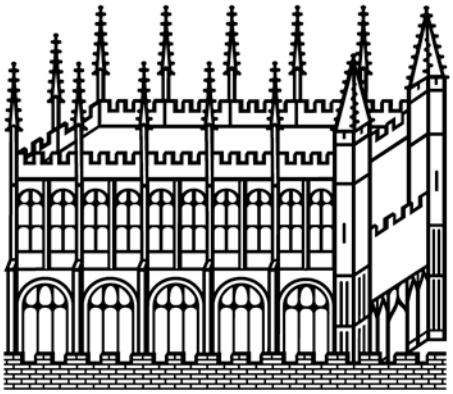

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THE HEIR
OF
HAZLEWOOD

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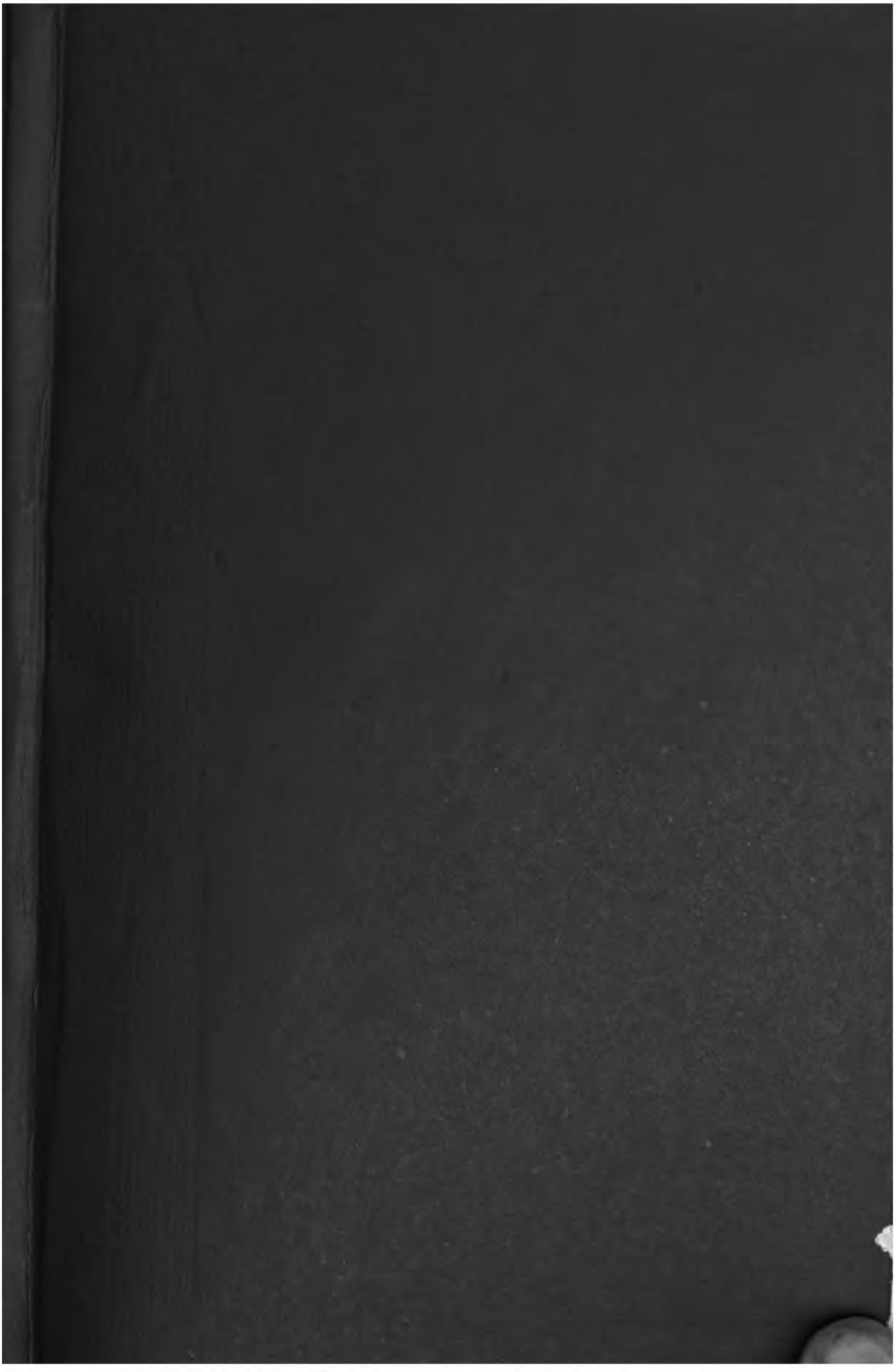

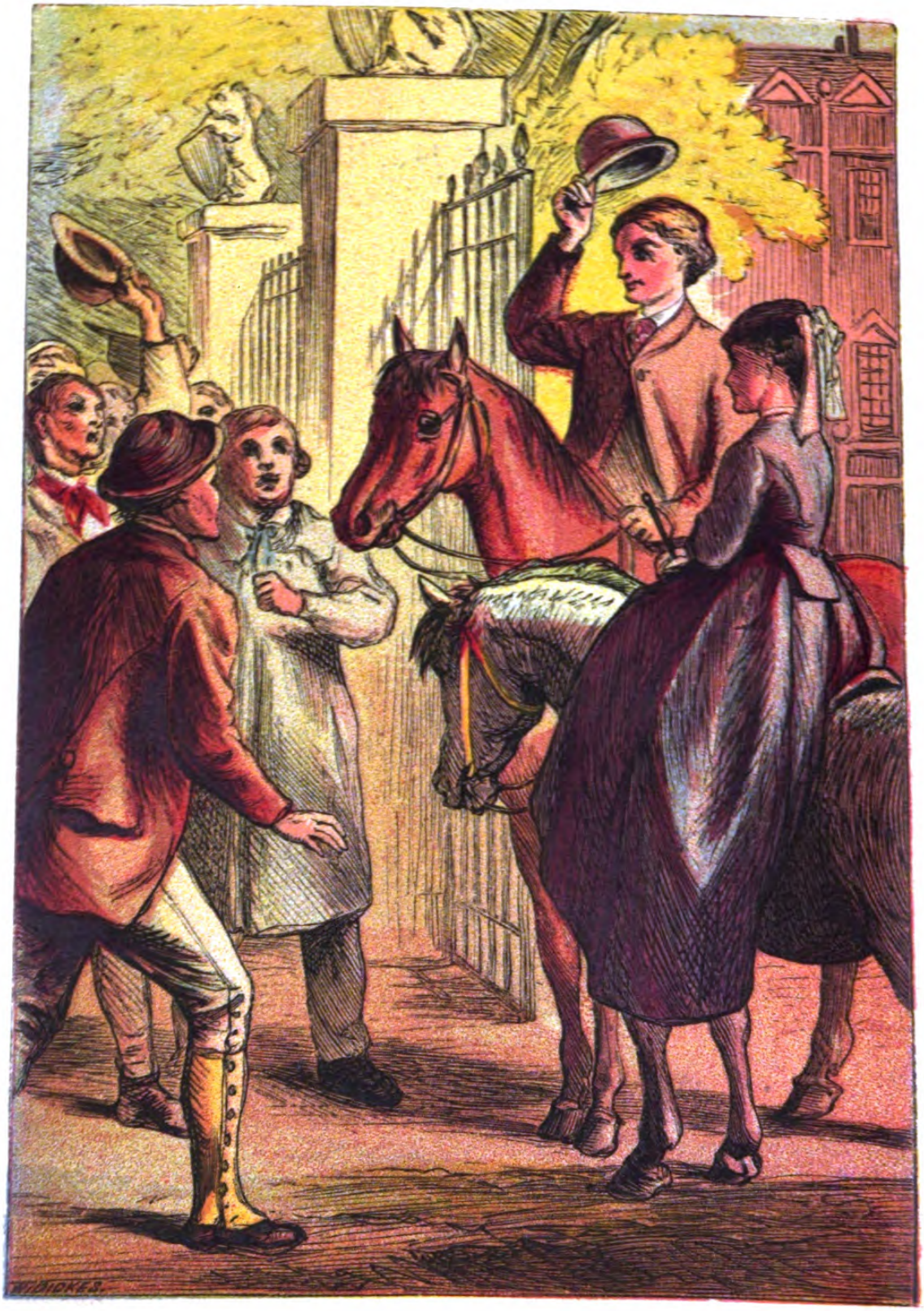

THE HEIR OF HAZLEWOOD REVEALING HIMSELF TO HIS TENANTRY.

F

THE

HEIR OF HAZLEWOOD;

OR

"ALL THINGS

WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM

THAT LOVE GOD."

LONDON: JARROLD AND SONS,
12, PATERNOSTER ROW.

250. m. 372.

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THE HEIR OF HAZLEWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGE BEGINNING.

DRIFTING with the tide, tossed from wave to wave, rocking backwards and forwards, on and on it floated, a small frail boat, without guidance or direction, save that of the Almighty eye that never sleeps, the arm that never tires, and without whose knowledge not even a sparrow can fall to the ground. It drifted on, drawing gradually nearer to a small vessel, whose sails flapped lazily in the summer breeze, and was at length observed by some of the sailors.

"Well, shipmate," said one of them, "that wee speck I've been watching for the last ten minutes looks like a boat now. It's drifted away from some of the places round here, I expect;" and the old sailor turned and went down below. Presently the captain's atten-

tion was drawn towards the same object, and he examined it through his glass.

"It is certainly a boat," he exclaimed. "Keep your eye on it, Johnson, for there is something in it, but what it is I cannot make out at this distance; but keep your eye on it, and call me when it gets alongside."

Thus commanded, Johnson watched the boat as it drifted nearer and nearer, and before it reached the vessel, startled every man on board by shouting, "It's a youngster—a baby, as I'm alive!"

All whose duty did not prevent it, rushed to the side of the vessel where Johnson stood.

"A child, did you say?" asked the captain—"where?"

"There, in the boat, cap'n: you'll see it move in a minute." And sure enough the white bundle lying at the bottom of the boat did move.

"Lower a boat at once, Hall," said the captain, "and fetch the concern here."

A few minutes afterwards, the "concern" was carefully hoisted to the deck of the vessel, and proved to be a baby about six months old, lying on a shawl in an old fisherman's basket. The sailors' astonishment was something ludicrous as they gathered round the little stranger, while he, poor little thing, frightened at the sight of so many rough-bearded countenances, began to cry again.

"Thee had better have stayed where thee came

from, I guess, young stranger," said their only passenger—a quaker, noticing the child's handsome dress. Baby still continued to cry, and at length one of the men ventured to take him out of his novel cradle. But this only made matters worse. From crying it rose to screaming, and the poor man, in a state of bewilderment not to be described, walked about the deck vainly trying to hush the unwonted sound, amidst the laughs and jokes of his companions.

During this time the captain had been carefully examining the boat to ascertain where it had come from, in order to restore it and its infant occupant to their rightful owners. But no clue could be discovered by which this could be done. No name of either owner or town to which it belonged appeared on either boat or basket.

"No wonder nobody didn't like putting their name on such a crazy old tub as that," said one man contemptuously.

"I wish they had though," said the captain; "old as it is it ought to have a name on it. What are we to do with that baby?"

Ah, that was a question difficult of solution, and the old man scratched his head and looked puzzled. Baby's shrieks were now resounding sharp and shrill, and he was kicking and fighting with all his might and main in the arms of his rough but kind-hearted nurse. The poor man was in quite a perspiration with his unavailing efforts to quiet and yet not hurt the passionate

little fellow. He was afraid of holding him too tightly, lest he should squeeze and hurt the chubby little limbs, and yet baby's struggles and plunges made it necessary that he should be held firmly.

"If we'd only got a woman here now, she'd know in a minute what to do," said the sailor.

"Let me see if I can manage him," said the captain, and he took the little boy in his arms, and spoke some gentle soothing words to him. Captain Elton had been a father himself only a few months back, and he could not help a tear gathering in his eye as he took this little one in his arms, who reminded him so much of his own lost Willie.

Whether baby could tell he was in the arms of one not altogether unaccustomed to baby ways and doings, I cannot tell, but certain it is that in a few minutes he was pacified, and a smile dimpled his round fat face, and seizing the silver-belled coral rattle suspended round his waist, made a dash at Captain Elton's face. The patting and stroking received in return evidently pleased his babyship, and he was soon on friendly terms with the kind young captain; but no sooner did one of the sailors touch him than he frowned ominously, and gave unmistakeable signs of crying again.

"What's to be done with him, cap'n?" asked one of the men some little time after his arrival; "the little chap's hungry. I guess he's getting fretful like even with you."

This thought had never entered any one's head

before. What could they give him to eat? They had nothing on board but hard biscuit and salt beef, neither of which could be given to a baby.

"I wonder whether he likes sugar," said the captain after a few minutes' thought. A sugar bowl was soon brought, and to the delight of all, baby helped himself to a handful, which he tried to thrust into his mouth. He succeeded in cramming some in, and ate it with evident relish. "Oh, that's all right," said the captain, laughing; "leave the bowl here for him, and go and tell cook to boil some biscuit soft, and make it very sweet, and we'll feed the young sailor." And soon afterwards baby made a hearty meal, and then went to sleep.

"What are you going to do with the child, cap'n?" asked an old sailor, as Captain Elton paced the deck that evening.

"That is a question I am now puzzling over," answered the captain. "It is clear there can be nothing done at present; we shall be in port by to-morrow evening, I hope, and then I must take him home until I can ascertain who he belongs to."

"That'll be no easy matter, I reckon, cap'n," said the man; "you see you can't tell where he shipped from; it might have been from England, or it might be from France. That 'ere boat had been drifting miles, I believe, by the looks of it and the youngster. He was hungry, too—ravenous like. Ah, I'm afeard it'll be a hard job to find who he belongs to, unless his clothes tell the tale."

"Ah, they might do it," said the captain musingly, for while the old man had been speaking, a new thought had entered his mind—a doubt as to the expediency of taking this baby home to his delicate young wife, who had sorrowed so deeply for the loss of her own sweet boy. Might not this one revive too painfully the thought of the treasure she had lost, and the shock be more than she could bear? These thoughts troubled Captain Elton all night, and when there was a move in the basket where baby had been put to bed, he was awake to hear it.

Next morning early, baby was duly fed with boiled biscuit and sugar, but he still refused to make friends with any one but the captain, who was thus compelled to have him in his arms nearly all day.

We sha'n't get in to-night unless the wind freshens," he said, as he paced the deck with baby later in the morning, and he gave orders for every sail to be set to catch as much as possible of the fitful breeze. But it was of little use; the wind dropped so as scarcely to ripple the surface of the water, and the vessel made very little progress in spite of the anxiety of captain and crew to make the port as soon as possible. This desire was heightened later in the day, for baby became violently sick, and seemed altogether so ill as to cause serious alarm. No one knew what to do or what to give him. The sovereign specific—sugar—failed now, and the coral rattle hung neglected from the soiled blue ribbon, while the lids closed wearily

over the laughing blue eyes, and the little head drooped heavily on the captain's shoulder. He did not cry much; he seemed to have too little life for that; and it was piteous to see him, lying so still and white in the captain's arms. He could not eat the boiled biscuit, but eagerly swallowed some spoonsful of cold water.

"If we only had a little milk for him now, he might do," said the captain, as he gently fed him with the water.

"And a woman to nurse him, cap'n. It's about all women are fit for, but they can do that well."

The captain smiled at the sailor's opinion of woman's capabilities, but it also brought to his mind the thoughts of the previous evening. He had decided *not* to take baby home for the reasons above-named, but to find some one to take care of it until he discovered the parents; but now, as he looked at him, lying in his arms so pale and ill, he thought no one would take such good care of him as his own Miriam, and he resolved to take him to his own home. Babies always bring a wealth of love with them, come wherever they may, and it was astonishing how this little fellow had twined himself around the hearts of captain and crew, although the acquaintance was but four-and-twenty hours old. There was not a man on board but felt concerned at baby's illness, and every effort was made to accelerate the progress of the vessel. All in vain; the shades of evening came on, and found them still many

miles from their desired haven. About ten o'clock, however, the wind freshened, and at eleven it was found necessary to take in some of the canvas. The vessel went right merrily now, scudding before the wind like a white-winged bird, and gladdening the hearts of all on board.

"We shall be in early to-morrow if we keep on at this rate," said the captain, cheeringly, as he stepped up the companion ladder about midnight.

"Yes, cap'n, I hope so for the youngster's sake. How is he now?" asked the man on the watch.

"Very bad I'm afraid; and the worst of it is I don't know what to give him. He don't seem to want anything but cold water, and perhaps I'm wrong to give him that."

"But there ain't nothing else you can give him here, cap'n," said the old sailor, "leastways, that would do for such a little chap as he. The med'cine that 'ud do for we old hulks would kill him maybe."

"Yes, that's the difficulty," said Captain Elton; and one would have thought, from the tone in which the two men spoke, that their sole business was the care of this child, and that the vessel was sent out for the express purpose of picking him up and taking him into port in the shortest possible time. Sails were hoisted and lowered, orders issued and countermanded, all with a view to increase the speed, and bring them an hour earlier to port, because this little nameless stranger, this all-engrossing baby, was ill, and needed

more care and attention than any one on board knew how—properly—to render.

When morning dawned, baby was evidently worse; his breathing was short and laboured, and he was in a burning heat. Very quietly he lay in the old basket, with a pillow substituted for the shawl, which formed a coverlid. Captain Elton bent over and kissed the burning temples, and then the blue eyes slowly opened, but their light was gone now, and they closed again in a minute, and the little head nestled down on the pillow again, as though he did not wish to be disturbed. The captain went on deck, and enquired the number of knots run the last hour, and then put his telescope to his eye with the hope of seeing the distant port. Yes, he could see it! could just catch the rays of the rising sun gleaming here and there on the white cliffs. He had sighted home again, and would soon be with his wife, who awaited so anxiously his return. He was within sight of help and comfort for baby—that all-engrossing baby.

But as the daylight increased, the wind lowered, and again every stitch of canvas had to be set before the breeze, and even then the speed slackened considerably, which caused a delay of several hours in the arrival of the vessel, so that it was afternoon before the anchor was dropped, and the anxiously-desired port gained.

As soon as Captain Elton could leave the vessel, he saw that baby was placed comfortably in his basket,

and covering him over, gave him in charge of Johnson to carry home, while he hurried on first to prepare his wife for the coming of the unexpected guest. He did not doubt her willingness to receive and befriend the little stranger so curiously thrown upon their care, but he feared to startle her by bringing him himself.

CHAPTER II.

ADOPTED AND LOVED.

IN a neat but prettily-furnished sitting room sat a pale, delicate-looking lady, in mourning, turning over the contents of a work basket, and laying aside from time to time, one article after another, which were folded carefully as if to be put away, while again and again the hot blinding tears fell on the tiny garments in spite of every effort made to restrain them. At length the bottom was reached, and the last thing—a little soiled worsted shoe with a hole at the toe—taken out. But at the sight of the little old familiar thing with its hole, through which so often peeped a little rosy toe, all the mother's firmness forsook her, and kissing the little shoe as though it had been a part of her lost baby, she burst into tears, and for a few minutes, sobbed hysterically.

"This will not do," she said at length, "these things must be put away before William comes home," and choking back her emotion with one more passionate kiss on the toe of the little shoe, she rose from her

seat, and gathering together the various articles of baby wearing apparel, she carried them upstairs and put them carefully away. It was like another burial to lay aside all the familiar every-day things belonging to the sweet blossom that lay sleeping beneath the daised turf, and the mother lingered lovingly over the drawer before she finally locked it, wondering whether she should ever need to use these things again. Baby's drawer was doubly dear and sacred now—even the key was something precious as belonging to that. It was a weary task the laying aside all the little things that had been made in such joyful hope, and when it was done, the mother's grief would have its way for a time. Rising after a few minutes, she knelt at the side of the bed and prayed for strength and resignation to bear this trial meekly and patiently, for grace to trust a Father's wisdom and love in thus removing this joy of her life, for grace to be enabled to say, Thy will, O Lord, not mine, be done.

Mrs. Elton had suffered many bitter trials in her life. Her marrying one so far beneath her in the social scale as Captain Elton, had offended all her friends, and since her marriage, they had never seen or held any correspondence with her. To one of a gentle, loving nature, this scornful treatment of all her advances was inexpressibly painful. She had written again and again to her father and sisters, but her letters were always returned unopened, and at length, Captain Elton positively forbade her writing again.

Her husband's frequent absence from home, exposed to many dangers, was another source of anxiety, and thus Mrs. Elton had frequent need to draw fresh supplies of strength from Him, who has promised to be the strength of all His people, to enable her to bear cheerfully these varied trials.

The prospect of having a little one to comfort her during her husband's absence was a great joy to her; and the possession for a few months of the frail gentle blossom had aroused all the energy of her character, and made her for the time forget the unkindness of her friends. And then she had been called upon to resign this sweet little comforter, to see the smiling face cramped with pain, and the pretty rounded limbs writhing in agony, it made her heart bleed at every pore to witness this, and she felt that death itself would be preferable to the sight of such suffering—suffering she would gladly have endured to spare her baby, but which she must witness, powerless to alleviate.

Sometimes doubts of God's love in thus permitting such suffering would haunt her mind, and when baby turned his heavy blue eyes towards her as if mutely asking for relief, hard rebellious thoughts of God came into her mind, and with the prophet of old, she said in her heart, "I do well to be angry." And then death came at last and laid his icy hand on her pet blossom, and the joy of her heart was removed with a stroke; and afterwards, she herself was ill, and

during that illness, her heavenly Father's love was manifested to her, and she was taught by the Spirit to see what she had never realized before, that the heart of God is a *Father's* heart, and yearns over His children with unutterable love, even when His hand is laid heavy upon them. The passionate longing to join her baby in the home above was then taken away, and she rose from her sick bed with the prayer, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

It was hard to come back to the every-day life, missing the sweet music of her baby's laughing and cooing, and to feel that they would never be heard again, but she set herself resolutely to the task of making her life as happy as possible, for the sake of her husband, believing that God had work for her to do here, though what that work would be she could not form the least idea, for her health—never very strong—had been so shaken during baby's illness that she was not able to do anything beyond the superintendence of her own home; for as their means were limited, only one servant was kept.

As my readers may have guessed, Mrs. Elton is now expecting her husband's return that she is so anxious to put away all little Willie's things at once. But she is doomed to disappointment, for the vessel did not reach the port on the day anticipated; but the next afternoon she heard that the "Fairy Queen" was in sight, and an hour or two after, she saw her husband walking quickly up the

quiet street in which they lived, and by the time he reached the door, she had opened it, and stood ready to receive him.

"Why, Miriam, my darling, I can scarcely credit the evidence of my senses, you look so well this afternoon!" said her husband fondly, as he led her into the cosy drawing room, where tea had been prepared, and there ensued a great many questions and answers until Captain Elton had almost forgotten, in the joy of this meeting, the fact of there being a baby on its way here, which his wife knew nothing about. Suddenly it rushed into his mind, and he looked up at the window, almost expecting to see the old basket with the white bundle in it then carried by, and without answering the question his wife had just asked, he said, "The 'Fairy Queen' picked up a passenger on her homeward voyage."

"Somebody from a wreck, I suppose," said the lady, shuddering.

"No, I fancy not," said her husband, "it was a baby."

"A baby!" repeated Mrs. Elton, all her sympathies at once at once aroused, "do tell me all about it."

"I can scarcely do that now, for I saw the man I told to bring it up here pass the window just now. Miriam, will you——"

But Mrs. Elton had left the room at the sound of a feeble wail from the passage. She came back in a minute or two, deeply agitated, it is true, but with the baby in her arms.

"Poor little darling, how ill it looks!" she said, kissing its pale cheek, while the tears fell like rain from her eyes.

Baby presented a sorry spectacle in its dirty, tumbled, sugar-stiffened white frock and stained blue sash, from which depended, by a narrower ribbon, the neglected coral rattle. One foot had a white sock and crimson morocco shoe, but the other was cold and dirty.

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Elton, as she noted all the dirt and discomfort of the child's attire, "will anybody come for it directly, William?"

He saw what was passing in his wife's mind, and answered, "No, I do not think anyone can be here for him to-night; I wish you would make him comfortable, or let Mary do it, if it will be too much for you." But Mrs. Elton would not hear of such a thing as trusting Mary with him, and proceeded at once to make him some suitable food. But he could not eat more than a few spoonsful, and then laid his little head against Mrs. Elton as though he was tired.

As soon as tea was over she undressed and washed him. Then came the struggle. Could she put her own darling's clothes on this strange baby? Her husband had gone down to the docks again, and she was all alone, and for a few minutes she gave way to the bitter anguish that surged up in her heart as she went on with the strangely familiar work of drying and powdering baby. She took up his clothes and looked at

them to see if it was possible he could wear them until he was sent for. No, it was clear they were not fit for him to put on, and yet she could not make up her mind to open that drawer she had locked the day before—it seemed like opening a tomb. What should she do?

At this moment, as if divining what was passing in her mind, baby looked up in her face with such an earnest pleading look in his eyes, and again closed them so wearily that Mrs. Elton could not resist the impulse to take him up and kiss him, while the tears fell from her eyes on his cheeks as she kissed them again and again. Baby had pleaded his own cause and gained the victory, and was very soon arrayed in one of little Willie's night dresses, and then some simple medicine was given him, and he was laid in Willie's bassinette.

Upon Captain Elton's return, he told her all the circumstances of the picking up the old boat with the baby in it, far out at sea—too far for them to form any conjecture as to where it had come from.

"Then you have no idea who this little fellow belongs to?" said Mrs. Elton, when he had finished the recital.

"Not the slightest, at present—but we must try to ascertain it at once."

"How will you do this?" asked his wife.

"Well, I scarcely know. Are his clothes marked?"

"His petticoat has C.H.E. marked in ink on the

band. I did not notice any of the others, but we will look now, it may help us to discover his parents."

In a few minutes the clothes were brought and carefully examined, but no other mark could be discovered. The little rattle bore the same initials, but nothing more than this, and with this slight clue, Captain Elton feared it might be weeks or months before he ascertained anything satisfactory respecting the child.

"And meanwhile, what shall you do with him?" asked Mrs. Elton.

"What should you wish, dear?" said her husband.

"To keep him, certainly, if I may—if you are willing that I should." Her husband had but one objection to this, and that was the pain it would probably cause her to give him up, should any length of time elapse before he was claimed.

"Oh, I could get over that," replied Mrs. Elton; "I should think of the poor mother's joy at recovering her darling—poor thing, what she must be suffering now! How I wish I could go to her with her dear little baby. Oh, William, you must make haste and find out where she is, and send and tell her her baby is safe."

"I think it will be best to put it into the hands of the police," said Captain Elton, "they will find it out if anybody can. It may be that some one will come forward and claim this little waif of humanity before I go away; if not, ——"

"You will leave him with me," interrupted his wife, "and perhaps I shall have the pleasure of giving him up before you return again."

The next morning, Captain Elton called upon the chief functionary at the police office and related all the circumstances of the finding the child, asking them to make enquiries, as the time he had to spend on shore was very short, and necessarily fully occupied. A promise was given that this should be done; and Captain Elton hoped that some one would speedily come forward and claim the child.

But weeks and months passed, bringing no tidings from his friends. Captain Elton returned again and again, finding baby still an inmate of his home, and that which was at first earnestly longed for, was now as greatly dreaded. Perhaps the police knew something of this, for beyond posting a few hundred handbills in the different towns along the coast, they did little towards finding out baby's rightful owners.

Meanwhile, baby had entwined himself very closely round the heart of Mrs. Elton. That illness, which lasted several weeks on his first arrival, had bound him by the strongest ties of affection to her. Before it was over, "baby's drawer" was again opened, and he had taken full possession of little Willie's wardrobe. His own clothes had been carefully laid aside, that there might be no mistake in his identification when he should be claimed; and very soon he had outgrown the delicate white worked frock, for the little

baby soon grew into a stout sturdy boy, in the bracing air of this sea-port town.

Six months had glided past when Captain Elton again called at the police-office, not to ask them to make further enquiries—he believed that nothing more could be done in that way beyond what had already been tried—but to say that he had resolved to adopt the child as his own now, but that he would give him up should his friends yet come forward to claim him.

"Now, Miriam, we must think about giving our baby a name," he said, when talking to his wife that evening of his visit to the police-office; "what must it be, do you think?"

"His clothes are marked C. H. E.; we must keep to those initials. E stands for Elton, so that there will be no difficulty about that. Suppose we call him Charles Henry. They are the names most likely to be the right ones."

"Very well, dear, as you like. Come here, Charley, and kiss papa and mamma."

"Mam—mam—ma," lisped little Charley, as Mrs. Elton caught him in her arms and kissed him. The tears started to her eyes at the unwonted strangely familiar words, "papa and mamma," for she had never allowed herself to think until now that baby was to be with her for more than a short time, although a pang shot through her heart at the thought of parting with him. But this fear had been gradually dying out lately; and now that baby had received a name, it

seemed that he was really her own. Little Willie was not forgotten; his carefully-tended grave would prove that he still lived in his mother's affection; but this baby had been a sweet comforter to her—had often beguiled her into a forgetfulness of her anxiety for her husband's safety, when the wind rose, and came sighing and sobbing as if in sorrow for the mischief it would cause. At these times, baby's cooing and laughing were more than ever precious to her, and the thought of having to part with him made her cling more closely to him.

But now he was her own, her darling boy, her adopted Charley, and no one but his own mother could take him from her. And so the child grew up and learned to say papa and mamma as other children did, and when asked his name, answered, "Charley Elton."

At first, Captain Elton thought it would be best to inform the child, as soon as he could be made to understand it, that this was not his rightful name, that he was only their son by adoption; but his wife would not hear of this. She maintained that it would do no good, but might be productive of much harm by making him restless and uneasy; and as he early shewed a disposition, impatient of control, would perhaps make him still more so, while his extreme sensitiveness would tend to make him suspicious of their love, more especially since a little one had been sent to share the love that had hitherto been all his own.

Little Eva was born when Charley was about two

years old. She was named after Mrs. Elton's favourite sister, and was thought to resemble her very much in character as she grew up. She was a gentle, timid little creature, of a yielding disposition, and the very opposite in many things of the bold fearless Charley. And yet the affection existing between the two children was very strong.

To Eva, there was nobody like her brother Charley; he was all that was good and true to her childish imagination—and Charley thought every other little girl inferior to Eva. When he was very naughty—which was not seldom, I am sorry to say—and refused to obey either school-master or mother, a gentle caressing word of Eva's would subdue the obstinacy, and he would learn the hated task for her, and lay aside the much-loved pencil and drawing. Drawing and designing different mechanical instruments were his especial delight, and often brought him into disgrace at school, where he was told he ought to love arithmetic and algebra, as they would be most useful to him in learning navigation, which he would have to learn before he could become a captain or even a sailor.

CHAPTER III.

PASSION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

ONE day as Charley was returning from school, with two or three of his companions, a dispute arose about the detested arithmetic.

"You will never be more than a common sailor, Elton," said one of them scornfully.

"A sailor!" exclaimed Charley, "I am not going to be a sailor."

"But you are though," returned his school-fellow, with the utmost coolness and assurance.

"Who says so—who dares to say so?" asked Charley, getting into a passion.

"I do, and your father does," returned the other, in the same provoking tone.

"My father did not say so," exclaimed the angry boy, clenching his fist as he spoke.

"He did, for I heard him," replied the other. "A pretty sort of a sailor you'll make, won't you?" he added, sneeringly.

This was more than Charley could bear, and raising his fist he struck the boy a blow which knocked him

down. He stepped back a pace or two, expecting the other would immediately rise and return it; but there he lay, just where he had fallen, while Charley stood horror-stricken and spell-bound, looking at the prostrate form. How long he stood thus he could not tell, the other boys had gone, and the last sound of their foot-steps had died away, when he heard a faint groan. It was music to Charley, and roused him from his agony of terror. All his anger was gone now, and stooping down he raised the boy's head, and then saw it was bleeding from a deep wound at the back. The tears fell fast as he besought his companion to open his eyes and speak to him. His first fear was past now he saw that he was not dead, but he was still in great alarm at the sight of the gaping wound and the fast flowing blood.

"Oh! what shall I do?" exclaimed poor Charley, "this is all through not curbing my passionate temper." But at this moment, to his great relief, his companion opened his eyes; and shortly afterwards, with Charley's help, he managed to tie his pocket handkerchief round his head and resume his walk home. Meanwhile the other boys had run off to tell the news that Charley Elton had knocked William Fisher down and killed him; for they had waited to see him rise, and finding he did not, went to look at him, and that one look at the still white face and closed eyes was sufficient for them. He must be dead to look like that. And so the news spread far and wide. Mrs. Elton heard it long before

Charley reached the town. The dreadful news was carried to her first, that he had struck down his schoolfellow in the heat of his passion and killed him dead on the spot. It was a fearful shock to her, coming as it did, just after a similar outburst of passion at home, which perhaps made her more ready to believe it than she would otherwise have been. But be this as it may, she was just preparing to go out to make further enquiry into the matter and search for Charley himself, when she was seized with a sudden faintness and giddiness, and fell back insensible in her chair.

When Charley reached home, after going with his schoolfellow to have his head bound up, he found Eva and the servant crying most piteously, and the whole house in confusion.

"Where's mamma?" was his first question. But for answer, Eva rushed to him, and throwing her arms around his neck, exclaimed, "Oh! Charley, you didn't do it? say you didn't do it," she added, imploringly.

"Didn't do what?" asked Charley, in bewildered astonishment.

"We heard that you had knocked a young gentleman down, master Charles."

"And that has made mamma ill—brought on a fit the doctor says," put in Eva. "But it isn't true, is it, Charley dear, about your knocking William Fisher down and killing him?"

"It isn't true that I killed him, but I might have done it, Eva," he added, solemnly.

Eva turned pale and trembled, she had never heard her brother speak like this before.

"Is mother very ill?" he asked, after a few minutes' silence.

"I'm afraid so; the doctor would not let me go into her room just now, when I went up."

Charley again relapsed into silence, and the ticking of the time-piece on the mantel-piece could be plainly heard for a few minutes. "Eva, does the doctor think mamma will die?" he asked, with a shudder. Eva started.

"I don't know," she answered, slowly, through her tears.

There was another pause for a few minutes, then Charley spoke again. "Eva, I am twelve years old, and—and perhaps a murderer;" the last words were gasped out.

"Oh! Charley, dear Charley, don't talk so dreadful," sobbed the little girl; "William Fisher is not dead—you said he was not much hurt, just now."

"No, Eva, but if mamma should die, it will be all my fault, all through my dreadful temper. Oh! Eva, what shall I do?" and covering his face with his hands, he burst into such a passionate fit of crying that Eva was frightened as she sat and watched his violent sobs, which seemed to shake his whole frame. She tried to comfort him in her usual gentle caressing fashion, but he pushed her on one side.

"No, no, Eva, you must not come near me. I am

not fit to be near you." Eva was puzzled, but Charley went on, "I am very, very wicked; you must not love me any more—I am a murderer, and everybody hates a murderer."

"Jesus don't," said Eva, quietly, "mamma was reading about Him praying for them to-day, and if Jesus loves you, I do, because I love Jesus." Charley left off his passionate sobbing to listen to the little girl's quiet grave talk. She sat opposite to him on the hearthrug, the tears still wet on her cheeks, but with a quiet seriousness in her eyes which looked into the fire.

"Charley," she went on, "you mustn't say you are a murderer because mamma is ill, she wouldn't be if God didn't think it was right—that is good for her or somebody else."

"Eva, how can you talk so? How can it be good for our dear darling mamma to be ill? You can't love her or you wouldn't say that." Eva's eyes filled—"I do love mamma very dearly," she said, "but I must believe what God says."

"What's that?" asked Charley, quickly.

"'All things work together for good to them that love God.' It was my text for to-day, and mamma told me a little about it. You believe mamma loves God, don't you?" she asked. Charley looked surprised at the question.

"I'm sure she does," he replied quickly.

"Then don't you see it must be true what I said,

that this illness, this fit *must* be 'for good,' because she loves God."

But Charley was not to be convinced. "What good can it do?" he asked persistently.

"I don't know," answered Eva, "but I believe what God says."

All the evening the two children sat gazing into the fire and listening to the sounds overhead in Mrs. Elton's room. At length the doctor came down, and beckoning to Charley, led him into the adjoining room. He thought it was to tell him it was all over—that he would never hear the loved voice of his mamma again; and sinking into a chair, he turned so pale, and trembled so violently, that the doctor feared he should soon have another patient on his hands.

"Come, come," he said, patting him on the shoulder, "be a man." But Charley's breath came in short, quick gasps, he tried to speak, but could not utter a word.

"I came to fetch you to see your mamma," said the doctor; "she is a little better—." But here he stopped. The effect his words produced upon Charley was to him incomprehensible, not understanding the boy's previous feelings. With a smothered half-hysterical cry, he had bounded from the room. When he came back, the tears were slowly falling down his cheeks, and there was a little more colour in them.

"Now, my boy," said the doctor, after looking at him a minute or two, "do you think you can keep perfectly quiet if I let you see your mamma?"

"Oh yes, sir," answered Charley, eagerly wiping away his tears.

"Very well, then; you understand you are to be perfectly quiet, and not attempt to stay many minutes. It is your mamma's wish that you should go up, and after that, mine must be attended to, and she must go to sleep."

Charley followed the doctor into the dimly-lighted room, stepping carefully on tip-toe for fear he should make the slightest noise. Mrs. Elton lay with her eyes closed, and such an ashy paleness overspread her face, that Charley started, and could scarcely repress a scream as he looked at her—he thought she must have died while the doctor had been down-stairs. But as he drew near the bed, she slowly opened her eyes, and when she saw him, such a joyful look of loving recognition beamed from them, that Charley had to exercise strong self-control to keep his arms from going round her neck, when there would have been another passionate outburst. It was almost the first act of self-control he had ever exercised, and he did not find it easy to stand there and answer his mother's questioning so quietly, when he was longing to throw himself on her neck and tell her how sorry he felt for what he had done.

After a few minutes, the doctor came forward and said he must go, and he held Charley's hand while he bent over to kiss his mamma. "Good night, my dear; kiss Eva for me," whispered Mrs. Elton. When he

reached the dining room, he found Eva just where he had left her, looking very placidly into the fire.

"How is mamma now?" she asked as he sat down beside her.

"Better, the doctor says, but I think she is very ill."

"But she will get well by and bye," said Eva, quietly, but in a tone of assurance.

"How do you know that?—you can't tell," said Charley. Somehow her quietness vexed him this evening. He had expected to see her cry because she was not to go up and see her mamma, and here she was, sitting very quietly and contentedly by the fire as though nothing had happened. "I don't believe you care much about mamma being ill," he burst forth at last, "for if you did, you'd want to go and see her."

"May I?" asked the child, eagerly; and she rose from her seat.

"No, I don't think you may," said Charley, cooling; "but I thought you would have *wanted* to go up."

"Mary told me it would not be good for mamma to see me to-night," answered Eva, while the tears slowly gathered in her eyes, "and so I thought it would not matter about my wanting it. I could wait, now I knew she wouldn't die."

"But how do you know that?" asked Charley; "I don't see how you can tell. The doctor hopes he can cure her, but he isn't sure."

"But God can if the doctor can't," replied Eva.

"Yes I know that; but how do you know that He will?" asked Charley.

"Because I asked Him," said Eva, in the same quiet tone. Charley was silenced, but not convinced, and the conversation was here interrupted by Mary coming to put Eva to bed.

Mrs. Elton's recovery from the effects of the fit was not rapid, and as the winter advanced her health declined. Captain Elton was alarmed when he returned and saw the alteration a few weeks' illness had effected in her, and at once sent for a physician. He advised an immediate removal to a warmer climate. "Indeed," he added, "a lengthened residence in the south is the only thing that will save her." This advice was rather difficult to follow just now. Charley and Eva's education would be interrupted by their removal to a foreign country, and Captain Elton feared his wife would not consent to go without them.

He was right in his conjecture. She refused to leave either of them at school even for a year. "Charley is trying to overcome his passionate temper, I know," she said; "but still I could not feel easy to leave him behind. Among strangers, he might forget the painful occurrences that have taught him to see the need of self-conquest, and relapse into his old habits of violent impatience under control. No, he had better be deficient in any other knowledge than the slave of his own self-will."

And so it was determined that they should all remove as speedily as possible to the south of France. This arrangement would enable Captain Elton to spend a

longer time with his family between his voyages than he had been able to do in England, and that reconciled Mrs. Elton to leaving her native land, which she was at first very unwilling to do.

Charley and Eva were delighted at the prospect of going abroad, and seeing so many strange-looking people and places.

"The people will not talk like we do, papa says, but ask for everything in French. Won't that sound funny? I shall think they are saying your lessons," said Eva.

Charley laughed—"Oh, I shall be able to tell you what they mean," he said, "at least, just at first; mamma will do it afterwards, until you have learned to speak French too."

"Afterwards!" repeated Eva—"after what?"

"I will tell you if you can keep a secret," said Charley; "but mind, you must not tell papa, or mamma, or anybody." Eva promised not to say a word about it.

"Well, I have made up my mind to go to sea," said Charley, drawing a deep sigh."

"To be a sailor!" exclaimed Eva, incredulously.

"Yes, just that—a sailor," said Charley, setting his teeth firmly.

"But I thought you didn't like it," said Eva.

"Like it!—I hate it! But I'm beginning to see that what people like are just what they can't have, and so why shouldn't I do what I hate as well as

others? Look at mamma now—I know she does not like going to France one bit, although she tries to make everybody think she is pleased. She would rather stay here, but she can't; and I would rather do anything than go to sea, but I'm going. Eva," he went on, after a few minutes' silence, "if I wasn't sure papa and mamma loved me very much, I should run away."

Eva started, exclaiming, "Oh, Charley!" while the tears stood in her clear brown eyes.

"I should," said Charley, "I should go off somewhere, and make my fortune, and then come back and make you all rich."

"But, Charley, we are not poor," said Eva.

"No, but we are not rich; and I should like to be. I should like a great many things I can't have: I should like to have a large house with a garden, and fields, and some horses and cows; and then in the house I'd have lots of beautiful pictures and models of machinery. Eva, why can't we be rich, and have everything we want?" said the boy, in a tone of bitterness.

"I think it must be because it isn't good for us," replied Eva, simply: "God always gives the people that love Him just what is good for them, mamma says."

"But why shouldn't it be good for us as well as for others?" said Charley, impatiently. "Look at old Murray, the miser. They say he is as rich as a Jew,

and yet he lives in that miserable old house that is tumbling about his ears, and won't even give his own sister a penny, although she is almost starving sometimes, and yet I suppose it's good for him to be rich. Now I should do some good with my money if I was rich: I wouldn't spend it all on myself; I'd give to all the charities, and help every poor person I knew of. Don't you believe I should now, Eva?" he said, looking straight into the little girl's eyes.

"Yes, I believe you'd be kind to other people if you were rich; but I think we can be that without having much money. We won't talk about being rich any more though. Tell me why you have made up your mind to be a sailor."

"I have told you," answered Charley, crossly.

"And you're going to try and like it because papa wishes it?" she said, gently.

"I'm going to sea because papa wishes it, but I shall hate it more and more every day. Papa does not know this, and I shall not tell him."

"But why not?" asked Eva. "I'm sure papa would not wish you to go if he knew you disliked it so much."

"Perhaps not, but I may just as well go. I can't have anything I want, and I don't deserve it. It's all through me mamma has to go away, and so it is but fair I should do something I hate. Perhaps I shall be able to conquer my passionate temper by and bye; that isn't done yet, and I only deserve to be a sailor [illegible]."

"Oh, Charley, do let me tell mamma about it," said Eva, deeply touched.

"No, not a word," said Charley; "mind, you have given me your promise. I don't mean to speak to papa just yet, not until we get settled in France; then I must go—yes, I must; it will be good for me to do just the most hateful things; I don't deserve anything else."

The last words were spoken more to himself than to Eva, and he turned away moodily, and went to another part of the room.

"Charley," said Eva, after some minutes' silence, "do you think you shall be happy when you are a sailor?"

"Happy!" said Charles, looking up from his slate, "how do you think I can be happy, handling dirty, greasy ropes, and doing all sorts of disagreeable things? No, I shall be miserable; but I deserve it."

"But that will not please God," said Eva.

"What?" asked Charley.

"Why you're going where you will be miserable."

Charley stared. He thought he was doing, or going to do, a very praiseworthy action, and make an ample atonement for all the anxiety he had caused his parents by thus yielding to what he believed was their wish. The more miserable he was over it added to its worth, he thought.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Mamma says God is pleased when we are happy.

He wishes us to be happy quite as much as she does, and so He won't be pleased at you're going for a sailor, for He'll know you are miserable, if papa and mamma don't."

This was such a totally different view of the subject from that held by Charley, who seemed to think, the more misery, the more glory in carrying it out, that he could only sit in blank astonishment, looking at the quiet little figure of his sister as she glided out of the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE CHATEAU.

A FEW weeks saw the Eltons in their French home. It was a small neat cottage or chateau, a few miles from Montpelier, where the soft breezes from the Mediterranean could be felt, but sufficiently far from the town to be away from its noise and bustle.

Mrs. Elton was very ill upon her first arrival, but a few days in that mild climate were sufficient to effect an improvement in her health, and to the great joy of her husband and children, she soon began rapidly to regain strength.

Everything was so new and strange to the children, that every day brought some new wonder to be talked over. The difference in the appearance of the country—the dress and language of the people. The appearance of the country women going about without bonnets especially amused Eva, and she wished to know if it was because nobody knew how to make bonnets in France that they went without.

Nothing more had been said about Charley becoming a sailor, and Eva hoped he had forgotten it, until one day, as she sat trying to master the difficulties of a French exercise, he said, "Come, Eva, you must make haste and learn, or you will be bringing mamma the wrong things when you go to market."

"But why must I go at all except with you?" asked Eva.

"Because I cannot be here always; I shall be going away soon, you know."

"What, and leave mamma and me, with only Mary to talk to? Oh, Charley, don't go away and leave us; we can't get on at all without you."

"I must, Eva; I mean to speak to papa about it the next time he comes home. I know he wishes me to be a sailor, and I'll do it."

He spoke in such a determined tone, that Eva knew it would be useless to try further persuasion, and so wisely gave it up. This subject was constantly on her mind now. She wished Charley had not told her how much he disliked the idea of being a sailor, she felt so strongly tempted to tell her mamma; for if she did not, she would never know it, but believe that Charley wanted to go to sea because he liked it.

At length she determined to ask Charley to tell her before his papa returned, and by this means she hoped the whole affair would be explained. She had some difficulty in persuading Charley to do this at first. He was afraid of the very thing Eva desired, and he had

somehow made up his mind, that to become a sailor and make himself miserable was the best thing he could do—what he ought to do, as a sort of penance for causing his mamma's illness. He was therefore very cautious how he spoke to his mother about it, for fear she should find out that he did not really like the prospect of such a life.

Mrs. Elton was somewhat surprised when she heard it, but thinking it was because he felt dull without companions of his own age, she made no objections to his accompanying his father the next voyage. "But of course your idea of becoming a sailor yourself will be an after consideration," she said.

Upon Captain Elton's return a few weeks afterwards, she mentioned Charley's wish, and he took an early opportunity of speaking to him about it. He, like Mrs. Elton, doubted his really wishing to follow the sea as a profession, but thought he was getting tired of the quiet life he was compelled to lead. He therefore took him for several excursions to different places in the vicinity, as a means of reconciling him to remain at home. While out with him one day he spoke of this.

"But, papa," answered Charley, "I am not going to stay at home. You wished me to become a sailor a little while ago, and I wish it now."

"So I hear," answered his father. "But what has made you change your mind? I think I heard you say once you hated the sea. Have you determined to go because I wish it?"

Charley did not answer.

"Come, tell me whether that was not your reason for altering your mind," said Captain Elton.

"Yes, papa, partly; but I thought I *ought* to go."

"Because I wished it! Now, suppose I have changed my mind and my wishes concerning you—can you give up your will and determination for me again?"

Charley looked up in his father's face. "I mean it," said Captain Elton, answering the look; "I want you to stay and take care of your mamma and sister."

"But mamma is well now—at least, almost well."

"Yes, but you must remember she is not strong, and that she is among strangers, with no one to take care of her while I am away but you; and think what would she do if she were taken ill, or anything should happen, with only Mary and little Eva, who can neither of them speak a word of French!"

"Eva is learning, papa; I am teaching her."

"I am glad to hear it. Will you stay and continue to do this, and improve yourself as far as possible? By doing so, you will please me much more than by embracing my profession."

"But, papa, what shall I be then?" said Charley, in a discontented tone; for he did not like the idea of giving up his own way at all. He had made up his mind to brave the hardships and disagreeables of a seafaring life, and they had a certain charm for him as adding to the merit of his sacrifice or penance; but

there was nothing of this—no adventures, no dangers to be encountered in settling down to a quiet home life, with his mamma and sister only for companions, and the prospect did not please him.

"Papa, what shall I be?—a lawyer, a tailor, a soldier, a doctor, or what?"

"My boy, I cannot say at present. That is a question that needs consideration. Your present duty is to improve yourself as far as you can in every branch of useful knowledge, and leave the future in God's hands. He will perhaps decide this in a manner we cannot foresee."

"And you wish me to stay at home and do nothing, papa," said Charley.

"I do for the present. You will find enough to do, I am sure. Suppose you try to bring the garden into order; it will be an amusement for your mamma and Eva to help you, but they could not do the hard work."

This suggestion did not please Charley at first. He found it very hard to give up his preconceived plan, and he grumbled to Eva, when alone with her, for being asked to do so.

"Of course papa expects I shall stay at home," he added, "although he only *asked* me to do so, and I gave no promise about it."

"I daresay papa thought you would be glad to do it when you knew he wished it."

"Glad!" repeated Charley, "as though anybody could be glad to have all their plans upset after they

have made up their minds to anything. But that's just like you girls, you have no wills of your own, and you think nobody else has."

"Oh yes, we have—at least I have," said Eva, "and I don't like doing as mamma wishes me always. But when I feel like this, I think of Jesus coming, not to do His own will, but the will of His Father in heaven."

"Now, Eva, how silly of you to talk like that; as if Jesus doing His Father's will could have anything to do with us—I mean with my doing as papa wishes me about staying at home."

"But it has, I think," said Eva, gently; "Jesus came to teach us that we're not to please ourselves; and mamma says we must learn to give up our wills, or we can never be His disciples."

"Eva, do you think you're a disciple of the Lord Jesus?" asked Charley, after a few minutes' silence.

"I don't know; I try to be," answered Eva, colouring at the unexpected question.

There was another pause for a minute or two, and then Charley said, speaking slowly,

"I suppose it's easier for a girl."

"What?" asked Eva.

"Why to do just as God says—to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus."

"What makes you think so?" she asked.

"Because they haven't so much to give up," answered Charley. "Now, it's very easy for you to do right always, but somehow I always seem to want to

go wrong, and I'm always forgetting the very things you remember—the things mamma wishes us to remember. Now, about this staying at home—I—suppose—I—ought—to—stay" (the words were pronounced very slowly—very reluctantly) "but I don't like to do it because I'd made up my mind to do something else."

"And you don't like giving up your own will?"

"I suppose that is it," confessed Charley; "and if I was to be one of the Lord's disciples, I should have to do it hundreds of times." These last words were spoken rather to himself than to Eva, and he was mentally pondering the question his mamma had asked him that morning—whether he did not wish to be a child of God. "Yes," he had answered, and he was sincere. He had often wished, when reading of some eminent young saint, that he too could have a share of the blessedness they enjoyed; but now the cost of discipleship was presented to him, he wavered. The giving up his own will now and then he found such hard work, that he shrank from a service requiring a total surrender of the will to God.

"But, Charley, you are trying to be a disciple, aren't you?" asked Eva, after a little while.

"I don't think I am," honestly confessed Charley.

"Not trying!" said Eva, in a tone of wonder.

"No, I don't believe I am."

"But you'll begin now, won't you?" she asked, pleadingly.

"I don't know; I haven't made up my mind."

"Oh, Charley!" she said in a grieved tone, the tears coming into her eyes, "you can't know what you're saying."

"Yes I do," he answered; "but I'll tell you something that will please you—I've made up my mind to stay at home with you and mamma."

After a time, Charley threw himself very heartily into his home duties, but not at first. During the first few days after the captain's departure, he did nothing but mope about the house, find fault with Eva and quarrel with Mary. This was his outer life. Inwardly a fierce contest was going on between his sense of right and his obstinate self-will. He had promised to stay at home—that he would do; but whether he would be the help and comfort, or the plague and torment of those at home, he had not yet decided. He did not consider this in the exact words I have used, but the substance of it amounted to the same. It was whether he should do as he liked, now he had yielded so far, or whether he should overcome this determined self-will, and do all in his power for the help and comfort of those placed in his care. Yes, placed in *his* care. He thought of that at length, and a feeling of pride swelled his heart, and at last gained the victory over every selfish consideration. He would not betray the trust committed to him. He felt heartily ashamed of his conduct the last few days, and resolved to atone for it. When Mrs. Elton came downstairs the fifth

morning after her husband's departure, Charley, instead of making a disturbance with Mary in the kitchen, was busily employed in digging up the garden.

"It's a perfect wilderness, mamma," said Charley; "but I think we can make a pretty garden of it."

Mrs. Elton stepped out of doors and went to look at the bed he was digging, well pleased to find him so employed.

"Oh yes," she answered gaily, "we shall soon be able to convert the wilderness of weeds into a fairy land of flowers. It will seem like home to have our own English flowers growing here."

Presently Eva came out, and a spirited conversation took place upon what would grow best and look prettiest in the front garden, which was to be devoted to flowers exclusively, while the back was to be transformed from a wild unkept waste to a kitchen garden. Charley now worked steadily every morning in the garden, and, with the help of a boy now and then, had soon the satisfaction of seeing the whole aspect of it changed. The afternoons were spent with his mamma and Eva in reading and study, and the evenings in taking a ramble or a shopping expedition to Montpelier. Very quickly and pleasantly passed the time to all the inhabitants of the little chateau. Charley grew wonderfully interested in his garden; it possessed more attractions for him than French verbs and Latin grammars, or arithmetic and history—indeed, Mrs. Elton frequently had to remind him that these things

must not be neglected, or his father would scarcely be pleased to see a well-kept garden at the expense of a well-stored mind.

When Captain Elton returned from this voyage, he brought a letter, which had been sent from their former home, to which it was directed, to the shipping office, where Captain Elton found it awaiting him. It was directed to Mrs. Elton.

"That is my sister's handwriting, I know," she said when she saw it, and joy beamed in her face as, with trembling eagerness, she broke the seal. Alas! it was no joyful tidings the letter conveyed—only a short formal note, announcing the death of Mr. Harcourt, Mrs. Elton's father. He had died the day previous to the date of the letter. Poor Mrs. Elton was deeply grieved to hear of the death of her only parent, more especially as he had never forgiven her marriage, or suffered her to come into his presence since. It affected her more deeply than her husband had expected, although it had opened the communication with other members of her family. As soon as possible she answered this rigidly polite note with one of sisterly affection; and this at length had the effect of bringing a similar one in return from her sister Eva, who was married about the same time as herself, but who had been kept in ignorance of her having written before. This letter did more towards restoring Mrs. Elton to her former contented cheerfulness than anything else could have done, and she began to talk of her return

to England the following year, where she hoped to meet this dear sister and her family. From this time, Mrs. Elton and Mrs. Etheridge corresponded very regularly, and became intimately acquainted with each other's family, so that Eva and Charley often talked of their cousins in England; for not even to her sister had Mrs. Elton confided the secret of Charley's being an adopted son, and thus messages sometimes came from the young Etheridges to "cousin Charley" and "cousin Eva."

In this way the winter and following summer passed, and Captain Elton began to hope that another winter's residence would so far establish his wife's health that he might with safety take her back to England the following spring. This was what he had planned and what the children were always talking of now. Almost everything they did was in some way connected with this return to their native land. Charley read and studied that he might not be behind his cousins; and Eva worked and practised on the piano with more pains, that her aunt might not be ashamed of her namesake niece. In short, this topic was uppermost in their minds, and occupied more of their thoughts than any other.

Captain Elton laughingly told them one day not to make too sure of accompanying their mamma, as he had made no promise to take them back.

"But mamma would not go without us," said Eva.

"She wouldn't go anywhere without us," confidently added Charley.

"Well, I don't know whether I shall take you," said the captain, in a mock serious tone. "I don't know but what your mamma and I may leave you here in this old chateau to do as you can." They were light words jestingly spoken—but alas! to have a true, a sad fulfilment.

The latter part of the autumn was unusually rough and stormy, and although little of the fury of the frequent gales could be heard in their sheltered retreat, Mrs. Elton could now-and-then hear enough to make her tremble for her husband's safety. The hollow roar of the waves could be heard occasionally, and then the wind in its fury would come sweeping past, surging through the trees, and screaming and shrieking round the house, and at length dying away in fitful moans and sobs, only to return the next minute with redoubled violence. At such times Mrs. Elton would sit with Charley and Eva—calm indeed, but so pale and anxious-looking that the children always dreaded to hear the wind for fear of its "making mamma ill."

One evening the three were gathered in the drawing-room, ostensibly reading, but really listening to the tempest that had been raging all day. The sweeping gusts of wind came rushing past, tearing up everything that obstructed their mad career, and making the three anxious listeners shiver with fear.

"I wonder where papa is," whispered Eva, in an awe-struck whisper. This expression of the dreadful fear that was gnawing at her heart was more than Mrs. Elton could bear, and she burst into tears.

"Oh, mamma, don't cry," said Eva, the tears rolling down her own cheeks as she spoke: "God can take care of papa, although he is out on the sea. You told me one day that God holds the sea in His hand, and so if He does, papa must be in His hand too, for papa is on the sea."

Mrs. Elton dried her own tears and kissed away Eva's, somewhat comforted by the words the little girl had spoken, but still she was unable to dismiss the fear, or rather the presentiment, that her husband would never return to her again—that she should never more welcome him home and recount all that had passed during his absence. In vain she tried to shake it off, to reason herself out of it; it would not be dismissed, but returned again and again, until at length, when left alone, she paced the room in her agony of doubt and suspense.

CHAPTER V.

DAYS OF TRIAL.

THE days of the next week dragged slowly on. To Mrs. Elton in her feverish anxiety they seemed interminable. For ever present to her mind was the one thought, the one anxiety—her husband's safety; she could not get rid of the haunting, sickening, dread fear that had come upon her that last stormy evening. It had seemed as though the contending elements had gathered all their forces for the last attack, for since then the weather had been fair and mild, and therefore those who had weathered that storm were not in like danger now. But had Captain Elton battled through it? This was the question his wife was continually asking herself. She tried to leave the matter calmly in God's hands—prayed for strength to bear the trial, but the sickening suspense had preyed upon her health, making her weak and nervous, and more than ever anxious in spite of all her efforts to the contrary.

At length the suspense was ended—the last ray of hope blotted out. It was about the time she had

expected his return, and the children had, as usual, made some little preparation for it, when news arrived from the shipping office that the "Fairy Queen" was lost, had gone down with all hands on board within sight, but beyond the reach of help. She had weathered the gale for some time, but being very much damaged, Captain Elton had tried to gain a sheltering harbour, when she was caught by the breakers and dashed upon the rocks; she went to pieces instantly in sight of the spectators, and one after another of the hapless crew had sunk beneath the boiling, eddying, foaming waves. Several attempts to launch a boat had been made, but they were ineffectual; no boat could live in such a sea, and thus the bystanders were compelled to endure the agony of seeing these brave men sink before their eyes powerless to save them.

Mrs. Elton did not hear all these particulars at once. The one dread fact that her husband was lost —gone from her for ever in this world, was so great a shock in her present state of weakness, that it was some time before she could rally sufficiently to attend to anything. For some days her life was despaired of by the doctor Charley had fetched from Montpelier; and when she began to get about again, he said she must take great care of herself, or she would sink into decline.

The death of Captain Elton had of course materially altered the circumstances of his family. If they were not rich before, they were certainly surrounded by

every comfort, besides enjoying many of the luxuries of life; but Mrs. Elton knew that to continue this they must be very economical, as their means were now exceedingly limited. Luxuries *must* be given up, but she thought with care and prudence they might still live in comfort. Had she followed her *wishes* just now, she would have returned to England; but her sense of duty forbade this in her present state of health. For her children's sake she would forego the comfort her sister's presence would give her for at least some little time longer, and live on at the chateau.

It is said that one trouble never comes alone, and experience sometimes proves the truth of this saying; poor Mrs. Elton proved it to be so in her case. Her husband had not been dead more than a few weeks when news reached her that the bank in which their money was lodged had failed, and their money with that of many others was gone—hopelessly lost. At another time Mrs. Elton would have thought little of this loss, but coming as it did just after her husband's death, and taking almost all they possessed from them at once, it well nigh overwhelmed her.

"Oh! mamma, don't grieve so about this money," said Charley one day, when he saw her crying at the sight of the letter that had brought the news.

"But my dear boy, what are we to do now it is gone?" asked Mrs. Elton.

"The Lord will provide," gently whispered Eva.

"Yes, my darling, He will I know," said Mrs. Elton through her tears; "but now I am weak and ill, I sometimes forget His promises."

"But that doesn't make any difference, does it mamma? God remembers them all the same."

"Yes dear, our Father remembers them and remembers us; but we should try and remember them also, that we may not lose our peace and confidence in His love."

"But, mamma, if all our money is gone, what are we going to do?" asked Charley.

"I have not had time to think yet, my dear," answered Mrs. Elton; "something must be done, it is evident," she added, lowering her voice.

After Charley went to bed that night, he lay pondering what his mamma had said, wondering what the "something" would or rather could be that they would do to eke out the few pounds that they still had left. The next morning when seated at the breakfast table, he mentioned what he had been thinking over: "And I have thought of a plan, mamma, by which I think, we can get a little money,—perhaps a good deal," he added, his face flushing with pleasure.

"What is your plan, my dear boy?" said Mrs. Elton, a smile at his earnestness flitting across her pale face.

"Well, mamma, if you wouldn't mind it, I think old Susanne's boy might take some of our vegetables to the market and sell them."

"Oh! Charley, *we* sell vegetables!" exclaimed Eva, laughing.

"No, not you, Miss Eva Elton, but Pierre should sell them for me, and I would give mamma the money."

"My dear boy, what could have put such an idea into your head?"

"Old Susanne did some time ago, mamma; she said Pierre should take them for me to sell with his master's, but I laughed and said I had rather she and Pierre had them for supper. But, mamma, if I could get some money this way, would it not be right for me to do it? you know I have to take care of you and Eva now," and Charley drew himself up proudly in spite of the tears that dimmed his eyes, as his thoughts went back to that time, when he had been asked to take care of them by one now lying in a watery grave.

"But Charley, who is to do the work of the garden, even if Pierre could sell the vegetables?" asked Mrs. Elton.

"I could, mamma. Of course, if you will let me do this, I shall get all that waste piece at the back dug up and planted, because the more vegetables we can sell, the more money we can get."

"But you could not do the work of such a large garden as we should then have," said Mrs. Elton; "it would be too much for you."

"No, mamma, it would not; with a little help from Pierre now and then, I could do it very nicely, I'm

sure. You know papa said several times he thought I should make a clever gardener. You will let me try this plan, will you not, dear mamma?" he added pleadingly.

Mrs. Elton was not very sanguine as to its success, but at present she could think of nothing else, and so yielded a rather reluctant consent. She did not like the idea of Charley doing the drudging work of a gardener. It had been all very well for him to cultivate a few flowers and vegetables for amusement, to pass an hour or two pleasantly, but the idea of doing it for money as a means to earn daily bread—she shrank from that, and shed many bitter tears over it in secret. Eva likewise did not enter very cordially into this plan of Charley's; her pride was touched more deeply than she cared to acknowledge even to herself, and she would not let herself believe that he could ever do any good by selling vegetables. Selling vegetables! What would their cousin Augusta Etheridge say to it? What a sound it made. She burst into tears as she thought of it all—thought of her papa's death, and the loss of the money that had compelled them to think of doing something. It was very hard, she thought, very hard indeed that her poor invalid mamma should have such troubles. Suddenly she thought of the words, "All things work together for good to them that love God," and with them came those of Charley, that night when her mamma was first taken ill, and now her own heart re-echoed them.

What good could *this* trouble, this humiliating trouble, do them?

She had stolen away to the further corner of the hated garden—for she did hate it just then—to indulge in a hearty fit of crying by herself; but she had not been there long when she heard voices approaching. It was Charley and Pierre, and they of course spoke in French, but she could understand sufficient of what was said to know that Charley was telling Pierre he wanted the waste patch dug up and planted as soon as possible; and then he commenced asking the market prices of the various articles. It was very little she heard Charley say, and a ray of hope shot through her heart that he would give up the disagreeable plan; but this was as quickly dispelled, for Charley's next question was whether they could not sell flowers likewise.

"Eva can make up the sweetest bunches," she heard him say, "and you could take them with the vegetables, couldn't you?"

Yes, Pierre would take them, he was delighted at the idea of it; the flowers would bring more, he said, than the vegetables, if mademoiselle would only make them up nicely.

"Oh yes, she will do that," said Charley; and directing Pierre where to commence digging when he came in the afternoon, he dismissed him, and, whistling a lively air, walked on to where Eva was sitting.

"Charley, I won't—I won't do it," burst forth Eva, in an uncontrollable passion of tears.

"Highty tighty! what's the matter now?" said Charley, in utter amazement, for he had never seen his sister so angry before.

"I won't—I won't do it, and I think you're very cruel to think of it."

"What?" asked Charley,

"Why, to sell mamma's flowers! *They're* not yours to do as you please with, if the garden and the vegetables are, and mamma won't let you have them. It's a shame for you to think of taking them from her, when you know she loves them so much; and I won't tie them up in bunches, as you told Pierre I should—I won't touch them."

Eva had talked herself out of breath, or more angry words would have followed. Charley was speechless with amazement; he could scarcely credit the evidence of his own senses that it was Eva—gentle, loving little Eva, that was pouring forth this torrent of angry words; and noticing her flushed face and swollen eyes, he thought she must be ill.

"You're not well, Eva," he said, in a gentle tone, without noticing what she had said; "let me take you in to mamma."

"Yes, I am well," angrily responded Eva, "but I'm not going to let you do as you like with me, and I won't touch the flowers."

"Then you won't help mamma," said Charley, quietly.

"Yes, I will, but I won't help you to take the flowers away from her."

"Well, if mamma does not like me to have the flowers, I won't touch them."

It was Eva's turn to be surprised now. She had expected to see him get into a violent passion; but their positions were reversed; it was she that was unreasonably angry, while he stood calm and self-possessed.

"Eva, why don't you like my plan about the garden?" he said, after a few minutes' silence.

"Because I don't."

"But why not? You know mamma said something must be done, and I'm the only one that can do it, for of course mamma could not do anything. If I was a man, or even a little older, I might go away and make my fortune, but now I can't do anything but just see after the garden."

Charley's ideas of making his fortune were very dim and indistinct. He thought the knowledge necessary for accomplishing this would come with advancing years; at present he could do nothing but wait for the dawn of this knowledge. When it came, he would go forth and brave the dangers and difficulties of the world, and win for himself and those dear to him wealth, and honour, and distinction; but now he could only stay at home, and help them in the every-day duties of life; that was what he ought to do now—that was his present duty, and he had set himself resolutely to perform it.

"Is there anything you can think of that I might do

instead of gardening?" asked Charley, after a further pause.

"No, I don't know anything," answered Eva.

"Then why don't you like my plan?"

"Because it don't seem a nice one," answered Eva, beginning to feel very much ashamed of herself.

"But what is to be done? I can't do anything else, you see."

"But think, Charley, what our cousins would say if they should hear we sold vegetables!" and the tears again came into Eva's eyes.

"I don't care a pin about that, if that is all your reason for disliking it. I am not going round the streets of Montpelier to sell them; and even if I was, there would be no harm in it. But what can be the difference in things now from what they were when I worked in the garden before?"

"Yes, but you only did it for pleasure. Everybody knew you were a gentleman, and only did it for amusement."

"And sha'n't I be a gentleman still, even though I do plant and cut vegetables for money, instead of amusement?" asked Charley, hotly.

"People won't think so," answered Eva, drooping her head.

"You won't, I suppose you mean to say," exclaimed Charley, beginning to lose his temper; "but I don't care for what you or anybody else thinks; I know what I ought to do, and I'll do it."

"I know you're doing it for mamma's and my sake," said Eva, "but I don't like to think that you have to do the same kind of work as Pierre and those poor boys."

"Eva, do you remember telling me one day you were trying to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus? I believe you are, and so I don't think you ought to be so proud and feel as you do about my having to work for money. Mamma said yesterday that Jesus was very poor when He lived on earth, and that we ought not to mind it very much if we are His disciples."

Eva's eyes went down to the ground as he spoke, and every trace of anger died out of her heart. What had she done? been angry against whom? Because God had seen fit to take their money from them, and make them poor, as He had made His Son when He came to dwell on the earth, she had put herself into a passion, and spoken unkindly to her brother, who was never unkind to her. She felt bitterly ashamed of herself now, and tears of repentance fell from her eyes as they drooped lower and lower. Oh, how could she have acted as she had? She never knew until now how much pride and evil lay concealed in her heart, or what constant prayer and watchfulness was needed to follow the example of meekness and gentleness, long-suffering and humility, set by her Lord and Saviour.

After some further conversation, she returned with Charley into the house. Some early flowers were

already in bloom; indeed, it seemed to the children that there had been no winter, for they had never been without flowers of some kind; Eva noticed them as they passed, and made some remark upon their beauty.

"I should think you might gather enough for Pierre to take to the market, without taking them all from mamma," she said.

"I'm sure there would be enough to supply a good-sized basket, without their even being missed, if mamma would only let us have them."

"I'll ask her about it," said Eva.

That evening when Pierre was leaving by the back gate, he saw his sister stop and speak to him. Her face flushed, and a look of open-mouthed astonishment appeared on the face of the rather stolid-looking French boy as she made her communication. When Eva joined him a few minutes afterwards, he asked, with some curiosity, what she had been talking to Pierre about.

"You must not ask questions," answered Eva, gaily, and she skipped off to avoid betraying her secret.

The following morning, as Charley lay awake, debating whether he should get up at once or turn round for another hour's sleep, he fancied he heard a stealthy footstep pass his door and descend the stairs. An hour later, he stood at his window, dressing, and looking over the piece of ground that had been dug up the day before. He was just debating what he should plant in this part, and what in that, when he saw Pierre

walk hastily down the path with a basket on his arm. There was evidently something in the basket that was carefully covered over with leaves, and in a minute or two the breeze lifted one of them, and Charley saw white and purple blossoms.

"The stupid donkey!" he exclaimed; "how dare he come and gather the flowers like that?" and dashing open the casement, he called out, "Pierre, Pierre," as loud as he could. But it was of no use, Pierre had reached the gate, and was walking down the lane. Hastily dressing himself, he ran downstairs, where, to his surprise, he saw Eva just entering from the garden.

"Good morning," she said, with one of her brightest smiles.

"Good morning," he answered, hastily; "I want to catch that fellow Pierre."

"What for?" she asked, running after him.

"He has been gathering the flowers."

"No, I gave them to him," answered Eva; "I know all about it."

Charley faced round at this—"What made you?" he said.

"Charley, I'm very sorry for what I said yesterday" —she spoke humbly—almost tearfully—"and I want you to let me do this always."

"What?" asked Charley.

"Why, gather the flowers, and get them ready for Pierre. Mamma has given me leave, and Susanne shewed me how many to put in a bunch, and how to

tie them. She used to do it for a gardener herself once, so she knows all about it."

"You shall arrange them, Eva," said Charley, kissing her, "but I will get up and gather them for you."

Soon after breakfast, Pierre called with the money he had received for the flowers. He was a shrewd fellow, and had judged that if he could get a few private customers, he should get a higher price for the flowers than by taking them into the market, and their fresh beauty would not be faded when they came into the hands of the purchasers. He had therefore called at several of the houses on his way to the town, and there secured some very willing customers for his floral treasures, bringing back in return several francs, to the wondering delight of Eva and Charley.

"Eva, we must take care of the flower beds now, and not let them get over-run with weeds," said Charley that morning, as they walked round, planning where the different seeds should be sown.

"I will undertake that part of the work as well as tying the flowers up," answered Eva; "I shall like to help you with the garden."

"But what will Augusta Etheridge say?" asked Charley, archly.

"I shall not tell her, and she will not know anything about it. But even if she did, I should try and not mind it now; I know it is what God would have us do."

"Bravo!" said Charley; "I like to hear you speak

like that. Our fine cousins might come and see me working in the garden and welcome, and I'd tell them I was going to send all that grew into the Montpelier market."

Eva could not understand Charley talking like this. To her it was a bitter humiliation. The having to do something—to sell vegetables—as she termed it, rose up in her mind twenty times a day, and cost her heart a pang each time. It was her daily cross—this gardening, and she had constantly to watch and pray against the proud rebellious spirit, that was ever ready to rise up in opposition to it. Charley never fully knew or could understand what a constant battle his little sister had with herself, while helping him with his daily toil. The work had been pleasant enough to her while they worked for pleasure only; but when it had to be done for money—for money to buy daily bread—there lay the bitterness of it.

Not a bit less of the young lady did Eva look—Mrs. Elton took care of that. In her pretty morning dress and garden bonnet and gloves, no one would have guessed that the dainty little lady was seeking more than her own pleasure when she was stooping to root out the weeds from her lovely flowers. But she was. While rooting the natural weeds out of the garden, she was likewise rooting the weeds of pride and self-will out of her heart, and cultivating in their place the sweet graces of meekness and humility.

CHAPTER VI.

LEFT ALONE!

THE chateau had been rented by Captain Elton direct from the owners, without the intervention of an agent, and he had always taken the rent when due himself. They were two elderly maiden ladies, sisters, who lived a short distance from the chateau. In March, when the rent became due again, Charley took it, and very important he felt at being entrusted with this rather difficult business—difficult insomuch as the ladies always insisted upon its being paid in small money, and divided equally to a *sou* between them. Captain Elton had often spoken of the eccentric old ladies, and Charley had heard from Susanne that they were always quarrelling over their money, their servants, or an orphan nephew who resided with them, whom they petted and scolded by turns. But he was not at all prepared for the ladies' disagreeable behaviour towards himself, and it made him feel more keenly than ever his lonely position in the world. He never realized his loss so fully as when

he stood in the *salon*, talking, or rather answering the questions of these ladies, who made the most minute enquiries of him as to their affairs. At last he felt disposed to resent this inquisitiveness when the questions became too pointed, and he answered them somewhat shortly and stiffly.

A few days afterwards a note arrived, almost unintelligible, for it was an odd mixture of French and English, but after some little difficulty they contrived to understand that the purport of it was to wish them to leave the chateau at once.

"Leave the chateau!" exclaimed Charley, in astonishment, "what can they mean, mamma?"

"I suppose they want it for another tenant," sighed Mrs. Elton.

"Then they can't and shan't have it," said Charley, hotly.

"Hush! Charley; we must leave if these ladies wish it."

"Mamma, how can we? We cannot take the garden with us; and now we have got it in such nice order, and are making money by what we grow in it, how can we go away?"

"It is very hard, my dear boy, but I fear we must submit," said Mrs. Elton, wearily. "You know they are rather strange old ladies, and may have promised to let it to somebody else."

"But they can't turn us out, mamma, can they, if we say we won't go—that is, can't go, you know?" he added.

"My dear boy, we *must* go I am afraid. This note is very peremptory, and I should think, from the tone of it, they had already let the chateau."

But Charley was by no means so willing to give up as his mamma, and determined not to do so if he could help it. After thinking the matter over by himself for some time, he resolved to take counsel with Eva upon what had best be done, for leave they could not immediately. The garden was beginning to be very profitable; and while Mrs. Elton's health rendered it necessary for them to remain in France, it would be desirable for them to continue their residence at the chateau.

"Eva, what can be done?" said Charley, as she joined him in a walk. "It will not do for us to leave here; and yet Susanne says those old fidgets will send down again and again if we don't."

"And that will make mamma ill," said Eva. "She is very much upset now, although she believes God will not allow us to be turned out."

"It's a very great shame they're wanting us to go at all," said Charley. But there, it's of no use talking about that; what can we do to prevent it?"

"Could you go and ask them to let us stay?" suggested Eva.

"I've been thinking of that; but they're such disagreeable things, I don't like the idea of it."

"It's the only plan I can think of," said Eva.

Charley had thought of the same thing, but rejected

it; but now that Eva had suggested it, he resolved to adopt it in spite of its unpleasantness. Unpleasant it would be he was sure, and he dreaded having to stand before those cross, inquisitive ladies to ask a favour, but for his mother's sake he resolved to do it, hard as it was.

Without acquainting his mother of his intention, he went out after tea, resolving to get the disagreeable business over as soon as possible. Arrived at the old-fashioned, half-ruinous mansion, where they lived, he knocked timidly at the door, and was told by the servant who answered it that his mistresses were not at home then, but would not be long if he would walk into the salon and wait.

Sitting in this room was a boy of about his own age, evidently engaged in learning his lessons.

"Are you English?" he asked, after a few minutes' silence, lifting his perplexed face from his book and speaking in his own tongue.

"Yes," answered Charley; "can I help you with that exercise?"—for he could see it was an English translation he was labouring at.

"Oh, will you?" said the boy, delightedly; "I shall be so glad, and so will my aunts; they have a great wish for me to learn English correctly.

They conversed in French, and Charley asked if he could speak English.

"Oh yes, I am learning," he said; and he quoted a few sentences, which made Charley burst into a hearty

fit of laughter at the ludicrous blunders and the alteration of many of the words. It was evident the young Frenchman was very proud of his English, but he took Charley's merriment very good-temperedly.

"I wish you could come and help me every evening," he said, when the exercise was finished. "What is your name?"

"Charles Elton. I live at your aunts' chateau on the Montpelier road."

"And mine is Claude Dimont. Are you waiting to see my aunts?"

"Yes," answered Charley; "but I am not in any hurry. I can help you with some more exercises if you like."

"I have done for this time, thank you; but to-morrow I have a tremendous long piece of English history to translate; do you think you could come and help me with it?"

"Oh yes," answered Charley, delighted at the idea of finding such an agreeable companion as Claude. The ladies not returning, Claude took Charley into the garden, and introduced him to all his dumb pets; and the hours of the evening passed, and it began to grow dark before they thought of returning to the house. The ladies were still absent, and then, as he was obliged to leave, he confided to his new friend Claude the object of his visit, promising to come again earlier the following evening.

He was in high spirits when he reached home, and

amused Eva with his account of Claude. Mrs. Elton, too, was pleased, that he had found a companion, and suggested that it would be a good plan for him and Claude to do some lessons together every evening: they might mutually help each other in acquiring their native languages.

He mentioned this suggestion of Mrs. Elton's to Claude the next evening, and he was delighted, and begged Charley to adopt it.

"I will if it pleases your aunts," answered Charley; "and I should like to see them about mamma's business before we begin this evening."

Claude darted off instantly in search of his aunts, to communicate the news that the young "Monsieur Anglais" would come every evening and help him with his lessons if they pleased. The old ladies were as delighted as their nephew, for it was their one ambition to see him a thorough English scholar, although they did not know a syllable of English themselves.

"Oh, and auntie, he wants to see you," said Claude, as he was dashing off again to rejoin Charley. "I know what it is about," he continued; "they don't want to leave the chateau, and they mustn't now, you know, or else perhaps I shall never be able to learn English perfectly."

He knew that this argument would have most weight with his aunts, and accordingly used it until a promise was obtained that the Eltons should be allowed to remain, although some one else had applied for the house.

Charley found very little unpleasantness in his communication with the ladies this time; they were pleasant and affable, making kind enquiries after Mrs. Elton's health, and hoping she would not think of moving until it was quite agreeable for her to do so. This was how the subject of the removal was introduced, and Charley embraced it by saying they had hoped to continue in their present residence until able to return to England.

"Then do so by all means," said one; "we were applied to for the house, but of course, if you wish to remain we have no wish for you to leave."

Charley thought they must indeed be strange people to speak like this after sending such a note, but he had a keen suspicion that it was owing to Claude's intercession, although no one hinted at such a thing.

Mrs. Elton was deèply thankful when told of the result of his mission. In her present weak state, the slightest exertion brought on a total prostration, and therefore she dreaded anything that would draw upon her feeble strength. She was very pleased too that Charley should again resume his studies. Latterly he had greatly neglected these. The garden had occupied all his time and attention, and her own health being so greatly impaired, she had not been able to give that time and attention needful to it, and so the daily lessons had fallen off.

Eva was pleased to think Charley had found a companion, but she missed his pleasant lively chat very

much—more than she could have thought possible. Mrs. Elton noticed her dull dispirited looks, as she walked up the garden after watching Charley off the second evening, and resolved to improve the quiet stillness of the evening hour by resuming her old custom of teaching her a daily text, and explaining its meaning to her as plainly as possible.

Very pleasantly passed the evenings now, Eva sitting on a low stool at her mother's feet, caressing the thin wasted hand that lovingly rested on her head; and it was an hour of sweet happiness to Mrs. Elton to watch the light of Eva's soft brown eyes, as she listened and questioned as to how even a little girl might do the will of God, by daily taking up her cross and bearing patiently the little trials and vexations, and perhaps slights and injuries that might come to her. Slights and injuries Eva knew nothing of at present; but in these conversations Mrs. Elton had in view, and sought to prepare her for, an event which her heart told was not far distant—her own death. Very hard had been the struggle to resign them at first; she had shrunk from leaving them here in a strange land among strangers, and had prayed—oh how earnestly—for a renewal of strength to accompany them to England once more, and place them among friends, but her petition did not seem likely to be granted, for her strength wasted daily. But although unable to take them to friends, a sweet peace and confidence was granted to her that God would deal graciously and

lovingly with her orphan children, and she was able to leave them calmly in His hands.

Feeling that her sister ought now to be acquainted with the fact that Charley was not her own son, although she begged her at the same time to consider him as such, and not undeceive him until he was grown up, she wrote the full particulars of the finding the old boat with its baby occupant. In conclusion, she again begged that no difference might be made in the treatment of the children. But, strange to say, this letter never reached its destination, although a few weeks afterwards another came from Mrs. Etheridge, saying she would become a mother to Charley and Eva if necessary, and which Mrs. Elton took as an answer to her previous communication.

The summer waned, and autumn came on, and still Mrs. Elton was able to come down-stairs, and lie for some hours on the couch in the pretty drawing-room, and watch Eva and Charley as they went about the garden. Slowly—almost imperceptibly—was she fading away, but none the less surely. She knew, and yet she shrank from undeceiving her children in their fond belief that "mamma would soon be better." But as the autumn advanced, her strength failed more rapidly, and very soon she was unable to leave her room. Feeling that it was dangerous to postpone telling them then, she sent for them one afternoon, and gently broke to them the sad news that they would soon be alone in the world, that she must leave

them to join her husband in heaven. Very great was the children's grief when made to comprehend this fact, and at first they refused to believe it; but slowly the conviction forced itself upon Charley's mind that his mamma was greatly altered, although he had failed to notice it before; and as he looked at the thin, pale, wasted features, he burst into an agony of tears. Eva's grief was more quiet, though none the less deep, and for a little while Mrs. Elton could only mingle her tears with theirs.

Taking Charley's hand at length, she whispered, "My darling, you distress me by giving way like this. Try to think that it is God's will I should leave you; and although I am no longer with you, He is, and will ever be near you. Charley dear, are you trying to be His disciple?—if you are, you will try to bear this trial patiently, because it is His will; and remember, 'all things work together for good to them that love God.'"

"Mamma, how can they?" said Charley, impetuously; "don't you love God?—and yet you're going to die."

"And does not my Charley think it is good to have done with all sickness and sorrow and sin, and go to dwell where these can never enter, and enjoy the company of those we loved on earth, who have gone before us, and are waiting for us to join them in their song of praise to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us?"

"Yes, mamma," sobbed the boy; "but I was thinking of ourselves—of Eva and I. Eva loves God," he added, dropping his voice to a whisper.

"And does not Charley?"

"No, mamma, I don't think I do," he said at length, noticing the steady gaze of his mother's eyes.

"And must I leave you thus, Charley—an enemy of my Father, to whose home I am going?" she said, mournfully.

"Oh no, mamma, not an enemy," he said, quickly.

"Charley, you must be; there is no middle course. God has said, 'Those who are not with me are against me.' Do you intend going on like this? Must I leave you, feeling uncertain whether I shall meet you or not in that brighter world? Can you give me no hope of seeing you there?" Very gently, but very earnestly, were the words spoken, and they penetrated to the boy's inmost soul.

"Mamma, mamma, I will try to be a disciple. I will try to give up my own will and my own way, and love God," sobbed Charley.

"My dear, you cannot do either the one or the other; God must perform that work Himself in you. But there is something you must do, and that is, seek earnestly God's Holy Spirit to do this, and work with the Spirit, and not against it, to overcome the evil of your heart."

"I will, mamma, I will begin from to-day; and perhaps—perhaps before you go, I may begin to follow Jesus."

"God grant it, my darling boy," said Mrs. Elton, earnestly. "I could die happier if I knew you were both seeking that heavenly treasure which none can rob you of; for I do not know—I do not think these things are cared for in your uncle's home, where you will go to live when I am gone."

"Are we to go to uncle Etheridge's, mamma?" asked Eva.

"Yes, my dear, your aunt has promised to take care of you until you are able to do something for yourselves."

"But mamma, why can't we stay here and do for ourselves now?" asked Charley.

"My dear, it would be impossible for many reasons. No, you must make your home with your aunt Etheridge for a few years; and try, my darlings, to remember that you are little lights, to shew forth the Saviour's glory in that family. And now I have something to give each of you. Give me that letter and box, Charley. The letter is for Eva, to be opened the day she is fourteen. The box is for you, my boy, and is to be opened when you are twenty. I have marked on the outside the day of the month and year on which I wish it to be opened; until then, do not touch it. Will you promise me this?"

"Yes, mamma, I promise not to break a seal until my twentieth birthday."

"The day I have chosen as your birthday," murmured Mrs. Elton, and then she added aloud, "Mind you take great care never to lose it."

Mrs. Elton lingered a few weeks after this—long enough to see her heart's desire fulfilled in Charley's seeking and striving to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and then she gently passed away to that land where the inhabitants say no more, I am sick. She had left a will, disposing of her few trinkets, books, and plate, and directing what should be done with the house and furniture; and a fortnight after she had been laid in the quiet cemetery, Charley and Eva bade farewell to their bright sunny home in France, and set out on their journey to Hazlewood Hall, the residence of Mr. Etheridge, their uncle.

CHAPTER VII.

HAZLEWOOD HALL.

HAYCROFT was a very important village, at least, in its own eyes. It boasted of two butchers' shops, three bakers, as many public-houses, a blacksmith's, one or two "general" shops, and a small haberdasher's—linendraper's Haycroft called it. Most of the inhabitants were farm labourers; a few were employed at the factory in the neighbouring town, but these were the minority. All the country round Haycroft consisted of farm lands: rich corn-fields, with their golden grain gleaming in the autumn sunlight, and pleasant green meadows, where the cows lazily flapped their long tails to keep off the flies, and busy farm yards, where the dogs and poultry kept up a constant chorus of sounds, varied occasionally by the farmer's sturdy voice or the dairy-maid's merry song. But the country round was not named after the village. Hazlewood was the name by which that was known, and the farms were grouped

around an old ancestral house, known as Hazlewood Hall.

"The Hall," as everybody called it, was situated in the midst of extensive gardens and pleasure grounds, generally known as Hazlewood Park. It had been the property of the Etheridge family for many generations. Being strictly entailed, it could not pass into other hands very easily. The estate was a fine one, consisting of the house and gardens, many small farms, and half the village of Haycroft; but owing to the bad management of its previous owners, it was not a very productive one, and under Mr. Etheridge it was not likely to improve. He did not like Hazlewood, thought it dull and damp, and seldom visited it with his family, but left it to the care of an agent.

He was paying his annual visit in the early spring when Mrs. Elton died, and therefore the young Eltons were directed to meet them there.

Mr. Etheridge had four children. Richard, the eldest, a lad about thirteen, but being tall and very dark, looking full two years older, which was likewise borne out by his proud, haughty demeanour. Arthur, a merry, good-tempered boy, a year younger, and the very opposite in looks and disposition to his brother. Augusta, likewise tall and dark, and the very counterpart of her eldest brother in disposition. And Maud—"little Maud" and "baby Maud" she was generally called, although nearly eight years old; but being the youngest, and moreover, one of those sweet, winning, sunny

spirits, everybody seemed to call her "little" as a term of endearment. Various were the opinions formed of the young orphans by their more favoured cousins, when it became known that they would henceforth form part of the family.

"I wish cousin Eva could come in time for my birthday," said Maud, about a week before they were expected.

"Needn't wish that, Maud; you'll have enough of them before long," said Richard, who happened to be present.

"I hope Charley's one that'll go in for some fun," remarked Arthur.

"I don't suppose he will," answered Augusta; "for I heard mamma telling papa that she thought aunt was very religious."

"But what has that to do with Charley liking some fun?" asked Arthur.

"Why of course, if aunt was religious, Charley and Eva will be the same."

"What is religious?" asked Maud.

Arthur laughed. "Oh, being ever so disagreeable," he said.

"What is it, Gussie?" she said, appealing to her elder sister.

"Oh, don't you know? It's saying long prayers, and never wearing pretty things, and being very miserable."

"Did aunt like being very miserable, then, that she made Charley and Eva religious, Arthur?"

"I don't believe they are, Maud—at least, not Charley," he added; "at all events, we'll find out before we make up our minds."

"I wonder what they are like," said Augusta, musingly; "I should think Eva was fair, with long golden curls, like Maud's."

"I'm so glad mamma is going to let Charley share my room instead of that disagreeable Dick," said Arthur, loud enough for his brother to hear.

But Richard only cast a glance of contempt towards his brother, and went on with his drawing.

"And Eva is going to sleep in my room instead of Gussie," said Maud, waltzing round.

"Yes, I teased mamma until she promised to let me have a room to myself; and she has half promised I shall have a lady's maid soon."

"Yes, mamma said this morning that nurse could not do my hair nicely," remarked Maud.

"Oh, but my maid would not do your hair, Maud," said her sister! "she would have quite enough to do for me."

"Doubtless," said her elder brother, with quiet sarcasm. "I have no doubt you would take care she was fully employed."

No reply was made, for at this moment Mrs. Etheridge entered the room, and she was immediately assailed with questions from Maud and Arthur touching the expected guests.

"Mamma, will they be ever so disagreeable—so

disagreeable that I can't love them?" asked Maud, seriously.

"Who could have put such an idea into your little head, my darling?" asked her mamma.

"Well, mamma, Gussie said they were religious, and Arthur said to be religious was to be ever so disagreeable."

"I think it would be better to wait until you see your cousins before deciding what they are," said Mrs. Etheridge, smiling; "but you must remember," she added, "that they are coming to be your brother and sister, and must be treated with the greatest kindness. How would my little Maud feel if her mamma was to die?"

"Oh, mamma, I should die too," whispered the little girl, her large blue eyes filling with tears.

"Cousin Eva has lost her mamma and papa too, and has no one left to love her now."

"Mamma, I will love her," said Maud, quickly.

"I hope you will, my dearest, and Augusta too," said the lady, glancing at the averted face of her elder daughter.

"I daresay I shall, mamma," answered Augusta; "I have no doubt I shall if she don't trouble me."

"Trouble you, Augusta," said her mamma; "I wish you would enter more cordially into this plan of receiving and warmly welcoming your cousins."

"Well, mamma, they will have all they want when they come here; I don't see that I need do anything for them."

"My dear child, I wish you would try to imagine yourself in their place, and then tell me if you would like to be received with coldness and indifference by those friends with whom you were going to live."

"But, mamma, they are poor, and ought to be very glad to come here, and not expect anything else."

"Augusta, do not let me hear you speak in that manner again, or I shall be greatly displeased," said Mrs. Etheridge. "Once more let me remind you that Eva and Charles are to be as your brother and sister in *all things*"—and Mrs. Etheridge laid particular stress upon the two last words.

"Mamma, can I put off my birthday until Eva comes?" asked Maud.

"Scarcely, my darling," said Mrs. Etheridge, smiling; "you could put off having your friends if you wish it. And now I will tell you that I expect them here in three days instead of a week, and we shall return to Clifton in the course of a fortnight."

"Oh! mamma, so soon!" exclaimed Arthur and Maud. "I do wish we could always live at Hazelwood."

When Charley and Eva arrived in England, once more the old familiar sights and sounds reminded them so forcibly of the past, and the happy hours that had been spent with those whom death had taken from them, that for a time their grief, that had been somewhat diverted by the constant change of travel, returned with all its first violence. Their faithful

servant Mary was still with them, and was to accompany them to Hazelwood, to see them safely placed in Mrs. Etheridge's hands. It had been Mrs. Elton's dying request that she should do this. Word had been sent to Mrs. Etheridge at what time they might be expected to arrive, and the carriage was sent to the railway station for them. Maud would have gone in it, but Mrs. Etheridge thought they might prefer coming with only their own servant.

Mary was delighted when the coachman, asking if they were going to Hazelwood, told her the carriage was waiting for them; and she began to think it might be a good thing after all for the children to have to come to their friends in England, if they were so grand. She did not say so to them, but commenced talking about the probable grandeur of their cousins.

"I shouldn't wonder now if your cousin, Miss Augusta, had a maid to herself; and of course she would wear very beautiful dresses to go down in the drawing room. I'm afraid yours will look quite mean beside them, Miss Eva. And then your hands, master Charley: I do wish you hadn't done so much in that garden, they're quite brown and hard; if you'd only worn gloves, now they wouldn't have been so."

"As if I could," burst forth Charley. "I don't care what they think about my hands, but I do wish we were not going to live with such grand folks."

"Are they grand, do you think?" asked Eva.

"Yes, I expect so by the look of this carriage and the footman." Eva looked down at her simple black dress, and wondered whether her cousins would think it looked mean as Mary had hinted.

"I must unpack your best white one before I leave you," said Mary, noticing Eva's depreciating looks at her dress.

"Oh! Mary, I could not wear white," said Eva.

"Oh! yes, miss, trimmed with black you could; that is what young ladies always wear in mourning."

"Then I'd rather not be a young lady," said Eva, the tears slowly filling her eyes; "for I can't leave off wearing a black dress yet."

"And you shan't either," said Charley. "One would think it was nothing to lose everybody you loved," and his own eyes filled in spite of his firm resolve not to give way, just as he was about to enter his uncle's house.

"Well, this is a grand place," said Mary in awe-struck whisper as they drove through the lodge gates. The children dried their eyes to look out of the carriage windows, and a very troubled look came into their faces as Eva said in a whisper,

"I wish we hadn't come."

"So do I," said Charley boldly. "Look, you can see the house through the opening in the trees. What a grand old house it is, and I'll be bound to say its owners are lordly enough, too."

"Of course they are," assented Mary. But Charley

made no reply, for another object had attracted his attention.

"Look, Eva, there's somebody on the steps," he said; "what a fine looking fellow he is—proud, too, he looks," he added, as Richard turned his haughty gaze upon the slowly approaching carriage, as he leisurely walked away in an opposite direction. But before he was out of sight, a little girl came tripping out of the house, but instantly darted in again when she saw the carriage.

"What a dear little thing she looked!" remarked Charley; I suppose that was Augusta." The next minute the same little girl appeared again accompanied by a lady, evidently her mamma; and the two stood eagerly watching the approaching carriage, the afternoon sun gleaming upon the golden curls of the child, and lighting up her sweet face.

"They are waiting for us," said Charley, a gratified smile flitting across his face as he spoke. A minute or two more and the carriage had stopped, and Mrs. Etheridge had folded the orphans in a motherly embrace, while the tears stole into her eyes as she tried to trace the features of her dearly-loved, sorely-missed sister in these her children. Maud had crept shyly behind her mamma when her cousins alighted, but Mrs. Etheridge drew her forward now and introduced her.

"We thought it was Augusta," said Eva, timidly, a little disappointed. Arthur now presented himself at

the door to welcome his cousins, and Mrs. Etheridge preceded them to the drawing-room, where she gently took off Eva's bonnet and cloak, and again pressed a loving kiss upon the lips of the shy, timid little girl.

"You are very tired, my dear, I daresay," she said, noticing that the momentary flush of excitement was giving place to an almost marble whiteness. "As soon as you have had some tea, Maud shall take you to your room;" and the lady turned to Charley and questioned him about their journey. He, like Eva, looked very ill at ease, and Mrs. Etheridge decided that they were both shy and unused to much society, but thought the feeling would wear off in a few hours.

Shortly afterwards Richard and Augusta came in, and their greeting, though polite, was cold and formal, and confirmed Charley in his first opinion of Richard. Eva, too, was greatly disappointed in Augusta; she had expected an almost sisterly reception from her, and was not at all prepared for the cold formality that awaited her. But as Charley remarked afterwards, their lofty manners were quite in keeping with the house—with the grand old oak-panelled drawing-room, that looked sombre and gloomy in spite of the large fire burning in the grate, and the afternoon sunlight streaming through the windows. Yes, the house had struck a chill to the orphans' hearts, that all Mrs. Etheridge's kindness failed to dispel. It was so utterly unlike to all they had been accustomed

previously. The dark—almost black oak carving of the rooms and their polished floors, the long stone gallery that ran the whole length of the house, and into which most of the upper rooms opened, appeared to them cold and uncomfortable—almost miserable.

As soon as tea was over, Maud took Eva to her room, where Mary had already commenced unpacking some of her things, and her first act after the door closed upon her cousin, was to throw herself into Mary's arms and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Oh! Mary, I can't stay here," she sobbed, "everything is so strange."

"It is a grand place to be sure," said Mary, "but it's very beautiful; and Mrs. Etheridge is a dear kind lady, and your mamma's own sister, you know, Miss Eva."

"Yes, I know," sobbed the little girl, "but I do wish mamma had let us stay in France with you to take care of us, we should have been so much happier."

"Your mamma knew best what was good for you, I daresay," said Mary, "and by and bye you will love your aunt and cousins, and even this grand old house." At this moment a knock was heard at the door, and on Mary opening it Charley entered.

"Is this your room, Eva?" he asked, glancing round it.

"Yes, mine and Maud's," she answered, drying her tears.

"How do you like Maud?" asked Charley. "I think I shall like Arthur."

"Oh! I like Maud," answered Eva; "but everything is so strange that I'm afraid I shall never feel at home here."

"I'm sure I shan't," answered Charley gloomily. "I wonder whether mamma knew what sort of a place this was, and that we should feel so uncomfortable in it."

"I think she knew we should feel strange at first," said Eva, walking with Charley to the window; "but she said she knew it would be best for us in the end. I suppose coming here is one of the things that is to work for good," said the little girl, wearily leaning her head on her brother's shoulder.

"Eva, I'm afraid it won't be quite so easy for us to be disciples here as it was at home with mamma," said Charley after a few minutes' silence.

"Perhaps not," said Eva; "you know mamma told us that it might be so—that we might have our cross to take up; she meant that our cousins might not care much about religion, and would perhaps laugh at us. But, Charley, you will keep on trying, won't you?" she asked, anxiously noticing the troubled look that had come into his face.

"Yes, Eva, but I was thinking of what mamma had said about our being little lights for God in our uncle's family. I'm afraid I shan't shine much—that Richard is so awfully provoking, I know."

"Don't you like him?" asked Eva.

"Like him, no! you should have seen how con-

temptuous he looked while I was telling aunt about our garden and house in France; and then I saw him look at my hands, and it made me feel ten times more awkward and uncomfortable. I shan't trouble him or that grand drawing room with much of my company, I know," he added.

"I don't think uncle lives here always," said Eva; "Maud told me we were going away soon, and that she was very sorry."

"Yes, Arthur told me the same. Uncle has another house at Clifton—near the sea, I think he said it was, and when we get there, I am to go to school with him and Richard."

"Will you like that?" asked Eva, innocently.

"Like it? I shall hate it," said Charley; you know I was never very fond of books, but to go to them again after working as I have in the garden will be perfectly intolerable. I am not quite a dunce, thanks to Claude Dimont, and so I think I shall ask uncle not to send me to school, but to let me learn to be something at once."

"What would you like to be?" asked Eva.

"Oh! an architect and civil engineer," replied Charley quickly; "but I don't mean to be particular what it is, so long as I don't have to go to school."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RETURN TO CLIFTON.

IT was Sunday morning at Hazelwood Hall, and the family had assembled in the breakfast room. At Clifton the children took their meals in the school room with the governess, Miss Arden; but at Hazlewood, many things were differently arranged, and this was one of them—they always breakfasted with their papa and mamma. While they were at breakfast, Augusta asked her mamma if she was going to church.

"Not to-day, I think, dear," answered Mrs. Etheridge; "the wind is very high."

"Are you afraid of being blown away then?" asked her husband, smiling.

"No, but I don't care to go to church, and I don't suppose the children will be very sorry to stay at home."

"I should like to go, mamma, if Gussie is going," said Maud; "I do so like to hear that blind man play

the organ. It is so beautiful," she added, turning to Eva, "you quite forget where you are."

"Maud, how ridiculous you are!" said her sister; "I cannot see that there is anything in the man's playing; it's dreadfully melancholy, I think, and I'm sure I sha'n't take the trouble to go all through this wind to hear it."

Maud looked disappointed. "Are you going?" she asked, speaking to her brothers.

They both shook their heads.

"Altogether too slow for me," said Richard.

"Never mind, Maudie; I'll go with you another time," said Arthur.

"I'm going," said Charley, boldly, "and so is Eva; so you can go with us if you like, Maud."

Everybody looked surprised—Mr. Etheridge rather displeased: "I don't know that you can have the carriage this morning," he said, coldly.

"We can walk, uncle, if we may go," said Eva: "may we, aunt?" she said, anxiously appealing to Mrs. Etheridge.

"Charley said he was going," said Mr. Etheridge, somewhat sternly.

"I beg your pardon, uncle, for saying so before asking permission; I forgot I was not at home"—and poor Charley's eyes filled with tears, and the bread and butter he was swallowing threatened to choke him.

"My boy, did you always do as you pleased at home?" asked Mr. Etheridge.

"No, uncle, but we always went to church if we possibly could; and it was one of the things mamma desired we should continue to do."

"Very well, my boy, then you have my leave to go, now and always. I will never contradict anything your mother has said: she was peculiar in her views, I know, but she thought them right, and therefore you, her children, are quite at liberty to follow them."

"Thank you, uncle," said Charley.

"You may depend they are religious," whispered Arthur to Maud.

Maud shook her head and frowned, trying to screw her sunny face into a look of severity, as she noticed the crimson blush that suffused Eva's pale face.

"Then the carriage must be ordered for you three little people," said Mrs. Etheridge, pleasantly.

"Oh no, we can walk, aunt," said Charley, quickly.

"Oh yes, mamma, let us walk—it will be good fun."

"Good fun, Maud," said Mrs. Etheridge, seriously; "remember you are going to church."

"It will be very pleasant to walk, I think," said Charley. But Mrs. Etheridge insisted upon ordering the carriage, and again reminded the kitten-like Maud to remember she was going to church. Going to church was evidently looked upon by the young Etheridges as a very solemn, gloomy business, to be avoided as often as possible. When their parents went, they were obliged to accompany them, but it was never of their own free will, Maud excepted.

Anything pleasant connected with the service of God was evidently not believed in.

The drive through the long avenue of trees, and, after they had passed out of the lodge gates, between the budding hedgerows, was very pleasant, with the sunlight streaming over the newly-ploughed fields, and reminded the orphans of the time when they used to drive to the English church in Montpelier with their mamma. One or two tears gathered in Eva's eyes, and slowly fell upon the crape tucks on her dress, as she thought of this. Altogether, the drive to church was a silent one, Maud merely remarking, as they came in sight of the little old-fashioned edifice, that she was glad they had come.

There was a dinner party that day at the Hall, and afterwards the children went down to the drawing room. It was a gay scene—the ladies in their bright dresses and flashing jewels, the carved oak panels, and mirrors reflecting the light from the chandeliers, but not at all like Sunday, Eva thought. In fact, the day seemed to be quite forgotten by the gay visitors, who laughed and chatted, and sung and played opera pieces. Maud flitted about here and there and everywhere, and seemed to enjoy the scene heartily. Richard and Augusta, too, made themselves very agreeable; but Charley and Eva were dull and out of spirits. They were among strangers; not one familiar face was there among all that crowd. And then they could not but remember how differently the

Sabbath had been kept in their own home; and Charley, remembering his uncle's words of the morning, resolved to absent himself in future from a Sunday evening dinner party.

In a few weeks they were back at Clifton, and then Charley's trials began. He had spoken to his uncle, and begged to be allowed to begin the business of life at once, but Mr. Etheridge would not hear of it, and said he must continue at school a year or two longer yet; and so he had to submit, sorely against his will, and recommence the odious lessons. He was behind his cousins in almost everything but French, and Richard's lofty air of superiority fretted and galled his proud spirit to the last degree. Merry, good-tempered, careless, easy Arthur helped him all he could, taught him how to "crib" and shirk his lessons; but Richard! well, he almost hated him.

One day when the orphans were left alone together —it was not often they were now—Charley suddenly asked Eva if she was happy. She looked up in surprise at the question, and answered quietly, "Yes, I think I am now, Charley. Aunt and uncle are so very kind, and Maud is the dearest little thing I ever saw."

"And Augusta?" asked Charley.

Eva crimsoned. "Well, Augusta is not so amiable as Maud," she said; "everybody couldn't be."

"Ah, I know," said Charley; "I can guess how she treats you—just about the same as Richard serves

me. I know I've been used to work," went on the boy, with rising temper, "and I'd rather do it a great deal than be an idle gentleman, as he expects to be; and I'd rather do it now a great deal than go to school. I only wish uncle would let me begin; I hate these humdrum lessons from morning till night; and work as I may, I shall always be behind Dick, and he will be always sneering about it."

"Do you have to study very hard?" asked Eva.

Charley coloured. "Well, no, not very hard," he stammered; "Arthur has taught me how to get them done quickly."

But his eyes fell before the gaze of his sister's clear brown truthful eyes, as she asked, "Is it the right way, Charley?"

He did not answer, and for a minute or two did not speak again. After a somewhat lengthened pause, he said, "Eva, I think mamma made a mistake in sending us here."

"Why?" asked Eva.

"Because it is almost impossible to do right here. If we could have lived on in France by ourselves, it would have been easy to be disciples of the Lord Jesus; but I don't see how we can here."

"Not by ourselves," assented Eva; "but don't you see that God can help us? He has done so much for us already in sparing His Son from heaven, to live here on earth such a long time, and at last letting Him die such a cruel death, that we might be saved, that it

seems to me He will be sure to do all the rest for us; and all we've got to do is to love Him, and shew our love by trying to please Him."

"But that is what is just so hard," said Charley—"the trying to please God."

"You said yesterday it was a pleasure to do anything for aunt, she was so kind, and you loved her so much. Don't you see that we ought to feel the same in trying to serve God? We ought to give up our own will and our own way, not as though a master had told us we must, but because we loved Him, and knew that it would please Him."

"But, Eva, it is so hard," repeated Charley.

"Yes, mamma told us, you know, that we should not find it easy to say, 'Thy will be done,' even in little things; but that we should daily need grace to keep us from being cross, and ill-tempered, and impatient at the little every-day trials that would come to us. I think she knew that we should meet with trials here, and that we should not sometimes know whether things were right or wrong for us to do; but she said the safest way for us would be always to keep close to Jesus, as the three favourite disciples, Peter, James, and John did; or like a sheep that was very fond of its shepherd, and always ran after him; and then if we did this, she said we should never go far wrong."

"But, Eva, if we have gone wrong!"

"Then we must go and tell Jesus, and ask Him to put us right. I know it must be very hard for you to

go to school again, but I think you ought to go. Papa said, you know, that knowledge was power, and the more knowledge anyone had, the more useful they might be. God means to make you a very useful man perhaps, and so He has placed you where you may gain a great deal of knowledge, to prepare you for it; you may be sure it is so, for you know mamma's text must be true—"All things work together for good to them that love God."

They were walking along the beach, watching the setting sun casting his golden rays across the ocean that looked like molten gold, when this conversation took place. They had all been for a long ramble, but Charley had gradually drawn Eva on one side for a little quiet talk. Unconsciously he looked up to her for counsel and guidance in all his difficulties, although the fact was scarcely owned even to himself. Now he walked on thoughtfully, pondering over what she had said, for Maud had fetched her away to join Miss Arden and the others. He thought of his promise to his dying mother, and then of his life during the past month or two since he had been at Clifton, of his unwilling submission to his uncle's wishes, of his proud impatient spirit, and quick angry temper that was daily becoming worse and worse, and more and more unchecked.

"It's pretty clear I've not been trying to do God's will lately," he said, as his eyes went down to the ground, as if watching for some of the nimble little

crabs that darted across his path now and then. But in reality, he saw nothing there although he kept them fixed upon the ground, and two or three drops fell that were not rain drops. At length he raised them once more, and whispered half aloud, "Yes, I will try, I will go back as Eva said, and begin again. If I had kept close to Jesus, I should have known it was wrong from the first." At this moment, Arthur came racing back to look for him.

"Why, old fellow," he said, "we thought you were lost! How serious you look! have you had a fright? Upon my word, you look quite scared. Say, Charley, have you seen a mermaid, or sea-nymph, or the great sea-serpent?"

"No, Arthur, I've seen nothing."

"Then it's quite time you did, so come along. Walter, and Jacques, and one or two of the other fellows are going to join us in a race across the rocks. Miss Arden and the girls are gone home, so there's no fear of their being frightened to death. Come along."

"Our lessons, Arthur! you forget we have not touched them yet."

"Cribs," whispered Arthur, as though he were afraid of the rocks and waves hearing the word, and repeating it in their wild murmuring to other listening ears; "we shall get done in time. Come along," he added, impatiently.

"I can't," answered Charley, "I must go home and begin my lessons."

"Moonshine!" said Arthur. "Come, they're waiting for us; I can hear some of them calling."

"No, I can't indeed, Arthur, I've resolved not to use cribs again, and so I must go home and begin."

"Not use cribs! why?" asked Arthur, in some fear? "have any of the fellows been splitting, or has papa heard anything about it?"

"Not that I know of," answered Charley, "but I've been thinking over it to-night, and I begin to see that it is not right."

"Right! who cares about its being right or not? it's easy, and that's enough."

"Not for me," said Charley.

"Now then, no cram," said Arthur, beginning to get angry, "because I know you hate the whole crop of lesson books as much as I do."

"I know that," replied Charley, equably.

"And yet you mean to tell me you won't use cribs again? I don't believe it. But, Charley, now," he added, altering his tone, "drop this nonsense, and let us have a gallop over to the others. Coming!" he called, as a shout was brought by the breeze from his distant companions.

"I wish you would believe that I am in earnest in what I say about the cribbing," said Charley, "for I assure you I mean it. Things are right or wrong; they must be the one or the other, and I know and you know that cribs are wrong; in fact, they are nothing more than a mean cheat."

"Well, nobody pretends to say they are *right*, I suppose," admitted his cousin; "but then who thinks about that? As long as we get the lessons done, what does it matter how they are done?"

"But it does matter," said Charley, "as I said before, things are right and wrong, and it rests with us which we choose—lately, I know I have deliberately chosen the wrong, but——"

"You," interrupted his cousin, "why, you know you're almost the steadiest old fellow going, and if you do fly out now-and-then, why, who could help doing it with that provoking Dick!"

"But, Arthur, I know myself better than you know me, and I know that according to the Bible rule, my life is almost all wrong."

"Now, Charley, are you in your sober senses, or are you moon-struck? Whoever heard of such a thing as taking the Bible down to know whether anything is right or wrong? Of course, no one goes by what that says."

"My mother did," said Charley, quietly, "and she wished us to do the same, and I mean to do it as far as I can," he added, resolutely.

Arthur found it was of no use trying to persuade him further, and not liking the serious turn the conversation had taken, said he must go to the others, and ran off. But in a few minutes he came back again. "Jacques and Walter have gone," he said, "and I wasn't going to walk with that proud, disagreeable

Dick. He will be the squire one day, you know. Papa is the squire of Hazlewood now, and the estate is entailed, whatever that means; and although it is his very own as long as he lives, he could not leave it to me, even if he wished; it *must* go to the eldest son, and so of course Dick, being the eldest, will have it, and he don't forget it either, or let anybody else; he is always saying he is the heir of Hazlewood. I said one day I should like to drown the heir of Hazlewood —only in fun, you know—and papa, who happened to hear what I said, was so angry, and mamma turned so white, just as though she was going to faint, that I have been careful never to say anything to my lord since about his heirship."

"And you—what are you going to be, Arthur?"

"Oh, I don't know yet; I'm not in such a hurry to get away as you are. I shall be something, though, of course," he added, more seriously, "because papa is not a *very* rich man, although he does own Hazlewood. It doesn't bring him in much money, I fancy; I think Simpson, the agent, keeps a good deal of it for himself. I don't like Simpson a bit—nobody does—and he doesn't like me. I'll tell you how that is. Last summer, while we were staying at Hazlewood, Maud and I went out for a ramble together ever-so-far, and at last she got so thirsty that she said she must find somebody to give her something to drink. Well, after walking a long way, we came to a cottage, such a miserable tumble-down place, that I hardly liked to

knock at the door, only Maud was so thirsty, and there was no other place near. After I'd knocked I hoped nobody would come, but presently, a little girl opened it, and she was crying. I asked her if she'd give us some water, and she said she'd see if there was a jug left—and while she was gone, I pushed open the door and peeped in, and do you know there was nothing in the place, but an old bed in one corner, with a woman lying on it. I beckoned to Maud to come and peep, and when she saw the woman looking so ill in that miserable place, she began to cry; and when the girl came at last with an old broken jug, she asked if that was her mother. Then the girl told us all about their trouble, how her father had died, and the squire had told them they might live in the cottage rent-free, but that Simpson had said afterwards it was all a mistake, and had made them pay, and then at last had taken all their things from them when they couldn't. You may be sure we were not long going home to papa with this news; and he sent for Simpson and give it to him well, and had all the things sent back to the poor woman. But if I'd been papa I'd have started Simpson about his business there-and-then." Charley had never heard his cousin speak so seriously before, neither had he heard so much of Hazlewood, and it gave it a new interest in his eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY.

EVA was twelve when she first came to live at Hazlewood. Her birthday occurred in the spring, and she was there at Hazlewood again when the longed-for fourteenth came round—the day on which her mother's packet was to be opened. Two years she had had it in her possession, with the seal unbroken, and the string uncut, guarded as a sacred treasure—almost too sacred for idle curiosity to wish to open until the specified time had come.

Mrs. Etheridge had kept strictly to her first intention of treating Eva exactly as one of her own daughters. She had the same allowance of pocket-money, dressed the same, shared the same pleasures and indulgences, the same tasks, and the same obedience was expected from her in all things, save where it clashed with her mother's known wishes, and then she was free to follow the dictates of her own conscience. And never had Eva abused this highly-valued indulgence. Unless her

aunt's command was in direct opposition to what she knew to be right, she always yielded obedience to it, though it might be at the cost of some little pain to herself, and her aunt knew this, and never tried to exact it at the cost of principle. Yes, a kind, tender, loving parent was Mrs. Etheridge to the two young orphans, and they amply repaid her watchful care by their warm affection and filial obedience.

The birth-days of the family were always kept as gala days, Charley's and Eva's among them. A party of young friends had been invited to spend the evening at Hazlewood, when Eva was fourteen, and such a merry bustle was there in preparation for their coming, that as hour after hour slipped away, she began to fear she should not have time to open the precious parcel before they came. Her aunt, who knew all about it, and guessed what she was thinking of as she saw her gaze anxiously at the clock from time to time, at length called her away from the rest, and whispering, "Run away to the coppice for half-an-hour," took her place among the merry mad-caps who had arrived the day before, to help in the preparations, which was more than half the fun, they thought.

In a few minutes Eva had quietly stolen away from the house down to the quiet dell, where she was sure of an uninterrupted half-hour. It was a mild, balmy afternoon, that reminded Eva of the sunny spot where the letter she held in her hand had been written more than two years before. The sun, glinting through the

half-clothed trees, made long patches of glory on the ground, and here the brave-hearted little daisy pushed up its white-fringed head, and looked with its mild yellow eye right up into the face of the glory-giver, as if mutely thanking him for warming its half-frozen root into new life again, and the primroses and crocuses, and pure white snow-drops, were all budding forth their praises in this half wild half cultivated spot. It was the best place in the world, Eva thought, for reading her letter, and throwing down the shawl she had brought to sit upon, with eager trembling fingers, she cut the string, and broke the oft-gazed at, oft-kissed seal, and opened the packet.

The first thing that met her view was a beautifully-executed portrait of Captain Elton, and under that one in a similar style, of her mother. For a few moments she could only sit and gaze at them through her blinding tears. On opening the letter she found a paper wrapped round two others, and Charley's name written on the outside. "Oh! I am so glad," she exclaimed, half aloud, and then she proceeded to read the letter.

"My darling Eva,

It is the last time I shall ever write your dearly-loved name. When my little daughter's eyes read these words she will be an orphan and alone—and yet not alone, for her Father in heaven will be with her. Her mother will be dead—gone to meet her papa in heaven. Oh, my child, my child, meet me there! Eva, darling, I

shrunk from leaving you at first; it seemed impossible to give you up, but God has taken away the fear now, and I know He will watch over, and protect, and bless you—you and Charley, both, for this letter is as much for him as for you. My children, you will be in England, I trust, when you read this. I do not know what trials and difficulties may await you in your home there, but this I know, that God can help you through, and make you more than conquerors through Jesus, who died to redeem you. Keep close to Him. Sit at His feet as Mary did. You will find some things hard to bear, but the nearer you keep to Jesus the easier they will become. Do not follow Him "afar off," as Peter did, or you too will soon betray Him likewise. The safest and happiest place is close to Jesus.

"Eva will be fourteen when this is read, and it is of this I would speak. I should like my daughter to grow up a useful woman—"a burning and a shining light." I do not know, but I greatly fear she may be tempted to forget this in her uncle's home; but my child, remember, if you are a disciple of the Lord Jesus, you must follow the example of your divine Master. 'He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister—not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.' Now, my little daughter, if you are His disciple, your life must not be passed in selfish indulgence; you must not seek merely your own pleasure; God did not place you in the world for that; Jesus did not die to redeem you for that—but that you might make known to others the love bestowed upon you, and tell them the same love is waiting to embrace all who will receive it.

"Read often the account of the life of Him who went about doing good, and try if you cannot imitate Him in some little way. Look around you, and see if there are

not some you could help and comfort. Do not despise the *smallest* opportunity of doing a kindness to another; remember, not even a cup of cold water given for the love of Jesus is unnoticed; surely, then, my little daughter, you may do some work for God—some little thing to hasten His kingdom, and increase His rule in the hearts of men—something among your cousins, or the servants of the family, or the dependents of your uncle. Oh, ever 'let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' Yes, the glory must all be given to Him. Love to Him must be the mainspring of all your actions.

"And now, my dear little daughter, I must bid you farewell. Whatever trials and sorrows may meet you in your earthly pilgrimage, never lose your faith in this—'All things work together for good to them that love God.'

"And now, my beloved children, once more farewell. Charley—Eva, my hand lingers lovingly over your dear names. 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.' Yes, my beloved ones, I leave you in the hands of a faithful covenant-keeping God. He will preserve you blameless, and bring you at last to meet in His eternal kingdom.

"Your loving mother,
"MIRIAM ELTON."

Eva had finished reading the letter, but she still held it in her hand, and the tears were slowly coursing each other down her cheeks as she sat thinking of

what she had read, and wondering what she could do to fulfil her mother's wishes, when she heard footsteps near, and the next minute Charley was by her side.

"Is that mamma's letter?" he said.

Eva nodded, and placing it, with the portraits for him, in his hands, told him to read it.

"These for me!" said Charley, in unfeigned astonishment, taking the pictures; "I have thought that my parcel must have had something of this kind inside. Whatever can mine contain then? Eva, how beautiful mamma looks here!" he said, after gazing a few minutes at the portrait, and then he read the letter. Very quietly and calmly he read on to the end, and then, as he refolded it and returned it to Eva, he said, "We must do it—we must try to be useful here."

"But how?" asked Eva, looking up with some surprise at the quiet grave tone in which the words were spoken.

"God will show us the way I think, if we ask Him," answered Charley; and taking his sister's hand, he said, "Come, you must not sit here too long, you will catch cold; we'll take a little walk round the grove together, and then go indoors. It isn't often we get a chance of having a quiet talk to ourselves, so we'll have one now."

One of the amusements provided for that evening was fortune telling. Verses from various poets had been written out clearly and legibly by the boys, and

these pieces of paper being folded were placed in a wheel of fortune, under the charge of Maud, who was to be the fairy, or presiding genius of this part of the festivity. A recess of the drawing room, with curtains dividing it from the other part of the room, was fitted up as the fairy's tent, and Maud looked a veritable fairy in her pure white dress, with her long golden curls floating round her shoulders. One at a time the guests were admitted within the curtains, and, after due ceremony, the wheel was turned, and a piece of paper taken out by the fairy and handed to her visitor. Augusta was one of the first to press forward to visit the fairy, but her face flushed with anger as she read her paper—"Against Pride."

"Stranger, be warned; and know that pride,
Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,
Is littleness. That he who feels contempt
For any living thing, hath faculties
Which he has never used. The man whose eye
Is ever on himself, doth look on one,
The least of Nature's works—one who might move
The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
Unlawful ever. Oh, be wiser thou!"

She crushed it in her hand, and in no pleasant mood walked to another part of the room. Eva went next, and received

"Little things on little wings
Bear little souls to heaven."

"Short and silly," remarked one young lady; but Eva did not think so, and treasured her "fortune" paper.

Charley received one on "Perseverance."

"Oh, triumph in the strength
Of an exalted purpose. Eagle-like
Press sunward on. Thou shalt not be alone.
Have but an eye on God; as surely God
Will have an eye on thee. Press on! press on!"

Charley was pleased with his paper, and went back to ask Maud whether she knew what she had given him. But the merry little sprite declared she was too busy to look at the papers as she took them out; she put her hand in, and chose them at random. Just as he was leaving, Mrs. Etheridge entered.

"Have you come to have your fortune told, ma'am?" asked the fairy, demurely.

"No, darling; I came to see about this window that is open just above your head; the night air is cold, and I'm afraid there is a draught when these curtains are opened."

"Oh, mamma, I'm not at all cold; please let it be open. Indeed, I'm quite warm. But you'll let me tell your fortune, mamma," she added.

Mrs. Etheridge waited for her paper to be given to her, and again expressed a fear that the fairy would catch cold. But Maud protested that it was not in the nature of fairies to do that, and pleaded so hard

for the window to be left open, saying she should not be long before she came out to mix with mortals in the dancing, that Mrs. Etheridge at length consented to let it remain as it was, and went to another part of the room.

The following morning, when they were assembled at breakfast, Maud complained of not feeling well.

"I have such a pain at my chest, mamma," she said, "and I feel so tired and hot."

Mrs. Etheridge thought it was the late hour at which she went to bed the previous night, and advised her to lie down all the morning, instead of going out with the others.

Mr. and Mrs. Etheridge were going to spend a week with some friends at a distance. The visit had been put off on account of the birthday party, but now that was over there was nothing to prevent their going at once, and accordingly they set off that morning. Mrs. Etheridge went to look at Maud when she was ready to start, and she was then sleeping soundly.

"Poor little fairy, she looks quite tired out," she said, as she stooped to kiss the sweet smiling lips, and push aside the clustering curls. And she went downstairs, telling Mr. Etheridge, when they were seated in the carriage, that Maud was looking better already; she would be quite well, she had no doubt, by the time she awoke.

But Maud was not quite well. She must be "baby Maud," she said, for that day, and stay in bed when

nurse came to tell her dinner was waiting. And so she was undressed and put to bed. Eva came and sat with her all the afternoon, reading and chatting, that the time might not seem so long; and they had their tea sent up to them, for Eva thought she would feel so very lonely in that large dark panelled room. It always seemed that company was wanted more at Hazlewood than Clifton, Eva thought.

Maud lay very still and quiet, listening to the stories Eva read, her lips occasionally breaking into a smile, but it was altogether such a very quiet smile that Eva could not help wondering two or three times what had come over her playful cousin, and she feared she must be very ill. Later in the evening this fear grew into a positive certainty, and while Maud lay dozing, she went down-stairs and told Miss Arden. The governess came up immediately, and for a minute or two stood looking at Maud. When she opened her eyes, she said gently, "Do you feel very ill, my dear?"

"Oh no, thank you," answered Maud, cheerfully; "I'm only a little tired, and have a little pain here," laying her hand on her chest. "I shall be better to-morrow, I daresay."

Miss Arden thought she had over-tired herself at the party, and told Eva not to be alarmed, for there was nothing the matter with Maud beyond a little fatigue, that a night's rest would cure.

But the night's rest did not cure her. In answer to her governess' inquiry the next morning, she said she was better, but did not want to get up.

"Not want to get up!" repeated Miss Arden; "oh, my dear, you must try to get up to-day; it is not good for little girls to lie in bed so long."

"But I would rather not get up, please Miss Arden," said Maud; "I like lying here quiet by myself."

"But I would rather you did get up, Maud," said her governess; "and so I shall expect to see you in the school-room presently:" and the lady went down stairs to Augusta and Eva, without noticing the look of weariness that came into Maud's face as she prepared to obey the command.

Very little in the way of lessons was attempted that day, and yet it soon became evident that Maud was not equal to the little that was required of her. A cough, that had not been quite cured, now became very troublesome, and her breathing short and difficult. Towards evening, these symptoms increased so alarmingly, that Miss Arden dispatched a servant for the doctor, and wrote to Mrs. Etheridge, informing her of Maud's illness, when he had been and said that violent inflammation of the lungs had set in.

Upon receiving this intelligence, Mrs. Etheridge returned home immediately, greatly blaming herself for having left when Maud was not well, more especially as she had been told by a physician not long before that she was of a delicate constitution, and required every care and attention.

Maud was dangerously ill when she arrived, and

Mrs. Etheridge was greatly alarmed when she saw the change a day or two had made in her darling. Already she looked thin and wasted, while the hectic flush upon her cheek told plainly of the inward fever that was consuming her strength. Her breathing was laboured and difficult, and a racking cough shook her slight frame at frequent intervals. She lay with her eyes closed, but propped up in bed with pillows when her mamma entered the room, but the half-hysterical sob Mrs. Etheridge uttered roused her, and she threw herself forward, and was caught in her mamma's arms.

"I'm so glad you've come, dear mamma," she said, gasping between each word; "nurse and Miss Arden think I shall die, and I didn't want to die till I had seen you again."

"My darling, my darling," sobbed Mrs. Etheridge, "You shall not die; I cannot spare you!" Then turning to nurse, who stood at the foot of the bed, she said, angrily, "What could have possessed you to tell the child such a thing?"

"Nurse did not tell me, mamma," said Maud; "I heard her whisper to Miss Arden in the night, when they thought I was asleep. Shall I die, mamma?" asked the child, anxiously.

"No, my darling; papa shall send for a physician, that will soon make my little girl well. Nurse does not know anything about it." And, in simple reliance upon her mother's word, the little girl's fears were calmed.

A physician was sent for immediately, and, as there was no hope at present of a speedy removal from Hazlewood, the boys were sent back to Clifton, that their studies might not be longer interrupted, Mr. Etheridge making frequent journeys between his two homes.

CHAPTER X.

MINISTERING CHILDREN.

THE physician could not cure Maud; neither did she die, as it was at first feared she would; but very slowly and uncertainly did her strength return, and the doctors all agreed that if in a measure restored now she could not live many years, and therefore advised Mrs. Etheridge not to trouble her with lessons, but to let her have her own way as much as possible, saying it was the only thing likely to prolong her life.

Mr. Etheridge spoke of taking her to a warmer climate—France or Italy—but the physician shook his head and said they could not take her to a better place than she was at—Hazlewood was in a sheltered spot and enjoyed a fine climate—she would be best where she was.

And so it was arranged that their residence at Hazlewood should become permanent—that is, Mrs. Etheridge, with the governess, nurse, and little girls. The boys would still remain at Clifton. This was

their last year at school, and therefore they could not leave. Next year Charley was to be placed under a civil engineer, and Richard would prepare to enter college, so that it was important that they should not be interrupted in their studies just now; and so, with the exception of flying visits now and then, they remained at Clifton. Mr. Etheridge might be said to reside at both places. He stayed a few days at one, and then a few days at the other, never leaving either for more than a week at the time.

As the spring advanced, Maud got better; and one of the first things she asked when able to sit up was, that the blind organist of the church might come and play on the organ that stood at one end of the gallery.

"My dear, I should not like to ask him," said Mrs. Etheridge, in astonishment at the strangeness of her request.

"I should so like it, mamma, if you could," urged Maud. "Couldn't you send for him to tune the piano?" she added.

"My dear, he might spoil it," said Mrs. Etheridge: "I should scarcely like to trust him with a good instrument, although he professes to understand tuning I believe."

"Eva says he tuned Mrs. Lintop's, and she heard him play when she was at the vicarage the other day. Mr. Lintop is anxious to help him, but the people in the town seem afraid to trust him, either to teach or to tune instruments, and so the poor man is very poor.

I wish I was well enough to learn," she added, wearily, "he should teach me then."

Maud's secret was out now. She and Eva had had several discussions as to how *they* could help this poor blind man. Eva had paid several visits to the vicarage lately, and Mr. Lintop had said, if he could get employed by some influential family, others would be ready enough to employ him likewise. Now, as Maud argued, theirs was the most influential family in all the country side, and therefore they ought to do it; and she threw herself very heartily into Eva's plans for helping the blind organist. The sending for him to play for her was one of them.

Eva had begun to look out for opportunities of usefulness, as her mother had wished, and, like everyone who does the same, she had not been long in finding many, although this was the first beyond the home circle, for her time had necessarily been much taken up by Maud, who always liked to have her with her; and in talking to Maud the day before, she had told her how much she wished to help Mr. Lintop's *protégé*, the organist, and this led to the proposition of his coming to play for her as a beginning.

"Maud," said Mrs. Etheridge, after a few minutes' silence, during which she had been considering her daughter's request—considering how she could grant it without offending her husband's prejudices against employing any one from the neighbouring town or village—"Maud, my darling, I will send for this Mr.

West to tune the organ and play to you to-day, but I cannot promise to employ him further without consulting your papa."

Maud was well content with this concession, and resolved to attack her papa upon the subject the first time she saw him, well knowing that no request of hers, if pressed, would be refused.

James the footman was dispatched with a note to request the attendance of Mr. West at Hazlewood Hall. He arrived at the poor man's cottage like an angel of mercy, for he was well nigh driven to despair of ever obtaining more than Mr. Lintop's patronage. A ray of hope had darted through his mind when he heard that Eva was Mrs. Etheridge's niece, and had promised to interest herself on his behalf, but the hope as quickly died out, for if the middle-class gentry about the town would not employ him, how could he expect the family at the Hall to do so? He was just reasoning with himself in this strain when James arrived. Eva had told him that he would have to read the note to Mr. West, and so, after saying that his mistress desired him to come to the Hall, and holding out the note for a minute, he asked if he should read it to him.

"Oh, do if you please," and the poor man's face flushed with pleasure when he heard the contents.

"If you like you can walk back with me," said James, as he concluded; "the family will be going to luncheon, but I daresay my mistress will see you first."

This was a great accommodation to Mr. West, and he thankfully accepted James's kind offer.

When they reached the Hall, however, Mrs. Etheridge was engaged with some visitors, and so he was asked into the library to wait while the kind-hearted footman went in search of Eva to tell her the organist had arrived, "and I think," he added, "if you would order some dinner, miss, the poor man might be glad of it."

"Thank you," said Eva; "I will come down and see him:" and the next minute she was gliding into the room where the nervously gratified organist was sitting.

"Good morning," said Eva, pleasantly, taking his hand; "my aunt is engaged at present, and therefore I am afraid you will have to wait a little while. But," she added, "perhaps you have not dined—have you? and in that case the time will not seem so long, if you are engaged."

Mr. West begged she would not trouble anyone for him, said his dinner was not of the least consequence —(nor was it, for he seldom had one, although he would not have let Eva guess this); but, without noticing what he said, she instantly rung the bell, and on James appearing in answer to it, she desired that dinner might be served in the adjoining anteroom, she, with considerate kindness, fixing upon that room as being free from interruption. Then, desiring James, when he came to say it was ready, to

see that he had enough of everything, she ran up to tell Maud how glad the poor man seemed at this opportunity of playing for her amusement, and of his offer to come every day if she wished it.

"Then I shall," said Maud, decidedly; "and I shall ask papa about it when he comes back from Clifton."

Mrs. Etheridge was more than satisfied with his tuning and playing the organ that afternoon, and, but for her husband's interdict, would have employed him for the piano, and to teach Eva and Augusta music; but she feared his old prejudice would prove an insuperable barrier, that no argument of hers would be sufficient to remove, and therefore she said nothing of it to him, but, at Maud's earnest request, asked him to come again the following day to play for an hour.

Eva took care that James should go for him about dinner time, that he might have his dinner first. She had her aunt's sanction and approval for this; indeed, Mrs. Etheridge was rather glad to be able to repay him in some way, for he had steadily refused money for this service when she had offered it the day before, saying it was a pleasure to him to be able to please the young lady.

It happened as Maud wished—he was playing this afternoon when her papa came up to see her, and she looked so bright and animated, that Mr. Etheridge exclaimed, delightedly, "You are better, my darling!"

"Yes," answered Maud, kissing him, "Mr. West's

music always does me good; it makes me forget the pain in my side; and I'm sure I have got stronger these two afternoons."

"Is that Mr. West playing now?" asked Mr. Etheridge.

"Yes, papa; is it not beautiful?" said Maud.

"It is certainly very good," confessed the gentleman; "I scarcely thought there was so much music in that old organ," he added.

"Oh, he tuned it first, papa," said Maud: "and mamma said he took so much pains with it, she should like him to do the piano."

"He is Mr. Lintop's organist, is he not?" said Mr. Etheridge, frowning.

Maud noticed the look; "Yes, papa," she answered, "you know I always liked to go to church to hear him play; and now I can't go, you'll let him come here and play for me, will you not, papa?" she asked, pleadingly.

Mr. Etheridge could not resist the earnestness of her appeal, and promised he should come whenever and for whatever Maud wanted him. After this it was easy for Mrs. Etheridge to persuade her husband to engage him as music master for Augusta and Eva, to the infinite delight of Maud, who said she would share their lessons as soon as possible.

It soon became known in the little country town that the exclusive Mr. Etheridge had engaged Mr. West as music master to his daughter and niece, and

very soon he had no cause to complain of his want of patronage and pupils; but with all his increasing engagements, he suffered nothing to trench upon "Miss Maud's hour." She often came to speak to him now, enquiring kindly how many pupils he had, so that it was a real pleasure, when a fresh engagement was made, for him to go and tell Maud that another had been added to his list.

As summer came on, she was able to leave her room and go down-stairs, and now she and Eva frequently drove out in a low basket chaise, always known as the "children's chaise," sometimes accompanied by Mrs. Etheridge, sometimes by the old coachman, and sometimes by themselves.

One day, when they were by themselves, Maud begged Eva to drive to Oakwood Lane, "I want to see if my poor woman lives there now," she said; and she went on to explain how she and Arthur had found her in great distress some years before, the particulars of which have been already narrated. "And ever since that time I have always gone in the summer to see how they were getting on," said Maud, as she concluded her story, which had greatly interested Eva.

They soon reached Oakwood Lane, and the cottage where the widow lived. She saw the chaise coming, and was at the gate by the time they reached it. She was delighted to see Maud once more, for she had heard of her dangerous illness, and feared that she should never again see the sweet young face that was to her almost as that of an angel.

"You'll maybe step inside and rest awhile, ladies," she said, opening the gate.

To Eva's great surprise Maud said she would, and the widow with reverent care lifted her out of the chaise. A boy was engaged to hold the pony, and Eva followed her into the cottage.

"Ah, we've never got no reading since you came last summer," said the widow, glancing at the Bible that lay upon the table by the window. Maud coloured, and Eva looked astonished, but the woman went on—"Dolly minded the verse you told her then, and says it to me every Sunday; but I wish as somebody could come and read us a bit, like as you did that time; if it wasn't being too bold, I'd ask you to read us another chapter now that you're here."

"My cousin will, won't you, Eva?" said Maud, her pale face again flushing crimson, while Eva could scarcely answer for surprise; she could not understand it all. Maud—the playful, kitten-like Maud—read the Bible to this poor woman! It was perfectly inexplicable.

She took the Bible from the woman's hand, and read where she first opened it—the sixth chapter of St. Matthew.

"Now perhaps Miss Etheridge'll give us a verse before she goes," said the woman, passing the book to Maud when she had concluded.

"It shall be this then," said Maud; and slowly and reverently she repeated, "Seek ye first the kingdom of

God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The words were repeated two or three times by the woman and her little girl, Eva gazing at them in dumb astonishment. If Maud had been trying to teach them Sanscrit, she could not have been in more utter amazement.

"Has Miss Etheridge noted the fields?" asked the woman as they were leaving.

"I thought everything looked very beautiful—trees, and hedges, and fields, and everything," said Maud, with a beaming smile.

The woman shook her head sadly; "The fields don't look beautiful," she said; "the corn's all got the smut."

"The smut—what is that?" asked Maud.

"Why, instead of having good seeds in the husk, it's only got a little dry dust, so there'll be no corn scarce this year."

"Oh dear! what a bad thing that will be!" said Maud. "I will look at the fields as I go home, and see if I can see any difference;" and the next minute she was bowling down the smooth shady lane, but not looking at the "smutted" corn, or thinking of the distress and misery that it would bring to thousands. No, she was thinking that the time had now come for her to tell her cousin of something that had taken place in herself more than a year before, that she had shrunk from communicating to anyone at present.

"Eva," she said, after they had driven some little distance in silence, "do you remember me asking if you were religious when you first came, and how I hoped you were not, because I hated people to be religious, and cross, and disagreeable?"

"Yes, I remember," said Eva, giving the pony a little touch with the whip.

"And do you remember a long time after that, when we were staying at Hazlewood, you were naughty one day, and Miss Arden said you were to stay in your room all the evening?"

"Yes," replied Eva.

"Well, I came up-stairs very gently, that Miss Arden might not hear me, to stay with you. I found the door a little way open, and heard you speaking, and pushed it a little further to see who was in there. I could not see anyone, but you were kneeling down, and it seemed as though you were talking to somebody. I could hear what you said, and I heard my own name, and then I listened, and heard you ask God to bless me, and change my heart, and make me His child. I don't think I felt very pleased as I walked along the gallery, and thought of what you had been saying. I did not think my heart wanted changing, if yours did; and when I came up to bed I was very cross to you, but would not tell you what it was about. Eva, I never could forget that time, although I tried; and at last it made me quite unhappy, until one day I thought *I* would ask God to

make me happy again—to change my heart; for I began to see that I was not good as I had thought. That was last summer, just before we came to Hazlewood, but I have not liked to tell you before, although I often wished I had when I was so ill."

"And are you happy again now, Maud?"

"Oh yes, happier than ever I was," answered Maud; "how could I help being happy now I know Jesus loves me—loves me more even than mamma does?" said the little girl, with kindling cheeks.

Eva stooped and kissed the happy joyous face at her side, drawing her closely with her disengaged hand, and whispering, "We are sisters in Jesus now," while her own face beamed with this new-found happiness.

"Yes, for a little while," said Maud, half-dreamily.

"A little while!" repeated Eva, wonderingly.

"Yes, only a little while here at least," said Maud; and then after a pause she said, "I may as well tell you *all* my secrets now, Eva. The doctors may tell papa and mamma that I shall get better, but I know I shall not. Eva," she went on, speaking almost solemnly, "when the frost and snow cover the ground again I shall not be at Hazlewood; I shall be where there is no night, or snow, or frost. I shall be in one of the mansions Jesus is getting ready for me now. I did not like to think of having to die so young at first—I am only ten; but the night of your birthday, when everybody else had had their fortune paper, I took one for myself, and I've kept it ever since, and I like it

now very very much; here it is;" and Eva took the paper and read—

"It must be sweet in childhood
To give back the spirit to its Maker,
Ere the heart has grown familiar with the paths of sin,
And sown, to garner up, its bitter fruits."

"And so I like the thought of dying young now," said Maud, "because I shall never be afraid of walking in 'the paths of sin,' as I might if I lived to be old. And by and bye, you, and mamma, and everyone will come to me. You'll stay and let the others see—and tell them how you love Jesus. If it hadn't been for you I should never have known Him. And, Eva, I wish you'd go to Oakwood Lane sometimes, and read to that poor woman—will you?"

"Yes, darling, I will," said Eva, tenderly kissing her cousin, with her tear-stained face, "I will do all you wish me."

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

THE gloomy, panic-stricken farmers were clearing their fields of the "smutted" corn when the last sands of Maud's little life on earth ran out. This failure of the crops had been the subject of much conversation at Hazlewood, as well as at other places, and Maud had begun to understand what want and misery was likely to ensue through it. Moreover, she had overheard Simpson, in a conversation with her papa, say he hoped the squire would not let the present state of things be an excuse for the farmers getting into arrears with their rent; and this, with little scraps of information she heard, of one family and another fearing they would have to leave the old homesteads if the squire was hard, told her plainly, with what she already knew, that it was in her father's power to increase or lessen much of the anxiety and misery now prevailing. Maud wished she possessed this same power. She had *never* wished for it so much as now that she was about to leave it for ever. The

desire grew in its intensity. She wished—oh how much!—that she was the possessor of Hazlewood. If she could have it, with all its fields, and farms, and homesteads to be her own—her very own for just a little while, it would make her so happy.

So she thought and thought, until it made her restless and full of pain, for she could not tell any one of this vain craving, and yet it grew and grew until she could bear it no longer, and resolved to send for the others to divert her mind from dwelling on it.

"Nurse, I wish you would go and ask papa and mamma and all the others to come and sit with me," she said, one evening. Nurse went, and presently Mr. and Mrs. Etheridge, with Augusta, Eva, and the boys, who had just returned from Clifton, entered the room.

"You want us *all* to come and keep you company, my darling?" asked Mrs. Etheridge.

"Yes, mamma, I like to see you all here. I shall not be with you much longer, I think, and so I like to lie and look at you as long as I can."

A quiet tear stole into Mrs. Etheridge's eye, but she did not contradict this or tell her child she would not die now. No, they all knew that death was coming with rapid strides to take this fairest blossom from their sight for ever; and though Mrs. Etheridge grieved deeply in secret, she carefully concealed her feelings while with her little daughter, and no one would have guessed, to see her calmly talking or

reading to her departing child, the bitter anguish that was wringing her heart.

Maud lay quiet for a few moments, contentedly looking at each; but then the restlessness she had been for days struggling with returned upon her again. Nurse raised her head, and moved the pillows, and Maud lay back again, murmuring wearily, "Oh dear!"

"My darling, do you wish for anything?" said her papa, tenderly kissing her burning lips.

"Yes, papa, I wish for something very much," said Maud, with startling earnestness.

"Then why did you not tell us before, my darling? You know there is nothing would be denied you."

"I can't have what I wish for," said Maud, growing timid again.

"What is it, my sweet one?" said her papa.

"I want Hazlewood to be all my own," said Maud, seriously.

"Want Hazlewood!" exclaimed several voices at once, Arthur beginning to laugh in spite of his mamma's warning looks.

"Yes, I daresay you think me very greedy," said Maud, "but I should like it to be every bit my own, although I know I shall not want to live here much longer."

"Well, Hazlewood is mine, every bit of it," said her papa, "and I will give it to you," thinking this wish was a mere childish whim, which a few words would pacify.

"Do you really mean it?" said Maud, joyfully.

"Certainly I do, my dearest."

"You give me Hazlewood to-night to keep till I die?" asked Maud.

"Yes," answered her papa.

"To do as I like with?"

"Yes, to do exactly as you please with," he said, not yet understanding what she could mean.

"You all hear," said Maud, looking at the others, her face flushed with joyful excitement, "Hazlewood is mine—my very own. "I sha'n't want it long, papa," said she, turning to him, "and then it will be yours again; but while it is mine, I want to tell you some things about it. Papa, the corn has all had the smut this year, you know, and so the people won't be able to sell it, and that will make them very poor. Now, I shouldn't like any of them to go away from here because they can't pay their rent, and so you won't let Simpson serve anybody as he did that poor woman Arthur and I found out, will you? Papa, you could do without the people's money for once, couldn't you?"

Mr. Etheridge smiled; "I think I shall be obliged to do so if you forgive all the tenants their rent while you hold it," he said.

"Will you do that, papa, for me?" asked Maud.

"What?"

"Forgive the tenants their rent if they can't pay it."

The question was asked so anxiously—so pleadingly by the feeble voice and gasping breath of the

dying child, and she looked up to her father's face, waiting for the answer.

"My dear, I cannot refuse you even this. It shall be as you wish—I promise it."

"Thank you, thank you, darling papa! I shall soon be in heaven now. And papa—mamma, you'll learn to love Jesus, and come there to little Maud, won't you?"

"Yes, dearest, we will," said Mrs. Etheridge. "But I do not think you must talk any more now; you are tired. Bid all the rest good-night, and let them go down-stairs, and I will sit by you."

They crowded round the little white bed, and kissed the sweet pallid face, and one after the other passed silently out of the room. When they were all gone, Mrs. Etheridge, with nurse's help, moved Maud's pillows again, and placed her more comfortably; and then dismissing nurse for half-an-hour, sat down to watch the fitful breathing—the quick-coming gasps of the patient little sufferer. With what eager hungry looks did she gaze on the sweet pale face, as though she would treasure through all time each shadow and change that passed over it; and when the blue-veined eyelids slowly unclosed from time to time, what a smile of passionate yearning love beamed forth in answer to the loving glances of the dying child.

When Maud had rested a little while, she suddenly roused again instead of going to sleep. "Mamma, you'll tell papa not to forget about the poor people," she said, speaking quickly.

"My dearest, you know your papa never breaks a promise."

"And, mamma, you won't forget yours about loving Jesus. I shall look for you very often in heaven."

"My darling, you are getting restless again. Do try to sleep a little. I will shade the lamp from your eyes, and then perhaps they will close." And the mother placed a screen before it, although it almost hid from her view the sweet face she would fain have gazed at each moment it was spared to her.

Maud closed her eyes for a minute or two, and then very slowly the fringed lids unclosed again, and she whispered, "Mamma, I am getting sleepy now, come and give me my good-night kiss—a long one, mamma, she added."

Mrs. Etheridge gave her a "long one"—so long and passionate in its earnestness, that it required all the force of Mrs. Etheridge's determination to keep her from yielding to her impulse to snatch her from the bed, and fold her once more in her arms. But she knew that any excitement might prove instantly fatal, and already there had been too much: and so, tearing herself from her, she sat down again to watch the now shadowed face. A sweet smile rested upon it, and the golden hair, thrown back upon the pillow, formed a halo about the head. More and more regular grew the breathing, and Mrs. Etheridge, as she watched, began to hope that after all the doctors might be deceived, and she might get better,

and be spared for at least a few weeks longer. It was so hard to believe that a white marble slab would soon cover her heart's idol, her sweetest child, her dearest Maud.

Thus Mrs. Etheridge thought as she sat and watched the sleeping child—sleeping so peacefully, so quietly, with such a look of happiness in her face. An hour—two hours passed, and still she slept. Nurse had come in two or three times, made up the fire, and gone again. Augusta, Eva, and the boys had been in for their good-night kiss, had gazed a moment at the lovely little sleeper, and gone to bed. Mrs. Etheridge would not allow them to kiss her, for fear of arousing her. At length Mr. Etheridge came up, and after looking a minute or two at Maud, sat down by his wife.

"She sleeps soundly," he said.

"Yes, very," whispered the lady.

"Has she spoken at all since we left?"

"Yes, she asked me not to let you forget your promise about the tenants."

"I will not," he said, and neither spoke again for some time. They had sat thus for nearly an hour, and neither sound or movement had been made by Maud, when Mr. Etheridge slowly rose and bent over her. The next minute he started. Mrs. Etheridge noticed it.

"What is it, Richard?" she said, with a suppressed scream, tottering towards the bed.

"My darling, it is only what we might have expected," he said, and he bore her fainting from the room.

Yes, the little life was over. Her last work on earth had been done that very night, and then she had gently sunk to rest, "For so he giveth his beloved sleep."

There was real mourning in many an honest heart and cottage home the next morning, when the news went forth that Maud was dead. Almost unconsciously, even to themselves, the hopes of many had begun to fix themselves upon the little golden-haired beauty. The story of poor West being employed at the Hall, owing to her influence—a thing almost unheard of, for anyone belonging to the place to get employment there—had not lost anything by its frequent recital; and then Simpson, in his wrath against her and Arthur, had let it be known who had interfered between him and the Oakwood Lane widow, so that many a one began to hope that their landlord would in time take some interest in the estate, and redress some of the wrongs they now suffered at the hands of the unprincipled agent, now that his little daughter had evinced some such interest, for she was the first that had done so for several generations.

But when the news went forth that she was dead, and the family would remove immediately after the funeral to Clifton again, many a heart sunk almost

into the apathy of despair, for if ever they needed the help of an intercessor with their landlord, to shield them from the tyranny of his agent, it was now. Their crops had failed, and ruin stared them in the face through it. They hated the agent, and he knew it, and never let an opportunity slip of requiting it; and now they were in his power, what might he not do! Thus they thought and talked with bated breath all that day. Worn and weary women often put their apron to their eyes when the troop of little ones came in shouting for bread, for they thought of the time that *must* come to some of them, when they must either leave the old familiar home of their forefathers, or starve. If they remained, the little hoard of money must go for the rent, and then what would be left to buy food for the winter? They had until now clung to the hope that the sweet young thing they had loved to look at in church would somehow step in and save them from utter ruin, as she had for one of their number once before, and they knew not how much energy this hope had given them until it was taken away.

Hazlewood was to be startled out of its dull monotonous life that week. The day after the news of Maud's death came a summons for all the tenants to appear at the Hall the following morning. If they had been told they were all to appear at the next drawing room at Buckingham Palace, they could not have been more surprised. Such a thing was unheard

of in Hazlewood annals, and endless was the gossip incident upon it. The being able to speak to their landlord about their affairs had been an impossibility hitherto. One or two of them had tried it, but were always politely referred to the agent, Mr. Etheridge saying he never interfered with such matters.

Had a stranger by chance been passing the road leading to the Hall the next morning, he would have thought holiday rejoicings were afoot, for so many men, all in their best clothes, were wending their way toward that place. They came in little knots of twos and threes, eager curiosity for the time taking the place of the gloomy, despairing look their faces had worn of late. The large entrance hall of the mansion was nearly full when they had all arrived, but there was a hush pervading their meeting, for not one of those stalwart men forgot that death had hallowed that household—that their golden-crowned hope lay shrouded in her white coffin upstairs.

When they were all assembled, Mr. Etheridge stepped out of the drawing room into their midst. The men all rose and touched their heads. Mr. Etheridge bade them sit down again, and there was a minute of silence, the men wondering more than ever what the squire could have to say to them, for it was noticed that the agent was not there.

"My friends," said Mr. Etheridge at length, speaking slowly, "I have sent for you at this time to inform you of a fact that intimately concerns you all. Three

days ago, Hazlewood was given by me to my dear little daughter, now lying in her coffin." Here the squire's voice became husky, and more than one rough hand was seen to brush a tear away; but after a moment's pause he went on: "It was no idle whim that made her wish to become the possessor of Hazlewood for the few hours she then had to live. I believe now that the thought of you and your ruined crops occupied her mind, and greatly troubled her during the last few days of her life, until, in the evening of her death, I gave her the estate to do with as she pleased. What that was these papers I hold in my hand will tell you—they are your receipts for the rent that will soon fall due. I will deliver them into your hands at once, as I must leave Hazlewood shortly. They are all legally drawn up and stamped, and I have affixed my daughter's as well as my own name to them; and if any of you are able by-and-bye to pay what I give this receipt for without receiving payment, I leave it to your honour to do so."

Mr. Etheridge paused, but no one spoke or moved. At length one farmer rose, and after coughing and clearing his throat several times, thanked Mr. Etheridge for what he had said, and there he stopped.

"Have I not made my meaning clear?" said the squire; "do you not understand what it was my daughter wished?"

Several shook their heads, whereupon Mr. Etheridge told them more plainly that he never meant to trouble

them for the rent about to become due, but would give them a receipt for it, to save them from all annoyance, leaving to them to pay when and how they could. They did understand that, and many a heart gave a great bound of thankful joy at the words, and it would have been a relief to their feelings if they could there and then have sent up a shout, but they did not so far forget themselves even at this time, when all their trouble and anxiety was in a moment rolled away.

The tear glistening in the corner of Mr. Etheridge's eye, as he saw the change in the faces of his auditors, touched the heart of every man there, for all had little ones of their own, and they had heard how dear this little fair-haired girl, who had thought of them in their trouble, was to her parents, and felt for them in their sorrow, and not an eye was dry as the squire handed to one and another the receipt, signed with the name of "Maud Etheridge," the first time a female name had ever appeared on Hazlewood papers.

Later in the day a deputation of the largest farmers waited on Mr. Etheridge, requesting to be allowed to form a procession and follow the remains of the "dear young lady who had been so thoughtful-like for them." It was the only thing they could do, they said, to shew their respect, and they should feel grateful to be allowed to do this. Mr. Etheridge mused a little while at the innovation such a thing would be, but at length assented, saying, "Well, as she was the possessor of

Hazlewood when she died, it is but right that her tenantry should follow her to the grave;" and he told them what time the funeral would take place the following Tuesday.

All Hazlewood might be said to follow Maud to the grave, for, after the long procession of men came the not less orderly, if more demonstrative, female portion of the village and country side. All who could leave home were there, each with some little badge of mourning in their dress and real sorrow in their hearts—"for what good she might have done if she had been spared," said an old woman; "but the best are always taken first."

"They do say Miss Maud was never so thoughtful-like for others till her cousin come," said another. "They say Miss Eva, as goes so often to read to widow Wilson, has done her a power of good."

"I don't believe it," said the old woman.

"Miss Maud said it herself; for I know somebody who knows the nurse, and she told her that it was all along of what Miss Eva had said as made her different from her sister Miss Augusta. Miss Maud said it was religion had made her different."

This was the village tale.

CHAPTER XII.

DYING WORDS REMEMBERED.

MAUD had been dead about eight months—dead, but not forgotten. No, she lived in the hearts of many, both rich and poor, and the remembrance of the fairy-like form and winning grace of the little golden-haired girl would live for many years both at Hazlewood and Clifton. Eva could scarcely believe when Maud told her that her silent influence—hers and Charley's—could have effected so great a change as Maud assured her it had, for her cousin always appeared gentle and amiable.

"But I had never thought about other people," said Maud; "and now I am just beginning to think and care for them, I must go away. But you'll be left, Eva, and you'll come to Hazlewood sometimes, and whenever you come, don't forget to go and read to widow Wilson, in Oakwood Lane."

And so, when they returned to Hazlewood for the customary spring visit, Eva's first care was to go to Maud's poor widow, in Oakwood Lane. A lodger had

come to live with the widow since she was there before—a young woman, who was ill, and needed change of air. But the change did her no good, judging from her looks, and the doctor said she could not live long.

Widow Wilson was glad to see Eva, and enquired after the family, the invalid listening eagerly all the time. This over, Eva took the Bible, and commenced reading the nineteenth chapter of St. Luke. At the close of the eighth verse she was interrupted by the invalid murmuring, "Ah, that's it, but I can't restore." Eva looked up, but seeing the poor woman colour at being noticed, she continued her reading without making any comment.

When she was leaving, the widow went with her to open the garden gate. "I wish you could come a little oftener, miss," she said; "that poor young woman can't last long, the doctor says, and yet she won't let me send for the parson. He'd do her no good, she says; and so she sits and moans, and rocks herself all day long."

"Well, I'll come as often as I can," said Eva; "but when I see Mr. Lintop this afternoon, *I* shall tell him to call, for I think she ought to see him—she seems so very unhappy."

A week passed away, and Eva and the clergyman had both been several times to the cottage—had read and prayed with the unhappy invalid, whose wretchedness seemed to increase daily. Mr. Lintop was

puzzled, and inclined to adopt the widow's opinion—that she had something on her mind; and after thinking the matter over for some time, he decided to put the question plainly to her.

The deadly pallor that overspread her face as he did this answered him before the feeble hesitating "yes" came out. Mr. Lintop urged a full confession, and, if possible, restitution, to the injured parties.

"That can never be, sir," she said, sadly; "it's too long ago; but I'd like to tell you all about it."

The clergyman was astonished beyond expression when he heard that the persons it most intimately concerned were Mr. and Mrs. Etheridge, of Hazlewood; and when she had concluded, he said she must repeat it again in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Etheridge. He had some difficulty in persuading her to do this, but she consented at length; and he, fearing lest anything should occur if there was any delay, rode off at once to acquaint them of the strange mystery that had come to his knowledge.

Mr. Etheridge, who was standing at the library window as the minister passed, was not a little surprised at his hasty and perturbed manner, and this unusual visit, for it was very seldom Mr. Lintop visited Hazlewood Hall.

When made acquainted with the nature of his errand, he ceased to notice the clergyman's manner, for it was a revelation so frightfully startling, that he paced the room in the greatest agitation.

"Mrs. Etheridge must not hear this yet," he said, stopping in his walk; "I must break it to her gently by-and-bye. And this girl—where is she?"

"In Oakwood Lane."

"We'd better ride round for a magistrate to hear her statement. Will you take it in writing for me? I shall be greatly obliged if you will."

"Certainly. We had better take all that is requisite with us; people who cannot read will not be likely to have writing materials."

"No, we must take all with us," said Mr. Etheridge. "And now, while my horse is being saddled, you must take some luncheon, while I go and acquaint Mrs. Etheridge of our journey, for she will be alarmed if she hears I have suddenly gone out with you. The object of our journey I shall not tell her at present."

In half-an-hour they were on their way to Oakwood Lane, James having galloped off first to the nearest magistrate, desiring him to meet the clergyman and squire at the widow's cottage. In another hour they were on their way back to Hazlewood to dinner, the important document containing the girl's statement, legally signed and attested, safe in Mr. Etheridge's pocket.

That night Mrs. Etheridge was informed of what had taken place, and a life-long secret sorrow was again disinterred, and dragged into the light of open day. As soon as she was able—had sufficiently recovered from the shock, she went to see the author of

all this misery; for she had begged so hard for Mrs. Etheridge's forgiveness, that she could not withhold it. And so, a day or two afterwards, she went to see the penitent invalid, and heard again from her own lips the fearful story, with much that the gentlemen had not heard, although sufficient had been told them to establish the fact, and Mr. Etheridge had even then gone to London to see the lawyers about the matter, that nothing might be wanting should the time ever come that the information might be useful.

And Charley—what of him all this time? my readers will say. Well, Charley has fulfilled the wish expressed by his dying mother, and is a steady, consistent follower of the Saviour. Not that he has found this easy to do at all times. No, he has found, and still finds, that it is only after a hard struggle with himself that he can do what is right. The old self-will is so ready to rise, the proud, haughty spirit so hard to bend, and he can ill brook the covert sneer, or the patronising condescension with which his cousin Richard so often treats him. The heir of Hazlewood was very fond of doing this—particularly fond of treating Charley with this lofty patronage, which never failed to raise a bitter feeling of anger in his heart, which sometimes found vent in no measured language, so that there was little love between these two.

But latterly Charley had schooled himself to bear this treatment of Richard's, silently comforting himself with the thought it would not be for long—he should

soon be away in London, learning more and more of his favourite study, drawing, when an event occurred that postponed for an indefinite time the putting this favourite project into practice.

Arthur and he had been for a long ramble one day, when a heavy rain came on while they were still some distance from home. There was no shelter near, and they were soon wet through; and in their wet clothes, with the rain still pouring down upon them, they had to walk nearly two miles before they reached home. They both caught a severe cold, which ended in Charley being seriously ill, which so reduced his strength, and left him so weak, that a physician was consulted, who ordered immediate change of air, and, as soon as he was strong enough, plenty of out-door exercise for some months. It would be some time, he said, before his health was re-established, and if great care was not taken now, he would probably sink in decline.

This had occurred just before the time fixed for his departure for London, which thus had to be post-poned, and a journey to Hazlewood taken instead, and here it was decided they should stay the whole summer.

In consequence of the doctor's ordering out-of-door exercise for Charley, it was decided that Arthur should stay and bear him company, he being more likely than anyone else to wean him from his favourite planning and designing.

Charley was much better, and able to go out, when the Oakwood Lane incident occurred, of which he knew nothing, but supposed his uncle's sudden journey to London was connected with him, as he knew the articles were not yet settled; and this being his supposition, he spoke of it freely to others, which was a great comfort to his aunt, who dreaded being asked by her children the purpose of her husband's sudden journey.

Upon his return, she asked if the business relative to Charley's articles had been concluded.

"No, my dear," answered her husband. "What makes you ask that question so anxiously?"

Mrs. Etheridge told him of Charley's supposition, and the relief it had been to her: "So, my dear, you must tell him that it is concluded," she said, as she finished.

Mr. Etheridge hesitated: "I cannot do that, Eva," he said at length; "I cannot tell how it is, but I have been thinking of our dear little Maud lately, and the charge she left us."

"Did you not fulfil it?" asked Mrs. Etheridge.

"Yes, the one most easy of fulfilment; but you know"—and he spoke in a low, tremulous voice—"she asked us to meet her where she has gone. I have thought much of that lately, Eva, and I see I am not fit, should I be called, to lie beside her."

It evidently cost Mr. Etheridge a struggle to say even this much to his astonished wife of the thoughts

that had occupied his mind lately, and when he had said these few words he hurried from the room.

The next morning his horse was ordered early, as he intended riding some distance before luncheon. It stood at the door, all ready saddled, old John holding its head when Mr. Etheridge came out of the drawing-room, hat and riding whip in hand, ready to depart, when, suddenly halting in the middle of the hall, he stood for a minute quite still, as if debating something in his mind, when, suddenly turning round, he laid his hat and riding whip down upon a sideboard near, and walked quickly up-stairs.

A quarter of an hour afterwards Mrs. Etheridge came out of the same room, and seeing the hat and whip, asked if Mr. Etheridge had gone into the library.

"No, ma'am; I saw master go upstairs," answered the housemaid. Mrs. Etheridge was on her way to Eva's room—it had been Maud's as well as Eva's, our readers may remember, and Maud's little bed still stood there. When she reached the door she found it locked. This somewhat surprised her, for she had left Eva with Miss Arden and Augusta only a few minutes before; and she was just about to knock for admittance when a heavy sob startled her and made her remove her hand from the handle.

"It must be Charley," she said, passing on to her own room; "poor fellow, I suppose he and Richard have been having some words and now he is blaming himself for what I strongly suspect is Richard's fault.

I wish the lads could get on better together," sighed the lady, as she sat down by the window and gazed at the long stretch of lawn and grove, and further off to the waving corn fields. The sight of these recalled the "smutted" corn of the previous autumn, and this led to a subject never far away from the mother's thoughts—her darling Maud and the charge she had left when dying concerning the farmers. And then there was that other charge that had not been forgotten—no it could not be forgotten, but it had been put quite away out of sight, Mrs. Etheridge thinking it would be time enough to think of that when she was laid upon a bed of sickness and death, and needed to be reminded of the bright home where her little daughter had gone.

She was almost lost in her reverie, and wondering what could have made her husband speak so seriously of it the day before, when she suddenly heard the clatter of horses' hoofs on the gravelled walk below, and the next minute she saw Mr. Etheridge galloping down the avenue of trees leading to the lodge.

When she went along the gallery on her way downstairs, a short time afterwards, the door of Eva's room stood open; and when she crossed over to the window she saw Charley and Arthur slowly walking towards the house.

"It could not have been Charley in here then," she said, nodding in answer to the boys' recognition of her, and she thought no more of the circumstance.

The luncheon hour had passed before Mr. Etheridge reached the lodge gates on his return. The day was warm, and in spite of the lateness of the hour he had leisurely walked his horse for the last mile almost lost in thought. Thoughts that had never troubled him before had been much upon his mind of late, and he had been very unhappy. He had begun to see that he had been mistaken in thinking a merely moral and respectable life was all that was needed to take him to heaven, and he was now seeking earnestly the way of salvation. He had procured in London a small pocket Bible, and this was referred to again and again during his leisurely ride home, and the perusal of it seemed to give him more and more satisfaction; but as he neared the lodge gates the book was replaced in his pocket—truth to tell, Mr. Etheridge did not care to be seen reading that long-neglected book by any of his own family, and some of them might by chance be near. As soon as the gates were passed he urged his horse into a smart canter, which soon increased to a gallop. They were going on at this pace and had nearly reached the middle of the grove of trees, when a dog jumped out and startled the horse. He reared, plunged violently two or three times, and finally threw his rider with tremendous force against one of the trees and then started off with dilated nostril and flying mane, foaming and tearing up the ground in his mad progress.

Charley, who happened to be walking with Eva

only a little distance from the house, saw the horse approaching, and as soon as he caught sight of the empty saddle he exclaimed, "Eva, something has happened! Look at Nero, he is tearing the ground like mad. I'll run in for James; you go to aunt;" and he ran off to the stables, where he knew he should find James. But before Eva reached her aunt she had taken the alarm, for she had seen the horse pass the window, and had rung for some of the servants to go immediately in search of their master.

"Eva, do you know what has happened?" asked Mrs. Etheridge, who met her in the hall, and noticed her pale scared face.

"No, aunt. Charley told me to come and tell you that Nero has come tearing—"

"I know, I know, my child," interrupted Mrs. Etheridge, in agitation, "and I do hope that it will prove we are frightening ourselves for nothing; but I am afraid, from Nero's appearance, he has thrown his rider somewhere."

The fear was confirmed in a few minutes, for Charley came in, looking very pale, but struggling to appear calm. He took his aunt's hand in his, and drew her into the little anteroom near which she was standing, Eva following.

"What is it, Charley?" gasped Mrs. Etheridge, for she could see that his calmness was only assumed.

"We have found uncle," answered Charley, "but he is hurt, I am afraid."

"Hurt? oh, say he is not killed!" shrieked Mrs. Etheridge, starting towards the door, against which Charley had placed himself.

"No, aunt, he is not killed; he lives, I know," said Charley, still maintaining his position.

"You don't know, you can't know! let me go and see my husband," said Mrs. Etheridge, standing before Charley.

This youth of seventeen seemed suddenly to have stepped into a premature manhood, as he took his aunt's hands in his, and led her to a seat. "I have never once told you a falsehood, have I, aunt?" he asked, as he placed her in the chair, and then stood facing her.

"No, Charley, you have not. But never mind that now; I want to go to your uncle."

"Then will you not believe me when I tell you uncle is not killed?" he said, without heeding the latter part of her sentence. He wanted to gain time—to prolong the interview for at least a few minutes, that she might not be shocked at seeing her husband carried insensible—apparently dead—into the house he had left a few hours before so full of life, and strength, and energy.

"Charley, do not keep me talking here now. If your uncle is hurt, I must go and send some one for a doctor."

"I have sent, aunt," answered Charley, without moving from his position.

At this moment, the regular heavy tramp of the men bearing Mr. Etheridge was heard entering the hall. As the sound reached Mrs. Etheridge, she started up; Charley flew to the door, and placed himself against it.

"How dare you do this?" said Mrs. Etheridge, angrily; "do you think I am a child? Move away from the door and let me pass."

"I will, aunt, in a few minutes, but I cannot let you pass now. Presently you will want all your strength to attend to uncle. If I were to let you go now, you could do no good, and would only unfit yourself for what you may have to do afterwards. James came on, and ordered all that was necessary, and one of the men caught Nero, and galloped off for Dr. Reid."

Mr. Etheridge was carried into the library, and laid upon the couch. When the medical man arrived, he ordered a bed to be made up there, as the injuries the gentleman had sustained were very serious, and rendered all movement dangerous.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE YOUNG HEIR.

AS Charley had said, Mrs. Etheridge needed all her strength and fortitude for the task which awaited her during the next few days. At first, some slight hope was entertained of Mr. Etheridge's recovery, but upon the arrival of the physicians, who had been summoned from London, this hope was taken away. Mrs. Etheridge begged to be told the worst, and these gentlemen knowing that a few days, or a week at the most, would bring death to Mr. Etheridge, told her as gently as they could that the internal injuries were so severe that there was no hope of his recovery. Mr. Etheridge had regained some consciousness after a few hours, and though never sensible for more than an hour or two at the time, he was able to speak of what was passing in his mind during these lucid intervals.

The second day after the accident he asked for Mr. Lintop. The clergyman was sent for, and came,

feeling, that he was desired now in the last hours of this rich man's life, as he was so often by his poorer neighbours, who said, they had no time to do it for themselves—to make peace for the departing soul with the offended and neglected God, whom they had put far from their thoughts while any hope of life lasted. Very sad were the good man's thoughts as he slowly wended his way to the hall, for until this visit, Mr. Etheridge had rarely been seen with the humble worshippers at Hazlewood church, although rumours of the gay dinner parties held on Sunday had often reached his ears and pained his heart. "And now," thought the minister, "I am sent for to give a pass as it were for this poor gentleman to enter the kingdom promised to those who love One, whom he has, in all his days of health, despised. And then I am expected to speak words of comfort to the survivors, and tell them the departed has gone to a world of bliss, far from these scenes of pain and sorrow and care, and thus confirm them in their life of heedless thoughtlessness, in which they indulge, counting upon a time for repentance being given them when death draws near." He was musing thus and asking for grace to be faithful, and declaring the whole counsel of God now at this solemn time, when he was ushered into the darkened library.

Mr. Etheridge was fully conscious then, and eagerly listening for the minister's coming as he held his wife's hand in his own feeble, almost nerveless, grasp.

"Ah, Lintop, my friend," he said, a faint smile flitting over his deathly pallid face, "I have been anxious to see you. Eva, my darling, don't leave me, I have nothing to say to Mr. Lintop I should not wish you to hear." Mrs. Etheridge had attempted to rise as the minister took a seat by the bedside. "I have just been telling my wife," he said, addressing the minister, "of what has occupied my mind a great deal lately, and particularly a circumstance that occurred the morning I was thrown from my horse.

"Do you know, Lintop, I am almost ashamed to confess it, but the first time I ever prayed in my life, was that morning. I cannot tell what possessed me, but I felt that morning that I *could* not go out until I had been to little Maud's room and kneeled down. You know my orphan nephew and niece, whom I have adopted, are both pious, and it was through them my darling Maud learnt about these things, and I have once or twice come upon them unawares, kneeling down to pray, and so, by an irresistible impulse, I felt that I must kneel and groan out some of the misery that seemed crushing me to the earth that morning, for I knew enough to know that God alone could give me relief. And now what I want to ask you is this. Do you think God would hear a prayer at such a time as that—when I was near the end of my life, you know?—for I am nearing the end," he added, solemnly.

"Yes, most assuredly yes, if it was offered in all sincerity," answered the minister.

"Oh that I could live to prove its sincerity!" groaned the dying man. "And you do think," he added, now addressing the minister, and speaking with trembling earnestness, "that God will forgive the sins even of a wretch like me?"

"Richard, you are not a wretch," broke in Mrs. Etheridge, "you have always been a good kind father and husband—what more can be wanted?"

"Eva, I'll tell you the very words that first startled me out of this belief. I picked up a piece of paper, and in Charley's handwriting, I read, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God;' and I reflected that the only persons in the family who did not forget God, was that boy and his sister. Mind, it is no great crime that is named, only forgetting God, and that is what we have been doing all our lives, Eva, and teaching our children to do the same. Maud did not learn to remember God from us. Eva taught her that, and if she had gone to her grave unforgiven—for I believe now that she needed and obtained forgiveness of her sins, young as she was—but if she had not, I say we should have been guilty (of sending her to hell), for we let her grow up in ignorance of God. I do not say this to pain you, Eva, darling, but that you—you who will be spared—may warn our other children against this forgetfulness of Him."

He was almost exhausted with talking, and for a few moments lay back panting on the pillows, but

never moving his anxious gaze from the clergyman's face. Presently, after taking a few spoonfuls of wine, he rallied again. "Mr. Lintop, do you think there is any hope for such a helpless sinner as I am?" he said.

"Do you feel that you are quite helpless?" asked the minister.

"Yes. My only hope is in these words which I read only a few minutes before my horse threw me—'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners'—they keep me from quite despairing; but tell me, will He save me?"

"Yes," answered the clergyman; "He is not only willing, but waiting to save you, if you will only be saved in His way."

"What is that? Oh, tell me what I must do to be saved," he said, in a voice of agonizing earnestness.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," answered the clergyman, solemnly.

"Believe—only believe?" asked Mr. Etheridge, incredulously.

"Yes, only believe," answered the minister, "that Christ has done all that is necessary to procure your salvation, and you shall be saved."

"But what must I do? Nothing!"

"What did you tell me a few minutes ago—did you not say that you were helpless in this matter? Now if you feel that you are helpless to do anything for yourself, why are you not willing to be saved in Christ's way?"

"But I thought there was something I might do!" hesitated Mr. Etheridge.

"To add to the finished work of Christ, because you do not like to be entirely indebted to Him for your salvation?" said Mr. Lintop. "My dear sir, I must be faithful and tell you plainly, that this is the way, and the only way, by which you can escape. 'The wages of sin is death.' That, as you acknowledge, is your desert—you have sinned—have lived in sin—and therefore the wages due for that work, is death—eternal death. But mark—'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Mind the difference here; death is due for the sin committed—but life, eternal life, is God's free gift, given for the sake of what Jesus Christ has done—what He has suffered in our stead."

The interview was continued for above an hour, Mr. Lintop endeavouring to explain more and more clearly the gospel plan of salvation; but he could not ascertain before he left whether Mr. Etheridge's mind (which had began to wander) had grasped his meaning. During the hours of his delirium he talked almost incessantly of Maud, occasionally mingling with the scene of her death, words uttered by Mr. Lintop in this interview.

The following day the minister came again, and from what then transpired during the short time of consciousness, Mr. Lintop hoped that the dying man had embraced the only hope set before him of being

saved. Another interview later in the day assured him of the fact, and then Mr. Etheridge professed his willingness to depart at once to join his little daughter, but said he could have wished to be spared to prove that his past life had been all a mistake, that he might undo some things he had done, and try to repair the neglect and unfaithfulness of years.

But this could not be—death was already fast approaching, and fearing lest another interval of consciousness might not be granted him, he, that evening, had all his family gathered around his bedside. He spoke to Charley first. "My dear boy," he said, taking his hand, "you and Eva have been the greatest blessings of my life. But for your coming into my family I could not lie here as I do, calmly waiting for death; and Charley, when I am gone, you must help your aunt. You will never leave her, will you, Charley?" he added, looking earnestly into the boy's face.

"No, uncle, I will not," answered Charley, through his tears.

"And you will be a faithful brother and friend to Richard and Arthur? You are older than they are, you know, and they will, perhaps, hear you when they they would not their mamma, and you will be able to help them when she could not. You will do this, Charley?"

"Yes, uncle, I promise to do this faithfully."

"Richard," said Mr. Etheridge, now turning to his son, "you will soon be the possessor of Hazlewood.

Act generously towards your cousins—act towards them as you do to your own brother and sister. And oh, my children," he added, taking Augusta's hand, "be warned by your father's example, and do not leave the work of seeking God for a death-bed. Remember this—you may be struck down as suddenly as I was, and without the space—the time given you to repent that has been granted to me." He ceased speaking, and all stood silently weeping around the bed. At length, he roused again, and kissing each one, bade them farewell. "I shall be with my dear little Maud very soon," he said, as Eva bent over him. Eva was always connected with Maud in his mind.

A few hours after, his soul passed away. There was no joy, no extatic feelings at the last, but with a simple reliance upon the Saviour's merits and work, he calmly and peacefully passed away, talking of his beloved Maud to the end.

A few days afterwards, he was laid beside her in the vault, and Mrs. Etheridge, for the first time, began to realize that she had lost her husband now that she could no longer gaze at his beloved form. Her grief, hitherto restrained and pent up, now burst forth with tenfold violence, for the restraint she had hitherto imposed upon herself; and for a time she abandoned herself entirely to her feelings, taking no heed of friends, relatives, or children, or anything that was passing around.

Mr. Etheridge had died without leaving any will.

Like too many others, he put it off, thinking there would be plenty of time to do *that* when he became an old man, and so it was not done at all.

Richard, now the young squire, although he had no right to the title or the property until of age, assumed at once the place of master; and as there was no one, in his mother's abandonment of grief, to dispute this right, he lorded it over everyone at Hazlewood. Selfish and self-willed, he thought of no one, cared for no one but himself, and now he had the power, he determined to gratify every desire, no matter what the cost might be to others.

No plans had been formed for the future of the family, and therefore he formed his own, and resolved, if possible, to carry them out. His aim must be, he thought, to reduce the expenses of the family as much as possible, that he might have the more for himself.

Hazlewood was his property, but the house at Clifton, with the small estate adjoining, belonged to Mrs. Etheridge. Now he thought if he allowed—yes, allowed, that was the way in which he put it to himself, thinking he was doing a very generous action—allowed his mamma the use of Hazlewood until he required it for himself, the house at Clifton could be let furnished as it was, which he thought would add a pretty round sum to the annual income, and leave the estate almost unencumbered.

Of course, there must be alterations—great alterations at Hazlewood. The governess and several ser

vants must be dismissed. They would not be needed now, there would be so few living at Hazlewood, for he had resolved there should be only a few. In another year, Eva could go out as a governess; and Charley—how Richard hated him! He should not stay much longer—he would make him feel now that he was master. He would humble—nay, crush his proud spirit if he could. He had dared to tell him that he was mean, and cowardly, and selfish, many times. He would punish him now, he would make him feel his power and smart for his daring in thus telling him boldly of his faults.

Not all at once were these plans formed, but he had nothing else to do just now but think over these things, and so bit by bit, one particular after another was turned over in his mind, and he only waited till he could talk over the matter with his mamma, that he might have a little shew of decency in what he did. That over, he would soon effect some sweeping alterations in the arrangement of many things at Hazlewood.

He did not wait for this before consulting the agent Simpson, and charging him not to let any of the tenants get in arrears.

"You know I shall want all the money I can get to pay my college expences, Simpson," he said.

"Yes, sir," answered the obsequious cringing agent, and I suppose there will be master Arthur's to pay for by and bye."

"Master Arthur may do as he can, for me," replied Richard; "I mean to get him off my hands as quickly as possible."

"Exactly, sir. Will the family reside at Hazlewood or Clifton, sir?"

"At Hazlewood for the future. By-the-bye, we shall want to let Clifton furnished—just as it stands. Will you see about this business?"

"Yes, sir."

"Stay, perhaps I had better wait a day or two and talk to mamma about it first."

"Some of the tenants are wanting repairs done, sir. The squire promised they should be done this summer."

"They won't be done now, then," said Richard, decisively. "Didn't I tell you I wanted all the money I could get. No, I don't mean to be so easy as my father has been; I don't mean to waste my money on repairs, and go without my rent because the crops happen to be bad—and you can tell them so. It's best to begin as you mean to go on," he added.

The agent smiled and nodded; he and Richard had always got on well together. The man was unprincipled enough to do anything for money, and Richard knew it and resolved to avail himself of it to serve his selfish purposes of grinding as much as possible out of the poor tenants.

It was several weeks before Mrs. Etheridge was able to attend to any business details, and during this time everything at Hazlewood went on as usual, and might

have gone on still longer, but for Charley's asking one morning if he might not soon go to London to commence his study of civil engineering.

"I do not think the business connected with your articles is settled yet, my dear boy," said his aunt, with a heavy sigh. Charley and Richard both looked up in surprise—the latter in triumph.

"I thought uncle had gone upon that business when he went to London," said Charley, in a tone of disappointment.

"No—it was not concluded then. But never mind, Charley, I will very soon have it done; and when you are strong enough, you shall go to London. Richard," she said, turning to that young gentleman, "will you come with me into the library? I want to talk to you."

The interview, though long, was not a pleasant one, judging from Mrs. Etheridge's face; and as soon as it was over, she hurried to her own room, which she did not leave again that day.

The following morning, Miss Arden and one or two servants received notices of dismissal. Perhaps Mrs. Etheridge was not acting wisely in thus yielding her authority to her self-willed son, but she was so weakened by her sorrow and trouble that she had not the strength to oppose him, and thus he gained point after point, she feebly combating each at first, but finally yielding to his persuasions and representations.

That same day, as Charley was sauntering towards the coppice, thinking over all the sad events that had

occurred in his young life—of all the dear ones he had been called upon to yield to death's cold embrace, he encountered Richard.

"Well, young man," said he, in his most offensively patronizing manner, "and how long pray, are you going to dawdle your time away here, eating the bread of idleness?"

Charley lifted his flashing eyes to the speaker's face, "Do I eat your bread?" he asked, proudly.

"Of course you do," answered Richard; "and now we are upon the subject, I may as well tell you at once, that *I* don't mean to carry out my father's plan of spending money on your being articled. You have received a good education, which was more than you could expect, and you must make your fortune out of that, without expecting any more to be lavished on you."

"I will never trouble you for a farthing of your money, Richard Etheridge," answered Charley, "I will go to London to-morrow, and get a situation as clerk, somewhere."

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARLEY IN LONDON.

"ARTHUR, come with me for a stroll, will you? I feel stifled in this room," said Charley, a few hours after his encounter with Richard. Richard had entered the room where they, with Eva and Augusta, were sitting, and the sight of him roused feelings in his mind he knew would be likely to overcome his better judgment, if further provoked that day.

"How can you say the room is stifling, Charley?" exclaimed Augusta. "You seem very cross and disagreeable this evening."

"Perhaps I am," said Charley, in a not very conciliatory tone.

Eva lifted her eyes to her brother's face, and saw that he looked troubled; but she forbore to question him then, resolving to watch for an opportunity to see him alone.

Arthur readily agreed to accompany his cousin for a walk, and they went out together, Richard watching them enviously from the window as he saw his brother

link his arm within Charley's. Yes, disguise the fact as he might to himself, this was another element of the bitterness he felt against his cousin—he was jealous of his influence over Arthur, and of the affection that existed between the two. True, he had never tried to win his brother's love—nay, had always acted in a most unbrotherly way towards him; but that did not matter, he thought Arthur was his brother—his younger brother, and ought to care for him, and mind what he said, and think more of him than he did of Charley, who was only his cousin; and this Arthur did not do, and in his outspoken fashion had told him so many times.

The two walked on arm-in-arm towards the coppice, unmindful of the envious glances cast at them by the watcher at the window.

"What's the matter, old fellow?" asked Arthur, looking into his companion's face; "there's something up between you and Dick."

"Well, yes," answered Charley; "you know there was never any love lost between us, so I cannot wonder that he wants to get rid of me."

"Get rid of you!" said Arthur, hotly: "you don't mean to say he's had the impudence to say anything like that?"

"I do though," answered Charley; "and perhaps it's just as well, for I shall know now that I've only my own hands and brains to rely upon."

"But, I say, you're not going yet?" said Arthur.

"To-morrow," answered Charley, "I mean to go to London."

"What! to be chained down to that stifling old office, drawing plans all the dog days?"

"I may not have the chance of drawing plans now, old fellow. The premium was not paid, you know; the whole business was put off through my tiresome illness," said Charley, sighing.

"Then why, in the name of common sense, do you want to rush off to London, just because of that mean, paltry—"

"Hush!" interrupted Charley; "Richard is your brother, you know."

"Yes, and a pretty brother he'll be to us all, I expect. But why are you going off in such a hurry for what he says? You didn't used to care much about it."

"Things were different then; he is master now, you know."

"And he has dared to tell you so!" said Arthur, in a tone of suppressed rage.

Charley nodded: he did not want to say any more just now, for he could see that Arthur's temper was rising; but Arthur would not have the conversation turned.

"What did you mean about not being able to draw plans now?" he asked. "If papa did not pay the premium, his lawyers, Smart and Bryce, can."

"Yes, if uncle has placed the money in their hands

for the purpose. That is what I am going to see about."

"And if he did not do that—"

"I shall not be articled," interrupted Charley.

"Who says so?"

"Richard. You know he claims everything, being the eldest son."

"And he told you *that*—that papa's express wishes concerning you should not be carried out? Then he's worse than I thought he was. Call him brother!—do you tell me to call that mean, base, cowardly fellow brother? I won't—no, by Jove! I'll disown him! I'll never acknowledge him as a brother again!"

So Arthur raved on, and Charley, knowing by experience that it was best to wait until his first passionate outburst was over, did not interrupt him for a minute or two. It would be of no use he knew, only to provoke more intemperate words.

"Now, Arthur," he said, when his cousin stopped to take breath, "do you think you can listen calmly to what I am going to say?"

"I'll try," said Arthur, moodily. "The sneak!" he hissed between his clenched teeth, as he caught sight of his brother at a little distance, "he'd better not cross my path just now, or I might do something I should regret afterwards.

"Very likely," assented Charley; "we're both hot-tempered fellows, and likely to do things we should bitterly repent in our cool moments. I wasn't so old

as you are when I learned this by my own experience. Arthur," he added, speaking solemnly, "do try to curb your temper more, or it will bring trouble upon you, as it did upon me. I nearly killed a school-fellow once in a passion, and the fright caused through that brought on my mother's illness, from which she never recovered." And he told Arthur of what had occurred the night of his mother's first seizure.

Arthur listened to the account, and promised he would try to overcome this fault, at the same time expressing his doubts of ever being able to do so as fully as Charley had done, "Because you know," he added, "I don't think seriously of things as you do, though I do mean to think more than I have done, because papa begged us all to do so when he was dying."

"Yes," answered Charley, "and that brings me to what I want to say. You know I promised never to leave aunt, and I never will. Wherever she is shall be my home so long as she will let me make it so—of course I don't mean to live at every day, but to come to occasionally; and that is what I want to talk about now. You know this house and all Hazlewood is Richard's own; no one can dispute his right to it, and therefore he has the power, if he liked, to forbid my coming here. Now don't you see that, on this account, we—you, Arthur, as well—we must both make up our minds to pocket whatever insults he may offer us for your mamma's sake? I don't think I could do this for myself, but I have made up my mind, and I will bear

anything rather than increase my aunt's trouble. And so there must be very little said about me or my going to London. I think the less my name is mentioned the better—the more likely I am to be able to come here in comfort sometimes."

It was not easy to persuade Arthur to act upon this view of things; he would far rather have been told that he might fling every opprobrious epithet he could think of into his brother's teeth, and thus produce an open rupture, a never-to-be-reconciled quarrel between them. But after some time had been spent in reasoning with, and persuading him, for the sake of others, not to follow his own wish in the matter, he consented to give it up, and behave civilly to Richard.

Later in the evening Charley met Eva, and had a long conversation with her, during which he explained the necessity of his going at once to London, and if Smart and Bryce had not the money to be paid as premium in hand, to try at once for a situation as clerk at some office. He clung to the hope that his uncle's lawyers had had the money placed in their hands for this purpose, although he tried to persuade himself and Eva that it did not much matter if it were not.

It was easy to persuade Mrs. Etheridge to give her consent to his immediate departure, to make enquiries about the business connected with his entering the architect's office, and Charley was careful to say nothing of what had transpired between him and

Richard; and the next evening saw Charley pushing his way through the crowded streets of the metropolis, on his way to the hotel at which his uncle had always stayed during his visits to London.

Charley had been with him to see Mr. Wainwright when the arrangement was made for his being placed under that gentleman, and he still carried the portfolio of drawings he had then taken to be examined preparatory to any steps being taken. Mr. Wainwright had been so well satisfied with these and Charley's appearance, that, in consideration of the handsome premium offered by Mr. Etheridge, he had agreed to take him at once as a pupil, and Charley would have gone in less than a month from that time but for his unfortunate illness.

Unfortunate indeed it seemed the next day, when he called upon Smart and Bryce, and heard that they knew nothing of his articles, and had received no instructions from Mr. Etheridge regarding the premium.

"Then my hopes are at an end," said Charley, bitterly, as he slowly wended his way from the close office into the open square, which he had left only a few minutes before so full of expectation. "How can this work for good?" he said the next minute—"this blighting of all my hopes as it were by a mere accident? I certainly have a talent for drawing: surely God gave me this to use; and yet here I am, deprived of the means of cultivating it."

Yes, it was a dark providence, totally inexplicable

to poor Charley, and baffling all his penetration to understand the needs be for it, and for a time he gave way to all the host of gloomy doubts and fears that are ever ready to rush in and take possession of our faithless hearts. It could not be true, he thought, that "all things work together for good to them that love God," for what possible good could come out of this disappointment? Much harm might arise, he thought, for when his aunt should hear of Richard's selfishness, she would be very angry: and there was Arthur—he had threatened never to forgive his brother; and poor Eva would be almost as disappointed as he himself was. At length the words of our Lord to His disciples were brought to his recollection—"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." So forcibly was this presented to his mind, that he felt calmed almost in a moment, and he was able once more to look up to God, and believe that he was still cared for and watched over, although he could not understand God's purposes towards him.

In the afternoon he called upon Mr. Wainwright, explaining all that had occurred, and at the close ventured to ask if that gentleman was in want of a clerk.

"No," said the gentleman, "I am not; but I can recommend you to a friend of mine who told me the other day he should be likely to want one. I'm really very sorry not to have you for a pupil, and it is a great pity, as you have talent, that it should not be culti-

vated. I would advise your not being too hasty in engaging yourself with Mr. Wilson; after all, your cousin may be brought to see things differently, and wish you still to come to me."

Charley shook his head: "You don't know Richard, sir," he said; "he is not at all like my uncle; he is not generous—indeed, he is scarcely just."

No, Charley could not, in the wildest flight of his imagination, ever hope that Richard would alter his determination, or give up the money necessary for his becoming a pupil of Mr. Wainwright's. And so, thanking that gentleman for his kind courtesy, he took the note he had written, recommending Charley, and went in search of Mr. Wilson's office.

Charley had seen very little of London, and this had made the office of Smart and Bryce seem close to him, although it was in reality a very open, airy office, situated in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and he thought so as he entered Mr. Wilson's, which was situated in a dark, dismal-looking street, where the houses towered high, and were so close in consequence of the street being narrow, that only a slit of the bright blue sky could be seen above them.

"I could never live here," thought poor Charley, looking up at the dirty, forlorn-looking houses; "and yet I must," he added a minute afterwards—"I must and I will, to save bringing any more trouble upon aunt. Happily, she, and Eva, and Arthur have no idea of the sort of place I shall be in. Yes, if Mr.

Wilson will take me, I will stay even here rather than bring trouble upon them at home."

Mr. Wilson did want a clerk, he said, after reading Mr. Wainwright's note, and he asked Charley several questions as to his qualifications for the situation. These were answered satisfactorily, and then he was asked to write a few words. Yes, Mr. Wilson was quite satisfied with his handwriting, and would take him a month upon trial. At this point Charley ventured to ask the amount of salary offered. It was very small, he thought, and he said so, but still agreed to come a month upon trial, and he was to enter upon his duties the following week.

It was clear, with such a salary, if it was to support him, he must find a cheap lodging; and so, instead of going back to Hazlewood, as he at first intended, he wrote, requesting that his things might be forwarded to him at once, as he entered upon his new duties with Mr. Wilson the following week.

"Mr. Wilson," repeated Mrs. Etheridge, when she read this letter, "I did not think that was the name I had heard; but I suppose it is all right, and he has got Smart and Bryce to hurry on the business for him; but he might have come down, and told us all about the place he is going to."

Arthur wrote and told Charley of this, and it confirmed him in his determination not to go down at present. It was the fear of this questioning, and lest his own courage should fail at the last moment, and he

should let them know what he was really about to engage in, and the sort of place most of the hours of his days would have to be spent in, that had made him decide to send for his luggage, instead of going back to spend the intervening days. He wrote more fully and confidentially to Arthur, telling him he had got a situation as clerk, but begging him not to tell his mamma of it at present, as she believed he was going to Mr. Wainwright still. He carefully concealed from him, however, all the disagreeable features of the case, touching very lightly upon his own disappointment when he found the lawyers knew nothing about the premium. Truth to tell, he was afraid to trust Arthur with the full particulars, lest in his excess of sympathy he should seek a quarrel with his brother, and thus defeat all his efforts to spare his aunt any annoyance or trouble in the matter.

In his search for a cheap respectable lodging he was not very successful, and several days were spent in walking up and down strange, gloomy, out-of-the-way streets, for his first day's experience had taught him that in these lay his only hope of obtaining a lodging at all within his means, and he was resolved to live within his means—not to apply to his aunt for any more money—Richard's money, as he whispered to himself.

At length when his patience was almost tired out, and he had resolved to give up the search for at least this day, he met with just what he required in the

home of a poor widow. The house was decently furnished and scrupulously clean, but very very different from the home of elegance and refinement to which he had always been accustomed, and he could not help feeling the change very painfully. He did not know how much music, books, mirrors, easy chairs, elegant curtains, and carpets, had tended to his daily comfort, until he missed these surroundings. Yes, steel his heart as he would against these things, he did feel the want of them very keenly, and they roused bitter feelings in his heart against him, who for his own selfish gratification had forced him to this life. And yet, was not he selfish, he thought, to care so much for these things. But try as he would, he could not help caring, and his meanly-furnished lodging became a daily cross.

The following week he commenced his work as a clerk, at the office of Mr. Wilson. The first day he sat there on the high stool before the desk, he thought the hours of an interminable length. Again and again did he look up above the dusty pigeon holes to the face of the old clock, whose hands seemed to move so slowly, as though the hot stifling air that was depriving poor Charley of all strength and energy, had affected the internal organization of that, and made it less brisk, and its monotonous tic, tic, more weak and melancholy. The day never would come to an end he thought, as with a weary sigh he took from his employer's hand another lease to copy, about the

middle of the afternoon; scratch, scratch went his pen for another half hour, and then Mr. Wilson went out. This was the signal for conversation to begin between the other clerks, and tilting their stools back, they threw pen nibs at each other, cut a few jokes at Charley's expense, grumbled about the heat, discussed the latest news of the day, and thus whiled away the time until they saw their master coming, when every one resumed his work. Charley had not left off—he would have disdained the meanness of taking advantage of his employer's absence in that manner, but the sudden quiet made him look up, and he was gazing round at his fellow clerks when Mr. Wilson entered the office. That gentleman frowned.

"You don't get on with that lease very fast," he said in a dissatisfied tone. Charley felt it and coloured violently; he had been trying very hard to give satisfaction, and he felt disappointed; his employer thought it was because he had been caught idling. Very weary and dispirited Charley felt as he wended his way to the little quiet street where he lived now—he could not call it home yet—he wondered whether he should ever be able to do so—ever get accustomed to the dreary monotony of the office work, and be able to laugh and joke as the other clerks did. He must learn to like his work, he said to himself, for should he not have to be a clerk all the rest of his life, writing leases, and casting up accounts, and looking at that old clock whose hands were so obstinately slow.

CHAPTER XV.

A NEEDED HOLIDAY.

CHARLEY tried very hard to like the work he was now engaged in—to take an interest in it, and feel that he was more than a mere human machine, but he did not succeed very well. Try as he would, he could not feel at home either at the office or in the little quiet street where he lived.

Perhaps the want of companionship greatly strengthened this feeling, for he had not met with anyone in London whom he could make a companion. It must be remembered that his present life was in a totally different sphere from that to which he had always been accustomed, and that greatly added to the isolation which he felt in it. His fellow clerks thought him proud, taciturn, and unfriendly, because he never joined in the conversation or fun that was carried on during Mr. Wilson's absence; and so they made no effort to become acquainted, and rarely spoke to him beyond what was necessary in the way of business.

And thus he went and came his lonely way between the office and Caroline Street, rarely exchanging twenty words all day; for Mrs. Holmes with whom he lived was very deaf, and seldom spoke to her "young gentleman" beyond wishing him "good morning," or "good evening."

How his heart yearned towards Hazelwood and the dear ones there, as he sat in his little scantily-furnished room of an evening, trying to read, or draw, or resting his throbbing head against the top of the hard couch that was placed there to look at, not to use. Somehow his head often throbbed now, or ached with a dull heavy pain that nothing would remove; and he wondered how it was he could have run races with Arthur such a short time ago, he always felt tired and languid now. But it would go off, he had no doubt, when he became more accustomed to the noise and hurry of the streets, and the close stifling air, and it would be getting cooler soon, and then he should get all right again. So he kept on his self-denying way, battling bravely with all the hardships of his lot, and bearing patiently each daily cross, carefully concealing from those at home how much he had to endure.

But somehow, with all his care, Mrs. Etheridge did not feel quite satisfied with his letters; they were not quite natural, she thought. Not that they were not cheerful, but there was an indefinable something about them that made her feel sure he was

concealing something. She did not notice this at first, not until Charley had been away a month or two, and she had had to arouse herself out of the apathy of her grief, and take some interest in things going on around her. This change in Mrs. Etheridge was mainly owing to Richard's having told Eva that she must think about maintaining herself shortly. This speech was overheard by Arthur, and immediately reported to his mamma, and it so roused her anger, that she resolved not to accede to any more of Richard's wishes—or rather demands, for they were put more in that way now.

Clifton had been given up to please him; the governess and one or two servants had been dismissed, and to one or two other changes Mrs. Etheridge had yielded so quietly, that he resolved to push things still further, and as it generally happens, went too far. Mrs. Etheridge once aroused, would not let him have all his own way, and reminded him that he was not the squire of Hazelwood yet—could not be until he had attained his majority, and told him she would have no further interference with her plans.

The young gentleman departed the next day for college in high dudgeon, mentally resolving that when he was of age, and became in reality the squire of Hazelwood, he would let everyone see he was master; his mamma should know then that he was not to be treated like a baby now for nothing.

After Richard's departure, things went on more

happily at the old hall, though not the same as formerly. Augusta and Arthur were gradually drifting into very idle habits, and Eva into very busy ones.

The reading at Oakwood Lane had continued, and Eva was now teaching the woman and her daughter to read for themselves. By degrees one and another begged to be allowed to share her instruction, and now nearly a dozen were grouped in the little room where she came of an afternoon. Few could read or write in Hazelwood, there being no school nearer than the town, and consequently Eva's instruction was highly valued. She was a patient little teacher, never complaining of the girls' idleness or stupidity, or the boys' ignorance and awkwardness; and many of them were idle and stupid, and awkward, as untrained children are sure to be; but when the widow in a vexed tone would tell them not to come there again with their noise and their worry, if they did not mean to learn, Eva would be sure to find some excuse for the little scatterbrains.

It need hardly be said that Eva was beloved by her little flock. And the love felt for her was not confined to the children. Not a man or woman in all Hazelwood but loved the gentle young orphan, who went in and out amongst them so quietly without assuming any airs of superiority, but had a smile and a pleasant word for every one she met. She often went to visit one and another who were sick in the neighbourhood, now carrying little dainties with her that they could not procure or prepare for themselves,

making herself, as Augusta said, very ridiculous—very useful, every one else said.

Mrs. Etheridge made no objection to her doing this, but often wondered how Eva could find time to do so much, for she was ever ready to help her in anything, and never neglected her own reading and practising, although there was no one to urge her to do this now Miss Arden was gone. This had been all unnoticed at first, as well as a certain quiet gravity that Mrs. Etheridge now saw had come over her—a sort of shadow that always rested upon her. Sitting alone one day with her, and noticing that Eva looked unusually grave, Mrs. Etheridge said, "My dear child, are you unhappy about anything?"

Eva started but answered quickly, "No, aunt, I am not unhappy."

"Something is troubling you, Eva, I am sure; Will you not tell me what it is?"

"I must not, aunt," faltered Eva.

"Must not tell me! said Mrs. Etheridge in astonishment; "but, Eva, I have the right to know. Is it about Charley?"

Eva nodded, and then burst into tears.

"What is the matter?" asked her aunt in alarm; "is he ill?"

"I think so, I'm afraid so," replied Eva.

"And why was I not to be told?" asked Mrs. Etheridge in a hurt tone.

"Because Charley made me promise before he went

away, that I would never tell you anything about him that would trouble you. He said it might be a relief to him to tell me things perhaps, but I was never to let anybody else know; and last night I had a letter, and I know he must be ill, although he says he had only got a bad headache. There, I have told you now, aunt, and Charley will never trust me again," and the tears fell faster than ever. This satisfied Mrs. Etheridge that she had not been wrong in her suspicion, that he was concealing something from her, and she wrote immediately desiring that he would come to Hazlewood for a few days at least. But before this letter was sent another arrived from Charley, saying that he was a little knocked up with the heat, and as Mr. Wilson desired him to take a holiday for a week, he should be at Hazlewood the following day.

After reading this note, Mrs. Etheridge felt inclined to laugh at her former fears. She could not have done so, could she have seen Charley when he wrote that note.

He did not wish to alarm them, and so said he was "a little knocked up;" but he had been so ill as to be unable to go to the office for several days, and when he got better, Mr. Wilson, who had learned to know and value his gentlemanly taciturn young clerk, even in this short time, advised him to go home for a week before resuming his duties. *How* thankful Charley felt for this respite from his monotonous

treadmill life none could tell but himself, for none knew what he had endured during this sojourn in London. The very thought of seeing all the dear faces and home scenes gave him fresh life and energy, and he packed the few things he had to take with him and walked to the railway station, feeling better even at that little step on his journey.

But when the end of his journey was reached he felt and looked very ill—so ill that he seemed scarcely able to walk the length of the platform. Arthur was there waiting for him, and the carriage was outside. How thankful Charley felt when he heard it—the easy luxurious carriage, that he had so often "bothered" and voted a "bore" and a "fashionable nuisance," was very acceptable to the weary, jaded London clerk, and he threw himself back in its cushioned corner looking quite worn out.

"You do look done up. Why, Charley, you've been ill, haven't you?" asked Arthur.

"Do I look as if I had?" asked Charley, rousing.

"Look! Well, we won't say anything about that, but I'll tell you what, mamma suspects you're hiding something from her, and if you really do want to save her from troubling about it, you'd better make a clean breast and tell everything."

"Oh, Arthur!"

"It will be far better. She feels hurt now I know, and she will be still more so when she sees your thin, white, scarecrow face. I say, what do people live on in London?" he asked in a gayer tone.

"Live on?"

"Yes, what did they have to eat—rusty pens and old parchment? I shouldn't think you'd had much more," he added, laughing.

Charley coloured. Truth to tell, his living had not been of the best, and he thought Arthur must know it. How was it they had managed to guess his carefully guarded secrets? He had thought the recent warm weather would have accounted satisfactorily for whatever was amiss with his looks, and now it seemed as though every thing was known. But these thoughts did not trouble him long, the gaiety of his light-hearted cousin seemed infectious, and before long he was laughing merrily with him at something they passed in the road.

"I declare you look more yourself already," said Arthur, as the carriage entered the gates; "when I saw you drag yourself out of the railway carriage, I could scarcely believe it was you."

"But I said in my letter I was a little knocked up with the heat."

"Yes, and you call that telling the truth, I suppose," staid straightforward Arthur; "but I should call it a white lie. You told me once, you know, that there were no white lies, that falsehood was falsehood all the world over;" but then seeing Charley's pale face flush, he added, "there, never mind, you're not in a fit state to be quarrelled with just now, only you must make up your mind to confess everything to mamma. I won't aid and abet you in committing suicide any longer."

"But, Arthur, it will do no good—"

"To slave yourself to death in London!" interrupted Arthur; "and if you won't promise to tell mamma, I shall. I mean to tell her all I know, and a great deal that you think I don't know, so I give you fair warning. Now will you promise?"

"I suppose I must," said Charley, rather reluctantly, "but I don't like doing it, because it will be troubling my aunt to no purpose. There is no other way open for me, and I daresay I shall get on in the world by and bye, although I am only a clerk now. I mean to try," he added.

"Yes, you look like trying, or as though you had been trying to give the undertaker some more work."

"Arthur!"

"I mean it. I wasn't at all sure whether it was you or your ghost got out of the railway carriage, and I felt verily guilty of helping you in your suicidal intentions, and my conscience would give me no rest until I had confessed my share in the horrible work." He rattled on in this mock serious strain of fun, banter, and persuasion, partly to hide his own feelings at the sight of the change in his cousin, and partly to rouse him into a little excitement, that those at home might not be so painfully struck with the change in him at first as he had been.

Before they reached the door, Charley had given the required promise to tell his aunt of the deceit he had practised upon her, for he could not tell how much

Arthur's "confession" might not include; and moreover, although he felt very unwilling to tell her of the step he had taken, his conscience told him that he ought to do so—that he was wrong in acting without her sanction and advice. True, he had done it to spare her trouble and anxiety, but now conscience whispered, might he not be bringing more upon her by this undutiful step—for undutiful it certainly was to one who had invariably treated him as a loving parent, and therefore entitled to the fullest confidence. But although his mind was made up as to acquainting his aunt with what he had done, he was resolved that nothing should induce him to alter it—to accept anything from Richard that would do so; and to take his aunt's money would be to take Richard's, for he was heir to all but the small estate at Clifton, which was barely sufficient to keep his aunt and other cousins, he knew.

But in the midst of these thoughts the carriage stopped, and turning his head, he saw his aunt and sister waiting on the portico to receive him, and then everything else was forgotten in the joy of meeting them.

Arthur had succeeded in rousing his cousin, so that Mrs. Etheridge did not notice at first the great change the short stay in London had effected in her merry-hearted nephew; but when the excitement was over, and they were left alone in the drawing-room together —Charley, pale and exhausted, lying on a couch, and

she with a book, trying to read, for she had noticed the signs of weariness in Charley, and sent the others away that he might be quiet, and recover somewhat from the fatigue of his journey. But as she sat and looked at him as he now lay, with his eyes closed, it seemed as though years must have passed over that bright young face to make it what it was. She saw more than illness there—a story of trial, and endurance, and battling with difficulties, that gave the quiet look of sober gravity to the mouth that was so firmly closed even in sleep. And then she reflected that she had taken no pains to enquire particularly about Charley's interests when he first went to London. She had been so absorbed by her own grief, that she had forgotten him, and that he needed a little oversight; and she reproached herself again for her weak and selfish indulgence, that had brought so much trouble to herself and others; for, had it not been for this, Richard could never have obtained the power he now had—not at least until he came of age, and then she hoped he would have acted very differently.

At this moment Charley turned his head towards her, and opened his eyes.

"Have I been sleeping long, aunt?" he said.

"No, not more than half-an-hour," replied Mrs. Etheridge; "and you still seem very sleepy. Have you been ill, Charley?"

"Yes—no—not ill exactly," said Charley; "the warm weather and the close office made my head bad, and I was obliged to have a little rest."

"Close office!" repeated Mrs. Etheridge—"why, I know your uncle refused to place you with one gentleman, to whom he was recommended, because the rooms were so small he said you would never be well; but this last one he saw—this Mr. Wilson—he said had very open airy apartments in the best part of London."

"Mr. Wainwright, you mean, aunt," corrected Charley, and his face flushed as he felt the time for his confession had come. He had resolved to wait for a day or two before entering upon this topic—to wait until he felt stronger and better able to bear his aunt's surprise and disapprobation. Yes, he was fully prepared for her disapproving the step he had taken, but he was determined nothing should alter it.

And so, as he reclined upon the rich damask-covered couch, he told of his being a junior clerk in a small second or third-rate office in London. The realities of that position—the full realities, that had struck so painfully upon him, he knew his aunt could never guess, and he was careful that nothing disagreeable should be told that he could truthfully conceal.

Mrs. Etheridge was at a loss whether to scold or applaud him for his heroic attempt to spare her trouble; but she told him he must write at once and inform Mr. Wilson that his friends would not hear of his returning to London again.

"But I must go, aunt," said Charley, rousing, "and I may as well go to Mr. Wilson, who has learned to

place confidence in me; in fact, I would rather go to him now, for I know him."

"As his clerk, do you mean?"

"Yes, aunt, there is no other way open to me that I can see, for I will never—no never—take a farthing that Richard could say was his," and his eyes flashed, and his hands clenched with determination, as he recalled that interview with his cousin a few months previously.

"But, Charley, something else might be thought of for you without involving an outlay of money"—for Mrs. Etheridge knew it would be useless to combat his last words.

"Then I would gladly accept it—if I could," said Charley.

"And you will write and resign your present situation at once!"

"But, aunt—"

"Charley, I require this obedience from you," interrupted Mrs. Etheridge; "you wish to save me trouble and anxiety; you promised to help me; therefore I have the right to ask you to do this for my sake."

"But I can do no good staying here, idling my time away, aunt. Let me stay with Mr. Wilson until some better appointment offers."

"No, Charley, I cannot consent to your returning to London—at least to Mr. Wilson's office—at all. If you will persist in going, you must go, but it will be against my wish."

"But, aunt—"

"No more, Charley"—Mrs. Etheridge could be very firm when she pleased—"no more, unless it be that you will promise to do as I wish."

"I will—I must," said Charley, "but I would rather have returned to London."

CHAPTER XVI.

"SOWING TO THE WIND."

A MONTH had passed away. Charley had kept his promise to his aunt, and written to Mr. Wilson, resigning his situation on the plea of the air of London not suiting him. It had not been easy to do this—he had made up his mind to battle through all difficulties, through all opposing forces. One step had been gained—he had won his master's confidence and esteem, and he would boldly push on to the end, and win a position in the world that men should look up to and respect—a position carved out with his own hands and brains. Thus he had thought and planned, and this was the termination of his planning. All his ambition and romance about making his fortune had to be given up for an idle life at Hazlewood.

It is true, he was as yet unable to do anything beyond an hour's drawing or reading without a return of the pain in his head; and Mrs. Etheridge had written to several influential friends, asking them to forward

Charley's interests upon the first opportunity; but, as Charley argued, it might be months before anything was heard from these gentlemen. It was a hard lesson poor Charley had to learn just now, this giving up his own way.

"Eva," he said, one day, when he had been talking it over with his sister, "when I think of how all my plans are continually being crossed, mamma's text seems as though it can't be true. Now, how can it be for my good to dawdle my time away here? I may waste all the best years of my life sauntering about, waiting for some appointment that may never come."

"Not *wasting* your time, Charley," corrected Eva. "I'm sure you've done some good, teaching those boys to read and write, and going about amongst the people."

"What good?" asked Charley.

"Well, I hardly know how to tell you," hesitated Eva, "but I've heard from one or two, that since uncle's death, all the people round have been getting very dissatisfied. Tales of Richard are talked over among them, and they say they will not put up with Etheridge tyranny much longer."

"How are they going to prevent it?" laughed Charley.

"I don't know—men do dreadful things sometimes."

Charley fairly laughed out at this. "You ridiculous little goose," he said; "and even if it were so—if they were going to burn Hazlewood and all its

inhabitants to cinders, what could I do to prevent it?"

"Why, don't you see, you and I, taking some interest in their affairs, and nodding pleasantly to them, makes them more willing to tolerate Richard. If our names were only Etheridge instead of Elton, I believe we could do more; for somehow, they have got the idea into their heads that nobody of the name of Etheridge will ever do any good. Oh, Charley! why is it people will only think and care for themselves?"

"Perhaps because they have never been taught as you and I have, Eva; I think that must be the reason," he added, more seriously.

"You will go on helping those farmers' boys to learn, won't you?" asked Eva.

"Yes, certainly, and touch my hat to every farmer, if you wish it," he said, mischievously; "but I most sincerely hope, for my own sake, it won't be for long," he added.

But the volunteer work of being village schoolmaster went on through all the autumn and winter, for no appointment came for Charley, and his aunt still refused to give her consent to his returning to London.

Meanwhile, Richard had plunged into all the gaieties of college life. Books, tutors, lectures, and classes went to the wall, while he joined in all the sports and frolics of the wealthy young scape-graces that flocked to those ancient halls of learning. The more money they could spend the better it seemed

to please these young men, and Richard Etheridge spent his lavishly. He could boast of an unlimited exchequer to draw upon; there was no angry father to check his expenditure. If his friends—tempters if you will, reader—wanted money, they had only to ask him. So he boasted, and so the money went.

There had been a plentiful harvest this year, and some had paid up that which had been forgiven the year before, for these honest English yeomen would not be beholden to their landlord when it was in their power to pay him, and thus the money had flowed into the banker's hands pretty freely, and there was plenty for Richard to draw upon. Home, he thought, after his college life would be insufferably dull, and so he spent two or three vacations with some college friends, and thus Hazlewood was not troubled with his presence all the winter. No one regretted this but Mrs. Etheridge. She was his mother, and felt some disappointment that her love was so little valued by her son, that he did not care to spend even one day with her during the festal Christmas-time which, Mr. Etheridge had always insisted should be spent by them together—refusing every invitation that would separate the members of his family at that season.

The family at the hall helped their poorer neighbours to keep Christmas this year—the first time for many generations—and Charley and Eva were thanked for it. Eva was inclined to laugh at her fears of the summer now, as well as Charley, so pleasantly did the world jog on in their quiet neighbourhood.

Spring came at length, and one day a letter, bearing the London postmark, for Charley. It was from Mr. Wilson; and after reading it, he ran off in search of his aunt.

"Mr. Wilson wants me to become his clerk again, aunt," he said, entering at once upon the subject of the letter.

"But, Charley," said Mrs. Etheridge, "you know I do not wish you—"

"It is not in London, aunt," interrupted Charley. "Mr. Wilson has been asked to take the management of a large estate, about twenty miles from here, near a quiet country town, where he thinks he might start a similar business to that which he is now carrying on in London, and it is for this branch affair he wants me."

"And do you really wish to go—to become a clerk again?" said Mrs. Etheridge.

Charley winced at the tone in which these words were spoken, but drawing himself up to his full height, he said, "I don't think there is anything dishonourable in my being a clerk, as that seems to be the only way of usefulness open to me. Should anything better offer, I can leave Mr. Wilson's, aunt," he said, altering his tone. "I can make that arrangement with him. May I accept his offer?"

"Yes—I can make no objection, as you will not have to go to London, and you promise to resign when another appointment arrives." But it was evi-

dent Mrs. Etheridge gave her consent reluctantly. She did not like that the world should be able to say that her nephew—her adopted son—was only a clerk, toiling for his daily bread in an obscure lawyer's office; and she felt more angry than ever with Richard as being the cause of it.

In a short time Charley commenced his duties at Framley, in Mr. Wilson's "branch affair." This was a great improvement upon the London office, and he was soon learning the art and mystery of managing a large estate, so as to make it profitable to both landlord and tenant.

At first, Charley was inclined to think Mr. Wilson was managing it for the tenants, or at least with a special eye to their benefit, at the expense of his friend, the proprietor. Repairs, to houses, barns, gates, fences, hedges, and ditches, varied with drainage to one part, cutting down timber in another, and planting trees somewhere else, seemed to be the order of the day. The outlay was, of course, enormous, and Charley thought that the rents would have to be raised pretty considerably to meet it, and it was evident that some of the tenant farmers feared the same, by the woe-begone countenances with which they beset Mr. Wilson's office every day after the work began, complaining bitterly of the "'provements" that upset them out of all their "country ways"—"shiftless ways" Mr. Wilson called them—touching at last upon the tender point of the rent.

But Mr. Wilson soon set their minds at rest upon this. He said nothing would be required of them but to keep their farms in proper order, and prevent them from going to decay, and to adopt the best measures to make their land most productive. That was all their present landlord would require in the way of compensation for the repairs and improvements; and many went back to their farms, resolving to work more steadily and carefully upon them now that they had a landlord who would work with them.

When Charley heard this he wondered still more what object Mr. Wilson could have in this outlay, studying, as he believed he did, his employer's interest before the tenants'. At length he ventured to ask him, urging as an excuse that his cousin, the proprietor of Hazlewood, acted upon such a different principle, that it was no idle curiosity that prompted the question.

Thus asked, Mr. Wilson took the trouble to go into all the details of the subject, and soon proved to Charley's satisfaction that the best way, in a pecuniary point of view, to manage an estate, was to treat the tenants upon the principle laid down by the Golden Rule—"To do unto others as you would they should do unto you." Mr. Wilson did not say this—probably he never thought of it—but Charley did, and summed up his remarks in these few words.

In the summer he went to Hazlewood for a short time, and he could not help comparing the neglected,

poverty-stricken, fast-going-to-ruin look of his cousin's property with that of the rapidly-improving estate of Mr. Vavasour, and he could not help wishing that he was the heir of Hazlewood instead of his cousin.

"Dear old Hazlewood!" he exclaimed, as he gazed over its spreading corn-fields to the wooded uplands beyond; "when I first saw you I thought I could never love you, but now you are the dearest spot in the world to me."

"The crops look nice," said Arthur, joining him a few minutes afterwards: "the farmers say there will be a splendid harvest."

"Yes, that red wheat looks very fine, but a great deal of it has been spoilt by the cattle trampling it down. Why don't Simpson see to the farmers having their gates and hedges kept in repair?"

Arthur shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply. There was, as the farmers expected, another very fine harvest, and everything seemed prospering in Hazlewood.

A twelvemonth passed, and Charley was still Mr. Wilson's clerk: no other appointment had come, although Mrs. Etheridge still expected it, and hoped that he would not have to return to Framley after this holiday. Time had worked but few changes at Hazlewood during this year. Mrs. Etheridge looked a trifle more careworn, Charley thought, but that could not be wondered at, considering the accounts that were received of Richard's career at college. It was well

Mrs. Etheridge had her own income, derived from the letting of Clifton, for the young heir spent money so lavishly, that it took all the income of the estate to supply his ever-increasing demands. Arthur was furious when he spoke of this and of his mother's anxiety on account of Richard's doings, and therefore Charley refrained from mentioning the subject, for it could do no good—all were alike powerless to alter this. This year the crops proved a failure.

The appointment did not come during the fortnight he was at home, and Mrs. Etheridge was obliged to consent to his again departing to resume his duties under Mr. Wilson.

Another year passed, and by this time Charley was heartily sick of the dreary monotony of drawing up leases, looking over accounts, and occasionally riding over the Vavasour estate. He felt that he might plod along in this dead-and-alive country office all his life, and be of no use to any one. Already his aunt was disappointed, and he resolved therefore, for her sake, to bestir himself, and look out for something better; and so, when he went to Hazlewood this year, it was with the understanding that he would not return to Framley again.

The first of July saw him wend his way once more through the village of Haycroft towards the dear old ancestral home of his aunt. There was something in the appearance of the village, and the people that he met, that struck him painfully. All seemed to bear

the unmistakeable marks of neglect. The little garden gates, hung back by their one rusty hinge, gave free admittance to the straying pigs who had broken from their tumble-down pens, and grunted, and eat, and trampled down all that remained of a once neatly-kept flower and vegetable garden. Scarcely one had escaped devastation, for scarcely a whole fence was to be seen all through the village, and in many instances the gates had totally disappeared.

Charley noted all this, and more than this. The appearance of the houses did not strike him so much as the unusual bustle in the little quiet village. Men stood loitering about with their hands in their pockets here at mid-day, calmly surveying the incursions of the pigs, in spite of the soaking rain. What could it all mean? Charley asked himself this question again and again, but without arriving at any solution of the mystery.

He was sorry to notice how the rain had beat down the corn, and spoilt a great deal of the hay. "Another bad harvest, I'm afraid," he mentally ejaculated. By the time he reached home, he had taken in the present and prospective condition of Hazlewood, and a sorry condition it was.

He was not expected until the following day, and so there was no one watching for his arrival, and he had time to look round as he crossed the large old hall on his way to the drawing room, to see whether his home shared in general look of things. It might

have been the unnatural gloom of the weather, but somehow the wide-spread discomfort seemed to have penetrated even to that; such an unusual stillness and silence seemed to be brooding over it.

In a minute or two came a scarcely audible "hush," and then a joyful "Oh, Charley!" and Eva's head was resting on his shoulder.

"Who was that warning hush intended for?" he asked as he released her.

"For Arthur. I thought it was his step, and came out to warn him not to make a noise, because aunt has just fallen into a doze. She isn't well, you know," she added.

"Not well, Eva! What is the matter?" asked Charley.

"Trouble, I think," answered Eva, sadly. "Richard is going on so badly, you know."

Later in the day, Charley asked for an explanation of the unusual appearance of the men standing about in the village.

Have you not heard about the strike?" asked Eva. "All the men have struck for higher wages, and will not go to work until the masters agree to pay it. And that is not all, Richard has ordered Simpson to raise all the rents; and, oh, you don't know how dreadfully angry all the poor people are. It is a shame of him, for he won't do any repairs, and he's so hard if the rent is not paid to the day; and what some of them will do if this wet weather continues I don't know. The last

harvest was a failure," she continued, growing still more excited, "and two of the very oldest tenants had to give up their farms through it; and it was so hard for them to go away, and yet Simpson wouldn't agree to wait for the money. Oh, Charley, it is hard to see all these things done, and not be able to prevent it;" and the tears fairly rolled down poor Eva's cheeks as she recalled the sad scene of the tenants leaving some months before.

"Yes, it is sad," said Charley, with a deep-drawn sigh; "and yet we must believe that all these things are working for good for the ultimate good of all. Yes, we must believe, in the words of the poet,

> "'There is not one sere leaf,
> That flutters in the very deepest depths
> Of any dense, dark forest, which is not
> His special care; nor can we drop one tear
> Where He o'erlooks it: let us trust in Him.
> He first prepares with His unerring hand,
> Then measures out with His grand sleepless eyes
> Each cup of sorrow, given to better us,
> Till we are strengthened by Him for our load;
> And every sigh that pulses through the air
> Finds echoes in His heart—for "Jesus wept."'

There, Eva, what do you think of that?" he said, as he concluded.

"I like it very much—I believe it too; but still it is hard to think that aunt might be well, and the people about here so happy, and you learning under

Mr. Wainwright instead of being a poor clerk, if Richard was only different."

"Try to think that all is of God's arranging, dear," he said, with a scarcely perceptible sigh. "I try to think God is educating me for something, although not perhaps for what we intended."

"Yes, I try to keep fast hold of dear mamma's text, and believe fully that 'All things work together for good to them that love God;' but sometimes it is hard to do this when everything turns out so badly. Now this weather will almost ruin some of the poor people. The crops will be spoiled, and of course there will be no work hardly for the men, and they say it is all Richard's fault—not about the weather, but about so many of the men being out of work."

"Poor fellows, I wish I could help them; but I can't, and mustn't stay here long even to say a friendly word to them. I must be off again to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Eva; "where are you going?"

"To see Mr. Rington, and ask his influence on my behalf. He may be able to get me an appointment for India," aunt says.

"Oh, Charley," gasped Eva, "would you go to India?"

"If my path of duty lay in that direction. Don't you think I could be useful there as well as here?"

"Yes, but—"

"Don't trouble about it until the time comes,"

interrupted Charley; "it's never wise to borrow trouble." And then, anxious to turn the conversation, he said, "I shall be back before the fourteenth—my birthday—my twentieth birthday, you know," he added.

"Yes, your curiosity will soon be satisfied as to the contents of your box," said Eva, smiling.

CHAPTER XVII.

HAZLEWOOD IN REVOLT.

CHARLEY was detained longer in London by Mr. Rington than he had anticipated. He had great hopes of obtaining a good post in the civil service of India now, but the business progressed so slowly, that he had great fears of being able to get back to Hazlewood before the fourteenth, his deeply longed-for birthday. However, the matter was settled for him by the arrival of a letter from Eva on the twelfth, begging him to return at once, as Mrs. Etheridge was very ill.

Upon his arrival at the Hall the next day, she was better, but begged that he would not leave home again at present, as there had been some disturbances in the village. Late in the afternoon, Eva came in from her school looking very excited and anxious, and beckoning Charley to follow her, she went into the library.

"Has aunt told you of the disturbances that took place in the village yesterday and the day before?"

she said, closing the door and speaking under her breath.

"She told me something about these men that are out on strike, and the farm labourers getting up a row there. How frightened you look, Eva! what's the matter?"

"Why, Charley, somebody must have seen you come home to-day, and mistaken you for Richard, for the report has spread that the young squire has come home, and all the mob of men are coming up to the Hall to demand redress for their wrongs. Oh! Charley, what can we do? It will almost kill aunt—the sight of all those rough, fierce men; for they are fierce now," she added; "they've been drinking at the Lion all day."

"And they mean to come up here?"

"Yes. One of them sent a boy to fetch two or three who had gone to the Uplands, and he told me as he went up Oakwood Lane. Charley, what shall we do? for the doctor says aunt must not be excited."

"I'll go down to the gate and speak to them."

"You!" exclaimed Eva in a voice of terror. "Oh! don't you go, they might kill you; send James with a message."

"That would be simply ridiculous," said Charley, "for they would not listen to a word he said."

"What will you do?"

"I don't know, and I can't stop to think, for if they are not to come here and disturb aunt, I must be off

to meet them at the gate;" and taking up his hat from the table he prepared to go out. "Is Arthur and Augusta at home?" he said, stopping suddenly as he crossed the hall.

"No, they are both away, and not expected to return for a week," answered Eva.

Charley nodded. "Go to aunt," he said, "and don't let her see your agitation," and he went out. Down through the grove of grand old trees he went with hasty strides. Just before he reached the gate, James cames up on horseback. He had been to carry a note for his mistress to some distance, and was now returning.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Charles," he said pleasantly; thankful to see Charley there at such a time, for rumours had reached his ears of the expected riot, and he dismounted to secure the gates.

"No, don't do that," said Charley, noticing the action; "set them wide open, and leave me your horse."

"Are you going out, sir?" asked James, in a tone of alarm.

"Not beyond the gates," answered Charley, and he mounted the mud-bespattered horse as he spoke, turning its head once more towards the gate. But he went a few yards beyond the gate out into the road, where, from his elevated seat, he could obtain a better view of the soaked fields and rotting hay. Yes, there was no concealing the fact from himself, ruin and

devastation was evident enough in those deserted fields, and still the rain came down most persistently hour after hour, day after day, driving the last remnant of hope away from the heart of the most sanguine.

"Poor Hazlewood! poor people!" said Charley, half aloud, when at the same moment the breeze brought the sound of distant voices in an indistinct manner.

"They are really coming then, the foolish fellows," said Charley in a disappointed tone, still speaking to himself and backing his horse to the gate; he bowed his head as he gathered the reins firmly in his hand, and sent up one agonizing prayer for help and strength from his Father in heaven to carry him through this trying hour.

A few moments more, and round a bend in the road came a motley crowd of men and boys, the tag-rag and riff-raff of Haycroft bringing up the rear. They uttered a loud yell which made Charley shudder, and quickened their pace as they saw him. But as they came closer to the young horseman, and caught sight of the bright fair hair and genial open countenance, their steps slackened again; and one or two would gladly have turned back, but for their companions. Truth to tell, the few respectable ones felt somewhat ashamed of themselves now. They had expected to meet Richard, and were fully prepared to upbraid him for all they had suffered at the hands of the agent, but they were not prepared to meet Charley, whom they had learned to respect and love for his kindness to

them and their children, and they heartily wished themselves back in the village, or anywhere but in their present company. But there was no turning back now, for fear of the laughs and jokes of their companions, but they contrived to shrink back as much as possible, leaving a few of the factory men to take the lead and face Charley.

"Well, my men," said Charley, speaking courteously, but maintaining his position at the gate, "what business brings you here in such numbers?"

"Our business be with the young squire," said their leader, a big burly factory man.

"But the young squire is not here—has not been home for some time," said Charley.

"It's no use throwing that chaff to us old birds," said the man with a scornful laugh; "at all events we've made up our minds for a walk to Hazlewood Hall this afternoon, so stand aside, young sir, and let us pass."

"I tell you my cousin is not at home, and there is no one at Hazlewood Hall but my sister and my aunt, who is ill." The mob had come to a halt now in front of the gates, which stood wide open, Charley mounting guard in the centre.

"It's no use telling us that tale, you see, sir, for the young squire was seen to come in at these 'ere gates to-day."

"Then you doubt my word," said Charley with flashing eyes.

"No, no, Mr. Charles," spoke up two or three voices from the back.

"I assure you it was altogether a mistake in supposing you had seen the squire. I arrived here this morning, but he has not been for some time."

"Well, we've come to be righted, and we'll have our rights," sulkily responded the leader.

"My friends," said Charley, addressing the crowd without noticing this man, "if I had the power, your grievances would have been redressed before this, but I have not; I am poor—poorer than some of you are, and therefore I can only tell you how sorry I am for you in your present trouble." A tear gleamed in his eye as he spoke, and his voice grew husky, which testified to the men, even if they had not known the speaker, that these were no idle words that he spoke. After clearing his voice, Charley went on. "I was sent for yesterday to come home to my aunt, Mrs. Etheridge, the mother of that dear little girl, who proved herself your friend some years ago. I found her very ill, unable to bear any noise or excitement, and was fetched from her room to hear that it was your purpose to visit the Hall, and demand redress for your wrongs—wrongs I admit some of them are, but which would never have been suffered had we the power to alter it. I felt at once that such a thing at this time would endanger my aunt's life, and would not—could not serve any purpose to better your condition; I therefore came out to meet and tell you this

beforehand. Of course, if you persist in coming, you must come, but I warn you of the consequences. As you are aware I am not able to resist your force, I would not even have the park gates closed against you; but now that I have told you this, it would be a mean, cowardly, unmanly act to disturb the peace of a poor defenceless lady."

Thus appealed to, the mob seemed divided in their opinion, as to whether it would be best to carry out their original project, or return peaceably to their homes. At length a voice spoke out.

"But she's the squire's mother!"

"And Maud Etheridge's likewise," said Charley quietly.

This evidently had some weight with the crowd, but still they did not seem inclined to disperse, and Charley did not move from the spot. There he sat, calm and unmoved upon the impatient horse, facing the surging undecided mob as they reviled the whole race bearing the name of Etheridge, mixed with curses loud and deep against the last their present landlord.

"Your name isn't Etheridge, is it, young sir?" said the leader, after some time had been spent in wrangling amongst themselves.

Charley shook his head. This evidently gave some sort of satisfaction to the man, and he seemed more willing to retire as he shouted,

"There never was an Etheridge good for anything!"

"No, there never was," repeated several voices.

"Is little Maud so soon forgotten then?" said her cousin reproachfully.

"No, sir, she was an angel, and so is your sister, Miss Eva," said a rough voice from the middle of the crowd.

"Ah! that she is; she's the only blessing we've got now," said another.

"Three cheers for Miss Eva," shouted an urchin, who was one of her scholars, and had come to see the fun. The youngsters took it up, and were soon joined by their elders, and such a genuine hearty shout went up from these stout, sturdy fellows, that Charley feared it would be heard at the Hall and cause some alarm there.

"Now, my friends," he said as the shout subsided, "I must ask you to let me go to my sister. I left her in a great fright, and if your loud cheer for her should have reached her ears, she will be much more frightened."

"Frightened of we! exclaimed a huge man of six feet, in a tone of surprise; "let us come and shew the young lady we wouldn't hurt a hair of her head, nor anybody belonging to her."

"Yes, let us come and give one cheer for our own dear Miss Eva." The smaller fry capered in delight at the suggestion.

"You forget my aunt," said Charley.

"You're afraid to trust us, young sir!" said the leader.

"Not at all," answered Charley, "on the contrary, I am sorry I cannot afford you the gratification of thus evincing your respect and esteem for her. I assure you she feels for you very deeply at this time, and I thank you for what you have done, which proves she is not forgotten by you."

"Well, sir, if we wait quiet-like here, will you go and fetch her that we may just give her one cheer?" This was said by one of the boys, but the wish was instantly joined by the majority of the men, that Charley knew not how to refuse.

"If I fetch her, then you will go quietly to your homes?"

"Yes," shouted a number of voices, and Charley turned his horse's head, and galloped up the avenue. "He hasn't shut the gates" he heard several say as he moved off, and looking back he saw one or two well-known forms had ranged themselves in front to keep out all intruders.

Upon reaching the house, he found all the servants gathered in the hall in a state of suppressed excitement. A look of relief came into their faces as Charley rode up, for one or two had ventured out to peep at the mob, and seeing them gathered round the gate in such strong numbers, entertained great fears for his safety, so that it was a considerable relief to see him back once more.

Charley jumped from his horse, and throwing the reins to the groom, said, "Don't take him away; get

the pony ready for Miss Eva. Quick!" he added as he ran into the hall among the affrighted servants.

"Oh, Charley! are you hurt?" said Eva, coming to his side pale with fright, and trembling from head to foot.

"No, you little goose, who would hurt me, do you think?"

"Those men. We heard such a noise a little while ago."

"Your friends," said Charley, "and they have sent me to fetch you to receive another ovation. I tried to spare you, but it was of no use, and so you must screw up your courage and face this mob before they will go home."

"Me! Charley; I can't," gasped Eva.

"Mary, fetch Miss Eva's things for riding, she will put them on in the library. Your pony is being saddled," he added as he drew her into the room.

"Charley, I can't do this," said Eva in a tone of terror, "and you ought not to ask me."

"But, Eva dear, it seemed almost my only chance of getting rid of them; the mention of your name turned the scale in our favour, and then they wanted to come up and cheer you. That I could not allow upon aunt's account, but you can ride down with me to the gates, and receive this their only mode of shewing their gratitude."

Convinced that this would spare her aunt annoyance and suffering, she consented, and by the time her pony

was saddled and brought round, she was dressed and ready to mount.

As they neared the gates, Charley saw that the volunteer guard still maintained their position, but when they saw the brother and sister they stepped back, and then there ensued such a deafening cheer, that Eva feared her aunt would hear it.

She bowed her head in graceful acknowledgment as she reined in her pony beside her brother, but no sooner had the one shout died away than another and another arose, to the infinite delight of the juvenile members of the mob, who were many of them Eva's scholars. Charley felt very proud as he glanced down at the happy excited face of Eva, and he thought how well she must have fulfilled her mother's wishes, to be thus hailed at such a time of universal sorrow. At length he ventured to put a stop to the cheering and shouting by thanking them in Eva's name, and then reminded them of their promise to return quietly to their own homes.

"Yes, sir, we'll go now, and thank you for not letting us go to frighten the young lady," said the leader; "you're not frightened now, Miss!" he added, addressing Eva.

"No," she answered pleasantly, "not now."

"No, you're not one o' them Etheridges; they're a hateful lot, the whole race of 'em."

Charley saw they were getting on dangerous ground again, and so taking off his hat, he proposed three

cheers for Miss Elton's school and scholars, many of whom had ventured to creep to the front. This was of course heartily responded to by all, Charley included, and replacing his hat on his head as soon as the last hurrah sounded, he motioned to Eva to turn, and again bowing her thanks, they wheeled their horses round and cantered up the avenue again.

"Will they go home now, do you think?" asked Eva, a shade of anxiety still in her tone.

"What, you've not got over your fear yet? Oh! yes, they will go home now, poor fellows. I do pity them," he added, "for under Richard's exactions and Simpson's extortions, there is little hope of things being much better. Oh! Eva, what a great responsibility riches and power are, and how very few ever use them aright. When I think of it, sometimes I feel thankful I am poor, for it's better to have the will without the power, than the power without the will, to do good with the riches God entrusts to our care."

"Do you remember your wishing to be very rich when you were a little boy?" asked Eva.

"Yes. Somehow it was always my boyish dream to be the possessor of a large estate."

"And I have often wished it too, lately; wished that you and Richard could change places."

"Thank you," he said smiling, "but I would rather not consent to that bargain."

"Of course I don't mean you to be as Richard is, but for you to have Richard's money and be yourself still. I do wish it could be so."

"Best not, Eva; God knows best what is good for us, and at present it seems that India will be the best place for me."

"Oh! Charley," said Eva with blanched cheeks, "is it settled?"

"Almost," he replied with a sigh.

"But, Charley, you promised uncle that you would never leave aunt and the others."

"Yes, that is what troubles me," with another deep-drawn sigh; "I want to know what I ought to do in the matter, what would be right to do. You see, aunt does not like me being at Mr. Wilson's, and I felt at last that I was wasting my time there, and what I have learned is not likely to be of any use to me. And now there seems no other chance for me but this appointment for India. I wish I could know beyond the possibility of a doubt what would be right for me to do. I don't wish to follow my own will, I want to do just as God pleases this time; I never felt so much that I wished God to choose for me as I do in this matter. Will you pray for me, Eva dear, that I may be guided aright? To-morrow is my birthday, the next I must go to London, and then the matter will be settled I expect."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DISCOVERY.

THE following morning immediately after breakfast, Charley went up to his room to open the all-important box, that had cost so many anxious surmisings. The last of these, and the one firmly held to now, was that it contained some rare old plate or jewels, heirlooms that had come into the possession of his parents, which they wished to be handed down carefully to future generations, and, for greater security, adopted this mode of committing them to his care.

Now that the time had come that he might open the box, he did not feel half the eagerness he had formerly experienced when looking at it, and he sat gazing at the seals, although they had been looked at hundreds of times before, instead of immediately cutting the string and examining the contents.

At length the string was cut and the lid lifted, but who could describe Charley's astonishment when, instead of the old-fashioned plate and jewels he had expected, there lay a little soiled red morocco shoe, with a white

sock tucked inside, an infant's silver-belled coral rattle, and a dirty faded blue ribbon. Lifting these out, after gazing at them in speechless amazement for some minutes, he came to the little white worked frock. He looked as though he expected to come upon the baby a little lower down, and if a little hand or foot had appeared, or a weak cry sounded from the bottom of the box, he could scarcely have felt more bewildered amazement than he experienced as he lifted out one article after another until a complete set of infant wearing apparel lay spread before him on the table. He was so bewildered at first with the strange sight, that he failed to see a book lying at the bottom.

"What can it mean?" he said at length, half aloud, taking up each little dainty garment with his thumb and finger, and shaking it to see if there were not some papers concealed which would explain the mystery.

At length he spied the book, and opening it he saw a letter directed to himself in Mrs. Elton's hand-writing. It commenced—

MY DEAR DEAR CHARLEY,

My truly loved, fondly cherished boy, I feel sure that the news (if you have not heard it before) I am about to impart will give you pain; and yet by the time this is read you will have grown up, and ought to know it. Charley, my darling, you have been dear to me as a son—dear as my own son could have been had he lived; but—the painful words must be written—*you are not.*—"

Charley could read no further than these last three words—"*you are not.*" The paper fell from his hand, and the room seemed to spin round with him. "I am not," he murmured—"not Charles Henry Elton, not Eva's brother, not my mam—no, she says she was not my mamma"—for his eye had caught the next words in the letter. "And so Arthur can't be my cousin. Who am I? who can I be?"—and the horror of being a nameless, unowned individual seemed to burst upon him, sweeping away by its violence every other feeling. "I have no right to anything—not even the honest name I bear," he said, covering his face with his hands, and pacing the room in his agony of spirit. "Oh mamma! mamma! why did you not tell me of this before?—why let me grow up, glorying in a name I had no right to bear!" His old tumultuous passion seemed for a time to have taken fast hold upon him, and he walked up and down the room without heeding the letter lying on the floor, or the tiny garments heaped upon the table. Up and down he strode, without even a wish to unravel the mystery, or look further into the letter.

How long he thus walked he never knew; but at length his steps were arrested by a gentle knock at the door. He stopped his walk then to ask who it was.

"It's me, Charley," came in Eva's sweet voice; and the thought that she, whom he was so proud to call "sister," was not *his* sister, went like a dagger to his heart.

Recovering from his emotion in a minute, he said, "I cannot let you in just now, Eva; I will be down by-and-bye."

"But here is a telegram from Mr. Rington; will you see whether it requires an answer before the boy goes back?"

By the time the door was opened, Charley's determination not to admit Eva was altered, and as he took the telegram from her hand, he asked her to come in. Eva gazed in speechless surprise at the open box and the baby habiliments strewed on the table.

"The plate and jewels," said Charley, with a feeble attempt to smile, noticing her look. Then putting the telegram in his pocket, he said, "I shall not be required in London for a week or two; this Indian business has come to a standstill. Will you say there is no answer, and come back to me at once?"

When Eva returned, Charley was reading the letter, which contained an account of how he was found in the old boat, dressed in the clothes now lying on the table. It referred to the book—Captain Elton's journal—for a further confirmation of the statement, and which also contained the names and addresses of the sailors and passengers present at the time. Mrs. Elton further stated that every effort had been made to discover his parents, but the search proving fruitless, they had thought it best to keep him in ignorance of the real state of the case until he had grown up, lest it should unsettle his mind, and produce a feeling of morbid jealousy and a wish to leave them.

"Wise, loving mamma," exclaimed Charley; "but oh that I had known it sooner!" Then looking up, he saw Eva's bewildered gaze bent upon him, and without a moment's thought he said hastily, "Eva, dear, it's all a mistake—I'm not your brother."

The words so suddenly, sadly uttered, fell like a thunderbolt upon the poor girl: "Charley! Charley!" she gasped, turning deathly pale, "What have I done?"

"You, darling!" exclaimed Charley, catching her hand; "oh, Eva, forgive me for frightening you: I am so unhappy;" and try as he would, he could not force back the hot, blinding tears.

The sight of Charley's unwonted agitation restored Eva sooner than anything else could have done, and the next minute her arm was round his neck, and she was trying, as she had so often done years before, to soothe him into composure. But her caresses seemed to make him worse at first, and with gentle force he tried to put her from him, saying he had no right to her love now he knew he was not her brother. But Eva would not be repulsed, and without questioning him at present, she said it made no difference; brother or no brother, she should love him just the same.

After a time he grew more composed, and passing his arm around the slender waist, as if fearing to lose her, he told her all he knew—all he had discovered upon opening the box. "And they are your clothes?" said Eva, pointing to the table where the discoloured linen lay.

"Yes, the things I wore when I was picked up. Oh, Eva, if I could only remember that time—remember who my parents were!" The words were spoken with such sorrowful earnestness that Eva hastened to check them.

"Never mind, Charley; it cannot matter much to you now who your parents were; mamma has—"

"Not mind, Eva!" interrupted Charley; "you forget that I have no right now to anything I have always thought my own—no right even to the name I bear. No, I am not Charles Henry Elton; I am a nameless impostor, not worthy—"

"Charley, Charley, you shall not talk like this; I will not hear it!"

"But, Eva, I cannot help feeling it very very much —almost as a disgrace," he added. "You don't know what I have gone through this last hour, thinking of it all—thinking that I am nameless—that no one can tell me what name I have the right to be called by. Oh, it is very hard!"

"All things work together for good to them that love God," whispered Eva.

"I could believe that a little while ago, but now"— and he looked bitterly at the open box and the baby wearing apparel—"all these things are against me."

"Oh! don't speak so despairingly," said Eva; and for the first time she took up some of the things to examine them. "How funny!" she said, "these things are marked C. H. E. You might be able to discover who your parents were even now."

"Impossible, if the search failed years ago," moodily responded Charley. "What I am in doubt about now is whether to inform aunt—Mrs. Etheridge I mean;" and he coloured.

"Would it be wise, Charley, in her present state of health?"

"Scarcely: and yet I shall be leaving for India shortly. Yes, I shall go now; this has quite settled the matter. I could not bear to see the place where I have been living as an impostor all these years, and to feel that I had no longer the right to call her aunt. And what will Arthur say?"

"Poor Arthur! Oh, Charley dear, this is a great trouble." The thought of his departure made it the "great trouble" to her.

"Now, Eva, we must decide about whether to tell aunt at once, or not. If she is not to be told, I must leave at once for London. I could not stay here another day as her nephew, knowing what I do."

"But, Charley—"

"Eva, I am resolved. Aunt knows nothing of this telegram I have received, and expects I shall go back to-morrow; therefore my going to-night will not cause any surprise. It must be so."

"But I was thinking whether it would not be better to tell her at once," said Eva.

"No, no, it would not do, weak as she is. If she is strong enough to bear the disclosure, I will tell her before I leave England; if not, I will write, and you must explain afterwards."

"I should like aunt to know at once," murmured Eva.

"No, I think it will be best not to tell her just now," said Charley, decidedly.

"Aunt is better to-day," said Eva, pleadingly; "she walked down to the drawing-room without assistance this morning."

"No, Eva, she must not be told yet;" and he moved towards the table to replace the things in the box. He was just folding the little delicate muslin frock, when a knock was heard at the door, and without a moment's thought Eva said, "Come in."

"Eva!" Charley uttered in consternation; but the warning was too late, Mrs. Etheridge had entered the room. Charley threw a paper over the things he was folding, and tried to look unembarrassed as he handed his aunt a chair; but she noticed his pale, agitated looks.

"What is the matter, Charley—have I disturbed you?" she said. "I suppose you have been satisfying your curiosity at last," as she glanced towards the table. The next moment she had rushed across the room to pick up the coral rattle, that had unnoticed fallen down, and in doing so the paper was pushed on one side, and the whole lay open to her astonished gaze. Seizing the little shoe, with dilated eyes, she gasped, "Where—when—how did you get this?"

The effect of this sudden extraordinary agitation in Mrs. Etheridge made them forget everything but that

she must be calmed; and Charley, though still agitated himself, drew her into a chair, saying, soothingly, "I will tell you all about it by-and-bye."

"By-and-bye," repeated Mrs. Etheridge; I must know now, I must see all those things—my baby's things," and she pushed Charley aside and went to the table. With trembling earnestness she turned over and examined each article, still holding the shoe and rattle, which she repeatedly kissed. At length she came to the soiled blue ribbon—"His sash," she exclaimed; "yes, I remember it all so well, I tied it just before he went out, and afterwards picked up his shoe in the hall;" this was said more to herself than her petrified auditors, whom she seemed to have forgotten, for without noticing them she abruptly left the room, they silently following her. They saw her go to her dressing case, and from a secret drawer take out another red shoe, the exact counterpart of the one found in Charley's box; then suddenly turning and seeing them watching her, she said fiercely, "Where is my baby, my darling Cecil!" and she seized Charley by the shoulder, and shook him with all her feeble strength.

Eva and Charley looked at each other wonderingly, Eva fearing that her aunt's mind was affected.

"Tell me, tell me where he is," said Mrs. Etheridge, still holding fast the little red shoes.

"Aunt, I don't know anything," stammered Charley, and Eva returned to the room they had left, intending

to put away all the things that had caused this strange agitating scene. But this purpose was frustrated by her aunt.

"No, no, you shall not take them away, Charley is going to tell me all about them;" and the poor lady sunk into a chair and burst into tears.

"Let me tell you another time, aunt; you are not strong enough now," said Charley.

"No, I must hear it now I am strong enough, and I am quite calm and collected;" and indeed she seemed much more composed now. Eva made a feeble attempt to persuade her aunt to postpone hearing Charley's startling disclosure, but it was of no use; and he had, therefore, to tell what he had that morning discovered, that he was not Charles Elton as he had always believed, but had been picked up when about six months old far out at sea, and adopted by Captain Elton.

"And the clothes!" gasped Mrs. Etheridge.

"Were mine!"

"My darling! my baby! my long lost Cecil!" The last words were faintly murmured, for Mrs. Etheridge had thrown herself in Charley's arms, and fainted from the over-excitement.

It was well that Mrs. Etheridge's state needed all their attention just now, for the startling revelations of the last few hours seemed almost like a dream to the two most intimately concerned—Charley and Eva—and they could not yet believe but that it was all some

hideous dream, from which they should presently awaken to find things in their original state.

Mrs. Etheridge's first words upon regaining consciousness were, "Bring Cecil to me. Where has he gone?"

"Charley has gone down stairs, aunt," replied Eva. "Are you better now?"

"Yes, only I want my boy, my Cecil. Tell him to come to me, Eva."

Charley, or Cecil as we must henceforth call him, was soon by her bedside.

"Are you better now, aunt," he said gently.

"My darling, say mamma! I am your mamma if they were your clothes," she added. "Fetch them, Eva, dear," she said, turning towards her; and while she turned them over and looked lovingly at the C. H. E. which her fingers had traced years before, Charley read the letter narrating the full account of his rescue.

The evidence was conclusive to Mrs. Etheridge, backed as it was by the shoe, sash, and rattle.

"I see it now," she said, as she looked at the initials on the rattle, "C. H. E. would stand for Charles Henry Elton, as well as for Cecil Harcourt Etheridge; how blind we must all have been not to notice your likeness to Arthur and Maud." And so with a look of glad content in her eyes, the lady lay gazing at her son, and talking until she grew weary and went to sleep.

Her first words upon awaking were, "Richard must be sent for; you are the eldest, and therefore the squire of Hazlewood."

"But, aunt—mamma, would it not be better to wait awhile, at least until you are better?"

"No, no; Sharp and Bryce know all about it. That poor woman in Oakwood Lane confessed that you were not dead—drowned as she had told us at the time you were lost, but that she had placed you in a boat asleep while she went for a walk, and upon her return the boat was no where to be seen, which so frightened her that she fell down in a fit, and was with difficulty rescued from a watery grave. This fit, she told us, occurred while she had the baby in her arms, and that you both fell together off the jetty stairs, whither she had gone in search of the boat. Her story was, of course, fully believed until she confessed the truth to your dear papa, a short time before his death. Sharp and Bryce have all the particulars, and you must write to them at once."

"When you are stronger, mamma." But this would not satisfy the lady, and so the lawyers were written to at once upon the strange, startling business of establishing his claim to the name of Etheridge, and the title of "Squire of Hazlewood."

"Eva, I can't understand it—I can't realize it yet," said Cecil, after the lawyers had left. "Sharp and Bryce say everything is clear and conclusive, and that Richard must be informed immediately, that he has no claim upon the estate."

"Oh! Charley, I am so glad—Cecil I mean," she added with an arch smile.

"No, no, not Cecil from you—not at least when we are by ourselves, with the others I must be Cecil, mamma wishes it, but to you I am Charley still, and shall ever be so. And now about the estate. I don't know that I shall take that. My father's name will satisfy me. If my claim to that is settled, the rest may go; but I could not rest satisfied without that being made quite clear.—No, I could not bear the thought of being nameless."

"But, Charley, it would not be right for you not to take the estate and title the way Richard is acting."

"You think not. You see," he went on, "Richard has always been taught to expect Hazlewood, which I have not, and, therefore, it would be very hard for him to resign it."

"It might do him good," suggested Eva; "and if not, for your own sake, at least, for that of others, you ought to take the estate, if you have the right to it."

This argument was unanswerable, and after some further consideration he agreed that Richard should be written to upon the important business, which affected the well-being of so many beyond the family it most intimately concerned.

After some little delay, Cecil's right to the name of Etheridge was clearly and legally established, and Cecil Harcourt Etheridge now appeared where Charles Henry Elton had formerly been written. But though

his title to the name was thus established, Richard scornfully refused to surrender the estate, and it was not until threatened with a lawsuit that he would listen to reason upon the subject. The lawyers represented to him that it was impossible to withstand his brother's claim, and in the event of a lawsuit, and the decision being against him—which it would inevitably be—he would be required to refund all he had received since assuming the right of master.

These considerations had great weight with Richard, and after a time he consented to resign, though what he was to do he did not know. He refused to go to Hazlewood at first—declared he would never see his brother—never own him as a brother; but stern necessity compelled him to reconsider this determination, and after a few weeks had elapsed, he was glad to go there, in the hope of getting some help towards doing something for himself.

He was not one whit the less surly when he appeared there: indeed, it soon appeared that he considered himself an injured person, and thought he ought to be made much of by his family, forgetting that his rival, as he chose to consider Cecil, belonged to the same family, and had, moreover, won the love and affection due to a brother long before he ever thought of being more than a cousin.

The events so intimately concerning all connected with Hazlewood had been kept as secret as possible, Cecil not wishing the change of landlords to be

known until he could rightfully claim the title of squire, which would be upon his attaining his majority. This would be in the following December, a few days before Christmas—Mrs. Elton fixing the fourteenth of July for his birthday, because it was the day on which he was found. Whether he would have succeeded in keeping it secret so long is a matter of doubt; but Richard's arrival hastened its disclosure.

He had been seen on his way to the Hall, and this time the man who saw him took care to satisfy himself and one or two others that they had not been deceived this time. Disaffection towards their landlord still prevailed among the tenantry, and Richard had not been at home many hours before news was brought that there was another riot, and that the mob were on their way to the Hall.

"*Another* riot!" said Mrs. Etheridge, turning very pale, "has there been one before?"

"Yes, aunt, a little while ago—while you were ill," answered Eva. "Charley stopped it then, and he is the only one that can do it now;" and she flew off in search of him.

The crowd were pouring in at the gate as he reached it, hissing and groaning in their impotent rage. Cecil drew rein in front of them, and again demanded their business. It was the old cry—they wanted the young squire. A mischievous smile parted their new landlord's lips as he asked, "Well, and what do you want with me?"

"We don't want nothing of you, sir, but we've seen the young squire to-day, and no mistake, and we don't mean to be baulked of going to the Hall a second time."

"We wants our rights, and our rights we'll have," said another.

"Yes, we've seen the squire sure enough this time, Mr. Charles, so please stand aside and let us pass."

But "Mr. Charles" did not move; he rather enjoyed the fun of teasing them a little; and, moreover, he had promised to wait until Eva joined him before declaring his important secret. Yes, he felt that this hour of his triumph must be shared by his life-long companion, his sweet little counsellor and sister-cousin. At this moment Eva appeared in sight, coming down the avenue on her pony at a smart canter, radiant with smiles at the thought of the surprise awaiting the tumultuous crowd at the gate. The sight of her evidently displeased them, and one of them said, "Ah, we don't mean to be kept from seeing the squire even by that dear young lady. Stand aside, Mr. Charles; we wouldn't hurt a hair of your heads, but we will see the squire." And Eva coming up at this moment, Cecil shouted, "Well, look at him then!"

The men gazed round, expecting to see Richard; and Charley, determined to bewilder them a little more before declaring the facts of the case—"I mean it," he said; "here he sits on horseback, waiting to hear your complaints."

"This is no joking matter, Mr. Charles; we bean't joking, I can tell you."

"Neither am I," answered the young horseman. Then dropping his light tone, he said, "My friends, what I am telling you is perfectly true. Circumstances have lately come to light which prove that I am the late squire's eldest son, and Mr. Richard has now resigned the estate to me." Here his speech was interrupted by the shouts of his auditors.

"There's no mistake about it?" asked one, as these somewhat subsided; "you're really and truly our squire?"

"Yes," answered Cecil; and there arose another cheer, making the park reverberate again and again. "And now for the business that brought you here," he said, as soon as he could make himself heard: "I promise—"

"We don't want promises from you," interrupted a score of voices; "we know you'll do what's right by us, and we'll wait till such time as you can do it."

"Thank you," said Cecil, fervently, deeply touched with the confidence thus implied: "I trust—." But again his voice was drowned by the hearty cheering with which they testified their joy at the news imparted; and seeing it would be useless to try to say anything more, he raised his hat, and, bowing, turned his horse's head, and left them to carry back the news to the village, and rejoice the hearts of those who had not joined in this second Hazlewood riot.

As they rode back, Eva brimful of happiness, and Cecil grave and thoughtful, he suddenly said, "I see it all now."

"What?" asked Eva.

"Why that I have had the best training I could have had for such a position as I shall have to fill."

"I have been thinking you ought to have gone to college," said Eva.

"Yes, and I suppose I should have done so if *man* had any will in the matter. But, Eva, God has trained me for this—I see it all clearly now; and His training must be the best. Think now, how could I sympathize with these poor struggling farmers in these hard times if I had not been poor, and known what it was to struggle myself?"

"But is sympathy necessary, Charley?" asked Eva.

"Yes, if they are to be helped and improved, and their prejudices overcome. Dear mamma's text is amply fulfilled—'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' Dear mamma! I wish she could have been with us now."

"Then your training would probably have been different," put in Eva.

"Yes, very likely it would; so that even her death is one of the 'all things' that has worked, I trust, for the good of dear old Hazlewood. This must be my last day of idleness; to-morrow I must begin some of the business connected with the estate. The confidence those poor fellows have in me has made me feel the responsibility more weighty than ever."

"You will not disappoint it?"

"God helping me, I will not. You must help me in my work, Eva. It will be hard, uphill work for some time, but I have learned to work, and so it will not come amiss to me."

"Charley, I should like a school built; I have so many scholars now."

"I will have schools, and master and mistress, as soon as possible," replied Charley; "but our improvements must not be pushed on too rapidly though," he added, "the funds necessary will not be forthcoming just yet."

"What is Richard going to do?" asked Eva.

"Accept the appointment for India I was to have had," answered Cecil. "He seemed glad of the chance when it was mentioned; and, as you said, I do believe the necessity of working for himself will greatly improve him."

By the end of the following summer, various alterations, repairs, and improvements had been completed at Hazlewood, and foremost among these were the schools for boys and girls, erected in the village, and called the "Elton Schools," in affectionate remembrance of the name borne so many years by the squire. They formed together a pretty neat building, the only ornament being a small marble slab in front, on which was engraved the words "ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD."

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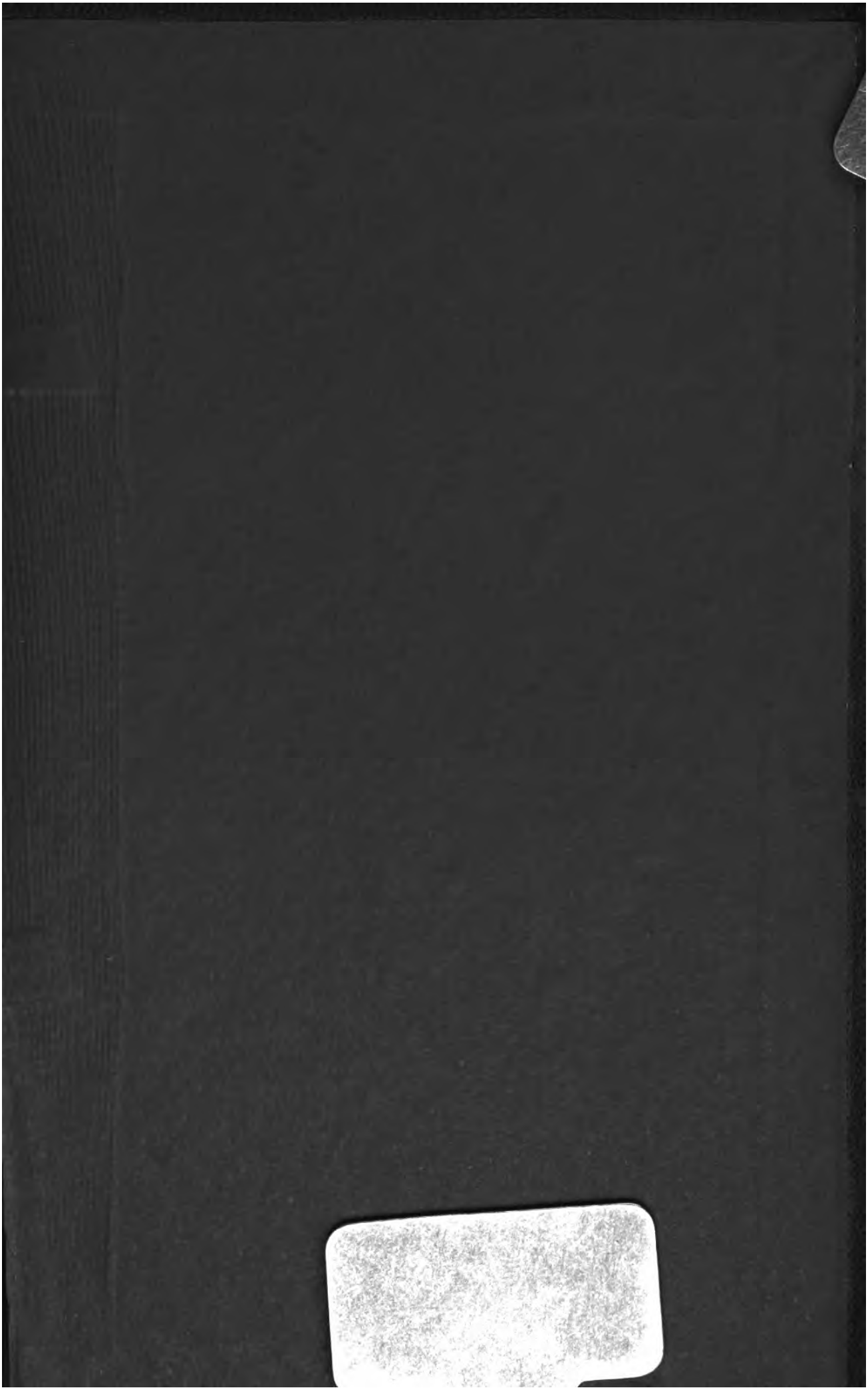
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