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THE CAPTURE OF THE CULPRITS. [*See page* 23.

BELL'S READING BOOKS.

SELECT TALES

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

LONDON:
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.
1897.

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*** *The above Tales have been selected from the collection known as "The Parents' Assistant," as specially adapted for school use. The last two have been slightly condensed to bring the volume within the required compass.*

EDGEWORTH'S TALES.

LAZY LAWRENCE.

IN the pleasant valley of Ashton there lived an elderly woman of the name of Preston. She had a small, neat cottage, and there was not a weed to be seen in her garden. It was upon her garden that she chiefly depended for support; it consisted of strawberry-beds, and one small border for flowers. The pinks and roses she tied up in nice nosegays, and sent either to Clifton or Bristol to be sold. As to her strawberries, she did not send them to market, because it was the custom for numbers of people to come from Clifton, in the summer time, to eat strawberries and cream at the gardens in Ashton.

Now the widow Preston was so obliging, active, and good-humoured, that every one who came to see her was pleased. She lived happily in this manner for several years; but, alas! one autumn she fell sick, and, during her illness, everything went wrong; her garden was neglected, her cow died, and all the money which she had saved was spent in paying for medicines. The winter passed away, while she was so weak that she could earn but little by her work; and when the summer came, her rent was called for, and the rent was not ready in her little purse as usual. She begged a few months' delay, and they were granted to her; but at the end of that time there was no resource but to sell her horse, Lightfoot. Now Lightfoot, though perhaps he had seen his best days, was a very great favourite. In his youth he had always carried the dame to market behind her husband; and it was now her little son Jem's turn to ride him. It was Jem's business to feed

Lightfoot, and to take care of him—a charge which he never neglected, for, besides being a very good-natured, he was a very industrious boy.

"It will go near to break my Jem's heart," said Dame Preston to herself, as she sat one evening beside the fire stirring the embers, and considering how she had best open the matter to her son, who stood opposite to her, eating a dry crust of bread very heartily for supper.

"Jem," said the old woman, "what, ar't hungry?" "That I am, brave and hungry!"

"Ay! no wonder, you've been brave hard at work—Eh?" "Brave hard! I wish it was not so dark, mother, that you might just step out and see the great bed I've dug; I know you'd say it was no bad day's work—and oh, mother! I've good news: Farmer Truck will give us the giant-strawberries, and I'm to go for 'em to-morrow morning, and I'll be back afore breakfast."

"God bless the boy! how he talks!—Four mile there, and four mile back again, afore breakfast." "Ay, upon Lightfoot you know, mother, very easily; mayn't I?" "Ay, child!" "Why do you sigh, mother?" "Finish thy supper, child." "I've done!" cried Jem, swallowing the last mouthful hastily, as if he thought he had been too long at supper—"and now for the great needle; I must see and mend Lightfoot's bridle afore I go to bed."

To work he set, by the light of the fire, and the dame having once more stirred it, began again with "Jem, dear, does he go lame at all now?"—"What, Lightfoot! Oh la, no, not he!—never was so well of his lameness in all his life. He's grown quite young again, I think; and then he's so fat he can hardly wag." "God bless him—that's right. We must see, Jem, and keep him fat." "For what, mother?" "For Monday fortnight at the fair. He's to be——sold!" "Lightfoot!" cried Jem, and let the bridle fall from his hand; "and *will* mother sell Lightfoot?" "*Will?* no: but I *must*, Jem." "Must! who says you *must?* why *must* you, mother?" "I must, I say, child. Why, must not I pay my debts honestly; and must not I pay my rent; and was not it called for long and long ago; and have not I had time; and did not I promise to pay it for certain Monday fortnight, and am not I two guineas short; and where am I to get two

guineas? So what signifies talking, child," said the widow, leaning her head upon her arm, "Lightfoot *must* go."

Jem was silent for a few minutes.—"Two guineas; that's a great, great deal. If I worked, and worked, and worked ever so hard, I could no ways earn two guineas *afore* Monday fortnight—could I, mother?" "Lord help thee, no; not an' work thyself to death." "But I could earn something, though, I say," cried Jem, proudly; "and I *will* earn *something*—if it be ever so little, it will be *something*—and I shall do my very best; so I will." "That I'm sure of, my child," said his mother, drawing him towards her and kissing him; "you were always a good, industrious lad, *that* I will say afore your face or behind your back;—but it won't do now—Lightfoot *must* go."

Jem turned away, struggling to hide his tears, and went to bed without saying a word more. But he knew that crying would do no good; so he presently wiped his eyes, and lay awake, considering what he could possibly do to save the horse.—"If I get ever so little," he still said to himself, "it will be *something;* and who knows but landlord might then wait a bit longer? and we might make it all up in time; for a penny a day might come to two guineas in time."

But how to get the first penny was the question. Then he recollected that one day, when he had been sent to Clifton to sell some flowers, he had seen an old woman with a board beside her covered with various sparkling stones, which people stopped to look at as they passed, and he remembered that some people bought the stones; one paid twopence, another threepence, and another sixpence for them; and Jem heard her say that she got them amongst the neighbouring rocks: so he thought that if he tried he might find some too, and sell them as she had done.

Early in the morning he wakened full of this scheme, jumped up, dressed himself, and, having given one look at poor Lightfoot in his stable, set off to Clifton in search of the old woman, to inquire where she found her sparkling stones. But it was too early in the morning, the old woman was not at her seat; so he turned back again disappointed. He did not waste his time waiting for her, but saddled and bridled Lightfoot, and went to Farmer Truck's for the giant-strawberries.

A great part of the morning was spent in putting them into the ground; and, as soon as that was finished, he set out again in quest of the old woman, whom, to his great joy, he spied sitting at her corner of the street with her board before her. But this old woman was deaf and cross; and when at last Jem made her hear his questions, he could get no answer from her, but that she found the fossils where he would never find any more. "But can't I look where you looked?"—"Look away, nobody hinders you," replied the old woman; and these were the only words she would say.

Jem was not, however, a boy to be easily discouraged; he went to the rocks, and walked slowly along, looking at all the stones as he passed. Presently he came to a place where a number of men were at work loosening some large rocks, and one amongst the workmen was stooping down looking for something very eagerly; Jem ran up, and asked if he could help him. "Yes," said the man, "you can; I've just dropped, amongst this heap of rubbish, a fine piece of crystal that I got to-day."—"What kind of a looking thing is it?" said Jem. "White, and like glass," said the man, and went on working whilst Jem looked very carefully over the heap of rubbish for a great while.

"Come," said the man, "it's gone for ever; don't trouble yourself any more, my boy." "It's no trouble; I'll look a little longer; we'll not give it up so soon," said Jem; and, after he had looked a little longer, he found the piece of crystal. "Thank'e," said the man; "you're a fine little industrious fellow." Jem, encouraged by the tone of voice in which the man spoke this, ventured to ask him the same questions which he had asked the old woman.

"One good turn deserves another," said the man; "we are going to dinner just now, and shall leave off work—wait for me here, and I'll make it worth your while."

Jem waited; and, as he was very attentively observing how the workmen went on with their work, he heard somebody near him give a great yawn, and, turning round, he saw stretched upon the grass, beside the river, a boy about his own age, who, in the village of Ashton, as he knew, went by the name of Lazy Lawrence—a name which he most justly deserved, for he never did anything from morning to night. He neither worked nor played, but sauntered or lounged

about restless and yawning. His father was an alehouse-keeper, and being generally drunk, could take no care of his son; so that Lazy Lawrence grew every day worse and worse. However, some of the neighbours said that he was a good-natured poor fellow enough, and would never do any one harm but himself; whilst others, who were wiser, often shook their heads, and told him that idleness was the root of all evil.

"What, Lawrence!" cried Jem to him, when he saw him lying upon the grass—"what, are you asleep?" "Not quite." "Are you awake?" "Not quite." "What are you doing there?" "Nothing." "What are you thinking of?" "Nothing." "What makes you lie there?" "I don't know—because I can't find anybody to play with me to-day. Will you come and play?" "No, I can't; I'm busy." "Busy!" cried Lawrence, stretching himself—"you are always busy. I would not be you for the world, to have so much to do always." "And I," said Jem, laughing, "would not be you for the world, to have nothing to do."

They then parted, for the workman just then called Jem to follow him. He took him home to his own house, and showed him a parcel of fossils, which he had gathered, he said, on purpose to sell, but had never yet had time to sort them. Now, however, he set about the task; and having picked out those which he judged to be the best, he put them in a small basket, and gave them to Jem to sell, upon condition that he should bring him half of what he got. Jem, pleased to be employed, was ready to agree to what the man proposed, provided his mother had no objection. When he went home to dinner, he told his mother his scheme, and she smiled, and said he might do as he pleased; for she was not afraid of his being from home. "You are not an idle boy," said she; "so there is little danger of your getting into any mischief."

Accordingly Jem that evening took his stand, with his little basket, upon the bank of the river, just at the place where people land from a ferry-boat, and the walk turns to the wells, and numbers of people perpetually pass to drink the waters. He chose his place well, and waited nearly all the evening, offering his fossils with great assiduity to every passenger; but not one person bought any.

"Holla!" cried some sailors, who had just rowed a boat

to land, "bear a hand here, will you, my little fellow! and carry these parcels for us into yonder house."

Jem ran down immediately for the parcels, and did what he was asked to do so quickly, and with so much goodwill, that the master of the boat took notice of him, and, when he was going away, stopped to ask him what he had got in his little basket; and when he saw that they were fossils, he immediately told Jem to follow him, for that he was going to carry some shells he had brought from abroad to a lady in the neighbourhood who was making a grotto. "She will very likely buy your stones into the bargain. Come along, my lad; we can but try."

The lady lived but a very little way off, so that they were soon at her house. She was alone in her parlour, and was sorting a bundle of feathers of different colours: they lay on a sheet of pasteboard upon a window-seat, and it happened that as the sailor was bustling round the table to show off his shells, he knocked down the sheet of pasteboard, and scattered all the feathers. The lady looked very sorry, which Jem observing, he took the opportunity, whilst she was busy looking over the sailor's bag of shells, to gather together all the feathers, and sort them according to their different colours, as he had seen them sorted when he first came into the room.

"Where is the little boy you brought with you? I thought I saw him here just now."—"And here I am, ma'am," cried Jem, creeping from under the table with some few remaining feathers which he had picked from the carpet; "I thought," added he, pointing to the others, "I had better be doing something than standing idle, ma'am." She smiled, and, pleased with his activity and simplicity, began to ask him several questions; such as, who he was, where he lived, what employment he had, and how much a day he earned by gathering fossils.

"This is the first day I ever tried," said Jem; "I never sold any yet, and, if you don't buy 'em now, ma'am, I'm afraid nobody else will; for I've asked everybody else."

"Come, then," said the lady, laughing, "if that is the case, I think I had better buy them all." So emptying all the fossils out of his basket, she put half-a-crown into it.

Jem's eyes sparkled with joy. "Oh, thank you, ma'am," said he, "I will be sure and bring you as many more to-morrow." "Yes, but I don't promise you," said she, "to

give you half-a-crown to-morrow." "But, perhaps, though you don't promise it, you will." "No," said the lady, "do not deceive yourself; I assure you that I will not. *That*, instead of encouraging you to be industrious, would teach you to be idle."

Jem did not quite understand what she meant by this, but answered, "I'm sure I don't wish to be idle; what I want is to earn something every day, if I knew how: I'm sure I don't wish to be idle. If you knew all, you'd know I did not." "How do you mean, *if I knew all?* "Why I mean, if you knew about Lightfoot." "Who's Lightfoot?" "Why, mammy's horse," added Jem, looking out of the window; "I must make haste home, and feed him afore it gets dark; he'll wonder what's gone with me." "Let him wonder a few minutes longer," said the lady, "and tell me the rest of your story." "I've no story, ma'am, to tell, but as how mammy says he must go to the fair Monday fortnight to be sold, if she can't get the two guineas for her rent; and I should be main sorry to part with him, for I love him, and he loves me; so I'll work for him, I will, all I can. To be sure, as mammy says, I have no chance, such a little fellow as I am, of earning two guineas afore Monday fortnight." "But are you willing earnestly to work?" said the lady; "you know there is a great deal of difference between picking up a few stones, and working steadily every day, and all day long." "But," said Jem, "I would work every day, and all day long." "Then," said the lady, "I will give you work. Come here to-morrow morning, and my gardener will set you to weed the shrubberies, and I will pay you sixpence a day. Remember, you must be at the gates by six o'clock." Jem bowed, thanked her, and went away.

It was late in the evening, and Jem was impatient to get home to feed Lightfoot; yet he recollected that he had promised the man who had trusted him to sell the fossils, that he would bring him half of what he got for them; so he thought that he had better go to him directly: and away he went, running along by the waterside about a quarter of a mile, till he came to the man's house. He was just come home from work, and was surprised when Jem showed him the half-crown, saying, "Look what I got for the stones: you are to have half, you know." "No," said the man, when he had heard his

story, "I shall not take half of that; it was given to you. I expected but a shilling at the most, and the half of that is but sixpence, and that I'll take. Wife! give the lad two shillings, and take this half-crown." So wife opened an old glove, and took out two shillings; and the man, as she opened the glove, put in his fingers, and took out a little silver penny. "There, he shall have that into the bargain for his honesty—honesty is the best policy—there's a lucky penny for you, that I've kept ever since I can remember." "Don't you ever go to part with it, do ye hear!" cried the woman. "Let him do what he will with it, wife," said the man. "But," argued the wife, "another penny would do just as well to buy gingerbread; and that's what it will go for." "No, that it shall not, I promise you," said Jem; and so he ran away home, fed Lightfoot, stroked him, went to bed, jumped up at five o'clock in the morning, and went singing to work as gay as a lark.

Four days he worked "every day and all day long;" and every evening the lady, when she came out to walk in her gardens, looked at his work. At last she said to her gardener, "This little boy works very hard." "Never had so good a little boy about the grounds," said the gardener; "he's always at his work, let me come by when I will, and he has got twice as much done as another would do; yes, twice as much, ma'am; for look here—he began at this here rose-bush, and now he's got to where you stand, ma'am; and here is the day's work that t'other boy, and he's three years older too, did to-day—I say, measure Jem's fairly, and it's twice as much, I'm sure." "Well," said the lady to her gardener, "show me how much is a fair good day's work for a boy of his age." "Come at six o'clock, and go at six? why, about this much, ma'am," said the gardener, marking off a piece of the border with his spade.

"Then, little boy," said the lady, "so much shall be your task every day. The gardener will mark it off for you; and when you've done, the rest of the day you may do what you please."

Jem was extremely glad of this; and the next day he had finished his task by four oclock: so that he had all the rest of the evening to himself. He was as fond of play as any little boy could be; and when he was at it he played with all the eagerness and gaiety imaginable: so as soon as he had finished his task, fed Lightfoot, and put by the sixpence he had earned

that day, he ran to the playground in the village, where he found a party of boys playing, and amongst them Lazy Lawrence, who, indeed, was not playing, but lounging upon a gate with his thumb in his mouth. The rest were playing at cricket. Jem joined them, and was the merriest and most active amongst them; till, at last, when quite out of breath with running, he was obliged to give up to rest himself, and sat down upon the stile, close to the gate on which Lazy Lawrence was swinging.

"And why don't you play, Lawrence?" said he. "I'm tired," said Lawrence. "Tired of what?" "I don't know well what tires me; grandmother says I'm ill, and I must take something—I don't know what ails me." "Oh, pugh! take a good race—one, two, three, and away—and you'll find yourself as well as ever. Come, run—one, two, three, and away." "Ah, no, I can't run, indeed," said he, hanging back heavily; "you know I can play all day long if I like it, so I don't mind play as you do, who have only one hour for it." "So much the worse for you. Come now, I'm quite fresh again, will you have one game at ball? do." "No, I tell you I can't: I'm as tired as if I had been working all day long as hard as a horse." "Ten times more," said Jem, "for I have been working all day long as hard as a horse, and yet you see I'm not a bit tired, only a little out of breath just now." "That's very odd," said Lawrence, and yawned, for want of some better answer; then taking out a handful of halfpence,—"See what I got from father to-day, because I asked him just at the right time, when he had drunk a glass or two; then I can get anything I want out of him—see! a penny, twopence, threepence, fourpence—there's eightpence in all; would not you be happy if you had *eightpence?*" "Why, I don't know," said Jem, laughing, "for you don't seem happy, and you *have eightpence.*" "That does not signify, though. I'm sure you only say that because you envy me. You don't know what it is to have eightpence. You never had more than twopence or threepence at a time in all your life."

Jem smiled. "Oh, as to that," said he, "you are mistaken, for I have at this very time more than twopence, threepence, or eightpence either. I have—let me see—stones, two shillings; then five days' work, that's five sixpences, that's two shillings and sixpence; in all, makes four shillings and sixpence; and my silver penny, is four and sevenpence—four and seven-

pence!" "You have not!" said Lawrence, roused so as absolutely to stand upright. "Four and sevenpence! have you? Show it me, and then I'll believe you." "Follow me, then," cried Jem, "and I'll soon make you believe me; come." "Is it far?" said Lawrence, following, half-running, half-hobbling, till he came to the stable, where Jem showed him his treasure. "And how did you come by it—honestly?" "Honestly; to be sure I did; I earned it all." "Lord bless me, earned it! well, I've a great mind to work; but then it's such hot weather; besides, grandmother says I'm not strong enough yet for hard work; and besides, I know how to coax daddy out of money when I want it, so I need not work. But four and sevenpence! let's see, what will you do with it all?" "That's a secret," said Jem, looking great. "I can guess; I know what I'd do with it if it was mine. First, I'd buy pocketfuls of gingerbread; then I'd buy ever so many apples and nuts. Don't you love nuts? I'd buy nuts enough to last me from this time to Christmas, and I'd make little Newton crack 'em for me; for that's the worst of nuts; there's the trouble of cracking 'em." "Well, you never deserve to have a nut." "But you'll give me some of yours," said Lawrence, in a fawning tone; for he thought it easier to coax than to work—"you'll give me some of your good things, won't you?" "I shall not have any of those good things," said Jem. "Then what will you do with all your money?" "Oh, I know very well what to do with it; but, as I told you, that's a secret, and I shan't tell it to anybody. Come now, let's go back and play—their game's up, I dare say."

Lawrence went back with him, full of curiosity, and out of humour with himself and his eightpence.—"If I had four and sevenpence," said he to himself, "I certainly should be happy!"

The next day, as usual, Jem jumped up before six o'clock and went to his work, whilst Lazy Lawrence sauntered about without knowing what to do with himself. In the course of two days he laid out sixpence of his money in apples and gingerbread; and as long as these lasted, he found himself well received by his companions; but, at length, the third day, he spent his last halfpenny, and when it was gone, unfortunately, some nuts tempted him very much, but he had no money to pay for them; so he ran home to coax his father, as he called it.

When he got home he heard his father talking very loud, and at first he thought he was drunk; but when he opened the kitchen door, he saw that he was not drunk, but angry.

"You lazy dog!" cried he, turning suddenly upon Lawrence, and gave him such a violent box on the ear as made the light flash from his eyes; "you lazy dog! see what you've done for me—look!—look, look, I say!"

Lawrence looked as soon as he came to the use of his senses, and, with fear, amazement, and remorse, beheld at least a dozen bottles burst, and the fine Worcestershire cider streaming over the floor.

"Now, did not I order you three days ago to carry these bottles to the cellar; and did not I charge you to wire the corks? answer me, you lazy rascal; did not I?" "Yes," said Lawrence, scratching his head. "And why was not it done, I ask you?" cried his father, with renewed anger, as another bottle burst at the moment. "What do you stand there for, you lazy brat? why don't you move, I say?—No, no," catching hold of him, "I believe you can't move; but I'll make you." And he shook him, till Lawrence was so giddy he could not stand. "What had you to think of? what had you to do all day long, that you could not carry my cider, my Worcestershire cider, to the cellar when I bid you? But go, you'll never be good for anything; you are such a lazy rascal—get out of my sight!" So saying, he pushed him out of the house-door, and Lawrence sneaked off, seeing that this was no time to make his petition for halfpence.

The next day he saw the nuts again; and wishing for them more than ever, he went home, in hopes that his father, as he said to himself, would be in a better humour. But the cider was still fresh in his recollection; and the moment Lawrence began to whisper the word "halfpenny" in his ear, his father swore, with a loud oath, "I will not give you a halfpenny, no, not a farthing, for a month to come. If you want money, go work for it; I've had enough of your laziness—go work!"

At these terrible words Lawrence burst into tears, and, going to the side of a ditch, sat down and cried for an hour; and when he had cried till he could cry no more, he exerted himself so far as to empty his pockets, to see whether there might not happen to be one halfpenny left; and, to his great joy, in the farthest corner of his pocket one halfpenny

was found. With this he proceeded to the fruit-woman's stall. She was busy weighing out some plums, so he was obliged to wait; and whilst he was waiting he heard some people near him talking and laughing very loud.

The fruit-woman's stall was at the gate of an inn-yard; and peeping through the gate in this yard, Lawrence saw a postilion and a stable-boy, about his own size, playing at pitch-farthing. He stood by watching them for a few minutes. "I begun but with one halfpenny," cried the stable-boy, with an oath, "and now I've got twopence!" added he, jingling the halfpence in his waistcoat-pocket. Lawrence was moved at the sound, and said to himself, "If *I* begin with one halfpenny I may end like him with having twopence; and it is easier to play at pitch-farthing than to work."

So he stepped forward, presenting his halfpenny, offering to toss up with the stable-boy, who, after looking him full in the face, accepted the proposal, and threw his halfpenny into the air. "Head or tail?" cried he. "Head," replied Lawrence, and it came up head. He seized the penny, surprised at his own success, and would have gone instantly to have laid it out in nuts; but the stable-boy stopped him, and tempted him to throw again. This time Lawrence lost; he threw again, and won; and so he went on, sometimes losing, but most frequently winning, till half the morning was gone. At last, however, he chanced to win twice running, and finding himself master of three halfpence, said he would play no more.

The stable-boy, grumbling, swore he would have his revenge another time, and Lawrence went and bought the nuts. "It is a good thing," said he to himself, "to play at pitch-farthing: the next time I want a halfpenny I'll not ask my father for it, nor go to work neither." Satisfied with this resolution, he sat down to crack his nuts at his leisure, upon the horse-block in the inn-yard. Here, whilst he eat, he overheard the conversation of the stable boys and postilion. At first their shocking oaths and loud wrangling frightened and shocked him; for Lawrence, though a *lazy*, had not yet learned to be a *wicked* boy. But, by degrees, he was accustomed to their swearing and quarrelling, and took a delight and interest in their disputes and battles. As this was an amusement which he could enjoy without any sort of exertion on his part, he soon grew so fond of it, that every day he returned to the stable-yard, and the horse-block

became his constant seat. Here he found some relief from the insupportable fatigue of doing nothing, and here, hour after hour, with his elbows on his knees, and his head on his hands, he sat the spectator of wickedness. Gaming, cheating, and lying soon became familiar to him; and, to complete his ruin, he formed a sudden and close intimacy with the stable-boy (a very bad boy) with whom he had first begun to game.

The consequences of this intimacy we shall presently see. But it is now time to inquire what little Jem had been doing all this while.

One day, after Jem had finished his task, the gardener asked him to stay a little while, to help him to carry some geranium-pots into the hall. Jem, always active and obliging, readily stayed from play, and was carrying in a heavy flower-pot, when his mistress crossed the hall. "What a terrible litter," said she, "you are making here!—why don't you wipe your shoes upon the mat?" Jem turned round to look for the mat, but he saw none. "Oh," said the lady, recollecting herself, "I can't blame you, for there is no mat." "No, ma'am," said the gardener, "nor I don't know when, if ever, the man will bring home those mats you bespoke, ma'am." "I am very sorry to hear that," said the lady: "I wish we could find somebody who would do them, if he can't. I should not care what sort of mats they were, so that one could wipe one's feet on them."

Jem, as he was sweeping away the litter, when he heard these last words, said to himself, "Perhaps I could make a mat." And all the way home, as he trudged along, whistling, he was thinking over a scheme for making mats, which, however bold it may appear, he did not despair of executing, with patience and industry. Many were the difficulties which his "*prophetic eye*" foresaw; but he felt within himself that spirit which spurs men on to great enterprises, and makes them "trample on impossibilities." In the first place, he recollected that he had seen Lazy Lawrence, whilst he lounged upon the gate, twist a bit of heath into different shapes; and he thought, that if he could find some way of plaiting heath firmly together, it would make a very pretty green, soft mat, which would do very well for one to wipe one's shoes on. About a mile from his mother's house, on the common which Jem rode over when he went to Farmer Truck's for the giant-strawberries, he remembered to have seen a great quantity of

this heath; and, as it was now only six o'clock in the evening, he knew that he should have time to feed Lightfoot, stroke him, go to the common, return, and make one trial of his skill before he went to bed.

Lightfoot carried him swiftly to the common, and there Jem gathered as much of the heath as he thought he should want. But what toil! what time! what pains did it cost him, before he could make anything like a mat! Twenty times he was ready to throw aside the heath, and give up his project, from impatience of repeated disappointments. But still he persevered. Nothing *truly great* can be accomplished without toil and time. Two hours he worked before he went to bed. All his play-hours the next day he spent at his mat; which, in all, made five hours of fruitless attempts. The sixth, however, repaid him for the labours of the other five. He conquered his grand difficulty of fastening the heath substantially together, and at length completely finished a mat which far surpassed his most sanguine expectations. He was extremely happy—sung, danced round it—whistled—looked at it again and again, and could hardly leave off looking at it when it was time to go to bed. He laid it by his bed-side, that he might see it the moment he awoke in the morning.

And now came the grand pleasure of carrying it to his mistress. She looked fully as much surprised as he expected when she saw it, and when she heard who made it. After having duly admired it, she asked him how much he expected for his mat. "Expect!—Nothing, ma'am," said Jem; "I meant to give it you, if you'd have it; I did not mean to sell it. I made it in my play-hours, I was very happy in making it; and I'm very glad, too, that you like it; and if you please to keep it, ma'am, that's all."

"But that's not all," said the lady. "Spend your time no more in weeding in my garden, you can employ yourself much better; you shall have the reward of your ingenuity as well as of your industry. Make as many more such mats as you can, and I will take care and dispose of them for you."

"Thank'e, ma'am," said Jem, making his best bow, for he thought by the lady's looks that she meant to do him a favour, though he repeated to himself, "Dispose of them, what does that mean?"

The next day he went to work to make more mats, and he

soon learned to make them so well and quickly, that he was surprised at his own success. In every one he made he found less difficulty, so that, instead of making two, he could soon make four, in a day. In a fortnight he made eighteen.

It was Saturday night when he finished, and he carried, at three journeys, his eighteen mats to his mistress's house; piled them all up in the hall, and stood with his hat off, with a look of proud humility, beside the pile, waiting for his mistress's appearance. Presently a folding-door, at one end of the hall, opened, and he saw his mistress, with a great many gentlemen and ladies, rising from several tables.

"Oh! there is my little boy and his mats," cried the lady; and, followed by all the rest of the company, she came into the hall. Jem modestly retired whilst they looked at his mats; but in a minute or two his mistress beckoned to him, and when he come into the middle of the circle, he saw that his pile of mats had disappeared.

"Well," said the lady, smiling, "what do you see that makes you look so surprised?" "That all my mats are gone," said Jem; "but you are very welcome." "Are we?" said the lady; "well, take up your hat, and go home then, for you see that it is getting late, and you know Lightfoot will wonder what's become of you." Jem turned round to take up his hat, which he had left on the floor.

But how his countenance changed! the hat was heavy with shillings. Every one who had taken a mat had put in two shillings; so that for the eighteen mats he had got thirty-six shillings. "Thirty-six shillings," said the lady, "five-and-sevenpence I think you told me you had earned already—how much does that make? I must add, I believe, one other sixpence to make out your two guineas."

"Two guineas!" exclaimed Jem, now quite conquering his bashfulness, for at the moment he forgot where he was, and saw nobody that was by. "Two guineas!" cried he, clapping his hands together,—"O Lightfoot! O mother!" Then, recollecting himself, he saw his mistress, whom he now looked up to quite as a friend. "Will *you* thank them all," said he, scarcely daring to glance his eye round upon the company,—"will *you* thank 'em? for you know I don't know how to thank 'em *rightly*." Everybody thought, however, that they had been thanked *rightly*.

"Now we won't keep you any longer;—only," said his mistress, "I have one thing to ask you, that I may be by when you show your treasure to your mother." "Come, then," said Jem, "come with me now." "Not now," said the lady, laughing; "but I will come to Ashton to-morrow evening; perhaps your mother can find me a few strawberries."

"That she will," said Jem; "I'll search the garden myself."

He now went home, but felt it a great restraint to wait till to-morrow evening before he told his mother. To console himself he flew to the stable:—"Lightfoot, you're not to be sold on Monday, poor fellow!" said he, patting him, and then could not refrain from counting out his money. Whilst he was intent upon this, Jem was startled by a noise at the door: somebody was trying to pull up the latch. It opened, and there came in Lazy Lawrence, with a boy in a red jacket, who had a cock under his arm. They started when they got into the middle of the stable, and when they saw Jem, who had been at first hidden by the horse.

"We—we—we came," stammered Lazy Lawrence—"I mean, I came to—to—to—" "To ask you," continued the stable-boy in a bold tone, "whether you will go with us to the cock-fight on Monday? See, I've a fine cock here, and Lawrence told me you were a great friend of his; so I came."

Lawrence now attempted to say something in praise of the pleasures of cock-fighting, and in recommendation of his new companion. But Jem looked at the stable-boy with dislike, and a sort of dread. Then turning his eyes upon the cock with a look of compassion, said in a low voice to Lawrence, "Shall you like to stand by and see its eyes pecked out?" "I don't know," said Lawrence, "as to that; but they say a cock-fight's a fine sight, and it's no more cruel in me to go than another; and a great many go; and I've nothing else to do, so I shall go." "But I have something else to do," said Jem, laughing, "so I shall not go." "But," continued Lawrence, "you know Monday is the great Bristol fair, and one must be merry then, of all days in the year." "One day in the year, sure, there's no harm in being merry," said the stable-boy. "I hope not," said Jem; "for I know, for my part, I am merry every day in the year." "That's very odd," said Lawrence; "but I

know, for my part, I would not for all the world miss going to the fair, for at least it will be something to talk of for half a year after. Come, you'll go, won't you ?" "No," said Jem, still looking as if he did not like to talk before the ill-looking stranger. "Then what will you do with all your money ?" "I'll tell you about that another time," whispered Jem ; "and don't you go to see that cock's eyes pecked out ; it won't make you merry, I'm sure." "If I had anything else to divert me," said Lawrence, hesitating and yawning. "Come," cried the stable-boy, seizing his stretching arm,—"come along," cried he ; and, pulling him away from Jem, upon whom he cast a look of extreme contempt ; "leave him alone, he's not the sort."

"What a fool you are," said he to Lawrence, the moment he got him out of the stable ; "you might have known he would not go—else we should soon have trimmed him out of his four and sevenpence. But how came you to talk of four and sevenpence ; I saw in the manger a hat full of silver." "Indeed !" exclaimed Lawrence. "Yes, indeed ; but why did you stammer so when we first got in ? you had like to have blown us all up." "I was so ashamed," said Lawrence, hanging down his head. "Ashamed ! but you must not talk of shame now you are in for it, and I shan't let you off : you owe us half-a-crown, recollect, and I must be paid to-night ; so see and get the money somehow or other." After a considerable pause, he added, "I'll answer for it, he'd never miss half-a-crown out of all that silver." "But to steal !" said Lawrence, drawing back with horror. "I never thought I should come to that—and from poor Jem, too—the money that he has worked so hard for too." "But it is not stealing : we don't mean to steal ; only to borrow it ; and, if we win, as we certainly shall, at the cock-fight, pay it back again, and he'll never know anything of the matter ; and what harm will it do him ? Besides, what signifies talking, you can't go to the cock-fight, or the fair either, if you don't ; and I tell ye we don't mean to steal it ; we'll pay it by Monday night."

Lawrence made no reply ; and they parted without his coming to any determination.

Here let us pause in our story. We are almost afraid to go on. The rest is very shocking. Our little readers will shudder as they read. But it is better that they should know the truth, and see what the idle boy came to at last.

In the dead of the night, Lawrence heard somebody tap at his window. He knew well who it was, for this was the signal agreed upon between him and his wicked companion. He trembled at the thoughts of what he was about to do, and lay quite still, with his head under the bed-clothes, till he heard the second tap. Then he got up, dressed himself, and opened his window. It was almost even with the ground. His companion said to him, in a hollow voice, "Are you ready?" He made no answer, but got out of the window and followed.

When he got to the stable, a black cloud was just passing over the moon, and it was quite dark. "Where are you?" whispered Lawrence, groping about—"where are you? Speak to me." "I am here; give me your hand." Lawrence stretched out his hand. "Is that your hand?" said the wicked boy, as Lawrence laid hold of him; "how cold it feels." "Let us go back," said Lawrence; "it is time yet." "It is no time to go back," replied the other, opening the door. "You've gone too far now to go back:" and he pushed Lawrence into the stable. "Have you found it? Take care of the horse. Have you done? What are you about? Make haste, I hear a noise," said the stable-boy, who watched at the door. "I am feeling for the half-a-crown, but I can't find it." "Bring all together." He brought Jem's broken flower-pot, with all the money in it, to the door.

The black cloud was now passed over the moon, and the light shone full upon them.—"What do we stand here for?" said the stable-boy, snatching the flower-pot out of Lawrence's trembling hands, and pulled him away from the door.

"Good God!" cried Lawrence, "you won't take all. You said you'd only take half-a-crown, and pay it back on Monday. You said you'd only take half-a-crown!" "Hold your tongue," replied the other, walking on, deaf to all remonstrances—"if ever I am to be hanged, it shan't be for half-a-crown."

Lawrence's blood ran cold in his veins, and he felt as if all his hair stood on end. Not another word passed. His accomplice carried off the money, and Lawrence crept, with all the horrors of guilt upon him, to his restless bed. All night he was starting from frightful dreams; or else, broad awake, he lay listening to every small noise, unable to stir, and scarcely daring to breathe—tormented by that most dreadful of all

kinds of fear, that fear which is the constant companion of an evil conscience.

He thought the morning would never come; but when it was day, when he heard the birds sing, and saw everything look cheerful as usual, he felt still more miserable. It was Sunday morning, and the bell rang for church. All the children of the village, dressed in their Sunday clothes, innocent and gay, and little Jem, the best and gayest amongst them, went flocking by his door to church.

"Well, Lawrence," said Jem, pulling his coat as he passed, and saw Lawrence leaning against his father's door, "what makes you look so black?" "I!" said Lawrence, starting; "why do you say that I look black?" "Nay, then," said Jem, "you look white enough now, if that will please you; for you're turned as pale as death." "Pale!" replied Lawrence, not knowing what he said, and turned abruptly away, for he dared not stand another look of Jem's; conscious that guilt was written in his face, he shunned every eye. He would now have given the world to have thrown off the load of guilt which lay upon his mind. He longed to follow Jem, to fall upon his knees, and confess all.

Dreading the moment when Jem should discover his loss, Lawrence dared not stay at home, and not knowing what to do, or where to go, he mechanically went to his old haunt at the stable-yard, and lurked thereabouts all day with his accomplice, who tried in vain to quiet his fears and raise his spirits by talking of the next day's cock-fight. It was agreed that as soon as the dusk of the evening came on, they should go together in a certain lonely field, and there divide their booty.

In the mean time, Jem, when he returned from church, was very full of business, preparing for the reception of his mistress, of whose intended visit he had informed his mother; and whilst she was arranging the kitchen and their little parlour, he ran to search the strawberry-beds.

"Why, my Jem, how merry you are to-day!" said his mother, when he came in with the strawberries, and was jumping about the room playfully. "Now keep those spirits of yours, Jem, till you want 'em, and don't let it come upon you all at once. Have it in mind that to-morrow's fair-day, and Lightfoot must go. I bid Farmer Truck call for him

to-night. He said he'd take him along with his own, and he'll be here just now—and then I know how it will be with you, Jem!" "So do I!" cried Jem, swallowing his secret with great difficulty, and then tumbling head over heels four times running.

A carriage passed the window, and stopped at the door. Jem ran out; it was his mistress. She came in smiling, and soon made the old woman smile too, by praising the neatness of everything in the house.

We shall pass over, however important they were deemed at the time, the praises of the strawberries, and of "my grandmother's china plate."

Another knock was heard at the door. "Run, Jem," said his mother, "I hope it's our milkwoman with cream for the lady." No; it was Farmer Truck come for Lightfoot. The old woman's countenance fell. "Fetch him out, dear," said she, turning to her son; but Jem was gone: he flew out to the stable the moment he saw the flap of Farmer Truck's great-coat.

"Sit ye down, farmer," said the old woman, after they had waited about five minutes in expectation of Jem's return. "You'd best sit down, if the lady will give you leave; for he'll not hurry himself back again. My boy's a fool, madam, about that there horse." Trying to laugh, she added, "I knew how Lightfoot and he would be loath enough to part. He won't bring him out till the last minute; so do sit ye down, neighbour."

The farmer had scarcely sat down, when Jem, with a pale wild countenance, came back. "What's the matter?" said his mistress. "God bless the boy!" said his mother, looking at him quite frightened, whilst he tried to speak, but could not.

She went up to him, and then leaning his head against her, he cried, "It's gone!—it's all gone!" and, bursting into tears, he sobbed as if his little heart would break. "What's gone, love?" said his mother. "My two guineas—Lightfoot's two guineas. I went to fetch 'em to give you, mammy; but the broken flower-pot that I put them in, and all's gone!—quite gone!" repeated he, checking his sobs. "I saw them safe last night, and was showing 'em to Lightfoot; and I was so glad to think I had earned them all myself; and I thought

how surprised you'd look, and how glad you'd be, and how you'd kiss me, and all!"

His mother listened to him with the greatest surprise, whilst his mistress stood in silence, looking first at the old woman, and then at Jem with a penetrating eye, as if she suspected the truth of his story, and was afraid of becoming the dupe of her own compassion.

"This is a very strange thing!" said she, gravely. "How came you to leave all your money in a broken flower-pot in the stable? How came you not to give it to your mother to take care of?" "Why, don't you remember," said Jem, looking up in the midst of his tears—"why, don't you remember you your own self bid me not tell her about it till you were by?" "And did you not tell her?" "Nay, ask mammy," said Jem, a little offended; and when, afterwards, the lady went on questioning him in a severe manner, as if she did not believe him, he at last made no answer. "Oh, Jem! Jem! why don't you speak to the lady?" said his mother. "I have spoke, and spoke the truth," said Jem, proudly; "and she did not believe me."

Still the lady, who had lived too long in the world to be without suspicion, maintained a cold manner, and determined to wait the event without interfering, saying only, that she hoped the money would be found, and advised Jem to have done crying.

"I have done," said Jem; "I shall cry no more." And as he had the greatest command over himself, he actually did not shed another tear, not even when the farmer got up to go, saying, he could wait no longer.

Jem silently went to bring out Lightfoot. The lady now took her seat, where she could see all that passed at the open parlour-window. The old woman stood at the door, and several idle people of the village, who had gathered round the lady's carriage examining it, turned about to listen. In a minute or two Jem appeared, with a steady countenance, leading Lightfoot, and, when he came up, without saying a word, put the bridle into Farmer Truck's hand. "He *has been* a good horse," said the farmer. "He *is* a good horse!" cried Jem, and threw his arm over Lightfoot's neck, hiding his own face as he leaned upon him.

At this instant a party of milkwomen went by; and one of

them, having set down her pail, came behind Jem, and gave him a pretty smart blow upon the back. He looked up.—"And don't you know me?" said she. "I forget," said Jem; "I think I have seen your face before, but I forget." "Do you so? and you'll tell me just now," said she, half opening her hand, "that you forgot who gave you this, and who charged you not to part with it too." Here she quite opened her large hand, and on the palm of it appeared Jem's silver penny.

"Where?" exclaimed Jem, seizing it, "oh, where did you find it? and have you—oh, tell me, have you got the rest of my money?" "I know nothing of your money—I don't know what you would be at," said the milkwoman. "But where—pray tell me where, did you find this?" "With them that you gave it to, I suppose," said the milkwoman, turning away suddenly to take up her milk-pail. But now Jem's mistress called to her through the window, begging her to stop, and joining in his entreaties to know how she came by the silver penny.

"Why, madam," said she, taking up the corner of her apron, "I came by it in an odd way, too. You must know my Betty is sick, so I come with the milk myself, though it's not what I'm used to; for my Betty—you know my Betty," said she, turning round to the old woman, "my Betty serves you, and she's a tight and stirring lassy, ma'am, I can assure——" "Yes, I don't doubt it," said the lady, impatiently; "but about the silver penny?"—"Why, that's true; as I was coming along all alone, for the rest came round, and I came a short cut across yon field—no, you can't see it, madam, where you stand—but if you were here——" "I see it—I know it," said Jem, out of breath with anxiety. "Well—well—I rested my pail upon the stile, and sets me down awhile, and there comes out of the hedge—I don't know well how, for they startled me so I'd like to have thrown down my milk—two boys, one about the size of he," said she, pointing to Jem, "and one a matter taller, but ill-looking like; so I did not think to stir to make way for them, and they were like in a desperate hurry; so, without waiting for the stile, one of 'em pulled at the gate, and when it would not open (for it was tied with a pretty stout cord) one of 'em whips out with his knife and cuts it——

"Now, have you a knife about you, sir?" continued the milkwoman to the farmer. He gave her his knife.

"Here now, ma'am, just sticking, as it were here, between the blade and the haft, was the silver penny. The lad took no notice; but when he opened it, out it falls. Still he takes no heed, but cuts the cord, as I said before, and through the gate they went, and out of sight in half a minute. I picks up the penny, for my heart misgave me that it was the very one husband had had a long time, and had given against my voice to he," pointing to Jem; "and I charged him not to part with it; and, ma'am, when I looked I knew it by the mark, so I thought I would show it to *he*," again pointing to Jem, "and let him give it back to those it belongs to." "It belongs to me," said Jem, "I never gave it to anybody—but——" "But," cried the farmer, "those boys have robbed him; it is they who have all his money." "Oh, which way did they go?" cried Jem, "I'll run after them."

"No, no," said the lady, calling to her servant; and she desired him to take his horse and ride after them. "Ay," added Farmer Truck, "do you take the road, and I'll take the field-way, and I'll be bound we'll have 'em presently."

Whilst they were gone in pursuit of the thieves, the lady, who was now thoroughly convinced of Jem's truth, desired her coachman would produce what she had ordered him to bring with him that evening. Out of the boot of the carriage the coachman immediately produced a new saddle and bridle.

How Jem's eyes sparkled when the saddle was thrown upon Lightfoot's back! "Put it on your horse yourself, Jem," said the lady; "it is yours."

Confused reports of Lightfoot's splendid accoutrements, of the pursuit of thieves, and of the fine and generous lady who was standing at Dame Preston's window, quickly spread through the village, and drew everybody from their houses. They crowded round Jem to hear the story. The children especially, who were all fond of him, expressed the strongest indignation against the thieves. Every eye was on the stretch; and now some, who had run down the lane, came back shouting, "Here they are! they've got the thieves!"

The footman on horseback carried one boy before him; and the farmer, striding along, dragged another. The latter had on a red jacket, which little Jem immediately recollected, and

scarcely dared lift his eyes to look at the boy on horseback. "Good God!" said he to himself, "it must be—yet surely it can't be Lawrence!" The footman rode on as fast as the people would let him. The boy's hat was slouched, and his head hung down, so that nobody could see his face.

At this instant there was a disturbance in the crowd. A man who was half drunk pushed his way forwards, swearing that nobody should stop him; that he had a right to see—and he *would* see. And so he did; for, forcing through all resistance, he staggered up to the footman just as he was lifting down the boy he had carried before him. "I *will*—I tell you I *will* see the thief!" cried the drunken man, pushing up the boy's hat. It was his own son. "Lawrence!" exclaimed the wretched father. The shock sobered him at once, and he hid his face in his hands.

There was an awful silence. Lawrence fell on his knees, and in a voice that could scarcely be heard made a full confession of all the circumstances of his guilt.

"Such a young creature so wicked!" the bystanders exclaimed; "what could put such wickedness into your head?" "Bad company," said Lawrence. "And how came you—what brought you into bad company?" "I don't know, except it was idleness."

While this was saying, the farmer was emptying Lazy Lawrence's pockets; and when the money appeared, all his former companions in the village looked at each other with astonishment and terror. Their parents grasped their little hands closer, and cried, "Thank God! he is not my son How often when he was little we used, as he lounged about, to tell him that idleness was the root of all evil."

As for the hardened wretch, his accomplice, every one was impatient to have him sent to gaol. He put on a bold, insolent countenance, till he heard Lawrence's confession; till the money was found upon him; and he heard the milkwoman declare, that she would swear to the silver penny which he had dropped. Then he turned pale, and betrayed the strongest signs of fear.

"We must take him before the justice," said the farmer, "and he'll be lodged in Bristol gaol."

"Oh!" said Jem, springing forwards when Lawrence's hands were going to be tied, "let him go—won't you—can't

you let him go?" "Yes, madam, for mercy's sake," said Jem's mother to the lady, "think what a disgrace to his family to be sent to gaol."

His father stood by wringing his hands in an agony of despair. "It's all my fault," cried he; "I brought him up in *idleness*." "But he'll never be idle any more," said Jem; "won't you speak for him, ma'am?" "Don't ask the lady to speak for him," said the farmer; "it's better he should go to bridewell now, than to the gallows by-and-bye."

Nothing more was said; for everybody felt the truth of the farmer's speech.

Lawrence was eventually sent to bridewell for a month, and the stable-boy was sent for trial, convicted, and transported to Botany Bay.

During Lawrence's confinement, Jem often visited him, and carried him such little presents as he could afford to give; and Jem could afford to be *generous*, because he was *industrious*. Lawrence's heart was touched by his kindness, and his example struck him so forcibly, that when his confinement was ended, he resolved to set immediately to work; and, to the astonishment of all who knew him, soon became remarkable for industry. He was found early and late at his work, established a new character, and for ever lost the name of "*Lazy Lawrence*."

TARLTON.

Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot,—
To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,—
To breathe th' enlivening spirit,—and to fix
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.

THOMSON.

YOUNG HARDY was educated by Mr. Freeman, a very excellent master, at one of our rural Sunday-schools. He was honest, obedient, active, and good-natured; hence he was esteemed by his master; and being beloved by all his companions who were good, he did not desire to be loved by the bad; nor was he at all vexed or ashamed, when idle, mischievous, or dishonest boys attempted to plague or ridicule him. His friend Loveit, on the contrary, wished to be universally liked; and his highest ambition was to be thought the best-natured boy in the school:—and so he was. He usually went by the name of *poor Loveit*, and everybody pitied him when he got into disgrace, which he frequently did; for though he had a good disposition, he was often led to do things which he knew to be wrong, merely because he could never have the courage to say *No;* because he was afraid to offend the ill-natured, and could not bear to be laughed at by fools.

One fine autumn evening, all the boys were permitted to go out to play in a pleasant green meadow near the school. Loveit, and another boy, called Tarlton, began to play a game at battledore and shuttlecock, and a large party stood by to look on; for they were the best players at battledore and shuttlecock in the school, and this was a trial of skill between them. When they had got it up to three hundred and twenty, the game became very interesting. The arms of the comba-

tants grew so tired, that they could scarcely wield the battledores. The shuttlecock began to waver in the air; now it almost touched the ground, and now, to the astonishment of the spectators, mounted again high over their heads; yet the strokes became feebler and feebler; and "now Loveit!" "now Tarlton!" resounded on all sides. For another minute the victory was doubtful; but at length the setting sun shining full in Loveit's face so dazzled his eyes, that he could no longer see the shuttlecock, and it fell at his feet.

After the first shout for Tarlton's triumph was over, everybody exclaimed, "Poor Loveit!—he's the best-natured fellow in the world!—what a pity that he did not stand with his back to the sun."

"Now, I dare you all to play another game with me," cried Tarlton, vauntingly; and as he spoke he tossed the shuttlecock up with all his force—with so much force, that it went over the hedge, and dropped into a lane, which went close beside the field. "Hey-day!" said Tarlton, "what shall we do now?"

The boys were strictly forbidden to go into the lane; and it was upon their promise not to break this command that they were allowed to play in the adjoining field.

No other shuttlecock was to be had, and their play was stopped. They stood on the top of the bank, peeping over the hedge. "I see it yonder," said Tarlton; "I wish anybody would get it. One could get over the gate at the bottom of the field, and be back again in half a minute," added he, looking at Loveit. "But you know we must not go into the lane," said Loveit, hesitatingly. "Pugh!" said Tarlton, "why, now, what harm could it do?" "I don't know," said Loveit, drumming upon his battledore; "but—" "You don't know, man! why, then, what are you afraid of, I ask you?" Loveit coloured, went on drumming, and again, in a lower voice, said *he didn't know*. But upon Tarlton's repeating, in a more insolent tone, "I ask you, man, what you're afraid of?" he suddenly left off drumming, and looking round, said, "He was not afraid of anything, that he knew of."—"Yes, but you are," said Hardy, coming forward. "Am I?" said Loveit; "of what, pray, am I afraid?" "Of doing wrong!" "Afraid *of doing wrong!*" repeated Tarlton, mimicking him, so that he made everybody laugh. "Now, hadn't you better say, afraid

of being flogged?" "No," said Hardy, coolly, after the laugh had somewhat subsided, "I am as little afraid of being flogged as you are, Tarlton; but I meant——" "No matter what you meant; why should you interfere with your wisdom, and your meanings; nobody thought of asking *you* to stir a step for us; but we asked Loveit, because he's the best fellow in the world." "And for that very reason you should not ask him, because you know he can't refuse you anything?" "Indeed, though," cried Loveit, piqued, "*there* you're mistaken, for I could refuse if I chose it."

Hardy smiled; and Loveit, half afraid of his contempt, and half afraid of Tarlton's ridicule, stood doubtful, and again had recourse to his battledore, which he balanced most curiously upon his forefinger. "Look at him!—now do look at him!" cried Tarlton; "did you ever in your life see anybody look so silly!—Hardy has him quite under thumb; he's so mortally afraid of Parson Prig, that he dare not, for the soul of him, turn either of his eyes from the tip of his nose; look how he squints!" "I don't squint," said Loveit, looking up, "and nobody has me under his thumb; and what Hardy said, was only for fear I should get into disgrace; he's the best friend I have."

Loveit spoke this with more than usual spirit, for both his heart and his pride were touched. "Come along, then," said Hardy, taking him by the arm in an affectionate manner; and he was just going, when Tarlton called after him, "Ay, go along with its best friend, and take care it does not get into a scrape;—good-bye, Little Panado!" "Whom do they call Little Panado?" said Loveit, turning his head hastily back. "Never mind," said Hardy, "what does it signify?" "No," said Loveit, "to be sure it does not signify; but one does not like to be called Little Panado: besides," added he, after going a few steps farther, "they'll all think it so ill-natured. I had better go back, and just tell them that I'm very sorry I can't get their shuttlecock;—do come back with me." "No," said Hardy, "I can't go back; and you'd better not." "But, I assure you, I won't stay a minute; wait for me," added Loveit; and he slunk back again to prove that he was not Little Panado.

Once returned, the rest followed, of course; for to support his character for good-nature he was obliged to yield to the

entreaties of his companions, and, to show his spirit, leapt over the gate, amidst the acclamations of the little mob:—he was quickly out of sight.

"Here," cried he, returning in about five minutes, quite out of breath, "I've got the shuttlecock: and I'll tell you what I've seen," cried he, panting for breath. "What?" cried everybody, eagerly. "Why, just at the turn of the corner, at the end of the lane"—panting. "Well," said Tarlton, impatiently, "do go on." "Let me just take breath first." "Pugh! never mind your breath." "Well, then, just at the turn of the corner, at the end of the lane, as I was looking about for the shuttlecock, I heard a great rustling somewhere near me, and so I looked where it could come from; and I saw, in a nice little garden, on the opposite side of the way, a boy, about as big as Tarlton, sitting in a great tree, shaking the branches; and at every shake down there came such a shower of fine large rosy apples, they made my mouth water: so I called to the boy, to beg one; but he said, he could not give me one, for that they were his grandfather's; and just at that minute, from behind a gooseberry-bush, up popped the uncle; the grandfather poked his head out of the window; so I ran off as fast as my legs would carry me, though I heard him bawling after me all the way."

"And let him bawl," cried Tarlton; "he shan't bawl for nothing: I'm determined we'll have some of his fine large rosy apples before I sleep to-night."

At this speech a general silence ensued; everybody kept their eyes fixed upon Tarlton, except Loveit, who looked down, apprehensive that he should be drawn on much farther than he intended. "Oh, indeed!" said he to himself, "as Hardy told me, I had better not have come back!"

Regardless of this confusion, Tarlton continued, "But before I say any more, I hope we have no spies amongst us. If there is any one of you afraid to be flogged, let him march off this instant!"

Loveit coloured, bit his lips, wished to go, but had not the courage to move first. He waited to see what everybody else would do: nobody stirred; so Loveit stood still.

"Well, then," cried Tarlton, giving his hand to the boy next him, then to the next, "your word and honour that you won't betray me; but stand by me, and I'll stand by you."

Each boy gave his hand, and his promise; repeating, "Stand by me, and I'll stand by you."

Loveit hung back till the last; and had almost twisted off the button of the boy's coat who screened him, when Tarlton came up, holding out his hand, "Come, Loveit, lad, you're in for it: stand by me, and I'll stand by you." "Indeed, Tarlton," expostulated he, without looking him in the face, "I do wish you'd give up this scheme; I dare say all the apples are gone by this time; I wish you would. Do, pray, give up this scheme." "What scheme, man! you hav'n't heard it yet; you may as well know your text before you begin preaching."

The corners of Loveit's mouth could not refuse though in his heart he felt not the slightest inclination to laugh.

"Why, I don't know you, I declare I don't know you, to-day," said Tarlton; "you used to be the best-natured, most agreeable lad in the world, and would do anything one asked you; but you're quite altered of late, as we were saying just now, when you skulked away with Hardy: come,—do, man, pluck up a little spirit, and be one of us, or you'll make us all *hate you.*" "*Hate* me!" repeated Loveit, with terror; "no, surely, you won't all *hate* me!" and he mechanically stretched out his hand, which Tarlton shook violently, saying, "*Ay, now, that's right.*" "*Ay, now, that's wrong!*" whispered Loveit's conscience; but his conscience was of no use to him, for it was always overpowered by the voice of numbers; and though he had the wish he never had the power, to do right. "Poor Loveit! I knew he would not refuse us," cried his companions; and even Tarlton, the moment he shook hands with him, despised him. It is certain, that weakness of mind is despised both by the good and by the bad.

The league being thus formed, Tarlton assumed all the airs of a commander, explained his schemes, and laid the plan of attack upon the poor old man's apple-tree. It was the only one he had in the world. We shall not dwell upon their consultation; for the amusement of contriving such expeditions is often the chief thing which induces idle boys to engage in them.

There was a small window at the end of the back staircase, through which, between nine and ten o'clock at night, Tarlton, accompanied by Loveit and another boy, crept out. It was a

moonlight night, and after crossing the field, and climbing the gate, directed by Loveit, who now resolved to go through the affair with spirit, they proceeded down the lane with rash yet fearful steps.

At a distance Loveit saw the whitewashed cottage, and the apple-tree beside it. They quickened their pace, and with some difficulty scrambled through the hedge which fenced the garden, though not without being scratched and torn by the briers. Everything was silent. Yet now and then, at every rustling of the leaves, they started, and their hearts beat violently. Once as Loveit was climbing the apple-tree, he thought he heard a door in the cottage open, and earnestly begged his companions to desist and return home. This, however, he could by no means persuade them to do, until they had filled their pockets with apples; then, to his great joy, they returned, crept in at the staircase window, and each retired, as softly as possible, to his own apartment.

Loveit slept in the room with Hardy, whom he had left fast asleep, and whom he now was extremely afraid of awakening. All the apples were emptied out of Loveit's pockets, and lodged with Tarlton till the morning, for fear the smell should betray the secret to Hardy. The room door was apt to creak, but it was opened with such precaution, that no noise could be heard, and Loveit found his friend as fast asleep as when he left him.

"Ah," said he to himself, "how quietly he sleeps! I wish I had been sleeping too." The reproaches of Loveit's conscience, however, served no other purpose but to torment him; he had not sufficient strength of mind to be good. The very next night, in spite of all his fears, and all his penitence, and all his resolutions, by a little fresh ridicule and persuasion he was induced to accompany the same party on a similar expedition. We must observe, that the necessity for continuing their depredations became stronger the third day; for, though at first only a small party had been in the secret, by degrees it was divulged to the whole school; and it was necessary to secure secrecy by sharing the booty.

Every one was astonished that Hardy, with all his quickness and penetration, had not yet discovered their proceedings; but Loveit could not help suspecting that he was not quite so ignorant as he appeared to be. Loveit had strictly kept his

promise of secrecy; but he was by no means an artful boy; and in talking to his friend, conscious that he had something to conceal, he was perpetually on the point of betraying himself; then recollecting his engagement, he blushed, stammered, bungled; and upon Hardy's asking what he meant, would answer, with a silly, guilty countenance, that he did not know; or abruptly break off, saying, "Oh, nothing! nothing at all!"

It was in vain that he urged Tarlton to permit him to consult his friend. A gloom overspread Tarlton's brow when he began to speak on the subject, and he always returned a peremptory refusal, accompanied with some such taunting expression as this—"I wish we had nothing to do with such a sneaking fellow: he'll betray us all, I see, before we have done with him." "Well," said Lovell to himself, "so I am abused after all, and called a sneaking fellow for my pains; that's rather hard, to be sure, when I've got so little by the job."

In truth he had not got much; for in the division of the booty only one apple, and a half of another which was only half-ripe, happened to fall to his share; though, to be sure, when they had all eaten their apples, he had the satisfaction to hear everybody declare they were very sorry they had forgotten to offer some of theirs to "*poor Lovell.*"

In the meantime the visits to the apple-tree had been now too frequently repeated to remain concealed from the old man who lived in the cottage. He used to examine his only tree very frequently, and missing numbers of rosy apples which he had watched ripening, he, though not much prone to suspicion, began to think that there was something going wrong; especially as a gap was made in his hedge, and there were several small footsteps in his flower-beds.

The good old man was not at all inclined to give pain to any living creature, much less to children, of whom he was particularly fond. Nor was he in the least avaricious, for though he was not rich, he had enough to live upon, because he had been very industrious in his youth; and he was always very ready to part with the little he had. Nor was he a cross old man. If anything would have made him angry, it would have been the seeing his favourite tree robbed, as he had promised himself the pleasure of giving his red apples to his grandchildren on his birthday. However, he looked up at

the tree in sorrow rather than in anger, and leaning upon his staff he began to consider what he had best do.

"If I complain to their master," said he to himself, "they will certainly be flogged, and that I should be sorry for; yet they must not be let to go on stealing; that would be worse still, for it would surely bring them to the gallows in the end. Let me see—oh, ay, that will do; I will borrow farmer Kent's dog Barker, he'll keep them off, I'll answer for it."

Farmer Kent lent his dog Barker, cautioning his neighbour, at the same time, to be sure to chain him well, for he was the fiercest mastiff in England. The old man, with farmer Kent's assistance, chained him fast to the trunk of the apple-tree.

Night came; and Tarlton, Loveit, and his companions, returned at the usual hour. Grown bolder now by frequent success, they came on talking and laughing. But the moment they had set their foot in the garden, the dog started up; and, shaking his chain as he sprang forward, barked with unremitting fury. They stood still, as if fixed to the spot. There was just moonlight enough to see the dog. "Let us try the other side of the tree," said Tarlton. But to whichever side they turned, the dog flew round in an instant, barking with increased fury.

"He'll break his chain, and tear us to pieces," cried Tarlton; and, struck with terror, he immediately threw down the basket he had brought with him, and betook himself to flight with the greatest precipitation. "Help me! oh, pray help me! I can't get through the hedge," cried Loveit, in a lamentable tone, whilst the dog growled hideously, and sprang forward to the extremity of his chain. "I can't get out! Oh, for God's sake, stay for me one minute, dear Tarlton!" He called in vain; he was left to struggle through his difficulties by himself; and of all his dear friends not one turned back to help him. At last, torn and terrified, he got through the hedge and ran home, despising his companions for their selfishness. Nor could he help observing, that Tarlton, with all his vaunted prowess, was the first to run away from the appearance of danger.

The next morning, Loveit could not help reproaching the party with their conduct. "Why could not you, any of you, stay one minute to help me?" said he. "We did not hear you call," answered one. "I was so frightened," said another,

"I would not have turned back for the whole world." "And you, Tarlton?" "I," said Tarlton; "had not I enough to do to take care of myself, you blockhead? Every one for himself in this world!" "So I see," said Loveit, gravely. "Well, man! is there anything strange in that?" "Strange? why, yes; I thought you all loved me!" "Lord love you, lad! so we do; but we love ourselves better." "Hardy would not have served me so, however," said Loveit, turning away in disgust. Tarlton was alarmed. "Pugh!" said he, "what nonsense have you taken into your brain? Think no more about it. We are all very sorry, and beg your pardon; come, shake hands—forgive and forget."

Loveit gave his hand, but gave it rather coldly. "I forgive it with all my heart," said he; "but I cannot forget it so soon!" "Why, then, you are not such a good-humoured fellow as we thought you were. Surely you cannot bear malice, Loveit?" Loveit smiled, and allowed that he certainly could not bear malice. "Well, then, come; you know at the bottom we all love you, and would do anything in the world for you." Poor Loveit, flattered in his foible, began to believe that they did love him at the bottom, as they said, and even with his eyes open consented again to be duped.

"How strange it is," thought he, "that I should set such value upon the love of those I despise! When I'm once out of this scrape, I'll have no more to do with them, I'm determined."

Compared with his friend Hardy, his new associates did indeed appear contemptible; for all this time Hardy had treated him with uniform kindness, avoided to pry into his secrets, yet seemed ready to receive his confidence, if it had been offered.

After school in the evening, as he was standing silently beside Hardy, who was ruling a sheet of paper for him, Tarlton, in his brutal manner, came up, and seizing him by the arm, cried, "Come along with me, Loveit. I've something to say to you." "I can't come now," said Loveit, drawing away his arm. "Ah, do come now," said Tarlton, in a voice of persuasion. "Well, I'll come presently." "Nay, but do, pray; there's a good fellow, come now, because I've something to say to you." "What is it you've got to say to me? I wish you'd let me alone," said Loveit; yet at the same time he suffered himself to be led away.

Tarlton took particular pains to humour him and bring him into temper again; and even, though he was not very apt to part with his play-things, went so far as to say, "Loveit, the other day you wanted a top; I'll give you mine, if you desire it." Loveit thanked him, and was overjoyed at the thoughts of possessing this top. "But what did you want to say to me just now?" "Ay, we'll talk of that presently; not yet—when we get out of hearing." "Nobody is near us," said Loveit. "Come a little farther, however," said Tarlton, looking round suspiciously. "Well now, well?" "You know the dog that frightened us so last night?" "Yes." "It will never frighten us again." "Won't it? how so?" "Look here," said Tarlton, drawing from his pocket something wrapped in a blue handkerchief. "What's that?" Tarlton opened it. "Raw meat!" exclaimed Loveit. "How came you by it?" "Tom, the servant boy, Tom got it for me, and I'm to give him sixpence." "And is it for the dog?" "Yes; I vow'd I'd be revenged on him, and after this, he'll never bark again." "Never bark again! What do you mean? Is it poison?" exclaimed Loveit, starting back with horror. "Only poison for a *dog*," said Tarlton, confused; "you could not look more shocked if it was poison for a Christian."

Loveit stood for nearly a minute in profound silence. "Tarlton," said he at last, in a changed tone and altered manner, "I did not know you; I will have no more to do with you." "Nay, but stay," said Tarlton, catching hold of his arm, "stay; I was only joking." "Let go my arm—you were in earnest." "But then that was before I knew there was any harm. If you think there's any harm?" "*If*," said Loveit. "Why, you know, I might not know; for Tom told me it's a thing that's often done; ask Tom." "I'll ask nobody! Surely we know better what's right and wrong than Tom does." "But only just ask him, to hear what he'll say." "I don't want to hear what he'll say," cried Loveit, vehemently: "the dog will die in agonies—in horrid agonies! There was a dog poisoned at my father's—I saw him in the yard. Poor creature! he lay and howled, and writhed himself!" "Poor creature! Well, there's no harm done now," cried Tarlton, in an hypocritical tone. But though he thought fit to dissemble with Loveit, he was thoroughly determined in his purpose.

Poor Loveit, in haste to get away, returned to his friend Hardy; but his mind was in such agitation, that he neither talked nor moved like himself; and two or three times his heart was so full that he was ready to burst into tears.

"How good-natured you are to me," said he to Hardy, as he was trying vainly to entertain him; "but if you knew——" Here he stopped short, for the bell for evening prayer rang, and they all took their places, and knelt down. After prayers, as they were going to bed, Loveit stopped Tarlton,—"*Well!*" asked he, in an inquiring manner, fixing his eyes upon him. —"*Well!*" replied Tarlton, in an audacious tone, as if he meant to set his inquiring eye at defiance.—"What do you mean to do to-night?" "To go to sleep, as you do, I suppose," replied Tarlton, turning away abruptly, and whistling as he walked off.

"Oh, he has certainly changed his mind!" said Loveit to himself, "else he could not whistle."

About ten minutes after this, as he and Hardy were undressing, Hardy suddenly recollected that he had left his new kite out upon the grass. "Oh," said he "it will be quite spoiled before morning!" "Call Tom," said Loveit, "and bid him bring it in for you in a minute." They both went to the top of the stairs to call Tom; no one answered. They called again, louder. "Is Tom below?"—"I'm here," answered he at last, coming out of Tarlton's room, with a look of mixed embarrassment and effrontery. And as he was receiving Hardy's commission, Loveit saw the corner of the blue handkerchief hanging out of his pocket. This excited fresh suspicions in Loveit's mind; but, without saying one word, he immediately stationed himself at the window in his room, which looked out towards the lane; and, as the moon was risen, he could see if any one passed that way. "What are you doing there?" said Hardy, after he had been watching some time; "why don't you come to bed?" Loveit returned no answer, but continued standing at the window. Nor did he watch long in vain. Presently he saw Tom gliding slowly along a by-path, and get over the gate into the lane.

"He's gone to do it!" exclaimed Loveit aloud, with an emotion which he could not command. "Who's gone? to do what?" cried Hardy, starting up. "How cruel, how wicked!" continued Loveit. "What's cruel—what's wicked?

speak out at once!" returned Hardy, in that commanding tone which, in moments of danger, strong minds feel themselves entitled to assume towards weak ones. Loveit instantly, though in an incoherent manner, explained the affair to him. Scarcely had the words passed his lips, when Hardy sprang up, and began dressing himself without saying one syllable. "For God's sake, what are you going to do?" said Loveit, in great anxiety. "They'll never forgive me! don't betray me! they'll never forgive me! pray, speak to me! only say you won't betray us." "I will not betray you, trust to me," said Hardy; and he left the room, and Loveit stood in amazement: whilst, in the mean time, Hardy, in hopes of overtaking Tom before the fate of the poor dog was decided, ran with all possible speed across the meadow, and then down the lane. He came up with Tom just as he was climbing the bank into the old man's garden. Hardy, too much out of breath to speak, seized hold of him, dragged him down, detaining him with a firm grasp, whilst he panted for utterance. "What, Master Hardy, is it you? what's the matter? what do you want?" "I want the poisoned meat that you have in your pocket." "Who told you that I had any such thing?" said Tom, clapping his hand upon his guilty pocket. "Give it me quietly, and I'll let you off."—"Sir, upon my word I haven't! I didn't! I don't know what you mean," said Tom, trembling, though he was by far the strongest of the two; "indeed, I don't know what you mean." "You do," said Hardy, with great indignation; and a violent struggle immediately commenced.

The dog, now alarmed by the voices, began to bark outrageously. Tom was terrified lest the old man should come out to see what was the matter; his strength forsook him, and flinging the handkerchief and meat over the hedge, he ran away with all his speed. The handkerchief fell within the reach of the dog, who instantly snapped at it: luckily, it did not come untied. Hardy saw a pitchfork on a dunghill close beside him, and seizing upon it, stuck it into the handkerchief. The dog pulled, tore, growled, grappled, yelled; it was impossible to get the handkerchief from between his teeth; but the knot was loosed, the meat, unperceived by the dog, dropped out, and while he dragged off the handkerchief in triumph, Hardy, with inexpressible joy, plunged the pitchfork into the poisoned meat, and bore it away.

Never did hero retire with more satisfaction from a field of battle. Full of the pleasure of successful benevolence, Hardy tripped joyfully home, and vaulted over the window-sill, when the first object he beheld was Mr. Power, the usher, standing at the head of the stairs, with his candle in his hand.

"Come up, whoever you are," said Mr. William Power, in a stern voice; "I thought I should find you out at last. Come up, whoever you are!" Hardy obeyed, without reply.—"Hardy!" exclaimed Mr. Power, starting back with astonishment; "is it you, Mr. Hardy?" repeated he, holding the light to his face. "Why, sir," said he, in a sneering tone, "I'm sure if Mr. Trueman was here he wouldn't believe his own eyes; but for my part, I saw through you long since; I never liked saints, for my share. Will you please to do me the favour, sir, if it is not too much trouble, to empty your pockets?" Hardy obeyed in silence. "Heyday! meat! raw meat! what next?"—"That's all," said Hardy, emptying his pockets inside out. "This is *all*," said Mr. Power, taking up the meat. "Pray, sir," said Hardy, eagerly, "let that meat be burned,—it is poisoned." "Poisoned!" cried Mr. William Power, letting it drop out of his fingers; "you wretch!" looking at him with a menacing air: "what is all this? Speak." Hardy was silent. "Why don't you speak?" cried he, shaking him by the shoulder impatiently. Still Hardy was silent. "Down upon your knees this minute, and confess all; tell me where you've been, what you've been doing, and who are your accomplices, for I know there is a gang of you: so," added he, pressing heavily upon Hardy's shoulder, "down upon your knees this minute, and confess the whole,—that's your only way now to get yourself off. If you hope for *my* pardon, I can tell you it's not to be had without asking for."

"Sir," said Hardy, in a firm but respectful voice, "I have no pardon to ask, I have nothing to confess; I am innocent; but if I were not, I would never try to get myself off by betraying my companions."

"Very well, sir! very well! very fine! stick to it, stick to it, I advise you—and we shall see. And how will you look to-morrow, Mr. Innocent, when my uncle the Doctor comes home?"

"As I do now, sir," said Hardy, unmoved.

His composure threw Mr. Power into a rage too great for utterance. "Sir," continued Hardy, "ever since I have been at school, I never told a lie, and therefore, sir, I hope you will believe me now. Upon my word and honour, sir, I have done nothing wrong." "Nothing wrong? Better and better! what, when I caught you going out at night?" "*That*, to be sure, was wrong," said Hardy, recollecting himself; "but except that—" "Except that, sir! I will except nothing. Come along with me, young gentleman, your time for pardon is past."

Saying these words, he pulled Hardy along a narrow passage to a small closet, set apart for desperate offenders, and usually known by the name of the *Black Hole*. "There, sir, take up your lodging there for to-night," said he, pushing him in; "to-morrow I'll know more, or I'll know why," added he, double locking the door, with a tremendous noise, upon his prisoner, and locking also the door at the end of the passage, so that no one could have access to him. "So now I think I have you safe!" said Mr. William Power to himself, stalking off with steps which made the whole gallery resound, and which made many a guilty heart tremble.

The conversation which had passed between Hardy and Mr. Power at the head of the stairs had been anxiously listened to; but only a word or two here and there had been distinctly overheard.

The locking of the *Black Hole* door was a terrible sound —some knew not what it portended, and others knew *too well*.

All assembled in the morning with faces of anxiety. Tarlton's and Loveit's were the most agitated: Tarlton for himself; Loveit for his friend, for himself, for everybody. Every one of the party, and Tarlton at their head, surrounded him with reproaches; and considered him as the author of the evils which hung over them.

"How could you do so? and why did you say anything to Hardy about it? when you had promised, too! Oh, what shall we all do! what a scrape you have brought us into! Loveit, it's all your fault!"

"*All my fault!*" repeated poor Loveit, with a sigh; "well, that is hard."

"Goodness! there's the bell," exclaimed a number of voices

at once. "Now for it!" They all stood in a half-circle for morning prayers. They listened,—"Here he is coming! No! —Yes! Here he is!" And Mr. William Power, with a gloomy brow, appeared, and walked up to his place at the head of the room. They knelt down to prayers; and the moment they rose, Mr. William Power, laying his hand upon the table, cried, "Stand still, gentlemen, if you please."

Everybody stood stock still; he walked out of the circle; they guessed that he was gone for Hardy, and the whole room was in commotion. Each with eagerness asked each what none could answer, "*Has he told?*" "*What* has he told?" "Who has he told of?" "I hope he has not told of me?" cried they. "I'll answer for it he has told of all of us," said Tarlton. "And I'll answer for it he has told of none of us," answered Loveit, with a sigh. "You don't think he's such a fool, when he can get himself off," said Tarlton.

At this instant the prisoner was led in, and as he passed through the circle, every eye was fixed upon him; his eye turned upon no one, not even upon Loveit, who pulled him by the coat as he passed—every one felt almost afraid to breathe.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Power, sitting down in Mr. Trueman's elbow-chair, and placing the prisoner opposite to him; "well, sir, what have you to say to me this morning?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Hardy, in a decided yet modest manner; "nothing but what I said last night."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing more, sir."

"But I have something more to say to you, sir, then; and a great deal more, I promise you, before I have done with you;" and then seizing him in a fury, he was just going to give him a severe flogging, when the schoolroom door opened, and Mr. Trueman appeared, followed by an old man whom Loveit immediately knew. He leaned upon his stick as he walked, and in his other hand carried a basket of apples. When they came within the circle, Mr. Trueman stopped short. "Hardy!" exclaimed he, with a voice of unfeigned surprise, whilst Mr. William Power stood with his hand suspended.—"Ay, Hardy, sir," repeated he. "I told him you'd not believe your own eyes."

Mr. Trueman advanced with a slow step. "Now, sir, give

me leave," said the usher, eagerly drawing him aside, and whispering.

"So, sir," said Mr. T., when the whisper was done, addressing himself to Hardy, with a voice and manner, which, had he been guilty, must have pierced him to the heart, "I find I have been deceived in you; it is but three hours ago that I told your uncle I never had a boy in my school in whom I placed so much confidence, but, after all this show of honour and integrity, the moment my back is turned, you are the first to set an example of disobedience to my orders. Why do I talk of disobeying my commands—you are a thief!" "I, sir!" exclaimed Hardy, no longer able to repress his feelings. "You, sir,—you and some others," said Mr. Trueman, looking round the room with a penetrating glance—"you and some others." "Ay, sir!" interrupted Mr. William Power, "get that out of him if you can—ask him." "I will ask him nothing; I shall neither put his truth nor his honour to the trial; truth and honour are not to be expected amongst thieves." "I am not a thief! I have never had anything to do with thieves," cried Hardy, indignantly. "Have not you robbed this old man? don't you know the taste of these apples?" said Mr. Trueman, taking one out of the basket. "No, sir, I do not; I never touched one of that old man's apples." "Never touched one of them! I suppose this is some vile equivocation; you have done worse, you have had the barbarity, the baseness, to attempt to poison his dog; the poisoned meat was found in your pocket last night." "The poisoned meat was found in my pocket, sir; but I never attempted to poison the dog—I saved his life." "Lord bless him," said the old man. "Nonsense—cunning!" said Mr. Power. "I hope you won't let him impose upon you so, sir." "No, he cannot impose upon me; I have a proof he is little prepared for," said Mr. Trueman, producing the blue handkerchief in which the meat had been wrapped.

Tarlton turned pale; Hardy's countenance never changed. —"Don't you know this handkerchief, sir?"—"I do, sir."—"Is it not yours?"—"No, sir."—"Don't you know whose it is?" cried Mr. Power. Hardy was silent.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr. Trueman, "I am not fond of punishing you; but when I do it, you know it is always in earnest. I will begin with the eldest of you; I will begin with Hardy, and flog you with my own hands till this handkerchief is owned,"

"I'm sure it's not mine;" and "I'm sure it's none of mine," burst from every mouth, whilst they looked at each other in dismay; for none but Hardy, Loveit, and Tarlton knew the secret.

"My cane!" said Mr. Trueman, and Power handed him the cane. Loveit groaned from the bottom of his heart. Tarlton leaned back against the wall with a black countenance. Hardy looked with a steady eye at the cane.

"But first," said Mr. Trueman, laying down the cane, "let us see. Perhaps we may find out the owner of this handkerchief another way," examining the corners. It was torn almost to pieces; but luckily the corner that was marked remained.

"J. T.!" cried Mr. Trueman. Every eye turned upon the guilty Tarlton, who, now as pale as ashes and trembling in every limb, sunk down upon his knees, and in a whining voice begged for mercy.

"Upon my word and honour, sir, I'll tell you all; I should never have thought of stealing the apples if Loveit had not first told me of them; and it was Tom, who first put the poisoning of the dog into my head. It was he, that carried the meat; *wasn't it?*" said he, appealing to Hardy, whose word he knew must be believed. "Oh, dear, sir!" continued he, as Mr. Trueman began to move towards him, "do let me off; do pray let me off this time! I'm not the only one, indeed, sir! I hope you won't make me an example for the rest. It's very hard I'm to be flogged more than they!"

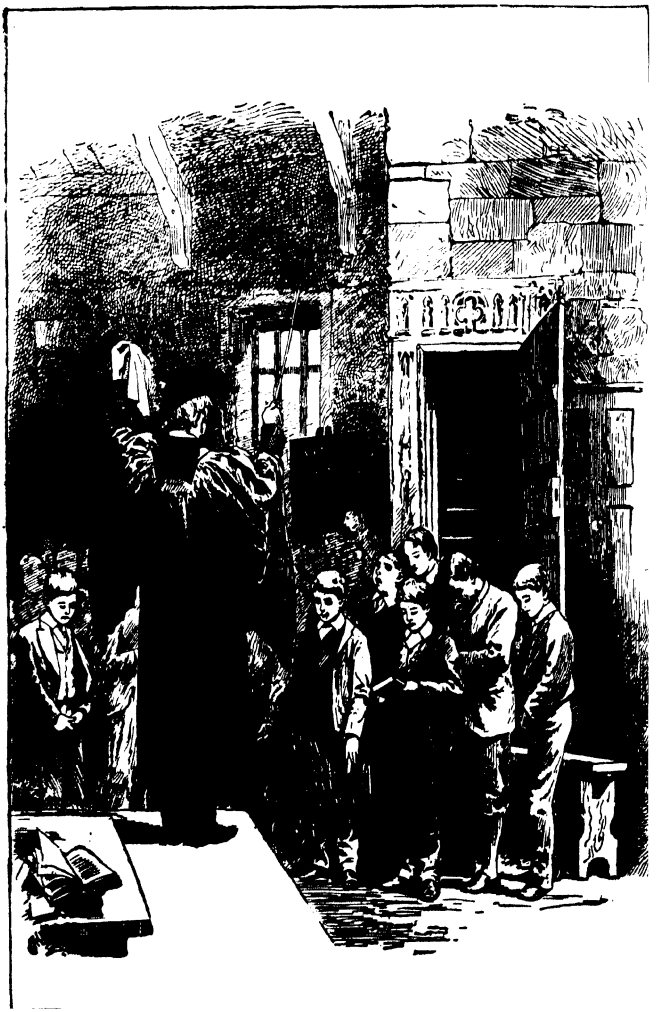
"I'm not going to flog you."

"Thank you, sir," said Tarlton, getting up and wiping his eyes.

"You need not thank me," said Mr. Trueman. "Take your handkerchief—go out of this room—out of this house; let me never see you more."

"If I had any hopes of him," said Mr. Trueman, as he shut the door after him; "if I had any hopes of him, I would have punished him;—but I have none. Punishment is meant only to make people better; and those who have any hopes of themselves will know how to submit to it."

At these words, Loveit first, and immediately all the rest of the guilty party, stepped out of the ranks, confessed their fault, and declared themselves ready to bear any punishment their master thought proper.



'I WILL FLOG YOU WITH MY OWN HANDS TILL THIS HANDKERCHIEF IS OWNED.'

"Oh, they have been punished enough," said the old man; "forgive them, sir."

Hardy looked as if he wished to speak.

"Not because you ask it," said Mr. Trueman to the guilty penitents, "though I should be glad to oblige you—it wouldn't be just; but there," pointing to Hardy, "there is one who has merited a reward; the highest I can give him is that of pardoning his companions."

Hardy bowed, and his face glowed with pleasure, whilst everybody present sympathized in his feelings.

"I am sure," thought Loveit, "this is a lesson I shall never forget."

"Gentlemen," said the old man, with a faltering voice, "it wasn't for the sake of my apples that I spoke; and you, sir," said he to Hardy, "I thank you for saving my dog. If you please, I'll plant on that mount, opposite the window, a young apple-tree, from my old one. I will water it, and take care of it with my own hands, for your sake, as long as I am able. —And may God bless you!" laying his trembling hand on Hardy's head, "may God bless you—I'm sure God *will* bless all such boys as you are."

SIMPLE SUSAN.

CHAPTER I.

Waked, as her custom was, before the day,
To do the observance due to sprightly May.
DRYDEN.

IN a retired hamlet on the borders of Wales, between Oswestry and Shrewsbury, it is still the custom to celebrate the 1st of May.

The children of the village, who look forward to this rural festival with joyful eagerness, usually meet on the last day of April to make up their nosegays for the morning, and to choose their queen. Their customary place of meeting is at a hawthorn, which stands in a little green nook, open on one side to a shady lane, and separated on the other side by a thick sweet-brier and hawthorn hedge from the garden of an attorney.

This attorney began the world with nothing; but he contrived to scrape together a good deal of money: everybody knew how. He built a new house at the entrance of the village, and had a large well-fenced garden; yet, notwithstanding his fences, he never felt himself secure. Such were his litigious habits, and his suspicious temper, that he was constantly at variance with his simple and peaceable neighbours. Some pig, or dog, or goat, or goose was for ever trespassing. His complaints and his extortions wearied and alarmed the whole hamlet. The paths in his fields were at length unfrequented —his stiles were blocked up with stones, or stuffed with brambles and briers, so that not a gosling could creep under or a giant get over them. Indeed, so careful were even the vil-

lage children of giving offence to this irritable man of the law, that they would not venture to fly a kite near his fields, lest it should entangle in his trees, or fall upon his meadow.

Mr. Case, for this was the name of our attorney, had a son and a daughter, to whose education he had not time to attend, as his whole soul was intent upon accumulating for them a fortune. For several years he suffered his children to run wild in the village; but suddenly, upon his being appointed to a considerable agency, he began to think of making his children a little genteel. He sent his son to learn Latin; he hired a maid to wait upon his daughter Barbara; and he strictly forbade her *thenceforward* to keep company with any of the poor children, who had hitherto been her playfellows. They were not sorry for this prohibition, because she had been their tyrant rather than their companion. She was vexed to observe that her absence was not regretted, and she was mortified to perceive that she could not humble them by any display of airs and finery.

There was one poor girl amongst her former associates, to whom she had a peculiar dislike,—Susan Price, a sweet-tempered, modest, sprightly, industrious lass, who was the pride and delight of the village. Her father rented a small farm, and, unfortunately for him, he lived near Attorney Case.

Barbara used often to sit at her window, watching Susan at work. Sometimes she saw her in the neat garden, raking the beds, or weeding the borders; sometimes she was kneeling at her beehive with fresh flowers for her bees; sometimes she was in the poultry-yard, scattering corn from her sieve amongst the eager chickens; and in the evening she was often seated in a little honey-suckle arbour, with a clean, light, three-legged deal table before her, upon which she put her plain work.

Susan had been taught to work neatly by her good mother, who was very fond of her, and to whom she was most gratefully attached.

Mrs. Price was an intelligent, active, domestic woman; but her health was not robust. She earned money, however, by taking in plain work; and she was famous for baking excellent bread and breakfast cakes. She was respected in the village for her conduct as a wife and as a mother, and all were eager to show her attention. At her door the first branch of haw-

thorn was always placed on May-morning, and her Susan was usually Queen of the May.

It was now time to choose the Queen.—The setting sun shone full upon the pink blossoms of the hawthorn, when the merry group assembled upon their little green. Barbara was now walking in sullen state in her father's garden. She heard the busy voices in the lane, and she concealed herself behind the high hedge, that she might listen to their conversation.

"Where's Susan?" were the first unwelcome words which she overheard. "Ay, where's Susan?" repeated Philip, stopping short in the middle of a new tune that he was playing on his pipe. "I wish Susan would come! I want her to sing me this same tune over again; I have not it yet."

"And I wish Susan would come, I'm sure," cried a little girl whose lap was full of primroses. "Susan will give me some thread to tie up my nosegays, and she'll show me where the fresh violets grow; and she has promised to give me a great bunch of her double cowslips to wear to-morrow. I wish she would come."

"Nothing can be done without Susan! She always shows us where the nicest flowers are to be found in the lanes and meadows," said they. "She must make up the garlands; and she shall be Queen of the May!" exclaimed a multitude of little voices.

"But she does not come!" said Philip.

Rose, who was her particular friend, now came forward to assure the impatient assembly, that she would answer for it Susan would come as soon as she possibly could, and that she probably was detained by business at home.

The little electors thought that all business should give way to theirs, and Rose was despatched to summon her friend immediately.

"Tell her to make haste," cried Philip. "Attorney Case dined at the Abbey to-day—luckily for us. If he comes home and finds us here, maybe he'll drive us away; for he says this bit of ground belongs to his garden: though that is not true, I'm sure; for Farmer Price knows, and says, it was always open to the road. The attorney wants to get our playground, so he does. I wish he and his daughter Bab, or Miss Barbara, as she must now be called, were a hundred miles off, out of

our way, I know. No later than yesterday she threw down my nine-pins in one of her ill humours, as she was walking by with her gown all trailing in the dust."

"Yes," cried Mary, the little primrose girl, "her gown is always trailing. She does not hold it up nicely, like Susan; and with all her fine clothes she never looks half so neat. Mamma says she wishes I may be like Susan, when I grow up to be a great girl, and so do I. I should not like to look conceited, as Barbara does, if I was ever so rich."

"Rich or poor," said Philip, "it does not become a girl to look conceited, much less *bold*, as Barbara did the other day, when she was standing at her father's door without a hat upon her head, staring at the strange gentleman, who stopped hereabout to let his horse drink. I know what he thought of Bab by his looks, and of Susan, too; for Susan was in her garden, bending down a branch of the laburnum-tree, looking at its yellow flowers, which were just come out; and when the gentleman asked her how many miles it was from Shrewsbury, she answered him so modest!—not bashful, like as if she had never seen nobody before—but just right; and then she pulled on her straw hat, which was fallen back with her looking up at the laburnum, and she went her ways home; and the gentleman says to me, after she was gone, 'Pray who is that neat, modest girl?' But I wish Susan would come," cried Philip, interrupting himself.

Susan was all this time, as her friend Rose rightly guessed, busy at home. She was detained by her father's returning later than usual. His supper was ready for him nearly an hour before he came home; and Susan swept up the ashes twice, and twice put on wood to make a cheerful blaze for him; but at last, when he did come in, he took no notice of the blaze or of Susan; and when his wife asked him how he did, he made no answer, but stood with his back to the fire, looking very gloomy. Susan put his supper upon the table, and set his own chair for him; but he pushed away the chair, and turned from the table, saying—"I shall eat nothing, child! Why have you such a fire, to roast me at this time of the year?"

"You said yesterday, father, I thought, that you liked a little cheerful wood fire in the evening; and there was a great shower of hail; your coat is quite wet, we must dry it."

"Take it then, child," said he, pulling it off—"I shall soon

have no coat to dry—and take my hat too," said he, throwing it upon the ground.

Susan hung up his hat, put his coat over the back of a chair to dry, and then stood anxiously looking at her mother, who was not well; she had this day fatigued herself with baking; and now, alarmed by her husband's moody behaviour, she sat down pale and trembling. He threw himself into a chair, folded his arms, and fixed his eyes upon the fire.

Susan was the first who ventured to break silence. Happy the father who has such a daughter as Susan!—Her unaltered sweetness of temper, and her playful, affectionate caresses, at last somewhat dissipated her father's melancholy.

He could not be prevailed upon to eat any of the supper which had been prepared for him; however, with a faint smile, he told Susan that he thought he could eat one of her Guinea-hen's eggs. She thanked him, and with that nimble alacrity which marks the desire to please, she ran to her neat chicken-yard; but, alas! her Guinea-hen was not there!—it had strayed into the attorney's garden. She saw it through the paling, and timidly opening the little gate, she asked Miss Barbara, who was walking slowly by, to let her come in and take her Guinea-hen. Barbara, who was at this instant reflecting, with no agreeable feelings, upon the conversation of the village children, to which she had recently listened, started when she heard Susan's voice, and with a proud, ill-humoured look and voice, refused her request.

"Shut the gate," said Barbara, "you have no business in *our* garden; and as for your hen, I shall keep it; it is always flying in here, and plaguing us; and my father says it is a trespasser; and he told me I might catch it and keep it the next time it got in; and it is in now." Then Barbara called to her maid Betty, and bid her catch the mischievous hen.

"Oh, my Guinea-hen! my pretty Guinea-hen!" cried Susan, as they hunted the frightened, screaming creature from corner to corner.

"Here we have got it!" said Betty, holding it fast by the legs.

"Now pay damages, Queen Susan; or good-bye to your pretty Guinea hen!" said Barbara, in an insulting tone.

"Damages! what damages?" said Susan; "tell me what I must pay." "A shilling," said Barbara. "Oh, if sixpence

would do!" said Susan; "I have but sixpence of my own in the world, and here it is." "It won't do," said Barbara, turning her back. "Nay, but hear me," cried Susan; "let me at least come in to look for its eggs. I only want *one* for my father's supper; you shall have all the rest." "What's your father or his supper to us? is he so nice that he can eat none but Guinea-hen's eggs?" said Barbara. "If you want your hen and your eggs, pay for them, and you'll have them." "I have but sixpence, and you say that won't do," said Susan, with a sigh, as she looked at her favourite, which was in the maid's grasping hands, struggling and screaming in vain.

Susan retired disconsolate. At the door of her father's cottage she saw her friend Rose, who was just come to summon her to the hawthorn bush.

"They are all at the hawthorn, and I am come for you. We can do nothing without *you*, dear Susan," cried Rose, running to meet her, at the moment she saw her. "You are chosen Queen of the May;—come, make haste. But what's the matter! why do you look so sad?"

"Ah!" said Susan, "don't wait for me; I can't come to you; but," added she, pointing to the tuft of double cowslips in the garden, "gather those for poor little Mary; I promised them to her; and tell her the violets are under the hedge just opposite the turnstile, on the right as we go to church. Good-bye; never mind me; I can't come—I can't stay; for my father wants me."

"But don't turn away your face; I won't keep you a moment; only tell me what's the matter," said her friend, following her into the cottage.

"Oh, nothing, not much," said Susan; "only that I wanted the egg in a great hurry for father, it would not have vexed me—to be sure, I should have clipped my Guinea-hen's wings, and then she could not have flown over the hedge; but let us think no more about it now," added she, twinkling away a tear.

When Rose, however, learnt that her friend's Guinea-hen was detained prisoner by the attorney's daughter, she exclaimed with all the honest warmth of indignation, and instantly ran back to tell the story to her companions.

"Barbara! ay; like father, like daughter," cried Farmer

Price, starting from the thoughtful attitude in which he had been fixed, and drawing his chair closer to his wife.

"You see something is amiss with me, wife—I'll tell you what it is." As he lowered his voice, Susan, who was not sure that he wished she should hear what he was going to say, retired from behind his chair. "Susan, don't go; sit you down here, my sweet Susan," said he, making room for her upon his chair. "I believe I was a little cross when I came in first to-night; but I had something to vex me, as you shall hear.

"About a fortnight ago, you know, wife," continued he, "there was a balloting in our town for the militia; now at that time I wanted but ten days of forty years of age; and the attorney told me I was a fool for not calling myself plump forty. But the truth is the truth; and it is what I think fittest to be spoken at all times, come what will of it—so I was drawn for a militia-man; but when I thought how loth you and I would be to part, I was main glad to hear that I could get off by paying eight or nine guineas for a substitute; only I had not the nine guineas; for you know we had bad luck with our sheep this year, and they died away one after another; but that was no excuse; so I went to Attorney Case, and with a power of difficulty I got him to lend me the money; for which, to be sure, I gave him something, and left my lease of our farm with him, as he insisted upon it, by way of security for the loan. Attorney Case is too many for me. He has found what he calls a *flaw* in my lease; and the lease he tells me is not worth a farthing, and that he can turn us all out of our farm to-morrow if he pleases; and sure enough he will please; for I have thwarted him this day, and he swears he'll be revenged of me. Indeed he has begun with me badly enough already. I'm not come to the worst part of my story yet——"

Here Farmer Price made a dead stop: and his wife and Susan looked up in his face breathless with anxiety.

"It must come out," said he, with a short sigh; "I must leave you in three days, wife."

"Must you!" said his wife, in a faint resigned voice. "Susan, love, open the window." Susan ran to open the window, and then returned to support her mother's head.

When she came a little to herself, she sat up, begged that

her husband would go on, and that nothing might be concealed from her. Her husband had no wish indeed to conceal anything from a wife he loved so well; but, firm as he was, and steady to his maxim, that the truth was the thing the fittest to be spoken at all times, his voice faltered, and it was with some difficulty that he brought himself to speak the whole truth at this moment.

The fact was this:—Case met Farmer Price, as he was coming home, whistling from a new-ploughed field. The attorney had just dined at *the Abbey*. The Abbey was the family seat of an opulent baronet in the neighbourhood, to whom Mr. Case had been agent. The baronet died suddenly, and his estate and title devolved to a younger brother, who was now just arrived in the country, and to whom Mr. Case was eager to pay his court, in hopes of obtaining his favour. Of the agency he flattered himself that he was pretty secure; and he thought that he might assume the tone of command towards the tenants, especially towards one who was some guineas in debt, and in whose lease there was a flaw.

Accosting the farmer in a haughty manner, the attorney began with, "So, Farmer Price, a word with you, if you please; walk on here, man, beside my horse, and you'll hear me. You have changed your opinion, I hope, about that bit of land,—that corner at the end of my garden?" "As how Mr. Case?" said the former. "As how, man—why, you said something about its not belonging to me, when you heard me talk of inclosing it, the other day." "So I did," said Price, "and so I do."

Provoked and astonished at the firm tone in which these words were pronounced, the attorney was upon the point of swearing that he would have his revenge; but, as his passions were habitually attentive to the *letter* of the law, he refrained from any hasty expression, which might, he was aware, in a court of justice, be hereafter brought against him.

"My good friend, Mr. Price," said he, in a soft voice, and pale with suppressed rage—he forced a smile—"I'm under the necessity of calling in the money I lent you some time ago, and you will please to take notice that it must be paid to-morrow morning. I wish you a good evening. You have the money ready for me, I dare say."

"No," said the farmer, "not a guinea of it; but John

Simpson, who was my substitute, has not left our village yet. I'll get the money back from him, and go myself, if so be it must be so, into the militia—so I will."

The attorney did not expect such a determination, and he represented, in a friendly, hypocritical tone to Price, that he had no wish to drive him to such an extremity; that it would be the height of folly in him *to run his head against a wall for no purpose.* "You don't mean to take the corner into your own garden, do you, Price?" said he. "I," said the farmer, "God forbid! it's none of mine; I never take what does not belong to me." "True, right, very proper, of course," said Mr. Case; "but then you have no interest in life in the land in question?" "None." "Then why so stiff about it, Price? all I want of you is to say——" "To say that black is white, which I won't do, Mr. Case. The ground is a thing not worth talking of; but it's neither yours nor mine. In my memory, since the *new* lane was made, it has always been open to the parish; and no man shall inclose it with my good-will. Truth is truth, and must be spoken; justice is justice, and should be done, Mr. Attorney." "And law is law, Mr. Farmer, and shall have its course, to your cost," cried the attorney, exasperated by the dauntless spirit of this village Hampden.

Here they parted. The glow of enthusiasm, the pride of virtue, which made our hero brave, could not render him insensible. As he drew nearer home, many melancholy thoughts pressed upon his heart. He passed the door of his own cottage with resolute steps, however, and went through the village in search of the man who had engaged to be his substitute. He found him, told him how the matter stood; and luckily the man, who had not yet spent the money, was willing to return it; as there were many others drawn for the militia, who, he observed, would be glad to give him the same price, or more, for his services.

The moment Price got the money, he hastened to Mr. Case's house, walked straight forward into his room, and laying the money down upon his desk, "There, Mr. Attorney, are your nine guineas; count them; now I have done with you."

"Not yet," said the attorney, jingling the money triumphantly in his hand. "We'll give you a taste of the law, my

good sir, or I'm mistaken. You forget the flaw in your lease, which I have safe in this desk."

"Ah, my lease," said the farmer, who had almost forgot to ask for it till he was thus put in mind of it by the attorney's impudent threat.

"Give me my lease, Mr. Case. I've paid my money; you have no right to keep the lease any longer, whether it is a bad one or a good one."

"Pardon me," said the attorney, locking his desk, and putting the key into his pocket, "possession, my honest friend," cried he, striking his hand upon the desk, "is nine points of the law. Good night to you. I cannot in conscience return a lease to a tenant in which I know there is a capital flaw. It is my duty to show it to my employer; or, in other words, to your new landlord, whose agent I have good reasons to expect I shall be. You will live to repent your obstinacy, Mr. Price. Your servant, sir."

Price retired with melancholy feelings, but not intimidated. Many a man returns home with a gloomy countenance, who has not quite so much cause for vexation.

When Susan heard her father's story, she quite forgot her Guinea-hen, and her whole soul was intent upon her poor mother, who, notwithstanding her utmost exertion, could not support herself under this sudden stroke of misfortune.

In the middle of the night, Susan was called up; her mother's fever ran high for some hours; but towards morning it abated, and she fell into a soft sleep, with Susan's hand locked fast in hers.

Susan sat motionless, and breathed softly, lest she should disturb her. The rushlight, which stood beside the bed, was now burnt low; the long shadow of the tall wicker chair flitted, faded, appeared, and vanished, as the flame rose and sunk in the socket. Susan was afraid that the disagreeable smell might awaken her mother; and, gently disengaging her hand, she went on tiptoe to extinguish the candle. All was silent: the grey light of the morning was now spreading over every object; the sun rose slowly, and Susan stood at the lattice-window, looking through the small leaded, cross-barred panes at the splendid spectacle. A few birds began to chirp; but as Susan was listening to them, her mother started in her sleep, and spoke unintelligibly. Susan hung up a white apron

before the window to keep out the light, and just then she heard the sound of music at a distance in the village. As it approached nearer, she knew that it was Philip playing upon his pipe and tabor. She distinguished the merry voices of her companions "carolling in honour of the May," and soon she saw them coming towards her father's cottage, with branches and garlands in their hands. She opened quick, but gently, the latch of the door, and ran out to meet them.

"Here she is!—here's Susan!" they exclaimed joyfully. "Here's the Queen of the May!" "And here's her crown!" cried Rose, pressing forward; but Susan put her finger upon her lips, and pointed to her mother's window. Philip's pipe stopped instantly.

"Thank you," said Susan, "my mother is ill; I can't leave her, you know." Then gently putting aside the crown, her companions bid her say who should wear it for her.

"Will you, dear Rose?" said she, placing the garland upon her friend's head. "It's a charming May morning," added she, with a smile; "good-bye. We shan't hear your voices or the pipe when you have turned the corner into the village; so you need only stop till then, Philip."

"I shall stop for all day," said Philip: "I've no mind to play any more."

"Good-bye, poor Susan. It is a pity you can't come with us," said all the children; and little Mary ran after Susan to the cottage-door.

"I forgot to thank you," said she, "for the double cowslips; look how pretty they are, and smell how sweet the violets are in my bosom, and kiss me quick, for I shall be left behind." Susan kissed the little breathless girl, and returned softly to the side of her mother's bed.

"How grateful that child is to me for a cowslip only! How can I be grateful enough to such a mother as this?" said Susan to herself, as she bent over her sleeping mother's pale countenance.

Her mother's unfinished knitting lay upon a table near the bed, and Susan sat down in her wicker arm-chair, and went on with the row, in the middle of which her hand stopped the preceding evening. "She taught me to knit, she taught me everything that I know," thought Susan; "and best of all, she taught me to love her, to wish to be like her."

Her mother, when she awakened, felt much refreshed by her tranquil sleep, and observing that it was a delightful morning, said that she had been dreaming she heard music; but that the drum frightened her, because she thought it was the signal for her husband to be carried away by a whole regiment of soldiers, who had pointed their bayonets at him. "But that was but a dream, Susan; I awoke, and knew it was a dream, and I then fell asleep, and have slept soundly ever since."

How painful it is to awake to the remembrance of misfortune. Gradually, as this poor woman collected her scattered thoughts, she recalled the circumstances of the preceding evening. She was too certain that she had heard from her husband's own lips the words, "*I must leave you in three days;*" and she wished that she could sleep again, and think it all a dream.

"But he'll want, he'll want a hundred things," said she, starting up. "I must get his linen ready for him. I'm afraid it's very late. Susan, why did you let me lie so long?"

"Everything shall be ready, dear mother; only don't hurry yourself," said Susan. And indeed her mother was ill able to bear any hurry, or to do any work this day. Susan's affectionate, dexterous, sensible activity was never more wanted, or more effectual. She understood so readily, she obeyed so exactly; and when she was left to her own discretion, judged so prudently, that her mother had little trouble and no anxiety in directing her. She said that Susan never did too little, or too much.

Susan was mending her father's linen, when Rose tapped softly at the window, and beckoned to her to come out. She went out. "How does your mother do, in the first place?" said Rose. "Better, thank you." "That's well, and I have a little bit of good news for you besides—here," said she, pulling out a glove, in which there was money, "we'll get the Guinea-hen back again—we have all agreed about it. This is the money that has been given to us in the village this May morning. At every door they gave silver. See how generous they have been,—twelve shillings, I assure you. Now we are a match for Miss Barbara. You won't like to leave home. I'll go to Barbara, and you shall see your Guinea-hen in ten minutes."

Rose hurried away, pleased with her commission, and eager to accomplish her business. Miss Barbara's maid, Betty, was the first person that was visible at the attorney's house. Rose insisted upon seeing Miss Barbara herself, and she was shown into a parlour to the young lady, who was reading a dirty novel, which she put under a heap of law-papers as they entered.

"Dear, how you *startled* me! Is it only you?" said she to her maid; but as soon as she saw Rose behind the maid, she put on a scornful air. "Could not ye say I was not at home, Betty? Well, my good girl, what brings you here? Something to borrow or beg, I suppose."

May every ambassador—every ambassador in as good a cause—answer with as much dignity and moderation as Rose replied to Barbara upon the present occasion. She assured her, that the person from whom she came did not send her either to beg or borrow; that she was able to pay the full value of that for which she came to ask; and, producing her well-filled purse, "I believe that this is a very good shilling," said she. "If you don't like it, I will change it; and now you will be so good as to give me Susan's Guinea-hen. It is in her name I ask for it."

"No matter in whose name you ask for it," replied Barbara, "you will not have it. Take up your shilling, if you please. I would have taken a shilling yesterday, if it had been paid at the time properly; but I told Susan, that if it was not paid then, I should keep the hen, and so I shall, I promise her. You may go back, and tell her so."

The attorney's daughter had, whilst Rose opened her negotiation, measured the depth of her purse with a keen eye; and her penetration discovered that it contained at least ten shillings. With proper management she had some hopes that the Guinea-hen might be made to bring in at least half the money.

Rose, who was of a warm temper, not quite so fit a match as she had thought herself for the wily Barbara, incautiously exclaimed, "Whatever it costs us, we are determined to have Susan's favourite hen; so, if one shilling won't do, take two; and if two won't do, why take three."

The shillings sounded provokingly upon the table, as she threw them down, one after another, and Barbara coolly re-

plied, "Three won't do." "Have you no conscience, Miss Barbara? then take four." Barbara shook her head. A fifth shilling was instantly proffered; but Bab, who now saw plainly that she had the game in her own hands, preserved a cold cruel silence. Rose went on rapidly, bidding shilling after shilling, till she had completely emptied her purse. The twelve shillings were spread upon the table. Barbara's avarice was moved; she consented for this ransom to liberate her prisoner.

Rose pushed the money towards her; but just then recollecting that she was acting for others more than for herself, and doubting whether she had full powers to conclude such an extravagant bargain, she gathered up the public treasure, and, with newly-recovered prudence, observed, that she must go back to consult her friends. Her generous little friends were amazed at Barbara's meanness; but with one accord declared, that they were most willing, for their parts, to give up every farthing of the money. They all went to Susan in a body, and told her so. "There's our purse," said they; "do what you please with it." They would not wait for one word of thanks, but ran away, leaving only Rose with her to settle the treaty for the Guinea-hen.

There is a certain manner of accepting a favour, which shows true generosity of mind. Many know how to give, but few know how to accept a gift properly. Susan was touched, but not astonished, by the kindness of her young friends, and she received the purse with as much simplicity as she would have given it.

"Well," said Rose, "shall I go back for the Guinea-hen?" "The Guinea-hen?" said Susan, starting from a reverie into which she had fallen, as she contemplated the purse. "Certainly I *do* long to see my pretty Guinea-hen once more; but I was not thinking of her just then—I was thinking of my father."

Now Susan had heard her mother often, in the course of this day, wish that she had but money enough in the world to pay John Simpson for going to serve in the militia instead of her husband. "This, to be sure, will go but a little way," thought Susan; "but still it may be of some use to my father." She told her mind to Rose, and concluded by saying decidedly, that "if the money was given her to dispose of as she pleased, she would give it to her father."

"It is all yours, my dear good Susan," cried Rose, with a look of warm approbation. "This is so like you!—But I'm sorry that Miss Bab must keep your Guinea-hen. I would not be her for all the Guinea-hens, or guineas either, in the whole world. Why, I'll answer for it, the Guinea-hen won't make her happy, and you'll be happy *even* without; because you are good. Let me come and help you to-morrow," continued she, looking at Susan's work, "if you have any more mending work to do—I never liked work till I worked with you. I won't forget my thimble or my scissors," added she, laughing,—"though I used to forget them when I was a giddy girl. I assure you I am a great hand at my needle now—try me."

Susan assured her friend that she did not doubt the powers of her needle, and that she would most willingly accept of her services, but that *unluckily* she had finished all the needlework that was immediately wanted.

"But do you know," said she, "I shall have a great deal of business to-morrow; but I won't tell you what it is that I have to do, for I am afraid I shall not succeed; but if I do succeed, I'll come and tell you directly, because you will be so glad of it."

Susan, who had always been attentive to what her mother taught her, and who had often assisted her when she was baking bread and cakes for the family at the Abbey, had now formed the courageous, but not presumptuous idea, that she could herself undertake to bake a batch of bread. One of the servants from the Abbey had been sent all round the village in the morning, in search of bread, and had not been able to procure any that was tolerable. Mrs. Price's last baking failed for want of good barm. She was not now strong enough to attempt another herself: and when the brewer's boy came with eagerness to tell her that he had some fine fresh yeast for her, she thanked him, but sighed, and said it would be of no use to her, she was too ill for the work. Susan modestly requested permission to try her hand, and her mother would not refuse her. Accordingly she went to work with much prudent care, and when her bread the next morning came out of the oven, it was excellent; at least her mother said so, and she was a good judge. It was sent to the Abbey; and as the family there had not tasted any good bread since their arrival in the country,

they also were earnest and warm in its praise. Inquiries were made from the housekeeper, and they heard, with some surprise, that this excellent bread was made by a young girl only twelve years old.

The housekeeper, who had known Susan from a child, was pleased to have an opportunity of speaking in her favour. "She is the most industrious little creature, ma'am, in the world," said she, to her mistress. "Little I can't so well call her now, since she's grown tall and slender to look at; and glad I am she is grown up likely to look at; for handsome is that handsome does; and she thinks no more of her being handsome than I do myself; yet she has as proper a respect for herself, ma'am, as you have; and I always see her neat, and with her mother, ma'am, or fit people, as a girl should be. As for her mother, she dotes upon her, as well she may; for I should myself, if I had half such a daughter: and then she has two little brothers; and she's as good to them, and, my boy Philip says, taught 'em to read more than the school-mistress, all with tenderness and good nature; but I beg your pardon, ma'am, I cannot stop myself when I once begin to talk of Susan."

"You have really said enough to excite my curiosity," said her mistress; "pray send for her immediately; we can see her before we go out to walk."

The benevolent housekeeper despatched her boy Philip for Susan, who never happened to be in such an *untidy* state as to be unable to obey a summons without a long preparation. She had, it is true, been very busy; but orderly people can be busy and neat at the same time. She put on her usual straw hat, and accompanied Rose's mother, who was going with a basket of cleared muslin to the Abbey.

The modest simplicity of Susan's appearance, and the artless good sense and propriety of the answers she gave to all the questions that were asked her, pleased the ladies at the Abbey, who were good judges of character and manners.

Sir Arthur Somers had two sisters, sensible, benevolent women. They were not of that race of fine ladies who are miserable the moment they come to *the country;* nor yet were they of that bustling sort, who quack and direct all their poor neighbours, for the mere love of managing, or the want of something to do. They were judiciously generous; and

whilst they wished to diffuse happiness, they were not peremptory in requiring that people should be happy precisely their own way. With these dispositions, and with a well-informed brother, who, though he never wished to direct, was always willing to assist in their efforts to do good, there were reasonable hopes that these ladies would be a blessing to the poor villagers amongst whom they were now settled.

As soon as Miss Somers had spoken to Susan, she inquired for her brother; but Sir Arthur was in his study, and a gentleman was with him on business.

Susan was desirous of returning to her mother, and the ladies therefore would not detain her. Miss Somers told her with a smile, when she took leave, that she would call upon her in the evening at six o'clock.

It was impossible that such a grand event as Susan's visit to the Abbey could long remain unknown to Barbara Case and her gossiping maid. They watched eagerly for the moment of her return, that they might satisfy their curiosity. "There she is, I declare, just come into her garden," cried Bab; "I'll run in, and get it all out of her in a minute."

Bab could descend, without shame, whenever it suited her purposes, from the height of insolent pride to the lowest meanness of fawning familiarity.

Susan was gathering some marigolds and some parsley, for her mother's broth.

"So, Susan," said Bab, who came close up to her before she perceived it, "how goes the world with you to-day?" "My mother is rather better to-day, she says, ma'am—thank you," replied Susan, coldly, but civilly. "*Ma'am!* dear, how polite we are grown of a sudden!" cried Bab, winking at her maid. "One may see you've been in good company this morning—hey, Susan. Come, let's hear about it." "Did you see the ladies themselves, or was it only the housekeeper sent for you?" said the maid, "What room did you go into?" continued Bab. "Did you see Miss Somers or Sir Arthur?" "Miss Somers." "La! she saw Miss Somers! Betty, I must hear about it. Can't you stop gathering those things for a minute, and chat a bit with us, Susan?" "I can't stay, indeed, Miss Barbara; for my mother's broth is just wanted, and I'm in a hurry." Susan ran home.

"Lord, her head is full of broth now," said Bab to her

maid; "and she has not a word for herself, though she has been abroad. My papa may well call her *Simple Susan;* for simple she is, and simple she will be, all the world over. For my part, I think she's little better than a downright simpleton. But however, simple or not, I'll get what I want out of her. She'll be able to speak, may be, when she has settled the grand matter of the broth. I'll step in, and ask to see her mother; that will put her in a good humour in a trice."

Barbara followed Susan into the cottage, and found her occupied with the grand affair of the broth. "Is it ready?" said Bab, peeping into the pot that was over the fire. "Dear, how savory it smells! I'll wait till you go in with it to your mother; for I must ask her how she does myself." "Will you please to sit down then, miss," said Simple Susan, with a smile; for at this instant she forgot the Guinea-hen: "I have but just put the parsley into the broth; but it will soon be ready."

During this interval Bab employed herself, much to her own satisfaction, in cross-questioning Susan. She was rather provoked, indeed, that she could not learn exactly how each of the ladies was dressed, and what there was to be for dinner at the Abbey; and she was curious beyond measure to find out what Miss Somers meant, by saying that she would call at Mrs. Price's cottage at six o'clock in the evening.—"What do you think she could mean?" "I thought she meant what she said," replied Susan, "that she would come here at six o'clock." "Ay, that's as plain as a pike-staff," said Barbara; "but what else did she mean, think you? People, you know, don't always mean exactly, downright, neither more nor less than they say." "Not always," said Susan, with an arch smile, which convinced Barbara that she was not quite a simpleton. "*Not always,*" repeated Barbara, colouring,—"oh, then I suppose you have some guess at what Miss Somers meant." "No," said Susan, "I was not thinking about Miss Somers, when I said 'not always.'" "How nice that broth does look!" resumed Barbara, after a pause.

Susan had now poured the broth into a basin, and as she strewed over it the bright orange marigolds, it looked very tempting. She tasted it, and added now a little salt, and now a little more, till she thought it was just to her mother's taste. "Oh, *I* must taste it," said Bab, taking the basin up greedily.

"Won't you take a spoon," said Susan, trembling at the large mouthfuls which Barbara sucked up with a terrible noise. "Take a spoonful, indeed!" exclaimed Barbara, setting down the basin in high anger. "The next time I taste your broth you shall affront me, if you dare! The next time I set my foot in this house, you shall be as saucy to me as you please." And she flounced out of the house, repeating, "*Take a spoon, pig*, was what you meant to say."

Susan stood in amazement at the beginning of this speech; but the concluding words explained to her the mystery.

Some years before this time, when Susan was a very little girl, and could scarcely speak plain, as she was eating a basin of bread and milk for her supper at the cottage door, a great pig came up, and put his nose into the basin. Susan was willing that the pig should have some share of the bread and milk; but as she ate with a spoon, and he with his large mouth, she presently discovered that he was likely to have more than his share; and in a simple tone of expostulation she said to him, "Take a *poon*, pig."[1] The saying became proverbial in the village. Susan's little companions repeated it, and applied it upon many occasions, whenever any one claimed more than his share of anything good. Barbara, who was then not Miss Barbara, but plain Bab, and who played with all the poor children in the neighbourhood, was often reproved in her unjust methods of division by Susan's proverb. Susan, as she grew up, forgot the childish saying; but the remembrance of it rankled in Barbara's mind, and it was to this that she suspected Susan had alluded, when she recommended a spoon to her, whilst she was swallowing the basin of broth.

"La, miss," said Barbara's maid, when she found her mistress in a passion upon her return from Susan's; "I only wonder you did her the honour to set your foot within her doors. What need have you to trouble her for news about the Abbey folks, when your own papa has been there all the morning, and is just come in, and can tell you everything?"

Barbara did not know that her father meant to go to the Abbey that morning, for Attorney Case was mysterious even to his own family about his morning rides. He never chose to be asked where he was going, or where he had been; and

[1] This is a true anecdote.

this made his servants more than commonly inquisitive to trace him.

Barbara, against whose apparent childishness and real cunning he was not sufficiently upon his guard, had often the art of drawing him into conversation about his visits. She ran into her father's parlour; but she knew, the moment she saw his face, that it was no time to ask questions; his pen was across his mouth, and his brown wig pushed oblique upon his contracted forehead. The wig was always pushed crooked whenever he was in a brown, or rather a black, study. Barbara, who did not, like Susan, bear with her father's testy humour from affection and gentleness of disposition, but who always humoured him from artifice, tried all her skill to fathom his thoughts, and when she found that *it* would not do, she went to tell her maid so, and to complain that her father was so cross there was no bearing him.

It is true that Attorney Case was not in the happiest mood possible; for he was by no means satisfied with his morning's work at the Abbey. Sir Arthur Somers, the *new man*, did not suit him, and he began to be rather apprehensive that he should not suit Sir Arthur. He had sound reasons for his doubts.

Sir Arthur Somers was an excellent lawyer, and a perfectly honest man. This seemed to our attorney a contradiction in terms; in the course of his practice the case had not occurred; and he had no precedents ready to direct his proceedings. Sir Arthur was also a man of wit and eloquence, yet of plain dealing and humanity. The attorney could not persuade himself to believe that his benevolence was anything but enlightened cunning, and his plain dealing he one minute dreaded as the masterpiece of art, and the next despised as the characteristic of folly. In short, he had not yet decided whether he was an honest man or a knave. He had settled accounts with him for his late agency, and had talked about sundry matters of business. He constantly perceived, however, that he could not impose upon Sir Arthur; but the idea that he could know all the mazes of the law, and yet prefer the straight road, was incomprehensible.

Mr. Case having paid Sir Arthur some compliments on his great legal abilities, and his high reputation at the bar, he coolly replied, "I have left the bar." The attorney looked in

unfeigned astonishment, that a man who was actually making £3000 per annum at the bar should leave it.

"I am come," said Sir Arthur, "to enjoy that kind of domestic life in the country which I prefer to all others, and amongst people whose happiness I hope to increase." At this speech the attorney changed his ground, flattering himself that he should find his man averse to business, and ignorant of country affairs. He talked of the value of land, and of new leases.

Sir Arthur wished to enlarge his domain, and to make a ride round it. A map of it was lying upon the table, and Farmer Price's garden came exactly across the new road for the ride. Sir Arthur looked disappointed; and the keen attorney seized the moment to inform him that "Price's whole land was at his disposal."

"At my disposal! how so?" cried Sir Arthur, eagerly; "it will not be out of lease, I believe, these ten years. I'll look into the rent-roll again; perhaps I am mistaken."

"You are mistaken, my good sir, and you are not mistaken," said Mr. Case, with a shrewd smile. "In one sense, the land will not be out of lease these ten years, and in another it is out of lease at this present time. To come to the point at once, the lease is, *ab origine*, null and void. I have detected a capital flaw in the body of it. I pledge my credit upon it, sir, it can't stand a single term in law or equity."

The attorney observed, that at these words Sir Arthur's eye was fixed with a look of earnest attention. "Now I have him," said the cunning tempter to himself.

"Neither in law nor equity," repeated Sir Arthur, with apparent incredulity; "are you sure of that, Mr. Case?" "Sure! As I told you before, sir, I'd pledge my whole credit upon the thing—I'd stake my existence." "*That's something*," said Sir Arthur, as if he was pondering upon the matter.

The attorney went on with all the eagerness of a keen man, who sees a chance at one stroke of winning a rich friend, and of ruining a poor enemy. He explained, with legal volubility and technical amplification, the nature of the mistake in Mr. Price's lease. "It was, sir," said he, "a lease for the life of Peter Price, Susanna his wife, and to the survivor or survivors of them, or for the full time and term of twenty years, to be computed from the first day of May then next ensuing. Now,

sir, this, you see, is a lease in reversion, which the late Sir Benjamin Somers had not, by his settlement, a right to make. This is a curious mistake, you see, Sir Arthur; and in filling up those printed leases there's always a good chance of some flaw. I find it perpetually; but I never found a better than this in the whole course of my practice."

Sir Arthur stood in silence.

"My dear sir," said the attorney, taking him by the button, "you have no scruple of stirring in this business?"

"A little," said Sir Arthur.

"Why, then, that can be done away with in a moment. Your name shall not appear in it at all. You have nothing to do but to make over the lease to me. I make all safe to you with my bond. Now being in possession, I come forward in my own proper person. *Shall I proceed?*"

"No—you have said enough," replied Sir Arthur.

"The case, indeed, lies in a nutshell," said the attorney, who had by this time worked himself up to such a pitch of professional enthusiasm, that, intent upon his vision of a lawsuit, he totally forgot to observe the impression his words made upon Sir Arthur.

"There's only one thing we have forgotten all this time," said Sir Arthur. "What can that be, sir?" "That we shall ruin this poor man."

Case was thunderstruck at these words, or rather by the look which accompanied them. He recollected that he had laid himself open before he was sure of Sir Arthur's *real* character. He softened, and said he should have had certainly more *consideration* in the case of any but a litigious, pig-headed fellow, as he knew Price to be.

"If he be litigious," said Sir Arthur, "I shall certainly be glad to get him fairly out of the parish as soon as possible. When you go home, you will be so good, sir, as to send me his lease, that I may satisfy myself, before we stir in this business."

The attorney, brightening up, prepared to take leave; but he could not persuade himself to take his departure without making one push at Sir Arthur about the agency.

"I will not trouble *you*, Sir Arthur, with this lease of Price's," said Case; "I'll leave it with your agent. Whom shall I apply to?" "*To myself*, sir, if you please," replied Sir Arthur.

The courtiers of Louis XIV. could not have looked more astounded than our attorney when they received from their monarch a similar answer. It was this unexpected reply of Sir Arthur's which had deranged the temper of Mr. Case, and caused his wig to stand so crooked upon his forehead, and which had rendered him impenetrably silent to his inquisitive daughter Barbara.

After having walked up and down his room, conversing with himself, for some time, the attorney concluded that the agency must be given to somebody when Sir Arthur should have to attend his duty in Parliament; that the agency, even for the winter season, was not a thing to be neglected; and that, if he managed well, he might yet secure it for himself. He had often found that small timely presents worked wonderfully upon his own mind, and he judged of others by himself. The tenants had been in the reluctant but constant practice of making him continual petty offerings; and he resolved to try the same course with Sir Arthur, whose resolution to be his own agent, he thought, argued a close, saving, avaricious disposition. He had heard the housekeeper at the Abbey inquiring, as he passed through the servants, whether there was any lamb to be gotten? She said that Sir Arthur was remarkably fond of lamb, and that she wished she could get a quarter for him. Immediately he sallied into his kitchen, as soon as the idea struck him, and asked a shepherd, who was waiting there, whether he knew of a nice fat lamb to be had anywhere in the neighbourhood.

"I know of one," cried Barbara. "Susan Price has a pet lamb that's as fat as fat can be." The attorney eagerly caught at these words, and speedily devised a scheme for obtaining Susan's lamb for nothing.

It would be something strange if an attorney of his talents and standing was not an over-match for Simple Susan. He prowled forth in search of his prey. He found Susan packing up her father's little wardrobe; and when she looked up as she knelt, he saw that she had been in tears.

"How is your mother to-day, Susan?" inquired the attorney. "Worse, sir. My father goes to-morrow." "That's a pity." "It can't be helped," said Susan, with a sigh. "It can't be helped—how do you know that?" said Case. "Sir! *dear* sir!" cried she, looking up at him, and a sudden ray of hope

beamed in her ingenuous countenance. "And if *you* could help it, Susan?" said he. Susan clasped her hands in silence, more expressive than words. "You *can* help it, Susan." She started up in an ecstasy. "What would you give now to have your father at home for a whole week longer?" "Anything! —but I have nothing." "Yes, but you have, a lamb," said the hard-hearted attorney. "My poor little lamb!" said Susan; "but what good can that do?" "What good can any lamb do? Is not lamb good to eat? Why do you look so pale, girl? Are not sheep killed every day, and don't you eat mutton? Is your lamb better than anybody else's, think you?" "I don't know," said Susan, "but I love it better." "More fool you," says he. "It feeds out of my hand, it follows me about; I have always taken care of it; my mother gave it to me." "Well, say no more about it, then," he cynically observed; "if you love your lamb better than both your father and your mother, keep it, and good morning to you."

"Stay, oh, stay!" cried Susan, catching the skirt of his coat with an eager, trembling hand;—"a whole week, did you say? My mother may get better in that time. No, I do not love my lamb half so well." The struggle of her mind ceased, and with a placid countenance and calm voice, "Take the lamb," said she. "Where is it?" said the attorney. "Grazing in the meadow, by the river-side." "It must be brought up before night-fall for the butcher, remember." "I shall not forget it," said Susan, steadily.

As soon, however, as her persecutor turned his back and quitted the house, Susan sat down, and hid her face in her hands. She was soon roused by the sound of her mother's feeble voice, who was calling *Susan* from the inner room, where she lay. Susan went in; but did not undraw the curtain as she stood beside the bed.

"Are you there, love? Undraw the curtain that I may see you: and tell me;—I thought I heard some strange voice just now talking to my child. Something's amiss, Susan," said her mother, raising herself as well as she was able in the bed, to examine her daughter's countenance.

"Would you think it amiss, then, my dear mother," said Susan, stooping to kiss her—"would you think it amiss, if my father was to stay with us a week longer?" "Susan! you don't say so?" "He is, indeed, a whole week;—but how

burning hot your hand is still." "Are you sure he will stay?" inquired her mother. "How do you know? Who told you so? Tell me all, quick." "Attorney Case told me so; he can get him a week's longer leave of absence, and he has promised he will." "God bless him for it, for ever and ever!" said the poor woman, joining her hands. "May the blessing of heaven be with him!"

Susan closed the curtains and was silent—she *could not say, Amen.* She was called out of the room at this moment; for a messenger was come from the Abbey for the bread-bills. It was she who always made out the bills; for though she had not had a great number of lessons from the writing-master, she had taken so much pains to learn, that she could write a very neat, legible hand; and she found this very useful. She was not, to be sure, particularly inclined to draw out a long bill at this instant; but business must be done. She set to work, ruled her lines for the pounds, shillings, and pence, made out the bill for the Abbey, and despatched the impatient messenger. She then resolved to make out all the bills for the neighbours, who had many of them taken a few loaves and rolls of her baking. "I had better get all my business finished," said she to herself, "before I go down to the meadow to take leave of my poor lamb."

This was sooner said than done; for she found that she had a great number of bills to write, and the slate on which she had entered the account was not immediately to be found; and when it was found, the figures were almost rubbed out: Barbara had sat down upon it. Susan pored over the number of loaves, and the names of the persons who took them; and she wrote, and cast up sums, and corrected, and re-corrected them, till her head grew quite puzzled.

The table was covered with little square bits of paper, on which she had been writing bills over and over again, when her father came in with a bill in his hand. "How's this, Susan?" said he;—"how can ye be so careless, child? What is your head running upon? Here, look at the bill you were sending up to the Abbey! I met the messenger, and luckily asked to see how much it was.—Look at it."

Susan looked, and blushed; it was written, "Sir Arthur Somers to John Price,—debtor, six dozen *lambs*," so much. She altered it, and returned it to her father; but he had taken

up some of the papers which lay upon the table.—"What are all these, child?" "Some of them are wrong, and I've written them out again," said Susan. "Some of them! all of them, I think, seem to be wrong, if I can read," said her father, rather angrily; and he pointed out to her sundry strange mistakes. Her head indeed had been running upon her poor lamb. She corrected all the mistakes with so much patience, and bore to be blamed with so much good humour, that her father at last said, that it was impossible ever to scold Susan, without being in the wrong at the last.

As soon as all was set right, Price took the bills, and said he would go round to the neighbours, and collect the money himself; for that he should be very proud to have it to say to them, that it was all earned by his own little daughter.

Susan resolved to keep the pleasure of telling him of his week's reprieve till he should come home to sup, as he had promised to do, in her mother's room. She was not sorry to hear him sigh as he passed the knapsack, which she had been packing up for his journey. "How delighted he will be when he hears the good news!" said she to herself; "but I know he will be a little sorry too for my poor lamb."

As Susan had now settled all her business, she thought she could have time to go down to the meadow by the river-side to see her favourite; but just as she had tied on her straw hat the village-clock struck four, and this was the hour at which she always went to fetch her little brothers home from a dame-school near the village. She knew that they would be disappointed, if she was later than usual, and she did not like to keep them waiting, because they were very patient good boys; so she put off the visit to her lamb, and went immediately for her brothers.

CHAPTER II.

Ev'n in the spring, and play-time of the year,
That calls th' unwonted villager abroad,
With all her little ones, a sportive train,
To gather king-cups in the yellow mead,
And prink their heads with daisies.

COWPER.

THE dame-school, which was about a mile from the hamlet, was not a showy edifice; but it was reverenced as much by the young race of village scholars as if it had been the most stately mansion in the land; it was a low-roofed, long, thatched tenement, sheltered by a few reverend oaks, under which many generations of hopeful children had gambolled in their turn.

The close-shaven green, which sloped down from the hatch-door of the school-room, was paled round with a rude paling, which, though decayed in some parts by time, was not in any place broken by violence.

The place bespoke order and peace. The dame who governed here was well obeyed, because she was just, and well beloved, and because she was ever glad to give well-earned praise and pleasure to her little subjects.

Susan had once been under her gentle dominion, and had been deservedly her favourite scholar. The dame often cited her as the best example to the succeeding tribe of emulous youngsters. Susan had scarcely opened the wicket which separated the green before the school-room door from the lane, when she heard the merry voices of the children, and saw the little troop issuing from the hatchway, and spreading over the green.

"Oh, there's our Susan!" cried her two little brothers, running, leaping, and bounding up to her; and many of the other rosy girls and boys crowded round her, to talk of their plays; for Susan was easily interested in all that made others happy; but she could not make them comprehend, that, if they all spoke at once, it was not possible that she could hear what was said.

The voices were still raised one above another, all eager to

establish some important observation about nine-pins, or marbles, or tops, or bows and arrows, when suddenly music was heard, unusual music, and the crowd was silenced. The music seemed to be near the spot where the children were standing, and they looked round to see whence it could come. Susan pointed to the great oak-tree, and they beheld, seated under its shade, an old man playing upon his harp. The children all approached—at first timidly, for the sounds were solemn; but as the harper heard their little footsteps coming towards him, he changed his hand, and played one of his most lively tunes. The circle closed, and pressed nearer and nearer to him; some who were in the foremost row whispered to each other, "He is blind! What a pity!" and "He looks very poor,—what a ragged coat he wears!" said others. "He must be very old, for all his hair is white; and he must have travelled a great way, for his shoes are quite worn out," observed another.

All these remarks were made whilst he was tuning his harp, for when he once more began to play, not a word was uttered. He seemed pleased by their simple exclamations of wonder and delight, and, eager to amuse his young audience, he played now a gay and now a pathetic air, to suit their several humours.

Susan's voice, which was soft and sweet, expressive of gentleness and good-nature, caught his ear the moment she spoke. He turned his face eagerly to the place where she stood; and it was observed, that whenever she said that she liked any tune particularly, he played it over again.

"I am blind," said the old man, "and cannot see your faces; but I know you all asunder by your voices, and I can guess pretty well at all your humours and characters by your voices."

"Can you so, indeed?" cried Susan's little brother William, who had stationed himself between the old man's knees. "Then you heard *my* sister Susan speak just now. Can you tell us what sort of a person she is?"—"That I can, I think, without being a conjuror," said the old man, lifting the boy up on his knee; "*your* sister Susan is good-natured." The boy clapped his hands. "And good-tempered." "*Right*," said little William, with a louder clap of applause. "And very fond of the little boy who sits upon my knee." "O

right! right! quite right!" exclaimed the child, and "Quite right!" echoed on all sides.

"But how came you to know so much, when you are blind?" said William, examining the old man attentively.

"Hush," said John, who was a year older than his brother, and very sage, "you should not put him in mind of his being blind."

"Though I am blind," said the harper, "I can hear, you know, and I heard from your sister herself all that I told you of her, that she was good-tempered, and good-natured, and fond of you." "Oh, that's wrong—you did not hear all that from herself, I'm sure," said John, "for nobody ever hears her praising herself." "Did not I hear her tell you," said the harper, "when you first came round me, that she was in a great hurry to go home, but that she would stay a little while, since you wished it so much? Was not that good-natured? And when you said you did not like the tune she liked best, she was not angry with you, but said, 'Then play William's first, if you please,'—was not that good-tempered?" "Oh," interrupted William, "it's all true; but how did you find out that she was fond of me?" "That is such a difficult question," said the harper, "that I must take time to consider." The harper tuned his instrument, as he pondered, or seemed to ponder; and at this instant two boys, who had been searching for birds' nests in the hedges, and who had heard the sound of the harp, came blustering up, and pushing their way through the circle, one of them exclaimed, "What's going on here? Who are you, my old fellow? A blind harper! Well, play us a tune, if you can play ever a good one—play me—let's see, what shall he play, Bob?" added he, turning to his companion. "'Bumper Squire Jones.'"

The old man, though he did not seem quite pleased with the peremptory manner of the request, played, as he was desired, "Bumper Squire Jones;" and several other tunes were afterwards bespoke by the same rough and tyrannical voice.

The little children shrunk back in timid silence, and eyed the great brutal boy with dislike. This boy was the son of Attorney Case; and as his father had neglected to correct his temper when he was a child, as he grew up it became insufferable. All who were younger and weaker than himself dreaded his approach, and detested him as a tyrant.

THE BLIND HARPER.

When the old harper was so tired that he could play no more, a lad, who usually carried his harp for him, and who was within call, came up, and held his master's hat to the company, saying, "Will you be pleased to remember us?" The children readily produced their halfpence, and thought their wealth well bestowed upon this poor, good-natured man, who had taken so much pains to entertain them, better even than upon the gingerbread-woman, whose stall they loved to frequent. The hat was held some time to the attorney's son before he chose to see it. At last he put his hand surlily into his waistcoat-pocket, and pulled out a shilling. There were six pennyworth of halfpence in the hat. "I'll take these halfpence," said he, "and here's a shilling for you."

"God bless you, sir," said the lad; but as he took the shilling, which the young gentleman had slily put *into the blind man's hand*, he saw that it was not worth one farthing. "I am afraid it is not good, sir," said the lad, whose business it was to examine the money for his master. "I am afraid, then, you'll get no other," said young Case, with an insulting laugh. "It never will do, sir," persisted the lad; "look at it yourself; the edges are all yellow; you can see the copper through it quite plain. Sir, nobody will take it from us." "That's your affair," said the brutal boy, pushing away his hand. "You may pass it, you know, as well as I do, if you look sharp. You have taken it from me, and I sha'n't take it back again, I promise you."

A whisper of "That's very unjust" was heard. The little assembly, though under evident constraint, could no longer suppress their indignation.

"Who says it's unjust?" cried the tyrant, sternly, looking down upon his judges.

Susan's little brothers had held her gown fast, to prevent her from moving at the beginning of this contest, and she was now so much interested to see the end of it, that she stood still, without making any resistance.

"Is any one here amongst yourselves a judge of silver?" said the old man. "Yes, here's the butcher's boy," said the attorney's son; "show it to him." He was a sickly-looking boy, and of a remarkably peaceable disposition. Young Case fancied that he would be afraid to give judgment against him. However, after some moments' hesitation, and after turning

the shilling round several times, he pronounced, that, as far as his judgment went, but he did not pretend to be downright *certain sure* of it, "the shilling was not over and above good." Then turning to Susan, to screen himself from manifest danger, for the attorney's son looked upon him with a vengeful mien, "But here's Susan here, who understands silver a great deal better than I do; she takes a power of it for bread, you know."

"I'll leave it to her," said the old harper; "if she says the shilling is good, keep it, Jack." The shilling was handed to Susan, who, though she had with becoming modesty forborne all interference, did not hesitate, when she was called upon, to speak the truth: "I think that this shilling is a bad one," said she; and the gentle but firm tone in which she pronounced the words, for a moment awed and silenced the angry and brutal boy. "There's another, then," cried he; "I have sixpences and shillings too in plenty, thank my stars."

Susan now walked away with her two little brothers, and all the other children separated to go to their several homes. The old harper called to Susan, and begged, that, if she was going towards the village, she would be so kind as to show him the way. His lad took up his harp, and little William took the old man by the hand. "I'll lead him, I can lead him," said he; and John ran on before them, to gather king-cups in the meadow.

There was a small rivulet, which they had to cross, and as the plank which served for a bridge over it was rather narrow, Susan was afraid to trust the old blind man to his little conductor; she therefore went on the tottering plank first herself, and then led the old harper carefully over. They were now come to a gate, which opened upon the high-road to the village. "There is the high-road straight before you," said Susan to the lad, who was carrying his master's harp; "you can't miss it. Now I must bid you a good evening; for I'm in a great hurry to get home, and must go the short way across the fields here, which would not be so pleasant for you, because of the stiles. Good-bye." The old harper thanked her, and went along the high-road, whilst she and her brothers tripped on as fast as they could by the short way across the fields.

"Miss Somers, I am afraid, will be waiting for us," said Susan. "You know she said she would call at six; and by the length of our shadows I'm sure it is late."

When they came to their own cottage-door, they heard many voices, and they saw, when they entered, several ladies standing in the kitchen. "Come in, Susan; we thought you had quite forsaken us," said Miss Somers to Susan, who advanced timidly. "I fancy you forgot that we promised to pay you a visit this evening; but you need not blush so much about the matter; there is no great harm done; we have only been here about five minutes; and we have been well employed in admiring your neat garden, and your orderly shelves. Is it you, Susan, who keep these things in such nice order?" continued Miss Somers, looking round the kitchen.

Before Susan could reply, little William pushed forward, and answered, "Yes, ma'am, it is *my* sister Susan that keeps everything neat: and she always comes to school for us too, which was what caused her to be so late." "Because as how," continued John, "she was loth to refuse us the hearing a blind man play on the harp. It was we kept her, and we hopes, ma'am, as you *are*—as you *seem* so good, you won't take it amiss."

Miss Somers and her sister smiled at the affectionate simplicity with which Susan's little brothers undertook her defence, and they were, from this slight circumstance, disposed to think yet more favourably of a family which seemed so well united. They took Susan along with them through the village. Many neighbours came to their doors, and far from envying, they all secretly wished Susan well as she passed.

"I fancy we shall find what we want here," said Miss Somers, stopping before a shop, where unfolded sheets of pins and glass buttons glistened in the window, and where rolls of many-coloured ribbons appeared ranged in tempting order. She went in, and was rejoiced to see the shelves at the back of the counter well furnished with glossy tiers of stuffs, and gay, neat, printed linens and calicoes.

"Now, Susan, choose yourself a gown," said Miss Somers; "you set an example of industry and good conduct, of which we wish to take public notice, for the benefit of others."

The shopkeeper, who was father to Susan's friend Rose, looked much satisfied by this speech, and as if a compliment had been paid to himself, bowed low to Miss Somers, and then with alertness, which a London linendraper might have admired, produced piece after piece of his best goods to his

young customer—unrolled, unfolded, held the bright stuffs and calendered calicoes in various lights; now stretched his arm to the highest shelves, and brought down in a trice what seemed to be beyond the reach of any but a giant's arm; now dived into some hidden recess beneath the counter, and brought to light fresh beauties and fresh temptations.

Susan looked on with more indifference than most of the spectators. She was thinking much of her lamb, and more of her father.

Miss Somers had put a bright guinea into her hand, and had bid her pay for her own gown; but Susan, as she looked at the guinea, thought it was a great deal of money to lay out upon herself; and she wished, but did not know how to ask, that she might keep it for a better purpose.

Some people are wholly inattentive to the lesser feelings, and incapable of reading the countenances of those on whom they bestow their bounty. Miss Somers and her sister were not of this roughly charitable class.

"She does not like any of these things," whispered Miss Somers to her sister. Her sister observed, that Susan looked as if her thoughts were far distant from gowns.

"If you don't fancy any of these things," said the civil shopkeeper to Susan, "we shall have a new assortment of calicoes for the spring season soon from town." "Oh," interrupted Susan, with a smile and a blush, "these are all pretty, and too good for me, but——" "*But* what, Susan?" said Miss Somers. "Tell us what is passing in your little mind." Susan hesitated. "Well, then, we will not press you; you are scarcely acquainted with us yet; when you are, you will not be afraid, I hope, to speak your mind. Put this shining yellow counter," continued she, pointing to the guinea, "in your pocket, and make what use of it you please. From what we know, and from what we have heard of you, we are persuaded that you will make a good use of it."

"I think, madam," said the master of the shop, with a shrewd, good-natured look, "I could give a pretty good guess myself what will become of that guinea—but I say nothing."

"No, that is right," said Miss Somers; "we leave Susan entirely at liberty; and now we will not detain her any longer. Good night, Susan; we shall soon come again to your neat cottage." Susan curtsied with an expressive look of gratitude,

and with a modest frankness in her countenance, which seemed to say, "I would tell you, and welcome, what I want to do with the guinea; but I am not used to speak before so many people. When you come to our cottage again, you shall know all."

When Susan had departed, Miss Somers turned to the obliging shopkeeper, who was folding up all the things he had opened. "You have had a great deal of trouble with us, sir," said she; "and since Susan will not choose a gown for herself, I must." She selected the prettiest, and whilst the man was rolling it in paper, she asked him several questions about Susan and her family, which he was delighted to answer, because he had now an opportunity of saying as much as he wished in her praise.

"No later back, ma'am, than last May morning," said he, "as my daughter Rose was telling us, Susan did a turn, in her quiet way, by her mother, that would not displease you if you were to hear it. She was to have been Queen of the May, which in our little village, amongst the younger tribe, is a thing that is thought of a good deal; but Susan's mother was ill, and Susan, after sitting up with her all night, would not leave her in the morning, even when they brought the crown to her. She put the crown upon my daughter Rose's head with her own hands; and, to be sure, Rose loves her as well as if she was her own sister. But I don't speak from partiality; for I am no relation whatever to the Prices,—only a well-wisher, as every one, I believe, who knows them is. I'll send the parcel up to the Abbey, shall I, ma'am?"

"If you please," said Miss Somers; "and, as soon as you receive your new things from town, let us know. You will, I hope, find us good customers and well-wishers," added she, with a smile; "for those who wish well to their neighbours surely deserve to have well-wishers themselves."

A few words may encourage the benevolent passions, and may dispose people to live in peace and happiness; a few words may set them at variance, and may lead to misery and lawsuits. Attorney Case and Miss Somers were both equally convinced of this, and their practice was uniformly consistent with their principles.

But now to return to Susan. She put the bright guinea carefully into the glove with the twelve shillings which she

had received from her companions on May-day. Besides this treasure, she calculated that the amount of the bills for bread could not be less than eight or nine and thirty shillings; and as her father was now sure of a week's reprieve, she had great hopes that, by some means or other, it would be possible to make up the whole sum necessary to pay for a substitute. "If that could but be done," said she to herself, "how happy would my mother be! She would be quite stout again, for she certainly is a great deal better, since I told her that father would stay a week longer. Ah! but she would not have blessed Attorney Case, though, if she had known about my poor Daisy."

Susan took the path that led to the meadow by the water-side, resolved to go by herself, and take leave of her innocent favourite. But she did not pass by unperceived. Her little brothers were watching for her return, and, as soon as they saw her, they ran after her, and overtook her as she reached the meadow.

"What did that good lady want with you?" cried William; but looking up in his sister's face, he saw tears in her eyes, and he was silent, and walked on quietly. Susan saw her lamb by the water-side. "Who are those two men?" said William. "What are they going to do with *Daisy?*" The two men were Attorney Case and the butcher. The butcher was feeling whether the lamb was fat.

Susan sat down upon the bank in silent sorrow; her little brothers ran up to the butcher, and demanded whether he was going to *do any harm* to the lamb. The butcher did not answer; but the attorney replied, "It is not your sister's lamb any longer; it's mine—mine to all intents and purposes." "Yours!" cried the children, with terror; "and will you kill it?" "That's the butcher's business."

The little boys now burst into piercing lamentations. They pushed away the butcher's hand; they threw their arms round the neck of the lamb; they kissed its forehead—it bleated. "It will not bleat to-morrow!" said William, and he wept bitterly. The butcher looked aside, and hastily rubbed his eyes with the corner of his blue apron. The attorney stood unmoved; he pulled up the head of the lamb, which had just stooped to crop a mouthful of clover. "I have no time to waste," said he; "butcher, you'll account with me. If it's fat—the sooner the better. I've no more to say." And he walked off, deaf to the prayers of the poor children.

As soon as the attorney was out of sight, Susan rose from the bank where she was seated, came up to her lamb, and stooped to gather some of the fresh dewy trefoil, to let it eat out of her hand for the last time. Poor Daisy licked her well-known hand.

"Now, let us go," said Susan. "I'll wait as long as you please," said the butcher. Susan thanked him, but walked away quickly, without looking again at her lamb. Her little brothers begged the man to stay a few minutes, for they had gathered a handful of blue speedwell and yellow crowsfoot, and they were decking the poor animal. As it followed the boys through the village, the children collected as they passed, and the butcher's own son was among the number. Susan's steadiness about the bad shilling was full in this boy's memory; it had saved him a beating. He went directly to his father to beg the life of Susan's lamb.

"I was thinking about it, boy, myself," said the butcher; "it's a sin to kill a *pet lamb*, I'm thinking—any way, it's what I'm not used to, and don't fancy doing, and I'll go and say as much to Attorney Case; but he's a hard man; there's but one way to deal with him, and that's the way I must take, though so be I shall be the loser thereby: but we'll say nothing to the boys, for fear it might be the thing would not take, and then it would be worse again to poor Susan, who is a good girl, and always was, as well she may, being of a good breed, and well reared from the first."

"Come, lads, don't keep a crowd and a scandal about my door," continued he, aloud, to the children; "turn the lamb in here, John, in the paddock, for to-night, and go your ways home."

The crowd dispersed, but murmured, and the butcher went to the attorney. "Seeing that all you want is a good, fat, tender lamb, for a present for Sir Arthur, as you told me," said the butcher, "I could let you have what's as good and better for your purpose." "Better—if it's better, I'm ready to hear reason." The butcher had a choice tender lamb, he said, fit to eat the next day; and as Mr. Case was impatient to make his offering to Sir Arthur, he accepted the butcher's proposal, though with such seeming reluctance, that he actually squeezed out of him, before he would complete the bargain, a bribe of a fine sweetbread.

In the meantime Susan's brothers ran home to tell her that her lamb was put into the paddock for the night; this was all they knew, and even this was some comfort to her. Rose, her good friend, was with her, and she had before her the pleasure of telling her father of his week's reprieve. Her mother was better, and even said she was determined to sit up to supper in her wicker arm-chair.

Susan was getting things ready for supper, when little William, who was standing at the house-door, watching in the dusk for his father's return, suddenly exclaimed, "Susan! if here is not our old man!"

"Yes," said the old harper, "I have found my way to you. The neighbours were kind enough to show me whereabouts you lived; for, though I didn't know your name, they guessed who I meant by what I said of you all." Susan came to the door, and the old man was delighted to hear her speak again. "If it would not be too bold," said he, "I'm a stranger in this part of the country, and come from afar off. My boy has got a bed for himself here in the village; but I have no place. Could you be so charitable as to give an old blind man a night's lodging?" Susan said she would step in and ask her mother; and she soon returned with an answer, that he was heartily welcome, if he could sleep upon the children's bed, which was but small.

The old man thankfully entered the hospitable cottage. He struck his head against the low roof, as he stepped over the door-sill. "Many roofs that are twice as high are not half so good," said he. Of this he had just had experience at the house of Attorney Case, where he had asked, but had been roughly refused all assistance by Miss Barbara, who was, according to her usual custom, standing staring at the hall-door.

The old man's harp was set down in farmer Price's kitchen, and he promised to play a tune for the boys before they went to bed; their mother giving them leave to sit up to supper with their father. He came home with a sorrowful countenance; but how soon did it brighten, when Susan, with a smile, said to him, "Father, we've good news for you! good news for us all!—You have a whole week longer to stay with us; and perhaps," continued she, putting her little purse into his hands,—"perhaps with what's here, and the bread-bills, and

what may somehow be got together before a week's at an end, we may make up the nine guineas for the substitute, as they call him. Who knows, dearest mother, but we may keep him with us for ever!"—As she spoke, she threw her arms round her father, who pressed her to his bosom without speaking, for his heart was full. He was some little time before he could perfectly believe that what he heard was true; but the revived smiles of his wife, the noisy joy of his little boys, and the satisfaction that shone in Susan's countenance, convinced him that he was not in a dream.

As they sat down to supper, the old harper was made welcome to his share of the cheerful though frugal meal.

Susan's father, as soon as supper was finished, even before he would let the harper play a tune for his boys, opened the little purse, which Susan had given to him. He was surprised at the sight of the twelve shillings, and still more, when he came to the bottom of the purse, to see the bright golden guinea.

"How did you come by all this money, Susan?" said he. "Honestly and handsomely, that I'm sure of beforehand," said her proud mother; "but how, I can't make out, except by the baking. Hey, Susan, is this your first baking?" "Oh, no, no," said her father, "I have her first baking snug here, besides, in my pocket. I kept it for a surprise, to do your mother's heart good, Susan. Here's twenty-nine shillings, and the Abbey bill, which is not paid yet, comes to ten more. What think you of this, wife? Have we not a right to be proud of our Susan? Why," continued he, turning to the harper, "I ask your pardon for speaking out so free before strangers in praise of my own, which I know is not mannerly; but the truth is the fittest thing to be spoken, as I think, at all times, therefore, here's your good health, Susan. Why, by-and-by she'll be worth her weight in gold—in silver, at least. But tell us, child, how came you by all these riches? and how comes it that I don't go to-morrow? All this happy news makes me so gay in myself, I'm afraid I shall hardly understand it rightly. But speak on, child—first bringing us a bottle of the good mead you made last year from your own honey."

Susan did not much like to tell the history of her guinea-hen—of the gown—and of her poor lamb. Part of this would

seem as if she was vaunting of her own generosity, and part of it she did not like to recollect. But her mother pressed to know the whole, and she related it as simply as she could. When she came to the story of her lamb, her voice faltered, and everybody present was touched. The old harper sighed once, and cleared his throat several times. He then asked for his harp, and, after tuning it for a considerable time, he recollected—for he had often fits of absence—that he sent for it to play the tune he had promised to the boys.

This harper came from a great distance, from the mountains of Wales, to contend with several other competitors for a prize, which had been advertised by a musical society about a year before this time. There was to be a splendid ball given upon the occasion at Shrewsbury, which was about five miles from our village. The prize was ten guineas for the best performer on the harp, and the prize was now to be decided in a few days.

All this intelligence Barbara had long since gained from her maid, who often paid visits to the town of Shrewsbury, and she had long had her imagination inflamed with the idea of this splendid music-meeting and ball. Often had she sighed to be there, and often had she resolved in her mind schemes for introducing herself to some *genteel* neighbours, who might take her to the ball *in their carriage*. How rejoiced, how triumphant was she, when this very evening, just about the time when the butcher was bargaining with her father about Susan's lamb, a *livery* servant from the Abbey rapped at the door, and left a card of invitation for Mr. and Miss Barbara Case!

"There," cried Bab, "*I* and *papa* are to dine and drink tea at the Abbey to-morrow. Who knows? I dare say, when they see that I'm not a vulgar-looking person, and all that—and if I go cunningly to work with Miss Somers—as I shall—to be sure, I dare say, she'll take me to the ball with her."

"To be sure," said the maid; "it's the least one may expect from a lady that *demeans* herself to visit Susan Price, and goes about a-shopping for her. The least she can do for you, is to take you in her carriage, *which* costs nothing, but is just a common civility, to a ball."

"Then pray, Betty," continued Miss Barbara, "don't forget to-morrow, the first thing you do, to send off to Shrews-

bury for my new bonnet. I must have it *to dine in*, at the Abbey, or the ladies will think nothing of me; and, Betty, remember the mantua-maker too. I must see and coax papa to buy me a new gown against the ball. I can see, you know, something of the fashions to-morrow at the Abbey. I shall *look the ladies well over*, I promise you. And, Betty, I have thought of the most charming present for Miss Somers: as papa says it's good never to go empty-handed to a great house, I'll make Miss Somers, who is fond, as her maid told you, of such things—I'll make Miss Somers a present of that guinea-hen of Susan's; it's of no use to me; so do you carry it up early in the morning to the Abbey, with my compliments. That's the thing."

In full confidence that her present and her bonnet would operate effectually in her favour, Miss Barbara paid her first visit at the Abbey. She expected to see wonders. She was dressed in all the finery, which she had heard from her maid, who had heard from the 'prentice of a Shrewsbury milliner, was *the thing* in London; and she was much surprised and disappointed, when she was shown into the room where the Misses Somers and the ladies at the Abbey were sitting, to see that they did not, in any one part of their dress, agree with the picture her imagination had formed of fashionable ladies. She was embarrassed when she saw books, and work, and drawings upon the table, and she began to think that some affront was meant to her, because *the company* did not sit with their hands before them.

When Miss Somers endeavoured to find out conversation that would interest her, and spoke of walks, and flowers, and gardening, of which she was herself fond, Miss Barbara still thought herself undervalued, and soon contrived to expose her ignorance most completely, by talking of things which she did not understand.

Those who never attempt to appear what they are not—those who do not in their manners pretend to anything unsuited to their habits and situation in life, never are in danger of being laughed at by sensible well-bred people of any rank; but affectation is the constant and just object of ridicule.

Miss Barbara Case, with her mistaken airs of gentility, aiming to be thought a woman, and a fine lady, whilst she was

in reality a child, and a vulgar attorney's daughter, rendered herself so thoroughly ridiculous, that the good-natured yet discerning spectators were painfully divided between their sense of comic absurdity, and a feeling of shame for one who could feel nothing for herself.

One by one the ladies dropped off. Miss Somers went out of the room for a few minutes to alter her dress, as it was the custom of the family, before dinner. She left a portfolio of pretty drawings and good prints, for Miss Barbara's amusement; but Miss Barbara's thoughts were so intent upon the harpers' ball, that she could not be entertained with such *trifles*. How unhappy are those who spend their time in expectation! They can never enjoy the present moment. Whilst Barbara was contriving means of interesting Miss Somers in her favour, she recollected with surprise, that not one word had yet been said of her present of the guinea-hen. Mrs. Betty, in the hurry of her dressing her young lady in the morning, had forgotten it; but it came just whilst Miss Somers was dressing; and the housekeeper came into her mistress's room to announce its arrival.

"Ma'am," said she, "here's a beautiful guinea-hen just come, *with* Miss Barbara Case's compliments to you."

Miss Somers knew, by the tone in which the housekeeper delivered this message, that there was something in the business which did not perfectly please her. She made no answer, in expectation that the housekeeper, who was a woman of a very open temper, would explain her cause of dissatisfaction. In this she was not mistaken. The housekeeper came close up to the dressing-table, and continued, "I never like to speak till I'm sure, ma'am, and I'm not quite sure, to say certain, in this case, ma'am, but still I think it right to tell you, which can't wrong anybody, what came across my mind about this same guinea-hen, ma'am; and you can inquire into it, and do as you please afterwards, ma'am. Some time ago, we had fine guinea-fowls of our own, and I made bold, not thinking, to be sure, that all our own would die away from us, as they have done, to give a fine couple last Christmas to Susan Price; and very fond and pleased she was at the time, and I'm sure would never have parted with the hen with her good-will; but if my eyes don't strangely mistake, this hen, that comes from Miss Barbara, is the self-same identical guinea-hen that I

gave to Susan. And how Miss Bab come by it is the thing that puzzles me. If my boy Philip was at home, maybe, as he's often at Mrs. Price's (which I don't disapprove), he might know the history of the guinea-hen. I expect him home this night, and if you have no objection, I will sift the affair."

"The shortest way, I should think," said Henrietta, "would be to ask Miss Case herself about it, which I will do this evening." "If you please, ma'am," said the housekeeper, coldly; for she knew that Miss Barbara was not famous in the village for speaking truth.

Dinner was now served. Attorney Case expected to smell mint-sauce, and, as the covers were taken from off the dishes, looked around for lamb; but no lamb appeared. He had a dexterous knack of twisting the conversation to his point. Sir Arthur was speaking, when they sat down to dinner, of a new carving-knife, which he lately had had made for his sister. The attorney immediately went from carving-knives to poultry; thence to butcher's meat. Some joints, he observed, were much more difficult to carve than others. He never saw a man carve better than the gentleman opposite him, who was the curate of the parish. "But, sir," said the vulgar attorney, "I must make bold to differ with you in one point, and I'll appeal to Sir Arthur. Sir Arthur, pray may I ask, when you carve a fore-quarter of lamb, do you, when you raise the shoulder, throw in salt, or not?" This well-prepared question was not lost upon Sir Arthur. The attorney was thanked for his intended present; but mortified and surprised to hear Sir Arthur say that it was a constant rule of his never to accept of any presents from his neighbours. "If we were to accept a lamb from a rich neighbour on my estate," said he, "I am afraid we should mortify many of our poor tenants, who can have little to offer, though, perhaps, they may bear us thorough good-will notwithstanding."

After the ladies left the dining-room, as they were walking up and down the large hall, Miss Barbara had a fair opportunity of imitating her keen father's method of conversing. One of the ladies observed, that this hall would be a charming place for music. Bab brought in harps, and harpers, and the harpers' ball, in a breath. "I know so much about it,—about the ball, I mean," said she, "because a lady in Shrews-

bury, a friend of papa's, offered to take me with her; but papa did not like to give her the trouble of sending so far for me, though she has a coach of her own." Barbara fixed her eyes upon Miss Somers as she spoke; but she could not read her countenance as distinctly as she wished, because Miss Somers was at this moment letting down the veil of her hat.

"Shall we walk out before tea?" said Miss Somers to her companions; "I have a pretty guinea-hen to show you." Barbara, secretly drawing propitious omens from the guinea-hen, followed with a confidential step. The pheasantry was well filled with pheasants, peacocks, &c.; and Susan's pretty little guinea-hen appeared well, even in this high company. It was much admired. Barbara was in glory; but her glory was of short duration.

Just as Miss Somers was going to inquire into the guinea-hen's history, Philip came up, to ask permission to have a bit of sycamore, to turn a nutmeg-box for his mother. He was an ingenious lad, and a good turner for his age. Sir Arthur had put by a bit of sycamore on purpose for him, and Miss Somers told him where it was to be found. He thanked her; but in the midst of his bow of thanks his eye was struck by the sight of the guinea-hen, and he involuntarily exclaimed, "Susan's guinea-hen, I declare!" "No, it's not Susan's guinea-hen," said Miss Barbara, colouring furiously; "it is mine, and I have made a present of it to Miss Somers."

At the sound of Bab's voice, Philip turned—saw her—and indignation, unrestrained by the presence of all the amazed spectators, flashed in his countenance.

"What is the matter, Philip?" said Miss Somers, in a pacifying tone; but Philip was not inclined to be pacified. "Why, ma'am," said he, "may I speak out?" and, without waiting for permission, he spoke out, and gave a full, true, and warm account of Rose's embassy, and of Miss Barbara's cruel and avaricious proceedings.

Barbara denied, prevaricated, stammered, and at last was overcome with confusion; for which even the most indulgent spectators could scarcely pity her.

Miss Somers, however, mindful of what was due to her guest, was anxious to despatch Philip for his piece of sycamore. Bab recovered herself as soon as he was out of

sight; but she further exposed herself by exclaiming, "I'm sure I wish this pitiful guinea-hen had never come into my possession. I wish Susan had kept it at home, as she should have done!"

"Perhaps she will be more careful, now that she has received so strong a lesson," said Miss Somers. "Shall we try her?" continued she. "Philip will, I dare say, take the guinea-hen back to Susan, if we desire it." "If you please, ma'am," said Barbara, sullenly; "I have nothing more to do with it."

So the guinea-hen was delivered to Philip, who set off joyfully with his prize, and was soon in sight of Farmer Price's cottage. He stopped when he came to the door. He recollected Rose and her generous friendship for Susan. He was determined that she should have the pleasure of restoring the guinea-hen. He ran into the village. All the children who had given up their little purse on May-day were assembled on the play-green. They were delighted to see the guinea-hen once more. Philip took his pipe and tabor, and they marched in innocent triumph towards the whitewashed cottage.

"Let me come with you—let me come with you," said the butcher's boy to Philip. "Stop one minute! my father has something to say to you." He darted into his father's house. The little procession stopped, and in a few minutes the bleating of a lamb was heard. Through a back passage, which led into the paddock behind the house, they saw the butcher leading a lamb.

"It is Daisy!" exclaimed Rose—"It's Daisy!" repeated all her companions. "Susan's lamb! Susan's lamb!" and there was a universal shout of joy.

"Well, for my part," said the good butcher, as soon as he could be heard,—"for my part, I would not be so cruel as Attorney Case for the whole world. These poor brute beasts don't know aforehand what's going to happen to them; and as for dying, it's what we must all do some time or another; but to keep wringing the hearts of the living, that have as much sense as oneself, is what I call cruel; and is not this what Attorney Case has been doing by poor Susan, and her whole family, ever since he took a spite against them? But, at any rate, here's Susan's lamb safe and sound. I'd have taken it back sooner, but I was off before day to the fair, and am but

just come back. Daisy, however, has been as well off in my paddock as he would have been in the field by the water-side."

The obliging shopkeeper, who showed the pretty calicoes to Susan, was now at his door, and when he saw the lamb, and heard that it was Susan's, and learned its history, he said that he would add his mite; and he gave the children some ends of narrow riband, with which Rose decorated her friend's lamb.

The pipe and tabor now once more began to play, and the procession moved on in joyful order, after giving the humane butcher three cheers;—three cheers which were better deserved than "loud huzzas" usually are.

Susan was working in her arbour, with her little deal table before her. When she heard the sound of the music, she put down her work and listened. She saw the crowd of children coming nearer and nearer. They had closed round Daisy, so that she did not see it; but as they came up to the garden-gate, she saw that Rose beckoned to her. Philip played as loud as he could, that she might not hear, till the proper moment, the bleating of the lamb. Susan opened the garden-wicket, and at this signal the crowd divided, and the first thing that Susan saw, in the midst of her taller friends, was little smiling Mary, with the guinea-hen in her arms.

"Come on! Come on!" cried Mary, as Susan started with joyful surprise; "you have more to see."

At this instant the music paused; Susan heard the bleating of a lamb; and scarcely daring to believe her senses, she pressed eagerly forward, and beheld poor Daisy!—she burst into tears. "I did not shed one tear when I parted with you, my dear little Daisy!" said she. "It was for my father and mother. I would not have parted with you for anything else in the whole world. Thank you, thank you all," added she to her companions, who sympathized in her joy, even more than they had sympathized in her sorrow. "Now if my father was not to go away from us next week, and if my mother was quite stout, I should be the happiest person in the world!"

As Susan pronounced these words, a voice behind the little listening crowd cried in a brutal tone, "Let us pass, if you please; you have no right to stop up the public road!"

This was the voice of Attorney Case, who was returning with his daughter Barbara from his visit to the Abbey. He saw the lamb, and tried to whistle as he passed on. Barbara also saw the guinea-hen, and turned her head another way, that she might avoid the contemptuous, reproachful looks of those whom she only affected to despise. Even her new bonnet, in which she had expected to be so much admired, was now only serviceable to hide her face and conceal her mortification.

"I am glad she saw the guinea-hen," cried Rose, who now held it in her hands. "Yes," said Philip, "she'll not forget May-day in a hurry." "Nor I neither, I hope," said Susan, looking round upon her companions with a most affectionate smile; "I hope, whilst I live, I shall never forget your goodness to me last May-day. Now I've my pretty guinea-hen safe once more, I should think of returning your money." "No! no! no!" was the general cry. "We don't want the money—keep it, keep it—you want it for your father." "Well," said Susan, "I am not too proud to be obliged. I *will* keep your money for my father. Perhaps some time or other I may be able to earn—" "Oh," interrupted Philip, "don't let us talk of earning; don't let us talk to her of money now; she has not had time hardly to look at poor Daisy and her guinea-hen. Come, we had best go about our business, and let her have them all to herself."

The crowd moved away in consequence of Philip's considerate advice; but it was observed that he was the very last to stir from the garden-wicket himself. He stayed, first, to inform Susan that it was Rose who tied the ribands on Daisy's head. Then he stayed a little longer to let her into the history of the guinea-hen, and to tell her who it was that brought the hen home from the Abbey.

Rose held the sieve, and Susan was feeding her long-lost favourite, whilst Philip leaned over the wicket, prolonging his narration. "Now, my pretty guinea-hen," said Susan—"my naughty guinea-hen, that flew away from me, you shall never serve me so again. I must cut your nice wings; but I won't hurt you." "Take care," cried Philip; "you'd better, indeed you'd better, let me hold her, whilst you cut her wings."

When this operation was successfully performed, which it certainly could never have been if Philip had not held the hen for Susan, he recollected that his mother had sent him with a

message to Mrs. Price. This message led to another quarter of an hour's delay; for he had the whole history of the guinea-hen to tell over again to Mrs. Price, and the farmer himself luckily came in whilst it was going on, so it was but civil to begin it afresh; and then the farmer was so rejoiced to see his Susan so happy again with her two little favourites, that he declared he must see Daisy fed himself; and Philip found that he was wanted to hold the jug full of milk, out of which Farmer Price filled the pan for Daisy! Happy Daisy! who lapped at his ease, whilst Susan caressed him, and thanked her fond father and her pleased mother.

"But, Philip," said Mrs. Price, "I'll hold the jug—you'll be late with your message to your mother; we'll not detain you any longer."

Philip departed, and as he went out of the garden-wicket he looked up, and saw Bab and her maid Betty staring out of the window, as usual. On this, he immediately turned back to try whether he had shut the gate fast, lest the guinea-hen might stray out, and fall again into the hands of the enemy.

Miss Barbara, in the course of this day, had felt considerable mortification, but no contrition. She was vexed that her meanness was discovered; but she felt no desire to cure herself of any of her faults. The ball was still uppermost in her vain, selfish soul. "Well," said she, to her *confidante* Betty, "you hear how things have turned out; but if Miss Somers won't think of asking me to go with her, I've a notion I know who will. As papa says, it's a good thing to have two strings to one's bow."

Now, some officers, who were quartered at Shrewsbury, had become acquainted with Mr. Case. They had gotten into some quarrel with a tradesman in the town, and Attorney Case had promised to bring them through the affair, as the man threatened to take the law of them. Upon the faith of this promise, and with the vain hope that, by civility, they might dispose him to bring in a *reasonable* bill of costs, these officers sometimes invited Mr. Case to the mess; and one of them, who had lately been married, prevailed upon his bride *sometimes* to take a little notice of Miss Barbara. It was with this lady that Miss Barbara now hoped to go to the harpers' ball.

"The officers and Mrs. Strathspey, or, more properly, Mrs.

Strathspey and the officers, are to breakfast here to-morrow, do you know," said Bab to Betty. "One of them dined at the Abbey to-day, and told papa that they'd all come. They are going out, on a party, somewhere into the country, and breakfast here in their way. Pray, Betty, don't forget that Mrs. Strathspey can't breakfast without honey. I heard her say so myself." "Then, indeed," said Betty, "I'm afraid Mrs. Strathspey will be likely to go without her breakfast here; for not a spoonful of honey have we, let her long for it ever so much." "But, surely," said Bab, "we can contrive to get some honey in the neighbourhood." "There's none to be bought, as I know of," said Betty. "But is there none to be begged or borrowed?" said Bab, laughing. "Do you forget Susan's beehive? Step over to her in the morning, with *my compliments*, and see what you can do. Tell her it's for Mrs. Strathspey."

In the morning, Betty went with Miss Barbara's compliments to Susan, to beg some honey for Mrs. Strathspey, who could not breakfast without it. Susan did not like to part with her honey, because her mother loved it, and she therefore gave Betty but a small quantity. When Barbara saw how little Susan sent, she called her *a miser*, and said she *must* have some more for Mrs. Strathspey. "I'll go myself and speak to her;—come you with me, Betty," said the young lady, who found it at present convenient to forget her having declared, the day that she sucked up the broth, that she never would honour Susan with another visit. "Susan," said she, accosting the poor girl, whom she had done everything in her power to injure, "I must beg a little more honey from you for Mrs. Strathspey's breakfast. You know, on a particular occasion, such as this, neighbours must help one another." "To be sure they should," added Betty.

Susan, though she was generous, was not weak; she was willing to give to those she loved, but not disposed to let anything be taken from her, or coaxed out of her, by those she had reason to despise. She civilly answered, that she was sorry she had no more honey to spare.

Barbara grew angry, and lost all command of herself, when she saw that Susan, without regarding her reproaches, went on looking through the glass pane in the beehive.—"I'll tell you what, Susan Price," said she, in a high tone, "the honey I

will have; so you may as well give it to me by fair means—yes or no?—Speak! will you give it me, or not? Will you give me that piece of the honeycomb that lies there?" "That bit of honeycomb is for my mother's breakfast," said Susan; "I cannot give it you." "Can't you?" said Bab; "then see if I don't get it." She stretched across Susan for the honeycomb, which was lying by some rosemary-leaves that Susan had freshly gathered for her mother's tea. Bab grasped, but at her first effort she reached only the rosemary. She made a second dart at the honeycomb; and in her struggle to obtain it she overset the beehive. The bees swarmed about her. Her maid Betty screamed, and ran away. Susan, who was sheltered by a laburnum-tree, called to Barbara, upon whom the black clusters of bees were now settling, and begged her to stand still, and not to beat them away. "If you stand quietly, you won't be stung, perhaps." But, instead of standing quietly, Bab buffeted, and stamped, and roared, and the bees stung her terribly. Her arms and her face swelled in a frightful manner. She was helped home by poor Susan and treacherous Mrs. Betty, who, now the mischief was done, thought only of exculpating herself to her master.

"Indeed, Miss Barbara," said she, "this was quite wrong of you, to go and get yourself into such a scrape. I shall be turned away for it, you'll see."

"I don't care whether you are turned away or not," said Barbara; "I never felt such pain in my life. Can't you do something for me? I don't mind the pain either so much as being such a fright. Pray how am I to be fit to be seen at breakfast by Mrs. Strathspey? and I suppose I can't go to the ball either to-morrow, after all!"

"No, that you can't expect to do, indeed," said Betty, the comforter. "You need not think of balls; for those lumps and swellings won't go off your face this week. That's not what pains me; but I'm thinking of what your papa will say to me when he sees you, miss."

Whilst this amiable mistress and maid were in their adversity reviling one another, Susan, when she saw that she could be of no farther use, was preparing to depart; but at the house-door she was met by Mr. Case. Mr. Case had revolved things in his mind; for his second visit at the Abbey pleased him as little as his first, owing to a few words which Sir

Arthur and Miss Somers dropped in speaking of Susan and Farmer Price. Mr. Case began to fear that he had mistaken his game in quarrelling with this family. The refusal of his present dwelt upon the attorney's mind; and he was aware that, if the history of Susan's lamb ever reached the Abbey, he was undone. He now thought that the most prudent course he could possibly follow would be to *hush up* matters with the Prices with all convenient speed. Consequently, when he met Susan at his door, he forced a gracious smile. "How is your mother, Susan?" said he. "Is there anything in our house can be of service to her?" On hearing his daughter, he cried out, "Barbara! Barbara! Bab! come downstairs, child, and speak to Susan Price." But as no Barbara answered, her father stalked upstairs directly, opened the door, and stood amazed at the spectacle of her swelled visage.

Betty instantly began to tell the story of Barbara's mishap her own way. Bab contradicted her as fast as she spoke. The attorney turned the maid away upon the spot; and partly with real anger, and partly with feigned affectation of anger, he demanded from his daughter how she dared to treat Susan Price so ill, "when," as he said, "she was so neighbourly and obliging as to give you some of her honey? Couldn't you be content, without seizing upon the honeycomb by force? This is scandalous behaviour, and what, I assure you, I can't countenance."

Susan now interceded for Barbara; and the attorney, softening his voice, said that "Susan was a great deal too good to her; as you are, indeed," added he, "to everybody. I forgive her for your sake." Susan curtsied, in great surprise; but her lamb could not be forgotten, and she left the attorney's house as soon as she could, to make her mother's rosemary-tea for breakfast.

Mr. Case saw that Susan was not so simple as to be taken in by a few fair words. His next attempt was to conciliate Farmer Price. The farmer was a blunt, honest man, and his countenance remained inflexibly contemptuous, when the attorney addressed him in his softest tone.

So stood matters the day of the long-expected harper's ball. Miss Barbara Case, stung by Susan's bees, could not, after all her manœuvres, go with Mrs. Strathspey to the ball.

The ball-room was filled early in the evening. There was a numerous assembly. The harpers, who contended for the prize, were placed under the music-gallery at the lower end of the room. Amongst them was our old blind friend, who, as he was not so well clad as his competitors, seemed to be disdained by many of the spectators. Six ladies and six gentlemen were now appointed to be judges of the performance. They were seated in a semicircle, opposite to the harpers. The Misses Somers, who were fond of music, were amongst the ladies in the semicircle; and the prize was lodged in the hands of Sir Arthur. There was now silence. The first harp sounded, and as each musician tried his skill, the audience seemed to think that each deserved the prize. The old blind man was the last. He tuned his instrument; and such a simple, pathetic strain was heard as touched every heart. All were fixed in delighted attention; and when the music ceased, the silence for some moments continued.

The silence was followed by a universal buzz of applause. The judges were unanimous in their opinions, and it was declared that the old blind harper, who played the last, deserved the prize.

The simple, pathetic air which won the suffrages of the whole assembly, was his own composition. He was pressed to give the words belonging to the music; and at last he modestly offered to repeat them, as he could not see to write. Miss Somers's ready pencil was instantly produced; and the old harper dictated the words of his ballad, which he called—"*Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb.*"

Miss Somers looked at her brother from time to time, as she wrote; and Sir Arthur, as soon as the old man had finished, took him aside, and asked him some questions, which brought the whole history of Susan's lamb and of Attorney Case's cruelty to light.

The attorney himself was present when the harper began to dictate his ballad. His colour, as Sir Arthur steadily looked at him, varied continually; till at length, when he heard the words "Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb," he suddenly shrunk back, skulked through the crowd, and disappeared. We shall not follow him; we had rather follow our old friend, the victorious harper.

No sooner had he received the ten guineas, his well-merited

FARMER PRICE AND THE LAWYER.

prize, than he retired into a small room belonging to the people of the house, asked for a pen, ink, and paper, and dictated, in a low voice, to his boy, who was a tolerably good scribe, a letter, which he ordered him to put directly into the Shrewsbury post-office. The boy ran with the letter to the post-office. He was but just in time, for the postman's horn was sounding.

The next morning, when Farmer Price, his wife, and Susan, were sitting together, reflecting that his week's leave of absence was nearly at an end, and that the money was not yet made up for John Simpson, the substitute, a knock was heard at the door, and the person who usually delivered the letters in the village put a letter into Susan's hand, saying, "A penny, if you please—here's a letter for your father."

"For me!" said Farmer Price; "here's the penny then; but who can it be from, I wonder? Who can think of writing to me, in this world?" He tore open the letter; but the hard name at the bottom of the page puzzled him—"*Your obliged friend*—Llewellyn."

"And what's this?" said he, opening a paper that was enclosed in the letter. "It's a song, seemingly; it must be somebody that has a mind to make an April fool of me." "But it is not April, it is May, father," said Susan. "Well, let us read the letter, and we shall come at the truth all in good time."

Farmer Price sat down in his own chair, for he could not read entirely to his satisfaction in any other, and read as follows:—

"My worthy Friend,—I am sure you will be glad to hear that I have had good success this night. I have won the ten-guinea prize, and for that I am in a great measure indebted to your sweet daughter Susan; as you will see by a little ballad I enclose for her. Your hospitality to me has afforded me an opportunity of learning some of your family history. You do not, I hope, forget that I was present when you were counting the treasure in Susan's little purse, and that I heard for what purpose it was all destined. You have not, I know, yet made up the full sum for your substitute, John Simpson; therefore do me the favour to use the five-guinea bank-note which you will find within the ballad. You shall not find me as hard a

creditor as Attorney Case. Pay me the money at your own convenience. If it is never convenient to you to pay it, I shall never ask it. I shall go my rounds again through this country, I believe, about this time next year, and will call to see how you do, and to play the new tune for Susan and the dear little boys.

"I should just add, to set your heart at rest about the money, that it does not distress me at all to lend it to you. I am not quite so poor as I appear to be. But it is my humour to go about as I do. I see more of the world under my tattered garb than, perhaps, I should ever see in a better dress. There are many of my profession who are of the same mind as myself in this respect; and we are glad, when it lies in our way, to do any kindness to such a worthy family as yours.—So, fare ye well.

"Your obliged Friend,

"LLEWELLYN."

Susan now, by her father's desire, opened the ballad. He picked up the five-guinea bank-note, whilst she read with surprise, "Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb." Her mother leaned over her shoulder to read the words; but they were interrupted, before they had finished the first stanza, by another knock at the door. It was not the postman with another letter. It was Sir Arthur and his sisters.

They came with an intention, which they were much disappointed to find that the old harper had rendered vain—they came to lend the farmer and his good family the money to pay for his substitute.

"But, since we are here," said Sir Arthur, "let me do my own business, which I had like to have forgotten. Mr. Price, will you come out with me, and let me show you a piece of your land, through which I want to make a road? Look there," said Sir Arthur, pointing to the spot, "I am laying out a ride round my estate, and that bit of land of yours stops me."

"Why, sir," said Price, "the land's mine, to be sure, for that matter; but I hope you don't look upon me to be that sort of person that would be stiff about a trifle or so."

"The fact is," said Sir Arthur, "I had heard you were a litigious, pig-headed fellow; but you do not seem to deserve this character."

"Hope not, sir," said the farmer; "but about the matter of the land, I don't want to take any advantage of your wishing for it. You are welcome to it; and I leave it to you to find me out another bit of land convenient to me that will be worth neither more nor less; or else to make up the value to me some way or other. I need say no more about it."

"I hear something," continued Sir Arthur, after a short silence,—"I hear something, Mr. Price, of *a flaw* in your lease. I would not speak to you of it whilst we were bargaining about your land, lest I should overawe you; but, tell me, what is this *flaw?*"

"In truth, and the truth is the fittest thing to be spoken at all times," said the farmer, "I didn't know myself what a *flaw*, as they call it, meant, till I heard of the word from Attorney Case; and, I take it, a *flaw* is neither more nor less than a mistake, as one should say. Now, by reason a man does not make a mistake on purpose, it seems to me to be the fair thing, that if a man finds out his mistake, he might set it right; but Attorney Case says this is not law; and I've no more to say. The man who drew up my lease made a mistake; and if I must suffer for it, I must," said the farmer. "However, I can show you, Sir Arthur, just for my own satisfaction and yours, a few lines of a memorandum on a slip of paper, which was given me by your relation, the gentleman who lived here before, and let me my farm. You'll see, by that bit of paper, what was meant; but the attorney says, the paper's not worth a button in a court of justice, and I don't understand these things. All I understand is the common honesty of the matter. I've no more to say."

"This attorney, whom you speak of so often," said Sir Arthur, "you seem to have some quarrel with. Now, would you tell me frankly what is the matter between——"

"The matter between us, then," said Price, "is a little bit of ground, not worth much, that is there open to the lane at the end of Mr. Case's garden, sir, and he wanted to take it in. Now I told him my mind, that it belonged to the parish, and that I never would willingly give my consent to his cribbing it in that way. Sir, I was the more loath to see it shut into his garden, which moreover is large enow of all conscience without it, because you must know, Sir Arthur, the children in our village are fond of making a little play-green

of it; and they have a custom of meeting on May-day at a hawthorn that stands in the middle of it, and altogether I was very loath to see 'em turned out of it by those who had no right."

"Let us go and see this nook," said Sir Arthur. "It is not far off, is it?"

"Oh no, sir; just hard by here."

When they got to the ground, Mr. Case, who saw them walking together, was in a hurry to join them, that he might put a stop to any explanations. Explanations were things of which he had a great dread; but, fortunately, he was upon this occasion a little too late.

"Is this the nook in dispute?" said Sir Arthur. "Yes; this is the whole thing," said Price. "Why, Sir Arthur," interposed the politic attorney, with an assumed air of generosity, "don't let us talk any more about it. Let it belong to whom it will, I give it up to you."

"So great a lawyer, Mr. Case, as you are," replied Sir Arthur, "must know that a man cannot give up that to which he has no legal title; and in this case it is impossible that, with the best intentions to oblige me in the world, you can give up this bit of land to me, because it is mine already, as I can convince you effectually by a map of the adjoining land, which I have fortunately safe amongst my papers. This piece of ground belonged to the farm on the opposite side of the road, and it was cut off when the lane was made."

"Very possibly. I dare say you are quite correct; you must know best," said the attorney, trembling for the agency.

"Then," said Sir Arthur, "Mr. Price, you will observe that I now promise this little green to the children for a play-ground; and I hope they may gather hawthorn many a May-day at this their favourite bush." Mr. Price bowed low, which he seldom did, even when he received a favour himself. "And now, Mr. Case," said Sir Arthur, turning to the attorney, who did not know which way to look, "you sent me a lease to look over."

"Ye—ye—yes," stammered Mr. Case. "I thought it my duty to do so; not out of any malice or ill-will to this good man."

"You have done him no injury," said Sir Arthur, coolly. "I am ready to make him a new lease, whenever he pleases,

of his farm, and I shall be guided by a memorandum of the original bargain which he has in his possession. I hope I never shall take an unfair advantage of any one."

"Heaven forbid, sir," said the attorney, sanctifying his face, "that I should suggest the taking an *unfair* advantage of any man, rich or poor; but to break a bad lease is not taking an unfair advantage."

"You really think so?" said Sir Arthur. "Certainly I do, and I hope I have not hazarded your good opinion by speaking my mind concerning the flaw so plainly. I always understood that there could be nothing ungentlemanlike, in the way of business, in taking advantage of a flaw in a lease."

"Now," said Sir Arthur, "you have pronounced judgment *undesignedly* in your own case. You intended to send me this poor man's lease; but your son, by some mistake, brought me your own, and I have discovered a fatal error in it." "A fatal error?" said the alarmed attorney. "Yes, sir," said Sir Arthur, pulling the lease out of his pocket. "Here it is. You will observe that it is neither signed nor sealed by the grantor."

"But you won't take advantage of me, surely, Sir Arthur?" said Mr. Case, forgetting his own principles. "I shall not take advantage of you, as you would have taken of this honest man. In both cases I shall be guided by memoranda which I have in my possession. I shall not, Mr. Case, defraud you of one shilling of your property. I am ready, at a fair valuation, to pay the exact value of your house and land; but upon this condition, that you quit the parish within one month."

Attorney Case submitted, for he knew that he could not legally resist. He was glad to be let off so easily; and he bowed and sneaked away, secretly comforting himself with the hope, that when they came to the valuation of the house and land he should be the gainer, perhaps of a few guineas. His reputation he justly held very cheap.

"You are a scholar; you write a good hand, you can keep accounts, cannot you?" said Sir Arthur to Mr. Price, as they walked home towards his cottage. "I think I saw a bill of your little daughter's drawing out the other day, which was very neatly written. Did you teach her to write?"

"No, sir," said Price, "I can't say I did *that*, for she mostly taught it herself; but I taught her a little arithmetic, as far as I knew, on our winter nights, when I had nothing better to do".

"Your daughter shows that she has been well taught," said Sir Arthur; "and her good conduct and good character speak strongly in favour of her parents."

"You are very good, very good indeed, sir, to speak in this sort of way," said the delighted father.

"But I mean to do more than *pay you with words*," said Sir Arthur. "You are attached to your own family; perhaps you may become attached to me, when you come to know me, and we shall have frequent opportunities of judging of one another. I want no agent to squeeze my tenants, or to do my dirty work. I only want a steady, intelligent, honest man, like you, to collect my rents; and I hope, Mr. Price, you will have no objection to the employment."

"I hope, sir," said Price, with joy and gratitude glowing in his honest countenance, "that you'll never have cause to repent your goodness."

"And what are my sisters about here?" said Sir Arthur, entering the cottage, and going behind his sisters, who were busily engaged in measuring an extremely pretty coloured calico.

"It is for Susan, my dear brother," said they. "I knew she did not keep that guinea for herself," said Miss Somers. "I have just prevailed upon her mother to tell me what became of it. Susan gave it to her father; but she must not refuse a gown of our choosing this time; and I am sure she will not, because her mother, I see, likes it. And, Susan, I hear that, instead of being Queen of the May this year, you were sitting in your sick mother's room. Your mother has a little colour in her cheeks now."

"Oh, ma'am," interrupted Mrs Price, "I'm quite well. Joy, I think, has made me quite well."

"Then," said Miss Somers, "I hope you will be able to come out on your daughter's birthday, which, I hear, is the 25th of this month. Make haste and get quite well before that day; for my brother intends that all the lads and lasses of the village shall have a dance on Susan's birthday."

"Yes," said Sir Arthur, "and I hope on that day, Susan, you will be very happy with your little friends upon their play-green. I shall tell them that it is your good conduct which has obtained it for them; and if you have anything to ask, any little favour for any of your companions, which we can grant, now ask, Susan. These ladies look as if they would

not refuse you anything that is reasonable; and, I think, you look as if you would not ask anything unreasonable."

"Sir," said Susan, after consulting her mother's eyes, "there is, to be sure, a favour I should like to ask; it is for Rose."

"Well, I don't know who Rose is," said Sir Arthur, smiling; "but, go on."

"Ma'am, you have seen her, I believe; she is a very good girl, indeed," said Mrs. Price. "And works very neatly, indeed," continued Susan, eagerly, to Miss Somers; "and she and her mother heard you were looking out for some one to wait upon you."

"Say no more," said Miss Somers; "your wish is granted. Tell Rose to come to the Abbey to-morrow morning, or rather come with her yourself; for our housekeeper, I know, wants to talk to you about a certain cake. She wishes, Susan, that you should be the maker of the cake for the dance; and she has good things looked out for it already, I know. It must be large enough for everybody to have a slice, and the housekeeper will ice it for you. I only hope your cake will be as good as your bread. Fare ye well."

How happy are those who bid farewell to a whole family, silent with gratitude, who will bless them aloud when they are far out of hearing!

"How do I wish, now," said Farmer Price, "and it's almost a sin for one that has had such a power of favours done him, to wish for anything more, but how I *do* wish, wife, that our good friend the harper was only here at this time! It would do his old warm heart good. Well, the best of it is, we shall be able, next year, when he comes his rounds, to pay him his money with thanks, being all the time, and for ever, as much obliged to him as if we kept it, and wanted it as badly as we did when he gave so handsome. I long, so I do, to see him in this house again, drinking, as he did, just in this spot, a glass of Susan's mead, to her very good health."

"Yes," said Susan, "and the next time he comes, I can give him one of my guinea-hen's eggs, and I shall show him my lamb, Daisy."

"True, love," said her mother; "and he will play that tune, and sing that pretty ballad. Where is it? for I have not finished it."

"Rose ran away with it, mother; but I'll step after her, and bring it back to you this minute," said Susan.

Susan found her friend Rose at the hawthorn, in the midst of a crowded circle of her companions, to whom she was reading "Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb."

"The words are something; but the tune—the tune—I must have the tune," cried Philip. "I'll ask my mother to ask Sir Arthur to try and rout out which way that good old man went after the ball; and if he's above ground, we'll have him back by Susan's birthday; and he shall sit here, just exactly here, by this our bush, and he shall play—I mean if he pleases—that same tune for us; and I shall learn it—I mean if I can—in a minute."

The good news, that Farmer Price was to be employed to collect the rents, and that Attorney Case was to leave the parish in a month, soon spread over the village. Many came out of their houses to have the pleasure of hearing the joyful tidings confirmed by Susan herself. The crowd on the play-green increased every minute.

"Yes," cried the triumphant Philip, "I tell you it's all true,—every word of it. Susan's too modest to say it herself; but I tell ye all, Sir Arthur gave us this play-green for ever, on account of her being so good."

You see, at last, Attorney Case, with all his cunning, has not proved a match for "Simple Susan."

THE WHITE PIGEON.

THE little town of Somerville, in Ireland, has, within these few years, assumed the neat and cheerful appearance of an English village. Mr. Somerville, to whom this town belongs, wished to inspire his tenantry with a taste for order and domestic happiness, and took every means in his power to encourage industrious, well-behaved people to settle in his neighbourhood. When he had finished building a row of good slated houses in his town, he declared that he would let them to the best tenants he could find, and proposals were publicly sent to him from all parts of the country.

By the best tenants, Mr. Somerville did not, however, mean the best bidders; and many, who had offered an extravagant price for the houses, were surprised to find their proposals rejected. Amongst these was Mr. Cox, an alehouse keeper, who did not bear a very good character.

"Please your honour, sir," said he to Mr. Somerville, "I *expected*, since I bid as fair and fairer for it than any other, that you would have let me the house next the apothecary's. Was not it fifteen guineas I mentioned in my proposal? and did not your honour give it against me for thirteen?" "My honour did just so," replied Mr. Somerville, calmly. "And please your honour, but I don't know what it is I or mine have done to offend you—I'm sure there is not a gentleman in all Ireland I'd go farther to sarve. Would not I go to Cork to-morrow for the least word from your honour?" "I am much obliged to you, Mr. Cox, but I have no business at Cork at present," answered Mr. Somerville, drily. "It is all I wish," exclaimed Cox, "that I could find out and light upon the man that has belied me to your honour." "No man has belied you, Mr. Cox; but your nose belies you much, if you do not love drinking a little; and your black eye and cut chin belie you much if you do not love quarrelling a little."

"Quarrel! I quarrel, please your honour! I defy any man, or set of men, ten mile round, to prove such a thing; and I am ready to fight him that dares to say the like of me; I'd fight him here in your honour's presence, if he'd only come out this minute, and meet me like a man."

Here Mr. Cox put himself into a boxing attitude, but observing that Mr. Somerville looked at his threatening gesture with a smile, and that several people, who had gathered round him as he stood in the street, laughed at the proof he gave of his peaceable disposition, he changed his attitude, and went on to vindicate himself against the charge of drinking.

"And as to drink, please your honour, there's no truth in it. Not a drop of whisky, good or bad, have I touched these six months, except what I took with Jemmy M'Doole, the night I had the misfortune to meet your honour coming home from the fair of Ballynagrish."

To this speech Mr. Somerville made no answer, but turned away to look at the bow-window of a handsome new inn, which the glazier was at this instant glazing. "Please your honour, that new inn is not let, I hear, as yet," resumed Mr. Cox; "if your honour recollects, you promised to make me a compliment of it last Seraphtide was twelvemonth."

"Impossible!" cried Mr. Somerville, "for I had no thought of building an inn at that time." "O, I beg your honour's pardon; but if you'd be just pleased to recollect, it was coming through the gap in the bog-meadows, *forenent* Thady O'Connor you made me the promise—I'll leave it to him, so I will." "But I will not leave it to him, I assure you," cried Mr. Somerville; "I never made such a promise: I never thought of letting this inn to you." "Then your honour won't let me have it?" "No. You have told me a dozen falsehoods. I do not wish to have you for a tenant."

"Well, God bless your honour; I've no more to say, but God bless your honour," said Mr. Cox; and he walked away, muttering to himself as he slouched his hat over his face, "I hope I'll live to be revenged on him!"

Mr. Somerville the next morning went with his family to look at the new inn, which he expected to see perfectly finished; but he was met by the carpenter, who, with a rueful face, informed him that six panes of glass in the large bow-window had been broken during the night.

"Ha! perhaps Mr. Cox has broken my windows, in revenge for my refusing to let him my house," said Mr. Somerville; and many of the neighbours, who knew the malicious character of this Mr. Cox, observed that this was like one of his tricks.

A boy of about twelve years old, however, stepped forward and said, "I don't like Mr. Cox, I'm sure; for once he beat me when he was drunk; but, for all that, no one should be accused wrongfully. He *could* not be the person that broke these windows last night, for he was six miles off. He slept at his cousin's last night, and he has not returned home yet. So I think he knows nothing of the matter."

Mr. Somerville was pleased with the honest simplicity of this boy, and observing that he looked in eagerly at the staircase, when the house-door was opened, he asked him whether he should like to go in and see the new house. "Yes, sir," said the boy, "I should like to go up those stairs, and to see what I should come to." "Up with you, then!" said Mr. Somerville; and the boy ran up the stairs. He went from room to room with great expressions of admiration and delight. At length, as he was examining one of the garrets, he was startled by a fluttering noise over his head; and looking up, he saw a white pigeon, who, frightened at his appearance, began to fly round and round the room, till it found its way out of the door, and flew into the staircase.

The carpenter was speaking to Mr. Somerville upon the landing-place of the stairs; but, the moment he spied the white pigeon, he broke off in the midst of a speech about *the nose* of the stairs, and exclaimed, "There he is, please your honour! There's he that has done all the damage to our bow-window—that's the very same wicked white pigeon that broke the church-windows last Sunday was se'nnight; but he's down for it now; we have him safe, and I'll chop his head off, as he deserves, this minute."

"Stay! O stay! don't chop his head off: he does not deserve it," cried the boy, who came running out of the garret with the greatest eagerness—"*I* broke your window, sir," said he to Mr. Somerville—"I broke your window with this ball; but I did not know that I had done it till this moment, I assure you, or I should have told you before. Don't chop his head off," added the boy to the carpenter, who had now the

white pigeon in his hands. "No," said Mr. Somerville, "the pigeon's head shall not be chopped off, nor yours either, my good boy, for breaking a window. I am persuaded, by your open, honest countenance, that you are speaking the truth; but pray explain this matter to us; for you have not made it quite clear. How happened it that you could break my windows without knowing it? and how came you to find it out at last?" "Sir," said the boy, "if you'll come up here I'll show you all I know, and how I came to know it."

Mr. Somerville followed him into the garret, and the boy pointed to a pane of glass that was broken in a small window that looked out upon a piece of waste ground behind the house. Upon this piece of waste ground the children of the village often used to play. "We were playing there at ball yesterday evening," continued the boy, addressing himself to Mr. Somerville, "and one of the lads challenged me to hit a mark in the wall, which I did; but he said I did not hit it, and bade me give him up my ball as the forfeit. This I would not do; and when he began to wrestle with me for it, I threw the ball, as I thought, over the house. He ran to look for it in the street, but could not find it, which I was very glad of; but I was very sorry just now to find it myself lying upon this heap of shavings, sir, under this broken window; for, as soon as I saw it lying there, I knew I must have been the person that broke the window; and through this window came the white pigeon. Here's one of his white feathers sticking in the gap."

"Yes," said the carpenter, "and in the bow-window room below there's plenty of his feathers to be seen; for I've just been down to look. It was the pigeon broke *them* windows, sure enough." "But he could not have got in if I had not broken this little window," said the boy, eagerly; "and I am able to earn sixpence a day, and I'll pay for all the mischief, and welcome. The white pigeon belongs to a poor neighbour, a friend of ours, who is very fond of him, and I would not have him killed for twice as much money."

"Take the pigeon, my honest, generous lad," said Mr. Somerville, "and carry him back to your neighbour. I forgive him all the mischief he has done me, tell your friend, for your sake. As to the rest, we can have the windows mended; and do you keep all the sixpences you earn for yourself."

"That's what he never did yet," said the carpenter. "Many's

the sixpence he earns, but not a halfpenny goes into his own pocket: it goes every farthing to his poor father and mother. Happy for them to have such a son!"

"More happy for him to have such a father and mother," exclaimed the boy. "In their good days they took all the best care of me that was to be had for love or money, and would, if I would let them go on paying for my schooling now, falling as they be in the world; but I must learn to mind the shop now. Good morning to you, sir, and thank you kindly," said he to Mr. Somerville.

"And where does this boy live, and who are his father and mother? They cannot live in town," said Mr. Somerville, "or I should have heard of them."

"They are but just come into the town, please your honour," said the carpenter. "They lived formerly upon Counsellor O'Donnel's estate; but they were ruined, please your honour, by taking a joint-lease with a man, who fell afterwards into bad company, ran out all he had, so could not pay the landlord; and these poor people were forced to pay his share and their own too, which almost ruined them. They were obliged to give up the land; and now they have furnished a little shop in this town with what goods they could afford to buy with the money they got by the sale of their cattle and stock. They have the good-will of all who know them; and I am sure I hope they will do well. The boy is very ready in the shop, though he said only that he could earn sixpence a day. He writes a good hand, and is quick at casting up accounts, for his age. Besides, he is likely to do well in the world, because he is never in idle company; and I've known him since he was two foot high, and never heard of his telling a lie."

"This is an excellent character of the boy, indeed," said Mr. Somerville, "and from his behaviour this morning I am inclined to think that he deserved all your praises."

Mr. Somerville resolved to inquire more fully concerning this poor family, and to attend to their conduct himself, fully determined to assist them if he should find them such as they had been represented.

In the mean time this boy, whose name was Brian O'Neill, went to return the white pigeon to its owner. "You have saved its life," said the woman to whom it belonged, "and I'll make you a present of it." Brian thanked her; and he from

that day began to grow fond of the pigeon. He always took care to scatter some oats for it in his father's yard; and the pigeon grew so tame at last, that it would hop about the kitchen, and eat off the same trencher with the dog.

Brian, after the shop was shut up at night, used to amuse himself with reading some little books which the schoolmaster who formerly taught him arithmetic was so good as to lend him. Among these he one evening met with a little book full of the history of birds and beasts; he looked immediately to see whether the pigeon was mentioned amongst the birds, and, to his great joy, he found a full description and history of his favourite bird.

"So, Brian, I see your schooling has not been thrown away upon you; you like your book, I see, when you have no master over you to bid you read," said his father, when he came in and saw Brian reading his book very attentively.

"Thank you for having me taught to read, father," said Brian; "here I've made a great discovery: I've found out in this book, little as it looks, father, a most curious way of making a fortune; and I hope it will make your fortune, father; and if you'll sit down, I'll tell it to you."

Mr. O'Neill, in hopes of pleasing his son rather than in the expectation of having his fortune made, immediately sat down to listen; and his son explained to him, that he had found in his book an account of pigeons who carried notes and letters; "and, father," continued Brian, "I find my pigeon is of this sort; and I intend to make my pigeon carry messages. Why should not he? If other pigeons have done so before him, I think he is as good, and, I dare say, will be as easy to teach as any pigeon in the world. I shall begin to teach him to-morrow morning; and then, father, you know people often pay a great deal for sending messengers; and no boy can run, no horse can gallop, so fast as a bird can fly; therefore the bird must be the best messenger, and I should be paid the best price. Hey, father?"

"To be sure, to be sure, my boy," said his father, laughing; "I wish you may make the best messenger in Ireland of your pigeon; but all I beg, my dear boy, is that you won't neglect our shop for your pigeon; for I've a notion we have a better chance of making a fortune by the shop than by the white pigeon."

Brian never neglected the shop; but at his leisure hours he amused himself with training his pigeon; and after much patience, he at last succeeded so well, that one day he went to his father and offered to send him word by his pigeon what beef was a pound in the market of Ballynagrish, where he was going. "The pigeon will be home long before me, father; and he will come in at the kitchen-window, and light upon the dresser: then you must untie the little note which I shall have tied under his left wing, and you'll know the price of beef directly."

The pigeon carried his message well; and Brian was much delighted with his success. He soon was employed by the neighbours, who were amused by Brian's fondness for his swift messenger; and soon the fame of the white pigeon was spread amongst all who frequented the markets and fairs of Somerville.

At one of these fairs a set of men of desperate fortunes met to drink, and to concert plans of robberies. Their place of meeting was at the ale-house of Mr. Cox, the man who, as our readers may remember, was offended by Mr. Somerville's hinting that he was fond of drinking and of quarrelling, and who threatened vengeance for having been refused the new inn.

Whilst these men were talking over their schemes, one of them observed that one of their companions was not arrived. Another said, "No." "He's six miles off," said another; and a fourth wished that he could make him hear at that distance. This turned the discourse upon the difficulties of sending messages secretly and quickly. Cox's son, a lad of about nineteen, who was one of this gang, mentioned the white carrier-pigeon, and he was desired to try all means to get it into his possession. Accordingly, the next day young Cox went to Brian O'Neill, and tried, at first by persuasion and afterwards by threats, to prevail upon him to give up the pigeon. Brian was resolute in his refusal, more especially when the petitioner began to bully him.

"If we can't have it by fair means we will by foul," said Cox; and a few days afterwards the pigeon was gone. Brian searched for it in vain—inquired from all the neighbours if they had seen it, and applied, but to no purpose, to Cox. He swore that he knew nothing about the matter. But this was false, for it was he who during the night-time had stolen the

white pigeon. He conveyed it to his employers, and they rejoiced that they had gotten it into their possession, as they thought it would serve them for a useful messenger.

Nothing can be more short-sighted than cunning. The very means which these people took to secure secrecy were the means of bringing their plots to light. They endeavoured to teach the pigeon which they had stolen to carry messages for them in a part of the country at some distance from Somerville; and when they fancied that it had forgotten its former habits, and its old master, they thought that they might venture to employ him nearer home. However, the white pigeon had a better memory than they imagined. They loosed him from a bag near the town of Ballynagrish, in hopes that he would stop at the house of Cox's cousin, which was on the road between Ballynagrish and Somerville. But the pigeon, though he had been purposely fed at this house for a week before this trial, did not stop there, but flew on to his old master's house in Somerville, and pecked at the kitchen-window, as he had formerly been taught to do. His master, fortunately, was within hearing, and poor Brian ran with the greatest joy to open the window, and to let him in.

"O father, here's my white pigeon come back of his own accord," exclaimed Brian; "I must run and show him to my mother." At this instant the pigeon spread his wings, and Brian discovered under one of them a small and very dirty-looking billet. He opened it in his father's presence. The scrawl was scarcely legible; but these words were at length deciphered:—

"Thare are eight of uz sworn; I send yo at botom thare names. We meat at tin this nite at my faders, and have harms and all in radiness to brak into the grate ouse. Mr. Summervill is to lye out to nite—kip the pigeon untill tomorrow. For ever yours,

MURTAGH COX, JUN."

Scarcely had they finished reading this note, than both father and son exclaimed, "Let us go and show it to Mr. Somerville." Before they set out they had, however, the prudence to secure the pigeon, so that he should not be seen by any one but themselves.

Mr Somerville, in consequence of this fortunate discovery, took proper measures for the apprehension of the eight men who had sworn to rob his house. When they were all safely lodged in the county gaol, he sent for Brian O'Neill and his father, and, after thanking them for the service they had done him, he counted out ten bright guineas upon the table, and pushed them towards Brian.

"I don't want to be paid for doing right."

"That's my own boy," said his father. "We thank you, sir, but I *don't like to take the price of blood.*"

"Will you, my good lad," continued Mr. Somerville, after a moment's pause,—"will you trust me with your white pigeon a few days?" "O, and welcome, sir," said the boy with a smile; and he brought the pigeon to Mr. Somerville when it was dark, and nobody saw him.

A few days afterwards Mr. Somerville called at O'Neill's house, and bid him and his son follow him. They followed till he stopped opposite to the bow-window of the new inn. The carpenter had just put up a sign, which was covered over with a bit of carpeting.

"Go up the ladder, will you," said Mr. Somerville to Brian, "and pull that sign straight, for it hangs quite crooked? There, now it is straight. Now pull off the carpet, and let us see the new sign."

The boy pulled off the cover, and saw a white pigeon painted upon the sign, and the name of O'Neill in large letters underneath.

"Take care you do not tumble down and break your neck upon this joyful occasion," said Mr. Somerville, who saw that Brian's surprise was too great for his situation. "Come down from the ladder, and wish your father joy of being master of the new inn called the White Pigeon. And I wish him joy of having such a son as you are. Those who bring up their children well will certainly be rewarded for it, be they poor or rich."

FORGIVE AND FORGET.

IN the neighbourhood of a sea-port town in the west of England, there lived a gardener, who had one son, called Maurice, of whom he was very fond. One day Maurice's father sent him to the neighbouring town to purchase some garden seeds for him. When Maurice got to the seed-shop, it was full of people. At length, when all the other people had got what they wanted, the shopman turned to Maurice—"And what do you want, my patient little fellow?" said he.

"I want all these seeds for my father," said Maurice, putting a list of seeds into the shopman's hand.

The seedsman looked out all the seeds that Maurice wanted, and packed them up in paper: he was folding up some painted-ladypeas, when, from a door at the back of the shop, there came in a square rough-faced man, who exclaimed, the moment he came in, "Are the seeds I ordered ready?—The wind's fair—they ought to have been aboard yesterday. And my china jar, is it packed up and directed? where is it?"

"It is up there, on the shelf over your head, sir," answered the seedsman. "It is very safe, you see; but we have not had time to pack it yet. It shall be done to-day; and we will get the seeds ready for you, sir, as soon as I have done up the parcel for this little boy." "What signifies the parcel for this little boy? he can wait. Here, my good lad, take your parcel, and sheer off," said the impatient man; and, as he spoke, he took up the parcel of seeds from the counter. The parcel was but loosely folded up, and as the impatient man lifted it, the weight of the peas burst the paper, and all the seeds fell out upon the floor. The peas rolled to all parts of the shop; but Maurice, without being out of humour, set about collecting them as fast as possible.

Whilst the boy was busied in this manner, a sailor came

THE LARGE VASE IN DANGER.

into the shop, and said, "Captain, the wind has changed, and it looks as if we should have ugly weather." The captain pushed forward towards the shop-door. Maurice, who was kneeling on the floor, picking up his seeds, saw that the captain's foot was entangled in some packthread which hung down from the shelf on which the china jar stood, so that it would throw down the jar. He immediately caught hold of the captain's leg, and stopped him—"Stay! stand still, sir!" said he, "or you will break your china jar."

The man stood still, looked, and saw how the packthread had caught in his shoe-buckle. "I am really very much obliged to you, my little fellow," said he. "You have saved my jar, which I would not have broken for ten guineas; for it is for my wife, and I've brought it safe from abroad, many a league. This was returning good for evil. Be so kind," continued he, turning to the shopman, "as to reach down that china jar for me."

The shopman lifted down the jar very carefully, and the captain took off the cover, and pulled out some tulip-roots. "Here are a couple of tulip-roots for you; and if you take care of them, I'll promise you that you will have the finest tulips in England."

Maurice thanked the gentleman, and returned home, eager to show his precious tulip-roots to his father, and to a companion of his, the son of a nurseryman, who lived near him. Arthur was the name of the nurseryman's son.

The first thing Maurice did, after showing his tulip-roots to his father, was to run to Arthur's garden in search of him. Their gardens were separated only by a low wall of loose stones:—"Arthur! Arthur! where are you? I have good news for you—something you'll be delighted to see, Arthur!—Ha!—but here is something that I am not delighted to see, I am sure," said poor Maurice, who, when he had got through the raspberry-bushes, and had come in sight of his own garden, beheld his bell-glass—his beloved bell-glass, under which his cucumbers were grown so finely—his only bell-glass, broken to pieces!

"I am sorry for it," said Arthur, who stood leaning upon his spade in his own garden: "I am afraid you will be very angry with me. I was throwing weeds and rubbish over the wall, and a great lump of couch-grass, with stones

hanging to the roots, fell upon your bell-glass, and broke it."

Maurice lifted up the lump of couch-grass, which had fallen through the broken glass, and he looked at his cucumbers for a moment in silence—"O my poor cucumbers! you must all die now. But it is done, and it cannot be helped; so, Arthur, let us say no more about it."

"You are very good; I thought you would have been angry. I am sure I should have been exceedingly angry if you had broken the glass, if it had been mine."

"O forgive and forget, as my father always says; that's the best way. Look what I have got for you." Then he told Arthur the story of the captain of the ship, and the china jar; and concluded by offering one of the precious roots to Arthur, who thanked him with great joy, and repeatedly said, "How good you were not to be angry with me. I am much more sorry for it than if you had been in a passion with me!"

Arthur now went to plant his tulip-root; and Maurice looked at the beds which his companion had been digging, and at all the things which were coming up in his garden.

Arthur's father, Mr. Oakly, the nurseryman, was apt to take offence at trifles; and when he thought that any of his neighbours disobliged him, he was too proud to ask them to explain their conduct; therefore he was often mistaken in his judgment of them. "A warm friend, and a bitter enemy," was one of his maxims, and he had many more enemies than friends. He was not very rich, but he was proud; and his favourite proverb was, "Better live in spite than in pity."

When first he settled near Mr. Grant, the gardener, he felt inclined to dislike him, because he was told that Mr. Grant was a Scotchman, and he had a prejudice against Scotchmen; all of whom he believed to be cunning and avaricious, because he had once been over-reached by a Scotch pedler. Grant's friendly manners in some degree conquered this prepossession; but still he secretly suspected, that *this civility*, as he said, *was all show*, and *that he was not, nor could not, being a Scotchman, be such a hearty friend as a true-born Englishman.*

Grant had some remarkably fine raspberries. The fruit was so large as to be quite a curiosity. When it was in season, many strangers came from the neighbouring town, which was

a sea-bathing place, to look at these raspberries, which obtained the name of *Brobdignag* raspberries.

"How came you, pray, neighbour Grant, by these wonderful fine raspberries?" said Mr. Oakly, one evening, to the gardener. "That's a secret," replied Grant, with a smile.

"Oh, in case it's a secret, I've no more to say; for I never meddle with any man's secrets that he does not choose to trust me with."

Grant, observing that his neighbour spoke rather in a surly tone, did not contradict him: being well versed in the Bible, he knew that "A soft word turneth away wrath;" and he answered, in a good-humoured voice, "I hear, neighbour Oakly, you are likely to make a great deal of money of your nursery this year. Here's to the health of you and yours, not forgetting the seedling larches, which I see are coming on finely."

"Thank ye, neighbour, kindly: the larches are coming on tolerably well, that's certain; and here's to your good health, Mr. Grant—you and yours, not forgetting your what d'ye call 'em? raspberries. I'm not apt to be a beggar, neighbour, but if you could give me—"

Here Mr. Oakly was interrupted by the entrance of some strangers. He was going to have asked for some of the Brobdignag raspberry-plants. The next day he did not like to go himself on purpose to make his petition, and he desired his wife, who was just setting out to market, to call at Grant's gate, and ask him for a few plants of his raspberries.

The answer which Oakly's wife brought to him was, that Mr. Grant had not a plant to give him, and that if he had ever so many he would not give one away, except to his own son.

Oakly flew into a passion when he received such a message, declared it was just such a mean, shabby trick as might have been expected from a Scotchman—swore that he would die in the parish workhouse before he would ever ask another favour from a Scotchman; related to his wife, for the hundredth time, the way in which he had been taken in by the Scotch pedler ten years ago, and concluded by forswearing all farther intercourse with Mr. Grant, and all belonging to him.

"Son Arthur," said he, addressing himself to the boy, who just then came in from work, "let me never again see you with Grant's son. I forbid you from this day and hour

forward to have anything to do with him." "Oh, why, dear father?" "Ask me no questions, but do as I bid you. Like father like son—you may think yourself well off to have done with him." "Done with him! O father, and shall I never go again to work in his garden, and may not he come into mine?" "No," replied Oakly, sturdily; "his father has used me uncivil, and no man shall use me uncivil twice. I say no. Wife, sweep up this hearth. Boy, don't take on like a fool; but eat thy bacon and greens, and let's hear no more of Maurice Grant."

Arthur promised to obey his father. He only begged that he might once more speak to Maurice, and tell him that it was by his father's orders he acted. This request was granted. The two friends took leave of one another very sorrowfully.

Mr. Grant, when he heard of all this, endeavoured to discover what could have offended his neighbour; but all explanation was prevented by the obstinate silence of Oakly.

Now, the message which Grant really sent was that the raspberries were not Mr. Grant's; that therefore he had no right to give them away; that they belonged to his son Maurice, and that this was not the right time of year for planting them. This message had been unluckily misunderstood. Grant gave his answer to his wife; she to a Welsh servant-girl, who did not perfectly comprehend her mistress's broad Scotch; and she in her turn could not make herself intelligible to Mrs. Oakly, who hated the Welsh accent. On such slight things do the quarrels of neighbours often depend.

Oakly, when he had once resolved to dislike his neighbour Grant, could not long remain without finding out fresh causes of complaint. There was in Grant's garden a plum-tree, which was planted close to the loose stone wall that divided the garden from the nursery. The soil in which the plum-tree was planted happened not to be quite so good as that which was on the opposite side of the wall, and the plum-tree had forced its way through the wall, and gradually had taken possession of the ground which it liked best.

Oakly thought the plum-tree, as it belonged to Mr. Grant, had no right to make its appearance on his ground: an attorney told him that he might oblige Grant to cut it down; but Mr. Grant refused to cut down his plum-tree at the attorney's de-

sire, and the attorney persuaded Oakly to go to law about the business, and the lawsuit went on for some months.

The attorney, at the end of this time, came to Oakly with a demand for money to carry on his suit, assuring him that, in a short time, it would be determined in his favour. Oakly paid his attorney ten golden guineas, remarked that it was a great sum for him to pay, and that nothing but the love of justice could make him persevere in this lawsuit about a bit of ground, "which, after all," said he, "is not worth twopence. The plum-tree does me little or no damage, but I don't like to be imposed upon by a Scotchman."

It was soon after this conversation with the attorney that Mr. Oakly walked, with resolute steps, towards the plum-tree, saying to himself, "If it cost me a hundred pound, I will not let this cunning Scotchman get the better of me."

Arthur interrupted his father's reverie by pointing to a book and some young plants which lay upon the wall. "I fancy, father," said he, "those things are for you, for there is a little note directed to you, in Maurice's handwriting. Shall I bring it to you?" "Yes, let me read it, child, since I must." It contained these words:

"Dear Mr. Oakly,—I don't know why you have quarrelled with us: I am very sorry for it. But though you are angry with me, I am not angry with you. I hope you will not refuse some of my Brobdignag raspberry-plants, which you asked for a great while ago, when we were all good friends. It was not the right time of year to plant them then, which was the reason they were not sent to you: but it is just the right time to plant them now; and I send you the book, in which you will find the reason why we always put sea-weed ashes about their roots: and I have got some sea-weed ashes for you. You will find the ashes in the flower-pot upon the wall. I have never spoken to Arthur, nor he to me, since you bid us not. So, wishing your Brobdignag raspberries may turn out as well as ours, and longing to be all friends again, I am, with love to dear Arthur and self,

"Your affectionate neighbour's son,

"MAURICE GRANT.

"P.S. It is now four months since the quarrel began: and that is a very long while."

A great part of the effect of this letter was lost upon Oakly, because he was not very expert at reading writing, and it cost him much trouble to spell it and put it together. However, he seemed affected by it, and said, "I believe this Maurice loves you well enough, Arthur, and he seems a good sort of boy; but as to the raspberries, I believe all that he says about them is but an excuse; and, at any rate, as I could not get 'em when I asked for them, I'll not have them now. Do you hear me, I say, Arthur? What are you reading there?"

Arthur was reading the page that was doubled down in the book, which Maurice had left along with the raspberry-plants upon the wall. Arthur read aloud as follows:—

(*Monthly Magazine*, Dec. 1798, p. 421.)

"There is a sort of strawberry cultivated at Jersey, which is almost covered with sea-weed in the winter, in like manner as many plants in England are with litter from the stable. These strawberries are usually of the largeness of a middle-sized apricot, and the flavour is particularly grateful. In Jersey and Guernsey, situate scarcely one degree farther south than Cornwall, all kinds of fruit, pulse, and vegetables are produced in their seasons a fortnight or three weeks sooner than in England, even on the southern shores; and snow will scarcely remain twenty-four hours on the earth. Although this may be attributed to these islands being surrounded with a salt, and consequently a moist atmosphere, yet the ashes (sea-weed ashes) made use of as manure, may also have their portion of influence." [1]

"And here," continued Arthur, "is something written with a pencil, on a slip of paper, and it is Maurice's writing. I will read it to you—"

"When I read in this book what is said about the strawberries growing as large as apricots, after they had been covered over with sea-weed, I thought that perhaps sea-weed ashes might be good for my father's raspberries; and I asked him if he would give me leave to try them. He gave me

[1] It is necessary to observe that this experiment has never been actually tried upon raspberry plants.

leave, and I went directly and gathered together some sea-weed that had been cast on shore; and I dried it, and burned it, and then I manured the raspberries with it, and the year afterwards the raspberries grew to the size that you have seen. Now, the reason I tell you this is, first, that you may know how to manage your raspberries, and next, because I remember you looked very grave, and as if you were not pleased with my father, Mr. Grant, when he told you that the way by which he came by his Brobdignag raspberries was a secret. Perhaps this was the thing that has made you so angry with us all; for you never have come to see father since that evening. Now I have told you all I know; and so I hope you will not be angry with us any longer."

Mr. Oakly was much pleased by this openness, and said, "Why, now, Arthur, this is something like,—this is telling one the thing one wants to know, without fine speeches. This is like an Englishman more than a Scotchman. I have a great mind to let you play together again." "Oh, if you would," cried Arthur, clapping his hands, "how happy we should be! Do you know, father, I have often sat for an hour at a time up in that crab-tree, looking at Maurice at work in his garden, and wishing that I was at work with him. My garden, look ye, father, is not nearly in such good order as it used to be; but everything would go right again if——"

Here Arthur was interrupted by the attorney, who came to ask Mr. Oakly some question about the lawsuit concerning the plum-tree. Oakly showed him Maurice's letter; and to Arthur's extreme astonishment, the attorney had no sooner read it, than he exclaimed, "What an artful little gentleman this is! I never, in the course of all my practice, met with anything better. Why, this is the most cunning letter I ever read." "Where's the cunning?" said Oakly, and he put on his spectacles. "My good sir, don't you see that all this stuff about Brobdignag raspberries is to ward off your suit about the plum-tree? They know—that is, Mr. Grant, who is sharp enough, knows—that he will be worsted in that suit; that he must, in short, pay you a good round sum for damages, if it goes on."

"Damages!" said Oakly, staring round him at the plum-tree: "but I don't know what you mean. I mean nothing but what's honest. I don't mean to ask for any good round

sum ; for the plum-tree has done me no great harm by coming into my garden ; but only I don't choose it should come there without my leave."

"Well, well," said the attorney, "I understand all that; but what I want to make you, Mr. Oakly, understand, is, that this Grant and his son only want to make up matters with you, and prevent the thing's coming to a fair trial, by sending you, in this underhand sort of way, a bribe of a few raspberries."

"A bribe!" exclaimed Oakly, "I never took a bribe, and I never will;" and, with sudden indignation, he pulled the raspberry plants from the ground in which Arthur was planting them; and he threw them over the wall into Grant's garden.

Maurice had put his tulip, which was beginning to blow, in a flower-pot, on the top of the wall, in hopes that his friend Arthur would see it from day to day. Alas! he knew not in what a dangerous situation he had placed it. One of his own Brobdignag raspberry-plants, swung by the angry arm of Oakly, struck off the head of his precious tulip! Arthur, who was full of the thought of convincing his father that the attorney was mistaken in his judgment of poor Maurice, did not observe the fall of the tulip.

The next day, when Maurice saw his raspberry plants scattered upon the ground, and his favourite tulip broken, he was in much astonishment, and, for some moments, angry; but anger, with him, never lasted long. He was convinced that all this must be owing to some accident or mistake. He could not believe that any one could be so malicious as to injure him on purpose—"And even if they did all this on purpose to vex me," said he to himself, "the best thing I can do is, not to let it vex me. Forgive and forget."

Tulips were, at this time, things of great consequence in the estimation of the country several miles round where Maurice and Arthur lived. There was a florists' feast to be held at the neighbouring town, at which a prize of a handsome set of gardering tools was to be given to the person who could produce the finest flower of its kind. Arthur's tulip was beautiful. As he examined it from day to day, and every day thought it improving, he longed to thank his friend Maurice for it; and he often mounted into his crab-tree, to look into Maurice's garden, in hopes of seeing his tulip also in full bloom and beauty. He never could see it.

The day of the florists' feast arrived, and Oakly went with his son, and the fine tulip, to the place of meeting. It was on a spacious bowling-green. All the flowers of various sorts were ranged upon a terrace at the upper end of the bowling-green; and, amongst all this gay variety, the tulip which Maurice had given to Arthur appeared conspicuously beautiful. To the owner of this tulip the prize was adjudged; and, as the handsome garden-tools were delivered to Arthur, he heard a well-known voice wish him joy. He turned, looked about him, and saw his friend Maurice.

"But, Maurice, where is your own tulip?" said Mr. Oakly; "I thought, Arthur, you told me that he kept one for himself." "So I did," said Maurice; "but somebody (I suppose by accident) broke it." "Somebody! who?" cried Arthur and Mr. Oakly at once. "Somebody who threw the raspberry-plants back again over the wall," replied Maurice. "That was me—that somebody was me," said Oakly. "I scorn to deny it; but I did not intend to break your tulip, Maurice."

"Dear Maurice," said Arthur—"you know I may call him dear Maurice now you are by, father—here are all the garden tools; take them, and welcome," "Not one of them," said Maurice drawing back. "Offer them to the father—offer them to Mr. Grant," whispered Oakly; "he'll take them, I'll answer for it."

Mr. Oakly was mistaken; the father would not accept of the tools. Mr. Oakly stood surprised—"Certainly," said he to himself, "this cannot be such a miser as I took him for;" and he walked immediately up to Grant, and bluntly said to him, "Mr. Grant, your son has behaved very handsome to my son; and you seem to be glad of it." "To be sure I am," said Grant. "Which," continued Oakly, "gives me a better opinion of you than ever I had before—I mean, than ever I had since the day you sent me the shabby answer about those foolish, what d'ye call 'em, cursed raspberries."

"What shabby answer?" said Grant, with surprise; and Oakly repeated exactly the message which he received; and Grant declared that he never sent any such message. He repeated exactly the answer which he really sent, and Oakly immediately stretched out his hand to him, saying, "I believe you: no more need be said. I'm only sorry I did not ask you about this four months ago; and so I should have done if you

had not been a Scotchman. Till now, I never rightly liked a Scotchman. We may thank this good little fellow," continued he, turning to Maurice, "for our coming at last to a right understanding. There was no holding out against his good-nature. I'm sure, from the bottom of my heart, I'm sorry I broke his tulip. Shake hands, boys. I'm glad to see you, Arthur, look so happy again, and hope, Mr. Grant will forgive——"

"Oh, forgive and forget," said Grant and his son at the same moment. And from this time forward the two families lived in friendship with each other.

Oakly laughed at his own folly, in having been persuaded to go to law about the plum-tree; and he, in process of time, so completely conquered his early prejudice against Scotchmen, that he and Grant became partners in business. Mr. Grant's book-*larning* and knowledge of arithmetic he found highly useful to him; and he, on his side, possessed a great many active good qualities, which became serviceable to his partner.

The two boys rejoiced in this family union; and Arthur often declared that they owed all their happiness to Maurice's favourite maxim, "Forgive and forget."

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