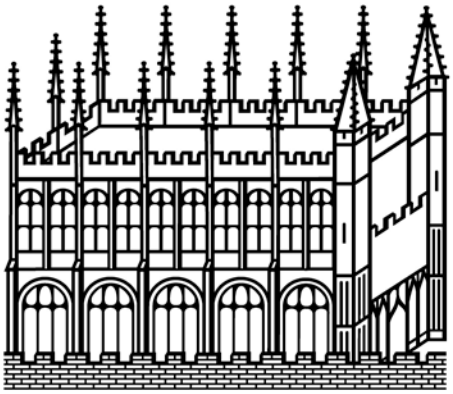

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THE YOUNG DUELLISTS AND THE FATHER'S MESSAGE

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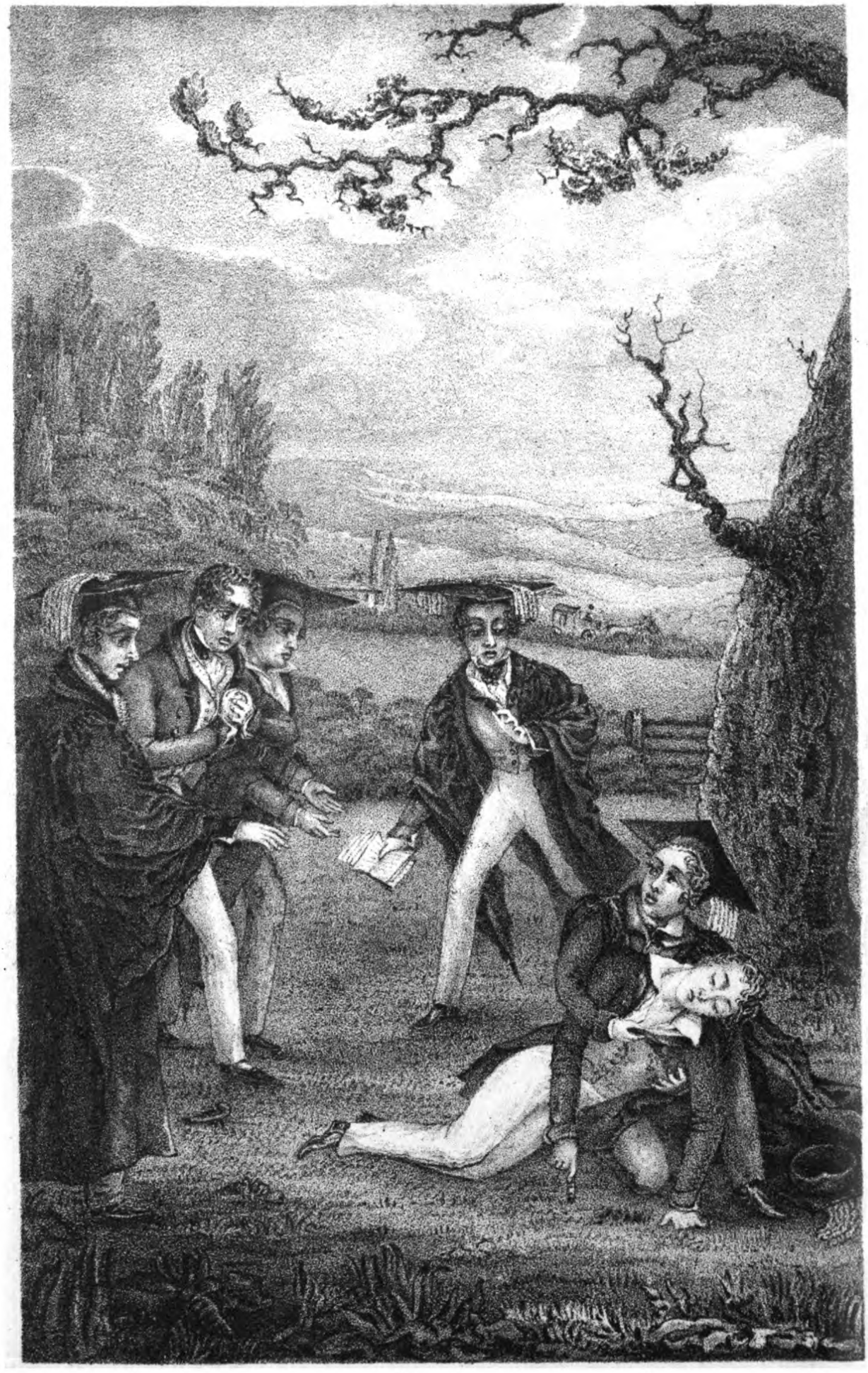

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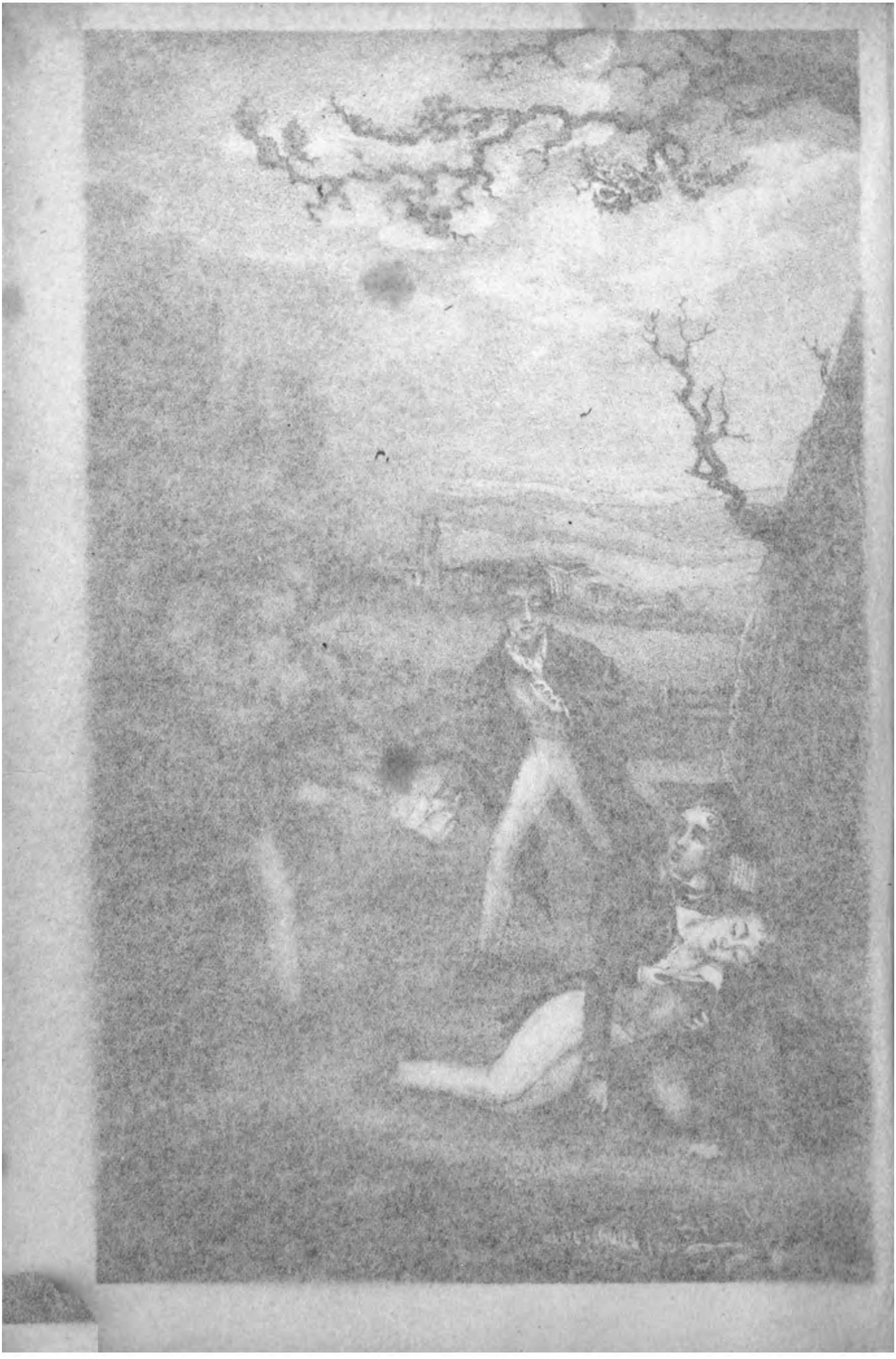

THE

YOUNG DUELLISTS;

OR, THE

AFFAIR OF HONOUR.

STEVENAGE :

H. F. MATTHEWS,

EXCELSIOR PRINTING WORKS.

PREFACE.

DUELLING of late years has been discouraged in every civilised Country.

THE AFFAIR OF HONOUR was published in 1837—a few lithographs remaining, the Authoress is willing to make use of them—books without lithographs will be presented gratis.

THE YOUNG DUELLISTS;

OR,

The Affair of Honour.

CHAPTER I.

Two young gentlemen of the same family, being at home for the holidays, and living near to each other, were constantly united by their parents in every plan for their amusement.

Edwin and William were nearly of an age, and having obtained prizes for various studies at school, were indulged by their gratified relatives in the rational delights of a winter-season in London.

Their mornings were spent in visiting the British Museum and the Society of Arts—in the latter each young gentleman had previously received silver and gold medals for specimens of figure and landscape drawing.

In the former branch of art, Edwin was considered to possess much talent, though rather inclined to caricature—a species of tact which however successful as a point of art does not claim credit as an amiable acquirement.

> A man renowned for repartee
> Will seldom scruple to make free
> With friendship's finest feeling;
> Will thrust a dagger at your breast,
> And say he wounded you in jest,
> By way of balm for healing.

William's forte had developed itself in sketches of village and woodland scenery, or mountain delineation—where the minute figure, perched on eagle height, where the broken sides, the rugged ascent remind us, that though difficult, and perchance hazardous the road, perseverance may ultimately attain the summit.

The cousins, then fourteen and fifteen years of age, were too young, and their application devoted to too great a variety of pursuits for them to have obtained perfection in their drawings and paintings. But the admirable and ostensible motive of that liberal-minded association (the Society of Arts) is "encouragement" not only of the Arts, but of the Sciences.

The visits of Edwin and William now were those of gratifying remembrances, and, very possibly, a polite inquiry after the health, and for the pleasure of a little chat with the amiable and lively lady-housekeeper.

The National Gallery, with many other places of public resort, also claimed their attention; whilst every evening a carriage rolled them to a dance, or a concert, or company detained them within their own ample mansions; and thus the time of relaxation from studies realizing a continued festivity, the lads considered themselves richly recompensed for their previously close application.

Edwin, the elder of the two, was vain and ostentatious. While the humble-minded William hesitated even to smile at the sound of praise, commendation, he would say, should be awarded to their masters, and acknowledgement made to their parents for giving them such excellent instructors.

"Ay, Aye," would Edwin exclaim, "but of what use all that, if we had not ourselves worked very hard."

William replied "We are obliged to bestow close application; but, without the guidance

of men who have obtained the knowledge for which we are seeking, it would not be merely labour—it would be drudgery."

Here Edwin's temper burst the limits of his patience. He would listen no longer.

One evening, at his father's house, having purposely led the unsuspicious William to reply to a remark emanating from himself, wilfully and absurdly ostentatious, he suddenly interrupted him by entreating the company to stand up and dance—sing—play forfeits—any thing they pleased, or cousin William would preach all night.

"And what think you," said he, when he heard the laugh go round, and believed it to be a testimony of admiration at his wit, "What think you—William actually made me lose the poetical prize."

"How so?" demanded a friend.

"O, he droned me into a nervous fever, and that so completely, that within an hour of sending in our pieces, I upset a bottle of ink over mine, whereby the chance was altogether lost to me."

"Then you were justly punished," said his father, "for, by your own account, good tem-

per must have deserted you."

"We will hear William's version of the matter."

William was obliged to stand forward, and thus explained the truth.

"I did not wish to be my cousin's censor," said he, "nor to annoy him any way, and felt certain of his gaining two out of four prizes at which we mutually aimed; but there happened to be an amiable boy of delicate health in the school, who, unable to keep up with some of us in the laborious and intricate studies, had devoted much of his leisure, in making himself master of the theory of the art of poetry."

"I was aware that he had exerted the whole energy of his mind, on a piece which had already excited him to considerable anxiety; therefore, with Edwin's probable success otherwise I endeavoured to persuade him against trying for the reward for the best metrical composition. In fact, he had no idea of doing so until within a very short time of the appointed examination."

"And who carried the day?" inquired some of the company.

"The sick lad," replied William, with an arch smile, "thanks to Edwin's bottle of ink."

"You need not laugh," returned Edwin angrily, "I think it was quite enough to make me lose the reward I had toiled for, as well as he."

"Presumption is seldom a guarantee of ability," rejoined his father. "I should rather imagine William's kindness over-estimated your performance, which more likely, even with deference to his judgement, would not have proved dangerous in the competition; especially as it was thrown together hastily."

"A part of the story I am well acquainted with from other sources of information, it was this very morning that the invalid sailed in one of our vessels to try the air of Italy by medical advice. He was too ill to be permitted to see any of his school-fellows, but he acknowledged to his guardians the amiable attentions he had received from my nephew, to whom, in the event of his death, he has requested that his late father's gold watch, chain and seals, and a pair of splendid pistols, may be presented."

"I hope he will not die!" exclaimed the

younger cousin, tears glistening in his eyes, "but if he does, Edwin, I shall beg your acceptance either of the watch or of the pistols, as a compensation for the disappointment you experienced."

"The pistols for me!" shouted Edwin; "and we will see if I cannot shoot another prize; ha, ha!"

Two or three of the visitors joined in a faint laugh, but by far the greater number looked grave at the sorrowful countenances of both father and mother of the unthinking boy.

Duty to their guests, however, soon raised the dormant smile on the lips of the parents, if their hearts were not satisfied: and the band striking up a lively tune, and Edwin selecting a pretty girl of about his own age, and being tall, handsome, and a good dancer, the tale of the sick lad was speedily banished from remembrance, and light spirits and amusement reigned throughout the spacious rooms.

A few days subsequently to this event, Edwin and William set out from their residences for the purpose of calling upon an old Quaker gentleman, who had been kind to them

from their childhood.

The weather was extremely severe, a strong North Easterly wind drifted the snow into their faces, while the intense coldness of the atmosphere froze every partical as it fell to the ground. They wished they had arranged a skating-match with some of their young friends, instead of proposing this visit.

"Let us do so now," said Edwin, "Mr. Barton will be none the wiser, and it is but a visit of ceremony which can be paid some other time."

"Not precisely so," replied William, "you know my father commissioned us with a message."

"Aye, that was because we ourselves said that we should go."

"Nevertheless," rejoined William, "since we have undertaken to deliver it, we ought so to do." And, resisting entreaties and remonstrances, he persevered over the slippery ground until they reached the Quaker's house.

William then ran smartly up the steps, which were well sanded to prevent accidents, and knocking as loud a rat-tat as his nearly-frozen fingers would allow; and the door

being quickly opened, there was an end to the controversy.

They were ushered into a warm, snug room, where the old gentleman was finishing his early dinner.

A smoking apple-pudding sent forth a delicious fragrance from the table, and our host, after welcoming the lads, invited them to partake of it with him.

"It will melt the frozen breath in thy throats," said he.

William laughed, and his teeth somewhat chattered, but considering that the pudding being of very small size might be perchance not more than the usual quantity of pastry completing the worthy man's dinner, and having taken luncheon previously to leaving home, he declined the offer.

"Wilt thou, my friend?" said the Quaker, addressing Edwin.

He unhesitatingly acquiesced; and the pudding or dumpling being cut in half was respectively deposited in two plates, and rendered still more relishing by powdered-sugar, nutmeg, and a squeeze of lemon. The old gentleman and Edwin seemed greatly to enjoy

the dainty, whilst William occupied the time in looking over a portfolio of engravings.

When the cloth was removed, the host invited the cousins to come near the fire.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Barton, "that I was not made acquainted with the time when I might expect the pleasure of this visit, I would have provided some excellent fruit. But look, William, into that celleret, I believe there is the last remaining bunch of grapes.

William obeyed, and brought forward a beautiful though not a very large cluster.

"Eat them," said Mr. Barton smiling, "thou hast had no dumpling, remember."

Edwin, who had been looking wistfully at the elegant and luxuriant fruit, now turned away his head quickly. It was evident that a feeling of vexation had entered his mind: probably not with regard to the contents of the plate William held in his hand, so much as that he was angry with himself for having accepted readily what William's modesty had thought proper to decline; and when his cousin, on Mr. Barton's refusal to take any of the grapes, equally separated the bunch and presented one half to him, he refused it.

Mr. Barton inquired of William what he thought of a print—he mentioned, in the portfolio which he had been examining.

"I was delighted with it, Sir," said William.

"My good-tempered boy," rejoined the old gentleman gaily; "thou shalt have it—not mine—thou shalt purchase one for thyself," and he gently dropped into the desert-plate before William a bright sovereign, remarking —"The sciences expand the mind, but the arts add a pleasing refinement to the more solid parts of education, and should be encouraged."

The worthy Quaker then conversed with both lads respecting their progress at school, and seemed equally pleased with his young friends, as they were charmed by his amiability and enlightened mind.

When they rose to take leave, Mr. Barton returned an answer to the message delivered from Mr. William Pierpoint by his son, and writing a few lines on a slip of paper requested the cousins to present it on their way home, to Mr.——, the bookseller, who was a particular friend of his, and it would save him (Mr. Barton) the trouble of sending expressly.

When they had left the house this proved a disturbance to Edwin.

Why could not Mr. Barton forward the note by post or let his servant take it? They had staid so long gossiping they should be late for dinner, and there was company expected; "and you know William," said he, "you must go home to change your dress and then return to us, and your house is further off than mine."

"Then probably," replied William laughing, "you are inclined to be the sole bearer of this note!"

"No, not I," said Edwin, "I do not mean to take it at all."

"Then, to be candid with you," returned his cousin, "it is possible you may be a loser."

"Ah! how is that? Did Mr. Barton ever give you a note to leave anywhere before this?"

"Yes, when I was a very little boy, and during the time that you were at Hastings with your Mother. It was to this identical bookseller. I was desired to place it in no hands, but those of the individual to whom it was addressed.

"I had to go six times before I could see

him, he was either engaged or from home. At length he received it, and told me that it was well for my advantage that I had not given the note to anyone but to him, for had I not minded what had been said to me, I was to have been informed that an answer would be sent to Mr. Barton; now, his directions were, to allow me to choose whatever book I should think proper from his shop."

"And was it then," demanded Edwin, "that you chose 'Cowper's Poems?'"

"Yes, Mamma had been eulogizing them the day previously. I knew her judgment must be better than mine, therefore desired to have what she admired."

"And you gained three volumes instead of one," exclaimed Edwin.

"I refused them when I found that to be the case, but the bookseller insisted that it was all right. I brought them home, and Mamma wrote in them as you may have seen, 'a kind remembrance from Mr. Barton to my dear boy. May he never forget the lesson'!"

"Well, that is droll enough," said Edwin. "I have often read those words, and took the matter for granted that our old friend, Mr.

Broadbrim, had been setting you a task, perhaps tasking you with a portion of 'the Task' and, pleased with your learning it, had given you the work as a remembrance of himself."

"I hope I have learned the lesson, to do as I am bidden," replied William. "But I should not have excited your expectations, had you not appeared determined to slight the commission we mutually undertook to execute."

"So I did," said Edwin, in a lively tone; "but now I have learned *my* lesson also, therefore come along Mr. Prosy."

They were not disappointed. An elegant set of the classics rewarded one of the cousins, and to the other was presented a beautiful selection of the British Poets. And, choosing to be the bearers of their own treasures, they were obliged to take a coach, which conveyed them so rapidly, that they arrived in good time to dress for dinner, and were commended for their diligence and the neatness of their appearance.

CHAPTER II.

The Turks have a proverb which says, "The Evil One tempts all other men, but idle men tempt the Evil One."

THE vacation ended, the cousins returned to school, whence, in three years' time, they removed to college for the advancement of those studies in which they had been prepared.

The fathers of the lads were merchants of the greatest respectability.

The Messrs. Pierpoint were rich; but Edwin's father, the senior in age and in the firm, having also married an heiress, was considered to be worth more, both in funded and landed property, than his younger brother.

Mrs. Pierpoint, we have said, was an heiress; also of high family, and truly amiable, but unfortunately very delicate health had prevented her paying that attention to the formation of her son's mind, which children of either sex so decidedly require from the tender watchfulness of a mother.

His father in his early days also being much occupied, the young Edwin was left greatly to the care of menials.

On the contrary, William's mother was a merchant's daughter, of family and circumstances similar to those of her husband. She was blessed with a good constitution; and actively alive to the responsibility of her maternal duties spared neither pains nor exertion in drawing forth the better faculties and the good feelings of her son.

Her affectionate solicitude was amply rewarded. The approbation of his parents, next to that of his own conscience before a righteous God, became the guiding-star of William's conduct, and safely carried him through the many little difficulties attendant on a first separation from the indulgencies of home. And it proved to be a most inestimable safeguard against those temptations and follies to which young lads are but too apt to yield from the fear of being laughed at by their elder or more mischievous companions: thereby causing to themselves disgrace, and sorrow to their friends.

When the cousins first arrived at college, they continued to study together as formerly, and their preceptors were as satisfied with one as with the other.

But some youths of rank, ascertaining that Edwin's mother was of high family, and himself a lad of spirit, sought to give him a little of the *ton* after their own fashion.

Edwin, delighted by the marks of consideration shown him by these young men, soon began to think contemptuously of his cousin's society, whose mother, though truly respectable, which he could not deny, was nevertheless of a different grade to the noble race whence Edwin Pierpoint sprung.

The amiable William forebore noticing this estrangement of manner, accompanied by many covert points of rudeness, until the masters complained of Edwin's defalcation from the steadiness for which he had been previously commended by them.

He then openly remonstrated and earnestly entreated him to relinquish those wild friends with whom he had of late been so intimate.

Edwin desired him to attend to his own business; and since he had met with companions suitable to his mother's rank, he should consider the credit due to her family, and not disgrace it by drudging for a dirty counting-house, "which resolution," said he, "I intend

shortly to convey to my father, decidedly, though of course respectfully."

"Respectfully!" cried William in amazement, at a word so misappropriately applied. "It would be hardly possible to couch such a resolution respectfully! I fear it would be received as ingratitude without the slightest melioration! Let me beg of you, my dear Edwin, only to consider——"

"None of your only's!" replied the wilful lad. "By the bye, I should like to get those pistols you talked of. Lord Dungarton has just had such beautiful ones sent down from London. Have you heard lately from Italy, William?" "No," returned his indignant cousin, "and, I hope I shall not very soon again, if the next news gives you the pistols, and me the watch."

"Farewell then, Mr. Sentimental," replied Edwin, sneeringly, "and, I shall get a pair for myself."

He strode from the apartment, hastened to the other end of the town, and there puchased the handsomest that could be obtained, paying for them the entire sum he had that morning received for his various expenses and pocket money.

Entering again the room where he had left his cousin, but who was now absent, he found my Lord Dungarton, and three of his fraternity, who had called to invite him to a game at cricket.

They changed their inclination, at sight of the pistols, and voted for an essay of skill, in firing at a mark. They who best understood the matter, instructing the others.

The young men quitted the town, and amused themselves for awhile, each at fixed paces, firing at the trunk of an old oak-tree in the centre of a beautiful meadow.

This agreeable amity did not long continue. Edwin, charmed with his purchase, could not refrain from talking too much about the splendour of the workmanship, and the pleasure of buying good things, that one lad, whose allowance was not equal to such expensive articles and being possessed with that same kind of envious desire which had swayed the mind of Mr. Pierpoint, thought proper to indulge in the gratification that was within his power, and with no slight degree of spleen vented many petty side-remarks on the vanity of the merchant's son.

Unhappily for the temper of Edwin, he overheard some of these taunting speeches, which concluded, by advising that the vaunted pistols, by way of being well taken care of, should be hung over-head of Mr. Edwin Pierpoint's high stool, in Murky Counting-house, Sum-it-up Alley.

"Sum up your impudence," cried Edwin, and snatching one of the weapons from the hand of the lad, who was in the act of firing at the old tree, he nearly lodged the contents in the face of the insulting wit.

General excitement prevailed with indignation against Mr. Pierpoint, but he raging with pride and vengeful feelings and the Hon. Mr. Courtney, no less influenced by disdain and desire to repay the insult he had received, it was at length arranged that a regular duel should take place under the formal, fulsome presentation of an Affair of Honour. Doubtlessly the witnesses expected the shots would be fired harmlessly and honour be satisfied by their presentation, but the bitterness of the grand merchant's son over-balanced even his own common sense and the Hon. Mr. Courtney was the victim—he fell and expired.

The ball, as it appeared on a *post mortem* examination, had penetrated the heart, causing immediate death.

William, who had been sauntering, book in hand, towards the very field where the sports had begun so harmlessly and were now ended so ruefully, at the report of the pistol and the exclamation of alarm which accompanied the fall of Mr. Courtney, precipitately leaped the stile, and rushing forward, demanded who had done the deed?

"It was I," replied Edwin, "but this shall expiate my crime. This shall finish the business:" and raising the pistol to his head presented it to his own forehead.

His cousin seized it also. In the scuffle it went off, and severely grazed William's left hand.

"Never mind," said he wrapping his pocket-handkerchief hastily round his wound. "Never mind it. You must fly from the town, and from the kingdom as quickly as possible. You received fifty pounds this morning, did you not?

Edwin's countenance flushed violently and he looked at the fallen pistols as his only answer.

William's comprehension supplied this lack of words, and taking out his pocket-book he presented to his cousin his own note for the same amount, and some loose gold and silver, that being obliged to change the larger sum, might not delay his flight.

"We must likewise decamp," said Mr. Springthorne, the son of a gentleman residing in the county, and who had been, during the few seconds of this conversation, supporting the head of the unfortunate Mr. Courtney on his knee.

There did not appear to be, in the minds of any of those present, the least expectation but that Mr. Courtney was quite dead. They notwithstanding bound up the wound with his own neckerchief, and laid the body at its length upon the grass.

William then proposed, that as he was the only innocent individual of the party, he should undertake the responsibility of remaining by the corpse, whilst they proceeded to the nearest inn, at which post-chaises were to be hired. "Engage two," said he, "and when on the road towards these meadows, direct one of them to my assistance. Manage it the best way you

can, and perhaps my silence, till I hear that you are safely across the channel, may prevent your being successfully pursued.

The young men severally thanked William for his disinterested kindness, and bidding him a different farewell to that which Edwin bestowed upon him in the early portion of this ill-fated day, they hastened away from the scene of action—the falsely-termed "Affair of Honour!"

CHAPTER III.

WILLIAM, thus left to himself, employed the first few moments of his mournful leisure in further arranging the gown of the fallen youth over his person. He then sat down by the side of it and listened anxiously for the first sound of the desired vehicle.

The London road skirted the meadows, and William's heart throbbed, when he heard the sound of approaching wheels, and felt that his moment of personal responsibility was about to commence.

But the carriage drove on, the noise died away, and for the instant he experienced almost relief that it had done so.

When, however, the afternoon neared to the close of day, and that the clouds, gathering with angry aspect, poured down a no-very gentle shower, and that the required assistance came not to his aid, he became indeed sensible of the extreme awkwardness of his situation.

Tortured with doubts and fears for his cousin's safety—with anxiety for his family—

with sorrow for that of the unhappy youth, he could resist no longer a bitter flood of tears.

But, reflecting that to be discovered crying would neither be favourable testimony of his innocence nor of his manliness, he exerted himself to resist the subduing influence; and mounting the stile by which he had entered the meadow, he waited with breathless interest for the next conveyance, horseman or foot-passenger that should appear on the road, determining to hail them and obtain succour.

He was disappointed in the intention. The audible and heavily-rolling sound that soon greeted his ear, proceeded from the London evening stage; on the roof of which, with their backs studiously turned upon the scene of their own bad conduct, he had the mortification distinctly to recognise Edwin, Lord Dungarton, Mr. Springthorne, and the other second, the Honourable Viscount St. Pierre.

"This is ungenerous," said he, while a momentary flush of anger tinged his cheeks. "But if they neglect their duty, I must no longer defer mine."

He descended the stile.

He was thrown completely upon his own

resources. There was a necessity for getting the body under the protection of a roof before night closed in.

At the commencement of the rain he had thrown the gown of the deceased over his head he now removed it, and with the help of the long sleeves, contrived to wind it round his body so as to confine the arms, and with care and trepidation he conveyed it towards a thicket near by.

He had scarcely advanced twenty paces under shelter of the trees, when three of the inhabitants of the town, to avoid the rain, determined upon the same plan which he had adopted, and coming smartly upon him exclaimed, "Holloa! my lad. What! carrying a dead body into the wood. To bury it, no doubt, or leave it there to rot. O! a gownsman, aye: and a brother gownsman, too!"

"By Jove, these are pretty goings on!" cried the elder. "But come, come, my pretty college young gentleman, you will have the kindness to bear your burthen a little beyond this convenient hiding place and we shall have the pleasure of escorting you to the nearest magistrate."

"I shall not hesitate to accompany you," replied William calmly, "but do me the favour to assist first in conveying this corpse to its former residence, or to some hotel, where they will not object to receive it."

"There need be no hurry for that," replied one of the men, feeling the face and hands.

"You say truly, the corpse, for it assuredly has been cold these three or four hours." And taking it from William, who appeared scarcely able to stand, he and one of his companions bore it between them.

The man who had previously addressed William, walked by his side, and keeping a sharp look-out that he did not attempt running away, indulged himself till they arrived at the magistrate's house with violently railing against the whole race of College scamps.

"It was but this morning," said he, "that the worthy Mr. Morland promised me and my neighbours ample justice, should we succeed in discovering the young scoundrels who amused themselves by breaking our windows, and wrenching the knockers from our doors last night. But perchance, my young blade, in your greater exploit of this evening, after-

noon, or morning, you may have forgotten the petty feat after last sun-set, eh?"

"Sir, I know nothing of your windows, nor of your knockers," replied William, a little haughtily.

"Ah, ha! I suspected you had forgotten it. Without doubt it is quite obliterated from your memory, eh! is that it?"

"No, Sir," said William, "I have not forgotten, nor could a circumstance have been obliterated from my memory, of which I have not heard mention till now, and am sorry it should have occured at all. But we will, Sir, if you please, refrain from a conversation which cannot be agreeable to either of us."

The tormentor had no inclination to be so lenient. He was delighted to pay off a few of the annoyances he had received from the collegians at various times, and he continued to taunt and insult his prisoner—for William was literally his prisoner—until they were admitted into the hall of the magistrate's dwelling.

William, however, maintained a determined silence, greatly to the chagrin of the townsman, who would have been much gratified had

he succeeded in his endeavour of working William into a passion, thereby proving that his words had taken effect.

These two were ushered into the magistrate's presence, whilst the others remained with the corpse in the hall.

The case was soon detailed, and the magistrate, surprised and shocked, hastened to view the body.

He shortly returned, bringing in his hand a letter which he had taken from the pocket of the deceased. He demanded of William, if that name and address had belonged to his unfortunate brother collegian.

"It did, Sir," replied William respectfully.

The magistrate shook his head, and ordering the body to be carried to the hotel, he mentioned, he desired his clerk to take down the deposition of the witnesses.

He dismissed them, and then turned to William, who, faint and sick, had sunk back in a chair nearly unconscious of what was passing in the room.

Mr. Morland was a clergyman as well as a magistrate. He was an elderly man, and not only for the greater part of his life had he

been an able dispenser of justice, but he had also been the faithful friend of the distressed. Rich and poor alike claimed the exertions of his benevolence, and many an aching heart had been relieved of the extreme bitterness of its sorrows, by the friendliness of his advice. He never waited till it should be sought for when it was in his power to offer it! He practised the Holy Spirit of Consolation.

William's gentle manners excited his interest, and the awfulness of his situation caused him to shudder for the possible fate of one so young.

He desired his clerk to retire for awhile, and causing refreshments to be brought in, he pressed William to partake of them. William, not having tasted any thing since his breakfast in the morning, gratefully received the attention.

"I should be glad to understand the exact truth of this distressing circumstance," said Mr. Morland; "but you must be careful, my young Sir, not to convict yourself. Whatever your confessions may be I shall be obliged to notice them to your advantage or discredit.

"Alas, Sir," replied William, "I am not at

liberty at the present moment to make a statement of any kind."

"O! I comprehend. Other parties concerned!"

William was silent.

"It is a sad, sad business," rejoined Mr. Morland. "But where are the weapons? You must deliver them up to me. It appears that Mr. Courtney died from the effect of a pistol-shot."

William opened his gown, to show that he had none about him.

Mr. Morland laid his hand upon his breast, to ascertain that that was the case. He continued it there for a minute. "Can this heart beat in innocency?" said he.

William's heart bounded to the question.

The reverend magistrate smiled. He knew well that the agitation of the heart is no criterion of guilt or innocence. He had made the inquiry with a different veiw.

"Was it an accident?" he demanded in a pleasingly inviting tone of voice.

William was still silent.

Mr. Morland sighed, and noticed, for the first time, that William's hand was wrapped up in his handkerchief.

The kindness of his manner was not altered, but the tone of his voice bore no longer its penetrating sweetness. It was cool, it was almost distant.

This was the trial of the spirit. This was the moment when William drank of the bitter cup, plenished with the exuberance of his cousin's guilt. He was losing the estimation of the virtuous and the just!

He felt so deeply the equivocal situation in which he was placed, that his pale cheeks became suffused with colour, and tears started to his eyes.

Mr. Morland no longer appeared to entertain doubts or expectations. He desisted from further attempts to draw him into conversation, and ringing the bell, desired his clerk's re-attendance.

"You will be lodged for the night," said he to Willam, in the private apartments of the jailor. The jury will be impanelled by three o'clock to-morrow, when, perhaps I need not inform you, you will require as much strength of nerve as you can command.

"I will give directions that every thing be provided for your comfort, consistently with

the restrictions under which you must be held, and your wound shall be attended to. I would not willingly depress both mind and body, and your reflections cannot be of the most agreeable nature."

"O, Sir," said William, quite moved by the reverend man's kindness and his reproof, "pray restrain an ill opinion of me until a few days' time shall allow me to explain myself."

"It will involve you in serious consequences," replied the magistrate, "if to-morrow you cannot give a satisfactory account of being discovered in actual possession of the dead body.

"I much fear this has been one of those acts of deliberate guilt, of which elder men set the example. A duel! *an affair of Honour! Dis*hononrable before God! and an acknowledged *Murder* by the jurisdiction of law.

CHAPTER IV.

THE following morning William looked pale, and the liveliness of his bright blue eyes somewhat dimmed. The wound of his hand, though skilfully dressed, had occasioned considerable pain and prevented his sleeping much during the night.

The jailor, accustomed to note these appearances, did not pay much attention to them as evidences of guilt. Anxiety, he used to say, was the destroying angel over both good and evil when in trouble.

He and his wife treated William with the greatest civility, and notwithstanding his indisposition he managed to eat a tolerable breakfast.

"You do not eat as if you were afraid," said the man, in a pleasantly inquiring tone.

"I need fear little for myself as regards guilt," replied William, "nevertheless, this is an unhappy business."

"Certainly, certainly," rejoined the other. "Your hand also,"—and he eyed his prisoner,

with rather a look of curiosity,—"that must be troublesome."

This was the second reflection William had been obliged to endure, respecting that sad accident, and, as in the former case, it recalled the banished color to his cheeks. Ah! thought he, should not my cousin and his friends hasten to proclaim my innocence, this wounded hand will be a terrible evidence against it. But why should I doubt? Of course, they will forward a letter, clearing me from all suspicion, from the first continental port at which they may arrive. This they can easily do, without endangering their own safety.

Edwin and his party in the meanwhile had reached London, and alighting from the stage before it turned into the Inn-yard had thrown themselves into a hackney-coach, bidding the coachman drive to St. Catherine's Dock.

Several steamers lay alongside the wharf, and passengers were crowding on board according to their destinations; among the number was Mr. Barton, the old Quaker gentleman.

He was hailed by the steward of the Greenwich packet, and passed quickly close to Edwin, as he and his friends were hesitating with

respect to which vessel they should choose.

Our young gentlemen had concluded, during the night's deliberation, that the first pursuit after them would be directed towards the usual means of gaining the Continent.

They therefore intended to keep clear of the Tower Stairs, Brighton, Southampton, Dover, and other large seaports, and to proceed to Margate or Ramsgate.

This plan could not now be taken advantage of; but Edwin was a shrewd lad. He had learned something of shipping concerns, the names of various mercantile houses, and gained other points of information from his frequent visits to the counting-house, during the different vacations, (of course previously to his having begun to despise it,) and he now volunteered to obtain, in some sailing-vessel, a cabin that should be entirely to themselves.

They cousequently entered another coach, and Edwin giving the direction, they drove at a rapid rate until they reached a large private wharf, where Edwin alighted.

In the midst of busy warehousemen, the landed freight from several ships, and finding his way with difficulty, he at length penetrated

a dusky counting-house, in a dark corner of the place, that painfully reminded him of Mr. Courtney's *reflection*, which he had received and repaid so bitterly.

"Is Captain Markham in England?" demanded Edwin, stifling his emotion, and essaying to look important.

"He is, Sir," replied the clerk.

"Can I see him?" said Edwin.

"He is here, Sir;" and a portly good-looking man, advancing into the office took off his hat making a low bow.

Edwin, returning the salutation, requested a private interview.

The Captain led the way to his own vessel.

There was now no danger of being overheard, but Edwin, at the moment of making the proposal he meditated, was seized with a fit of hesitation, he cast the blame on a disagreeable cough and cold that tingled his throat, and the distressing bark with which he concluded this explanation, excited the serious commiseration of the Captain.

"I think, Sir," said Edwin, "that, in a former voyage, you were entrusted with confidential dispatches to an eminent house at Rotterdam."

Captain Markham again bowed, and smiled.

"And to where are you now bound?" asked Edwin, in a familiar tone, assumed upon his acquaintance with the Captain's business, which, though private, had been well known at his father's office; and these dispatches had been of some peculiar importance in the commercial world.

Captain Markham replied, that he was returning immediately to the same place, whence he should proceed, in a new and a larger vessel, to the East Indies.

"When do you leave here?" said Edwin.

"In two hours; the tide will serve about that time, and, should the wind continue in its present quarter, we shall get under weigh, and clear the river in fine style. The *Anna Maria* is considered the best sailing-vessel of her class on the Thames. I wish she were large enough for the Indian service."

Edwin demanded of the Captain if he could receive four young gentlemen as passengers to Rotterdam. They had friends intimate with Messrs. Van Sluys and Huysen, of Rotterdam.

At the mention of the names of Van Sluys and Huysen, who had been Captain Markham's

former employers, the Captain consented to accommodate them, observing, that he would land them at Messrs. Van Sluys and Huysen's premises, close to shore.

He requested Edwin's name.

"Mr. George Bruton," Edwin replied, unhesitatingly.

"Your own, I presume, Sir?"

Edwin bowed, and smiled. George Bruton was the name of an old school-fellow, a lad very expert at getting himself out of trouble, leaving any body else to bear the blame; and, thought Edwin, under my present circumstances, I cannot choose a better model.

The young gentlemen proceeded on board one at a time, to avoid notice; and before noon were sailing down the beautiful and majestic Thames, with the tide in their favour.

CHAPTER V.

At three o'clock the same afternoon, a respectable jury of the principal citizens of—— met at the hotel whither the body of the Hon. Mr. Courtney had deen conveyed.

The magistrate's report was read. The witnesses were examined.

They repeated their previous statements, that they had overtaken Mr. William Pierpoint as he was entering the thicket with the corpse which, to the best of their judgments, had been dead some hours.

This latter point was corroborated by the attending surgeon, who also added his testimony, that by whatever means the young gentleman came by his death, the catastrophe must have been instantaneous.

The towns-people had been particularly incensed, that no attempt had been made to gain medical assistance to the unfortunate deceased; this opinion of the surgeon, therefore, removed a considerable degree of the odium which had been attached to William's conduct.

Upon the return of the coroner and jury from viewing the corpse, the prisoner was summoned to their presence.

He was quite recovered from the nervousness which had oppressed him the previous day, and his open brow, steady eyes and erect gait, would of themselves have made a favourable impression of his innocence but for the condemnatory appearances of evidence against him.

"I am sorry, very sorry, Sir, to see you brought before me under such circumstances," said the coroner, addressing William; "it appears, Sir, that your late brother collegian, the Hon. Mr. Courtney, has been shot by a pistol-bullet, thereby causing his death; and that you, William Pierpoint, were discovered yesterday evening, between the hours of seven and eight o'clock, carrying his dead body into a thicket or copse by the road-side, about a mile from the town, your left-hand wrapped in a handkerchief saturated from a wound you had yourself received. What, Sir, have you to say to this charge?" repeating the usual precaution not to say any thing to convict himself.

"I am innocent, Sir, of the death of Mr. Courtney," replied William, respectfully, "but I fear I must be obliged to await the arrival of my friends before I can answer the accusations against me."

"Young man," returned the coroner, "your best adviser is your conscience. If you can clear your character from this distressing imputation, it is your duty to do so without delay, otherwise it will be mine to commit you to jail, where you will remain till the assizes."

"Had there been a quarrel between you and the Hon. Mr. Courtney?" demanded a juror.

"None in the least, Sir," said William.

"From whence had you brought the body when you were entering the wood?" inquired the same gentleman.

"From the adjoining meadow, Sir."

"Then probably you know these pistols?"

William was silent.

"And this book, with your name written on the title-page?"

And the book which William had inadvertently dropped, instead of putting into his

pocket, whilst agitated by the ungenerous conduct of his cousin, was produced.

The case had excited so great a sensation in the town, that evidence was pouring in upon the most trifling matters; many of them totally irrelevant to the affair though concerning William's individual movements for days previously to the sad event.

Independently of the three tradesmen who had already given their testimonies, the gunsmith of whom the pistols had been purchased was the most material witness.

He unhesitatingly pronounced William to be the young gentleman to whom he had sold them. He remembered his light hair, his blue eyes, and florid complexion, which were not to be mistaken.

The pistols were handed to him, and he proved, by an invoice, that he dealt with the maker whose name was upon them.

"What was the price of them?"

"Fifty pounds."

"Were they paid for?"

"Yes."

"In gold, or notes?"

The gunsmith took from his pocket-book

the note which Edwin had on that morning received from his father; he handed it to the coroner. The evidence was conclusive—it was convicting—it was over-whelming! On the back of the paper was written, in a clear, legible counting-house hand, "Pierpoint, Pierpoint, and Co."

The verdict of wilful murder was returned.

William was then removed to closer confinement within the jail. He requested the indulgence of writing-materials, and penned, that evening, by the gloomy light slanting its restricted rays through the narrow and closely-barred aperture near the roof of his cell, the first letter that had ever occasioned the least disquietude to his beloved parents.

It was forwarded for that night's mail; and William, bestowing on the messenger his last—his only remaining shilling; having, with the omission of that one, emptied his pockets to his ungrateful cousin, was constrained to content himself with prison fare. But purity of heart and mind would have sweetened coarser diet. And his hand being dressed, he commended himself to the protection of his Heavenly Father, and slept soundly till he

was awakened by the entrance of the jailor the following morning.

"Your look betokens that you have rested well," said the man, attentively regarding him.

"I have indeed," returned William, "my wakefulness the previous night makes me now a late riser, if I may judge by that small portion of sun-light playing against the opposite wall."

"Small portion, verily," replied the keeper, "and it will be two months before you enjoy a much greater quantity of that blessed light.

"Will it be that time to the assizes?"

"Quite so, and I cannot help thinking, young gentleman, that you might have made a better defence than you did yesterday. I am an old man: I have been long in this situation, and have seen more of the troubles of others than I would wish to repeat; but never did I know good proceed from mystery."

William was prevented the necessity of a reply by the entrance of the jailor's wife with coffee, rolls, and eggs, on a small waiter, covered with a clean white cloth.

"Ha! here she comes," cried the husband; "scarcely a wink of sleep has she had the

bygone night, thinking of you. She insists—and indeed I think so myself that you bear a strong resemblance in face and person, to our own dear William, lost at sea four years ago. Poor Bill! He was the kindest-hearted creature possible and would not have hurt a sparrow."

He drew his coat-sleeve across his eyes, whilst his good dame, her cheeks bathed in tears of maternal sorrow, declared her thorough belief that the young gentleman must be innocent, he looked so amiable.

William sympathised with these kind-hearted people. But how much better off will they be than either my parents or Edwin's, should he or I pay the forfeit of our lives in a dishonourable manner for this unhappy affair? My cousin will, however, certainly write to-morrow, or the next day. If not, I must for awhile submit with patience to the responsibility I voluntarily took upon myself.

CHAPTER VI.

"There is no possession more valuable than a good and faithful friend."—*Socrates.*

TOWARDS evening, the following day, the two Mr. Pierpoints and their ladies arrived from London, accompanied by a professional gentleman. They drove immediately to the jail without alighting in the town.

William, after the first tender salutations of his family, and an almost paternal embrace from the excellent Mr. Serjeant, an old and valued friend, apologised for his reception. "My apartment," said he, with a forced tone of gaiety, "is meagrely furnished; here is one stool between you, my dear aunt and mother. The gentlemen, I fear, must satisfy themselves with resting on the edge of the bedstead. I, the humble servant, will respectfully stand."

"My dear William, how can you jest in a place like this?" said his mother; "we are all anxiety to learn what is the real matter. Your letter merely stated that you were in trouble

and where we should find you. This cell, and your hand in a sling, alarms me."

"And where is Edwin?" demanded the elder Mrs. Pierpoint; "surely he does not allow you to be much alone; his studies cannot occupy his mind whilst you are in this situation."

"I sincerely hope, my dear aunt," replied William, "that my cousin is where, it is desirable that he should be. May I," and he addressed himself to the whole party, "be permitted a consultation with Mr. Serjeant, who will advise me how far I may speak with candour even to my dear, dear parents—my kind aunt and uncle," and he again affectionately embraced them.

"William, William," cried his father, "what can you have been doing? incarcerated in a public jail, your hand wounded, and yourself afraid to communicate the truth to your family. Whatever your fault may have been, you cannot imagine we will be less lenient than those who have had the power to place you here."

"My dear father," said William entreatingly "will you allow me to commission Mr. Serjeant who, I am sure, will kindly undertake to

explain to you the news, which, I confess, is more painful than I at first wished you to suppose.

"We shall, doubtlessly, bring you through," said that gentleman. "No very serious affair, I dare say, in which William Pierpoint voluntarily engaged. An erroneous charge—came up at the instant—wounded in an attempt to separate the combatants—mistaken identity—eh! my young friend," and he encouragingly patted William on the shoulder.

"Leave the case to me, my dear Sirs," and he turned to the Mr. Pierpoints. "Whilst you conduct the ladies to an hotel, Mr. William and I will consult—advise—then I will wait on you—turn barrister, and plead for him."

There was no demurring to the kindness of this proposal. Mrs. William Pierpoint having satisfied herself that her son's wound was in a healthy state, and not requiring further assistance than had been afforded to it, taking the arm of her sister-in-law, led the way to their carriage, which was waiting for them without the prison-gates.

In an hour's time they were rejoined by Mr.

Serjeant. He looked serious; but, as dinner was waiting his arrival, he requested that it might not be delayed; the information he had received from William could be as well repeated afterwards. Then, in a more animated tone, and in the hearing of the servants, he assured Mr. and Mrs. William Pierpoint that their son was innocent. He hoped that in a day or two it would be so proved.

The meal passed over in nearly total silence. The long withholding of that explanation so much desired by the whole party, excited unfavourable forebodings, which were, alas, but too painfully realized to the elder Mr. Pierpoint and his amiable wife, when, with a delicacy of word and manner, it would be impossible to describe, Mr. Serjeant rather led them to understand, than expressed in positive terms, Edwin's guilt, subsequent flight, and the consequences entailed on his cousin.

Vainly did William's father and mother, and the Solicitor endeavour to convince these afflicted parents of the probability almost amounting to certainty, from the time that had elapsed since the departure of the young men, of their gaining a place of security, be-

fore the fact of their being concerned in the murder should become known.

They were shocked at Edwin's culpability. Their anxiety rejected the likelihood of his escape—the gibbet in all its horrors danced before their eyes—the death-knell rung in their ears, and "my child— my lost child," burst from them in agonies of grief.

Mrs. Pierpoint fell into successive fainting-fits, and was at length carried to bed extremely ill, whilst her no-less distressed partner, eluding the vigilance of his friends, left the hotel, once again to seek that worthy nephew, so painfully endeared to him, by his generosity towards his less noble, though still beloved son.

The agitation of Mr. Pierpoint's mind prevented his considering the lateness of the hour, and when he arrived at the jail it was finally closed for the night.

This was a sad disappointment.

The unhappy gentleman wandered from the town, and by one of those chances, which, to ignorant minds, assume the character of a fatality, he entered upon the foot-path leading to the ill-omened meadow.

It was a clear, star-light night. He crossed

the stiles, and the old oak-tree being a prominent object, he rested, and leaned against its broad bulk for support.

Who, that had seen this sorrowful parent, with his manly features, pale as the silver planet which reflected its beautiful light on his open brow,—but would have asked of themselves—is this AN AFFAIR OF HONOUR?

Put the question to yourselves, my young friends. Early accustom yourselves to reflect, that, no affair can be honourable, that entails disgrace as its consequence.

The Romans dedicated a temple to Honour, into which no man could enter, but through the temple of Virtue!

But we must return to Mr. Pierpoint. He was suddenly roused from his grievous reflections by the voices of four men, who had entered the meadow without perceiving him. They had approached by a different route, and were inspecting the dark stains upon the grass.

"I hope the young dog will swing for it!" said one: and this was the townsman, who acted as principal in conducting William to the magistrate. The others were, the gunsmith, whose evidence had been so much

against him—a waiter from the inn at which the family were staying, and an under-turnkey of the jail."

"The hypocritical young rascal," continued the first spokesman; "to look so demure before the coroner!"

"Yes, and he was silent when asked if he knew the pistols. He could find tongue to deny the death of Mr. Courtney being by his hand, but he had nothing to say to the fire-arms. No, no, we have him there, My business is not like that of a linen-draper, or of a grocer, who sells different articles in small portions from morning till night, and to as various a multitude of individuals. It is true, I see more faces in my shop than any gunsmith in the county, but I do not sell so many pairs of such pistols as those, but that I could identify every purchaser of the last five years. Besides, there is the note, what could he say to the evidence of the fifty-pound bank-note? he was obliged to look demure then."

"There was his cunning," replied the townsman; "Master Modesty would wait the arrival of his friends. A fellow was brought

up for poaching the other day. 'Sir' said he, 'I'll wait the arrival of my friends'! Mr. Morland demanded if he meant the hares and pheasants. Man, or boy, who can defend himself, does not wait for the advice of his friends. No, no, Master Hypocrite!"

"Our head-jailor and his wife," said the under-turnkey, "have taken a prodigious fancy to him. They say he so much resembles their poor Bill, who was lost in the Greenland Fishery, three or four years ago. I can't see it myself, but the old woman makes a terrible fuss about it. She took him such a nice breakfast this morning, coffee, and eggs, and rolls."

"She did, did she?" cried the townsman.

"Pretty goings-on, these," said the gunsmith.

"I'll enquire into it," rejoined the former.

"I know the Reverend Mr. Morland very well, and I'll give him a plain-speaking hint; that, without a little precaution the cage may be left open and the bird fly away one of these nights."

"May I be so bold, Sir," said the underman of office, slowly rubbing his hands one over the other, and cringing closer to the townsman

and the gunsmith, while a pair of little bright ferret-eyes twinkled in the moonlight, "If I might be so bold, Sirs, as to propose—a trust—a peculiar trust, Sirs—a trust extraordinary—"

"Nonsense, nonsense, man—a necessary commission—private authority to look after a particular prisoner."

"And the person commissioned, Sir—"

"You, my good fellow. And if it should be found desirable to suspend the old man and his wife, send to me my man for a vote. You'd make a capital head-jailor."

The waiter interrupted the fellow's expression of thanks, by saying, that the family of the young gentleman were come down from London. "And I think," said he, "if you had heard the sounds of distress that reached the ears of us servants, after that we had cleared away the dinner and had left the dining-room, you would feel a little more merciful than you do now."

"Merciful," replied the townsman, surlily, "what have I to do with mercy? I overtook a young collegian with a dead body, which he was conveying into a thicket, between seven and eight o'clock at night. Of course, I made

him go before a magistrate. The magistrate had no more mercy than I had, for he sent him to prison. The jailor yielded him up to the coroner—the coroner returned him to jail, where he will remain until the judge tries him and then—"

The gun-smith finished the sentence, "and then," said he coolly, "he will be hanged!"

"Ay, to be sure, now these young gentlemen have begun shooting each other, by-and-bye they will be shooting us."

"Are you afraid?" said the waiter contemptuously. He despised the vindictiveness of the two witnesses, and the meanness of the traitorous turnkey.

"No, I am not in fear," replied the other, dauntingly; "nor will I be in danger. Some of the scoundrels, yesterday, when I was returning home from attending the inquest, laid two lighted squibs upon my hat as they passed me, turned round and laughed in my face, as they went off successively. But they will not succeed in frightening me. I gave notice to the watchman and the night-patrole that, if my house was set fire to, or any mischief done to me, that night, or any other night, I

would make them answer for it. At present, I have done my duty only; but I dare say, if I were to try, I could rake up more evidence than even has already come forward. The young gentlemen had better not make a party business of it."

CHAPTER VII.

WITH respect to Edwin, it was now requisite to consult, that some plan might be adopted, with the view to ascertain whither he and his companions had fled; that money might be forwarded to them, and the necessary document obtained for proving William's innocence.

"That must be declared at once!" said the elder Mr. Pierpoint, when at breakfast, the morning after their arrival in the town.

"My son would be exceedingly hurt," replied his brother, "having been taken before a magistrate—sent to prison—a coroner's verdict returned against him of 'wilful murder,' and already an incarceration of three nights, were you to foil the only end for which he has endured so much disgrace, by precipitately acknowledging what must be satisfactorily proved, previously to his being liberated. William has not gone beyond the example I would have given to him, had I been similarly situated, and would not you have taken the same part? I am convinced you

would! Let not then our children disgrace the sympathy we bear to each other.—A few days' submission to his voluntary undertaking will add no further injury to William's character and I trust not to his health. It will enable Edwin to secure himself and his friends: when of course he will be anxious to inform us of his safety."

The two ladies seconded this arrangement.

Mr. Pierpoint, was at length constrained to yield to his friends' entreaties; and, leaving his wife with Mr. and Mrs. William Pierpoint at the hotel, he posted up to town with the friendly solicitor.

They had finally agreed that it was probable the first news might be to the counting-house.

But no news came. No inquiries were directed to be made. No advice was sought for.

Letters crossed each other upon the road from the hotel to London; from London to the hotel: and a week—a fortnight—three weeks—and a month were passed in torturing suspense without information from the travellers.

During this lapse of time, the sudden absenting from college of Lord Dungarton, Viscount St. Pierre, and Mr. Springthorne,

had occasioned much surprise, and had been variously commented upon.

Mr. Edwin Pierpoint, it was rumored, by busy tongues, was kept out of the way by his family, that he should not be obliged to appear in evidence against his cousin. The young gentlemen had occupied the same apartments, therefore they must have known each other's movements.

The friends of the two young noblemen, and of the young squire, having been communicated with, by Mr. Pierpoint's solicitor, had returned vague and indecisive answers to the information forwarded to them by the Heads of the Colleges at which the young gentlemen were students. Now, however, they became equally uneasy with the Messrs. Pierpoint, their ladies, and the friendly Mr. Serjeant; and united their endeavours to trace the route of their young relatives.

Immediately they took up the inquiry, it was asserted, that the four young men had acted as seconds to Mr. William Pierpoint and the Honourable Mr. Courtney: and thus the matter rested in that part of the world, the following month.

Not so in London, and in the various parts of England. Friends and employed agents were actively engaged. Every ambassador's office, whence passports issued, and every foreign consul, were visited.

Captains and stewards of packets were inquired of; and coachmen and guards on the London roads; William having stated in confidence to Mr. Serjeant that he had seen them the evening of the catastrophe, on the stage to that metropolis. Unfortunately the driver of that particular coach had met with an accident shortly afterwards. He had been thrown violently from his seat, and received a concussion of the brain. He now lay dangerously ill, and unconscious of the value attached to his evidence, which, to the disappointment of all parties, he was unable to give, the Courtney family included, who were desirous to obtain the fullest conviction of the prisoner's guilt, of which they did not entertain a doubt.

The books of the London coach-offices, also were examined, and an investigation instituted among the ship-owners, but not the slightest clue could be gained from any source.

The description being always of four young gentlemen together, the clerk at the wharf, whence they had actually sailed, did not recognize the important, and only gentleman, who, entering the counting-house, had inquired that morning for Captain Markham; and it became a firm persuasion with the interested parties, that Edwin and his friends had not quitted England at all.

Affairs were now approaching to a crisis: William's life was in a perilous situation: the strongest evidence was against him: not one witness of material consequence in his favour.

"Do not so greatly distress yourselves, my dear friends, on that account," said William, when Mr. Serjeant and Mr. Barton, who had been assiduous for his young favorite's interest, entering his cell, where his family were already assembled, on the day previous to the trial, had destroyed the last feasible expectation of Edwin and his companions being discovered, in time for their testimonies to be of service. "It is unfortunate for me, but since a sparrow falls not to the ground without the permission of the Father of Mercy, may I not dare hope that His goodness will point out a path, by

which I may escape the penalty of the law; I was not even an accessory in the offence." William would have said crime, but for the presence of his aunt and uncle.

"You, my dear—my beloved father," said he, "yourself taught me, that reason and reflection alleviate the troubles of life. When I was first imprisoned, I reproached myself that I had not sufficiently estimated this advice. I had endeavoured to profit by it when circumstances required self-command, but it has been only during these two months that I have become fully sensible of its value—of its blessing!"

"And what result have you experienced, my child?" demanded his agitated but gratified parent.

"Confidence in the goodness of God, which relieves me from all apprehension for myself; I know that I have good friends, good advisers, good counsel, and a good cause, though overshadowed for the moment; and, I do not allow myself to think of the reverse side of the question.

"Dear William," replied his father "to have confidence in the mercies of a just God and

in the exertions of your friends is proper; but the ways of the Almighty are inscrutable."

"Many pious and virtuous men have been called upon to yield up their lives in equal innocency. And many, many an individual condemned by a jury of his fellow-men, upon infinitely less apparently substantial evidence than, to-morrow, will be brought against you. Your dear mother, with more dependence than your young heart could conceive, has even severely prepared herself for the worst."

"And yet I am not depressed, my William," said the junior Mrs. Pierpoint; and, drawing her son towards her, and parting the light hair from his forehead, she imprinted on it a maternal benediction.

"I have been strenuously," said that sweet lady, "urging your dear aunt and uncle to subdue the extreme agitation of their spirits; they cannot do otherwise than feel,—we all feel, my child—" and, for a few seconds, the duty of the parent and the friend was nearly overcome by the tenderness of the mother.

The cell had been supplied with such accommodation as could be allowed, and the party were seated.

Mr. Barton rested his elbow upon the table, his hand supported his cheek, and tears coursed down his venerable countenance, whilst his eyes were fixed in admiration upon the mild features of that heroic parent, strengthening her son's mind for the possibility of defeat (in a wordly sense,) though fully conscious of his deserving victory.

The friendly solicitor dashed away the obtrusive evidence of the amiability of his heart, but he knew that one witness had succeeded another, even more quickly and pertinently to the proof, than the accusing voices at the Coroner's Inquest against his young friend.

Mr. and Mrs. Pierpoint wept unrestrainedly. Their anxiety was for their nephew,—their shame for their son; "A wounded heart who can bear?"

Mr. William Pierpoint strove manfully to restrain his own feelings, and, with the united efforts of his wife and his friends, was at length successful in restoring these distressed parents from their temporary abandonment to grief.

Mrs. Pierpoint continued, "To support each other in our affliction," said she, "is a duty mutually incumbent on us, but which we cannot

perform, unless we preserve a calmness of mind, with dependence on the goodness of an All-beneficent Being. Let our trust be in the Lord Omnipotent!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE opening of an assize is not dissimilar to the commencement of a military campaign. The standard is raised, or the day is fixed. The warriors rage round their general.—The lawyers assemble before the bench of the judge. The old and the wise, the young and the lovely, lend the support of their presence.

The commander-in-chief issues his orders. The fiat of the civil judge goes forth. The verdict is the authority of the court.

What the verdict would, or might be, in the present case was not so much taken into consideration as that it was the opening of the County Assize. The shock created by the first report of the catastrophe, had passed away from the minds of many. There were other cases to be tried—other names on the calendar—and a pressure of visitors flocked to the town to meet their friends, at this general time of rendezvous.

The charm, moreover, of an assize town is the assize ball. In this instance it was

rendered peculiarly attractive from several distinguished families, visiting in the neighbourhood, having accepted the invitation of the managing and honorary stewards; and from the expected introduction to society—in common phraseology, the coming-out of a wealthy young heiress. It was even said, that the list of barristers upon this circuit was singularly numerous to what it had been any session since the very last time a similarly-pleasing occurence had taken place. The whole town was bustle, activity, and gaiety. It ever has been and ever will be the same, whilst an assize ball closes, or takes place, during an assize session. We do not wish to argue upon the propriety of selecting that precise time for merriment, we would rather pass it over; but it certainly does not exemplify the christian principles of sympathy and piety.

William rose early that morning, dressed himself with care, humbled himself at the Throne of Mercy, and when Mr. Barton and the friendly solicitor entered his cell, he received them with a placid smile that betokened the calmness of humble dependence on the wisdom of God, uninfluenced by the slightest

particle of that pride which, sometimes, will arise from the pure and exalted consciousness of inward rectitude.

"Where is my dear mother," said William enquiringly, "will she not visit me this morning?"

"She has decided against doing so," replied Mr. Barton, she commissioned me with her blessing;" and he affectionately laid his hand upon his young friend's forehead, "and bade me desire you in no-wise to be cast down by the violence of your opponents, who have exerted themselves to obtain the utmost stretch of evidence against you. Your friends will be near, and the all-scrutinizing eye of Providence will not slumber whilst you still further endeavour to deserve His protection."

The Court-house was thronged: standing-room below was not attainable beyond the places secured upon the first opening of the doors, and the gallery was filled by ladies.

William was placed at the bar; the usual formalities were proceeded with in the customary manner, and the prisoner put in his plea, "NOT GUILTY."

There were many who from his appearance,

would have agreed to the truth of that negative, but the prosecution was in the hands of Mr. Byfield, a man too deeply skilled in argumentative and also in declamatory discourse for the interest of the opposing client long to remain unshaken, and William suffered greatly in the estimation of those most willing to credit the honest expression of his countenance whilst the learned gentleman detailed the (apparent) fact of his purchasing the pistols between eleven and twelve o'clock in the morning, of his being noticed to walk in the direction of the meadows about noon, of his being discovered in actual possession of the dead body at half-past seven, or nearer to eight o'clock the same evening, carrying it into a thicket, an overgrown mass of brushwood, on so uneven a surface of ground, that almost any of the hollows would have served as a convenient hiding-place, of his own wounded hand proving that he must have been engaged in mortal combat, of his acknowledgment at the Coroner's Inquest, that he had taken the corpse of the Hon. Mr. Courtney from the adjoining meadow, of the pistols found there, a pair of which it had been, and would again

be, proved to be the identical pair bought by him in the morning, having paid for them with a bank-note, endorsed by the counting-house firm of his own family, of the book containing the prisoner's christian and surname in his own hand-writing, picked up by the officers sent to examine the meadow, closely by the melancholy spot, where the dark colouring of the grass testified the nature of that barbarous deed, which had robbed a noble branch of an illustrious family of their only child, the heir to their titles, their property, and, he would add, their virtues, for he enjoyed the honour of a personal knowledge of his noble clients, it was an afflicting bereavement. Perhaps it could be only paralleled by the opposite extreme,—unblushing depravity! William's calm placidity, though accompanied by a respectfully attentive manner, appeared to rouse the indignation of the learned councillor.

"Would not the prisoner, my Lord," continued the learned gentleman, "had he been able to justify this plea of '*not guilty*,' have answered the interrogatories of the magistrate when brought before him? Would not a young heart, conscious of its innocence, have burst

forth with whatever justification or excuse was in the power of its possessor? No! the young gentleman asked for time," and he contemptuously waved his hand towards the apparent culprit. "Time for what?" he repeated with force. "Time for what? The escape of his accomplices!"

He continued, "It would seem, by the result of inquiry, that they must have been four of his brother-collegians, who abstracted themselves from the town, on the exact day on which the murder was committed."

"I will now, my Lord, submit the examination of the witnesses to the Court."

Mr. Rood, the gunsmith, was the first sworn.

He deposed to the prisoner having entered his shop, about half-an-hour before noon, on the day set forward in the indictment, that he had demanded to look at some pistols, several pairs had been shown to him, from which he selected the pair produced at the Coroner's Inquest, he, the gunsmith, had immediately recognized them, by their workmanship, and by the name of the maker.

The invoice particularizing those sworn to, was handed to the Court, likewise the bank-

note with which they had been paid for.

"Was the prisoner alone?" demanded Mr. Byfield.

"Quite so, Sir."

"Did none of the young men of the College pass the window, look in, or saunter about during the time the prisoner was selecting his purchase?"

"He was not long making his choice," replied the gunsmith; "but, whilst his back was to the window, and he was admiring this pair, for he seemed very much pleased with them, two of the young gentlemen who are now missing went by the house arm-in-arm."

"Were you previously acquainted with their persons?"

"I know most of the collegians by sight."

"And who where those two?"

"Lord Dungarton, and Viscount St. Pierre."

"Speak louder," said his Lordship from the Bench; the witness beginning to drop his voice, considerably, at this part of his evidence.

"You must speak sufficiently loud to be heard by the whole Court," said Mr. Byfield.

The gunsmith bowed.

"Did you see Mr. Springthorne, or the

Hon. Mr. Courtney, that morning?"

"They followed one after the other within a few minutes."

"And which way did Mr. Pierpoint take, when he quitted your shop?"

"The same."

"And does that direction lead out of the town towards the meadows?"

"No, to the College; but the meadows and the copse are on that side of the city."

"Was Mr. Edwin Pierpoint with either of the gentlemen you have mentioned?"

"I did not see him."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes; I used often to see him walking with the young gentlemen at the bar; but, of late, I had not seen them much together."

"Have you seen any of the young men you have named since then?"

"No, Sir—but I have heard that the parents of the young gentleman missing are very much alarmed. They have not heard of them since the day of the Honourable Mr. Courtney's death."

CHAPTER IX.

WILLIAM'S life, as far as worldly wisdom was concerned, depended on the possibility of proving the gunsmith in error regarding his identity with the lad purchasing the pistols, and upon the degree of credence with which the Court would receive the statement made by himself to Mr. Serjeant.

That generosity which had induced him to take upon himself the responsibility of staying by the corpse, and the influence of that goodness of heart which had dictated his whole conduct, were now to be relinquished. His life was a loan from his Maker, and duty in the preservation of that trust demanded the fullest justification of his innocence. Small were the means within his power, but these it was requisite to exert. He was entangled in a net, not of his own weaving but fabricated by the arch-enemies of mankind—bad temper and revenge!

The management of the defence was entrusted to Mr. Clifford, a man not less esteemed

for private virtues than the commencing developement of public talent.

There are many who care only for the talents of a man, in whatever capacity they may employ him. But there is an inward gratification, a sweetness, a purity of delight experienced by the virtuous when virtue is combined with talent in their service.

It had been the particular desire of William that Mr. Clifford should be his Counsel. He was an intimate friend of Mr. Barton's, and William had learned to appreciate his worth before the time arrived when he needed his assistance.

Now, at the present moment, it was the duty of the learned gentleman to cross-examine the witness.

He addressed him mildly. He was rather desirous of leading him to understand the possibility of his having mistaken one cousin for the other, than to render him irritable by accusing him of having given false evidence.

The gunsmith, however took a wrong notion upon the subject. He was not aware that it is more honourable to emancipate ourselves from errors than to persevere in them.

And when he quitted the witness-box he had enforced, to the utmost of his power, each injurious statement that he had previously made.

Many were the looks of commiseration bestowed upon the prisoner from various parts of the Court. But attention was the only expression perceptible on his features. Nor was it altered in the slightest degree as the evidence for the prosecution continued.

The townsman and his two companions, who had arrested William when intending to carry the corpse through the wood;—the surgeon, whose examination of the dead body had been recorded on the Coroner's inquest;—the attending surgeon at the jail, who had dressed the wound on William's hand;—the individuals who had seen him leave the town, walking towards the meadows—the book in his hand being the attracting point of remembrance;—the officers, who had discovered the pistols with the eventful book near the darkly-stained grass, proving the spot where the duel had taken place, or as it might appear, the murder had been committed, were severally questioned by Mr. Byfield, the learned judge, the jury,

and cross-examined by the prisoner's counsel, but no deviation transpired from their previous attestations at the coroner's inquest.

Mr. Clifford then addressed the Court in behalf of the prisoner.

He laid before his lordship and the gentlemen of the jury a plain unvarnished account of William's amiability, in running the risk of temporary embarrassment to himself the better to secure the escape of his cousin and his three friends.

He detailed fully the minutest circumstance —movement—word or look that passed among the young gentlemen after that he—the prisoner—arrived upon the scene of action which was not until the fatal weapon had been fired.

The learned gentleman then proceeded to state the decorous conduct of the cousins when they first entered College—of the gradual decline of Mr. Edwin's attention to his studies and of his unhappy intimacy, as the result proved, with the deceased, with Lord Dungarton, Viscount St. Pierre, and Mr. Springthorne each day.

He positively asserted, upon credible evidence, that the prisoner had seldom joined this

party in any of their excursions—in any of their pleasures, or walked with them, unless they had chanced to overtake each other when going in the same direction, consequently could not have been seen *repeatedly* together.

He would presently place in the witness-box the gentleman whose respectable testimony would out-weigh depress, and sink to utter improbability that of the gunsmith. And he would prove to the satisfaction of the Court that it was not Mr. William Pierpoint but Mr. Edwin Pierpoint who was intimate with the young men spoken of.

The learned counsel for the prosecution had commented in warm terms on the pitiable distress he had been called upon to witness and to sympathize with.—But if the sensibilities of the learned gentleman had been so severely wounded in sympathizing for a misfortune that was irretrievable, how much more painful must be his own peculiar situation—Painful! It was a more distressing duty than he could have expected would fall to his lot in thus early a stage of his public career.—He was called upon, by the most imperative duty, to destroy the happiness of one portion of an amiable

family, to support the innocence of another member of the other party. He had been obliged, by the exposure of the elder cousin to tear away with unflinching hand the last link of security on which no less fond and virtuous parents than those of the deceased Mr. Courtney depended, of saving the life of equally an only child.

Much had been said upon the testimony of one pair of pistols, but the evidence of a second pair, found on the same ill-favoured spot, had been passed over in silence. If the learned gentleman could have proved that they did not belong to Mr. Courtney, why did he not do so? And, if there was a probability or certainty that they were the property of the deceased, then the case was no longer one of 'unblushing depravity,' with which the learned gentleman had been pleased to apostrophise the prisoner at the bar!—It was a case in which both parties might have subjected themselves to the fate by which one was ultimately overwhelmed.

Whether the deceased Mr. Courtney met his death in consequence of *deliberate* anger, as preponderatingly in his own heart as that

of his antagonist, or, and which would appear more likely from their extreme youth, that the catastrophe was the result of a quarrel at the moment, he was not prepared to answer. Neither would he, in either event, for the value of his profession, stand before the Court to offer the least shadow of an excuse, for any client whatever, whose vain-glory and presumption had dared to hurl a fellow-creature to that destruction which must be the portion of those who appear unbidden before their Maker,—themselves seeking the doom of everlasting death! Happily for him the innocent alone claimed his exertions. It was in behalf only of the innocent that he appealed to the justice of the Court. That he besought them, to bear in mind the explanation given by the noble-spirited prisoner at the bar.

It was not an avowal wrung from him under the fear of punishment. It was not a subterfuge taking advantage of the absence of the witnesses of the deed—they could be at any future time brought against him. Nor was it a statement given to the public to obtain the suffrage of their good opinion before the trial came on. No! It was the private—the con-

fidential communication made by the prisoner to his father's solicitor, from whom he expected advice:—to his family, to whom it may naturally be believed he spoke the truth.

He (Mr. Clifford) must again refer to the words of his eloquent opponent. There was a striking sentence in the argument of the learned gentleman that must have carried conviction to the judgment of the Court from the sound sense it conveyed. "Would not, my Lord," said that eloquent pleader, "a young heart, conscious of its innocence, have burst forth with whatever justification or excuse was in the power of its possessor?"

The confession now offered to the Court was that justification!—The prisoner's conduct needed no excuse. It was dictated by goodness of heart, supported by conscious integrity.

The learned gentleman concluded amidst a strong murmur of satisfaction.

The solicitor then ascended the witness-box. Well-accustomed to Courts of Justice, he experienced no more hesitation as a witness than he would have done as a pleader, had that been his vocation. He at once took up

the cause of his young friend, and in a manner that gained him universal approbation. Without intruding on the patience of the Court, as he repeated the explanation already detailed by the learned Mr. Clifford, he passed his own remarks on the indubitable nature of the statement from his knowledge of the different and peculiar dispositions of the two cousins, with whom he had been acquainted from their infancy.

The parents of the absentees, with the exception of Mr. Pierpoint, who was not called, also bore testimony that the prisoner's justification had been communicated to them within the week after the catastrophe.

They had neither heard of their sons nor received news from them of any kind since their flight.

Then one of the professors of the College, from his personal observation, corrected the assertion of the gunsmith, respecting the intimacy of the prisoner with Lord Dungarton Viscount St. Pierre, and Mr. Springthorne. He had himself represented to Mr. Edwin Pierpoint, that if those young men did not feel the necessity of greater assiduity, it was a

pity that he who had begun so well should fall into the same idleness.

He likewise said, that it was possible Mr. Rood might have mistaken one cousin for the other, if his knowledge of them had been confined to seeing them walking in the town. There was considerable family resemblance in person and general appearance.

The professor added, that it was much to be regretted Mr. Rood had not been informed of his error before the impression of the prisoner's identity had sunk so deeply into his mind.

Still, with these favourable certificates to justify the prisoner's plea of "not guilty," the fact of his having been taken in the actual possession of the dead body could not be contradicted. And the wound of his own hand, and the perseverance of the gunsmith to the first deposition that William was the youth to whom he had sold one of the pairs of pistols found upon the scene of action, with the book bearing his own signature, and the production of the £50 bank-note with which the pistols had been paid for, remained uncontroverted evidence. And the learned

counsel for the defence requested (as a last resource) the indulgence of the Court whilst he should put one more question to the gunsmith.

"It appears, Sir," said Mr. Clifford, "that you are resolved upon the prisoner at the bar having placed in your hands the £50 note displayed to the Court I think I have understood that there was no one in the shop to distract your notice from your customer, and that his back was towards the window when his collegiate friends passed by. You have endeavoured to be very clear in these particulars, Sir—now it strikes me, Sir, as being decidedly possible, that when your customer had selected the pair with which you say he seemed to be much pleased, that you should have looked to him for payment."

"Certainly," replied the gunsmith, "I looked to him for payment, and I looked at him also."

"Very well," said Mr. Clifford, "then of course you can inform the Court whether it was pocket-book, or purse, from which he drew the note, and what the colour of either."

A malicious smile crept over the face of the gunsmith, and he answered with a bold un-

daunted air, "It was neither! It was neither purse nor pocket-book from which the note was drawn. It was from a letter!"

A faint exclamation from the gallery was heard immediately upon this announcement.

There had been undivided—there had been intense attention from every fair individual looking down upon that tribunal of life and death—upon every variety of evidence given by the witnesses, or detailed by the eloquent pleaders at the bar.

The learned Mr. Byfield had commanded the passions of the listeners. Scarcely a breath had mingled with the atmosphere unembarrassed by the wish to repress it, whilst the past sad scene was laid before their view.

The tender sentiments of those fair beings, whose hearts palpitate responsively to the finer feelings of compassion, had been largely called upon by the nature of the defence, and, pursuing the line of mercy consonant with those feelings, their sympathies had rested with deeply-excited interest upon the prisoner.

CHAPTER X.

WILLIAM, we have said, had humiliated himself at the throne of a just God, and not presuming upon his own righteousness had depended, in humble faith, on that High Power who knoweth and permitteth all things,—that Providence which having been a cloudy pillar in his path was now to turn the bright column of its light upon his integrity and truth of word.

A nobleman, known to many gentlemen present as Lord Mount-Clear, the father of the beautiful heiress who was expected to grace the Assize-ball with her presence, ascended quickly towards the gallery upon the exclamation which had proceeded thence. He returned with a young woman, who held a letter in her hand. The learned Counsel for the defence was informed that another witness desired to give evidence. A respectable quiet-looking young person was ushered into the witness-box and after the customary formula, she handed to Mr. Clifford a letter; he examined the out-

side, then opened it and read the wording of the contents.

"How came you by this letter?" was his first enquiry.

She answered, "I was in the service of Mr. Rood when this misfortune occurred. As usual, my master went out when the shop was closed. I fastened the door after him, and seeing a gun wrapper that had fallen from the counter, I picked it up: the letter was under it. I did not look at the address, taking it for granted that it must have belonged to my master. I put it in the drawer of my work-box, intending to give it to Mr. Rood when he returned home, but the serving lad, who had also been out of the house, came back with the awful news, and master, himself, adding a still more terrible account of what he called a murder, I forgot all about the letter."

"When did you remember it?" was the next question.

"Only yesterday," she replied. "I have left Mr. Rood's service and am now waiting-maid to Lady St. Clear and her daughter. When I saw the address on the letter I took it to Lord Mount-Clear, and he desired me to be very

careful of it and to come to the Court this morning with his wife and daughter, and to listen attentively for a judicious moment for delivering it into the hand of the counsel for the defence."

Several respectable persons residing in the neighbourhood gave the maid-servant a good character; and Mr. Rood, himself, was constrained to admit, that during the three years she had lived in his house he considered her conduct irreproachable.

It was now satisfactory to the Court, that the gunsmith had laboured under delusion in regard to the identity of the prisoner which delusion arose from the fact of one cousin having purchascd the deadly weapons in the morning, and the other cousin—both bearing a strong family resemblance,—being detected in the evening of the same day in possession of the dead body, with various coinciding circumstances.

But in absence of all evidence, to prove that the prisoner had caused, or been accessary to the death of the Honourable Mr. Courtney.

When the learned judge had summed-up the evidence, commented upon various parts,

and animadverted in strong terms upon the conduct of the young men which had excited the irritability of the towns-people against their members, the jury, without retiring from the box, unitedly expressed their belief in the innocency of the prisoner and the Judge pronounced the satisfactory verdict "NOT guilty!"

The Court adjourned upon the acquittal of the prisoner, and rose simultaneously at the moment that his friends crowded towards him.

His father was there. Unknown to William he had watched the whole proceedings, and he now clasped in a short convulsive embrace that son to his heart, whose steadiness and integrity crowned his paternal anxiety with honour and glory.

The jury, and almost every gentleman present, congratulated the happy parent.

The ladies leaned forward from the gallery, to take a last look at one so young, so handsome, and so noble-minded,

Lord Mount-Clear, wife and daughter, were standing by the side of his father.

CHAPTER XI.

It would be almost profanation to the holy joy of pure affection to attempt to describe the scene that ensued on William's joining his family at the hotel.

The senior Mr. Pierpoint and his wife raised above the remembrance of their unworthy son by this general diffusion of happiness seemed for the moment perfectly unmindful that a baneful sorrow lay corroding at their hearts; and before leaving the town, which had been to them a place of grief and joy, they united with William's parents in settling a comfortable annuity on the good old jailor and his wife.

What had become of Edwin and his friends must now be inquired into.

Confidential communications had been made to various foreign correspondents, and agents had been despatched in numerous directions. They returned, and answers arrived—but all unsuccessful. Some of the principal cities in Europe and North America were visited in-

dividually, by the parents of Lord Dungarton, Viscount St. Pierre, and Mr. Springthorne, who were equally assiduous with the Messrs. Pierpoint; but no clue, nor the slightest information, could be obtained of the young men; and the greatest distress was necessarily experienced by each party.

It was about twelve months, from the date of the trial, when William, having one morning arrived home from a tour amid the islands, and along the northern coast of Scotland, whither he and his uncle had been pursuing the continually-disappointed search, and just as he was on the point of stepping towards his father's carriage, giving orders to be driven to the residence of Lord Mount-Clear, with whose family the Pierpoints were now intimate, when a young man—his upper-lip circled by a dark moustache—hair of the same colour, combed straightly over his forehead, with hat slouched and person entirely enveloped in a large dark cloak of Spanish or Portuguese make, closely approached him and lightly touching him upon the arm, demanded in a low tone of voice if all friends were well!

William startled—but the succeeding in-

quiry, "Am I safe?" recalled prudence to its full vigour, and motioning the stranger to follow him he turned on his heel, re-entered, the house, threw open the wide folding-doors of the drawing-room, re-closed them as the seeming foreigner entered, and announced the long-lost, the truant Edwin.

The aunt advanced to her nephew, and as William released him from a warm affectionate embrace, smilingly extended both her hands.

Edwin clasped them to his heart. "Can my dear generous aunt," said he, "forgive that misconduct which so nearly destroyed her son?"

Mrs. William Pierpoint folded him in a maternal embrace.

"My dear Edwin," said Mrs. Pierpoint, "by what means do you propose informing your mother of your return?"

"I have dreaded to undertake any," he answered. "I must depend on you, my dear aunt, and William."

"Your cousin, then, shall invite your parents to dine with us, leading them to understand that they may expect to hear news of you in the evening."

Mr. and Mrs. Pierpoint were early to the appointment. They were promised the introduction of a stranger in the evening, who had seen Edwin and his friends, and had brought the intelligence that they were well.

Mr. Barton, Mr. Serjeant, and Mr. Clifford, were of the party. They easily perceived that Mrs. William Pierpoint wished her brother and sister-in-law to anticipate the more immediate return of their son to England, than her mere words expressed; and they kindly assisted her, by remarks and questions tending to the same point.

Mrs. William Pierpoint referred to the young man, who travelling for his health, had fortunately been residing some short while at Maderia, where he met with Edwin and his companions.

The whole of the circumstances combined—sorrows, difficulties, and mercies, have doubtlessly worked a salutary effect. The amiable youth, almost from the date of his last letter to William, had been residing at different parts of the island. His health is now so greatly restored, that he travels as much for pleasure as the further strengthening of his

constitution. He ascended the Monte Serra* with his tutor and guide, and discovered our unhappy party, in a state of deplorable wretchedness. He relieved them from his own basket of provisions, sent for aid to the valley of Vicente, where they had last dwelt, had them conveyed carefully down the precipitous heights, lodged them at his own house, which he had taken for the season, tended them with the affectionate solicitude of a brother, paid the little debts which they had contracted, and upon Lord Dungarton, and Edwin recovering from a severe illness, he informed them of the trial, of William's acquittal, and of the enquiries instituted for them by their families.

This information, though communicated with all gentleness, yet, supported as it was, by the evidence of the English newspapers, produced in Edwin a relapse of a more serious nature, and of a longer duration, than the previous indisposition.

"He is now comparatively well, and, if it is possible, without risk of detection, to visit us, he will do so before many days."

* Paulda Serra. 5159 feet above the level of the sea.

'Hours!' exclaimed Mrs. Pierpoint, clasping her hands. "I know your kindness," she added, faintly. "The stranger!—let me see him—directly!"

William was already at the dining-room door, the next instant the repentant Edwin was kneeling at the feet of his father and his mother—those amiable parents, so ready to forgive, yet so deeply wounded by his faults and his crimes. And, here, with that beautiful verse of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, let us draw to a conclusion. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Edwin ultimately became as virtuous and upright as he had been arrogant and unjust; and on the day that his cousin was united to the lovely daughter of Lord Mount-Clear, he conducted to a foreign* altar, a near relative, and beautiful resemblance of his affectionate aunt.

The amiable young barrister, in a very few years, attained to considerable celebrity in his

* Edwin was obliged to pass the remainder of his life abroad.

profession. The friendly solicitor, and the worthy Mr. Barton, continued their attachment to the family. And the latter, ultimately devised the whole of his property equally between the two cousins, with the exception of his library and valuable collection of prints which were bequeathed to William, as a peculiar testimony of his affectionate regard, and a memento that he had 'learned his lesson' in early life, a period at which they had been designed for him.

Edwin acknowledged the justice of this last characteristic trait of the upright old Quaker-gentleman, and failed not to impress on the minds of his children, when they were of an age to understand this truth—that, whatever may be the opinion of a small portion of the world, a virtuous deed is the only affair which can properly be termed

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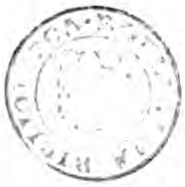
INTRODUCTION.

In the following pages, we have dressed-up no fantastic tale—no idle visions "baseless as the fabric of a dream"—

A dream! Intrinsic fibre of the web of daylight predilections!

We have ventured to express, in a modified degree, our deep commiseration for the semi-starved condition of the greater portion of our agricultural labourers—as a small contribution towards this subject which has been and is at the present moment so generally discussed.

1870.



LIVE AND LET LIVE.

THE

FATHER'S MESSAGE,

A DOMESTIC TALE,

SPECIALLY ADDRESSED

TO THE FRIENDS

OF THE

AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

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THE FATHER'S MESSAGE.

"LIVE AND LET LIVE."

Price 6d. ——— *By Post 7d.*

"Live and Let Live is well written and the interest well sustained. It abounds with fine feeling, based on the religion and morality of the Gospel, and is therefore calculated to do great spiritual good." —*Morning Advertiser.*

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1870.

THE FATHER'S MESSAGE:

LIVE AND LET LIVE.

1870.

CHAPTER I.

"My dear, dear father," said Mary Arnott, "you must fancy I am going to some strange sort of a place."

"It is on account of its strangeness," replied her father, "that your mother was doubtful of my consent when first she heard of it. On the Sabbath we look to the preacher with reverence. On the week-day, when troubles overtake us, we wish the good Samaritan would travel our lonely hill, for the priest as of yore passes by on the other side. We have lived on this spot thirty years and no minister of religion has ever crossed our threshold nor presented himself at the door-step. This creates a feeling that we are

strangers to the clergy and the clergy strangers to us. They do not show forth the good shepherd, 'I know my sheep and am known of mine.' It also deadens our love and confidence."

"We are so out of the way, my dear husband," gently interposed Mrs. Arnott, "the parish is very large and farms and cottages and hamlets are widely distributed. Besides, since the new road was made down yonder this old road has been little frequented."

"We had ten years of abundant passage on the old road, to and fro, to and fro, yet it was the same then as now," he answered. "During those ten years we lost four children, and who came to comfort us? Were was the balm and the oil to our sorely-afflicted hearts?"

Mrs. Arnott approached, and laying her hand on his shoulder, said, in a voice tremulous with emotion: "It grieves me, my dear husband, to hear you revert to this subject. Were we not made rich by our poverty? Did we not find ourselves more than ever driven to seek the Lord and His consolations?"

"True enough, wife; and we have been the happier. Still, to my mind, there would not

have been so much wickedness with our folks up here if they had been looked after. The clergy-magistrates are sharp enough when wrong doings come to light, but they don't otherwise trouble themselves."

Ralph Arnott was an agricultural labourer. He and his wife had been well taught at the parish schools. The seed thus sown had been cultivated by pious parents, who, although well educated, had been under the necessity of availing themselves of these advantages for their children. Ralph and Mary had been playmates and school-fellows and finally agreed to journey together through the wilderness of life—seeking and striving to keep the narrow path. They had their trials —sharp and decisive afflictions and consequent heavy expenses: but they experienced two very great blessings. The first and most exalted, a more and more humble submissiveness to the dispensations by which their faith, their love and constancy were tried; and the minor, though still great—very great—personal advantage of regular employment. Women who perform their domestic duties have always sufficient occupation. But the labourer of our

day; Alas! The newspapers are busy with this painful topic. They ventilate the cause now and then, proving that the depression of the day-labourer results in similar influence on the small shop-keeper, thence upward to the larger houses, the wholesale house, the manufacturer, and the merchant. What remedy do they propose? Is it a renewal of the old custom—yearly engagements? That a man should be employed by his worldly master as St. Paul worked for Christ in season and out of season. The apostle was ever in hunger and thirst after righteousness. The labourer is in bodily requirement throughout the year, with wife and children no less hungry and thirsty in season and out of season. The farmer says he must act like a niggard and use the marrow and strength of a man for short periods and then cast him off when the work is done that he may lay by money for the commuted tithes, or have his land ransacked for every tenth of the produce. Aye! There's the rub! It is not the low price of wheat nor the glut of the market. The tithes jar his nerves, wound his sentiments of justice and make a hole in his pocket; which his sus-

ceptibility imagines no thread of common usage could repair, nothing but the hard-drawn sinews of a working man. We love the Bible and its glorious inspirations. But, why should our nation adopt, or having adopted continue an Israelitish custom, which had its origin under very different and very exclusive circumstances. As regards the labourer there must be a change. The malady lies at the root. The disease rots through the heart's core of the country.

Ralph Arnott was one of the favoured few in constant work, therefore he and his wife found it possible to manage the small payment they received. Unavoidable debts were temporary clouds over the sunshine of their peace but no tradesman was defrauded. Of their little they paid a little until the whole was liquidated; and the humble tiller of the soil daily went abroad in the proud consciousness that he was an honest man—as justly the poor man's prerogative as we take the matter for granted with the wealthy. An only child now remained to Mr. and Mrs Arnott: the young Mary. At too great a distance from the town of Vale-Acres to frequent the parish schools it was happily in the power of the parents to

teach their child. Not a book of any kind did these worthy people possess—save one! no pamphlets, no tracts, never a newspaper. Their sole library, their richest treasure was a Bible, of large type and strong leather binding. A gift to them conjointly when they married by the then rector. It is not to be supposed there was or had been any omission of clerical duties or of attention to the poor generally. Ralph's animadversions referred only to the neglect of remote districts, of which his locality was one of the most secluded, though situate on an eminence—the height of a steep ascent on a range of cultivated downs broken here and there at rare distances. At present the hamlet was out of the routine of public traffic. They were as sheep unknown to the keeper of the fold. Allowed to stray aside and only collected and beaten and bruised when the thorns and brambles of an evil course had already done their part. At an early age Mary was sent out to service. By steady good conduct she had raised herself from place to place till in her nineteenth year her innocent ambition became highly excited and finally gratified by the situation of nursery-maid at the rectory.

"O! mother," she exclaimed, "what happiness! What joy! They must be all good people who live under a clergyman's roof."

"My dear child," replied Mrs. Arnott, "you must not too nearly calculate all in one house being of one mind. There will be differences of disposition and of temper. You must endeavour to do your own duty and carry out a spirit of forbearance towards others. And remember love, whilst using diligence in the work of your earthly master and mistress there will come opportunities to prove your zeal to your heavenly Lord and Saviour."

"O, mother, dear, I am a poor ignorant girl. I shall hardly dare look at my master and mistress. There can be nothing for me in the way you speak of in such a house as that."

"Wait, my child. Look to the Lord with confidence and He will place before you the means, if His wisdom sees fit to accept your humblest efforts. The missionary meeting I and your father attended, opened our eyes on this subject."

"Aye, aye! Here is goodly work for you at once, little maid," said Ralph, re-entering the house at the moment. "It was a moving

point leading us to consent to your wishes—young as you are and simple as you think yourself there is a mission for you. Make the rector acquainted with our wants up here. Tell him there are souls to be saved. Brands to be snatched from the fire of hell—hell yawning for them. Men and women on the old road side who might be turned from a godless life to better goings on. And don't forget, my darling, that for thirty years no messenger of love has shed the light of holiness on our neglected paths."

Mary was received at the rectory with a mixture of kindness and supercilious haughtiness. The household were town-bred—men and women. The latter in the height of imitative fashion—its extreme exuberance.

> Flowers, ribands, gauze, and lace,
> Flaunted in each servile place.

Our lass from the old road-side on the distant hill-top felt for awhile bewildered—almost humiliated. But familiarity with the sight of objects soon brought down to its proper level the mere flimsy importance of dress and manner. Mary learned by experience to estimate her own modest apparel and found that

gentle ways gained her more respect than these would-be fine folk bestowed on each other.

> Proud angry words and scornful flings,
> The vengeful taunt as surely brings.

She had occasion to remember her mother's observation—that she must not too nearly calculate all in one house being of one mind. But these flashings of lightning sped as fast as they were projected and there was a general understanding that peace was the motto in a clergyman's domicile.

The only uncompromising individual was the head nurse. She reigned paramount and termagant in her own department. There were five lovely children—sweet scions of an elevated race. The Rev. Henry Dorian was of peerage family. The redundancy of wealth which crowned the heraldic tree as usual reflected a paucity of leaves and flowers on the lower branches. Yet, a goodly private income swelled the revenue of the commuted tithes and the Rev. Henry Dorian was accounted a rich man. Some of the farmers discussed this matter among themselves. They had a shrewd notion that our laws, though founded

on the sacred system, were carried out with perversion of practice as established by Divine will—the ceremonial being deputed to one tribe—the High Priesthood to one family—the tithe or tenth produce of the land was the subsistence of the sons of Levi—beyond which they were to have no inheritance—the Lord's graciousness was their inheritance. The Israelites were a peculiar people and each man paid his tithe as unto the Lord. Each man brought his sacrifice to the officiating priest and at sacrifical feasts the poor were fed.

"I should be very glad if there were means of feeding our poor, the rates are continually increasing," said a farmer with a shake of the head expressive of much dissatisfaction.

"In all agricultural districts," replied an aged and respectable individual, "there are appropriate means for feeding the agricultural poor. If you well-to-do farmers, and small farmers proportionately, were to give constant employment to just so many as need-be to carry on your business from year's end to year's end, the surplus men must of necessity take themselves off elsewhere. You would profit by a

steadier set of labourers and have fewer on the parish books. Instead of that, you give a job to one and a job to another. You are nobody's master and nobody looks up to you. Your farms are shabbily kept. Your hedges are a disgrace to you. You are always discontented. Grumbling at the clergy, growling at the poor-rates and in a state of rebellion to God's own ordinances—You do not follow his command to do unto others as you would be done by: or, as worldly wisdom says '*live and let live.*' "

The Rev. Henry Dorian heard nothing of all this. He saw no signs but those of prosperity at home and abroad. Nature had been bountiful in the region round about. Smiling pasturage, woody uplands and fields of teeming plenty, elegant villas, comfortable homesteads, and on the Sabbath a well-dressed attentive congregation. He rather congratulated himself on his temporal advantages at Vale-Acres. His lady was of like mind. She had cast her lot with his: as he led so she followed. Together they glided down the stream of life's versatile enjoyments. Hitherto the Lord had spared them the burthen of a cross! They

were still young and willing to embrace all the pleasures within reach of health, youth, beauty, wealth, and station—though magisterial duties would sometimes interfere with a pic-nic, a morning concert, or an archery meeting. Themselves the cynosure of the neighbourhood, the circuit of Vale-Acres became noted for its select and fashionable entertainments.

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Crossley, the head nurse, was by no means satisfied that Mrs. Warner, the housekeeper, should have engaged so humble an assistant for the nursery as Mary Arnott.

"I was pleased with her looks," said Mrs. Warner.

"But I look to her dress," replied Mrs. Crossley, with indignation. "That horrid lilac print has been discarded the last quarter of a century, I feel quite ashamed of her appearance."

Mrs. Warner laughed. "My dear Crossley, you and I wear silks and embroidery and trinkets enough. We like them, and no one finds fault with us, bnt I am very far from agreeing with a lady of this town who accepts or rejects society by the standard of dress; I am assured she scans every new presentation as they call it, as a bird-fancier examines the gay plumage of a parrot, or any other display of gaudy feathers. With regard to this girl, Mary Arnott, all that can be said is this—that

her dress is as modest as her manners. Do not be harsh with her, give her fair play, and from the account I have heard of herself and her parents, I believe you will find true worth in her." Mrs. Warner retired.

The four elder children, Alice, aged eight, Harry, Vernon, and Julia, came in from walking and playing in the grounds, attended by their new maid. It was evident that they had been enjoying themselves; Mary's honest countenance no less beamed with satisfaction, she had begun to love these tender young ones, and as quickly as glance meets glance they had reciprocated her love. Nurse glowered from one to the other, with well-feigned astonishment at the children, and with wrathfulness at Mary, "I can have no rioting here," she said, "You were not hired as a playmate; these are the daughters and sons of the Rev. Henry Dorian. If you do not know how to conduct yourself with propriety your stay at the Rectory, I can assure you, will be for a very short time."

Mary shrunk abashed at this stern rebuke—She felt as if the crimson tide circulated over the very crown of her head. Nurse looked at

her as she would have looked at a guilty thing; rejoicing in the poor girl's confusion.

Alice glided up to Mrs Crossley. "Indeed, nurse, there was no rioting. Mary would not even let us run much, fearing we should get too warm. We only played at May-pole."

"Yes," said Harry, a brave bluff boy, who had attained his seventh year, "and Mary was so good as to be May-pole for us, and we danced round and round." And Harry laughed heartily; all the little ones joining in. "And then" said Harry, "we made her Queen of May, and we were her loving subjects; and we will love her, we will love her; our Queen of May!" There was a concert of juvenile happy voices—"We will love her, we will love her; our Queen of May!"

Mrs. Crossley found herself obliged to give in, so turning to Mary, desired her to go and change her dress that she might be ready to wait at the nursery dinner. Mary obeyed instantly, and came back in an entirely new gown of Hoyle's best lilac print. "This is past forbearance," muttered Mrs. Crossley, to herself, but I will wait my opportunity.

Not long afterwards, one quiet evening, when

the little ones were in bed and nurse had hushed to sleep the youngest, a baby of ten months old, she and Mary sat down to needle-work. The ever-recurring thought—her dear father's injunction, induced Mary to open her mind to the only person with whom she was in actual communication. From her arrival the house had been full of company, and Mrs. Dorian, in her visits to the nursery, had always brought with her a relative or friend. Mr. Dorian, Mary had only seen at morning and evening prayers and in the sabbath services; and Mrs. Crossley told her she was not likely to have any more convenient chance of speaking to either mistress or master. Mary ingenuously explained the nature of her father's message; giving the substance of it as delicately as possible.

"There! that's enough," said Mrs. Crossley "I know all about it. There are scores and scores of places in the same state. Poaching and all that sort of wickedness. Large parishes must have their cuts and corners. Clergymen cannot be running after every idler. There is no doubt if men were employed during the day they would have less inclination to tres-

passing at night; the fault is, being compelled to live by their wits. What would be the use of telling villagers or inhabitants of isolated hamlets that they ought to resist temptation, when temptation lies abroad and invitingly all around. As easy to turn snow-balls into balls of fire. What my master can do for your delinquents is to be as lenient as the law allows when he meets them as the chief magistrate at Vale-Acres."

Mary put down her work and gazed at Mrs. Crossley with increased earnestness. "O Ma'am, my father says every clergyman at the day of judgment will have to stand side by side with each lost soul of his parish and be called upon to give account of his stewardship."

"Your father is a very bold man," retorted Mrs. Crossley. "And is this the message he commanded his daughter to deliver to the Rev. Henry Dorian."

"No replied Mary sorrowfully, and tears filled her eyes, "I was to say there are souls which might be saved. Father thinks some of them would not be so bad if they were looked after. It is not only poaching!"

"I dare say not," was the contemptuous

answer. "Is it your desire to introduce yourself to your master? Would you address him at prayer-time before the assembled family—or solicit a private interview in the library? Perhaps you would rather choose that I should remain upstairs and allow you to go for the children when they have been to dessert, that you might have the opportunity of telling the Rev. Henry Dorian to prepare to give an account of his stewardship!"

Mary felt she had been indiscreet. She could perceive there was much temper and ill-will in the unpleasant way in which the head nurse had tortured her dear father's words. Conscious of the true value of clerical supervision, he had wished her to inform the Rector that there was an unfrequented road in a distant part of his parish, where he would be welcomed, and where he was needed—certainly where had been much neglect. The head nurse was a keen woman and guessed what was passing in Mary's mind.

"Your father," she said, "has got over thirty years knowing a want and not seeking the remedy. He must now do his own bidding. Whilst you are in my nursery you will

obey me. I strictly forbid your naming this subject to Mr. or Mrs. Dorian, or to any one in any way connected with this household. What would be said of me if I permitted such conversation to go forth from my department. It would spread like wildfire. We should be in a blaze. Rank, wealth, and fashion all round would hear of it. It would creep into private houses, and run rampant over every counter. Jackdaws would chatter that the Rev. Henry Dorian must render an account at the day of judgment for each lost soul of his parish."

Mary attempted to speak.

Nurse silenced her by an imperious gesture —" Then would come the investigation, traced from one to another, 'till indignant scorn would penetrate this room, and you would be sent home in disgrace. No more of it! Not another word. It is almost past belief that so much presumption should exist under what Mrs. Warner so foolishly terms modest manners and modest dress!" And Mrs. Crossley laughed the little laugh of ridicule. " There, go to bed child and get up wiser in the morning. Also in other respects strive to imitate your

betters. There is not a servant in this establishment but understands what is due to the respectability of the family. Each season has its custom. At this time of the year muslin dresses and trains, though I have heard trains are to be discontinued; I am glad of it; children and awkward persons tread on them; and certainly it is very much like carrying a broom behind you—sweeping up the dust!"

Mary did get up wiser the very next sunrise; determined on a more silent tongue with Mrs. Crossley. She saw her parents every Sabbath for a few minutes, and always replied to her father's interrogatories, "No, not yet." She prayed that some way might be opened to her without the necessity of deliberately clashing with the dominant power of the nursery. Eyes, ears, and heart centered in the desired object; but no less vigilant was Mrs. Crossley. Time sped on and on its stealthy yet rapid pace. The poet says—

> "Softly falls the foot of time,
> Which only treads on flowers."

Our maiden found her's rather a thorny path, though soothed and comforted by conscious willingness to please in all points of duty and

by the amiability of the children.

How brilliant are the visions of our minds. How easily Ralph Arnott thought to effect a purpose true and righteous in itself. The Lord had not denied his wishes. The evil temper of one individual had contravened the good and ardent aspirations of father and daughter. Yet, the loving Lord had work for the little Missionary Maid; work which almost banished for awhile every other thought and feeling. Miss Alice had always been of delicate constitution. A sultry autumn more than usually subdued her fragile portion of strength. The medical attendant was called in. "Nothing, nothing at all," he assured Mr. and Mrs. Dorian. "Only the heat of the weather. Miss Dorian would soon be as well as was generally the case with her." The excessive fervor of these autumnal days glided on. Cooling showers refreshed the parched herbage and renovated the life-spring of man and beast. The gentle invalid however became weaker and weaker. Physicians were sent for —the most renowned. By their efforts a slight improvement took place and renewed hopes were cherished by family and household—Miss

Alice being a general favourite. Mr. and Mrs. Dorian, who had felt keenly the anxiety of the moment, now rose above their temporary distress, as the lark soars high and joyful when the mower has passed by the asylum of her young ones. Thanks were returned in the church "for restoration to health of a young person." Again the rectory became the scene of festivity, and pleasurable associations progressed their usual circuit round the neighbourhood of Vale-Acres. There was one individual whose reflections were deep and solemn. It seemed to our cottage maiden that death had hovered very nigh. That he was still not far distant. She prayed that dear Miss Alice might be drawn nearer and nearer to the throne of Grace. She was not alone in her perceptions. Nurse was too acute to be entirely satisfied. Mr. Dorian also, contrary to his usual custom, sought the nursery and that frequently, to hold anxious and spiritual converse with his first-born and darling child. Mary was delighted. The Sabbath preacher, the eloquent man of the pulpit, never proclaimed "the way, the truth, and the life" to a crowded audience with more stirring power

than the words spoken kindly and gently penetrated the heart of his sweet child and her attendant. Not one sentence passed unheeded nor unremembered by Mary. When Mr. Dorian was not present she was ever ready to seek chapter and verse: to read, to sing, to pray, to commune with this little one, whose longings were evidently for that kingdom, where "the pure in heart shall see God." Too surely renewed indisposition supervened a short convalescence. November fogs and cold biting winds brought with its low fever a sharp and painful cough. Mary was allowed to devote herself to the invalid; much to the gratification of Miss Alice, who was glad always to have her near. A low stool by the easy chair or by the bed-side was the humble nurse girl's chosen seat. No one interfered with her. No one called her away. Her apportioned task seemed to be to watch—spiritually and bodily. No matter who shared with her the cares of the sick chamber, throughout the day, far into the night, and early the next morning, she was to be found watching—praying—comforting.

"Mary, dear," said Alice, awakening from a rather more refreshing slumber than usual,

"I have had such a beautiful dream. I was dressed in white, and with garlands of white flowers. I was so happy and felt so well. All at once it became quite dark. The darkness suddenly went away and I was in a white cloud glittering with silver stars. There was such sweet music and then the sunshine burst out so bright and dazzling that it awoke me."

"The sunshine of Immortal Glory," said Mary, with difficulty commanding her voice.

"Miss Alice," said nurse, "I never before heard you say so much at one time since you were born."

"O, nurse, I feel it. I felt the sunshine. Mary, did you say it was Immortal Glory! I know what that means."

Mary could not reply but kneeling by the bed hid her face in her hands.

Mrs. Crossley sat down and wept. At length she said, "I have no doubt, dear Miss Alice, that you did feel the sunshine in your heart and that you know the meaning of Immortal Glory. I have often heard you and Mary when you little thought I was listening to you. Mary is a good girl."

Alice stretched out her arms for nurse to

embrace her. Then turning to Mary circled her neck with such loving tenderness that the poor girl's fortitude completely forsook her. The hour arrived when inscrutable Wisdom saw fit to claim his own. The sweet child passed away like the early dew of a summer's morn.

The first death in a family ever brings with it the greatest shock. Mr. and Mrs. Dorian grieved sorely for the loss of their first-born—their lovely Alice. By their direction Mary received a handsome gratuity in acknowledgment of her unremitting assiduities to the dear departed; and permission to go home for a week after the funeral. But alas! from early spring to late in the year she had never obtained the opportune moment for delivering her fathers message. The dwellers on the old road side on the distant hill-top were yet as sheep having no shepherd.

CHAPTER III.

In sombre mood and meditation fraught with late events Mary quitted the Rectory, and set out on her return homewards, pausing only when she arrived where the new road swept proudly away into the distance. She waited to rest a minute before commencing the steep and continuous ascent. The public traffic with good reason had been diverted from over the hill to the level at its base—miles of increased but uninterrupted progress. A loud halloo startled Mary. She turned and beheld a young man running to get up to her.

"I've seen you for a mile," cried James Martin, "but you kept on right-a-head and never looked behind. We've had some cases of fever lately, and your parents thought that you had better not come home just now. Your mother has been too busy amongst our people and is herself poorly. She said it might prevent your going back to your place."

"My place," replied Mary, "is with my mother, if she is ill."

James tendered his arm and as they walked on explained that he had been to Vale-Acres on business for his master, that he had called at the Rectory soon after the funeral but she was already gone. They parted at the door of Ralph Arnott's humble dwelling. The good couple were on either side the fire, Mrs. Arnott looking very ill, but in her usual seat —a straight-backed chair, over-topping her white cap; under no circumstance allowing any position than that of uprightness. It was of dark Spanish mahogany, wrought with taste; and had once played its part with the handsome furniture of the farm where her husband, their friend Martin, and his son James worked as labourers. Ralph, sunk amidst the cushions of a large easy chair, had no less the appearance of great indisposition. It was evident Mary had only arrived home at the needful moment for the work appointed by the All-Wise Disposer of events. Happy were her parents to see her and thankful for her dutiful attentions. Together Ralph and Mary Arnott had risen into life's turmoil and pleasantness; together they succumbed to that malady which was as an

evening star ushering in a night to be followed by the day-spring of everlasting happiness. Mary roused herself to subdue every tendency to despair. It was a conflict with the certainly increasing and increasing prostration of those dearly loved beings. He whose word is truth supported and strengthened her through weeks of trial. It was of rare occurrence that an epidemic invaded this hamlet, but in a contrary direction to Vale-Acres the disease had lately been prevalent and carelessness had brought it to our friends on the hill-top. To our young maiden nights and days ensued of torturing suspense. The flow and ebb, which hope and fear magnified alternately, at length ceased, and a calm settled on the waters of life. Its turbulence—the billows of affliction—the light breeze of earthly joys no longer upheaved the living barks—and slowly, solemnly Ralph and Mary Arnott drifted into that haven—the sure refuge of the good. Beyond! —*eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* To the bereaved child,—she could only exclaim,—This is, indeed, a visitation from

the Lord! He who could have restored her dear parents to health had taken them from her. Both, both at once! She was left desolate! Love, joy, hope, fear, every sentiment that through her young life had been roused or glowed with her heart's best wishes were now gone. She was utterly—utterly alone! That intense loneliness which seems the height the depth, the compass of human misery! It was in mercy that her exhausted spirit was permitted to sink into the comparative quietude of bodily ailment. These untoward events caused great dismay. Ralph and Mary Arnott had been looked up to with respect by their neighbours, though not a few slighted their friendly counsel. The little maiden was considered the pride of the hamlet.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin and their family had always been on terms of intimacy with Mr. and Mrs. Arnott. Under the blessing of God, by Mrs. Martin's devoted attention, Mary, after a long illness, once more found herself able to take part in the domestic duties of her cottage. With returning strength the healthiness of a well-regulated mind brought her into submission to the will of her Heavenly Father. With

Him she held communings of heart and spirit, and, believing herself influenced to do that which was pleasing in His sight, determined to seek another engagement at Vale-Acres, trusting He would yet open the way to her to deliver her father's message to the rector. The scourge passed off with the death of its late victims and its fierce struggle with our gentle maiden. There were no new cases; and white-washings and due precautions became the order of the day with the well-thinking portion of the dwellers on the old road.

The season was open. There was plenty of work for the men and as usual no scarcity of hands. Then again, farming work became dull; genial activity lay quiet; but speedily resolved into noisy revelry. To the undiscerning it might have been surprising, but so it was, that drinking was more copious than when the labourer was in acknowledged employment. The "BIRD IN HAND" was a significant sign. Sign and sign-post stood bold and inviting several feet into the high road before the mostly open door of Jonathan Dry. A board over the entrance announced "good bed and stabling for man and horse."

Above that in gilt letters on a blue ground "Stricnine and Quasha's Entire." Twenty years previously a flourishing business had been carried on at the "BIRD IN HAND." Carriage folk and equestrians equally made it a halting place, and foot travellers were sure to turn in and refresh themselves. Times were now changed, and Jonathan Dry complained bitterly at the lack of respectable customers. Yet he kept on and was reckoned a man of means. Not so with Peter Irons, blacksmith and farrier. Skilful in his occupation recompense had poured in upon him so abundantly in his younger days, that he might then have provided and been independent of the loss he sustained when the old road was deserted; and a lucky opponent possessed himself of the only convenient spot available on the new line of route. Now, in the decline of years, he was known and confessed himself to be a desperate character.

> Rumour! Malignant jade, with hydra head,
> Ne'er sleeps—but ever seeking still to spread
> Whate'er can harm the guilty or the wise;
> Like noxious vapours which from swamps arise;
> Pollute the air and mix with mortal breath;
> Turns life to death, or keeps up living death.

Rumour had been busy with the idle tale that Miss Dorian had induced her papa to promise a tolerably large sum of money to Mary Arnott, which was paid immediately upon the decease of the young lady. That late expenses could not have disbursed very much and that the greater part, though the amount was not certified, was, as it must be, still in hand. The fire in Peter Irons' dilapidated, miserable tenement had ceased. Scant work had driven him to hasten the scattering of his family, and he scarcely cared even to hear of them. His wife had been long dead, and the most of what he gained was spent at the "BIRD IN HAND;" where he was more frequently to be met with than at his wretched home. There he sat hour after hour, swilling the pernicious draught, and making himself less and less of a man. Giles Tantrum was his boon companion. Together they planned many a deed in which they were assisted as much by the maddening beverage as by their wits. Giles Tantrum had a wife and six little ones. Nevertheless he rather liked working by the job, and then to scour the country for weeks together seeking employment. With a plausible tongue, he was

listened to—the misfortune had become so prevalent. But he was easily offended, grumbled when there was no occasion; so returned from his rambles much as he went—with empty pockets. His wife lamented the day she had united her fate with one so unsteady, but she did her best: patched together the poor children's bits of rags, kept the house clean, and turned her hand in any way that could bring in a loaf—loaves few and far between.

Peter Irons had closed the smithy, and early in the evening he and Giles Tantrum sat in consultation at the "BIRD IN HAND." No men were there but themselves, save the master of the house, who from time to time answered their summons and supplied them with more drink, and a lad who came to renew the fire with fresh coals. Peter Irons watched the closing of the room door, as he thought, securely, and approaching his face to Giles, whispered, "We can do it to-night. When I have prized the front door you run upstairs and present a pistol to her head. Demand the money. No parleying. No qualmishness. Life or money. Money or life."

"I—I'll do it," responded Giles and feigning to present to his companion, shouted "Money or life. Life or money!"

"Blockhead! fool! idiot!" cried Peter.

Giles rose to his feet. "I'll tell you what it is, Master Irons, blockhead, fool, idiot as you take me to be, "I'm not going to leave you at the door to run away and I in the lurch. Why man alive, one shriek from that girl would arouse every man and woman in the hamlet."

"Then give her the knife before she wakes up," growled the blacksmith savagely.

"I shan't do that neither;" said Giles, and unable longer to keep his footing he sank down on the settle and fell fast asleep.

To the astonishment of Peter Irons, Mr. Martin and his son James came in. Likewise another visitor arrived—a stranger to the hamlet. To appearance he was a man advanced in years, with white hair and grizzly beard—long and flowing. When he removed the broad wide-awake that seemed to have sheltered him from many a noon-day sun, a small black velvet cap might be seen fitting closely to his head and pressing down his aged locks. His dress was respectable but

travel-worn and he carried a goodly-sized box strapped over his shoulders. He glanced from under his brows on the occupants of the room which began to fill rapidly, his eyes resting for a second on the ill-omened visage of the blacksmith and on his sleeping companion. Peter Irons no less regarded the wayfarer and the brass-bound box riveted his attention. When the pedestrian swung it round in front of him unbuckled the straps, set it on the floor, and deliberately placed his feet on it, he growled to himself, "how like a dog on his master's coat." The pedlar took no further notice of anyone but applied himself like a hungry man to the very good supper set before him by the master of the inn. He then smoked his pipe, drank moderately, and finally prepared to continue his journey.

"The road is lonesome," said the elder Martin. "My son would give you his company part of the way if agreeable."

"Nothing more delightful," replied the pedlar. "Are you ready?"

"Quite so," said James, and they departed.

The blacksmith rose, and roughly waking the sleeping toper was leaving the "BIRD IN

HAND" when Mr. Martin called him. "Master Irons," said he, "my visit here this evening is to meet you. I will not detain you long, but I wish some conversation."

"Then you won't get it," answered Peter, in his gruffest tone; and he strode out of the house followed by Giles Tantrum. "Those meddlesome Martins!" he exclaimed, when at sufficient distance.

"What of them?" inquired Giles, rubbing his eyes and yawning.

"What of them?" responded Peter, "They came to the 'BIRD IN HAND' while you were sleeping."

"Came to the 'BIRD IN HAND,'" repeated Giles. "Why them Martins don't flit about much. They keep pretty well to their own chimney-nook."

"They came, however, this evening, and the old one wanted conversation with me, but I knew better than that. Some one, and no eaves-dropper neither, might have heard you, when you made such an egregious madman of yourself, shouting out in that frantic manner, 'Money or life.'"

"Peter Irons," said Giles, "that girl was

the happiness of her parents and those parents were many a time a God-send to my Betsy and the children. I should expect my arm to be paralyzed if I rose it against her. Besides, them Martins, if they've got a suspicion, don't you think they'll be on the alert?"

"True enough!" rejoined the blacksmith, gloomily, "but, Giles," here he still further lowered his voice, as in the early part of the evening, "there is a pedlar on the road."

"A pedlar!" quoth Giles, "now, I'm indeed your man. We'll be off for to-morrow's fair at Rumble-tumble. A glorious place for such folk as we are. You and I shall have gewgaws enough to win hatsful of money. Betsy shall have a new gown. I don't want to be hard with her; but somehow I get on as if I was always going backward. Never mind James," said he, when he heard of the elder Martin's civility to the stranger, "if he is only to go part of the way: we can cross the fields, go through the wood, and wait in the hazel-copse, near the new road; he won't go so far as that."

"We have no weapons," said Peter.

"Yes we have," replied Giles, "weapons that won't tell upon us, unless we bruise or

gash them."

"Good!" cried the blacksmith. "At one time of my life I could have felled an ox without the cleaver."

"Did you ever try it?" demanded Giles.

"I've done as much," answered the other.

"Then do it again!" responded his companion. The heavy sleep at the "BIRD IN HAND" and the now invigorating air of the mountain had removed the overpowering effects of that intoxicating liquor in which he indulged to excess. He took upon himself to dictate the line of conduct they were to pursue. The master-spirit submitted to the fresher man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE evening was as far advanced when James Martin and the pedlar quitted the "BIRD IN HAND" that the leaden hues of night were beginning to steep in darkness distant objects. Fleecy clouds previously tinged with golden hue assumed a heaviness that threatened to return to earth and sea and river whence they had been vapoured forth. Like our own best aspirations which rise on high and are re-poured down upon us in the abundance of God's gracious gifts. Scorched by the sun of adversity we yet burst forth again into life, and joy, and gratitude.

To the surprise of James, the pedlar was lively in his discourse and passed various cheerful comments on his quondam companions at the road-side inn. Then changing his tone "Does your hamlet," said he, "hold many such evil-looking fellows as the one who sat on the settle with that sleeping rakish-compound, who I should guess, must be his companion?"

"There is much to be regretted with our folk up here," replied James, "but that 'rakish-compound,' as you call him, might have been better if he had been brought up to regular, steady employment. My father says, 'job work is the curse of the agricultural labourer. It leaves him in idleness and drives him with the devil's own lash into all sorts of temptations.'"

"That need not be," answered the pedlar. "I travel the country from north to south; from east to west. Fifty times I hear that same want of regular employment and fifty times there is the outcry 'want of hands.' When there is a commission appointed by government—a supervision over agricultural districts and labour more evenly distributed, your masters will then seek their own interests and be as anxious to secure yearly servants as they are, now, to abide by the dirty system of sending off to starvation the men who have just stacked their hay, their corn, and filled their store-houses with plenty."

"I and my father have no reason to complain;" said James, "we have been on the same farm, each of us, from boyhood upward;

summer and winter; spring and autumn: as the harvest song says—

Hedging, ditching,
Weeding, twitching,
Sowing, hoeing,
Rolling, mowing,
Hurdles making,
Hedges staking,
Thatching, patching,
Poultry hatching,
Reaping, 'cheening,
Lambs a weaning,
Sheep a shearing,
Nothing fearing,
For every hand,
Upon the land,
Enough to do,
And pleasure too.

But, here we are at my father's cottage. I'll just give a word to the good mother." James opened the door. The pedlar peered in curiously. A comfortable fire reflected its pleasant light on shining tins and earthenware and the many little aids for domestic use which the thrifty housewife knows how to purchase at convenient moments. The furniture was plain and solid. Mrs. Martin herself a portly specimen of wife and mother and withall good-looking. Two younger women, merging from girlhood, were folding their needlework as if the increasing darkness closed their day of industry or simple usefulness. One in deep mourning looked pale and serious. The other healthy, beaming with good temper, and, as the pedlar thought, remarkably handsome. A

few words sufficed for James' communication. He possessed himself of a stout blackthorn stick that nestled in a quiet corner and nodding to his mother and the girls they were quickly again on the route. Neither spoke for awhile. At length James stood still. He heard footsteps. He looked round and saw two men cross the stile into the fields. He knew them by their outline of figure. Many in that locality wandered from evening 'till midnight and from midnight 'till morn: but strange misgivings filled James Martin's perceptions at this moment and turning to his companion he rather sharply inquired why he had not remained at the inn till the morrow, when it might have been safer travelling. The reply was, that urgent business compelled him to pursue his journey.

"This sort of thing happens to me frequently," said he, "and I am well prepared for casualties."

"So am I," said James, flourishing his trusty blackthorn. "I shall go with you to the bottom of our mountain, as we call it. May-be you'll get the luck of a returning vehicle one way or the other."

"I'm going to Vale-Acres for the night," answered the pedlar, "and start off again early in the morning. But though I so gladly accepted your companionship I assure you I do not require a guard. The moon is rising and I have no fears."

"My fears are on your account," rejoined the younger man. Resistance being vain they went on together, chatting gaily. The pedlar recounting anecdotes and hair-breadth escapes to himself and his pack, till they neared the hazel-copse, when again footsteps resounded on the night air: not the desultory shuffling that characterizes the drunkard, but the tramp, tramp, of resolute men. The men were a short distance in front of them, under the shadows of the copse. There were two—not hiding themselves, but walking side by side. James grasped his well-knotted thorn with both hands. The pedlar felt for something in his breast pocket and both were prepared to do valiantly. "If they molest us," said the pedlar, in a low voice, "we will give them a smart reception." He had scarcely ceased speaking when a heavy blow reverberated as a single stroke upon a drum; and the inner-

most man in front fell towards the middle of the road, bearing down with him his companion.

Two men bounded from their lair in the copse. Peter Irons instantly bestrode his insensible victim: Giles Tantrum struggled in conflict with the other man, who had quickly raised himself from his unexpected prostration.

"Where is the box?" growled the blacksmith, doubling his fist.

"Here is the box," answered the pedlar; presenting at the same time a revolver to the head of the disappointed savage. "Strike that poor head again and I'll send a ball through that fiendish skull of yours."

Execrations loud and awful burst forth from the wretched sinner. He rose up with the activity of years gone by, renewed by the energy of intense desperation: sprang from side to side and around the pedlar: despising or little caring for his threats: seeking the pugilistic advantage of a skilful hit. James, without the necessity of availing himself of the services of his knotty friend, seized Giles Tantrum and flung him away from his antagonist. He would have escaped and have fled—no one knowing whither to pursue—to

enact fresh scenes of inebriety and folly, but retribution was nigh. He was to be handed over to that justice which tells to the derider of God's laws that he must be punished by the laws of man. He was secured and manacled.

Two policemen had been despatched by their superior to attend to certain information of poaching and other malpractices. A gentleman's villa lay on the lower slope of the hill. They had passed through the grounds through that same copse, which was a limit to the property and had come out upon the old road a little above where Peter Irons and Giles Tantrum had secreted themselves, calculating only upon the two they expected from the "BIRD IN HAND."

"Stand still I say," cried the pedlar, "or I must bring this dance to an end. Once, twice," —the blacksmith concentrated his powers for a furious lunge, dash went his fist towards the pedlar's face, but ere the crash greeted his own terrible anticipations his clenched fingers flew open; the flash, the report, and his once gifted hand were as things that are past. He sank at once to the ground. His inflamed

courage and his brutal strength were gone; not more subdued by personal agony than by despair. He saw that his day was over. He knew the fate he had tempted and had long deserved. His groans were such as might be imagined when fiends goad on the tortured souls of the condemned.

Another individual came on the scene of action. Actuated by motherly solicitude, Mrs. Martin had insisted upon her husband going to meet their son or rather, as she said, overtake and bring him back. It was very well to be civil to strangers but she did not at all like such freaks as these. The clouds and the moon seemed to be struggling for mastery over the night. It looked ominous and she felt uneasy. Mr. Martin was by no means disinclined to his wife's behest. In proffering the company of his son to the pedlar, he sought to make it evident to those assembled, especially to Peter Irons, that the stranger would be protected. The conference about Mary Arnott's legacy or gift had been partly overheard by the lad in service at the inn, communicated by him to the master, who promptly sent for Mr. Martin, thence his

presence in the tap-room and invitation to the blacksmith for a few words of conversation. The blunt refusal the departure of the boon associates so quickly after the exit of his son and the pedlar, raised unpleasant surmises. He made inquiries and ascertained that these, the most mischievous men in the parish, had been seen taking the path across the fields, leading to the wood and the hazel-copse; considered to be a short cut to the road lower down. He gave strict charge to his wife to keep the orphan girl under their roof for the night, and he would be home again as soon as possible. A stout, hale man was the elder Martin, in the prime of life. Confessing himself under never-to-be-forgotten obligations to his late friend, Ralph Arnott, whose kindly admonitions had withdrawn him from early follies, made him a man of principle and taught him to understand that *contentment is truthfulness to God, and of great gain.* James Martin sat upon the ground supporting the head of the apparently defunct policeman; applying to his brow, temples, and nostrils a liquid from a phial given him by the pedlar. This and other remedies were taken from the

coveted brass-bound bit of mahogany, which now stood in the middle of the road with its lid wide open. The owner of the travelling merchandise knelt on one knee between his well-cared for property and the man who had fallen a victim to the cupidity excited by its supposed value. Giles Tantrum and Peter Irons lay stretched near to each other, watched over by the policeman whose good fortune placed him at the furthest distance from the dastards secreted in the copse. The blacksmith's arm had been as securely bandaged as circumstances would allow; the mutilated member being enveloped in lint steeped in balsam. Fierce and horrible was the auguish until the reckless man became as insensible as the poor fellow who as yet showed no signs of life.

The pedlar was now the first to catch the sound of approaching footsteps, and again his hand sought his breast pocket.

"Have a care," cried James, "that is my father's heavy walk. Down goes his stick; he is never without it. The children run out to meet him when he is a long way off. Yes, there he is! Father, I am so glad you are come."

The elder Martin made no reply, but looked sorrowfully on the sight before him.

The pedlar interrupted his thoughts,—"Dear sir," said he "is there a farm-house near-by, where you could borrow a waggon. These men ought to be under immediate surgical treatment. I carry a few nostrums with me from fear of accident, but these are very serious cases. I have tried to get a drop of brandy down the throat of this poor fellow but his teeth are hard set."

Mr. Martin listened to the suggestion; there was a villa, which lay about half-a-mile distant and he hurried off on his mission.

"James," said the pedlar, "you do not know my name, but I am happy that I know yours, and hope we shall meet again. I am sure that you and your father are as true and faithful as that moon now shining upon us. The clouds are dispersed; the danger is over; and could I but see this man ever so slightly revived I should rejoice. Indeed I ought to be grateful to the end of my days should his life not be sacrificed. That rascally pugilist meant his deadly aim for me. Did you hear his frantic cry—'where is the box?'"

"Yes," replied James, "and his shriek of disappointment when he recognized your voice. I confess I felt terrified when I saw him start up and attack you like a huge ox suddenly gone mad; but the weapon you held in your hand made me powerless to assist."

"A dear, dear, old friend of mine," said the pedlar, smiling; "nevertheless I was sorry to be obliged to use it; but it was a desperate affair, to be settled only by desperate means."

During these few remarks James and the pedlar had been actively engaged with such appliances as were at hand. At length signs of returning consciousness in the patient gladdened their hearts. Welcome, most welcome was the sound of a pair of horses trotting up the hill with a goodly-sized waggonette, the gentleman-owner, three serving men, Mr. Martin, and a large bundle of straw and various wrappers. The ex-officer was tenderly laid in the vehicle, approximating his savage assailant, now again groaning in mental and bodily ailment, they were accompanied by the villa servants, the pedlar and his box, the effective policeman, and Giles Tantrum.

Crest-fallen indeed was that unhappy man,

"O, Martin," he had said, with a voice almost choked by the agitating influences of anger, remorse, and self-abasement, "O, Martin, if I had taken your advice and the sharp but kindly warnings of Ralph Arnott, I should not have been the wretched victim to my own temper that I am at this moment." And he swayed two and fro his long arms, still fast bound within their narrow iron circlet. The long arms of an active, able-bodied, useful, God-purposed worker of that fruitful earth, from which the Almighty fiat hath decreed man by the sweat of his brow should eat bread. Some such thought occurred to him, for with a burst of frantic energy he cried out, "Bread! Bread for my little ones! Bread for my sickly wife! Bread for my hungry self! Did we get it? What did we get? Ha! ha! Draughts of cold water to fill empty stomachs!" And he gave way to a laugh so wild and maniacal that it thrilled through the hearts of every one on that lonely spot. But he subdued himself and spoke rationally. "I did at times—a few times perhaps, apply myself to steady labour. I did wish at times to be a better man, but cast off when in my best

of moods roused a hell within me and made me scorn even the work I could have had in my native place, and I wandered forth as Ralph Arnott more than once told me, 'like another Cain, with the brand of neglecting my family marked upon my forehead.' I had learned to hate the soil which yielded to me and others so much disappointment and distress. What was the gathered harvest? What was the abundance to me and to my fellow sufferers? We might eat chaff and stubble or thistles when our work was done!" He ceased. He looked upward. It might be that he prayed—to that Being far away yet ever near! The sphere immediately overhead seemed as it were alive with the eyes of God gleaming down upon this little group—the steady and the unsteady, the fortunate and the unfortunate: and will He not equally search and prove the employer—liberal or churlish; and the wisdom of the laws and their insufficiency: and as surely write down in the Book of Life a neglect most wonderful in a land of charities without bounds! The true and most effectual charity for the agricultural labourer is regulated employment, and that merciful

programme now expanding the *holiness* of its views to obtain *Sunday Closing* of public houses, which would unquestionably be a golden link in the hallowed chain of *Sobriety*—a blessing to the population and a Glory to the Kingdom!

CHAPTER V.

MR. MARTIN, or Old Martin, as he was familiarly termed, now that his son had arrived at manhood, looked after the departing waggonette until it had disappeared from the hill, and turned into the broad high road. "It may be," said he, "that I have had my last gaze on my sad, sad, neighbours. They have run riotously the way to destruction."

"Don't you think, father," said James, "that the policeman will recover!"

"I trust so, my son, but there will be punishment to the guilty. The few words of explanation from one or another leave no doubt on my mind that the intent was murder. The ferocious strength of Peter Irons has made many a man cower who would otherwise gladly have fought out a quarrel. But we must hasten our steps homeward, James, there are anxious hearts awaiting us." As they neared the hamlet the elder man suggested the propriety of concealing from Mary Arnott the wicked plotting against herself. "The poor

child," said he, "requires all her fortitude to go forth again to battle with the world."

"Excuse me, father, but would that be upright towards one who looks upon us as friends?"

"Quite so, my son, this young girl has lost both her natural protectors, and as her truest friends it is our duty to prevent any unnecessary shock to her feelings, it would renew that loneliness and desolation which at first so much oppressed her."

"O, father! not with all of us seeking her comfort and happiness. We should be as nothing. She would even think little of the danger which is now I hope passed by."

"Indeed, James, silence is our most prudent course."

"I am sorry, father, to differ from you, but it is my opinion that Mary has a stronger mind than you give her credit for; and though she is going away she might hear all the circumstances at Vale-Acres. Then what would she think of us? Her confidence, her respect would be gone from us for ever."

"Not a whit," replied the elder Martin, "she would thank us by and bye for having been so considerate: therefore remember, son

James, I expect you to be as silent as I shall be."

"You shall be obeyed, sir," replied the younger man, "but, perhaps you are not aware that one mischievous rumour has been succeeded by another. I heard this morning as if it was fact, 'that a long time ago Ralph Arnott found under his hearthstone a tin can full of small pieces of silver; that it amounted to a great deal when counted: and it was agreed on all sides that the Arnotts never seemed to spend more than they earned.'"

Down went Mr. Martin's heavy walking stick as if it struck deeply into the subtle earth and fixed the man himself. The moon shone her clear bright light upon his countenance in which scorn mixed largely with angry feelings. "Those two lying rascals!" he exclaimed. "This was their work. To set everybody talking was to prepare a blind over their own purposed villainy. No matter how idle the subject, attention would be carried off from what they believed to be true. It is well they are gone, and when it is known they are in custody these reports will be as sharp thorns in the hands of the speakers, which they will be glad to be rid of."

They arrived home, much to the satisfaction of the expectant family. A comfortable meal was ready for them. When the elder Martin had answered the reasonable inquiries of his wife and had detailed such events as had absolutely occurred, he knelt with the assembled party and poured forth the acknowledgements of a heart full of gratitude for the preservation of his son and the poor old pedlar, and for the many mercies vouchsafed to him and his family; not forgetting their young and tender visitor, Mary Arnott.

The next morning, with her friend, Janet Martin, Mary returned to her own domicile. She had shared in the anxiety of the over night from the prolonged absence of Mr. Martin and his son, and was now rather more cheerful than had been her wont of late. The slight distance was quickly traversed. Our maiden unlocked the door leading into the sitting-room but remained standing on the threshold without the power to advance. There was an inward resistance to obtaining entrance; when that was overcome further ingress seemed well-nigh impracticable. Janet was by her side but neither could direct her thoughts beyond

simple wonderment. The chairs, tables, and other articles of furniture were overturned and heaped promiscuously. The little cupboard which had been bracketed to the wall by the late careful owner had been torn down. The grate was removed from its setting. Bricks lay scattered or in heaps—two-thirds of the flooring having been disturbed. Deep holes dug within the circle and about the fireplace showed plainly that whatever the motive activity and perseverance had been at work.

Mary was the first to speak, "Will you be afraid to go upstairs with me, Janet?"

"I shall not let you go by yourself!" was the answer.

In the rooms above and in the back kitchen or washhouse, there was similar confusion: in the latter a small window had been forced in. The superintendent of police from Vale-Acres rode up at the moment. His business was to make inquiries in the hamlet respecting the prisoners of the last evening. Perceiving the confusion that reigned within the cottage and noticing the scared looks of the girls he alighted. Janet explained matters—that Mary Arnott and herself had carefully fastened doors

and windows the preceding afternoon. They had remained under the roof of her father, James Martin, until the morning; when, re-opening the front door of Mary's house they found everything in the state of disorder in which he now beheld it.

He asked many questions but neither Mary nor Janet could give the smallest elucidation. He had his own idea—that something had been sought for which had not easily been found if discovered at all, he suggested the probability that money had been the coveted object. Mary shook her head. Could she perceive that she had lost anything? No! the little chest of drawers upstairs had been ransacked and the great oaken case that held her father's sunday and working suits, had been completely overhauled, but she could not miss anything nor any part of the furniture. The superintendent made the back window secure for the moment, the house was re-closed and accompanied by the two girls he proceeded to Mrs. Martin's, requesting her to send for her husband and her son immediately. They were not long obeying the summons.

The officer commenced with the first busi-

ness on hand. Why had the elder Martin proffered his son's company to the pedlar. Did he suspect the men who subsequently made the attack, which, no doubt, fell on the wrong party: at least, so the pedlar had represented his belief? Were they, the prisoners, in a state of inebriety: had they been talkative?

"Not whilst I was in the taproom."

"Then you had no conversation with them?"

"None."

"You did not speak to them?"

"I spoke to Peter Irons when he was leaving."

"What did you say to him."

"Excuse me," replied Martin; "it had nothing to do with the outrage upon the high road. I seldom go to the 'BIRD IN HAND,' and hold very little intercourse with Peter Irons at any time."

"But you were there last evening and when the man was going away you said something to him which you are unwilling to repeat. What did you say to him?"

Martin made a sign to Mary and Janet to leave the room, but the superintendent signified that they were to remain. He called Mary

forward and demanded of Martin if the words spoken by him to the blacksmith had reference to the property of the young person now standing before them. James looked at his father as if entreating him to speak out; but the elder man was staunch to his own views and opinions and declined to answer any questions that did not refer to the outrage by the hazel-copse; of which he was only an after witness, and he bluntly desired the officer to address himself to his son.

"By and bye," was the reply. "But I am surprised at you, Mr. Martin; hitherto you have been regarded as an honest man. Concealment bodes no good. You lead me to suspect you of close understanding with the worst men about you. After their departure the cottage of this young woman was ransacked, the flooring removed and holes dug as if in search of hidden treasure."

Down went the stick with a force that set plates and dishes rattling on the well-filled dresser. With the movement, however, the momentary passion evaporated. Mrs. Martin loved that ungainly "hand support," as he used to call it. Her husband was naturally

quick and irritable but she verily believed angry feelings glided down that stick, like electric fluid down a conductor. The children too, if need-be to call for his interference, fled at its threatening aspect as the scared inmates of a poultry yard with the kite circling and circling overhead. He returned the fixed look of the superintendent but said calmly and firmly, "You have asserted this at a venture, I don't believe a word of it, there's no one here now likely to do anything of that sort."

"Except yourself!" bluntly retorted the official. It will be my duty to note that you did hold conversation with Peter Irons, or that you spoke to him on some subject not to be revealed, and when he was gone, so that he could not be a participator, this second outrage took place."

Martin, as we have before observed, was a hale man, in the prime of life. He was one of the few specimens left us of Britain's boasted peasantry. The race of sturdy husbandmen is fast vanishing from the soil; dying-out by semi-starvation. A job here and a job there does not conduce to a man's personal appearance any more than it does to his physical

strength. The well-to-do farmer is almost the only one who sustains the nearly obsolete axiom that "no work is more healthy than farming."

Constant employment had been blessed to our friends, James Martin, the elder, and his son James. He, the elder man, gave back the taunt of the official with a look which conveyed, "I could, if I pleased, fling you through that open doorway." But, he was a Christian man, who struggled in the path of forbearance. He knew that the strength of the law must be yielded to by the most innocent; so bidding Mary sit down by his side, and with both hands clutching his trusty stick, he detailed what he had heard from Jonathan Dry of the proposed villiany of Peter Irons and his accomplice; what he had said to the former, his rude answer, and the report given him by his son of the tin can full of small pieces of silver, said to have been found under his hearthstone by his late friend and neighbour, Ralph Arnott."

"Dear Mr. Martin," said Mary, "you are always kind and thoughtful. I can understand why you wished me to leave the room

just now but if you had told me, even after you returned home last night, we might have been in time to take precautions against every thing in the house being thrown into confusion by an idle search."

The superintendent proposed adjourning to the "BIRD IN HAND" for further information: thence they proceeded to various cottages, and other men were called off their work; but, as predicted by Martin, the chief talkers about the money under the hearthstone became as men with thorns in their hands, which each strove to withdraw from his own palm, if even to stick that same thorn sharply into his neighbour. There was total denial and much doggedness: there was also sincere regret expressed that the daughter of Ralph and Mary Arnott should have been subjected to so much indignity. When the official had taken his departure, offers of assistance in re-establishing order in her little domicile and condolements and kind speeches were well-nigh overpowering. Mary thanked them all with a sweet smile but would not trouble them; Mr. and Mrs. Martin would do or direct such work as was beyond her own exertions.

James was despatched by his father to the farm where they worked requesting that they might be excused returning to their occupation for the remainder of that day. Mr. Wincrop, the gentleman farmer, was in the house. He and his wife listened with horror to the detail of late circumstances.

"This comes of no church," said Mrs. Wincrop. "They won't do as we do, as your family do, and as the late Ralph and Mary Arnott used to do: go to the House of God once in the week and worship God in his temple."

"No!" said the farmer, "and the church won't come to them."

"What do you mean," inquired Mrs. Wincrop, "by the church coming to them how is that possible?"

"Quite possible and easy, my dear. The Church of Christ is that spirit of religion which is unseen. That spirit which enters into the heart of man and makes him 'the temple of the Holy Ghost—a habitation of God through the Spirit.' If God's acknowledged ministers were impelled by righteousness they would convey the Spiritual Church, her holi-

ness, her love. But, James, my lad, this recital of yours confounds me. This is a new sort of fashion with the people up here—to break into one another's houses. That poor girl, Mary Arnott, must not be left alone!"

"She is going to Vale-Acres, sir, I heard her say she would go into the town to seek a new engagement, and then sell the furniture."

"Let her come here," said Mrs. Wincrop. "I will receive her and treasure her as a daughter."

"Wife!," cried the farmer, rubbing his hands gleefully, "I reverence you for that thought. I wonder I did not catch such an idea myself when her parents died; at all events as soon as she recovered from the fever. Poor lamb! how does she bear up under this new trial?"

"Wonderfully, sir. She says the danger is over: her chief anxiety is to comfort my poor father, who reproaches himself for neglect."

"Bah! bah! We none of us know when the thief is coming."

"Nothing, as yet, can be missed," said James.

"No, no: of course not. It was the tin can

full of small pieces of silver the rogues were after. If ever I heard such nonsense in all my life!"

"Not quite so out of the way," rejoined Mrs. Wincrop: "before the time of the Arnotts' there was an old man lived in that cottage by himself; no one knew how he obtained his livelihood, but it was said he had money by him: so this is an old tale renewed."

"I am of opinion," pursued the farmer, "that the blacksmith was at the bottom of this twice-told tale. Now you mention it, my dear, I very well remember the circumstance: it was then said Peter Irons had a fingering in the old man's leavings. I am heartily glad he is gone and hope he may never come back: from his earliest days he has been a violent man. Now for your message, Mrs. Wincrop, to our adopted daughter. Why, bless the sweet child, it will be coming home. This farm once belonged to her family. Those were the golden days of the long war, when bread-stuffs were high and farmers tapped their port and sherry and filled their decanters from the hogshead—not a swine's-head, young man, but puncheon, pipe, or tun. Casks of

capacity. Many, many have I seen in after use for cider, beer, or as water barrels. The fact was of common occurrence. Suppose, Mrs. Wincrop, you invite Mary Arnott to spend the day with us to-morrow."

"With all my heart. Deliver that invitation James, if you please," said the good lady.

CHAPTER VI.

JAMES Martin quitted Wincrop House much in the spirit of a martyr, only that for him there was no hope, no recompense, no glory. Mary Arnott to be raised to the position of his master's daughter was to annihilate his long-cherished aspirations. He had looked up to her as the choicest specimen within his limited knowledge of all that makes woman lovely. He had ventured to regard her as the idol to whom he might consecrate his tenderest affections 'till death should sever all earthly ties.' His steps were slow. Half stupified, his eyes sought the ground through meadow land and narrow pathway. He emerged upon a stretch of heathy land, and, for the first time, turned his back upon his master's demesne with a feeling of relief. The hamlet lay before him. Cottages straggling along the old road side. A volume of smoke from Mary's chimney betokened that his father had accomplished his task of propping up the fire-grate, until a more efficient workman in that branch of

labour could be procured. Slower and slower he paced his way, revolving in his mind—should he simply deliver the invitation from his mistress, for Mary to spend the following day at the House, or should he give her the happiness of hearing the advantages which were in store for her. He might with equal propriety do one as the other; and the thought wounded him to the quick—what joy she would feel—how heartily his family would congratulate her. Then fancy outsped the moment and his perturbed imagination beheld the maiden, with enhanced loveliness, receiving the homage of surrounding youth and manhood in equal circumstances with herself. But he! What right had he to murmur? He had never opened his lips to her otherwise than as a brother might address a sister. Well! well! as a brother he would still continue to love her. He would rise above his oppressed feelings and that deadening pain at his heart and rejoice in whatever contributed to her happiness.

He opened the cottage door and Mary herself kindly greeted him. "I am so glad you are come, James. We are waiting tea for you." The glow of activity had settled on her cheeks

and James thought he had never before seen her look so truly beautiful.

Beautiful she might not be as an artist would delineate feature and feature; but sweetness of disposition manifested itself in every turn of her expressive countenance and a certain dignity of manner, which arises from conscious rectitude, were charms characterizing her whole demeanour: and made those who received her love or esteem give back tenfold those solaces which render life endurable through all its trials and afflictions. Friendship is a word much abused: but friendship is love. We sympathize with a friend: sympathy is based on love—the love of God which impels us to love one another.

James struggled manfully and forced himself to do justice to the humble meal before him. He gave the invitation as he received it and was wonderfully surprised that it was immediately declined by Mary. She had sent word to an aged widow at Vale-Acres that she would go thither on the morrow for a few days purposing afterwards to return, sell her furniture, and relinquish the tenure of the cottage. Her eyes filled with tears as she looked at the

many little comforts which had belonged to her dear parents.

"Mary," said James; and his voice was steady and his manner quiet; "my father and mother have been very good to me: they have allowed me to put by the greater part of my earnings. Of course, I expected at some time or other I should require a home of my own. This seems a fitting opportunity. Do not allow anything to pass into the hands of strangers. I value every article almost as much as you do. That dear old clock! Your mother taught me to know the hour and the minute. I should be reminded of her various good counsels. Likewise of those of your dear father. He used to say 'hours and minutes are to the Lord. We have no possessions in this life: we are entrusted with blessings, but those blessings may cease even whilst we are enjoying them.' His dwelling shall be mine and I will strive to follow in his footsteps. Sister Janet shall be my housekeeper."

Mr. and Mrs. Martin approved of this arrangement, if agreeable to both parties; and took their leave, promising that when

James returned home they would send their next two lads to occupy Mary's spare room. Janet would also remain. Mary gladly acquiesced regarding the furniture, which plan would spare unavoidable pangs of regret: it moreover, passed in review before her mind that she would be able, in an unassuming way, to make up to that kind family their many sacrifices during the illnesses of her parents and herself. It was now young Martin's task to urge the acceptance of Mrs, Wincrop's invite for the morrow.

"There will be no more need of service for you, Mary: my master and mistress desire to receive you as a daughter."

"Impossible!" she replied. "I respect Mr. and Mrs. Wincrop as my own dear parents respected them; but that has been an unfortunate house for our family. I have heard my dear mother say that after my great uncle came into possession he never prospered."

"Never prospered!" repeated James. "I've been told of amazing goings-on there. Hunters and race-horses. Breakfasts and luncheons laid out for fifty and double that number pouring-in, yet abundance for all—and dinner

parties continually. He must have been in a prosperous condition for awhile, at all events. My master spoke this afternoon of those golden days when farmers tapped their hogsheads of port and sherry and filled their decanters from the taps."

"Yes!" said Mary with a sigh, "my dear mother often mentioned it and my father would answer, 'lavish expenditure was sure to bring with it its own ruin.' He said my great uncle lived up to the prices of farming-stock during war time and when peace came and prices were lowered he had no standing in himself and went down like a stone to the bottom of a well. His own family and his sister who lived with him and had lent him her money were obliged to turn out into the world and earn their daily bread."

"You need not be afraid of anything of that sort now," said James. "Mr. Wincrop has been a careful man; laying out his money judiciously. He has been just and merciful to his labourers and his labourers have worked for him as if the land was their own. The produce has been gloriously blessed to him and it is well known that he is a wealthy man.

Dear Mary, you must not turn aside such great advantages."

"I must not place myself in the way of so great a temptation," replied the maiden, with increased earnestness. "I have a duty to perform to my father's memory. I must deliver his message to Mr. Dorian."

"Why not go to the rectory and ask to see him. The head-nurse has no power over you now: or let me go for you: or my father would I am sure be pleased to save you any further trouble on that business."

"No trouble, James: duties are not always agreeable, but they cannot be handed on from one to another."

"It is very possible," said James, "that last night's work may open the rector's eyes and he may see proper to look after our people and try to win them from their crooked ways. Not that I think he is likely to do much good. They are hardening in wickedness day by day. Scant work and daily wants seem to have brought them to the resolution to help themselves: and I verily believe some care not whether by honesty or dishonesty."

"O, James, my father had a great idea of a

clergyman's influence. He said they had both grace and power if they chose to exert themselves."

The young man leaned forward as people are apt to do when serious reflections occupy the attention. "I have frequented church pretty regularly every Sabbath for twenty years," said he, "and have heard much from the pulpit of the power of the Spirit and of the Grace of God: but had it not been for home teaching I should not have seen the working of one nor the working of the other."

"But you will do!" replied Mary triumphantly. "Mr. Dorian is a good, kind man; he only requires to be told of our spiritual wants: and he will attend immediately."

"But listen, Mary dear."

"I am listening," replied the maiden with a smile.

"Well, then, I will only refer to my twenty or twenty-three years and say nothing of your father's experience. During my time there have been marriages from here, churchings, christenings, burials: there has been disorderly conduct of various descriptions: lately intent to highway robbery—with murder or no mur-

der as it might turn out and breaking into other peoples houses. The rector must know us, and know us well as the clergyman of the parish—as the magistrate at Vale-Acres—and who ever pretended that he was ignorant how many farms lay on the slopes of our beautiful range of hills. But, dear Mary, why should I argue with you. Do what seems best. Go straightforward to Mr. Dorian and deliver your father's message; or seek a friend or a new mistress who will give you the opportunity of speaking to him; but let me entreat you not to neglect my master and mistress; they are faithfulness itself. I could not undertake to give your present answer to them. You must really do that for yourself. You had better go to-morrow morning." Then turning to his sister, he asked her opinion. Janet shook her head and rising from her seat left the room without answering. It was in vain young Martin pressed the point he sincerely held to be a conscientious duty. Mary was decidedly repugnant to locating at Wincrop House; nor would she be persuaded to pay a farewell visit. James Martin, as if to withdraw from outward objects for a few moments, closed

his eyes. When he re-opened them he stood upright.

"Good bye, James," said Mary, evidently glad that the controversy should be ended.

It was now the young man's turn to smile. He made a step or two and sank down amidst the cushions of Ralph Arnott's easy chair—which had been carefully restored to its original position. "O, Mary," said he, in his old brotherly way of speaking, "do sit in your mother's favourite high-back for a little while; you used to be so fond of it; don't turn against it though it did come from Wincrop House."

Mary occupied her mother's seat immediately. The young man allowed her no time for anticipation; the pent-up feelings of his heart were poured forth with simple earnestness. The maiden looked grave and more and more serious as he continued to plead for a few words of encouragement. At length she reminded him of the short time that had elapsed since her dear parents were consigned to the grave. Would she promise for a future day? No, she had no heart even to admit a thought until she had accomplished her father's bidding.

He drew up his head, not proudly, but as if to permit a sigh to expand from the very depths of his broad, manly chest. He gazed on the sweet face before him and as he gazed his perturbation increased: but when he spoke it was in the subdued, quiet tone of one who hopes—as yet only hopes he has conquered a difficulty. "Mary dear," was his familiar way of addressing her; "Mary dear," he repeated. "Your parents were not averse to me. If they could look down upon us they would bless us—not that we should be separated, but that we should be husband and wife. This was their expectation. I would make it a special request that the rector should perform the marriage ceremony, and then, Mary love, my own darling Mary, who should prevent your saying to him, all that is in your own righteous heart."

"O, James," replied the maiden, "you try me very hard; indeed you do. Please go home, James, and I will think over what you have said."

But James did not please to go, and go he did not until he had gained the promise he desired—not for the indefinite future but within a reasonable period.

Quite early the next morning Mrs. Martin accepted the office of explaining the present posture of affairs and of tendering Mary Arnott's grateful acknowledgments to Mr. and Mrs. Wincrop. She was received by the worthy couple with their usually cordial manner.

"Sit down, Mrs. Martin," said the old gentleman, "Sit down;" and he courteously placed a chair. "Why have you not brought our young friend with you?"

Mrs. Wincrop inquired after Mary's health. "We expect to see her here this afternoon," said that lady; "we were just talking about her."

"Just talking about her," responded the old gentleman; "we do little else than talk about her: and those villianous rascals, who I hope will get their deservings. If our sweet lamb is ill I will drive over and fetch her; the sooner she is here the better; and here we intend her to remain 'till some fortunate man claims her as wife; and a good dower she shall have out of the Wincrop Farm: it had not that name formerly, but names are of slight consequence—my pride will be that my adopted daughter be as well portioned as any maiden

this side of the county. What say you, Mrs. Martin, shall I have the pony put-to: or, if my sweet child is on the road—coming through the meadows, perhaps, I will go and meet her." He waited for an answer; then he looked at his wife and both turned to Mrs. Martin expectingly. The poor woman had been aware she had been sent on a delicate mission but had not calculated on the excitability of the old gentleman and for a few moments she was confused.

"Tell us, tell us at once, what is the matter," demanded both husband and wife.

"Nothing," replied Mrs. Martin, recovering herself. "Nothing at all. Only that Mary Arnott and my son James are engaged to be married."

"To be married!" repeated Mrs. Wincrop indignantly. "He might have told us yesterday and we should have been spared the pain of being trifled with."

"Excuse me ma'am," returned Mrs. Martin with a manner which well became her matronly bearing. "My son is incapable of trifling: more particularly with so good a master and mistress. He only pleaded his own cause

when he found Mary would by no means be persuaded to think of Wincrop House as her home. She desired me to say she was truly grateful for your kindness and that her love and respect were not surpassed even by the love and respect which her dear parents ever bore to Mr. and Mrs. Wincrop."

"Aye, aye," rejoined the old gentleman. "I see into it—this was an unfortunate residence to her mother's family. But with a different name came new ideas and ways. The change was total and it has worked well. Blessings have been literally showered down upon me. What the rain has watered the sun has ripened. Wife! Shall we render homage to the Giver of all good gifts and benefit these young people even as we have received bountifully. James is a lad verily after my own heart. We shall have two children instead of one."

Mrs. Wincrop graciously nodded assent.

CHAPTER VII.

THE wedding-day arrived. A quiet little party entered the handsome and ancient edifice, where customary prayer and praise had imbued the sacred precincts with a holiness and sanctity bearing its own reflection on the faithful hearts which came to pledge themselves before the Lord. Mr. Dorian was there, assisted by his curate, the Reverend John Trotman. With charming urbanity, when the ceremony was concluded, the rector congratulated the young couple. He expressed his pleasure at the superior position they were thenceforward to maintain and his hearty belief they would credit their rise and good fortune. He complimented Mr. and Mrs. Wincrop on their enlarged views and liberal interpretation that *the workman is worthy of his hire*—so agreeably illustrated in the Arnott and Martin families; of whom he had lately heard high eulogiums. They then adjourned to the vestry. When the signatures were completed the party withdrew: young Martin signifying to the

curate to follow them—leaving the bride alone with the rector—for such had been her wish. Pale and trembling; her father's image before her mental vision, she found it difficult to collect thoughts and words. Mr. Dorian's eloquence was in abeyance but he waited with gentle patience. His manner re-assured her. The necessity of embracing the long desired opportunity overcame natural timidity, and beyond the hardihood of her father's bidding she realized the promise *in that hour shall be given you what to say.*

The rector answered not a word. When he saw that her communication was ended he took her hand and feelingly pressed it between both of his. At her intimation of departure he opened the vestry door and let her pass forth, but he remained behind. The curate quickly joined him, with a smile and vivacity; which received peremptory check.

"How is it Mr. Trotman," was the enquiry, "that the hamlet where these young folk have hitherto resided has never been attended to in the usual district visiting—it lies on your side of the division of clerical duty?"

"My portion of the town sir," replied Mr.

Trotman, "is well cared for. The hamlet is at the extremity of the parish. Two miles along the level and two miles up the most stubborn though slanting ascent."

"Not so stubborn as our neglect, Mr. Trotman—which must give way. I am deeply grieved to hear that for thirty years no minister of peace has shed the light of righteousness on their neglected paths."

"Small blame to either of us, sir. You have been at Vale-Acres but a third of that time and I only five years."

"Quite sufficient time, Mr. Trotman, for us to have avoided the humiliation of being told by that young woman, and I know her to be true and faithful, 'that there are souls to be saved—brands to be snatched from the fire of hell—hell yawning for them. Men and women on that old road-side who might be turned from a godless life to better goings-on.' Her father sent the message, it appears. He is now dead: but his words are a living reproach—not that there is more wickedness in one part of our parish as perhaps elsewhere, but that we should absolutely require to be told to seek out the lost sheep and bring them

back to our master's fold—and more than that, young man. You have probably many years before you—take heed at once to what that sweet bride in her humility yet lofty inspiration ventured to say to me—to myself personally—not by her father's direction, but that it was his idea, 'that every clergyman at the day of judgment would have to stand side by side with every soul entrusted to his charge, and be called upon to give account of his stewardship.'"

"Did you really sir, condescend your attention to all this?" demanded the curate.

"Yes, sir," retorted the rector, "and felt it too. Hitherto I must have been a faithless soldier—sleeping at my post. But understand me, Mr. Trotman—I shall in future expect from you such daily work as will, I hope, be in unison with mine. No more idleness, and less pleasure, if you please. That caution is to myself as it is to you."

Mr. Dorian retired by the side door and gate leading into the rectory grounds.

The clerk had long departed to his own business, and Mr. Trotman closed and locked the principal entrance, by which the bridal

party had been admitted. He stood under the portico and thus he mused: "Daily work in unison with his, such as he hopes it to be! No more idleness and less pleasure! I am never idle. I scarcely breathe for unremitting occupation. As to pleasure, it is on the wing —not to fly away but fluttering and expanding. High example has been imitated. Routes, balls, and concerts by small parties, dances and musical entertainments. I am looked up to for cordiality; and shall I go amongst those I have directed with the wand of good fellowship and drivel at their rightful enjoyments. Nay—so well have they taken their cue they will follow it out, with or without my interference. But, this hill-work! There is no doubt it must be done. I will take the early morn."

Behold the Rev. John Trotman toiling along the dusty highway and over the uneven surface of the neglected route; forgotten it would seem by authorities spiritual and temporal. The sun shone brilliantly and he sat down on a rustic bench partly surrounding a blasted oak on the old road side. Exceeding the memory of the present generation there it

stood with its gnarled and tortuous branches. The head, the crown of ornament, had yielded to the fiery element and left the riven trunk a mere stop-gap in the hedge—but an emblem of life's transitions. Thoughtful consideration had placed a seat for the tired or heated pedestrian. There the curate renewed his musings of the previous day. "Five years of hard work! No respite. Few holidays and then friends so glad to see me I come back exhausted—and exhausted I renew my hard work! Five successive periods I have circumferenced yon glorious orb and I could almost fancy myself under nauseate influence at my diurnal rotation so tired am I of this desperately hard work. I must get an incumbency of my own. There are many fair purses would open to the purchase if I could only bring myself to a selection. Aye—there's the difficulty!" He pursued his walk and reached the top of the hill. The first living soul he encountered was a boy, about eight years of age; ragged and dirty; amusing himself with small stones for marbles. The curate approached and received for his welcome all that the tatterdemalion held in his hand.

"Keep off I say, can't you; what do you come up here for.—We don't want you, there's nobody dead!"

"I am come to pay you a visit," replied the curate, "will you go with me and tell me the names of those who live in the different cottages?"

"I tell you they none of them want you," roared the boy. "I know who you are, you are the undertaker. My grand-dad was ill last week, but he's better now—he don't want to see you—he says he is not fit to die."

"That is the very reason I should like to see him. I am not the undertaker."

The boy changed his manner and grinned from ear to ear. Sugar drops and candied sweets had not spoiled any of his beautifully white teeth and his eyes glittered in the morning sunshine: but his face was smeared and begrimed with dirt.

"Do you never wash yourself?" asked the curate.

"No!"

"Does no one else ever wash you?"

"No!"

"Who has the care of you?"

"I takes care of myself," replied the urchin with a hearty laugh. Presently he continued—"If you are not the undertaker, you are very like him; and there is somebody will want him."

"Who—who is it?" demanded the curate anxiously. "Will you show me where?"

"Just beyond that tidy house," and the boy began to search anew wherewith to carry on his game.

In that "tidy house" dwelt Mrs. Martin. A kind landlord, her husband's master, had not permitted heedless neglect amidst timber and brickwork. Whole and sound in every part, comfort within, and careful cultivation around betokened the acknowledgment of that interest which is a mutual benefit to the employer and the employed.

It was highly-gratifying to the good woman to receive Mr. Trotman—she besought him to rest himself and to accept such refreshment as her humble means allowed. He politely declined and requested information as to who was sick in the next cottage.

"A poor young woman, who had been long from home," replied Mrs. Martin; "she has

lately returned, it seems to die. It is a melancholy case. I am truly thankful, sir, you are come."

He proceeded to the next dwelling. He was shown upstairs. A good-sized bed occupied the larger half of the room, but close under the slanting roof and by the open window was a smaller pallet, on which lay, in tawdry garments, that had once been light and tasteful, one of those lovely specimens of country beauty to be met with in our wanderings through Britain's fair Isle. Eyes of blue so deep and rich in tone—casual observers would have pronounced them black—fringed by long dark lashes: raven tresses, unbound, yet soft and smooth, contrasting a complexion brilliant in health, now sallowed by care and sickness; features fast shrinking beneath the withering approach of death but still retaining delicacy of form and outline. Her hands were small and white. The curate accepted a chair and sat down by her side. He leaned towards her and said in a low voice, "Is it all peace within?"

She clasped her hands and drew herself further from him with a look of horror. He

would have addressed her again but she intimated by gesture her wish that he should be silent. Her relaxed hands fell on either side. Her eyelids closed over those glances of terrified despair, pellucid drops mantled high and close upon that polished forehead, and a groan escaped so painful as if life itself must cease with such intense anguish. "Too late!—Too late!" were the only words murmured forth ere the spirit passed away—for ever!

Mr. Trotman ventured as much religious condolence to the afflicted parents as their distress permitted them to receive at the moment. His duty speedily conveyed him to other scenes, but, "Too late! too late!" sounded fearfully on his reminiscence for many a day. He next visited the grand-father of the urchin whose acquaintance he had made when he reached the top of the hill. The old man expected him, but was equally resolute to distance his near approach. The grinning little fellow bestrode a pile of brushwood slightly bound together, within the open doorway. "You were ill last week," said Mr. Trotman, bowing courteously, to an aged man who sat in the corner of a spacious old-

fashioned fireplace. The room was full of smoke and the old man coughed incessantly.

"There!" said he of the brushwood, "that's all the answer you'll get. When he begins like that he never leaves off for no one."

The curate strove to make his way in by pushing the lad aside. The old man shook his fist at the boy—who roughly got rid of the curate's hand from his shoulder. "Can't you see," said he, "that he don't want you. I told him you wasn't the undertaker; but he said he'd throw his crutch at me if I let you in."

"Is he also lame?" asked Mr. Trotman sadly.

The young malapert giggled with delight at the rev. gentleman's evident vexation.

"Yes, he is lame, and that's how I gets out of the way when I gives him green wood on the fire. As soon as you are off I'll be off."

Mr. Trotman turned away with a sigh. He really felt sorry for this poor child of neglect and grieved that he had been disappointed of earnest conversation with that aged cripple. Many of the cottages were locked up; the owners being from home—at work or elsewhere. Some shut-to their doors and bolted

them when they heard that a stranger was visiting from house to house. Others—lazy-looking men, shirked off ere Mr. Trotman could get speech with them. Betsy Tantrum came forward of herself; curtseying and humbly apologising. With her husband's delinquencies she felt herself beyond the pale of sympathy. The six little ones claiming her attention alone prevented her utterly sinking beneath accumulated poverty and disgrace. A few days' employment in the fields now and then just kept them from absolute starvation and nothing more. Scarcely could it be said they were not starved. She ventured to ask news of her husband and how it went with him in the examination before the magistrates.

"Complicity," replied the rev. gentleman, shaking his head mournfully. He pitied the unhappy wife whose partner had rushed headlong within the hard grip of the law's just retribution. Comfort he could not proffer in regard to the husband, but he entreated her to seek consolation where alone it is truly to be met with: and strength would be given her to bear whatever trials might yet be permitted by that Being whose wisdom is beyond our

comprehension—but who hides a smiling face behind the dark clouds of adversity. He put into her hand all the loose money he had about him and turning away began to retrace his steps, unwilling to attend to the outpouring of a most grateful heart.

A farm servant in a gig presented his master's best respects, with an invitation to dinner and a promise that Mr. Trotman should be driven into the town of Vale-Acres when agreeable to him. The rev. gentleman was hardly seated in the vehicle when Mr. Wincrop made his appearance with similar hospitable intentions. He expressed his regret that he could not have the pleasure of Mr. Trotman's company, bnt thanked him with the heartiest sincerity for his visit to the hamlet; and hoped at future times such kindly visitations would be received with better appreciation by the dwellers on the old road-side.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE evening of that day which shone so brightly over the Rev. John Trotman's toiling expedition closed upon him in the rector's library. But the loveliness of the weather—the life-invigorating sunshine, while it gladdens, blesses, and beautifies all nature and assists us more cheerily, more soothingly on our paths of duty, pain, or gratification, yet there ceases its influence; and duties, pains, and pleasures have their independent course. So it fared with the curate.

"Too late!" ejaculated Mr. Dorian, when he had heard that portion of Mr. Trotman's misadventure: for so it must be termed, when a special purport of the visitation had been missed. Too late! Ah! Where shall we be and what shall we be when we are *too late?*

Blessed are they who are up and stirring, with the watchword *On!* Christians, *On!* Forward we must go. Daily, hourly forward. Otherwise there can be no hope against that interminable doom, *too late! too late!* Mr. Dorian

gave brief attention to other details of the visit. The unwillingness of some even to an interchange of civilities might be overcome; but *too late! too late!* was the "solemn knell—of departed hours—numbered with the flood of years gone by—o'er life's narrow verge—into dread eternity." The rector paced the apartment. To say that he was grieved would be inefficient. He was wounded. A living soul had passed away to meet its account: sounding with its latest mortal breath its own fearful condemnation. At length he paused. "My dear Mr. Trotman," said he, "we cannot excuse ourselves. There has been neglect. Much less do I wish to blame you individually. You have less responsibility than I have: but I take this opportunity to repeat there must be more duty and less pleasure. You have too much occupied yourself catering to the amusements of the townspeople. Do not interrupt me, sir; they are a liberal, well-to-do, kind set; neighbourly with each other, and quite capable of understanding their own resources. In future they must be left to themselves in these matters and we must seek their assistance in visiting the poor. The

unpaid agency of lay workers is valuable. There are none, now-a-days, 'who love greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.' The fatigue, the time required the expense entailed, much or little, in these labours, prove the sincerity of those who willingly accept the task. I will not detain you later, my dear sir, good night; and may the Lord strengthen us to renewed efforts in the right path."

Mr. Dorian was obedient to his own mandate —more duty and less pleasure. Fashionable gatherings were not so frequent at the rectory. The rev. gentleman entered thoroughly into the views and wishes of his parishioners in general. Even the perversities which chequer life's fitful ways were dealt with kindly. His presence was hailed for the solving of doubts which had lain hidden or dormant within that sacred depository—the human heart. The uneducated or the wise alike desire the communion of intellect and spirituality. The craving after unceasing revelry began to subside in the broad-acre valley. And Mr. Dorian realized poor Arnott's belief—that humble dweller on the old road-side—on that

far away aclivity, distant from the friendly intercourse of local traffic, "that a clergyman has both power and grace when he chooses to exert their influence."

To the Rev. John Trotman this variableness in the disposition of the good folk of the town was an enigma. He could guess pretty-well at a riddle of the deepest construction. No man more skilful at a conundrum: but, also, the condescension of the stoical, dignified aristocratic rector filled him with amazement. His own sway, hitherto unbridled, was unpleasantly curbed by this new process. He could not deny, even to himself, that the rector was sincere and manifestly determined to be no longer the great man but the good pastor.

Nature had gifted the Rev. John Trotman with a heart full of merriment and a mouth full of laughter. He would rather die the death of the celebrated Zenxis, who expired laughing at the portrait of a comical old woman; which portrait, of the said comical old woman, had been painted by his own talented fingers, than he would yield to the Homœopathic principle of "Like cures Like."

But it was useless to be out of temper, so

he went on as gaily as heretofore; and chatted and laughed; and laughed and chatted; the while strenuously cultivating those sweet interchanges of youthful feeling, with the fairest beauties of the place, as might eventually resolve into such latitude of the innocent enjoyments of social life as his own discretion should dictate. There were many who listened and some who loved. The words were nothing —mere exhalations of a lively temperament. The oiled silken threads were not fine-drawn gold fitted to the wedding-finger. They were "something—nothing: and had been slaves to thousands." At length, however, prudence and perchance inclination induced him to limit his tender assiduities and the circle became narrowed; and still narrower until one alone remained on his right hand and one alone on his left. Now his spirits drooped. "There is a time for all things and all things have a time." Even our merry-making, laughter-loving curate could be made serious. The silken thread was a shackle upon his own heart. There was an entanglement which produced uneasiness: just the smallest possible amount of retribution. It was painful.

He minded it; now that he himself had to bear the penalty of the shafts so heedlessly flung around: and for a whole week—from a certain Monday morning to Saturday night it was noticed that the Reverend John Trotman was unusually sedate. But shortly, very shortly afterwards, came the announcement, that the reverend gentleman was the accepted suitor of the selected one; whose prospects were gilded with that precious metal which glitters with prevailing force from the highest to the meanest dispenser of the smallest coin of the realm. Hey! for the conqueror! He had wooed. He had won. Incumbencies lay before him as an open map. *Too late! Too late!* vanished from his remembrance. The world, the joyous, the laughter-loving world invited him forthwith to the plentitude of its enchantments.

Changes duplicate changes. No sooner did it become known that the curate's success in his matrimonial speculation would launch him into wider spheres than the circumscribed limits of his present position and that he was about to depart, than there sprang up a breeze of excitement—a revulsion and convulsion, agitating

a diversity of persons within the circuit of Vale-Acres. "So friendly!" "So chatty!" "So entertaining!" "Aye, aye," quoth farmer Burley; "a right jolly good fellow!" "A right jolly good fellow!" was gaily responded to. "A testimonial!" cried one. "A testimonial!" repeated others; and the proposal was carried by acclamation.

A deputy waited on the reverend gentleman.

"It was difficult," he said, "under such prosperous circumstances to decide what might be acceptable."

Mr. Trotman expressed himself averse to any considerable outlay. The goodwill of the intention to honour him was sufficiently gratifying. Pressed, however, to give an answer, he laughingly replied: "One of the pyramids of Egypt."

Mr. deputy bowed and withdrew. The conclave, or coterie of kind friends, which had forwarded the deputation, was still sitting. "I know Egypt very well," said one; we've got it in the town library."

"But about the pyramid?" said another.

"You know nothing at all," joined-in a third. "I've seen such things you've no

notion of. Leave it to me. I'll produce a pyramid worth the presentation."

In due time the pyramid was transported by rail: no complaint being made by the authorities —seemingly contented with their customary moderate freightage. A pyramid in a packing-case. It proved on inspection to be of the most delicate Alabaster—of tolerable height—flat at the summit; whereon might be viewed tiny representatives, in silver, of the Osmanli, wild Arabs, and Western Travellers. At the sides on the level at its base the four seasons were exhibited in groups of charming figures. The whole supported on a circular plinth of silver: the border being embossed with mystical figures of Egyptian theology. The inscription—graven by the art of man, was eulogistic. It ought to have been,—"In memorial of jovial qualities."

The succeeding curate was a man essentially the reverse. His cheerful countenance and pleasant manners betokened a mind at ease, under due control, and with just appreciation of the dignity which sacred service demands. He was a married man with increasing family. In domestic life his ways were no less well-

regulated. Early rising and comfortable leisure with those whom the Almighty had given him to cherish, and to imbue with the day's responsibilities, sent him forth to his clerical duties with a heart invigorated, thankful for home blessings and actively earnest to fulfil his high calling. Punctually at ten o'clock he emerged from his own house. It was a gleam of light from that domicile which pursued its course whichever way duty required, and penetrated the humblest abode. There was naturally much to do in a large parish and a variety to be dealt with; but he gave no rough word nor showed ungentle bearing. He worked his *Master's* work soberly, charitably. At one o'clock he returned to dine with his wife and children. Two afternoons in the week were appropriated to special cases of sickness. On two afternoons he received those who by unavoidable events had been deprived of his visits or who might desire his attention to any reasonable topic. The remaining portions of this routine were devoted to retirement in his own study. Thus, at the end of each year much real time had been bestowed on all points of duty—spiritual, clerical, and domestic.

There was no lack of invitations; but he neither accepted all nor declined all. Now and then courtesy was pleasant and welcome, and he and his wife became agreeable guests first to one and then to another; personal esteem being their chief guidance.

This new impulse to religious vitality in Vale-Acres completed what the Rev. Henry Dorian had previously commenced as his own mode of action. Nor were the rector and curate left to work alone. Precept and example in unison attracted admirers. The ladies and the independent gentlemen of the town gladly acquiesced in a congenial and more intimate arrangement, by which no family of humble means or poverty should be overlooked. Each had a district, wherein to read, to pray, to comfort, as near to his or her residence as possible. The poor, the sick, the destitute in their immediate localities were *their* people—*their* lowly friends. Thus *the talents were put out to interest.* It being suggested that each district lady should be assisted by a nurse residing within her district, to attend special cases of sickness—a respectable widow, or matron, whose family no longer demanded her

maternal care—two shillings - and - sixpence weekly, or ten shillings monthly. Thus *talents* in a spiritual and wordly sense would be put out to interest—and become Local Charities.

"And, now," said the reverend divine, one speaking for both, "you ladies and gentlemen will be cognisant of any deficiency on our part and may call us to account if neglect be traceable to other sources than absolute necessity."

One fine morning the rector accompanied by his curate, the Rev. Francis Gideon, quitted the town of Vale-Acres on business which had for some while been urging its silent retrospective appeal. It was a time of non-employment at the hamlet on the old road-side, save to the favoured few, and there were evidences of want among the women and children, strangely contrasted by the inebriety of the men, who staggered in and out of the "BIRD IN HAND" or lounged about the door smoking, drinking, jesting; the coarser the jest the more uproarious the laughter. The clerical-magistrate was known to many, and stupid and lost to their senses as were most of them,

a general caution pervaded that it would be handling hot iron to misbehave.

Whilst the rector held conversation with Jonathan Dry, Mr. Gideon addressed the men. "Dear brethren," said he; but he was interrupted by "Hip! hip! hurrah!"

"I cannot call you brethren," said Mr. Gideon, "if you do not quietly listen to what I say to you. As fellow-men I earnestly desire to tell you how grieved I am to see you in such a state of sinfulness. Have you never heard 'that no drunkard shall enter the kingdom of heaven.' Is there one of you who can truly say you hope for salvation and everlasting life? You know as well as I do, that you are going the way to destruction."

"Well, master," hiccupped a lazy-looking fellow, "we can die but once."

"Die!" repeated Mr. Gideon, in a voicc that made the loungers hold themselves upright. "Die! your bodies will rot and become earth to earth, but there will be punishment for the deeds done in the body. I would again call you dear brethren, I would explain to you the gracious love of that merciful Redeemer who came into the world to call *sinners to repent-*

ance. I invite you by this holy Gospel;" and he took a small testament from his pocket; "I entreat you to turn away from the vice of drunkenness. Cease from a habit which even the beasts of the field do not indulge in—of drinking more than is needful."

"So we would, sir, if we had work, we don't sit here in the day-time when we have anything else to do, but if the farmers won't employ us, why, Jonathan Dry will; that's all I can say."

The speaker was about to enter the tap-room when the lazy-looking one who had first spoken caught him by the arm. "Keep your ground, you sniveller. Let us all speak our mind and stand by each other."

"Nay," said Mr. Dorian, placing himself by the side of his curate. "It would save time if one spoke for all, you are doubtlessly agreed as to what you wish to say."

They looked at each other. Those within opened the window and stared around.

Jonathan Dry closed the house door and stood sentinel. "Come, my lads," said he, "let those speak that can speak."

A few attempts were made in the way of

brave speeches, but they quickly broke down and ended in angry mutterings.

Jonathan Dry took up the cause. "It is twenty years, sir," said he, "since I had the pleasure of seeing a clergyman, scarcely a gentleman, along this road, excepting your late curate, once. My business now is almost exclusively confined to this class of men. I confess my sympathy with them. I am sorry you find them so early in the day in a state which neither credits them nor me, but I have no alternative, if I did not supply my customers they would go elsewhere. But, sir, I am a husband and a father, and I do say that farm labourers ought to have the means of feeding their wives and children from those who have them at beck and call the year throughout; not be thrown wholesale upon the stinted measure of the parish. Many here are good workers; and many might become so if they were encouraged to better ways."

"But we are not encouraged," cried the lazy-lounger; "that's the evil of it."

"The best of all encouragements," answered Mr. Dorian, "is a good conscience. And a good conscience does not seek to drown itself

in the sin of drunkenness. I always think a drunken man a guilty man in more respects than by the vice itself. I am glad to see that you are recovering yourselves from the degraded state in which you were even a quarter of an hour ago. Perhaps the shock to my feelings made you appear worse than you really were. Be that as it may. You are able to comprehend the nature of the proposal I am going to make. Mr. Dry informs me that a narrow strip of uncultivated land, which I had noticed, contains so considerable a quantity of stones that it is useless for agriculture. It would seem as if the good providence of God had prepared for you at such a needful moment as this the means of employment. I could not give permission but must communicate with the authorities: and, if in a day or two you should be offered half your usual amount of wages to repair your own road from the top of the hill to the bottom with these stones, dug out, broken when requisite, collected and carried, all by your own labour, I hope there would not be one to refuse. Should there be one, let me know the man. He could not be compelled, only let me know him."

The men at the open window sprang out and stood by their fellows. By tacit consent they ranged themselves in a semi-circle. Then ascended a shout. Not "hip! hip! hurrah!" but the hearty good-will of men, to whom it is decreed to eat bread by the sweat of their brows.

CHAPTER IX.

THE Rector gave a few words of additional serious advice to the farm labourers, and he and the curate, taking courteous leave, turned away. They made it their business to enter every cottage along the hamlet. There were the usual contradictory appearances so observable with our poor—tidiness and cleanliness though the bread-pan was empty and neither potatoes nor firing to be seen. Others were supplied with the necessary accompaniments of daily life but squalor and misery seemed to be their portion. The former received the Rector's bounty with gratitude; the latter felt his presence an inconvenience; his very glance reminded them how untidy and dirty they were.

Mr. Dorian had heard that Betsy Tantrum was deserving his commisseration; he enquired for her, and came at length to her dwelling. Her husband had been sentenced, with his evil companion, to a long term of imprisonment, with such compulsory work as the law

enforces. Though the law has not provided such regulation for the employment of the cultivators of the soil, as would restrict a laxity of morals, which, in all climes and ages, and to all men, results from idleness. To repeat an Eastern proverb—"The devil tempts all other men: but idle men tempt the devil."

No work !—less honesty in man :
To live—he gets just what he can ;
But give him work and he will think,
Better to rise than downward sink.
No man that lives but feels his claim,
To be a man in more than name.
To keep, to feed, to clothe* a wife,
Is the labourer's part in life.
His little ones, by high command,
Will replenish—and work our land.
But tender sinews must be fed,
To make them strong—with *daily bread*.

Mr. Dorian tapped gently but as neither sound nor movement answered him he opened the door and entered. The mother and six children were crowded together in a corner.

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* NOTE. In straw plaiting districts women and children were accustomed to aid in clothing themselves; but, of late years, the abnegation of bonnets by the ladies has caused a depression in the plait market; greatly adding to the distress of want of employment with the men.

Some under cover of an apology for bedding; others seeking comfort by huddling close to them. The children were pale but the mother flushed. She raised herself upon her elbow and gazed at the reverend gentlemen, then faintly uttered "thankful, thankful." The next instant she fell back, every vestage of colour disappearing from her face.

Mr. Dorian was about to send for assistance when Mrs. Martin came in. The good woman courtesyed, "Mrs. Tantrum," she said, "had been working in the fields and had taken severe cold. They had not been without firing until that morning and she had sent them a breakfast early in the day. Her daughter-in-law came over from Wincrop House every week; and this was her day of sending relief. Mrs. Wincrop used to be very kind and liberal; but now the arrangement of these matters was left to Mrs. James Martin. It was pleasant to observe gently dignified pride mantling her happy countenance, while the natural humility of position remained unimpaired—an acknowledgement of God's gracious dealing without affectation or assumption of personal importance. Mrs. Martin held in one hand a can of

soup, hot and savoury, in the other a basket filled with bread and minor articles. A healthy little fellow, whose features betokened him a son of Mrs. Martin, also entered, both arms embracing as much conveniently cut lengths of wood as he could carry. "The weather was not cold," Mrs. Martin said, "but a bit of fire would comfort the mother and children."

Mr. Dorian, on quitting the cottage, paused at the doorstep. "When I came in," said he, "she raised herself on her elbow and said 'thankful, thankful.'"

"O, sir," replied Mrs. Martin, "that has always been her way. She says she never could have got on thus far through life if she had not kept herself thankful for such mercies as she did receive. And now her heart is so filled with gratitude that her husband was not permitted to be an accomplice in murder, that she accepts the Lord in all His doings—Tender, Merciful, and Gracious! No doubt, sir, in speaking to you she wished to acknowledge your kindness in coming to see her."

The rector and curate were touched by this bright example in so lowly a woman, subject to such intense trials. They walked on silently;

each occupied with his own thoughts. Their reveries were interrupted by the unsightly aspect of the blacksmith's dilapidated tenement. The shutters, doors, lintels, side-posts, even the floorings of the rooms above had been carried away, scarcely anything remained but tottering walls. A ruin. A reproach to its late master, should he ever return, and ponder over those days when ample means were squandered upon more than the requisites of life, when years were passed without caring for the knowledge of God, without thought for the future of this world, or dread of the wrath to come.

The clerical magistrate shook his head. "I trust," said he, "we shall soon get the folk about here into more reputable work. This spoilation has been robbery, which I should be obliged to punish if I knew the guilty parties."

The old grand-dad next claimed the attention of the rev. visitors. The aged cripple was again ill, very ill, and his conviction that he was not fit to die was pressing on him acutely. The church had come to him. The spiritual church. The message was delivered. The

way made clear to his hitherto darkened mind. For months the rector or curate visited that old man. He died in peace, trusting in the merits of a crucified Redeemer.

To continue the events of that special morning, when the earthly shepherd became known to this distant portion of his flock, we must follow the Rev. Henry Dorian and Mr. Gideon into Mrs. Martin's comfortable abode. A few inquires were made by Mr. Dorian, respecting some of the parties he had visited. He then directed his attention to a respectably dressed man who upon his entering was seated in a snug corner by the fire. The stranger had risen, bowed respectfully, then seemed disinclined to be further noticed; becoming apparently absorbed in watching the flames as they ascended from the roaring, crackling logs on the hearth. The rector advanced a step or two and addressed him, "Are you one of my parishioners," said he, with a smile, if so, do you live about here, or where do you reside?"

The dull, impassive look of unwilling recognition gave way. Intelligence animated his features, and with a modicum of drollery

he replied; "I have had the honour of standing before the magistrate at Vale-Acres."

"Ha!" responded Mr. Dorian "such an idea slightly occurred to me; but I could not connect it with any circumstance. I perceive now—I clearly remember you—But where is the beard, the grizzly whiskers, the aged locks and the pack—the brass-bound mahogany box, exciting cupidity and well-nigh causing the death of one of our most useful officers?"

"Gone!" was the answer. "Parted with for ever. I have made a nice little sum to retire upon, and that neat place formerly occupied by the Arnott's will be my home if I am so fortunate as to secure a tidy housekeeper."

Mr. Dorian again smiled. It was obviously a near hit, when the youthful and handsome eldest daughter of the house blushed at this open avowal. Seeing that further explanation was expected, he gave as a reason for the disguise—finding as a young man he lost more time in chattering and being chattered with than compensated a smart business, he considered it better to be older in appearance than he really was. Then he got on faster,

not only in disposing of his articles but by the quickness with which he was turned off.

The gentlemen laughed heartily, but Mr. Dorian reminded him, that had he been suspected of not being what he seemed to be his testimony would have been inadmissible.

"I was aware of that," replied the ex-pedlar "but I was waylaid as an old man, attacked as an old man, and as such I gave my evidence. Had the case been one of life or death to the prisoners I should have come forward as I am now. They were sentenced for their outrage on the policeman."

The reverend gentlemen drove to Wincrop House. It was the afternoon hour of rest, and the little coterie of two happy couples, the aged and the youthful, received their guests in the old-fashioned parlour used as a general sitting-room. The carved wainscot, the panelings of the doors, the mouldings of the ceiling, the highly ornamented chimney or mantle-piece, manifested the refinement of owners in days that have passed by. Mr. Wincrop was wealthy. He had paid the estimated worth of the farm, and had so improved it that the land, under divine blessing, had

yielded its increase almost or perhaps equal to the sunny slopes of a more southern temperature.

When Mr. Dorian and Mr. Gideon had refreshed themselves by partaking of a substantial repast speedily laid before them, they were invited to walk round the near portions of the farm and to veiw some modern erections which Mr. Wincrop considered more advantageous for the preservation of sheep and lambs than allowing them the run of sodden meadows in rainy weather, or the close quarters of hurdled enclosures. Other buildings likewise, less cared for by many, had repaid him by the healthiness of his cattle. He was a farmer in the most literal sense of the word. He was also a christian gentleman.

"You have delighted me," said Mr. Dorian, when the inspection was concluded. "I was not aware there was so absolutely a model farm in my parish. Did you adopt any particular system in the management of the land?"

"At the outset," replied the old gentleman, "system and management were sadly at variance. Like many a young man I thought to

proceed race-horse fashion, but it was a labour of years to recover from the neglect of my improvident predecessor. At length, however, we came to something approaching good order. My general knowledge was the result of early observation in a very extensive agricultural neighbourhood. As soon as I came here I let my people see that I could work with my own hands. I looken sharply to their doings even whilst most careful only to employ the steady and industrious. And there were two principles, Mr. Dorian, upon which I endeavoured to act: one emanating from the other. To honour God and be just to my fellow-man. Those who toiled for me through the heats of summer were not turned adrift during the cold blasts of winter—as the broken-up planks of a wrecked vessel, to be tossed about upon an ocean of distress. I was never desirous of being talked of as employing a wonderful number of hands. I made my experiment and when I decided how many sufficed, I kept to that number throughout the year. Labour need not be always by the moistened brow and the full stretch of the sinew. There is another point. Except in very extreme cases I do not

employ men by the job. They slight over whatever you give them to do. Nor for a few days or weeks. They lengthen out the time. I am dissatisfied, and when the work is ended they are dissatisfied because it is ended."

"My dear sir," said the rector, grasping him cordially by the hand; "you have invoked the blessing of God by your uprightness. I wish others would follow your example. It is an anomaly hardly to be accounted for—trades, services, and professions have their rise and fall, but they are almost certain at some period to have their days of prosperity, even superfluity—but the agriculturist with seven to twelve, or even sixteen shillings a week, is at a great loss when payment is withheld in rain and snow and frost; and utterly at a stand when discarded for months."

"I have no time," continued the reverend gentleman, "to bestow upon the subject. Magisterial and clerical duties are absorbing. Yet I could give my hearty assent to any measure, to be laid before parliament, for a better regulated medium between the employer and the employed, than the unrestricted will of the more powerful of the two. We have

clubs and friendly societies and are continually advancing their claims to public encouragement but a man repeatedly upon the parish-books has meagre chance of benefiting himself or family. A legislative discussion would be most desirable—It is ever a focus attracting the brightest intellects of the country."

They re-entered the comfortable old-fashioned sitting-room. James Martin was gone. He was now the young master. Well he looked in his superior habiliments. A fine young fellow! Bearing his honours manfully yet with his customary quiet manner and application. Mrs. Wincrop invited the curate to converse on matters of interest connected with his own and the rector's doings in the town, which had reached the good lady as early zephyrs from an eastern isle laden with the aroma of sweet spices. Mr. Gideon was not backward in detailing the ways and means of expenditure for the relief of the necessitous, and was rewarded by a munificent donation: sending him home with increased joy to the fulfilment of charitable duties or the duty of charity.

Mr. Wincrop was a silent listener to Mr.

Dorian, who entered into pleasant discourse with the bride. Upon taking leave he thus addressed her: "I rejoice," said he, that you are in a position to carry out the precepts of Divine love. The sick—the destitute of your neighbourhood are delegated to you by a wise dispensation. I find that you provide for their wants and look to their comforts, but you have also the capability of ministering to their spiritual requirements—certainly to those of your own sex. You are specially gifted with the Mission Grace of God.

May His blessing be with you!

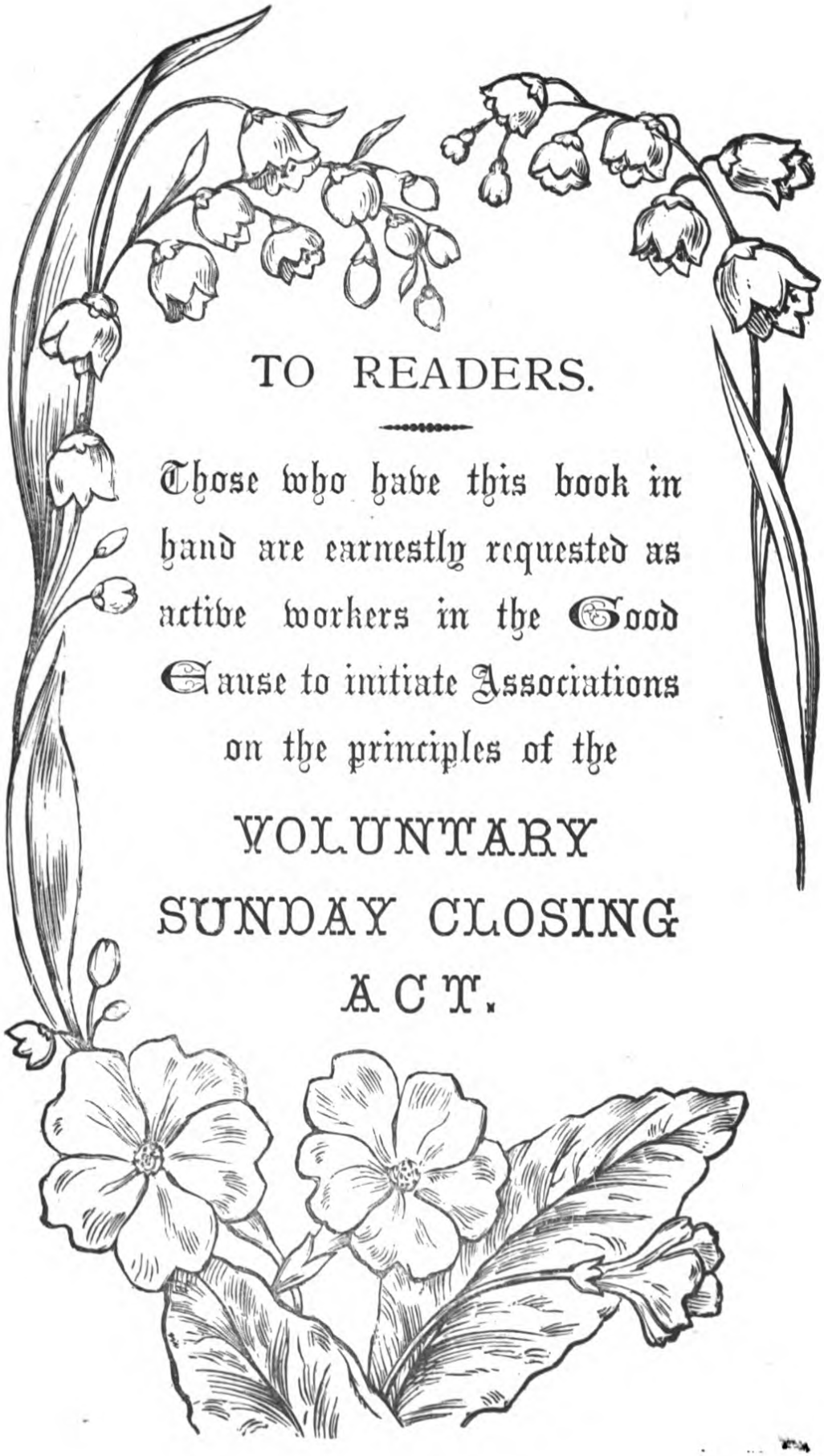
Now, dear Mrs. Martin, farewell. Accept my best thanks. I thank you from my heart for your faithfulness and truthfulness in delivering your FATHER'S MESSAGE."

FINIS.

THE DRUNKARD.

With racy beer he washed his throat,
With ardent spirits fired his brain;
And many there are, friends might quote,
Who never clear sense could regain.

SIGN THE PLEDGE—'tis a two-fold sign,
Waving over body and soul;
Redeeming by sacred design,
From perilous liquor control!



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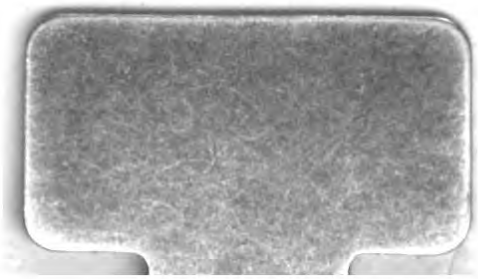

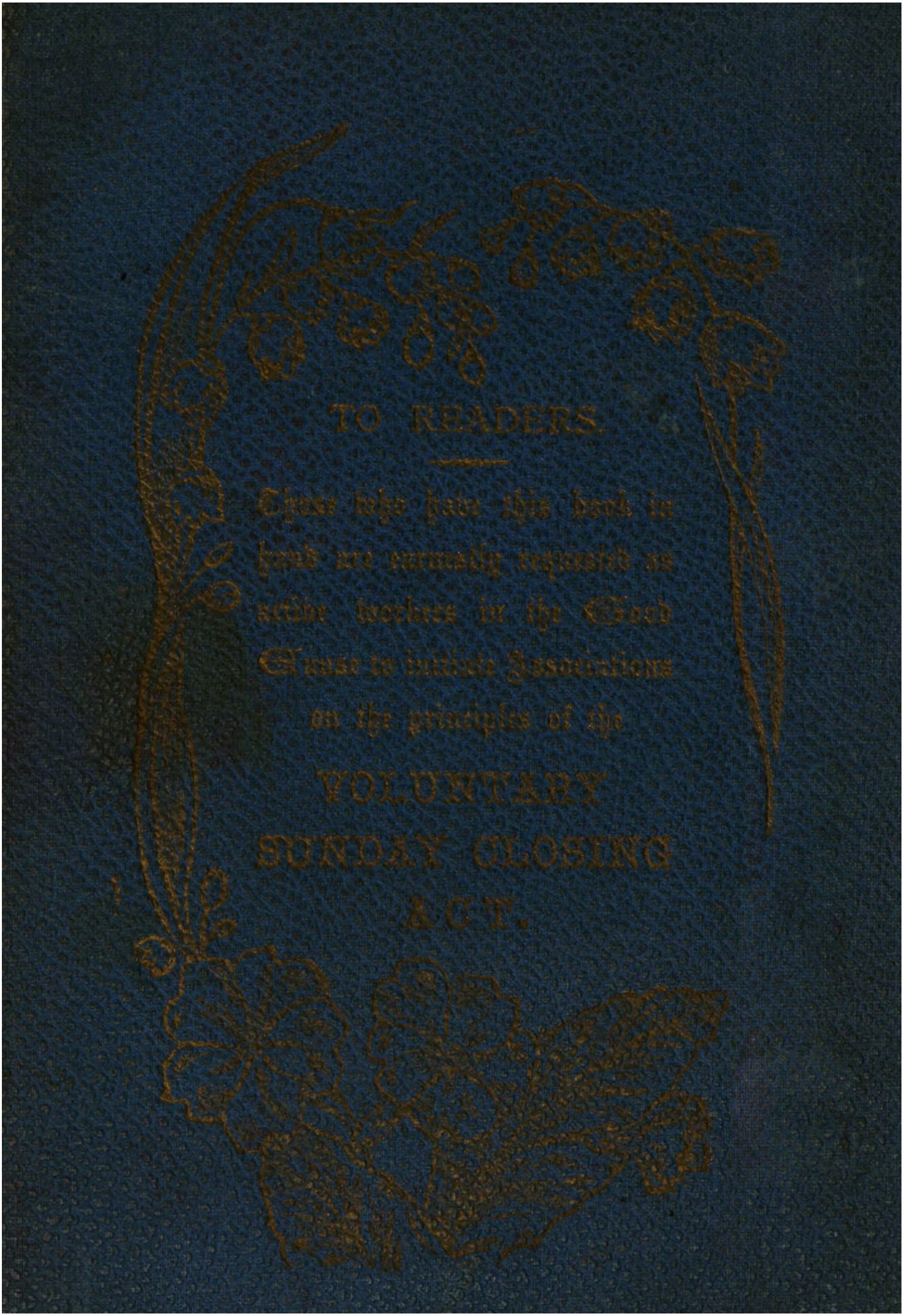
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