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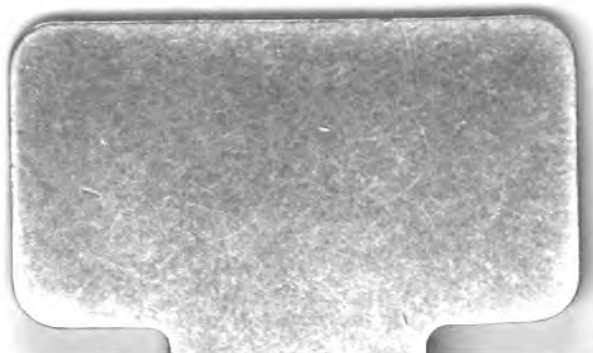
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AGNES AND ELIZA.

46.

1545.





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AGNES AND ELIZA;

OR,

HUMILITY.

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CHAPTER I.

“Do not have the shutters shut just yet, if you please, aunt; let me watch at the window one quarter of an hour longer: I am sure Agnes must be here by that time.”

“My dear Eliza, you have been looking out of that window half-an-hour already, and you may yet have a good while to wait; come, let Martha draw the curtains, and do you help me to wind this skein of silk,

which has got sadly twisted. We shall be sure to hear directly the chaise stops."

Such was the way in which Mrs. Denham and her niece waited the arrival of Agnes, the sister of Eliza, from whom she had been parted for what seemed to them both a long time. Eliza tried in vain, whilst holding her aunt's skein, to remain still ; she was so full of the thought of seeing Agnes. Presently ceasing to talk, and listening very attentively, she cried, " There, there, aunt : that is the chaise, I am sure." She ran into the hall, and soon the two sisters were in each other's arms. The next minute Eliza was leading Agnes towards Mrs. Denham, to introduce her to that lady, whom she never remembered to have seen before. " This is Agnes, aunt, come after all. There, Agnes ; you have seen aunt Denham at last."

Mrs. Denham drew the child nearer, and gave her a kiss. " And how did you leave your grandmama ?" she asked ; " not the better, I am afraid, for having to part with you : but she will be so, I trust, by and by. And now I am sure that you must be quite ready for some tea ; or at least, that you will

be, when you are a little less cold. So stand by the fire, and warm yourself a few minutes; I dare say you are tired of sitting."

Though the joy of the sisters at meeting was great, that of Agnes was a good deal damped, because she had just left a very kind grandmama, Mrs. Shaen. When the servant who had driven her over in the chaise came in to ask if Mrs. Denham had any orders for him to take back to his mistress, the little girl could scarcely prevent crying: happily for her, however, the evening was short; for Mrs. Denham, thinking that Agnes might possibly be tired, and that the children would like to be together, sent them both to bed early.

And there we will leave Agnes and Eliza to rest, that I may tell you, my young readers, something more about them. I dare say you would like to know how old these little girls were, and how tall they were, and what they were like; all this, therefore, if you will wait patiently, you shall hear.

Agnes and Eliza were twins. They had lost both their parents when they were quite babies, and had since then lived with Mrs. Shaen, their grandmama. This lady, was a

very good and kind person, and loved these little ones most tenderly. Their mother, Mrs. Graham, had been the only daughter of Mrs. Shaen; at her death, she had given up her infants to the care of their grandmama, who had, from that time, watched over them with the greatest affection, and they, in return, loved her as a parent. Westcote, the village in Somersetshire where she lived, was a very pretty place, and there, under their grandmama's roof, the first years of childhood were happily spent by the two sisters; more happily, indeed, by Agnes than by Eliza, the reason of which you shall hear presently.

Now it happened, when these little girls were about nine years old, that Mrs. Shaen's health, which had always till then been remarkably good, began to fail; she became subject to violent headaches, which often confined her to her room; and, even when free from these, she was not able to walk out with her grandchildren, nor to teach them, as she had done before.

So, after going on in this way for some months, she began to feel that it would be better for Agnes and Eliza to leave her, at

least for a little while; and, just as she was thinking about this, Mrs. Denham, an aunt of the little girls, as you have heard, though no relation to Mrs. Shaen, came to settle in that part of the country. Before this, she had lived a long way off, in the north of England, and had not seen her nieces since they were old enough to remember her. Now, however, that she was nearer to them, on hearing of their grandmama's ill health, she wrote and offered to receive Agnes and Eliza into her house for the present. The proposal was gladly accepted, and it was fixed that Mrs. Denham should come over and spend a few days at Westcote, and then that the children should return with her to her home at Barrow. But several things occurred to prevent this, till at last Mrs. Shaen resolved to wait no longer, but to send Agnes and Eliza to their aunt in her pony-chaise. As she could not make up her mind to part with both at once, Eliza went first, and Agnes in about ten days, joined her. How she was received by Mrs. Denham, and how the sisters met, you have already heard.

But I have not yet told you, as I promised

to do, about the appearance of these little girls. They were now between nine and ten, and as tall as those of that age usually are. Being twins, they a good deal resembled one another : they were of the same height and size, and had hair and eyes of the same dark colour. In some other ways, too, they were alike : they were both lively and affectionate, though rather backward for their age. Yet there was a difference between them ; and it may help you, my readers, to understand the reason of this difference, if I tell you one or two things which took place when Agnes and Eliza were quite young children, living with their grandmama at Westcote.

It happened, then,—to go back a little in my story,—when they were both about seven years old, that a cousin of theirs, named Mary Rankin, was returning for her first holidays from a school at some distance from her home, the road to which lay near Westcote, and Mrs. Shaen wished the child to spend a few days with her on her way. Agnes and Eliza were very glad to have a companion, and many a merry game of play did they enjoy with her, for they were allowed holidays during this visit, and, in-

stead of their usual lessons, they used to read some interesting book all together. But one morning, Mrs. Shaen said that she should like to see how her little friend had been getting on at school. So she bade the three children sit down, and write a copy which she would set them. Eliza and her sister, however, were chiefly busied in watching their cousin; and so, when their writing was finished, the letters were very uneven and ugly. "My dears," said their grandmama, as she looked at them, "how is this? I know you can make better strokes than these. I fear you have been sadly inattentive. Come, I will set you a fresh copy, and I shall hope to see it better done."

Presently Mary brought her writing.

"Ah, that is very nice," said Mrs. Shaen. "I see you have been a good little girl, and have taken pains. If you continue to do the same at school, you will soon find that you improve, and are able to write much better than at present, though that is pretty well for your age."

"Oh, Agnes," cried her grandmama presently, "I am quite ashamed of you! See, your cousin has had the same letters to

write, and what a difference there is between them ! But no wonder, for you are not copying mine. Perhaps, Mary, you can help her a little, and shew her how to make her capitals, which she seems to have forgotten ?”

Mary very quietly did as she was told, but Agnes was not at all pleased that a child of her own age should be called upon, as she thought, to teach her. It was not, therefore, till after some little time that she made any attempt to do as she had been shown, and then only from the fear of displeasing her grandmama. At length, however, the copy was finished, and much better written.

The next day Mary left. The morning after her departure was Sunday, and Agnes and Eliza used on that day to read to Mrs. Shaen the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, which they would hear at church, that she might explain whatever was difficult first. This was the third Sunday after Trinity, and consequently the Epistle was 1 Pet. v. 5.

“Some of those are very nice verses for you, children,” said their grandmama, when they had finished reading.

AGNES. Yes, grandmama, and we ought to know them because a long while ago you taught us the 5th verse, which says, "All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

MRS. S. How happy it would be for you could you always remember this! And yet, though it seems to you now an easy text, you find it difficult to recollect at the right time. Do you not believe, Agnes, that if you had thought of it the other day, when Mary was with us, you would have acted differently.

AGNES. About my writing, grandmama, do you mean?

MRS. S. Yes, Agnes; you behaved in that naughty way then, because you were too proud to let your cousin teach you a thing which you yet knew she could do better than yourself. Such pride may seem a very little fault to you, my Agnes; but see what God says of it, "He *resisteth* the proud." And in another place we read, "Every one that is proud *in heart* is abomination to the Lord." I do not speak to

you now only, Agnes ; I want to speak to you both, because I see in you both, from time to time, the breaking out of that pride which is, indeed, natural to us all, but which is so opposite a temper to that which God loves. You remember how our Blessed Lord told His disciples to become like little children ; and do you not think that, when He told them so, He meant that children themselves should be meek and humble ?

“ But,” continued Mrs. Shaen, for she saw Agnes looking very sorrowful, “ we have not yet read to the end of our verse. That God who resisteth the proud, ‘ giveth grace to the humble.’ There is a pleasant thought for you, children : if you ask God, His grace shall make you humble ; and when He has made you so, He will still give you greater grace, and you shall become more and more like Him who was meek and lowly in heart.”

Then Mrs. Shaen told her little grandchildren to find out different texts which speak of the evil of pride, and bring them to her on the following Sunday : and when they did so, she explained to them the

meaning of such as they had not before understood.

In this way did their grandmama, from time to time, talk to Agnes and Eliza : she loved to speak of the Holy Child Jesus, and she prayed that they might follow the example of His great humility ; sometimes she would say that pride was one of the chief of those works of the devil which it had been promised for them at their baptism that they should renounce ; at others, she would tell them of the peace and joy which only humble children know. And, by the blessing of God, her words were not in vain : little Agnes listened very attentively, and thought much of what she heard ; so that Mrs. Shaen had the pleasure of seeing her become, by degrees, more meek and gentle. She had never, indeed, been a particularly naughty child ; still there began to be a change in her manner and conduct, which those about her could not but notice. With Eliza it was different. Being very fond of her grandmama, she perhaps paid more heed to her words than to those of any one else ; but she never thought of doing according to what she was taught ; so she went on, as far

as she could, in her own way, from day to day. Even the kind instructions by which Agnes was improving, did Eliza harm : for thus it is with children, as with grown people, that if they are not made better by the good things they hear, they become worse ; and each time that they are told what is right, they grow more careless about doing it.

Now, however, to speak of something more pleasant, I will tell you two stories about Agnes, which will shew you the way in which she tried to remember her grandmama's words. The first shall be an account of what happened a few months after Mary's visit, of which you have heard.

Agnes and Eliza were one day sitting with Mrs. Shaen, doing their lessons as usual.

“ Oh, grandmama, what a long sum ! ” exclaimed both the children, as they saw her put down figure after figure upon the slate.

MRS. S. It is so long a sum that I do not feel at all sure whether you will be able to do it ; but I should like you both to try.

The little girls therefore set to work very diligently, and were quiet for some time.

“ I have done it, grandmama,” at last cried Eliza.

MRS. S. And it is quite right. You have done it very well.

AGNES. I have done it now, too, grandmama.

ELIZA. Oh, Agnes, that cannot be right, for it is not like mine!

MRS. S. You have made one or two mistakes, my love, but I am not surprised at that. However, if you like to look over your sum for a few minutes, and try to find them out, you can do so.

Agnes tried, but in vain. Presently her sister said, “ I can help you, Agnes, if you like.”

AGNES. No, thank you, Eliza; grandmama is going to shew me.

Just then the servant came into the room, bringing word that some one was waiting to speak to Mrs. Shaen.

“ My dear Agnes,” her grandmama then said to her, “ you must not spend any more time now over your sum, and I cannot stay

to help you; so, either rub it out, or let Eliza shew you."

Agnes was a good deal vexed at not being able to succeed with her task, and vexed again that her grandmama could not assist her in it. At first she wished to rub the figures out altogether, but a better thought came into her mind, and, going round to her sister, she asked, "Eliza dear, will you help me?"

A very little aid from Eliza was sufficient to shew Agnes her mistakes, and she finished the sum by herself.

"There, my love," said her grandmama, on entering the room, and looking at her slate, "I am as much pleased as if you had done this quite alone."

The other story I have to relate about Agnes is of something which took place a year and a half afterwards, during Mrs. Shaen's illness. At this time the children were chiefly left with Aylton, a faithful servant of their grandmama's, of whom they were very fond. But it happened that Aylton was obliged to go over to her father for a week, and then a much younger person, of the name of Hill, took care of Agnes and Eliza.

One day, the little girls were playing together in the parlour with their balls, when Hill came in.

“Miss Agnes, Miss Eliza,” she said, “will you be so good as to go and play upstairs in the nursery? I am afraid lest your balls should do some mischief here.”

ELIZA. We always played down-stairs when Aylton was with us; and there is so little room in the nursery, we cannot go there.

HILL. Yes, Miss, you might do so when your grandmama or Aylton were sitting with you, but that is quite different from playing alone.

ELIZA. “Oh, we shall not hurt anything here; or if we do, now that you have told us, it will not be your fault. I really cannot go,” she then whispered to her sister, “just because Hill says it. If grandmama had told her, then I would do so.”

AGNES. “Oh! but, Eliza, I think we ought to go. I think grandmama would call it proud, not to do what Hill says, because she is a servant. I am coming, Hill,” she continued, speaking louder.

Eliza at first felt inclined to stay behind

by herself ; but, unwilling to lose her game of play, she soon followed her sister.

Thus did Agnes go on, till the effort, which had at first been very difficult, grew by degrees easier to her ; and, before she was herself aware of it, it had almost become a habit with her to think and speak humbly : so that it was surprising how much the little girl was improved when she left her grand-mama's.

And, now that I have brought down my story to the time at which it first began, it will be better for the future to proceed more regularly : for this purpose let us return to little Agnes and Eliza, whom we left sleeping quietly together the first night after their meeting at their aunt's. What they did on the following morning, shall be related in my next chapter.





CHAPTER II.

SOON after breakfast the next day, Mrs. Denham left her little nieces to play together for a short time. Eliza had much that was new to shew her sister ; and Agnes, on her side, had a good deal to tell about her grandmama. When all this was over, and they were both getting a little tired, Agnes suddenly exclaimed,—

“ Oh, Eliza, how glad I am that we are together again, and in such a pretty place, too ! I almost felt last night as though I should not be happy here ; but perhaps it

was only because I was tired, and had just left grandmama.”

ELIZA. Do not be too sure of being happy, Agnes. Aunt Denham is not at all like grandmama; she does things so very oddly. And then this house, how can you call it pretty, Agnes? Our room, too, is so small, and so dull. And we have only the parlour for playing, and doing our lessons in.

AGNES. Oh, but there is the garden, Eliza.

ELIZA. Yes, there is that certainly; but I never saw so ugly a one before. Agnes, I don't like being here at all.

AGNES. Do not say so, Eliza. To be sure, I don't know aunt yet, but she seemed very kind last night; and this morning, you see, she has let us play together almost the first thing.

ELIZA. You will say differently by and by. You do not know aunt's way of speaking yet: when I am doing my lessons, she teaches me just as if I were a baby, and had not learnt anything.

AGNES. But we are children, Eliza, and we cannot know half so much as aunt. When we do, I dare say she will leave off

speaking so. But somehow I think we ought to be the more obliged to her for teaching us, since she believes we know so little.

ELIZA. Well, Agnes, I cannot understand you. You used to appear so fond of grandmama always, and to like to be with her: and now you have come here, you do not seem to mind it. I did not imagine you were so forgetful.

AGNES. I am not forgetting, Eliza; I am thinking of what grandmama said to me before I came away.

ELIZA. What was that, Agnes?

AGNES. "I had been talking about going, and saying that I was sure I should never be so happy as with her; and she answered, (I do not remember just her words, but they were something like these,) that there was one sure way to be always contented, and that was, to be humble: because, if we were so, we should feel, as we looked at all the pleasant things around us, that each one was more than we deserved: (and here, Eliza," continued Agnes, "we have so many:) and then grandmama repeated that verse out of the Psalms, which I had learnt before, 'The meek shall inherit the earth;' and she said

that something like this was the meaning of it."

Just as Agnes had finished speaking, Mrs. Denham entered the room.

"Come, Eliza," she said, "it is time for you to leave off play now. And do you, Agnes, fetch your books, and come and sit down by your sister."

Agnes was a little startled by the quick way in which her aunt spoke; however, she did as she was bid, and in a few moments was seated by that lady. The little girls' first lesson that morning happened to be in geography, of which they were both fond. Mrs. Denham was not used to children, and her manner, which was rather rough, was very different indeed from that of Mrs. Shaen; however, the gentle and docile behaviour of Agnes quite won her regard, and, after the lessons were over, Mrs. Denham proposed that her nieces should take a walk with her, and that Agnes should see the village. Agnes and Eliza both liked their walk; and their employments in the afternoon seemed, even to the latter, pleasant and easy. Towards evening their aunt again allowed them to play till about an hour be-

fore they went to bed, when she called them to sit and work by her.

Eliza went up stairs that night, wondering what had made the day pass so much more happily than usually was the case; and whether it was all the consequence of Agnes being with her; and she hoped that all the time with her Aunt would be as pleasant in future.

In this hope, however, she was disappointed, for her troubles soon returned again. But unfortunately, when she felt sad, and when her aunt was vexed with her, she seldom thought that the fault was her own; or, if she did think so, she would not acknowledge it, but laid all the blame upon others.

Now I will tell you what it was that made this little girl unhappy; and if you, my readers, ever feel so from a like cause, I trust that reading about her may lead you to see where you have been wrong, and that you may thus be helped to alter your ways.

Eliza's real enemy was her pride. That pride, to which she had from time to time given way whilst at her grandmama's, began to shew itself more openly. Now the child was no longer kept, as she had been at

Westcote, by the presence of her loved grandmama, from letting the violence of her sinful temper break out ; and as it had not been her habit to submit to those placed over her, because it was her duty to do so, she allowed herself, since she felt no particular affection for Mrs. Denham, constantly to struggle against that lady's will, and disobey her commands ; of course, such conduct was not likely to gain her aunt's favour : whereas, had Eliza, like her sister, shewn herself gentle and humble, she would have found, like her, that Mrs. Denham really loved her, and was kind to her.

Indeed it was surprising how many pleasures little Agnes enjoyed at Barrow.

Mrs. Denham was very fond of flowers, and she had some early ones in glasses ; these the child used to nurse and take care of for her. She had also a pet dog, of the name of Dash, which was at first no favourite with either of the little girls ; but since Agnes was kind to it, and did not pull it about, as her sister would do when she was in a passion, it learnt to like her, and follow her round the garden. There were moreover two birds, a goldfinch and a canary,

kept by Mrs. Denham ; and, when her nieces had been very good, she would allow them to feed the little creatures : this was a treat which could seldom be permitted to Eliza, but it often was to Agnes, so that the birds began to know her ; and once when the goldfinch had been let out of its cage for a few minutes, Agnes was delighted to see it perch upon her hand. And sometimes Mrs. Denham went down to the village school, and gave reward books to the diligent children ; then she would take Agnes there, which was a great treat to her.

There was, however, one thing which often made Agnes sorrowful ; for she loved her sister, and could not bear to see her either doing what was wrong, or suffering for having done so. Still, when she tried to persuade her to behave differently, the answer usually was, “ Oh, Agnes, it is all because I am here, and not with grandmama. I shall never do differently in this place.” Eliza accordingly continued to give her aunt so much trouble that she became perplexed what to do with her. At last she resolved to pay a visit to Westcote, and consult Mrs. Shaen on the subject : and, as

she knew it would give her little nieces great pleasure to see their grandmama, she determined to take them with her. One morning, therefore, at breakfast, she said to them: "My dears, I am thinking of going over to Westcote this day week, and I should like to take you both there. I have requested your grandmama to send over the chaise the evening before; only I can take none but very good children, so I give you a week's notice."

The time passed on, and Eliza was remarkably diligent and attentive through the whole of it. At length the wished-for morning arrived, on which they were to set off for Westcote. Eliza and Agnes were very sorry, when they woke, to see that it was raining; and still more so, when told by their aunt, that, in consequence of the weather, only one of them could accompany her: for the front part of the chaise had no cover to protect them from the damp air.

"Oh! dear aunt," cried the children together, "I am sure there would be plenty of room for us both inside. Grandmama has often taken us so with her."

"Yes," observed their aunt, "but then

it was only for a short distance. This will be a long drive."

"I do not take much room, aunt," cried Agnes; "I can sit anywhere, indeed I can."

"So can I," said Eliza, who was willing for once to make herself of little consequence; "only do let us go!"

"My dears," replied Mrs. Denham, "I have some parcels to carry over with me to Westcote, so that the thing is impossible. I am very sorry for the rain, but I cannot help it; one of you must therefore remain behind."

"Do you not think, aunt," exclaimed Agnes, after a pause, "that, if you were to wait only a very little while, it might clear up?"

"I cannot wait, Agnes," answered her aunt; "even if we set off directly, we shall not be back till quite late. Come, I must decide who is to go. Eliza, you have been a very good child this week; and it is so seldom that I can have the pleasure of saying this, that I will take you with me this time. You, Agnes, must stay at home."

Mrs. Denham and Eliza then left the room. Poor Agnes felt very sorrowful, and

stood for a moment against the table with her head resting on her hand : just then it came into her mind, that once before, when she had met with some disappointment at Westcote, Mrs. Shaen, on entering the parlour, had found her in the same position, and, after enquiring what was the matter, had repeated the verse, " Submit yourselves therefore to God ; and if to God," she had said to her, " to those also whom He places over us, our parents or teachers."

No sooner had Agnes recollected this, than she endeavoured at once to put away her discontented feelings from her ; and it was well that she did so. It is well for us all, when good thoughts come into our minds, that we do immediately what they would lead us to do : because it is God who by them is speaking to us, as from Him only all good counsels proceed ; and if we listen to this His voice, we may hope that He will continue to guide us in His way ; whereas, if we put those thoughts from us, it may be that He will never speak to us again.

To return to Agnes. She presently remembered, that there would be just time

for her, before her aunt and sister left, to write a little note to her grandmama, which they might take to Westcote, and she hastened to do so. Mrs. Denham was really sorry not to have Agnes with her, and concerned also for the child's disappointment. Just as she was stepping into the chaise, she turned suddenly back, and taking a large key from her pocket, gave it to Agnes, saying,

“It will be several hours, my love, before we return; but, if you should be in want of any amusement, go to Ellis, and ask her to unlock the closet which this fastens; and you may then bring out of it whatever you think will please you.”

Agnes thanked her aunt, and soon found abundance of entertainment in the contents of the closet. As she occupied herself in putting together a map of England, which she had taken from thence, she could not help thinking how kind it was of Mrs. Denham to recollect what would gratify her, just before she went away; and what a happy child she was to have those who would be so good to her, even when she was at a distance from her grandmama.

Meantime Eliza and her aunt had arrived at Westcote. Mrs. Shaen wished that Agnes could have been with them, but she had scarcely expected to see them all such a wet morning : she read the little girl's letter, however, with great pleasure. In the afternoon, whilst Eliza was gone out into the garden to look again at the beds which had formerly been her own and her sister's, and which were still kept for them, (for it had cleared up sufficiently for this purpose,) her grandmama and Mrs. Denham talked together for some time.

At length it was settled between them, that if all should be well, at the end of the Midsummer holidays (it was now the beginning of June) the two little girls should be sent to school at Stoke, a town about thirty miles from Westcote.

“I think this will decidedly be the best plan for them,” said Mrs. Shaen to their aunt, “since you find it impossible to keep Eliza with you, and I do not like separating the two sisters. I have heard much of Mrs. Wakefield,” (that was the name of the lady who kept the school,) “and I will write to her about it this evening.”

And now, that I may not make this part of my story too long, I will only, before we follow Agnes and Eliza to school, stay to tell you of their parting with their grandmama ; for Mrs. Denham allowed them both to spend a few days at Westcote before they went to Stoke : and here I will relate to you what Mrs. Shaen said to them the last evening they were with her.

They had just finished their usual Bible reading with their grandmama, when she spoke to them thus :—

“ My dear children, I do not know how long it may be before I am able thus to hear you again; but in the mean time I shall know, and you may know it too, that when neither I nor your aunt are near you to talk to and direct you, there is One always with you, and always able to guide you. Yet, remember, this is God’s promise,” and she looked especially at Eliza, “ ‘ The *meek* will He guide in judgment, and the *meek* will He teach His way.’ There are many blessed promises in Holy Scripture, but none are made to those who are proud, while they continue so. And yet we cannot make ourselves humble ; this none but God

can make us ; and we never shall be truly so, till He, by leading us to feel our sins, has shewn us what cause we have to repent of them. We must first be humbled before God, else, whatever we may seem in man's sight, there will be no true meekness in us. Ask of God, then, my children, that He will give you a contrite spirit ;—give it you more and more every day. And hear how sweetly He who was meek and lowly in heart, invites you to Himself, and bids you follow His example. ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.’ I can wish for you, my dear children, no higher happiness, wherever you are, than this ;—that you may so rest in your Saviour here, that you may enjoy His perfect rest hereafter in heaven.”

Then Mrs. Shaen bid Agnes and Eliza good night : and early the next morning they set off to return to their aunt, who was to take them with her to school on the following day.



CHAPTER III.

As Agnes spent several years at school, you, my young readers, may perhaps like to know a little about the place to which she and her sister were now going. Stoke (for so we shall call it) was a small country town: it had not the beauty of Westcote, where the windows of the neatly-thatched cottages used to peep out amidst clusters of roses and honeysuckle, nor the wide views over hill and dale which the children loved to look down upon from the heights of Barrow: still, as I before said,

it was a town ; and that was a novelty to Agnes and Eliza. Though the shops in its principal street were neither many nor large, yet the sight of them, in passing, much amused the little girls. The school-house, however, stood away from these, up a lane, called Stoke Lane, which led besides to the church and rectory, which were about three quarters of a mile from Mrs. Wakefield's. In front of the house was a large lawn, with beds of fine flowers very carefully kept: and the windows at the back looked on another lawn, though not nearly so pretty a one as the former. Its shape was square, and it had only a few flower-beds. This was the children's playground. A gravel-walk led round it, on the other side of which were small borders, that served for the gardens of the little girls: and some were so neat and well-cultivated, as to do great credit to the industry of their owners. Beyond this back-garden there was a view of the parish church; for the lane of which I have spoken wound so completely round, that this building and the rectory were almost exactly opposite Mrs. Wakefield's house. In the summer

time there was a pleasant walk to them through the fields and over a bridge across the stream which ran below the churchyard: but in winter the only way was the longer one, up Stoke Lane.

The number of Mrs. Wakefield's pupils was five and twenty. Of these, four or five were quite elder girls, soon about to leave school altogether; the rest were separated into two divisions, the greater part were between the ages of ten and fourteen, but there were seven younger and less forward children, called the little ones, and these two classes did not generally mingle much one with another.

Agnes and Eliza were not accustomed to be with little girls of their own age, and the sight of so many new faces was at first rather strange to them; but, as they were not naturally shy, the thought of a number of companions pleased them, and eagerly did they watch the proceedings around them the first evening they were at Stoke. They were somewhat disappointed, however, on the following morning, to find themselves, after a little examination by Miss Wakefield, placed by her in the

lowest class; for their age had led them to expect a higher position. They were the more sorry for this, because they had already formed a high idea of the kindness and ability of the eldest Miss Wakefield: and the little ones, with whom they were now ranked, were not taught by her, but by her sister, Miss Charlotte. Mrs. Wakefield herself, though a very active person, found enough to occupy her time in the management of the domestic concerns of the house: she consequently bore no part in the instruction of the children, and seldom took much notice of them, unless they were ill.

Her first disappointment almost destroyed the hopes of happiness at school which Eliza had conceived; and she soon found an opportunity of uttering her complaints to her sister in this way:

ELIZA. Is it not vexing, Agnes, that we are put down just at the bottom of the school, and among such children too? Why, do you know, there is one really not eight years old.

AGNES. I am very sorry for it, Eliza, and the more, because there are one or two

little girls just our age in the next class, whom I was wishing so much to know; and now I shall see scarcely anything of them, I am afraid.

ELIZA. Well, I am sure I shall not do much amongst such babies; and it is not worth while to try; I should be sure to get before them, if I did, and yet I should not be moved, I dare say.

AGNES. Oh, but, Eliza, we should not talk so. Miss Wakefield must know best where we ought to be: and very likely there are several nice children amongst these whom you seem to despise, some, perhaps, from whom we may be glad to learn. At all events we can try to behave kindly to them.

But Eliza appeared determined to keep her naughty resolution. She took no pains with her lessons, and the younger Miss Wakefield, in consequence, scarcely noticed her, for that lady was apt to overlook children who were not bright or attentive; and, imagining the little progress Eliza made in her pursuits to be occasioned by a natural want of ability, she left the little girl very much to follow her own way. So,

although she was by no means a favourite in the school, she avoided for some time any particular trouble.

The chief events of the-half year with which we are concerned at present were two misfortunes which happened to Agnes ; perhaps, however, I should hardly call them misfortunes since they were the consequence of her own faults. The first took place not long after her arrival at Miss Wakefield's, in the manner which I am about to relate.

One fine summer's afternoon, it being a half-holyday, all the children, younger and older, had joined together in a game of play. Such a circumstance but rarely occurred, and perhaps on that account the little girls enjoyed it the more on the present occasion. The game which they chose was a very exciting one : the school divided itself into two parties, to each of which was allotted half of the play-ground. They dignified themselves by the names of two different nations, and the war between them was carried on by the endeavour on each side to make prisoners of such as chose to expose themselves on

the enemy's ground; nor was it ended till a decisive victory had been gained by whichever party was fortunate enough thus to capture and confine the entire number of its foes.

Among the little girls foremost in entering into the amusement, was Emily Gardiner, a child a year and a half older than Agnes. She was very lively and entertaining, and generally thought amiable,—quick at her lessons, yet fond of play; moreover, her powers as a runner were in high repute through the school, so that now each party was anxious to secure her for itself. The matter, however, was soon settled, and then Emily and Agnes found themselves placed on opposite sides.

After many an escape and many a capture, these two little girls were left to maintain the honour of their respective nations alone, the companions of both being alike prisoners. Emily, not at once perceiving this, ventured rather incautiously into the territory of Agnes; the latter instantly seized the advantage, and succeeded in claiming her as a prisoner, and thus putting an end to the war. There was

a general shout of congratulation from her young friends who witnessed her victory.

“ Oh, Agnes !” cried Emily, “ let me go. I am not your prisoner. You have been running over that flower-bed, and that is not fair.”

“ Let her go ! let her go !” exclaimed several voices at once. “ How could you do such a thing, you unfair child, and then say you have conquered ?”

“ But I did not think that it was unfair,” replied Agnes. “ You know that this is the first time I have played. And, besides, I should have caught Emily just the same without running over any bed. Look !” (and she shewed her companions,) “ it could make not the least difference.”

Several voices were here raised in behalf of Agnes, and the matter was finally brought before one of the elder girls, who had been chosen as umpire to settle disputes. She pronounced that, owing to Agnes' mistake, the victory was to be considered undecided ; but added, that she fully believed the child to be guilty only of a mistake, and of one, moreover, which had given her no advantage whatever in her race with her companion.

This opinion by no means satisfied Emily ; and, as she walked with Agnes from the play-ground, she continued to reproach her, in a very angry tone, for what she called her unfairness and deception.

“ It will be a long time, Agnes, I hope,” she said, “ before the great girls allow you to play with them again.”

“ Very well,” said Agnes, a good deal provoked ; “ at all events I will not play with *you* in a hurry, Emily.”

What the reply was Agnes did not stay to hear, for she ran away in a violent passion. During the remainder of the evening several of her young companions were praising her for the part she had taken in the game. The history of it was related to Miss Wakefield, who commended the child for her agility and activity.

But Agnes was not happy. She felt that she had done wrong, and that Emily had done so too did not make her own fault the less. These were her feelings as she went upstairs for the night ; and then the thought came into her mind, how could she seek pardon in her prayer that evening, if she were too proud to ask forgiveness of the per-

son she had offended ? She resolved, therefore, to go and find Emily, who slept alone in the room next Agnes'. She knocked at the door which separated the two.

“Emily, may I speak to you ?”

“Yes, come in,” was the answer.

“Emily,” whispered Agnes, “I am come to beg your pardon for what I said to you to-day in the garden. Will you forgive me ?”

Now had the little girl been asked this question at another time, or by any one else, she would probably at once have forgotten her anger, and only blamed herself for the quarrel. But her pride had been wounded by her defeat that day in the game ; and, besides, she was really glad that by the improper way in which Agnes had then spoken, she had given some ground for that dislike which Emily had long allowed herself to feel towards her, without knowing the reason of it. So she only answered very coolly, “Oh ! you are sorry now, Agnes, are you ?”

AGNES. Yes, Emily ; and you forgive me, do you not ?

EMILY. Oh, certainly ; but I shall take care that you have no occasion to ask my forgiveness in future.

Little Agnes crept back to her room, and began crying; she thought that Emily was unkind, and, what was worse, that this unkindness was the consequence of her own fault. "No one was near me," she said to herself, "to reprove me to-day in the garden, and perhaps no one knew what a passion I was in when I spoke to Emily; but I am being punished now, by her coldness, and my own feelings."

Perhaps here, my readers, you may wonder that Agnes should think so much about what appears to you so slight a thing. But thus it is that, whether young or old, those who are best feel most when they have done wrong: for their Heavenly Father would make use of that sorrow to keep them from again falling into sin; and far more unhappy are they who can offend Him, and not grieve.

Agnes ceased crying as she knelt to repeat her evening prayer; and then she especially sought pardon for the sinful temper to which she had that day yielded, for His sake, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again:" and, soon after she had laid herself down, she fell asleep.

Day after day passed on after this at Mrs. Wakefield's much the same as former ones had done ; but they did not feel the same to little Agnes, for it seemed to her now as though she had an enemy in the school, and one too whom she had made so in part herself. Emily always avoided speaking to her, and took pleasure in saying unkind things about her, and laughing at her ; and this vexed her much. She had learned, however, by what had lately happened, not to suffer herself again to be easily provoked : and so she went on quietly, hoping that before long something or other would occur which might reconcile Emily to her. She had first, however, another lesson to learn, and one which cost her much.

One of the pleasantest occupations of Agnes' young companions was gardening. I have already told you how pretty their little flower-beds were, and to make them so required some labour, but that labour was an enjoyment. Agnes' garden especially was her delight. Oftentimes did the sight of her roses drive from her remembrance the difficulties of the morning's

lesson; and many a favourite poem became dearer to her as she repeated it whilst working among them. A succession of wet days in the beginning of September confined the children to the house; and, when the weather began a little to clear, it was still too damp to allow of their doing more than walking in the driest part of the grounds. Mrs. Wakefield, therefore, expressly forbade them to employ themselves again in their gardens without her permission. The following Sunday the sun rose brightly and warmly; the moist roads and fields soon felt the glad effect of his beams; so that the next morning, when the little girls went out to play at their usual hour, the garden seemed quite a different place: the ground dry and almost hard. Agnes happened to be the first in the play-ground that day; she was delighted at the change, and her instant thought was of her garden. In her eagerness she forgot that not the fine weather alone, but Mrs. Wakefield's permission was necessary before she might work in it again. So, arming herself with a hoe to root out the weeds, which had sprung up abundantly during

the late rain, she was soon diligently occupied.

Presently some of her younger school-fellows came running out :

“Look! look! there is Agnes gardening,” they cried; “then Mrs. Wakefield has given us leave;” and forthwith two or three hurried off for their tools.

“I shall go and ask her first,” said one child; “but no, I won’t take that trouble either, I dare say it is all right;” and so she followed the example of the rest.

Now it happened that Agnes’ garden lay quite away from those of her companions; for, on her first coming to school, she had begged so hard that she might be allowed a large piece of ground to herself, that part of a bed, commonly shared by the elder girls, had been allotted to her; and consequently now she neither saw nor heard what her little friends were doing.

Presently Eliza, pleased with an occasion on which to make herself of importance, hastened to one and another to give them notice that they must instantly leave off their employment, or fall under Mrs. Wakefield’s displeasure. But this unwelcome

advice was received rather coldly: "Go and ask Agnes," was the reply; "we shall do as she does."

"Agnes! Agnes!" cried Eliza, quite out of breath with running; "what is it you are about? Don't you remember how expressly Mrs. Wakefield forbade our gardening till she gave us leave; and when have you heard her do so?"

"Oh dear!" answered Agnes, "I quite forgot; but what shall I do?"

"Do," replied her sister, "why stop, to be sure; and I must go and get the other children to do the same, whom you made to begin."

"I made?" exclaimed Agnes.

"Yes," answered Eliza, "certainly you did; for they saw you gardening, and set to work themselves."

But Eliza's admonition was rather late; for Mrs. Wakefield had already seen what the little girls were doing, and called them to her. She was a person who did not often interfere with, or give orders to, the children; and therefore, when she did so, she was the more particular in exacting obedience.

Before Agnes could reach the house, four

out of her six companions who had been guilty on the present occasion had excused themselves to Mrs. Wakefield by her example.

On her entrance, however, that lady instantly turned to her, "And you, Agnes, whom did you see, or what led you to disobey me?"

Agnes did not answer.

"Were you the first, Agnes, in the garden this morning?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"And what could make you think of gardening there, when I had forbidden it?"

Agnes, being a little frightened, made no reply till Mrs. Wakefield repeated her question, and then she said,

"Indeed, Ma'am, I am very sorry, but just then I did not remember what you had told us. When I went out, it looked so fine and dry, I only thought of that."

MRS. WAKEFIELD. You are sure this was the case, Agnes?

AGNES. Yes, quite sure, Ma'am.

MRS. WAKEFIELD. "Very well; I will endeavour to make you remember better in future. I am sorry, Agnes, that by your forgetfulness you will have involved your

companions also in difficulty. You should have been more careful, children," she said, turning towards them, "to ascertain the truth. And now I forbid you all to garden for the next fortnight; and, as you cannot be trusted with your tools, I will keep them for you for that time. And you, Agnes," continued Mrs. Wakefield, "as this is the first time you have disobeyed me, so I hope it will be the last. But I shall take your garden quite away from you for this autumn; next summer I trust you will be a less forgetful child."

As the little girls, having brought their garden implements to Mrs. Wakefield, walked slowly into the school-room, some of them began to speak very rudely to Agnes, and to blame her as the sole cause of their punishment. Indeed, their voices were so loud, that, had Mrs. Wakefield been near, they would probably have incurred her displeasure again. Emily soon learnt the cause of their anger, and, instead of trying to soothe it, strove to excite it the more, and joined in their reproaches of, and complaints against, Agnes. Two little girls, however, took no part in these pro-

ceedings: one was Lucy Seymour, rather younger than Agnes, of whom she was very fond; the other was Jane Stevenson, a good child, who did not like to blame another when she felt that she had herself been wrong; so she remained silent. But Lucy could not stand so quietly by.

“ Oh, Emily !” she cried, “ how can you say that Agnes is always getting people into trouble? You do not know how often she helps us, nor how much she does for us.”

“ Indeed I do not,” replied Emily; “ and I should like to hear who does besides yourself, Lucy.”

“ Oh ! I do,” said little Jane; “ and so do the others too, only they will not tell you so now.”

Thus the children went on, some blaming, and some excusing, and some praising Agnes, who had in the meantime made her escape into the inner school-room, which she found deserted. Here a bright thought entered her mind, and a little comforted her, when the door was opened by Lucy.

“ Agnes,” she said, “ I am come to fetch you back again; and you need not mind, for the little girls will not speak unkindly to

you any more: they would not have said half so much to you just now, had not Emily been there. I cannot think why Emily behaves to you so differently from her way generally."

"Oh! that is my fault too, partly at least," answered Agnes.

"Well, never mind; come now, and forget her, will you not?" repeated her friend.

"Not yet, Lucy," replied Agnes. "I have thought of something, and I will do it too; for I cannot bear that you should all be punished on my account: so I will go to Mrs. Wakefield, and ask her to let you have your gardens again; and then she may do what she pleases with me instead."

"That will be quite useless, Agnes," exclaimed Lucy. "I am sure I hope it will."

But Agnes was deaf to the remonstrance of her friend. She found a happy opportunity of speaking to Mrs. Wakefield, and made her request accordingly.

"No, Agnes," was the answer; "it is right that your companions should suffer for their carelessness; and, as you have led them into a fault, you must bear this as a part, perhaps to you the worst part, of your punishment.

One thing, however, I will tell you. I do not think your little schoolfellows would have been so ready to follow your example, had you not already gained the character of a good and obedient child. I hope therefore that the influence you have over them may some day be used to better purpose."

These words of Mrs. Wakefield made a deep impression on Agnes. Before this time, she had always endeavoured to do what was right, without considering who might be near her; but now another thought came into her mind,—that the children round her might sometimes copy her actions, and do what she did; and this made her the more anxious to behave always as she ought.

Often after this, as she looked at her now desolate garden, she was made humble by the remembrance of having once been the means of leading her companions into disobedience; and she wished within herself, that it were as easy to persuade others to good, as it is to induce them to evil.

But I have made this chapter already sufficiently long: the conclusion of the half-year shall therefore form the subject of another.



CHAPTER IV.

By this time, perhaps, my readers are wishing to know something more of Eliza, of whom they have heard lately but little. Indeed I have nothing very pleasant to relate about her. She had become sadly idle; for not finding it so easy as she had imagined, to get before the little girls amongst whom she was placed, she gave up the attempt, and contented herself with thinking and saying to Agnes, that, when there was a prospect of her being moved into

the next class, it would be seen how much better she could do.

Sometimes, indeed, the example of her sister roused in her better thoughts; for Agnes was growing very diligent; she felt that she had much to learn, and she was willing to learn from every one, and very grateful to those who would shew her anything she did not know. Eliza would often at first wish to be like her: she was naturally extremely fond of her sister; and although now and then comparisons rather mortifying to herself were drawn between them, (as a reproof given to Eliza was usually followed by a commendation bestowed upon Agnes,) yet Agnes all the while behaved so kindly to her, and seemed so ignorant of the difference which others saw in them, that Eliza felt almost inclined to love her the more. But her foolish pride turned from the thought of being led by one not older than herself: and still less could she bear the idea of her companions observing that she was so. "No," said she to herself; "I will follow my own way, not Agnes'. I dare say mine will be as good in the end."

One day, when Eliza was in somewhat a

better mood, the following conversation took place between the sisters :—

ELIZA. Don't you think, Agnes, that Miss Charlotte is kinder to you now than she used to be ?

AGNES. I know more of her now, and so perhaps that is the reason why I can please her better.

ELIZA. But I know more of her too, and yet I never can please her.

AGNES. Do not say *never*, Eliza ; you can when you really try, I think. Why, she was pleased with you this morning.

ELIZA. Yes, but I shall make her angry again to-morrow. And so it is with everybody else. Agnes dear, I cannot please people as you can.

AGNES. Oh! Eliza, I am sure you could if you would try. But sometimes I fancy you do not wish it.

ELIZA. Well, no more I do, for I see it is impossible, and therefore I give up trying.

AGNES. But, Eliza, even if you knew that you could not succeed, still you might try.

ELIZA. Why, where would be the use of that? What do you mean, Agnes?

AGNES. I mean, dear, that we should

endeavour to please others, because it is right to do so, and not merely for the sake of gaining their favour: and therefore, though we were quite sure that we should fail in this, still the chief reason for trying would remain the same.

ELIZA. Oh! but, Agnes, I am not like you. I cannot do a thing because it is right; I want some reward, or some praise, for doing it.

AGNES. Well, then, Eliza, remember what a reward those who do right now will have at last. But, besides, it often seems to me such a great thing for children like us to be able to please God; perhaps you do not understand me, but I mean that I think God is so very good in letting us try to please Him; so very good to give us strength on purpose to try, when we have none of our own.

ELIZA. Oh! Agnes, I never have such thoughts. I cannot understand how it is that you do.

AGNES. How I wish you had them too, Eliza. I scarcely know how I should go on without them, because it makes me so happy to believe, that, by every little thing

I do I may please Him who always sees me; and it is such a comfort, if others mistake the reasons of any of my actions, and therefore are vexed with me, to remember that no such cause can make God angry with me.

“I wish that I were like you, Agnes,” thought Eliza; but she did not express her thought: she only said, “Agnes, I see we are quite different.”

A short time after this conversation, it happened that Emily Gardiner was summoned home, owing to the illness of a cousin, which proved fatal. She was therefore kept from Mrs. Wakefield's some little time; and on her return, though still lively, she did not seem quite so eager and playful as before. During her absence a new game had been introduced into the school, and some of the children had new hoops made on purpose for it (for it was played with these). A day or two after Emily came back, some circumstances prevented both Miss Wakefields and their mother from taking their pupils their usual walk; so they were left to play in the garden. The new game was instantly pro-

posed, and one of her companions explained it to Emily. Agnes was standing by, and, as she looked up at Emily's mourning, she could hardly believe her to be still a child with the same feelings as at the time of their quarrel a few weeks before.

“ Oh !” answered Emily, “ I cannot play, I have no hoop ; besides, I did not intend to play again with Agnes.”

The tears came into Agnes' eyes ; but she hid them, and ran away. Presently she returned, bringing her hoop with her.

“ Emily,” she said, “ I am not going to play, so will you take this. I have brought it on purpose for you.”

“ No,” was the reply, “ I do not wish to play to-day ; I had rather walk quietly : so keep your hoop for yourself ; but thank you, Agnes, all the same.”

There was something in Emily's manner more than her words, which made Agnes feel happy, as she joined her companions ; for she thought that she had at last persuaded Emily to forget their former quarrel. Nor was she mistaken. The next time the two children were alone together, Emily began talking to Agnes thus,—

EMILY. Agnes, I have something which I want to say to you.

AGNES. Well, let me hear it then, Emily.

EMILY. But, before I tell you what it is, you must answer me one question. Agnes, do you think you ever could love me?

AGNES. Why, Emily, what do you mean? To be sure I could, if you would let me.

EMILY. Then, Agnes, I am very sorry indeed for the way in which I have been behaving to you all this time; but if you think you can forget it, and forgive me, I will not go on thus any longer.

AGNES. Oh! Emily, I shall be so glad to forget it, and to think that you do not dislike me so much as I once believed you did.

EMILY. Pray do not imagine that I dislike you now, Agnes, or you will be quite mistaken," replied Emily; and here the conversation was interrupted.

But, though Emily said no more then, her manner towards Agnes from that time was quite altered. It was a delightful

change to the latter, who now began to like school very much. Miss Charlotte Wakefield, finding her attentive and desirous to improve, had grown quite attached to her: the elder girls liked her, because she never spoke rudely to them, and was always obliging in doing what they asked her: and she had besides one or two little friends who were her constant companions. About this time, too, she enjoyed a great pleasure in the receipt of a note from Mrs. Shaen. That lady had lately written to Mrs. Wakefield, to enquire how the little girls were going on; and, receiving in reply a particularly good account of Agnes, she had sent her a letter by way of encouragement. The child was delighted at the idea of having gratified her grandmama, and she thought how good her Heavenly Father was in giving her these lesser rewards for doing right, and hoped that all the things which made her so happy just now, came from Him as marks of His favour; for she had heard her grandmama say that we ought to look upon blessings in this way.

But I have not yet mentioned one thing

at Mrs. Wakefield's, which was a source of pleasure to Agnes. Mr. Sanderson, the rector of Stoke, was a very excellent man; and, whilst he endeavoured to attend most carefully to the wants of all his flock, he took especial pains with the young: the children of his poorer parishioners he catechised every Sunday in church, and saw them often besides, at their own homes and at school; and he by no means neglected Mrs. Wakefield's little household, calling in from time to time, and speaking to one and another of her pupils. He likewise paid regular visits at the school, at more fixed intervals; and to these Agnes and several of her companions used to look forward with delight. On such occasions, during the last and the present half-year, Mr. Sanderson had been going through the Catechism, and explaining it. He had now got as far as the middle of the answer to the question "What is thy duty towards thy neighbour?" and here I will relate to you what he said upon that part of it, "To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters."

MR. SANDERSON. Can you tell me, children, what is the difference between the mean-

ing of this and the last clause, “ To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters ”?

“ That told us only how we should act towards our teachers and masters ; and this says in what way we should behave ‘ to *all* our betters.’ ”

MR. SANDERSON. Very true. This speaks more generally than the former clause ; but there is another difference between them : do you know what it is ?

The children were silent.

MR. SANDERSON. What were the duties commanded you in that part, “ To submit myself, &c.” ?

“ Submission—Obedience.”

MR. SANDERSON. Right : now here you are taught how you should shew that spirit of submission in your manner. And there are two words made use of to express that manner. You are to order yourselves, —how ?

“ Lowly and reverently.”

MR. SANDERSON. Do these two words mean the same thing ?

“ Yes, sir. No, sir.”

MR. SANDERSON. Not quite. I will ex-

plain this to you : *lowly* refers to yourselves ; you should think humbly of yourselves, and that will make your manner quiet and gentle : *reverently* has regard to others you should think of them in this way, and that will make your manner towards them respectful. Do you understand me, children ?

“ Yes, sir.”

MR. SANDERSON. Well then, what two things ought you to shew in your behaviour ?

“ Gentleness and respect.”

MR. SANDERSON. What do you mean when you say at the end, “ to all my betters ?” Who are they ?

“ All above us.”—“ Those who are our superiors.”

MR. SANDERSON. Is there more than one way in which people may be your superiors ?

“ Yes, sir ; there are several.”

MR. SANDERSON. Tell me one of them.

“ They may be our superiors in age.”

MR. SANDERSON. Right : and with regard to such, you should remember the verse, “ Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.” Tell me now another way.

“ They may be our superiors in rank.”

MR. SANDERSON. Yes: God has so ordered it, that there shall be different degrees in station, from the Queen down to the cottager. And of these He says:—"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." How else may any be your superiors?

"By their office."

MR. SANDERSON. Yes: by their office or relation to you; for these two come to much the same thing. Thus a teacher is placed over a pupil, a parent over a child, a king over his subjects, a minister over his flock. Are people generally your superiors in more than one of these ways?

"Yes. Almost always, sir."

MR. SANDERSON. Yes. Whilst you are children, you are placed with those who are not only older than yourselves, but are also above you in some other way, either by their relation as your parents, or by their office as your instructors. Therefore you see you have a double reason for ordering yourselves lowly and reverently towards them.

"Yes, sir."

MR. SANDERSON. Now you told me that

these words meant that you should be gentle and respectful. Can you give me any instances in which such a manner will shew itself? Mind, I am speaking now of humility in *manner* only: of the duty of submission and obedience in our actions, I have had occasion to talk to you before.

“ In our way of speaking: that we should address our superiors as “ Sir” or “ Ma’am, or give them whatever title may belong to them.”

MR. SANDERSON. Right; can you give me another instance?

“ In our silence when they are speaking, if we are likely to disturb them.”

MR. SANDERSON. Quite right; and anything else?

“ Only that if there is anything we have to do for them, we should do it in a respectful way.”

MR. SANDERSON. Yes; and there are other little things which you might mention, such as rising when any old person enters the room and speaks to you, and opening the door for them when they leave it.

“ Yes, sir.”

MR. SANDERSON. Well, children, those of

you that are the younger ones, I mean, I will tell you a story of those two famous nations among the Greeks, the Athenians and Spartans. It was once when they were all assembled to witness their national games,—and at these times the different Greek tribes used to sit in separate places in the *theatre*, as it was called,—that an old man, a stranger, entered among them. He walked along the part where the Athenians were, but they took no notice of him. Now the Athenians had many rules about politeness, and prided themselves upon being a courteous people. Then he came up to the seats of the Spartans, and they immediately rose, and made room for him. Upon which the old man cried out, “The Athenians know what is right, but the Spartans practise it.”

“I hope, my dear children,” continued Mr. Sanderson, “that you will be like both these nations: that you will know what is right, like the Athenians, and do it, like the Spartans. For knowledge without practice will help you little. And consider, besides, how much higher motives for a suitable behaviour you have, than a heathen people could know.”

So saying, Mr. Sanderson rose to go, and the little girls all curtsied to him as he took his leave.

It now began to draw towards the holidays; and Agnes and Eliza, in common with their schoolfellows, were looking forward to them with great pleasure. First, however, came the examination; and Agnes was anxious about this, for she very much wished to be moved into a higher class, that thus she might shew her grandmama and aunt that she had taken pains to improve during the half-year. She needed not, however, have been so anxious; for her diligence and perseverance at Mrs. Wakefield's had been so constant, that it now required no great effort on her part to pass such an examination as would enable her to accomplish her purpose.

Eliza, too, had determined, a few weeks before, to prepare herself for this trial; and she pleased herself with imagining how much she should surprise her companions and Miss Charlotte Wakefield by her sudden success; and what a clever child they would think her, to be able to do so much in so short a time. Foolish little girl!

she did not consider how wrong she had been in wasting her time hitherto, and giving so much trouble as she had done by her carelessness and inattention ; and she forgot, that, whilst all she had intended was to take no especial pains to improve, she had really been going back, or at least suffering others to get before her : and so, now that she really wished to apply herself to her studies in earnest, she was so unused to do so, that she found everything difficult and perplexing : still she tried, and tried hard, to accomplish what was given her to do, until she saw that every one in the class could succeed better than herself ; and then, after her usual custom, she abandoned all further efforts.

It was not Mrs. Wakefield's habit to give prizes to the lesser children, perhaps because she thought they would probably remain long enough with her to obtain one in another class, and she wished them to be moved from the lowest as soon as possible. But Agnes was not by this prevented from longing for the day when the issue of the examination might be known.

And a happy morning it was to many of the little girls. It was the week before Christmas, a cold bright day. After breakfast the children were called from the school-room into the parlour; there upon the table the different prizes were very prettily set out: some were nicely-bound books, some little workboxes, or writing-cases; for Mrs. Wakefield did not confine her rewards to one or two children in the class, but allowed all to receive them who had reached a certain point of progress in their studies, or whose behaviour had been such as to merit a prize for good conduct.

The little ones were first called by her, —not, as we have said, for the purpose of receiving any of these; but Mrs. Wakefield, who was on this day the only acting person, summoned them each to be commended or blamed, according as they had passed their examination, and she made at the same time certain observations upon their conduct throughout the half-year. Then those who were to be moved into the upper class were allowed to go and stand among the elder girls of whom it

consisted. Agnes was one of those to whom this permission was given, and great was her delight in consequence. As each was called up to take her prize, Mrs. Wakefield now and then cast a look at the little girl and two or three of her companions in the same situation, and expressed her hope that at the end of the next examination she might have the pleasure of bestowing a reward upon them also ; a wish in which Agnes could heartily join.

There now remained only the three or four great girls who formed a class by themselves. It was their concluding half-year at school, and not without something of a sorrowful feeling were these their last prizes given and received. Perhaps, on their part, this was because they were considering how many more they might have gained had they but improved their whole time with Mrs. Wakefield as they should have done : but, be that as it may, a kind of gloom seemed to succeed the former gaiety of their companions at the thought of their finally quitting Stoke.

It was usual with Mr. Sanderson, in the afternoon of this day, to call at Mrs.

Wakefield's, and speak to her pupils : thus, encouraging or reproving as he saw occasion, he would take leave of them for the holidays ; not, however, without some words of advice as to the manner in which the vacation should be spent.

In the summer the evening of the prize-day was generally passed at the rectory ; and, as Agnes heard the description of the happy games and merry talking in the garden and parlour, she quite longed for the time when she might share in all their pleasures.

Her thoughts were, however, soon recalled, by the bustle of packing around her, to the more immediate, and perhaps greater, delight of seeing her grandmama ; for it had been settled that the first part of Agnes' and Eliza's holidays should be passed with Mrs. Shaen,—a plan which was very welcome to the two little girls.

Yet it was by no means unmixed pleasure which Eliza felt in the prospect of her return to Westcote. She was thoroughly mortified by the issue of her examination ; vexed that younger children should have done so much better than she could do ;

vexed again at the idea of remaining another half-year exactly where she had at first been placed; and also at the thought of the difference in the accounts which Agnes and herself would have to give their grandmama of their proceedings at school. What effect Eliza's feelings had upon her conduct I will relate by and by; at present let us leave the little girl to her sad reflections.

There was yet one Sunday more before the holidays. It was a beautiful day; and it seemed to Agnes and some of her school-fellows a delightful calm after the excitement of the preceding week.

Before church in the morning Mrs. Wakefield had sent a few of the children to walk in the garden; and Agnes, who was among the number, soon found her little friend Lucy Seymour beside her.

LUCY. Oh, Agnes! are you not glad that our last Sunday is so fine a one? it is just as though everything would smile upon us before our going home.

AGNES. Yes, Lucy, I am very glad: this day makes one feel quiet again, after the bustle of the examination.

LUCY. I cannot feel quiet though: I am constantly thinking about returning home, and especially that I shall be able now to tell mama that I have got into another class. Dear, how delightful that will be! I have been wishing for this so very much: but I shall not tell her directly, not till she asks me. Oh! now I know what I shall do. When my sister Isabella sees me, and says, "Well, Lucy, what have you done this examination, and where are you?" then I shall not say anything:—and I know that she will answer, "Ah! I thought how it would be: I never believed that you would be moved this half-year, though you promised us so:" and she will go on talking, till mama says to me, "Well, but Lucy, my love, let me look at you a little, and see how you are, and how much you have grown; and we will hear all about the examination presently." Then I shall tell her all about it, you see—don't you think that I shall like it?

AGNES. Yes, Lucy, it will be very delightful to you to give them all so much pleasure.

LUCY. But that was not quite what I

meant, Agnes. They will think it such a great thing for me to have done as I have : I know Isabella will, although, perhaps, she may not say so.

AGNES. Well, dear Lucy, I am very glad for you ; and I like, too, to think that we shall be together next half-year.

LUCY. And you must be glad for yourself, too, for what you have done : only you are older than I am, so it is not such a great thing for you.

AGNES. Perhaps not, Lucy : but yet I do think of it a great deal, only not quite in that way. I should be afraid to think of it as you do, Lucy.

LUCY. Afraid, Agnes ? What do you mean ?

AGNES. I should be afraid it would make me proud, Lucy, to consider that I had done something very good : so what I chiefly look forward to, is the pleasure it will give my grandmama to hear about the examination.

Here they were joined by little Jane Stevenson, who asked and obtained Agnes' consent to walk with them. Jane was about Lucy's age, but not so bright a child : she had done pretty well at the examination,

but was not thought sufficiently advanced to change her place.

“Do you believe, Agnes,” continued Lucy, “that it is wrong for me to feel as I do. I am afraid I cannot help it.”

“But, Agnes,” said Jane, who had heard a part of the former conversation, “can we help being proud when we have done well?”

“I do not know, Jane, whether we can help it altogether,” replied Agnes, and here she paused.

“Well, Agnes,” cried Lucy, “why do you stop?”

“I was thinking,” answered Agnes, “what grandmama would say to me, if she were here. I fancy she would tell us, as she has often told me before, whenever we are tempted to be proud, to remember Him who came to visit us in great humility, and has left ‘us an example that we should follow his steps’; I have heard my grandmama speak thus, till I have sometimes imagined it impossible for me to be proud again; and then, too, I have thought, what a happy thing it is that we, who are so ready to think highly of ourselves, should have such a perfect pattern of humility before us.”

“Well, I will try your way, Agnes, when I go home,” said Lucy.

“Oh! do not wait till then, Lucy,” answered Agnes. “Try it, dear, every day, so soon as one proud thought comes into your mind.”

“And I will try too,” said little Jane: “and thank you, Agnes, for telling me.”





CHAPTER V.

I WILL pass over the happy holidays that Agnes spent with her grandmama. You, my young readers, can well imagine them for yourselves. Among the little girl's greatest pleasures was that of seeing that Mrs. Shaen

had much recovered her former health, so that Eliza and herself could be with her, as they had once been, without the fear of tiring her. The last part of the vacation the children passed with Mrs. Denham, who was very kind in doing all in her power to amuse them.

And now I will fulfil my promise of letting you hear a little more about Eliza. She returned to Westcote, as you were prepared to believe, with far less joyous feelings than her sister : but, when there, she soon lost the remembrance of her former disappointments ; and unhappily, as she forgot the consequences of her faults, she forgot the faults themselves. The freedom she enjoyed at Mrs. Shaen's, and even with her aunt, was to her so delightful after school, that she seemed once more full of life and spirits. There was nothing in particular to call forth her besetting sin of pride : for Agnes was not very ready to speak of the progress she had made beyond her sister ; and Miss Charlotte Wakefield, still looking upon Eliza as a dull, rather than a wilfully idle child, had made no heavy complaints of her in the letter which she wrote to her grandmama

in the beginning of the holidays. So the little girl fancied herself happy, that no more notice was taken of all her indolence and inattention at school. Poor child ! it would have been far better for her to learn humility, though by suffering, than to go on imagining she could have peace, whilst she cherished her pride. But we shall often find it thus:—that those who have been warned (and Eliza had been several times), and despised those warnings ; who have had good examples set before them, and refused to follow them ; who have felt convictions, and stifled them, are left, sooner or later, to themselves ; and this is the worst thing that can befall them.

Eliza, however, was not thus left at present. When she returned with her sister the next half-year to school, she resolved to make a grand effort to be placed, as soon as the opportunity should arrive, among the elder girls ; although she knew this could not now be till Midsummer. She therefore began to apply herself with greatly increased diligence to her lessons ; and so far it was well. But, meanwhile, a readier obedience to Miss Charlotte Wake-

field formed no part of her plan ; pride was her only motive for exertion now, as once it had been the cause of her indolence ; and, indeed, she rather fancied that the desire to improve in her studies gave her a right to follow them in her own way. She was therefore inclined to look upon the directions of her governess, when they crossed her own will, as a needless interference ; and the consequence was, a constant struggle between that lady and herself, something like what had taken place about a year before, between Mrs. Denham and this her troublesome niece ; only now that Eliza was older, her pride was more deeply rooted, and her passions stronger than formerly. But as in this story I wish to speak of the grace and the blessings of humility rather than of the sin and danger of pride, I will not dwell on Eliza's conduct at this time, nor its sad consequences. Agnes often grieved over her sister ; but, as they were in separate classes, she was not able to be much with her, and, indeed, Eliza seemed to shun her presence, which greatly vexed her. She would often, however, when alone, pray

for her : and she was the more encouraged to do this, for she knew that He, who had put into her own heart the desire for humility, which of herself she never would have known, could take away Eliza's pride, and make her humble too. Two or three times, however, in the course of the half-year, the sisters talked together very gravely. On one occasion, in particular, Eliza was found by Agnes crying bitterly, in consequence of some task which had been imposed upon her as a punishment, when the following conversation took place between them.

AGNES. Oh ! Eliza, what is the matter with you ; are you ill ?

ELIZA. No, Agnes, I am not ill, but I wish that I were, and then I should not stay here, and be persecuted in this way.

AGNES. In what way, dear ?

ELIZA. Oh ! Agnes, you know as well as I do, and therefore why do you ask me ? It's all very well for you to be happy here, but you must not expect me to be so.

AGNES. I am afraid you would not be happy anywhere just now, Eliza ; not even at Westcote.

ELIZA. And pray why should I not be, Agnes? What is it you mean?

AGNES. I wish, dear Eliza, that, instead of supposing yourself with grandmama, you would imagine her here, and think what she would say to you.

ELIZA. And what would that be, Agnes, pray, since you can fancy things so readily?

AGNES. Oh! Eliza, I cannot say it half so well as she would; but only recollect her favourite texts, and consider Who it is that speaks in them.

ELIZA. Agnes, I can't recollect; I don't wish to think of anything but Miss Wakefield; and as to doing what she tells me, I never will!

AGNES. Oh! Eliza, I cannot stay to hear you talk in this way. Do, do put those thoughts from you; only try and do it, dear, and learn your lessons; do anything, but feel and speak so.

But Eliza would not be silent: and Agnes, seeing that it only increased her sister's anger to have some one to whom she could express it, rose and left her.

Yet she did not cease to think of her, wondering within herself at the change

that had come upon Eliza. She well remembered their childish games together in former years at Westcote; she recollected how often a hard task had seemed easier when its difficulty was shared by her sister, and a fresh lesson more delightful because it was new to them both. "Eliza was naughty then sometimes, I know," said Agnes to herself, "but she would soon be good again; and even at aunt Denham's she used to come to me whenever she was unhappy, and ask me to beg aunt to forgive her. And last half-year, though certainly she gave Miss Wakefield much trouble, and some of the little girls disliked her, she would often be my own dear Eliza still: but now, I cannot tell what she is like."

In this way the child continued her reflections, till the school-bell summoned her to her lessons.

Had it not been for her sister, this would have proved a very happy half-year to Agnes. She was making progress in her pursuits; and, as a reward for her past diligence, Mrs. Shaen allowed her now to learn of one or two of the masters

who attended at the school. Miss Wakefield, too, was much kinder in her manner, and more disposed to notice her, than Miss Charlotte had been ; and, finding her always ready to listen, she would often talk to her on those subjects of which the little girl best loved to hear, till Agnes was surprised to find that any one besides her grandmama could speak to her when alone so pleasantly. Then, also, Emily had grown quite affectionate in her behaviour to her, and Agnes in return was disposed to do more than *like* Emily ; so that they began to be looked upon throughout the school as two principal friends : for Lucy Seymour happened to be away during the greater part of this half-year ; and from little Jane Stevenson Agnes was necessarily a good deal separated, though the child would continually find something or other to do for her, or ask as a favour to be allowed to walk with her, and Agnes was by no means backward in granting the request, for she sincerely loved her little friend.

Midsummer was now approaching, and the idea of a prize, and of the evening at

the rectory, were frequently in the mind of Agnes. Her hopes, however, in common with the bright prospects of many of her schoolfellows, were this time to be disappointed. In the beginning of June scarlet fever broke out at Mrs. Wakefield's, and her pupils were in consequence hastily dismissed to their homes. Much as Eliza had before been wishing to return, she was now thoroughly mortified: for throughout the half-year she had steadily kept in view the resolution with which she began it; and, notwithstanding all her faults, as indolence was not now one of them, it seemed likely she would attain her object, and be moved into the upper class. Now, the fear lest her being obliged to leave school without any examination should prevent this, wholly occupied her thoughts. In vain did Agnes assure her that Miss Wakefield would not allow it to do so: and once, indeed, the more to comfort her, she ventured to say that perhaps it was better for Eliza not to undergo an examination, as thus she avoided the remarks which might have been made upon her conduct. But this, though done

in a very gentle way, made Eliza so angry, that Agnes was afterwards silent.

“Oh, Agnes! dear Agnes!” said little Jane to her the morning they were to leave; “I am so sorry for you, for you have been wishing so much for a prize, I know; and now, though it is not your fault, you cannot have one.”

“It is not my fault, Jane,” answered Agnes, “and therefore I the less mind; that is, I try not to mind it.”

“Oh! but,” continued Jane, “just consider how pleasant it would have been for you, the first Midsummer after your coming to school, to have had a prize to take home. Now you must wait till Christmas.”

“I have thought of all this before, Jane,” replied Agnes, “and at first I was very sorry about it. But I have got over those feelings now; only do not bring them to my mind again, for I am sure they would easily return.”

“Well, then, Agnes, I won't try,” said Jane; “but let me ask you a question instead. Tell me how you got over them?”

“You know, Jane,” answered her friend,

“that, whenever I want to find out what is right for me to do or to feel, I fancy what grandmama would say to me. And I can the better do so now, because I heard from her the other day on this very subject of the prizes, before she thought that I should be obliged to return home so suddenly; and she bids me remember the text, ‘Before honour is humility.’ But stay, I will read you exactly her sentence, for I always carry about her last letter with me. ‘Humility must go before honour, Agnes, but it must not be parted with when honour comes; that were a sad exchange for my child: and so, if you cannot have both, I would rather wish for you humility without honour, than honour without humility.’ Now I think, Jane,” continued Agnes, “that, if I had obtained my prize, it might have made me proud; and then I should have had just what grandmama did not wish for me, honour without humility.”

It was a happy thing for Agnes that humility had been one of Mrs. Shaen’s favourite subjects of conversation, so that the little girl could scarcely think of her grandmama without having some precept

about, or example of, this grace, brought to her mind. It might have been the same with Eliza. It did often happen, that when she was about to give way to some proud temper, verses which she had learnt or heard at Westcote would come to her recollection : but she had from the very first tried to forget them ; and the poor child had so well succeeded, that they had only once been in her remembrance during the last half-year, in a violent fit of passion : then she immediately put those thoughts from her, that she might indulge her temper without restraint, and never, since that time, had they visited her again.

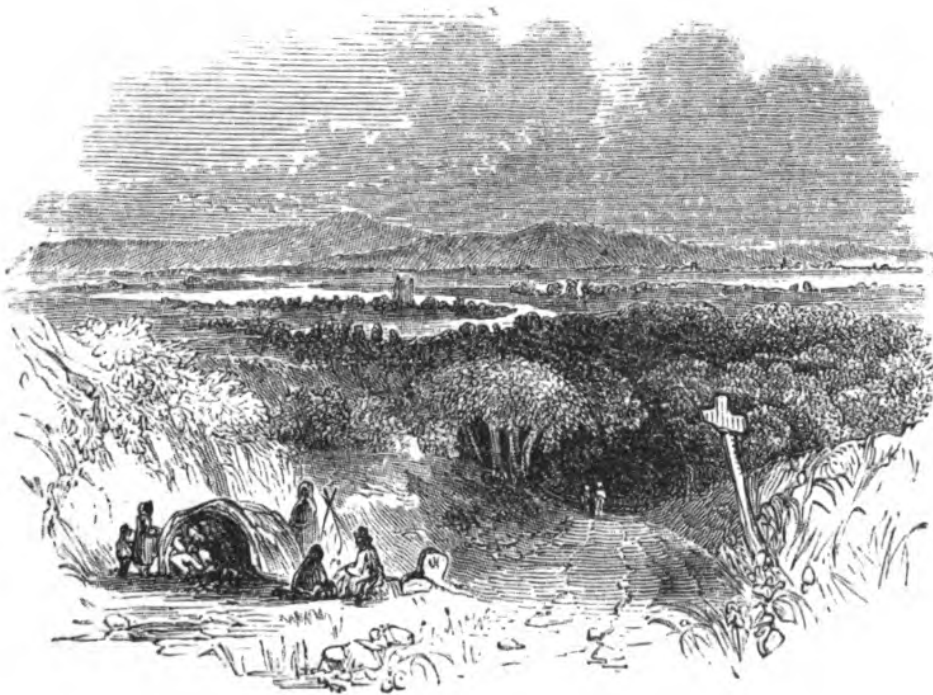
A few days after Agnes and Eliza left Stoke, they were both taken ill at Mrs. Denham's (for they had gone immediately to her) with scarlet fever. It broke out with Agnes, as it had done with her little schoolfellows, in a very mild form ; but Eliza soon became dangerously ill : and her sister, having recovered sufficiently for this purpose, was therefore sent over to Westcote. It was a strange thing to the little girl to feel sorrow in the prospect of going to her grandmama's : yet now she

would far rather, if she might, have staid by and watched Eliza ; or if this had not been permitted her, still she thought, that, by remaining in the house, she should at least have had the solace of hearing continually how her sister was. However, Mrs. Denham considered, and perhaps rightly, that it would be better for Agnes to be entirely separated from her : she allowed her to take one last look at Eliza, who was scarcely conscious of her presence ; and then, kissing the little girl, almost lifted her into the chaise. On her arrival at Westcote, Mrs. Shaen did what she could to comfort her ; but, as her sister grew worse, she determined herself to go over to Barrow to be with her, and so Agnes was left under the care of Aylton. I will not describe the child's bitter sorrow, as from time to time the thought forced itself into her mind, that she should never see Eliza again ; nor the kind of trembling delight, which Aylton would now and then awaken in her, at the words that her sister might yet recover. And, if so, Agnes went on to hope she might be a very different and a better child.

But these days of anxiety, long though they seemed to poor Agnes, were not many. In about a week's time a letter from her grandmama put an end to her uncertainty : and, whilst it told her that she could never see her sister more upon earth, it spoke so reverently of Him " whose never-failing providence ordereth all things in heaven and earth ;" pointed with such love to Him who once shared a sister's grief ; so trustfully to Him who is the Comforter,—that it much helped the little girl to put down any murmuring thoughts against her Heavenly Father. Her sorrow was not less deep, but it became a softer, holier feeling. She was enabled to obey the command, of which Mrs. Shaen reminded her, to humble herself under the mighty hand of God : and though she was but a child, she found, as really as older people, the sweet calm that follows the really looking upon every event as ordered by Him who doeth all things well, —the humbly taking up of the cross laid upon us by Him who bore His own so meekly for us,—the yielding up of the whole will to Him who deigns to dwell in the lowly heart.

Quietly, therefore, could Agnes now wait her grandmama's return, which was delayed for ten days ; so quietly indeed, that Aylton was astonished to hear no expression of discontent or impatience uttered by the little girl in all her sorrow ; and she once ventured to say so.

“ Oh, Aylton ! ” was the reply, “ if you had read my letter, and been taught as I have, you would not wonder then. ”





CHAPTER VI.

HAVING now followed Agnes during the earlier part of her childhood, I do not intend to give you, my readers, so exact an account of her future history. I have already told you about her sufficiently to enable you to judge what kind of little

girl she was, and how she became and continued so ; and you may all think for yourselves how far you are like her,—like her in this especially, that, wherever you are, you are shewing the same humble, and therefore contented spirit.

From what you have already heard of Agnes, you will easily believe, that each year as it passed, still found and left her improving ; for, wishing and seeking to be guided, she was guided in the way that she loved ; and, the further she advanced in it, the lowlier she became,—the more ready to make allowances for others, though unwilling to excuse herself.

She continued some years at Mrs. Wakefield's, for her grandmama and aunt both thought that she enjoyed more advantages there than could elsewhere be given her. Agnes, feeling their kindness in allowing them to her, endeavoured to improve them to the utmost ; so that, after the first midsummer, there was no half-year in which she did not return home without one prize at the least as the token of her good conduct, or improvement in her studies. She was a general favourite throughout the school ;

still, Emily Gardiner, and Lucy Seymour, and Jane Stevenson (now no longer *little* Jane), were her chief friends. Yet, much as she loved them, she ever felt a kind of loneliness since Eliza's death. Her regret was perhaps increased, because she had so often formerly, when grieving over her sister's conduct, comforted herself with the hope that, as Eliza grew older, she would improve ; and now that prospect was gone for ever. Besides, Agnes was afraid that she had not always spoken and acted before her sister, nor been kind and forgiving towards her, as she ought. " Oh ! had I been different," she would say to herself, " she might have been so too."

But these recollections were not useless to Agnes ; they made her more watchful now, especially when she was with those whom she loved, lest she might hereafter have cause to reproach herself in the same way with regard to them.

Her holidays were now regularly spent at Westcote ; for, after she had been about two years at school, some family affairs had called back Mrs. Denham to the north, where she had resided the greater part of her life.

And now, as I draw nearer to the end of my story, I feel a fresh difficulty; for I am supposing that several years have passed with Agnes since its commencement, and she therefore speaks and must be spoken of as an older person: whereas with you, my readers, it is probably but a short time since you took up this little book. However, though you may not now understand everything in this part of my tale, you may yet like to continue it; and perhaps it may some day come to your recollection, when you can better enter into its meaning.

What I have to relate of Agnes will be still chiefly, as hitherto, her behaviour in small and common things; for they are such as are more likely to happen to yourselves,—they must at least occur more frequently than greater events.

Emily Gardiner left school the vacation before Agnes; and it was then settled, with the consent of the mama on the one, and the grandmama on the other side, that, if all should be well, the next Midsummer, before Agnes returned to Westcote, where she was thenceforth to take up her abode,

she should pay a visit to her friend at Woodford, so Emily's home was called. There was much to occupy Agnes' mind during this last half-year, as she wished to make the most of the time which yet remained to her at Stoke : but, as the holidays approached, with many happy imaginations, and plans of the life she was to lead with her grandmama, was mingled the delightful prospect of seeing Emily, and being made acquainted with her home.

That Midsummer prize-day dawned love-lily upon many bright faces at Mrs. Wakefield's : and, if Agnes' was not among the most so, it was because she had spent too many pleasant years at Stoke to feel unmingled joy at the thought of leaving it. It was an exciting day to her, for she received, together with her prizes, the highest commendations from Mrs. Wakefield, and not a few congratulations from her school-fellows ; so that she was glad of the quiet of the evening to collect her thoughts. Sleep, however, presently came to interrupt her meditations : but an opportunity was soon given her for a fuller indulgence in them. A few mornings afterwards, Agnes

set out on her way to Woodford; each arrangement had been made, her last leave-takings were over, and she was alone: she had, therefore, full leisure for looking back on the past, or forward to the future. She occupied herself with the first; and thence many serious thoughts rose to her mind. Not the least so was the remembrance of the time when, with Emily and a few others of her companions, she had taken upon herself the duties, and been admitted to the full privileges, of a member of the Christian Church: scarcely more than a twelvemonth had elapsed since the period of Agnes' confirmation; and the tower of Ilton church, where it had taken place, as it caught her eye in the distance, brought each circumstance vividly to her mind,—the vow, and the blessing, and the prayer. No wonder, then, that they were very grave feelings of which Agnes was conscious during the first part of her journey.

Meanwhile, the day seemed long to Emily, for she must wait till the evening for the arrival of her friend. The house and garden at Woodford, pleasant at all times in Emily's eyes, seemed doubly so then, as she watched

for Agnes by the summer twilight: and, happily, the calmness and beauty around her somewhat soothed her impatience for the hour of their meeting. That came at last, and the joy which it brought to both was nearly equal; but the greatness of its degree I will leave to the imagination of my readers.

Agnes had heard so much of Mrs. Gardiner from her young daughter, and had formed such an exact idea of her in her own mind, that she felt not a little anxious to see her; and she was desirous also to know how so sensible and agreeable a person as Emily represented her mama to be, could yet be so different from Mrs. Shaen, as her friend assured her that she was. A few days at Woodford convinced her that Emily was right; that Mrs. Gardiner, though she quite equalled the expectations which Agnes had formed of her, was yet an entirely different character from her own grandmama. Mr. Gardiner and herself were both extremely kind to Agnes: they were prepared to welcome her as the friend of their daughter, but they soon learned to like her for her own sake. The visit was therefore

on all accounts a very pleasant one to her: she enjoyed all the freedom of a large house in the country, and could pursue her occupations with Emily with little interruption: there was a lovely garden where they could walk together, and Mr. Gardiner would often accompany them in long country rambles. It was a pretty room, too, which Emily had chosen for her friend: the window looked upon the valley below the house, where, amid the cluster of cottages forming the village, stood the tiny church; and the chime of its bells often sounded sweetly on Agnes' ear. Still, surrounded by these things, she loved to think who it was that gave them to her; and, receiving them as proofs of a goodness which she did not deserve, she tried to use them all, as He would have her, who had bestowed them.

Agnes felt much, too, the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, and was only sorry that she had it but little in her power to prove that she did so: yet, perhaps, her manner shewed it more than anything else could have done. They, on their part, were very glad that their daughter should have chosen such a friend; and, when she spoke of going,

they were urgent with her to prolong her visit.

When Agnes had been about ten days at Woodford, one morning at breakfast Emily proposed taking her to see Martha Panton, an old inhabitant of the parish, who lived at some distance from Mr. Gardiner's house.

“ I have been thinking of it a long time,” she said, “ and the walk will be so pleasant this beautiful day ; shall we go, Agnes ? ”

“ You may be sure I should like it, Emily,” replied her friend.

The plan was mentioned accordingly to Mrs. Gardiner, who started some objections.

“ The fields will be too wet for you from the late rain,” she observed ; “ and by the lane I do not quite like your going. It is so much further, and so lonely.”

“ Oh ! mama,” cried Emily, “ I often walk alone down that very way, and I have never met with anything disagreeable, excepting once an old blind horse ; and Agnes is not easily frightened.”

“ Pray, do not object to the walk on my account, ma'am,” said Agnes ; “ I have no doubt I should enjoy it.”

“I quite believe,” replied Mrs. Gardiner, “that you would neither of you be the least afraid, and very possibly you might pay your visit and return with the utmost safety; still, I do not think it exactly the thing for you. However, do as you like; I have told you what I think about it.”

So saying, Emily’s mama left the room.

“Dear,” continued Emily to her friend, “I cannot see what harm there would be in the walk. That lane is not a pleasant one, I know, but I have often been there quite by myself; and you would not mind it, would you, Agnes?”

“Oh! not for myself in the least,” replied Agnes: “one lane is much the same to me as another in that respect; I like them all. But I suppose your mama is a better judge about the matter, so shall we not give up the walk for to-day?”

“It’s tiresome though,” answered Emily; “for, if we do not go to-day, I cannot tell when we shall; to-morrow you know we are engaged.”

“Let us put off our visit, however, this once,” said Agnes; “and leave the future to itself.”

Emily at length agreed in this opinion: and presently afterwards it came into her mind, that, as they could not go to Martha immediately, they might in the meanwhile have time to make her a gown, of which the poor woman stood greatly in need. She therefore invited Agnes to assist her in the choice of something suitable for this purpose, from a store of materials which she kept by her, and from which she was in the habit of supplying the wants of certain families among the villagers. This done, the two friends both set busily to work.

“You are very diligently occupied,” said Mrs. Gardiner, as she entered the parlour that evening: “that looks a nice dark colour; is it your selection, Agnes?”

“I believe Emily and I both agreed on the choice,” replied Agnes.

“And it seems a strong stuff too,” continued Mrs. Gardiner. “But Agnes, my dear, surely that work is hardly strong enough. It is all very well to look at, but would not prove durable, I am afraid.”

Agnes saw that Mrs. Gardiner was right.

“Indeed, I think I have made a mistake,” she replied. “Emily will you let me look at your work?”

“Emily’s is not over and above strong, I see,” said her mama: “but it is better than your’s. I should advise you, Agnes, to take some coarser cotton, and run those gathers again.”

“Oh! mama,” said Emily; “surely Agnes need not take all that trouble? Martha is an old woman, and does not want her gowns for doing hard work in.”

“Thank you, Emily,” exclaimed Agnes; “but I do not mind the trouble, and I had rather take your mama’s advice.”

Then, thanking Mrs. Gardiner for telling her of her mistake, (for Agnes was always glad to be shewn where she was wrong,) she set to work to rectify it: and, though it took her a good while to do so, she did not afterwards repent of the delay.

Very shortly after this incident occurred, a friend of Mrs. Gardiner’s came to spend a little time at her house. The name of this lady was Mrs. Rankin: she was the mother of little Mary, about whom you heard in the early part of my story. Her daughter had not been passing these holidays at home; for, as she was to return finally at Michaelmas, it had been thought

better for her to remain during this summer at school—the same school, at her first return from which she had spent a few days at Westcote, as you may remember. Mrs. Rankin herself, although a distant cousin, had never seen Agnes ; and, indeed, it was chiefly on this account that Mrs. Gardiner had now invited her friend. She was an agreeable person ; with a peculiarly pleasing manner. She soon took a great fancy to Agnes, whose simplicity and modesty had quite a charm for her : and Agnes, on the other hand, learned to admire the ease and grace of her cousin's deportment. Indeed, as Emily once remarked to her mama, there was something alike in both : only what was in Mrs. Rankin but the effect of education, and of the society in which she had mixed, sprung in Agnes from character and principle.

A morning or two after her arrival, Agnes and Emily were employed in turning over the leaves of a book which lay upon the breakfast-table.

“How very dull must this volume be !” exclaimed the latter to her friend.

“Particularly so, I should say, judging from its appearance,” replied Agnes.

“Oh! so you have got my book there, have you, young ladies?” exclaimed Mr. Gardiner on entering the room; “and pray what do you think of it? A most interesting work I assure you it is.”

“Indeed, papa!” cried Emily; “then it was well you did not hear what we were saying just now, for we both agreed that it seemed extremely dry.,’

“Have you either of you read it, then?” inquired Mr. Gardiner.

“No, we have not, sir,” answered Agnes.

“Then do not speak without knowledge. I can only tell you I have not been so much pleased with any volume a long time; and I really advise you both to read it before I send it away, which I must do shortly. Miss Graham, I thought I heard you inquiring for some book to read yesterday: in my opinion, you cannot do better than take this; and I shall be most happy to lend it you, for I have just finished it.”

Mr. Gardiner then continued the conversation with Mrs. Rankin. Agnes, meanwhile, again took up the work which she had heard him praising so highly, and it still appeared to her exceedingly uninteresting:

but she knew Mr. Gardiner to be a sensible man, and believed that he was more likely to form a right estimate of its merits, after having read it through, than herself, who had scarcely seen it. She resolved, therefore, to follow his advice ; and she soon had reason to be glad she had done so, as the work contained abundant information on a subject about which she had lately been inquiring : nor was the present the only occasion on which Agnes' willingness to listen to the recommendations of others proved of great advantage to her.

In the course of breakfast that morning, Martha Panton's name being mentioned, Mrs. Rankin proposed to take the two young friends to the cottage in her chaise, as she said she had a call to make in that direction. The offer was gladly accepted.

“ Well, Emily,” observed Agnes, as they went up stairs to dress, “ you see we have gained two things by taking your mama's advice the other day about waiting,—Martha's gown, and a pleasant drive.”

“ Yes, mama is generally right,” replied Emily : “ but somehow, Agnes, I am not quite such an advocate for being guided by other people as you are.”

“You should rather say,” returned her friend, “for listening to it; that I would do in most cases, at all events.”

On their return from Martha, Agnes was Mrs. Rankin’s companion in the chaise, and she appeared very willing to enter into conversation with her.

“You have now been here long enough to form a judgment of this part of the country,” she said: “which do you prefer, Westcote or Woodford?”

“Most parts of Somersetshire are beautiful, I think,” replied Agnes; “and I shall remember this place with peculiar delight: but yet it hardly seems to me so lovely as Westcote; the lanes are not so deep and green, nor the hills so wooded.”

“But,” continued Mrs. Rankin, “have you seen the Hanger, and the Deep Dell, and the Fairies’ Glen?”

“Yes,” answered Agnes, “I have seen them, for Mrs. Gardiner has been very kind in taking me everywhere; and I admire them all exceedingly.”

“And you still prefer Westcote!” said Mrs. Rankin. “That is the effect of prejudice. Your village must indeed be beau-

tiful, if it surpasses this. I think I shall come and pay a visit to you there, and explore for myself."

"I am sure," replied Agnes, "I shall be very happy to shew you our scenery. Westcote is quite noted in that part of the country for its loveliness."

"You seem fond of the country, Agnes," observed Mrs. Rankin. "I dare say you recollect those lines of Cowper's, beginning 'He is the freeman whom the truth makes free.' There are many beautiful sentiments in Cowper; though, as a poet, I much prefer Thomson. You know the 'Seasons,' do you not?"

"Yes, I read them during my last holidays," replied Agnes; "but I think I know more of Cowper."

"And which do you prefer?" inquired her cousin.

"Indeed," said Agnes, "I cannot tell which I ought to like best: but at present Cowper is my favourite, certainly."

"That is only because you are not sufficiently acquainted with Thomson," remarked her companion: "what! you do not think so, Agnes?"

“Perhaps it may be as you say,” replied Agnes; “but yet there is something about Cowper which I fancy would always please me more than Thomson.”

“And what is that?” asked Mrs. Rankin.

“I can hardly tell,” answered Agnes; “sometimes I have imagined it is that Cowper lets me know more of his own feelings, and they are such as I can well understand.”

“Some people are of your opinion, Agnes,” replied her cousin; “but, in my judgment, Thomson and Cowper are not to be compared.”

Mrs. Rankin then began to talk upon one or two other subjects about which her ideas rather differed from those of Agnes: but, as the latter was invited by her cousin to express her opinion, she did so, gently indeed, but very clearly. At the conclusion of the drive, as the two young friends walked together into the house, Emily exclaimed to Agnes,

“Well, I congratulate you upon so well maintaining your side against Mrs. Rankin. It was all the better for you, as I could render you no assistance.”

“ Indeed,” replied Agnes, “ I was not aware that I was in any situation of difficulty. Mrs. Rankin is so kind, I do not mind talking to her; and, if I am asked, you know I must say what I think.”

“ Oh ! to be sure ; I seldom mind saying what I think,” cried Emily ; “ only it amused me to hear you, remembering what happened about that dull book this morning, and how ready you were to believe papa.”

“ Yes,” said Agnes ; “ and I always wish to listen to the advice of those who are so well able to give it. But I still do not think that it is inconsistent with this, nor do I see any want either of politeness or humility, if a person expresses an opinion, when asked, even though it should happen to differ from that of another.”

“ In that I quite agree,” answered Emily : “ and I believe, Agnes, few people would quarrel with one for differing with them in matters of taste merely, such as you were speaking of : but in more important things it is so difficult, do you not think, for young persons to disagree with any of their superiors, without incurring the censure of being very self-opiniated ?”

“Emily dear,” replied Agnes, “I can imagine instances where those even who are quite young may be called upon to differ from such as they are yet bound to esteem and honour, and to shew their difference by their conduct: yet even then this may be done, as I am sure it ought to be done, in a very humble manner. Happily for us, however, these are cases which we can only imagine; and I should think that, generally speaking, young persons like ourselves were more apt to err, by paying too little deference to the judgments of others, than by overvaluing them.”

“Well, you may be right, Agnes,” said Emily; and thus the friends separated.

I have already mentioned that one of Agnes’ pleasures at Woodford was afforded her by her friend’s beautiful garden: she liked to be there alone in the early morning, that she might enjoy her own thoughts, which were usually then very pleasant; and at other times she would employ herself in learning favourite poems, or reading. Many a happy hour, too, did she there pass with Emily; thus preparing for her, as the latter would often say, fresh

pleasures of memory to solace her when Agnes should leave.

On such occasions Agnes was especially fond of recounting speeches or anecdotes of her grandmama; and Emily loved to hear them, partly from the pleasure which the relation gave to her friend, and partly because she already felt a great affection towards Mrs. Shaen, although she had never seen her.

One remarkably fine evening, they were walking together in their favourite shrubbery, when the following conversation took place between them :

EMILY. I think, Agnes, if every evening were like this, (and like it also in your being with me,) I should become quite a different creature, and grow so calm and contented as to cease to look forward continually, as now I do. For did you ever see a lovelier twilight? There is but one cloud above us, and I would not wish it away, it rests so softly there.

AGNES. It is very, very, beautiful, Emily. Do you not think, dear, that such a scene as this helps us somewhat to realize that description given us of God, as "the High

and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy!"

EMILY. It might well do so, Agnes; but yet I do not know that I ever looked upon it before in that way.

AGNES. Perhaps I am the more inclined to do so, because I well remember the first time my grandmama repeated that verse to me, on an evening much like this. I believe I had not been quite good just before, and so she quoted those words, and went on to the end of the text. I recollect even now how she spoke to me about it. "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also, (what an *also*, Agnes!" she said), "that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Do you ever, my love," continued grandmama, "wish for a humble spirit? then see what God has joined with it, *contrite*. My dear child, if you would be humble, ask God, who only can do so, to shew you your offences against Him; and when you see how many, and how great, and how aggravated, they are, you will not be disposed to be proud in your

conduct towards men." Then grandmama went on to tell me of the happiness of having God to dwell in the heart, till I thought how blessed a thing that humility must be, to which such a promise is given.

EMILY. What an advantage you have had, Agnes, and will, I hope, long continue to have, in the society of one who talked to you so often on such a subject! And you have done well to remember what she said.

AGNES. Oh, Emily! I wish I had taken more pains to do so; then I should have recollected more. But, however, the whole effect of her example and conversation will not, I trust, be quite lost upon me. I can recal now so many texts, that she loved to repeat over and over again, which speak of humility, either in the way of precept, or example, or promise. Often, too, as we walked with her to church, she would tell us how humbly the Bible teaches us to pray; and how our Church, following herein the example of Holy Scripture, would impress upon Her members the same spirit of humility by all Her services. Then she would quote many instances of this.

EMILY. Tell me some of them, Agnes, please.

AGNES. We need but turn to the Prayer-book, dear; (and we can remember our Collects without doing that just now;) petitions we have expressed in such a form as this, "We humbly beseech Thee;" thanksgivings, "We give Thee humble thanks," "We most humbly praise Thy name;" confessions—but of these I need not remind you. Think, too, of the whole spirit of our Services; or let us take as a specimen that one—surely it is among the most beautiful—for the Holy Communion. Did it never strike you there how the deepest humiliation is blended with the sublimest praise? the confession followed by that glorious hymn, "Therefore with angels and archangels;" and that again by the lowly prayer, "We do not presume to come to Thy table, O merciful Lord," &c. For, as it says in a verse which my grandmama sometimes repeated,—

"The soul that so abased lies,
With deepest shame and humblest cries,
Most meet shall join in angels' lays,
And lowliest heart yield highest praise."

EMILY. Agnes dear, I always like to hear

you talk of your grandmama. How I wish I knew her!

AGNES. I hope you will know her some day, Emily," said Agnes; and so saying, she followed her friend into the house.

The morning after this dialogue, as Emily entered the breakfast-room, "Here, my love," said Mrs. Gardiner to her, displaying a bag of rather curious workmanship; "this is a present Agnes has made me."

"How very pretty!" exclaimed Emily; "and how nicely you have done it, Agnes, if it is your work!"

"You must have made several bags of this kind before, I should think," said Mrs. Gardiner, "or you would hardly have arrived at such perfection; for really there is some practice as well as ingenuity required in this work."

"A young lady at school taught me," answered Agnes; "you knew her, Emily, —Augusta Haines."

"Oh!" cried Emily, "I am sure she might have taught me long enough before I should have made any progress."

"Well," replied Agnes, "I will say much credit is due to her patience with me; but,

after all, this work is not so difficult an affair as you seem to imagine. I could very easily shew it you, if you have any wish to learn."

"Oh! from you, Agnes," said Emily, "I am always willing to learn anything; though, in the present instance, I fear I shall prove but a dull scholar."

Accordingly the two young ladies soon found an opportunity of beginning their employment. They had not been long seated, when Mrs. Rankin rather suddenly made her appearance.

"And so I find you, as usual," she said, "diligently occupied. You are teaching Emily that pretty work, are you, Agnes? Well, it is uncommonly elegant. I have just been admiring Mrs. Gardiner's bag, and now I am come to say that I must learn myself."

"I am sure," answered Agnes, "I shall be very happy to shew you."

"Yes, my dear," replied Mrs. Rankin; "but I do not intend to be taught just yet. You must come to Otterbourne, and there I shall have my lesson."

Agnes smiled.

“Yes, Agnes,” continued her cousin; “but indeed I expect a more serious reply. I see you are waiting for a formal invitation, but that it is not in my way to give. I am only sorry Mary is not at home just now; Mr. Rankin and myself would be most glad that she should have had you for a companion. Still, as to entertainment, I can promise you some without her. There are several things in our neighbourhood well worthy of a visit; and, as you are fond of drawing, you may like to look at our pictures, for Mr. Rankin is somewhat of a connoisseur, and has a few by the finest artists. Come! I will leave you to talk the matter over with Emily, and then I hope you will not keep me longer without an answer.”

Agnes hardly knew at first what reply to make to Mrs. Rankin, except to thank her for her kindness: however, she deemed it best, before coming to a decision, to write to Mrs. Shaen on the subject. Her grandmama saw no objection to the visit: she was rather glad that Agnes should have this opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of her cousin. It was

therefore settled, that, when Mrs. Rankin returned to Otterbourne, Agnes should accompany her, and thence, after a short stay, should return to Westcote.

“Are you not glad, mama,” said Emily to Mrs. Gardiner the morning afterwards, “that Agnes is going to Otterbourne? I think it will be so pleasant for her, and it will not take her at all sooner from us, you know.”

“Oh no, my dear!” replied her mama; “I shall be sorry, whenever the time comes, to part with Agnes; but perhaps, on the whole, it is desirable that she should stay with Mrs. Rankin.”

“What makes you say ‘on the whole,’ mama?” cried Emily; “why, do you not like her to be there?”

“I do like it, my dear, as I have said, on the whole,” answered Mrs. Gardiner; “but yet there is one reason which makes me a little hesitate.”

“Oh! mama, what can that be?” exclaimed Emily: “do pray let me hear it.”

“Why, Emily,” answered her mama, “I see that Mrs. Rankin has taken a great

fancy to Agnes, and this is all very well : yet I think she does not always shew it in the wisest way. Agnes is a favourite of mine, too ; and I should be quite sorry if she becomes spoiled. She is very humble now, but I do not know how far her cousin's excessive admiration may tend to make her otherwise."

Emily had so high an opinion of her friend, and the idea of her being spoiled was so new, that Mrs. Gardiner's words a good deal surprised her.

"Mrs. Rankin spoil Agnes, mama!" she exclaimed ; "what ! do you think she praises her too much?"

"You know, Emily," observed Mrs. Gardiner, "you cannot expect any one, not even Agnes, to be above the power of flattery : and, the clearer a mirror, the more discernible is each speck on its surface. However, watch for yourself."

Emily mused in silence upon what her mama had said, and a little reflection and observation of their visitor's conduct convinced her that it might be right. Mrs. Rankin, though in most respects very sensible, was rather apt, when she met with

a young person who pleased her, to shew her partiality too openly. It was not that she exactly flattered, but her praise was given in that delicate way which is most pleasing, and so most dangerous to a modest character, and the constant repetition of which is likely to produce, almost insensibly, a bad effect upon the mind.

No sooner did the thought that Agnes was in danger of being injured, or rendered unlike herself, enter Emily's imagination, than she resolved to do what lay in her power to prevent such a consequence. She waited long for an opportunity, till at length it came to the last day of Agnes' visit at Woodford, and then she could delay no longer. Happily she had no occasion. It was usual with the two friends to read together before breakfast the lessons for the morning; and this day, it being the 10th of July, they had just finished the twenty-ninth chapter of Proverbs, when Emily exclaimed,

“ Oh, Agnes, how long will it be before we shall read together so pleasantly again !”

“ Pray, Emily dear,” replied her friend,

“do not put into my mind such sad thoughts as those of parting now: or, if we must think of it, let it be to fix more deeply in our memory these our last chapters.”

“Well then, Agnes,” answered Emily, “I will tell you what verse struck me the most as you were reading, though you may think it a strange one. It was the fifth, ‘A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.’ Do you not think, dear,” she continued, “that generally now-a-days we hear more of the folly of bestowing flattery, than of the danger of receiving it? and yet, from this text, it would seem no very safe thing to be exposed to its power.”

“Indeed, it would not,” returned Agnes; and so I think we may be glad to have been hitherto pretty well kept from the trial.”

“Well, I must confess,” answered Emily, “that I like both to give and receive praise very much. And yet it is so difficult to know when praise becomes flattery. I am afraid it would often do so, in my own case, before I was aware of it.”

“Perhaps,” said Agnes, “it is hardly necessary to decide that question exactly, because we can in some measure judge when praise has been too much for us, by its effect upon our minds. I can remember, from the time when I was a very little girl, that generally, when my grandmama commended me, I used to be made more anxious to please her again; and I think praise, if judiciously given, would always have a similar effect. As for what is injudicious, I have hitherto been so much kept from hearing it, that I have never particularly considered its danger. But I recollect a saying of my grandmama’s, ‘A little praise is good for all, much praise benefits few, and flattery none.’”

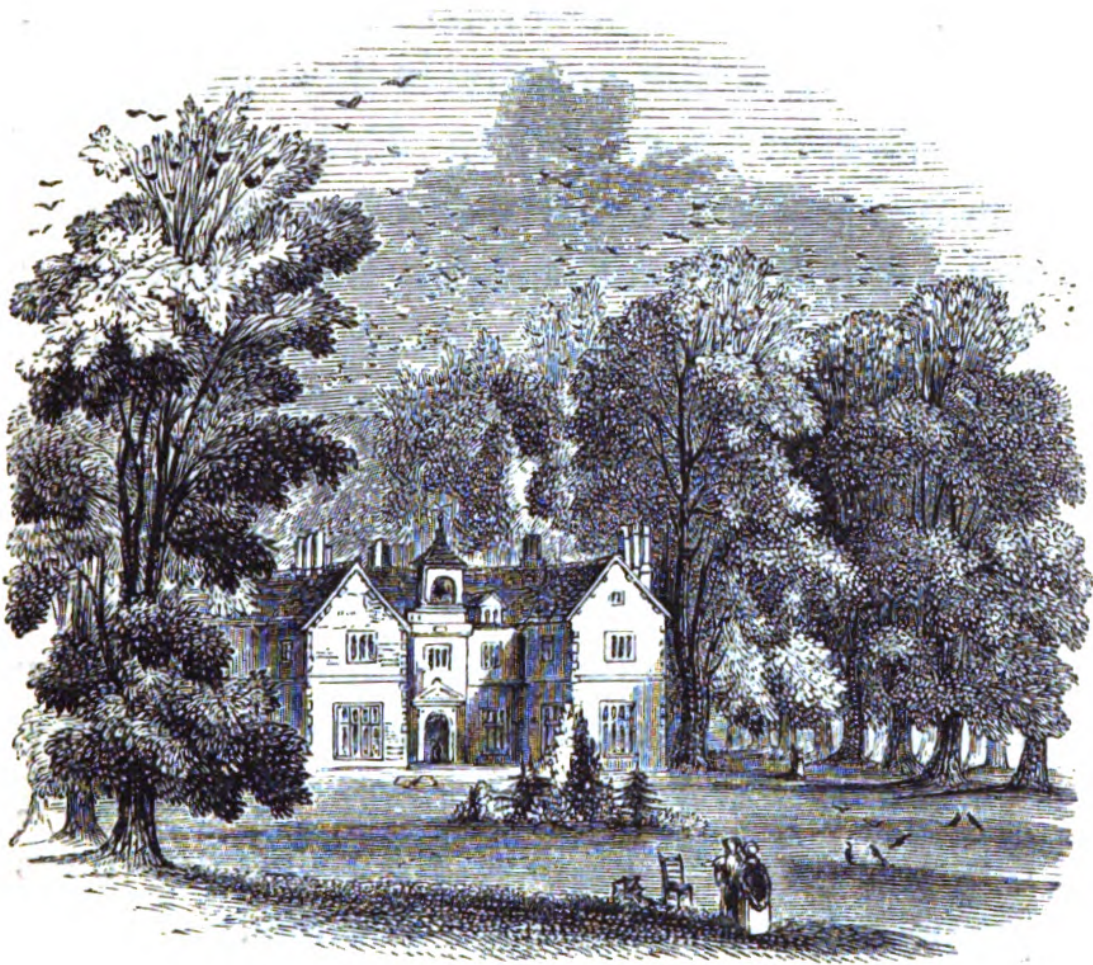
“I think I agree with that,” replied her friend. “But, dear Agnes, though you have not yet, as you say, been in much danger from the flattery of others, perhaps some time or other you may be; and then ‘Forewarned, forearmed,’ you know.”

“Well, Emily,” answered Agnes, “if ever I should be so, I hope this verse may come into my mind.”

“I hope it may,” replied Emily, “and that you will recollect that I said so.”

“Thank you, Emily,” returned Agnes :
“and now shall we read the second lesson.”





CHAPTER VII.

MY readers may by this time have discovered that I am not fond of lingering upon parting scenes; they will not, therefore, be surprised that I pass over Emily and Agnes' farewells, and beg them to accompany the latter on her drive with her cousin to Otterbourne. Mrs. Rankin kindly left Agnes to her own thoughts the first part of the

way, and afterwards endeavoured by agreeable conversation to divert her mind from the loss of her friend. Every object of interest on the road was carefully pointed out ; and when at length they arrived at the end of their journey, Agnes was quite disposed to admire the beautiful situation of her cousin's house. It was a little raised above richly-wooded grounds on either side. In the midst of these ran a clear stream, and the dark foliage of chesnut and elm was beautifully reflected in the calm water. Behind the house was a range of low hills, now glowing with heath ; and higher ones peeped above them in the distance.

“ From their summit, Agnes,” said Mrs. Rankin, “ we gain a splendid view of the Channel on the one side ; and, on the other, you may count village after village, and at least fancy Woodford to be one of them.”

But it was not only in out-door scenes that Agnes was called upon to express her admiration : all within was beautiful, and much was new to her. There were cabinets of curiosities, and paintings and statues ; there was a harp, which wanted not in its owner the accompaniment of an exquisite

voice ; and a library always at Agnes' command. Mr. Rankin was a very superior man, and besides took great pleasure in shewing his young visitor the rarities with which his house was stored ; and Mrs. Rankin wishing to associate Agnes with her in her employment, displayed to the latter all her arrangements : she introduced her to the charity-school, which she had lately established, and preserved in a most perfect order ; and she made her acquainted with several happy families among the poor, to the cottages of whom Mrs. Rankin paid frequent visits. Thus the time passed quickly and pleasantly with Agnes, though she often longed for Emily to share her enjoyment.

There was, however, a greater evil at Otterbourne than the absence of Emily, though poor Agnes was unconscious of it. Her cousin's kindness to her was indeed unvaried, but it was not the truest kindness. Mrs. Rankin took every opportunity of shewing how high an opinion she entertained of her visitor : Miss Graham's judgment and taste were always to be consulted, her advice even must be asked, upon every

subject; yet this was done in such a way, that Agnes by no means shrunk from it, as she would have done from open flattery: nay, she began, though unawares to herself, to like her cousin the better, and think the more highly of her, in proportion as she paid her attention.

Still, as we have said, no event occurred for some time to disclose Agnes' feelings to herself; and, as there was nothing from without to disturb her, all went on very smoothly and happily for several days.

At length, a few evenings before her leaving Otterbourne, Mrs. Rankin invited some friends to dinner; and one or two of them were to sleep at her house that night. After tea, Agnes was, as usual, called upon to play, and the commendations she received for her performance (not indeed without reason) were such as satisfied even her cousin. Soon after, Mrs. Rankin, talking with a lady about to visit Scotland, wished her young friend to exhibit some drawings of Benvenue, and Loch Katrine, which she had lately copied. They still lay on the table, when Mr. Rankin, pausing in the midst of a long argument, approached it,

and took them in his hand. Agnes was standing by, but he did not notice her.

“Oh! have you not seen those Scotch mountains?” said his wife; “then I am sure you have a treat. They are Agnes’ drawing, you know.”

“They are not badly done,” replied Mr. Rankin, rather hastily turning them over; “and they serve to bring to my mind many a pleasant ramble in by-gone days. But you had some Irish views here just now: what has become of them?”

“Oh! Fanny Roberts’s, you mean,” answered his wife: “she has taken them away. Fanny, my dear,” she continued, “could you bring your drawings here once more? I am sorry to trouble you, but Mr. Rankin wishes to see them.”

Fanny complied.

“Thank you!” said Mr. Rankin: “this is a style I exceedingly admire, so free and bold. And you have some smaller drawings, I see: may I look at them?”

“Oh!” said Miss Roberts, “these are only some sketches I have taken lately; I am quite a beginner in this way.”

“But I see you know how to begin,”

replied Mr. Rankin ; “ and that is something. You must be very fond of drawing, and have had a good master, I should say. Have you learnt long ? ”

“ About two years, ” said Miss Roberts.

“ Well, ” observed Mr. Rankin, turning to his wife, “ I do not wish to speak slightly of Miss Graham’s drawings ; they are really very prettily done : but these are far more to my own taste. Miss Roberts has learnt but a short time as yet ; by and by, if she goes on thus, I think she will attain to some excellence. ”

Agnes heard all this conversation, and her first feeling was one of vexation. She was mortified that Mr. Rankin, who was known to be a judge about such things, should have seemed to disregard her own drawings, and have shewn such a decided preference for those of another ; and especially that he should have expressed this opinion to Mrs. Rankin. Her second was that of envy and dislike towards the young lady who had been the innocent cause of his remarks. For a few moments she indulged this feeling, but it was only for a few. Scarcely was Agnes conscious of the

wrong disposition at work within her, than she checked it by the remembrance of the verse "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." And now she was as much vexed that for a moment she should have indulged such a contrary spirit, as she was before from the mortification she had received. That she might more entirely put away her envious thoughts towards Miss Roberts, she went up and entered into conversation with her, asking to see her portfolio. This she was soon able to look at with real pleasure, and both the young ladies began to be interested in talking upon a subject of which they were extremely fond. Agnes was much gratified by several remarks of Miss Roberts's upon the theory of painting, and was able, in her turn, to furnish her companion with some useful practical hints, gained from her own experience. Thus they separated for the night, mutually pleased with one another.

But when Agnes retired to her room, she could not feel satisfied with herself. She was accustomed to review at the close of the day her actions, and motives, and

thoughts throughout its progress : and though her feeling towards Miss Roberts that evening was but transitory, it was, nevertheless, one which she was so unaccustomed to know, that she became the more anxious to discover the cause of the difference. Formerly, when a comparison had been drawn between herself and her companions to her own disadvantage, she had scarcely felt annoyed, much less jealous of their superiority. Often, indeed, she had taken as great pleasure in hearing another praised, as in receiving praise herself. What then could have made the change? She felt that it was in some way connected with her strong desire to maintain the high opinion her cousin had conceived of her. "I ought indeed," said Agnes to herself, "to feel grateful to Mrs. Rankin for her kindness, and endeavour to shew that I am so. But is it right that I should be so very anxious for her to continue to believe me different from what I know that I am? I cannot certainly undeceive her myself: but if anything occurs that may tend to do so, should not my vexation be (if indeed I must be vexed) that I am not the perfect

creature she imagines, rather than that she should cease to consider me as such ?”

Presently the thought of Emily's verse, and their conversation upon it, flashed across Agnes' mind. This was followed by a whole train of remembrances. She could recal many times when Mrs. Rankin had strongly expressed her approval of conduct which her grandmama would, she knew, have passed over in silence ; others, when she had been more anxious to receive the commendations of her cousin, than to deserve them ; and she remembered having been led to say and do many things, during her stay at Otterbourne, solely for the purpose of hearing herself praised. And now Agnes wondered that she could have gone on so long, blind to Mrs. Rankin's ill-judged attentions. “Oh,” she thought, “if my only motive for doing right is that of being praised, perhaps before long the same principle may lead me into what is very wrong. And how foolish and weak I must be, that so slight a thing should prove to me such a temptation !”

But it is the same with older people than Agnes. Those who have continued longest

in a right course, are not so strong that they may depend upon their own steadiness, nor so safe that they may cease to keep a constant guard over themselves. And this is the great danger of hearing much of our own praises, that, believing what we are told, we are thrown off our guard, and cease to take heed, exactly when we have most need for watchfulness.

Agnes, after this, stayed but a few days at Otterbourne, but that time was sufficient to allow her former thoughts often to recur to her. Mrs. Rankin's conduct continued the same ; she paid her still the same attention as ever, but it gave Agnes now no pleasure ; on the contrary, rather pain, as it reminded her of her own folly. And yet she was glad to be so reminded, that by the recollection of past weakness she might learn where to look for strength, and thus be preserved in a future time of temptation.

Very grateful, too, did she then feel to Emily for the warning she had given her. Oh ! how often are the gentle warnings of friends made use of by God to preserve His people from sin ! Remember this, my children ; and if, when you are about to turn

aside from the right path, some kind words of those who love you come across your mind, regard them as the merciful voice of your Heavenly Father, to check you, and make you consider your ways.

When Agnes left Mrs. Rankin, it was to live with her grandmama at Westcote : and if she had formerly anticipated this time with great delight, abundantly now were her imaginations of happiness realized ; for those imaginations were not the idle castle-building in which too many indulge themselves. Agnes had never suffered the thought of the future to make her discontented with the present : rather had humility taught her, in whatsoever state she was, therewith to be content ; and so now, when placed exactly in the situation which, could she have chosen for herself, she would have desired, she looked up the more gratefully to Him who had brought her there, and strove to shew forth His praise by devoting herself to His service.

Mrs. Shaen was indeed now growing old : but a considerable measure of bodily health and comfort were still permitted her, and her mental powers were vigorous as ever.

It was an old age which Agnes loved to compare to the bright autumns of Westcote, with their purple fruits, and golden harvests, and glowing woods, and sunsets of glory. In whatever weakness she felt, it was Agnes' delight to be her solace ; to her wants it was her privilege to minister. And many of the poor of the parish, towards whom for so many years Mrs. Shaen had acted as a mother, manifested now the affection of children in her decline ; whilst Agnes, by the activity and devotedness of her conduct amongst them, guided as these were by the experience of her grandmama, gave promise that she would not ill supply the place of the latter, were she hereafter called upon to do so. A happy change, however, about this time, took place at Westcote, on the death of the former clergyman. The new rector, Dr. Hammond, with his family, came to reside in the village. It was a novelty, and soon felt by the inhabitants as a delightful one, to have their minister among them ; the more so, as Dr. Hammond was a man whom to know was to love. His wife, as her health was but delicate, was very glad of Agnes' help in the parish :

and the latter, acting under her direction, and that of the rector, soon proved herself an effectual assistance to both. The visits of Dr. Hammond were sources of great delight and consolation to Mrs. Shaen; and the clergyman loved also to watch over Agnes, and advise, while he encouraged, her in every good work.

You may therefore believe, my readers, that in such a situation Agnes would scarcely have felt the want of companions of her own age excepting that, wherever she was, she could not but mourn her sister's loss. But, besides the society of her grandmama, that of one or two young friends was also permitted her: Lucy Seymour's parents lived at no great distance from Westcote, and so she and Agnes contrived often to meet: Jane Stevenson's home was too distant to allow of such intercourse; but she herself, on leaving school, gladly accepted an invitation from Mrs. Shaen to pass a little time at her house, where she accordingly spent a happy month with Agnes; and, after this, the letters which they wrote at intervals one to another served to maintain and increase their friendship.

But where was Emily, you will ask ; was she forgotten by Agnes ? After the latter left Woodford, the two friends were separated for some years ; most unwillingly, indeed : but so it was, that several times, just as Emily had made everything ready to go and stay at Westcote, some circumstance occurred to prevent the execution of the plan. They were, however, in no danger of forgetting one another. All the occupations, and many of the thoughts and feelings of each were communicated to her friend ; and, parted though they were, they scarcely the less shared each other's joys and sorrows, giving one another encouragement in difficulty, and comfort in sadness.

In the meanwhile it happened that Emily married. Agnes could not be at the wedding, which was a disappointment to both ; but when about a year afterwards the latter received a letter from her friend, begging her to undertake the office of godmother to her baby, and, after some consideration and consultation with Mrs. Shaen, she had acceded to the request, Agnes left Westcote, to be present at the christening.

The infant, by its papa's wish, was called

Emily Alice ; but, for the sake of distinction, I shall give it the latter name.

Then, at Emily's home, the intercourse of former days between herself and her friend was renewed ; and they found that whilst years had scarcely taken from the freshness, they had increased the strength and depth of their affection.

Again Agnes returned to Westcote, and time passed on quietly, but happily, with her.

In the course of four years, Emily was summoned to leave England with her husband, on account of some situation which had been offered the latter abroad. They were obliged, much to the grief of both, to leave their little one behind. This was the greater sorrow to its mother, as she could not commit it to the care of her own parents, for they too were absent ; and, besides them, she had no relation to whom she entirely liked to entrust her child.

Emily thought of Agnes ; and, well knowing that a stronger tie than even friendship for herself bound her to the little Alice, she ventured to write and ask her whether she were willing to undertake such a charge.

The last part of her letter I will here copy for my readers.

“ Our darling, though rather young to be at school, will yet, we trust, be taken care of in every way where we have placed her ; and at present her learning much is a matter of no great importance. But the thought that you, dear Agnes, will watch over her, and let me hear of her from time to time, will be very cheering to me ; for, since I am denied the pleasure of bringing up our little girl myself, I know of no one to whom I can entrust her with such entire confidence as to yourself. I am sure those lessons you were taught by your grandmama in early days are not likely to be forgotten now ; and I only wish they could be as strongly impressed upon our Alice. You will teach her, Agnes,—for so you learned yourself,—that to be holy, we must first be humble ; you will shew her that the dress which will best befit her is that she be ‘ clothed with humility ; ’ that her truest ornaments are those of ‘ a meek and quiet spirit. ’ You will point her to the Pattern of humility, and pray that she may so walk, as He walked, in ‘ all lowliness. ’ And that

she may be prepared, when she goes out into her little world, to be told a different language, that she may expect to hear of such a union as a proud and *noble* spirit, you will bid her remember that ‘that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.’”

Agnes, on the receipt of this letter, hastened to tell her friend how gladly she would comply with her request: and henceforth she looked upon Alice, during Emily’s absence, as her adopted child. She did not indeed take her to live at Westcote, though, had Agnes wished it, her grandmama would have had no objection to this plan: but they both thought that Alice would have more advantages at school. The holidays of the little one were, however, always spent at Mrs. Shaen’s; then Agnes would tell her how dearly she herself loved her mama, and she delighted to relate anecdotes of her in her childish days. Often she would say, what a pleasure it would be to Alice, if her life were spared, to welcome her papa and mama back to England; and the child thought so too, though she loved Agnes almost like a parent, and Mrs. Shaen

also very fondly. Let us hope, therefore, that her affection led her to follow their example, and listen to their instructions; then we need not doubt that the little girl grew up to be such a character as Emily would approve when she saw her again.

But these hopes are all that I can give you with regard to the future history of Alice; for it is time now that we should part from her, and from Agnes, who has been so long our companion. The account of the earlier years of the latter was all I intended to relate; and I would fain trust it has not been related in vain. It will not be, if her example leads you, my readers, to desire for yourselves that humility, which has been represented in her;—so to desire it, I mean, that you may, with regard to this grace especially, for the future, obey the command, and obtain the promise, “Ask, and it shall be given you.”

THE END.

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