

DISPLAY.

A Tale

BY JANE TAYLOR,
AUTHOR OF 'ESSAYS IN RHYME,' AND ONE OF THE AUTHORS OF
'ORIGINAL POEMS FOR INFANT MINDS', &c

Examine thyself well;—see if thou art not tainted with this evil.

Jurieu.

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TESTIMONIES IN FAVOUR OF THIS WORK.

“ The picture before us is composed with considerable skill, and touched with peculiar delicacy: there is a freshness and verdure about it which delights the eye, and the figures are certainly not still life. If the catalogue announced it as the work of certain elder Artists, who might be named, we should say, it has not their force, but the whole is harmonious.”

Literary Panorama, June, 1815.

“ The Author of DISPLAY comes the nearest to Miss Edgeworth in point of style, and skill in developing character, of any writer that has yet appeared; but her production is distinguished by features of its own. It is a tale of the most unpretending description—a tale for young persons—founded on incidents of every day’s occurrence, and occupied in delineating the ordinary situations. We never met with any composition so completely and beautifully simple both in sentiment and style, which at the same time interested us so strongly by the *naïveté* of its descriptions, sometimes heightened by the most delicate touches of humour and pathos; by the *heart* that pervades the narrative, and the air or reality which is thrown over the characters.

“ It will be evident from the extracts we have given from this admirable tale, that we have scarcely adverted to its most distinguishing excellency, which consists in the judicious remarks with which its abounds, in reference to religious subjects, and the unaffected piety which diffuses itself, like a beautiful tint, over the whole production.” *Eclectic Review, August, 1815.*

See also a very high Character of the Work in the British Review for Feb. 1816.

DISPLAY.

CHAPTER I.

“ I WISH we were not going this evening,” said Elizabeth; “ they say Mrs. Fellows is so clever, and so satirical, that I shall be afraid of speaking a word.”

“ Dear now, I am glad we are going,” replied Emily, “ we have heard so much of Mrs. Fellows; and I had not thought about being afraid of her.”

“ I trust of all things they will not ask us to play. I would not play before Mrs. Fellows for all the world,” added Elizabeth.

“ I had rather not, certainly,” said Emily, “ and yet I do not think I would mind it so very much.”

“How I envy you having so much courage,” said Elizabeth; “ I am such a silly, timid creature!”

It was true that the dispositions of these young people differed essentially: they belonged to opposite classes of characters; which—to borrow terms used long ago in a different sense, in scholastic controversy—might be called *Nominalists* and *Realists*.

Emily was a *Realist*: whatever she did, said, or *looked*, was in earnest: she possessed the grace of SIMPLICITY;—a simplicity which appeared alike in her virtues and her faults. It was neither from insensibility, nor self-conceit, that she thought of her introduction to this formidable lady with so much composure. Modest people are not the soonest frightened:—” I wonder what they will think of *me*?” is not the inquiry of humility, but of vanity.

Now this inquiry Elizabeth was making perpetually: to speak, to move, to weep, or to smile, were with her but so many manoeuvres, which she was practicing for *effect*, and to attract attention. The prospect, the picture, or the poem, which Emily admired with all her *heart*, Elizabeth admired with all her *eloquence*; too intent upon exhibiting her taste or sensibility, to be truly the subject of either.

It was this disposition to *display*, that made her anxious about the expected visit: Emily was going that she might see Mrs. Fellows; Elizabeth, that Mrs. Fellows might see *her*.

From the conference with her friend, Elizabeth went directly to her dressing-room. She would have given away half her ornaments to know whether Mrs. Fellows wore ornaments. “ As she is a literary lady, I dare say she despises dress,” thought Elizabeth, as she looked at her pearl bracelets; and she clasped and unclasped them several times; but at last put them on in a hurry, because there was no time left to deliberate.

Elizabeth and Emily went together to their friend’s house. Emily happened to take off her glove in the hall. “ You have no bracelets on!” said Elizabeth. This was a comparison she could not bear:—“Mrs. Fellows would think her a mere doll.” “ Wait one moment,” said she; but in snatching one of the bracelets from her arm, it broke; and the pearls wandered deliberately to every corner of the hall. “ O your beautiful pearls!” said Emily. But just as she and the footman were beginning to search, a rap, long and loud, announced the arrival of other company. It was

Mrs. Fellows herself. "Oh, never mind, never mind," cried Elizabeth, shocked at the idea of being caught by a learned lady in the act of collecting beads—"Thomas will look for them." And drawing on her glove still more eagerly than she had taken it off, she hurried much discomposed to the drawing room.

The first glance at Mrs. Fellows when she made her appearance, convinced Elizabeth that this literary lady was no despiser of dress; and she now regretted the misfortune that had befallen her bracelet.

Mrs. Fellows was reputed a universal genius: besides excelling all the masters in all the usual accomplishments, she was a botanist, and a chemist, and an anatomist. She had written sonnets, and a novel, and a tragedy; and appeared—at least among the *noblesse* of an obscure country town—a prodigy of learning and genius.

Nothing could be more ill founded than Elizabeth's expectation of attracting the attention of this gifted lady. Satisfied with being herself the object of attention, and engrossed by the display of her own accomplishments, she had little leisure or inclination to observe those of others. She was presently engaged in conversation with two or three gentlemen; and the whole evening would have passed without Elizabeth's being able to ascertain whether she had once attracted her notice, if she had not happened to hear her say—after catching her eye for a moment—"about the height of that young lady."

How much anxiety and vexation do they escape, who mix in society with a simple, unambitious temper!

The business which brought Mrs. Fellows from town, was to dispose of an estate in this neighbourhood to a relation.

"I understand we shall have a great acquisition in this new family," observed a lady.

"Very much so, I assure you," replied Mrs. Fellows; "my cousin is a very sensible, excellent, clever, worthy man; and educates his family in a vastly superior manner."

"Any of the young gentlemen grown up?" inquired a matron.

"Oh no; the eldest I think is but ten years old."

"Only ten years old!" said three young ladies in a breath.

"There is a tutor, a governess, I suppose," resumed the lady.

"No tutor; my cousin at present superintends their education entirely himself. Mrs. Leddenhurst has a governess, I believe; but really I can give you very little information about them," said she; "I have scarcely seen any thing of them of late; indeed, my cousin and his wife have some peculiarities, which render them not altogether so entirely agreeable as one could wish." And here she changed the conversation; leaving the company in a state of suspense about these "peculiarities;" but it was not insupportable suspense, because the family was expected in six weeks; "and then we shall know all about it," thought Mrs. P-----, and Mrs. M-----, and the three Miss C-----'s, and old Mrs. G-----, and young Mrs. G-----, and Dr. W-----.

At length it was requested that Mrs. Fellows would play. The lively term in which Elizabeth expressed her pleasure at this proposal were lost amid the general din of solicitation.

"What taste! what execution!" she exclaimed repeatedly, during the performance.

When it was over, Mrs. Fellows insisted that some of the company should take her place. Elizabeth advanced a step or two within the line of observation.

“Miss Palmer, my dear,” said the lady of the house, turning towards her: but in the meantime another lady had been prevailed upon.

“What an escape for you!” whispered Emily.

“Yes, indeed,” replied Elizabeth faintly, “what an escape!”

When the party broke up, Elizabeth, as she wished her friend Emily good night, added in a whisper---

“How much I am disappointed in Mrs. Fellows!”

Elizabeth and Emily were friends, as it often happens, rather from accident than congeniality. They had been play-fellows from their infancy; and when they ceased to play, they had continued to associate.

Emily was affectionate; and she loved Elizabeth sincerely: Elizabeth felt as much regard for Emily as for any one she knew: but vanity chills the heart; and in proportion as she became conscious of the slightness of her affection, she grew lavish in her professions of it. But notwithstanding the difference in their tastes and dispositions, there were some respects in which they suited each other. Elizabeth could by no means have tolerated a friend, who had been taller, or fairer, or considered more clever than herself. Perhaps she was not aware how much of her regard for Emily, and the pleasure she felt in her society, depended upon her own acknowledged superiority in these respects.

Elizabeth was now more than nineteen years old; Emily nearly a year younger, and most people thought, “Elizabeth Palmer much handsomer than Emily Gray.” They had always lived among people who allowed their *full* value to external advantages; and Elizabeth’s superiority to her friend was a circumstance entirely taken for granted between them; and the deference naturally claimed by the one, was peaceably yielded by the other.

As for Emily, a companion who would talk, and leave her to think and feel as she pleased, suited her better than one who had been disposed to interfere with her thoughts and feelings. Yet she occasionally sighed for something more like her own idea of friendship, than she had ever found in associating with Elizabeth.

CHAPTER II.

ONE morning, Elizabeth and several others called upon Emily. There was now an opportunity, they said, of going over the house and grounds at Stokely, as it was open to the workmen, and a great many people had been to see it.

It was a pleasant walk from the town; the house stood on arising ground, and, embosomed in fine trees, was a picturesque object in all directions.

“What a pity that such a pretty place should be shut up!” had been said year after year by many a traveller. But now every thing indicated that inhabitants were expected.

“Let us go over the house first,” said several of the party, as they sprang nimbly up the steps to the hall door.

“You must take care of the paint, young ladies,” said the workmen, as they flocked into the hall.

While they steered their way among work-tables and scaffolding, and over heaps of shavings and saw-dust, and passed from one apartment to another, they expressed their opinions in various tones and terms of admiration “What a charming room *this* is!” and “what a delightful room *this* will be!”

“What a sweet place this would be for a ball-room!” said one, bounding in upon a fine smooth floor, and humming a few notes of a country dance.

“If I were Mrs. Leddenhurst, I would have this for my dressing-room, or study, or something,” said another as they passed on. “This is exactly such a kind of a room as I should like for myself,” cried a third. “I wonder what *this* is to be? I wish there was somebody to tell one what the rooms are to be,” said a fourth. “I wonder whether I shall ever live in such a nice house as this!” exclaimed a little girl. “Silly child!” said her sister, who was old enough not to wonder *aloud*.

They next attempted a door which they could not open. “That room is locked up, and I can’t part with the key upon no account,” said a person, who seemed to be a superintendent.

“Dear, I wonder what they can be so particularly curious within,” said Elizabeth, looking through the keyhole.

“Nothing particularly curious *within*; they are my books, ladies, which I shall be very happy to show you when they are in better order,” said a gentleman who at that instant appeared on the staircase, and passed on: this was said with a graceful bow, and a very good-natured smile. They were all silent in a moment: and stood colouring, and looking silly at each other: for when a party of young ladies are rambling at large over an empty house, it is highly probably that some silly and impertinent things will be said; and each was now trying to recollect what *she* happened to be saying, when the stranger appeared. Elizabeth remembered *her* speech very distinctly.

“It must be Mr. Leddenhurst himself, I suppose,” said she, in a low voice.

“Oh, you may depend upon that, for you know he said *my* books,” replied one of her companions.

“ I thought he was to go away with Mrs. Fellows; I had no idea he was here now,” continued Elizabeth, in a vexed whisper.

“ Don’t you wish you had not been looking through the keyhole?” said another of her friends.

“ Oh I don’t believe he saw that; I am certain he would not possibly see that,” said Elizabeth, sharply.

“ Well,” said Emily, “ I believe we have been all over the house now.”—So the party returned quietly home.

The trees of Stokely were bright with the tints of autumn, before it was in complete readiness for its new inhabitants.

One fine evening in October, a travelling carriage, covered with dust, was seen driving through the town; and it was observed to take the road leading to Stokely Park. The travellers were fatigued with their journey: for they had come from a great distance.

“ Where are we come to now?” said a little girl, in a sleepy voice, who was roused by their stopping at a turnpike.

“ Just coming into Broadisham,” said her father: “ and now, children, in a few minutes we shall get a sight of Stokely.”

“ Of Stokely! and is this Broadisham?” They were all alive in an instant, and looked out eagerly from one side of the way to the other. “ Ladies’ boot and shoe warehouse—Hodson, Dyer, and Hodson—Eve’s fancy-dress and millinery rooms—Ladies’ school—Phoenix fire-office—Pryke, haberdasher”—read little Lucy, as they drove through the town.

“ What a handsome bridge we are coming to now!” said Richard. “ And there is Stokely,” said Mr. Leddenhurst; “ those dark trees, just in the sunset.”

The children now expected to stop every moment; but the road had many a tiresome sweep to make still. At length it became shaded by a row of graceful elms; and a fir grove, with park-paling, bespoke their near approach. And now the gate flew open, and they drove straight up the avenue.

“ What a different looking place is it to what I expected!” said Richard.

“ Yes,” said Lucy, “ but a great deal prettier.”

While the father listened to their eager observations, Mrs. Leddenhurst and her friend beside her sat in silence. It was not the extent of the estate, nor the beauty of the scenery—but life, and its vicissitudes, that occupied her thoughts, as she drove up to her new residence.

In a short time Mr. and Mrs. Leddenhurst had been visited by most of their neighbours.

Being people of good sense and discernment, they were not particularly gratified by these specimens of their new society: nevertheless their guests were received with much courtesy and kindness; for their good sense was graced with good breeding, and their discernment was softened by benevolence.

It was generally agreed that Mr. and Mrs. Leddenhurst were very agreeable people; and no one had detected the peculiarities which had been hinted at. They were well dressed, and well bred; they wondered what Mrs. Fellows could mean. Emily was the first to unravel the mystery.

On the morning that she and her father called, Miss Weston—of whom nobody could determine whether she was “a friend or the governess”—was inquiring if there were any one in the town who took in needlework. Emily said there was a young woman who used to work very neatly, but she remembered hearing of her being ill, and did not know whether she could undertake it at present;—“but I will inquire about it immediately,” said she. Miss Weston said she intended to be in the town the next morning; and that if she pleased they would go together.

Emily was glad of this proposal; for there was something in Miss Weston—the expression of her countenance, and the sweetness of her manner—that attracted her attention. There was other company in the room; and they did not sit near enough to converse together; but she could not help looking at her continually: and their eyes met so often, that at last Emily felt quite ashamed.

Miss Weston called the next day at the time appointed. They had to go a little way out of the town; and during their walk she engaged in such agreeable conversation, that Emily could not help wishing she might have Miss Weston for a friend.

When they arrived at Eleanor Jones’s, her mother opened the door—“Does your daughter take in plain work, Mrs. Jones?” said Emily.

“Yes, Miss—that’s to say she used to do,” said the widow Jones; “but my poor child is so ill, ladies!”

“Mother,” said a feeble voice from within, “ask the ladies to please walk in.”

“Yes, let us go in,” said Miss Weston.

They found Eleanor Jones sitting by the fire in a tall arm chair: she looked extremely weak and ill, but her cheeks were flushed at the entrance of strangers;—she spoke with difficulty.

“If it is not much in a hurry, ladies, I think I could undertake a little job,” said she, coughing.

“I am afraid it would fatigue you too much,” said Miss Weston; “you appear very unwell: has your daughter had advice, Mrs. Jones?”

“The doctor as ‘tends the parish, ma’am, he sent her some drops in the spring, but he hasn’t been up here o’ some time now—only the young gentleman; and he says the cough’s of no consequence—but dear me! she coughs sadly o’nights.”

“Can she take any nourishing things?” said Miss Weston.

“Oh, she’s no liking at all to her meat, ma’am,” said the mother; “she takes nothing scarce by fruit, and such like, and now the fruit is just over.”

“Do you think you should like some grapes?” said Miss Weston.

“Yes, I should like some grapes very much, I think,” said Eleanor Jones; “but my wants are very few now, and I know that all the doctors in the world could do me no good—my time here is very short.”

“Oh, you will get better soon, I hope,” said Emily; “you must not be so low-spirited.”

“I am not low-spirited,” she replied; “I am very happy, and if it was not for my poor mother, I should not have a wish or a want.”

Emily looked rather puzzled at this, but Miss Weston seemed to understand her. There was a Bible open upon the table; and Miss Weston, laying her hand upon it, said,

“It is *this*, I hope, that makes you happy; whether we are sick or well, there is no real happiness but what is to be found here.”

At this the invalid looked up with great animation, saying, “O ma’am; I am glad to hear you say so, I am rejoiced to think you know that: yes, yes, the Bible made me happy when I was well, and now that I am ill and dying, it makes me still happier.”

Emily listened in silence to the conversation which now commenced; and she was surprised and affected at what she heard. She had often read in the newspaper, and heard among her acquaintance, about “bearing a long affliction with Christian fortitude;” and about “resignation to the will of Heaven;” but she now heard sentiments expressed which were entirely new to her. She was surprised that Miss Weston and this poor girl, although entire strangers, and in very different circumstances, seemed so completely to understand each other; and to think and feel so much alike upon the subjects about which they were conversing.

“You have talked long enough now,” said Miss Weston at length, in a kind voice; and she took leave, saying she would call again to see her in a few days.

“Miss Weston, I have a favour to ask you,” said Emily, after they had walked a little way in silence.

“What is that?”

“I scarcely know what I mean, exactly,” said she, “but I did not understand several things poor Eleanor Jones said just now; indeed I am afraid my religion must be very different from hers; would you be so good as to explain to me—”

“My dear,” said Miss Weston, “you could not have asked any thing that would give me half so much pleasure.”

Her countenance, as she said this, beamed with benevolence; and there was something so kind and encouraging in the manner of her speaking; that it brought the tears into Emily’s eyes.

“If I were not such a stranger to you—” said she.

“We will be strangers no longer,” interrupted Miss Weston; “let us be friends; and talk to each other without reserve; and there is no subject of so much importance, none that can afford such a rational and interesting topic for conversation.”

“And yet,” said Emily, “I have never been in the habit of conversing upon it, nor of thinking about it much, but I am certain your religion must be very different.”

“You must not call it *my* religion,” said Miss Weston, smiling; “there is, there can be, but one true religion, which is that the Bible teaches; and they who most clearly understand, and most consistently practice it, are the wisest and happiest people in the world.”

“I read the Bible on Sundays,” said Emily, “and I hope I have always done my duty.”

“That is saying a great deal,” observed Miss Weston.

“But I never knew the Almighty required any thing besides?” continued Emily.

“Certainly he requires nothing more than that we should do our duty,” replied Miss Weston; “but that is a very comprehensive phrase; are you sure you entirely understand it?”

“Not quite sure,” said Emily.

“You have read the Bible,” continued Miss Weston, “and so have many people; who yet, from pride, prejudice, or indifference, never appear to have understood its meaning. Let me advise you now to read the New Testament with great attention and seriousness; and, my dear, it must be with *humility*: it is God’s word; His own message to mankind; and it becomes us to receive it humbly as His creatures. Did you ever make it a subject of earnest prayer, that God would teach you to understand the Scriptures?—Without this, there is the greatest danger of making some important mistake about them; for it is in this way that He directs us to study His word; and in which alone He promises us instruction. And when you have read it in this spirit,” continued she, “you will be better able to judge, whether there is not something in the Christian religion beyond the observance of outward forms and duties; whether there be any tendency in these alone, to produce such effects at the near approach of death as you have just witnessed; the same willingness to resign life, the same peaceful serenity at the thought of death, and the same humble joy in the prospect of a heaven of holiness.”

Emily listened with interest as her friend proceeded: they parted at the turning of the road, having agreed to renew the conversation in their future visits to Eleanor’s cottage. She walked home musing on what had passed: her mind was affected and elevated; a new world seemed to have opened to her view, notwithstanding her very indistinct ideas as to its nature and reality.

Mr. and Mrs. Leddenhurst, as well as their friend, were intelligent Christians: they knew religion to be the most important of all concerns, and they uniformly acted as though they believed it. They felt the disadvantage of coming to reside in a neighbourhood where they had reason to fear its true nature was little understood by those with whom they would be expected to associate; but the hope of being useful reconciled them to the circumstance. There was a general consternation when it was discovered that the new family at Stokely were, as *they* called them, “quite methodists:” all marvelled, many murmured, and some mocked. There were a few poor and despised people in this town who generally bore that or similar names: but then, as a lady observed, “It was all very well for that sort of people; but what could induce such a family as the Leddenhursts to make themselves so remarkable, was to her a complete mystery: though, to be sure,” said she, “people of property may do any thing.”

Miss Weston was both “a friend and the governess:”—a friendship had subsisted between her and Mrs. Leddenhurst from their early youth, which time had strengthened and matured: but it was only of late that she had become an inmate in her family. Though it was perceptible to none but accurate observers of feelings and faces, Miss Weston was a sufferer:—it is easy to wear a pensive smile, but hers was a smile of cheerfulness; and she generally spoken of as being “remarkably cheerful.”

As to the cause of her sorrow, only a conjecture can be formed; because Mrs. Leddenhurst, who was the only person in whom she had confided, never betrayed her confidence. Among the numerous sources of human woe, the reader may fix upon that which to her may appear most difficult to endure with fortitude and resignation. One may conclude she

had lost her friend; another, her heart; and a third, her fortune; but perhaps, after all, it was something very different from any of these.

Miss Weston's idea of *resignation* was not as one may see it in the print shops—a tall figure, weeping over an urn in the middle of a wood; it was, in her opinion, and active, cheerful, and social principle. It was not indeed, without an effort, that she resisted her inclination to seek relief in rumination and seclusion; but strength of mind, that is, strength of principle, prevailed. Without waiting to confer with her inclinations, she wrote to her friend Mrs. Leddenhurst, offering to assist her in the education of her little girls.

“ You know,” said she, “ how much I love children, and that of all children none are so dear to me as yours. I am quite in earnest in saying that I will come and be the governess for who you are inquiring: do not raise needless scruples; some employment, that will engage both my time and attention, is essential to me just now; and I think I should engage in the work or education with an interest that would enable my mind to recover its self-possession. Indeed I am impatient to forsake this retirement—sweet and soothing as it is. Let me come, dear Caroline, and exchange these dangerous indulgences for the more wholesome pleasure of social intercourse and useful occupation.”

Mrs. Leddenhurst, who understood enough of the human heart, and of the character and feelings of her friend, to know that her resolution as was wise as it was courageous, gladly welcomed her to the bosom of her family; where she soon learned to “ smile at grief,” without sitting “ on a monument.”

CHAPTER III.

OF all the young people who had been introduced to the Leddenhursts, there was not one whose appearance pleased them so much as Emily's. They observed that in some important respects her education had been defective; but she seemed amiable, modest, and unaffected; and possessed of good sense, and a strong desire of improvement, which greatly encouraged them in their wishes to serve her.

They perceived that Elizabeth was a less hopeful subject than her companion; but this did not make them less willing to attempt her improvement; for they were not accustomed to shrink from a duty because it was unpleasant, nor to despair of one that was difficult. They were both invited to join the family circle at Stokely as often as they felt disposed. They were not backward to accept this invitation; and an early evening was fixed upon to pay their first friendly visit.

Elizabeth and Emily set off on this occasion with high expectations of gratification and enjoyment. Hitherto they had only seen them with other company; "but now," thought Emily, "we shall be alone, and be able to enjoy their conversation."—"now," thought Elizabeth, "we shall be alone, and they must take notice of *me*."

On their way, they met one of the servants from Stokely, with a basket of grapes.

"There goes a present for somebody: who can it be for, I wonder?" said Elizabeth: "the Tomkins's—or the Davisons', perhaps."

"No, no," said Emily; "I can easily guess who it is for—poor Eleanor Jones, who is so ill: I know they send her fruit or jellies every day."

"Well, very likely," replied Elizabeth; "for I heard—but really I can scarcely believe it, Mr. Leddenhurst looks such a pleasant, different kind of man—they may say, however, that he and Mrs. Leddenhurst were there the other day, and had such a strange conversation! Oh, I cannot remember half of the extraordinary things, I heard they said to her."

"I know they have been to see her," said Emily, "and that she was very much pleased with their conversation; I do not think *she* thought it strange."

"Well, I sincerely hope we shall have no such gloomy, stupid doings to-night!" exclaimed Elizabeth.

"Elizabeth," said Emily, "I have heard and thought more about religion since I conversed with Miss Weston than I ever did before; and I really think nothing is so likely to prevent one from being gloomy and stupid; besides, do not the Leddenhursts appear remarkably pleasant and cheerful?"

"Yes, in company; people, you know, must be agreeable in company: but I have heard those over-religious kind of folks are miserably dull when they are alone."

"Well, we shall see," said Emily.

When they reached Stokely, and entered the room, they found Miss Weston playing a lively tune; to which the children were dancing by the light of the fire. They were cordially welcomed; and Emily felt very happy as the circle formed, and she took her seat by the side of Miss Weston. She looked round, and saw none but cheerful faces; it did not appear to be that

kind of cheerfulness which is made at a moment's warning by the rap of the door; they looked as though they had been cheerful and happy all day long.

Elizabeth appeared this evening dressed with taste, but rather over-dressed for the occasion: and this did not pass unobserved; for in the simple action of walking from the door to her chair there was a *manner* that asked for observation—that is, it was *not* a simple action.

Mr Leddenhurst was looking over a review. “Poetry! poetry in abundance for you, ladies,” said he, “if you like it.”

“Oh, indeed, I am passionately fond of poetry,” said Elizabeth.

“Passionately fond, are you? Here is an article then, that, perhaps, you will do us the favour to read.”

Elizabeth readily complied, for she was fond of reading aloud.

“We select the following passage,” said the injudicious critic, “for the sake of three lines, which we are persuaded no reader of sensibility will peruse without tears.”

“No reader of sensibility!” thought Elizabeth: but how should she discover for certain which they were in that long quotation? To cry at the wrong place, she justly calculated, would be a worse mistake than not crying at the right; but, fortunately, as she approached the conclusion, the lines in question caught her eye, considerably printed in italics. She read them with great pathos; and as she read, tears—two undeniable tears—rolled deliberately down her cheeks. Having succeeded in this nice hydraulic experiment, she looked at Emily, and observed with some satisfaction that there was no trace of tears on *her* cheeks; but glancing round at the rest of the company, she felt rather disconcerted to see how perfectly composed every body was looking.—“Are they not extremely affecting?” said she, appealing to Mrs. Leddenhurst.

“Really I can scarcely tell,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst; “I always find, that nothing more effectually drives away my tears than having them bespoke: pathetic touches, to produce their effect, should take the reader by surprise, I think.”

“I question if those lines could have *surprised* me into tears,” said Mr. Leddenhurst.

“Oh not *you*, papa!” said Richard, laughing; “men should never cry, should they, if they can help it?”

“Neither men nor women should cry, if they can help it,” answered his father.

“I can remember seeing papa cry, though,” whispered little Lucy, “when he was telling mamma how glad the shabby looking gentleman looked at the sight of the guinea; I saw a tear in the corner of his eye, just for a moment.”

Elizabeth was so much absorbed by the little vexation she had just experienced, and by endeavouring to ascertain the precise construction that had been put upon her sensibility, that the conversation had taken a different turn before she was aware, and she found Mr. Leddenhurst in the middle of a long story. He had travelled; and was giving an account of a night he once spent in a Laplander's hut; which the children thought so very entertaining, that they often begged their father to tell it them over again; and they now came from the further end of the room, where they were quietly at play, saying.

“Oh, papa is telling about the little Laplanders!”

Elizabeth suddenly roused herself to the appearance of lively attention. They who feel interest have no need to feign it; but it rarely happened that Elizabeth was really interested by conversation to which she was only a *listener*. The vain and selfish deprive themselves of most *genuine* pleasures. There was nothing now, for her, but to wait till the recital was finished: to wait for *her* turn, with that sort of impatience which good-breeding itself can sometimes scarcely conceal, in those whose sole object in society is *to make an impression*. But Mrs. and Mrs. Leddenhurst had seen the little artifices of vanity practiced by greater proficient than Elizabeth. She was not the first person in whom they had observed a greedy impatience to squeeze into conversation every scrap of information that can be collected upon the point in hand. Little do they imagine, who angle for admiration by this and similar methods, how completely their end is defeated, at least with respect to acute observers. They who are intent upon being *heard* and *seen*, are not often *observers*; nor can they believe how easily they are *detected* by those who know how to *hear* and *see*. The involuntary admiration which is inspired by wit or beauty, and especially the respects for talents and acquirements, are, to say the least, *neutralized*, if but a suspicion be excited that they are used as articles of *display*.

Elizabeth would have been really agreeable, if she could but have forgotten to be charming. Her form was delicate; her face handsome,—and it might have been interesting, if the constant effort to make it so had not given a restlessness to her features which was far from pleasing: her eye first shot its spark, and then looked about for the damage. In her sensibility, especially, there was an appearance of *artificialness*, which rendered it difficult to feel real sympathy for her.

“There is nothing I have ever wished for so much as to travel,” said Elizabeth, when Mr. Leddenhurst had finished his narration; “it must be so excessively interesting, I should think, especially with an intelligent companion.”

“We who are obliged to stay at home,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst, “may, however, enjoy, by our fire-sides, most of the information, and a considerable share of the entertainment, of going abroad, we are now so abundantly supplied with the observations of travellers.”

“Yes,” replied Elizabeth; “and there is no kind of reading I am so partial to as voyages and travels, they are so uncommonly interesting.”

“Very interesting indeed,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst; “though I cannot say there is *no* kind of reading that I am so partial to.”

“Oh, certainly not; I did not mean to say *no* kind of reading, but—but really I am surprised,” continued she, “that Mr. Leddenhurst was never prevailed upon to publish his tour; it would, I am sure, have been such an acquisition!”

At this Mrs. Leddenhurst only smiled, and began talking to Emily, who had fallen into a reverie in *her* turn; but it was not about herself nor the company: her imagination had been carried by Mr. Leddenhurst’s narrative to polar regions; and was wandering over fields of ice, and arctic snows, where

“—the shapeless bear,

“With dangling ice all horrid, stalks forlorn;”

when Mrs. Leddenhurst recalled her recollection.

The evening passed rapidly away; and to Emily it was passing very happily: but Elizabeth felt an uneasiness which she would have been at a loss to define; there was nothing to complain of, but she was not *gratified*. She had been brilliant, and arch, and playful; she had caressed Lucy, and admired Caroline, but without *effect*; and there was a certain expression in Mr. Leddenhurst's eye, when she happened to meet it, that did not quite please her. The vexation she really felt suggested a new experiment. Her animation gave place rather suddenly to an air of pensiveness: she was silent and thoughtful; and started when spoken to, as though waked from an interesting reverie. Notwithstanding this, conversation went on very briskly, and even became increasingly lively; as she was suffered to be silent. At length Mr. Leddenhurst observed it, and said, "My dear, cannot we think of any thing that will entertain Miss Palmer?"

"Here is a new botanical work, with coloured plates: perhaps you will like to look at it," said Mrs. Leddenhurst; and the book and the candles were placed before poor Elizabeth, mortified beyond measure to be treated like a child, dull for want of amusement. Her assumed pensiveness now degenerated into real ill humour, which was but ill disguised during the remainder of the evening.

The fresh air sometimes produces a surprising effect in restoring people to their senses: and Elizabeth, when she had taken leave, and walked a few minutes in the wind, began to repent of her behaviour. However, they had bade her good night, and repeated their invitation so kindly, that she hoped it had not been particularly observed: and when Emily, who had been too much occupied to remark her friend's disappointment, observed what a pleasant evening they had passed, Elizabeth assented, saying, "A delightful evening, indeed!"

Happy are they who do not go into company to *perform*; who can think an evening pleasantly spent, that has been unproductive of compliment, and afforded no particular opportunity of displaying the favourite quality, or talent, or acquirement.

There are some unfortunate persons, who seem to make little other use of conversation than as a means of petty, personal aggrandizement; and who, in consequence of this wretched propensity, little as they suspect it, subject themselves to the contempt or pity of those whose opinions are most valuable.

There is a class of *speechmakers*, who contrive by ingenious allusions, and hints casually dropped, to *let you know* what they feared you might not otherwise find out: they are letting off fireworks; and when it seems all over, and there are only a few pitiful sparks dropping about—off goes another!—*but it never succeeds*. For whether it be—"my uncle's carriage,"—or "my friend the colonel," or "the general,"—or, "when I was on the continent," or "only a *jeu d'esprit* of mine, a very foolish thing,"—or, "Latin? Oh scarcely a word, I assure you,"—or, "a cousin of mine knows him intimately,"—or, "when I write to Lady so and so,"—or all these one after the other—such hints afford a kind of information which is not intended to be conveyed: they prove, not only that her uncle keeps his carriage—that she knows a colonel and a general—that she has been on the continent—that she writes poetry (and foolish things)—that she learns in Latin—that her cousin knows a learned man—that she corresponds with Lady so and so; but they show that she is anxious you should *know* it; that *she* considers such things as distinctions; and

that they are to her new or rare, for people seldom boast of that which they have always been accustomed to; and what is worst of all, it must create a suspicion that she has nothing more left to boast of: for she who gives out that she reads Latin, is not likely to conceal her knowledge of Hebrew or Greek; and she who intimates that she writes to Lady A—, would assuredly let you know, if she had any connection with Ladies B—, C—, or D—.

But the symptoms of vanity are almost infinitely various: there is no genus comprehending a greater variety of species. The silly girl, vain of her dress and complexion, is really one of the least offensive and most pardonable of all; for in proportion to the value of the thing boasted of, is the meanness of the boast: hence a pedant is more contemptible than a coxcomb.

But whatever particular character it assumes, that mind is in miserable bondage, whose happiness is dependent on the opinion, especially on the applause of others. It is a bondage which seems always the concomitant of a general moral imbecility, whether that imbecility be cause or effect.

Chawton House Library

CHAPTER IV.

EMILY's introduction to her new friends at this period of her life, was a more important circumstance than she was aware of, highly as she felt disposed to value their friendship. Notwithstanding her many good qualities, she was not free from faults: she was sensible, modest, and ingenious, but she was—*eighteen*.

She lost her mother early; and her father, although desirous to do every thing in his power for the welfare of his only child, was not aware of the best means to promote it. He was a man of business, and it did not occur to him, that any thing more was requisite, than to send her for several years to an established school, from whence he expected her to return completely educated. He did not consider that it is often not until the time when young persons leave school, that the real ardour for self-improvement is excited, which it is of so great importance to direct and cultivate.

Girls of entirely common minds take leave of their books, and often of the accomplishments which they have acquired at such a vast expense of money and time, at the conclusion of the last half year; delighted to exchange them for the pleasures from which they had been reluctantly restrained during the tedious periods from Christmas to Midsummer, and from Midsummer to Christmas. Revelling for a few giddy years in vanity and idleness, they by and by settle in life; and as the vigour and interest of youthfulness subside, sink into those ordinary beings who, without thousands of their kind, eat, drink, and sleep, dress, visit, and die; while young people in whom the spark of intelligence has been enkindled, are exposed to different dangers. Pride, pedantry, romance, and many other evils, according to the accidents of disposition and education, are the frequent consequences of partial and uncorrected cultivation.

Emily's *simplicity* was her grand preservative from many of these perils; and she possessed a native delicacy of taste, which defended her from others. With the choice of all the volumes in the circulating library of a country town, her reading had been tolerably select. When she left school, her father informed her, that "he did not approve of young girls reading novels:" but he had little hope that the prohibition would be regarded, because he firmly believed that "young girls *would* read novels." But in this instance, Emily had less temptation to disobedience than many: from whatever was common, low, or profane, she always shrunk with dislike. Good taste had in some measure supplied the place of good principle; and of all the gifts of nature, that instinctive *fineness* of feeling is most estimable, of which education itself can be produce an imitation.

Emily read and felt poetry, and lived in its atmosphere: but as none of the beings around her did the same, she shut herself up in her own world of enjoyment; neither desiring to interfere with the pursuits and pleasures of other people, nor wishing them to participate in hers. She loved her father tenderly, and was obedient and attentive to him: but he was so wholly incapable of entering into her feelings concerning those things which she thought most interesting, that she never attempted to address him in a language which she knew would have been quite unintelligible: while he, satisfied with her cheerful looks and dutiful conduct, dreamed not of the

ideal world his daughter inhabited. He studied to make her happy by supplying her with all the comforts and pleasures his circumstances would allow: but it was not for these things that Emily felt most obliged to her father. Having never known the want of a constant supply of those daily comforts, which are as really necessary to the intellectual as to the unrefined, she had not learned to value them. It was the liberty she enjoyed to pursue her *own* pleasures—the luxury of being alone—the inestimable privilege of not being obliged to talk, &c. that inspired her with gratitude, and made her think him the best and kindest of fathers. And indeed this gratitude was not misplaced: for that sort of kindness, which allows the object of it, as far as possible, to pursue its *own* plan of happiness, is that alone which makes the difference between *gratitude* and *thanks*. It is but a selfish kind of generosity to load persons with favours they do not value, and thwart them in the very point on which *their* pleasure depends.

There was one standing trial of Emily's good-nature; this was that her father expected her to read the newspaper to him every day after dinner. The sight of the newspaper was disagreeable to her; and politics were worse than uninteresting: however, she thought of Milton's daughters, and made the daily sacrifice with a good grace; and by degrees attained so great a proficiency in the art of reading and carrying on her own train of thought at the same time, that it became less burthensome. The kind "thank ye, dear," with which her father always repaid her when she finished her task, reproached her more than any thing, if she had performed it with reluctance.

The company of "uninteresting people," as Emily secretly styled the whole circle of her acquaintance, would have been grievously bothersome but for this habit of abstraction, which enabled her to take some apparent share in conversation, and to enjoy her own delicious musings at the same time. It could not, however, escape the observation of her friends, that her own contemplations seemed more agreeable to her than their company; and she had sometimes been called proud: but it was not by those who knew her; those who had opportunities of witnessing her invariable sweetness and good-nature, and the obliging alacrity with which, when once roused from a reverie, she would do any thing, for any body; though it sometimes happened that her services were required before her attention was excited.

Notwithstanding this indifference towards most of those she had hitherto known, Emily had very sublime notions about friendship; and from her first conversation with Miss Weston, she believed she had found that, concerning which, as yet, she had only speculated. Her heart soon glowed and expanded with affection and respect towards the whole family at Stokely. Although the acquaintance was so recent, she felt more at home there than in the circle of her old associates; for she was with beings who understood her—to whom she could express her feelings without the dread of being stared at for eccentricity. Not that her new friends by any means coincided in all Emily's feelings and opinions: but they were not misinterpreted, nor ridiculed; and when corrected, it was with a tenderness and reasonableness that made her quite sure she had been in the wrong.

But it was not likely that a girl of Emily's age and disposition should love such friends as the Leddenhursts—especially as they were new friends—with entire sobriety and moderation. In comparison with them, every body appeared uninteresting and insignificant: and every thing

belonging to Stokely appeared to her to possess some peculiar excellence, incommunicable to any other place or thing. The children seemed more lively and engaging than all other children; the flowers more fragrant; the trees most picturesque.

When she walked out with her father, she always pleaded to go that road, or at least some walk where the house was in view: and it was a sort of pleasure if it happened to meet even a greyhound belonging to Stokely. For on such an occasion—perhaps after she had been wondering that her father should seem so much interested in what he was talking about—she would explain with sudden animation, “There’s Leopard!—pretty fellow!—see, papa, is not he a graceful creature?”—and be disappointed that her father appeared so little interested by the interview. But when once affection, however well placed, exceeds the bounds of reason, it becomes a source of at least as much torment as delight. They who live on imaginary pleasures, must expect a balance of *real* pain. Emily did not expect, and she thought she did not even wish, for an *equal* return of affection from these friends; but she was too anxious about it: and although they gave the most substantial proofs of their regard for her, she tormented herself when any little expression of it was accidentally withheld. It is not until persons enter upon the realities of life, that they learn to distinguish between what is essential and what is trifling, in friendship, as well as other things; and Emily had this and many other lessons to learn, which are never effectually taught but by experience. She possessed, however, a certain nobleness of temper, which prevented her from feeling jealous of Elizabeth. If ever she detected in herself a tendency to that meanness, she instantly discarded it, and thought, “Is not she my *friend*?”

As Emily became better acquainted with them, she saw and heard many things at Stokely that surprised, and even disappointed her. Mr. Leddenhurst, for instance, appeared really interested about politics, or rather public affairs: and Mrs. Leddenhurst engaged in her domestic concerns, not so much as matters of dry duty as Emily had generally considered them.

She observed, too, that they entered into conversation with their guests, with a degree of interest that exceeded, she thought, the requirements of politeness; instead of practising that dexterous conciseness of reply, which brings a tiresome subject to the quickest possible termination.

But what surprised her most of all, and occasioned her the most pain, was a confession one day, from Miss Weston, that she was by no means devoted to poetry. She felt no higher delight in it than every cultivated mind must derive from the productions of the best poets: and she assured Emily, that she had more satisfaction in reading works addressed to the understanding than in the finest productions of imagination.

Observing that her young friend looked disappointed, she added: “But, Emily, you must not suppose that I despise or undervalue the taste in others, because I do not possess it myself. I not only tolerate, but I admire it where it is correct, and does not stand in the place of better things.”

“But yet,” said Emily, “I wish you felt exactly as I do about it.”

Now Emily possessed more genuine poetical taste than many who talk a great deal about poetry. It was not the fashionable admiration of the poem or poet of the day; nor the pedantic

taste of the classic, or the critic; nor the indiscriminating rapture of youthful enthusiasm; but she had an eye to see, a heart to feel, and taste to select, the *truly* poetical, not only in books—but in nature, in life, in sentiment.

She did not often yield to the temptation of *scribbling*: when she did, it was to express and gratify some feeling of the moment; not to show about among her acquaintance, nor to send to a magazine or a newspaper. She was quite convinced that her own compositions were juvenile at best, and far inferior to the productions of poets that she did not greatly admire. This was one instance in which her good taste proved of essential service to her: it saved her from the unhappy mistake of those, who perceive no difference between writing verses, and writing *poetry*; and who accordingly go on writing verses, as many as you please—or more: which is an art as easy of attainment as that of doing cobble-stitch, or making patch-work, or painting sprigs on a thread-paper.

They were just entering on a disquisition upon poetical taste, when a morning call interrupted the conversation. It was Miss Oliver; one of the standing inhabitants of the town.

She belonged to a class of ladies, of whom it may be said, that they are *good for nothing but to be married*. Let no intellectual *Coelebs* object to the expression; it is not intended to recommend her to *him*.

At eighteen she was tolerably pretty; and about as lively as mere youth will make those who have no native spring of vivacity. Her education, like her mind, was common. If she had married, she might have performed the ordinary offices of domestic life as well as they are ordinarily performed. Though she had not cared much for her husband, she would probably have loved her children; and the maternal duties and affections of themselves impart a degree of interest to any character. But she did not marry, although trained to consider marriage as the grand object at which she was to aim.

Year after year passed away; during which, her attendance at the Christmas rout, the Easter ball, the summer races, was tiresomely punctual. At length it became necessary, by extra attention to dress, and studious vivacity, to show that she was still young; but even that time was gone by, and she now only laboured to prove that she was not *old*. Disappointment, and the discontent occasioned by the want of an *object* in life, had drawn lines in her face which time might still have spared. It sunk down into dismal vacuity after every effort at sprightliness; for without mind enough to be pensive, she was habitually dull.

Her circumstances did not allow her the relief of frequenting places of fashionable resort; she contrived to exist with no other air, and no better water, than were to be obtained in her native parish. The few families in the neighbourhood with whom, in her youthful days, she used to spend her Christmas or her Whitsuntide, were dead, or dispersed, or the acquaintance was broken off: so that the routs and card-parties of this little town were the only relief to her monotony; where she went to meet the same faces, and to say and hear the same *nothings* as ever.

It was no wonder, therefore, that the veriest trifle—a new stitch, or a new pattern—became to her an affair of importance; that the gossip of the neighbourhood seemed essential to

her existence; and that, without malignity, scandal should become an entertainment, and mischief a recreation.

Having conversed for a short time with Mrs. Leddenhurst, in a strain of *commonness* that forbade the supposition of an original thought having ever by any accident strayed into her brain, she took leave. As Mr. Leddenhurst shut the door after her, Emily was greatly surprised to hear him say, "Every human being is interesting." Thinking her, and most other human beings, uninteresting, she could not understand this at all: but to Mr. Leddenhurst, who was an observer of human nature, and studied it as the most important and interesting of sciences, every specimen was valuable, for every specimen presents *some* shade of variety. But there was a still higher interest which the meanest of his fellow-creatures did not fail to excite. Christian benevolence was with him an active principle; and the earnest desire of doing good led him to seek and cultivate the society of those, whom the pride of intellect, or the selfish indulgencies of taste, would have taught him only to shun.

"What an alteration," said he, "an interest in religion would make in such a countenance as that lady's!"

Nor was it uncharitable of him to apprehend that she was one of the *many* who pay no decided regard to it. There is a *vulgar cant* belonging to people of the world, which as effectually betrays *their* fraternity, as any peculiar phraseology called *religious cant* can do.

"I never remember," continued Mr. Leddenhurst, "observing such an expression of listless vacuity in the face of the meanest Christian. Habitual thoughts of God, and of eternity, *will* impress *some* trace of mind upon the countenance. What a new world of hope and happiness might be opened to such a character! Caroline, let us cultivate her acquaintance."

CHAPTER V.

ELIZABETH and Emily accepted, with apparently equal eagerness, the offer of their friends at Stokely, to assist them in their course of study and self-improvement. They had free access to Mr. Leddenhurst's ample library, and the advantage of his advice to direct their choice of books. The course of reading recommended to Emily was calculated to inspire her with a taste for solid acquirements, and general information: and to correct, without impairing, the liveliness of her fancy, and the originality of her mind.

They found it more difficult to ascertain what plan of study was most congenial to Elizabeth's taste, or the most likely to improve it. The pleasure she took in reading, or in any kind of study, for *its own sake*, was but small. It was less, perhaps, than she was herself aware of; because she was not accustomed to analyze her motives; and she might possibly mistake the avidity with which she often sat down to read a book in the morning, which she intended to talk about in the evening, for the pure love of knowledge, or the gratification of genuine taste.

How many books Elizabeth would have read, and how many things she would have learned, if she had been *Robinson Crusoe*, she never inquired.

A very superficial kind of knowledge had been hitherto sufficient to answer all the purposes to which she applied it; but now that she was associating with persons who possessed, and evidently valued, more substantial acquisitions, she began to apply herself to them with avidity: for Elizabeth could accommodate herself to the different manners, tastes, and opinions of different people—which she possessed some sagacity in discovering—in a way truly astonishing to simple beholders.

There was now nothing so dry, so difficult, or so wholly foreign to her real taste, which she would not have set herself about if it had been recommended at Stokely, or if Emily had been going to apply to it.

What a pity that so much labour should be lost!—lost, not only with respect to the particular end aimed at, but as to any *sterling* advantage to her own mind; and her new friends were pained to perceive, that with all her laborious efforts to obtain it, she missed the only method of gaining solid approbation. They did not, indeed, wish to discourage her in the pains she was willing to take; but above all they would have been pleased to see her aiming to extirpate the radical evil; and becoming simple, honest, unobtrusive, and in *earnest*.

Elizabeth's studies were interrupted one morning, by revolving a scheme, which was suggested to her by something she heard Mrs. Leddenhurst say the evening before, about establishing a Sunday school for the poor children of Broadisham; and as soon as she had breakfasted, she stepped into the disorderly cottage of a neighbouring cobbler, who had seven or eight dirty children that were always either playing or fighting in the street, and, to the great surprise of the whole family, she offered to teach them all to read.

At first they did not seem to understand her; and when they did, they appeared less struck with her generosity than she had expected. The father went on with his work, with a proud sullen countenance. The mother grinned stupidly; and said, "I don't know as they'll choose to *larn*."

Bill boy—oo'll ye like to *larn* to read?—Sal, do ye hear—oo'll you choose to *larn* to read, child?"

Bill said "no"—Sall said "yes:" while Elizabeth, indignant at their rudeness and ingratitude, would have left them to their ignorance; but recollecting her object, she condescended to expostulate, representing the importance of the acquisition; and "You know," said she, "you cannot get them taught for less than twopence a week any where in the town, and I tell you, I will teach them all for nothing."

Finding, however, that she made no impression on the parents, she turned to the children, saying,

"Well, if you'll come and let me teach you to read, I will give you all a halfpenny a-piece every Sunday morning."

These words, "a halfpenny a-piece," were the only ones the children seemed to understand.

"I'll come if you like," said one of them: "and so'll I," "and so'll I," said some of the others. So in consequence of her liberal promise, she had four or five dirty scholars the next Sunday morning.

But while the children were thinking of their halfpenny, and Elizabeth of her reputation, A, B, C, was a dull subject to both parties.

"B, I tell you, you stupid little creatures" said she, again and again; but at last her scholars were dismissed, with scarce any other notion about A, B, and C, than that there was some connexion between them and a halfpenny.

The very next day, as Elizabeth was walking with Miss Weston and Emily, they met a party of young ladies, who asked Elizabeth what made her "so uncommonly late at church yesterday morning?"

"Why, I was detained rather longer than I intended by my little scholars," said she.

"Scholars!" said Emily.

"What scholars have you?" said Miss Weston.

"Only a few poor children, that I teach to read on Sundays," answered Elizabeth, carelessly.

"Indeed! I'm pleased to hear that: I did not know there was any one here who—indeed I am *very* much pleased to hear it," said Miss Weston; and as she spoke, she looked at Elizabeth with such an expression of approbation as she was not accustomed to receive.

For Miss Weston's was a charity that not only "hoped all things," but "*believed* all things" in a wider sense than would have been possible, had she possessed a little more intuitive perception of character. But it was not

"Her nature's plague to spy into abuses."

Herself perfectly upright and sincere, any species of dissimulation appeared to her almost impossible; and the actual discovery of artifice, at which the malignant would be gratified, and the sarcastic amused, filled her only with grief and pity.

That evening Elizabeth was invited to Stokely, to assist in forming a plan for a Sunday school.

“We have certainly injured poor Elizabeth,” said Miss Weston, when she mentioned the circumstance to Mr. and Mrs. Leddenhurst. “Not that I should think so much of her having raised a little school of her own when no one else had thought of it, but she has never told us, never boasted of it, even when we were speaking on the subject. Emily herself did not know of it.”

“I am surprised at that,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst.

As soon as Elizabeth arrived, they began consulting about the school.

“We have no wish, Elizabeth,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst, “to interfere with your arrangements; as you were the first to begin, we shall be quite contented to follow you. What plan, my dear, have you pursued with your scholars hitherto?”

“Oh,” said Elizabeth, colouring, “I have no very particular plan; I hear them read, you know—and so forth: but I am sure you and Miss Weston understand these things much better than I do.”

Mrs. Leddenhurst then described some of the arrangements and methods of teaching which had proved successful in schools she had formerly been engaged in; and as they entirely met Elizabeth's approbation, it was determined to proceed without delay.

A convenient room was provided in the middle of the town; and Elizabeth and Emily, with a few other young people, undertook to attend regularly, twice every Sunday. The poor families around were not all so insensible of the privilege as Elizabeth's cobbler; for a school of fifty children was presently raised, and the numbers increased continually. More teachers were soon wanted; but of all the ladies who were applied to, few were found willing to lend a helping hand. Many were too indolent; and others were afraid of having any thing to do with what they thought a *methodistical* concern. There were some who appeared very eager in it at first; but as soon as the novelty was over, they became irregular in their attendance, and dropped off, one by one: for to submit to the self-denial and exertion requisite to a regular and persevering attendance at a Sunday school, requires, in general, some stronger motive than mere caprice; although many motives beside the *right* one may be strong enough.

In this exigence, they gladly accepted the assistance of two or three young women of a lower class, who came forward to offer their services. They appeared quite competent to the undertaking, having been formerly engaged in a small Sunday school, which fell off for want of the means to support it.

One of these, well known by the name of “Betsy Pryke,” was a person of some repute among her friends and acquaintance.

She was a sharp, neat, compact, conceited looking person, who kept a little haberdasher's shop in the market-place. By the aid of some quickness, a good memory, and what was called a *great taste for reading*, she had accumulated a curious mass of heterogeneous lore, with which she was accustomed to astonish, if not to edify, her simple neighbours. She was particularly fond of hard names, and words of many syllables: and her conversation was frequently interspersed with quotations from Young, Hervey, and Mrs. Rowe.

Her customers, in addition to their purchase, were generally favoured with a little

learning, gratis, while she was weighing the pins or measuring the tape; and even before those whom she could not venture to entertain with familiar discourse, some fine word, or *knowing* remark, was dexterously dropped, to let them know *what she was*; and her behaviour to this class of her customers was marked by that mixture of pertness and servility, which is commonly produced by self-conceit in dependent circumstances.

To these qualifications Miss Pryke added a flaming profession of religion. She was one of the very few inhabitants of this town who appeared to pay any serious regard to it; and among those pious, simple people, who possessed little of the wisdom or knowledge of this world, she passed for a pattern of zeal and sanctity. Miss Pryke's creed was all *creed*: she was fond of *holding argumentations* upon a few points on which she considered herself to have attained more *light* than the generality of plain Christians. She appeared to take little interest in the practical parts of Christianity, about which there is no controversy: and upon those who made any thing more than a distant or casual reference to these subjects, she readily bestowed her enlightened pity. They were “persons in the dark;” and if they were ministers, they were “blind leaders of the blind,” and knew nothing of the *gospel*. She valued *comfort* much above consistency, and was more observant of her *frames* than of her temper.

She could quote Scripture with great facility; but was fonder of hearing it *allegorized* than explained. She had by rote the whole string of those phrases, and particular modes of expression, which pass current among some good people, and which, although frequently used with the utmost sincerity, are very far from being evidences of it.

Susannah Davy was a person of a very different description: she was an humble, serious, and superior young woman.

Her father was an alehouse-keeper, a profane, violent man; he scoffed at religion, and had treated his daughter with great severity since she became acquainted with its value. But she submitted to his harsh treatment with patience and meekness, and conducted herself in his riotous house with such strict propriety, that she was respected by the lowest who frequented it.

Whenever she could be spared from the business below, she took refuge from the disorderly company in the kitchen, in her quiet chamber; where with her Bible, and a very few good books, she passed many a tranquil and happy hour.

She had a pleasing, intelligent face; and while her manners were perfectly unassuming, there was a dignified reserve in her deportment. Her dress was neat and plain. She had that nice sense of propriety, which secured her to the vulgarity of dressing beyond her station.

She showed that she respected *herself*, by her uniformly respectful behaviour towards her superiors; and the circumstances of the ladies she was now introduced to being her fellow Christians, did not dispose her to forget what was due to them. She had read, that superiors are “not to be despised because they are *brethren*.” and she felt no inclination to practise that unbecoming familiarity, which in some instances has proved a hinderance to profitable Christian intercourse between the brother of high and of low degree.

The fault, however, is not always on one side; there is a *manner* in which some good and very charitable people behave towards their inferiors in rank, which must be grating to those who

retain any independence of mind.

It was not thus with the Leddenhursts: they always remembered and respected the *natural* rights of the poor: those rights which belong to them in common with the rich; and which in so many essential respects, place all the ranks of mankind upon an equality. They considered their services as voluntary, their dwellings as sacred, and above all, their minds as free, as their own.

There were few families more beloved, and more justly, by their poor neighbours, than the Leddenhursts; and few, perhaps, whose intercourse with their needed tenantry was so entirely free from the debasing spirit of *feudalism*—that spirit which has so long survived the system. They were friends of the poor, without calling themselves, or wishing to be called, such names as patrons, benefactor, and the like. Their offices of charity were never performed with that superlative *condescendingness* of tone and manner, which, though it may be thought excessively amiable, is but a creditable way of being proud; and which does, in fact, neither become nor belong to one being, in its transactions with another of the same species. Nor were their religious instructions and advice given with an air of persons invested with the authority of Church and State. They always used to *reason*, as well as to exhort; and to reason *first*. They well knew that authority can no more bind *opinion*, than chains can bind sunbeams.

They took particular care to instil proper notions on this subject into the minds of their children; that when they were going about on little errands of kindness to their cottages, they might not fancy themselves such condescending little cherubs as some foolish people might call them. They were told that a child *cannot* condescend to a grown person: and the little Leddenhursts were remarked for their modest, respectful behaviour to servants, and to the poor. Nor were they ever encouraged in any thing that might make their charities look *picturesque*: for their parents were aware, that with every possible precaution, it is difficult enough to prevent a frightful mixture of motives in the performance of any good work.

But all this time Susannah Davy is waiting to speak to Mrs. Leddenhurst. Her appearance very much prepossessed them in her favour; and they accepted the offer of her services with still more readiness than that of her sagacious friend. They both, however, seemed well qualified for the employment; and Elizabeth and Emily, to whom such engagements were entirely new, appeared at first, in comparison with them, to some disadvantage as teachers of a Sunday school.

Indeed they both experienced some disappointment in this concern. In *itself* it was wholly uninteresting to Elizabeth: for what is there in a row of poor children, to interest a vain, selfish mind? and she found it more unproductive in other respects than she had expected. Although she would lose a great deal by withdrawing her attendance, there was but little to be gained by continuing it. She was but one of a number, undistinguished among the other teachers, who were too busy with their own classes to observe Elizabeth's attention to hers.

Emily's disappointment was of a different kind: she had surveyed the form of children allotted to her—which consisted of the usual proportion of the stupid, the brisk, the idle, the diligent, and the froward—with sanguine expectations of what instruction would do for them; not calculating on the dull comprehensions, feeble powers, or perverse dispositions of the little beings she had to deal with. She soon discovered that the pleasant reward of immediate or certain

success was not that which could be depended upon; and Miss Weston told her, that the only way not to feel discouraged, was to be contented with the satisfaction of *endeavouring* to do good to our fellow-creatures. She knew better than Emily what consequences to expect from such exertions; and was contented to perceive, that the children were tolerably regular in their attendance; that they made a real, though slow progress in their learning and that they gradually became more decent and orderly in their appearance and behavior.

It struck Miss Weston, that the new teacher, Miss Pryke, regarded her friends Elizabeth and Emily with an evil eye. Some hints she occasionally dropped, confirmed this suspicion: but she had not given her an opportunity to explain herself fully, having rather avoided entering into conversation with Miss Pryke. Her manner of talking, especially upon religious subjects, was not agreeable to Miss Weston. She had much greater pleasure in conversing with Susannah Davy. The poor in this world are often “rich in faith;” and many a lesson of patience, trust, and cheerful suffering, may be learned from their “simple annals.” When this pious, humble girl told of the peace and happiness she enjoyed during her hours of retirement, even in the midst of hardships and insults, Miss Weston felt that if her own sorrows were more refined, her consolations were not more elevated.

The truth was, that Miss Pryke was not very well pleased to find Elizabeth and Emily in office at the school. She knew that they had always been numbered among the gay young people of the town; and she augured no good from admitting people of the world to engage in such a service. Miss Pryke's notions concerning this phrase, “people of the world,” were neither liberal nor correct. It is a phrase which cannot be particularly attached to wealth or station: nor is there any condition of life, any creed, or party, from which it must necessarily be excluded. They who love God supremely, and serve Him faithfully, are *not* of the world: they who prefer any thing before Him, *are* of the world; though they may “call him Lord,” and “prophesy in his name.” And it is of little consequence, whether the worldly mind be seeking its gratification from a display of dress and beauty in the glitter of a ball-room, or from a display of its *gifts* among a few poor brethren at a prayer meeting: each is loving “the praise of men, more than the praise of God.” But this was not the view of the subject that Miss Pryke was accustomed to take. With the exception of herself, and a few of her friends, she considered all the inhabitants of Broadisham, especially those of the higher class, emphatically, “*the world.*” And however true this appeared to be with respect to the majority, her charity would never stretch so far as to allow, no, nor to hope, that there might be some among them, who, humbled at heart, and essentially relying on their *unhonoured* Saviour, might grope their way to heaven, through all the rubbish of ignorance, error, and pharisaic prejudice, which worldly connexions, and unfaithful instructions, must throw in their way. But “God seeth not as man seeth.”

One day, when Mrs. Leddenhurst and Miss Weston remained after the school was dismissed, to make some arrangements in the room, Miss Pryke seized the opportunity she had been wishing for. Mrs. Leddenhurst remarked that the children were making as much progress as could be expected.

“Yes, certainly, ma'am,” said Miss Pryke, “as it respects their temporal instruction; but

for my part," added she, sighing, "I could have wished to see the work prospering in our hands in a different way to what it does: it would be a great encouragement to my mind, I must say, to see some of these dear children enlightened."

"We are not to expect miracles," answered Mrs. Leddenhurst; "there are very few of them who can read their Bibles at present."

"Oh," replied Miss Pryke, "we must have faith, and nothing will be impossible; but if I may speak my sentiments, Mrs. Leddenhurst," said she—now resolving to cast off the fear of man—"I do not wonder that our labours are not blessed; and I don't believe they ever will be while we have so many people of the world amongst us. What can be expected from such poor, dear, deluded, young creatures! and what an example to set before these dear children, Mrs. Leddenhurst!"

Here Susannah Davy ventured to remark, that, "perhaps their attendance at the school might be made useful to the young ladies; she had heard of such instances, and thought it would be a great pity to discourage them."

To this Mrs. Leddenhurst assented; and observed, that, "so far from disapproving of their assistance, she lamented that no other ladies had joined them: she knew not by what authority they should be justified in forbidding any, who were willing to unite in a good work."—And silenced, but not satisfied, Miss Pryke, by adding, that "there was nothing in the character or conduct of these ladies that, in her opinion, disqualified them for the task they were at present required to perform."

The conversation ended here; for Miss Pryke was not the kind of person with whom they chose to enter into a further debate. She could not, however, be more truly concerned for the religious welfare of the children than they were. The grand object of all their exertions, and of which they never lost sight, was to train them for heaven; and they steadily pursued those methods, which, in their opinions, were most likely to promote this end. They did not attempt to feed them with "strong meat," but with "milk," because they were "babes;" and communicated the simple ideas they could comprehend, in plain language, and short sentences, such as they might easily attend to, and remember. They knew that most children will not listen to a long discourse, however excellent; but that their attention may be excited by a short, striking, personal address.

Such slow and simple methods did not satisfy Miss Pryke's zeal for the conversion of her pupils. Not considering the *usual* course of divine proceeding in spiritual, as well as in natural things, she expected to sow and reap at the same time: but instances of Sunday school children's appearing seriously impressed are rare, and, generally speaking, doubtful; though there have been hopeful exceptions. At any rate, teachers may be satisfied with imparting that knowledge, and forming those habits, which are so frequently followed, in after life, by the divine blessing.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the meantime Emily's friends witnessed with great pleasure the hopeful, though gradual change that appeared to be taking place in her mind. These friends could make allowances for the prejudices of education, the influence of early habits, and the various disadvantages which must attend the dawning of religion in those who have not been taught to fear God from their youth.

They were pleased to observe in her a delicacy of conscience which made her extremely guarded in conversing on the subject, lest she should be led to express more than she felt. Without sincerity she saw that religion is but a name, and without earnestness, a shadow.

As soon as she began reading the Bible with attention and prayer, she perceived that she had never before read it to purpose. She was surprised that she had often passed over the same passages which now struck her so forcibly, with such total inattention to their obvious meaning. She began to feel that "one thing is needful;" that the grand business of life, and that to which all others must be secondary, is to prepare for the life to come. Of the necessity and nature of this preparation she became increasingly conscious the more she thought of God, and of the nature or heavenly happiness. She was convinced that "His presence could not be fulness of joy" to any but those who are, like Him, holy and spiritual. When she compared the state of mind which the Scriptures call "meetness for heaven" with the vanity and earthliness of her present taste and pleasures, and with the distaste she felt to those that are wholly spiritual, she began to understand what is meant by being "born again;" and to feel the necessity of it, although her ideas of the way in which this change must be produced were still indistinct and uncertain.

She had bowed at the name of Jesus, and spoken of Him, and heard Him spoken of as "our Saviour," and "our blessed Saviour;" but with notions the most vague, and feelings the most indifferent. But when she began to regard Him as a Saviour from sin and misery, as the Friend of *sinner*s, a living and present Friend, and to hope that He might be hers—His being and His character appeared an astonishing reality, and it seemed to her as though she had never heard of Him before.

At first Emily set about becoming a Christian with the same expectation of success, as she would have applied herself to a language or a science. She saw that she had it all to learn, and she thought there was nothing to be done but to learn it. She soon, however, began to experience some of the difficulties which will be encountered by all who are in *earnest*. She was sincerely asking, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" But, like him who once "went away sorrowful," Emily found herself unwilling to make that entire surrender of the heart to God which He requires, and without which religion is but an irksome bondage, a fruitless effort to compromise between God and the world. She complained of a secret reluctance and disinclination to serious thought and engagements, and of a disproportionate interest in her own pursuits and pleasures. She sometimes expressed a fear to Miss Weston, that her solicitude about religion arose more from a dread of the consequences of neglecting it, than from a desire towards it for its own sake.

To these complaints her friend listened with sympathy; and administered such encouragements as were calculated, not to make her easy and satisfied with her present attainments, but to stimulate her to perseverance and diligence. She explained to her that these or similar obstacles ever oppose the entrance of real religion to the human heart; that all are naturally indisposed to embrace it; but that these who feel and lament this indisposition have every encouragement to expect assistance.

“Strength,” said she, “is promised to those, and those only, who are sensible of weakness; who, acknowledging with deep humility and poverty of spirit their mental impotence, are willing to receive help of God.”

“That change of heart which consists in new dispositions and affections, new pursuits and pleasures, new apprehensions of things unseen, and without which heaven could not be happiness, is,” she said, “the immediate operation of the Spirit of God. It is that for which of ourselves we are absolutely insufficient. We must not, however,” continued Miss Weston, “expect this assistance, unless we earnestly and constantly seek it: ‘Ask, and ye shall receive;’ this is the invariable condition. And, Emily, we must watch as well as pray; and diligently use every means that God has appointed for the promotion of religion in the soul; never relaxing from that strict system of mental discipline in which Christian self-denial chiefly consists. It is to those who *do* the will of God that the promise is offered.”

While Miss Weston was thus continually performing the noblest offices of human friendship, Emily's love for her became increasingly ardent; for she assumed no authority nor superiority in advising her: her manner was so humble and affectionate; and displayed at once such a delicate consideration of her feelings, that Emily's heart melted with grateful affection.

It has been said that there was nothing so dry, so difficult, nor so *wholly foreign to her real inclinations*, that Elizabeth would not have set herself about, if it had been recommended—or rather, likely to recommend *her* at Stokely. It was therefore less surprising—as religion was the one thing most attended to and valued there, that Elizabeth must now also become religious, or at least appear to be so.

Without premeditated and consummate hypocrisy, yet without sincerity, and wholly without earnestness, she professed to view the subject in a new light, and requested instruction upon it. She readily, and without gainsaying, acquiesced in new opinions: to many she might have appeared a more hopeful learner than Emily. But surely there can be no bondage so irksome, no drudgery so base, as counterfeiting, or from any mistake falling short of that character which, when genuine, brings with it freedom and independence, pleasantness and peace.

Although they found it a difficult task to converse on the subject with Elizabeth, no pains were spared to give her right views, and to excite in her mind a real concern about it. She assented readily to every thing that was said; believed whatever was stated; felt all that was described—and more; but they could not feel satisfied with her professions.

Indeed, the manner in which the Christian character was described and exemplified at Stokely, rendered it so difficult of imitation—there was so little credit to be gained by mere

outward appearances or particular expressions, while so much stress was laid upon sincerity, humility, and spirituality of mind, that Elizabeth soon began to feel the support of her new professions almost intolerably irksome, and almost hopelessly difficult: perhaps she might have abandoned the attempt altogether, if she had not accidentally discovered a style of religious profession far easier of attainment.

Miss Pryke was confirmed in her suspicions of the unsoundness of the new family by what had lately passed, and she attended the next Sunday, determined to make redoubled efforts at enlightening the school. The instructions she addressed to the children were indeed principally aimed at the teachers; and Elizabeth's form being next to Miss Pryke's, she could not avoid hearing a great deal of it. She listened to her harangue, partly from curiosity, and partly from a desire of becoming familiar with a language which she wished to adopt. Perceiving from the whole strain of it that it would be comparatively easy to be very religious after Miss Pryke's manner, she determined to gain the notice and good opinion of this enlightened teacher. So, as soon as the school was dismissed, Elizabeth made up to Miss Pryke, and shaking her by the hand, with a particular kind of smile, said, "I am sure I have reason to thank you for what I have heard this morning."

Miss Pryke started at this very unexpected address: however, it put her prejudices to flight in an instant. Notwithstanding her jealousy of the gay or genteel, she was doubly gratified at having proselyted one of this class. Her answer was studiously seasoned with *spiritual flattery*: but that and the succeeding conversation are not recorded, because it would be painful, and equally offensive to right feeling and good taste, to repeat a discourse in which expressions might occur, which to use professedly in earnest, but without sincerity and reverence, is the worst kind of profaneness.

The conversation was renewed in the afternoon, and on the following Sunday: and Elizabeth was invited to join a private meeting which was held once a week in Miss Pryke's parlour. She felt rather ashamed of accepting this invitation, and scarcely knew why she wished it; however, as it was winter, she stole in one evening.

Her entrance seemed for a time to distract the devotions of the little assembly, the appearance of a gay lady was so very unusual among them. There was some bustle in dumb show, to make way for, and accommodate her; and she was beckoned and jostled, and pointed and pushed to the vacant arm-chair by the fire-side: but Elizabeth with gracious bows declined this distinction, and seated herself—for she was fond of contrast—on one of the forms, between a very old woman, and a spare squalid looking man, whose head was tied up with a blue handkerchief. Elizabeth's lace veil floated on his shabby shoulder, and her rich India shawl spread over the old woman's red cloak, who shook it off respectfully; while the good man squeezed himself up to his narrowest compass, and drove at his next neighbour to make more room.

When the service was over, Miss Pryke made up to Elizabeth, and shook hands with her; and so did two or three others, saying a word or two expressive of their pleasure at seeing her there: and there were some present whose hearts glowed with true Christian benevolence when

they did so.

Chawton House Library

CHAPTER VII.

BY this time Emily, without having studied for it, had gained the love and esteem of the whole family at Stokely. Elizabeth saw that she had: and notwithstanding their impartial attentions—for none but the children *appeared* the fondest of Emily—Elizabeth perceived that she was not loved, esteemed, and, what to her was still worse, not *admired* so much. It was a long time before she could believe this; but when she did, when she felt quite sure of it, her mortification began to produce a degree of indifference to their opinion, and distaste to their company; and she wondered why she had taken so much pains to please them.

From this time her visits to Stokely became gradually less frequent; and as she felt Emily to be no longer a foil, but a rival, her company also became irksome to her; and although her professions when they met were the same as ever, Emily was hurt to perceive that Elizabeth shunned her society.

Her connexion with Miss Pryke tended much to promote this coolness; for it gave Elizabeth another object and other engagements; and such as were not very compatible with her intercourse with the Leddenhursts. She continued to attend the weekly meeting at Miss Pryke's; for vanity is seldom dainty—and the notice she attracted, and the distinction she obtained *there*, were agreeable to her. Her manners, her accomplishments, her dress, excited little attention among persons of her own rank, who could display much the same; but in all these respects she stood unrivalled in Miss Pryke's parlour, and they obtained for her that consideration which she loved.

Well had it been for Elizabeth if she had made as good use of these meetings as many, as most of those did who frequented them. But unfortunately, she only imitated what was not worth imitating. She soon acquired a facility in using the phrases current among these poor people, and even caught something of their particular looks and gestures. These peculiarities, which, while they too easily pass among some as signs of grace among others, are with a little discrimination concluded to be the symptoms of a canting hypocrisy; but which are, in fact, often, most often, the genuine and natural expressions of earnest sincerity, uncontrolled by the delicacy which teaches the educated to conceal their feelings.

But, truly, the least agreeable excrescences which are produced by earnestness in religion, are more reasonable, and ought to be less offensive, than that finished air of indifference which to often characterizes *politer* worshippers.

When a poor Christian turns the key upon her comfortless dwelling, and sets off with her lantern and her Bible, to spend an hour in thinking and hearing of a place where there will be no more want, it is not surprising if she be more deeply interested and affected than those, who leave a comfortable drawing-room, and intelligent circle, or some interesting pursuit, and whose “joy unspeakable” it costs them, perhaps, little effort to conceal.

But it is best to avoid *all* extremes; and those good people who are prone to make *such* “outward and visible signs of their inward and spiritual graces,” would do well to observe the conduct which Jesus Christ seems plainly to recommend on this subject; that decent composure

of countenance and manner, which while we are exposed to the eyes of others, answers the purpose of “entering into the closet, and shutting to the door.”—“Be ye not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast: but anoint thy head, and wash thy face,” &c.—When the repenting publican “smote upon his breast,” he was not with the throng of worshippers in the Temple, but standing “afar off.”

Elizabeth, however, found herself in high esteem among this little company, especially with Miss Pryke, by whom she was studiously flattered and extolled. She had little opposition to encounter at home, on account of her new profession; for her parents disliked trouble too much to persecute; and Mrs. Palmer contented herself with exclaiming sometimes, when her daughter was setting off for the market-place—

“Bless me, Elizabeth, how can you make such a fool of yourself!”

Elizabeth’s father and mother were people of the world in the most complete sense: they were “lovers of pleasure, and not lovers of God.”

Mrs. Palmer was clever; and had a vast deal of taste in laying out gardens, and fitting up rooms, and setting out dinners. Her grand object in life was, *to enjoy herself*; and her selfishness was refined, and perfect in its kind. She was a good wife, a kind mother, an obliging neighbour, as far as ever she could be consistently with this object, but no further. She had an easy, pleasing address; and her politeness was so unremittingly attentive, that it looked almost like friendship. Whatever did not demand any real sacrifice of her own pleasure or convenience, was done, and done in the most obliging manner possible; but really to deny herself for the sake of another, was a species of virtue which she left to be practised by such good sort of people as chose it: to her it appeared foolishness; especially as she could decline her services with such masterly adroitness, with such a gentle, sympathizing address, that the cold selfishness of her heart often escaped detection.

Her feelings were naturally violent: but she had such an extreme dislike of being uncomfortable, that she rarely suffered them to be very troublesome to her. When the news arrived that her only and darling son had died abroad of the yellow fever, many people thought she would not long survive the intelligence. Her sorrow at first was ungovernable. She said she should never have another happy hour: but it is easier to be distracted for a week than to be sorrowful for life; and Mrs. Palmer discovered surprisingly soon, that she was still in possession of all those good things on which her daily pleasure depended. She had no son, it was true; but she had her pleasant house, and handsome furniture; luxurious fare, and a healthy appetite; a fine person, and expensive ornaments. She could still walk, and ride, and visit, and see company; and build her grotto, and attend her greenhouse, and arrange her cabinet; so that she recovered her cheerfulness rapidly. There was nothing in her mind with which sorrow could *amalgamate*; it was an unwelcome and unintelligible foreigner.

By her son's dying at a distance, she was spared what were, to her, the most shocking circumstances attending such an event.

Death—that one thing which the sceptic *must* believe, and to which the worldly must submit—was that which she most disliked to think about; and she studiously avoided whatever

was likely to remind her of it. She shrunk from the survey of its gloomy apparatus; and was really glad that all that part of the affair was transacted so far of as Jamaica. The opening of the family vault was a circumstance she particularly dreaded: *that* was a place she did not like to think of; and still less to recollect, that she must *herself*, one day, lie down in that dark chamber. Whenever the unwelcome thought was forced upon her, she instantly recurred to the soundness of her constitution, and the vigorous means she used to preserve it. Besides which, she avoided perils by water and perils by land; was the first to foresee evil and hide herself; and to flee from contagion and every form of danger: thus, by a common but strange kind of deception, feeling as though to delay death were to escape it.

She thought it prudent, however, to make some provision for the distant day; and was, accordingly, constant at church, and charitable to the poor: by which means she concluded all would be safe, whenever she should be under the absolute necessity of going to heaven.

Mr. Palmer was a gentleman of ordinary capacity: but he could hunt, and shoot, and joke, and swear; and contrived to do very well without thinking: for with these accomplishments, a good table, and well stocked cellar, he wanted neither for friends nor reputation.

It suited the taste both of Mr. and Mrs. Palmer to live expensively; whether it suited their income as well, they did not often inquire: for they avoided every thing that was disagreeable: and to them it was very disagreeable to think about debts and prudence.

A short time after Elizabeth had begun to estrange herself from Stokely, Mrs. Leddenhurst received a parcel of books from her, which they had lent her; with a note thanking her for the loan of them, but declining the offer of others that had been proposed; adding, that “ studies of this nature were too apt to encroach upon pursuits of higher importance.”

“ This is very true indeed,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst, when she had read the note; “ and I wish Elizabeth may now find herself more disposed to engage in pursuits of higher importance: but I am afraid she is making a mistake; at least I should question whether she will really employ the time she would have spent in reading these books to more advantage. I have known some good people, ” continued she, “ who would scruple taking up a volume of elegant literature, or of philosophy or science, alleging, that they had not the time to spare from better reading; whose consciences would yet allow them to spend months in working a cap or a handkerchief; and who were in the habit of employing themselves in such domestic affairs as, in their circumstances, could be as well done by their servants.”

“ Elizabeth has learned this from some of her new friends,” said Mr. Leddenhurst: “ it is no uncommon thing for persons of low education and contracted views to entertain this kind of jealousy against general information. Indeed, most things which their own circumstances will not permit them to enjoy; whatever they have not knowledge to understand, or taste to appreciate, they are apt to consider as inconsistent with real piety.

“ Many very good people are subject to this prejudice, and are apt to consider as dangerous symptoms of conformity to the world, pursuits and refinements, which a little more knowledge, and a little more liberality, would convince them, are, in their way and *in their place*, aids and ornaments to Christianity.”

“ The opposite extreme is, however, so much the most general and the most abused,” said Miss Weston, “ and this is so much the safest of the two, that one had need be cautious in censuring it. Where one person abstains from general reading for conscience, or rather for prejudice sake, how many are there who read bad books without any regard to conscience, and who are prejudiced against good ones!”

The Leddenhursts were sorry that Elizabeth had withdrawn herself so much from their society; especially as they did not feel perfectly satisfied with the present style of her professions. They did not, however, venture to form so decided a judgment concerning her as was declared of Emily by some of the good people at Miss Pryke's.

Emily had no ambition to gain their favour; indeed she paid too little regard to public opinion: and her dread and abhorrence of *unfelt* professions led her to avoid those very appearances and expressions which might have induced them to form a more favourable judgment of her piety. They shook their heads at her youthful sprightliness; while Elizabeth was pronounced “ a gracious and growing character.”

Chawton House Library

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE spring evening, Elizabeth had taken her accustomed seat by the side of Miss Pryke's counter. While they were talking, she sometimes put aside the shawls and ribands that blinded the window with the end of her parasol, to see what was passing without. But there was nothing to be seen except some children at play in the middle of the square—and Mr. Preston standing in his usual position at his hop door—and old Mr. and Mrs. Parsonson returning from their evening walk—and the setting sun shining on the old market-cross, just as it did a hundred years ago.

It was seldom that any thing happened to disturb the tranquility of this remote place: except that a show, or a conjuror, or a company of strolling players, sometimes stopped to amuse the inhabitants for a the night or two, in their way to the county town. But suddenly their conversation was interrupted by the sound of distant music. Elizabeth started from her seat, exclaiming:

“Hark, Miss Pryke! what can that be? the bass-drum, I declare!”

For now it came nearer and louder; and presently a full band, in gay green and white, playing a lively march, followed by the regiment, and all the boys and girls of Broadisham, crowded into the market-place.

“How partial I am to military music!” said Elizabeth, as she stood nodding to the tune; while rank after rank passed the shop door.

This was a lively evening for Broadisham: it was all bustle and animation: maids and mistresses, masters and men, appeared at their doors and windows. Trains of soldiers, stooping their tall caps, were seen entering the lowly doors of the Angel, the King's Arms, and the Red Lion; while a party of officers assembled before the gate of the new Hotel.

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The teachers of the Sunday school had been employed for some time past in making a set of frocks and tippets for the children, and as soon as it was completed, an evening was appointed for them to meet in the school-room to receive them. This evening being arrived, and the parties assembled, they were about to proceed to business, when Emily proposed waiting a little while for Elizabeth, who was not come; but at last they were obliged to go on without her.

It was a pleasant task to take off the patched, worn, and torn, and fit on these new, comfortable dresses. The whole school soon appeared in a neat livery: and while the children in stiff attitudes kept surveying themselves and each other, and looking almost as much ashamed as they were pleased, the ladies not less pleased, stood beholding the happy crowd. Emily enjoyed it exceedingly, as with great animation she stood rolling up the old tattered garments, and admiring the new.

It was nearly dark before the children were dismissed; and just as the ladies were coming down stairs, they observed a light dressy figure making her way impatiently through the crowd of children that was issuing from the school-room door. Till the moment she passed, when the light from a chemist's shop shone full upon her, they did not discover that it was Elizabeth. Emily spoke to her, but she was looking another way, and appeared not to observe any of the

party, who stood gazing at her as she passed swiftly on.

“ She is going to this officers' ball,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst; “there is her mother, I see, just before.”

“ I am surprised at that!” said Emily.

“ And I am concerned,” said Miss Weston.

“ I am concerned, but not much surprised,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst.

“ But I have heard her say so much against those amusements lately,” added Emily.

“ I should have been more surprised if she had said less,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst; “ but we will not condemn her, perhaps she is going against her inclinations. I only fear that if she once begin to break through the restraints she has lately imposed upon herself, she will return to these things with increased avidity.”

As they passed the assembly-room they saw the chandeliers were lit up; the dancing had commenced; and they could distinctly hear the sound of the inspiring viol. Emily had trod many a measure there, and she could scarcely forbear stepping to the well-known air. She was really fond of dancing; but the company, the dissipation, were never very agreeable to her. She had declined attending this ball without regret. Mr. and Mrs. Leddenhurst had explained to her their reasons for abstaining from these diversions in a way that convinced her of their priority. Without shaking their heads, and speaking of dancing as containing in itself some mysterious evil which could not be explained, they simply stated the difficulty, if not impossibility, of preserving that temper of mind in such assemblies which a Christian should *always* maintain; that they were universally allowed to indispose the mind to serious reflection and serious engagements; and to expose young and old to many temptations.

The offence it would inevitably give to many pious people, whose *prejudices* even we are expressly enjoined to consult, was mentioned as another reason, and a sufficient one, for abstaining, independent of all other considerations.

“ And if resigning such paltry pleasures as these,” said Mr. Leddenhurst, “ be considered too great a sacrifice to be made for Christ's sake, what are we to understand by forsaking *all* to follow him? But even,” said he, “ if I could attend these places without any injury to my own mind, or any offence to the minds of others, I really should not feel disposed to go dancing through a world so full of sin and misery as this is.”

Emily, however, needed not many arguments on this subject. When she began to *feel* religion, and to think of eternity, she did not want to dance, nor to mix much with people whose thoughts are all about this world; yet she had never before been so uniformly cheerful as now. She returned to Stokely with her friends, and spent the remainder of the evening so pleasantly with them, that she quite forgot the assembly-room.

How it happened that Elizabeth was at the officers' ball, must now be explained.

One of these officers was an old acquaintance of her father's; and he, with all the others, were invited to dine at his house.

Elizabeth had not quite finished dressing herself for this occasion, when she was called down stairs to Miss Pryke, who waited to speak with her in the hall.

“ I did not hear till just now,” said she, glancing as she spoke at the various parts of Elizabeth’s dress, “ I did not hear till this minute, that all these people were coming to dinner here to-day; and as I was convinced you would not wish to be in the way of it, I came to request the pleasure of your company to spend the day at *ours* and I hope—”

“ Thank you,” said Elizabeth, “ you're extremely good, I'm sure, and I should enjoy it exceedingly, for, you know, it is excessively distressing to me; but, indeed, I'm afraid I could not get off any how, for you see, my mother would be so much displeased. So thank you, *good morning*,” said she, withdrawing rather abruptly, and leaving Miss Pryke not quite satisfied with the manner in which her invitation had been declined.

There are ways of being irresistible without *flirting*: and Elizabeth did not find it requisite on the present occasion to throw off entirely the character she had assumed. When she made her appearance, there was a look of childish simplicity and timidity, with a becoming expression of being distressed at the presence of so many gentlemen: hastening to take refuge among the ladies, she seated herself beside Miss Oliver, who was one of the party, with whom she began chatting in an under voice, with playful familiarity.

During dinner the subject of the proposed ball was introduced, and Lieutenant Robinson, a young officer who sat next Elizabeth, began talking about the pleasure of meeting her there. But Elizabeth acknowledged she was not partial to these amusements. “There was too much publicity in them,” she said, “ to suit *her* taste: she was aware she exposed herself to the imputation of singularity, but, in fact, she preferred pleasures of a more private and domestic kind.” While the lieutenant was expressing his grief, surprise, concern, and astonishment at this declaration, a lady who sat opposite exclaimed,

“ Oh, we must not expect to see Miss Palmer at the assembly-room; she has forsaken our innocent amusements since she has been such a saint.”

At the word *saint* all the company laughed; laughed rather more than Elizabeth liked, and dreading further exposure, she joined in the laugh, saying,

“ Oh, pray indeed, you must not call *me* a saint! I only wish I was more of one than I am.”

“ But, Mrs. Palmer, ma'am,” said the lieutenant, appealing to her mother, “ Miss Palmer surely cannot be serious; let me beg of you to intercede with her, that we may have the honour of her company tomorrow evening.”

“ I shall certainly endeavour to prevail with Elizabeth,” said her mother.

“ There,” said he, “ Mrs. Palmer takes our part; you will not refuse her, I'm convinced? ”

“If my *mother* wishes it, certainly not,” replied Elizabeth, with a submissive smile.

Thus she had promised to go to the ball before she recollected her pre-engagement at the school-room; and she could not break her promise; besides which, in the course of this evening Lieutenant Robinson had rendered himself so agreeable, that all prior considerations rapidly gave way.

When she was alone in her room that night, she began to speculate upon the posture of affairs. She thought for a moment of the opinion that would be entertained of her by her friends

in the market-place for going to the ball; and she thought for two moments of what would be thought of it at Stokely. But Elizabeth now found herself engaged in business of importance, to which trifles must be sacrificed; and the tide that was plunging her back into a world from which her heart had never been alienated, was but feebly stemmed by principle or conscience.

Elizabeth had probably been deceiving herself as well as others. They who are little accustomed to self-examination, who look more at actions than at motives, may go a great way in false professions without *deliberate* hypocrisy. Perhaps she was herself surprised to find how easily her scruples were overcome, and her professions laid aside. She felt less dread in doing so, than shame at the idea of their being discovered. Her mind was not indeed at this time in a state for making cool calculations.

Religion, friends, reputation, were hastily thrown into one scale, and Lieutenant Robinson's gold epaulette into the other—and thus the point was decided.

Chawton House Library

CHAPTER IX.

FOR more than a fortnight after the night of the ball, Elizabeth had not been seen by any of her old friends. At length Emily was surprised by a call from her; and still more, by her proposing to accompany her that evening on a visit to Stokely.

“It is so long since I have been,” said she, “that they must think me quite inattentive; and if you would like to go this evening, I shall be happy to attend you.”

Emily readily agreed to this unexpected proposal: indeed she was very glad of it; especially as she remarked a certain thoughtfulness and pensiveness in Elizabeth’s manner, which made her hope she was sorry for what had lately occurred.

During their walk Elizabeth was unusually silent and absent; and she continued so after their arrival, although she had received the same free and cordial welcome as usual. Many ineffectual efforts were made to enliven her; and at last Mrs. Leddenhurst—who had remarked that Elizabeth liked to be asked to play—proposed that she should sit down to the instrument.

“What shall I play?” said she, turning over the leaves of the music-book. “The Soldier’s Adieu—that’s a sweet thing! shall I try it?”

“If you please,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst.

Elizabeth played, and began to sing; but stopped presently, as though unable to proceed.

“Why don’t you sing?” said Emily. “Do sing!”

“I cannot sing very well this evening,” said she, looking distressed; and added side to Emily, “You *must not* ask me to sing *those* words.”

After attempting a few more notes, she stopped again, and leaning back upon Emily, begged for air and water.”

The window was thrown open, and Mrs. Leddenhurst led her to the sofa; where, after a few hysterical sighs, she found herself a little better.

“Emily, my love, lend me your arm,” said she, rising; “I shall soon recover in the air; it’s nothing but the heat of the room.”

So Emily led her friend to an arbour in the garden; where, as soon as they were seated, Elizabeth leaned her head upon Emily’s neck, and burst into tears.

“What is the matter?” said Emily. “Are you ill, dear Elizabeth—or has any thing grieved you?”

She continued to weep and sigh, but made no answer.

“I am sure,” resumed Emily, after a short silence, “I do not desire to know any thing you wish to conceal; but if I can guess why you are so unhappy—”

“Oh, then I have betrayed myself!” exclaimed Elizabeth, hiding her face.

“Betrayed yourself! what do you mean, Elizabeth? I only thought that perhaps you were sorry about going to the ball, and giving up the Sunday school; and if—”

“Oh, my dear!” interrupted Elizabeth, “you do not know, you cannot guess—it is quite impossible that any one should ever discover the cause of any uneasiness: that must ever remain a secret in my own bosom.”

“ Then certainly I shall not inquire,” said Emily. “ Will you like to walk?”

“ No, stay a moment; forgive my weakness, Emily, although I cannot reveal the source of it.”

“ As long as you please, but take care, or I shall find it out.”

“ Oh dear! oh dear! oh dear me!” said Elizabeth

“ Dear me!” said Emily.

“ Do you think Mr. Leddenhurst observed the words of that song?” inquired Elizabeth.

“ I can’t tell, indeed,” replied Emily.

“ How silly it was of me to attempt to play it!”

“ Why so?”

Elizabeth looked down, and sighed.

“ How beautifully the sun is setting!” observed Emily, who found it difficult to maintain her part of the conversation.

At length Elizabeth broke another silence by saying, “ Emily, I know I may confide in you; will you promise faithfully never to betray me, if I tell you all my heart?”

“ Yes, you may depend upon me,” said Emily.

“ But how shall I confess my weakness?” resumed Elizabeth; “ cannot you guess?—Oh, Emily, if you had ever loved, you would know how to feel for me!”

“ Dear! are you in love?” said Emily, simply.

“ Hush! my dear creature!” cried Elizabeth; “ but, what,” continued she, in a low voice, “ what but this fatal attachment could have led me to act as I have done?”

“ Do you know now,” said Emily, after running over in her mind the list of all the beaux and bachelors she knew, “ do you know, I am entirely at a loss to think who you can be at all attached to.”

“ Oh, my dear, that fatal regiment!” cried Elizabeth.

“ Already!” said Emily.

“ You do not know him, or you would not be surprised.”

“ Is it that tall, brave-looking officer that I have seen walking with your father?”

“ No, that’s Captain Scot; he is not particularly tall; you’d not be so much struck at first sight: but indeed he has paid me such attentions! though I know he is only flirting with me,” said Elizabeth, sighing.

“ Then indeed, Elizabeth, I hope you will endeavour to overcome it,” said Emily; “ and as it is so very recent, I should think with a little effort—”

“ A little effort! Oh Emily, you know nothing about it; never, never; it cannot be overcome!”

“ How are you now, Elizabeth?” said Miss Weston, who appeared at that instant.

“ Thank you, better,” said Elizabeth, starting.

“ She is a great deal better,” said Emily, blushing.

“ I feared you would stay too long in the evening air,” said Miss Weston; and, supported by her two friends, Elizabeth returned to the company.

Elizabeth had long wished for an opportunity of being a heroine; for which nothing had been wanting but a hero: and this being so unexpectedly supplied, it was no wonder that, mistaking ambition of conquest, and partiality to scarlet cloth, for love, she should presently exhibit its interesting phenomena.

She had not, however, been guilty of any misrepresentation in saying that Lieutenant Robinson had “paid her *such* attentions;” for this young man had fallen in love with Elizabeth; and a short time after this arbour scene, and after about a month’s acquaintance—during which time he spent every morning at her work-table, and every evening in her company—he made his proposals to her father, which meeting with the approbation of the whole family, he became her acknowledged lover.

Elizabeth would have been more gratified at making a conquest of a man of sense; and she would have preferred altogether having a sensible man for her husband: however, she had made a conquest, and she was going to be *Mrs. Robinson*.

Sometimes, indeed, she felt a little dissatisfied during the morning *tête-à-tête* with the strain of her lover’s conversation: for it was surprising what silly things he would say rather than not say any thing: but then Elizabeth thought it was because he was in love; and any such unfavourable impression wore off during evening parade, when the lieutenant was manoeuvring at the head of his company; and always while the band was playing she was *sure* she was in love with him.

After evening parade the band was ordered to play for an hour in the the market-place, for the amusement of the ladies, who were assembled on these occasions, and promenaded up and down the square.

It was then that Elizabeth enjoyed the *éclat* of her conquest. While she appeared laughing and talking with her lover among her less fortunate acquaintance, who were walking about in unattended rows, her purpose was served as well, or better, by a blockhead than a genius.

Sometimes she would stop awhile to chat with them, and her nods were dealt about lavishly, and with unwonted cordiality, to every body.

“Who are all these?” said Lieutenant Robinson, one of these evenings, as a new party entered the square.

“Gracious me! all the Leddenhursts,” said Elizabeth, who would rather have avoided the interview.

“And who is that pretty figure in the cottage bonnet?” said he, as they came nearer.

“It’s only Emily Grey,” answered Elizabeth.

“How d’ye do, how d’ye do, Emily, my love, how are you?” said she, addressing her friends as they advanced.

She now introduced Lieutenant Robinson, and would have passed on, but they all seemed disposed to stay and chat, and Mr. Leddenhurst entered into conversation with her lover.

Never had he appeared to so much disadvantage to Elizabeth as at this moment, now that she saw him, not for herself, but for them; saw him, too, by the side of Mr. Leddenhurst.

Her hand had fallen from his arm as they approached, and she now began talking as fast

as possible to Mrs. Leddenhurst, Miss Weston, and Emily, to divert their attention from the conversation that was passing between the gentlemen.

Emily, who had raised her expectations rather unreasonably high, of a being whom it was possible to love in three weeks, was nearly guilty of the rudeness of starting when she first beheld the mean figure, and fiercely vacant countenance, of her friend's admirer.

"Is it possible!" said she to herself, and she looked about to avoid meeting the eye of Elizabeth.

In the meantime the lieutenant continued running on in his usual style of sprightly dulness to Mr. Leddenhurst, who stood looking down upon him with an eye of keen but candid observation.

"What a monstrous curious old cross you've got here!" said he, staring up, and tapping it with his cane.

"Well, good night!" said Elizabeth; "it's cold standing in the wind;" and she walked off with her lover, feeling more uncomfortable than ladies *always* do when they walk off with their lovers.

When they reached home, Elizabeth threw herself on the sofa, saying:

"Don't talk to me; I am tired this evening, Mr. Robinson."

Thus repulsed, he walked backwards and forwards in the room for some time, half whistling; till, stopping on a sudden, he exclaimed,

"That Emily, what d'ye call her, is a confounded pretty girl!"

"Do you think so?" said Elizabeth, rousing up: "Well, she does look rather pretty in her bonnet."

Here the lieutenant resumed his walk and his whistle; but the remark had a fortunate effect upon Elizabeth. The momentary jealousy made him appear surprisingly more agreeable, and worth *securing*: and while she sat watching him as he paced up and down in the dusk, she said to herself, "He *whistles* uncommonly well!"

Very soon after Lieutenant Robinson's proposals were accepted, the regiment, which was quartered at Broadisham, received orders to remove to a distant county. It was expected they would march in three weeks; and as both he and Mr. Palmer were anxious to conclude the affair as soon as possible, it was agreed that the marriage should take place accordingly

Elizabeth, therefore, suddenly plunged in the agreeable confusion of preparation, had little leisure to study the character and qualifications of her intended husband. He was but *one* of a great variety of important concerns that now distracted her attention. Crape and sarcenets, her silver tea-pot, her satin work-bag, and her scarlet beau, were objects of alternate and equal interest. Wholly intent upon the *éclat* of her bridal, she had as little inclination as opportunity to look forward to the months and years when she would be a wife, but no longer a bride.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT this time, Eleanor Jones, the invalid mentioned early in this history, having lingered through a painful winter, died peacefully.

Miss Weston and Emily had visited her frequently during her illness, and they were present at the last scene.

Death, as personified and decorated by poetry, Emily had frequently contemplated; but she was unacquainted with the realities of a dying bed.

The moment they entered her room, they perceived the altered expression of her countenance; and although Emily had never seen it before, she saw it was *death* in her face. She felt the shock, but would not turn away; “for if I cannot bear to see it, how shall I endure it?” thought she.

Soon after they entered she was seized with a convulsive spasm, which lasted several minutes.

“Oh, see!” said Emily, “cannot we help her? Is there nothing that would give her any relief?”

“Nothing, my dear,” said Miss Weston softly; “it will soon be over.”

“Dear, dear creature!” cried her distressed mother: “please God to release her! for I cannot bear this!”

When the spasm was over, her features became composed, and she looked round upon them with an expression of joyful serenity.

“These are only the struggles of nature,” said Miss Weston; “‘the sting of death is sin;’ she does not feel that.”

At this she smiled, and her lips moved, but they could not distinguish what was said.

She then lay for some time quite tranquil: they watched her in silence—and at length perceived that she had ceased to breathe.

Miss Weston led the mother down stairs; while Emily remained fixed to the spot, gazing on the placid corpse.

She looked round on the low, tattered chamber, and thought she should never again wish for the vanities of so short a life.

“This is how they must all end,” she thought; “and death would look just the same if this poor bed were a state canopy.”

It seemed but a moment, not worth caring for, before she herself must lie down by her side.

Her contemplations were soon interrupted by the entrance of Miss Weston.

“Come, Emily, my love,” said she, “we can do nothing more here, but we may still comfort her poor mother.”

“I should like to stay longer,” said Emily; “I never saw death before; how strange, and awful, and beautiful it is!”

“You have staid long enough now,” said her friend, and she led her out of the chamber;

and as soon as they saw that the mourning mother had said and wept her utmost, they took leave, with many assurances of continued friendship.

When they opened the cottage door, they found it was noon-day, and bright sunshine.

Emily had not shed a tear before, but they overflowed at the sight of the bright fields and clear blue sky.

They walked on silently to the entrance of the town.

“Had not we better go the back way? You will not go through the town this morning, Miss Weston?” said Emily.

“Why not, my dear?”

“I always avoid it when I can,” replied Emily, “and just now especially.”

“Unfortunately I have an errand in the town,” said Miss Weston, “at Mrs. Eve’s.”

“At Mrs. Eve’s!” said Emily.

They went on; and Emily was obliged to endure the sight of the shops and people, looking as busy as usual.

Mrs. Eve’s windows were set out with spring fashions; and when they went in, they found Elizabeth, with her mother, and other ladies, making purchases, and examining the new assortment.

“I was just wishing for you,” said Elizabeth, “to give me your opinion of these sarcenets: which should you prefer, Emily, this rose colour, or the pale blue?”

“They are both extremely pretty,” said Miss Weston, “but the blue, I think, is the most delicate.”

“I advise you to go up and see the millinery,” said Mrs. Palmer to Miss Weston and Emily; “and really you’ll be delighted. Mrs. Eve has some uncommonly pretty things come down, I assure you.”

“We have something quite new in flowers, ladies,” said one of the young milliners, taking down a tempting drawer. “That’s a sweet thing, ma’am!” said she, holding up a quivering spray before Emily; who, sickening at the sight, made her escape as soon as she could to the opposite counter; where Elizabeth still stood, wavering between the rose colour and the blue.

“Yes, Elizabeth,” she said, “they are very pretty; but we are just come from Eleanor Jones’s; and have seen her die.”

“Die! good gracious, have you?—She is gone at last, poor soul! is she?” said Elizabeth.—“Dear me!” added she, perceiving that Emily expected her to say something more.

“I wish you had been with us,” said Emily; “you cannot think what a striking scene it was: I think I shall not soon forget it.”

“It must indeed be very affecting, I should think,” said Elizabeth, still glancing at the rival tints.

“I will walk back with you now, if you would wish to see her,” continued Emily; “she is looking so placid and tranquil: would you like to go?”

“My dear, you must excuse me,” said Elizabeth: “my spirits are so weak, I never could endure to see a corpse.”

“ Why, she is only looking as we ourselves shall very soon.”

“ La! my dear Emily!” cried Elizabeth; “ but really I have not a moment to spare—you know how I’m circumstanced: besides,” said she, looking up and down the street, “ I am expecting Frederick every instant; he was to call here for us half an hour ago.”

“ Poor Elizabeth!” said Emily, as soon as they had got out of Mrs. Eve’s shop, “ how completely she is absorbed again in these things; and how trifling, how disgusting they are! I hope I shall never again waste a thought, or a moment, about them!”

“ They are trifling certainly,” said Miss Weston; “ but I think they are only disgusting when they are made affairs of importance, and suffered to engage a disproportionate share of time and attention. ‘ There is a time for all things,’ you know, a *little* time, even for attending to the trifles of life. It would not pain me, I confess, to see Elizabeth just now busily engaged in these affairs, if I were sure they were kept in due subordination to better things: but there is the danger.”

“ I wish she had been with us to-day,” said Emily, “ that she might have felt, as I did, the transition from that room to Mrs. Eve’s exhibition.”

“ It is very desirable sometimes,” said Miss Weston, “ to view the gaities of life in such strong contrast; and we should be careful constantly to maintain such an impression of these *realities*, as to counteract their undue influence. But it is not intended that we should walk through the world only by a sepulchral light; not that we should be *always* turning aside from its pleasant fields, to wander among the tombs. Indeed the mind may take a melancholy pleasure in being familiarized with such objects, without making real progress in religion. It is far better for our thoughts to be habitually fixed on the world *beyond* the grave: that is more likely to stimulate us to run the race that is set before us, with patience, with vigour, and with cheerfulness; and to give us at last the victory over the grave.”

The first time Emily called upon the widow Jones after her daughter’s funeral, she found her in a great deal of trouble.

The expenses of a long illness had reduced her so low that she was unable to pay her rent, which had already run on several quarters. By Eleanor’s death she had also lost her chief means of support; being herself too feeble to go out to work as she used to do. So that, with grievous lamentations, she told Emily she must turn out of her cottage, and end her days in the parish poor-house.

Emily, much concerned at this account, set off to consult with her friends at Stokely. At the outskirts of the park there was a little building, covered with ivy, which had formerly been a pleasure-house, but was now disused, and falling into decay. It struck Emily, as she passed, that with a little repair it might be made a comfortable asylum for the poor widow. She went in full of this scheme; and before she had exhausted half her arguments, obtained Mr. Leddenhurst’s free consent. He promised to have it put in proper repair, and commissioned Emily to superintend the alterations; as she expressed much anxiety lest the workmen should tear down the ivy, or lop the branches which spread so prettily over the thatch.

Mrs. Leddenhurst engaged to supply it with furniture; and it was to be ready by

Midsummer day: the day on which Mrs. Jones had warning to quit her cottage. To increase the pleasure, Emily proposed that in the meantime it should be kept a profound secret from the widow: but Mrs. Leddenhurst suggested, whether, for the sake of that momentary surprise, it would be right to keep her so long in uneasiness at the thought of going to the poor-house.

“I forgot that,” said Emily; but she looked so much disappointed, that Miss Weston proposed to hold out only an indefinite hope, which might allay her anxiety, without letting her know the actual good fortune that awaited her.

Emily now went to work with alacrity. There was much to be done which she undertook to execute herself, besides giving directions to the workmen; and she had a great deal of trouble in persuading them implicitly to follow her orders. They had so little notion of the picturesque, that if she had not kept a constant watch over them, the place would, in her opinion, have been completely spoiled.

There was a little plot in front, overgrown with nettles, which she had cleared and was converting into a flower garden. The children were very much pleased with being employed under Emily on this occasion. They were permitted to weed and dig, and to do whatever services she required. To adorn the entrance, she contrived to form a rustic porch, with a seat, of mossy logs and branches; and she led over it a wild honeysuckle and a white jessamine, which had long grown there, and crept over the front of the building.

One day, while Emily was busily employed in twining the sprays of her favourite jessamine over this porch, she was surprised by her friend Elizabeth.

“My dear Emily,” said she, “I’m just come to bid you good bye—I am going to be married to-morrow.”

“To-morrow!” said Emily, and her hand fell from the bough.

“Yes, indeed,” replied Elizabeth, “I did not expect it would be quite so soon; but the regiment is ordered off immediately, and Frederick is anxious we should spend a few days at Cheltenham before we join it: and I assure you I am quite fagged with packing and preparing. But I would not go on any account without seeing you,” said she, with a voice and look of apathy that went to Emily’s heart.

She sat down in her porch, and burst into tears.

But Elizabeth was too busy, and too happy, to weep. Just come from the important bustle of preparation, the sight of Emily in her garden hat and gloves, so intent upon fitting up a house for an old woman, excited that kind of contemptuous pity, with which the simple pleasures of simple people are commonly regarded by such observers as Elizabeth.

After standing an awkward minute, wishing Emily had not cried, she added—

“Well, Emily, my dear, I must not stay.”

“Stay one moment,” said Emily; “I was thinking of the old days when we were children, and used to play together under the chesnut trees.”

Elizabeth was touched by the sudden recollection, and, without an effort, a tear came into her eye. She sat down by her friend, and they embraced affectionately.

“Elizabeth, I hope you will be happy,” said Emily; “I hope Mr. Robinson is—”

“ Oh, he is indeed,” interrupted Elizabeth; “ I have no doubt I shall: he is the most pleasant, generous creature in the world. I wish you had seen more of him, Emily; but really, of late, you know, I have been so particularly occupied.—But, Indeed, I must be gone!” said she, rising; and they parted with a hasty embrace.

Emily followed her to the gate, and watched her with tearful eyes to the winding of the road, as she went briskly on.

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Elizabeth slept soundly in consequence of this day’s fatigue; and woke the next morning with only a confused idea of what was before her. But the red beams of the rising sun, shining full upon her white hat and feathers, brought the strange reality to her recollection. She started up; but the clock struck four—only four! So she lay down again; fell into a wakeful doze, and dreamed it was only a dream.

At six o’clock, the maid who had nursed her from her infancy come to awaken her. She looked at her young mistress as she lay asleep, and, brushing a tear from her eyes, she said,

“ Come, Miss Elizabeth, dear, it’s time to get up, ma’am!”

At ten o’clock the chaise that was to take Elizabeth away stood at her father’s door. Soon after she appeared, covered with a splendid veil, and was handed in by the smiling lieutenant; when, bowing, and waving her hand to the party assembled at the street door, they drove off.

It was a beautiful morning; the bells rung merrily, and as it passed the end of Church-street, they outnoised the rattling of the chaise.

Elizabeth, in passing through her native town, felt an increased glow of satisfaction, from observing her friends and neighbours going about the ordinary business of the day. Some were *washing*, and some were *brewing*. Parties of children, with their workbags, were sauntering to school—and there were the pale teachers, peeping over the tall window-blinds, to see the bride—and there sat Miss Oliver with her hair in papers—and the row of young women at Mrs. Eve’s all together raised their heads from their work, at the sound of the chaise; while she, a gay and youthful bride, was leaving them all to their monotonous employments: she was married—and she was going to Cheltenham.

CHAPTER XI.

----- “ No, this way,” cried Emily, as she was conducting the widow Jones to her new dwelling.

“ Dear miss! where are you a fetching of me? ‘twas never worth a while to turn such an old woman as me out of my house and home,” said she in a crying tone, as she went hobbling after Emily.

“ But I tell you,” said Emily, “ you should not be thinking of your old cottage now.” Yet, in spite of all her remonstrances, the widow Jones went groaning and grumbling all the way to Stokely.

Richard, and Caroline, and Lucy, were anxiously waiting their arrival at the garden gate.

Emily, as she approached, called eagerly to them to stand out of the way that they might not intercept the view of the dwelling; which, with the little white gate and rustic porch peeping under the trees, had certainly a very pretty effect.

“ What do you think of that?” said she, looking eagerly at the widow.

“ Deary me!” said she.

“ Do you think it pretty?” Then this is where you are to live; so do not be fretting any more about your old cottage, for you are to live here,” repeated Emily. “ Isn’t it a pretty little retired place for you, now?”

“ I thank you, and his honour, and the ladies, a thousand and a thousand times,” said she, casting a forlorn glance at the thick shade that environed her dwelling.

“ What, don’t you like it?” said Emily.

“ Why, dear, I can’t mislike it,” said she, “ here's a power of trees, to be sure! but 'twill be more lightsome come winter.”

“ But that is the beauty of it,” said Emily. “ Come, then, and see if it is not comfortable inside.”

Emily indeed had spared no pains to make it so. The kettle was now boiling on the fire, and the little deal table was set out ready for tea. The widow's favourite cat had been dexterously conveyed away that morning, and Caroline and Lucy had kept her in safe custody all day. With indefatigable care and coaxing, and after various obstinate attempts to escape, they at last succeeded in making her lie down to sleep upon the hearth.

“ Well a-day, there's our puss!” exclaimed the widow, now looking *really* pleased.

This was the only thing that did not look strange to her; and novelty, much as it charms the young, is itself a grievance to the old.

Emily now only waited to point out some of the principal beauties and conveniences of the new abode.

“ See,” said she, setting open the door. “ I'll tell you what you should do these fine summer evenings. You must bring your knitting, and sit here to work in the porch; you'll look so pretty sitting to knit in the porch! and be sure,” added she, “ that you do not tear down the ivy that grows over your little window.”

The widow Jones having promised to do, and not to do, all that she thought it reasonable to require, Emily only stood a moment at the door, surveying, with a picturesque eye, the group formed by the old woman, her cat, and the tea-table; and then took leave, saying, she would “now leave her to enjoy herself.”

The evening before this, Emily had put the finishing stroke to her work; and when it was done, she thought it looked such a snug little seclusion, that she very much longed to live there herself. It was a calm summer evening, she was alone, and she sat down in the porch to enjoy it, just at the time when the moonlight began to prevail over the twilight; and Emily began to feel very poetically.

A scrap of paper that was left there rendered the temptation irresistible: but she had written only a few lines, when Mr. Leddenhurst appeared at the garden gate.

“What are you about now, Emily?” said he.

Emily put by her verses, coloured, and said, “Nothing, sir;” and then took him in to admire her contrivances. He did admire them, and she thought no more about her verses till she got home again, and found herself alone in her father's parlour. She then read them over, merely to see if they were worth finishing; and she took a fresh piece of paper, and was just getting into the spirit of it again, when she heard her father's knock at the door: and he, with several other gentlemen, came bustling in, talking all together, and very earnestly, about a parish dispute which was to be decided the next day at the county assizes.

“I tell you, sir, they must lose their cause,” said one of them—“Miss Grey, how d’ye do, ma’am?—and I’ll give you my reasons, Mr. Grey—”

“Take off these things, child,” said her father, pushing away Emily's papers rather disrespectfully, and laying a pile of lawbooks on the table.

Emily took them off, and made her escape as fast as possible to her own room thinking, as she went, how foolish it was of her to write poetry. The verses were put by in a folio with several similar effusions, of which some were better, and some worse. They were mostly in a strain that to the uninitiated might appear inconsistent with Emily's lively and flourishing appearance; but nothing could be more unreasonable than requiring young writers of poetry to “prove their words;” unless it were, inflicting upon them some of the extraordinary things they sometimes wish for themselves when they are rhyming.

The verses Emily began writing this evening in the widow's porch were as follow:

SAY, spirit, if thou wanderest nigh,
Of every sylvan dale;
What forms, unseen by mortal eye,
Frequent this leafy vale?

Perchance 'twas once the flowery court
Of merry elfin king;
Where fairy people lov'd to sport,
And tread the nightly ring.

The sun, descending down the sky,
In floods of misty light,
Surveys it with his golden eye,
And makes the valley bright.

The moon, who rideth in her pride
At solemn midnight hour;
And sheds her radiance far and wide,
On turret, dome, and tower;

Here sleeps upon the chequer'd glade;
Nor finds a softer rest
On myrtle bower, or classic shade,
Or ocean's silver breast.

And oft would I, alone, resort
To this seclusion dear;
Uncheck'd to breathe the ardent thought,
Or shed th'unquestion'd tear.

O Nature! how thy charms beguile
Or soothe our cares to sleep!
Thou seem'st to smile with those who smile,
And weep with those who weep!

The vernal tint, the summer breeze,
E'en winter's aspect drear,
Thy woods, and vales, and skies, and seas,
Like friendship soothe and cheer.

The soul in thy serene retreats
Communion sweet may find;
But gay assemblies, crowded streets,
Are desert to the mind.

The throng where giddy mortals press,
Is solitude to me;
But Nature, in her wildest dress,
Refined society.

CHAPTER XII.

ELIZABETH had scarcely been married two months when she received the news of her father's death. He was taken off suddenly by a fit of apoplexy; and his affairs were found in so embarrassed a state, that a narrow jointure alone secured his widow, and her recent settlement his daughter, from absolute want.

In consequence of this change of fortune, Mrs. Palmer immediately retired to a distance from Broadisham: and, about the same time, Elizabeth despatched the following letter to Mr. Leddenhurst.

“MY DEAR SIR,

Chester, Sept. 23.

“It would be absolutely impossible for me to attempt to describe the variety of painful emotions I experience at this moment, in taking the liberty of addressing you. Nothing indeed, but a conviction of your extreme goodness, could have emboldened me to undertake so awkward a task.

“The poignant affliction occasioned by the loss of my lamented parent needed no aggravation; but I am persuaded you cannot be a stranger to the very unpleasant embarrassments in which, in consequence of his untimely decease, his affairs are involved. The result to us, as you readily imagine, has been particularly unfortunate. The truth is, my dear sir, that Lieutenant Robinson, depending on those resources of which we have been so fatally disappointed, has contracted some trifling debts, which it is, in fact, out of his power immediately to discharge. He has, you know, considerable expectations, but these are of no present avail; and I am persuaded you would be greatly concerned were I to relate the excessively unpleasant circumstances to which we have been exposed for some time past. In consequences of which I have been induced to address you; and encouraged by a recollection of your former goodness, to request the loan of two hundred pounds, if perfectly convenient; and which there is not the smallest doubt but we shall in a very short time be able to return.

“You may be surprised that Mr. Robinson does not apply to his relations; the fact is, that the uncle to whom he has repeatedly written on the subject, is a low man, in trade, of very sordid and contracted ideas; who obstinately refuses the smallest assistance, except on conditions with which it is absolutely impossible we should comply.

“This determined me to trouble you with the present application; indeed there is no individual in the whole circle of my friends on whose generosity and friendship I could so firmly rely. And need I say, under what infinite obligations we shall consider ourselves, should you be induced to comply with the request?

“Lieutenant Robinson begs to join me in kindest regards to yourself and Mrs. Leddenhurst; and believe me, my dear sir, with the greatest respect, your most obliged friend and servant,

“ELIZABETH ROBINSON.”

A tremendous secret was discovered to Elizabeth a very short time after her marriage, in a letter from his uncle.—Lieutenant Robinson had been—a linen-draper.

He was a weak, hot-headed young man; a dislike to business, that is, to employment, and an opportunity he once had of trying on a military hat, inspired him with an ardent desire for the profession of arms. And at the expiration of his apprenticeship to his uncle, deaf to the remonstrances of his prudent friends, he commenced the life of a gentleman.

In order to escape the ridicule of his brother-officers, and to remove, if possible, the suspicions they evidently entertained of his origin, he thought it requisite to plunge into most of their extravagances. In consequence of which—notwithstanding occasional supplies from his uncle, and the convenient practice of leaving every town at which they were stationed in debt—he was kept in perpetual embarrassments.

His alliance with Miss Palmer, therefore, appeared a very eligible measure. He had been confidently assured that her father was a man of handsome property, and this opinion every thing he saw at his house and table tended to confirm.

Elizabeth thought this discovery at once released her from all obligation to love, honour, or obey her husband. From that time she conducted herself towards him with coldness and haughtiness, which he bore with tolerable patience until the intelligence of her father's death, and the unexpected state of his affairs, gave him, as he said, "a just right to resent it."

Trained in habits of show and expense, and wholly unaccustomed to economical calculation, Elizabeth had soon made alarming demands upon her husband's limited resources; which, depending upon her promised but delayed portion, he had not thought it necessary to check.

The news of Mr. Palmer's insolvency made an immediate alteration in this respect. Nor did Elizabeth fully comprehend the nature of her misfortune, until the first time that, for want both of money and credit, she was really obliged to deny herself something she wished for. With a strange feeling of impatient astonishment, she then discovered that she *must* do without, what she had said "it was absolutely impossible to do without." A scene of mutual upbraiding between herself and her husband was the consequence of this first lesson in economy, or rather in poverty. But they reproached each other, not for their faults, but their misfortunes—not for being imprudent, but for being poor.

Elizabeth, however, had no sooner despatched her letter to Stokely, than she felt relieved of her difficulties. She had witnessed so many instances of Mr. Leddenhurst's generosity, that she was confident of receiving the requested supply. And she had not yet learned to look beyond the narrow extent of two hundred pounds.

She was engaged to dine at the colonel's and had just finished dressing for the occasion, when her husband brought her the expected letter.

"This is fortunate, indeed!" said she: "then, Mr. Robinson, be so good, while I read it, to step over to Levi's, and desire them to send the gold clasps; you may say, you know, I shall call and settle the account tomorrow morning."

They who have ever unfolded a letter, expecting at every turn to behold the fine texture

and expressive features of a banknote which was *really wanted*, and found it was *only a letter*, will know better what Elizabeth felt on this occasion, than others who never met with such a circumstance. Having first turned it about in all directions, she sat down and read as follows.

“MY DEAR MRS. ROBINSON,

Stokely, Sept. 28.

“ I SHOULD be sorry to forfeit the opinion you are so good as to entertain of my readiness to serve my friends by every means in my power; and shall be happy should I succeed in convincing you, that I am sincerely desirous of doing so in the present instance; although it may not be in the way that appears most expedient to you.

“ I should have been greatly at a loss to know how most effectually to serve you, if I had not been favoured with an interview with Lieutenant Robinson's uncle: of whose character I conceive you have formed a mistaken idea. He appears to me to be a man of integrity, good sense, and benevolence; and highly deserving the esteem and confidence of his relations.

“ He has undertaken a journey to Broadisham, with the view of explaining to your friends the plan he had suggested to his nephew, in hopes of obtaining their concurrence, and influence with you.

“ Having himself been unsuccessful in former applications to you and Lieutenant Robinson, he has requested me to address you on the subject; a task which I undertake more than cheerfully, since you have already indulged me in your confidence.

“ Mr. Sandford informs me that Lieutenant Robinson was not intended for the military profession, having been trained to business; but entered it very recently, contrary to the advice of his friends. His uncle hoped, however, that after having experienced some of the inconveniences to which he would be exposed from such a change of habits and circumstances, he would more readily listen to proposals for returning to his former pursuits: and had determined, for a time, to urge him no further on the subject. It was not till he heard of his having formed an alliance, and with so young a lady, ill qualified to brook the difficulties of her situation, that Mr. Sandford became solicitous to prevail with his nephew to abandon his new profession immediately.

“ With regards to those expectations you allude to, Mr. Sandford requests me, as a friend, my dear madam, to assure you that they must prove wholly fallacious, unless Mr. Robinson finds them on his own diligent exertions. Should he be willing to enter into the prudent views of his uncle, he may depend upon every support and encouragement it is in his power to afford; otherwise he must still submit to those distressing embarrassments, to which the the expensive habits so commonly contracted in his profession, and the limited resources it affords, unite to expose him.

“ Justice to his other relations, Mr. Sandford directs me to say, must forbid his continuing to answer Mr. Robinson's repeated demands, even if there were a probability of its proving of any ultimate advantage to him; but so far from this, he considers that it would only be a means of encouraging those expensive habits, and, in the end, of plunging him in deeper embarrassments.

“ And now, my dear Mrs. Robinson, permit me to assure you, that I am solely influenced by a tender concern for your real welfare, when I earnestly recommend you to use every

endeavour to prevail upon Mr. Robinson to accede to his uncle's proposals. I am not surprised that, at first sight, they should appear to you such as it was absolutely impossible to comply with; and I readily admit that nothing less than an heroic effort can enable you to submit with a good grace to such a change of circumstances. But in making that effort you would find a noble satisfaction; and in descending cheerfully, and gracefully, to an humbler sphere, more true independence and dignity of mind would be exerted, than would probably ever be displayed throughout the whole of a gay life

“ Considering that it might not be agreeable to his nephew to engage in business in his own immediate neighbourhood, Mr. Sandford has been making inquiries in different directions, and has lately met with a very eligible offer from a respectable tradesman retiring from business. The only objection that I know of to the situation is, that it is at the village of Hilsbury, not more than fifteen miles distant from Broadisham; but as it is much secluded, and remote from any of your connexions, perhaps you would not consider that a sufficient reason for declining it. The present proprietor has realized a considerable property in the concern: it being the only one in that line in a populous neighbourhood; and I should conceive a retired situation of this nature would be more agreeable to you than the publicity of a large town.

“ Should Mr. Robinson be willing to undertake this concern, his uncle and I will cheerfully unite to advance the capital; and with regard to the remittance you mention, it will be forwarded to Chester by the same day's post that informs us of his having agreed to this proposal.

“ In case of your concurrence, Mr. Sandford proposes to enter immediately upon the business at Hilsbury, in his nephew's name; where he would see every thing properly prepared for your reception, and await your arrival.

“ After all, my dear friend, I am aware that no terms can be employed in this affair that will not be harsh and offensive to you; nor will I attempt to represent what might be called the pleasant side of it: for perhaps you have not yet had sufficient experience of the inconveniences of an unsettled life, nor of the miseries of *showy poverty*, to estimate the value of a peaceful home and a moderate competence.

“ I would rather remind you that we are never so safe, nor so truly well off, as when following the obvious directions of Providence. Our affairs are all ordered by Him, who is acquainted not only with our outward circumstances, but most intimate with our hearts; and who knows by what means they will be most effectually subdued, and made willing to accept of real happiness. And be assured, my dear friend, that *by whatever circumstances* we are taught the nature and value of *real* religion, and led cordially to embrace it, *then*, and *not till then*, we shall find happiness.

“Believe me your sincere friend,
“C.L LEDDENHURST.”

When Lieutenant Robinson returned from his commision to the jeweller's, he found his lady in strong hysterics in her room.

“ Mercy upon us! what's the matter?” exclaimed he, stopping in dismay at the door.

“ Elizabeth! Betsy! why don’t you speak, child! what’s the matter, I say?” continued he, advancing towards her.

But Elizabeth took no notice, except motioning with her hand for him to stand further off. Presently a servant came in, saying,

“ If you please, ma’am, here’s Mr. Levi, with the gold clasps for you to choose; and here’s the bill he bid me to bring up to you.”

“ I can’t look at them now; tell him to call another time,” said Elizabeth. “ There, Mr. Robinson, read that!” said she, pointing to the letter, and again falling back in her chair.

When he had read it, he walked up and down thoughtfully for some time; at length, going towards his wife, he said, timidly,—

“ I’ll tell you what, my dear, it does not signify objecting and objecting, we must, I know we must—”

“ Must what?” said Elizabeth.

“ Must do what Mr. Leddenhurst says, my dear.”

“ Do exactly as you think proper,” cried Elizabeth; “ I am not in the least surprised Mr. Robinson, that *you* are so willing to acquiesce it in; but I never will—do you suppose I ever would submit to be the wife of a tradesman?”

“ I’ll tell you what, Betsy!” said her husband, flying into a passion, “ I can’t, nor I won’t submit to this any longer! you didn’t bring me a penny, nor halfpenny, nor sixpence; and what business have *you*, I should be glad to know, to talk in this unbecoming manner to *me*?”

“ O heavens!” cried Elizabeth, “ what a barbarian! let me escape!” and rising hastily, she flew down stairs, and throwing herself tragically into the chair, which had been long waiting for her at the door, ordered to be taken to Colonel Harrison’s.

While she was going there, Elizabeth, notwithstanding her complicated misfortunes, was far from feeling *really* unhappy. She remembered a great many heroines who had been in debt and had bad husbands. Young, lovely, distressed, she was flying for protection from his cruelty. Besides, she had fully determined to open her whole heart to her *friend* Mrs. Harrison; and she was quite certain, that by some means or other, she should be rescued from the threatened degradation.

Elizabeth made her *entrée* at the Colonel’s with an air of interesting distress. There was nobody then present but the lady of the house, and the major of the regiment, with whom she was particularly intimate.

“ My dear creature, how shockingly ill you look!” exclaimed Mrs. Harrison.

“ Indeed I am not very well,” said she; and throwing herself upon the sofa, she burst into an agony of tears.

While Mrs. Harrison was repeating her enquiries and condolence, the graceful major seating himself beside her, saying, tenderly,

“ My dear Mrs. Robinson, what has happened to distress you? only tell me if there is any possible way in which I can serve you?”

Elizabeth could only reply by smiling on him gratefully through her tears, for other

company entered at that moment: but she whispered Mrs. Harrison, that she would tell her *all* as soon as they were alone.

After dinner the ladies walked in the garden; when Elizabeth contrived to take her friend aside for a few minutes. She found it however an awkward task, notwithstanding the vague and general terms she employed, to disclose those parts of her story which related to her husband's connexions.

"But, my dear child, what an unlucky thing you should ever have liked him!" said Mrs. Harrison. "Upon my word, my dear, I feel quite distressed for you."

"Only tell me what steps I ought to take," said Elizabeth; "I rely entirely on your friendship."

"Indeed, my dear, I should be excessively happy to advise you, and serve you, I'm sure, in any way that lies in my power, in this unpleasant affair; but really it's an awkward thing to interfere between man and wife: indeed I am not so much surprised that Lieutenant Robinson should consider it altogether most prudent to take the advice of his relations."

"But what then will become of me?" cried Elizabeth, weeping passionately.

"Come, come, my dear Mrs. Robinson, let me beg of you not to discompose yourself thus," said Mrs. Harrison. "To be sure," continued she, sighing, "we know it is our duty at all times to submit to what the Almighty is pleased to appoint for us. But really I must insist upon it, that you do not distress yourself in this manner; I can't endure to see you so unhappy. Here are all our friends!—for heaven's sake, my dear, dry your tears: shall I send you a glass of any thing?"

"Nothing, thank you," said Elizabeth, who felt, at this forlorn moment, the difference between a friend and an acquaintance. The others now joined them; and as her eye wandered from one smiling, selfish face to another—faces from which the unhappy had *nothing to hope*—she involuntarily thought of Emily, and Stokely. The major, however, was a friend nearer at hand; but she saw no more of him during the evening. When she returned at ten o'clock to her comfortless lodgings, she was surprised to find him in earnest conversation with her husband.

The major, who was very good-natured, had frequently accommodated Lieutenant Robinson with small sums of money; which by this time had amounted to a debt that he was anxious to have discharged. He had been rather pressing on this subject of late; so that the lieutenant came to the resolution of disclosing to him the whole state of his affairs, and asking his advice on the present emergency. No sooner did the major understand that by resigning his commission he would be able to pay his debts, than he warmly urged him to comply: and it was not so difficult a matter to persuade him as it would once have been. He began to be weary of his present mode of life, of which the novelty had already worn off; and of the misery of being always in debt, and always short of money. His objections to business were less insurmountable than those of his lady; it was not pride, but idleness: and he now considered what a difference there would be between being master, and man.

"But then there's my wife," said he to the major. "If you had but seen the piece of work we had this morning! Let omr beg of you, my dear sir, to try what you can do with her; she will

not listen to me, that's for certain."

This task the major undertook; and when Elizabeth entered, he addressed her with an air of friendly interest, saying—

"Mrs. Robinson, we have just been talking over this awkward business of yours; and I do assure you very seriously, as I've been telling Robinson, I do not see any other plan in the world that as a man of honour he could adopt. In fact, if I were in his place, I should not hesitate a single instant about the business. Indeed, for my own part, I should not feel any particular reluctance to—to—engaging in mercantile concerns—upon my life I shouldn't. If he were a single man," continued the major, observing the gathering gloom in Elizabeth's countenance, "it would be wholly a different affair; but when a man is responsible for the honour and happiness of a young and lovely woman—"

"Oh, do not talk of *my* happiness," cried Elizabeth, glancing expressively at her husband; "that is sacrificed for ever!"

"Heaven forbid!" said the major, looking at his watch.

"So the major's been advising *of* me to lose no time about the business; and he thought I had better write to my uncle and Mr. Leddenhurst by return of post: and so you see, my dear, it's all settled," said Lieutenant Robinson, anxious to make the whole confession before his friend was gone.

"And I am extremely glad that every thing is so happily adjusted," said he rising; and unwilling to wait the issue either of fainting-fits or remonstrances, he took leave.

As the door closed upon the gay, agreeable major, Elizabeth felt herself abandoned to wretchedness. She had no inclination to go into hysterics, nor to remonstrate with her husband; but sat silent and motionless, watching him, while he was sealing and directing the letters for Stokely:—and now she felt *really* unhappy.

The loss of rank *is* a misfortune; and Elizabeth felt its utmost poignancy. She had always indulged that senseless contempt for trade, and *trades-people*, which is prevalent among the *vulgar* of *her* class: and she had not had opportunities of knowing, that many of the *truly* noble, the excellent of the earth—that many persons of superior understandings, even of real taste, and respectable information—are to be found standing behind a country counter.

Having, however, no means of redress, Elizabeth suffered the necessary arrangements for their departure to take place undisturbed. During the few weeks they still remained at Chester, she never allowed herself to take any distinct view of the future: only indulging a kind of vague hope, that any thing so insupportable as the condition which threatened her, she should never be actually permitted to endure. And since nothing was now to be hoped from friends, relations, or acquaintance, she began to think that chance, or fate, or Providence, or something, would certainly interfere to prevent it.

CHAPTER XIII.

NOTWITHSTANDING these hopes, the day actually arrived on which Elizabeth and her husband took leave of Chester, and set off for their new home.

For, in this interval, no distant relation had died and left them a fortune; not a single individual in all the city of Chester had offered to lend them a thousand pounds; no banker, brewer, nor merchant, wanted a partner; no fashionable dowager a companion. In short, neither luck nor accident prevented their driving safely into the village of Hilsbury, on the very day they were expected.

ROBINSON, in gold letters, over the door of a smart country shop, pointed out to Elizabeth her future residence.

“Is there no private door?” said she to her new uncle, as he handed her from the chaise.

“We have no other door; please to follow me, ma'am, and I'll show you the way,” said he, conducting her through the shop, into a light, pleasant parlour. It was in reality far pleasanter than the dark and shabby apartment which Elizabeth used to call her drawing-room, in their lodgings at Chester.

“Welcome to Hilsbury, ma'am!” said the uncle, courteously.

Elizabeth bowed; and returned laconic answers to his repeated good-natured attempts to draw her into conversation.

But Mr. Robinson, who felt more at ease, and more in his element than he had done for two years past, was in high good humour, and very talkative.

“Bless my heart, uncle, what a nice snug little place you've got for us here!” said he, rubbing his hands, and looking round the room.

There were some neat flower-stands, set out with autumn flowers; and a very pretty painted work-table; and various little decorations; at which, however, Elizabeth was rather surprised than pleased, when she observed them.

Every part of the house wore the same appearance of neatness and comfort; and seemed adjusted by a correct taste, careful to prevent an awkward contrast between the shop and the dwelling. It was something more than neat, and yet less than elegant.

Elizabeth, as she was conducted over it, could not help wondering that the old man should have so good a notion of doing things. For he had been strictly forbidden to inform her, to whose taste and activity the credit really belonged. She was indebted to Mr. Sandford for the desire of having everything comfortable for her reception, and for the willingness to pay for it: but it was her friend Emily who had done the rest.

Emily, having heard Mr. Sandford expressing a wish that things might be made as agreeable as possible to the young lady, and lamenting his own ignorance of these affairs, earnestly requested permission to attend him to Hilsbury, to assist in making the requisite preparations: which was agreed to, upon Miss Weston's offering to accompany her. And during the time that Elizabeth was waiting at Chester, thinking herself abandoned by all the world, her two friends were busily employed in planning and executing those little contrivances to make her

comfortable, which would not occur to the genius of an upholsterer.

It was not till the morning of the very day on which Elizabeth was expected, that all was in complete readiness. Mr. Leddenhurst's carriage stood at the door to take them home. Miss Weston was quite ready to go: but Emily still lingered, to see if every thing was in exact order. She replaced the flowers—then returned to adjust the folds of the window curtains—and stood at the parlour-door, to see how it would strike Elizabeth when she first entered. She next returned to that which was intended to be Elizabeth's room, which was fortunate; for the wind has blown up one corner of the white napkin on the dressing-table. Emily laid it smooth—set the looking-glass in precisely the proper angle—once more patted the volumes on the book-shelves quite even—and after a moment's thought, took down the handsome new Bible which had been provided, and laid it on the dressing-table. She then went down stairs, and having repeated sundry injunctions to Mr. Sandford, sprang nimbly into the carriage, and drove off.

When Elizabeth arose the next morning, refreshed from the fatigue of her journey; and opened her pleasant window, which looked across the village street upon a fine hilly country; her spirits experienced a momentary revival—a transient glow of comfort, such as will occasionally beam out upon the deepest gloom. But it *was* transient: the sight of Mr. Edwards the shopman, in the street below, taking down the shutters, recalled her to a sense of her unhappiness.

Comfort sounds a dull word to those who are accustomed to live upon *enjoyment*: to Elizabeth it had few charms. In surveying her new situation, she was rather provoked than pleased, to find there was any thing to render her discontent less reasonable. She had neither philosophy enough to *be* pleased, nor good nature enough to appear so. Indeed it is nothing less than Christian humility, that can make persons willing to be happy in any way that is not of their own choosing.

Old Mr. Sandford's was the only pleasant face that was brought down to breakfast this morning: for poor Frederick Robinson found that the two idle years he had spent in his Majesty's service had not had the smallest tendency to lessen his dislike to useful employment. He sighed heavily, when, as soon as breakfast was over, his uncle, with the promptness of an industrious man, hurried him away to the counting-house: while Elizabeth, who scrupulously avoided engaging in any thing that would seem like acquiescing in her fate, shut herself up in her room, and employed herself in unpacking her portmanteaus. When she had done so, in spite of her reluctance, she found it most expedient to put away the things in her new drawers. With a heavy heart she put by the gay dresses and ornaments, which were now useless to her: but it was with a deeper pang that she laid aside her husband's discarded uniform. She gazed at the faded scarlet, and tarnished gold; and felt, that *that* was all she had ever admired in Lieutenant Robinson.

The reserve and coldness with which Elizabeth conducted herself towards Mr. Sandford, could not overcome his good nature. He was particularly fond of young people; and longed to express the kindness of a relation: but he was careful not to offend her by unwelcome familiarity. He saw that she was placed in a new and mortifying situation; and while he regarded her with true pity and benevolence, he treated her with such respectful tenderness as *would* have dispelled the gloom from many a brow.

Emily loved the old man; and he, while witnessing her cheerful, disinterested zeal in the service of her friend, and while receiving from her himself those respectful attentions which she involuntarily paid to age and worth in every station, often wished that his nephew might have made as good a choice.

Mr. Sandford had been so long absent from his own concerns, that he could only remain a few days longer, to introduce his nephew to the business. During this period he observed with some uneasiness the unpromising disposition they both discovered towards their new duties. Elizabeth sat in state all day at her work-table; leaving her domestic affairs to fate and a servant: while Mr. Robinson wished excessively to be allowed to lounge about in the same gentleman-like idleness he had been lately used to. As to the business, his uncle and Edwards, he thought, were quite sufficient at present: but as soon as his uncle was gone, he declared that he intended to give his mind to it—"upon his word and honour he would."

Accustomed to revel at ease at the luxurious mess, he felt it a particular hardship to have to rise in the midst of dinner to attend a customer.

"Frederick—the bell, Frederick!" his uncle used to say; but he would be so long preparing to go, that his good-natured uncle usually went himself; Frederick contenting himself with pretending to rise, and saying, "Don't you go, sir!"

It was not, therefore, without anxiety, that Mr. Sandford took leave of his niece and nephew. Just before he set off, he called the latter aside, and gave him some good advice, particularly on the subjects of industry and frugality.

"You know, Frederick," said he, "how handsomely Mr. Leddenhurst has come forward: and as for me, I have done more than I ought, in justice to your poor sister and your cousins. So that if you get into fresh difficulties, you must look to others to help you out, for I have done my utmost; and, Frederick", added he in a milder tone, "while we are speaking, let me beg of you to treat poor Mrs. Robinson with as much respect and delicacy as possible. You should consider that you have brought her into a very different situation to what she was brought up to, and it's natural she should feel it—quite natural. You should consider, too, what a delicate young creature she is, and give her every indulgence that's prudent; and make allowances: a little tenderness and consideration may do a great deal in reconciling her to her circumstances."

To all this, and more, Mr. Robinson continued saying, "Certainly, sir—certainly, sir." As soon as his uncle was gone, for which all the time he had been rather impatient, he ran upstairs to unpack a new violin which he had brought from Chester, but which he had not thought fit to produce during his uncle's stay. He always believed that he had a fine ear for music; and to scrape on this instrument, was one of the accomplishments he had acquired during his life of leisure.

The village of Hilsbury was remarkably secluded in its situation and appearance. It consisted of a single street, hidden amid the solitude of fine, but barren hills; and, with the exception of Mr. Robinson's house, was formed entirely of stone cottages. The business depended upon the custom of the neighbouring farms, and of the poor inhabitants of many little hamlets that were scattered among the hills.

In this solitude Elizabeth's days passed with dreary sameness. She used to sit by her fire-side during the dark afternoons of this November, and, watching the sparks from the blacksmith's shed that was directly opposite the house, muse upon scenes of past happiness. This was her only solace; except, indeed, that she experienced a secret satisfaction from the contrast between herself and her condition. When she surveyed her delicate form, her white hands, her beautiful hair, her dress, though unornamented, still elegant, she felt that she was still a heroine in distress: but it was a satisfaction too slight to be a real alleviation; because there were so few to witness it, and those few so insignificant. And she now discovered—what it required some experience to believe—that it is a far pleasanter thing to be a heroine *not* in distress.

Elizabeth had been some time in her new abode, before she had once made her appearance in the shop. The first time she did so, it was to procure some articles she wanted herself. "Pray do you sell silk fringe?" she said, in the same tone and manner with which she had been accustomed to make her purchases.

While she was examining the box of fringes, and turning over card after card with her delicate fingers, some ladies from a seat at some miles distance happened to stop at the door in a barouche. Elizabeth took no notice of them as they entered, but continued looking over the fringes, and withdrew as soon as she had found some that suited her. But just as she was quitting the shop, she had the satisfaction of hearing one of them say to Edwards, in a tone of surprise, "Is *that* Mrs. Robinson?"

Elizabeth was seen reading, very intently, at the parlour window, when the barouche drove past.

There was a green, in the outskirts of the village, where the neighbouring young farmers used to assemble to play at cricket. Mr. Robinson was fond of this diversion; and he soon became one of the most constant attendants there.

One day, just as he had snapped to his fiddle-case, and was reaching down his hat to go to this green, Mr. Edwards walked into the counting-house:

"I just wish to say, Mr Robinson" said he "that I shall be obliged to you to find some other person to do your business, sir. It's what I never was used to, and what I can't undertake, to have every thing laying upon one pair of hands; and unless you think proper to give me some assistance, Mr. Robinson, the sooner you suit yourself the better, sir."

Much as Mr. Robinson was disturbed at this speech, he could not give up going to the cricket-ground: but he told Mr. Edwards he would take it into consideration; and assured him he should have some help before long. He felt, however, very much perplexed and discomfited on this occasion. There were few afflictions he dreaded so much as that of being obliged to exert himself.

As he walked down the street, wishing Edwards would not be so unaccountably lazy, and wondering what he should do, some fine nuts caught his eye, that were exposed for sale in a cottage window; he bought some—and was *comforted*. He was very fond of good things in general, and of these in particular; and while he sat on a seat upon the cricket-ground, cracking his nuts, he forgot his troubles; at least, they did not oppress him. There were few of the evils of

life, for which an apple, a nut, and especially a good dinner, would not afford him temporary relief. And if this *real* interest in the sweet and the savoury were peculiar to persons of no higher intellectual pretensions than Mr. Frederick Robinson, it would not be at all unaccountable.

But when both the feast and the sport were over, and he was returning late in the afternoon through the village street, the lights in his shop window brought it again to his remembrance. At supper time he appeared full of thought: Elizabeth did not take suppers; she was reading the newspaper, at the further end of the room.

“I say, Elizabeth!” said he, all on a sudden, as soon as he had finished supper.

Elizabeth looked up from the newspaper.

“There’s one thing that I have been going to speak of ever since we have been here; and it’s what I hope you’ll not make any piece of work nor opposition about, because it’s absolutely, indispensably necessary.”

“What is that, pray?” said Elizabeth

“I must say then,” continued he, “that this is the first business I ever was in, in my life, where the mistress—where the lady, did not use to go in sometimes when she was wanted.”

“What do you mean, Mr. Robinson?” said Elizabeth.

“I mean what I say,” replied he; “I mean that it is a sin and a shame, to see a woman sitting all day long in her parlour, doing of work and nonsense, when there’s a shop full of customers that want to be waited on. Why, there was Mrs. Jones, and Mrs. Johnson, and—”

“Gracious goodness!” exclaimed Elizabeth, “this exceeds all—every thing! I really did not imagine—I confess I had not the smallest idea that any one—that you, *even you*, Mr. Robinson, would ever have thought of proposing such a thing!”

“Bless my heart, Betsy! what a riot for nothing! I say then, whatever you may think of it, something must be done. There’s Edwards this very day been giving *of me* warning, because he has so much upon his hands, and nobody to help him. As for me, you know very well that I am confined from morning to night to the counting-house, and can’t stir: and I see plainly the business is going to ruin—and my uncle will lay all the blame upon me; and all because of your pride and nonsense.”

“If there is so much business that one servant is not sufficient, pray why cannot you keep another?” said Elizabeth. “Oh!” added she, falling into a violent fit of weeping, “when I left my dear, dear father’s house, how little I thought of all I was to suffer!”

Her husband was always frightened when she went into hysterics, and he thought she was going into hysterics now; besides, he was really good-natured. So he said, “Well, well, child, I tell you what—I’ll see if I can’t get another man, or boy, or lad, or something. So don’t go and flurry yourself into those foolish fits now, for mercy’s sake!”

Mr. Robinson, however, dared not venture to take this step, without writing to consult his uncle. And Mr. Sandford, in reply, strongly dissuaded him from any such expensive proceeding: but he added, that in order to afford him some present relief, until he became more accustomed to business, his sister Rebecca had offered, if he wished it, to come and stay a month or two at Hilsbury, and render them all the assistance in her power. “We can ill spare her,” said the good

uncle, “ but I am willing to do every thing in my power to encourage you: and in the meantime, as it must be a few weeks before she can be with you, I shall expect, Frederick, that you make every possible exertion yourself, with regard to business.”

This offer Mr. Robinson very joyfully accepted; and Mr. Edwards was prevailed upon to stay, upon the promise of an accomplished assistant in “ my sister Becky.”

Chawton House Library

CHAPTER XIV.

BUT by this time Elizabeth's cheek had grown pale. She was unhappy without *éclat*: there was none to admire—none even to pity—none to wonder at her hard lot; and she was deprived of all that had the power to gratify or to excite her. Irritated, impatient, and comfortless—a stranger to the balm of resignation—she sunk into despondency: and the effect was soon visible in her altered appearance.

After several days of feverish indisposition, she became so ill, as to be confined to her room: and there she found herself alone indeed. Her husband was very sorry to see her so ill, but nursing, he thought, was *women's* business. He left that to the maid; and she was an unfeeling, selfish woman, who brought up her mistress's ill made messes with gloomy looks, and frequent murmurings.

It was towards the close of the third day Elizabeth had passed on her bed, that as she was lying feverish and comfortless—watching, in the dusk, the light of the blacksmith's shop flashing on the ceiling—she heard the door open gently; so gently, that she was sure it could not be her maid: and in an instant she saw Emily at her bed-side, her countenance glowing with health and cheerfulness; and she said,

“ Dear Elizabeth, I heard you were ill, and I am come to nurse you.”

Elizabeth started up without speaking a word; and throwing her hot arms around Emily's neck, continued to weep a long time, with a plaintive, piteous, weak cry, upon her bosom.

“ Dear, dear Elizabeth” said Emily.

It was so long since she had heard the accents of kindness, that the soothing tones of Emily's voice quite overwhelmed her.

“ I did not think there was any one in the world that cared for me now,” she said, at length.

“ Oh, you have never been forgotten by your *friends*,” said Emily. “ I should have come to see you long before this, if I had been sure you would have liked it. But we will not talk much to-night, dear Elizabeth;—let me try now to make you a little comfortable,” said she; and taking off her hat and pelisse, she proceeded quietly to smooth the tumbled pillow, and restore the littered room to neatness and comfort.

She next went to prepare a cooling beverage for the night, into the disorderly kitchen where the maid and the shopman were carousing over a blazing fire.

Elizabeth took readily, and with confidence, what Emily had made for her; said it was “very pleasant;” and soon after she sunk into a quiet sleep.

Emily sat up with her friend that night; and when she had done all that was requisite for her, she went to the book-shelves down for something to read. She first took Elizabeth's morocco Bible: and she sighed to see that it had the appearance of an *unused* book.

Emily, since they last parted, was improved in her appearance, but still more in her mind: it was now under the settled, habitual influence of religion.

Her faults, though not extirpated, were subdued; and her once uncertain virtues shone out

with the steady light of Christian graces. Her good nature was now charity—her sensibility, benevolence—her modesty, humility—her sprightliness, cheerfulness.

She found that in many of her intellectual indulgences there was much selfishness, and little use: and her frequent abstractions from the common affairs of life had in great measure given place to a cheerful performance of its quiet duties, and a ready attention to the wants and interests of others. She had lost much of her romance, but her taste was rectified: she had fewer ecstasies, but more happiness.

For several days after Emily's arrival, Elizabeth continued so ill, that little conversation passed between them but what related to her present wants and sufferings. When she began to amend, the effects of her disorder, and the returning remembrance of her misfortunes, produced a state of irritable fretfulness, which Emily's invariable tenderness was unable to soothe; and she repelled with peevishness, and almost with asperity, every effort to enliven her, or to engage her in conversation.

Emily's eyes filled with tears, whenever she contemplated the alteration that illness and unhappiness had made in her late blooming and brilliant countenance: and she fervently wished and prayed, that her friend might be led to seek for that consolation, of which she still appeared to be wholly destitute.

Having once the Bible open in her hand, Emily ventured to say,
“ Would you like me to read aloud a little while?” But Elizabeth looked at her reproachfully, and said,

“ No, no, I cannot bear it—pray do not disturb me!”

Emily shut the book, and gazed at her with heartfelt pity.

One morning, as soon as she arose, Elizabeth's spirits revived on finding herself decidedly better; for in spite of other trials, the first feelings of returning health will be feelings of happiness.

When Emily came in, she found her for the first time disposed to enter into conversation, and to tell her of her troubles: for when people begin suddenly to *talk* of their misfortunes, it is generally in consequence of some temporary alleviation of their pressure.

“ Oh, Emily!” said she, “ I have been too ill to talk to you: but you do not know how unhappy I am. You see, indeed, what a situation I am in—*what* a situation! Oh! my happiness is sacrificed—sacrificed for ever!”

“ Indeed I feel for you deeply, dear Elizabeth,” said Emily, after hearing her expatiate upon her grievances. “ How glad I should be if I could comfort you!”

“ There is no comfort for me, Emily: can there be any thing in my circumstances that could possibly afford me the smallest degree of pleasure?”

“ Not *pleasure*, perhaps,” replied Emily; “ but is it not possibly to be happy—to be contented, at least—without pleasure?”

“ Oh, do not take up my words,” said Elizabeth: “ I really don't understand those nice distinctions. If you will not allow that I have cause to be miserable, it is because you never knew what it is to be unfortunate.”

“ I know you have much need of patience and of resignation,” said Emily: “ but, Elizabeth, I have myself seen instances of people being really happy, who have had, perhaps, as much as you have to endure.”

“ Yes, I know very well what you mean: but as to religion, it would never, I am confident, make any particular difference to me, if I were to give myself ever so much concern about it. Now you are exactly the kind of person to be very religious; and I am not at all surprised that you view it in that particular kind of way that some people do.”

“ Indeed you are mistaken,” replied Emily; “ so far from being naturally disposed to it, it is impossible you should feel more averse to religion—*real* religion—that I did, nor more difficulty in it: and I should always have remained as ignorant and as indifferent as I used to be, if God had not made me willing, and given me the desire to seek Him. And He will give it *you* if you ask for it: and then—oh, *do* believe it, Elizabeth!—then you would be happy; happier a thousand times here, in this humble solitude, than all the splendours of the world could make you.”

“ But even if I were ever so—so devotional, and all that,” said Elizabeth, “ I am persuaded it would only continue so long as I am deprived of other things: I am certain I should never care particularly about religion, if I had any thing else to take pleasure in.”

“ Yes, if you had once felt the happiness of loving and serving God, you would prefer it to all other pleasures,” said Emily.

“ It may make some people happy, and it does you, I dare say,” replied Elizabeth; “ but as for me, I really do not believe it ever would: indeed I feel a dislike to the thought of the thing; and to confess the truth, I always did, even at the time that I was hearing and seeing so much of it.”

“ And so did I—and so does every one,” replied Emily, “ until a *new* heart, and a *right* spirit is given; and this is what we must pray for. But oh! do not let us talk of religion as a thing we may choose or refuse like an accomplishment, according to our particular taste: we *must* be religious—we *must* come to Jesus Christ for salvation, and love God and His service, and learn *not to love the world*—or we must perish. And what should prevent you? God is not willing that any should perish.”

“ I do assure you,” said Elizabeth, after a short pause, “ that sometimes since I have been in this miserable place, I have wished I were religious; but I know that it is quite impossible I ever should be.”

“ Impossible! oh no; it is impossible that such faint wishes should make you so; but with God every thing is possible; and if you sincerely desire, and earnestly ask *His* help, you *will* receive it.”

“ You do not know my heart,” said Elizabeth, “ it is very different from yours.”

“ If God had not promised to change the heart, I must have despaired as well as you; but He will.”

“ What, *my* heart?” said Elizabeth.

During the latter part of this conversation, there was an appearance of sincerity and

solicitude in Elizabeth, that Emily had never observed in her on any former occasion. She did not, however, continue it much longer at that time, lest she should be wearied; but she was overjoyed to find that for the two or three following days Elizabeth appeared willing, and almost anxious, to renew it.

During this visit, Emily had many opportunities of observing the neglected and declining state of the business. She had even heard Mr. Robinson making some lazy complaints of the discouraging state of his affairs. In writing to her father she had mentioned this, and expressed an earnest wish that some situation could be devised for them that would be less irksome to Elizabeth, and more likely to secure their permanent comfort. Very soon after, she had the satisfaction of receiving a letter from Mr. Grey, offering—provided it met with Mr. Robinson's approbation—to use his interest in endeavouring to procure for him the situation, then vacant, of superior clerk in a concern with which he was remotely connected. The salary, he said, was handsome, and the place considered respectable. An immediate answer was required, and Emily lost no time in submitting it to Mr. Robinson's consideration.

Most people, and especially idle people, expect to be bettered by a change of circumstances, and he accepted the offer without hesitation.

Emily found Elizabeth employed in reading the Bible, when she entered her room to communicate the contents of this letter.

“I am sorry to interrupt you,” said she, “but here is something”—offering her the letter—“that perhaps will give you a little pleasure.”

“My dear girl!” cried Elizabeth, when she had hastily read it, “how shall I ever repay you and your dear, good father for this kindness? Why this is the very thing for Robinson—let me see—what does it say?—‘the place considered respectable’—that means genteel of course: oh, Emily,” said she, shutting the Bible, and rising briskly from her chair, “I feel quite well and happy!”

“But recollect, it is still very uncertain,” said Emily.

“Not *very* uncertain, my dear, surely; your father here speaks confidently, almost, does not he?—‘think it not unlikely my application may be successful.’”

“Not unlikely, but he is not at all sure, you see,” said Emily. “I am almost sorry I told you now,” added she, as she looked at Elizabeth's animated and eager countenance, in which the *world* had already regained its recently banished expression.

“Dear, it would have been cruel not to have told me,” said Elizabeth.

“But if you *should* be disappointed,” resumed Emily, “you would *now*, I hope, know how to submit, and where to seek consolation.”

“Yes, indeed, I hope I should,” replied Elizabeth.

“It is the only satisfaction,” continued Emily, “to commit such concerns cheerfully to Providence, knowing they will be overruled for our real good; it must, I should think, prevent all distressing anxiety.”

“Very true,” answered Elizabeth. “Emily,” said she, after a short silence, “I wonder what your father means by ‘a *handsome* salary’—have you any idea, my dear, what it would be?”

“ No, indeed, I never heard,” said Emily, sighing; and she almost regretted that the application had been made.

Nothing was now talked of but the expected appointment; and Emily found, with deep concern, that it was vain to attempt engaging Elizabeth in the conversations which had lately seemed to interest and affect her. She either answered with indifference, or, what was still more painful to Emily, and discouraged her most from attempting it—she adopted her old artificial manner, in talking about religion.

After only a week's suspense, a letter arrived from Mr. Grey, to inform them that his application in behalf of Mr. Robinson had been *unsuccessful*. Elizabeth was busy at her drawers examining some dresses, which till now had not seen the light since she came to Hilsbury, when Emily, with a heavy heart, entered with her father's letter. She put it into her hand, and withdrew in silence.

Mr. Robinson's disappointment was more vociferous, but less acute, than Elizabeth's. In her mind a relish for the world had been aroused too actively to subside again with the hopes that excited it. She was first stunned, then irritated, by the intelligence. She referred again and again to the unwelcome letter; but still the decisive words, “ unsuccessful application,” left her nothing to hope.

She had not learned to *acquiesce* in adversity, and at first refused to believe that she must actually submit to it. If *this* plan had failed, *something* she thought might be done: and her mind ranged with impatient ingenuity from scheme to scheme, as each appeared more impracticable than the former: till at last she was compelled to believe, that there was nothing before her but submitting to present circumstances. When after a long train of thought she arrived at this conclusion, she again burst into a passionate fit of impatient sorrow.

When Emily joined her, she did not attempt to offer ill-timed reflections; they passed the greatest part of the day in silence; and it was not till Elizabeth had recovered from the surprise of disappointment, that she began to recollect there was still *one* way of being happy that was not unattainable.

How many are driven to religion as a last refuge, who would never have chosen it as the first good!

As they were sitting together in the evening, Elizabeth broke a long silence by saying, in a voice between penitence and peevishness,

“ Is not this exactly what I told you—that I should never care about religion if I had any thing besides to take an interest in?—I have scarcely given it a thought the last week, Emily, and now what is there but that to comfort me?”

“ Oh, Elizabeth then is not this a happy disappointment? be thankful that you were not *abandoned* to prosperity.”

“ But now,” said Elizabeth, “ now that I have been again as unconcerned, and indifferent, and ungrateful as ever—how can I hope to be forgiven?”

“ God's ways are not like ours,” answered Emily; “ His invitations are made to the unconcerned and the ungrateful. But when we have refused to surrender our hearts to Him till

they have made trial of every other object, it should make us more humble and more thankful, that He will at last accept such a worthless, ungenerous gift.”

The tears were starting in Elizabeth's eyes while Emily was speaking: and when a little more had passed, she thought it best to leave her alone, and silently withdrew.

Elizabeth had sometimes said her prayers, but she had never *prayed*; and she now for the first time felt a real desire to do so. As soon as Emily was gone, she sunk down by the bed-side; she wept, but was unable to utter a word; overwhelmed with the strange, glowing feeling of *sincerity*, and with the new and mighty effort to express a deep, inward sentiment, to a Being invisible, and hitherto wholly unknown.

They who do not know that prayer is an effort requiring all the energies of body and mind, may question whether they ever have prayed.

After awhile, she knew not how long, Elizabeth rose up from her knees, exhausted, but yet relieved.

When Emily returned to her, she was struck with an expression of meekness and *reality* in her countenance, that was not natural to it.

“Emily,” said she, in a faltering voice, “I have been attempting to—pray; but I cannot.”

“Then I believe you have prayed, dear Elizabeth,” said Emily. “It is only in *real* prayer that there is any difficulty: it was easy to *say* our prayers, as we used to do: but now you feel the difference between that formal service, and calling upon God in spirit and in truth.”

To Elizabeth, however, although a desire and a hope had suddenly sprung up in her mind, that gave her a new and strange sense of satisfaction, the difficulties in her way appeared at first insurmountable. Nor was it surprising that to a person of her character, religion, as it now appeared to her—an inward, heart-felt, all-pervading principle—should seem an almost unattainable good.

A single glance at its reality convinced her, that those things must be sacrificed to it from which she had ever derived her choicest gratifications. It was not so much that any particular pursuits were to be relinquished—this had been the least and lightest sacrifice; but the inmost recesses of her heart must yield up their long-secreted idolatries.

If “the rich can scarcely be saved,” how shall the vain? For who that knows his own heart but must acknowledge, that it were easier to resign his wealth than to mortify his vanity? “How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another?” was said by Him, “who knew what was in man.” And surely, if any one principle of depraved nature may be considered as more than another directly opposed to the Christian temper, it is that self-seeking, and self-display, which has human admiration for its object.

For the being who throughout the course of a vain life has never acted in conformity to the will of God, but with a slavish regard to the opinion of its fellow-creatures—whose shallow virtues even are become artificial, from being habitually used as articles of display—whose infirmities and sins has been set off as interesting and captivating—whose very devotions must be *picturesque*: for such a being to sit *unseen*, and learn at the feet of Jesus—to study in every thought, word, and action, the eye of Him who is invisible—to act, speak, and think, only in

simplicity, integrity, and singleness of heart—to substitute inward graces for outward attractions—silent charities for showy sensibilities—to bring every action, and every motive, into subjection to Him who seeth the thoughts and intents of the heart:—and when all is done, to be humble still; not even to make a display of humility and devotion, but to acknowledge that a disposition to do so betrays humility and the want of both:—all this must appear absolutely unattainable, until the inquiring mind is instructed to look beyond its own efforts, and to depend on Him to whom this and “all things are possible.”

It was *then* that Elizabeth first perceived, that the unfavourable propensities of her character were not insurmountable obstacles to her becoming a Christian. She then saw, that whatever her natural dispositions might have been, the operations of Omnipotence would have been not less requisite. The change would be as *real*, though it had been less conspicuous.

A mind may be naturally unearthly and refined, serious and contemplative—and, in a sense, even devotional: it may love to speculate upon mortality and futurity; and may be in the view of itself, and of others, as Elizabeth expressed it—“just the sort of mind to be very religious;” that is, amiable, and intellectual: but it cannot become *holy* and *spiritual* without the same almighty energy that must be exerted to renovate the worldly or the indolent, the selfish and the vain.

CHAPTER XV.

IF Elizabeth's religion had expended itself in words and emotions, it would have been, as before, of a very doubtful character. But she soon gave the best evidence of its reality, by her anxiety to bring her daily conduct under its universal influence. She had, however, at present much to subdue, and much to learn.

She and Emily had many conversations on the subject of her future conduct.

"I believe," said Elizabeth, as they were talking of these things one evening, "that I could be happy now in a cottage—almost in any situation, especially with a companion I could love: but the business—the trade—I cannot tell you, Emily, how unpleasant it is to me; only I hope I am now willing—more willing, at least, to submit to what is unpleasant."

"But in time," said Emily, "may not you become almost reconciled even to this? especially if you *could* so far overcome your reluctance as to take an interest in it yourself: and you are so clever, and have so much taste, that—"

"Dear, do you think so?" interrupted Elizabeth.

"That I am sure," continued Emily, "Mr. Robinson would soon find an alteration in his affairs, if you were once to attend to them."

"But then there's Robinson! Emily, you know I *cannot* love him."

"Cannot you?" said Emily. "But yet," added she, after a long pause, "I have thought sometimes, you might treat him with a little more respect and—kindness, and then perhaps—"

"I know it—yes, I know I ought; and I *will* endeavour," said she: and here the conversation ended; for the time was come which Elizabeth now regularly devoted to her evening retirement.

She had learned the pleasure and privilege of daily "entering into her chamber, and shutting to the door:"—and it was *there* she could best fortify herself for any self-denying resolution. But in doing so, she was a wonder to herself. That *she* should find happiness in *such* engagements—that an hour spent in meditation and prayer should to *her* be the happiest of the day—

"Strange were those tones, to her those tears were strange;

She wept, and wonder'd at the mighty change."

That night Mr. Robinson came in to supper with a gloomy countenance. Every thing was going wrong. Business dull—money scarce—Edwards saucy—but what really oppressed him most of all was the weight of his own indolence.

When Elizabeth came down from her room, she had evidently been in tears, but she did not look gloomy, and going towards her husband, she said,

"Are you tired to-night?"

"Rather, my dear—not very, though, thank you," said he, unfolding his arms, and brightening up at the unexpected attention.

While they were at supper, after two or three unsuccessful efforts to speak, Elizabeth at length said,

“ Mr. Robinson, you spoke to me some time ago about assisting you in the shop: I refused then, but now I have determined to do it; and I intend to begin as soon—” and her voice faltered—“ as soon as I am well enough to stand in the cold.”

“ Dear me! will you?” said her husband in unfeigned astonishment.

But Elizabeth, overcome by the effort she had made, burst into tears, and could not reply.

“ But I would not have you to do it upon any account, if it frets you thus,” added he.

“ Oh, she is not fretting,” said Emily; “ she likes it, only—” and here she stopped, at a loss how to make Mr. Robinson comprehend why any body should *cry* at what they *like*.

“ I shall be of very little service at first,” resumed Elizabeth, in a firmer voice; “ but I hope I shall learn in time; and as your sister is coming, and you find Edwards so inattentive and troublesome, I think it would be best to part with him, and we will endeavour to manage the business among ourselves.”

“ Well, I assure you I shall be glad enough to get rid of that idle dog; that is, if you really intend it, my dear,” said he.

“ Yes, I really intend it,” said Elizabeth.

And she retired to rest this night, with a calm sense of self-approval that she had seldom known. It was the genuine pleasure with which most instances of self-denial are rewarded—the pure satisfaction of sacrificing inclination to principle.

The next day, while they were at dinner, the stage coach, which once a week passed through the village, drove by their window; and Mr. Robinson started up, exclaiming,

“ There's my sister Becky!”—and immediately set off to receive her.

“ I wonder what sort of a being she is,” said Elizabeth.

“ We shall soon see,” said Emily.

In a few minutes Mr. Robinson returned, laden with packages; and introduced his sister to the ladies.

Elizabeth held out her hand to one of far less delicate texture, and endeavoured to receive her new relation with cordiality: but Miss Rebecca's first appearance was not prepossessing. She was a plain person, much marked with the small-pox, and appeared about forty years of age. Her dress was far from untidy; but it showed that total deficiency of taste, which is betrayed by some persons, who, without much ambition to be *smart*, would yet fain appear a little like other people: besides, she was now in her travelling *déshabille*. But when she spoke, there was a softness in her voice, and a propriety in her mode of expressing herself, that instantly made a favourable impression.

For a person in Miss Rebecca's circumstances to conduct herself with exact propriety towards such a sister-in-law as Elizabeth, would not appear very easy; but she seemed to understand this secret to perfection. There was a certain independence in her character that made her feel at ease, and enabled her to retain her self-possession on every occasion. Although fully conscious of her own inferiority in those respects, she was not to be overawed by such things as wealth, beauty, or elegance in others. Her behaviour was uniformly obliging, courteous, and respectful; but it was never servile—never for a moment—to the grandest carriage customer that

ever entered her uncle's shop,

Elizabeth took some pains to check the feeling of contemptuous pity, which the first appearance of her new relation had excited.

But she soon found that this effort was quite unnecessary. A person of good nature, sound sense, and consistent piety—and *who makes no absurd pretensions*—is not so easily despised as people may imagine. Miss Rebecca answered this description; and Elizabeth had not spent many hours in her society, before she found that she absolutely commanded her respect.

As they became better acquainted, Elizabeth and Emily were surprised to perceive how far removed she was from vulgar ignorance. This discovery, however, was not made by her introducing the names of all the books, and quoting all the authors she could recollect, on the first day of her arrival, but by the general superiority and intelligence of her conversation.

She had been in the habit of reading as much as her engagements would permit, from the honest desire of improving her mind, not with the most remote intention of making it a subject of vulgar boast. In the course of her life she had waited upon many a well-dressed, supercilious customer, to whom it would have been in her power to have imparted some useful information; but she never felt disposed to make an unbecoming advantage of her acquisitions. If her mind was superior to her station, it did not disqualify her for its duties, nor lead her to despise them; for her little stock of knowledge had been turned to the best account: it had made her not vain, but wise—not ridiculous, but respectable.

There was no one who ever had so much influence over Frederick Robinson as his sister. While he was at his uncle's, he was continually embroiled in some dispute with his cousins, or the apprentices, or the servants. A consciousness of his own weakness made him exceedingly tenacious of his rights and privileges, and jealous of his dignity: so that he was always imagining the one invaded, and the other insulted. In these disputes his sister Rebecca was the universal peace-maker: every one was willing to appeal to her; and even Frederick would submit to her decisions.

Since her arrival he had been unusually attentive to business; and the scraping of the violin was rarely heard till shop was shut in the evening. Indeed, in three days after she came, every thing wore a different aspect. Without bustle or parade, her pervading management had restored order in the counting-house, the shop, and the kitchen. Her attentive and obliging manner to the customers was soon noised abroad; and many who had been offended by the neglect of the master, and impertinence of the man, began to return.

Elizabeth was not more agreeably disappointed in her sister-in-law, than Miss Rebecca was in her. She listened with tears of joy, while Emily related the change which had recently taken place in her friend's mind: and Emily was rejoiced when she became acquainted with her character, to commit Elizabeth's yet weak and fluctuating principles to her superintendence. Young as she herself was in Christian knowledge, she was glad to be relieved from the burden of such responsibility, and to consign it to one on whose experience and judicious management she could so well rely.

When she had done this, Emily took leave of Hilsbury; her heart glowing with joy and

gratitude, as she contemplated the unexpected issue of her visit.

Elizabeth, who had dreaded the familiarity of a vulgar relation, was the more touched by the true delicacy of Miss Rebecca's manner towards her.

A fair form and delicate complexion—much as one might wish to believe it—are not the invariable indications of a delicate mind; while it often happens that this jewel is concealed within a plain, ungraceful exterior.

When Elizabeth witnessed how much might be effected by activity and management, she was strengthened in her determination to remain no longer a useless incumbrance in her own household: and having made an ingenuous confession of her ignorance, she requested to be instructed in all the mysteries of domestic economy. Miss Rebecca undertook this task with perfect simplicity. She took great pains in instructing her, without suffering her to feel it a mortification to be taught.

Emily had not flattered her, in saying that Elizabeth was clever. Her talents had hitherto been exercised to one unproductive end; but now she felt the pleasure of exerting them usefully and honourably; and she made rapid progress, not only in the attainment of those things of which she might feel ashamed of being ignorant, but also in her knowledge of the business, her ignorance of which was no disgrace.

It required, however, an effort—and an effort of something better than philosophy—on the morning she went in to take her first lesson behind the counter. Still pale from the effects of her recent illness, she appeared wrapped in a large shawl; but as she entered the shop, a deep glow passed over her cheeks. Miss Rebecca did not feel less on this occasion than Elizabeth, but she contrived to be quite engaged at the time with a customer, and did not seem to notice her as she walked round and took her station by her side.

A country girl happened to come in at the same instant, who, addressing herself to Miss Rebecca, said,

“ I want a yard and three quarters of -- your servant, miss,” said she, perceiving Elizabeth, and dropping a curtsy.

“ What did you want, pray?” said Elizabeth, graciously.

While she was showing the article inquired for, Elizabeth observed that her customer's attention was diverted from that to herself: she was glancing at her, and at her dress; and seemed admiring the white hands that were unrolling the ribands, still more than the bright, glossy articles themselves. When Elizabeth had dismissed her first customer, she whispered with a smile to Miss Rebecca, “ Really it's not half so disagreeable as I expected!”

Elizabeth's good principles were too recently implanted to have attained the force of habits; and she found a constant reference to them necessary upon every fresh occasion. The exercise of patience, self denial, forbearance, humility, was new and difficult. Indeed, had other dispositions, or better education, rendered them of easier attainment, the strength and reality of her piety had been less apparent. It was in no instance more so than in her conduct towards her husband. She was solicitous not only to fulfil her ordinary duties towards him, but to win him to partake of that happiness which she herself enjoyed.

“ If religion,” she said, “ were to do as much for him as it has for me, we might be almost happy together.” And it was especially with this view that she endeavoured to subdue the constant propensity she felt to treat him with harshness or indifference.

“ That tiresome violin!” said she, one evening, as they caught its distant sound from the counting-house.

“ I must say, however,” said his sister, “ that he does not suffer it to be very troublesome to us; I do not remember ever seeing it brought into the parlour.”

“ No. I confess he has never done that,” said Elizabeth.

“ Do you think,” she resumed, after a long silence, “ do you think he would be pleased if I were sometimes to ask him to play to me?”

“ That he would, I am certain,” said his sister.

That her resolution might not have time to relax, she went out immediately, and opening the door of the counting-house, said, good-naturedly,

“ Mr. Robinson, you keep it all to yourself; why don't you come and play to us sometimes?”

“ Dear me! I am sure I had no idea you would like to hear me play! why, it's what I should like of all things,” said he, gathering up the music-books, and proceeding briskly to the parlour.

“ What shall I play to you now?” said he, in high good humour, “any thing you like, only say.”

His sister chose something she thought Elizabeth would prefer; and Elizabeth, pleased with herself, found her spirits enlivened even by her husband's bad fiddling; and the evening passed more cheerfully than usual.

Accustomed to be despised, and to be thwarted, he was always particularly gratified by any mark of attention or compliance; and a little such kindness and consideration produced the happiest effects upon his temper. It was in this way—and it was the only one practicable—that his sister recommended Elizabeth to attempt to acquire an influence over him. He had always been proud of his wife, and would have loved her, after *his* manner, if she would have permitted it; and now that her conduct towards him was so much altered, he began to be “ *very fond of her indeed.*”

Miss Rebecca did not offer to leave Hilsbury till she had the satisfaction of seeing her brother's affairs in a very different state to that in which she had found he them. The business was increasing: he himself appeared disposed to take some interest in it; and as for Elizabeth, she was become both willing and able to superintend and conduct their concerns.

But she had derived still more important advantages from her sister's society: herself an experienced Christian, she had led Elizabeth on step by step, as she was able to bear it, till she saw her making real progress both in the knowledge and practice of religion.

Having thus spent three useful months with them, she was at length obliged to take leave.

They parted with mutual affection and regret: and Elizabeth was left alone to manage her house, her business, her husband, and—herself.

CHAPTER XVI.

ONE morning in the spring, a carriage stopped at Mr. Robinson's door.

Emily was the first who sprang out of it: and she was followed by the whole party from Stokely.

Elizabeth coloured high as she advanced from behind the counter to receive them. But their easy, affectionate salutation quickly relieved her embarrassment. She led the way to her little parlour. Mr. Leddenhurst, as he followed her, looked neither to the right hand nor the left, but steered his way through the piles of goods that stood in the shop, and stooped beneath the festoons of drapery that decorated the passage door, as though he saw them not.

As this narrative is so near its conclusion, it may be imagined that the Leddenhursts were come to announce to Elizabeth some sudden change of fortune; or, perhaps, to make her a present of one:—but no; they were only come for the pleasure of seeing her—for the pleasure of seeing *Elizabeth* happy in obscurity.

They were affected by the striking alteration in her whole appearance since they last met. Simple in her dress—*almost* artless in her manner—the once restless and ambitious turn of her countenance succeeded by a subdued and tranquil expression. As Miss Weston sat gazing on her, her eyes filled with tears, in spite of her efforts to restrain them.

The good opinion Elizabeth had once so unsuccessfully practised to win, was now spontaneously yielded. She had never in former times received such gratifying expressions of their regard. It was not, as she had dreaded, the affability of condescension to her reduced station, but the open, cordial aspect of friendship and esteem.

Their visit was prolonged to several hours, and they had much conversation with Elizabeth; who, when the first feeling of constraint had worn off, spoke of herself, and her situation, without reserve. This afforded them an opportunity of observing more minutely the real change that had taken place in her character.

Their expectations were not disappointed, because they were not raised unreasonably high. They did not expect to find propensities and habits of twenty years' growth completely extirpated in the course of a few months, even under the influence of the most potent of all principles.

In Elizabeth's present retirement there was, indeed, little temptation or opportunity to *display*, if that word be understood in its commonest import; but there is no retirement, except that of the grave, where the infirmities of human nature may not find opportunity to exhibit themselves.

Pride is rather provoked than checked by degradation: and never was vanity cheated into humility by being placed in the shade.

Elizabeth still found, no duty she had to perform was so difficult—no act of self-denial so painful—as to watch, detect, and subdue it; especially in the new and more subtle forms in which it now frequently assailed her. But it was no longer a studied and cherished indulgence. Philosophy might have enabled her to detect, and pride, to *conceal* it: but it was religion that had

taught her to lament it as a *sin*, and to resist it as an enemy.

They found her even more reconciled to her condition than they had hoped. Time had already worn off the edge of mortification. She was no longer surprised, or shocked, to find herself where, and what, she was. She took an interest in her employments; and was alive to the honest pleasure of successful management. Besides, she was *occupied*: and the busy cannot, if they would, be as discontented as the idle. Employment, that *second* grand secret of happiness, had contributed more than any thing, except the *first*, to reconcile her to her circumstances. Above all, she had inward peace; and a hope, that was better to her than either the vain pleasures or real comforts of life:—it was “a hope, full of immortality;” and enabled her “in whatever state she was, therewith to be content.”

During their visit, Elizabeth took her friends over her neat, orderly house: and into her pretty retired garden, which was now looking gay with spring flowers.

“You would be surprised,” said she, “to see how many little pleasures I have now; and that from things which I never took any real pleasure in before. Even my taste is improved by religion: I am not so selfish—so engrossed in—” but here she checked herself, and began to speak of something else. Talking of *herself*, she observed, was particularly hazardous; and she found it a good rule never to do so—not even to speak of her faults unless it was unavoidable.

While Mr. Leddenhurst and Mr. Robinson were gone aside to transact some business, Elizabeth and her friends conversed still more unreservedly.

“I assure you,” said she, looking on the carpet, “I am happier in all respects than I ever expected to be;—Mr. Robinson is really much more—much less—much improved. Dear Emily,” she added, “I often, very often, think of that dreary, feverish night, when you came to nurse and comfort me: from that I date all my happiness!”

“Let us rather both think,” said Emily, “of that happy day that brought our friends to Stokely; it is to *them* we both owe every thing that is good.”

“We can all now,” said Miss Weston, “look back to the time when we were unacquainted with God, and with ourselves,—when religion was uninteresting to us; and to whatever circumstances we may trace the wondrous change, let us acknowledge *Him* as the sole and gracious Author of it.”

“And now, sir,” said Mr. Leddenhurst, when they returned to the ladies, “we hope to prevail upon you to part with Mrs. Robinson, before long, to pay us a visit at Stokely.”

“To be sure I will,” replied he, “with a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Leddenhurst; she deserves a little recreation now, as well as any woman in the world; and I’ll be bound to say, that there’s no place whatever where it would give Mrs. Robinson so much pleasure to pay a visit to.”

“It would, indeed, give me a great deal of pleasure,” said Elizabeth; “I have no where such kind friends; I should like, too, to visit Broadisham once again; if it were only to think of all that has passed since I last drove out of it.”

“Ah, that was on our wedding-day!” said her husband.

“Then you will come, my dear,” said Mrs. Leddenhurst.

“Yes, she has promised,” said Emily.

Her friends now took an affectionate leave of Elizabeth. Before the carriage drove off, they all looked out at her as she stood by her husband's side at the shop-door. There was a tear in her eye, but she strove to conceal it; and her countenance shone with content.

“ This is a sight,” said Mr. Leddenhurst, “ worth coming more than fifteen miles to see:— the subjugation of a propensity that I had almost thought incurable; and I believe that nothing but *religion* will cure the love of—DISPLAY.”

THE END□□

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Chawton House Library