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TRUE CHARITY.

Page 200.

London, Published by Poole & Edwards, 12 Ave Maria Lane, 1827.

TRUE CHARITY:

OR,

A TALE

OF THE YEAR 1800.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"MORAL TALES."

"The desire of *Power* in excess, caused the angels to fall; the desire of *Knowledge* in excess, caused man to fall; but in CHARITY is no excess,—neither can man, nor angels, come into danger by it."

LORD BACON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR POOLE AND EDWARDS,

(SUCCESSORS TO SCATCHERD AND LETTERMAN,)

12, AVE MARIA LANE.

1827.

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LONDON

PRINTED FOR JOHN AND EDWARD

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IN THE MARIAGE

1851

PREFACE.

The design of the following tale, is to exhibit the happy influence which education, and early instilled principles of virtue, have in forming the minds of youth; and to shew their powerful efficacy in ennobling the character in adversity, and causing it to be respected, even under the frowns of fortune.

An attempt has also been made, to arm the youthful female especially against the folly of aspiring to those friendships, whose attractions consist merely in a superiority of rank, fashion, or wealth, unsupported by the more permanent basis of moral worth; and to exemplify the rapid declension of character, which too often attends connexions in which these invaluable qualities are disregarded.

That "broad is the way that leads to destruction," is a text of the Sacred Volume, on which the state of society unhappily affords an ample comment. Too many examples daily occur of a Caroline Stanley perverting the simplicity, and betraying the confidence, of a misguided Eliza ; but the writer would fain indulge a hope, that her example, as here presented, may encourage those whose best feelings have been impaired or corrupted by the world's misnamed friendships, to return to a virtuous temper and conduct, with the like sincerity and success.

It is scarcely necessary to recommend the amiable Laura to the imitation of the female readers of this little volume ---her actions will pronounce her highest eulogium.

The spirit of Charles Fitz-Osborne, in his magnanimous conduct to his fallen persecutor, will meet with a responsive chord in every manly bosom

but his still higher achievement, in sacrificing royal favour, and military renown, to his convictions of the incompatibility of the profession of arms with religious principle, can be duly appreciated only by the Christian philanthropist; yet, whatever may be thought of the correctness of the motives, the praise of exalted heroism can scarcely be withheld.

Should the author be charged with exhibiting models of virtue from the visionary creations of her own mind, rather than from the realities of life, she can only say, that while she hopes this imputation cannot be justly made, she possesses the suffrages of the wise and good of all ages, to the danger of lowering the standard of virtue to the level of common attainments; and to the necessity of raising the standard of human excellence to an elevation sufficient to attract the eye of the noblest ambition.

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CHAPTER I.

What passions fill the hero's heart,
Forc'd from home and friends to part;
Ambition's call, impels to roam;
Affection's voice, invites him home:
And he, who went with heartfelt joy,
Returns no more a thoughtless boy:
While many a hand that shared his toil,
Now rests beneath the clay-cold soil.

AN INTRODUCTION.

IT was on one of those lovely evenings in August, which lull the mind to the indulgence of calm repose, that Charles Fitz-Osborne returned to his native village. Five tedious years had rolled away since he had seen this object so dear to his remembrance; and as he traced the well-known haunts of his childhood, the tears frequently started to his eyes, as he marked the changes which had taken place during that space of time.

Many of those humble cottages which then sheltered the widow, and had been a refuge for the orphan, were now either pulled down to make room for the refinements of luxury, or inhabited by strangers, who, with eager eyes, endeavoured to penetrate the mystery the youth's presence betokened. His appearance was, indeed, calculated to strike the inhabitants with astonishment. The regimentals he wore had apparently seen better days, and his abstracted look and unsteady pace served to render him an object of general attraction. Charles, however, proceeded, totally unobservant of the general gaze. He thought of the dear home, from which he had been so long torn; and, in the blissful remembrance of the past, forgot the uncertainty of the future. At the age of fifteen, a willing defender of his king and country, he had left the paternal roof, and, during the course of a tedious war, was taken captive by a French privateer. The horrors of a French prison had weakened a constitution naturally robust, and checked the vivacity of his mind; but, at the same time, it had taught him to controul his passions, and had matured his understanding by the practice of self-denial. At length, released from captivity,

he had flown on the wings of hope to his native village, to indemnify himself for all the hardships he had undergone, by a happy reunion with his beloved family. As he approached the parsonage, how his hopes fondly turned on the individuals he imagined it contained. His father, whom he had left in the enjoyment of every earthly blessing, heightened by the reflection of a pure conscience, he expected to see, declining with the weight of years, but still with that heavenly beam upon his countenance which marks the good Christian, sinking quietly into his grave, adored by the poor, beloved by his equals, and respected by the rich. His mother, too, he should again see in the performance of every Christian duty, and though wrinkles might be on her forehead, still would her eyes sparkle with the glow of contentment. In imagination, he also thought he saw the countenance of little Laura (his only sister) lighted up with rapture at his return. While these thoughts agitated his mind, he reached the parsonage, and with a palpitating heart knocked at the door. It was immediately opened, and, too impatient to make the usual inquiries, he was rushing into the house, when he was stopped by the ser-

vant, and looking up he beheld (not the faithful Thomas with whom in infancy he had so often "laughed the rosy hours away," but) a stranger. Brought to some recollection by the man's rude gaze, Charles said, "Is my father, the Reverend Mr. Fitz-Osborne, at home?" The man again stared, and then replied, "the Reverend Mr. Fitz-Osborne, sir, has been dead these two years; but if you wish to see the present rector, Mr. Seely, I will inform him." Charles made no reply, but, thunderstruck at this intelligence, leaned against the threshold for support. The servant seemed moved at his silent sorrow, and continued thus, as if he meant to offer him some words of consolation: "O yes! indeed, sir, the good old rector has been dead nearly two years; directly after his death, my master came from London, to take possession of his living, and the widow then left the parsonage, but I do not know what has since become of her." Charles was too abstracted to thank the speaker for his information, and turned with horror from the mansion which could no longer receive him as an inmate. "My father dead!" said he, as he proceeded forward, "and I have not received his last blessing. Oh! never to be

forgotten days, days when faithless fortune smiled upon my head, when, with the elastic spirits of youth, I looked forward to the happy future, and knew not the meaning of the word sorrow; where now can the poor, destitute, friendless Fitz-Osborne lay his head? who will receive and shelter him?"

Night was now fast spreading her veil, and the hapless youth arrived on a barren heath, in the midst of which stood a lonely cottage, well calculated for the abode of misery. Almost unconscious of the act, Charles lifted up the latch; and what a scene presented itself to his view! An aged female, with a countenance of a deathlike hue, was reclining on what could be scarcely termed a bed; from time to time she appeared to speak, but in such a faltering tone as to be scarcely intelligible. Though her spirit seemed ready to take its flight, resignation was depicted on her countenance, and her soul seemed already to have entered the valleys of eternity. Kneeling by her bedside was a lovely blooming child, whose varying countenance plainly shewed the agonies of her mind. Sometimes her eyes rested on the invalid, and then, with hands firmly clasped, she raised her eyes to Heaven

in the attitude of fervent prayer. Charles remained fixed to the spot, contemplating this affecting scene; and though he was well aware he had no right to intrude on the privacy of the unfortunate, no consideration could induce him to retreat.

While he thus stood, in mute astonishment, the attention of the invalid was attracted by a deep sigh, which he vainly endeavoured to suppress. She started, and then sank motionless on her pillow.

Charles flew to the bed-side, the little girl arose from her knees, and both endeavoured to restore her to life. She slowly began to open her eyes, and he started in his turn. Could it be reality, or did he deceive himself? The features were the same; but, could he in this abject state recognize his mother? It was, alas! too true; and Mrs. Fitz-Osborne, on recovering herself, was permitted to see her son once more, to bid him a last adieu!— We shall pass over this meeting, as too affecting to describe, and retrace those events which gave rise to the present melancholy situation of the rector's widow.

CHAPTER II.

One act may move a parent's wrath,
One cherish'd prospect blighted:
And e'en 'till death's cold hand is felt,
Affection's voice be slighted.

But One there is, of purer mould,
Inhabitant of heaven!
By Him our faults are lightly scanned,
Our sins by Him forgiven.

FAMILY PRIDE.

Lord de Clifford was a branch of one of the most noble English families; early in life he married Lady Laura Wallingford, and proud of his ancestry, his wealth, and the family to which he was allied, it was not only his earnest desire, but positive command, that his children, (two sons and one daughter) should settle in life as advantageously as himself. His eldest son, the Hon. Mr. Stanley, perfectly coincided with his

wishes, and the hour which united him to the Countess of Beaumont, Lord de Clifford fondly hoped would unite his second child to the Earl of Willenby. But the pride of the haughty Baron was soon to receive an irrecoverable shock. Laura, who preferred the charms of virtue to all the allurements of wealth, married a young clergyman, with but an inconsiderable living to depend upon; and nothing to boast of but the purest, most unsullied virtue. Nothing could exceed the rage and indignation of Lord de Clifford when informed of his daughter's disobedience: to see his family thus degraded, and his commands slighted, were thoughts too cutting for his proud spirit to bear, and in the excess of his anger, he banished his daughter for ever from the paternal roof, at the same time forbidding any person from interceding in her behalf or mentioning her name.

Vain were all her attempts to obtain an interview, the Baron thus offended was lost to her for ever; some days after, she received a few lines from this offended and unbending parent, coolly renouncing all connection with one who had thus degraded her family, and telling her she might now seek for happiness in the path she had chosen, without presuming to disturb

the repose of those by whom she would henceforward be justly considered an alien. Feeble would be all endeavours to describe the feelings of the sensitive Laura, on receiving this testimony of her father's unalterable determination, and though many years of comparative happiness succeeded this agonizing moment, her delicate constitution never fully recovered the shock. Year after year, however, imperceptibly rolled on, and Mr. and Mrs. Fitz-Osborne found in the retirement of a country life, happiness such as rarely falls to the lot of mortals; while gazing on their smiling children, they would confess with gratitude, that happiness such as theirs was not to be purchased by the consciousness alone of high birth, or the mere parade of unbounded wealth. But at such times as these, a thorn would rankle in the breast of the fond mother; "Alas! my children," she would well nigh exclaim, "when these parental eyelids are closed in death, when this weary head is reposing in the clay-cold tomb, who will shelter and protect you? Will they who are now enjoying that which by right is yours, bestow a moiety on the orphans of a once loved sister? Oh no! they will be taught to despise you, as beings of an inferior order to

themselves, and consider it praiseworthy to inflict on her guiltless children, the punishment due to the offence of their departed parent."

"Shall I not then prepare you for the slights you must experience when the great world opens to your view? But why should I check that smile of hilarity? I once possessed it, and the world will but too soon tear it from you: yet there is One who will never forsake you, in him then we will put our trust."

In this peaceful manner sixteen years wore away, and it was not until then that the virtuous rector and his lady discovered the full extent of their affection for their children. Charles Fitz-Osborne from his infancy had always expressed an extreme partiality for the army, his youthful mind was elated with the idea of acquiring laurels in his country's service, and though apprehensive of the danger of their darling boy, Mr. and Mrs. Fitz-Osborne could not withhold their consent. With some pecuniary embarrassment an ensigncy was procured, and the moment of separation too soon arrived. The fond parents sorrowfully bade adieu to their only son, and as the youthful soldier departed almost friendless and totally unpatronised, a fervent prayer was mentally offered up, that he might return to

them unaltered and uncorrupted by the temptations to which he would soon be exposed. Having thus consigned their unsophisticated child to the guidance of an all-protecting Providence, they again enjoyed their accustomed serenity in the society of the little Laura, whose lively prattle could rob sorrow of half its bitterness and add to happiness a tenfold charm, while each succeeding day, they reflected, shortened the absence of the distant Charles. But the imagination is too apt to dwell on the fairy scenes of the past, while fancy loves to linger amid the ruins of departed bliss; as the fading tints of Autumn reluctantly give place to the ungenial frosts of winter. We must now hasten to reverse the picture.

Three years had scarcely elapsed since the departure of Charles, when news was brought of his having been taken prisoner on his return home after the defeat of Walmoden; and while mutually deploring this unforeseen event, the most alarming symptoms of a rapid consumption were discoverable in the afflicted father. It was now that this once fondly cherished daughter was called upon for the exertion of that fortitude and self-denial she so pre-eminently possessed, while taking her

station by the bed-side of her drooping husband. No hand was extended to relieve the high-born Laura in her unceasing attentions: no kindred soul was nigh, to pour the balm of consolation into her lacerated heart. Renounced by those who were called upon by nature to protect her, the afflicted wife endeavoured to appear cheerful in the presence of the invalid, and often, while he enjoyed at intervals an hour's repose, wept in agony over the sensitive little Laura whose infantile caresses but gave her a sharper pang.

At the flushed countenance of the dying christian, hope would sometimes reanimate her enfeebled frame, but quickly every spark of its invigorating power vanished, as his short convulsive breathings plainly foretold his approaching dissolution: vain indeed was all human assistance; the dreadful fiat had gone forth, and at that awful moment, firmly strengthened in his confidence in the blood of an atoning Saviour, the truly pious rector breathed his last convulsive sigh ere his soul left its mortal tenement for ever. And if while lingering on the bed of sickness he had fearfully reflected on the unprotected state of her who was bending over him with anxious solicitude, speedily

he repressed the idea as unworthy to find place in the breast of one, whose confidence was in the arm of an all-seeing Providence.

The feelings of the bereaved widow would indeed baffle all attempts at description, when she saw the mortal remains of one for whom she had sacrificed so much, conveyed to their last sad home; and the hysteric sobs of her afflicted child could alone recall her to life, as the solemn procession wound round the neighbouring coppice on its way to the village church, where for thirty years he had been the pastor, the benefactor, the father, and the friend of all who required his counsel or assistance.

Scarcely had four weeks been devoted to the unrestrained indulgence of sorrow, when the unexpected arrival of Mr. Seely rendered Mrs. Fitz-Osborne more keenly sensible than ever of her irreparable loss. Unlike his predecessor, he was proud, austere, and unfeeling; from him she neither sought nor received consolation, and hastily collecting the little all which remained for their future support, the desolate widow, accompanied by her innocent child, quitted the now gloomy abode where

each had experienced the most lively emotions of joy and sorrow.

In this trying hour the sincerity of those professions which in prosperity are generally so lavishly bestowed was called upon for a display, and Mrs. Fitz-Osborne in her humble friends alone found that assistance she might naturally have expected from her equals. So true it is that the arrows of adversity can pierce the delicate texture of an apparently endless friendship, and misfortune, which should but bind hearts in stricter union than before, too often dissolves every tie which could render life desirable. Mrs. Fitz-Osborne's mind was of too sensitive a nature not to feel in the most lively manner this neglect.

Time had not chilled the ardent feelings of her youth, and though the petty arts of some only excited her pity, the behaviour of others told her a sad tale of misplaced confidence. A destroying tempest seemed ready to burst over her devoted head; that cherished son, on whom all her hopes had been centered, was a prisoner in a foreign land, the eye of maternal fondness might never again gaze upon this object of tenderness: the affectionate, the art-

less Laura clung to her for support, on her alone reposed for kindness and protection, while the horrors of poverty were fast gathering round their heads.

It was a sad task, but for the sake of her children Mrs. Fitz-Osborne resolved to make one last appeal to the heart of an offended parent; she therefore dispatched a letter to the Baron, relating her misfortunes and imploring his forgiveness.

Time rolled slowly onwards, as the anxious widow, agitated between hope and fear, waited a reply.

Alas! her fate was too soon determined; a fortnight had scarcely elapsed before her letter was returned, the envelope merely stating that the hand writing not being recognised, it had been unintentionally opened, but the person to whom it was addressed having long declined all connection with the writer, further application would be useless. The agony of Mrs. Fitz-Osborne at this period may be imagined, and her constitution (though not her mind) gave way under the shock. Lord de Clifford she well knew must by this time be in his second childhood, age might have rendered him more callous than ever to the voice of nature,

but the hand which had inflicted the wound was not that of one declining with the weight of years, too plainly telling her, that those around him were equally insensible to the misfortunes of their relatives. Thus surrounded by evils, nature reluctantly gave way, and Mrs. Fitz-Osborne became the victim of a lingering decline. But fortune had now done her worst, and the sufferer (clothed in the unostentatious garments of Christianity) having patiently supported every trial, was now to experience a ray of returning happiness.

One evening as a former attendant was tenderly administering to her wants, Laura entered with a cheerful countenance, bearing a letter. "See, mamma," said the animated child, "I have at length the letter from London, which you have so long expected. I hope its contents will make you better." Her mother made no reply, but seizing it with eagerness, proceeded to peruse that with difficulty which indeed proved a balm to her lacerated heart. It was from the friend of her youth,—one who in sorrow had shared her grief, and in joy had been joyous too. To her Mrs. Fitz-Osborne had related her misfortunes, firmly persuaded of her unalterable affection.

But a twelvemonth had elapsed, no answer had been returned, and to her other reflections the bitter one was added, that even this friend had failed her: but how she had injured her, this letter clearly proved.

Sorrow had also visited this long-tried friend. For the benefit of her declining husband, a tour to the Continent had been recommended: but all had proved useless to snatch him from a premature grave. Consequently, no letters had reached her for many months; and in the mean time, the death of Mr. Courtney, and the illness of her children, had filled her heart with grief and anxiety. After endeavouring, in the most affectionate manner, to pour consolation into the heart of the sufferer, the letter concluded thus:—"Do not, I beseech you, give way to despair. I would even now hasten to your bed-side, were I not compelled to repair to Cheltenham, for the benefit of Charlotte and Eliza, who still continue very ill. But, in the mean time, in case any thing should happen to my early friend, teach your dear little girl to regard me as a parent; and be assured that the once little volatile girl, who has so often received a lesson from the graver and more polished Laura de Clif-

“ford, will watch over and cherish her offspring with the most anxious solicitude, in remembrance of the early friendship which is still unchanged in the heart of the altered, but ever grateful,

“ELIZA COURTNEY.”

Deep was the impression made on the heart of Mrs. Fitz-Osborne by this event. Gratefully did she accept the offer; and after having dispatched a few lines to Mrs. Courtney, expressive of her sincere acknowledgments, she taught the artless Laura to consider her future benefactress as a superior being. One earthly wish alone remained: to take leave of her absent Charles, ere her eyes were closed in death. This desire, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, was also gratified. She bade an affectionate farewell to her afflicted children; and after desiring them to hasten to Mrs. Courtney, and, amid every temptation, to cherish in their hearts that love of virtue their father and herself had endeavoured to inculcate, the excellent Mrs. Fitz-Osborne, joyfully obeyed the summons which called her to the regions of eternal felicity.

CHAPTER III.

See you a warrior, bending o'er yon tomb ?
His eye is moisten'd by the orphan's doom :
Then, stranger, pause—to view this sadden'd scene ;
Were thy young hopes once nipt as his have been ?
The sigh escapes, while tears of anguish start,
But canst thou tell the throes of that sad heart ?

A DYING REQUEST.

Slowly the mournful procession bent its way, as the remains of Mrs. Fitz-Osborne were to be deposited in the grave of her husband. The son, who had cheerfully undergone so many hardships and dangers (which hope fondly whispered would be forgotten in the bosom of his family), was seen to follow the bier as chief mourner—the agony depicted on his countenance plainly telling that his was not a semblance of grief, but the reality ; whilst the sobs of the once gay Laura told the sorrowful

tale that the guide of her youth, the support of her infancy, was lost to her for ever. The few, but faithful domestics who followed the remains of their late mistress, shed the heartfelt, but unobtrusive tear to her memory; while the traveller, leaning on his faithful staff, was seen to pause, as the mournful group opened on his view; and the tale of by-gone years, that the honest rustics poured into his ears, tempted the attentive auditor to exclaim, while the tear of deep feeling glistened in his eye, "Such is, alas, the uncertainty of our mortal pilgrimage."

When the funeral procession was ended, and a last lingering look cast on the grave of their parents, the afflicted orphans prepared to obey the injunctions of the deceased; but a sad duty was yet to be performed, ere they bade farewell to the home of their childhood, ere they said farewell for ever.

Gladly would they have been spared the task of taking leave of the villagers, who still remembered all they owed to their lamented benefactor.

Their hearts overflowing with gratitude, the faithful few crowded around to bid them a last adieu; and honest widow Morgan, who, on

account of her many afflictions, had ever been Mrs. Fitz-Osborne's care, during her prosperity, insisted on their accepting the savings of herself and companions, to the amount of 50l.

But the lofty soul of Charles revolted from the idea of depriving them of the fruits of their industry; and though well aware the little stock of money he possessed would barely suffice to convey himself and Laura to London, actual want he considered preferable to robbing these faithful creatures of their scanty earnings, and receiving money from those on whom as dependants he had been accustomed to bestow it.

But though thirteen summers had scarcely been numbered over the head of his orphan sister, those of late had been so replete with trials and disappointments, that the seeds of pride she inherited from her grandfather had lain dormant, while the example of christian humility she possessed in her mother, had succeeded in exterminating this dangerous propensity. Taking, therefore, the generous gift, and endeavouring to smile through her tears, she said, "Let us accept, dear Charles, the assistance which the kindness of our friends

affords us. Fortune will not, I hope, be always unfavourable to us; and when our days of tribulation have passed away, the no longer destitute orphans will gratefully remember those who in sorrow deserted them not, who in the hour of adversity consoled and assisted them."

Ever open to conviction, Charles was instantly subdued, and ardently longing for the moment when he might freely converse with one who though so young was greatly his superior in patient humility, warmly thanked the widow and her companions for this last proof of their affection to his lamented parents, and added—"We receive this pledge of your generosity not so much on account of our necessities, as that, in all the temptations to which we may be exposed, regarding it as the sacred deposit of disinterested attachment, it may be an incentive to virtuous actions; hoping also that in the hour of need we may be nigh to pour the balm of consolation into the hearts of those who have to-day so lavishly bestowed it."

The glow of approbation was visible on Laura's countenance as he concluded, and attended by the prayers of the worthy creatures,

and conducted by them to some distance from the village, the youthful travellers pursued their way to S——, from whence they proceeded in the mail to London.

Though left to the undisturbed enjoyment of each other's society, little conversation passed: sorrow preyed too heavily on the minds of both for utterance. Even the patient Laura was well nigh overpowered by her own reflections: she was torn from the scenes of her earliest remembrances, where hill and dale were alike endeared to her by the sportiveness of childhood; separated from the play-mates of her youth, and all who had loved her for her parent's sake, she was hastening to London, that scene of vice and virtue, against the temptations of which she had been so often warned; and though accustomed to consider Mrs. Courtney as the emblem of her departed mother, yet she shrank from the idea of being dependent on the bounty of another. Unwilling, however, to indulge such gloomy anticipations, which reason and religion equally forbade, she addressed some trivial question to her brother, respecting the celebrated city they were approaching. He started at the sound of her voice, though scarcely

conscious of its import, so engrossed was he in the contemplation of the past. Once only had he visited the metropolis, when he first bade adieu to the paternal roof. His stay there had been but for a few days ; in its gaities he had participated but sparingly, but, alas ! now how changed his fate ! Ah ! thought he, is the structure once formed by an ardent imagination no longer ideal ? Have the hopes I then fondly cherished been realized ; Oh, no ? they have departed with the expectation of happier days, and Laura, the only being who has a claim on my affections, must accept that support from a stranger which I am unable to afford, and which the arrogance of her nearest relatives denies. And why is it denied ? Has the voice of nature no longer a claim on their attention ? or, surrounded by selfish enjoyments, have they no longer time to reflect on the desolation of the fatherless and the widow ?

Such were the mental ejaculations of Charles Fitz-Osborne, when Laura endeavoured to draw him into conversation. Her affectionate endeavours proved successful, and if the gentleness of her manners failed to inspire him with cheerfulness, he felt gradually restored to con-

tentment and resignation. Fearful of making any remarks that might irritate his partly subdued feelings, when they were within thirty miles of London, Laura observed, as a lordly domain opened on their view (where nature and art had alike bestowed their treasures in rich profusion), "What a lovely spot! how happy its possessor, where, far from the busy scenes we must soon enter, years glide serenely along in this abode of tranquillity: next to my native hills it is here I should like to end my days. I could almost envy the favoured mortal who can say, "this peaceful retreat is mine."

"And thinkest thou Laura, that the wicked can be happy though surrounded by titles and possessed of domains such as these," returned Charles with ill concealed bitterness; "knowest thou not that the canker-worm of remorse, will never permit their hopes of coming happiness to be realized, while the remembrance of a mispent youth will bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

He paused, and sensibly hurt at this unexpected reply, a tear trembled in Laura's eye. "Think not," he continued in a milder tone, "that I am indulging merely a burst of uncon-

querable passion, and that all that I have said is false, you know not the emotions your words have excited. That widely extended domain, which just now attracted your notice, is the property of Lord de Clifford, it was pointed out to me on my last journey to London, as being one of the numerous estates now in the possession of that family. Say then, can his heart be the abode of peace, though surrounded by all that is lovely in nature; when wearied with the embellishments of art, and drooping with age, will not a reproving conscience be heard in reflections such as these? "Misguided old man, has that happiness attended thee which thou didst so ardently desire, and for which thou hast sacrificed so much!"

"Thou hast perhaps gained the boasted eminence to which thy ambition aspired, but how little has it proved worth the price?" "Nay," interrupted Laura, "be not too severe, it may not be as you imagine; stranger as he is to us, we cannot judge the secrets of his heart, and if it is as you say, he is an object of our pity rather than our censure."

"Generous unsuspecting girl," replied her brother, "sad is it that such a heart as thine should be corrupted by an intercourse with an

unthinking world: but it must be so, and I also have too fully experienced its allurements and its vanities. I have seen the expiring warrior, though the wreath of triumph encircled his brow, spurn the fading glory which was now of no avail, and I have heard the wounded soldier (feebly clasping his now powerless hands) speed the fervent prayer to Heaven, that his loved offspring by resisting the temptations to which he had yielded, might in the closing scenes of life reflect on by-gone years with that calmness to which he dared not aspire. Wealth and power may for awhile stifle the voice of nature within us, but believe me, Laura, a time must come when it will be heard, when the unheeded expiring sigh of the desolate widow, when the silent tear of the unpitied orphan, will rise before the eyes of those who have slighted them. Such must be the fate of Lord de Clifford." "Then spare him, dear Charles," said Laura, earnestly: "we are not placed here to condemn the actions of others, and if (which I will not for a moment presume to doubt) our failings receive their due reward in this life, far from judging him, let us never forget the tie of relationship, which though he disowns, can-

not be dissolved: rather let us be grateful to that Providence which has given us parents more able to direct the erring steps of youth, and suppress that spirit of ambition which has fallen to the lot of our grandfather." She paused, while Charles gazed on her animated countenance in amazement. But Laura had not yet told half her full heart longed to utter, and fearing he was going to interrupt her, she proceeded thus; "you look incredulous, Charles, but when I have told you who was my instructress in this lesson of forbearance, your doubts will be satisfied: it was mamma. During the period of her illness, which lasted more than two years, no word of complaint escaped her. Poverty, neglect, and sickness, she bore with equal fortitude; while every interval of ease was employed in preparing me for the event she foresaw must soon happen. Even when that fatal letter came, which destroyed every hope of obtaining her father's forgiveness and support, no angry or revengeful word was uttered, she was, on the contrary, only more anxious to impress my mind with the importance of possessing a forgiving and christian disposition. Fain would I have been silent on this subject," continued

Laura, tears almost impeding her utterance, “until we were both more reconciled to the loss we have sustained;—but you have led me to the subject, and I have still a mournful task to perform.

“The morning of your return, feeling her strength failing very fast, mamma called me to her bed-side, and feebly said, ‘Laura, I once hoped to see my darling boy before I died, but it must not be, I feel I cannot live long; but should he ever return, tell him how ardently I have longed to see him. Here are two packets: one directed to your brother, the other to yourself: their contents will be essential to your happiness, according to the use you make of them. If you stedfastly persevere in their injunctions, you will ever preserve with delight the memory of your parents; if otherwise they must speedily be forgotten, and these memorials of our affection be rendered worse than useless. If Charles still lives, I charge you to deliver this into his hand alone, and tell him I bequeath him my blessing according as his heart tells him he deserves it.’” Laura ceased, overpowered by her emotion, while the no less affected Charles eagerly seized the packet thus solemnly consigned to him.

One look he cast on the envelope; in trembling characters these words were written:—"The pledge of maternal fondness"—he broke the seal—it was the moment of suspense—but how was he repaid? What an inestimable treasure did he behold: the miniature of his ever revered mother, ere the lapse of time had furrowed her cheek, or penury and disease dimmed the lustre of that eye which was now beaming upon him with maternal fondness. As the traveller returning from distant climes, (but to find the hall of his ancestors forsaken and his kindred dispersed,) views some memorial of their tender remembrance; thus did Charles Fitz-Osborne gaze upon the image before him, while the recollection of all her fondness in his childish years recurred to his mind, leaving him no room to doubt, that anxiety for his welfare had hastened her path to the tomb. Tears of agony stole down his cheeks at the thought, and for some moments he enjoyed the luxury of unrestrained grief; visions of happier days floated before his imagination; memory recalled the treacherous hopes that had then allured him; and his tears ceased to flow, when Laura gently turning the miniature, again left him to reflection

He started as from a dream,—the cheerless certainty burst upon his remembrance,—and he again sought that countenance which could beguile him of his woe, but it had vanished, in its place he beheld the lovely form of Christianity, while three guardian angels were hovering over her, each performing their separate offices. One was shielding her from the arrows of her enemies; another pointing to the sky, that celestial habitation from whence she came; while the third with a countenance of a heavenly cast, was instilling into the heart of this temporary resident on earth the doctrines of her heaven taught mind:—

Underneath were engraved in small but legible characters, the following beautiful words of the Apostle Paul: “And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is CHARITY.” Charles gazed on the picture before him with renewed delight and astonishment; the admonitions of his mother recurred to his recollection; her dying words, “be virtuous, my children, and my blessing attend you,” sounded again in his ears, and turning to Laura, he said affectionately, “happy, thrice happy are you, in being separated but by death from such inestimable parents as ours:

the scenes of vice and misery that I have witnessed may in some degree have hardened a heart not invulnerable by nature, but I will learn of you Laura, I will imitate your christian humility, and when roving in foreign climes, I no longer have you to cheer and guide me, when dangers tempt, when passions rage, I will gaze on this memorial of a parent's solicitude, and the storm will be hushed."

He then requested to see her packet, she readily complied ; it was a miniature executed in a similar manner ;—but it was the likeness of his father.

With fresh delight he gazed on the placid features,—each moment strengthened his virtuous resolves,—much he knew yet remained to be done, but the path of duty lay before him, and he determined to pursue it.

Laura felt no less gratified that her conduct had drawn the above commendation from her brother. Sorrow however was still an inhabitant of their breasts, but her yoke was lightened by the intercourse of friendship and affection. Each felt a void at their hearts, each inly mourned the dear relatives which death had torn from them, but so chequered with adversity did they consider the passing moments, that

neither (had it been in their power) would have recalled the objects of their regret from the enjoyments of immortality. Thus, in harmony with themselves and all mankind, the youthful travellers reached Portland Place, where the kindest reception awaited them.

CHAPTER IV.

Each flow'r of the garden, a character has
And nature is prompt of her cares ;
The tulip is fam'd for its beauty of dress,
And the rose, for the smell that it bears.

Thus nature has made us,
Grave, giddy, or gay,
Consistent, or brilliantly smart ;
Then judge not, I pray,
From the face of your friend ;
It is not the dress, but the heart.

A FAMILY SKETCH.

Well would it be worthy the learned metaphysician's skill to point out the source whence arises what is so commonly discernible, the various effects produced on the minds of the human race by similar circumstances.

Like her friend, Mrs. Courtney was an only daughter, she had likewise married when

young from disinterested motives, and like her had been separated by death from the husband of her choice.

But notwithstanding these coincidences, their lot in life was ordained to be as widely different as the scene of their actions. While the rector and his virtuous partner were struggling to maintain a respectable figure in the world, the death of an elder brother rendered Mr. Courtney the possessor of a handsome independence.

His family thus amply provided for, he could look forward with that composure to his dissolution, which had Mr. Fitz-Osborne's reliance on Providence been less firmly established, would in this hour of trial have failed him.

Scarcely had Mr. Courtney quitted his native land, when he bade adieu to this world for ever: a world in which notwithstanding its vanities, he loved to linger; and where every blessing had been granted him by his merciful Father, save one—the enjoyment of health.

To Mrs. Courtney as to her friend, the death of her husband was a severe shock. As the companion of her youth, so had he ever been the guide and the support of her maturer years, and while she wept over her idolized

children, and called upon their departed father, her tears were those of unfeigned agony. But the real difference that existed in their characters was by this event more fully displayed. In youth, her heart had been warm and affectionate, but as she approached the decline of life, her actions were too often rather the impulse of the moment than of mature reflection.

Her feelings though less enthusiastic were not sufficiently under the guidance of reason, and that stability which in early life she had never attained, was still wanting to render her a suitable guardian for youth.

From this imperfect sketch of Mrs. Courtney's character, little wonder will be excited at the violence of her emotion at this period of her life, and as little, or perhaps less, when we relate that her grief was of short duration.

The same wealth which in her husband's life time had gratified her pride was still at her disposal; the numerous acquaintances who on her departure for the continent had bewailed their separation as "painfully unavoidable," now crowded around to offer consolation to their "dear friend," and to intreat her "to drown in dissipation the recollection of

her unheard of misfortunes." The desponding widow too readily acquiesced, she soon began to think society had a balm for every woe, and a twelvemonth had barely elapsed, ere a participation in worldly gaieties became more than ever essential to her happiness. Let it not, however, be imagined that amid the follies in which Mrs. Courtney was sometimes an actor, her children were neglected or her heart wholly corrupted.

She could still warmly sympathize in the sorrows of others, and though a period of twenty years had elapsed, since her meeting with Mrs. Fitz-Osborne, not for a moment had she felt her affection for her early friend diminished. To her children, Mrs. Courtney had ever been a tender and indulgent mother, always solicitous of rendering them happy; they were the delight of her heart, and when stretched upon the bed of sickness, no temptation however great, no amusement however alluring, could tear her from attending them.

Algernon, her darling and only son, was Charles Fitz-Osborne's senior by three years, and considerably older than his sisters Charlotte and Eliza. To the manly countenance of his father, he united a greater degree of firm-

ness; his manners were rather grave, but peculiarly suited to the dignity of that sacred profession to which from childhood he had voluntarily devoted himself. Ever among the foremost of his collegians, Algernon soon became conspicuous at Cambridge, and to his tutor the excellent Doctor Goodwin, he owed not only that high cultivation of talent which gained him the esteem of those around him, but the more noble qualities of the heart which are an ornament to the clergy of our land, and which when exercised, add a dignity and a lustre to the meanest of the human race.

Thus early instructed in all that is good and great, we may venture to affirm that Algernon became as perfect a character as erring mortality can obtain; and though various untoward circumstances had concurred to separate him from his family, his return to it was ever hailed as the harbinger of joy. Ere the vacation had elapsed, the altered countenances of the little group too plainly told the time for their separation was approaching, and it was peculiarly at moments such as these, that all the former energy of Mrs. Courtney's character was excited. What on the one hand was the forerunner of sorrow never failed on the con-

trary to inspire joy. His return to college was hailed by his companions with delight, while the praises of the good, the courteous, the highly-gifted Algernon, echoing from tongue to tongue, spoke the unaffected language of the heart.

Charlotte, a tall girl in her fifteenth year, was as unlike her mother in character as in person. Her constitution was delicate, and her disposition of a thoughtful turn; led away seldom by passion, but maturely weighing the consequences of her actions. Her understanding was better than most girls of her age, and though by nature warm and affectionate, she required to be known to be deservedly esteemed. To the excellent qualities of her eldest daughter Mrs. Courtney could not be indifferent, she cherished her with fondness, and endeavoured by every possible means to render her happy; and had it even been hinted by her dearest friend that an undue preference was displayed towards her youngest daughter, she would have rejected the idea with anger and astonishment. But it was nevertheless true, and even strangers failed not to observe that the retiring graces of Charlotte were concealed, to make way for the noisy vivacity of

the animated but thoughtless Eliza. At the period of which we are now speaking, Eliza had reached her thirteenth year; the fire that shot from her dark eyes revealed every emotion of her heart, and as Mrs. Courtney parted the hair which hung in natural ringlets over her forehead, fancy would revert to the days of her youth, when her spirits were buoyant as her darling child's, and she would gaze upon her countenance until her own image (such as it had been in childhood) seemed to rise before her. Fully conscious of the power she possessed, Eliza used it with unbounded authority; and had not her really affectionate heart induced her to listen to the advice of her relatives, she would have degenerated into the mere spoiled child. With thoughts, light as air, and tripping along in all the playfulness of childhood, her words carelessly uttered, often spoke daggers to the heart of those around her; and though her sister was generally at hand to palliate the blow, the wound was sometimes too deeply inflicted to admit of immediate relief. But in this slight sketch of the family circle, we have hitherto neglected to mention Miss Melbourne, a sister of Mrs. Courtney, who though last is by no means the

most inconsiderable personage in the group. This excellent woman, who was verging on her fiftieth year, was usually denominated an old maid, her countenance was still remarkable for its traces of former beauty, while the perfect ease of her manners, and her extreme fondness for young people, made her escape those censorious remarks too often levelled at the members of her sisterhood.

Possessing a genteel competency, Miss Melbourne preferred residing with her sister to keeping a separate establishment, and her endearing qualities rendered her to all, a welcome guest. Mrs. Courtney regarded her as one who acted from firmly established principles, and though unable (or rather unwilling) to imitate her, cordially gave her unqualified admiration and esteem. The thoughtless but really affectionate Eliza, was often inclined to ridicule what she considered the over-acted goodness of her aunt, but that dignity of manners so peculiarly her own, and her uniform kindness to the laughing girl, seldom failed to inspire her with respect. But it was reserved for Algernon and Charlotte to know the real value of the treasure they possessed; to the latter she was in every sense of the word

a parent. The retiring character of Charlotte was more congenial to her feelings than the thoughtless gaiety of her sister, and when the heart of the timid girl was oppressed with care she would pour all her sorrows into the ear of this affectionate relative, with that assurance of her confidence being accepted, which from the lofty and partial spirit of her real parent was withheld.

Highly did Miss Melbourne prize the affection of her niece, and wisely employed her power in turning it to the artless girl's advantage. There is a suitable degree of confidence which Miss Melbourne knew to be essential to life, with this she endeavoured to inspire her favourite niece, and during those hours which Mrs. Courtney (accompanied by Eliza) spent in her search after happiness, this truly excellent relative was employed in storing the mind of Charlotte with an abundant harvest of knowledge, and in searching for the defects of a character which was more suited for private than public life. But amid all the objects of this worthy woman's solicitude, none lay nearer her heart, than that of uniting Algernon and Charlotte in the strictest bonds of fraternal and sisterly affection. How far her wishes were

accomplished, and how far this characteristic sketch of our family group may be correct the following pages will shew.

The evening on which Charles and Laura Fitz-Osborne were expected was spent by most of the family in a considerable degree of anxiety. As Mrs. Courtney sat perusing some fashionable production of the day, her thoughts wandered far from the pages before her. The recent death of her early and long tried friend, drew the tear of fond regret from her eye; the misfortunes and sufferings of that friend recurred to her imagination: the splendour in which she had been educated, and the desolation of her children, all pressed on her recollection; while a voice seemed to whisper within her, "how different has been thy fate; rich in blessings has a merciful Father been to thee: then, in gratitude for such multiplied favours cherish the offspring of thy departed friend, and ever remember that thy children might have been unprotected as they." To the amiable Miss Melbourne and her pupil this might indeed be termed a moment of uneasiness; the latter sought a friend, her sympathy had been deeply awakened by the sorrows

of the orphan Laura, and hope fondly whispered that in her would be found what she had so long sought in vain.

On the other hand, she reflected Laura might not be all she wished, and her heart, although warm and affectionate, could not receive every one as her friend. Miss Melbourne's compassionate heart ever led her to love the unfortunate, and had she not still remembered the endearing qualities of Laura de Clifford, her sympathizing heart would have inclined her to receive her offspring with affection. For Charlotte, she had long wished to obtain a more suitable companion than the headstrong Eliza, and hope and fear agitating her by turns, the quick eye of her little niece was attracted by her restlessness.

“What! my good aunt,” she exclaimed, “are you also full of anxiety for the arrival of our visitors? well, I only hope your expectations may be realized, depend upon it we shall not be able to discover in them any resemblance to the venerable Lord de Clifford: mere cottagers, I dare say;—Charles, however, is in the army, and may be a little polished, but Laura can be nothing but a mere country girl.”

Miss Melbourne looked grave, Charlotte hurt, and Algernon much displeased at her levity ; while her mother was far from checking that vivacity which was her delight. Eliza continued, “ well good folks, you will soon be out of your misery ; for I see a coach driving up to the door: yes, yes, there they are, sure enough, and you have only one moment of suspense to undergo.” A loud knocking at the door now seconded this assertion. Mrs. Courtney rose to receive her visitors—the offspring of her earliest and unfortunate friend entered the room—one moment more, and Laura was in the embrace of her future benefactress. “ Welcome, thrice welcome to our family circle,” said Mrs. Courtney, affectionately extending her hand to Charles, “ we shall I am sure be emulous of rendering you and Laura most happy and endeavour to make you forget the loss you have sustained.” The last words died away upon her lips as the sable garb and tearful eye of Laura at that moment drew her attention. “ Yes,” proceeded Algernon with energy, “ this is the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing Charles Fitz-Osborne, but we shall not I hope long remain strangers: let me now introduce you to my aunt and sisters.”

A general introduction took place ; Mrs. Courtney for once forgot that wealth and fashion have charms peculiarly their own : an evening happier than many preceding ones was spent by the whole party, and our youthful travellers retired to rest, resigned to the past, and hopeful of the future.

CHAPTER V.

When life is op'ning in the bud,
And trifles happiness will lend !
Are not our childhood's early joys
Sweeter,—when shared with a friend ?

True friendship will our joys increase,
And make our sorrows lighter ;
It calms our griefs—it dries our tears,
And makes our pleasures brighter.

A VISIT.

It has been observed by many, that youth is peculiarly susceptible of friendship, and is too apt to place that confidence in human nature, which experience would otherwise teach it to withhold. The unsuspecting disposition of Laura rendered her confiding in the extreme. In Charlotte Courtney she found a companion exactly suited to her taste ; and in her, Charlotte found the friend she had so long been in

search of. The amiable Miss Melbourne watched their growing intimacy with delight: her penetrating eye soon discovered the similarity of their dispositions; and those advantages which wealth had procured her nieces in the different branches of learning and accomplishments, were, by her kind interference, extended to the unportioned and grateful orphan.

Uneducated, as Eliza had supposed the little rustic, a few days were sufficient to prove her ideas erroneous.

Having herself been educated as became the daughter of a nobleman, and being fully conscious of its importance, Mrs. Fitz-Osborne had (until the death of her husband) devoted a considerable portion of her time to the instruction of her daughter. The hours appointed for study were generally far from being irksome, either to pupil or preceptress, but were, on the contrary, welcomed with joy by both; and if, when climbing over her native mountains, accompanied by her faithful dog Cato, the lesson was by chance forgotten, or the village clock unheeded, the gentle and persuasive admonitions of her mother never failed to make a more lasting impression than

the most severe reproofs ; and the little culprit was not satisfied, until by increased diligence the past omission was remembered only as being productive of the most beneficial effects.

Among the very few expensive articles in which Mrs. Fitz-Osborne had indulged was a harp. From childhood this had been her favourite instrument : when careworn and anxious, its silvery tones had oft-times been a solace to her heart ; and as she advanced in life, it was her pride and pleasure to hear the slender fingers of her darling child striking its chords. Thus encouraged, and possessing moreover a musical genius, Laura, though young, had made a considerable progress, when the death of Mr. Fitz-Osborne materially changed their situation in life.

Among those luxuries of which adversity deprived them, the most considerable were the treasured harp, the portfolio, and a choice collection of books. To part with these was a sad trial ; it was, however, necessary, and Laura cheerfully obeyed. From that hour until the present the tones of a harp had been unheard, the pencil neglected, and those few books Mrs. Fitz-Osborne had selected

from the wreck of their former competency, unregarded: but they were not forgotten; memory cherished them as the attendants of happier days; and whenever reason regained her empire, hope would whisper that the valued harp might one day be regained. Dismissing, therefore, all unnecessary accomplishments, Mrs. Fitz-Osborne, when her health permitted, continued to instruct her daughter in all that it was expedient for her to know; and so much had Laura profited by her endeavours, that the prejudging Eliza was soon conscious of her own inferiority. In the latter there was unfortunately a slight disposition to jealousy: the happiest hours of her life were too often clouded by the idea that there were others more beloved than herself; while to come in competition, or to be owned superior to herself in any point whatever, was a misdemeanour of such magnitude, that it required all her good-nature and volatility of character ever to overlook or to forgive it.

Let the following trifling circumstance however speak for itself.—About a fortnight after Laura's arrival, Eliza one morning proposed riding to Sydenham, and taking a sketch of a

spot which had there, a short time before, attracted her notice. Ever anxious to gratify her slightest desires, Mrs. Courtney readily complied.

Charlotte was too unwell to accompany them; Miss Melbourne preferred remaining at home; but Laura was invited to make one of the party. The day proved fine, and the ride delightful. Eliza was in more than her usual flow of spirits; her lively prattle beguiled her young companion of her woe; and they returned home, highly gratified with their morning's amusement. Laura had also taken the sketch; and in a few days, when they were both completed, and the whole party assembled, Eliza having procured both copies, went up to Mrs. Courtney, with perfect self-satisfaction, "Look, mamma, here are our two drawings, now tell me which you think the best; I must not tell you whose they are until you have guessed." Mrs. Courtney smiled, looked at each for an instant, and then pointing to the one which was evidently the best, replied; "That, my love, decidedly, which I suppose is your's, Eliza; your friend, however, must not be discouraged, for you have had so many more advantages than she has, that you

would indeed be censurable if yours was inferior. But why that grave countenance, Eliza?" "Oh, mamma!" exclaimed the thunderstruck girl, "indeed you are mistaken, greatly mistaken; that is Laura's, and the one you think so lightly of, that you so despise, is mine." As she pronounced these words, tears of vexation rolled down her cheeks, and, overwhelmed by a sense of inferiority, poor Eliza knew not where to fly for concealment. Mrs. Courtney knew not how to reply: she felt angry with herself for the words she had thoughtlessly (as she considered) uttered, but still more so with Laura, the innocent object of her darling's embarrassment.

The awkward situation of the former may be imagined: the short, but pointed expression of Mrs. Courtney had not escaped her; and while it evinced the fond parent's blind partiality, she readily forgave it, her embarrassed air plainly telling Miss Melbourne, who was watching her countenance with some degree of anxiety, that the preference unintentionally shown would willingly have been relinquished to spare the breast of Eliza a moment's pain. Knowing, however, that the best way was to appear unconscious of what was passing,

Laura began reading, with the greatest apparent attention, a book that lay open before her. Mrs. Courtney had by this time recovered her self-possession, and, kissing the burning cheek of her sensitive daughter, said affectionately, "Be not discouraged, my child; do not imagine that I despise or think lightly of yours: I must this time give the palm to your friend; but exercise a little more patience in what you undertake, and the cloud which now hangs over that brow will soon be dispersed. Only remember," continued the fond mother, smiling, "when next you make me arbitress in a case like the present, to whisper a few words in my ear, ere I pronounce my decree, as by that means the feelings of my darling girl will be spared." Eliza made no reply, but the words went to her heart: her mother, indulgent even to her failings, had found occasion for a reproof, and the drawing of an unportioned orphan had been openly avowed to surpass her own. For that day her gaiety ceased: not all the endeavours of her friends could recall her accustomed vivacity, as she sat sullenly brooding over this event, so trifling in itself, and so completely of her own seeking.

To the bosom of Miss Melbourne, ever anxious for the happiness of her nieces, this event gave considerable uneasiness. Carefully had she watched the workings of Eliza's mind, and too plainly did she discern those traces of jealousy, which if allowed to increase would eventually become the bane of her existence. Thus sensible of the consequences, the difficulty was how to rectify the cause. Her sister she well knew to be extremely tenacious in the management of her family, and a few words of advice, however gently administered, would, she was well aware, from the warmth of Mrs. Courtney's temper, be considered as an ill-timed interference, and might be the means of separating her from a home, where, if only for Charlotte's sake, she wished to remain. All she could therefore hope for the present was, what a few words of advice given in private might effect. Penetrating and upright as was Algernon Courtney, it cannot be supposed he was insensible to the faults of his mother, or her conduct in regard to his sister; and though many were the conversations he had with his aunt on the subject of the latter, the habitual

respect he ever paid to his only surviving parent kept him silent.—But we must now return to Charles, whom we have but briefly mentioned since the commencement of this chapter.

The day after his arrival in London, he proceeded, accompanied by Algernon, to the War Office, where he learnt that the regiment to which he belonged was expected to embark in a few weeks for Egypt, under the command of Sir Ralph Abercrombie. There he also received intimation that the recent death of his superior officer had raised him to the rank of Lieutenant; while it was observed that his gallant conduct during his campaign on the Continent had not passed unnoticed. To the undaunted and aspiring mind of Charles this was indeed a highly gratifying moment: he had proved himself worthy of the cause he sought to maintain, of the noble ancestors from whom he sprung; and he was hastening on in the career of glory, which the happy presages of his mind assured him would finally be crowned by victory. But, ah! were there no ties which bound him to his native land? no orphan sister who might rely on him alone for consolation and protection, when the scoffs of the unthinking were levelled at the poor dependant?

did he not already feel a growing friendship towards the amiable being beside him? and could he joyfully bid adieu, perhaps a last adieu, to the land of his forefathers?

Such was the inward conflict in the mind of Charles as he reached Portland Place, when the whole party warmly congratulated the youthful soldier on his recent promotion; but it was not until the morning after the circumstance we have recently mentioned had taken place, that, being alone with Laura, he summoned up courage to tell her of his approaching departure. The feelings of Laura can be imagined only by those who have themselves been forced to separate from an only and dear relative, and by those who for some time have been residing in fancied security. His words went like an electric shock to her heart, and when he told her that a few weeks only would elapse ere they must separate, she attempted not to interrupt him; one big tear alone found its way down her cheek: but when he told her that he had been fearful of mentioning to her the mournful intelligence, with a countenance expressive of the deepest sorrow, and in a reproachful tone, she exclaimed, "And did you fear to place confidence in me, Charles?"

Did you think that by my tears I would seek to move you from your virtuous resolves, or render more acute the pang you must feel in leaving us? Oh, no! little do you know me, if you think me capable of such weakness. Go! Charles, where duty and mamma's dying injunctions call you; and that invisible hand which has hitherto protected us both, will one day restore you in safety to your country, and to one who will incessantly pray for your preservation."

"Noble-minded girl!" exclaimed the astonished Charles, "where but in the school of adversity hast thou learnt such a lesson of forbearance? No, after all that I have seen and heard, I could not imagine that you would shrink from any trial, however severe; but how could I bear to tell you, that having so lately met, we must again part?" This gloomy intelligence thus communicated, they remained in conversation a considerable time, when they were interrupted by the entrance of Miss Melbourne and Charlotte, prepared for their accustomed walk, who invited Charles and Laura to accompany them. Consent being obtained, they strolled into the Park; but the hitherto pensive, though resigned countenance of the

latter seemed now to be changed to that of intense grief, and failed not to attract the attention of Miss Melbourne, who was ever anxious for the happiness of those around her. Into her compassionate ear, Charles willingly poured his tale of sorrow, and while she sincerely sympathized in his misfortunes, and deplored the necessity which compelled him to depart, she calmed the tumult of his emotions with her assurance that in his absence she would watch over Laura with a parent's fondness. The excellent Miss Melbourne having thus endeavoured to re-assure her young friends, and considerably heightened the already fervent admiration which the sorrowing Charlotte felt towards her aunt's character, they returned home.

On entering the library they beheld Mrs. Courtney, Eliza, and Algernon; the latter had been communicating the intended departure of his friend. Mrs. Courtney received the intelligence with sorrow, though without surprise; and Eliza, who had by this time recovered her gaiety, little heeded a matter which had no immediate concern with herself; or if we, as faithful portrayors of the human character, must tell the truth, there was a sad

lurking desire of revenge, which even made her feel pleased when her mamma mentioned with regret the sorrow it would occasion Laura. "Ah," whispered at once all the malevolent passions of her heart, "she will soon be made to feel the grief she yesterday occasioned me!" But Eliza was mistaken: not even a separation from all that was dear to her on earth could give Laura a pang half so poignant as jealousy had occasioned the former. While the self-tormenting girl was thus mentally indulging in what she dared not even own to herself, the innocent and unsuspecting object of her thoughts entered with her companions. "So, good folks," she began with more than her usual thoughtlessness, "you have already been taking your sober walk: why, mamma and I are but just going for a morning's ride. Is it not time we sallied forth?" she continued, looking at her watch: "you know, mamma, you promised to be with Lady Rochford by one o'clock," "Did I, my love?" returned Mrs. Courtney, and wishing them good morning, she approached the door; "then let us be gone." But not so Eliza, who had a few words to say ere she departed. "So, my pretty little rustic," she rattled on, addressing

Laura in an audible whisper, “you are going to lose your brother again, I hear; but remember you do not set your mind upon his return, for fierce is the battle’s roar in Egypt, and some, you know, must fall: how consolatory, however, it will be to you to see in the list of the slain—“Lieutenant Charles Fitz-“Osborne, a promising young officer, while “gallantly leading his men to the charge.” She paused, as if waiting for a reply; but Laura, overpowered by her thoughtless levity, was unable to give one. The bare possibility of what had been surmised with such indifference rendered too heavy for endurance the weight already at her heart, and, covering her face with her hands, she wept aloud. “For shame, Eliza!” exclaimed Algernon and Miss Melbourne in one breath, and in a tone of displeasure they were not wont to assume: “how can you thus trifle with the feelings of others?” “Nay, be not angry, I beseech you,” she returned, in an imploring tone and supplicating attitude: “pray forgive for this once my want of thought; if I have offended I am sure I am heartily sorry, and would even now stay to intreat your pardon, but mamma is waiting for me, so good morning to you.” Having said

this, she tripped away, jumped into the carriage which awaited her, and totally forgetful of the feelings she had wounded, her restless eye wandered in search of that amusement which her volatile disposition, and the superficial education she was receiving, had rendered almost essential to her happiness. After her departure Miss Melbourne and Charles endeavoured to compose the irritated feelings of Laura, and while the former told her that the words which had wounded her were quite unintentional on Eliza's part, the latter cheered her with hopes of his speedy return. Grateful for their attentions, and anxious to reward them, by degrees she became more calm, to the great delight of Charlotte, who felt almost inclined to withhold forgiveness from her sister, who had thus trifled with her friend. It was five o'clock ere Mrs. Courtney and her daughter returned. The young friends were reading in the library, when the latter entered. "Oh, Charlotte!" began the little chatterer, seating herself in the first chair that met her view, "we have spent such a delightful morning; you should have been with us, indeed. Do you know, while we were at Lady Rochford's, the Countess of Beaumont and her only child, Caroline

Stanley (your aunt and cousin, Laura) entered. Well, I had never seen Caroline before, but we soon got quite friendly, and, do you know, before we left, the Countess gave mamma this card, which is to invite us to a juvenile fête, to be given this day three weeks at Richmond, in honour of her daughter's birth-day, who is about your age." "I am sorry for it," returned her sister, calmly, "for I have no wish to go." "There now! that is just like you, Charlotte, you are always spoiling one's pleasure by your strange notions," said Eliza, in a peevish tone; "what is your reason for not wishing to go?" "Simply because," returned Charlotte, "from all accounts, Caroline Stanley is a haughty self-willed girl, and I have therefore no wish to become acquainted with her." "How very absurd," retorted Eliza; "really, Charlotte, I thought you had more sense: of what importance can a person's character be, when you only go to spend a few hours with them? But I never saw any girl (except your friend, Laura Fitz-Osborne) with such formal ideas; what a pity it is that you were not born some hundred years ago, for you would have made excellent Lady Abbesses: but woe be unto the poor creatures

who entered the walls of your convent," she continued with asperity; "you should never have caught me there, I promise you." So saying, she quitted the room, her sarcastic words only exciting a smile on the countenance of Charlotte, in which Laura freely joined.

From this time until the anticipated birthday nothing material occurred. The period of Charles's departure was as yet uncertain; and against her own inclination, Charlotte, yielding to her mother's wishes, had accepted the invitation of the Countess of Beaumont.

On this auspicious day, the ardent Eliza rose much earlier than was her custom, and long before the appointed time her studies for that day were completed. In Charlotte the dawn of this festive morning gave rise to no extraordinary emotion; or if an unusual cloud passed over her countenance when they assembled at breakfast, it was occasioned by regret that those so nearly allied to the Countess and her daughter would not accompany them to Richmond. At twelve o'clock the carriage was at the door, and, with feelings too joyous almost for endurance, Eliza (accompanied by

her sister) proceeded on her way to Beaumont Park.

Leaving therefore Mrs. Courtney to the enjoyment of her own reflections; Charles to the society of his newly acquired friend, Algernon; and Miss Melbourne to a tete-a-tete with the confiding Laura; let us now, with the wings of the fabled Iris, rejoin the youthful visitants, as they approach the splendid mansion of the Honourable Mr. Stanley.

Most of the party had already assembled. When they entered, the Countess rose to receive her guests with marked courtesy, and introduced Charlotte to her only child, Caroline Stanley, who soon after led the way to an elegant collation, prepared in various marquees dispersed throughout the grounds. After this refreshment was concluded, a dance commenced on the lawn in the front of the house, and while the feet of the happy group kept time with the band which had been provided, their smiling countenances told the pleasing tale that all were equally delighted. Ever among the gayest of the gay, shone Eliza Courtney; in every place her happy countenance was to be seen, in every joyous party her lively remarks

were to be heard: she was now precisely in her element, and though early accustomed to mix in society, a scene so perfectly congenial to her feelings had never yet presented itself. But not to herself only did Eliza's vivacity impart pleasure. "Who is that dark-eyed, animated Brunette?" was whispered from one to another; while the reply seldom failed to extract from the inquirer the exclamations of "sweet child!" "interesting girl!" In a word, by the grave and the gay, by the youthful part of the assembly, as well as by the more aged, Eliza was universally admired. We must not forget to mention Charlotte, who was far from being unmoved by all the attention paid to gratify and amuse her.

Her ear was charmed by the concourse of sweet sounds, and her eye delighted to observe the harmony depicted on the countenances of her companions; but whenever her heart seemed most attuned to joy, an inward voice seemed to ask, "Why is Laura away?" this was a question Charlotte could not solve, but again and again it recurred to her, and cast a gloom over the mirth-inspiring day, which would otherwise have been one of the happiest of her life.

In this instance, therefore, as in many preceding ones, Charlotte, though acknowledged by all a very engaging girl, was not so generally a favourite as her sister. But our happiest moments are but as a span, and when memory reviews the pleasures of the past, we too often find that we have not duly appreciated the passing moments. So thought Eliza, as the sun, fast sinking in the western horizon, warned her that the day was far spent, and reminded her that the hour of departure was at hand; full well she knew that his rising would find them dispersed, and far away:—but the impression was slight.

At this moment the Countess summoned Miss Stanley and her guests into the house, where, after partaking of refreshments, in a saloon prepared for the occasion, the young people gradually dispersed. “This has been a short visit, my dear Miss Courtney,” said the Countess, extending her hand as Charlotte rose to depart, “but may I hope it will be repeated?” Charlotte thanked her Ladyship for her kind wishes, and taking the hand thus extended, earnestly breathed the fervent prayer that it might one day be offered to her neglected friend. “But how shall I express my thanks

to you, my sweet Eliza," continued the Countess with increased courtesy, "for the pleasure you have this day afforded me? oh! that my Caroline had your excellent spirits, though I would not for worlds deprive you of them; but you must come and spend a week with her before we quit Richmond, and you may perhaps impart some of your vivacity: will you come, my love? for I cannot part with you without having obtained your promise."

The delighted countenance of Eliza gave a willing assent, and the Countess kissing her cheek, added, "then farewell, only remember it is but for a time." Eliza was too overjoyed to give utterance to her feelings, and pressing her Ladyship's hand with a countenance which expressed more than the most elaborate words could have conveyed, joined her sister. It was late ere they reached Portland Place, and on entering the drawing-room they beheld Mrs. Courtney, (who had been waiting their arrival with great anxiety,) reclining on a sofa, looking pale and weary. Algernon was apparently reading, but while he bent his head, as if to fix his wandering thoughts on the pages before him, his restless eye plainly indicated that some inward uneasiness was preying

upon his mind. Charlotte's earnest gaze sought her aunt and Laura, but in vain; both had retired to rest, the former from a slight indisposition. "Well, my love," exclaimed Mrs. Courtney, addressing Eliza, as if unconscious that her other child was present, "you have come at last, I was fearful some accident had detained you. O Eliza, the day has past so tediously; but it always does when you are absent. I know not how it is," she continued, casting a half-reproachful glance at her son; "but Algernon has lost all his former vivacity: we have been here together above an hour, and he has scarcely uttered a word." Although conversing with his sister, Mrs. Courtney's words had not escaped the attentive Algernon, whose first impulse suggested a reply; checking himself, however, he silently returned to the book before him, though Charlotte's penetrating glance quickly discovered that he was labouring under doubt and perplexity.

While Charlotte was thus experiencing a gloomy foreboding of approaching calamity, Eliza (who had been recapitulating the events of the day) had succeeded in restoring Mrs. Courtney to her accustomed cheerfulness. But when she came to relate the promise

which the Countess had extorted from her ; interrupting her with a look of sorrow, the fond parent said, “ How can I part with you, my child ? nevertheless, if it will add to your happiness, I will endeavour to do so ; but you must be wearied with this day’s enjoyment, and I will no longer detain you from your rest.” Eliza declared, that far from being tired, she was on the contrary too much gratified, with all she had seen and heard, to sleep ; but compliance was at length necessary to ease Mrs. Courtney’s maternal fears, who wishing Algernon good night with her wonted kindness withdrew, accompanied by Eliza. To both, this was a night of undisturbed repose, the latter, fearless of the future, slept but to dream of days happier than those which had elapsed ; while the former, proud of the distinction with which her darling was every where received, reposed in fancied security, visions of splendour and magnificence flitting before her imagination ; and the cloud hovering over them was unheeded because unobserved. But the case was widely different with the thoughtful Charlotte ; the tone in which Algernon had whispered, “ good night,” was such as she had not observed since their departure for the

continent, and when at length she closed her eyes, fancy was busy in her anticipation of evil;—the image of Algernon haunted her dreams, she feared it foretold their approaching separation; and she once started from her pillow as in imagination he bade her farewell.

CHAPTER VI.

And then he went to distant lands,

To soothe the heart distress :

For others woes, and others cares,

With pity warm'd his breast.

To soothe their griefs, or heal their woes,

His purse was freely given !

And he shall find a sure reward,

A brighter one in Heaven.

A FAREWELL.

The visions which had haunted the brain of Charlotte were but too prophetic for the peace of our domestic circle. Algernon Courtney was young, and as yet had seen little of the world ; of his few associates some had proved unworthy of his confidence, while others had amply rewarded it ; for the sake of the latter, therefore, he loved to think well of a world in which (young and inexperienced himself) he knew no guile. Long had he desired to visit

distant climes,—to share his purse with the more needy,—to be a physician to the souls of his erring or unthinking brethren. In a word; he sought for an opportunity of devoting a portion of those talents with which he was so eminently gifted, to the benefit of his fellow mortals. There were ties which bound him to his native land; there were duties which compelled him to quit it; the latter, once fulfilled, he should (if his life were spared) return improved by experience, with a better heart, a wiser head, and better qualified to fill the sphere in which he would then be placed. At least so reasoned Algernon when he first became acquainted with Charles Fitz-Osborne. An intimacy of a very few weeks was sufficient to fix his wavering mind.

There was in the generous character of Charles a charm he had never before met with: which made him deeply regret their approaching separation, and earnestly endeavour to avert it; he resolved to accompany him in his expedition to Egypt, as chaplain to his regiment; and this upon enquiry he found might be effected without difficulty.

By this means, he reflected, he might be essentially useful to his friend; he should

share his danger ; be ever at hand to bestow his counsel, and impart his wealth ; even without the knowledge of the independent and high-spirited Charles. To his countrymen too he might be serviceable, for while he relieved their necessities, and endeavoured by every possible means to lighten their burthens, he might warn the young and vigorous of their approaching danger ; when the battle was raging around, he might administer (with the divine blessing) spiritual consolation to the wounded and the dying ; while to the repentant sinner he whispered the joyful tidings of pardon and peace. Such were the constant reflections of Algernon Courtney. As he pondered this great undertaking, often would he inwardly exclaim “ Shall the distinctions of fortune, distinctions which no merits of my own have procured, keep me inactive at home, while my exertions might render me useful to my less favoured friends and countrymen ? shall I not sacrifice a season of ease to serve them, and voluntarily share those hardships which necessity compels them to undergo ? ” His generous and forbearing nature answered in the affirmative, and the only difficulty that now remained was to inform his mother and sisters of his intended departure.

To Miss Melbourne it was already known; and though she could have wished it had been otherwise, she forbore to attempt altering what she soon discovered was his fixed determination. Such was precisely the state of affairs when the absence of Charlotte and Eliza left Mrs. Courtney and her son together.

This was an opportunity which the latter had long sought; but now when it had arrived, he knew not how to make the disclosure, for his mother's unusually sunken eye told him that this was not the most auspicious moment he might have chosen. He therefore resolved to defer it until the succeeding day, but such was his embarrassed state of mind (from the idea of giving her pain) that all his attempts to enter into conversation were ineffectual. Long after Mrs. Courtney and her children had retired, Algernon sat ruminating on his future prospects, his reveries being interrupted only by the entrance of Charles, who, on his return from the war office, had been detained until that hour, by accidentally meeting one of his former companions.

He was the bearer of intelligence which could not fail to have due effect on the mind of his friend. The fleet which was to serve as con-

voy to the land forces was shortly expected to sail ; no time was therefore to be lost. Algernon was conscious too late of his error in not making known his intentions before ; but the following day witnessed the fulfilment of that resolution, which accompanied him to rest.

Early the ensuing morning, Charlotte quitted her pillow, and hastily sought Miss Melbourne. "Tell me, my dear aunt," said the agitated girl, as the latter observed her unusally pale cheeks, "tell me, what is the matter with Algernon? I am sure all is not well, I had such horrid dreams last night." "Does Charlotte put faith in dreams?" inquired Miss Melbourne, with a smile ; "but be not alarmed, my child ; you will only have occasion for a slight exertion of your fortitude : since Algernon is going to accompany Charles Fitz-Osborne to Egypt, and is consequently out of spirits at the idea of being separated from his friends."

"Oh!" exclaimed Charlotte "that is all I feared ; but where is he ? I will go to him ; I will persuade, I will entreat him to alter his purpose." "Nay ; that would be unkind, as well as very wrong," returned her aunt calmly, "since your brother considers it his duty not

to remain inactive here, but to hasten to the scene of danger; and I had hoped that the example set you by Laura would have enabled you to bear this intelligence with more composure; besides, your friend has much greater cause for alarm than yourself: the sacred character of Algernon's profession will shield him from much of that danger to which Charles will be exposed, but her good sense teaches her cheerfully to submit to what reason tells her is unavoidable." The mild persuasions of her aunt soon produced their never-failing effect on the mind of Charlotte, who was ever open to conviction, and willing to be swayed by gentle admonitions. To the great delight of Algernon, Mrs. Courtney heard of his intended departure, certainly with surprise, but without the slightest displeasure: she had so long been accustomed to rely on her son's judgment as superior to her own in all matters of importance, that she seldom if ever disapproved of his actions, or attempted in the slightest degree to control them; and when he entreated her to sanction his departure in order to render his absence less tedious, she replied, "Go, my son, my blessing attend you; I wish I could acknowledge every action of

my life had been dictated by as pure a motive as your own ; but," added she with a sigh—"remember only that you return the first opportunity which offers itself, for days will seem as weeks during your absence." "Oh that I should leave you at all, my ever kind mother!" said Algernon, in a tone of energetic affection ; "but I am a wayward mortal, and I must experience the want of the many comforts I enjoy, ere I learn to value them aright." Algernon's heart was too overcharged for him to utter more, and pressing his mother's hand in silence, he quitted the room. Thus relieved from the weight which had for some time oppressed him, he gradually recovered his cheerfulness. Mrs. Courtney endeavoured to reconcile her mind to his departure, and Eliza, though professing extreme sorrow, was of too volatile a disposition to be guilty of what she termed anticipating evil ; when therefore the Countess of Beaumont called upon her for the fulfilment of her promise, in active preparation every thing else was forgotten. The morning destined for this visit arrived, and Eliza, prepared for her journey, entered the room with a joyous countenance, where Charles Fitz-Osborne was reading aloud to Miss Melbourne and her young friends. "Why do I behold such grave

faces?" inquired the little prattler, as she paused at her entrance, "are you listening to some tragic tale of former years, or are these pitiful countenances as a propitiation for the sins of your less demure neighbours? But I had forgotten; you are thinking of Algernon and your kind reader here; these sorrowful looks are in preparation for their departure, I presume." "Your raillery," returned Miss Melbourne gravely, "would in the present instance be better dispensed with, and had Eliza possessed those feelings to which I once hoped she would not have been a stranger, this visit would have been delayed, to prevent her being separated, until absolutely necessary, from a brother who would have sacrificed much to add to her happiness." "Oh! aunt, indeed you are too severe," began the half-repentant girl. "I am sure I am very sorry for poor Algernon, but then you know it is his own fault, and what would the countess have said, had I neglected to perform my promise?" "The reason I have alluded to would have been a sufficient excuse; besides, the Countess of Beaumont and her daughter are mere strangers to you, and if we wish to be beloved, we must sometimes willingly forego our own gratification, to add to that of others," returned her aunt. "And I will do so too," replied Eliza,

now fully convinced of her error, "it is not yet too late; I will send to say, that I cannot leave Algernon, and surely the Countess will not be offended." Miss Melbourne shook her head, and added, "No, no, Eliza, the time has gone by now, you should have thought of this ere your word was given; but may I hope at least from all I have said that you will next time reflect before you act?" "Indeed I will endeavour to do so," said Eliza, "but if I must go, say that I have your forgiveness, and promise me to tell Algernon how sorry I am to leave him." Miss Melbourne cordially assented, and kissing the cheek of the really affectionate girl, said, "I hope, my dear child, you will not forget the lesson you have this day received, conscious as you must be of my anxiety for your welfare." At this moment Eliza was summoned away by Mrs. Courtney, who was to conduct her to Richmond, and bidding them farewell she reluctantly departed. During her stay, and the few moments after her departure, Charles Fitz-Osborne paused ere he again proceeded, and in that short space of time, he could not but compare the characters of Laura and Eliza. How different, he reflected, had been the conduct of the former in regard to him-

self; so different that he felt inclined to turn with horror from one devoid of all sisterly affection. But when he witnessed her deep contrition for past offences, when he observed with what anxiety Miss Melbourne watched the receding carriage, and saw her drop the silent tear as she returned to her work, pity and sorrow were the only emotions he felt, that one so ingenuous by nature, should be thus corrupted by an intercourse with the world, and led away by the blind partiality of a fond but too indulgent parent. If such were the reflections of Charles, the reader may easily imagine how much more acute were those of Miss Melbourne, who had seen the mind of her little niece expand like a flower just shooting from the parent stem; and who daily beheld those treasures with which nature had so richly endowed it, consumed by the too fervid rays of folly and dissipation. But let us now return to the object of these reflections. The Countess received Eliza with her accustomed urbanity, and even the morbid Caroline seemed pleased to see her. Ever attentive to the comfort of her guests, the former had collected around her every allurement to render the visit delightful, and soon, as was too generally the

case, Algernon, Miss Melbourne, and even her kind admonitions were all, for a time, forgotten. But notwithstanding, Eliza found the expectations she had formed were not realized. During this visit, which she had anticipated would pass like so many succeeding birthdays, she found to her amazement, that there were moments which rolled tediously away even at Richmond; and notwithstanding her veneration for the wealthy and the high-born, she felt inwardly obliged to confess, that in Caroline Stanley there was something more repulsive and haughty, than in any one she had hitherto met with. The Countess too, she soon discovered, though ever kind to herself, was not the courteous, happy being she had once taken her for; and those bursts of anger and ungovernable passion, she sometimes witnessed in both, were such as had but very rarely been known to occur in the inmates of Portland Place. Could Eliza indeed have seen the inward workings of the Countess's breast, could she have known the inroads which pride and self-will were making in the better feelings of Caroline's nature, though surrounded by this world's good, she would from her very heart have pitied them. But no, she knew not that

the eye which was in the morning bright and sparkling, was at night dimmed with the tear of vexation and disappointment; that, though we will not say the Countess was devoid of affection for her daughter, her hopes had all been centered in a boy; without whom the immense possessions of her father-in-law must descend at her husband's death to his younger brother. Eliza was not aware that the leading features of Caroline's education had been excessive pride, insuperable contempt if not hatred for her cousins, and habitual disrespect in her conduct towards her paternal grandfather; that the indulgence of these feelings had rendered her callous to the gratification of those around her; or if sometimes a thought of others would intrude, it was rather a settled enmity she felt towards them, than otherwise.

Well indeed would it have been for Eliza, had she possessed a little more penetration; could she have discovered that those moments of bitterness were not, as she imagined, the consequences of those infirmities incident to human nature, but the result of human passions. As such she would have despised them, but no friend was at hand to warn her; strife and contention quickly became familiar to her ear; the

specified week was lengthened to a fortnight, and the fortnight was exceeded when the promise she had given her aunt occurred to her recollection. Conscience reproached her with her forgetfulness, but she felt not the same sorrow as formerly for having erred, and had not Mrs. Courtney sent to request her immediate return, it is doubtful whether the persuasions of Caroline Stanley had not prevailed in opposition to her better sense. With extreme reluctance she bade adieu to Beaumont Park and its possessors; while those feelings of pleasure, which had ever been wont to accompany her on her return home after a short absence, were sensibly lessened. The delight with which she was received by Mrs. Courtney, gave a pang to the heart of her altered child, while she reflected how ill she had requited her affection; but like all her emotions, it was but momentary, and the intelligence that the following week was fixed upon for the departure of Algernon and Charles, was received with scarcely any feeling of regret.

On one point, indeed, she was decided; namely, that of avoiding all conversation with her aunt, whom she no longer regarded as a

friend anxious for her welfare, but feared as her most bitter enemy.

Independent of this, there was another feeling in her breast which seemed to strive for the mastery, that of enmity towards the innocent Fitz-Osbornes. But the ingenuousness and simplicity of Eliza's character was lost to her for ever: she was no longer the open hearted girl, ever ready to confess her faults and promise amendment. With Caroline Stanley's society she had imbibed a portion of her reserve, and those feelings which had once been instantly discoverable on her countenance, could now be known only to the watchful and attentive few: screening herself therefore under her well-known character for thoughtlessness, her words were too often dictated by a spirit of malevolence and ill will. On the morning after her return, as Charlotte and Laura were at work, and Charles employed in a distant part of the room, she entered. Seating herself by Laura, she began speaking to her of her aunt and cousin; her unsuspecting companion listened with the greatest attention, and inquired whether she had seen her grandfather? Eliza answered in the negative; then, as if the thought had struck her at that mo-

ment, she said, "By the bye, Laura, you now remind me of what Caroline said respecting your father. We were talking one day about you; and she told me such a long story about your father being proud and low-born," (this was said in a tone of affected incredulity) "that one day accidentally meeting your mamma in company, and quickly penetrating the instability of her character, he determined to make her the dupe of his artifices, in hopes by this means of rendering himself independent, and of emerging from the obscurity in which his birth had placed him."

The air of assumed indifference with which Eliza uttered these words, was in direct opposition to the anxiety with which she watched the varying countenance of Laura; and the astonished Charlotte vainly endeavoured to catch her sister's eye, as she gave utterance to her ill-concealed malignity. Eliza paused, as if waiting for a reply, but ere Laura could sufficiently calm her irritated feelings, she found an adversary in Charles as little welcome as expected. "Proud and low-born! instability of character! say you?" he demanded with the dignity of one conscious of unmerited insult;

“ and does Caroline Stanley dare to asperse the memory of those so infinitely her superiors, save in a titled parent, and the possession of paltry dress? does she presume to accuse the departed of crimes of which they were never guilty? But tell her when next you meet, that the being she accuses of instability, spurned a title bought by the sacrifice of every virtuous feeling; that the blood flows as pure and unspotted by any base action in the veins of the Fitz-Osbornes, as it does in those of herself and her haughty mother; tell her to correct her own failings, ere she presumes to censure any one; and having done so, she may perhaps be able to inspire a little more respect in the breast of her companion towards the feelings of others.”

As he said this, all the native energy of his character was roused, and the conscious Eliza shrunk from his penetrating glance. Her words indeed had not been intended to reach his ear; she knew herself unable to cope with his impetuous and independent spirit, and she was therefore endeavouring to plant unseen a thorn in the heart of his gentle sister, which might rankle there in silence.

But for this time Eliza's plans were frus-

trated. Charles, with whom she was by no means a favourite, had penetrated the thin veil with which she had yet learnt to conceal her motives; and though, had it been possible, he would have recalled the rebuke his words conveyed (on account of Mrs. Courtney, to whom Laura and himself were so greatly indebted), he could not repent having thus defended the aspersed characters of his departed parents. Laura, who had been at first terrified at her brother's vehemence, soon discovered his regret, by the flush which immediately overspread his countenance; and while she felt grateful to him for thus rescuing the memory of her relatives from insult, she sincerely joined with Charlotte in pitying Eliza, who was overwhelmed with merited confusion, and in hoping that this might be the means of rendering her more thoughtful for the future. But they knew her not: from this moment the misguided girl was more her determined enemy than before.

The day of separation quickly arrived. The young travellers, in order that their departure might be protracted until the last moment, remained till the evening, when they intended to hasten to the place of embarkation.

After a day spent in fearful anxiety, now hoping for their speedy return, and now apprehensive for their safety, a walk was proposed; all readily complied, and they bent their steps to the Park. It was an evening of unclouded splendour; the beams of the setting sun, as they illumined the western sky, were contrasted with the pale silver moon, which was now seen rising in the eastern horizon.

Charles and Laura lingered behind the rest. "I am going, Laura," said the former impressively, "and on such an evening as this you will think of the soldier as he hastens to distant climes, will you not? But fear not," he continued, as the unbidden tear started to her eye, "the same sun will cheer me with his rays; the moon will still beguile the tedious hours of night; and the same invisible hand will guide me over the watery way. The necessity of exertion, and the busy life I shall lead, will employ every moment of my time; but I dread to think of what will become of you in my absence! Much, I fear, you will have to endure from Mrs. Courtney and Eliza, for well do I perceive the latter regards you with no favourable eye." "Oh, no! Charles," interrupted Laura, "she may be thoughtless,

but indeed she does not intentionally strive to hurt me." "How I wish that were the case," resumed her brother; "but saw you nothing more than thoughtlessness in her countenance, when she the other day attempted to tarnish the characters of our parents? there was a malignant smile on her face, which she vainly endeavoured to suppress. I fear also that her intercourse with our unamiable cousin will but increase her malevolent propensities." "Be not thus hasty, dear Charles," said the unconvinced Laura, in an imploring tone; "time only will shew, and I will endeavour to bear a great deal; but at all events Mrs. Courtney will befriend me." "That is what I am fearful of," he continued; "Mrs. Courtney's blind partiality to her youngest child, and that child's persuasions, will, I apprehend, have too powerful an effect upon her mind: but let us hope for the best, I would only wish to put you on your guard. Miss Melbourne and the amiable Charlotte will always be your friends. Take this offering of gratitude," continued he, extending to her the gift of the honest villagers, "it was won from them by your kindness, when in prosperity; I have no right to it; you may find it useful when I am away, and who

so well as yourself knows how to bestow it on objects worthy of charity?" But this Laura stedfastly refused. "I will share it with you willingly," she said, "and I doubt not you will, where you are going, meet with those who are both worthy and in need of assistance." Charles was forced to comply, and they were presently joined by their companions, on their return, as the moment of departure was approaching. The anxiety of Mrs. Courtney's mind rendered her almost incapable of reaching home, where, after partaking of a slight refreshment, Algernon arose. "We must begone, Fitz-Osborne," he said, in a voice scarcely audible, "without a moment's delay." Charles obeyed with reluctance, and taking a respectful leave of Mrs. Courtney, he turned to Miss Melbourne, whose extended hand cordially returned his pressure, when Mrs. Courtney, in an agony of grief, intreated her son not to leave her.

By the most soothing tones of persuasion Algernon succeeded in restoring her to some degree of composure, and then consigned her to the care of his aunt and sisters, and taking leave of each—"To your watchful care and attention," he said, addressing the former, "I

willingly consign my mother; you will, I know, comfort her with the hope of my speedy return. You, Charlotte, I need not entreat," he added in a low voice, "to join with your aunt in rendering Laura happy, during the absence of her brother; but Eliza, may I feel equally secure of you,—may I hope that you will spare the feelings of the unfortunate? But as you value my esteem and affection, I charge you to beware of Caroline Stanley; and be assured she is not your friend, when she urges you to commit an action which your better judgment condemns;—remember now, farewell." He was answered only by their tears, and taking leave of Laura Fitz-Osborne, and once more endeavouring to sooth Mrs. Courtney into calmness, he was compelled to tear himself from her embrace. Laura was obliged to separate from her affectionate brother; but what were the parting words of that brother? "Farewell, Laura; pray that I may never forget the lesson of Faith, Hope, and Charity, you gave me in our journey to London, and which I still possess here;" (alluding to the miniature, which was his constant companion) "and may our next meeting be under happier auspices than the last!"

CHAPTER VII.

O for the friend, with look benign,
To sooth that wounded heart of thine,
To bid the tear of anguish cease,
To warring passions whisper peace;
To ease the bitter portion given,
And gently wing the soul to Heaven!

A DISCOVERY.

The agony of Mrs. Courtney on witnessing the departure of her son soon drew Laura to her side, and the fond solicitude, therefore, with which the travellers for a moment paused, to gaze once more on the residence of those so tenderly beloved (on which the moon was now shedding her silvery light) was unobserved; and setting their horses at full speed, they rode forward in silence. As the affectionate girl gazed upon the quivering lip and heard the hysteric sobs of the sufferer, her

tears flowed rather for the woes of her benefactress than her own ; and while all their endeavours for a time proved insufficient to restore her to composure, the stronger minded Laura, for the first time beheld the consequences of those ill-regulated feelings which in youth Mrs. Courtney had neither been taught, nor possessed inclination to restrain.

This was a lesson Laura had never before received ; one which, had she thought at all, she would have considered unnecessary ; but now, when one of the most trying moments of her hitherto short, but eventful life, had arrived, she hailed it with gratitude ; and while compassionating in another what she would have severely censured in herself, she endeavoured to put on that robe of fortitude and resignation which had ever adorned her deceased parent, the remembrance of whose excellencies never failed to preserve her from evil, and to invite her to further exertion in the path which lay before her.

Mrs. Courtney's grief was too violent to be of long duration, and in a few days her anxious relatives had the satisfaction of witnessing her partial recovery. But the event had so shaken her naturally delicate constitution, that

change of air and scene were declared by the faculty essentially necessary to insure her perfect convalescence. The pure atmosphere of W—— was particularly recommended for invalids during the winter season, and thither Mrs. Courtney, accompanied by her family, resolved immediately to repair. This watering-place was well known to her, and feeling an unusual distaste for the pleasures of the metropolis, she already anticipated the benefits to be derived from dwelling amidst its peaceful scenes, and enjoying undisturbed the society of those around her. Eliza (that idolized child, on whom, almost unconsciously, Mrs. Courtney depended for happiness in every place) whose love of novelty rendered every new plan pleasing, looked forward to this visit with pleasure; and let us do her the justice to add, that all her filial affection had been excited by the illness of her mother: while, therefore, the injunctions of Algernon recurred to her, she determined, by her cheerful attentions, and highly prized vivacity, to restore, if possible, the glow of health to the cheek of her declining parent. But alas! that keen susceptibility of new impressions, that very vivacity which rendered her both desirous and capable of

pleasing, was ever the ignus fatuus which led her into temptation, and crossed her path in her attempts at well-doing.

The day was fixed for their leaving London, when Eliza received a letter from Caroline Stanley, couched in the most affectionate terms, entreating her to comply with the united wishes of herself and mamma, by accompanying them the following week in an excursion they proposed making for a short time to Bath. She was alone when the letter was brought to her, and hastily running her eye over its contents, her countenance glowed with animated delight. How long she had wished to visit Bath,—to participate in all its gaieties;—but to accompany the Countess and her daughter there, oh! that was happiness such as Eliza had never imagined was reserved for her, and twice she perused the letter, ere perfectly convinced that it was reality. In vain did an inward monitor whisper that her presence was required to sooth an anxious parent's fears, and cheer by her vivacity the sick-bed of one, who in illness had watched over her with such solicitude; in vain did the parting admonitions of Algernon, and the promise she had formerly given her aunt, of exercising

her powers of reflection, occur to her; the temptation was too great for the pleasure-loving girl to resist; and hastening to Mrs. Courtney, she said, placing the letter in her hands, "I only wait your consent, mamma, before I accept the invitation." The open brow of Eliza was somewhat contracted by disappointment, when Mrs. Courtney, drawing a deep sigh, and passing her hand across her forehead, said, "I am not well this morning, and cannot at present give you an answer; but come to me in half an hour; in the mean time I will think the matter over; now leave me." What Mrs. Courtney's reflections were during this solitary half hour, we pretend not to determine; doubtless remorse for her misplaced preference, and unbounded affection, were among her other emotions, and thoughts of withholding her consent: but hers was a proud spirit, and that obedience which the love of her children could not procure her, she refused to extort from their sense of duty: certain it is, when next she met Eliza, her only answer was, "If you have set your mind upon this excursion, and can really think of going, circumstanced as you are, then go, by all means." Her voice faltered as she uttered these words, and Eliza

would fain have asked an explanation of this ambiguous reply ; but conscience reproached her too severely for the fault she had been committing, and she hastened to dismiss the intruder by answering her friend's letter. The surprise and displeasure of Charlotte and Miss Melbourne on hearing of this event, were extreme ; so much so indeed, that the latter would seriously have remonstrated with her niece, on the impropriety of her conduct ; but Eliza studiously avoided all her attempts at conversation, and Miss Melbourne little suspecting her real motive, knew not how to account for the estrangement which had (so unintentionally on her part) taken place between them. Resolved, however, not to be silent on the subject, she one day took advantage of Eliza's absence, when Mrs. Courtney, more than usually exhausted, sat brooding in silent despondency over the bustle and preparation necessarily attendant on the journey they were on the eve of undertaking.

“ Why, my dear sister,” began Miss Melbourne, affectionately, “ can you think of permitting Eliza to leave you, in your present weak state ; when all our united efforts are required to cheer and amuse you ?” The deep-

drawn sigh which followed, gave testimony to Mrs. Courtney's inward emotion; but perhaps her maternal fondness was roused at this implied neglect of her favourite child; or she might have felt it a tacit reproach on her too yielding disposition, for she replied in an extenuating tone: "The poor child; Eliza seemed bent upon going, and I knew not how to refuse her; besides, attendance on a sick-bed might injure her already delicate health." "It was not thus you argued when we were last at Cheltenham, Eliza," returned her sister; "besides, I hope there is no occasion to apprehend the consequences you speak of: change of air and scene will soon restore you to your wonted strength; forgive what I am going to say," she added with increasing earnestness, "but do you not fear, your over indulgence may imbitter many moments of Eliza's after life?" Mrs. Courtney again sighed deeply, and the desponding tone in which she added, "perhaps you are right, I see I have been to blame; but it is too late now;" made Miss Melbourne almost regret the words she had rather precipitately uttered.

Finding therefore that it was in vain to attempt altering her sister's determination, she

forbore to press her further, and the former quickly relapsed into her habitual listlessness. The following morning, Eliza took leave of her relatives, and joined the Countess at the town house, while Mrs. Courtney, Miss Melbourne, Charlotte, and Laura, prosecuted their journey to W——. Before they parted, however, Mrs. Courtney gave strict injunctions to Eliza, to write immediately on her return to London, to specify the day on which, escorted by Catherine, her faithful attendant, (who was to accompany her to Bath,) she was to join them at W——. Eliza faithfully promised all she required, received the embrace of her parent, who bade her adieu with tears of tenderness and regret, while Miss Melbourne, placing a well-filled purse in her hand, said affectionately, “some malevolent person has, I fear, been endeavouring to persuade you I am not your friend; for I think too highly of you to imagine that, had it been otherwise, your conduct to me would have been such as it has; but beware, my dear child, of false counsel, and never cease to reckon upon me as such until your conduct renders you unworthy of my regard, which I trust will never be the case; you are now going among strangers, and your wants

may be more numerous than hitherto; accept, therefore this trifling present; you will, no doubt, find it useful; but while you are administering to your own necessities, forget not those of others, and ever remember that a poor man's blessing is worthy the acceptance of a prince." A repentant tear fell upon Miss Melbourne's hand, as Eliza received the kindly offering, for she reflected how ill she had requited such confiding affection; but it was blended with no virtuous resolutions for the future, and was like the sunbeam which for a moment breaks through the dense and cloudy horizon, but to leave all behind it involved in deeper gloom and obscurity.

By her sanguine relative, however, it was hailed as an omen of amended conduct, and having returned the sisterly embrace of Charlotte, and even looking with complacency on Laura, Eliza departed. It would be tedious, as well as unnecessary, to follow Mrs. Courtney and her companions through the events of their journey to W——. Those who have had relatives suffering from nervous attacks (for this was her principal disorder) too well know the terror with which the invalid shrinks from exertion of any kind, to need a repetition

here; let it suffice therefore to say, she bore the fatigue better than her anxious attendants could have anticipated, and took possession of the spacious house prepared for her (situated at a short distance from the coast) with some of her wonted cheerfulness. In a word, from the day of her arrival, Mrs. Courtney's health began rapidly to amend; to that despondency, which had at times threatened to overwhelm her mental faculties, succeeded a moderate enjoyment of the amusements around her, while endeavouring to still those harassing thoughts of Algernon's danger, which had once overpowered her cooler reason.

But was all this improvement attributable to change of scene alone? had not the unwearying assiduities of her attendants the chief share in her restoration to health? Truly that post of honour, which the self-indulging Eliza had deserted at the moment of duty, was joyfully filled by Charlotte; and in Miss Melbourne, Mrs. Courtney indeed found united, the rare qualities of the affectionate relative, the faithful friend, and the able counsellor: had Mrs. Courtney been directed by the counsel of that relative, much of the misery of her after-life had been spared. But in what

words shall we express the unceasing attentions of the grateful orphan to her benefactress?

If Charlotte or Miss Melbourne were absent but for a moment, Laura's hand was ever nigh, to adjust the cushions of the invalid; if she walked, her ready, but unobtrusive arm was proffered to support her, and when wearied with her exertion, the silver tones of Laura's harp never failed to lull her to repose. It was impossible that one so susceptible to kindness as Mrs. Courtney could remain insensible to the many proofs of her grateful regard; each day, the artless girl won upon her affection, and became doubly endeared, from her resemblance to that early friend whose name she bore. It might be a little more than a fortnight after their arrival, when they were one morning agreeably surprised, by the receipt of a packet from London, containing letters for each member of the family, from their absent relatives.

Algernon, stated, that having fortunately spoken a vessel on her return to England, they had taken advantage of the circumstance, to inform their friends of their perfect health; likewise that they had nearly reached the place

of their destination in safety. To his sisters he wrote but sparingly, for little time was allowed him; but what he said was dictated by fraternal solicitude for their happiness. To Laura, Charles wrote with all the ingenuousness of his nature, talked much of his present security, and peculiar good fortune in possessing so invaluable a friend as Algernon Courtney, and spoke lightly of future danger. Reanimated by the intelligence these welcome letters conveyed, Mrs. Courtney was conversing with unusual cheerfulness, when the Rev. Mr. Llewellyn and his sister were announced. Laura started at the name: it was one associated in her mind with recollections of departed happiness; it was dear to her, from the lips which had so often uttered it; but those were now closed in death, and shuddering, as imagination would have taken flight to scenes of blended terror and delight, her eyes were involuntarily raised on the entrance of the strangers; for such indeed they were. Mrs. Courtney received them with that ease of deportment, so peculiarly her own; and Mr. Llewellyn soon explained the cause of his visit, by saying, that having accidentally seen her name among the list of arrivals, and thus discovering

her place of residence, he had (accompanied by his sister) taken the liberty of calling on her, to offer their united services in shewing any attentions, which, as the rector and inhabitant of the place, he should be proud of rendering to the parent of his much esteemed college friend, Algernon Courtney.

This introduction was quite sufficient for Mrs. Courtney; Llewellyn was a name not unfamiliar to her ears, for Algernon loved to extol the virtues of his friends; and accepting his offer with the greatest cordiality, from this day an intimacy commenced, interesting to all, but particularly important in its consequences to Laura. There was indeed something in the countenances of Mr. Llewellyn and his sister, well calculated to win regard and confidence. The former seemed about seven and twenty, the latter a little older; the ease and vivacity of their manners were such as to conciliate instant good-will, while the dark expressive eyes of Miss Llewellyn beamed with benignity on all around. To her the characters of Charlotte Courtney and Miss Melbourne were not unknown; Henry Llewellyn loved to talk of his boyish days, and often while seated at their cheerful fire-side, when the storm was raging,

and winds were howling without, he would relate hitherto untold circumstances concerning his friend Algernon, and those relatives in whose praise the latter had so often been eloquent. Being seated between Charlotte and Laura, she soon entered into conversation, and after making their stay most unfashionably long, they parted with mutual regret; not however until an early day had been fixed for returning the visit.

By the young folks, that day was anticipated more than the most brilliant assembly would have been, but the precarious health of Mrs. Courtney rendered it doubtful whether she would be well enough to undertake a ride to the Rectory, which was situated at some distance from the town. All things, however, proved favourable; the morning was fine, and Mrs. Courtney, Miss Melbourne, Charlotte, and Laura, were received by the young clergyman and his sister with that unaffected dignity of manner, which so peculiarly marks the well-bred. The Rector's residence was an unobtrusive, romantic looking building, well framed for the abode of peace and innocence: roses, interwoven with the fragrant climatis, were there to be seen in rich

profusion, as if aspiring to crown its humble roof with their choicest sweets ; and the smile with which the brother and sister conducted them into the interior of their prepossessing dwelling, (fitted up in a style of simple elegance,) was answered by one as joyous, on the countenances of their guests. It seemed as though some charm rendered the society of these newly acquired friends essential to the happiness of our family party, and they separated with more regret than on the preceding visit. From this time, a day seldom intervened, unenlivened by the intercourse of some member of each family. Fanny Llewellyn, whose amiable disposition never shone more conspicuous than when in the society of her juniors, made it her study to relieve her young friends in their attentions to Mrs. Courtney, by planning some amusement which the invalid could partake of. To the sterling qualities of Charlotte and Laura, Fanny was equally sensible, but almost unconsciously the latter became her favourite ; there was something in her countenance, which seemed to fix her attention, and Laura would frequently find her gazing at her with mingled pleasure and regret. It was not long indeed, ere she

discovered, the cheerful Fanny had some secret cause for sorrow; even society sometimes failed to charm her into gaiety, and a tear, unperceived by all but Laura, would steal down her cheeks as if at the remembrance of past misfortunes. In these reveries she would sometimes indulge, during her morning rambles with her young companions. "How happy, dear Miss Llewellyn, ought we to consider ourselves, in thus unexpectedly attaining so inestimable a friend as yourself," said Charlotte as they one day seated themselves beneath the ruins of an ancient abbey, to avoid the fervid rays of the sun. The speaking countenance of Laura, as she pressed Fanny's hand, gave testimony to the sincerity of Charlotte's avowal. "Say rather it is I who am indebted to you, for the happiness I now enjoy," returned Miss Llewellyn, affectionately regarding her companions. "To that countenance, I owe," she continued addressing Laura, "the recollection of past events, which I would wish never to forget, and the remembrance of one for whom I must ever entertain the fondest affection. To you, Charlotte, I am indebted for the sight of such friendship, as once united a lamented parent with a more

than relative." "That must have been a dear friend," said Laura thoughtfully, as the look of affection, with which Charlotte greeted her, passed unnoticed. "Dear indeed!" was the reply; "but lost to me for ever; I know not, indeed, whether she yet lives."

Here, unbidden tears chased each other down her cheeks, and the unexpected commiseration of her companions, but caused them to flow the more freely. "But I forget myself," she added, endeavouring to conquer her emotion, "forgive me, I am grateful for your sympathy; but"—"Then let us share your sorrows," interrupted Laura eagerly, raising her eyes with an imploring look; Charlotte gazed also at Miss Llewellyn, anxious for her reply:—she paused, turned from one to the other, pressed her hand to her forehead, and at length said, "No, I cannot resist those eyes, so like hers whom I lament; nor that speaking countenance," she continued, turning to Charlotte: "yes, my friends, you shall share my sorrows, and learn what cause I have to regret that friend, in my short but eventful history." Charlotte and Laura instantly became all attention, and Fanny commenced.

"My father, Henry Llewellyn, was a de-

scendant of the heroes of that name, so famous in the early stages of the Norman conquest ; and, ennobled by ancestral and personal merit, an English baron, eminent for his parade of high birth, considered his alliance with an orphan niece, no degradation to the family name. A true supporter of the hospitality of the ancient Cambrians, the weary or benighted traveller was ever sure of finding at his gate shelter and protection. It is now about four and twenty years since my father, who held the rank of Colonel in the army, was killed on the continent. I was then scarcely six years of age ; but I can well remember the grief with which the news of his death overwhelmed my mother ; and young as I then was, I had soon cause to lament it. In the generosity of his nature, my father had forgotten that his possessions were inadequate to defray the expenses of a large establishment ; and all his landed property being mortgaged, my mother now saw herself, with two helpless children, left totally without provision.

“ To her uncle, as her nearest relation, my widowed parent in this extremity applied for assistance, and counsel ; but the Baron was too

worldly to bestow a favour, where there was no possibility of a return, and the scanty pittance he afforded as a relief from present necessity was accompanied by the assurance, that after mature reflection he found himself unwillingly obliged to decline all interference in her affairs, since more immediate calls upon his purse put it out of his power to render any further assistance. You, my dear young friends, may easily imagine the mingled horror and despair with which this intimation was received. In her eagerness to be near her relative, from whom she had expected both relief and consolation, my mother had hastened to London, accompanied by myself and Henry, with one faithful domestic, who refused to quit us in our fallen fortunes; but the Baron, under the plea of urgent business, refused even to see her, and we were thus left to actual want, when a ministering angel, in the person of her cousin Laura (the Baron's only daughter) flew to our relief. No sooner did she hear of our arrival, than she hastened to the humble abode which sheltered us; that shock, under which my mother had well-nigh sunk, was lightened by her friendly consola-

tion and unostentations assistance, perceived only in the different form our circumstances soon began to assume.

“ Our obscure lodging, in a confined part of the town, was exchanged for one delightfully situated on the Hampstead Road, and the faithful Agnes, rewarded for past services, was expected, to administer unceasingly to the wants of her suffering mistress. Such repeated acts of kindness could not fail to awaken the slumbering faculties of my mother to the most lively affection for so amiable a being, whom she intreated not to overwhelm her with such multiplied benefits. But the generous girl stopped not here, a legacy of 500*l.* had been left at her own disposal by her grandfather, when she became of age; this sum as yet remained untouched; with two-thirds of it she purchased an annuity in my mother's name, and the remaining part was, by the assistance of a friend, placed in the funds for the education of myself, and Henry, whom she had often expressed a wish to see brought up to the church. Never shall I forget the expression of her countenance, the day she made known her intentions to my parent: it resembled yours, Laura, when you are conscious of imparting

happiness; she gazed on me and Henry with tears of tenderness and joy;—but we were too young to understand the cause of her emotion. Ineffectual was every persuasion to make her alter her determination, she declared it was a mere act of duty, not generosity, though she carefully forbore to censure the conduct of the Baron: for he was an indulgent father in many respects, and her notions of filial duty were far too exalted to permit her to do so. Having thus relieved us from indigence, she did not however forsake us: her cheering society oftentimes enlivened the solitude of our little cottage, and time rapidly flew until I attained my ninth year. About this period, my mother was summoned to the death-bed of a distant relation, who resided in Wales, and as her cousin advised her to hasten thither immediately, accompanied by her children, she consented, and in the space of a few days all things were prepared for the journey. To be removed from those we tenderly love, is at all times a calamity, but circumstanced as we were, you may imagine with what feelings we contemplated a separation. Unable as we were at that early age duly to appreciate so invaluable a friend, Henry and I were still aware

that she regarded us with the affection of a parent, and were not slow in returning her partiality. By my mother, indeed, whose support she had been in the hour of trial, a temporary separation was a subject of mournful regret; and the amiable Laura, we have since been informed, had, at the time I mention, herself need of an adviser. But how much more painful would have been these emotions, could we have looked into futurity, and there seen that her sweetly beaming countenance was never again to enliven the dwelling for which we were indebted to her bounty: that her tearful farewell was to be a lasting one. We parted—with gloomy forebodings on the part of our relatives; while Henry and myself, after the first burst of grief had subsided, forgot our sorrow in the anticipation of a happy reunion, which was never realized. We reached Wales in time to receive the blessing of this dying relative; she was poor, but she bequeathed to us her little all, in gratitude for our having cheered her death-bed by our presence. She closed her eyes in peace, and after an absence of six months we returned to London.

“ But Laura was not there to receive us; all inquiries into the particulars of her flight were

vain ; every word we could learn was, that having offended the haughty Baron by marrying a Clergyman, her name was erased from the affection of her family, and she was gone to some distant part of the country—no one knew or cared to inquire whither ! Such was the heart-rending intelligence which met us on our arrival ; it was then that we recalled her fond regret at parting, and dwelt upon every word she had uttered. But what words can express the effect this intelligence produced on my poor mother ! time, however, and the hope that this inestimable friend was not lost to her for ever, supported her under this misfortune.

“ Thus passed the fleeting hours, until the period drew nigh, when Henry was to become a Minister of the Established Church ; he repaired to Cambridge, and it was there he became acquainted with your excellent brother Algernon. When his studies were completed, the interest of a friend procured him the living he at present enjoys ; thus in our peaceful dwelling did we enjoy a greater share of happiness than falls to the lot of many, until, two years since, the death of our mother again overwhelmed us with sorrow. She paid the

debt of nature with but one wish ungratified, that of ascertaining the fate of her lamented friend, whose name was mingled in the parting breath with which she blessed us.

“Such my friends,” continued Miss Llewellyn, “is the history of my early years, such the confidence you required; you see I have not much cause for grief, on the contrary, every thing to be thankful for. I have found friends where I expected none, and the principal events of my life are one continual proof that (whatever misanthropy may say to the contrary) the most exalted virtue is still an inhabitant of the earth. But you, Laura, have been the innocent cause of reviving all my sorrow; your name, the expression of your countenance, the very tone of your voice, remind me of her, whose existence is to me a secret. The Baron still lives, but the reserve with which he ever received our advances, made us long since give up the attempt as useless: a report once reached us that the death of her husband had involved the amiable Laura in the distress from which with such a liberal hand she had rescued us: if such is really the case, oh! that I were near to return her her own and, oh! may she find some one like herself

an agent of that Friend who ever watches over the fatherless and the widow." Miss Llewellyn ceased—and Laura, whose countenance had undergone many variations during this recital, laying her hand upon Fanny's arm, said in a tone of deep interest and inquiry, "Tell me what is the name of the Baron?" "De Clifford," was the reply. "Oh you are then, you are that same favourite little Fanny, and I am the child of her you regret," resumed Laura, embracing Miss Llewellyn with tears of joy. For a moment, the latter gazed at her in astonishment: and in that instant, recognizing the features of Laura De Clifford, she returned her caresses with grateful acknowledgment for having thus unexpectedly discovered the offspring of that friend so long and so deservedly regretted, while Charlotte, who remained a silent spectator of the scene, gazed until every kindly feeling of her heart expanded with reciprocal delight. But Miss Llewellyn's joy was quickly checked, as Laura's sable garb met her view; she had been informed by Miss Melbourne that her young favourite was an orphan, and in ascertaining the fate of her friend, her worst fears were but too surely realized. Charlotte and Laura soon penetrated

these thoughts, and mingling their tears at the latter's recital of the late Mrs. Fitz-Osborne's sufferings, they reached the Rectory, where they had been anticipated by Mrs. Courtney and her sister, who had appointed to dine with Mr. Llewellyn and Fanny. The events of the morning occasioned the most lively emotions of joy in the party assembled. Henry Llewellyn welcomed his newly discovered relative with all the ardour and sincerity of his nature: Mrs. Courtney shared in the pleasure of one who was daily gaining upon her affections; and Miss Melbourne—but why need we mention her, whose happiness was ever dependant on that of those she loved? Fearful of encountering the night air, Mrs. Courtney and her family left the Rectory at an early hour; while therefore Laura steals an hour from repose to communicate to Charles the discovery we have just related, let us leave an anxious parent to a night of restlessness, (five weeks having elapsed without any intelligence being received from Eliza) and rejoin the latter as she reaches Somersetshire.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh! bear me far hence, unto Ganges' fam'd streams,
To muse all alone by the wide expanse there!
Or haste! let's away, where the Laplander dreams
That his country is lovely, his mountains are fair.

Or e'en would I linger on Passion's bleak rock,
Where—the Genius of Envy afar!
Where—the taunts of the scorner ne'er heard to resound;
Nor the arrow-spced word call'd to war!

DECEPTION.

The arrival of the Countess of Beaumont and her circle at Bath, was ushered in by a round of dissipation and amusement, so easily procured at that place of fashionable resort. With her usual love of pleasure, Eliza entered at once into the various excuses for waste of time which now presented themselves. One source of gratification to her was, that the hitherto morbid Caroline Stanley seemed now awakened to interest in the common occur-

rences of life—self-love attributing it to her own magnetic influence. How little, however, did she know the real purpose for which Caroline courted her acquaintance, and roused herself from the torpor in which she had so long indulged. Wealth is too often the only passport requisite for an admittance into the best society; the fame of the Countess's magnificent entertainments, superb equipages, &c. were soon noised abroad, and every person of note anxiously sought to obtain her favour. Those whose high birth was their only distinction, eagerly sought to occupy a place in the crowded saloon of the wealthy Countess; while those unfortunates who boasted not of their ancestry, but of their well-filled coffers, endeavoured, under the shelter of her approbation, to shield themselves from the arrogance of their titled neighbours.

Courted, therefore, by all, the Countess of Beaumont, who loved to excel those around her, dispensed her smiles with all the imperiousness of an Eastern Sultana. The entreaties of some she disregarded; the invitations of others accepted; and those who were honoured with her patronage, were sure to rank high in the fashionable circle. As the friend and fa-

vourite companion of Caroline Stanley, Eliza was every where received with respect and attention; at once gratifying her own pride, and calculated to raise the already exalted ideas she entertained of her hostess; thus was she plunged into every expensive amusement. Extravagance may well be considered as the parent of necessity; though so plentifully supplied with what could procure her every rational desire, Eliza soon found the contents of her purse almost exhausted. The inconvenience which followed occasioned a moment's reflection (a faculty which was very rarely called into action by her); as when she had employed a sum which had been bestowed for so kind and charitable a purpose, she could not but confess it had been squandered in dissipation and folly; and while turning a deaf ear to the many who had implored her assistance, how much had been devoted to senseless extravagance.

“The mischief is, however, done,” thought Eliza, “and regret is now useless; experience will render me wiser in days to come; and since the past cannot be recalled, all that sage prudence has to do, is to provide for the future. So now necessity, reason, and inclination,

bring forth your respective claims to the august bar of judgment." Here she paused in some perplexity, her thoughts becoming sadly confused and unconnected; various plans were instantly formed, and as speedily rejected; when she came to the determination of husbanding her little store with the greatest frugality, and, if any unforeseen circumstance occurred, to borrow a small sum of Caroline Stanley. Unluckily a temptation too soon presented itself. Scarcely had Eliza dismissed the matter from her thoughts, when she learnt that a wealthy nabob, lately arrived from Bengal, had issued tickets for a fancy dress ball to take place in a fortnight, at which most of the guests were expected to appear in the costumes of foreign countries, chiefly of the east: the Countess of Beaumont had consented to honour the festive scene with her presence; and Caroline spoke with animation of the unrivalled magnificence which was to be displayed on the occasion, as well as of the pleasure she anticipated. "How I regret I cannot share it with you," said Eliza, with evident vexation, for the Countess having declared her intention of returning to London immediately after the ball, she the more regretted her inability to attend; "unless

you, dear Caroline," she continued after a pause, "would oblige me by the loan of five guineas, for I am ashamed to say the contents of my purse are exhausted." "I, Eliza!" returned Caroline, her countenance instantly becoming overcast, "why, you astonish, as well as distress me; I have not much more than that left for myself, so much have I spent within the last month; and I have decided on appearing at the ball in the dress of an Hindoostan flower-girl, which I fear will be rather expensive: but it is quite absurd for you to think for a moment of remaining at home; and there are ways and means, you know, my good friend."

Surprised at these ambiguous words, Eliza knew not what answer to return, but anxiously endeavoured to fathom their import. At length the meaning seemed to dart across her mind, and she said in a burst of virtuous indignation: "What, Caroline! do you mean to advise my incurring debts which I may not have it in my power to pay?" "Oh dear, no," returned her companion, with a malicious smile, and an air of perfect indifference, "I never dreamt of advising such a thing; the ways I speak of are *strictly honourable*; but I see you are de-

terminated not to go, and my errand here, which was to propose your dress being like mine, has now ended, so good morning to you."—"Stay, Caroline I entreat you," said Eliza, eagerly detaining her as she would have departed, "you know how much my mind is bent on going to the ball, do not therefore leave me in suspense; and as you well know how I rely on the purity of your motives, explain to me your meaning, for I really cannot understand you." "O you silly girl," exclaimed the well-pleased Caroline, with pretended unwillingness to be prevailed on; "well, well, if it must be so, come sit down, and let us talk the weighty matter over."

Eliza readily complied; and Caroline began, "Well, now what think you of writing to Miss Melbourne or your sister, and requesting them to send you the sum you require?" The countenance of her companion, which had been lighted up with expectation, became instantly overcast. "Oh, no! that will not do," she replied, "my aunt would be shocked at the bare idea; and were I to appeal to Charlotte, who can do nothing without her infallible counsellor and aunt, the whole neighbourhood would quickly be up in arms at my extrava-

gance.” The tone, indeed, in which this proposition had been made, had not been such as if she anticipated her auditor’s consent: Caroline had a deep part to play; to ensure her success, it was necessary that even Eliza should be ignorant of her motive, and with feigned concern, but inward exultation, she now proceeded to the grand point in view. “Well, since you do not approve of that plan, we will say no more about it; but has not that Laura Fitz-Osborne, (Caroline always avoided owning their relationship,) that dependant on your mamma’s bounty, I mean, has she no money which might be at your service in this emergency?” Caroline had (during one of their conversations respecting Laura) been informed of the circumstance by which the latter became possessed of 50l.; this in her present agitation was by Eliza quite forgotten, and after patiently listening to the recital, Caroline continued, “then am I not fortunate in my second proposal? that will do exactly; so you had better write to her immediately, and request her to lend you 20l.” “Oh,” interrupted Eliza, “but you know not what strange notions Laura has, she considers that money as wholly to be employed in charitable purposes, and I

doubt whether, knowing my intention she would let me have even half that sum!" "Charitable purposes," repeated Caroline, with a scornful curl of the lip, "strange notions indeed hers must be; but let me see, since she might prove refractory, suppose you were to say you wanted it for some good purpose." She paused, for a slight shade passed over Eliza's countenance, but it was not a momentary burst of good feeling, like that which had before agitated her, and her ensnaring companion, who instantly perceived it, added, "I merely hazarded the opinion; however, you have perhaps particular reasons for wishing to remain at home on the ball night, and I would not for worlds have you act contrary to your inclination." Eliza was sensibly mortified: the determined, aggravating indifference of Caroline; the voice of conscience within her; her unwillingness to deprive herself of the slightest gratification; all stung her to the quick.

Feelings such as these were ill calculated to detain the fleeting sparks of virtue, which might by one exertion have been recalled; she therefore endeavoured to convince herself that this plan was, as her companion had affirmed, indeed *strictly honourable*; that this circum-

stance was the last of the kind that could possibly happen, and thus did she compromise with her conscience, by silencing the "still small voice," which was warring with unsubdued passions. "Yes, Caroline," at length she said, "I see you are right, it must be so, I will act as you suggest, relying on the friendliness of your intentions." The triumphant smile which followed was unheeded by this victim of false friendship, and the artful girl, whose policy it was to avoid giving her any time for reflection, replied, "Well then, since no time is to be lost, and you have at last made up your mind, take my desk, which is at hand, and as you write, I will dictate." Eliza complied, when however her request had been made, she suddenly stopped, exclaiming, "Oh, but I fear Laura will tell my aunt or Charlotte, and still all the mischief will be done." "That," returned Caroline, "need not give you a moment's uneasiness; you can say, that, wishing to spare the feelings of the obliged person, you will be glad if she will keep the affair a secret for the present; and as you have often spoken of her high sense of honour, she will no doubt comply." Eliza hesitated—thus unblushingly to add one falsehood to another,

was a degree of guilt she had not yet attained, and she would fain have inquired where was now Caroline's sense of honour, but the fear of ridicule withheld her. She dreaded the unsparing irony of her companion, if she was again seen to waver, and her only resource was therefore to comply. The letter was as follows:—

“ Knowing, dear Laura, your compassionate
“ heart is ever open to the distresses of your
“ fellow-creatures, I would request the loan of
“ 20l. in behalf of one truly deserving relief;
“ and as the person for whom this favour is
“ required was once in happier circumstances,
“ you would render the obligation doubly valu-
“ able by keeping this letter and its purport a
“ secret from every one, as you would respect
“ the feelings of another. To prevent misun-
“ derstanding, will you be good enough to
“ return this letter with the money required?”

And here let us for a moment pause, to consider how easily all this deception might have been avoided. Was the dress of an Hindoostan flower-girl indispensable for an admittance to the ball? undoubtedly not; but had such indeed been the case, would the indulgent Mrs. Courtney, would the generous Miss Mel-

bourne have refused to listen to her request? and what though a gentle reproof had accompanied the latter's compliance, would not the deepest anxiety for her future welfare have dictated it? and her niece's indiscretion, without any intimation to that effect, have remained sacred in her eyes?

But of all this, Eliza thought not; an estrangement of some months had driven from her memory the kind offices of nearly fourteen years; and from the misrepresentations of another, she had now learnt to look upon her aunt only as the causeless censurer and the unbending judge. Such ideas it was Caroline's aim to strengthen, who was endeavouring to lead her victim gradually from the paths of rectitude and virtue; not on account of any particular aversion for Eliza, for she felt a kind of morbid insensibility to all the concerns of her fellow-beings, save one; for that one she entertained a kind of constitutional hatred, and need we add, that one was Laura. To gratify this unhallowed feeling was her aim, nor did she for a moment pause to consider her guilt in thus offering up one unconscious victim at the altar of revenge, provided the object of her hatred also became the sacrifice.

But to our story—The letter was immediately dispatched, and in the course of a few days, an answer returned, (accompanied by the loan required), in which, after expressing her pleasure at receiving this incontestible proof of Eliza's compassionate disposition, Laura added, that the respect which had been so kindly paid to the feelings of another, should never be infringed by herself. According to Eliza's request, her own letter was returned; and comparing the two, Caroline remarked the striking similarity of their hand-writing; it was indeed such as to attract the attention of a casual observer, but, at the moment, her companion little heeded it, for she was ill at ease, from contending emotions.

Far from exciting the admiration of Eliza and Caroline, Laura's confiding nature was ridiculed by them; but the smile of the former, though she would fain have concealed it even from herself, was one of bitterness.

How different from the lightness of heart with which their unconscious dupe dispatched the packet, which she imagined was to convey happiness to a suffering fellow-creature, let those declare who have experienced the sensation; such is the immeasurable distance

placed by an omnipotent hand between vice and virtue.

The ball night arrived, and among the foremost in the splendour of their habiliments were the Countess of Beaumont and her party; the scene was magnificent beyond any Eliza had yet beheld; but that pure taste for enjoyment which had rendered the birth-day enchanting, was here wanting; since that time, her senses had been bewildered by the active part she had taken in the splendid drama of the world; she had been hurried along the sea of dissipation, unmindful of the quicksands which every where threatened to destroy her; and though reflection was impossible amid the unthinking crowd that surrounded her, it was in the solitude of her chamber, on her restless bed of down, Eliza Courtney was called upon to remember that her evening's amusement had been purchased by the most unprovoked, unpardonable deception.

Two days after, they quitted Bath, and the same feelings of reluctance which protracted Eliza's departure from Richmond, now prevented her from performing the promise so readily given.

Day after day did she delay her departure

for W——, under the most frivolous pretences, until her faithful attendant ventured to remind her young lady of her mistress's anxiety at not seeing them. Reluctant, and unaccustomed as Eliza ever was to listen to the advice of any one, she at length found herself obliged to comply; and an early day was fixed for the journey, not, however, until she had enjoined the wondering Catherine to secrecy, respecting the fortnight which had elapsed since their arrival in the metropolis, and who was further requested to say they had but just reached London. Thus does one act of disobedience engender another.

When Eliza had determined upon going, she earnestly requested Caroline Stanley to accompany her. For some moments the latter gazed on her in silence, until every feature became strongly marked by rage and contempt; at length in a tone of blended bitterness and amazement, she replied, "Surely Eliza you jest; what! accompany you to W——, to be mocked by the demure excellences of that hated cousin, that Laura Fitz-Osborne? no, no, Eliza, I have been too well instructed for that, believe me. Come to us in Devonshire, (whither we are shortly going) when you will;

but never can you see me while she remains under your roof; when it is otherwise, you may expect me." Never before had Caroline so explicitly declared her enmity towards the innocent Laura; and had not Eliza's discernment been obscured by prejudice and passion, she would have discovered the real designs of her companion: as it was, she withdrew in terror from the impending storm, and the subject was, by tacit consent, never recurred to.

With mutual professions of regret, the Countess and her daughter parted with their guest, who found the journey less tedious than she had anticipated. The scenes indeed which Eliza had recently witnessed, afforded her an ample field for reflection, and had she been wise, she would have learnt from them more duly to appreciate the fire-side to which she was hastening: but the misguided girl was ever the sport of appearances: the delusive gaiety in which she had plunged had prevented her looking forward to the enjoyment of domestic intercourse; and she paused not for a moment to consider, that while she vainly endeavoured to grasp the shadow, the more discerning Charlotte was securing the substance. Home was no longer the dear resting

place to which she could retreat from the little turmoils of life, to which she had as yet been exposed ; it contained an object at once feared and despised. The unobtrusive, but conspicuous virtues of Laura, had oftentimes made her feel her own inferiority, and she now determined to depreciate the excellence she had not sufficient strength of mind to imitate. To do this effectually, she must gain the ear of that parent whom in affliction she had deserted, but who still yearned to embrace her with unabated affection. Little did she then imagine that the seeds of suspicion were already (by her means) sown in the breast of Mrs. Courtney, for which we must now account.

The morning after the happy discovery we have recorded had taken place, Laura received Eliza's letter ; she was certainly surprised at its contents, although implicitly relying on the veracity which prompted the request. The injunctions to secrecy she resolved faithfully to observe ; and having folded it up, she arose to place it in safety, with a note just received from Fanny Llewellyn, when the former slipped from her hand and fell to the ground. Mrs. Courtney, who was seated by her side, stooped to pick it up, and Laura, vexed at the

accident, regained it with some confusion. "Your note from Miss Llewellyn I imagine, or from an unknown correspondent?" inquiringly exclaimed Mrs. Courtney, at the same time eyeing her with a penetrating glance. Laura's colour rose at the thought: a falsehood she detested; but must she betray the confidence reposed in her? A moment's reflection made her determine to avoid either; and, stammering out a hasty negative, she quitted the room.

Mrs. Courtney's disposition was generous and affectionate; but it was sadly obscured by suspicion. She loved Laura; but she remembered she had sometimes, at the instigation of Eliza, treated her unkindly. Laura, tender as she was, might still retain a sense of recent injury: that letter she was so anxious to conceal might be in answer to some reflections on her own character, hazarded by the sensitive orphan, to some one who was unknown to herself. The confusion she had witnessed confirmed this idea; and, at least, she now discovered (or thought she did) that Laura was not so candid and ingenuous as she appeared to be. Such were the feelings which agitated the mind of Mrs. Courtney, as Laura pursued her way to the Rectory, where she was to pass

the day, and who was rendered no less uneasy by the foregoing incident. The native artlessness of her character revolted from the slightest suspicion of duplicity or secrecy; and the kind welcome she met with on her arrival, served but to increase, rather than subdue her agitation. The promise extorted in Eliza's letter prevented her participating her sorrow with one, who, by her counsel, might have alleviated it; and at an early hour she parted from her friends, eager to seek in the retirement of her chamber that peace of mind, which in society was wanting to her comfort.

Time, however, wore away; Mrs. Courtney treated Laura with her accustomed kindness, though a painful impression remained on her mind; and the latter, conscious of her unshaken integrity, began to hope that this violation of candour had been forgotten.

About three days before Eliza was expected to arrive, as Laura was one morning returning from her accustomed walk with Fanny Llewellyn (from whom she had just parted) her attention was attracted by a little child, who was sitting by the road-side, sobbing aloud. Her compassionate heart was instantly moved at his distress. "What is the matter, my good

little boy?" she enquired, approaching him. The child made no reply, but wept only the more bitterly. Laura endeavoured to sooth him by the gentleness of her inquiries; and at length he said, "You are a very good lady for speaking to me thus kindly; and I don't think mammy will be angry if I tell you of our distress. My father is gone to the wars; my poor sister is dying; and last night mammy was taken so ill, that she cannot work for us any more; she has no bread to give us, so we must all die of hunger. I should not mind any thing, if it was not for poor Susy; but she will die, I am sure she will die." Sobs here impeded his utterance, and Laura, moved almost to tears, inquired his name, and where he lived? "My name is Willy Morgan," he replied; "and our cottage stands hard by yonder mill; but I could not bear to see my mammy so broken-hearted, so I came and sat down here." "But that is not kind of you to leave her, my good little fellow," said Laura; "you must go home and comfort your mammy, and I will go with you." The child instantly dried his tears, and raising his innocent little countenance to hers, with an expression which seemed to say, "And will you indeed go with

me?" he arose, and ran in the direction to which he had pointed, stopping but to ascertain that Laura was by his side, until they reached the cottage. The little boy raised the latch;—Laura entered; and if her commiseration had been raised by his artless tale, how much more was her attention riveted by the scene which now presented itself! The dying sister, of whom Willy had spoken, (a child of nine years of age,) was lying on a humble pallet, with very few signs of animation; while the parent, who was gently supporting her head, seemed little less exhausted by penury and suffering, than the child to whose wants she was administering. The room was almost entirely stripped of furniture; but the clean white-washed walls and sand-strewn floor bore testimony to the former neatness and comfort of the inmates. The day was excessively cold, and the dying embers seemed to linger on the deserted hearth, as if unwilling wholly to withdraw their transient power; while the convulsive moans, which at intervals broke from the little sufferer, added to the cheerlessness of the scene. Little Willy hastened to the bed-side (beckoning Laura to approach) and said in a low voice, "I hope, mammy, you

won't be angry ; but this kind lady came up to me when I was sitting by the road-side, and told me I must come home and comfort you, and said she would come along with me. Do talk to her, mammy, and tell her all about poor Susy, for she speaks so kindly, and looks so good !" The imploring accents in which these words were uttered aroused the attention of the cottager, and unwilling as she was to accept assistance from a stranger, one glance at the compassionate countenance of Laura conciliated her regard. In words dictated by the purest commiseration she inquired into the complaint of the invalid. The tale was soon told: the ravages of a rapid consumption had reduced her to her present state ; while continued watching and abstinence had rendered the poor woman unable any longer to labour for the maintenance of herself and children. Her husband was on the Continent, and she had no friends to assist her. The anguish of the poor woman was in some measure alleviated by a flood of tears, when she spoke of the inevitable death of her child ; and Laura was too young, and too much affected herself, to offer consolation : she could, therefore, only blend her tears with those of the mourner ; but

those tears spoke volumes to the heart of the disconsolate parent; they told her that there was one being who still sympathized in her misfortunes, and she was comforted. “My poor tender-hearted Willy!” said the cottager, “I know not what will become of him when he loses his dear Susan.” Laura, whose attention had been drawn from her little friend, now sought him in the place he had before occupied; but the affectionate boy had crept round to the other side, and resting his head on the bed, within a short space of his sister, was gazing at her with mingled alarm and tenderness, permitting neither tear nor sigh to escape him, lest the slightest agitation should interrupt her already difficult breathings. Laura gazed at him in wondering admiration: “So young, and yet so thoughtful,” she inwardly ejaculated; “surely his heart must be the seat of nature’s best treasures.” She then endeavoured to sooth the good woman with the hope of her child’s recovery; but she shook her head—“Oh no! (my dear young lady,) nothing now can save my poor Susan—I have long foreseen that, and I have prayed for resignation; but I had hoped my strength would not have failed me until all was over, that she

might not be deprived of the few comforts she can yet enjoy." "Fear not on that account," returned Laura, "the unfortunate will ever find a friend: the little money I have at present with me will perhaps be sufficient for your wants until to-morrow, when I will come again; and believe me it is my especial happiness in having it in my power to assist you." So saying, she presented her purse: the grateful cottager for a moment hesitated to receive it from a stranger; but Laura's pleading look seconded her request, and she no longer refused. "I willingly receive your bounty," she replied, "for you, my kind benefactress, can compassionate the misfortunes of others—can respect the feelings of those, who, from comparative comfort, are reduced to actual want. May I hope that you will not make known our distress, (for our landlord is a hard-dealing man, and I have not at present the means of paying my rent), at least until you are acquainted with some particulars of our past lives." Laura readily consented; but instantly calling to mind the uneasiness her former promise had occasioned her, she sought and obtained permission to reveal it to one friend, who, she assured the good woman, was

able and willing to assist her. She now prepared to depart, promising to return the following morning. Willy then left his station: "Did I not say," said the grateful little fellow, "that you spoke so kindly?—but you will come again to-morrow; and perhaps Susy will not die." Laura kissed the affectionate child; and renewing her promises, left the cottage, meditating on the scene she had witnessed, and revolving in her mind, whether it would be most advisable to inform Fanny Llewellyn or Miss Melbourne of her late visit. A circumstance which had occurred during her absence determined her in favour of the former.

Miss Melbourne had that morning received a letter informing her, that an intimate friend who had been for some time at the Hot Wells for the recovery of her health, was now at the point of death. With all the zeal of disinterested friendship, Miss Melbourne resolved immediately to repair thither, to take a last farewell of one whose society had so often charmed her, and whose attachment to herself was no less fervent and sincere. When Laura arrived, she found her in the midst of preparations for the journey; to trouble her therefore with her tale of woe, when her heart was already

heavy with sorrow, was what Laura could not think of doing; Mrs. Courtney she also found more unwell than when she had quitted her, and as Miss Melbourne bade her farewell, she could not repress one selfish tear (it was what she seldom indulged in), this separation seeming to her an omen of approaching evil. It was Mrs. Courtney's custom, not to rise until ten o'clock; and no one was permitted to disturb her till that hour: quitting her bed therefore early the ensuing morning, and telling Charlotte she was going to the Rectory, but should be back in two hours, Laura repaired thither with all possible speed, thinking to return before Mrs. Courtney left her room, or might require her services. It so happened, however, that on this morning, the latter having passed a restless night, rung her bell, not long after Laura had departed. Charlotte instantly obeyed the summons, and tenderly inquired after her health. "I am very far from well this morning," replied Mrs. Courtney, "but where is Laura?" Charlotte answered that she was gone to the Rectory, but would return shortly. "To the Rectory," said Mrs. Courtney, "she is always going there; I wish she was not so fond of leaving home." Charlotte reminded

her of the many circumstances which concurred in rendering Miss Llewellyn's society desirable to her friend, and again inquired if there was any thing she wished for. "No," replied the invalid, half peevishly, "only that those about me would be less fond of seeking after new acquaintances."

Charlotte made no reply, but, closing the curtains, seated herself by the bed-side, though the tear of wounded feeling fell down her cheek as she did so. She reflected how many privations Laura and herself had cheerfully undergone, to administer to the comforts of her parent, and that while they were denied the very few recreations their situations afforded, the absent self-indulging Eliza was on every occasion extolled as a most tender-hearted affectionate child.

At such a moment as this, Charlotte could not but deeply feel so ungenerous a partiality; but she had been too well instructed by Miss Melbourne to entertain the slightest degree of jealousy in regard to a sister whom she really loved, and conscious of her innocence in the affair laid to her charge, she endeavoured to suppress thoughts so inimical to filial duty, considering all the little unkindnesses they had

to experience as the result of the invalid's weak state of health. Mrs. Courtney was in the mean time no less active in brooding over evils; hers, however, were those of the imagination only; she thought that Laura, for a new friend had deserted her; that her kindness to a portionless orphan had not been properly requited; and calling to mind the letter which had so carefully been concealed, she came to this conclusion, that Laura's former attentions had been dictated by a cold sense of duty, or sordid interest,—by any thing but affection. Meanwhile the unconscious object of these reflections reached the Rectory, and quickly making known the occasion of her visit at that early hour, accepted with joy Miss Llewellyn's offer of accompanying her immediately to the cottage.

On their arrival, Laura found the poor woman much better than on the preceding day; the little sufferer was also more composed; and Willy, who had been anxiously awaiting her coming, now ran to the bed-side and whispered something in his sister's ear.

The smile of grateful recognition which played upon her lips at the entrance of Laura was answered by the more voluble satisfaction

of her brother, when his joy was checked by the sight of a stranger. With all the genuine sensibility of her nature, Miss Llewellyn inquired more particularly into the situation of the cottager and her children; while Laura, approaching her little friends, produced the presents her usual forethought had provided. Among the rest, was a book of hymns for the little girl! "How kind of you to bring a book for Susy, dear, good lady," said Willy; "do you know, before we came here, some one as kind as yourself taught her to read; and she has promised when she gets better to teach me." "And that will never be, Willy," replied Susy, shaking her head: "nor do I wish to get well again, only for your sake and mammy's; but you will be a good boy, and comfort her when I am gone, and then every body will love you, and teach you to read." Poor Willy turned away his head to conceal the fast-falling tears as she spoke; and wishing to relieve the kind-hearted little fellow, Laura said, "I will teach you to read, if you desire it." The child looked artlessly at her, and exclaimed, "Will you indeed? oh, then I shall be able to read these pretty hymns, and grow up a great boy, and work for mammy and Susy." After spending some time

longer at the cottage, and leaving behind many mementoes of their munificence, Miss Llewellyn and Laura departed, and having agreed to meet at the cottage the same hour the succeeding day, each separated for their respective homes. The evening of the same day witnessed the arrival of Eliza, who was received by Mrs. Courtney with all that delight with which we welcome a favourite child after an absence of many years: past neglect was forgotten; present endearments only were remembered; while Eliza, whose mind was active in designing evil, determined to lose no time in putting her plans into execution.

From this moment she aimed at rendering Mrs. Courtney suspicious of Laura; every look, every action was interpreted to the latter's disadvantage. She liked not Miss Llewellyn, from motives known only to herself, but she resolved by her means to render her shafts more fatal. Eliza was too wary, and Mrs. Courtney too unreserved in her communications, for her long to remain ignorant of Laura's supposed duplicity, which the artful girl turned without scruple to her own advantage. Every thing relating to the debt she had contracted, was by her carefully avoided, (it was one she never in-

tended to liquidate,) and Laura was possessed of too much innate nicety of feeling to ask for what was thus unceremoniously withheld. To get rid of one to whom she was so greatly indebted was therefore her aim; Caroline Stanley would then perform her promise; and the absence of her aunt rendered the present time a most favourable opportunity. Every moment of Laura's absence was construed by her into studied neglect; and so total a change took place in Mrs. Courtney's feelings, that she soon began to wonder how she could ever have entertained any affection for one so devoid (in her opinion) of gratitude. Laura sensibly felt the change, but, perfectly unconscious of the cause, she continued her visits to the cottage; while Eliza was busily employed in planning schemes which were to prove as successful, but more effective in her intended removal.

The crafty girl indeed was not long in discovering that Laura's steps were not always directed to the Rectory: the hurried negatives with which she answered the inquiries of Mrs. Courtney respecting her visits there, were to Eliza so many proofs of some mysterious proceeding. Even Charlotte she observed was not admitted to these morning perambulations, and,

determined on elucidating this seeming mystery, she one morning watched the moment of Laura's departure, and followed her at a short distance. As Laura proceeded, she became deeply involved in thought; a circumstance which had occurred the preceding day having filled her at once with pleasure and regret.

The cottager had, at her request, then related the events of her past life, and what was her astonishment at recognizing in the widow, the daughter-in-law of that same widow Morgan, mentioned in the second Chapter of this volume; at learning that the "kind lady," who had taught Susan to read, was no other than her lamented parent. On reflecting that Charles's sincere wish was thus gratified, in the hour of need she had been nigh to return that assistance which had once been so lavishly bestowed. The grateful Mrs. Morgan had joyfully beheld in her youthful preserver the child of her former benefactress, but a lapse of some years had greatly altered the then sportive little girl, and, at such a distance from her native place, she had failed to recognise her.

While agitated by these reflections, she was joined by Miss Llewellyn, and having seen them enter the cottage together, Eliza returned home.

CHAPTER IX.

My child ! my child ! the mother cries,
From thee too must I part ?
Oh ! 'tis a truth indeed that rends
My poor forsaken heart.

But oh ! forgive this wayward thought,
Thou Power Supreme, Divine !
Take what thou gav'st, in mercy take,
And teach me to resign.

DELUSION.

A trying scene however awaited these good Samaritans; the little invalid had been for some days past evidently growing worse, and her short and blameless life was now drawing to a close. She received Laura and her companions with her usual smile of satisfaction, but seemed unable to give utterance to the feelings which oppressed her, while the affectionate Willy called Laura's attention to the little

hymn book which she still grasped in her feeble hand. "Susy has been telling me she is going to die!" said the child in a low voice, endeavouring to stifle his sobs: "and she says she will leave me that book, that I may learn the pretty things there are in it, if I will promise to keep it as long as I live; but what shall I do if I lose her? oh, I shall want for nothing then, I shall die too; do you not think, dear lady, that she will get better?"

Laura knew not how to answer this question; her fear for Susan's safety far exceeded every hope of her recovery, but she knew not how to probe the already deeply wounded heart of the affectionate boy. Susan now motioned them all to her bed-side. "I feel I am dying, dear mother," she said in a feeble tone, "but let not that grieve you, for I die very happy, I have said my prayers, and I trust they will be heard, and all my sins forgiven; and I have prayed for you kind ladies that you may be as happy as you deserve to be. I cannot tell you all I feel for your great kindness, but you must not think me ungrateful on that account; and you, Willy, will remember what I told you this morning; you must attend to what those hymns tell you, and if you grow

up a good boy, you will meet me in that good place, where through my Saviour's atoning sacrifice I hope to go." She paused, respiration becoming impeded, and the disconsolate parent turned away her head to conceal her emotion. Willy sobbed aloud, while Laura and Fanny attempted not to repress their tears. A silence of some minutes succeeded, during which the dying Susan kept her hands feebly clasped, utterly unconscious of surrounding objects; for her thoughts were fixed on all that the Christian can hope for, but mortality never attain.

A total change however seemed shortly to have taken place; her sunken eye was now lighted up by an unearthly lustre, her look of dejection had vanished, and her whole frame bespoke the expiring Christian triumphantly quitting this scene of suffering. Not a murmur broke from the little group as they stood transfixed to the spot in wondering astonishment; a slight movement was now perceived; her features became still more animated, and her half-raised hand twice motioned to some object which was discernible only to herself; a slight convulsion then shook her feeble frame; one moment more, and she had ceased to breathe. A long and awful pause ensued,

until Willy, who dreamt not but a temporary sleep had overtaken his sister, gently drew away the book which her expiring effort had grasped; in this moment her hand rested against his; the chill of death was upon it; the fearful truth now suddenly burst upon his unprepared senses, and uttering a shriek of horror, he fell lifeless by her side. Long was it before the united exertions of his disconsolate parent and her companions could restore the unconscious boy to a sense of his loss, and having consigned the mourners to the care of a poor woman who lived close by, Laura and Fanny departed, while each bent their steps in a contrary direction, on their return home.

The awful scene Laura had just witnessed concurring with the frowning aspect of her own situation, gave to her present reflections a sable hue. Unlike her brother, Laura's disposition was not sanguinary, or rather her naturally lively imagination had been so checked by the events of her hitherto chequered life, that she had long learnt to regard prosperity with a suspicious eye; and her fancy, hastily discarding the streams of light which at times broke in upon her, would oftentimes linger

amid the dark shadows that intervened. But who among the most favoured children of fortune has not felt the utter dreariness by which Laura now fancied herself surrounded? when the mind vainly seeks for shelter in some corner of this seeming desert; when every earthly object appears insignificant and valueless. The absence of Charles and Miss Melbourne, the pointed attacks of Eliza, the altered behaviour of Mrs. Courtney, all concurred to increase her melancholy; and she reflected with regret, how different was the fate of the departed Susan. "Oh, that the grave would as soon shelter this weary head!" she exclaimed in an agony of grief; "from care and trouble thou, happy girl, art now free; while I am left to make my way through this wide world, an orphan and a dependant." Tears of bitterness succeeded, but the words had scarcely escaped her when she became sensible of the sinfulness of repining; the "still small voice," was never disregarded by her, and uttering the fervent ejaculation of "Thy will be done," she soon became more composed. But the scenes which awaited her on her return home, were calculated to increase rather than subdue these uncomfortable reflections in the mind of

one less governed by religious principles than herself.

Every occasion of concealment having now subsided, Laura would fain have confided to Mrs. Courtney the story of the poor cottager; but the repelling monosyllable with which her tender inquiries (whether her night's rest had refreshed her) were answered, frightened away the poor girl's resolutions, while her friendship with Charlotte, which had hitherto been her solace in every emergency, was now pointedly obstructed; the latter being commanded to avoid all intercourse with one unworthy of her regard. Such was the laconic intimation Charlotte received, that her friend had forfeited the esteem of her parent; and she had ventured to inquire why it was thus suddenly withdrawn? But Charlotte had never been the child of indulgence, her request was silenced in a tone of authority, and the triumphant smile which played upon Eliza's lip at this refusal too plainly convinced her of the truth. It will therefore be readily conjectured that she beheld Laura with undiminished affection, though too timid to declare it openly; when various circumstances which occurred for a time shook her confidence in her friend's integrity.

On the evening of the same day, as Laura was completing a drawing of Corfe Castle and its surrounding scenery, Eliza approached, and accosted her with, "May I presume to inquire if that is a sketch of the cottage to which the artless ingenuous Laura Fitz-Osborne daily bends her steps."

Laura started; her visits to the cottage were then discovered, and by one who she saw was ready to place the worst construction upon them; but presently recovering her self-possession she answered in the negative: "Nay," resumed her tormentor archly, "that cottage in the distance is surely the spot at which the former mentioned personage and her friend meet to discuss the weighty matters which agitate their brain." "Of what cottage and of what friend are you speaking?" inquired Mrs. Courtney petulantly, "Oh, for an explanation I must refer you to this skilful artist, which I do the more willingly, being myself anxious to learn the purport of these mysterious walks, and I doubt not she will presently give one with her usual artlessness." "Forbear Eliza," said Mrs. Courtney with angry imperiousness "to irritate me, by your levity; and by you, Miss Fitz-Osborne, I again desire to be informed

the meaning of all this." Never until this moment had Laura been fully sensible of the actual dependency of her situation; never until now had Mrs. Courtney exercised the slightest authority over her words or actions. In one, whose naturally high spirit had been replaced by Christian humility, this conviction excited one bitter feeling, and but one; stilling therefore the momentary throbbing it had occasioned, she calmly replied;—"The cottage, dear Madam, Eliza mentions, is one situated about half a mile from hence; and the friend, Miss Llewellyn, who has for some time past accompanied me in my visits there; the intention of which has been the relief of a poor woman, named Morgan, and her two helpless children." "Oh, we doubt not for a moment the intention of one so immaculate as yourself," retorted Eliza with an expression of contempt. "The objects of your charity must doubtless have reminded you of your own situation at a former period of life." But the blow fell powerless on her for whom it was intended, and unhumbled by Eliza's malicious insinuations, the high-minded Laura replied: "It did so, and I was therefore the more anxious to share with Miss Llewellyn the delightful task of soothing the

unfortunate ; and in so doing to follow the example of your mamma, who has so long and so kindly given shelter to a houseless orphan."

Laura spoke from her feelings, and any one but the relentless Eliza would have been softened by the mildness of her adversary ; but it only incited her to renew her attacks, and she resumed : " Oh certainly : but let me add one circumstance which you appear to have forgotten ; it was your opinion (and by no means an uncommon one) that an air of mystery gives a degree of interest to the most trivial subject ; it was on that account you kept these visits a secret from every one (save from that doughty representative of yourself, Miss Llewellyn) until they could no longer remain so. It was this prompted you daily to steal out unknown to the inmates of this house ; and such has been the conduct of the sister of one who once boasted of the ingenuousness which marked his family : oh for shame !" " One moment will be sufficient for me to refute your unmerited charges," replied Laura, wounded, but not irritated, at the suspicion of duplicity. " A promise was extorted from me by one who was unaccustomed to receive the bounty of a

stranger ; that promise is no longer binding ; it was therefore my intention to make known the distress of the poor woman, the first opportunity ; and you, Eliza, are the last whom I should have suspected of censuring this conduct." The peculiar stress laid on the latter part of this sentence, made the colour mount to Eliza's cheek: Laura was evidently referring to the promise she had herself enjoined at Bath, as she recurred to the laboured falsehoods of which she had then been guilty ; and which, if discovered, would empower Laura to become her accuser ; a sense of her perilous situation therefore kept her silent. Mrs. Courtney however, by whom this emotion was unobserved, replied, " Enough of this dissension ; you Eliza have acted rightly ; while the plausible story Miss Fitz-Osborne has invented to serve her present purpose, has failed in its object ; she must still stand convicted of unwarrantable duplicity, of which I fear her character principally consists." Mrs. Courtney ceased, and taking up her candle, was preparing to quit the room. In a moment, Laura was by her side, " Leave me not in anger, dear madam," said the broken-hearted girl. " If you cannot trust in my veracity, do not at least condemn me

until you have appealed to Miss Llewellyn, for the truth of all I have asserted." Mrs. Courtney gazed at her with a stern countenance, but replied in rather a softened tone, "No, Laura, I cannot listen to you, indeed I cannot; one omission might have been overlooked; but this is the second time you have violated every pretension to candour; my behaviour to you has not merited such a return, and I find too late that I have been deceived in you: Charlotte, follow me to my chamber." Firm in conscious innocence, Laura instantly turned to Eliza for an explanation, but the latter had no intention whatever to give one; and with a smile of gratified malice she followed her mother and sister, who had now quitted the room. Laura's feelings at this moment it is utterly impossible to describe, and in a state of mind endurable only from the conviction that she was unjustly accused, she sat long after her usual time of retiring, uncheered by the society of a fellow-creature, and at length sought her pillow, but to experience a night of restlessness and sorrow. Nor was Charlotte less disturbed by the events of the evening; Laura, (the only friend her heart had ever truly acknowledged) was in trouble, while she was

peremptorily forbidden to see her, to share her sorrows or to offer consolation.

Eliza's accusation had been too plainly dictated by malice to escape her notice, and though she could not forbear thinking her parent was governed more by prejudice than reason, she was vexed that Laura should have given occasion for the assaults of the enemy. Still however she relied on her friend's integrity, and resolved that no good offices should be wanting on her part to ensure her restoration to favour: with this determination she retired to rest. Little indeed did the timid Charlotte imagine the effect those good offices were likely to produce; Mrs. Courtney's ear was open only to the insinuations of Eliza; the supposition of one more unworthy action was alone wanting to make her withdraw her protection wholly from Laura, and that by the prompt activity of Eliza was speedily supplied. On the following morning, Laura having calmed her mind by meditation and prayer, descended to the breakfast table; her accustomed visit to the cottage had been deferred until it received Mrs. Courtney's sanction; her little stock of money was also expended, but on the munificence of Miss Llewellyn she relied, for affording

that assistance which was no longer in her power to bestow.

Charlotte greeted her with her usual affectionate smile, but it was unaccompanied by one from Mrs. Courtney or Eliza, who both seemed determined to treat her with utter disregard: thus passed three tedious days, when a note arrived from Miss Llewellyn, inviting Laura and Charlotte to spend the following one at the Rectory. The former immediately presented it to Mrs. Courtney: "You, Miss Fitz-Osborne, may act as you think proper," said the latter, "for Charlotte I have other engagements." "May I not also proffer my services," Laura ventured to say; but she was sternly answered in the negative, and the poor girl withdrew, to hide the tear of wounded feeling which she vainly endeavoured to suppress. Early the ensuing morning, Laura set off for the Rectory, leaving Charlotte to regret she was unable to accompany her. With the kindest solicitude, Fanny sought to disperse the cloud which she saw gathering on the brow of her young friend, but she wished not to extort a confidence which might from various motives be withheld; and Laura, from principle, ever avoided making the unkindness of Mrs. Courtney, or the malice

of Eliza, the subject of their conversation. She was now enabled to learn all the particulars she desired, concerning the inmates of the cottage, accounting for her own absence by mentioning the ill health of Mrs. Courtney. Her satisfaction was great at hearing Mrs. Morgan bore her loss with christian fortitude, and that little Willy had become more resigned, on being told that if he were a good boy, he might one day hope to rejoin his lost sister. "To-morrow," added Miss Llewellyn, "is fixed upon for Susan's interment, and Mrs. Morgan has expressed her intention of repairing shortly to her husband's native village, since she will then be surrounded by her friends; and there is no prospect of his return, until the war on the continent is concluded. Her little boy often speaks of his instructress in terms of the most lively affection; and already anticipates the time when by her assistance he shall be able to read the hymn book, which he regards as his greatest treasure."

Thus employed in conversing on various subjects, the time rapidly flew by, and ere the evening arrived, Laura had insensibly forgotten the contending emotions which had of late agitated her; but she had an enemy in W——,

who was far from being inactive in her absence.

When Mrs. Courtney, accompanied by Eliza, descended to the library (which was not until some time after Laura's departure) they observed a letter lying upon the sofa. "What have we here," inquired the latter, taking it up, and looking at the inscription, "Oh, 'To Lieutenant Fitz-Osborne,' no secrets I suppose, or Laura would not have left it thus carelessly about; besides, they have a right to read, who are most concerned, and the name of Courtney appears here to be conspicuous: but what," added Eliza, "is this?" "The tyrannical disposition of Mrs. Courtney, and the no less unendurable behaviour of Charlotte and Eliza, have rendered me long weary of existing in such slavery." "Give me the letter," interrupted Mrs. Courtney eagerly, "Let me see what the artful girl says."

Eliza complied, and, agitated by contending emotions, the former read what surprised as well as shocked her. The letter was addressed to Charles, to all appearance in Laura's handwriting; language seemed vainly endeavouring to describe the utter detestation she entertained towards her benefactress; all she had been condemned to suffer from her capricious tem-

per, as well as from the contemptuously proud Eliza, while she added, that the pretended friendship of the weak-minded Charlotte, (who was too timid openly to give an opinion) did but aggravate her wretchedness. Repeatedly did she call down misfortunes, such as hers, on the heads of those who had occasioned them ; and concluded by saying, that the treatment she experienced from all, had already caused her to regard life without any feelings of satisfaction or pleasure.

“ Ungrateful girl ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Courtney, “ was it for this I have sheltered thee— fostered thee, with a parent’s care ; to have myself and my child traduced ? Oh no ! this is too much ever to be forgotten. ” “ There, ” said Eliza, handing the letter to Charlotte, who at this moment entered the room ; “ you have ever refused to believe the ingratitude of Laura ; you have your own character now at full length : read, therefore, and be convinced. ” Charlotte did, indeed, read in wondering conviction ; she could no longer doubt the unworthiness of her friend ; but ever wishing to palliate the faults of others, she replied, “ Might not this have been dictated by momentary anger, at what she considered your unkind behaviour the other night ? ” No ; that

cannot possibly be," said Eliza, quickly; "for see, it is dated several days since, and she had then no provocation for such baseness." Charlotte could make no reply; and the day passed in gloomy abstraction and thoughtfulness.

On returning to W——, late in the evening, Laura was told Mrs. Courtney and her daughters were engaged, and had desired they might not be disturbed. She, therefore, retired to rest; slept soundly, from her day's fatigue; and just as she was about to quit her room the following morning, a note to this effect was placed in her hands.

"Having, from a letter which was not intended to reach her eye, ascertained beyond all doubt, the unheard-of ingratitude of one who has so long shared the bounty of her whose character she has so shamefully traduced, Mrs. Courtney considers it a duty she owes to herself, and more especially to her children, wholly to withdraw her protection from so unworthy an object. Miss Fitz-Osborne must therefore instantly seek a home elsewhere (Miss Llewellyn will, doubtless, gladly afford one); and to spare the feelings of both parties, she will dispense with a meeting, which must painfully remind

lummy against herself or her children would never be overlooked;—to make Laura appear guilty of this, had therefore been her endeavour. The letter had been placed on the sofa by her a moment before she entered the room with Mrs. Courtney, whose injunction was, to all appearance, complied with (that it should remain precisely in the same situation until Laura's return); but it was carefully removed by Eliza, ere it could reach the eye of her against whom it spoke volumes, and consigned to the flames, as having served the purpose for which it was indited.

It was a considerable time ere the injured Laura could convince herself that what she saw was indeed reality, or that she read aright. Her utter ignorance of the fact alluded to made her conscious some mistake must have arisen; and all she thought of was to see Mrs. Courtney. Her request was, however, not complied with, being imperiously told to act as she was desired, without further delay. Vainly did she entreat her, in the name of her whom she still professed to remember with regret, to grant her offspring a hearing: in vain did she solemnly protest she was innocent, and perfectly unconscious of having

written any letter within a considerable time. Mrs. Courtney was still inexorable; and all she could be prevailed upon to concede was, that at the moment of her departure Charlotte should be permitted to take leave of her.

Long was it before Laura could sufficiently collect herself to determine her actions: at length she resolved on addressing a few lines to Miss Llewellyn, enclosing the note she had that morning received from Mrs. Courtney. One hour brought the affectionate Fanny to W——. In playful accents, she informed her favourite the occasion of this visit was to run away with her, each individual at the Rectory being anxious to have her for its inmate. Laura then spoke of obligation. “Name it not,” earnestly replied Fanny; “it is I who should talk of that; are not Henry and myself indebted to your departed parent for every thing we enjoy?—to her active benevolence we owe that greatest of all gifts, when properly applied, education;—to her our present station in life;—and will you, Laura, refuse to share all she has afforded with us?” “You are too kind, much too kind,” said Laura; “I am totally unworthy of such goodness. Oh! how I regret I am not a few years older; I

might then provide for myself, by becoming governess in some family ; and you may perhaps scruple to admit under your roof one who at once stands accused of disingenuousness, falsehood, and ingratitude." "Nay, now," resumed Fanny, with a smile, "I perceive you are only making a trial of my good-nature : how often must I repeat to you, that I firmly believe your integrity to be unshaken, your ingenuousness unimpeachable, and your grateful remembrance of the slightest benefits conferred, indeed, lasting. As for the subject of your regret (which is, I confess, laudable in itself), we will say no more about it at present ; all I now require of you, is, that you hasten to quit a house where you may perchance be considered an intruder ; and in regard to the future, we will settle *that*, when you and I find that we cannot live amicably together." A short time was sufficient for Laura's preparations ; and Miss Llewellyn then requested an interview with Mrs. Courtney. The latter, however, (who had been prevailed upon by Eliza not to expose her delicate frame to any unnecessary excitement of her feelings), declined seeing her, adding, that however painful it might be to her, she must, from

various circumstances, decline all further intercourse with herself and Mr. Llewellyn, after returning thanks for their many kind attentions. Five minutes, however, were granted Charlotte to take leave of her friend. Several moments elapsed in tears and embraces, ere either could give utterance to all they felt. At length Charlotte exclaimed, "Oh, Laura! is it thus we must be separated? Oh, why have you not acted otherwise?" Laura made no reply, but recoiled from her grasp with mistrust and wounded affection.—Did Charlotte then imagine her unworthy? was the firm friendship which had hitherto existed between them thus to be ended? The woe-worn countenance of her companion spoke of a heart unchanged, however appearances might seem to convict her. Every feeling of anger instantly subsided, and in a solemn, though scarcely audible, tone of voice, she replied, "Every moment is precious, Charlotte; we have no time for prevaricating; and should we never meet again, I here solemnly protest to you (what I would fain have done to your mamma), that I am innocent of the crime so unaccountably laid to my charge,—that I have never been wanting in the duty I owed to my bene-

factress, or in gratitude for her multiplied favours: do you believe this?" "I do, indeed I do," returned Charlotte, "I knew, I felt assured you must be innocent." "Then will you, henceforth, not give ear to the malice of my enemies," inquired Laura, extending her hand, "but judge for yourself?" "I will," replied her companion impressively. "Enough; I require no more; return, therefore, this note to my benefactress, and tell her, that I cannot consent to receive it as a last testimony of her kindness, since I have done nothing to forfeit its continuance: thank her for all her goodness; carry to Eliza my fervent wishes for her future happiness; and oh, Charlotte! as you would preserve your own character unspotted and blameless,—as you respect the good opinion of your dearest, most revered friends, let not, I entreat you, let not Miss Melbourne be prevailed upon to think me ungrateful." At this moment Mrs. Courtney's bell rang. "All you require shall be performed," answered Charlotte, "however difficult the task. Should any letters arrive from Charles, they shall be forwarded to you. I know not when we may hope to meet: and now Heaven bless you, Laura! farewell!" "Thank you, thank you

a thousand times," murmured her companion. Tears prevented further reply; and again embracing, Charlotte departed; while Laura joined Fanny, with whom she proceeded to the Rectory.

Laura for some time walked onward in silence. From the various events which had occurred since Eliza's arrival at W——, she could not for a moment doubt, that to her was owing her hasty dismissal from a house which had so long been considered as her home. A momentary struggle then ensued: was the promise extorted from her during Eliza's sojourn at Bath still binding? But the conflict was quickly ended: Laura's heart was indeed as Caroline Stanley had anticipated, "the seat of honour;" her word had been given, and she quickly discarded the idea. Repressing only this circumstance, she related to her companion every thing as it had occurred; concealing, however, the suspicions Eliza's conduct had confirmed. When she had concluded, the amiable Fanny replied earnestly, "Laura, you are not formed for an intercourse with the busy world; your heart is too sensibly alive to the wants and woes of your fellow-creatures; your nature is too candid and confiding to fit

you for the turmoils of life, in which too many make their way by the exercise of sordid selfishness and duplicity. You have yet, my dear girl, to get an insight into mankind; that, experience must afford you; but remember I say not unto you, copy their examples,—there is danger in the thought: you must select the choicest, the most fragrant rose; but ever beware, lest the thorn should rankle in concealment. Your anxiety to gratify all parties has led you into error: had you been less eager to comply with Mrs. Morgan's request (which was urged without thought),—had you stipulated for the participation of your friends at W—— in her confidence; and if that were impracticable, had you selected Mrs. Courtney for your companion in this work of Christian charity, in preference to myself, (pardon me, Laura,) all would yet have been well. Thus you see, I have taken upon myself, unasked, the austere character of a censor, and now tell me if you can forgive me." "Forgive you!" reiterated Laura, with a glistening countenance, "when every word you have uttered is the most convincing proof you could possibly have afforded me, that I have a place in your affections; believe me, when I say your advice

shall be carefully treasured ; and may I ask you to repeat these injunctions, when indiscretion is leading me into error, for I have indeed need of some kind friend to direct me." "Doubt not but I will comply with your request," resumed Fanny, with a smile ; "and as you promise to become an obedient pupil, I shall, in the first place, enjoin you to be less solicitous in obliging others ; but shew some partiality in this affair, I pray you, lest I become a sufferer by the compact." Laura's heart was too full to permit a reply, and they quickly reached the Rectory, where she was welcomed by Henry Llewellyn with a smile of joy, as well as by the faithful Agnes, who was now drooping with age, and who wept with feelings of grateful remembrance at mention of the late Laura de Clifford.

A few days were sufficient to settle Laura in her new habitation ; and but for the loss of Charlotte's society, and the unceasing recollection of the supposed culpability which had procured her removal, she had every reason to be gratified at the change. How often did her thoughts revert to her friend ! how often did she think of the cheerlessness of her situation !—with a parent she could not revere,

and a sister, to whom, with her utmost efforts at forgetfulness, she could not award her esteem. A fearful void, indeed, had been occasioned in the breast of Charlotte, by the absence of her friend. Conscious of having acted without reflection, Mrs. Courtney had become more taciturn and petulant than ever; while Eliza, since Laura was no longer in her power, seemed willing to transfer to her sister the aversion she had once experienced for the former: she was left therefore to her own resources; and in the absence of her aunt, her greatest satisfaction was in pursuing the avocations which that excellent relative had prescribed. Laura's visits to the cottage were now resumed, and though the tear of bitter remembrance was discernible in the countenance of little Willy, on first seeing her; it was succeeded by a ray of unspeakable delight. He earnestly petitioned her to continue her instructions, a request which she willingly complied with; and so dear to her did the affectionate boy hourly become by his artless manners, that she looked forward with much regret to their approaching separation. About a week had elapsed since her arrival at the Rectory; when, returning from their morning's walk,

Fanny exclaimed: "To morrow being the anniversary of our arrival here, is a kind of festival with us; the surrounding poor on that day dine at the Rectory; and I have just been inviting Mrs. Morgan and her little boy to join the party; the morning following, Henry leaves us for a short time; business in London requiring his presence, and which he has great expectations of terminating favourably; should such be the case, a journey to town may be the consequence, but we must wait patiently the result." All was now bustle and preparation at the Rectory; and at an early hour the ensuing day, the neighbouring peasantry were seen flocking to the hospitable mansion of their pastor, accompanied by their infant children, who as soon as in faltering accents they could lisp his name, were brought to share his munificence, and receive his blessing.

This was a highly gratifying sight to Laura; days, long since gone by, passed before her imagination; and as she beheld Mrs. Morgan and her little friend among the guests, she observed with infinite satisfaction, the former forgetting for a time her recent troubles, while the countenance of Willy, who joined in the sports of

his young companions, soon became radiate with pleasure and delight.

The day passed off with that hilarity which usually characterizes such proceedings; and having procured a friend to officiate in his absence, Henry Llewellyn at the appointed time departed for London.

The object of this journey, Laura was not given to understand; its termination was looked forward to by Fanny with the greatest anxiety; and it seemed in some measure connected with the dying injunctions of the late Mrs. Llewellyn.

Not in the smallest degree however did she imagine it concerned herself; for to spare her friends, if possible, the uneasiness she herself experienced, was a leading point in Fanny's character. The reader may remember her declaration, that the name of Laura de Clifford had been mingled in the parting breath of her parent; but she had omitted to add, that Mrs. Llewellyn had obtained a promise from her children, of hazarding their fortunes, and even their lives, in the service of their much regretted friend or her offspring. This promise they determined religiously to perform, but until the present moment no opportunity had occurred.

Now, however, Henry Llewellyn (sacrificing every feeling of anger at former neglect) determined on making one last appeal; not to the Baron's generosity, but to his sense of justice; to the inextinguishable feelings of nature, in behalf of the orphan Laura and her brother.—The events of his journey are so important to the principal characters of this history, that we must refer the reader to the following chapter.

CHAPTER X.

When honour calls, and war's alarms
 Invite the brave,—the strong to arms,
 How glorious to see!—
 More glorious far, the heart that mourns,
 For other's woes, and quickly burns
 With christian charity.

RECONCILIATION.

On the morning after Henry Llewellyn's arrival in town, accidentally taking up a newspaper, he read among the list of deaths, the following paragraph: "On the 23d inst. after a short illness, the Honourable Francis Stanley, eldest son of Lord de Clifford." Henry had that morning intended proceeding to the Baron's residence, but he now altered his plan, resolving to let some days elapse, ere he broke in upon his privacy, or withdrew his attention from the loss he had sustained. That time having expired, he one morning bent his way

to Grosvenor Square, and upon inquiring, was informed, that the Baron, though at home, had long declined receiving any visitors. Urging that his business was important, and would admit of no delay, a domestic who had been despatched to the Baron, now returned, with the information, that his Lordship was too much indisposed to see company. Henry Llewellyn reluctantly departed; but he was in no way discouraged by this seeming difficulty: an interview with the Baron he determined to procure; and he doubted not, at length, attaining his object; especially as from the significant looks which had passed between the attendants, he was led to more than suspect, that his Lordship's consent to his admittance had never been ascertained.

The following day, therefore, he presented himself at the Baron's residence;—again requested an audience, which was again refused. Determining, however, to allow no day to elapse, without repeating his visits, the Baron, wearied by his continual solicitations, granted him an interview.

On being ushered into the apartment, he was instantly struck with the change a few years had effected in his Lordship.

He was seated in a spacious room, sur-

rounded by papers which he seemed to regard with a look of mistrustful apprehension; his once erect figure was now drooping with age and his still quick though sunken eye, seemed to wander in search of objects it was doomed never to attain, while at the same time it inspired the beholder with mingled pity and alarm. His whole person betrayed marks of habitual neglect, and instead of the mourning garb, which the recent death of his son had authorised, the faded habiliments of former splendour in which he was arrayed, were sadly in unison with the departed greatness of the wearer. Such was the person into whose presence Henry Llewellyn was now ushered; the attendant had withdrawn; and having made known his name, the Baron for some time gazed at him with a look of vacancy: "Who are you?" at length he said, "I know you not, and why therefore do you thus molest me?" "It is some years since your Lordship and I have met," returned Henry, "but you must surely remember the son of the late Mrs. Llewellyn!" "Llewellyn!" repeated the Baron, "yes, I think I have some faint recollection of the name; but I am strangely altered of late; and see you not these papers?"

he added wildly, "they are the bane of my existence, should I lose them, I am undone; and I cannot rest either night or day, lest they, like every thing else, should be torn away from me." Here he grasped the inanimate objects which lay before him, as though in them was centered every spark of lingering affection; he then relapsed into his former silence; the same air of vacuity again overspread his countenance, and Henry Llewellyn instantly became sensible that age had partly bereft him of his reason; and that this extreme anxiety concerning these papers, which the phantoms of his brain had conjured into such an invaluable treasure, was one great evidence of his temporary insanity.

He therefore permitted some moments to elapse, ere he again ventured to address his companion in terms of condolence; he then said, "The late domestic calamity you have sustained must doubtless have been a great shock to your nerves; the death of Mr. Stanley, was, I believe, rather unexpected." Lord de Clifford answered not: at the mention of his son, a frown of hatred and anger had been discernible, but it quickly passed away. "And you once had a daughter;" resumed Henry.—

The Baron's frame now shook convulsively; he grasped the speaker's hand with violence, exclaiming, "Know you ought of her? and yet name her not, lest I become frantic; oh, I had indeed a daughter, but I spurned her from my roof; I refused to listen to her when in distress, and I have perhaps been the cause of her death: but I was persuaded, I was forced, to act as I did—then do not, oh! do not reproach me with my cruelty." The Baron at these words sunk back exhausted in his chair, and Henry Llewellyn became alarmed at his seeming insensibility.

Soon, however, he began slowly to revive; but his countenance was singularly changed; his former energy had fled; his answers were vague and incoherent; and with difficulty did Henry make him understand, he should repeat his visit on the following morning, when he had some important communications to make.

When next he saw the Baron, who had now regained his accustomed composure, he observed with pleasure, that he was received with an air of satisfaction; and taking advantage of what had occurred the preceding day, he more cautiously introduced the desired subject. His companion appeared less affected than before,

and listened with breathless attention to the concise narrative he gave of Mrs. Fitz Osborne's married life, carefully avoiding any circumstance that might seem to reproach him with unkindness; when, however, he related that the death of her husband occasioned the most alarming symptoms of consumption, the old man concealed his face between his hands, exclaiming: "Oh! hide not the truth from me, I can, I must bear to hear it; it was I who gave her a death-blow; it was I who brought her with sorrow to the grave: and for whom? for those who have taken every thing from me, but my life; for those who have now left me to mourn over what I was, and all I have sacrificed, to ennoble them. Ah, my poor Laura! why did I not listen to thy entreaties? thou wouldst not have deserted me in my old age; but I taught thy kindred to despise thee, and too readily did they obey me." He ceased, overpowered by this exertion; and Henry Llewellyn became apprehensive of a suspension of intellect as on the following day; but he quickly revived, and seizing the favourable moment, his companion replied: "It is not yet too late to retrieve the past, and"—"Say you so?" interrupted the Baron eagerly; "but no,

have you not told me that she no longer lives? that I have been the cause of her death?"

"Nay, my Lord," returned Henry, "accuse me not thus unjustly; I did indeed say that Mrs. Fitz Osborne was no more, but she has left a daughter, who with the name inherits the invaluable qualities of her parent; and a son now in Egypt, nobly defending his king and country."

"Ah," ejaculated Lord de Clifford, every nerve being instantly strung with animation; "is there yet one fellow-being with whom I may claim kindred? is there still one link which binds me to this world of woe? but no, they will have been instructed to despise me, to execrate me for my cruelty, and I must linger out the remainder of my existence unpitied, unregarded, but by those who are eager to snatch from me the little I still possess; who think I have already lived too long!"

"Do not such injustice to the memory of your daughter," resumed Henry, sensibly affected at witnessing this paroxysm of grief; "by imagining that her children have been educated in such principles; it was ever her aim to inculcate in their hearts the doctrines of christian charity, and how unspeakable would be the delight of Laura, (the image of her de-

parted mother,) were she permitted to see you and crave your blessing." "Where then is she? inquired the Baron, "why does she not come to me? but no," added he, gazing wildly around him, and shuddering as he spoke: "they have told her that I am a frantic, raving old man; so she fears to approach me; and no one will tell the poor child that I have forgiven the disobedience of her parent." Many were the endeavours of Henry to convince Lord de Clifford that his grand-children only waited a summons to attend him; and having in some measure succeeded, and declared his intention of immediately despatching a messenger to W——; he departed with feelings of mingled horror and commiseration.

It was evident that the unhappy mortal he had quitted was a victim to avarice and ambition; that every kindly emotion, every virtuous sentiment had been sacrificed to gratify these passions, and while thus deserted by those whom he had so earnestly sought to ennoble, and left to ruminate on the deeds of his youth, Henry wondered not for a moment that reason sometimes tottered on her throne, or that he regarded mankind with a mistrustful and misanthropic eye.

Cruel, indeed, had been the desertion of his sons; while it was embittered by the consciousness that his own conduct had provoked it; and his only daughter, who might have soothed his declining years by the hand of affection, he had for ever discarded for one single act of disobedience. The wandering tyrannical disposition of his eldest son, had long alienated him from his family; and the youngest, who held a distinguished rank in the army, was no less a stranger to his aged parent.

The death of the former, therefore, was not calculated to inspire him with any very violent emotions of sorrow, and his heart yearned for some object on whom he could repose the fondness he had once entertained for all that had now proved so worthless. With a heart glowing with the kindest hope, that all might yet be well, the truly excellent Henry Llewellyn despatched a trusty domestic to W——, bearing a packet which required the immediate attendance of Laura and his sister in the metropolis. The evening on which this messenger arrived, had succeeded a day marked by the two-fold emotions of joy and sorrow. It was one on which Mrs. Morgan had fixed for her departure, and on which little

Willy was to bid farewell (perhaps a final one) to his generous preserver and instructress. With grief little inferior to that he had experienced on losing his sister, did the affectionate boy cling to Laura, inquiring when they were to meet again; and when at length the conveyance arrived which was to carry them some miles on their journey, he tore himself in an agony of grief from the gratified but heart-stricken Laura, while the tale of overflowing gratitude which the artless child poured into the ears of the listening group at L——, was the most grateful incense Laura ever received as a tribute to her many virtues.

With a palpitating heart Fanny unsealed the packet, which she knew was to prove so important to the future prospects of her friend; and hastily glancing her eye over its welcome contents, her first care was a thanksgiving to that higher Power who had thus mysteriously changed the heart of the hitherto inflexible Baron. “The happiest moment I have experienced for many years, is the present one!” exclaimed Fanny, handing it to her companion; “nor will it I think prove a selfish gratification, in which you, dear Laura, cannot share; this letter restores you to the affection of your

grandfather, and to that station in society, to which your virtues have ever entitled you ; at to morrow's dawn we must speed our way to London." The delighted astonishment of Laura was indescribable, as well as the mutual expressions of grateful acknowledgment which ensued when an explanation took place. The anticipated morning arrived, and with it the departure of Laura and Fanny from W—— ; but the former was too faithful a friend to forget (now fortune seemed willing for a moment to smile upon her) one who in adversity had been unchanged ; and though Mrs. Courtney had forbidden all intercourse, their correspondence had not also been interdicted.

To Charlotte she therefore wrote a long and affectionate epistle, containing (what she knew would be highly gratifying to her friend) the hope she entertained of becoming reconciled to her mother's family, through the kind offices of Mr. Llewellyn ; carefully avoiding all mention of the mysterious letter, for the appearance of which she was utterly unable to account ; gently reminding her of her promise respecting the arrival of letters from Charles, about whom she was now becoming anxious ; earnestly hoping for their speedy reunion, and

concluding with many expressions of lasting gratitude to Mrs. Courtney and Miss Melbourne, with the hope that she might one day have an opportunity of displaying it. Meanwhile the travellers reached London; and repairing to the house of a friend, were gladly welcomed by Henry, who having prepared Lord de Clifford for the arrival of his granddaughter, had fixed upon the ensuing morning for their first interview. As we have seen in a former chapter, Laura had never entertained the slightest enmity towards the Baron, for his obdurate neglect; compassion and sorrow had been her most predominant emotions; and her present joy was not therefore mitigated by the latent remembrance of having cherished any baneful feelings of revenge.

To dwell upon the intense anxiety with which she awaited the hour appointed for the long ardently desired meeting, would be unnecessary; and hoping the reader is not wholly uninterested in the fate of the amiable girl, we will at once transport her to Grosvenor Square, where her agitation became so great as almost to alarm her companion, Fanny had, from various motives, declined accompanying them; she wished not to interrupt the pleasure

of their interview by any unnecessary intrusion, and she feared lest the presence of a stranger should prove too much for the aged Baron. At this hour of trial, therefore, Laura was deprived of her generous sympathy and support; Henry Llewellyn, however, earnestly called upon her for an exertion of her fortitude; and a moment after, she found herself in the presence of Lord de Clifford. "My grandfather! oh, my grandfather!" ejaculated Laura, sinking on one knee before him. For a time, Henry became terrified for the old man's intellect; his eye had resumed its former wandering, and he gazed wildly on the kneeling girl. But the resemblance to his lost daughter was too striking to be mistaken; the struggle between a bewildered brain, and the recollection of past happiness gave way; nature at length regained her long doubtful empire, and while tears coursed each other down his furrowed cheeks, he exclaimed in faltering accents, as he placed his hands on her head: "Bless thee, my child, bless thee!" A pause ensued, during which the Baron regarded her tenderly, and motioned her to rise; but Laura moved not, and he resumed, "Canst thou forgive me, my child, for all my cruelty towards thee and

thy brother? does not my name inspire thee with feelings of mingled horror and detestation?" A convulsive shudder at these words ran through his feeble frame. "Talk not thus," replied Laura, "but say, may I obtain your forgiveness for not coming sooner to entreat your blessing, and to urge my present request? Oh! my grandfather, by the love you bore my departed parent, by the remembrance of her many virtues, I implore you to let me sooth your declining years by the most unceasing attentions, and most ardent affection; let me endeavour to afford that consolation, which I feel assured has long been wanting to your repose, and every thing shall be forgotten—shall be obliterated, but that I have one kind, one indulgent relative, to whose happiness I may be instrumental. Tell me, canst thou grant this petition, and I will rise?" "Say'st thou so," said the Baron, energetically pressing the hand he still retained, while every feature was beaming with delight; "now then are you my own child, my own Laura, ever willing to sacrifice your own gratification for that of others? And will you indeed bear with the whims of a petulant old man?—will you not leave me for some livelier companion?—"

will you not, like all the world, desert me?" "Never!" replied Laura, emphatically. "I believe thee, Laura, I do indeed believe thee; a countenance, a voice like thine, were never known to deceive me. Then rise, my child, for joyfully do I comply with thy request," added the Baron, raising the gratified Laura, "and may heaven reward thee for this proof of thy filial piety, towards one who has not deserved it at thy hands."

With the utmost skill did the amiable girl endeavour to withdraw Lord de Clifford from the contemplation of the past, by inspiring him with hopes of the future; these efforts succeeded beyond her most sanguine expectations; and as she refused to quit her grandfather for a moment, Henry was deputed to fetch his sister, who with himself was to remain at Grosvenor Square during their stay in London, that Laura might not yet be separated from her friends; while the Baron was anxious to see Fanny, in order to thank her for her kindness to the orphan Laura, and to obtain her forgiveness for his former neglect of herself and relatives; which it is almost unnecessary to say was cheerfully granted.

Sincere and manifold were the congratula-

tions of the delighted Fanny, at witnessing the happiness of her favourite ; who, conscious to whose kind interference it was solely owing, became the more anxious that her friends should share it. But her greatest pleasure arose from the contemplation of Charles's delight at these unforeseen events ; and often was she lost in the anticipation of his first emotion ; “ But where alas was he ? had he yet escaped the demon of destruction ? or had the relentless spirit of war already claimed its victim ? ” Laura could not tell ; and in the absence of certain tidings she was forced to remain in suspense. Thus passed several days, when the various duties of his situation recalled Mr. Llewellyn to his peaceful home, content in having fulfilled the object of his journey, and in the consciousness of having imparted happiness to two of his fellow-beings. The lively Fanny, however, had yielded to the solicitations of Lord de Clifford and Laura, to protract her stay some weeks longer.

But not for her own gratification had her consent been obtained ; quickly discovering, that while her vivacity cheered the thoughtful Baron, it was gradually restoring her friend to that occasional gaiety which had once distin-

guished her lamented parent; Fanny, (in whom self-enjoyment was never allowed to compete with even the probable benefit of her fellow-creatures,) instantly relinquished all idea of an immediate return.

“ Oh !” exclaimed the latter, one morning calling Laura to her side as she was perusing the paper, “ here is some delightful news for you ; a paragraph announcing dispatches from Egypt.” Laura obeyed, and read as follows : “ Official intelligence has been received by “ Government of a most brilliant victory ob- “ tained in Egypt by the British troops, who “ have signalised themselves by acts of almost “ unprecedented bravery. It is however said “ that the English have sustained the severe “ loss of their brave commander, Sir Ralph “ Abercrombie : but more certain information “ will soon be made public.” “ These are in- deed glad tidings,” replied Laura, “ but to me, individually, may be of little advantage ; conquest can never be purchased but at the expense of multitudes, and may not Charles be among the number of those who——” “ Nay, nay,” interrupted Fanny, “ I cannot allow of your indulging such gloomy fore- bodings as these ; be assured, your warrior will

return, while the laurels he has gained on the continent will soon obliterate from your memory this temporary anxiety, and the plaudits of his admiring countrymen will quickly indemnify him for past danger. And what if your worst fears should be verified, have you, Laura, so little of the ancient Spartan in your composition, as to bewail the loss of one relative, were he sacrificed for the public weal?" The tone (at once playful and earnest) in which Fanny uttered these words, produced the desired effect. Laura could not repress a smile, and when she related to the Baron the occurrence of the morning, he joined with Fanny in anticipating the speedy return of his grandson, for happy in the society of Laura, and the conviction that the past might yet be retrieved, Lord de Clifford slumbered in a tranquillity which had long been wanting to his repose; seemingly unwilling to chequer present enjoyment by the supposition of future evil.

The ensuing day, rumour was succeeded by certainty; the memorable battle of Alexandria, the taking of Rosetta, and the defeat of the French in every quarter, became generally known; joy was visible among all ranks of people; individuals seemed determined to for-

get domestic troubles, and by the sacrifice of private feelings to confer honour on the brave conquerors, and though every word of congratulation told her of the uncertainty of Charles's fate, Laura was too kind-hearted not to share in some measure in the general satisfaction. She was not long, however, to remain in suspense: night had now spread her veil over inanimate nature; the joyous multitude had assembled in little groups to talk over the glad tidings they had received; the statesman had commenced his solitary vigils, with every nerve bent on acquiring a glorious and lasting peace for his royal master and his suffering countrymen; the busy hum of men was gradually subsiding into comparative silence, when the arrival of a stranger at Grosvenor Square, called Laura from the Baron and her friend. Surprised at so unusual a summons she prepared to obey; an inward voice seemed to whisper that she was now to obtain a knowledge of Charles's fate, (be that fate what it might,) and it was some minutes ere Laura attained sufficient courage to enter the apartment into which the stranger had been ushered. The military hat and cloak, in which he was enveloped, so effectually dis-

guised his person, that at first she failed to recognise him, but as he hastily removed the former, and advanced to meet her, her delighted exclamation of "Charles, is it indeed you?" quickly told the welcome truth.

It was indeed the youthful soldier, who was thus unexpectedly restored to the anxious Laura; sad had been their parting, but happy, thrice happy was their meeting. Much had each to relate, much to learn: while they are therefore thus employed, we will in a few words explain those circumstances which nearly concern Charles, and which led to his sudden appearance in England. We have already said that the death of his superior, had raised him to the rank of Lieutenant; by one of those singular coincidences, which will sometimes occur; an officer who had lately exchanged from another regiment, and who was now called upon to fill the station of Colonel, he discovered to be no other than his uncle Maurice Stanley.

Quickly ascertaining their relationship, the Colonel rejected with proud scorn those advances which the counsel of Algernon Courtney and Charles's unprejudiced reasoning had induced them willingly to afford. Nor did the

excitement of his angry feelings end here; no possible insult, no imperious command, was omitted in his conduct towards the brave, but high-spirited Charles; who, but for the friendship of the excellent Algernon and the memento of his departed parent, had been unable to brook such treatment. On the day previous to the battle of Alexandria, it had been aggravating beyond any former degree; and so frail are the feelings of humanity, that as, on the following eventful morning, Colonel Stanley, (whose personal bravery was conspicuous) led his men on briskly to the charge, Charles almost indulged a wish that his own sorrows, or the taunts of his persecutor, might quickly be terminated in a death glorious to either. Not long however had the attack become general, when Colonel Stanley's noble charger, together with his rider, received a mortal wound.

The feelings of Charles at this moment, (who was at no great distance and saw them fall) were indescribable; wounded pride, indignation and revenge struggled within him, but they were not to obtain the mastery. He viewed, "the pledge of maternal fondness," which he had received from his truly charitable

parent; he recalled to mind the example, the precepts of the truly patient Laura, and he beheld his enemy yielding, overpowered by numbers. Every vindictive feeling instantly subsided, and, followed by a few companions of undoubted bravery, he boldly advanced to the rescue of his Colonel. Nobly did the little band maintain their ground, around the body of their disabled commander. One by one however, they fell, (though not unrevenged) until of assailants and defenders Charles alone remained.

With scarcely credible strength and (swiftness did the invincible young warrior bear his rescued charge beyond the reach of immediate danger, and, having procured surgical assistance, was returning to his post, when the dying Colonel who was sufficiently sensible to recognise his preserver, motioned him to draw nigh. "Young man," he exclaimed in feeble accents, "you have this day nobly approved yourself worthy of your profession, you have vanquished all my former obduracy, and, too late, I acknowledge your kindred with the proudest princes of our land would confer honour." "And now to all your benefits add one more, grant me your forgiveness for the past." "I do, I do," replied

Charles pressing the hand extended to him. "Enough," resumed the Colonel, "but though overwhelmed by obligations, I would implore you to grant one more request, which I have yet to make. On your return to England, convey this to my father," he continued, drawing forth a small casket, "tell him, by an open avowal of your rightful claims, to avoid, ere too late, the remorse I now experience: wear this bauble in recollection of one, whom you will ever remember with pleasure, as having placed it in your power to act thus generously, and now, young man, return to your duty, with the consciousness of having soothed the dying hour of your relenting persecutor; and tell all the world that Colonel Stanley died gloriously." A ray of proud satisfaction lighted up the pale countenance of the speaker at these words; Charles received the casket and the diamond ring, and bowing respectfully as was his wont, instantly obeyed. Quickly was he again seen plunging into the battle, sparing the enemy when consistent with his duty, and totally regardless of personal danger.

But not to him, like his unfortunate uncle (who shortly after expired), were the plains of Alexandria to prove fatal; and though mo-

mentarily braving the most imminent perils, they seemed to flee before him. Merit, which seldom loses its reward, was not doomed to oblivion in the present instance: this was not the first occasion on which the conduct of the brave Lieutenant Fitz-Osborne had claimed the admiration of his commander, and he determined it should not now go unrewarded. But the highest meed of praise he received was from his friend. "Welcome, my dear Charles, welcome!" exclaimed Algernon Courtney, when they met after the conflict was ended; "you have this day achieved a more noble conquest than England has ever obtained by the valour of her troops; you have conquered your evil passions,—you have, indeed, returned good for evil,—and you have made me more firmly your friend than ever." What the intentions of Sir Ralph Abercrombie were, in regard to Charles, the death of that brave officer must ever involve in doubt. General Hutchinson, however, who then succeeded to the command, and who had ever regarded him with a favourable eye, openly commended his gallant and generous conduct; and at length, in reward for his dis-

tinguished services, appointed him bearer of despatches to England, with news of the almost entire conquest of Egypt.

Receiving his instructions, and taking a hasty farewell of Algernon, he quitted the once celebrated port of Alexandria, together with its scenes of devastation and danger; and after a prosperous and expeditious voyage, regained his native land. Having fulfilled the purport of his embassy to the infinite satisfaction of all parties, and having been rewarded for his gallantry in the field by instant promotion, Charles hastened to Portland Place, where ascertaining that Mrs. Courtney was still at W——, he proceeded thither with all possible despatch; but Laura was not there. Mrs. Courtney alleged ill-health as an excuse for not seeing him; and being directed to the Rectory, he departed thither, after leaving the many tokens of remembrance which had been consigned to his care by the forethought of Algernon. Here, however, he was again disappointed, and referred to the town house of Lord de Clifford, where he at length found the object of his search, although he was utterly unable to account for her present residence in Grosvenor Square. This seeming mystery,

however, Laura quickly dispelled, endeavouring to place the conduct of her grandfather in the most amiable point of view, lest the pride of Charles should oppose the convictions of his better judgment. But speedily penetrating her motives, he replied, while inward satisfaction was discernible on his countenance, "Fear not, Laura, that I will reject the proffered kindness of the Baron; there once was a time, I confess, when the hot-brained Charles Fitz-Osborne would have spurned it; but adversity has subdued his proud spirit—has led him to religion,—that great, that only source of consolation, and he now returns to you with a humble and penitent heart; he forgives, as he would himself hope to be forgiven. Lead me, therefore, to my grandfather; I have still Colonel Stanley's commission to execute, as well as mournful intelligence to communicate; and need I add, I am anxious to see Fanny Llewellyn?"

The Baron's reception of his grandson was such as will easily be anticipated. Fanny welcomed him with one of those gratified smiles which instantly prepossessed the beholder in her favour; and as he discovered the solicitude with which his aged relative re-

garded Laura's every action—his endeavours to insure her happiness,—how freely did he forgive each instance of former neglect! With resignation almost amounting to indifference, Lord de Clifford received the tidings that his youngest son was no more; and the tears he paid to his memory seemed rather drawn forth by the melancholy reflections it recalled, than by any remains of parental affection.

From this time, therefore, it was the study of Charles and Laura to avoid all recurrence to the past; for to this propensity were those paroxysms of grief, in which the Baron sometimes indulged, chiefly owing.

Thus have we seen Charles and Laura Fitz-Osborne restored to their rights;—thus have we marked the gradual decline of the haughty De Clifford family;—and we would now leave the former to the happiness which their many virtues must insure them, but that there are still some members of that family, whose fate it may concern the reader to know; and moreover that, as faithful historians, we may record one more act of self-denial, as well as ascertain how far the principles of TRUE CHARITY may influence our actions.

Not many days had elapsed since Charles's

return, when news was received in Grosvenor Square of Caroline Stanley's death; and some hours after, a note, as follows, was placed in Laura's hands:—

“ The time, Laura, has arrived for proving
 “ the sincerity of your many grateful profes-
 “ sions. Eliza has deserted us! A slow fever
 “ is wasting mamma's frame; while I am
 “ scarcely able to write these hurried lines.
 “ Lose, then, not a moment; but come to us,
 “ —come from the happiness which surrounds
 “ you, to the abode of sickness and sorrow.
 “ Should you ask, is not this too much for
 “ friendship to require? I reply, you alone are
 “ capable of it. Come then, and insure the
 “ eternal gratitude of

“ CHARLOTTE COURTNEY.”

Distressed at receiving so unexpected a summons, Laura's first impulse was immediate compliance; but instantly remembering her promise to the Baron, of never quitting him, she determined to hasten to him—to tell him all, and intreat him to sanction her departure, were it only for some hours. “ Go, my child,” answered the old man, when she had concluded, “ it were cruel to refuse you this generous gratification. Bear in mind, however, with

what anxiety I shall await your return; though think not I would hasten you from this work of charity. Charles and Fanny will, I hope, remain with me: go then, and may success attend you." Resolved on using this kind acquiescence with moderation, Laura proceeded to Portland Place, from whence Charlotte's letter had been written; but though expecting to find its inmates changed since their last meeting, she was not prepared to meet the half-delirious gaze of Mrs. Courtney, or the blanched cheek of her daughter. Charlotte was seated by the side of her suffering parent, and her grateful pressure of Laura's hand would alone have rewarded the latter for her prompt compliance. "This is indeed kind," exclaimed her friend: "strange that mamma should ever have suspected your sincerity; she has this day, however, discovered your innocence; but the depravity of Eliza is no longer a secret, and it has stung her to the soul." Here Charlotte burst into tears, while Mrs. Courtney appeared perfectly unconscious of what was passing. "You have remained here too long, Charlotte," returned Laura; "I am come in the character of nurse, and you must now resign to me."

From actual debility, the heart-broken girl at length yielded ; and from this moment Laura became the indefatigable attendant, the constant companion, of her former benefactress and friend. During the many hours of tedious watchfulness, to which she cheerfully submitted, the desolate situation in which she had found the invalids often recurred to her with surprise ; Charlotte (whose illness was of a most alarming description) was strictly forbidden to converse ; and it was not until many days had elapsed, that she learnt from a domestic the cause of Miss Melbourne's absence.

That excellent lady had, on reaching Bath, found her friend better than she had been led to anticipate ; and some hopes (although very faint ones) were entertained of her recovery, provided an immediate removal to the mild air of Languedoc could be effected. Ever ready to sacrifice her own interests, when the well-being of her fellow-creatures were concerned, Miss Melbourne had accompanied her in this perilous undertaking. Intelligence of her sister's illness had been dispatched thither ; but as yet sufficient time had not elapsed for her return.

Often also did Laura recall the words, "Mamma has this day discovered your innocence," until she was lost in vain conjectures. To the convalescence of Charlotte could she alone look forward to the solving of her doubts; and as she regarded the fevered countenance of her friend, she was compelled to acknowledge the probability that such might never be the case. Far from being discouraged, however, she redoubled her assiduities. But let it not be imagined that among her various avocations the Baron was forgotten: a small portion of every day was allotted for her visit to Grosvenor Square; and while she gladdened the hearts of her relatives, by reporting any favourable symptoms which had taken place in the invalids since their last meeting, she never failed to find her doubts satisfied, and her pious resolutions strengthened by her attentions. These symptoms gradually increased: youth, added to a tolerably strong constitution, were in Charlotte's favour; and as Laura gazed upon the features of her friend, it soothed many an anxious hour to observe that they were regaining their wonted placidity. With Mrs. Courtney the contest was longer doubtful: her malady was occasioned rather

by mental than bodily suffering; but the partial insensibility which attended it (bearing with it a respite from such overwhelming intensity of thought), though alarming in appearance, was most salutary in its consequences.

Laura was one evening seated by Charlotte's side, when awaking she affectionately exclaimed, "Still at your post! how tedious and solitary must each day appear to you; those pale cheeks make me almost regret my sending for you; and why is Eliza not here to act your part? Oh, Laura! had she never known your unfortunate cousin all had yet been well." "Hush!" interrupted Laura, "you must not speak, you must not indeed; and you do me injustice if you imagine I am not most happy in endeavouring to serve you." "I know it," replied Charlotte; "I am convinced of your sincerity: you have ever been a kind friend to me; but you must let me express my gratitude, however inadequate words may be to the occasion, and I feel so much better just now, that I think a little talking cannot hurt me; besides, I am anxious to tell, what you must long have been desirous to hear; the cause of Eliza's absence." The altered countenance of her friend assured

Laura she might fearlessly accede to this arrangement. To avoid the interruptions which necessarily took place, we will briefly relate the leading features of her recital, as well as others, with which Charlotte herself was unacquainted; and for this purpose we will return to Dorsetshire.

A short time before Mrs. Courtney quitted W——, Eliza was summoned by the Countess of Beaumont into Devonshire. Glowing with anticipations of gaiety and dissipation, the self-indulgent girl heeded not the visibly declining health of her parent, and as we have said before, Mrs. Courtney (though keenly alive to this second instance of neglect) was too proud to enforce the obedience of her children. Eliza therefore proceeded on her journey, and when she arrived at its close, when Aylvin Priory in all its sombre magnificence burst upon her view; fancy arrayed the interior with scenes of festivity and rejoicing; but for once she was doomed to disappointment. The Countess of Beaumont received her with a countenance ill-assorting with her late gladsome reflections, and on her inquiring for her friend, she replied: “Caroline has been long inquiring for you, you shall

see her." She then led the way to an adjoining apartment, where, extended on a couch, lay the once morbid, but now changed Caroline Stanley. Every feature was distorted by unsubdued, ill-regulated emotions; her countenance was pale, but her eye (kindled by the inward workings of passion) wandered in search of some distant object until it rested on Eliza. "Ah!" she exclaimed in a tone of bitterness, have you come at last, you who have shared with me the delightful task of humbling the low-born Laura Fitz-Osborne? but see you how she has foiled us, how she has attained that station we so much dreaded! this; this is our reward." A wild hysterical laugh followed these words: for a moment the horror-stricken Eliza remained immovable; scarcely comprehending this unlooked-for reception, her brain seemed bewildered; she would have reached a chair, but her strength failed her, and she sank senseless on the ground. Long and fearful was this sleep of insensibility, but eventful was it to prove in the era of Eliza's existence; the scene she had just witnessed was calculated to make an indelible impression upon her once ductile and innocent heart; Caroline's words were indeed such, as to con-

vince her of the depravity of her conduct; Caroline's example could not fail to display its ruinous consequences. Eliza returned to life altered, for she was humbled, subdued by the consciousness of her own unworthiness; passion no longer lent its aid to still the whisperings of conscience, and all her folly (not to say sinfulness) stood disclosed before her. But this conviction was followed by one feeling to which Eliza had, as yet, been a stranger—the desire of amendment. Sad and tedious would, she knew, be the task, but from this moment she determined to undertake it. Each revolving day strengthened her in these resolutions; she beheld Caroline Stanley sinking into an untimely grave—the victim of dissipation, passion, and disappointed malice; and when at length she saw her expire, unaccompanied by the solacing reflection that her short life had been passed in innocence and peace; Eliza did indeed feel that this awful scene would never be effaced from her memory; did indeed determine from Caroline's example, to turn from the error of her ways. Oppressed with grief by all she had witnessed, and shuddering at the retrospection of her past conduct, she resolved, as a first step towards her intended amendment,

to confess the arts she had made use of to procure the dismissal of Laura Fitz-Osborne, and entreat the pardon of her deluded parent, ere she again ventured into her presence.

A letter to this effect had reached Portland Place on the morning of Laura's arrival, and it was this which Charlotte now placed in her friend's hands. "Domestic calamity," continued the former, "has softened the Countess of Beaumont's heart. Eliza speaks of her kindness with affection, and purposes remaining in Devonshire until she hears from us. And now, Laura, can you obliterate the past, and do what I am myself incapable of—answer this letter? Tell her, that mamma freely forgives her own injuries, and will gladly receive her penitent child; but that there is another whose pardon she must crave. Many are her promises of amendment, and would that we could believe them! Oh, Laura! you know not the bitterness of the feeling, when we are forced to doubt the veracity of our nearest and dearest relatives." "Say no more," replied Laura, "I freely consent to your request, and let us hope for the best; Eliza has already given you one great proof of her sincerity." Charlotte, overpowered by her exertion, pressed

her friend's hand in silence, and bidding her good night, Laura withdrew to perform her promise.

Having finished her task, without reverting further to the mischievous letter, than by expressing her hopes of their speedy meeting and reconciliation, she entered Mrs. Courtney's apartment, whom she had the satisfaction of finding more composed than she had been for many days. Mrs. Courtney was now sensible of Laura's presence; her late insensibility had taken from her, save at intervals, all recollection of her past conduct towards the injured orphan; and as the latter again ministered to her wants, she beheld, not her whom she had wrongfully accused of the most unworthy artifices, but the affectionate girl who had soothed her bed of sickness when at W——. Thus, conducing to, and witnessing the recovery of, the invalids, Laura was found by Miss Melbourne.

That excellent lady, who was unacquainted with the many events which had occurred during her absence, listened to the glad tidings with more than her wonted pleasure. Fain would Laura have concealed those of a more melancholy and distressing tendency, had not

Eliza, firm in pursuing her settled plan of conduct on her return from Devonshire, which quickly followed, confessed all her faults, together with her sincere desire of amendment.

With contending emotions Miss Melbourne listened to the recital. Sensibly did she feel the unhappiness her niece's conduct must have occasioned Laura; but she was not one of those rigid beings who are unwilling to make any allowance for the failings of others; she secretly bewailed the frailty of human nature, but ever bore in mind that she was herself prone to error; and bidding the penitent Eliza take example from the fate of the hapless Caroline Stanley, she from this moment considered her but the more needful of her counsel—the more entitled to her affection. But how highly did Miss Melbourne learn to estimate the character of her youthful favourite, from all she heard! How earnestly did she hope that the seeds of jealousy once rooted from her breast, Eliza would take pattern by the amiable girl,—who, happy in the esteem and love of the truly virtuous, now dutifully rejoined her relatives in Grosvenor Square, notwithstanding the entreaties of each member of Mrs. Courtney's family.

TRUE CHARITY

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CHAPTER XI.

When Charity the steps attend,
And Virtue seems the guiding friend ;
Then Faith and Hope together join
To grace a mind almost divine.

And all shall view, with wond'ring eye,
Her pure, her quiet way ;
And whisp'ring angels bear her hence,
To everlasting day.

CONCLUSION.

A merry peal from the church bells of Avondale, one morning during the spring of 1802, announced an event of no common description. Busy satisfaction was depicted on the countenances of the assembling rustics, when the appearance of a coroneted carriage, drawn by four fine bay horses, and attended by two outriders, explained the cause of this rejoicing. Curious to obtain a glimpse of the distin-

guished personages, whose arrival had caused such lively demonstrations of joy, we were surprised at recognising our old friend Charles (or rather Colonel) Fitz-Osborne, the cheerful Fanny Llewellyn, the retiring Charlotte Courtney, her excellent brother, the venerable Lord de Clifford, and his amiable granddaughter, who now sat listening with beaming eyes to the gratifying sounds which met her ear; and now watching with intense anxiety the varying countenance of her aged relative. To the highly sensitive Laura, this might well be termed a moment of extacy: she beheld her grandfather welcomed to his paternal inheritance with all the honours so suitable to his rank; and she knew, by his altered conduct, that he was now worthy of such distinction. At this moment they turned an angle in the road; the cavalcade entered Avondale Park; and on the summit of a gentle declivity, the ancient and favourite mansion of the De Clifford family appeared in view. A tear trembled in Laura's eye; it was the same picturesque lovely spot which had so forcibly attracted her attention, when, accompanied by her brother, she was hastening for the first time to the metropolis.

Scarcely less affected by the circumstance, Charles noticed her emotions, for he remembered the angry feelings he had then cherished; and recalled the many moments of bitterness they had occasioned him. A peal unusually loud and joyous now called him from those reflections; the travellers alighted, and entered the house, while the sounds of festivity gradually died away into silence.

Some important events had occurred, since those recorded in our last chapter: the reader will perhaps be surprised to learn, that Charles and Algernon had, from different motives, both quitted the army; those which had once actuated the latter, no longer existed: he had seen, he had participated in, the miseries of his fellow-creatures,—and had done all that mortal could do to alleviate them; he now longed to rejoin his family, and he had found one who was both anxious to fill his situation, and worthy to engage in so sacred an avocation. Various were the inducements which had influenced Charles in this determination; gifted by nature with the deepest feelings of commiseration for the sufferings of his fellow-beings, his compassionate heart turned with horror from the misery he was unable to soften; he beheld the rancour

and recklessness with which so many lives were sacrificed; and he felt that such a spirit was not sanctioned by the religion he had of late been taught, more than ever, to venerate. In vain had military honours courted his acceptance; vainly had the king, to whom he was presented, commended the bravery of his youthful subject, and bade him reckon on the royal favour: Charles gently but perseveringly declined such distinction; he preferred obeying the dictates of principle, and the approbation of his own conscience, to all that the world could offer him: "What is glory?" he would sometimes ask himself, "'tis but as the foam, for a moment discernible on the wide and tempestuous ocean; and shall I rest contented with this passing breath? shall I not rather seek that celestial haven of rest, to which peace and universal benevolence must be my guiding star? Yes, I will leave bloodshedding to the thoughtless and the inveterate, while I endeavour to discharge the many social and relative duties which must now devolve on me as heir to the title and estates of my grandfather."

On the morning after the arrival of our visitors, Charles invited his sister to accompany

him in a stroll he projected round the park ; Laura willingly complied, and at every step found abundant reason to repeat her former declaration. The park was skirted by a road of considerable extent ; at its entrance stood a cottage, whose ivy-clad roof and neat gothic architecture betokened the probable prosperity of its possessors. The little edifice, indeed, together with the surrounding scenery, formed a subject well calculated for the pencil ; since the woodland heights by which it was overshadowed added much to the beauty of the scene, while the tastefully arranged plot of ground which fronted it, displayed no small share of horticultural skill.

A fine rosy-cheeked boy, apparently about six years of age, was busily employed in gathering some early roses, which grew there in rich profusion, too much engaged to notice the endearments of Laura's favourite greyhound, which had preceded his mistress, and seemed willing to recognise him as an old friend. Laura spoke in raptures of the prospect before her, when the child's ardent gaze drew her attention : that long steadfast look was impossible to be mistaken, and in a moment Willy Morgan was by her side. Laura turned to

Charles for an explanation, and the animated expression of his countenance told her all she required to know. At his invitation, Mrs. Morgan had quitted L——” and arriving some days previous to the time we mention, had been duly installed in this little possession, which had been at the Baron’s request legally made over to her and her heirs ; and thus both had concerted to procure Laura this agreeable surprise. The good woman now came forward, and invited them to enter the cottage, where every thing was arranged with that peculiar neatness, which was the distinguishing feature throughout the whole.

Deeply impressed with this proof of kindness, from the two persons whose affection she prized beyond all others, Laura returned from her walk. But we must now hasten to take leave of some other personages, who have figured in this little history, ere we return to those included in the Avondale Party.

In Eliza, slow, but progressive, was the work of reformation ; long indulged habit, and the love of dissipation, would sometimes break through the dictates of her better sense ; but the watchful Miss Melbourne never failed to observe the struggle, and aided by her counsel, as well as won by her kindness, Eliza would

quickly regain her wonted firmness and serenity. Manifold were the advantages she derived from her self-denial; she became a better friend, a better sister, a better member of society. Thus changed, though still preserving her usual frankness of disposition, she became the favourite companion of Laura Fitz-Osborne, and in after life, when age and sickness called her to the couch of her parent, Eliza gave abundant testimony that she had become a better child. Happy in the prosperity of her idolized children, Mrs. Courtney once more enjoyed the blessings of health; obliterating the past from her memory, Eliza again became her favourite daughter, and as the conduct of the latter had ever greatly influenced her own, she was led from the effect she observed to inquire minutely into the cause. The result will be anticipated with an unprejudiced mind;— she observed what was the main-spring of Eliza's actions, she saw she was not actuated by any worldly motives and receiving the truth with a meek and lowly mind, Mrs. Courtney became an altered character. Obeying the commands of her heavenly Master, Miss Melbourne pursued her undeviating way; her career was not brilliant, but it was graced by

the smiles of her poorer fellow-creatures; and when at length her spirit shook off the frail burden of mortality, the tear of the orphan and the widow bedewed the grave of the good Christian." But one was left to supply her place, and shall we say, that one was the once erring Eliza.

Stung with grief at the death of her husband and child, and disappointed in her ambitious schemes, the Countess of Beaumont retired to a foreign country, and in the most extravagant dissipation vainly sought for the happiness she knew not how to attain in the social enjoyments of life.

Content in the affection of his grandchildren, Lord de Clifford reached an extreme old age: seldom did his former retrospective horror overtake him; until he was led by the active example and persuasive eloquence of the beloved objects around him, to a review of his past conduct. Never after did he shrink from self-examination; he became convinced of his many errors; he compared his present with his former state, and recognising, with humble thankfulness, the many special mercies he had received, he adored with contrite spirit that directing Hand "that doeth all things well."

A long visit was annually paid to Avondale Park by Fanny Llewellyn ; this never failed to be a happy one, for as she witnessed the prosperity of her friend, it was gratifying to reflect that her brother (under a higher power) had been its instrument ; it was pleasing to remember that she had thus discharged her load of of gratitude towards the generous Laura de Clifford. The retiring Charlotte Courtney still continued Laura's firm friend and frequent companion.

In fulfilling the important duties of his station, Charles ever sought the counsel of his inestimable friend Algernon, who conscientiously and cheerfully discharging the avocations of his high calling, was again recognised, by all who knew him, as " the good, the courteous, the highly-gifted Algernon Courtney."

But we must return to Laura, who as our principal character, now demands our undivided attention. At Avondale Park, she found all that mortal could desire ; its sylvan scenery brought to her mind the rural prospects of L—, and it possessed one great, one incalculable charm in her eyes, for it had, in childhood, been the favourite residence of her mother.

One spot was peculiarly dear to Laura : about half way through the wood we have described, was a secluded and almost invisible winding descent ; at the termination of this was a small and abrupt opening from whence the eye could wander over an upland space of many miles ; while the ear was attracted by the soft gurgling of a stream, of considerable breadth, which here crossed the path, and all interruption from the back ground was precluded by the thickness of the underwood. Here was erected a small but fanciful Chinese temple, and the willow trees which shaded the front of this edifice were by the veteran gossips of Avondale asserted to have been planted by Mrs. Fitz-Osborne's own hand. Thus embellished by nature and art, and doubly endeared to her from the scenes of innocence and happiness it recalled ; this quickly became Laura's favourite retreat : when sorrow for a moment oppressed her, (and who shall say they have no sorrow?) here would she retire from the turmoil of a busy and unthinking world ; and as she watched the ever varying landscape before her, and calmed her mind by meditation, she could in fancy look beyond this sublunary existence, and anticipate the hour, when in that " better

land," she should be at rest, until time and eternity shall be no more. Years rolled away, but Laura, unchanged in prosperity as in adversity, remained the same.

A paragraph to the following effect, once reached our ears.

"Married.—On the 13th inst. at St George's Hanover Square, by the Reverend Henry Llewellyn, Captain Fitz-Osborne, late in his Majesty's service, grandson of Lord de Clifford to Charlotte, eldest daughter of the late Archibald Courtney, Esq. Also on the same day, the Reverend Algernon Courtney, Rector of Avondale, ———, to Laura, only daughter of the late Reverend Charles Fitz-Osborne and grand-daughter to the above noble Lord."

Certain however it is, Laura became the patroness of the villages near which she principally resided. Was a smile discernible on the countenance of the honest but distressed rustic, "the good lady of Avondale" had condescended to enter his cottage. Was the grief of the orphan or widow assuaged, "the good lady of Avondale was the benefactress;" nor were the inhabitants of L—— forgotten. Thus blessing and blest, we leave the excel-

lent Laura to pursue her christian course and now take an affectionate leave of our youthful readers ; to whom we would apologise for having so long detained them, had it not been in the contemplation of that greatest and most enduring of all human virtues, "TRUE CHARITY."

FINIS.



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