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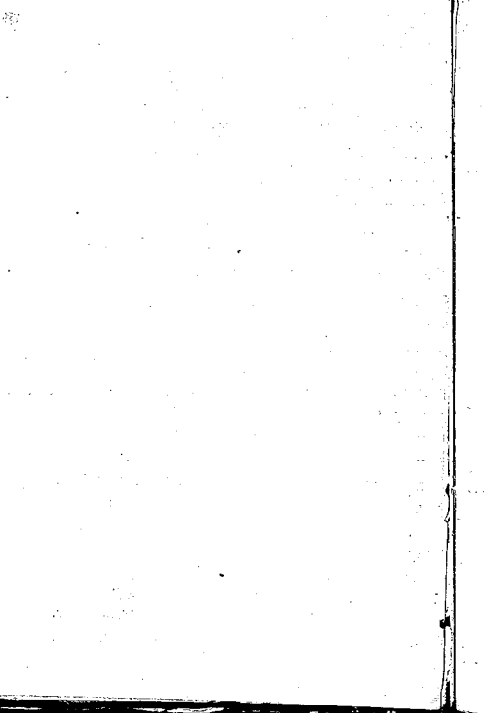
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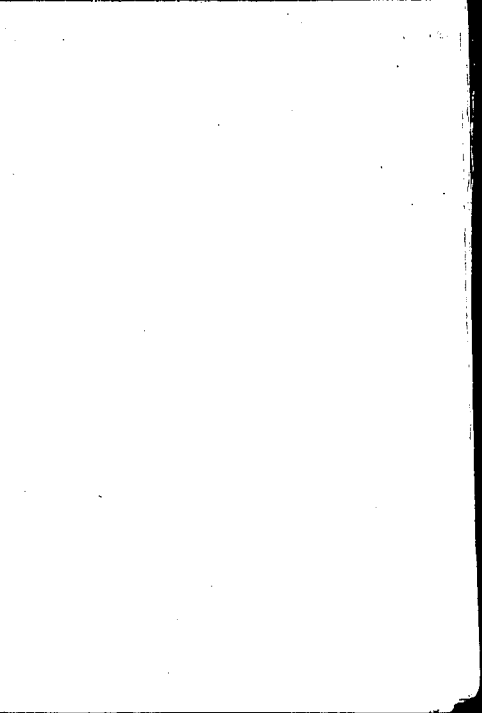
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AND
HIS CHILDREN.

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AUTHOR OF

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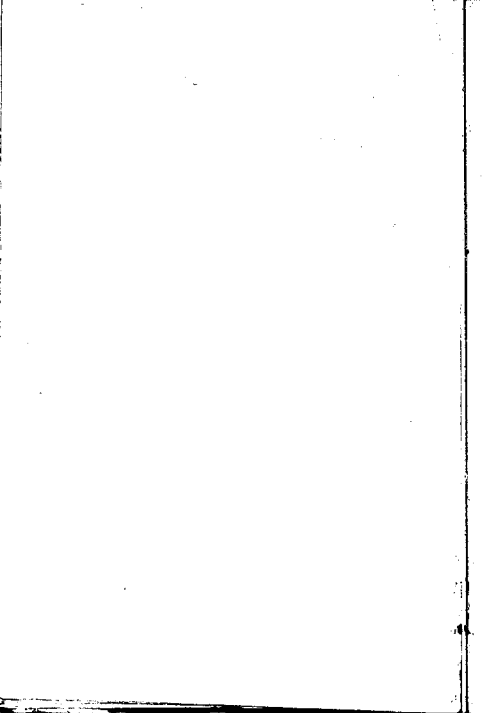
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THE approbation which former works of the Author have met with from the first rank and talents in the country—particularly from that father and daughter* who are a “host,” since their judgment is as indisputable, as their genius is rare—induces her to venture another simple story to the rising generation, which she trusts will not be less acceptable than those which have preceded it, since it is governed by the same principles, and dictated by the same feelings.

* Mr. and Miss Edgworth.



THE
BLIND FARMER
AND
HIS CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

“ I HAD an excellent tenant offered to me last night for the Green How farm, but they complain of it being too small,” said Sir Harry Eustace to his groom one morning, as he watched the operation of saddling his favourite steed.

“ Your honour may make it larger; farmer Norton’s lease is out at Michaelmas, and if you join Lea Meadows to Green How, it *will* be a thing—ay, one

of the finest things in the county of Stafford."

"I will speak to old Grey about it."

"Never speak to he, your honour—what's the use of your honour coming to age, and having your leases all out, and every thing tumbling as it were into your hands, if so be you go to consult your steward about every thing—it ben't his way to give in to these great farms, but being as how all the quality do it, why shouldn't your honour, I wonders?"

"But perhaps this same farmer Norton may be as little willing to go, as old Grey to send him."

"Who's to ask he, I wonders? besides, to my mind, your honour, he's altogether an unproper man; he's a house full of children, that keeps him poor; his wife, 'tis true, is a handy body, but she's not over and above strong. Last week he had two cows died, and that makes a hole in

his stock, I takes it; but what is more than all, he's got crackertons in his eyes, and is as near blind as the old coach-horse, and that wants shooting, every body knows."

During the principal part of this speech the young baronet was whistling and patting the sleek sides of his courser, but at the last blunder he burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, at last saying—"Cataracts you mean, Joey."

The groom answered sulkily—"I mean he's blind, and that's enough."

The baronet was good-natured and thoughtless; he was convinced, both from reason and feeling, that he had no right to indulge his risibility at the expence of his servant, in a point where ignorance was no reproach, since it was not to be expected that such a person was correct in all the words he might happen to catch; he therefore atoned to Wilkins the groom, by

taking his advice, in opposition to that of Mr. Grey, his old steward, a man of great respectability and knowledge in his own department.

In this hasty compromise with his feelings, Sir Harry, though a good-tempered man, was guilty of an ill-tempered action: we cannot positively call it a *bad* action, because he broke no law, but the effects of his resolution involved injury and ruin to a worthy man and promising family. There is nearly as much mischief done in the world by thoughtlessness as wickedness, and it is every man's duty to examine his own conduct, and act from some motive of more importance than the whim of the hour, or the suggestion of an inadequate or unworthy adviser, more especially when he is rich, and therefore powerful.

Farmer Norton succeeded his father on the Lea Meadows about twelve years before the period of which we speak; he

being then the father of two children, his father turned over the farm to him, on condition that himself and his wife should end their days in the house. This was not only readily agreed to on the part of the young couple, but most religiously observed, as henceforward poor old Norton and his good dame found no other change in their house, than that increase of ease and comfort which their age rendered desirable; and they lived early life over again, in the society of their grandchildren, with much more pleasure than they had done whilst raising their own numerous family, because they had less anxiety respecting them, and more leisure for attending to them.

Farmer Norton was a sensible man; he perceived that in the progress of society, more was expected from men in his station than used to be; and as he had but

little property, his father having brought up eight children, every one of whom had enjoyed a little portion, he endeavoured to increase his stock of knowledge, and to give his children such educations, as, without either increasing their ambition or refinement beyond its due bounds, should yet give them that power which can alone spring from knowledge, and which is found the only balancing influence against wealth in a great commercial country.

Agreeably to this desire, he placed his eldest son at the grammar school of the neighbouring village when he was very young, and as he was a very good, industrious boy, he was remarkably forward; so that even when he got to be of an age in which he could be useful at home, he was still induced to prolong his stay, which he was the better enabled to do, as his second son, though likewise quick at his book, was of a remarkably active disposition, ex-

cessively fond of the country, and not partial to close study : the third child was a girl, who partook the dispositions of both her brothers ; she was thoughtful, observing, and acute, yet active and lively, and soon became a person of importance in the household ; she could knit stockings, skim the milk, dress the young child, or read a sermon to her grandfather, as well as any woman in the parish, at nine years old. The next was a boy two years younger, who followed her lead in every thing ; and below him were two little girls in regular gradation. The names of these children were John, Francis, Elizabeth, William, Mary, and Susan.

Our young readers cannot remember, but their parents can inform them from painful recollection, that fourteen years ago, the harvest, in some parts of the country, failed very much ; but the failure was by no means so general as it was at first

supposed. In consequence of this, many new laws and regulations took place, in order to protect the farmer; but unfortunately they only enabled those who were rich to become the means of oppressing the people, and rendering themselves independent; while the poor farmer, who was really injured, sunk under his misfortune. This was the case with farmer Norton, whose crops entirely failed; and what rendered his trouble the greater, was the illness of his father, whose complaint was of such a nature as to call for the best medical help, which his duteous son was desirous of procuring him, whatever might be the expence; his mother had been long an invalid, and his wife, by doing more for the old people than her strength allowed, was reduced to a sick-bed; and this state of affliction continued more than a year, in which time his finances were reduced from a flourishing to a declining state, for sick-

ness is always expensive, but theirs was particularly so.

At last the good old man died, and it was ever a comfort to his excellent son, that he died in ignorance of the great expence he had caused him. Poor Mrs. Norton began to get about again, but she now discovered that the affliction of which her husband said little, but thought much, had indeed come upon him; his eyes were very dim, and although he could go about his business in the fields, he was utterly unable to write or discern figures, and it appeared that he had made several unfortunate mistakes in calculation, which he detected when too late, having erred through his sight, which he now never dared to trust.

It was just at the time when the expences of his father's funeral was come upon him, together with the loss of his two finest cows, and the melancholy cer-

tainty that he was verging to total blindness, that he was informed that he must quit his farm, as it was promised to another tenant.

Sir Harry was that night dancing at a ball, given by a neighbouring gentleman in honour of his daughter's birthday : little did he think, as he tripped away in the gay circle, how much misery his cruel mandate had caused to a family of inferior rank in life, but equal in virtue, and equal in sensibility, with that which now surrounded him. The bitter agony this information gave, was such as entirely to overturn all the strength even of farmer Norton's mind for a short time ; it was therefore no wonder that of his aged mother, his ailing wife, and his helpless infants, bent beneath it, and wept the expected change in all the bitterness of sorrow.

The farmer walked several times up

and down the large room, which was a kind of hall and upper kitchen, where his family usually sat, struggling with his feelings, and determining to support himself like a man ; but unfortunately one of the younger children, who were of course unconscious of the affair, placed its chair in his way, and in stepping forward, he stumbled over it : this circumstance completely overcame him.—“ God help me !” said he, “ I cannot see my way ; my afflictions are all fallen upon me at once.”

With these words he sunk down on a long bench, and hiding his face with his hands, actually burst into tears. His affectionate family, far more moved with *his* sorrow than any change that could happen to themselves, crowded around him. His wife sitting down by him, gently put her arm round his neck, and leaned his head upon her bosom, drying her own tears, and whispering to him—“ Take comfort, my

love, something will be done ; let us trust in God, who never forsakes those who seek to do his will."

"My dear wife, if I had my sight I would fear nothing ; but to think you and my poor children should want bread, while I am in the prime of life, with strength to work, yet not the means of doing it, this breaks my heart—it will kill me, I feel it will."

The poor children, on hearing this, all burst into an agony of weeping, and clung round their parents ; of poverty they had entertained comparatively little fear, because they had no idea of it, yet they had but too just an idea of death. Much had it grieved their little affectionate hearts to part with their dear grandfather ; but the thoughts of losing their beloved father, whom they felt to be the fountain of all their comforts, was too much for them, and they sobbed with equal grief and ter-

ror at the idea. Farmer Norton was quite shocked to perceive the effect his desponding speech had had upon them, but he was too much affected to speak again; the more they loved and depended upon him, the more terrible appeared the melancholy situation in which he stood.

Happily for him, his wife was a woman of strong mind, whose excellent understanding and sound principles were but exemplified in the hour of trial.—“My dear children,” said she, “you all love your father dearly, and you will, I trust, prove your love, by subduing your sorrow now, since it adds to his affliction—by and by you must do more than express it in words and tears; you must all learn to work for *him*, as he has worked for *you*.”

They all, with one voice, declared they would most thankfully work every day, and all day long, for their dear father and her;

and with the eager spirit of youth, they dried their tears, and stood around her, as if expecting that she would immediately set them a task.

“Poor lambs, what can *they* do?” said the fond father; “or what can you do, my dear, out of a farm?”

“Many things,” replied Mrs. Norton, with a smile, though the tears ran down her cheek; “you know, my dear John, you always say the back is fitted to the burthen, and I doubt not but God will have mercy upon us, and make rough places plain before us; all I desire is, that you will keep up your spirits, and take care of your health. While I have you to look at in the corner, I can do any thing—but oh, my dear husband, without you——”

The idea of that affliction the heart of a tender wife is indeed least able to endure; the poor woman suddenly stopped, and in her turn wept bitterly; while her husband,

drawing her to his bosom, declared he would, for her sake, endure, without repining, the misfortunes which it might please Heaven to afflict him with, confident that they would, in due time, be removed by his Heavenly Father.

Just at this time, the schoolmaster of the village, who was likewise the curate, entered, and as he was always an intimate friend, and a truly kind-hearted good man, they did not hesitate to inform him what was the occasion of the grief he saw. He was sincerely sorry to learn the cause of their distress, the more so, as he was aware that there was no help for the more immediate evil ; for he had already been informed that Sir Harry was going to make all his farms large ones, and that many of the lesser tenants were likely to be reduced to being servants, on the very places where they had formerly been masters ; he therefore applied himself to giving consolation in the

only place where it was admissible, and in that where poor Norton seemed to feel misfortune the most acutely. He examined his eyes, informed him that the complaint in them admitted of relief, and that so far from being, as he apprehended, entirely decayed and lost, they were, in fact, incrustated with a thick film, which a skilful operator could remove, and by that means, restore him to a more perfect sight than he had enjoyed for several years.

As all the party were accustomed to place implicit credit in all their pastor assured them, although this appeared little short of a miracle, they did not doubt it; and the poor man and his wife only begged to know how such a blessing could be obtained.

The good curate told them he believed it was only in London that such skilful people lived, and he was afraid a large sum would be required in payment; but yet he

doubted not that the operator would proportion his charge to the circumstances of the patient.

From this time, all the consideration of the parties was, how to insure the good in question ; and as it appeared not only particularly necessary, not only to the farmer's individual comfort, but also sound policy, for the sake of his family, it was determined that it should be the first thing attended to ; and as they could not hear of any farm in the country, small enough to suit their reduced stock and scanty means, they agreed to sell whatever they had, and then consider how to dispose of themselves ; in the humble hope that, with sight, the power of some provision could not fail to be afforded them.

One thing, above all, the farmer determined on, which was, to sink such a sum as would provide for his poor mother for

her life, and in this resolve his wife heartily acquiesced.—“It will,” said she, “take a load from my mind.” Though the good old woman was thankful for their care, yet she opposed this proof of their love for some time, saying, “she was afraid in doing it they would tie their own hands ;” which was indeed too true ; but the hopes of regaining sight made the poor farmer spurn at all other difficulties ; and his wife, owing to his reasonings, had set all her hopes and wishes on this single stake, and of course, their poor children thought in all things with them.

But in despite of all their fortitude, though it was that of the best kind, being implanted by humility and religious hope, when the fatal day came, which tore them from their beloved home, and the dwelling where they had so long enjoyed plain comfort, and exercised modest hospitality, their affliction was very bitter ; and as the dumb

animals, which had so long constituted a part of their family, were consigned to other masters, the little boys wept aloud, and poor Betsy felt her very heart wrung, as the poultry it had been her province to feed, were dealt out to different purchasers; but this sensible, good child, endeavouring to imitate the conduct of her mother, suffered not a sigh to escape her, lest it should wound her father's heart, although many a silent tear stole down her rosy cheek, which she wiped off with the corner of her apron, almost envying her poor father his blindness, which saved him from witnessing the desolation which now marked the spot where he was born, and which was so long his happy and abundant home, since its owners had once possessed all their wants, and even wishes, required.

CHAPTER II.

As soon as the sale was over, the children and their grandmother removed to the house of a neighbour, who agreed to accommodate them at a small expence, for they were sincerely sorry for their situation, whilst the poor farmer and his faithful partner pursued their way to London. Grief had so greatly increased the complaint of the poor man, that he was now utterly unable to see his way at all; and never having been in a stage-coach, where he was liable to meet all kinds of curious and disagreeable company, he thought it the best way to go up in a post-chaise, as the difference in the expence was not so great as the different comfort it promised; and he felt as if he could make it up a thousand ways, when

he was once restored to his sight, of which he did not entertain a doubt.

But alas ! travelling a hundred and fifty miles became a much more expensive thing than he had reckoned upon ; and when he arrived in the metropolis, money appeared to fly with double wings. He had got no friend to inform or advise him how to proceed, for the good curate's directions were vague and indefinite ; in consequence of which his expences were amazingly increased, and his expectations from day to day disappointed, as his applications were made to wrong people.

At length he obtained an interview with the great oculist he sought ; and he then learnt, to his infinite disappointment, that distressing as his state was, it was yet not bad enough to admit of that operation which was required for his emancipation from blindness. It appeared strange to the poor man, that he must necessarily become

worse than he was, being already so bad ; but the gentleman to whom he applied did not disdain to explain this necessity to him ; and poor farmer Norton became convinced that there was indeed no hope, until he was totally blind, which might yet be a period of some years.

This grievous disappointment he endeavoured to bear with Christian fortitude, being supported still by his wife ; but of course common prudence dictated the necessity of embracing the very cheapest method of return, which was the outside of a stage-coach ; and accordingly on this vehicle he mounted, with the faithful partner of his cares, and for some time they proceeded more comfortably than could have been expected ; but, alas ! before they arrived at the town of Birmingham, through which their road lay, another coach happened to overtake them, and the coachmen, with that utter disregard of the lives and

limbs of their respective passengers which distinguishes this race of men, entered into a contest, which terminated in the overthrow of the unfortunate farmer, who being unable to assist himself by guarding in any measure against the shock, was taken up half dead, and conveyed to the nearest public-house, with little hopes of recovery.

Poor Mrs. Norton was likewise much hurt, but she exerted herself to the uttermost for his sake; but the length of his illness, and the nature of his complaints, exhausted all their little property, and they knew not how to obtain redress; and before he was able to walk, their children were sent to them, as the person who had kept them began to fear that he never should be paid, although a very small portion remained due. Of these children, however, the eldest remained behind; for the good curate, considering himself as in some measure the cause of their last misfortune, and

aware that the eldest boy was capable of being made very useful to him, agreed to keeping him in his service, as an usher in his school, which he was the more inclined to, because he thought it very shocking to subject a boy of considerable attainments to the coarse employments extreme poverty might subject him to, in their present situation.

John was a good boy, and uncommonly steady and reflective for his years; the line of life thus chalked out, was precisely what he could have desired; but such was his affection for his parents, and his sense of duty towards them, that he could not help desiring to be actively employed in their immediate service; and it was not until he had received a letter from his mother, informing him that providing for himself was in fact a great assistance to them, that he could feel reconciled even to accepting

that good, for which he yet felt sincerely grateful.

When the poor children were at length admitted to the presence of those dear parents, from whom they had never been separated before, bitter tears bedewed their innocent faces, on perceiving that their poor father was now not only blind but lame, and that their mother, who used to be the handsomest and neatest woman in the parish, looked pale, and old, and shabby;—nor were the feelings of the parents less painfully awakened, especially when they found the children were accompanied by their grandmother, as they would willingly have kept their distress from her; but the good old woman insisted on sharing with them the little stipend with which their duty and love had so kindly supplied her, insisting upon it, that although weak and infirm, she could help to wait on her poor son and the young children.

Mrs. Norton, aware, from her own sad experience, that weeping is neither the way to mend that which is bad in our situation, nor evince faith in the goodness of God, cheered up the hearts of her little household, and observed to them, "that the worse their father was, the more they were all called upon to comfort him;" and the poor children with great truth declared, that if they might live with him and talk to him, they would work constantly, and fare sparingly; their only dread was, lest they should be taken away to the workhouse, as many people in their own country had lately prophesied.

The bare idea was heart-breaking to the mother, and she lost not an hour in guarding against it. Well aware that a pure air was above all things necessary for them, and that they were all capable of taking a great deal of exercise, her first care was to procure them all a lodging in the outskirts

of the town of Birmingham, and she was so fortunate as to meet with a place, where there was only a man and his wife, with one child, so that they could spare the best part of their house, which they let with as much furniture as there happened to be in it; the rest they endeavoured to supply by a sale of some few articles which they had hitherto deemed sacred, which were an old family silver tankard, the tea-spoons and sugar-tongs bought on their marriage, and the bright copper tea-kettle, which was wont to shine like gold on a high shelf.

The next house was inhabited by a tailor, and to this man Mrs. Norton looked as a sheet anchor, for her new plan of getting her livelihood: she had ever been very active and clever in working for her sons and her husband, and she knew that in proportion to the difficulty of any pursuit, must be the profits accruing from it. She therefore entreated employment for men's

wear, in preference to women's; and the gentleness, and even the superiority of her manners, induced the tailor to trust her with a little work, which she executed so well, that he soon trusted her with more; but he could not fulfil her wishes by giving any to her little daughter, because he considered that as wronging the people whom he already employed.

Alas! work as hard as she would, she could not pay for their lodgings, and feed so many mouths, although they wished for nothing besides bread and potatoes; the plump ruddy cheeks of the once-smiling little train, grew pale and thin, and the loud voice of sportive play was no longer heard amongst them. Betsy and Frank, who were the oldest, were frequently in deep consultation as to the possibility of doing something, but what that something could be was the question: they had no object

or plan, for all around them was new, and the very manners of the people discouraged them from offering their services.

One day when Mrs. Norton took her work home, she found her employer in great distress for some buttons, which the manufacturer had neglected to send, and she offered to send Frank to fetch them, for he was a very sharp boy, and had already found out every place about the town; so his services were quickly accepted. When Frank arrived at the button manufactory, he was obliged to wait some time, during which he observed several women sitting at a long table, rubbing the buttons with the palms of their hands to polish them. It appeared to him very easy work, and as he surveyed them with an earnestness that indicated the interest he felt, one of the women said—"Do you think you should like to do this?"

"I think," said Frank, "I could soon learn to do it."

The women all broke into a sneering laugh, which greatly disconcerted poor Frank; but the master of the place, who was making up the parcel, said to him with a good-natured smile—"If you have a mind to try, my boy, you may, begin as soon as you like; I will give you three and sixpence a week, and more as you improve yourself."

Tears of gratitude gushed into the eyes of the poor boy, and he ran home in great delight to tell his parents, whose circumstances were now at so low an ebb, that this was a great relief to them; besides, they justly thought that any mode of industry was preferable to idleness; and they encouraged the poor boy to exertion, by assuring him that this would be a great assistance to them.

Poor Frank accordingly began to polish

buttons the very next day, but he found it very different work to what he had imagined. The sharp edges of the buttons continually cut his hand, and then the blood spoiled the buttons; and poor Frank was still more vexed to see his labour lost, than to feel the pain in his hands. His greatest care was to hide his sufferings from his mother; but she, poor woman, was only too well aware of them; and often when he was asleep, she crept to his bedside, and kissed those poor hands which were wounded, being well aware that nothing but habit would remove this trouble to him. She encouraged him, however; and as he was too manly to yield to difficulty, in the course of a few weeks his hands became perfectly smooth and yet hard, and the women gave over laughing at him, which had galled his spirit more than any thing else; so that every thing went on very well, and even his wages were a little raised.

As this manufactory was a great distance from his own home, sometimes Mrs. Norton would send Betsy with his dinner, in order to save time; and one day as she was standing to speak with him, a gentleman, who was a manufacturer of the paper tea-trays, asked her if she would like to work for him; the poor child blushed and curtsied, but durst not speak, so Frank answered for her—"That she would be glad to do any thing in her power;" so the person told her to come to a certain place on the following morning. Accordingly Betsy went, accompanied by her mother, who was surprised to see what a number of people were working in close workshops, where it appeared scarcely possible to breathe; some were pasting one sheet of paper upon another, until it became as strong as a board; others were cutting and sawing these boards, and nailing them together in different forms, such as tea-trays,

bread-baskets, snuffer-trays, &c. and after them came people who covered them with a beautiful japan. They then went into another place, where a number of women were drawing upon them all sorts of flowers and borders, which they did with a kind of cement, and then they laid gold leaf upon it. The leaf stuck to the cement, and only to it; so then they took a very delicate brush, and rubbed it over, and all the drawing appeared covered with gold, &c. looking very beautiful.

Little Betsy was quite delighted with this, and thought she should like to learn it prodigiously, and it was not hard work; her mother was very glad to engage with the master, who promised to have her taught; and finding from her first efforts that she had a very good notion, he agreed to give her a trifle, which was to be increased in proportion as she improved; so from this time she went regularly to work

every morning with Frank ; and poor Mrs. Norton, having disposed of two of her children, began to hope that in a little time something might be done by every one to contribute to the general welfare, and that her poor husband's heart would be relieved of that load of anxiety which still pressed him to the earth.

William, the fourth child, was about ten years old ; he had been very delicate, and was still little of his age, so that his mother could not think of consigning him to a manufactory, as she was too well aware that the close air and the confinement would be ruin to his health ; but yet she took care that he should be ever employed, and he became the errand-goer and principal servant of the family.—Mrs. Norton soon discovered that the people with whom they lodged, although very good to them, had all the vices which too frequently belong to the poor of manufactur-

ing towns ; they earned as much money as would have kept her large family in comfort, and even secure to them all the blessings of education ; yet they experienced all the miseries of poverty, through want of management. It was their custom to buy a fine joint of meat, of which they used to cut slice after slice, and broil and frizzle it all away, so that there was little support given at a great expence. All their best clothes were worn out without care or mending, and their poor child was always sickly, because it was crammed with improper food, and never kept cleanly in its person. Mrs. Norton was a woman of too much real benevolence to see this sad waste unmoved ; and after she got a little more free with them, she ventured to inform them in what they erred respecting the child, proposing that when the mother went to her work, the little one should be left to the management of her mother, who

would watch its steps with her own little one, which was of the same age, about two years old, but nearly twice as big.

In consequence of this plan, the poor child soon became quite a different creature; and the parents observing the general propriety, and even comfortable appearance of their lodgers, notwithstanding their poverty, did every thing in their power to follow their advice, and prove their gratitude; and were in a short time surprised to find that they were much more comfortable, and that they actually lived better, and yet saved money. They had a bit of ground belonging to the house as a garden, which they now determined to enclose; and poor Norton, on hearing this, once more lifted up his dejected head, and declared that with his son William's help, he had no doubt but he should be able to cultivate it for the use of both families.

"Never say that," said the landlord,

“ for it is quite at your service, neighbour ; you have made my child thrive as I never expected to see it, and my purse thrives too under your management, and it is as little as I can do to give you this bit of rough land, so pray make the most of it any way you please.”

Poor Norton, once roused, began to feel his faculties return : he soon learnt to grope about and dig very well, while little Billy doing exactly as he bade him, put the plants and seeds into the ground, and found health as well as profit and pleasure from the employment ; when, after great labour, (for the poor man had done his work often over, from his want of seeing what was finished), the garden was done, they commenced, at the instigation of the provident mother, building a pig-sty, and over that they made a little hencoop. When all was completed, Mrs.

Norton sold the only silk gown she had ever possessed, and with it she bought two little pigs; while she encouraged the two children who worked out, by purchasing for them two hens and a cock, which she declared should be considered their property, and little Mary was appointed to take care of them; and every Saturday night, when they received their wages, a certain portion was appropriated for food, and at the same time they received the money for which their eggs had been sold to the neighbours.

"But, dear father," said Billy, "how will the pigs be fed, they are such greedy things?"

"My dear," replied the farmer, "we must give them a little food and a great deal of cleaning; they are naturally a filthy animal, but they always thrive when they are kept clean."

"Then I will take care of that, dear

father, for I want very much to be good for something, the same as Frank and Betsy are."

"In order to do this, my child, you must collect from all the houses in this row, the wash which they are accustomed to throw away; you may collect from the gentleman's gardener many valuable vegetables which are useless to him, and by picking them clean, and boiling them in some cases, you will fatten the pigs; while your brother and sister get money, you will save money, and be equally beneficial to me."

In this manner, by unremitting industry, though with very small profits, the distressed family made shift to support themselves; but what was more extraordinary, they preserved to their minds that degree of knowledge they had acquired, and so far from sinking into an ignorance fatal to their future advancement in life, they con-

trived to improve their minds, even in a situation which afforded so little apparent help ; for when the poor farmer got them all round him on the Sabbath-day, he never failed to repeat to them, in the most impressive manner, all the knowledge he had acquired in the course of his life ; and as their veneration for him was really increased by his misfortune, it was imprinted on their affectionate hearts in the strongest manner. To this may be added the cares and kindness of their eldest brother, who wishing them to enjoy similar advantages with himself, and not being able to afford postage, used to write down in a little book whatever he thought most desirable for them to know, and now and then these books were transmitted by a neighbour ; and these little tracts being written by the brother they dearly loved, failed not to be duly observed and carefully recollected ; and seeing he took so much pains for

them, put them on taking pains with each other ; so that they taught even their little sisters to read and write, whenever they had an opportunity, and in doing this, greatly improved themselves.

If it had not been for this mental exercise, the life of poor Frank would have been very dull and cheerless, for he was naturally a fine lively clever lad, and to sit rubbing buttons twelve hours a-day," may well be supposed to be a very stupid occupation. On the contrary, Betsy's employment, although an unhealthy one from its closeness, was really amusing ; and Frank would very frequently wish he were engaged in it, for he was very fond of drawing ; and whenever she showed him any new pattern, he would practise it with a bit of chalk or a pen, until he had got it to such perfection as to be frequently able to improve her ; and when he had ex-

hausted this, he would turn to any other object, and especially the plants in the garden, or even the pigs; which he used to draw to please poor Billy, who had the pleasure of seeing them grow up as fine as his heart could wish.

When the poor farmer heard his wife speak of this talent in their son, he would sometimes sigh over his loss of sight, which forbade him witnessing either his work or Betsy's; but every proof of faculty they displayed, only made him more anxious to imbue their ardent minds with knowledge. He described to Frank every forest tree, and directed him to get little specimens of them: during his Sunday evening's walks, he taught him how to look at animals so as to distinguish their anatomy, and to observe all the most striking characteristics of plants and grains. Whatever had been connected with his own profession, poor Norton thoroughly

understood, and in relating his observations to his children, he felt the only consolation his melancholy state admitted ; he saw that he did not live in vain.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN the pigs had attained to the size the farmer wished, he directed his son William to drive them to the market, where they were usually sold; and having felt and examined them, informed him what price he must ask for them. The poor boy did not know whether he was most glad or sorry for this order; in the first place, he had so constantly tended and fed these animals, that, disagreeable as they are by nature, yet they had become so endeared to him, that he felt as if he could not bear to see them killed; in the second, he really wished his dear parents to have a side of bacon as they used to have, especially as they had now a prospect of plenty of beans and peas from their own

little garden; and as he drove them away, the tears stood in his eyes, as he thought of the pleasure he had often promised himself in seeing this.

The affectionate mother, who read all his thoughts, said—"My dear boy, if you sell your pigs well, you shall buy a little porker, and fatten it for your father; but we cannot afford such a great pig as either of these. I will walk up and down near the place, and if you have a good offer, you must come and tell me."

Thus assured and happy, poor Billy set out on an errand he justly considered honourable and useful; and on arriving at the market, he had the proud satisfaction of shewing the very finest pigs in the place; and on hearing the prices asked by other people, he found that his dear father had considerably underrated them. He had not stood long, when a gentleman and his bailiff came, and having examined the ani-

mals, inquired the price, when William, in a hesitating voice, asked him that which he had himself set upon them.

"So, young one, you have a conscience, I see," said the bailiff; "you thought of asking more, didn't you?"

"No," said William, "I thought of asking less."

The gentleman laughed — "Come," said he, "that is honest, however; we must make no words on this subject; Johnson, pay the lad, and drive home his pigs."

Johnson pulled out a yellow canvas bag, well stocked with golden guineas, and Willy's heart for a moment danced with joy, at the thoughts of taking some of them to his dear father and mother; but as he cast his eye down towards his grunting companions, his countenance fell, and he gave a deep sigh.

"You seem sorry to part with your pigs, my boy," said the gentleman.

"I fed them ever since they were taken from the sow, sir."

"Well, they do you credit; they are the show of the market."

"Yes, sir; but it was cleaning that made them what they are."

"They are remarkably clean; I thought they were washed for the occasion."

"So they were, sir; I used to wash them every day, and curry them too very often; because I had not much food to give them, and father said cleanliness would supply the want of food."

"Your father is a sensible man, and you are a good boy for observing his direction."

"I'll be bound," said the bailiff, "the father saw him do it; but I wonder he

trusts him here, so young as he is, to take money."

"My poor father couldn't *see* me," said the boy, reddening.

"Oh, couldn't he? what, is he blind?"

"Yes," said the boy, bursting into tears.

The bailiff was heartily sorry for what he had said, and the gentleman was much affected; but before he had time to speak, Billy darted away to a very decent woman on the pavement, and dragging her towards them, she comprehended that he wanted her to receive the money which the bailiff still held in his hand.

Mrs. Norton took the money in silence, but finding a guinea and a half more was given to her than her husband had named as the sum he expected, she said—"Here is no mistake, I hope."

"None at all, ma'am, your son asked that, and I gave it—his pigs are the finest

in the market, and he has a right to the best price."

Mrs. Norton curtsied to the gentleman, and saying she hoped they would prove excellent bacon, was taking Billy's hand and going, when the gentleman, who was much struck with the propriety of her manners, and the respectability of her appearance, which was indeed that of a decayed farmer's wife, not that of shabby finery, stopped her, saying—"I am a person, ma'am, who lose no opportunity of gaining knowledge on agricultural subjects; my name is Appleby."

Mrs. Norton knew the name well; he was a resident within ten miles of her once-happy home, and she felt well aware that had her husband been *his* tenant, he would never have been expelled his farm; her heart rose to her throat, and though by her movement she assured the gentleman

that she recognised him, yet she was unable to speak.

“ Well, ma’am,” continued Mr. Appleby, “ your little man here has given me information, on which I shall act with respect to the management of pigs, and I wish to reward by presenting him with one that shall be his own property; the young ones are in the low part of the market, and, with your permission, he shall go back, and my bailiff shall choose one for him.”

Both mother and son heard this with glistening eyes; and in a very short time poor Billy with a thankful heart drove home his pretty porker, thanking and blessing the good gentleman, and determining to feed and clean it even better than before, and then present it to his parents. The children heard of their brother's good luck with great joy; and Frank promised when days were a little longer,

he would draw the pig, which was all he could do ; he sighed when he thought how long he might rub the buttons, before he got money enough to buy a pig ; but his mother going to the cupboard, brought out the money which had been saved for him and Betsy, out of the profits of their poultry, and they saw with delight that it amounted to seventeen shillings, and they both desired that it might be laid out in something that she and their father would like.

“ No, my dear children,” said the kind mother, “ we must put it by a little longer, that we may get you a few clothes, for you are now scarcely fit to be seen at church.”

The children did not recollect that, in their eagerness to assist their parents, but they now looked wistfully towards the sum of money which was in their father's hands, and even he was sensible of

the direction of their heads towards him.

“ My dear children,” said the farmer, “ I am indebted to the person where you lodged in the country during my unfortunate journey, all this sum, save three pounds, and my reason for selling the pigs, was to set my heart at ease by paying it, although I am not pressed to do it. I trust you all will feel with me, that it is better to live on dry bread and roots a little longer, and have a clear conscience in this respect; it grieves me to deprive you of any comfort, because you are good children, but I wish you from your infancy to show yourselves capable of suffering any thing, rather than debt, which, to an honest mind, is a perpetual torment.”

All the children, with one voice, declared that they wanted nothing for themselves; and the little one, who knew not of what they spoke, but saw in their eager

affectionate looks that they meant to be particularly kind, climbing upon his knee and clasping his neck, said, "me want nothing but daddy;" and as the poor father kissed it, as the representative of all the rest, he lifted up his sightless eyes to heaven, and thanked God that he was blessed with such a family, and such an excellent mother for them.

In time the pig grew, was killed, and the half of it, together with a portion of the produce of the garden, paid for their lodging; and from the joint savings of the family, another was purchased; and as Mrs. Norton improved in her work, she gained a little more money, and was now enabled to employ her daughter Mary likewise, as the little one could take care of itself, and old Mrs. Norton contrived to cook for them:—but, alas! though a little more money was thus gained, yet

the consumption of increasing growth in a family of this description, kept pace with it; and Betsy alone could be said to maintain herself, as, her work being the finest, she was paid best. Yet about her, the mother was the most unhappy, for the poor child pined for want of air, and the people among whom she worked were by no means proper company for her; so that the anxious mother was continually casting about for the means of providing her a more suitable situation.

Between all the children there existed the most cordial affection, but especially with Frank and Betsy, whose pursuits and taste were exactly similar in every leisure moment; and through her, Frank had now attained a ready method of copying any little pattern he saw, and from native talent went generally far beyond her, although she was considered the cleverest girl of her age in her own manufactory.

One day, as poor Frank was going on with his usual humdrum employment, a gentleman was showing his employer a new pattern of a button he had brought from abroad—"Oh dear," said the master, "how I wish I could draw! I would take it in my pocket-book—bless my life, is there nobody about the place, I wonder, that can do it?"

Poor Frank looked up, and very modestly offered to do his best.

"You!" said the master in astonishment.

"Let him try," said the gentleman; "there is no harm in trying."

Frank tried, and so far succeeded, as to give all that was required; and the master observed that he really thought the lad had a notion above his years, and that he would move him into a more lucrative line of employment; and he said, "as you have evidently a taste for these things,

some day when you are clean and smart, you may call at Mr. Bloomfield's, the artist, in the Crescent-road, and give my compliments, and beg he will let you look at his paintings; it will be a great treat to you."

Poor Frank knew too well that when he was made as clean as he could be, he was yet not smart enough for such a visit as this; for his well-worn jacket was patched until the original was scarcely visible; he therefore sighed to think that a sight, which would have been indeed a treat, was effectually denied to him.

Although this little circumstance ran much in his head, yet he did not mention it to any one save Betsy, lest the pain he felt on account of his shabby clothes should extend itself to his parents; but one Saturday afternoon, when his wages were paid sooner than common, on going home, which he always did with great speed, on

this occasion he found his mother so busy, finishing a waistcoat, that she could not even take his money.—“ Here, child,” said she, “ run in with this to Mr. Brown’s ; I know he is waiting for it.”

Frank did as he was bid.

“ Oh,” said Brown, the tailor, “ here comes the waistcoat ; I am never disappointed by Mrs. Norton ; come, make haste with the coat, and then whip away with them to Mr. Bloomfield’s, for he is all impatience, and it is a good step to the Crescent-road.”

Frank’s heart beat quick ; he thought he might get a peep at the place, so he said—“ Sir, it is Saturday night, and you are busy ; I will carry the clothes for you as soon as I have washed my face, if you please.”

“ Thank you, my good boy, you cannot oblige me more—we shall be ready in five minutes.”

Poor Frank ran home in a great bustle, put on the clean shirt his mother had provided for the morrow, and making himself as decent as he could, ran away with the coat to the painter's; when he got there, the servant said her master was in a great passion because the clothes were not come, and was then under the hairdresser's hands.

"I am to wait, and see if the coat fits," said Frank.

"Then you may go in there," said the girl, opening the door of a room that seemed all in confusion.

But the moment Frank entered the place, it presented to his delighted eye the wonders he most desired to behold; on every side were beautiful views of the country, and pictures in every stage of progress were laid about on every side. The taste and ability displayed by the artist, the various kinds of materials for forming his colours, his pencils, oils, and palette,

were all objects of attention to Frank, whose eye ran eagerly over every thing he saw, till at last a large picture, in which a group of cattle were seen, naturally charmed it most; and he was kneeling before it in mute wonder and pleasure, when a loud and angry voice was heard to say—"You put the tailor's boy in the painting-room, did you?—how dared you do such a thing, you impudent slut? I will be bound he has done me fifty pounds' worth of damage already—a tailor's prentice in a painting-room—worse than a blind horse in a china-shop!—what a fool!—what a cursed fool!"

Frank was so terrified by this ebullition of passion that he durst not move, and he began to think that even his pleasure was too dearly purchased, and he dreaded seeing the speaker, quite as much as not a moment before he had wished to see the painter; when therefore he flounced into

the room, as if to take vengeance for imagined injury, the boy still knelt before the picture, and continued to gaze from terror as intently as he had lately done from admiration.

The moment the painter beheld Frank, his hasty passion evaporated, for who can be angry with the compliment expressed by profound attention to his own works? But in addition to this, a thought struck the artist. —“Kneel where you are, my boy,” said he; and taking up a pencil, he immediately proceeded to sketch him on a panel. “There, you may go,” said he, in a few minutes.

Frank rose, really desirous of thanking him for the pleasure he had enjoyed; but he could find no words adequate to express his feelings; he therefore simply inquired if the coat which he had brought suited him.

“Oh, the coat! yes, it will do very

well ; here, you may take the old one ; it may be of use to you, my boy—this is a good sketch—umph. I must finish it ; come again in a day or two, will you ?—I will pay you for your time.”

Frank went home, delighted with his visit ; and as his poor mother failed not to make up the painter's gift for him, the very first hour he could be spared he repaired thither ; and Mr. Bloomfield, happening to be engaged ; he put him into the painting-room himself, telling him he might take a pencil and paper, and employ himself in copying any thing he saw.

The fact was, that the master with whom Frank worked was at this very time speaking of him to the artist, who thus gave him an opportunity of proving whether he really had those talents of which his employer spoke. Poor Frank was so desirous of making good use of his time, that

he began so many things without finishing one, that he could not be said to do himself justice ; nevertheless, when Mr. Bloomfield looked at his paper, he was much pleased, and said—" I want a boy to grind my paint, clean my palette, go my errands, and, in short, do any thing and every thing for me, and in return I will do every thing for him in the way of instruction—would you like to be that boy ?"

With eager haste Frank replied he should be most thankful for the situation, and he was sure his parents would be so too.

" Then we are agreed, for you have taste for the art, and I hate to have a numskull about me ; but mark me, you will have something to go through."

Frank only smiled—he began indeed to conceive that his new master was an oddity, and he thought that probably his temper would cause him some trials ; but

so delightful appeared to him a change which would afford him continual employment for his mind, and that in the precise way to which he had lately applied all its powers, that he felt as if no hardship or difficulty could affright him from the pursuit; and so happy did the prospect render him, that it was with difficulty he related the offer to his parents, and besought their consent.

“I give it,” returned the farmer, “on one condition only, which is, that you regularly spend the Sabbath-day with your own family;—your regularity and good conduct, your affection to your parents and family, is of the last importance; and this can only be insured by our continuing to associate together, and spending our time in the service of God; for although you are now, my dear Frank, a very good child, yet you are so volatile and enthusiastic, that I know it is necessary to watch

over you, and give you all the protection my sad situation allows."

As this was readily agreed to by the artist, Frank was immediately removed, and his place at the manufactory for a short time supplied by William; but it was soon found that his health could not bear it; the master, however, did not withdraw his assistance from the family, as he frequently employed them in going errands; and, on learning that they kept poultry, he desired his wife to purchase all they could spare, so that they were enabled to increase their stock; she likewise gave work to little Mary, and the youngest child began to knit and weave cabbage-nets, being taught by her poor father, who, notwithstanding his affliction, was always employed; and it was an afflicting spectacle to behold him, as he sat at work, listening to his poor old mother, who often read in the Bible to him,

while his wife and the little ones, as still as mice, were all busy around them.

When Frank came home on a Sunday, it was now a time of great rejoicing ; but this was greatly added to, when, at the Midsummer vacation, they had the great felicity of receiving their eldest son, whom they had not seen for two years, but who, as a reward for his good behaviour, was treated by his master with a journey. It was delightful to them, that he did not find them in that extreme poverty they had so long struggled with, as they knew it would have just broke his tender heart to have reflected upon it ; and yet his grief could have answered no good end, as it was not possible for him to do more than he did. He was now getting on, a fine handsome youth, and exceedingly improved in every respect ; so that the poor farmer was charmed with every word he uttered, and felt one of

the earliest wishes of his heart fulfilled, in the learning and knowledge of his son, who was likewise modest, humble, and of the most obliging and affectionate disposition possible.

This visit was of very great use to Frank, who, although one of the best boys, in point of disposition, that could be met with, had yet evinced of late a considerable disposition to domineer over his brothers and sisters at home; and in his sincere and proper desire for imitating his master in some things, had been led to do it in others, and Mr. Bloomfield was a passionate, hasty, thoughtless man, although he possessed many estimable qualities; so that Frank had frequently been inclined to give himself airs, as a person suddenly lifted into consequence; but when he saw how meek and gentle, condescending and kind, his brother was, he became so too, and really learned to distinguish between that which

was to be esteemed and that which was to be lamented in a master whom he truly loved, and whom he admired even to veneration.

One day he asked leave to bring his brother to see the pictures, which was readily granted: all the way as they went, they lamented that poor Betsy could not go with them; and John, with great feeling and propriety, deplored that she was shut up in such a disagreeable place, and among such a set of dissolute, or at least ignorant companions; and Frank, who dearly loved her, lamented it also; and the poor boys tried to arrange various plans for improving her prospects, but with little real chance of success. On arriving, they found Mr. Bloomfield painting a landscape, in which he introduced a group of haymakers, and he was glad to have them to stand for the figures, because they understood the proper positions. "But," said he, "what can

I do for a girl? servant maids are like any thing but haymakers now-a-days."

Frank eagerly offered to fetch his sister, at which John was shocked, as he did not like her to be seen in her working-dress, for he had not been long enough acquainted with it to be reconciled; when, however, poor Betsy came, he perceived that the painter took no other notice of her than to direct her how to stand; and as he found her tractable and sensible, he had soon done with her, and she departed with John. Yet Frank, who knew his master, was in hopes that he would some way do her good; he was therefore a little disappointed, when, after a long silence, he called to him, saying, "Come and look at these cattle, and this drove of pigs, and tell me what you think of them."

"I like the cattle very much, sir; they are just like cows."

“ And the pigs? don’t you like the pigs?”

“ Not so well, sir, I confess.”

“ That’s a sign you don’t understand them.”

Frank thought, in his own mind, he understood them the best; but he thought likewise it would be presumptuous in him to say so. His master being vexed, and at the bottom not satisfied with his own performance, went out of the house; and Frank, having nothing else to do, began to revive his ideas on the subject, and having various early sketches of poor Billy’s first favourite pigs, he began drawing them in various points of view, till at length he had got a small group of pigs, and being much interested in them, he worked till it was quite dark, when his master suddenly entered, and being perfectly cured of his ill-temper, caught the paper from him, and examined it with great good humour, asking various questions, as to the colour of the animals,

and observing upon their forms ; and finally, he took out his own from the landscape and adopted those of Frank, who, with great pride, saw them transplanted into the beautiful picture.

A few days after this, when Frank returned from an errand, his master put a five pound note into his hand. " Here, my boy," said he, " I have sold my picture, and as your pigs really made a singular impression on the gentleman, I give you this as a reward for them ; if I were you, I would appropriate it to the use of your pretty sister, who is really a deal too good and handsome to be trusted in the public manufactory where she now works."

With many thanks, Frank hied home with his prize, being indeed very willing to appropriate it to the use of his beloved sister ; but his mother was rather desirous that it should be laid by as the medium of procuring his father's sight, when the time

came that the operation could be safely performed. Poor Frank heartily wished he could do every thing with it; but as John, who was now departing, still leaned towards Betsy, because he deemed his father's case a hopeless one, she agreed to purchase her clothes with it; but she durst not venture to take her immediately from her employment, though equally anxious to do it with themselves, unless she could put little Mary for a few years into it.

The gentleman who had purchased Mr. Bloomfield's picture, invited him to his house, in order to paint another to hang pendant with it, from a view in his own grounds; and one day while he was there, his lady lamented to the artist that she was at a loss for a proper person to attend her two youngest daughters.—“I want a person,” said she, “a little above a servant, and yet not a perfect governess, for they are too young to require that. I want a

respectable girl about fourteen, who would always remain with them in the nursery, and not run junketting with the other servants; a good-principled, modest girl, is all I ask for; but the better her education, the more valuable she would be to me."

"I can find you the very thing, madam," said Mr. Bloomfield, "and will answer for her character myself."

As soon as ever he got home, he kindly informed Mrs. Norton of this, and told her to lose no time in preparing her daughter; she was very thankful to hear of this, but when informed that it was Mrs. Appleby, of Primrose Hill, who wanted her child, her joy was exceedingly great, as she knew her to be a lady of high character, and she reminded Billy of the gentleman who bought his pigs, saying, she did not doubt but seeing them represented in the picture, had been one reason why Mr. Appleby had bought it, as it was connected with a

circumstance of his benevolence, which could not fail to awaken pleasure in his own heart.

Betsy was very timid, and she began now to fear, that having been in a manufactory would be a disadvantage to her in the eyes of the genteel, respectable family to which she was going, and her heart sunk at the thoughts of having no mother to whom she could every evening relate the occurrences, or vent the sorrows of the day. But her father encouraged her by saying—"My dear child, as you have really gained no bad habit at the manufactory, never allow yourself to suppose that you can be the worse for having been there; seeing that you have attained a certain art, which will be always useful, and one which is perfectly compatible with even the most elegant occupations of your sex; and though you have not your dear

mother to speak to, yet you have one infinitely more able to listen to your wants, and redress your grievances. Go then, my dear child, in the humble assurance that so long as you trust in God, and exert yourself, you will find a present help in every hour of need."

With many a kind kiss, and some tender tears on all sides, Betsy took her leave, and went down in the coach to Primrose Hill, where she was received with kindness by her future mistress, and pleasure by the little ladies.

CHAPTER IV.

THE family of Mr. Appleby consisted of two daughters, who were approaching to womanhood, two sons, who were at a boarding-school, and two little girls, who were at a considerable distance in point of age from their brothers, as they had had the misfortune to lose a son and daughter between them.

Mrs. Appleby was an active, clever woman in her family, and although her fortune was very large, she was only the more anxious to spend it properly, and render her large establishment a blessing to that part of the community among whom she was placed. She was both feared and loved by all her dependants; but the awe which Betsy at first felt of her was

soon converted into the warmest attachment; and she felt that in the countenance of such a good and clever woman, there was a protection which would effectually shelter her from all other fears; and her only care became that of attending to her young charge, and improving her own mind, so as to enable her to improve theirs.

The eldest of these children was between five and six, the youngest between three and four years of age, and she soon brought them to read very prettily; and being generally a very silent girl, she had not contracted any provincial accent in the manufactory, so that she might be trusted to talk with them; she had gained a little knowledge of geography from her brother John, and all that she knew she imparted. Sometimes the young ladies would come into the nursery for an hour or two, to assist her in teaching the eldest to write,

and this greatly improved Betsy as well as her pupil. One day, they came in, prepared to make some paper quadrille-boxes, but after several efforts they were going to give it up; but as Betsy was perfectly mistress of the proper method, she felt it was her duty to show them how; yet the fear of thereby betraying her late employment, prevented her for some time; but at length gaining courage, she ventured to offer her services.

The young ladies were of course delighted with the progress they now made; and in the course of their chat, she learned that when the young gentlemen came home at the next vacation, they were to bring a youth, who was their teacher, with them, and whom they wished to accompany them to Oxford. — “Yes,” said Louisa, the younger, “and I suppose somebody else will be coming about the same time.”

The eldest blushed excessively, but was silent.—“ Yes, yes,” said Louisa, “ we shall have Sir Harry Eustace here before them, I’ll answer for it.”

At the name of Sir Harry Eustace, Betsy felt all the blood rush into her face, for she could not help associating with his name the idea of all her misfortunes; the sisters looked at her, and asked if she knew him; to which she truly answered — “ No, ma’am,” but the tears were in her eyes, therefore they said no more; and becoming soon engaged with their employment, thought no more about it.

About a month afterwards, Sir Harry actually arrived at the house; and poor Betsy, who had ever associated with his idea every thing that was hideous, beheld with surprise a handsome, agreeable-looking young man. Conscious that she might be frequently obliged to see him, she endeavoured to conquer the emotion which

might lead her into difficulties, and which could do her dear parents no good; but when she found that he was considered in the family as the lover of Miss Appleby, her heart ached exceedingly, for she dearly loved the young lady, who was a most amiable creature, and she thought it would be a thousand pities for her to marry a man who could have acted so cruelly by a worthy family as he had done.

One day, as she was walking in the park with her young charge, the ladies and Sir Harry overtook and joined them, for the children were very fond of Sir Harry; and as they were now near the gates, one of them said—"Look, look, here is company coming."

Two young men, very well mounted, and dressed in the height of the jockey fashion, just then pulled off their hats to Sir Harry, who touched his in return with a cold air; but this did not repress them; the eldest,

addressing the ladies—"Hoped 'squire Appleby was well."

Miss Appleby made a stately courtesy, and they rode on.—"Pray who are those people? their dress and address seem very different."

"They are the sons of a tenant of mine," returned the baronet.

"Upon my word," said Louisa, laughing, "they cut a better figure than the landlord; but indeed one sees nothing like farmers now-a-days; papa says I shall marry a farmer, that I may wallow in plenty, knowing I have a taste for the good things of life.—I suppose these are the people who live on one of your great overgrown farms, hey, sir Harry?"

"Yes, like a fool, I made three into one, to oblige old Reynolds, the father, who was represented to me as a rich man, a great agriculturist, and nobody knows what; the two first years he made a monstrous

deal of money, and spent it as fast; the last two seasons have been worse, but he still goes on spending; and whether he will pay his rent or not, is a matter of great doubt, I assure you."

"Has he any other children?"

"Oh, plenty; the farm, they tell me, never lacked them: the last proprietor had half a dozen at least, (poor Betsy turned her head away)—yes, there is Juliana and Sophia Matilda, just come from boarding-school; Orlando and Charles, who still go thither, and another sprig, who is preparing for the army; these whom we have just seen being contented to dash in scarlet, only on hunting days, and along with the yeomanry cavalry."

"I hope the ladies are accomplished."

"Oh, prodigiously; while their old grandmother, who has the sense of the whole house, is trotting about at the age of seventy to skim the milk-pail, or turn a

cheese, they play duets on the piano-forte, jabber execrable French, and draw more execrable flowers; while their mother broils herself over the fire to make cosmetics for the complexions of the family, of which she takes such care, that the men and maids rob the pigs of their rights in butter and milk, in order to preserve their own skins from the effect of hay-making."

"You forget, my dear sir Harry, that these are the very people in whose favour you quarrelled with papa about two years ago, and with whom you were going to dine *en famille*."

"Well, Louisa, and in those two circumstances you have surely given two very good reasons for an alteration in my opinion—never shall I forgive myself for daring, young and inexperienced as I then was, to dissent so decidedly from your father—and the dinner!—Oh gemini, the dinner!"

"Do tell us about it—I love to laugh, you know."

"But surely you ought not to laugh, Louisa, merely because you *love* to do it," said Miss Appleby.

"Yes, Maria, I may do it safely at upstart airs and affectation: every body is respectable in their own places, nobody out of them; and I don't see why one may not enjoy a laugh at the expence of those who are perpetually trying to elbow us out of ours, in order to intrude their own vulgar consequence and new-fangled importance."

"Well," said Sir Harry, "in the first place, I was assailed by the young ladies, one of whom, having good teeth, kept in a perpetual grin, by way of playing the pretty rustic; the other, armed with a cambric handkerchief, exhibited sentimentals; the old man, however, would scarcely let them perform, so anxious was he to talk about the funds, of which he knew nothing; while

his sons were equally desirous of taking my opinion on the 'bit of blood' which each could exhibit. If I were astonished with this display of wealth in the old-fashioned parlour, now converted into a drawing-room, how much more was I surprised with the poverty of the dining-room, for such I deemed it! instead of the plump barn-door fowl and gammon of home-fed bacon, I beheld a whole farrago of what should have been made-dishes, ill cooked, and worse served; one solitary dish did I espy which I could eat, and for this an apology was made, as being the 'bad taste of my grandmother;' but to this I applied with all my powers, not less to appease hunger, than to show a proper contempt for the intended treat.—Juliana cast up her languishing eye in astonishment, and her fair sister 'grinned a gaping smile,' and quoted Walter Scot, and the 'Miseries of Human Life,' on which the farmer saga-

ciously observed, that books ‘were well enough for women;’—the youth who is intended for the army, said, ‘He had no objection to reading of battles and those things; he remembered about Alexander the Great and Skipio; they had a famous tug for it when they landed in Britain; but, for his part, Hannibal was the man for his money.’—‘I adore Annibal Scratchy myself,’ said Juliana.—‘I never knew that was his surname,’ said the youth, ‘and I can’t say I admire it at all—but pray now, Sir Harry, do you read at all?’—‘A little.’—‘Little enough,’ quoth the farmer, ‘I’ll be bound—but, Sir Harry, I shall be glad to pledge you; my Madeira is, I think, tolerable.”

“Madeira!” cried Louisa.

“True, my good girl, such is the style of farmers, as times go—but you will observe, though I got my dinner I got no

rent, and one can't press *gentlemen*, you know—when my steward applied, he was answered—‘That really it was not convenient, and *between gentlemen*——’”

“Well,” said Louisa, smiling archly at her sister, “and *between ladies*, he was right served.”

“Well, well, seven years is no long time; by and by the lease will be out, and I shall then——”

“What will you do *then*?”

“Seek a tenant, Maria, and I hope find a little better thing in consequence.”

From the looks that passed between the parties, Betsy might have perceived that the baronet hoped to find a wife, but she had been too much thrown on the recollection of her own father and family to think of any thing else; and she returned to the house full of solicitude for the future, which seemed to present a kind of vague promise for better days.

The following day the baronet took his departure; he said that he would only just stay till the boys arrived, and having shook hands with them, set out. For the purpose of meeting these dear branches, all the family were drawn out before the house, and of course Betsy was with her young ladies, who, when the carriage arrived, joyfully clapped their little hands, and hailed their brothers; but how was she astonished when the third person that descended was her own John, who now appeared to be the young tutor in question!

As his surprise was not less than hers, no wonder that they instantly darted into each other's arms; and as every body had caresses to give and receive, it was some moments before their situation was perceived, when the relationship was inquired into; and it was observed by Sir Harry, that their eyes were so exactly

alike, he could have known them for brother and sister any where.

The elder of the little girls, kindly laying hold on the baronet's coat, said, in a whisper—"Pray don't talk about eyes before Betsy, for her poor father is blind, and she often cries about him, because she has not money to pay the doctor for couching him."

"Poor girl," said the baronet, with great sympathy, "I pity her from my heart."

Seizing the opportunity when the family were busy with the new comers, he took Betsy aside, and putting a twenty pound bank bill into her hand, said—"Take this, my good girl, for your father; tell him that at this very time the first oculist in the kingdom is at Oxford, and I will request his attendance on him; this for his expence—hush! *not a word!*"

In a moment he was mounted and gal-

loping away, and Betsy precipitately retired to weep her thanks, and pray for blessings on the head of the donor, who appeared now an object worthy her unbounded gratitude ; but she felt it her duty, in obedience to his wishes, not to proclaim her feelings. The first time, however, that she could get a few words with John, she delighted him with the information ; and he agreed with her, that no time should be lost in conveying this noble present to their father, and urging him to set out without delay for Oxford, for the purpose of obtaining relief from the celebrated man, whose visit to the University would probably be short.

At the time when this letter reached the little family, poor farmer Norton had, indeed, become aware that he was perfectly blind : no form, however dimly, glanced before his darkened orbs, no misty sub-

stance suffused his sight, but all was dark, impenetrable night. Although this was precisely the state he had been taught to desire, yet still it doomed him to such entire dependence, that it was impossible to rejoice in it, more especially as he had not the means of procuring the assistance he wanted so much ; and his spirits, in despite of his better hopes and wishes, were exceedingly low, and all his family partook his emotions.

It will be readily conceived what a change was made by the receipt of this letter from their dear children, and how greatly it added to their pleasure, to find that they were now together in the house of so good a gentleman, and one who had the will and power to assist them so effectually. But when they learned that the means of obtaining sight was furnished by the very hand which had doomed them to such a severe trial, they were still more

surprised; and not knowing that he was perfectly ignorant of the person whom he assisted, they too conceived that he intended them some future good, which therefore added to their present enjoyment.

When poor Norton kissed his old mother at parting, he ventured to promise himself the pleasure of once more beholding her; and she declared that it was her only prayer that she might know him restored to sight, and then depart in peace; for she was become very infirm and full of pain; so that although she had every care and comfort which kindness could procure, she was yet desirous of departing and joining her beloved husband. The farmer and his wife earnestly recommended their grandmother to their children, who faithfully promised to be very good and attentive to her, and fulfilled that promise to the uttermost, Francis taking his share of the charge, by sleeping at home every night,

and spending every hour he could spare with her, which was a great comfort both to her and the young ones, as Frank, from seeing a great deal of good company, who came to converse with his master, and from reading the books with which he had kindly furnished him, was exceedingly improved, and become not only clever in his profession, but every way a sensible and well-informed youth; and poor William, who had enjoyed less benefit either of education or society than the rest, was eager to imbibe from him that knowledge which might atone for his deficiencies.

Never was boy happier than Frank, when he had got his grandmother on one side, and the children on the other, to read to them a letter from his mother, giving an account of their safe arrival at Oxford, and their expectation that in a week's time the long wished-for operation would be performed; but yet, when they thought of the

pain he must endure, their countenances fell, and their hearts trembled, but each ascended in silent prayer to God on his behalf, nor did they ascend in vain.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN farmer Norton and his faithful wife arrived at the ancient city of Oxford, they felt almost as much at a loss as they had done in London some years before ; but as they had the advantage of having less ground to traverse, they soon found out the temporary residence of the gentleman they sought. But, alas ! they attended in vain for several days, unfortunately not understanding that they had a right to use the name of Sir Harry Eustace. One morning, as they were, according to custom, standing in the anti-room, a gentleman passing happened to see Mrs. Norton's face, and stopping, he said, " I think I know you, good woman ; if I am not mistaken, you are one of my parishioners."

Mrs. Norton answered, "That she had enjoyed the comfort of attending his church at Birmingham a considerable time."

"I remember you both, and likewise your little family, and perceive that you are come with your husband for the purpose of consulting Sir ———. I will try to get you in. I heartily hope he will be of use to you, for I am certain you are regular, respectable people."

The gentleman passed, and very soon returned to conduct them forward. Poor Mrs. Norton was as pale as death when she entered, but she was relieved when informed that the operation^r could not be performed for two days, during which time some preparation must be used: finding that the oculist treated them as objects of charity, she told him with great candour her means of payment, adding, "that it was furnished by the bounty of Sir Harry Eustace."

The gentleman smiled—"I am sorry you did not say this before; I have been expecting the persons mentioned by my young friend some days; but, however, there is little time lost—I shall give orders for your admittance on Thursday."

Till that time arrived, prayers and tears occupied continually the affectionate wife; but the farmer himself attained that composure, which, as a man and a Christian, was equally desirable and expedient; and when the time arrived, he walked, taking hold of his trembling partner, with a firmer step and stouter heart than he had done for many months before.

When they arrived at the place, the oculist said—"You must observe, that although I hope and doubt not that I shall restore your sight, yet I must absolutely forbid you using it for several days; on this depends the real restoration of sight;

for remember, if it is lost after the operation, the case is hopeless."

"I will gladly submit to whatever restrictions you impose, sir, said the farmer, "if you will only permit me to look once at my wife, at that kind, good woman, who has supported me in all my affliction, and been to me as a guardian angel—with one look I will be content."

"I am sorry to deny you, but indeed I dare not trust you, and I must beg your wife to quit the apartment; the more affectionate you are to each other, the more necessary in such a moment do I find it to part you."

"I have great resolution, sir," said Mrs. Norton.

"I believe you, ma'am; but though I can trust your fortitude, I had rather not try my own."

Mrs. Norton immediately withdrew,

and as she re-entered the anti-room, she was struck by the appearance of a man in very great agitation, who kept incessantly walking up and down, and muttering half sentences between his teeth; she concluded he was a fellow-sufferer with her, for some one very dear to him; but, alas! in this dreadful moment even her sympathy was frozen, for her whole heart was wound up in expectation, and she hardly dared to breathe, lest she should disturb the operation within.

In a very short time she was convinced that it was a very happy thing that she was not present, for her solicitude amounted to an agony, that shook her convulsively; and at the moment when the servant of the oculist announced that "the operation was over and all was well," she sunk back in a fit, as if she were really expiring.

When Mrs. Norton came to, she found

herself in the arms of that stout man, whom she had seen so much agitated, and who was now blubbering, as it appeared, for joy; but the mild voice of her beloved husband was her best restorative, and on hearing him near her, she exerted herself to raise and offer him that kind, though trembling arm, which had so long befriended him. But she could not set out till she had beheld the skilful man, whose hand had been the providential means of restoring this invaluable blessing, and she hastily left even her husband to seek and thank him.

When, however, she really beheld him, her gratitude overpowered her as much as her anxiety had done, and she was nearly fainting at his feet: he raised, consoled and re-assured her; and being well aware that her strength was reduced by poor living, and working above her power, he positively refused to accept of any money, but in-

sisted upon it, that she should spend all the money, besides defraying the expences of her journey, in providing the means of re-establishing her own constitution.

Sobbing the thanks she was utterly unequal to express, Mrs. Norton now returned to the door, where her husband was standing, supported by the stranger who appeared to take so great an interest in him : endeavouring to collect herself, she said—" Really, friend, I am much obliged to you for your great kindness to me and my husband."

" Not at all, not at all ; I have been a great enemy, but I am a poor friend."

" Enemy ! really, I did not know we had any enemies," said the farmer.

" I dare say you did not, nor was I your enemy from any ill will I bore you, God knows ; but yet, just for pride, and in order to be clever and fussy, I egged

my master, Sir Harry Eustace, on, till he let the Lea Meadows over your head, that I did, may God forgive me, and you too, for I am now grieved to the heart."

"I do forgive you, friend," said Norton with great solemnity; "it was indeed a sad thing, for both me and mine; but God forbid I should stain this hour of joy and gratitude, by retaining anger in my heart against any one; doubtless all is for the best."

"And can you forgive Sir Harry too?"

"Forgive him; I am his debtor beyond what tongue can tell; to him I owe my restoration to sight, for he sent me hither."

"Indeed!—that's more than he knows, I am sure."

"How then came you to know I was here?"

"I saw you by chance, inquired your

errand, and became anxious about you to the greatest degree—aware that wherever you had been, you had been all this-time a sufferer.”

By this time the Nortons had reached their lodgings, and recollecting that Sir Henry had commanded Betsy to be silent, they desired Wilkins to say nothing on the subject, which he promised, but with little intention of long keeping. It was several days before the farmer was permitted to use his newly-recovered faculty; but at last he once more beheld his wife, and gazed on those features he was wont to behold with so much pleasure; while she, with rapture that amounted to pain, once more saw his honest countenance illumined with the light of heaven, and beheld the fulness of joy beam from those orbs so long consigned to darkness.

“ You are sadly altered, dear Elizabeth,

for the worse, since I beheld you," said Norton.

"Yes, my dear, but now you can look at me, I shall soon regain all I have lost," said she; "before winter comes, you will think me quite handsome enough."

"That you are *now*, for goodness and affection give a beauty that never fades."

They now journeyed homewards, still veiling those precious eyes, lest any dust should annoy the still delicate sense; but when he was actually in his own apartment, the grateful happy wife tore from his sight every bandage, and he beheld again his mother and his children.

It is impossible to describe the joy and thankfulness with which they all beheld each other; the good old woman could now truly use the words of Solomon, and say, "Now let me depart in peace." The farmer was surprised to see how much his children were grown, and he con-

fessed that he had formed no idea of it, not having attained that accuracy of feeling which is frequently remarkable in those who were blind from infancy, which was probably owing to his having had some trifling perception of objects until within a short time. With what delight did they gather round him ! how many things had they to show him ! and in how many points to woo his approbation, or seek his advice ! although he had been only three weeks absent, yet it appeared as if he had been raised from the dead, both to himself and his family, so many wonders were on all sides presented to him.

But if little Mary was gratified in showing her work, Susan in saying her lesson, and poor Billy in exhibiting his neat garden, poultry, and pigs, how much higher was the gratification of Frank, when he unfolded all the treasures of his portfolio to his affectionate, admiring father, who,

although a plain man, had ever beheld the productions of nature with a tasteful and discerning eye, and was capable of appreciating the talents and perseverance of his son, and rewarded them now by comparing him with his eldest brother, which Frank felt to be the highest compliment his father could possibly pay him; being well aware that there was not only an intense-ness of application and superior faculty in his brother, but likewise a solidity of understanding, in which there had been once too much reason to fear he would remain unrivalled in his family.

The still anxious wife was obliged to check their enjoyment, by again refusing the exercise of sight; but, as he now gained strength every day, in the course of a week he undertook to write a letter himself to Betsy, who was still in a state of solicitude respecting him, because he had from the first been anxious to make this extraor-

dinary exertion, especially while John was at Mr. Appleby's, under the idea that the dear children would feel their pleasure heightened by sharing it with each other. It was indeed a sensible drawback to the felicity of the present party, to feel the want of these beloved children in such a season of rejoicing, especially poor Betsy; for as she had shared in all the severe sorrow they had known, as her little hands had helped to procure bread for the family, and her kindness and unceasing love and duty softened many a tedious hour, so the good farmer felt a particular desire that she should witness his present comfort; but Frank justly observed, that all was made up to her by the sweet reflection, that her hand was the medium of administering this blessed relief.

The letter of farmer Norton to his daughter was, like himself, sensible, pious, unaffected, and full of gratitude to God

and man ; but it was necessarily short, for he was ever attentive to the tender exhortations of his wife, and careful to preserve that sense by which he now hoped to provide for her and his younger children. Of course this subject was now continually in his mind ; and as he thought himself too old a man to enter a manufactory, and his heart sighed for the country, to which his wife was equally inclined, he began now to bend his mind to that state of servitude which in such a case seemed inevitable, and began to inquire for a situation as the bailiff or overlooker of his farm, to any person who might happen to need one.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Betsy really perceived that the letter we have mentioned was indeed written by the hand of her dear father, she was so overwhelmed with joy, as to be unable to contain herself; her innocent and ingenuous heart, conceiving that all ought and must partake her raptures, especially her excellent lady, she ran straight to her dressing-room, where all the female part of the family happened to be assembled.

The ladies were looking over some old dresses, for the purpose of giving the trimmings to their little sisters for them to dress their dolls with, so that they did not immediately perceive Betsy, and a consciousness that she had no right to intrude, and perhaps that even her information would

lead to infringing the baronet's injunction, at once struck upon her mind, and checked her speech ; just at this moment, Miss Appleby said laughingly—" How smart I thought myself when I wore this frock, five years ago ! I was fourteen, and we had a ball, you know, in honour of my birthday."

" Oh yes ; I remember perfectly," said Louisa, " and so I dare say does sir Harry ; the 9th of August 1804, will never be forgotten by him."

Poor Betsy was then scarcely twelve years old, yet she, too, well remembered that day, and happy as she now felt, the contrast only made her more sensible of its sorrows : she made a sudden ejaculation and a deep sigh, which startled the party, and Mrs. Appleby said, " Are you there, Betsy ? come forward, child ; what did you want ?"

Betsy, with many blushes, ventured to

say "I am so—so very happy, madam, that—"

"I am glad to hear it, for I thought, from your sighing, you were unhappy."

Betsy's confusion increased excessively; she felt as if she could account for both sensations too well, but in both she must be called upon to avoid one person's name, who was yet the most prominent character in the history of her joys and her sorrows; she tried to collect herself, and as every eye was fixed upon her, she looked how to begin her little story, so as to avoid his name, and she said to herself, "I will tell every thing without naming Sir Harry Eustace."

Unfortunately the latter words passed not only her thoughts but her lips, and though pronounced exceedingly low, they caught the quick ear of Miss Appleby, who, becoming as pale as death, caught

hold of her mother, and said, " She speaks of Sir Harry—oh mamma !"

" What did you say of Sir Harry Eustace, child ?"

" Nothing—nothing, indeed, madam ; I shall never blame him as long I live—he has made full amends for every thing."

Every exclamation of Betsy's seemed to inflict a distinct pang on the heart of Miss Appleby, who changed colour with every word that was uttered ; and Louisa, who dearly loved her sister, was of a warm temper and rather high, though possessing many estimable qualities, instantly became angry with Betsy.—" My dear mamma," said she, " pray question that girl closely ; I fear we have been deceived in her from the first : a creature taken from a Birmingham manufactory was never likely to bring any thing but disgrace and mischief into a gentleman's family : for Heaven's sake send her home again, and directly too."

At this moment Mr. Appleby entered, and seeing Betsy, who was close by the door, he said, without noticing the confusion and distress which were now visible in many countenances—"Betsy, I have just now dispatched a letter in behalf of your brother, to Sir Harry Eustace, who will, through the medium of his friends, procure him a very advantageous situation at Oxford, as a servitor; and I mean to pay such a sum to him for his attendance on my sons, as will enable him to appear respectable, and with his learning and good conduct there can be no doubt of his doing extremely well."

Betsy turned a countenance towards him full of gratitude, but blended with confusion and covered with tears; and his eye at the same moment caught those of his own daughters, one pale with fear, the other red with rage—he looked inquiringly towards his lady.

"I am puzzled as much as you can be, my dear," said Mrs. Appleby; "but I am glad you are come in, to help me to investigate the matter. It appears from something that has just slipped from Betsy, that she has some kind of clandestine communion with Sir Harry Eustace, which we ought to inquire into, not only for our own sakes, but hers."

"Oh no, indeed! not clandestine!" cried Betsy, bursting into an agony of tears, which suffocated her.

Mr. Appleby, with an air of great alarm, gazed on the poor girl, who still stood with the letter in her hand, and perceiving his eye fall upon it, with a glance of suspicion, she instantly offered it to him, again recollecting that the baronet's name was not actually mentioned.

The gentleman took the letter, and read it aloud: the simplicity of the language, the devotion and affection of the senti-

ments, and the air of sound sense that pervaded it, struck them all, and fell like oil upon the raging deep; and Mrs. Appleby, by a single look, gave her daughter Louisa to understand, that such a father and such a daughter were incapable of the deceit she feared; as, however, Louisa still shook her head, the lady addressed Betsy.—“Your father mentions a great benefactor—does he mean Sir Harry Eustace?”

“Oh, yes, madam, it was him who——”

“Then why did you not say he had benefited *him*, and was therefore entitled to *your* gratitude?”

“Because he forbade me.”

“That he did,” said the elder of the two children, “for I heard him say so when he gave her the paper, and so *I* never said any thing about it neither; but it was all owing to me that ever he knew her father was blind, and ever he gave her the money—that it was.”

This little artless, but effectual advocate, in pleading Betsy's cause, unconsciously developed another. Mr. Appleby's eyes twinkled, he glanced towards his eldest daughter, who, catching the expression of his countenance, rushed forward and flung herself into his arms—he kissed her cheek—"My dear girl," said he, "*I see, I feel* it all; Harry has behaved very well in this affair—very well indeed."

Mrs. Appleby unfortunately durst not yet share in the pleasure this eclairsissement gave them: seeing Betsy a little more composed, she fixed upon her a keen and scrutinizing eye, such as she had seen her use towards others, but which she had never felt herself subjected to before; sensible, however, that she had nothing now to fear, she met it with humility, but calmness.

"Although it is plain, Elizabeth, that you have much to thank Sir Harry Eustace

for, yet it strikes me, that you have also something to forgive, or something which is in its own nature reprehensible—you may be sorry, now your father is so much benefited, that you let this blame slip, but since you have done so, it is your duty to explain; if it is of a nature which you can mention to me alone, I will step with you into the next room.”

“ Oh, no, madam, all the world knows what I meant; his honour did no wrong; every body has a right to do what they please with their own; but just hearing Miss Louisa mention the very day when all our troubles began, as it were, made me fret.”

“ What day, my good girl? what do you allude to?”

“ The day, sir, when Sir Harry turned my father off the Lea Meadows Farm, where we all lived so happily.”

In a moment the whole party crowded

round poor Betsy, and the words, "turned *you* off the farm?"—"Was it *your* father who lived on the farm?"—"Are your parents really living?" were heard on every side; and the confused, distressed girl, turning on either hand, and not knowing what to say, again burst into tears.

"There are nothing but lies in the world!" exclaimed Louisa; "we were told that your father was thrown from the top of a coach, and almost killed—that he spent all his money in getting cured, and after leaving the public-house, was supposed to sink into the most abject wretched poverty, somewhere in Birmingham; and papa was so hurt at what he conceived the improper conduct of Sir Harry, that he took a rash oath that he should never marry my sister, till your father or his family were again in their own farm; and he has been wishing to find you all from that hour to this: and now it turns out to be all a story, and poor

dear Harry has suffered for nothing, since it was not his fault."

"Alas! our poverty and wretchedness was all too *true*," said Betsy; "but I grieve sincerely that Sir Harry, or any other person, should have suffered in any degree on our account."

"Where can you have been living, and how, child?" said Mrs. Appleby; "that you have never applied to your parish, we know."

"We lived in a little lodging, madam, at Ashted, near Birmingham; my grandmother had a little bed, so had my father, but the rest of us slept on straw; but after a time we sewed it up in a sacking, and when we had got that and a blanket, we thought ourselves well off; we all worked very hard, and my mother managed so well, that she generally got a little bit of meat for grandmother and father, but the rest of us lived on potatoes and a certain

portion of oat-cake. We never told my father how dear things were, nor how little money we got, and so, poor man, his good, kind heart was never grieved with thinking, that while he picked his mutton-bone, the wife and children he doted on were eating dry crusts around him."

As Betsy recapitulated this, the tears flowed down her cheeks, which were pale with recent agitation. Mr. Appleby took her hand, and placed her in a chair—"Sit down, Miss Norton, sit down, my good girl." Louisa took hold of her with an air of uncommon tenderness and self-reproach—"Go on, go on, my good girl—I deserve the pain this sad story gives me."

Betsy continued, but repressed, from this moment, all that she thought most painful—"At length, from the sale of my poor mother's clothes, we purchased two pigs, and my poor little brother exerted himself wonderfully to feed them; he succeeded, and

had the happiness of selling them to a generous buyer, as you, sir, know."

" Bless my life ! I remember very well how I was struck with the boy and his mother ; and it was after coming from that very purchase, that I quarrelled with Sir Harry, because the blindness of that boy's father reminded me of the blindness said to threaten farmer Norton, whom by character, but not by person, I knew ; it was my only association, as I never heard the name of my little chapman, and I have often blamed myself for not inquiring."

" Well, sir, from that time we did a little better, and with the money we took from you, we discharged the last debts due in our own parish ; and as the good curate left it soon after, taking my brother with him to the new school he entered upon, I suppose nothing more was known about us in our own dear country. Besides, the Birmingham people pronounce the name

long, as if it were spelt Noreton, and our own neighbours very short, as if it were Nerton, so that accounts for the difference in your mind between us and the unhappy family, for whom you so generously interested yourself."

"I never heard your name, my dear, until the day when your brother arrived, and there was nothing in the appearance or manners of either, which I could associate with extreme poverty."

"My poor mother always did her endeavours to put the best side outward; and when we were almost without victuals, we went all clean and neat to church on Sundays, until our shoes were worn, and then we took it by turns to wear the best pair; and my poor father always took care to keep up and improve the little education we had, and we did our best to improve each other. A kind neighbour lent

us many books, for which we used to give her a few new-laid eggs, or a cauliflower ; for in the worst of times my mother taught us all to be honest and grateful—and I hope, sir, madam—yes, I do hope we shall all be found still so.”

The poor girl, who had never said half so much all the time she had lived in the house, except to her young charge, now humbly courtseying, and overcome with her feelings, slowly withdrew ; and, penetrated as they all were with her sad but instructive story, and desirous as they were of doing her any possible good, they yet clearly saw that she would recover her serenity best in retirement. Mr. Appleby therefore said only—“ One word, Betsy, and you shall go. What do you suppose your father now thinks of doing ?”

“ He tells me in the postscript, sir, that he wishes to procure a situation as a bailiff, provided he is not wanted to reside

in the house; my mother will be glad to assist, and she has hands for any thing."

"So it appears. Well, tell him from me, that I will inquire for him, and I will likewise answer any references he may make."

Betsy, conscious of the high character and the great value of Mr. Appleby's recommendation, half sobbed, half smiled her thanks, and withdrew; and composed her agitated spirits, by writing a most welcome, congratulatory epistle to her dear parents, including the kind message of her true friend and excellent master.

CHAPTER VII.

It will be naturally supposed that the ladies of Mr. Appleby's family, who were all much attached to the young baronet, lost no time in requesting him to inform Sir Harry of the circumstance just related, which he was very willing to do, but as he was afraid that in his anxiety to reinstate poor Norton, he might be guilty of some other error, and he had reason to expect him in the neighbourhood shortly, he preferred informing him himself; and as they all thought it was impossible to remove the present proprietors till the lease had expired, they were the more patient on that account.

In the mean time, Sir Harry had received the letter Mr. Appleby had written to him on John's account, and lost no time in placing him in the situation to which he

was recommended; and on bidding him adieu, had made him a very handsome present, so that John was now very comfortable on his own account; but was soon rendered far more so, by receiving the news of his father's restoration to sight, which was all his heart could wish for, except the knowledge that he was got into some line of life; for his heart would often ache with the thoughts of what they were suffering at home, while he lived in the possession of that plain plenty to which he had been born, and which satisfied his desires. He now, however, looked forward, with all the enthusiasm of hope, to some period which should enable him to help and support them all.

As Sir Harry was now in that uneasy frame of mind which a state of probation usually excites, it was no wonder that as soon as he had settled all the business which his benevolence had imposed upon

him, he should betake himself to another journey; he had been on a little tour to Matlock, in Derbyshire, during the period when farmer Norton had been in Oxford; but he heard with great satisfaction that the patient he recommended had been cured, and made a handsome present to the oculist; but as he had no desire to blazon his own good deeds, little more than was necessary passed, and no more transpired. It was during his absence that Wilkins, who was left in charge of his horses, had seen poor Norton as we have related; he now attended his master, and had all the inclination in the world to talk to him on the subject, but the baronet was by no means so communicative as he used to be, and the journey was passed in silence.

The sight of the natural beauties of Matlock had given the baronet a revived taste for scenes of a picturesque kind, and he nourished it the more, because it was

the taste of her he loved ; he therefore bent his way towards the Leasowes, and as he arrived at Hales Owen at night, the next morning he strayed into those delightful grounds which the genius of Shenstone has consecrated.

Sir Harry had not rambled far, when he saw a young man sketching a view, that was in itself very pleasing, and which he thought he should like to sketch also. He therefore joined the youth, and after some general preliminary conversation, he borrowed from him the necessary materials. After working about an hour he perceived the young man moving his seat, and he arose to compare his own sketch with that of the youth's.

" Yours is decidedly the best," said Sir Harry, " and that is a shame, for you are much my junior, and most probably have not enjoyed my advantages."

The youth smiled. " I apprehend, sir,

that I have had a spur which never goaded you ; to perfect the present sketch, I had *two*—necessity is aided by gratitude in the work before you."

"You are professionally an artist then?"

"I have only this week ceased to be a pupil—this is my first attempt without a master."

"I am happy in having met with you ; a friend of mine is in possession of a picture I wish you to copy for me ; if you will meet me at the Bull Inn, in the village of —, I will conduct you to his house, and we will arrange the matter."

As Sir Harry held the sketch the young man had been doing in his hand, he was surprised on seeing his own name written with a pencil in a corner ; he therefore concluded he was known, and did not give his address, saying only—"This day fortnight I will expect you." Frank (for as the reader may imagine it was no other) was surprised that the gentleman said no more ;

but as he soon after saw him on the road, attended by a well-dressed servant, he concluded that he was somebody whom he ought to attend ; and having completed his sketch to his satisfaction, he put it up along with the stranger's, and returned home to his parents, as the Leasowes is only seven or eight miles from Birmingham.

When Frank arrived at home, he found the family in earnest consultation ; his father a few days before had heard of a place which he thought would suit him, and he had applied for it to the gentleman that had the disposal, who was an attorney in the town. This person had questioned poor Norton closely, and, as he thought, rather roughly, respecting his qualifications ; but on his mentioning Mr. Appleby as the person to whom he could refer for a character, he had treated him with much civility, and had advised him to go down thither, and meet his future master, whom he spoke

of as a neighbour, and probably a friend of Mr. Appleby's—" You had better go," said he, " on Michaelmas-day, and as there is no doubt but you will be hired, you can arrange your affairs accordingly."

Under these circumstances they were once more in a state of considerable confusion, as there were many things of importance to contrive and arrange. Poor Frank, taking possession of the garret which he shared with William, began, under every possible disadvantage, to paint his first picture; but his master, who was really a kind-hearted, though very odd-tempered man, lent him an easel, gave him instructions, and encouraged him to go on; so that in the course of a week there was really much progress, and by the end of another, what appeared to the farmer and his family, a prodigious clever landscape; and as his road lay the same way with his son's, though unconscious that they were going to the

same place, they set out together; the artist taking his picture with him as a proof of his abilities.

Poor Mrs. Norton had in the mean time been exceedingly puzzled as to the most prudent plan to be adopted with her remaining children. She felt little doubt but that her husband could always put work into the hands of William, but she was afraid that the cottage where they were now to reside would never contain them all; and the poor girls were at once too big to be taken, and too little to be left; they were too young for any kind of service, yet their father's wages had no chance of maintaining them—"Tis true," said she, "they are very handy, and in a gentleman's house there are many occupations; we must see what can be done; in the worst of times the poor lambs can spin and knit, they have been used to hard fare, and can struggle a little longer."

Poor Norton was so elated with the recovery of sight, that he could not doubt but, when he once got into the country, all would be well with him. His kind and prudent wife, during the long period of his affliction, had carefully concealed from him every thing that could add to his uneasiness, and make him sensible of the burthen he was upon his family ; so that he never knew till now the dearness of provisions, nor the expence of lodgings in a town. Little did he imagine, when she brought him a cup of beer, that water was her own portion after many a long day's work, but now he began to discover all ; and as he never knew want till he knew the town, he concluded rather hastily, that when he left it, he should know it no more.

His wife was, however, well aware that she left certain profits, as well as certain expences, and like a wise woman, she calculated on every possible means of pro-

viding for them. Besides, she felt, that in leaving even an abode in which she had experienced much sorrow, she left some things to regret; the people with whom they lodged were most fondly attached to them, the child was almost like their own, and the good tailor for whom Mrs. Norton had worked so long, declared that he never could supply her place, for regularity, neatness, honesty, exertion, and thankfulness.

On inquiry, it was found that a waggon set out the night before Michaelmas-day for the village nearest to Mr. Appleby's, and in this conveyance Mrs. Norton determined to travel, with her mother, her little girls, and the little property which remained to them from the miserable wreck to which they had at one time been reduced. It was decided, that after disposing of their live stock, which was still all their worldly riches, William should follow; but know-

ing the value of these, they afterwards considered that he should bring them with him, trusting to the kindness of their future master to provide them the means of keeping this little semblance of the life they once enjoyed, and which they naturally clung to still.

As the morning rose upon our travellers, which was one of the finest a late autumn could exhibit, every thing they beheld awoke sensations of the most exquisite enjoyment, and the poor old woman seemed to inhale returning life and strength with every breath of air which she drew. The song of the redbreast, the crow of the cock, the cackling of geese, the lowing of the cows waiting to deliver their rich burthen, and the barking of sheep-dogs, were all to them, sounds like the voice of friends after long absence ; they awoke the most delicious emotions of the heart, and brought tears of delight into their eyes, and presented vi-

sions of promised happiness to their minds.

If such were the feelings of the females, in the close vehicle in which they were confined, still more highly did the father and his son Frank enjoy their journey, part of which they took on foot, and the rest on the top of a stage-coach : their hearts ascending "from nature up to nature's God," beheld the dewy grass sparkling with innumerable gems, and marked by filmy lines fine as the spider's thread, now glisten in the beams of morning—the thick woods, shaking their yellow leaves, yet boasted the finest tints of autumn ; and, while the proud pheasant shook his plumage to the golden ray, or the timid hare scudded across the path, they hailed the sight of animated life, and rejoiced in the prospect of holding communion with every living thing. They retraced those feelings with which they were wont to tend the calf, the lambkin, and the playful foal, in the days of their in-

fancy, and declared that man could never be so happy as when he felt himself at once the lord and the father of the dependent world.

With conversation like this, no wonder the road appeared short which brought them to the Bull Inn, which was the end of Frank's journey. The Red Lion, where the waggon stopped, was a little further, and thither the farmer hied, anxious to see his beloved wife, and inquire after those feelings which he was well aware were in unison with his own, and which appeared a foretaste of pleasure which the country promised them, even under the situation in which they were compelled to revisit it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE farmer had proceeded but a little way from the inn, when he perceived a carriage draw up to it, and a gentleman, wrapt in a travelling coat, alight. The officiousness of the landlord and waiters, who came running to the door, shewed the person arrived a man of great importance, yet it was plain that he saluted his son Frank with an air of courtesy, and they walked into the house of entertainment together.

The heart of the father swelled with a little pardonable vanity, as he said to himself—"Frank is no lout—he knows how to address a gentleman. I see he is neither bold nor sheep-faced, but just what an honest man's son ought to be. Well, well, all is for the best; who knows but my poor children have got as much in the day of my adversity, as they would have done in that

of my prosperity?—God's will be done !”

This soliloquy brought him to his family, whose hearts elated by their little journey, they hailed him with more than common affection and pleasure ; and his wife taking from her pocket a new silk and cotton handkerchief, bought for the occasion, folded and tied it round his neck, with the care and neatness with which she used to prepare him for a fair.—“ You are going,” said she, “ where you will see our precious child, and I would have you look creditable by all means, for Betsy's sake.”

“ Bless her,” said the farmer ; “ but,” added he, with a somewhat faltering voice, “ I am likewise going where I am to be hired as a servant, and that must keep down all proud thoughts, both in her and me.”

“ Remember, dear John,” said his wife, struggling to conceal the tears that sprung to her eyes, “ remember, you owe nobody a shilling, and that when you had bread to give,

you never turned the poor and hungry from your door, and let this support you."

"Remember, too, that you helped to pay your sisters their portions, and that you kept your poor old mother like a lady," said the good old woman, wiping the mist from her spectacles.

Norton smiled, and kissing them all round, set out to Primrose Hill, whither he was directed by the landlord. He hemmed stoutly, and buttoned his coat to his chin, and tried to feel as he was wont, but he was sensible that his walk had been too much for him; a little lameness had ever hung over him, in consequence of his fall from the coach, and it now affected him so much, that he found he could not have got forward without the stout stick on which he leaned. He was thin, and he felt thin, and being at that period of life when flesh becomes a man, he was sensible of looking older than he was, and perhaps

older than his new master expected, and this disheartened him.

Desirous of rendering his walk as short as possible, he called to a man who was engaged in cutting hay for fodder, and whose back was towards him, inquiring—"If he could cross the next field to Primrose Hill?"

The man started, and turned suddenly round, but on sight of him dropped the hay-knife from his hand, and turned as pale as ashes.

"Bless me, is not that Thomas—*my* Thomas?"

"Ye-e-e-s, I was him sure enough. God rest your poor soul, you were a good man once."

"Why, Thomas, you do not take me for a ghost, surely? I thought I had cured you of that nonsense; here is my hand, my honest fellow."

"My de-dear maister, why be it yo

raley? I declare it be, and your eyes be quite pure—dang it, I am so glad to se yo.”

Thomas drew the back of his red rough hand across his eyes as he spoke, wondering what was the matter with him, and in spite of his joy, still shocked to see his worthy master so thin and pale, when the farmer said—“I was in hopes, Thomas, you would have stayed at the old place; I left you a character that should have secured you a service there.”

“Ay, sur, and they tuk me, but I stayed till I’d had enough of they, and as I took it into my head to marry Nance, I com into the nighbirhud where she happened to be servin, for you see, sur, it were time for sic as I to com away, bein by no means used to gentility.”

“You were used to decency, Thomas, and that is enough for a farm-house, in my opinion.”

“ Ay, sur, one may see you ha bin living in a town ; times are finely changed since you left off farmin : why we were so genteel at my last master’s, we kept hunters and musical tables ; the ladies went pretty well neaked, except their hands, and they were always covered ; then they had bells to ring sarvants with—tinkle, tinkle, when th’ hay were down, even to get a cup of tea, or bring madam her clogs ; and all they could do was to take a paddy sol, and com nim, nim, as if they were treading on eggs, and say—‘ Is it going to rain, Timmis ? ’ and turn up their noses, as if they had honoured a poor body too much by breathing the same air as he did.”

“ Poor young creatures ! they have been improperly brought up.”

“ Unproper ! ay, sur, unproper enough, for they be as different from rale ladies, as a lamb fro a filly—look at Miss Appleby for that ; but the young men were never a

bit better—duce a dung-fork ever I seed i' the hands a one of them.—'Saddle my horse, fellow'—'feed my pointer'—'ride over to my tailor for my regencies,' and 'bring a new pudding for my throat.'

"Why, Thomas, you are quite a wag; I never knew you were so satirical before."

"Me sisterical! I leave that to the ladies, sur; but when they paid my wages with a *bill*, I hopes you would allow it was time to be flirtical, and so I hopped off, and I ha niver seen a penny for my bit a paper, fro that day to this'n; more shame say I."

"Indeed you are right there, Thomas. Well, good b'ye; I shall see you again soon; in the mean time, you will find my wife and mother at the little alehouse above, if you like to see them, and can spare half an hour."

"If, O maister! yo know there is no if

to that ; I would go barefoot fifty miles to see my mistress any day."

"Thou hast a grateful heart," said the farmer internally, as the tears sprung to his eyes.

"Did not she make a mon of me, teaching me to read ? and little John setting me copies too ? and when I had a leam leg, doctoring it with her own hands—*if* indeed, I say *if*."

The farmer walked forward briskly, though his ear loved to linger on the praises of his wife, but he felt that he should be beyond his hour ; and, alas ! he had no longer the great round silver watch which once graced his fob. He soon, however, came in view of the house, and struck with its beauty, and the neatness of the surrounding domain, he was nearly loitering again.

His first inquiry was naturally for his daughter, and a respectable-looking ser-

vant showing him into a little parlour, ran to call her : but when, soon after, a handsome genteel young woman entered the room, the honest man still forgetting the lapse of time, stood up to bow, as he imagined to one of the ladies of the house. How was he astonished when, catching him round the neck, gazing at him, kissing him, wildly, she called him again and again her father, her own *dear* father—"And can you see, my father? see quite well?"

"Yes, my child, for I can see that you are the image of your mother, when I first saw her a young creature at Himley Church. But, dear me, you are quite grown out of knowledge, my little Betsy!"

"But my mother, how is she, and—?"

"They are all at the village hard by, and longing to see you, my love."

Betsy flew to Mrs. Appleby, told her of her father's arrival, and asked leave to visit

her family ; which was not only instantly granted, but refreshments were ordered to be taken to the farmer, and Mrs. Appleby, stepping to the room where he was, bade him welcome, and inquired in the kindest manner after his sight, and the health of his family ; and then proceeded to inform him of the great satisfaction she had in the conduct of those children of his who were placed under her protection.

The farmer, moved with her kindness, and affected by the events of the day, looked the thanks he could not utter.

“And so,” continued the lady, “you have got a situation, I understand : well ! servitude is rather hard at your time of day, Mr. Norton, but keep up your spirits—be assured it will not last long.”

“Alas, madam, I have no other chance, for my little property is all gone, except a trifle that comes at my mother’s death, and a little matter that my wife’s uncle may

leave her; but there are no small farms now-a-days suited for little folks like me, so we must submit."

The lady had not time to reply, for a servant entered to say that a gentleman was in the drawing-room, and therefore withdrew, thinking that Mr. Appleby was engaged; but it so happened that they both entered the room together.

"My name is Reynolds, sir," said a fat, vulgar, consequential man; "I wait upon you to inquire the character of a man who has applied to be my bailiff. I live—I dare say you know where I live, you being acquainted with the estate of Sir Harry Eustace; I hold a pretty snip of his land, I may say, Green How, Lea Meadows, and so on."

"So I have understood, sir."

"Well, Mr. Appleby, the person in question, is he *all fate*, as my girls say? will he suit a man of business like me?"

Mr. Appleby felt really distressed for

farmer Norton, and could not immediately answer ; at length he said—" You hold the Lea Meadows farm, you say ?"

" I do, sir ; a pretty farm it is, and in pretty condition—far the best bit in the baronet's estate, I take it."

" The person who now offers to be your servant held the farm before you—of course, you have a right to judge of his knowledge as a farmer."

" True, sir !—well said, sir !—but you will excuse me, what age may he be ?—is he stout ?"

" I have never seen him," said Mr. Appleby, ordering a servant to show the farmer up stairs.

The farmer did *not* look very stout, when Mr. Appleby announced that Mr. Reynolds was the person who wanted his services :—the recollection of serving in the house once his own, was indeed bitter, and his face became of an ashy paleness, but he bowed and

spoke not ; internally he lifted up his heart to Him who readeth its most secret thoughts, and the aid he sought was granted to his humble prayer.

“ It seems you know the land, honest man,” said Reynolds, “ so far it is well ;— you have had experience too—that is good ; but you look ill—seem a little lame—I fear you can’t run about ; I am all for business ; a very dragon at business ; bustle, bustle’s my word—hey, Mr. Appleby ?”

Poor Norton answered, “ that he was naturally active, and when his strength was restored, he had little doubt but that he should give satisfaction, and his endeavours—”

“ Ay, ay, endeavours are all very well ; but they will not do for me—wages is no object with me, none at all ; therefore I want a smart active man for my money, hey, Mr. Appleby ?—but however, sir, I have a great regard for you, sir, a very great regard, sir ; and you can do me a good turn

with sir Harry ; and therefore, sir, just to oblige *you*, I will take the poor fellow in tow—you understand, sir.”

“ Yes, sir, I understand that you want to oblige me ; to which I answer, that I will *not* be obliged by you, and by the same rule I say, that neither can I oblige you.”

“ Sir ! Mr. Appleby !—but what will become of the poor man ?—I mean to make him my servant, upon my *honour* I do.”

“ But upon *my* honour you never shall, while there is a rood of land, or a cottage on the Primrose estate. I have heard much of you, Mr. Reynolds, but in this interview I have seen still more ; and I must beg leave to say, that as this is the first, so I hope it will be the last time, you and I shall meet.”

Farmer Norton, relieved of an intolerable weight on his spirits, was now retiring, but the room was suddenly entered by a large party, who blockaded the door ; and as there were ladies in the first place, he stood

aside with an air of courtesy and natural politeness, which though alike untaught and unstudied, was very pleasing. He was surprised to see his son Frank enter with the rest, as if in conversation with them. In order to account for a circumstance which puzzled the farmer, we must go back to the inn where he was left, and then return to the drawing-room and the present party, including Mr. Reynolds, who beheld amid the youthful group the form of one whose eye appalled him more than that of the basilisk, although it had a very different effect on a delicate and timid young lady.

CHAPTER IX.

SIR Harry Eustace arrived at the inn, as we have seen, and supposing he was known, did not announce himself, nor could Frank take the liberty of inquiring. When the baronet asked *his* name, Frank observed that the gentleman gave a kind of uneasy shrug; but as he instantly began to ask a multitude of questions respecting his progress in the art he professed, the circumstance immediately vanished from his mind.

The truth of the case was this :—Sir Harry was desirous of having a handsome excuse for a visit to Primrose Hill, and he knew of no better than the gaining a copy of a picture of which Mr. Appleby was very fond, and which was likely to be some time in progress. He therefore was glad to

meet with a modest young man of merit whom he could introduce properly; and although he was pleased with the view of the Leasowes which Frank exhibited to him, yet such was his impatience to arrive at Primrose Hill, that he hastily rolled it up again, saying—"Come along—we will get a frame for it when we get to my friend's house:" and with these words he returned to the carriage, desiring Frank to follow him.

As they drove forward, Sir Harry inquired if he had ever heard of the Appleby family.

"Oh yes," replied Frank, "I have heard a great deal."

"Indeed! what may you have heard?"

"That they are very worthy people—Indeed I *know* it, for some very dear to me have benefited by their goodness very greatly."

"The young ladies—did you hear any thing of them?"

"They are very handsome, I believe, and highly accomplished, especially the eldest, I understand."

"What a clever young fellow this is!—I am determined to patronize him," said the baronet internally—while he called to his postilion to stop, and in a moment he found himself in the park, with the very ladies of whom they were speaking; but he did not introduce Frank, for the name of Norton would not sit easy on his lips; he wished the youth had any other.

The young ladies were very fond of drawing, and the eldest was a proficient in that charming art. On seeing Frank's portfolio, they sat down on the grass to examine its contents, and looked over a number of things, till at length they came to a sketch of the pigs, which resembled those in their father's picture; and in order

to prove they did, they hastily rose and went towards the house to examine them and compare them, but ere they entered it, they encountered the two sons of Mr. Reynolds, who, being as remarkable for their impudence, as the sons of Norton were for their modesty, thought they had an apology for entering a great house, in order to call upon their father : this was therefore the motley group which now entered the drawing-room of Mr Appleby.

The young ladies, wishing to repel the impertinent advances of these forward youths, eagerly ran to their father, showing him the drawing, which he approved ; and on pointing out the young artist, he honoured him with an obliging notice.

Vexed that a person, whom he considered far his inferior, should be preferred to him, the elder of the two Reynoldses pushed forward, and, looking rudely at the drawings, said—" Well, young one, if you

draw pigs, it is my belief your brother drives pigs, for we passed a boy on the road a bit since that was driving three, and a basket of poultry was on his arm; mayhap you have that among the rest of your thingumbobs."

"The boy *was* my brother, sir, I dare say," said Frank, with an air of modest firmness, that completely disconcerted the insolent attacker.

"I wish I had seen him," said Mr. Appleby, "I should have recognised him with pleasure; for I now see clearly that I was right in supposing that my prize pigs which gained such honour to the county, are indeed the originals in that picture, and that you are the pupil to whom Mr. Bloomfield gave the praise, so truly merited, as the original drawer of them."

Frank bowed and coloured, and, retiring from the eyes which were naturally turned to him on all sides, he beheld his

father, who had given way till he had got literally behind the door, and was only pressing forward a little at the moment when Frank beheld him.

Catching hold of his son's hand, he was looking his congratulations, when Sir Harry unrolled the view of the Leasowes, and held it up within a frame, which of course was a great improvement; and they spoke so highly of it, that on dismounting from the chair, he said in a low tone—"I think I will purchase *this*."

"You *will*—you mean you *have*," said Louisa, "for your name is written in pencil on the back of it already."

Sir Harry was surprised, and rather vexed, as he thought the young man had presumed on his intentions. He hastily asked Frank—"What was meant by that name being upon it?"

"I am under the highest obligations to

that gentleman, sir, and I desired to present to him the first picture I ever painted on my own account ; and I went to the Leasowes on purpose to get a sketch, where I had the honour of meeting with you."

"It is very curious, but yet I now see it very possible, that you do not know till now, that you address Sir Harry Eustace."

Frank bowed exceedingly low, but his countenance was open and unembarrassed.

At that moment farmer Norton advanced.—"Permit *me*, the father of this youth, and more immediately benefited by you, Sir Henry, to say how sincerely I thank you."

"I do not understand this : did you not say your name was Norton ?—If you are the Norton of Lea Meadows—I, I——"

"I am the *Norton* whom your bounty enabled to procure the restoration of sight, the most invaluable of human blessings—I

am the Norton whose son you have placed at Oxford in a situation which will eventually procure him the means of honourable subsistence; and, with the consciousness of possessing such gifts from your benevolence and compassion, I am enabled to forget that I am the Norton who was obliged to leave Lea Meadows."

"I am still at a loss to understand this," said Sir Harry, apprehensively.

"Yet, surely, you have a pleasure in knowing that Providence has enabled you, though ignorant of the persons, to apply remedies to the evils your thoughtlessness inflicted; or rather, given assistance in cases which called for atonement. I assure you, dear Sir Harry, that, so gratifying has your conduct been to me, I shall now look forward with almost as much impatience as yourself to an event which will doubtless happen in the due order of things," said Mr. Appleby.

The Reynoldses, perceiving the attention paid to the Nortons, now crowded round Frank, and began to admire his drawings; and the younger said—"He would get him to paint his horse; he should not mind paying handsome, if the thing pleased him. I do not think I can do better than have it done; can I, Miss?" said he to Louisa.

"Yes, a great deal better, in my opinion."

"As how, Miss?"

"By selling it."

"That is a good one; why it is a bit of the best blood in the county."

"Then it ought to belong to the oldest blood, and the best fortune in the county."

"Lord, Miss, you be prouder than people would think; yet you take notice of those Nortons, and they are very different to *us*, I can tell you that."

"So can I—the Nortons make no pre-

tensions; they do not set themselves up, of course there is no need to pull them down; besides, they have what you want, and what neither money nor blood can purchase, for either rich or poor."

"Indeed! pray what is it?"

"Virtues and talents."

While this conversation was going on, Sir Harry held a very short one with Mr. Appleby, after which he turned hastily to Frank, and said, in a voice which every person might hear—"Mr. Francis Norton, I accept your present with much pleasure, but request that you will paint me a pair to hang on each side of it, for which I beg you to accept this bill of a hundred pounds. Do not refuse me; artists are a poor race, and being paid beforehand is no disgrace to them, nor, I believe, at all uncommon."

The latter words were spoken with such

a smile of amenity, a tone of such friendly jocularity, yet not familiar freedom, that obligation was rendered sweet to one party, yet the distinctions of society were not confounded by the other; and never had Frank felt such pure enjoyment as in taking from the hand of the baronet, that which *he* put into the hand of his father.

Far different was the air with which Sir Harry accosted Mr. Reynolds, yet it was neither angry nor vindictive; for the baronet was too much humbled by that view of the subject his much-improved character now gave him, to omit his own share in the folly of the transaction.

“Mr. Reynolds, you hold more land than you know what to do with; at least much more than you find it convenient to pay rent for; yet, if I may judge from appearances, your farms are pretty profitable.”

"Why, as to that, Sir Harry, I don't complain."

"But *I do*, sir, and have a right to complain, as you well know; and that complaint would be very differently expressed, if I had not myself to blame as well as you: I therefore inform you in one word, that I require from you immediately the lease of the Lea Meadows Farm, on which condition I will release you from the arrears of rent due upon it. As you have two houses, you cannot think it a hardship if I desire you to evacuate the one in question in the ensuing week. When you have drawn your affairs into a smaller compass, you will perhaps be able to visit my steward to a better purpose, than by offering long bills which you are compelled to dishonour."

Mr. Reynolds, with a low obsequious bow, declared—"That every thing must be as his honour pleased; he hoped his

honour would consider that he had a large family to provide for, and, when the time came to renew the lease of Green How Farm, he should be thankful to take that alone."

"I make no promises," replied Sir Harry, "nor do I utter any threats, for in the space of two years you will have time for reforming your family, and taking example from your neighbours. I have suffered too much for the fault of expelling an old tenant, to be subject to inflicting punishment of the same nature on a new one; but I am decided in calling for radical reform, and am happy that your sons hear me as well as yourself: my future conduct will be regulated by my observation on yours."

The Reynoldses, with humble looks that almost amounted to terror, yet a consciousness that they were not only fairly but kindly dealt with, bustled out of the

room ; and the moment their feet were heard at the bottom of the stairs, the Nortons, father and son, were retiring also, when Sir Harry, addressing the farmer, said—" Mr. Norton, you are, I trust, aware that the agreement I have just made is for the purpose of offering you the farm, of which I thoughtlessly deprived you, and which I now promise you for a term that shall make you easy for your own life, and that of your wife at least. The rent will be raised, for the farm will bear it ; but it will not bear the extravagance your predecessor and his family have adopted. In order to enable you to stock it, I will advance you money, which I consider secured, not less by the legacy your wife is heir to, than by your own good conduct, and that of your amiable and promising family."

With few, but heartfelt thanks, the joyful, happy farmer, leaning on his equally

happy and thankful son, withdrew ; and as they closed the door of the drawing-room, Sir Harry ventured to take the hand of Miss Appleby, saying to her father—
“ My dear sir, may I now claim the prize—the reward for which I have sought so long ? ”

“ You may, my dear Sir Harry ; you have my full consent ; I am truly satisfied with your conduct, and gratified by your preference of my daughter.”

In this sentiment Mrs. Appleby concurred with the most affectionate cordiality.

“ And surely,” said Sir Harry, “ my Maria is also satisfied. ’Tis true, the gentleman-farmer’s ‘ style,’ and the poor farmer’s ‘ wants,’ will take a few pearls from those bright ringlets, but they will add to the best jewels a country gentleman’s wife can display—a respectable and happy tenantry.”

Miss Appleby, with a sweet smile chas-

tened by a tender and approving tear, was beginning to express her entire approbation and delight, when the door was suddenly flung open, and her brothers from Oxford rushed in, their first term being just completed. They were all life and spirits, and appeared full of some particular satisfaction; for they kissed their mother, and danced about their father with all their school-day eagerness of delight, declaring they had come as fast as the mail-coach, though they had only a pair of horses.

“ But where is your tutor, boys ? ”

“ Oh, he’s got it ! he’s got it ! beat all the rest hollow, father—I knew he would.”

“ Got what ? Where is he ? ”

“ Got the prize, to be sure ! that’s what we’re so glad about. As to where is he ? I believe he’s growing to his father’s neck, for I left him in the hall crying over him

with joy, and if I had stayed I should have cried too, I believe."

In truth, the farmer was at this moment enjoying the purest pleasure of which his heart was capable, in the presence of his eldest son, who presented to him a still greater wonder than his daughter had done, in the improvement of his person; so that, if in the morning he had felt himself a feeble man, he had the satisfaction before night, to find the somewhat decayed and shattered stock surrounded by strong and sightly branches. Mrs. Appleby, on hearing her son's information, immediately descended, and after welcoming John, and congratulating them on this happy meeting, she desired Mr. Norton to take possession of the little parlour where she had first seen him, telling him that it was at his service until he removed to the Lea Meadows, and that she had ordered beds to be prepared for him and his family.

To this kindness it appeared soon that a still greater was added ; for in a very short time Betsy returned from the inn, whither she had gone to visit her mother, bringing with her the remainder of the family, all of whom assembled now in the room, which, with so much kind consideration, had been appropriated to their use, and where they could, with equal ease and pleasure, descant on the happiness of their future prospects. When the farmer beheld his wife and mother enter, those worthy and successive mistresses of that house, where he so soon hoped to see the one resume her situation, the other repose from her labours, he became sweetly but affectingly agitated, and kissing his wife, he hailed her as " the mother of his children, the partner of his heart, the manager of Lea Meadows."

The good woman, perceiving he was overcome with pleasure, which she imputed

to the presence of his children, and the kindness of the good family, began to fear that squire Appleby's good ale had got into his head, and she looked for an explanation of his words to Frank and John.

" 'Tis all very true, mother," said the former, " for Sir Harry has bargained that you shall be in the house in a week, and he will give a lease for both your lives—and what is more, my father has at this moment a hundred pounds in his pocket, for which I shall be able to give satisfaction."

" And to this," said John, " I can add fifty, for which I have given satisfaction."

" And I," said Betsy, " have got thirty, dear mother, to add to the stock."

" And we have three pigs, and fine pigs too," said Bill, " to begin with."

" True," observed Frank, " and to your feeding, my dear Billy, we are in a great measure indebted for all this good fortune; for the pains you took, little and weakly as

you were, to do your duty to those creatures, put me upon observing them closely, and sketching them in a way which afterwards became serviceable : it was the first link in a chain, the last of which endues us with the means of resuming our situation in life, and all its comforts."

Little Mary hoped " father would take her hens for his new farm ;" and Susan promised to feed them.

" I will take all," said the farmer, " and thank God for all ; but above every thing else, for this, that my family are united and industrious, and that they have preserved, through a situation of extreme trial, that desire of mental improvement, that taste for knowledge, and that power of self-cultivation, which, as it gives the highest pleasure the rich can know, so it sheds comfort on the lowest state the poor can suffer."

It will be readily conceived, that few houses could boast so many happy persons

beneath their roof, as that of Primrose Hill, on this memorable evening, since it would be difficult to say whether the inhabitants of the parlour or the drawing-room were more happy. On the following day, the happiness of each party ceased to be of the quiescent kind, for all the lively bustle of business commenced; and it was found expedient for the farmer's family, with the exception of his eldest son and daughter, whose duties held them at the house of their kind patron and benefactor, to adjourn to some place in the immediate neighbourhood of their former and future residence, in order that they might purchase such things as were necessary. Farmer Norton and his wife possessed too much native feeling and real delicacy, to intrude upon the vain, but humiliated family who were departing from the house; but, on receiving an intimation that they would be glad to sell them a few necessaries, they were hap-

py to avail themselves of the convenience this offered.

Mrs. Norton was surprised to find her once plain abode converted into the receptacle of much frippery and useless refinement; but yet she found likewise some conveniences and comforts, of which she was glad to avail herself; and as the farmer's money was forthcoming for the things he purchased, they were glad to oblige him. And on the following Saturday, he once more slept in a house of his own; and on the next morning, Betsy and John came over to visit him, and he once more proceeded to his own parish church, and, with all his family about him, took possession of his own seat; and with a heart deeply penetrated with a sense of the Divine goodness, joined in the pious exercises of the day. When he came out of the church, all his old neighbours flocked about him, and welcomed him, and among the rest

came their old servants, Thomas and Nancy, whom they took home, to share their plain, but plentiful dinner.

But very different guests awaited them; and on Monday Betsy let out the important secret, that on the following morning Sir Harry Eustace would obtain his lovely bride; and as his road lay immediately past the Lea Meadows Farm, it was his intention to stop and take a little refreshment there, as he conducted his amiable and long-loved lady to the seat of his ancestors; and that thus far it was the intention of Mr. and Mrs. Appleby to escort their happy daughter.

It will be readily believed, that every body and every thing was put in requisition for this grand occasion. Little Mary's chickens were roasted, Mrs. Norton made a dish of her best curds, and even the old woman tried her hand at a custard, while Betsy and Frank arranged the parlour with

white drapery and evergreens, in a manner that did honour to the taste of the one, and the neatness of the other. John, though far retired, was more employed than either, for he composed a short but ingenious epithalamium in honour of the marriage; while William made the farm-yard and all about it as neat and respectable as the shortness of the time admitted, being assisted in every thing by his father, who already had recovered ten years of health in his happy countenance.

Joyful greetings, raptures "deep, not loud," met the youthful couple as they alighted at the farmer's door; and joy, hope, and gratitude, beamed on every countenance; Lady Eustace declaring that no mode of rest or refreshment could have been devised equally agreeable to her, since it presented, along with a great many good things provided for her palate, a feast also delightful to her heart.

We now take leave of farmer Norton and his children, hoping that their history will prove advantageous to those who have much to suffer, and that the part their landlord bears in it, will not be less so, to those who have much to give; and who, holding great power in their hands, are called to exercise it with discretion and knowledge, wisdom and benevolence; and we conclude with intreating our young readers to consider, that next to honesty and industry, piety and duty, unassuming modesty, and propriety of manners, insured the success of the Blind Farmer and his Children.

THE END.

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