

12
UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY FOR
THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

POOR LAWS AND PAUPERS
ILLUSTRATED.

I. THE PARISH.

A TALE.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

LONDON :
CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1833.

COMMITTEE.

Chairman—The Right Hon. THE LORD CHANCELLOR.

Vice-Chairman—The Right Hon. SIR HENRY PARNELL, Bart., M.P.

Treasurer—WILLIAM TOOKE, Esq., M.P., F.R.S.

W. Allen, Esq., F.R. and R.A.S.	The Rt. Hon. the Lord Chief Justice of England.
Rt. Hon. Viscount Althorp, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.	Henry B. Ker, Esq.
W. B. Baring, Esq., M.P.	Th. Hewitt Key, Esq., M.A.
Capt. F. Beaufort, R.N., F.R., and R.A.S., Hydrographer to the Ad- miralty.	George C. Lewis, Esq., M.A.
Sir C. Bell, F.R.S.L. & E.	James Loch, Esq., M.P., F.G.L.S.
The Right Rev. the Bishop of Chichester, D.D.	George Long, Esq., M.A.
William Coulson, Esq.	J. W. Lubbock, Esq., F.R., R.A., and L.S.S.
R. D. Craig, Esq.	H. Malden, Esq., M.A.
Wm. Crawford, Esq.	A. T. Malkin, Esq., M.A., James Manning, Esq.
T. Fred. Daniell, Esq., F.R.S.	J. Herman Merivale, Esq., F.A.S.
Right Hon. Lord Dover, F.R.S., F.S.A.	James Mill, Esq.
Lieut. Drummond, R.E., F.R.A.S.	W. H. Ord, Esq., M.P.
T. F. Ellis, Esq., M.A., F.R.A.S.	Dr. Roget, Sec. R.S., F.R.A.S.
John Elliotson, M.D., F.R.S.	Sir M. A. Shee, P.R.A., F.R.S.
Thomas Falconer, Esq.	Rev. Rich. Sheepshanks, M.A.
I. L. Goldsmid, Esq., F.R., and R.A.S.	J. Smith, Esq., M.P.
B. Gompertz, Esq., F.R., and R.A.S.	Dr. A. T. Thomson, F.L.S.
G. B. Greenough, Esq., F.R. and L.S.	N. A. Vigors, Esq., M.P., F.R.S.
H. Hallam, Esq., F.R.S., M.A.	John Ward, Esq.
M. D. Hill, Esq., M.P.	H. Waymouth, Esq.
Rowland Hill, Esq., F.R.A.S.	J. Whishaw, Esq., M.A., F.R.S.
Edwin Hill, Esq.	John Wrottesley, Esq., M.A., Sec. R.A.S.
David Jardine, Esq., M.A.	

THOMAS COATES, *Secretary*, No. 59, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

823

M36p~~or~~

V. 1-2

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—Pay Day at Thorpe . . .	1
II.—Farm Service . . .	18
III.—Morning Calls . . .	36
IV.—Thorpe Corner . . .	53
V.—Lodgings to Let . . .	71
VI.—A Frolic . . .	34
VII.—More Frolic . . .	96
VIII.—The Spoiler Invited . .	106
IX.—The Spoiler Welcomed . .	131
X.—Ease and Plenty . . .	158
XI.—The Mile Cross . . .	186
XII.—Try Again . . .	206

Don Rev Ray 22 Apr 53 Chislett = 25. in 1 W. Longlin. 26 Aug 53

P R E F A C E.

As any utility which may be contemplated from the following tale must be impaired by the supposition that the woes and vices it displays are the offspring of an uncontrolled imagination, I beg to state that all that is most melancholy in my story is strictly true. I have unquestionable authority in the Reports of the Poor-Law Commissioners, and the testimony of others who are occupied in the administration of parish affairs, for every parochial abuse and every pauper encroachment here exhibited ; and I have taken no pains to select the worst instances of either that have come within my knowledge.

The pleasantest office of philanthropy is, doubtless, to set forth persuasively whatever is pure in human nature, and lofty in social character : but there is a satisfaction amidst the pain of exhibiting the reverse of the picture, when vice and misery can be indisputably referred to the errors of a system rather than to the depravity of individuals. All social systems being remediable, the task of exposing the unhappy results of any involves a definite hope of the amelioration which must, sooner or later, follow the exposure. The more clearly evils can be referred to an institution, the more cheering are the expectations of what may be effected by its amendment. Let these rational hopes console the readers as they have supported the writer of this tale.

H. M.

POOR LAWS AND PAUPERS

ILLUSTRATED.

No. I.

THE PARISH.

CHAPTER I.

PAY DAY AT THORPE.

“BLESS me, squire ! what brings you here, I wonder ?” exclaimed farmer Goldby, on squire Manning taking his stand opposite to Donkin, the overseer, who was preparing to pay the paupers, to whom the doors were about to be thrown open. “I thought, squire, that you and I saw enough of these people at home, and that you would leave it to Donkin to deal with them to-day.”

“I might as well ask what you come for,” observed the squire : “but, of course, you will say it is to see how your money goes. You keep a sharp look out upon Donkin, I know, and make him answer for every sixpence he pays away.”

“I wish some other people did so too, and then mine would be an easier office than it is,” observed Donkin. “Mr. Goldby and I together

are a pretty good match for the paupers ; but when you come, squire, or, what is the same thing, when you send Woollerton,——”

“ Aye, Woollerton ! Where’s Woollerton ? That is one of the things I came to ask,” observed the squire. “ I want to see him.”

“ You have only to wait a few minutes, if, as is most likely, he happened to see you turn in here. He will be sure to pay his respects to your worship and the people without.”

“ Poor Woollerton ! It seems mighty hard that he should always be sneered at by you overseers, when he gets ready so much of your work to your hand.”

“ There is no denying that he does that,” replied Donkin, laughing. “ He and you cut out plenty of work for the overseer.”

“ Woollerton is in duty bound to do so, if the squire wishes it,” observed Goldby. “ Who gave *poor* Woollerton his office, hey, squire ?”

“ The vestry, of course. The vestry made him their clerk, and appointed him his salary. It does not follow that he is at my beck and call because I thought him a fit person to be vestry-clerk. But what I came for is to speak to you about the widow Brand. She has taken an odd fancy into her head. She wants to give up her pay to-day.”

“ Well, that is an odd fancy,” observed Donkin.

“ Do let one speak, Mr. Donkin. She comes to me to ask to be rated, that she may open a beer-shop. I tell her she does not know what she is about in undertaking such a thing ;

and it is my belief that it will be her destruction. What is she to do, I ask her, with half-a-dozen fellows, when they get merry over their beer? much more when they grow quarrelsome. And then her family———”

“ O, leave all that to her,” cried Goldby. “ It is no concern of ours whether she turns out a tipsy customer herself, or gets a stout neighbour to do it. Let us only slip her and her three children off the rate, and she may settle the rest.”

The squire felt it his business, whatever Goldby might think, to prevent a poor widow, if he could, from entering upon a speculation which was likely to ruin her and hers, soul, body, and estate. He had hoped to keep the parish free from the nuisance of a beer-shop ; but it was in vain to hope that no one else would set one up, if widow Brand did not, now that the notion was abroad that such a thing must answer. But he must make one more attempt to show the widow that she had best “ let well alone,” and go on respectably and comfortably, as she had done from her husband’s death till now: and he looked to Donkin to bear him out in what he said.

Donkin smiled at the idea of the respectability and prosperity of living in part on parish pay, as the widow and her children had done since poor Brand’s death. He agreed, however, that, judging of a beer-shop by what beer-shops were in other places, it was a fearful undertaking for a lone woman, with young people

who might be corrupted. He was far from desiring to cast her off the rate as he would cast off a stout labourer, and was willing to give her his best advice. Widow Brand, being in waiting outside, was called in.

She came curtseying, and looking by far too bashful to be fit for her proposed occupation. She hoped the gentlemen would not take it ill that she came to give up her pay.

No fear ! farmer Goldby assured her ; particularly if she proposed to assist the rate instead of living upon it.

She must endeavour to do so, the widow replied, as it was necessary to her undertaking, though there was one of her children,—the one whose hand she held,—that was likely to be always a burden, and for whom she should be glad to have an allowance still ; but she feared that could not be, if she was rated.

“ She is a poor weakly little thing indeed,” observed the squire. “ With such a hump as that growing, she will hardly be any taller ; and what are you to do with a sickly child in such a house as yours will be ? You had better think again, dame, and take your money for this week, to give yourself time to consider.”

Mrs. Brand had considered, and gone so far as to get the house ready for its being opened the first day of the next week. It was the house on the common that stands apart on the left, just as you go out of the street.

“ What, one of Blogg’s new cottages ?” inquired Donkin.

"Yes, sir; Mr. Blogg is my landlord. He offered me a choice between the middle house of the row, and this one on the common; and I chose this, (though the rent is higher by thirty shillings,) because it has a large room below, where people may sit and take their beer."

"And have room to knock one another under the table; hey, dame?" added the squire.

"And because," continued Mrs. Brand, "one gets on better with the neighbours if any thing of the nature of a public-house stands apart, in case of such a thing as a quarrel, or of singing that any one might think too loud."

"So you expect some trouble of that sort," observed Donkin. "Since you do, and yet have made up your mind, there is nothing more to be said. But you have done wisely in not taking one of the cottages in the row,—at least, if you have made sure of yours being better built and drained."

"They are but tumble-down places indeed, sir, to bear a rent of seven pounds. It is better worth while to give between eight and nine pounds for mine; though the wood work is far from sound, and the walls are very thin for such an exposed situation, as I told Mr. Blogg."

"Those things (though bad enough, as you will find) signify less than the house being built on a clay soil, and having no drain, which is the case with the house in Myrtle Row. I wish we could make Blogg pay for all the sickness that will be bred in that place when the wet months come on. I told Jay lately that he

would have a lot of patients there by and by, that will keep him too busy to leave much time for speechifying and writing handbills."

The squire observed that if every man, woman, and child in the parish was down upon a sick bed, Jay would find time for making harangues, and people to listen to them. Happen what might, Jay would always rate himself more highly as a politician than an apothecary.

"You have taken pay for three children, I think," said the overseer to the widow. "You have managed to live upon this and your own allowance, and the little you earned."

"Just managed, sir. With one more child I should have been pretty comfortable."

"The devil you would," cried Goldby. "So you and your neighbours have children to be made comfortable out of our pockets."

The widow hoped no offence, and went on to relate that she must dispose of a part of her family, in order to make room for her customers.

"And to get your young people out of harm's way, I hope," observed the squire. "What do you do with your sister? She is so much younger than you, you must remember, that you ought not to reckon on her being so steady."

"I had that in my mind early, sir; and Jemima has got a very good service with Mrs. Blogg, who takes in washing, and keeps a person always employed under her. Jemima will be there from early in the morning till late at night, when my house will be cleared; so that the only help I have to ask is for my daughter

Ruth. If the parish will find her a place, I shall be very glad to be relieved of her."

Farmer Goldby was sure she must want Ruth at home to help her to draw beer, and keep the scores, and clean the house after the many feet that would be going and coming ; but the widow declared her little son Peter to be equal to a part of this business, and that she must take the rest upon herself, or hire help, rather than run the risk of unfitting Ruth for a respectable service, by making so young a girl wait in a beer-shop. Donkin thought the widow was right, and asked Goldby whether he did not want such a girl as Ruth in his kitchen or dairy, adding, that he believed her to be a well conducted, intelligent girl.

" If you would please to ask the governess, sir," interposed the widow, " she would tell you that Ruth is considered a credit to the school ; and I am sure you would look long among the children in the workhouse before you would find one that would make you so good a servant."

Goldby merely replied that he did not want such a servant at present.

" You remember," added Donkin, " you must take your share of the boys and girls who are to be put out next week. It is ten to one that you get such a lass as Ruth."

" And you certainly mean to take charge of her among those who are seeking service ?"

" Certainly," the squire decided. " You cannot do less for Mrs. Brand, in consideration of her taking herself and her family off the rates."

“ Well, then, as Ruth must be a parish girl, and as I must take a parish girl, I may as well take her instead of standing the chance of a worse. But it is very hard when I have too many servants already ; and so my good woman will tell me when she hears of it. Now, mind ye, Donkin, don’t put another upon me for a long time to come ; for I take this girl purely to serve the parish.”

“ And me, I am sure, and I own it with many thanks,” said the widow, curtseying and withdrawing on the entrance of other persons who had business with the overseer.

Blogg nodded to her as she went out, and then made his way to the table, every body yielding precedence to the owner of cottages.

“ Sharpe tells me,” said Blogg, “ that you refuse to pay his rent for him.”

“ To be sure,” replied the overseer ; “ you know little of the calls upon the rate, if you think that we can pay rents out of it.”

“ I know that you will have worse calls upon it if you do not pay rents. I must have my money ; and unless you help Sharpe to pay it, I will distrain, and then you must do the best you can with him and his family.”

“ So you want to make the parish pay for your having taken a bad tenant.”

“ How do you mean ‘ a bad tenant ? ’ Sharpe belongs to the parish. I suppose you do not dispute that. Leave it to me to make him pay as long as he can. When he can pay no longer, his parish must do it. Trust me for choosing my

tenants well. I take care to have nothing to do with non-parishioners, unless they can give good security for their rent."

"You are out in your reckoning, my good sir," observed the overseer. "It has never been our practice to pay rents out of the rate."

"That is no reason why it never should be. If people have a right to a maintenance from their parish, I cannot see how you can deny them wherewith to pay for a roof over their heads."

"True, true; very true," observed the squire. "Neither you nor I have any right to draw the distinction where the law makes none. You must help Sharpe with his rent if you find that he really cannot pay it himself."

"If so," said Donkin, "the best way will be to buy cottages for our paupers at once, instead of putting a yearly profit into Blogg's pocket."

"With all my heart. I take you at your word, if you give me my price," cried Blogg, urging his challenge with an outstretched arm.

"And what is your price?"

"Seventy pounds a-piece for the houses in Myrtle Row."

"Thank you; but it would answer better to us to build than to take your damp, rickety cottages at that price, even if we had the conscience to put our poor into such unwholesome dens."

"Build away, pray: you will be just where you were before, as concerns my tenants. Cottages do not stand empty long where there are young people of the parish ready to marry; and

there will always be Sharpes enough to live in my cottages, if you build three to my one. My houses will never stand empty long."

"They are not likely to stand long, any way," observed Goldby. "How can you for shame, Blogg, ask seventy pounds for such piles of old brick and rotten wood?"

"They yield a rent of seven pounds; and if that is not good interest upon seventy pounds, I don't know what is."

"But they would not be worth that to the parish. You know that it is a chance if they stand more than ten years, and you make your tenants pay for the bad quality of the building. The parish could not do this; so none of your bargains of cottages for us!"

"If we bought them, it would be to pull them down," observed Donkin; "but not with any idea of selling the materials to you, Mr. Blogg, lest you should make them serve for a third erection."

"You may please yourselves," said Blogg. "If you do not buy, there are others that are ready to do so; and mind ye, if you do not help Sharpe with his rent this very day, I distrain, and you will have his whole family on your books next week."

And Blogg retired, casting back a look from the door to see the impression of his speech. Squire Manning seemed to him to be laying down the law; and Blogg was therefore satisfied that the matter was in a good train.

There was by this time a throng of persons

in waiting to be paid, most of whom altered their demeanour in one respect or another when they found that the squire was present. Some became very deferential to the overseer; others urged new claims with great pertinacity, as if hoping for squire Manning's countenance; while a few bandied jokes with the good natured farmer, whose complaints were as inoffensive as they were unavailing.

"Well, Wilde," said he, "what is to be done with you? Am I to go on paying you because you do no work?"

"Unless you choose to pay me for doing work. Whether work or not, I must have pay."

"And work too," said Donkin. "There are the gravel-pits, if you cannot get employment elsewhere. We cannot afford to let you do nothing."

"Now, just tell me honestly, Wilde," said Goldby; "have you really tried in earnest to get work? Have you tried as if starvation was before you?"

"Why, sir, you see, starvation is not before me, so I can't say: but I have asked a many people, and there's but little encouragement to ask, when they look as if they wished me at the world's end for teasing them. You know yourself, Mr. Goldby, that you do not look your handsomest, nor Mrs. Goldby either, when I come on that errand."

"That's very true; but yet it is an awful thing to measure such a stout fellow as you from top to toe, and think that you are eating some-

body out of house and home. Do work your best at the gravel-pits, my good fellow, till you can step into somebody's shoes at a better sort of labour."

Wilde observed that he made no promises. He was as tired as any man of lounging about, and taking no money but what was grudged in the giving; though, for that matter, one sort of payment was as much grudged as another in these days. He remembered the time, young as he was, when hard working men took their wages as a matter of course, without thanks and without repining, because neither the labour nor the hire was thought of as a matter of favour. Now, a man might toil as hard as a horse, and he got only half his dues out of his master's hands; and he had to go through what no honest man should in getting the rest from the parish. Such a man being treated as a pauper at all events, it was no wonder if he worked like a pauper, and preferred lounging to putting his hand in earnest to what he was about.

Goldby could answer for the truth of this, and believed that scarcely a man in the parish knew the pleasure of doing a good day's task of labour. The hardest working man in the parish was the squire on the day of a long run in the hunting season; and next to the squire came the steward and housekeeper, during the bestowing of their master's Christmas bounty.

"And pray where do you rank me?" inquired the overseer. "You do not think my place a sinecure."

“ Why, man, there is not one of the hedgers and ditchers that stands before this pay-table, that will do such a stroke of work all next winter, as you will have done before this day is over, always supposing that we go on paying them for being idle as we are doing now.”

“ Come, come, Goldby,” said the squire, “ no more of your abuse of these poor people : I advise you for your own sake. I cannot stop now, as I sometimes do, to palliate what you say ; so do be prudent, and make no more enemies.”

And the squire nodded to the persons present, and withdrew to pursue his morning’s ride. Goldby immediately observed in a low tone to the overseer,—

“ The squire never can see that it is ourselves and not the poor people that I find fault with, because it is we ourselves who make them idle. And as for making enemies, it is not possible but that a farmer in this parish should be beset with them. I hold myself to be as good natured a fellow as most, but hang me if I can turn myself right or left without meeting a scowling face, or an eye that has mocking in it. But who comes here ? You know this face, surely, do not you ?”

“ Not the less for the owner being out of livery.—Well, Wood, so you show yourself again ; why could not you come while your master was here ?”

“ I had to hold his horse, sir ; he has but just

mounted. My wife has two children, you remember, sir."

"I have her down. Pray, Wood, does your master know of your taking parish pay? You who wear his livery, and not only wait at his table, but eat your fill of what is carried from it."

"My master has nothing to do with my wife's concerns, and it is for her that I take pay. Not so much as a shilling goes into my own pocket."

"Why, no; I don't see how you would manage to spend it, your wages being a pretty income of themselves, even if you had to find either clothing or food, both of which are provided for you. I shall spare your wife nothing till she wants it more; so, clear the way, if you please."

Wood beckoned to the vestry clerk, who had entered the room after a short conference with the squire, as he mounted. Woollerton had much to say in favour of Wood's claim, and advised a reference to the squire in case of any doubt. Donkin always dreaded a summons to the squire's (at the distance of nearly five miles), as more expensive than giving relief. He therefore allowed Wood's claim for this week, and proposed to Goldby, in a whisper, that the first of them who saw the squire should endeavour to obtain his assent to the wife of a livery servant being an improper object for parish relief.

When the crowd of claimants had been dismissed, there was some consultation between the three who remained at the table, as to what

should be done towards reducing the expenses of the workhouse, which were, as they had long been, on the increase.

Woollerton entered an immediate protest against any change. When they considered, he said, what sort of people were in the workhouse,—old, diseased, and otherwise helpless persons—it seemed impossible to think, for an instant, of stinting them in their little comforts; and so soon as many of them would die off, it would be a cruel economy to save in that quarter.

“Aye, but what do you think of the children?” said Goldby. “They are not to die off soon, are they? And their little comforts cost us so much, let me tell you, that we shall have few enough left for our own children. There are Halliday’s four brats still—year after year. I am sure, Donkin, you cannot have done your utmost to find their father, or he would have been forthcoming before this.”

“Do you try to find him, then,” said Donkin. “That widow Brand can keep a secret, whatever else she can do. By no device that I can invent, can I gather an idea from her where her brother has been any one day since he deserted his children; and yet he lets us know some things about him. He does not mind showing that he is doing well, and that he cares for his poor little ones, for he sends them presents through the widow Brand two or three times a year.”

“What is there to wonder at in that?” inquired Woollerton. “It does not follow from a man’s deserting his children that he hates them,

while there is the parish to take charge of them. I suppose you do not think that Halliday would have left his children to die in a ditch, if there had been no such thing as a parish-rate."

"If there had been no such thing as a parish-rate, Halliday would have been supporting his family, instead of making our rate-payers do it; and here is reason enough for our looking to it, that the rate has no more such unreasonable burdens to sustain. In this case I have done all I can. I have even spent more money than I like to think of, in trying to trace Halliday. We must hope that he will turn up one of these days."

"He will be sure to do that," observed Goldby. "When his children have grown up to an age at which no one will think of their depending on him, and when he begins to fail and to be reminded of old age, he will come and be one of those whose expenses are not to be grudged because they will soon die off."

Woollerton observed that if any one had told him that Goldby, of all men, would grow hard hearted, he would not have believed it; but now he had heard him, with his own ears, make a mockery of old age and infirmity.

"Your ears deceive you, then," said Goldby. "If I mocked at all, it would be at the notion of old age and infirmity being made comfortable in the workhouse. These poor creatures in our workhouse ought to be cherished at home by their own kith and kin, instead of being turned out lonely among a herd of sufferers like them-

selves. But our lads and lasses, even some of the steadiest of them, have as little notion of providing for their parents in old age, as Halliday's deserted children are likely to have hereafter. As a matter of curiosity, Donkin, I will go round the workhouse with you some day, and learn how many of the impotent folks we support have able-bodied sons and daughters."

"With all my heart," said Donkin. "Will you step across with me now? I am going to look in."

"Not now, for I must make haste home. This business of paying takes a longer time every week, I think."

"It does; and I must find some means of shortening it, for the labourers make it an excuse for losing half a day's work."

"Aye, aye, any excuse will serve where there is no will to work," observed Goldby, buttoning the large metal buttons of his green coat, and fitting on his broad-brimmed straw hat, in preparation for departure. The overseer, meanwhile, tied up his money-bag, and made the necessary entries in his memorandum book. Woollerton was already on his way home, to assist his wife in serving the customers, who were particularly numerous on pay day, and liberal in their purchases of candle, tea and sugar, bacon, and things in general.—If any complaints of high prices were occasionally heard, Mrs. Woollerton was ready to hint to the grumblers, that without her husband's good-nature in the vestry, they might have been in no condition to make pur-

chases at all ; and Mr. W. was not slow to intimate that the blame of high prices must rest on those who caused bad debts, for which he must, of course, indemnify himself by a larger profit than would be necessary if all paid their debts in an honest way.

CHAPTER II.

FARM SERVICE.

THE widow Brand's daughter Ruth was not long in discovering that life in a farm-house is a very different thing from life passed between the charity school and a tender mother's apron-string. Ruth had been an industrious girl thus far ; she had always been up in time to wash and dress her poor deformed little sister, and to give the sturdy master Peter his breakfast, before she went to school ; and when she had once learned the routine of the school, she went through her business with considerable regularity, advancing from hemming to seaming, and from the mysteries of marking and backstitching to the responsibility of fixing work for her juniors. She could read pretty well and write a little, but had scarcely sufficient energy for arithmetic, and far too little to bear with any grace her share of the sweeping and scouring of the school-room,—a proper part of the duty of the elder girls. As Ruth was never idle, however, and as she per-

formed as much as any body expected of her, and was certainly to be depended upon for truth and honesty, she bore a very fair character, and was likely to meet with a more favourable reception from Mrs. Goldby than was usually offered to candidates for instruction in the matters of the dairy and farm-kitchen.

Ruth scarcely knew whether to like or fear the change proposed for her. She would rather have gone on attending the school and taking care of Biddy; but as that could not be, she wavered between her awe of Mrs. Goldby, and her dread of the beer drinkers whom she must wait upon if she remained at home. Certain old associations with the Goldbys' interior decided her inclinations to follow her destiny. It was some years since she had been in the orchard and dairy; for Mrs. Goldby had grown severe against idlers; but Ruth remembered calling "chick, chick," in the poultry-yard, and picking up the apples that were showered from the tree over her head, and playing hide and seek in the straw in the old barn. She did not suppose that she should now play hide and seek; but the fowls might, in time, come to be under her charge, and she should be much in the dairy, where the green boughs rustled so pleasantly before the windows, and the coolness was so refreshing in a summer's noon. There was a lilac hedge just within the palings which separated the little front garden from the road. Often and often had she supported Peter behind, while he stood on the rail, and pulled a fragrant bunch or two, with fear

and trembling. Now she should have free access to this lilac hedge, and might gather as many white and lilac bunches of blossoms as she chose; perhaps even leaves enough to finish an experiment which she and Peter had often begun, but never could complete. Their mother was wont to tell them of the Babes in the Wood, the whole of which story they devoutly believed; but they could never sufficiently admire the industry of the robins, in covering the children with leaves. Peter was anxious to know how many leaves it would take. There was no horse-chesnut, or sycamore, or other large-leaved tree within his reach, and farmer Goldby's lilac hedge was therefore his best resource. One lapfull after another of its widest leaves did Ruth carry to the corner of the churchyard wall, close by, under which poor little Biddy was laid to be covered with leaves; but the trial never succeeded, either for want of material, or because Biddy would toss her arms about when the leaves were nicely joined, so as to hide the blue of her pinafore, or get up and go away before she was half covered. Ruth was quite aware that it would now be beneath her dignity to pursue this inquiry by herself, but she had, half unconsciously, a hope that under colour of amusing some baby-visiter at the farm, she might arrive at a solution.

Very different was the actual appearance of every thing from the picture which dwelt in her fancy. It was not now the season for snow-drops or lilacs, or for green boughs to wave around the dairy. Dying leaves were whirled about in the garden

walks, and a few stray ones were blown into the very milk-pans, when any careless person left the door open to the autumn gusts. There were apples in the orchard, both on the trees and strewed beneath them; but Ruth was not called to gather them. Mrs. Goldby let no one feed her fowls but herself. The mornings were dark and misty; and instead of waking with the lark, and tripping across a clover field to hail her cows, Ruth found she was expected to leave her bed on a random guess at what o'clock it might be, and grope her way to the tinder-box, at the risk of being growled at if it should prove too early, and scolded if too late to suit any of the various notions of the people around her, respecting the fitness of times and seasons. Then there was all the awkwardness of making her way among the cows in the glimmer of her horn lantern, and the discomfort of the draughts in the cow-shed, and of the raw mist when she came out of it; and the forlorn appearance of the farm-kitchen at dawn, with its long table strewed with the fragments of the last night's supper,—with crusts of bread, and parings of cheese, and spillings of beer, all of which she was to remove, and replace with the substantial breakfast of the carters and out-door servants. Next came whatever fatiguing variety of work might constitute the order of the day,—scouring the dairy utensils, churning, making cheeses, and what not. Then the long dinner-table was to be got ready; then huge baskets of apples to be carried up to the apple-loft, and stowed away; then milking

again; then supper, with noise and confusion which made her thoroughly stupid before she was dismissed, weary, to her bed, to be alarmed by the stirrings of the owls in the roof, or to cry herself to sleep amidst thoughts of Biddy and home.

If Mrs. Goldby was somewhat severe with her little maid, it was chiefly owing to this propensity of Ruth's to cry. The so-called laziness in the mornings, the want of finish in her milking, the deficiency of vigour in pressing the cheeses, might all—though somewhat provoking faults to an accomplished farmer's wife—have been tolerated in the prospect of improved experience; but frequent tears were an unpardonable sin in a dairy-maid.

“What's this about, child? Tears dropping into my milk-pans! Are you salting the milk to make it keep?” was sometimes the insulting question; to which, when Ruth could achieve any other answer than sobs, she could only reply that she could not make the dappled cow stand still, and she was sure the beast would kick down the pail some day, and then she, the unfortunate milker, would be blamed for the loss of the milk. No inducements were strong enough to persuade her to keep her tears for the actual occasion.

“Send that girl away,” was at other times the order. “She will damp half the straw in the apple-chamber with her crying. But first tell me, Ruth, what is the matter now?”

Ruth's back ached terribly with carrying loads of apples, and she had pinched two of her fingers

between the baskets. Her mistress thanked Heaven that every body had not such a back. It ached with churning, it ached with stooping over the curd-tubs, and it was half broken with carrying apples. As for her fingers, they must take their chance till she could keep them out of harm's way. She was entreated, however, not to look so miserable ;—more miserable than any girl out of the workhouse, blest with health and a good service, ought to look. If her mother was to see her, she might fancy she had been ill-used, when perhaps she had only been melted at seeing a fowl's head cut off, or scared by a turkey-cock.

“ If you would let me see my mother,” Ruth would reply, amidst her tears, “ I might tell her what a”—(still sobbing) “ what a fine place I have got.”

“ See your mother ? Why that is reasonable enough, to be sure, when people have earned indulgence, which you can hardly think you are doing while you cry in this way from morning to night, as if we were the cruellest people in the world. If you will mend in this respect, I will see when we can spare you,—if Jenny will undertake your work, and if we can fix on a tolerably convenient day, and if my husband does not object to your going, as I rather think he will, to a beer-shop.”

The chance of a trip homewards which was left by these numerous conditions, was enough to inspire Ruth with vigour to sustain the

sticking of a pig, and to defy the most dolorous hooting of her neighbours the owls. It was more difficult to restrain her fears of the inmates of the farm-kitchen. They were all awful to her in different ways; the carters and cattle-servants from their noise and roughness of act and speech; and the girls in the kitchen, former inmates of the workhouse, from their boldness of manner and marked contempt of herself. It would have been some comfort if she had known how Mrs. Goldby spoke of these people by her fireside in the evenings, when her husband laid down his paper and took up his pipe, in order to a patient hearkening to his wife's suggestions and complaints.

"You know, my dear," she sometimes said, "it is not my way to wish to break through old customs, that have been found to answer well."

"Which is proved, my dear, by your practice of lecturing me when I am too tired to defend myself." And the farmer yawned fearfully.

"Nonsense, my dear! I was thinking of nothing so little as lecturing you. I only just want to know how many more people you mean to crowd in under our roof."

"Crowd in, my dear! I wonder what you call crowding. Do you remember how many farm-servants this house held in my father's time, before the additions were made that you planned?"

"I remember that those additions have nothing to do with the number of servants we

lodge. What difference does it make in that respect that we have a second parlour, and that there is a bay-window to the bed-room over it?"

"I am sure, my dear, I don't know, except that I always supposed that adding to a house made it larger."

"And while you bid me remember," continued the wife, "I do not forget that besides old Williams, who was left a sort of legacy with the farm, there are three other carters, quite a different sort of men from those in your father's time. And then there are the cattle-servants. I have told you before, I would almost as soon have in the cattle themselves to eat three times a day in my kitchen."

"Well, my dear, if you turn out the carters, I don't know that we could do better than use the space they will leave for such a purpose, and then the cattle-sheds will do for the paupers we shall have to house henceforth."

"And good enough for them too," observed Mrs. G. ; "but you are so tender hearted, you let them have the run of your house, and submit to see your wife and your estate pauper-ridden, and then ——"

"Just tell me how I am to help it, and whether I am not pauper-ridden in a worse way than you."

"Very likely ; but only do not talk of bringing more labourers under our roof, for I will not pretend to manage your concerns if you do. You are going to say that your mother would not have made such a speech ; nor would I in

such times as your mother lived in ; but things wear a very different face now. Then farm-servants had some respect and regard for their employers, and some grace in their behaviour. The men used to be orderly in their conduct at meals ; and when they came in from work, used to sit down, as a matter of course, to cleaning and mending their harness or other tackle, or making baskets, or even knitting their own coarse stockings ; and they went to church on Sundays behind their master, and in the mean time were thankful for any notice he chose to take of them. All this is over now."

" And some people think it is as well it should be over," replied the farmer.

" What ! are you going to compare their present state with that ?" exclaimed the wife. " Who knows better than you, that they choose their own hours for coming in and going out, and are more fond of gossiping over their ale than of spending quiet evenings at home ? You know that there is not such a thing as a word of thankfulness ever heard from one of them, except old Williams. You know what a sharp watch I have to keep over the girls I am obliged to take, and how little work I get done among them, from some being brought puny and pining from a sewing school, and others bold and lazy from the workhouse. Do you mean to call this a better state of things than the old ?"

" I think it a desperately bad state of things ; so bad, that the old custom of our servants living under our roof is quite a different sort of

thing from what it was, and so it is as well that there should be an end of it; except that we cannot make our large rambling farm-houses shrink into dwellings of the size we want for our own families, and we cannot afford to waste so much room and accommodation. If it were not for this, I should be for making our people shift for themselves as to lodging and board, and relieving you, my dear, of the trouble and anxiety I know they must cost you."

Mrs. Goldby was somewhat softened by perceiving that her husband was really aware of her domestic troubles. She observed that there was some pleasure in providing for the comfort of the labourers in the kitchen, when they showed that they cared for comfort and decency of manners, but very little when they came in late from the alehouse, and testified no thankfulness for anything that was said or done for them. She hoped her husband was not really going to take in any labourers, in addition to the present household. Goldby replied, that if he wished it ever so much, he doubted whether he could find any that would serve him on such terms. Since men had found something to rely on besides their own exertions, they had found the domestic habits of the farm-house less pleasing than the greater liberty they could enjoy by taking their chance for a living between the overseer and the farmer or squire. It was only a sober labourer here and there who would hear of living with his employer for more than the winter months, when it happened to be convenient; and the

times were past when a farmer might pick out such a sober labourer from among the crowd of careless, idle fellows who were brought to him to be fed.

While Goldby was still talking about sober labourers, he was told that a man whom he knew to be of this class, was waiting to speak with him on business. Mrs. Goldby's sanction being obtained, the man was shown in, and induced to come forward into the light of the wood fire, and tell his business.

"If it is a long story, Ashly, you had better sit down," said Goldby.

"It depends on you, sir, whether it is to be a long story, or a shorter one than will please me."

"Indeed! but take notice before hand, that I do not like long stories except on Christmas nights."

"Then, sir, to speak out, Sewell, your carter, is going to leave your service."

"Indeed! that is news to me. Who told you so?"

"Sewell himself, sir. He has had a legacy left him; and so he throws up his work, he tells me."

"How much has he had left him? a thousand pounds?"

"Lord bless you, sir, no; no more than sixty pounds. But there are three cows into the bargain. If you would let me take his place, sir, I would serve you to the best of my power."

"And that, I have no doubt, Ashly, would be very well,—much better than it is easy to get

one's-self served now. But you know, Ashly, there are other things than the quality of the service, to be borne in mind now in the hiring of servants ; I am sorry to say it, but so it is."

" But if you would consider, sir, it is not only the quantity of work done (though that is much), but the care that is taken of your property, that signifies. Now, I don't pretend to set myself above my neighbours, but I will say that I have a character to keep, and children to support by it, and I should not be likely to risk having myself turned out of work by using such ruinous ways with your team, and making such waste of your substance, as I heard you complaining of the other day. I have no spite against any one, and do not so much as know which of your carterers you were complaining of ; I only know I should not be likely to do the like."

" What are you doing now, Ashly ?"

" I wish I could say I was doing anything, sir ; for it is not my will to be idle, especially with children depending upon me. But I was turned off from Mr. Bingham's farm without a fault being found with me, to make way for Tims ; and I have got no work since, (though it was eight months ago,) except at hay and harvest time."

" What, that drunken fellow Tims ? That was because he is a pauper, I suppose, and must be fed. That is the way they reward you for not being a pauper, you see, Ashly."

" How can you say anything, my dear, to

tempt a man to throw himself on the parish?" exclaimed Mrs. Goldby.

"The system says more than I could get spoken between this and Christmas," replied the farmer; "and Ashly knows all that I can tell him, by having had a drunkard preferred to himself for such a reason."

"I know that they will soon make a pauper of me," observed Ashly in a melancholy voice, "unless you or somebody will give me work. Let a poor man's savings be used ever so thriftily, they will soon melt away when nothing is coming in to be added to them."

"So, you have savings?"

"It is no secret, sir, that I saved while I could; if it was, I might be tempted to keep it a secret still, at all risks; for its being known does me nothing but harm. I had a very pretty store, even after my wife's illness and funeral were paid for; but I do assure you, sir, I have very little left."

"I could almost wish that you had none, my good fellow, and then you would stand a better chance, and I should know at once what to do, supposing it true that Sewell is going to leave me."

"It is true, I assure you, sir. He told me so himself."

"Well, well.—Do you know Wilde?"

"He that was a hedger at Bingham's? I saw him among the paupers in the gravel-pits to-day."

“ Well, the parish has to maintain him, he asking for work. The parish has not to maintain you. Now, can you expect that Wilde will be continued as a burden while I want a carter?”

Ashly looked as indignant as the farmer was concerned, and appeared to be above answering the question. Mrs. Goldby seemed little less offended, while she asked whether her husband meant to give into the new fashion of punishing the industrious and prudent, by giving favours in preference to such men as—she would not say Wilde, because she knew nothing of him—such men as most of the pauper labourers of their parish.

Goldby saw all the mischief of such a system, and all the hardship to Ashly : but what could he do ? He had no money to spare.—O no, not any, his wife agreed.—He could not afford a maintenance to two men, when one would do all the work which Sewell was about to relinquish ; and if, by making Wilde his waggoner, he could save the parish the expense of his support, it was his duty to do so.

Ashly moved to depart without having spoken another word ; but the farmer begged him to stay and take a seat, and have a little chat, if he wished to show that he was not angry. Ashly said nothing about not being angry, but sat down as desired.

“ What is Sewell going to do with his legacy ?” was the opening of the proposed chat.

“ He means to set up for himself. You know sixty pounds is just the price of one of Blogg’s cottages.”

“ He asked the parish seventy.”

“ Aye, that is because he thinks it fair to get anything he can out of the parish. He takes sixty of Sewell.”

“ And a dear bargain Sewell will have of it. Why, he might build for himself cheaper than that, and have a better soil under his feet, and a drain, and a roof that would be pretty sure to outlast a stormy night.”

“ But he does not like the trouble of building, sir, and wishes to step into his new condition at once. He sells one cow to keep the others, and then ——”

“ And then,” interrupted Mrs. Goldby, “ he will live upon his wife’s labour, and pass his time between the beer-shop and the gravel-pits,—the next best place for a gossip.”

Ashly did not attend to the next two or three questions that were put to him, and presently returned to the subject of which his mind was evidently full. He begged pardon for speaking of it again, but urged the claims of his motherless children, but for whom he should be too proud to ask twice when once denied. He suggested that Sewell had probably had very good wages, which he certainly deserved as a superior workman : now, it was possible that Mr. Goldby and himself might agree for something less.

“ You are mistaken there in two ways, my good fellow,” said Goldby. “ You could not live for so little as I pay Sewell, unless you were helped out, as he is, by the parish. Sewell is a tolerable servant, as servants go, though not such an one as you would be ; but wages have fallen, even since you were out of work ; and they are very different from what they were when a man could maintain his six children upon them. I speak of places where the rate is as high as it is here.”

“ And how am I mistaken in another way ?”

“ You forget that Wilde is a single man, and that, however low you may fix your wages, I can offer him lower, as having no wife or children to support.”

“ But do not you think, sir, that this will quicken him to get both ?”

“ He must please himself about that. It is our business to save where we can ; and a man who has only himself to take care of cannot expect the same wages from me, or allowance from the parish, as one that has half-a-dozen depending upon him.”

“ But I thought the difference was between the married and single, without regard to the children.”

“ Yes : we leave it to the parish to look after the little ones. We only make the most of the single men while they are single ; which happens to be a bad thing for you to-day, Ashly. I am sure you can scarcely be more sorry for it than I am.”

“That is easily said,” replied Ashly, in a mournful voice; “but I ask your pardon, sir, for thinking that you don’t know what it means. You have not seen your wife die with the very words on her lips, that you had promised that her children should be brought up as the children of an honest man that was beholden to no one. You have not felt it weighing on your mind from that day to this, as if you had done wrong, that not a stroke of profitable work has been wrought by your hands, not a shilling earned to remove your children further from parish help. You have not had the bitter thought that you are setting an example of idleness (so different from their mother’s!) to your own little ones; and you have not hoped, and laid all your plans at home for the change a dozen times over, and been disappointed; and so, sir, it is impossible (though I don’t doubt your meaning what you say) that you should be nearly as sorry as I am.”

“Well, I am so sorry, that I will ride over to-morrow, and see the squire about it. It is not very likely that he can help you in the way you want, any more than I; but he ought to know your case.”

“And then if better times come, sir, you will remember me.”

“One of the very first, you may rely upon it; but I cannot say I have much hope of better times for us farmers, unless somebody else takes a larger share of the burden of our poor. See how my wife shakes her head! She often pro-

phies that we shall go to the workhouse ourselves; and if we do get there, perhaps it will be some comfort to her that you were there first; for then she will be sure that it could not be helped."

"How you do talk, Mr. Goldby! When did I ever say such a thing? What I say is, that though it would be a sad thing to leave one's old home, and the beasts and fowls one has grown attached to, I should not wonder if every farmer gives up at the end of his lease, and leaves it to others to do what they can with the poor. For my part, I would lock up my dairy myself, and pat the dappled cow for the last time, and send my bantams to market every one, and go and live in the red house in the street, with not an ell of garden, to be out of sight and hearing of the parish poor."

"And they would return the compliment, my dear, for they are not over fond of either you or me."

"How should they be? I am almost angry with myself sometimes for being sharp with Ruth, partly because she came after the manner of a parish girl, whether I would or not. She is not a girl to bear being sharply spoken to, however; and I will let her go to-morrow and see her mother."

"That is where Ashly is going now," said the farmer, "to judge by the hurry he is in. Ashly, you had better take a draught of ale with my people behind there, than go to the beer-shop for it."

Ashly disclaimed all thoughts of beer this night, and was going home to see if his little folks were all in bed.

CHAPTER III.

MORNING CALLS.

WHILE Ruth was meditating, the next morning, with tears in her eyes, how she might best remind her mistress that it was now a long time since she had cried, at least by day-light, Mrs. Goldby came into the back kitchen, where she was cleaning the breakfast cans, and asked her if she did not think it was a very fine morning, and if she would not like to go and see her mother. She might ask Jenny to do the rest of her morning's work, and be gone, as soon as she had finished what she was about, if she would promise to be home by dinner time. There was a look of hesitation in the midst of Ruth's joy which made her mistress inquire if there was any difficulty? when the girl asked whether Mrs. Goldby would be so very good as to speak herself to Jenny, lest she should not believe what was intended, or should refuse her share in it. Being satisfied on this point, she was emboldened to ask further whether she might gather just one bunch from the tall holly-hock that was so full of flower. She should like to carry one to Biddy, if it could be spared. Her mistress replied by desiring her to come and speak to her in the

garden when she was dressed ready to go, and then went to fill a basket of apples, and cut a bunch of flowers with her own hands, for the widow Brand's table and parlour. Mrs. Goldby was far from thoughtless in these little matters, though strict with her maids, and apt to be out of patience with encroachers.

Ruth's hands shook so with joy and impatience, that she made a terrible clatter among the cans before she had done with them, and drew upon herself a scolding from her fellow-servants that damped her pleasure even when she was half running, loaded with fruit and flowers, along the lane which formed a short cut to the common, now graced by her mother's establishment. At every reach of the lane, through every gap in the hedge, did the girl look for the face of some friend to whom she could tell that she was going to see her mother, and might stay out four whole hours. No such face appeared, however, for some time; and Ruth began to feel almost as if nobody cared for her, and almost to wonder whether the people at home would be as glad to see her as she had fancied. Just when she was thinking of resting her basket on the top of a gate, and trying not to cry, she caught a glimpse of a coat-tail that could not be mistaken, and she was instantly re-invigorated. She ran on, shouting in her shrillest voice,—

“ Mr. Ashly ! Stop, Mr. Ashly ! Mr. Ashly, stop, will you ? ” But Mr. Ashly did not heed, till she set down her basket, and hollowed her

hands to give effect to her shout. Then Ashly turned, and waited till she came up.

"O, Mr. Ashly, I thought you never would have heard me : how I did call !"

"What is the matter, my dear ? One would think it was midsummer by your scarlet face. What do you want ?"

"I am going to see mother ; and I may stay till dinner time. You know I live at the farm now," she continued, seeing her friend look puzzled. "I have not been home this long, long while."

"So that was what you called me for ; to tell me where you are going. I am very glad indeed, Ruth. And now you must let me carry your apples for you. I can just as well go round your way as not ; and you will get on all the quicker."

And, as they went, Ashly told her that he should be very glad if his eldest girl had such a place as hers, and could come tripping through the lanes now and then, full of joy, to see her father. Ruth argued that it must be much pleasanter to stay at home and take care of the little ones ; and the controversy lasted till they came within sight and hearing of the beer-shop, when Ashly said he must wish her good bye, and resigned the basket to her, with many wishes that she might have a happy morning with her family.

Ruth relaxed her speed when she came within a hundred yards of her mother's door, being

necessary to plan how to gain entrance. Several lads were standing round the door: men were going in and coming out, like bees at the entrance of a hive. Ruth was surprised to see how altered the place looked since she saw it last. The grass was worn away before the whole of the front of the house; and several panes were broken in the windows which had looked so bright and new. Some of the white palings, which enclosed the narrow bed where she had planted pot-herbs, were broken away; and she could see no signs of the rabbit-hutch which she had confided to Peter's especial care. While she was wondering whether she dared push in among the customers at the door, she perceived that Biddy was not afraid of them. This poor child, deplorably deformed, and stunted in her growth from her fourth year, seemed to be making mirth for the loungers, one of whom brought her out in his arms, and set her down, while others threw sticks to various distances, which they cheered her on to fetch and carry, like a dog, while they laughed at her waddling gait and strange appearance, and rewarded her with a sip from their cans, or with nuts from their pockets. Ruth met her full in front, in one of her fetching expeditions, and caught her round the neck, covering her with kisses: but there was as much vacancy as pleasure in the countenance of the child at this meeting, and more eagerness about the apples than about her sister. As Ruth, tall and slim, led home her charge, a shout of mirth at the contrast of their

forms burst from the gazers, and was answered by laughter from Biddy, and a burning blush from Ruth. She pushed, elbowed, ducked, and leaped aside from as many as would have pinched her cheeks, or offered her a draught of beer or a whiff from their pipes, and at length stood panting before her mother in the little back room, with Biddy's struggling hand still grasped in her own. "Well, mother!" was all she could say.

"My dear! only think of your coming at this time of day, when we are all in confusion always! Run up to the bed-room, there's a good girl, out of the way of these people; and I will come and speak to you as soon as I can."

"Do make Biddy come with me, mother, instead of making sport for those men. She does not care for a word I say to her."

"Nor for what any body says to her. She is growing quite stupid and unmanageable, I think. There's no making her do any thing till Peter takes a stick to her: 'tis almost the only thing she understands."

Ruth could not answer, even to ask about Peter. She tried what the apples would do in tempting Biddy up stairs, and found that the lure succeeded. The little girl climbed on all fours, step by step, with eyes fixed on the basket, and resisted every attempt to carry, or in any way aid her. When fairly within the bed-room, Ruth bolted the door, but was quite at a loss what to do with her companion when one apple was devoured, and the rest hidden on a shelf which was out of the dwarf's reach. Biddy was

restless, cross, and so foolish that her sister did not know her for the same girl she had taken care of for so long. She was positively afraid of her from not knowing how to manage her, and listened with intense anxiety for her mother's step upon the stairs, till, at the end of the second hour of her holiday, this seemed almost the only sound she had not heard. There had been the fragment of a song; the beginning of a brawl, which was stopped; repeated bursts of laughter; the crash of falling crockery; shouts for more beer, which told her that Peter was on the premises; and lastly, long continued speechifying, accompanied by thumps upon the table, and marked into periods by applause and a buzz of voices. All this time the widow appeared to have forgotten her daughter; and at last, on the striking of the clock in the midst of the orator's harangue, Ruth had once more much ado to swallow her tears at the thought that this was the way her long expected holiday was passing from her.

For the sake of something to do, she opened the casement and peeped out cautiously, hoping to see what was passing, without attracting the attention of the loungers below. The first person she observed was Peter leaning against the window beneath, with his arms crossed on the sill, and listening open-mouthed to the orator within, turning round occasionally to grin and nod when some happy point elicited applause, or releasing himself with a jerk from any tormentor who twitched his jacket for more beer, or pulled

his hair in sport. Ruth began her attempts to communicate with him, by a gentle cough, during an interval of comparative quietness, hoping that he would know her cough while no one else would observe it. But Peter had no attention to spare to her repeated signs, till she called his name, and then he looked all ways but the right; and when he discovered that the call came from above, half-a-dozen rude faces were turned up at the same moment with his. In answer to Ruth's request that he would ask mother to come up and speak to her, he beckoned energetically for his sister to descend and hear what pleased him; but she heard quite enough where she was, as Blogg was not given to make the floors of his houses too substantial to be in proportion to his walls and roofs. That on which Ruth stood shook with every peal of applause from below, and exhaled the eloquence it imbibed. Scarcely a word was lost of all that Jay was saying in complaint of the low rate of wages; in recommendation of a tax on machinery, without which all reform was a humbug and a bubble; and in ridicule and abhorrence of the overgrown wealth of the landlords. Some of his words seemed to be longer than any at the very end of Ruth's spelling-book; but there were enough remaining of a reasonable length to make Peter, and some less sharp than Peter, think that they understood what they heard.

“Do they think,” cried the orator, “that the diurnal world is made for them alone,—for the aggregation of their comforts and the consolida-

tion of their wealth? Look at their rent-roll, and mark the engines of the poor man's exclusion from his birthright, the drill and the thrashing-machine, and you will find that such is the exposition of their creed. See the lords of the universe riding out through the domains where the poor man waters the ground, as the poet says, with the sweat of his brow. See the hare flit across his path, the pheasant whirl about his head, and hear him say in his heart to his hard-working neighbour, 'These are made for the recreation of my amusement, and in no wise to fill an empty stomach.' See the chaff flying from his thrashing-machine, and hear him saying in his chuckling meditations, 'So I give to the winds the scum of the earth, that have been a thorn in my side so long. This machine does my work without complaining, and comes between them and my nobility.' Thus is nature to the poor man curtailed of all her fair proportions, and Providence enlisted on the—in the—under the banners of despotism." Tremendous applause, during which the eloquent apothecary refreshed his throat with one of his own Emulcent Lozenges, in preparation for proceeding.

"It is, you know, established on irrefragable evidence, that there are two principles in nature, freedom and politics."

"And gravitation, sir," modestly suggested the schoolmaster, who liked to interpose occasionally.

"Yes, yes; we shall come to that by and by,

demonstrating how all phenomena gravitate to the centre of freedom and union."

The schoolmaster nodded in token of full satisfaction.

"Shall these principles be asserted elsewhere," continued Jay, "and shall we tamely submit to have them nullified by the perverse interpretations of those that sit in high places, devouring their game with rich sauces while the poor man starves?"

"I thought he sold sauces himself," whispered one hearer to another.

"Those are fish-sauces, and they don't come under the game laws, I fancy," was the reply.

"Sitting in high places," the speech went on, "and quaking at the nightly fires, which they next day set about quenching with blood,—blood got by trampling on the necks of a magnanimous and suffering nation. They promise us reform. From this egg wonderful things are to be hatched; but, in the meanwhile, what is the principle on which this egg is laid? As the cuckoo feloniously drops her offspring into any nest but the right, and the world is disappointed in the issue; so the government ——"

Here Ruth was startled by a pushing and shaking at the room-door. It was her mother, untidy and hurried in her dress and manner.

"My dear," said she, "I am so sorry I could not get to you before: and now I shall be called away again in a minute, I know. You must come at a better time of day, next time. O, you can't choose, and you don't know when you shall have liberty again. Well, it's a sad pity, to be

sure ; and I want to hear all about how you go on ; but those people cannot be left two minutes. —Be quiet, Biddy, will you ? You had better go out the back way, Ruth. You have grown finely, to be sure, since I saw you last, and you are too tall now to be about here, unless you were older. —Coming, Peter, coming !”

“ O, if you must go, mother, can’t you send Peter up ? I have not had a word yet ——”

“ I’ll see, my dear ; but Peter is wanted every minute to draw, you see. But I’ll tell him to spare a minute.”

Peter came presently ; but Peter was very much altered. He seemed to have nothing to ask his sister, but much to tell her that she did not care to hear.

“ Lord, Ruth, did you hear what a shot old Willett’s gamekeeper got the other night from the poachers. He is not dead, however ; but he was so frightened he let them get off with a fine quantity. They say there was three sacks, beside the hares.”

“ I say, Ruth,” was the next question, “ wouldn’t you like a fight ? Stuff ! never mind your being a girl ! They say girls go and see a fight sometimes. Dick Wilde is going to take me, some day ; and I put him in mind of it every day. I saw a bit of a fight here once. You should have seen Simpson, what a rare hit he got on the chops.”

Now appeared Mrs. Brand again, breathless, to send Peter down. “ Perhaps, mother, I had

better go, as you are so busy," said Ruth, dolefully.

"Why really, my dear, I think you had, and come again some day when I have more time to speak to you. Remember the back door, you know, and slip out quietly."

"Must I go home, then?" said Ruth hesitatingly, as the striking clock told that another hour remained at her own disposal.

"Why, suppose you go and speak to your aunt Jemima. (It is droll to think that she is your aunt, now that you begin to look nearly as old.) You will always find her at Mrs. Blogg's at this time of day, and she can talk to you over her wash-tub or her ironing-board better than I can, with all these people keeping me on the foot."

Ruth brightened up at the suggestion, emptied her basket into her mother's apron, left the flowers, as desired, on the shelf, and ran off towards Mrs. Blogg's, anxious to make the most of the time that remained.

Jemima, a girl of little more than twenty, though she bore the venerable title of aunt, was in a very favourable position for a chat, and took care to place Ruth in one which was no less advantageous. The room in which Jemima was washing linen opened into what was called the street; and door and window were left wide to let the steam escape. Jemima stood at her wash-tub, where she always found that the alternate dip and rub constituted no impediment to con-

versation, while the splash among the lather formed a gentle and not displeasing accompaniment to the voice. Perhaps this was the reason why she always sang when there was nobody to talk with, unless it was that she wished to show the neighbours what a voice she had. The street was not very narrow, yet her melody penetrated every recess of the opposite shop, which was Jay's, the apothecary. His last apprentice had learned every note of her two songs, "the Maid of Lodi," and "Jessy the flower of Dumblane," before he had been a week behind the counter. The sudden interruption of the latter in the middle of the last stanza, made him now step to the door to see what caused the interruption, and gave him his first sight of Ruth.

"Well, Ruth, so you have come to see me, and have a word with me. Now, sit down for as long as you can stay; aye, there, on that chair by the door, where there is no fear of my splashing you with my lather, and you can get a look at James Beaver, if you like. I can see him sometimes where I stand, when the steam blows away for a minute; but yours is the place, just where you have set the chair, for seeing what is going on. There's James Beaver looking across at you, I declare."

"So, that is James Beaver! How he is grown, to be sure."

"Grown, aye; well he may be, for he is almost grown out of being an apprentice. But it will be a pity when he goes away to settle for himself, for it is ten to one Mr. Jay gets such

another. A nice, modest young man he is ; opening the shutters so much earlier in the morning than the last one did, and very handy in the shop already, Mr. Jay says. I declare he is peeping at you from behind the white horse in the window."

"What is that white horse for?" asked Ruth. "It used to stand at the saddler's: at least it looks like the same."

"It is the very same. You may know it, if you just go across and look close, by the black finger marks round the leg, where one of the blacksmith's children took hold to lift up the foot and see if it was properly shod. It is very funny how children imitate what they see. Well, the saddler did not want it any more, when he got so much to do that his saddles and bridles made as good a sign as any plaster horse that ever was made; so he sold it to Mr. Jay to put in his window, to show that he sells horse medicines. Look, James Beaver is dusting it, seeing us look that way. Mr. Jay says it answers to him to set up his horse, so well as James Beaver keeps it for nothing. Mr. Jay is so droll!"

Ruth was planning how to begin some inquiries about Biddy and Peter, when Jemima asked her if she knew Mr. Jay, adding, that he was a nice young man. Oh! if she had not seen him lately, she had no idea how handsome he was grown to what he used to be. And his speaking! His speaking was amazingly fine. Many people that knew how to judge, said he ought to be in the House of Commons. And

so good natured with it all! He would come over when it was getting dusk, and chat about a hundred things, till one and another came to call him away; for every body wanted him for his advice,—if not about their illnesses, about their misfortunes; and he never refused his advice.

Ruth observed that he seemed to be giving a great deal of it to the people at her mother's.

“O, you heard him, did you? Well now, was not it beautiful? But you don't know half unless you heard him talk about the fires in the neighbourhood, and the rights of the poor as to the thrashing-machines.”

“Does he come over to talk to you about that?” asked Ruth; “or how do you know so much about his speaking?”

There was a half smile on Jemima's face when she replied that Mr. Jay had sometimes one thing and sometimes another to say to her; but she had often heard him and Mr. Blogg talking about how the government ought to oblige the parish to make up better wages to the labourers, if it was really true that the farmers could afford no higher than were given now. If Ruth could see Mr. Jay as he stood by the door, with the red and green light from his own lamp shining sideways on his face, with his right foot on the threshold, and the forefinger——

Here Mrs. Blogg made her appearance from an inner chamber, and Jemima's story of Mr. Jay's forefinger was drowned amid the energetic splashing and rubbing which she resumed at the approach of her mistress.

Mrs. Blogg was followed by four children, each a little more able than the one below it to take care of itself; but they could take care of nothing else, and were therefore sadly in the way where washing was going on,—where there were light baskets which must not be upset, things hung up which must not be pulled down, and tubs of water in which it was dangerous for a little child to snatch at its own reflection. Mrs. Blogg seeming fairly at a loss what to do with them all, Ruth took possession of the youngest to give him a ride on her foot, and asked the next eldest to be so kind as to make her a sand pie on the threshold; but one of the others beginning to wail about the soap which had been splashed into her eye from Jemima's tub, and the eldest being found guilty of amusing himself with the mangle without leave, there was soon an end of peace in the apartment, and finally a contest between the four which could cry loudest. Mrs. Blogg's temper was not made to bear this. Its first outbreak was directed upon the eldest.

“How dare you be at home, sir, at this time of day? Why did not you go to the mile-cross an hour ago? you are more trouble than you are worth, at the best; and it is the least you can do to pick up what you can at the mile-cross.”

“I'm tired of going there, mammy,” said the boy; “and last time, we could not get Peggy along; and she cries so when the wind blows over the heath.”

“Never mind her crying; she must learn better. I can't afford to have my children so

delicate ; so, off with you ! Peggy, my woman, go with your brother and see the gentlefolks ; and when there is a fine carriage coming, if you ask prettily, you will get a penny, I'll be bound."

The children seemed so unwilling to go, that Ruth could not help inquiring into the nature of their errand to the mile-cross, where she would fain have gone herself. It was such an excellent spot for play, and had been such a favourite resort of Peter and herself in old times, that she could not imagine how any child could object to being permitted to jump from the steps of the cross, that marked the meeting of four roads, and to watch for the approach of carriages from the distant quarters of the wide heath. She remembered how she and her brother used to vie with each other in their obeisances to the travellers within these carriages ; and how, when it rained, they ran and sheltered themselves in the gravel-pits where paupers were now employed to dig. On questioning the children as to their objections to do what she remembered with so much pleasure, she found that they were sent, not to play but to beg,—not to jump in the sunshine, but to sit on the steps of the cross in all weathers, to move the compassion of passers-by ; not to pay respect to travellers, but to ask pence of them. Their mother tried to prove to them that it must be very pleasant, and that they might get apples and nuts by it, which they must otherwise go without.

It seemed to enter Mrs. Blogg's mind, that some explanation was necessary to account for

the children of a builder and owner of a mangle being set to beg in the high road; and she therefore observed to Ruth, that her husband was obliged to pay to the rate when he did not know but that he might have to take from it some time or other; and that it was but fair that he should get something from the rich if he could, while he was at such an expense for the poor; and that they were chiefly the rich who passed by the mile-cross on their way to the watering place, a few miles off,—people who could well afford a few halfpence to poor children.—“To buy nuts with?” Why, children must now and then have a few nuts, or something of that sort, and the rich could best afford to give them such things; besides, the prospect of nuts made the children more ready to go and be out of the way of her washing. Ruth ventured to ask if the children would be willing to work hereafter, if they were made fond of begging now; the reply to which was, that they were too young, poor things, to be taught any work yet, and they might as well make a little money, if they could, in the meanwhile. So the four little things were dispatched on their money-getting expedition, the eldest carrying the youngest, and the others being desired to spend a penny, and bring the rest home, like good children.

There being no more private conversation to be had with aunt Jemima, Ruth departed, looking back towards Jay's shop from the end of the street. James Beaver was certainly gazing after her, and she felt (she scarcely knew why) less

discontented with the issue of her holiday than when she had left her mother's door.

She was closely questioned by her mistress as to what she had seen and done, and was favoured with much instruction as to how every body but the farmers found the means of getting on in the world, while they were weighed down with burdens which none were made to share in a due proportion. Mrs. Goldby had a good mind, she declared, to set her young people to open gates for passengers (which was a wide step above begging), and to sell beer, as a way of getting back from the parish paupers some of the money which went out of her husband's pocket for their support. With all her simplicity, Ruth did not take this threat for earnest. She understood that it was only an ebullition of spleen ; but it left her wondering whether her mother was really growing rich by selling beer, and building castles about the fortunes of the family.

CHAPTER IV.

THORPE CORNER.

MRS. GOLDBY did herself the justice of making known that the whole society around her did not fall under her censure ; and by this means she certainly enhanced its effect. She could point out examples of labourers who went to the beer-shop for no other purpose than to buy beer ; of

men with families who abhorred parish relief; of growing girls whose backs did not easily ache, or who shed no tears over such aches; of little boys who brought home pence without having begged, and without the stipulation of spending a portion of their earnings in nuts. Ashly and his family were pronounced exemplary in the whole of their conduct, and their neighbours, the Goodmans, scarcely less so. She did not perceive, in this case, as she was wont to do, that Ashly's young folks were much the worse for being able to read, and being in the habit of reading. She often boasted, indeed, that the little Goodmans did not know a letter of the alphabet, and that they promised, notwithstanding, to turn out industrious, and shrewd enough for all practical purposes; but she had nothing to object on these points to the Ashlys, who were not less industrious, not less shrewd, and certainly better able to amuse their father and each other at dull times than their friends, the Goodmans.

The children of the two families were more frequently together than any other set of young companions in the parish. Goodman's and Ashly's cottages stood near each other, and apart from the village. Goodman was a labourer on Goldby's farm, and inhabited a cottage in the rear of his stack-yard, in a nook of ground called Thorpe Corner, which was seldom visited by passengers, and would have been thought very solitary and dull but for the vicinity of Ashly's little dwelling. As it was, there was a

perpetual going to and fro over the three-cornered plot of grass which lay between the cottages : Mrs. Goodman now stepping over to ask whether Susan Ashly would do a little errand for her as she was going to the village ; or Johnny being sent to know whether any of the Goodmans would accompany him into the fields or lanes to scare birds or hunt hedge-hogs. Goodman sometimes requested Ashly, as a favour, to dig his plot of ground for him, as he had not enough time to do it properly himself ; and then a basket of produce of some sort was sure to find its way to Ashly's dwelling before night. Both families were poor, very poor ; but they contrived to lighten the burden of poverty to one another, in more ways than one, by their friendship. They not only imparted of their little substance on those occasions, when the very small gifts of the one party may be of great service to the other : they not only consoled one another under passing troubles ; but were an effectual mutual support under the permanent vexation to which all honest and independent labourers are subjected, in parishes where the poor-rate is expended lavishly, or otherwise injudiciously. Either of these men would have often found his spirits sink, and his indignation rise to an undue degree, on beholding how the provident and honourable are turned out of work in order to make way for the worthless ; each would perhaps have felt his love of independence melting away, under strong temptation to claim what others claimed ; each might have

desponded as to any good he could singly effect in the way of testimony and example, if they could not have met at the end of the day, at the end of the week, at the end of the year, to consult on their affairs, and to vent in sympathy their abhorrence of the present system of employing agricultural labour, and their dread or hope of what future seasons would effect in the way of change. Many people told Goodman that he had nothing to complain of, as he was a superior labourer, and was considered and retained as such by his master, when many others were dismissed to the gravel-pits, or to any further distance at which their parish might lie, if they should happen not to have a settlement in Goldby's parish. It was true that Goodman was so far better off than others that he was sure of work as long as his master had any to be done ; but he felt himself injured by the system under which he worked, as much as if he had been obliged to pay to his pauper neighbours a fourth, or even a third, of the wages of his hard labour. It came to much the same thing, he often said, whether wages were lowered one-third in order to be made up out of the rates, from which a spirited man could not bring himself to take a shilling, or whether the labourer was paid full wages, and obliged to give away one-third to support his pauper neighbours. His case was not so hard as Ashly's ; but it was sad enough to afford a theme for many an evening conversation, when the friends were at work side by side, mending their thatch, or

putting their little plots of ground in order. The evenings, or the Sundays, after church, were the times for Goodman's spirits to sink, and for his friend's, cheered by converse, to rise ; and the mornings, when Ashly staid at home with nothing to do, and Goodman trudged off to work with his tools over his shoulder, exactly the reverse. The hours of the year were few, when both were hopeful and happy ; but their attachment was not, perhaps, the less strong for this.

One misty autumn morning, when Goodman came forth in the dusk, with his usual burden of tools, he found Ashly leaning over the gate of the stack-yard he was about to cross.

" Good morrow to ye, neighbour," said he. " You are early abroad this raw morning."

" Not earlier stirring than you and yours. I have been watching yon little light from your window this half-hour."

" Why, yes ; the mornings get too dark now to do any thing without a candle so early as this ; and my dame has no notion of lying in bed any later because the sun changes its time ; so my little folks are all up and about, long before yours, I dare say."

" No, no : my girl is up the first of the family. And well she may ; for she has more to do than I have."

" Just at present, man ; but that is not to last for ever. The time will come when you will be as busy as any of us."

" Aye, for a week or so at hay-harvest, perhaps. But it is a weary time first. The grass

is hardly half an inch long yet that I am to mow."

"Well, well. There's your club in the mean time. It is a fine thing for you, belonging to that club."

"So it is, in as far as it keeps me above the rate; but it won't do long. It has been a help in sickness, and when my wife died: but neither that fund nor any other will last on, year after year, to support a man who adds nothing to it. Well, but I did not mean to vex you with complaints this morning, but rather to know whether you want any thing done at home that I can do for you. Now's your time, you know, when I have only too many hours that I will thank any body to fill up for me. I need not say that I would take nothing for what I might do. It would be kindness enough to let me think I was not idle."

Goodman could not remember any thing that he wanted done: moreover, he must not stay now to talk: so Ashly was presently left alone at the gate, watching the sun as it rose, turning from blood-red to copper colour, and from copper colour to golden. It was a particularly dull day to Ashly, though it promised to be sunshiny and warm for the season. Instead of going home, he lingered about Thorpe Corner, now pulling hips and haws from the moist glittering hedges, and now standing with his hands in his pockets, watching the restless robin that flitted and hopped around him. Before the short thin grass on the plot near his cottage was well dried in the sun-

shine, he lay down at full length upon it, looking up with half-shut eyes at the pale blue sky. It was not long before he heard little feet busy about him, and felt himself suddenly bestrode by stout young limbs, while a baby face laid itself against his cheek.

"Father, are you busy to-day?" was the first unfortunate question.

"Busy! no, child."

"Then I wish you would come and lie down in the church-yard, and see me jump. I can jump this much higher than I could the last time you went."

"Not to-day. I can't go to the church-yard to-day."

"Will you go to-morrow, then, and show Bob the owl's nest in the ivy? We can't get up so high by ourselves."

"No, not to-morrow. I shan't go to the church-yard any more except on Sundays."

The children were silenced by their father's tone; but they wondered within themselves what had made him change his mind about the church-yard, where he used to show them all that was to be seen, and loiter at idle hours, as if he loved the place even more than they. They were not aware that there was something there which reminded him of his promise to keep every child of his from the parish, as from the worst of misfortunes.

Presently came another voice, at the sound of which he suddenly raised himself, overthrowing the child that was sitting upon him, and the little

one that was trying to gain its feet by the help of his coat collar.

“Father,” said Susan, “as you are within sight, I’ll just step down to the osier ground for some more osiers to peel. Just keep an eye on the door, will you?”

Ashly nodded assent, instead of offering to go and cut osiers for his daughter. She went on to ask,—

“Shall I take the children with me, or will you look to them?”

“O, let me go to the osier ground! I want to go with Susan,” cried the children.

“Take them with you,” said Ashly, pushing them away.

“Then, Johnny,” said his sister, “run round by widow Brand’s, and bring Biddy down. She has not been out with us this long while. You will find us by the new dyke, if you make haste.”

“Biddy can’t make haste,” said the boy. “She goes like the lame duck yonder.”

“Well, don’t hurry her; and mind you help her over the dyke. But you can make haste; so, off with you!”

When the children had been gone some time, and before Ashly had ceased wondering what made him too lazy to cut osiers to-day, a heavier step approached, which proved to be Wilde’s. He stretched himself, and then lay down also on the grass, saying,

“That little fellow of yours spoiled our sport just now. He carried off our dwarf just when we were setting her to run a race with Jay’s

dog. He would have carried off the dog too ; but we kept him for another kind of sport by and by."

" Which ? the boy or the dog ?"

" The dog, to be sure. Your boy would be a rare boy if he could help us to such sport as we expect from that dog by and by, as I said before."

Ashly made no reply, and Wilde went on.

" Talking of rare fellows ; is not that fellow Jay a good one ? You should have heard how he has been talking,—as finely as a member of parliament. And he is not a spoil-sport like the whole of one set of speechifiers—the parsons. They are for ever telling us, ' you must not do this,' and ' you must not do that ;' till a man with any spirit asks what the devil he may do. Now, Jay has as much to say as any man about the right and wrong of things ; but he sets one on to do fine things with a famous deal of spirit. You should have heard him this morning."

" I can't think how you find time to hear him, Wilde, at this part of the day, when I thought you ought to be at the gravel-pits."

" O, I don't trouble my head much about what time of day I work. The parish is bound to find me ; and it does not matter what time of day I do their cursed work, or whether I do it at all ; particularly when I have other fish to fry by and by, as I said before."

As before, Ashly remained silent. As before, Wilde resumed.

“ Now you, who have no parish work to do, nor other work either, as far as I see,—you are just the person to help sport, which is a thing we did not expect of you when you wanted your nights for sleep after a hard day’s work. But now——”

Ashly cut him short with a declaration that he was never so little disposed for sport as when he had no work.

“ Aye, aye ; you mean singing rollicking songs, and playing skittles, or perhaps helping on a fight. We all know that such sports as those bring nothing in, and help one to run scores sooner than to pay them. But if, as Jay says, there is a sport which has justice,—no ; the rights of the poor,—no ; I forget what he said exactly ; but it came to this, that a hare is a mighty good thing for hungry people to have to eat ; and that there are plenty of people ready to give a good price for pheasants ; and that we have a better right to every thing of that sort than any squire Manning that ever lived.”

“ When you prove to me,” said Ashly, “ that I have a right to squire Manning’s pheasants, I’ll set Susan to roast them without my having climbed a wall by moonlight, or shot a gamekeeper to get them.”

“ Hang the gamekeepers ! They would not be shot if they kept out of the way. They have the woods to themselves all the day : they might give us our turn at night. Hang the meddling fellows !”

"If you let such a meddling fellow as Jay talk you over, Wilde, it will end in the game-keepers hanging you."

"No such easy matter," replied Wilde. "You'll hardly find my match at dodging in the moonlight, and making a stand in the dark, as you'll see if you'll come with us some night. We meet at——"

"Don't tell me a word about it," said Ashly, "or you will repent; for I won't promise to keep secrets that I have no part in. If I am above taking parish money, while I can do without it, I am much more above taking the squire's game, like a thief. I would sooner beg at his door for a crust of bread."

"Much you know about it!" cried Wilde, scornfully; "and where's the wonder, when you never hear what Jay has to say about it? I suppose you grant that neither you nor the squire has so much to say as Jay. There is not such a man to be met with at every turn. But it is ill-natured of you to talk as you do about blabbing; and it is cursedly good-natured to the squire. I wonder you have so little spirit, when you owe him a grudge."

Ashly replied that he had no particular liking for the squire, who had injured him over and over again in preventing his being employed in preference to parish paupers. It was not because the pheasants were Manning's that he declined stealing them, but because he was above stealing at all, and should be, if the game belonged to somebody as hateful as he (whoever he was)

that made the game laws, and as helpless as poor little Biddy.

"It would be strange, to be sure," observed Wilde, "if you had any consideration for a man that has used you as I know Manning is doing. You should hear what he says."

"Never mind what he says. He can say no real ill of me; so don't be repeating cross words of his to tempt me to steal his game."

"You don't know what I'm thinking of. No man can be further from saying any harm of your character; but it is not the less hurtful to you for that. Says he, 'Let Ashly alone to take care of himself. He is a substantial man; and we need not trouble ourselves about getting work for him, as he can live for a while without.'"

"Whom did he say that to?"

"To Goldby, when he rode over to tell the squire how much you wished for work. Jay was there and heard it."

"And what did Goldby say?"

"He said the parish would lose more by driving such a one as you to be a half-worker, or an idler, than it could ever gain by giving your proper work to a batch of paupers. That was his civil way of speaking of us who have parish-pay. He will be made to repent of it one day."

"What did he mean by calling me a half-worker and an idler?" cried Ashly, starting up.

"Why, there now, lie down again. He did not mean that you doze on the grass when you have nothing to do. He said what it was that he meant—that the most high-spirited men have the

least heart for the work that is paid by the parish. He said, that while good labour is so scarce in the neighbourhood, it is a great loss to the parish to have men that do their business like Goodman and you turned from examples into warnings."

"I'm proud to feel obliged to Mr. Goldby," exclaimed Ashly; "and if Jay thinks as he does, perhaps he will leave off inciting the people to get hold of all the money they can without earning it."

"Jay told us this to show that you are a warning already, instead of being an example. He says, that any one who passes you when you are lagging along, as melancholy as a new-weaned calf, and afraid to treat yourself with a pint of beer to cheer your heart, may see a warning of what happens to people who are above asking for the money that the law allows them, and yet have not spirit enough to bleed the land-owners and farmers of what they have wrung out of the poor. He says, if you cared for your country, and the poor men in it, you would get into Goldby's pocket, and help to make him pay the cost of his thrashing-machines ten times over."

Ashly sprang to his feet, while he said that Jay should soon see that he had something better to do than to consume the substance of an honest, kind-hearted fellow like Goldby. Wilde took it for granted that he alluded to the midnight sport to which he wished to tempt him, and began to congratulate him on his roused spirit. But Ashly

had very different thoughts in his mind, and said so. He urged Wilde to proceed to his work in the gravel-pits, and to leave it to the owls to be abroad at night; stepped to his dwelling to mend the fire, on which the potatoes were boiling, and to close the door, and then followed the children to the osier ground, revolving in his mind the notion with which he had just been inspired—of investing his small remaining funds in some sort of stock, on which he might make a profit. If he could do this, he would no longer be pointed at by his neighbours as the man who was fool enough to save, and pitied by those who approved his spirit. If he succeeded, he should be independent of squires and farmers; if he failed, it was but coming upon the parish a little sooner than he would otherwise do.

The children set up a shout when they saw him trudging down the meadow at a quick pace. Susan looked out from among the osiers, and Johnny made a display of the sheaf already cut; and the two little girls left off teasing the ducks, which they had been chasing from creek to cove of the little stream which bounded the meadow. Biddy was found to have lost a shoe, and Bet to be wetted before, behind, and on each side; whereupon Johnny was sent with the children to search for the shoe among the weeds, and to convey it and the owner home; while Ashly helped Susan to finish her task, and loaded himself with her sheaf. He came to the point with his daughter immediately.

“ Susan, how should you like to keep shop ? ”

“ What sort of shop ? such a one as Mrs. Woollerton could teach me to keep ? ”

“ No, no, I must have a different sort of shop-keeping from Mrs. Woollerton’s, even supposing she would teach any body how to set up in opposition to her. No ; the schoolmaster has taught you something in figures, and I think we might manage to learn the other parts of the business ourselves. It is a long time since we bought tea or sugar ; and it is rarely enough that we have had bacon of late ; but I dare say we remember sufficient to prevent any great mistakes in laying in our first stock. I am sure we have good reason to remember the prices we had to pay at Woollerton’s.”

“ I get some things there now, for that matter,” said Susan. “ The last salt butter we had was a penny an ounce.”

“ And far from good, too,” replied her father. “ I don’t believe Woollerton gives more than six-pence a pound for it to the grocer he buys it of. I have reason to know that he asks for ordinary goods when he buys his stock. We had no great loss in leaving off tea, such as his was latterly. We might bake the leaves of any bush between this and the squire’s, and have as good tea. And to charge six-pence an ounce for it ! I dare say we might sell better at four-pence. Then there’s cheese. There is little doubt farmer Goldby would sell me a few of the cheeses he sends to market, and I could warrant the quality good and wholesome (which is more than Woollerton’s

ever is), and sell it, moreover, at three halfpence the two ounces, instead of a penny an ounce, which every body is paying for his strong hard stuff, which is not fit for any child's stomach, I am sure."

Susan doubted whether Goldby would part with any of his cheeses to be sold retail in the neighbourhood, since Woollerton was obliged to go so far for his. Her father told her that Goldby could not sell his good cheeses so cheap as Woollerton's friend, the grocer, could afford to part with his fragrant commodity; so that though Woollerton might make a good profit on Goldby's, he preferred making a much larger on bad cheese from a distance.

"Then there are candles," pursued he; "they are a principal article, for Woollerton himself says there is twice the quantity of candles burned that there was a while ago."

"Why, how is that, father? we burn fewer, and so do the Goodmans, now that there is neither sickness nor a young baby in either house."

"People that have their things found by the parish," replied her father, "grow less careful by degrees than we are obliged to be. In many a cottage where there was formerly never a candle seen from March to October, there are lights flaring in the window for hours of the midsummer night, when sober labourers ought to be in bed. They must have a candle to gossip by at their doors, or at the open casement; and the sun wastes a pretty quantity of light upon them before they are up in the morning. I fancy it is

long since many of those who work in the gravel-pits saw the early dew. We shall have them grumbling at getting work when that blessed time, the hay-harvest, comes round, because they must be up betimes to mow."

"To be sure," observed Susan, "Mrs. Brand, for one, must be a good customer for candles. You may see lights moving about for a long while after her house is cleared at night; she being busy cleaning up after her customers, I suppose. And all the winter, the few that do get up to work call in there betimes for their warm beer and spices; so she and her maid must burn lights almost the whole night through. She uses better candles than the poor pay a halfpenny a-piece for; but if it only came to that, think what a bill it would be at the winter's end!"

"If she bought of us by the pound, we could afford candles much cheaper than she pays Woollerton. As for bacon, I should like to turn that article over to Goodman, if, as I think, he can manage to keep pigs. It may be a kindness to put it into his head. He can either dispose of the bacon himself, or, what is better, (since people do not think of buying any where but at the shops,) let me sell it for him, which I would do with great pleasure, giving him every thing over and above the expenses."

"But, father, only think of the expenses; only think of having a shop."

"Aye, you are thinking of such a shop as Woollerton's; or, perhaps, Mr. Jay's, with gilding on the drawers, and painted doors to the

cupboards. I mean nothing of that sort ; but just a deal table or counter that I can put up myself in our own kitchen, with a sort of covered place behind to keep our stock in ; and perhaps a bench in front to set fruit, and eggs, and gingerbread upon in the summer. Or Johnny might have a little set-out of them on the green."

" You forgot that nobody ever passes our way but the Goodmans, and their custom would be but little."

" What is there to prevent people passing our way ? They will flock to Thorpe Corner fast enough if they find they can buy cheaper by half of us than of Woollerton. If we can but make a beginning, we shall see our quiet nook as like a fair as Woollerton's shop-door, when the people go straight there from the workhouse."

Susan had yet another objection to make. She had heard that Mrs. Woollerton was continually complaining of the impossibility of getting in her payments ; and Susan was sure she could not press very poor people hard for their money. Her father had no intention of selling for any thing but ready money. Bad debts, or even a delay of payment, would presently knock up a shop-keeper with so small a capital as his. Susan liked the idea of ready money, instead of having the trouble and anxiety of keeping scores. She fully acquiesced in the plan, and promised to say her tables of money, weights, and measures, to herself as often as she took up her needle, and to practise making parcels, so as to waste the least possible time, paper, and string.

The plan being thus opened to his daughter, and favourably received by her, Ashly waited with impatience the return of his friend Goodman, whom he intended to admit to his consultations from first to last. The hours between noon and Goodman's evening leisure were spent by Ashly, not so much in peeling osiers with his industrious children, as in measuring his dwelling, inside and out, and estimating the accommodations of which it might admit. The window was small; the counter must be short and narrow; the cupboards and shelves scanty in depth and height; but who could know what might arise from a small beginning, and whether Ashly and his daughter might not end by keeping shop in the middle house of Myrtle Row?

CHAPTER V.

LODGINGS TO LET.

MRS. GOLDBY was wont to mention, as one of the signs of the times, the facility with which people changed their plans, in comparison with former days. In old times, a man, and yet more a woman, meditated long before adopting a new occupation, or introducing any material variation into a long-pursued way of life. Now there was such shifting and changing, that it was plain the old maxim was forgotten—"A rolling stone gathers no moss." A man that was a labourer

yesterday was to be a shopkeeper to-morrow; and shopkeepers themselves seemed to think little of altering the character of their stock several times in a year. The only thing some people kept steady about was taking an allowance from the rate; and if, for purposes of their own, they gave it up for a time, the principle of fidelity in this particular instance was so strong, that on the failure of their schemes they were sure to return to the rate again, with an eagerness enhanced by suspension. All this went to prove, that persons thus changeable were not likely to have much to lose, and that their experiments were therefore tried at other people's expense. If it were not so, there would be, as in old times, a Jack-of-all-trades here and there, and the rest of the working people divided into classes according to their permanent occupations, instead of a herd of people who were ready to be this to-day, and that to-morrow, whenever a slight promise of profit appeared. Some people objected that the prosperous were little less changeable than those who had nothing to lose: and these cited Mrs. Brand as an example. Mrs. Brand did not appear to the farmer's wife a fair specimen, however, as her name had stood on the parish books, and no one who was written down in that condemned list was deemed worthy to be regarded as a sign of what the times were to the working classes.

But what were the changes in widow Brand's plans? She still kept a beer-shop, as well she might, if what her neighbours said was true of the quantity of beer she drew, and of the num-

bers who drank their pints and quarts at her door, and in her house, between morning and night, besides those who sent for it at dinner and supper-times. Every body thought she must be growing rich very fast, and would gladly have borne her burdens to be in her place. What these burdens were, of which she often spoke, and of which her slatternly dress, sharpened voice, and knit brow told yet more plainly, it was not very easy to discover. Even the laziest folks thought they should not object to be up early and late, and to be at every one's call through the day, if they were rewarded with a fine profit, and possessed such a till as her's, where silver and copper were dropping in with a continual jingle. But it was certain that the widow had troubles, however loud she might laugh when every body else laughed, or however delighted she might at times appear with the apothecary's oratory, or Wilde's polite attentions in giving her half his chair to listen to it. Some mothers, indeed, thought she had trouble enough to make her frown in her little son's promise of full-blown wickedness, and in poor Biddy's increasing helplessness of body and mind; and did not very well see how an abundance of money could compensate for evils of this nature; but the wonderers continued to form the majority, as there were many who knew what it was to have bad or sickly children, to one who had experienced and could estimate the comfort of having money.

To wonder succeeded something like envy, when it became known that the widow was about

to open a lodging-place for vagrants, at the suggestion and under the sanction of the squire. How many now began to marvel at themselves for not having first thought of doing such a thing, so often as the squire had been heard to lament the difficulty of knowing what to do with vagrants, for whom there was no proper accommodation in the workhouse ! How many thought the widow Brand had quite enough upon her hands, and flowing into her pocket already, and that she might have done some neighbour the kind turn of giving up the speculation to him ! Others blessed their stars that they had nothing to do with such a set of creatures as the vagrants that passed through the parish ; and asked how much profit any one could expect to make of such destitute bodies as they. Meanwhile the widow proceeded with her preparations, which were not very expensive, though they promised as much luxury as could be expected on the terms of two-pence a night. The straw was spread, thick and dry, on the floor of the sort of out-house which was to be appropriated to her vagrant visitors ; troughs of water were placed at each end ; a mighty store of soft soap was laid in ; and roll towels of prodigious length and substance decked the wall. All this was certainly much to offer for two-pence a night ; but, as somebody observed, a man that had two-pence might have more, whether from the hands of a magistrate or from some unknown source ; and this surplus was almost sure to be spent in the beer which might be heard splashing into the cans on the

other side the partition. Thus a very few vagrants (and there never had been many in this parish) might make it worth the widow's while to entertain them.

It was not long after Christmas that she was ready to receive the first wanderer who was directed by the squire to her abode; and next morning, before less active people would have breakfasted, appeared the squire himself at the widow Brand's door, giving his horse to Peter to be led up and down before the house. He seemed to be disposed to walk in—more so, a discerning observer would have said, than the hostess to invite him. There was no place for him but her little back parlour, as she could not think of putting him where the men were having their morning draught. The squire condescendingly assured her that the back parlour would better suit the purposes for which he came than any more public place.

"Well, Mrs. Brand," said he, "I sent you a customer last night."

"Yes, sir, he is still there;" nodding in the direction of the out-house.

"Still there!—Well, do not let him slip away without paying you your two-pence. He has two-pence, I assure you. I took care of that before I sent him to you."

The widow curtseyed in token of her sense of obligation.

"Perhaps," added Mr. Manning, with a shrewd look, "he found ways and means of getting more

than two-pence into his pocket between my house and yours—perhaps he was a customer in more ways than one. Eh! Mrs. Brand?”

“Indeed, sir, he has not spent one farthing here; and if he has eaten any thing, it could only be such broken victuals as he might have with him. I have made no profit of him, I assure you, sir.”

“Very well—very well. It is as well, you see, that I should come to ascertain the success of our first experiment with this sort of people. They must be looked to, both as to making them comfortable, poor creatures, while they are in our hands, and preventing our being cheated by the rogues among them. What kind of man, now, would you suppose this fellow to be?”

The widow could say nothing to this question, as she had only seen the man for a moment, and taken no particular notice of him then. She only knew that he had been quite quiet, and not asked for any thing from the time Peter showed him where he was to sleep, till now. She was surprised when the squire told her that her guest declared himself to belong to the parish, and that he came for the purpose of claiming relief. She would observe him more particularly, the widow said: and if the squire would favour her with his name, perhaps she might recollect it.

The name had slipped the busy gentleman's memory, and he had left his memorandum-book in his last night's coat-pocket; so the name of the vagrant must be learned from himself. Meanwhile, there was more to be said to Mrs. Brand.

“ My good woman,” said the squire, looking very serious, “ are you aware that your establishment is not a gin-shop ?”

The widow submitted that it would be rather odd for her to fancy she sold gin, when in fact she sold only beer.

“ If it is not a gin-shop,” pursued the squire, “ neither ought it to have the morals and manners of a gin-shop.”

Mrs. Brand hoped her own morals were pretty good, and she had nothing to do with those of other people.

“ There is your mistake, my good woman ; and a great mistake, I assure you, it is. You are answerable for whatever goes on in your house—for whatever rebellion may be hatching (I would have you look well to that)—for privy conspiracy—for drunkenness—for brawls—for profane jesting—for——”

While the squire was racking his faculties for more sins to specify, the widow seized the opportunity of saying, that if she had been aware that all such shocking things were to rest upon her conscience, she should not have thought so little of opening a beer-shop.

“ I dare say not,” was the reply. “ Those who open gin-shops prepare themselves for whatever may come of the detestable assemblages within their doors ; but——”

“ Do you really think they do, sir ? Then I think they must be the worst people living.”

“ Do not forget Christian charity, my good woman. Would not you think it hard, now, if

any body called you the worst person living, because treason was talked in yonder room? But, as I was going to say, there is great delusion about these beer-shops. They were begun with the idea that people would be enabled by them to provide themselves with good beer at a reasonable rate, and that multitudes would leave off drinking gin when there was convenience for their being served with the fine old English beverage, which—which——”

“And I’m sure, sir, people are served reasonably with very good beer from my shop. You would be surprised at the number that send for their quarts at dinner-time every day, instead of brewing at home.”

“True, true. An excellent intention, indeed, was that of the legislature in establishing these beer-shops; and very good beer is yours, Mrs. Brand, I have no doubt. But can you honestly say, now, that there is no rebellion hatched here over your beer? Does Jay make no speeches? Do our tradesmen make no complaints of their neighbours—the squire, and the overseer? Do our labourers say nothing under your roof against Goldby? And,”—whispering, “has no poacher drank out of your cans?”

“Bless me! and does your worship think this is all owing to the beer?”

“Not entirely; for matters were very far from going right before the beer bill passed; but you will allow that there has been more mischief at work in this parish of late than ever; and I much fear there will be still more. I fear I cannot keep

our people from hearing of the disorders in other parishes. The news of the fires flies fast, and people's ears are always open to dangerous reports of that kind. I own I dread the consequences. But remember, that if any mischief happens, I and my brother magistrates shall feel it our duty to question you as to what has passed under your roof; and I hope we shall hear better things of you than some that have reached us lately."

"Why, sir, as to keeping these fires a secret, I don't see how you are to manage that, now that they have come so near. You can't make people walk with their eyes shut of a night; and Sims, that did work at Bingham's, saw a fire far off one dark night lately, and brought news of it here in the morning; and—and—a friend of mine climbs up the big elm by the pump every night to look out; and I've heard that several people are let into the church-tower by the sexton, sometimes as late as twelve o'clock, and watch for hours. So I hope, if there should happen such a thing as a fire in our parish, your worship will not fancy I began it."

"But you must own that our parish is in a very sad state—in a much worse state than it was before your house was opened."

"But if it was shut up to-morrow, do you think, sir, that matters would mend? I don't say but that a man here and there may drink more beer than he can properly afford; as some of my bad debts can testify; and I see plainly enough that when discontented people get together, they

increase their discontent, and stir one another up to mischief. But I don't see but that the same things would happen if there was no beer-shop in the place. As long as labourers have idle time upon their hands, and money from the parish, they will have drink ; and if there is not beer at hand, they will have gin. As long as little tradesmen have to pay more to the rates than they can afford, they will grumble at those that they think make them pay more than they need ; and as for Mr. Jay, he will make speeches as long as he thinks the people wronged ; and if there is not a roof granted him to speak under, he will stand in the wind and the rain."

" But, my good woman," said the squire, with a comfortable smile, " you have not answered my question yet. Is the parish in a worse state than when Blogg let this house to you, or is it not ?"

" It certainly is, sir, if all that you and Mr. Jay say be true."

" I and Mr. Jay !"

" Yes. Your worship seems exactly to agree with Mr. Jay so far. There's a new set of people in Blogg's cottages, poor miserable creatures, Mr. Jay says, so sickly, that he has more trouble than enough with them, considering what his salary from the parish is."

" Aye, I know the people in Myrtle Row are most of them upon the parish."

" Half-starved by the parish, sir, Mr. Jay says : and this, and the place being so damp and without any drain, makes them very troublesome patients to him."

“ Blogg must be spoken to to make a drain, and——”

“ Bless you, sir ; the cottages have been out of Blogg’s hands this long while, and the money he sold them for three quarters spent by this time, I’ll be bound. Sewell bought one with his legacy, and Blogg compounded with the parish for the rest, as your worship would have it that the parish must pay the rents.”

“ True, true. I forgot. Those houses must be looked to, however.”

“ Looking will do little good, I am afraid, sir, as long as they are built on a heavy clay. Well, then, there are such labourers as Goodman ground down by the farmers to such wages as will barely find them potatoes, which is, as Mr. Jay says, a burning shame in the farmers, though they complain that they can’t give better. We’ve nothing to do with that, says Mr. Jay. It’s the labourers’ business to get their rights of the farmers, and let the farmers get theirs of the landowners, and the other rich folks that oppress them. Then, again, there are the bands of poor men that are set to work in the gravel-pits ; there are more and more of them every day going in droves, as Mr. Jay says, to be worked like slaves——”

“ Mr. Jay does not know what it is to work like slaves,” interrupted the squire. “ These paupers do as little work each as a boy of ten might get through.”

“ Mr. Jay meant, sir, that they were marched in droves like slaves, not that they worked like slaves, which may be much or little, for any thing I know. Then, there are children dropping into

the workhouse from here and there, and the overseer grumbling over every fresh one that comes in, as if it was not a misfortune, as Mr. Jay says, that their parents are prevented, by the oppression of the rich, from maintaining them. Mr. Jay thinks the least the overseer could do would be to give them what the law orders them, without making any difficulty about it. I am sure I dread carrying my poor little girl there, he will taunt me with it so."

"What are you going to send her for?"

"I find I can't keep her at home any longer. She requires more looking after and nursing than I can give her, with my hands so full from morning to night. It will be a great relief to me to have her better provided for than at home."

"I should have thought you were well able to have your child properly taken care of at home, or by a neighbour. There are few people in the parish now taking so much money as you."

The widow answered that she had more than enough to do with her money; that the parish at present made her an allowance for Biddy, and it would cost the overseer little more to have the child in the workhouse. The parish should remember too, that she had taken herself and all her family off the rate when she began her new way of life; and it was the least it could do in return to help her poor, deformed child, that was a sad burden upon a widow woman. In this the squire agreed, provided she found herself really unable to maintain the child.

Mrs. Brand declared her son Peter to be

quite enough of a charge for any mother to bear. Besides his being so idle that he left nearly all the business of the house on her and her maid, he had lately been detected in pocketing half-pence and six-pences, which he scored against customers. How long this had gone on, and what was the extent of her loss, Mrs. Brand could not guess ; nor did she know what he did with the money, unless he spent it at the fights a friend of hers had taken him to lately. The good-natured squire hastened to turn the conversation, thinking that her son's delinquencies must be a melancholy subject for a mother to dwell upon. He asked whether the vagrant could not be roused (supposing him asleep), and brought before him ; and Mrs. Brand sent Peter to see. The boy brought word that he had called for some time and got no answer, and that on looking in, he found the man was gone. " Without paying his two-pence ? " the squire asked. Every body supposed so, till the servant girl, hearing the speculations upon the two-pence, gave evidence that she had seen the stranger in conference with Peter a few minutes before ; whereupon the boy's pockets were turned inside out, and it appeared that he had received the money.

" You will have much trouble with that boy, I fear, my good woman, and you can hardly doubt his wickedness being owing to the nature of your occupation, whatever you may think of Jay's, and Wilde's, and that of other bad fellows that might, for aught I know, have been bad, as you say, without having had a beer-shop to go to."

“ Bless me, sir, please not to give out that I said such a thing as that ! Mr. Jay a bad man ! and Wilde too——”

“ Well, take care they do nothing bad under your roof, that’s all. No talk of rick-burning, I beg ! No more such brawls as I happen to have heard of ! I am far from wishing to be hard upon my neighbours, but——”

He was stopped by protestations that he was the kindest of neighbours, the most indulgent of magistrates, as every body would say who did not want to pinch the poor as to the parish money that was their right. It was only such as the overseer that could ever complain of the squire.

With this comfortable assurance in his ear, the squire departed in search of the vagrant who had excited his curiosity. He was little aware what kind of consultation respecting himself he left behind him, or what a scene awaited him in the village.

CHAPTER VI.

A FROLIC.

WHILE the squire rode away, the idlers, who looked after him from the window and door, delivered their opinions of him.

“ He is a good-hearted man enough,” pronounced one. “ He always gives it against the

overseer when a pauper appeals to him. There's some pleasure in going to him with a complaint. One is sure to get what one wants."

"He is a better man than Goldby by half," observed another. "He makes every body about him take on labourers, while all Goldby's endeavour is to employ as few as the overseer can be persuaded to put upon him."

"But remember," interposed a third, "what a different thing it is paying labourers one's self, and forcing them on other people to be paid."

"Aye, but Goldby is a bad man for all that. The whole time of my affliction last year, he gave my wife no more than half as much help as the squire, though she nursed Mrs. Goldby in her last confinement. O, Goldby is a bad man compared with the squire!"

"You would have so much out of Goldby in the way of the rate," said the farmer's advocate, "that you leave him nothing to give away in charity. He cannot afford to help those he has a regard for, because he is obliged to do far too much for those who never think of thanking him."

"I call Goldby a better man than the squire," cried a politician of Jay's band. "Nobody can say that the farmer is rich through what he grasps and wrings from the poor. The farmer has no hares that a poor man's dog may not follow. He has no traps set for starving men, who may not bring down a bird as it flutters before them, though they feel they could eat it, feathers

and all. I'd sooner take a night walk through his preserves than through Goldby's stack-yards."

"Hold your talk," cried the first speaker, "and see what is coming here. What is the meaning of all this? Where are all these barrows of gravel going? with the fellows hallooing as if they meant to raise the village as they go."

"That is what they want, no doubt, or they would not come on with such a noise. One, two, four, six, ten, eighteen barrows of gravel! Why, a cart with one man to drive it would carry as much as that; and then seventeen of the poor fellows might be taking their ease here with us."

The gossips poured out from the widow's door to meet the barrow-men; and the news soon spread that it was a freak of the overseer's to set the men to wheel away the gravel which had till now been carted. It was said that less gravel was wanted, while there were more men to be employed by the parish, and that this was a device to keep the paupers employed; a piece of spite, as they called it, to prevent their enjoying a little liberty with their parish-pay. They should like, if they dared, to bury the overseer up to the chin in this very gravel; and they were determined, at all events, to resist up to the furthest point at which they could hope for the protection of the poor man's friend—the squire.

"What are you going to do with your loads?" somebody asked of Wilde, who was a ring-leader.

"Come and see, and bring as many as you like to look on."

"But are you sure you're safe? Don't get thrown into prison for such a little thing as this."

Wilde pointed to a companion who carried a book; and this person explained that the men in the pits had had so much talk from the overseer about the letter of the law, and so much disputing among themselves as to what this was, that they had clubbed to buy Burn's Justice, which they had studied with such effect as to have great hopes of puzzling the overseer, and perhaps the squire. They expected now to frighten Donkin by a plea, (if their present conduct could be called pleading,) that work done for the parish must be made profitable, if possible; which gravel that was barrowed instead of carted could not be.

Who read and expounded the book to the paupers? It passed from hand to hand among those who could read; and the more ignorant gathered round to listen when the overseer's back was turned. All wished to be ready to make Donkin stare, or the squire swear, the next time either should begin laying down the law.

There was no time for more explanation now, for the entire population of the street was turning out as the procession wheeled round the corner from the common into the village. Such a bustle had seldom been seen in the place. The barrows were driven zig-zag in the hurry, and squalling children and squealing pigs scudded and blundered about among the creaking wheels, in terror of being run over. One barrow-man, who was

too busy shouting to heed where he went, threw down the bench before the tinman's door, and brought down its glittering and clattering load. Another upset his vehicle among a little congregation of fowls, whose terrors proved that they did not like a gravel-heap so well as a dung-hill. The mishap proved no misfortune to the conductor, who immediately took his seat in his own barrow, and became the wheeled instead of the wheeler. As he was not a very heavy load, he arrived the first at the place of exhibition, a small open spot, where two or three by-lanes met the principal street, and where any obstruction must cause particular inconvenience. Here the seventeen barrows were emptied, their contents blocking up the way in every direction for all but foot passengers. On the top was seated Wilde as on a throne.

They had not to amuse one another and their followers very long before the squire rode up, having wondered all the way from the workhouse-gate what so much noise could mean.

"Hey day! What's the matter here?" he cried, when he found no easy passage for his horse. "Who ordered all this gravel to be thrown here?"

"The overseer, your worship," replied Wilde, demurely touching his hat. The squire looked up at the neighbouring buildings, and round him upon the ground, as if endeavouring to spy out some new undertaking which might require the materials before him. A loud laugh burst from the crowd, and a voice exclaimed,—

“Where are your spectacles, squire? You can’t see our new road without them.”

As it was no part of their policy to put the squire into a passion with any body but the overseer, the merriment ceased before he had time to think himself insulted, and Wilde informed him of the particulars of the case in a manner which conveyed the entire confidence of the paupers in his assistance and approbation.

“Where is the overseer?” was the first solemn question of Mr. Manning, when he had heard the complainant’s version of the story.

Donkin did not appear, though his name was echoed for half-a-mile in each direction from the place of action. Some were, of course, ready to say that he dared not show himself, while others, who knew him better, suspected that he had been called away on some fool’s errand, to allow the paupers to enact their scene without molestation. Mr. Manning presently proceeded :

“Upon my soul, this is tyranny, dreadful tyranny. I am as much for upholding the laws as any man, and for making people work for what they eat, as long as their work does any body any good ; but I could not strain the thing to such a point as this for the life of me : I could not, upon my soul ! But, my good fellows, where’s the use of bringing all this stuff here ? How will that mend the matter ?”

Only by showing all whom it might concern, Wilde answered, that the people were determined to have what the law allowed them, and to have it in their own way.

“ Hush ! my good man : no more of that. That is too much in Jay’s style of talk for me. Let us hear no more about rights, pray. I am sick of hearing of them.”

“ You will be more sick still before you have done hearing of them ; and there is not a medicine in all my shop that will cure you,” cried Jay, who now appeared on horseback on the outskirts of the crowd. “ Your only cure will be in giving the people their rights. When they have them to their hearts’ content, they will cease to talk about them.”

“ Was there ever one of that set of talkers that had a contented heart, I should like to know,” said the squire.

“ There never was one yet, sir, that had his rights ; if I may use a word,

‘ Far from agreeable to ears polite,’

as the poet says.”

And here Mr. Jay prepared himself to be eloquent, rising in his stirrups, and taking his whip in the left hand that the right might be free for action. There was nothing to fear from his horse, which was too much accustomed to its master’s eloquence to be much moved by it, except upon very extraordinary occasions. At present, the squire was much more disposed to bolt than the steed. He would fain have changed parts, and stood passive, deputing it to the animal to open its mouth in the argument, of the substance of which he was not quite clear.

“ You do not deny, sir, I presume, that man

possesses the earth. From this it follows that all men possess by natural right all the land and all the fruits of it, through the whole extended universe."

"You are very welcome to seek your share in the moon, I am sure, Mr. Jay."

"Pshaw! sir.—It follows, I say, that the land must maintain all that are born——"

"Bless me! must nobody eat fish, Mr. Jay?"

With a look of ineffable contempt, the apothecary went on,—

"Every man claims only his natural right when he claims to be supported by the land of his native clime. Every attempt to deny this is to rob man of his birthright,—to corrupt the springs of society. Those who call themselves lords of the soil, mistake their title, and are only tenants."

"Well, we all know Goldby is only a tenant; but what has that to do with the overseer?"

"It has as much to do with him as light has to do with noon-day, or darkness with midnight, or—or——"

"Or stack-fires with apothecary's turpentine," cried a voice near. "You are a fine fellow to talk of rights of property."

"I repel every charge whatsoever with scorn," cried the orator, "and postpone imputation to ratiocination. If every man has thus a right to the soil, what follows?—What follows? I say;" (the horse disturbing the order of its master's ideas by its restlessness under a most irregular twitch of the bridle)—"What follows? I ask

again. That these oppressed and magnanimous fellow-beings around us have an equal right with Goldby himself to the soil he holds."

"‘To the soil’ is just what you said before," observed Mr. Manning; "but the produce is a very different matter. You do not mean to say that idle people ought to eat up the corn that was sown, and grown, and reaped by labour and tools that Goldby paid for. It seems to me that this is rather hard."

"The question is not what seems hard to you, sir, but what is hard to people that know more of hardship than you do. Is it not hard to see the rich pursue their sports and their feastings,—hunting, sir, and eating the game they have killed; while the labourer may not put a gun to his shoulder to shoot anything better than a crow or a sparrow? Is it not hard——"

"What would you have done some few hundred years ago?" asked the squire, scornfully, "when men lost a right hand or had their eyes put out for meddling with rich men's game?"

"He would have looked out his plaster and salve," cried a voice.

"What should I have done?" cried the heroic apothecary; "I would have gone forth like a comet among the host of stars——"

"Setting stacks alight with your fiery tail," exclaimed the same unfriendly voice.

"I would have scoured the country, raising the people wherever I went, and addressing them thus,—‘My friends, goaded by oppression, I throw myself among you——’"

The action was here suited to the word in a way that the orator did not anticipate. Speaking of goading, he drove his spurs into his horse's sides so as to make the animal bolt, and throw his rider fairly off upon the shoulders of the nearest of his listeners. The laugh was now against him, and the squire took advantage of the turn affairs had taken to put an end to the controversy. He told the pauper malcontents that they had done quite enough against the overseer for one day; that office must be respected, and that he would advise them to go home quietly when they had had some beer, which he would order for them immediately. And Mr. Manning rode off towards the beer-shop to send the promised refreshment.

The present appeared to Woollerton a good opportunity to ingratiate himself with the paupers, to the prejudice of his new rival, Ashly. Rashers of bacon and slices of bread and cheese were brought to accompany the beer, in which the vestry-clerk got himself toasted as the poor man's friend. He had it intimated to every rate receiver, how much of his allowance he owed to the clerk's support of his claim in the vestry, and how it was therefore the duty of his protégés to spend in his shop the money he had conveyed into their pockets. Many sneers were spent on the shabbiness of insisting upon ready money, and on the humble pretensions of the little shop at Thorpe Corner, where it was thought that robins and sparrows, and now and then a stray pig, were likely to be the only customers. The

paupers joined in the sneers, communicating to the clerk at the same time their expectations that he would obtain from the vestry this favour for one, and that for a second, and another impossible thing for a third; all which were in course of being confidently promised, when the overseer came up and stopped the process of negotiation.

Donkin was not torn to pieces, nor even dragged through the horse-pond. The men were in too good a humour from the squire's countenance and benefaction, for any serious mischief. The overseer was allowed to find his way after the magistrate, which was more than might have been permitted if they had foreseen the consequence. In half an hour Mr. Manning returned, in company with Donkin, in a very different mood from that in which he had departed. When it was pointed out to him, he began to see that the keeping pauper labourers employed is a much more important point than the profit which may be derived from their work; and that when profit is out of the question, the employment should be continued both for the sake of keeping them out of mischief, and (much more) because where the principle and practice of giving parish support to idlers is once allowed, there is every prospect of the substance of all who are not paupers being consumed unproductively, to the destruction of the whole society where such consumption is permitted. When it was pointed out, the squire saw that if labourers had the same allowance from the parish for doing no-

thing as the farmers gave in wages for twelve hours per day of hard labour, every labourer would be tempted to become a pauper. When it was pointed out, he perceived that the more disagreeable parish work was made, the less temptation there was to become a pauper; and he was ready to own that no work is so disagreeable as that which is known at the time to be useless. This was the principle on which the overseer had proceeded in his order about the gravel, and to this principle the squire was at present a convert. At present,—for there was no security that he might not admit the first complaint which should be brought to him in his justice-room, of the hardship of wheeling gravel for eight shillings a week of farmer Goldby's money. The present, however, was the overseer's most pressing concern; and he trusted that if he could obtain an immediate victory over the refractory labourers, any future measures of improvement would be more easy of accomplishment. He prevailed upon Mr. Manning to sanction his orders that the gravel should be instantly removed to the place where it ought to have been carried, and that every man of the eighteen should work two hours longer than usual that day, on pain of being deprived of parish allowance and committed to prison. The constable appeared; Woollerton disappeared; the apothecary had slunk away long before; the overseer was grave and firm; the squire evidently on a perfectly good understanding with him, and serious in his orders that the remainder of the beer

should be carried away. Wilde was therefore, at the end of an hour, left nearly alone in his desire to brave the parish and take the chance of getting the allowance out of the overseer by intimidation, and was at length compelled to quit his throne by its being dug away under him. What it remained possible for him, as an individual, to do, he did. He repaired to the beer-shop instead of the gravel-pits, and there organized a plan for getting something to live upon without the aid of the parish, and gratifying his revenge at the same time. A band of enterprising malcontents swore to take a midnight walk together through the squire's plantations; and then separated to clean their guns and look out their sacks, during the interval between the present time and the hour of meeting at the widow Brand's back door.

CHAPTER VII.

MORE FROLIC.

It was a dark windy night when the poachers began to assemble on the heath. The moon had gone down, no stars were visible, and the flaring candle with which Mrs. Brand came to the door from time to time, cast the only light that was visible for miles round after the last twinkle from the village had disappeared. It was bitterly cold; that sort of chill being in the air which

usually precedes snow ; and this and the darkness together, made the more punctual of the party not very patient in waiting for such of their companions as had not arrived. They were soon tired of blowing upon their fingers and keeping their dogs quiet, and even of drinking the warm beer that was handed out to them by the widow. Reminding one another how far they had to walk to the scene of action, and how necessary it was to secure a good booty for so large a party to divide, they set forth without three of their expected companions. They left directions however about overtaking or meeting the party, which the widow was earnestly charged to deliver accurately, as the adventurers were by no means satisfied that they were strong enough to resist such a force as the squire might bring upon them, if by any chance he should be warned of the peril of his game.

The usual topics were discussed in no very low tones of voice while the party was breasting the wind and passing over the heath, where none but themselves could be supposed to be walking at this time of night. They were glad it was so dark that they need not hide the barrels of their pieces : they thought it would be a pretty scrape if snow should come thick before they left the woods, so as to show how they took their way home : they planned to whom they should offer such game as might be bagged, and compared notes as to whose wife, sister, or friend was the best hand at cooking a hare. This style of conversation lasted till they reached Thorpe Corner,

when the signal was given to be silent and take care of the dogs while passing Goodman's and Ashly's cottages. When most of the party had strode on far enough to venture to begin talking again, Wilde was missed. After waiting a minute, one or two went back to look for him, and stumbled upon him leaning over the gate of Goldby's stack-yard.

"What are you doing here?" said they.
"Do you see any body about?"

"See! no; how should one see any body to-night that does not carry a light? One can hardly make out the top of the stacks against the sky. I was only thinking that if Goldby had foreseen the fires, he would hardly have built his stacks so near the road. Any child that had a grudge against him might fire them, just passing along the lane, while the watch (if there was one) was on the other side the stack."

"Well, come along now; for the snow is very near, and the night wears on."

The poachers found on entering the preserves, that the night was too dark to be very favourable to their purposes of plunder, however well it might at first serve them for concealment. One of them missed his footing while in the near neighbourhood of the gamekeeper's cottage, and fell into a deep ditch, making a prodigious crash and crackle of dry wood in getting out again. The consequences of this false step were much to be feared, unless the gamekeeper's family should happen to be snoring in chorus. The adventurers cursed themselves and each other for not

having brought a lantern, by whose light to examine the snares which sly hands had previously set. Further on, the birds were seen on the leafless trees against the faint sky, perched like black balls on the branches; but the shots seldom told, and the lurchers were less expert than usual in bringing in the game. Wilde found his men growing cross one by one; a process which he had never experienced since he was a child. His good humour was now very serviceable in stimulating his companions to the exertion necessary towards fulfilling the object for which they came.

“ So you can’t make a hit to-night, Tims. Well, try again; remembering who pays for the powder and shot. To my mind, it is the best part of the joke that the squire’s money goes for what is to bring down his own pheasants. Try once more, man; the parish will fill your powder-horn again next pay-day.—Tom, what’s the use of cramming your piece in that way? do you think you shall bring down more birds for putting in more charge? It may be all very well to get into the workhouse; but any part of it is more to my mind than the infirmary, where you will have to go if you make your piece burst in your face. Remember you will have less of Jay’s company there than elsewhere, for all he is the apothecary.—Now, before you fire, be quiet all of you, and listen.”

All listened for voices, footsteps, or the crackling of boughs; but all seemed still, till the sudden rise of a gust of wind gave the signal for

Tom's well-loaded piece to be discharged. The momentary glare brought out in strong relief the naked branches overhead, the dark stems behind, and the picturesque figures of the poachers as they stood,—some leaning on their guns, one or two with sacks slung across their shoulders, and all looking eagerly upon one another during the instantaneous revelation of the group. Wilde, and one or two others, fancied that they saw the forms of men among the trees in the back-ground, and communicated the apprehension to each other in whispers. They lost no time in shooting again, to satisfy themselves; and were convinced that they were watched by a party in their rear.

“Give the word,” shouted Wilde, “or I shoot. I shall send a charge among you that you will not like. The word!”

“Tire the squire,” answered a voice from behind. “Jeer the overseer,” instantly replied Wilde. “All right, my good fellows, and I'm glad you are come at last. But what the devil kept you so long? We might have taken battle half a score times before you came up.”

The loiterers had abundance of reasons to give for their delay; the last of which was the caution necessary to be observed in passing the game-keeper's cottage, wherein there was certainly some movement, though no light was visible. They strongly suspected that the alarm was given, and advised an immediate return; more especially as the wind was now dropping, and snow was beginning to fall. Wilde would not hear of go-

ing back with so small a supply of game as they had yet obtained ; just enough, as he observed, to throw every man of them into prison, and not enough to run such a risk for. As he was in for it, he would get a sackfull for the market, and trust to the snow continuing so as to cover their foot-marks before morning. In defiance of all entreaties to give over—of all complaints about his wilfully running his companions into danger, and, finally, of all threats that he should be left alone to disport himself in the woods—he went hither and thither as if he heard no remonstrance, popping off his piece at shorter intervals, and at smaller distances from the ears of the squire's dependants. His spirit of daring communicated some sense of security to his party, and they followed him from reach to reach of the plantations, till they thought nearly as little as himself of the gamekeeper and the snow.

If it had not been for the darkness, which continued as thick as ever, this daring might have preserved them from attack, as a gamekeeper with only one or two assistants would hardly have ventured upon encountering, in the moonlight, four times their number of desperate men, armed, and on the watch for resistance. But such a feat might be, and was achieved in the mystery of darkness. Under a wall, in a spot where they least expected it, the poachers found themselves hailed and vigorously attacked with bludgeons, and threats of gunshot wounds. The accident by which many more important and less unrighteous battles have been lost, now hap-

pened. Comrades made war upon each other, and consequently could find no end to the number of their enemies; so that, when many hurts and bruises had been received, and there seemed a great chance of as many more, the adventurers thought it as well to make their escape, giving up the hope, for this bout, of eking out their parish-wages with the produce of the squire's preserves. They made a scattered retreat, leaving Wilde in the hands of the gamekeeper and his companion, who had quietly withdrawn with their prisoner from the commotion as soon as they had fairly set the poachers upon beating one another with heart and good will.

The being taken did not much affect Wilde; but his rage was unbounded when he was insultingly told, after it was too late, to what an insignificant force he had yielded. The going to prison for poaching was, as he observed, a very different thing to a dependant on the parish, who had nothing to lose, from what it was to a labourer who lived on his own resources, and cared for the reputation of doing so; but the prospect of being laughed at for life for his ignominious surrender, was very exasperating to Wilde, and made him doubly bitter in his harangues to his fellow-prisoners on the oppressions of landed proprietors, and the hardships suffered by their victims.

Those of his party who found their way home bore wondrous tidings of the battle to their wives and sisters, who bustled about to put the plunder out of sight before any officer of the law

should appear to make a search, and inquire into all late processes of cooking, and the mysteries of the cupboards;—cupboards better stored than any in the dwellings of Goodman and Ashly had been for the whole time that they had been independent farm-labourers.

There was sorrow in many faces when morning dawned, and the news travelled fast that Wilde had been taken in the act of poaching. There were no near relations to mourn the event; but every body in the village knew Wilde; most people admired what they called his spirit, and liked his good nature; and all who were engaged in the struggle with the parish authorities looked up to him for guidance in their enterprises, and for courage in their attacks on the parish purse. There was, therefore, much sympathy in his misfortune; but the regret of all united could not equal the consternation of the widow Brand. She was like a person possessed for the first hour after the tidings reached her; and all who saw her were convinced that the scandal which had of late been talked about her was not without foundation.

Before she had nearly recovered from her crying fit, she was surprised by a visitor whom she little expected, and was convinced anew of the truth of the old maxim, that “troubles never come alone.” The parish constable arrived to tell her, that an information of some kind had been laid against her, and that she must appear before the squire in his justice-room the same day at noon. He had provided for her convey-

ance, and advised her to carry all the money she had to spare, that, in case of a fine being imposed, she might, by paying at once, avoid the further discipline of a prison.

While the widow went to her room to equip herself for her very disagreeable ride, she busied herself in conjectures whether she was to be called upon to swear her unborn child to some one, in consequence of information spitefully communicated to the magistrates; or to answer for the assembling of the poachers at her door the preceding night; or to reply to the general charge of keeping a disorderly house. It might be any or all of these; and she was likely to have sufficient occupation during her ride in determining what to say in each case.

She drew the hood of her cloak round her face as the open cart in which she was seated passed through the village, and by the little shop at Thorpe Corner, where a few people were buying snuff or cheese; and though the wind and snow made the way very dreary, she thought the vehicle reached the squire's avenue all too soon. The first going to the overseer to ask relief had seemed to her a very dreadful thing, before she grew as wise as her neighbours on the subject; but it was nothing in comparison with the first appearance on a summons before a magistrate.

The news with which she was greeted somewhat relieved her. The magistrates, with the rector beside them, were busy swearing in special constables, and she must wait. There were a

good many to be sworn in, in consequence of the hourly increasing alarm about fires, which occurred at less and less distances in various directions round the parish. Till the business of swearing in was finished, she was to sit down in the hall with the other people who were waiting to demand or suffer justice.

Among these people she found her sister Jemima, James Beaver, the apothecary's apprentice, farmer Goldby, several of his regular labourers, and a corps of paupers. The overseer stood apart, looking out of a window, with his hands in his pockets; and nobody could tell in what capacity he attended, whether as informing, or informed against. The widow was in no spirits to join in the talk that was going on around her about the poachers and the special constables; about shots overheard in the plantations, and fires visible from afar. She preferred trying to keep in her tears, after a somewhat childish fashion, by counting the spires on the antlers of the stag which was suspended over the wide mantel-piece, and the tags on the shoulder-knot of the footman, who lingered about in the hope of gathering news for the servants' hall. Mrs. Brand could not, however, with all her counting, have told the number of either tags or spires, if that had been Mr. Manning's first question on her entering his magisterial presence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPOILER INVITED.

IT was a busier day with the squire than often occurred to even so busy a person as himself. He had fixed this morning for the hearing of several appeals, before he could have any idea of the additional business which was created by the adventure of the preceding night. The visit of the clergyman took him somewhat by surprise, and was not altogether agreeable to him, as he had laid some little plans for the dispatch of affairs, with which Dr. Warrener's presence might possibly interfere. The squire was sadly annoyed by the provision made by law for ensuring the co-operation of two justices of the peace in some exertions of their authority. This appeared to Manning a waste of time, and an irksome restraint. To lessen the grievance as much as possible, he was discreet in his choice of a coadjutor, preferring to send his carriage some miles for old Mr. Weakley, to calling in a brother magistrate from the neighbourhood, who might be less tractable, and encourage an opposition in certain parties, who would be disagreeable to a man of the squire's temper. There was no fear of any thing of the kind from Mr. Weakley, who was too old to relish needless disturbance, and too infirm in mind to be able to

achieve any thing better than acquiescence. He had no objection to being thus called in on occasion. He enjoyed the importance with which his office invested him, since it could be purchased by a ride in an easy carriage, and a seat in a luxurious chair in the justice-room, while he had all the entertainment of what was going forward, and was saved the trouble of judging and deciding ; all which part of the duty was taken upon himself by the squire.

The present was one of the occasions when a morning's amusement was thus provided for the old gentleman. It was a sad pity that the clergyman happened to come in, as he was very apt to find something to object to in the proceedings, and was likely to investigate very closely the share of free will exercised by Mr. Weakley. This probability struck Mr. Manning the moment that he saw the rector's look of astonishment on perceiving who it was that occupied the stuffed chair at the warmest corner of the table.

“ Ah ! Dr. Warrener ! My dear sir, how do you do ? I am always glad to see you ; but you have not happened to choose the best day—the day when I can be most at your service. We are very busy swearing in special constables, as it is thought to be high time now for us to be on our guard against what is happening in other places. A dreadful fire last night !—seen as far as Bickstead ! But we do not say much about it to our old friend here, who cannot stand alarms any better than you and I may at his age.”

“ Why alarm him, then?—Why drag him away from his fire-side, where he need know only what his family choose to tell him ?”

“ O, it amuses him to see what is going on. Mr. Weakley, here is Dr. Warrener.—You remember Dr. Warrener, sir? Our worthy rector, you know, who has been recruiting his health abroad. I am sure we are equally glad to see him home again.”

Mr. Weakley bowed with all propriety, but without giving any intimation of the fact that he had seen Dr. Warrener almost every day of the two months which had elapsed since his return to his abode, in the immediate vicinity of Mr. Weakley's.

“ Do not let me interrupt you,” said Dr. Warrener ; “ you know what errand I came upon, and will not suppose that it is to see you otherwise than in the way of business.”

The squire looked puzzled, for he had not been informed that the clergyman might be expected. It appeared on inquiry, that the clerk had saved his master the trouble of summoning the widow Brand, by taking the act upon himself.

“ Do you allow your clerk to summon persons in your name, and without your authority ?” asked Dr. Warrener.

“ Not without my authority ; by no means. I give him a sort of general authority—a very sufficient authority, I assure you,” said Manning, glancing uneasily towards some papers on the table, on which he saw that the clergyman's eye

was fixed. He presently swept them up, and tossed them towards the clerk, continuing,—

“Merely summonses that I have been signing while the pen was in my hand, just to get a good deal of business done at a stroke.”

“Does it take so much time to sign while you are filling up?” asked the rector, laughing. “I think I shall take the hint from you, and write the dates at the bottom of all the sermons to be written within the next year, lest I should not have time to do it each Saturday night.”

“Your clerk cannot fill up blank spaces with theology so easily as mine can with neighbours’ names,” replied the squire; “and, so far, I am better off for a clerk than you.”

When Dr. Warrener found that it was actually the squire’s practice to sign blank summonses, and leave it to the clerk’s discretion to fill them up, he remonstrated earnestly against such an abuse of the powers of a justice; which, however, Manning justified.

“Why, my dear sir, only consider how business must come to a stand, if none of it is to be done by any body but myself. So often as I am out hunting for the whole day, or riding in the mornings, or absent on half a hundred errands besides, it is very necessary indeed to turn over some of my work to the officer who is hired to do it.”

“And if the overseer is summoned, rightfully or wrongfully, six times a week, must he bear the expense of the six journeys hither?”

“ We do not summon overseers wrongfully,” replied the clerk, tartly ; “ so we cannot answer your question, reverend sir.”

Dr. Warrener thought it was answered sufficiently, if it was the fact that the overseer had always judgment given against him, the summonses being issued at the discretion of the clerk.

“ And this is another device for saving time, I suppose,” he continued, taking up a printed paper, which was lying before Manning on the table. “ You will not want this while you are swearing in special constables ; so I will amuse myself with it till other business comes on.”

“ This paper was not printed by my order,” replied the squire ; “ but I find it a prodigious convenience, and so Morgan told me I should, when he sent it me in the name of all the magistrates round. You see here the amount of relief we are to give, calculated and made into a regular table, according to the number of children, the amount of wages, and the price of bread. You see nothing can be easier than to refer to this, and relieve accordingly. It is the exactest thing in the world. A child of ten years old might do the business of the vestry by its help.”

“ O yes, very easily, in the way you would have it done. A man is to have so much, if he has so many children, so much wages, and if bread is at such a price. It does not matter whether or not he has a hundred pounds a-year from any other source.”

“ My dear doctor, how you talk ! Where should our paupers get a hundred pounds a-year ? ”

“ Or,” continued the clergyman, “ whether they have half their wants supplied by your worship’s Christmas bounties.”

“ Poor souls ! It is little enough that my small bounty can do for them ; it is far from curing all the cold and hunger within our parish for a single week.”

“ If you could prove to me that it cured cold and hunger in any degree without causing more than it cures, I would let you alone, my dear sir, to do your charities as your own kind heart moves you. But while our parish continues in its present miserable state, I shall keep up the controversy with you ; and, as for this printed allowance scale, I warn you that the system of which it is the exponent forms no part of the law, and that where it is adhered to, payers and receivers are alike in the high road to ruin.”

“ The fellows always claim it as law, and seem to know before-hand how much they are to have.”

“ Let them club again, as they did once before, to buy a law-book : let them by any means get a sight of the laws relating to the relief of the poor, and they will find nothing there about an allowance scale, or about the relief of able-bodied labourers, out of the workhouse. Do not you see that if our farmers grow poorer, and our tradesmen the same, from the falling off of custom, and if our labourers go on to have

more children, while wages are dropping, the rate-payers must soon become rate-receivers?"

"We must alter the scale as times grow worse, I suppose," observed the squire. "I agree with you, that, in our parish at least, matters cannot go on long as they are. The collector has more and more trouble in getting in the rate. He now charges six-pence in the pound for collecting, on this account; whereas he used to have but four-pence. Something must be done to make people pay."

The clergyman had long seen and now saw more plainly, from all that passed before his eyes in this room, that it would be surprising if rate-payers were willing to give their substance, when it seemed to answer little other purpose than to increase poverty and to generate vice.

The overseer's time being the most valuable; he was called in first, to answer a complaint of Goldby's, about relieving persons who were not proper objects. The farmer and Donkin entered the room together, and seemed to be on excellent terms.

"You know," said Goldby to him, "that I have no spite against you, and you may be sure that I would not have brought the matter before their worships if I had not known that you would be here on another complaint. But, as you are here, I really should be glad to know whether you think the man you gave half-a-crown to on Wednesday wanted any such relief."

"Indeed I do not believe he did. I never thought that he did."

“Why the devil then did you give it him?” demanded the squire.

“Because he vowed he would appeal to your worship; and it is expensive work travelling,—five miles here and five miles back, and having to give the relief after all.”

“But you would not have had to give relief after all, if the man did not want it.”

Donkin made no reply, and the squire understood the meaning of his silence. He went on—

“You think me a cursed soft-hearted fellow, I know, and ——”

“Not to me, I am sure,” said Donkin, laughing.

“Nor to me,” said Goldby; “nor to my labourer, Goodman. You are obliging me to turn off that man, or to grind him down in wages till he cannot help himself, and must come upon the parish as others do.”

“Nor to Ashly,” added the overseer. “He knows what your worship said about his being a substantial man, and therefore the proper person to be left without the work which was given to paupers.”

“Why, hang it!” said the squire, “you would make out that I am hard-hearted to all the good people, and kind to all the bad.”

A smile went round at this exact and ingenuous interpretation of the thoughts of each. He went on—

“You will soon see, however, that I am going to be very strict,—very strict indeed; and I shall show no favour to any body. Mr. Weakley

knows how careful we are to sift every case ; are we not, Mr. Weakley ?”

Mr. Weakley flourished his hands, and bowed assent.

“ And we always frown on frivolous complaints, and all attempts at imposition ; do not we, Mr. Weakley ?”

Mr. Weakley frowned mightily, and flourished assent again.—Donkin took leave to think, that if they frowned on one side of the face, they winked on the other. He begged to know what he was henceforth to do when applied to for relief by vagrants, or by persons asking merely temporary assistance, who certainly did not want it, and would inevitably appeal, relying on the squire’s support. He had a hard task, he declared, between the rate-payers who justly complained of the enormous increase of the rate, the paupers who abused him in the village and triumphed over him in the justice-room, and the squire, who, if he might venture to say so, was sadly apt to think he must be in the wrong in any difference with the people.

“ What must you do ?” interposed Dr. Warrener. “ You must, if you wish the people of your parish to keep their integrity and their domestic satisfactions, to have food and clothing, and any prospect of maintenance for their children,—you must, if you have any heart for the welfare of your neighbours, keep the earnings of the honest out of the hands of knaves, and teach those who have been brought up to look to the law for the relief of every want, that the law

was made for no such purpose, and shall not be perverted from its true objects by you. Let able-bodied paupers appeal against you till they are tired, and have tired out Mr. Manning too. Go on resisting all claims of persons that can find subsistence elsewhere than out of Mr. Goldby's pocket."

"But, sir, think of the waste of time and money; remember I have five miles to come, and fees to pay, and that I lose the best part of a day."

"It will soon turn out a saving, depend upon it. A proper consideration of the state of the case will be forced upon those who can regulate it; and in the second year, you will be troubled with no more appeals, your expenditure will be lessened, and every body about you, from the squire and the farmer down to the poorest of the honest labourers of the parish, will be thanking you for your services. What is better, and yet more to the purpose of my vocation, the careless and idle of your paupers will be turning into honest labourers, and the incorrigible will have taken themselves off, out of our way."

Donkin bowed low, and was now in good heart to hear the other charge on which he was summoned. Three men were called in, who had all the same complaint to make.

"Please your worship, the overseer won't give us what we have a right to."

"And what is that?"

"We have work for only three days in the

week; and he won't allow us a farthing for the other three."

"Is this true, Donkin?"

"As far as it goes, sir; but it is not the whole of the story. Will you please to ask what they are paid for their three days' work?"

"We have only got a job at Bingham's for a little while, and we work there only every other day; and we have all families. It is a hard thing for men with families to live when they get work for only half their time."

"Why, so it is; and it seems to me, Donkin, that it comes to much the same thing whether we make up low wages for full work, or half, where there is only half work."

"Please your worship, you have not heard yet what these men earn; and perhaps you will inquire at the same time what the families are that they complain of."

Two out of three of the families were found to consist partly of grown up sons and daughters, who were or ought to be capable of supporting themselves. The earnings of their fathers were five shillings per day for three days in the week.

This was more, Mr. Manning observed, than many had with their wages and parish relief together. The appellants, however, blessed his soul, enumerated their necessary expenses, and wondered how he would contrive to live on such a pittance, till he began to think that fifteen shillings per week was indeed a pitiful sum, and that willing men who were without work three

days in the week ought to be considered by the parish. The men insisted on it as a right, urging more vehemently as they saw his worship more disposed to listen, that it was very hard if they could not get allowance for their idle three days, when many that they knew who had constant work were relieved the whole year round. This argument seemed to the squire quite unanswerable. He asked Mr. Weakley's assent, and of course obtained it; and ordered Donkin to allow all the three men a shilling a-day for their unemployed days.

Dr. Warrener took no notice while this was going on, as he did not think himself authorized to interfere in the magistrates' decisions; but he cast a glance of encouragement towards Donkin, and followed the triumphant appellants to have some conversation with them, as to how they disposed of their earnings, and how it was that they did not feel it a degradation to augment their means by having needless recourse to legal charity.

When he returned to his seat, he found Donkin receiving directions to negotiate for the purchase of Sewell's cottage, as it was pretty clear to the squire's mind that it would be a saving to the parish to be possessed of this cottage. If the authorities did not buy it, it would fall into the hands of somebody who would let it in reliance on the parish paying the rent. Mr. Manning would speak to Woollerton about it, and he had no hesitation in promising on the part of the

vestry, that the parish would agree to any reasonable terms of purchase.

Donkin thought it a pity to bring both Sewell and his house on the rate, when each might be made to keep the other clear of it. Sewell had sold his first cow and spent the money; he had sold his other two cows and spent the money. He had sold his bit of garden and spent the money; and if he were now to sell his house, he would spend the money and inhabit it, or some other at the expense of the parish, after all. Would it not be better to let him keep it on his hands as long as he could?—to oblige him to the last moment to have property? There was no fear of Blogg's buying it up. He had now nothing to spare for such a purpose; and no other speculator had as yet appeared.—The rector laughingly asked him if he was quite sure of his last point, explaining that he had been buying a house in the village lately, and might buy another, if he saw good reason for so doing.

This reminded Mr. Manning to have the widow Brand called in, and the clergyman's business with her dispatched. Never did a culprit enter a justice-room in greater trepidation.

"Your business is not with me, good woman," said the squire. "Your landlord wants you. You had better ask him what he has to say."

Mrs. Brand looked from one to another, as if quite uncertain which of the gentlemen was her landlord. The rector spoke to her.

"Did not Blogg give you notice, as I desired,

that I had purchased the house you inhabit, and cautioned you to be very careful in your conduct, as I should be a strict landlord ?”

Mr. Blogg had said something about parting with the house ; but the rest of his notice had been understood as a mere idle threat. Dr. Warrener told her that he knew she had been frequently warned that she was laying herself open to the law, and that it was his intention now to have her fined, in order to make her more careful in future, and for the sake of the morals of the people who frequented her house.

The widow bit her lips and twisted her fingers to keep in her ready tears, while she answered that this was being a strict landlord indeed, to treat her in this way at the very beginning of the connexion.

“ I became your landlord for the very purpose of having a hold over the tenant of that house, Mrs. Brand. From its situation, and the apparent success you have had in it, it will probably remain a beer-shop, whether you continue to inhabit it or not. Now, I have no objection to beer-shops in themselves. I see a great deal of good that may arise out of them, and no necessary harm. But the harm that has been bred in gin-shops may be carried into places where no spirits are drunk ; and it is my duty to watch that this harm is discouraged to the utmost. If, by seeing that the law is kept, I can put an end to brawling, extravagance, plotting, poaching meetings, and such things, I shall certainly see that the law is enforced.”

He then explained to the weeping widow, whose composure had been completely upset by the reference to poaching meetings, the points wherein she had rendered herself liable to fine, and even to ejection, and declared that the fine should be exacted, and the sentence of ejection suspended over her till the future conduct of her establishment should appear. Mrs. Brand denied nothing, and did not beg very hard to be let off, knowing that she should be able soon to discharge the moderate fine imposed. Her only urgent petition was that the character of her house should not be injured.

“Nay,” replied Dr. Warrener, “the character of your house is in your own keeping, not in ours : and none can be more anxious than we are for its respectability,—for its being what beer-shops are intended to be. You know as well as we whether it is so now.”

“I’m sure, gentlemen, if you knew what it is to have to do with such people as live in our parish now, you would be sorry for me rather than press hard upon me. Gentlemen, they are so lost to all care,—so desperate, I may say, and indifferent at the same time, that one has no hold upon them at all. I’m sure I try all I can ; but while they hate some of their neighbours, and scorn others, and make game and matter for speechifying and jesting of all that used to be talked about gravely and quietly, it is more than a lone woman can do to manage such people.”

The squire wondered she was not ashamed and afraid to libel her parish in that manner.

“ She speaks of what she sees,” observed the clergyman ; “ and probably your clerk would bear out her report, if he judged from the specimens that are produced at this table ; and Goldby, if he looked no further than his pauper labourers ; and Donkin, if he had no acquaintance beyond those among whom his duty lies. My duty leads me among a different class of the parishioners ; and I can testify, that so far from the old virtues being extinct, they live in as much greater strength, as they are more severely tried than formerly. It is not the patient and frugal that come to Donkin’s pay-table ; nor the industrious that drink at noon-day at Mrs. Brand’s ; nor the charitable who show their faces among paupers who laugh at charity as doing good to none but the parish. The virtuous are obliged to betake themselves to the dark corners of such a parish as ours ; but those who visit these dark corners see as much as society has ever yet seen of meek forbearance of the wicked in their prosperity, of patience under unmerited neglect and oppression. There was patience formerly ; and many are ready to tell us of the industry of old times ; but then patience was honoured, and industry rewarded. What then is the worth of the patience and industry which I daily see, which are neglected by the rich and derided by the poor ? ”

“ I am sure it is a wonder,” observed Goldby, “ that there is either the one or the other, since we are doing our utmost to put an end to both.”

“Nothing,” replied Dr. Warrener, “astonishes me so much as the patience of the honest poor. They rise up hungry and go weary to bed (when bed they have), while their less scrupulous neighbours get what they want from the parish by asking. The honest poor know that they are working harder and harder for wages which are continually lessening, and must go on to do so, in order that the increasing number of the impoverished may be supported; and yet the honest poor work on. They feel within their inmost heart that it is they who deserve the sympathy and the encouragement (they do not ask the gifts) of the rich; and yet they see this encouragement given to the slothful and encroaching, and do not become encroaching too. When they find their spirit of independence despised, their virtuous toils contemptuously pitied, and their mutual charities ridiculed by their companions, they nourish their high feelings in secret, instead of exchanging them for profitable dependance. If there is heroic virtue to be found on earth, it is in the dwellings of the independent poor. If there is oppression upon earth, it is in sacrificing them to their pauper neighbours. If there is one work rather than another where the devil would delight to lend a helping hand, it is in transforming the one race into the other.”

Dr. Warrener had been walking about the room in a state of some excitement while declaring what he found in the dark corners of his parish. He stopped, when Manning asked with eagerness whether he thought the evil work he spoke of

was advancing in their neighbourhood. Goldby took upon himself to answer.

“ To be sure it is :—flourishing in a way after the devil's own heart. How should it be otherwise, when we offer premiums upon idleness, and tax the virtuous to support the profligate? What human virtue will stand against that? And if, among us, we turn but one a year of the independent poor into a pauper, what sort of consciences ought we to have, your worship? Whether we do thus tempt and overthrow so few as one a year, I leave it to the overseer to tell.”

Judging by the enormous increase of the rate,—no less than three hundred pounds within the last year,—the overseer apprehended that many must have taken relief who had hitherto contrived to live without. The lawyer's bill was, however, a very large one, and might account for a part of the increase. It ought to be borne in mind, Donkin said, that the poorer a parish grew, and the more pressed for relief, the greater was the anxiety to disprove settlements, and the more numerous the appeals at the Petty Sessions; so that law expenses increase in proportion as the rate is less able to bear them, in the same manner as the cost rises with the difficulty of collecting the rate. It did make him indignant, Donkin said, to observe how the money went, when he knew so much of the hardships of those from whom it was wrung; to see some part passing needlessly into a lawyer's pocket, and part lavished away, as soon as received,

at the shops of jobbers, or, worse still, in drink. He asked Mrs. Brand whether it was not the fact that she drew more beer on a parish pay-day than on any other?

The widow could not deny it, but urged that it was not her business to ascertain from her customers where they obtained their money. If it passed in a few hours' time from the overseer's money-bag to her till, it was for him to look to it, and prevent it as he might. She had no wish that money should be improperly spent within her doors.

The squire had long been looking compassionately on her care-worn face, and now asked her if she had not better have taken his advice, and left it to some one else to open a beer-shop. Donkin and Goldby stopped him with remonstrances, and said he would end by bringing the woman and her three children on the rate again.

"No fear, gentlemen, if his reverence will be merciful to me. I am in for it now, and I scarcely think any thing more will happen than has happened already. It is too late now to make my son what his father was, and to get back the character my house opened with, and to keep my own——"

She could not speak for sobs.

"Why too late?" kindly inquired the clergyman. "Is it ever too late to amend?"

"Yes, sir; in a place like this. My boy is cast out by the few sober people's children; and there are plenty of idle folks that are fond of

teaching him every thing that is bad : and when he finds companions of his own age to play with, it is always some of the little wretches out of the workhouse. And as for the character of my house,—if I opened it only to sober people, I should have no customers at all.”

“ True enough,” said Goldby. “ The Goodmans and the Ashlys, and such people as they, can no longer afford beer. Those only can spend money in drink who do not earn it.”

“ So, gentlemen, you will please to remember,” continued Mrs. Brand, “ that the blame lies at the door of the parish, and not at mine, if my house is not so orderly as it should be. If you were to toil all day, and cry half the night, as I often do, you could not make it better.”

“ Nevertheless,” said the clergyman, “ the nuisance of a disorderly house cannot be allowed, and I shall eject you, Mrs. Brand, on the very next information of such doings as went on on your premises last night. My preaching and visiting in my parish will be all in vain if there is any place of corruption open for the people to frequent as they do your house.”

“ The corruption spreads from the workhouse, and (if I may make bold to say so) from the justice-room,” said Mrs. Brand.

“ Yes, but you give it house-room, as you do to vagrants whom you did not make vagrants ; and we should have less of both if you did not.”

“ Nay,” interposed the squire, “ we have only one vagrant yet. Do you know, Mrs. Brand, that fellow turns out to be Halliday, the father of

the four children who were deserted, and left to the workhouse a few years ago."

Mrs. Brand now looked ready to sink.

"My own brother!" she exclaimed. "My own brother! and I took two-pence from him for a night's lodging on straw! Mercy on us, what are the times coming to?"

"They can hardly be worse to him than they have been," observed the clergyman. "A man can hardly sink lower than to have four children in the workhouse."

"O, but, your reverence, he was doing very well indeed, from the time he left the parish till I last heard from him. He sent presents to the children many times in a year."

"Then why desert them?"

"He could not have got on here any better than his old friends and companions have done. He thought it the best thing he could do for his children to put them in the way of having what the law allows them, and move off to better his condition elsewhere. I cannot think what has happened to make a vagrant of him."

A very common thing had happened, the squire told her. Work had become scarce in the parish where Halliday had earned his living for some years. He was turned off to make way for the parishioners who must be maintained; and, after having spent all he had while waiting in hope of employment in a place where he was known to be a good labourer, he was now passed home, as a vagrant, to a parish where, though a native, he was at this day a stranger, and could have

no hope of employment while so many who had previously occupied the ground were idle. It was supposed that he was ashamed to meet his family and old neighbours in his present degraded condition; for, besides that he had avoided making himself known to his sister, he had not yet been to the workhouse, and no one had seen him from the moment of his examination, when, however, he had promised to appear before the overseer on the regular day.

The miserable Mrs. Brand now paid as much of her fine as she had present funds for, and promised the rest in weekly instalments. She had little sorrow to bestow on the pecuniary loss when she thought of her lover in prison, her brother a vagrant, her boy a ripening black-guard, and——another subject of grief, perhaps the bitterest of all. She had had some dreams of ambition and motherly affection for her good girl, Ruth, from being told, and thinking she perceived, that James Beaver liked her very much, and had managed to become very well acquainted with her of late. Every body thought James Beaver a steady, religious youth, and so fond of his business that he was pretty sure to succeed in it; and it was therefore with as much surprise as consternation that the widow heard what was said of him this morning. He was in waiting in the hall, being summoned to have a child sworn to him by Jemima.

What was her consternation, however, compared with that of the young man himself? From the time that he had been told of the injury me-

ditated against him, he had not had a moment's rest or peace. He did not think there had been such misery in the world as he experienced while trying in vain to turn his persecutors from their design; and he could now understand something of the temptation to suicide. He tried all means,—by testifying his own extreme surprise, by giving vent to his indignation, by condescending to entreaties, by threats of disclosing what he had reason to believe about the real parentage of the unborn child. It was maddening to be treated as he was;—to be told that he gave himself a great deal of needless concern about the matter, as nobody would think the worse of him for it, and as it was impossible for him, an apprentice, to pay the allowance which would be ordered. The whole affair would signify nothing, if he would but put a laughing face upon it, and cut the clergyman short, in case of his attempting to give him a lecture. Instead of cutting the clergyman short, or even waiting for a lecture, James Beaver now appealed to him while Jemima stood waiting to take the oath.

“Sir, if you had but come into the neighbourhood a little sooner, if you had but known something of me, you would never believe her. I know how it all is, sir, if I could but prove it. I am sure the real father is a person who could pay the allowance, and does not like it, and so charges it upon one who cannot pay, that the parish may bear the expense.”

“But you say you cannot prove this,” observed the squire.

“How should I, sir? but *she* knows it; and how she can be so false—how she can be so cruel——”

He could not go on, as the thought of Ruth came into his mind, and the cheerfulness of their last parting.

“Lord, James Beaver, how you are for making a fuss, when it would signify nothing if you took it quietly! As people brew, so they must bake, you know.”

“Take it quietly!” he cried fiercely. “When I have a mother——Sir,” he continued, appealing again to the clergyman, “I have been religiously brought up, and my parents have not thought, so far, that I have disappointed them; and when they hear——”

He was quite subdued, and laid his head on his folded arms on the table, trying no longer to conceal his agitation. Dr. Warrener was deeply grieved for him, whether he was innocent or guilty, and did what he could to persuade the magistrates to defer taking the oath for the present. The more earnest he grew, however, the more positive was Mr. Manning that it did not do to be tender-hearted in cases of such frequent occurrence; that the young woman was very clear in her statements, and cool about taking the oath, and that it was the best rule to dispatch business in hand instead of letting it stand over. Mr. Weakley thought that business should never stand over; that the young woman seemed to know what she was about, and that it was high time to be no longer tender-hearted in such mat-

ters. So the oath was taken. James Beaver turned with loathing from his reputed mistress, did not venture to touch his hat to the rector, and left the justice-room with a face of quiet misery, which half broke Dr. Warrener's heart. He followed him, partly to protect him from the greetings which were probably awaiting him without, and partly to induce him to open his mind more than it was safe to do in a justice-room.

Jemima remained to make a further demand. Since she had been unable to earn her usual wages by washing, the parish had made her a small allowance; she now wanted more.

"Please your worship, it is an order for shoe-money that I want. I wear a good many shoes, and my allowance is not enough for other things."

"Then you must buy shoes out of your wages. You still earn some, I know."

"Lord, sir! nothing to keep me decent. If you'll believe me, I have been obliged to go without tea and sugar this week past, and must for another week, if your worship does not give me an order for shoe-money."

"Or for shoes out of the workhouse stock. Which had it best be, Donkin?"

"Neither, if I might judge."

"Hold your tongue, sir, about what is no business of yours. How shall we come off cheapest, for I look very strictly to these things? by giving the order for money or shoes?"

The shoes furnished to the workhouse were very dear, the overseer observed. They might be had ten per cent. cheaper from Y—— and from

F——, and even from London. He had given information of this again and again; but the shoemaker was a vestryman, and a friend of Woolerton's, and nobody would entertain the proposition that his contract for shoes should be subject to a revision. This was all beside the mark at present, the squire said; and the overseer was brought to explain that as the parish was, on some pretence or other, compelled to take a certain quantity of shoes every year, which occasionally proved more than were wanted, it would be better for Jemima to have the article than the money to buy it. What was done with the surplus of shoes? They were given to paupers instead of other articles, to be changed away at a loss. There was no lack of barterers for these cheap shoes; and thus, as Goldby observed, people that were not paupers were shod cheap at the expense of the farmer's pocket.

It began to grow dark before the hall was cleared, and Mr. Manning congratulated Mr. Weakley on their having done a very good morning's work, and Mr. Weakley agreed that it was a very good morning's work indeed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPOILER WELCOMED.

THE special constables began their duties immediately and vigorously throughout the parish. They formed themselves into watches to patrol

the roads and lanes, and look into the stack-yards after dark. Jay and his followers laughed at these precautions as unnecessary and absurd, as there had yet been no alarm of fire in or near Thorpe. The apothecary added that he had professionally no objection to the increase of colds and coughs which would be caused by these nightly perambulations, but that he felt the indignation which all high-minded persons must experience at the imputation thus cast on the morals of his parish. Certain indications had, however, been perceived,—tokens of the nearer approach of fires, of the presence of turpentine in holes and corners, of a new and curious kind of shopping going forward on Jay's premises, which made wise observers think that it was time for the authorities to be on the alert. It was perceived that Jay became more and more anxious that his apprentice should learn to visit the sick, and more kind and accommodating in staying at home to keep shop, in order that the young man might do so. It was observed that Jay and his apprentice now served at different counters, and that a new class of customers had lately attended the master's. It was not known to be a particularly sickly winter for cattle, but never had such a quantity of horse and cattle medicines been prepared by Jay's hands, or applied for by countrymen in fustian jackets, or strangers in long dark coats, and slouched hats covered with oil-skin. The reputation of Jay's cattle medicines seemed to have had a sudden and remarkable spread; for his shop was re-

paired to by persons from a distance passing through in gigs, who jumped out, purchased their article, or, if only the apprentice happened to be at home, promised to look in another time, jumped in again, and drove away.

All that was said of the excellence of Jay's compounds, however well it might account for the increase of his custom, and the appearance of strangers in the parish, did not prevent the more discreet of the special constables from keeping an eye on all who came in gigs, and on all property whose owners had become in any way obnoxious to their neighbours. The obnoxious might be distinguished from the popular in two ways; by the part they took in the administration of the Poor Laws, and by the anonymous letters of warning which they received. It had long been a rule that all who had to pay largely to the poor-rate, and might therefore be supposed inclined to complain, were, in the language of the discriminators, "bad men;" while all who had contracts with the authorities, and were therefore supposed to advocate the utmost possible consumption on the part of the paupers, went by the name of "good men." If, however, any one of the "good" failed to plead sufficiently in favour of any applicant, he was now liable to be visited by anonymous threats of fire, powder and ball, or some other punishment not the less dreadful for being left to be divined from obscure terms. Not only was the squire abundantly warned that he would be burned in his bed unless he released from gaol any unfortunate poacher who might

be in his power; not only was Goldby threatened with utter destruction if he did not immediately raise his wages; Woollerton himself was stimulated to greater diligence in his calling as "the poor man's friend," by hints that it would be the worse for him if he did not support every claim which came under the consideration of the vestry.

The letter writers could never be found; and all that could be done was to watch that their threats were not executed. Never before had truants and trespassers found it so difficult to amuse themselves; and every unemployed pauper complained of being stopped if he happened to be out after dark, and questioned about his vocation, and whether he was skilled in buying cattle medicines. Goldby had frequent alarms, being sent for when absent from home, to hear that suspicious persons had been seen near his premises, and to be favoured with a multitude of wise and kind suggestions of which it was impossible to make use.

"Come, tell me quick, what is the matter now?" said he one Sunday afternoon, when a messenger had hastened him home from church. "It is scarcely dusk yet. You cannot have caught any body already."

"There are two or three people lurking about the little barn," said the trembling Ruth; "and the constable bade me send for you directly. He will be back in two minutes with Ashly, whose turn it is to watch to-night. O, sir, don't go by yourself! Do wait till the constable comes, sir! They might murder you if they found you alone."

“ They will be gone, if I do not make haste to catch them ; so you may send the constable and Ashly after me. I have as good a nose for turpentine as any of them, and I should like to be the first to find a fire-ball, if we are to have such things thrown among us. We will stick it into the mouth of the white horse in Jay’s window, for a sign.”

Ruth stood on tiptoe, looking anxiously after her master, when Ashly and the constable came up ; they followed towards the little barn, and presently met Goldby returning at a languid pace, with his hands in his pockets, and kicking a round pebble before him as he walked. He was congratulated in joke upon its not being a fire-ball.

“ A fire-ball ! no,” said he, peevishly. “ You have got your heads so full of fire-balls, there is no room for any other notion. These folks at the barn are only stealing my corn, that’s all.”

“ Stealing your corn ! And have you caught any of them ? Come, Ashly, make haste,” cried the constable.

“ Let it alone, if you please,” said Goldby, holding him by the sleeve. “ They are welcome to steal my corn.”

It was pretty clear that they were so, Ashly observed, from the barn being left in the bad repair which it had exhibited for a long time, past. There seemed to be no thought of mending the holes in the weather-boards.

“ If I mended the barn,” replied Goldby, “ the paupers would not be able to help themselves

with my corn, and then I should have the expense of carrying it to market and selling it. The paupers consume my produce either way ; and it costs me less to let them have it in kind than in the money I bring from the market. It seems they know this, for they did not move off just now when they saw me coming."

"I wonder what makes you leave the large old barn in a worse condition still," said the constable. "There is no corn in it for any body to steal, with or without your good-will ; and it might be made a serviceable place if it was prevented from dropping to pieces."

"It would not have dropped to pieces these seven years if it had had fair play," observed Goldby. "It is in course of being pulled down piece-meal. Paupers must have fuel as well as food ; and they must help themselves from my barn till I can better afford to find them coals out of my pocket."

"You might find them wood from some other part of your estate, surely," said the constable ; "some that you could better spare than the rafters of your biggest barn."

Goldby gloomily replied that he could spare them perfectly well. He had nothing now to put into this barn. So many of his fields were let out of cultivation that the building would be wanted no more, while he held the lease of the farm. His successor (if any one could be found fool enough to succeed to a farm in such a parish) must do as he had done years before,—build a new barn, with magnificent expectations of the wealth

it was to hold, and be content in the end to see it carried away, plank by plank, by the hands of the paupers who had first eaten up the corn once housed in it.

Grief and dread struck upon the heart of Ashly as he listened. He had long been too familiar with both emotions, but they arose at present from a new apprehension. Goldby was the treasurer of the Benefit Club which had long been the principal resource of the independent labourers of the parish when in worldly trouble. If Goldby's affairs were really in the declining way of which he gave the impression this afternoon, it was high time that the funds of the club were placed under a surer guardianship. It would be very painful to hurt the honest farmer's feelings by any token of want of confidence; but the security of the club was an object too important to be put in competition with any scruples of delicacy. Ashly determined to mention the matter at the very next meeting of the club, stating his objection, not as pertaining to Goldby individually, but to lodging public funds in the hands of any farmer in a parish where the pauper system weighed heavily on the cultivators of the land.

While he was thus meditating, the farmer and the constable discussed the plans laid for preserving the peace of the parish the next day. It was to be a very important day—no less than the occasion of the annual distribution of the squire's bounty of food, clothing, and money. It had been removed, with some difficulty, from

Christmas to a few weeks later, as it had been found that the persons relieved at Christmas were in as destitute a state as ever in a month afterwards; and it was thought that as the worst hardships of winter do not arrive till nearer the end of it, the food, fuel, and money (though not perhaps the blankets), would do more good to the poor, and better service in lightening the rate in February than in December. The postponement had always been unpopular, and the people took advantage of the discontents of the present winter to vent their complaints more freely than they had hitherto dared to do. They spoke of this bounty as of a right, because whatever the squire gave was saved from the rate. Having got thus far, it was an easy matter to fancy that they ought to have been consulted about the postponement, and to have been at least asked when it was most convenient to them to receive their comforts. It was whispered that the squire was to be groaned at, the housekeeper insulted,—possibly the steward assaulted on the occasion of the distribution; and as there were special constables in being, it was decided to be as well that they should be upon the spot to prevent or repress tumult.

“Your turn comes to-morrow, I think,” said the constable to Goldby.

“Why yes, it does. I would have got off, but I could not. I think it is not fair to make constables of us farmers, obliging us to leave our homes unguarded, while we are in much more danger than any body else. I doubt whether I

shall get home till long after dark to-morrow, for there is to be a brave company at the squire's. More by half, he tells me, than when he began his bounty; and many coming to take charity to-morrow for the first time."

"Aye, and not without thinking about it for a long while past, and making all ready. I wonder whether the housekeeper has seen, as I have, how many silk gowns and black feathers have disappeared as the time for the bounty was coming round."

"If she is but little more clear-sighted than her master, she might learn much by comparing Mrs. Blogg at Christmas with Mrs. Blogg at Shrove-tide—the builder's wife with the little beggars' mother."

"Like mistress like maid. Look at Jemima, too; flaunting away after the apothecary a month ago, in finery that his new cattle medicine is to pay for, I suppose; and now, as sordid and slatternly as a workhouse girl, till she has got what she can out of the squire. When his charity purse is empty for this year, her feathers will have another dance in the wind, you'll see."

"Very likely; but she looks as demure as a Quaker to-day. If all that are to eat the squire's bread looked as quiet, one could no more fancy a commotion among them to-morrow than a battle on yonder roof among your gentle doves."

"Well, I hope they will take their good cheer quietly, and carry it home betimes, that I may give a look about my own premises before I go out upon my rounds at dark."

Mrs. Goldby regarded the day of the bounty as a day of peculiar comfort to herself. She could have her own way undisturbed among the servants who were left at home, and was quite sure that no loiterers would hang about her gates ; no beggars infest her doors. She had, for some hours, the plenitude and repose of power which she regarded as the first of blessings to a farmer's wife. It was therefore with some surprise that she saw a stranger approach her dwelling near the close of a day when Jenny had been industrious because there was no one to flirt with her, and Ruth cheerful and alert because nobody laughed at her or criticised her gravity, and because she was to have her share of the general holiday when her day's business was done, having obtained permission to spend the night at her mother's—a night which was pretty sure to be a quiet one at the beer-shop, from every one having drunken his fill at the squire's.

“What can the fellow want?” cried Mrs. Goldby, bustling out herself to the door, in the absence of her maid Ruth, while the children huddled together at the window to try how many horrors they could discern in the aspect of a meek-looking, poverty-stricken man, who drew near with as much apparent unwillingness as if he anticipated the scolding he was likely to receive from the dame. They heard him told that he had no business there ; that if he wanted charity, he should go to the squire's ; if refreshment and lodging, to the widow Brand's. They saw him turn about at once to depart,

without further plea, and presently beheld him brought back by their father, and guided across the farm-yard towards that part which lay contiguous to Thorpe Corner.

The farmer soon after came in to fortify himself by a good supper for the watch of the night.

"Father, what man was that that went to the stack-yard with you just now?"

"A very curious sort of man indeed, my dear. Such a man as I have not seen this many a day."

"He looked a very common sort of man," observed the boy. "He looked like a beggar. What is he, father?"

"A beggar who is ashamed of being a beggar."

"That is all put on, to win you on your weak side, depend upon it," said the wife. "I wonder you had any thing to say to him, encouraging the begging that will make beggars of us all in time."

"It was not to countenance begging, my dear, but to encourage the shame of an unaccustomed beggar, that I had any thing to say to him. I am not going to give him charity. He asked no more than to be allowed to sleep under any roof in my yards."

"To fire your stacks, I suppose, as soon as you have turned your back."

"Rather to guard them, my dear. I know the man, and that any one of the children there is as likely to burn my property as he."

The man was Halliday, who had scarcely been

seen in the parish from the day of his first appearance as a vagrant. He had been so long accustomed to maintain himself respectably, and was so unwilling to cast any reproach on his sister's apparent prosperity, that he could not bring himself to appear before the parish authorities in his sordid condition, and with the certainty of being condemned to the hateful workhouse to which he had long ago doomed his children, but which he felt would be intolerable to one who had lived as he had done for some years. He deferred the evil day, skulking about in the neighbourhood, subsisting as sparingly as possible on the squire's first donation, and sleeping wherever he could find a little dry straw, instead of showing himself before his sister to ask a vagrant's lodging. Having furnished himself with the last roll he had the means of buying, he had sought the farmer this evening to take the chance of getting work from him by the most earnest petition that he could frame. This was immediately proved to be in vain, by the fact of Ashly's having been out of work for many months; and nothing remained but to ask a place to stretch himself in under shelter, and to make up his mind to apply at the workhouse the next day, at the latest possible hour that hunger would allow. When asked how he had so easily brought himself to commit his children to parish care, he answered that it was their right, and that they, being helpless, need not blush to claim it. The loss of a mother is the loss of almost every thing, he considered, to very young children, and entitled them to whatever

protection the law of the land gave them, which was a very different thing from the relief to able-bodied labourers, which many of his old village companions seemed as eager as he was unwilling to ask. Goldby told him that he was only half what he should be while he held such pernicious doctrine about his children; but that in consideration of his being half-upright, he would do what he could to secure him the most favourable treatment the parish had to bestow. Meanwhile, he conducted him to the farm buildings, and showed him a waggon in one of them, in which he might sleep, and pointed out a shed full of straw from which he might help himself with materials for his bed. As it was now quite dark, he left him a lantern, bidding him extinguish it when he lay down, and promising to come for it immediately after supper.

Halliday lost no time in preparing his accommodations, fetching two or three armsfull of straw from the shed, shaking them down in the waggon, borrowing a long sack which he found rolled up in a corner to sleep in, and immediately extinguishing his light, thinking that he could as well eat his roll in the dark, and knowing that the farmer could not wish to have anything seen about his premises which could excite particular observation.

Almost before he began to expect it, the farmer returned for the lantern. He came groping in the dark, probably for the purpose of better convincing himself that all was secure from fire on his premises. He carried the lantern away

with him, saying that Halliday must not be startled if he heard him about in the shed some hours later, as he should probably look in between the present time and dawn.

As Halliday lay, he could see a perspective of the farm-house windows, between the rail of the waggon and the roof of the shed. He amused himself for some time in watching the steady light which proceeded from the sitting-room, and observing how the flitting gleams from the other windows became extinguished one after another, till, at length, by the time his nose end and uppermost ear began to feel as if in high preparation for freezing, all the fires and candles seemed to be put out, and not an object was visible far or near. He then thought it time to bury his head in the sack and go to sleep ; both which he did immediately.

He was wakened up (under the impression that he must have been asleep a long time), by some one stumbling bounce up against the waggon.

“Halloo, farmer,” cried Halliday, starting up ; “you don’t know the way about your own shed better than any stranger. What sort of a watch have you had ?”

Nobody answered, and Halliday therefore at once concluded that it was not Goldby who was groping about near him.

“Can’t you speak, whoever you are ?” said he. “Can’t you tell me whether you are the farmer or no ?”

“Farmer ! no ; far enough from being a far-

mer," replied a gruff voice. "What sort of a corner have you got into? Can one find a place for a tired man to lie down in till morning?"

"With or without leave?"

"Without, to be sure. Whom should one ask leave of in the middle of the night, when one is almost too tired to speak?"

"You have walked far to-day, then?"

"Only from the next county, that's all; only thirty mile. Can't you make room for me beside you?"

"After a manner; but you must get some more straw. Just across the yard, to the right as you turn out of the shed, you will find a place full of straw; it has wattles in front, but you can pull the straw out over them, or lie down in it if you like it better than being cramped in the waggon."

Grumbling at the trouble, the stranger went, but returned in a few minutes, complaining that the place was open to the wind, and too cold to sleep in. He climbed into the waggon, replying to a question from Halliday that he believed it was about two o'clock. Having laid himself down at the further end, he said no more, and Halliday went to sleep again.

It was not long before he was a second time disturbed. His companion was evidently trying to leave the waggon so quietly as not to be perceived.

"What now?" cried Halliday. "Why can't you lie still, if you are so tired as you said you were?"

“ I can’t sleep, doubled up in a corner in this way. I shall step on to the village, and get a sleeping-place there.”

“ You may have one for two-pence, at the widow Brand’s,” answered Halliday ; and he directed the stranger to the beer-shop, warning him that if he met the patrol, he might be treated as a suspicious character.

“ They will hardly be this way yet,” replied the man : “ there was an alarm at Bingham’s as I passed, and they would stay there till all is safe.”

“ I thought you came here by quite a different way from Bingham’s—I’m sure you said so.”

“ So I did ; but I saw the fire from four miles off, as I came along the lanes.”

“ I hardly think it could have been at Bingham’s. He has been very popular of late, compared with some others of the farmers.”

“ You’ll see in the morning,” replied the stranger ; “ meantime, I am going on to the village, so good-bye.”

And he stumbled out of the shed, leaving Halliday once more to his repose. Halliday had a momentary suspicion that the man did not leave the stack-yard, as he fancied he heard a step behind the shed ; but all being presently as still as death, he drew himself, with many murmurs against disturbers, into his sack, and tried to finish his night’s rest.

He was not the only person whose repose was broken by a stranger this night. Ruth was sleeping with her mother, after an unusually

quiet evening, of which Mrs. Brand had taken advantage to close her doors early, and get to bed two hours sooner than on any day, except Sunday, for some months past. Ruth's slumbers were the lightest, and she was therefore the first to hear a strange noise at the window, which she at the moment took for the pattering of hail. It came by fits, however, and she began to fear it was some one tapping, though she scarcely thought the panes could be reached from below otherwise than by a long stick. There was a rushlight burning dimly on the hearth, and she involuntarily looked out between the curtains. She was almost certain she saw a face peeping from without over the half blind which hung against the lattice.

"Mother! mother!" whispered she into her drowsy mother's ear, "there's somebody looking in at the window!—There's somebody tapping! O, mother! what shall we do?"

Mrs. Brand made no answer, but slipped out of bed, threw on a cloak which hung near the bed's head, and unfastened the window with a cautious hand. Ruth did not venture to peep out again; nor would she have learned any thing by it, as the rushlight blew out with the first draught of cold air that entered by the opened lattice. She heard part of what was whispered between the stranger and her mother.

"You must have taken something comfortable to sleep upon," said he, "for you were as sound as a toper. Here have I been dangling, till I thought I could not have held on any

longer. 'There is a better hold now you have opened the window, but it's a precious narrow footing I have got. I doubt whether any body ever stood on it before.'

Never, to her knowledge, Mrs. Brand declared. But what did he want, wakening her up in the cold at such an hour?

Just to hand her in something that she must keep at the top of her bed, or in some other unobserved place, till called for. She need not be afraid, as nobody would apply to her about it.

"Mercy on us! what is it?" cried Mrs. Brand, as something cold touched her hand.

"Nothing on earth but a horse-pistol. There are plenty of horse-pistols in the world, woman; so, if this is found (which is not likely), it is nothing unnatural in your keeping: but I don't want to have it in mine, because it belonged to poor Wilson."

"What, he that was transported from Bingham's?"

"Yes, poor fellow! He was a better one than many we have to do with now. He carried a good heart in his breast, and went away without telling any thing: and that is more than some would do that are abroad to-night."

"Where? At Bingham's?"

"Aye; and at some folks' that deserve it worse than Bingham. It is not so much to transport a fellow or two for once and away, as to grind down the poor as Goldby does."

"Ah! they are all calling out upon him for a bad man."

“ And a bad man he is. He prevented my having more than three and six-pence a week ; and, more than that, when he had got his own way about it, he had the impudence to find out what I got a week altogether, and tell the vestry, just to show that he was right ; which, after all, he was not, considering what others have that are no worse off than I.—Take care ! Don’t jam my fingers in the window, woman ! Can’t you wait till I get down, which I must do before it is lighter.”

“ We’re far enough from the dawn yet, surely. It can’t be much more than three.”

“ But there will be another sort of light soon. Bingham’s barn is burning now, and Goldby’s will be alight presently.”

“ Mercy ! and am I to keep the pistol——”

This was the last of the dialogue that Ruth heard. Her part was taken from the moment that she heard—“ Goldby’s will be alight presently.” She thought nothing of being bold or being timid, or of any thing but how she might most quickly get to her master’s to give the alarm. The darkness favoured her. While her mother was still talking at the window, she carried her arm full of clothes out upon the stairs, slipped on some of them, unbolted the back door, and got out on the opposite side of the house to that at which the conversation had taken place, and from which her mother remained gazing in expectation of the prophesied blaze. In one long paroxysm of terror, but without a moment’s thought of turning back,

the poor girl ran along the lanes, now losing a shoe, but not stopping to feel for it in the dark, now saluted in the face by a stray bough in the hedge, but refraining from a scream. She once tried to call "Fire!" but her voice was scarcely heard by herself, and could not have roused the liveliest robin in the bushes to put forth its head from behind its wing. She reached the gate of the stack-yard without seeing any thing, and there rested in the blind darkness for an instant, to recover breath before climbing the gate, in order to take the shortest cut to the house. Her heart beat so as to shake the gate as she leaned upon it, and her head swam so that she scarcely knew whether she was standing or falling; and the blue speck which floated before her eyes was very like what she had often been troubled with when dizzy from fatigue or fear. From a blue speck, however, it instantly brightened into a blue flame before her strained eyes. Fully believing that some one must be lurking in the yard, she yet climbed the gate; but before she had set foot to the ground on the other side, the flames had mounted too high to leave any hope that they could be immediately extinguished. They spread up and down and on each side, and ran along the ridge and eaves of the stack as if a rocket had skimmed them; and the yellow glare instantaneously brought into strong apparition the thatched cottage of Goodman, close at hand; the gleaming windows of Ashly's dwelling, a little further retired; the gnarled roots of the ancient trees jutting over the sullen pond; and

the diversified paling which surrounded the stack-yard. At a considerable distance, the shadowy house, mantled with its vines and trained pear trees, began to appear as the flames shot up, and cast their radiance over the low buildings which intervened. In these buildings, the cattle began to stir. The pigeons came out upon the roofs, and flapped their wings. A bat, more blinded than Ruth herself by the glaring picture which had suddenly come out of the blank darkness, flew low, and blundered against her face. Half stunned, she rushed on at no very steady pace; and at the first corner where she turned into comparative darkness, she ran up against a man. He was completely dressed, and had evidently come forth that very moment from a shed; which circumstances left no doubt in Ruth's mind of his being the incendiary. In a passion exalted by her previous fear, she seized him by the collar, and swayed him to and fro with no contemptible force, while she reproached him with all the vehemence of a woman's anger for having ruined her master, and wishing to burn him and his family in their beds. Halliday—for it was he—threw her off as soon as he could recover himself from the sudden attack, and ran towards the house, shouting "fire" with all his might. Before he could be persuaded to cease clattering at the doors and windows with his stick, and screaming the names of the master and mistress, the ready Mrs. Goldby was half dressed, and the farm-servants came pouring out, to get as near the fire as they could without

being burned, and to gaze upon it with eyes and mouths expanded at the utmost width practicable without dislocation. There were two ponds gleaming within a few yards; and a range of buckets had hung before the men's eyes during every meal that they had taken in the farmer's kitchen since they entered his service; yet no one did any thing effectual towards putting out the flames. All ran hither and thither, jostling and overthrowing one another. Some remarked how the fire ran along the dry litter on the ground from one stack to another, like water in trenches; and others followed with their eyes the wisps of burning straw which were carried up by the wind, and fell thick upon the thatched roof of Goodman's cottage, and upon the surface of the pool which slept at the foot of the old trees. These last went out as they touched the water. It would have been well if the former had been equally harmless: but the thatch was kindled before a bucketfull of water had been procured; and almost before the labourer's winking and scared children could be brought out, the little dwelling was wrapt in flame.

Ashly was absent on guard as well as the farmer; so that the whole direction of affairs seemed for the moment to rest on Goodman. When he had lodged his wife and infants under Ashly's roof, and assured Susan that, standing to leeward, it was in no danger from the fire, unless the wind should change, he appeared, with a face deadly pale, but a composed manner

and steady voice, to do what could be done in so apparently desperate a case.

It was in vain to make any effort. The farm-servants were bewildered and helpless;—not made so by the surprise alone, but by the conduct of the people who came thronging from the village, some of whom were only in too directly opposite a state. There were many present who showed neither alarm, nor indignation, nor sorrow. They looked on at their ease, talking about the many reasons which might account for this calamity, and speculating upon whether the injury was aimed at the farmer or the landlord. One offence after another was brought up which Goldby had committed against the interests or the dignity of the poor of his parish, of so much of whose maintenance he had borne the burden so long.—In vain did Goodman look round for more than one or two who were willing to help the farmer instead of insulting his misfortunes. There were but very few such friends present. The reason of this was, not that Goldby had scarcely any friends, but that all the more respectable part of the parishioners were engaged at the fire at Bingham's. If they had known as well as some of their neighbours that there would be two fires this night, they would probably have divided their numbers, and afforded Goldby his proportion of assistance.

No effectual check was given to the flames till they had burned every thing within that department of the farm enclosures. The stacks,

the remains of the big barn, a portion of the cattle sheds, and poor Goodman's cottage were all destroyed within a very short space of time. It was an hour or two before dawn that the greater number of gazers returned home, having seen all that was to be seen, while Goodman, apparently exhausted, was desired by the good-nature of his companions to go and rest himself, confiding it to them to watch the embers till the danger of a revival of the fire was past. All seemed to be already safe, as the wind had dropped, and the rain began to fall heavily; but they agreed to watch till the red smoke was changed into grey.

Instead of turning into Ashly's cottage, where he was expected,—instead of stepping up to the farm-house, where he was invited to refresh himself, poor Goodman loitered towards the gate which the farmer must enter on his return.

There the houseless labourer leaned, half dreading, half longing for the appearance of his master, heedless of the smarting of his eyes from the smoke, and of the coldness of the dripping rain after the heat to which he had been exposed. There were sights before his eyes and sounds in his ears which left no attention for present sensations. From the very bottom of his soul he resented the cruel indifference with which the calamity had been beheld; and the countenances in which this indifference had been displayed glared before him as if still in the light of the flames. His ears yet throbbed with the groans of his favourite cart-horse, which had cruelly perished

through the mismanagement of some persons who had attempted to bring it out of the stable with its eyes uncovered. When the animal had once become alarmed, there was no doing any thing with it. It had become more and more restive, till the burning beams began to tumble about the heads of those who were measuring their strength at one end of the halter, against that of Dobbin at the other. They were obliged to leave the animal to its fate; and its horrible groans were destined to haunt for long the sleep of the labourer, who had exchanged morning and evening greetings with Dobbin as regularly as with his own children for many a year past.

While Goodman was still convincing himself how easy it would have been for any but the most stupid fools in the world to save the poor beast, the tread of a horse approaching slowly, as if heavily laden, was heard, and Goldby rode up with Ashly behind him. Goodman silently opened the gate for his master, and as silently held the horse when he alighted, not daring to look up to see as much as the dim light of the dawn permitted to be seen of the countenance of the farmer. Goldby was the first to speak.

“Is the fire out?”

“Quite, sir. Above an hour ago, sir.”

“What have we lost?”

“All the three stacks yonder, sir, and the sheds, and the big barn. Your cottage,” turning to Ashly, “is safe enough. The wind carried

the flames the other way. Every stick and stone of your place is safe."

"And yours destroyed, my poor fellow!" said the farmer.

"My house is yours while it is standing," said Ashly. "You and yours must live with us till matters come round again."

"When will that be?" asked the farmer. "It would have been rather hard work to bring my matters round before; and now the only thing seems to be for Goodman and me to go to the workhouse together."

Whether he went to the workhouse or not, must depend on the farmer, Goodman declared. If there was work for him on the farm, he might yet struggle through. If not, he must, after all, submit to the workhouse. As for his master, he trusted he was only joking when he talked of ruin. He could not think the loss was such as to ruin anybody.

Goldby observed gloomily that a small force would overwhelm a sinking man. He should never get over this blow; and he wished that those who had inflicted it might not find that they had cut off their own means of subsistence by destroying his. They might get their money where they could at the next levy of the rate. He should have none to spare. And he changed the direction in which he was walking, turning away from the path to the stack-yard, and towards the house; as if unwilling to meet the eyes of the loungers who might be on the watch to observe how he bore his misfortune.

The greeting which awaited him at home was not of the most consoling kind. Mrs. Goldby having long before made up her mind that the stranger who was allowed to sleep on the premises must be the author of the mischief, was ready to assure her husband that he might thank himself for what had happened, and that everybody else had seen twelve hours before what would be the consequence of his weak good-nature to a tramper. It was in vain to argue with her that an incendiary was the last person in the world likely to court the observation of the family whose property he meant to destroy. Ruth's testimony to his terror and concern when she encountered him hastening to give the alarm, was very decided; and the farmer silenced his wife by declaring that he knew his guest, and could answer for his innocence: but Mrs. Goldby was not satisfied; and for ever after looked wise upon the matter.

Meanwhile, Ruth deposed to what she had heard of the midnight conference at her mother's window, and Halliday to what had take place in the waggon-shed: the pistol was found on the top of Mrs. Brand's bed; and exertions made to trace its progress from hand to hand since it had been left behind by its convict owner. The result was that 'Tims was committed to meet his trial as the actual incendiary; and great pains were taken to prove Jay an accessory before the fact; but though the evidence was strong enough to give all who heard it a full persuasion of his guilt, it was not of a kind to warrant his being

made to hold up his hand at the bar. He was at present left at liberty to show, if he could, what service had been done to society by injuring the farmers, and how it had become easier to the poor to obtain the legal support which they claimed by exhausting the sources from which it must be drawn.

CHAPTER X.

EASE AND PLENTY.

THE present was a time to call the virtues of which Dr. Warrener had spoken out of the dark corners of the parish, for the sake of the sufferers from their opposite vices. The farmer received not only sincere condolence from many who had never touched and meant never to touch a farthing of his money, but generous offers of assistance in repairing his losses, as far as the work of the hands could do so. There were labourers willing to devote their spare hours to rebuilding his sheds; and more than one owner of an out-house who offered to lodge either a beast or a labourer who had been burnt out of his accustomed shelter. Some who had been considered of late as enemies to all charity, because they saw and pointed out the evils of a legal charity, badly administered, now showed by their practice that it was not the principle of charity that they objected to, but its misapplication. The more

bitterly they had complained of the injustice by which work and wages were monopolized by paupers, and the funds of society unproductively consumed by its most worthless members, the more ready were they to assist the injured, and to alleviate the losses of the really deserving.

Ashly was one of the truly charitable. With the assistance of his daughter, he soon discovered (according to the old maxim about a will and a way) that there was room in his dwelling for all Goodman's family for more than one night. By shaking down straw here, and packing the children closely there, and bringing his mother's old arm-chair into requisition, all were enabled to sleep; and the bacon and potatoes which Susan quietly declined selling enabled all also to eat. Susan proved to Mrs. Goodman by ocular demonstration that she had two frocks and two petticoats, and was strong in her argument that she could not put on both at once, and that therefore Nancy might as well be wearing the spare ones as crawling about half naked in the month of February. It was far from being Goodman's intention to subsist for any length of time on his friend's bounty, let the alternative be what it might. He only waited for a few days to see what turn his master's fortunes would take.

This was but too soon decided. Ashly came home at dusk one afternoon,—four days after the fire,—from a business trip to the next town. Goodman had not left Thorpe Corner all day, being engaged in repairing the roof of his

friend's out-house; and was now making haste to finish his work before it was quite dark. Ashly gently pushed through the children who nearly filled the apartment, and making his way out behind, sat down on the lower steps of the ladder at the top of which his friend was engaged. Goodman hailed him from the roof, but he made no answer. Johnny crept behind the ladder and twitched the skirts of his father's coat, but could obtain no notice. Ashly never stirred till Goodman came down and asked leave to pass; and then Ashly only got up, and went into the house, mechanically taking his seat beside the low fire, and lifting one of the children on his knee, forgetting however to play with it.

"You are dull to-night, neighbour," observed Goodman, when he came in, wiping his brows, from his labour.

"I'm afraid it will be but a dull night to us all," replied Ashly. "I bring but dull news for you, neighbour: and as there is no help for it, one may as well speak out at once. Goldby has failed."

"What, downright stopped; so as to leave his farm, and give no more work?"

"Not a stroke more will be done there by him and his. He has nothing left to go on with."

"Nor to pay up the funds of the Benefit Club, I am afraid?"

"The greater part is as clean gone as if it had been burnt in the fire," Ashly replied.

Goodman answered nothing for some time. The misfortune of each was too great for present comfort. Mrs. Goodman was the first to speak, timidly inquiring what they were to do next.

“Go to the overseer to-night,” replied her husband. “We must not take another meal in this house: and I am only sorry we have taken so many, the club being knocked up in this way. Ashly, I am sorry at my heart for you,—that all your toiling and saving should have come to this.”

“Don’t say any more about that,” answered Ashly; “nor yet about going away to-night. The potatoes are on the fire, and there is no reason for your turning out before morning. I wish I could say anything about your staying longer; but I don’t clearly see how I am to keep out of the workhouse myself; and I must feed my own children as long as I can; and I have but little left to do it with.”

Goodman consented to stay twelve hours longer. The thoughtful Susan hastened supper, and got the noisy children stowed away earlier than usual; and then a last consultation was held.

Perhaps no people cling more tenaciously to hope, than the poor who have a thorough abhorrence of dependance on the parish. Every glimpse of a possibility of obtaining work is hailed; every effort to do without what have hitherto been deemed necessities, is made light of when the dreaded time seems to be just at hand. If such hope was honoured as it deserves,

society would be astonished at its efficacy in averting the dreaded event. In the present case, the mutual advisers were more hopeful for each other than for themselves.

“ You will not be in the workhouse many days,” said Ashly. “ I see nothing for it but your going there ; but it is the interest of the parish officers now to get work for you ; and, when once that happens, you will prosper again. No one can throw in your teeth any disgrace from having slept in the workhouse for a night or two, just because your own cottage has been burnt over your head. It is quite a different thing from the way that Wilde and Tims and many more have applied ; quite different too from Halliday’s case. Poor fellow ! he can’t skulk about in sheds any more, and is obliged to go in. I dare say he will court being by your side all day ; but you will not forget that he deserted his children, and will hold up your head accordingly.”

Goodman muttered that there was little kindness in keeping up his pride for him, when he was brought to such a pass. It was no time now to talk of holding up one’s head. He did not see, however, why Ashly should not keep his as high as ever. Though the Benefit Club—that best resource—was broken up, there was the little shop, besides what the children earned, and the hope of seasonable employment for Ashly at hay-making and harvest times.

Ashly agreed that he might get on if he had fair play ; but there lay the difficulty. Any one

would think that fair dealing as to the qualities and prices of goods, would carry the day over such a method of traffic as the Woollertons, but in this parish it was not so. If an angel came down from heaven to sell the best goods for a mere song, he would have no custom in a pauper-ridden parish, unless he had interest with the vestry. There were plenty of stories to be told about the arts used by the Woollertons to get custom, and the way in which they were aided and abetted by rate-payers and rate-receivers ; but Ashly was not fond of blistering his tongue with such tales. He would rather struggle on as long as he could, without losing heart or temper, and submit with as good a grace as he could if the worst came to the worst.

Goodman found himself quite unable to use the hint about submitting with a good grace, when it became necessary, the next morning, to present himself and his family to the overseer. His wife was crying, and the children were as thoroughly unhappy as their parents, having been brought up to regard the high walls which surrounded the workhouse-yard with as much fear and dislike as those of a prison. A more low-spirited group of applicants had never appeared before the overseer, who was far from being disposed to welcome them. The observation of Ashly (who accompanied his friend, carrying the youngest child in his arms) that Goodman's domestication in the workhouse would probably be only for a few days, was the first thing which made Donkin's brow relax. He observed that the parish must find

some means of shaking off its burdens, as its resources seemed to be failing in every direction. Bingham had lost much by the fire; Goldby was impoverished; and now, before the week was out, Woollerton's death——

“Woollerton dead,” cried Goodman, looking up for the first time.

“Dead, aye; he died last night; and, as some people think, in debt to the parish. I wonder how many months it is since I began pressing upon the squire and the vestry the necessity of having the clerk's accounts made up and settled. They always said it should be looked to, and never bestirred themselves; and now they may make the best they can out of the widow.”

Here Donkin checked himself, as if ashamed of having spoken to pauper applicants of what was uppermost in his mind; but the fact was he forgot in what capacity they appeared before him; and Goodman, as well as Ashly, had hitherto been looked upon as a man with whom any one might hold discourse without condescension. He felt as if that time was over for ever, when the overseer silently made out the order for the workhouse, and dismissed the party with an intimation that work was to be had in the gravel-pits if none more profitable should be found elsewhere.

Ashly had scarcely a thought to bestow on the change which might be effected in his own prospects by Woollerton's death, while attending his friend to the workhouse-gate. It was he who pulled the bell; it was he who told the porter

that Goodman wanted to see the governor ; but it was Goodman who first declared that the moment was come for them to part. Ashly glanced round upon the throng of noisy, dirty paupers who were making merry or quarrelling within the enclosure, and immediately pronounced that the parting could be but for a very short time. He would see them, if possible, the first hour that they came out, and on Sunday at all events, if they should not be released before.

The slam of the gate shook his spirit within him as he stood alone on the outside ; but not so fearfully as his friend's. Goodman heeded no circumstance of the confusion around him while crossing the court, till one of his children wrenched her hand from his grasp, and ran off with a cry of joy. She saw Biddy at a distance among a group of men, women, and children,—Biddy whom she had taught to play ducks and drakes while Susan Ashly was cutting osiers, and to pick up acorns in the lanes for the pigs. Biddy, sickly and cross as her face now habitually appeared, seemed as glad to see an old companion as she could be of anything ; and when that companion was forcibly brought back to appear before the governor, Biddy crawled after the party so perseveringly as to draw upon the new-comers the attention of all who amused themselves with laughing at her. The overseer had been more kind in act than in manner. He had directed that Goodman and his family should be allowed to have their meals by themselves, and be in all respects treated with the consideration due to

those who were paupers only temporarily and by accident. They were accordingly shown to an apartment, where a fire was presently lighted, the room having been unoccupied for some time ; and were told that dinner would be brought to them in two hours.

Mrs. Goodman was, at her own desire, furnished with knitting ; the pauper who brought it to her seeming much amused at the request. The family were then left alone to grief and dulness,—grief to the parents, and dulness to the children, who looked round upon the bare and not very white walls, seeing no promise of better amusement there than in tracing the cracks in the plaster, and then gazing up at the window, which contained cobwebs enough to afford promise of much fly-catching in summer, but presented no prospect like the pretty, cheerful one at Thorpe Corner ; nothing but the paved yard and high wall which surrounded it. When the children turned to their parents, they saw their mother's tears falling upon her knitting-needles, so that she could scarcely go on with her work, and their father's face too grave for them to venture to speak to him. They began to think they were very tired,—very sleepy,—very hungry : and were heartily glad when two great brown dishes, a pewter jug, and some trenchers, were brought in, and put down on the bench at one end of which their father sat. They thought it very odd that he was not as eager as they to eat.

When at length Mrs. Goodman wiped her

eyes with her apron, and uncovered the brown dishes, the children were not allowed to begin at once upon the boiled mutton and turnips disclosed to view. They were told they must wait till some further directions were obtained. After watching for footsteps till the fat began to look opaque, and the gravy had turned into flakes before the eager eyes of the children, Mrs. Goodman softly opened the door, and called in some person who happened to be at hand, to know how they were to help themselves; how much of all this meat and vegetables and beer was meant for them. She was vehemently laughed at for her question, and told to eat up every bit and scrap if she liked. It was only the regular allowance for six people, weighed out in the governor's scales. Goodman begged pardon for having caused his wife to ask the question; but there was more meat in that dish than his family had seen in his house any week of the last year; and he had not supposed it could all be meant for them. The children ate all they could, and were sorry to leave off while any remained; but comforted themselves with the prospect of another such dinner to-morrow.

It seemed so cruel to shut up the children from the present hour—one o'clock—till bedtime, that their mother exerted herself to gather up her spirits and take the little ones out into the yard, where she did not like them to go without her. It was a great effort to her; and she sat down with her knitting at some distance from any body. The children were not so shy when the fear of the high wall—the fear which had

been so carefully instilled into them—began to wear off. They saw that several children were at play, and heard how loud they laughed, and observed that they did not care what they said or did. There were well known faces too. Besides Biddy, there was Jemima, who had often played with them in a better place. There were several babies of all ages; and the eldest girl was so fond of nursing babies that she always quickly made acquaintance, wherever she might be, with all who carried them. She had been proud of having been pronounced a very nice nurse, and a great help to her mother, when little George was a baby; and she had been quite sorry when he was no longer in arms. She now hoped to acquire new credit among the variety of babies that were being dandled within a circuit of a few yards.

“What, are you as fond of playing with babies as ever, Nanny?” asked Jemima, seeing Nanny take one of the little ones from its tired mother, and teach it to set one foot before the other on the bench where some of the women were sitting.

“I like it better than ever,” replied Nanny; “our baby has got past being nursed now; and when he wants to be carried, he is so heavy that it is not the same thing as tossing a mite of a baby like this.” And she held up the crowing child at arm’s length.

“Well, if you stay long enough, you shall help me to nurse mine, unless it should please the Lord to provide better for it.”

“Will it live here with you always?”

"It will live here whether I do or not ; and I shall too, if I can. I'm not so fond of Mrs. Blogg's wash-tubs as to go back, if I can keep where I am."

"But who is your husband?"

"James Beaver ought to be ; but he is so obstinate, he won't, though the squire and every body has told him that he ought. If he stands out much longer, I shall get somebody else. There are plenty of husbands to be got here, as you'll find by and by."

Nanny thought she should not like any of the dirty rude people who stood about ; but she was told that she would learn to like them, if, by marrying one of them, she could be saved all trouble about how to live, and have a good dinner every day without the plague of earning and cooking it. It was tiresome enough, to be sure, to have to take one's turn in scouring the floors and doing the kitchen work ; but there was plenty of fun and sociability between times ; and it was not difficult to persuade one's friends to come in, so as to make the turns occur seldomer, and show the governor that here, as well as elsewhere, it was "the more the merrier."

Nanny's mother was all this while being instructed after somewhat the same manner as the little girl. An elderly woman came and took a place beside her as she sat retired, pretending to admire the dexterity and industry with which she knitted, and observing that she would be a fortune to the parish if she went on slaving as she would do in a house of her own.

“ I see you and your husband are wearing your own clothes,” she observed. “ Why don’t you wear the workhouse dress, since you are not above letting your children wear it ?”

“ They must wear it, poor things, because all their own clothes were burnt, except the shirts and shifts they had on when they were taken from their beds. My husband and I had just time to slip on what we had worn the day before. I did give a pull at the chest where the children’s Sunday things were kept ; but it was very heavy, and there was such a crackling and roaring, and such a heat and smoke, that I was obliged to leave it behind. I am thankful that we each saved a suit.”

“ But you might as well have taken a workhouse suit too when it was offered you, as I suppose it was.”

“ It would not have been worth while, so few days as we are likely to be here. My husband is now out till dark, trying to get work.”

“ But you need not have worn the clothes more than the first day, just for show ; or not more than just the gown ; for the governor would not think of looking to see what sort of handkerchief and petticoat and stockings you had on ; and then you might have got a cup of tea, which I dare say you have been used to.”

“ Why, I like my cup of tea as well as any body ; but I suppose one must not look for such a thing here. Nothing but milk-porridge of an afternoon, I am told.”

“ Unless you bestir yourself to get something

better: but there are always people going out and in, and your husband will be one, who can settle your little matters in the village. Mrs. Woollerton has no objection to changing away, when one has no money; and she has taken two pair of shoes of me very lately. Her gin is as good as you can get, though she does not profess to sell it."

Mrs. Goodman thought this was taking an advantage which was not meant when parish clothing was given: in return for which ridiculous speech she was stared at, and asked what parish relief was for but to be made the most of by those to whom the law gave it. She was more respectfully listened to when she doubted whether such dealings would go on any longer now that Woollerton was dead. As it was understood that most of his business was derived from his being vestry-clerk, she questioned whether the widow would find it answer to go on keeping shop, unless she married the next vestry-clerk. The next vestry-clerk would probably purchase the good-will of the concern, and carry it on, as people seemed to think that the offices of vestry-clerk and general shopkeeper must be naturally and profitably conjoined in a parish populous in paupers.

Woollerton dead! This was the most important piece of news that had entered the work-house for many a day; more important to the paupers than Goldby's fire, since it signified far less to them how the rate was raised, which must be raised to support them, than whether

they had in the vestry-clerk a friend who was in their interest, in return for their patronage of his shop, or a man who would retrench all needless indulgences, and consider the rate-payers more than the paupers. Many of the loungers in the yard now began to tremble for their gin, their tea, their tobacco; and not a few indulged in the prevalent workhouse amusement of match-making: an amusement which is no where else, not even in the drawing-rooms of the great, pursued with so much eagerness and success. It was presently settled that Mrs. Woollerton, who knew their ways so well, should be induced to marry the new vestry-clerk, if those interested could gain their point of having a single man put into the office. The ways and means of effecting this were discussed, and the merits of the few candidates who could appear were balanced and measured as carefully as if the inmates of the workhouse had constituted an elective body.

In the midst of the speculation thus excited the Goodmans were forgotten, and the afternoon therefore passed less strangely and uncomfortably than might have been expected. Nanny turned from one baby to another, and learned a great deal from the mothers that she never knew before, and that excited and amused her curiosity in a very agreeable way; and when tired of this sort of occupation, there was Biddy to play with and protect from the practical jokes of the youngsters in the yard. All but their practical jokes seemed to be so relished by the foolish

object of them, that it was not for any body else to quarrel with them. It was not so with all the fun that was going forward.

A purblind old woman had groped her way out of one and into another of the many doors that opened upon the yard, to have a little chat with a friend who was too lame from palsy to walk about. The appearance of this old woman was more respectable than that of most of the paupers, though the crape on her widow's bonnet was brown and frayed, and her thread-bare black cloak formed a curious contrast with the workhouse dress in which she was otherwise clothed.

As she descended the stairs which led from the chamber she had visited to the yard, the girls who sat at various elevations mocked her, and made believe to pull the cloak which trailed on the next step above her. When she was out of danger of falling, and began to grope with her stick along the wall, she had as many train-bearers as a princess surrounded by pages. One rude boy after another twitched a corner, or came to play bo-peep under it, while their sisters placed themselves in front on purpose to be run against, and have cause of shrill complaint. The old woman very naturally swung her staff round her from time to time, as an irritated horse lashes himself with his tail to get rid of the flies on a July day; but these children were as nimble as flies in escaping, and as sure to return and fasten upon their victim. A very aged man, who had made an excursion from his seat to re-

light his pipe, came to the widow's assistance, but it was little that he could do against a gathering tribe of mischievous children. His growling was disregarded; the old woman held by one arm, and it was too much to expect that he should surrender the pipe which he carried in the other hand. He seemed quite as likely to be twitched and made use of for bo-peep as his companion, when Nanny appeared as the champion of both. She took upon herself the guidance of the woman, thus setting the man at liberty to kick, cuff, and growl to better purpose than before; and at length the task was happily accomplished of seating the old folks one on each side of Mrs. Goodman.

"Who are you, child?" asked the old woman; "I do not remember your voice, and I am sure from your behaviour that you have not been in this place long."

"Nor shall be long, I hope," replied Mrs. Goodman, giving the heads of their story. "This is a bad place for children, I see."

"And yet," said the old man, "workhouses were meant for such as them and us. It seems odd, but it is quite true, that none of them turn out good, and none of us happy. This is not what was meant when workhouses were made for the helpless poor."

"'Tis because others besides the helpless poor come into them that they don't answer," observed the widow.

"I am sure all the folks here seem helpless enough," replied the man. "There's scarce a

man that can botch a shoe while here, or keep up his credit as a hedger and ditcher when he gets out again, if such a thing happens; and as for the women, they can neither spin, nor knit, nor bake and brew as women did in my day."

"That is because they are not obliged to do such things as honest people are that live in houses of their own. They would be no more helpless than others if they had nobody to help them. But I was speaking of those that find their eyes and their feet failing them, or are too young to work. A workhouse ought to be a place for them to be made comfortable in, instead of such a miserable den as this, where people come to be plagued as soon as they are past being corrupted."

Mrs. Goodman thought it hardly likely that any who had passed the best part of their lives in a home of their own should settle down quietly any where else. She did not see that any body was to blame for that.

"To be sure," answered the old woman, "the aged seem hardly the right persons to go and live in a crowd, as my neighbour Potts says. I remember finding it very teasing to have my grand-children coming in and out when I lived at my son's; and when the baby cried in the night, I could not go to sleep again as the others did. But all that was nothing to what we have to go through here. What with one coughing all night, and another that is superannuated, saying her prayers aloud for hours together, and the heavy tread above and below, there is no

sleeping in the dark or in the light. As for what we meet with if we step out to speak to a neighbour, you saw something of that just now. I often pray the Lord to release me, and send me where I may be in quiet."

"You did not give your father reason to pray that prayer before you," said the man.

"I am thankful not to have been obliged to send him from me," replied the woman. "He was deaf, to be sure, from the time he was seventy-two; but he was not the less sensible of being disturbed. I taught all my children to step lightly, and the very youngest of them rarely pushed against his chair. I hope he had as much of quiet as the poor can well have in their old age."

"Just what you hoped and deserved to have yourself," muttered the old man.

The widow's ears served her better than her eyes, and she overheard the remark. She replied that she did not wish any body to be blamed for placing her in the workhouse. If times were now what they had been thirty years before, her son would have done for her what she had done for her parent; for he was far from wanting in duty. But the more people went to the workhouse, the more must go. They made work scarce to independent labourers, and wages low; and when such labourers found, as her son did, that it was all he could do to maintain his own children, there was no help for it, but his parents must go to the parish, and take their chance with the crowd that pressed

upon the rate. She had chosen to enter the workhouse in preference to any one of the children being brought upon the rate, as it was better that the aged should be made uncomfortable for a little while before they died, than that the innocent should be corrupted for life. But must they be corrupted? Mrs. Goodman asked. They generally, if not always, were so, both the companions bore testimony; and they mentioned that the foremost among the widow's tormentors were the children of Halliday,—children as innocent and well-trained as could be seen when they entered the workhouse, but now given to all sorts of wickedness that folks so young could fall into. Mrs. Goodman thought this no proof, and owned that she should expect (in case of being obliged to remain longer than she hoped would be necessary), to keep her young ones in something of the same habits that they had been brought up in at home. This reminded her that it was time to call them in from play. She left the old people to seek out their respective corners, and called her children after her into the room which she was at present allowed to call their own.

“You are tired, love,” said she to her husband that evening, as he sat waiting gloomily for bed-time.

“Who would not be tired of the first day in a workhouse?” he replied. “And not a chance of work do I see to get us out of it. I have applied to every body that employs any sort of labourers, except two or three that I was obliged

to leave till to-morrow. But they will not employ me, I know before-hand. There is not a chance of work."

"Well, we must wait patiently," answered the wife. "Meantime, we have a roof over our heads, and abundance of all that we want. When they have let me clean up this room (which I mean to do to-morrow), we shall be more comfortable than I ever expected to be away from a home of our own. And you will get up your strength with eating meat every day. I have been quite uneasy about you since the fire. You over-tired yourself then, and you did not eat half enough at Ashly's, from consideration for him. Here you will have plenty, without having occasion to consider any body's means."

Goodman made no answer, and his wife proceeded to advise his going to bed, and making himself easy in mind. The great step was taken, and could not be retracted. They had received parish relief; and now the wisest way would be to make the most of it, and enjoy good shelter, food, and clothing while they had it. They might take a lesson from the children in this. Once having seen what was within side the high wall they had had a horror of all their lives, they lost all fear, and were as merry as the wildest of the workhouse children.

Goodman took his wife's advice about going to bed. The rest of her counsel was adopted more slowly, but not less surely. He did not make himself very easy this first night, nor entirely so the second; but by the third, he felt the

relief from the care of providing for his family so pleasant, that he was ready to laugh at the children's accounts of their frolics in the yard, and to agree with his wife that it was better to wait with a little patience till work turned up than to tramp the whole country round, wearing out shoes and strength to no purpose; and upon this conviction he went to sleep as quietly as he had ever done under his own roof, in old days before he went supperless to bed, wondering how bread was to be found for his little tribe till his next wages should come in.

Their present residence was soon made more sociable and pleasant by the companionship of other old acquaintances. The little Goodmans had been pleased to find Biddy in the workhouse; their parents were soon called upon to welcome Biddy's mother and brother. The beer-shop had become such an intolerable nuisance, through the meetings held there since the fires, that Dr. Warrener had executed his threat of ejecting Mrs. Brand for keeping a disorderly house. She had immediately decided on coming into the workhouse till after her confinement, hoping that Wilde would by that time be out of prison, and ready to marry her, and being at a loss what to do with her hopeful son Peter, in the meanwhile, in a home of her own. She had had no heart for her business since Wilde's adventure; and had not, she declared, had a moment's peace for weeks till now. Now she was fully prepared to expatiate with the Goodmans on the comfort of being provided for without

care or trouble, and letting the world wag without doors, as long as they had their mutton and beer and mirth within.

Widow Brand had never been so courted in her prosperous days as she was now in her pauper-state. She had not yet disclosed who was the father of her unborn child; and many inmates of the workhouse, who were on the watch for every opportunity of getting indulgences, and who thought that the real father might be disposed to lay down a sum, in consideration of being relieved from all danger of future demands for the maintenance of his child, asked a recompense for the loan of their names. This loan of names was merely an empty ceremony, as all parties knew perfectly well that the overseer would never be able to recover a shilling. Three pounds and a treat were the terms proposed at first. They were brought down to a sovereign, and pipe and porter; but in vain. The widow said that the real father would appear all in good time, and that there was no occasion to take a false oath unless it was necessary.

Mrs. Brand observed to her sister Jemima, what a pity it was that some of these people had not come in her way before she had gone so far as to swear her child to James Beaver. It would have answered the purpose of screening Jay just as well, and have spared the poor youth's name. Jemima answered hotly, that it would not have answered her purpose equally well, at least if there had been any calculating

upon Beaver, as there was upon most young men new to the world. But he was so perverse, there was no knowing what to make of him.

“ O, you thought you should make him marry you, and he won’t. Well, you had better get one of these people to be your husband. They seem to be very ready.”

Jemima tossed back her head, and observed that there was no need for her to go about begging for a husband. There was one that was ready to take her to-morrow, if the squire had not laid him fast ; and he would marry her the first day he came out of prison, if she would promise (which she was quite disposed to do) to have no silly high notions about living out of the workhouse, at any rate till they had children enough to get better wages from the farmers than he had ever obtained as a single man, and a comfortable allowance from the parish for their family.

Just as Mrs. Brand was going to explain that this was much like her own case, Jemima observed her countenance change, and following the direction of her eye, saw that Ruth was being shown in by the porter.

Mrs. Goldby herself would hardly have wondered at Ruth’s being tearful now.

“ O, mother !” she cried, “ how long must you be in this place ?”

“ Till you have to come here to her, Miss Ruth, I dare say, for all your high notions,” cried aunt Jemima. “ You thought to be Mrs. James Beaver by and bye, and keep a pretty shop.

But your management will come to nothing, and Mrs. James Beaver you never will be."

"I know it—I know it," murmured Ruth, amidst a torrent of tears. "I did not think he could ever have been so bad—so very wicked."

"O, it is very pretty to talk of his being bad! You would have had him, for all his badness, if you could. But I'm glad you know you can't. Who told you the story, my dear? O, your mother does not know it, I see."

And the tormentor proceeded to relate that Beaver had engaged himself to a very poor girl in the next parish, whom he meant to marry as soon as his apprenticeship was up. Some people thought it was a fine thing to do, to bring a wife upon the parish in retaliation for the parish having ascribed a child to him. Jemima said nothing of the opinions of others, that he had rashly engaged himself in self-defence, to avoid Jemima's solicitations to go to the altar, and the practices of the master who would have made him a tool in his schemes, and the screen of his vices. Mrs. Brand could not help wishing that, whether or not he had erred in the way imputed to him, Ruth had been the one to whom he had engaged himself; but neither of the young people once thought of this. Ruth had no other idea than that all was over, from the moment she heard what had taken place in the justice-room, at the beginning of the winter. As for Beaver, he had never since lifted up his eyes to Ruth; and had cast about for a very different though not a positively disreputable person, when he sought to

engage himself for the purpose of being able to say that he had done so.

As it was not the pleasantest thing in the world to stand crying in the workhouse-yard, stared at by a crowd of paupers, and as her feelings, under insult and affliction, could not be immediately restrained, Ruth looked hastily about for some corner where she might hide herself from the many eyes that were upon her, and from the tongue of her affectionate aunt. Her mother aided her by asking her to go and see the Goodmans, who would be wishing to know something of their late master and his family.

“Why, bless me! look at poor Ruth!” cried Mrs. Goodman as they entered. “Sit down, my dear,” she continued, “till my husband and the overseer have done talking. What a pity it is that you distress yourself so about your mother! I could have cried like you at first coming in, but indeed it is not half so bad as you think, when the first feeling is over.”

It appeared from what was overheard of the conversation at the opposite side of the room, that the overseer found the whole family only too ready to agree that the workhouse “is not so bad as people think, when the first feeling is over.”

“To be sure, farmer Jones’s is not such work or such wages as you would prefer, if you could pick and choose,” the overseer was heard to say; “but it is such as would have prevented your coming here, if it had been offered the day after the fire. You had better be off without delay, and make sure of it.”

“ I’ll just step to Ashly’s, if you please, sir, and tell him of it. He has been out of work longer than I. I am sure he would be very glad of it.”

“ No doubt he would ; but what have we to do with Ashly ? He is an independent man.”

“ He was, sir ; but the Benefit Club is broken up by Goldby’s failure ; and it was that club that helped Ashly to hold up his head all this time. Unless something offers, he must soon be on the parish ; and, as I am so already, I should wish to give up the work to him, sir, if you please.”

“ It pleases you to be very kind to Ashly, I see,” replied the overseer ; “ but I must please to do the best I can for the parish. If Ashly has to come upon the rate in the end, we can’t help it ; but that is not the case yet ; and we must provide first for those we have upon our hands already.”

Goodman seemed to have several other objections to make, in the midst of which, Donkin cut him short, remarking that the family had been treated with particular consideration while they had been known to be accidentally deprived of work. The case would be quite altered, however, if they refused employment. For the little time which would elapse before they would be turned out, they must be reduced to the level of the other paupers, eating in the common room, and mixing at all times with their fellow-inmates of the workhouse.—Goodman seemed a little impressed by this, but had some remark to make about the necessity of an allowance

from the parish, in addition to the promised wages.

“ Well, you know I gave you to expect some allowance; and if, as you say, you must have money to begin with, you can take a month’s allowance in a lump to-day. Only you must be sure and remember that you have had it for a month to come.”

Donkin would not stay longer than to say that he expected to see Goodman presently, to receive the promised money as he went to his work.

Ruth made haste to help Mrs. Goodman to collect the children, and the few articles of property they had carried in with them. She was so happy on their account at their release, and had so little doubt that her master and mistress would be so too, that she could not understand the apathy with which they moved to the gate. She took the opportunity of slipping out with them, and was amazed to see them turn their backs unwillingly on the high wall, and meet the free air and sunshine with faces of greater anxiety than they had worn in what she felt to be the dismal and disgusting restraint of pauperism.—She hoped that if the day should ever come when she might release her mother from this hateful place, she should see more satisfaction in the change; meanwhile, she determined to deposit where she knew they would be welcome the tidings of Goodman’s having got employment, and accordingly quickened her pace that she might have time to look in at Ashly’s on her way home.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MILE CROSS.

A LITTLE time decided the question whether Ashly was more or less in want than Goodman of the work which the latter would have declined for his sake. While Goodman could sink no lower than he was, Ashly had already begun to rise, though deprived of the resource of the club to which he had long subscribed, and from which he reasonably expected relief in all times of pressing need. The death of the vestry-clerk removed the unfair disadvantage under which Ashly's little shop had hitherto suffered, and customers began to multiply just when their custom had become absolutely necessary to save this good man and his family from the disgrace and misery of pauperism. In the interval between the death of Woollerton and the appointment of his successor, the buyers of the village discovered that it was much pleasanter to purchase with the simple view of furnishing one's self with what one wants, and therefore to be at liberty to get good articles cheap instead of bad articles dear, than to buy with a view of patronizing and being patronized. Some had tried the experiment of stealing to Thorpe Corner, and furnishing themselves with good butter and well-made candles, without publishing the fact that they had changed their dealer; but it did not answer. Woollerton always detected the

proceeding; and if the tenants were not penitent on being taxed with it, they were made to fear the effects on their own interests after the next vestry meeting; and could propitiate the potential clerk only by purchasing an unusual quantity of rancid butter, and of candles that ran down in the burning as if they were warm out of the chandler's trough. It was a matter of wonder to many how so busy a person as Woollerton could bear in mind when one family ought to be out of soap, and how long another had been without buying cheese, and that a third must have left off tea, or dared to buy it elsewhere. From such supervision they were now freed, (for no one feared Mrs. Woollerton, as unconnected with her husband's office. She might scold as she pleased; the tongue of a pauper can match that of a jobber at any time); and this freedom was some consolation for the interruption in the even course of rate-receiving for which they had been obliged to their official advocate.

The little green recess at Thorpe Corner was now no longer the quiet place it had been when only a stray labourer or chance customer crossed the three-cornered grass-plot. Men and women came, some with basins, and some with dishes; while children who could not be trusted with earthenware were bid to bring the bacon or the butter in brown paper; the mother observing that if they did let either substance down in the dust, it would not signify, like breaking what cost more than they went to buy. Susan, having discovered this principle of management, became

very careful to wrap up her ounces and quarter pounds so as to leave no folds open, that her butter might not be pronounced soiled, or her bacon gritty. Her pauper customers were, however, disappointed at finding that their shopping, however freed from restriction, was now placed on a new principle. The children were sent back without that which they came for, unless they brought their halfpence in hand; and their parents were asked whether it was reasonable to expect to be cheaply served except for ready money. If Ashly had consented, like Woollerton, to take the chance of two out of four customers paying their scores, and of that payment taking place many months after the purchase, Ashly must, like Woollerton, have charged a higher price for worse goods. This very much altered the paupers' view of the case; and many of them could not submit to the preposterous inconvenience of paying Ashly in the same way as Ashly paid the wholesale dealer from whom he purchased his stock.

This class of customers Ashly was content to dismiss after a single visit. Those who remained were enough to occupy Susan's time whenever her father should happily be again employed at out-door work; a time to which he looked forward with the greater confidence as his domestic concerns improved. He had the good-will of the paupers who had been made so by the pressure upon the rate of such as chose to be a burden. He had the good-will of all the economical and prudent—that is, of most of the independent

labourers of the place ; and these were enough to support a small and safe concern like his.

As the spring advanced, a new set of customers appeared to benefit him by the custom which they withdrew from the grocer at Y——. Mrs. Goldby was known to purchase at Y—— the groceries for her large establishment in wholesale quantities ; and it was therefore with some surprise that Susan Ashly found herself called upon one day to serve her friend Ruth with some articles for the farm-kitchen. She ventured to recommend some other articles, in case of Mrs. Goldby being in want of them also before she had occasion to send to Y——.

“ We are not going to send any where but here for our groceries, for the little time we remain at the farm,” said Ruth. “ The family is so small, and we are going so soon, that my mistress says she shall buy what she wants of you, if you serve her as well as you serve other people.”

Susan curtsied, as if Mrs. Goldby had been present while she answered.

“ No doubt of that. We serve all alike—all as well as we can afford. But how is the family smaller than it was ? I thought there was as much brown sugar used in the farm in one day as any one of our sugar-boxes will hold.”

“ There used to be, in the middle of winter,” replied Ruth ; “ but the farm-servants have all taken a fancy to go away this spring, as they did last. My mistress says that if we were to stay another winter——”

“ So you are really going before winter !”

“ Before winter, yes ! We quit the farm at Midsummer ; and my mistress says the men might have had the grace to stay till that time, considering how comfortably they have been housed through the worst part of the year, when they would most likely have been out of work. My master reasonably looks, she says, to being well served through the year by those he keeps on through the winter ; instead of which, at the first word they hear of higher wages when the busy spring time comes on, off they go ; one this way, and another that, without thinking of my master’s convenience, or how they leave his work to a set of pauper-labourers who do not care whether they do it well or ill, or whether it is done at all.”

“ I am afraid you are all rather downhearted still at the farm,” observed Susan.

“ We should be, if we were going to stay,” replied Ruth. “ But both master and mistress hope more from moving than they could ever have got by staying ; and the labourers that stay are not sorry to look for a rich farmer in the place of one who has grown so poor as master.”

“ I hope the rich one won’t grow poor in time, like Mr. Goldby, as I heard father saying last night,” observed Susan ; to which her friend answered, that Goldby wished his successor might do what he himself ought to have done long before—look into the condition of the paupers and the rate before he settled, and come to an understanding with the parish that its affairs

should be better managed than to involve the ruin of the resident farmers. He himself meant to choose his future residence with a view to this as much as to any other circumstance whatever. He would rather never set foot in a ploughed field again than be pauper-ridden as he had been to his ruin at Thorpe. He hoped the people most in fault would now be made to reconsider their methods ; if not, this farm and every other that might become vacant would remain unlet, and the appropriate punishment would fall upon the parish of having no land-occupiers to help to support its poor, or (as Ruth expressed it after her own manner) the paupers must live without the rate, as the little shopkeepers could not pay it without the farmers to help them.

“ Now tell me, Ruth,” said her friend, “ what do you feel about going away ? Do you go by choice, or had you rather stay ? ”

“ O, I can’t stop and tell you all about that now,” said Ruth, in some agitation. “ It is better for me to go, and my mistress is very kind in thinking so, and in taking me with her at the first word that was said to her about it.”

“ And who spoke to her about you ? ”

“ My mother was unwilling I should stay any longer,” replied Ruth, in a tone of deep distress ; “ and Dr. Warrener said something too which made my mistress speak like a mother to me about staying in a respectable service with small wages, rather than being cast adrift as I might be if——. However, I am to stay with mistress, whether master goes into one of the small red

houses in the street, or (which is more likely) into a farm in some other parish. He would not farm again in this parish, managed as it is, for five hundred pounds given him at the end of every year, he says. But let me have my parcel. I must go."

"Be sure you tell me when you know where you are to go," was Susan's parting injunction, as a new customer appeared to take Ruth's place at the counter. This new customer was one of the labourers who had left Mr. Goldby for the sake of more profitable work. He and the companions who had quitted the farmer's roof must now board themselves; and all who paid regularly were added to the list of Susan's customers. Some of her neighbours congratulated her on the benefit her business derived from more money being spent by eight persons buying their groceries separately at a small retail shop, than by one of the eight purchasing the total required quantity at wholesale prices; but Susan had grown shrewd enough to see that this was not an unmixed advantage, even to her shop. She would rather that the groceries should have cost no more than formerly, and that the surplus expenditure should have been given to her father as wages, in return for the labour he was willing to bestow on the good land, which Goldby was obliged, for want of capital, to let out of cultivation. There was another way too of putting the case. The funds of the Benefit Club were mixed up with Goldby's capital, and had vanished away with it; so that every waste of that capital, whe-

ther it was lavished on idle consumers, or thrust into the pocket of the small retail dealer, might be regarded as the misapplied expenditure of the funds of the club. Susan would much rather have seen her father enjoying the assistance which was his due from the society, than receive any remnant of its ruined funds in the form of increased custom.

Her father had had a good deal of conversation with Dr. Warrener on the practicability of re-establishing this club on the dividend which might be expected to remain after the settlement of Goldby's affairs. Dr. Warrener had pointed out to him what improvements had taken place in the constitution and management of such societies since the one in question was founded, and had shown and explained to him tables, from which it appeared that if a few young men would join the former members, the contributions of the whole, with the dividend, would be sufficient to re-establish the society on a safe footing. Ashly was this morning gone in search of his friend Goodman, to run over with him the names of the young men in the parish who would be most likely to join, and to whom the proposal should first be made. The difficulty was, that the single men among the labourers were paid so much less for their labour than the married that there was a direct temptation to them to marry. It was no easy matter to find a single man of the labouring class who could or did support himself without parish assistance; and still less easy to find a married man who did not ridicule the idea

of his beginning to subscribe to a benefit club after he had begun to have a family, and in such unpromising times. Still Ashly thought it hardly possible that the number should be so very small as Dr. Warrener and he had made it out to be ; and he wished to see whether the Goodmans could not help him to enlarge it.

He went to the place where he expected to find Goodman at work, at the distance of a few miles from Thorpe. Goodman was gone, having that day thrown up his work from discontent with his wages. Ashly then proceeded to the single room where the family had lodged since leaving the workhouse. They had paid their landlord two hours before, and departed—whither, the people of the place did not know, but they had turned up the higher road to Thorpe.

Along the upper road, therefore, Ashly returned, having come by the lower. He perceived no traces of those he was in search of till he arrived within sight of the Mile Cross, on the heath. There, from a distance, he saw Goodman lying along the highest of the three steps, with his hat over his eyes, as if to shade them from the yellow sunshine of a spring afternoon. His wife looked scarcely less lazy. If she was doing any thing, it was picking out a weed here and there from the crevices of the stone. The children were jumping over the lengthening shadow—the little ones, of the shaft—the bigger ones, of the cross beam. The wealthiest nobles of the land could not have looked more free from

worldly care than this group would have appeared to a careless eye. A foreigner travelling by would have had them down in his note or sketch book in a trice, as an out-standing specimen of the once-envied English peasantry. Ashly was far from contemplating them in any such light. He knew too well how small must be the utmost degree of ease and happiness which a man in his friend's circumstances could enjoy, to be misled by the outward show of an hour's leisure on a sun-shiny afternoon.

He came close up to the group before he was perceived ; and then Goodman did not seem in over haste to uncover his eyes.

"What a hunt I have had !" cried Ashly. "I have gone just four miles round after you. But one might easily have had a worse day for the walk ; and a worse seat to rest on at the end of it," he continued, placing himself next Goodman, and taking off his hat, while he faced the mild breeze.

"What could you want with me, to give yourself so much trouble ?" asked Goodman.

Ashly related his business, and began counting on his fingers the men who might, he thought, become members of the club. Goodman interrupted him with the news that he did not know what he was talking about. One, and another, and another, of these very men had thought it a good thing for the society when the treasurer failed, as the members got less from the funds, after subscribing for years, than they might have from the parish without subscribing at all.

“ You will not get one of those you mention to join you,” he concluded.

“ You don’t consider the difference between saving up capital and taking charity,” said Ashly, astonished at his friend’s line of argument.

“ O, yes ; there is a difference ; (though one would not call parish assistance charity, since it is provided by law ;) but men cannot stop to consider such differences in times like these. They must bring down their pride, and live as they can. That pride is a sort of delusion, after all, which a poor man cannot indulge in these days.”

“ A sort of delusion !” cried Ashly, starting up and putting on his hat. “ Is it a delusion that I stand here a happier (I don’t mean a better) man than you, because I can stretch out my hands and say, ‘ Not a penny of another man’s money has touched these palms ?’ Is it a mistake to think that my children look up to their superiors with different eyes from the little creatures that live on charity ; neither downcast like the humbled, nor bold like the hardened ? Is it not true that all the care, and hunger, and disappointment that I and mine have gone through, are easier to bear than the orders of parish benefactors, and the being mixed up with the bad and the despised ? Here I stand, and I defy any body to despise me. I could set my children in the middle of the church aisle, and dare any one to throw a taunt at them about the place they hold in society. There may be some wiser ; there may be many richer ; but there are none more honourable. Is it a delusion that there is

comfort in feeling this? I beg your pardon, friend," he added, seeing Goodman shut his eyes, as if wanting to go to sleep again; "I beg your pardon for saying all this to you. But it was through misfortune and not fault that you were reduced; and I did not mean to make out that I was any better than you,—only happier. And I should not have said a word about it, if you had not let drop something very unlike yourself, Goodman."

Goodman did not know that he had said any thing that he did not think. He had tried the two ways of living, and so, ought to know; and he was ready to declare that he had had more pain and trouble to provide for his family for the last week, than he was likely ever again to meet with in the workhouse, once having got over the dread of going in.

"You don't mean that you are going into the workhouse any more!" cried Ashly, in fear of the answer.

"O yes, we are going there now; and so we are making the most of the last free afternoon we shall have. The worst of a workhouse is, that one can't go out and come in when one likes. It is better in our workhouse than in many, the governor not being particular as long as one is within the court by bed-time; but it costs something to get over the shyness of asking leave to set foot beyond the threshold."

Ashly hoped that if it should ever be his lot to be driven into a workhouse, he should never get over this shyness. He had rather be fixed in his

bed by rheumatism than range about by the sufferance of those to whom he had surrendered his liberty in exchange for charity-bread. But was it really true that the Goodmans had given up the struggle for which they had so long been honoured by those whose respect was worth having? Was the workhouse to be really their home?

“Why, yes,” said Goodman. “I am quite tired out with seeing my neighbours helped with whatever they chose to ask, while I was left to labour and strive as I might. The only fair thing is to share one with another; and so you will come to think in time, neighbour.”

“By that time there will be nothing left to share. I thought you knew, Goodman, that the help that was given to your neighbours was the very cause of your difficulties.”

“To be sure I do: that is the very thing I have been complaining of all this time. There is Wilde; but they gave him such low wages, I don’t see how he was to do without help. Then there is Tims: he has had a mint of money from the parish; and the more he and his family got, the lower my wages fell. And now Sewell is come upon the rate, for all his pretty legacy; and the Bloggs are talking of making a claim; and, among them, they will drive independent labourers out of the place to seek work; and there is no help for it but doing as others do. So we are going to the workhouse now; and, wife, it is time we were on the foot again, judging by yon shadow.”

“ But don’t you see,” cried Ashly, seizing him by the button ; “ don’t you see that you are doing the very thing you complain of others for doing ? *You* help to leave the independent labourer no chance. *You* do your best to destroy the substance we all depend on. *You* will carry another family into pauperism in your train, and they will carry more ; and so all will become paupers, and nothing will be left.”

Goodman twitched away his button, and bade Ashly call the spoilers to account who had burned him out of house, and home, and work : and if, as wise people said, these spoilers were made such by parish abuses, let him go and call the officers to account. All he had to do with was getting bread for his children while it was to be had ; and so he was on his way to the workhouse.

“ But you can get bread in other ways,” cried Ashly. “ You had work this morning, and have thrown it up. And I know that money was given you to begin with, in the belief that you would ask no more.”

“ I can’t help what they chose to believe,” replied Goodman. “ Their money and my fourteen hours’ work a day would not buy such meat and beer as we shall have to-morrow without toil and trouble. And if the time ever comes, as you seem to think it will, when there will be little meat and beer for any body, I can hardly be worse off than I should be now as an independent labourer. So I shall get what I can in the meanwhile, and trust for the future.”

“ Trust ! Aye, this is the use people make of

the word trust !” said Ashly. “ The squire trusts that the paupers will grow fewer by miracle, I suppose, for nobody sees how it is to happen in any other way, if we go on as we do. The vestry trust that the rate will not go on increasing, though they encourage every body round to come and take a share. They trust that vagrants will leave off coming, though they prepare pence and open a lodging for them. They have trusted that you would keep your family clear of the parish, while they have done their utmost to break down the principle and feelings which kept you independent. And now, here are you trusting that ruin will not come, when you are snatching bread from the mouth of him who has earned it, and robbing the pockets of those whose substance is our only resource. O, I am sick of the word in such mouths !”

“ I am sure,” interposed Mrs. Goodman, “ I have never heard even the clergyman talk more of trust than I have heard from you. When my Nanny had the fever, and you came and held her in her ravings, you bade me trust that she would get well if we followed the doctor’s orders. And when you ran in to tell us of the fire, you said you trusted the children would all be got out safe. And you are for ever bidding Susan trust that you will all do well in time : and now you talk against my husband for using the same word.”

“ But *how* does he use it ? I might as well have trusted that Nanny would recover if you gave her poison, or that your children would be saved if nobody went into your burning house

to wake them, or that my family would prosper if Susan took to cheating and I to drinking, as that our parish will not be ruined by all its labourers becoming paupers. The Bible tells us that not a sparrow falls unless God wills it; but no bible reader expects that the sparrow will hold on its flight when a shot has broken its wing. You and I may trust that Providence will not let us fall into degradation and poverty, but then we must try to keep above them. If we plunge into them, we may wait long enough for a miracle to lift us out."

Goodman meanwhile was summoning the children from their play, and preparing to go. He muttered so as to be scarcely understood, that he did not expect ever to have heard such harsh words from an old friend like Ashly.

"It is because I am such an old friend that I speak as I do," said Ashly. "I am too much bound to you, Goodman, to see you acting unlike yourself without being hurt, and telling you that I am."

Goodman did not see that any body was so bound to him as to have any thing to do with his affairs.

"Yes, I and mine are," replied Ashly. "Did not you walk ten miles to bring a doctor to my Mary? And did not you send in your wife to nurse her to the last, and carry her head to the grave yourself? And have not we worked together at one another's thatch and palings, and got a laugh out of one another many a day when our hearts were heavy? And have not we agreed

a hundred times that if we could keep the overseer from setting foot in Thorpe Corner, we could and would struggle on, upholding each other? And now, you *can* struggle on, and you will not; and yet you complain that I am hurt."

Goodman smiled painfully, and said that it was easy for those who felt themselves getting up in the world to lecture their old companions: it was the way of the world. Ashly resented this speech; Goodman grew angry; his wife began to scold; Ashly raised his voice to make himself heard above the din. The noise reached the neighbouring gravel-pit, where the workhouse labourers were employed, or unemployed. They came pouring over the ridge which hid the pit from sight, to enjoy the quarrel, and exalt it, if possible, into a fight. As soon as they gathered an idea of the subject of dispute, they took part in it so far as to bear down Ashly to the utmost. He had too long and stoutly testified his opinions about a parish maintenance to leave himself any friends among the paupers; and they were delighted to have now found an opportunity of exasperating and insulting him. At every word of Goodman's they slapped the knee and cheered, pressing closer and closer round Ashly to see how he bore it. At every word of his they jeered and mimicked, and the louder he spoke, the more noisily they laughed. He might soon have so far forgotten himself as to strike a blow, if the tormentors around had not begun to form themselves into a ring, and given signs of a wish to bring the strife to this point.

“ I cannot fight you, Goodman,” cried Ashly. “ I cannot make sport for these people with an old friend. Follow me to some place where they cannot come.”

And he broke through the circle, threw off the meddlers who would have brought him back, and turned only once, and for an instant, when the word “ coward ” was shouted after him. Goodman was then standing irresolute, his wife holding him back by one arm, and a stout pauper or two pushing him on from behind.

“ If he does not follow me this instant,” said Ashly to himself, “ I have lost him for ever.” Hearing no rapid steps behind him, he strode on with a swelling heart:—but Goodman was not to be his enemy for ever.

As soon as he had turned his back, Goodman began looking from one to another for that praise and justification of what he had said and done which he could not find in himself. Every body was ready to welcome him into the pauper fraternity, and to assure him that it was high time to break partnership, as to high notions, with Ashly. But when they went on to plunge into the gratuitous abuse of his friend, which, in a crowd of this character, waxes more offensive every moment, they became too disgusting for even Goodman’s anger to endure. When he was told that Ashly was no better than Woollerton, unless a sanctified cheat is better than a bare-faced one ; that he was a sneaking informer against pauper frolics, and moreover knew more of Goldby’s fire than he chose to tell, Goodman

broke from the railers, fled after Ashly, seized his hand in full view of the mob, and was evidently offering peace.

“ If we were alone,” was Ashly’s reply to his gesture, “ I would take your arm and never think of the matter again. But how *can* I be friends with you in a moment, when you have set me up alone to be scoffed at for holding principles which I know to be right? I would have walked with you to the workhouse gate, and set your children within it with my own hands, for friendship’s sake ; but I cannot, in the face of these paupers, so appear to give up my principles.”

Goodman would have allured him on, but he stood firm, saying,—

“ Remember, neighbour, you now belong to the many, and I stand alone. When you were on my side, you might have done any thing with me. But you have chosen to leave me alone, and I shall act for myself. I will not quarrel with you, as I said before ; but not a step further will I move on this path. Farewell, Goodman. If ever you wish to come and see me, you will always be welcome ; and only let me know when you are in distress : but you will not expect me to visit you in the workhouse, unless you were one of the impotent people for whom the workhouse was provided. Farewell, neighbour.”

The wife and children had now come up, and the pauper crew stood at a distance, looking on. They saw Ashly help Goodman to swing upon

his shoulder the basket his wife had brought after him. They saw Ashly kiss the children, and shake hands with Mrs. Goodman, and then strike across a knoll on the heath, in an opposite direction from that in which the pauper family sluggishly pursued their way.

When nothing more was to be seen, the disappointed rabble dropped back into the gravel-pit to recover their coats and tools before proceeding to the village for their evening carouse. They murmured at the want of spirit of both the disputants, and pictured to one another the delight that it would have been to see Ashly well drubbed. The place being soon left clear by his tormentors, Ashly repaired by a circuit to the Mile Cross, and disconsolately laid himself down where Goodman had been lying just before. He charged the pauper system, which he had always considered the bane of his parish, with the breach of an old and much-tried friendship; and revolved in his aching mind all the instances in which he and his friend had been that support and comfort to each other which they could never be again. The sun went down before his thoughts settled upon any other aspect of the circumstances. When the dew began to fall chilly upon his face, he bethought himself of home, and, starting up, felt a thrill of joyful pride animate his reflection, that if he *was* alone, his loneliness was not forlorn. It was for those who had lost their own self-respect to feel forlorn.

CHAPTER XII.

TRY AGAIN.

THE church at Thorpe was seldom so well filled as one Sunday this summer,—the last Sunday in June. Mr. Goldby was to depart the next day, and many friends wished to bid him farewell. The rector had returned after another journey which his health had obliged him to take. He would preach, if able; and if not, would certainly be present; and not only all the more conscientious part of the parishioners went, but several of the careless, who did not wish to be missed from their pews on this day. The successor of Mr. Goldby had arrived during the week; and all who wanted work or amusement took the chance of gaining access to him in the church-yard, or of getting a good view of him during the service. The paupers from the workhouse, who were wont to slip away to pursue their own devices, as soon as the gate was closed behind them, trod all the same path this morning, and actually appeared in the place where they were supposed to be at this hour. The church-yard was busy with groups of talkers before the bell had begun to ring, and Goldby's name was on every tongue. He was talked over with regard to his kindness and his stinginess; the good he had tried to do to the village, and the harm he had always plotted

against the paupers ; the esteem the rector entertained for him, and the trouble the squire had had with him ; the regret of his labourers and old friends at losing him, and the joy of the poor who had ruined him that he was going to make room for a rich man on whom they might fasten their claims afresh. Mrs. Goldby, it was thought, would be a good riddance. For all her kind heart, and her beneficence when people did their duty, she was very much in some persons' way, with her talk of economy, and her mercilessness in making every body work as hard as herself if they would have her favour. Ruth had no enemies. Several were sorry to lose sight of her ; and those who were not, grounded their satisfaction on the truth that she was much better in a respectable service with a good mistress, whose esteem she had won, than in the same village with a mother who had disgraced herself, and a brother from whom nothing was to be hoped. It was thought that the publication of banns which was to be gone through to-day should have been delayed a Sunday or two, that she might have left the parish and be out of hearing. While this gossip was going on, the new farmer crossed the church-yard with Mr. Goldby ; and the rector being known to be in the vestry, every body made haste to follow the stranger in.

Immediately upon the conclusion of the service, the rector requested that no person would leave the church, as some affairs were about to be discussed which were of great importance to

every person present. At this announcement, some hearers were glad that they had come, and others wished themselves away. The only one who attempted to depart was Jay; and he was stopped by a civil inquiry from Dr. Warrener whether he could not spare half an hour, as his testimony would probably be wanted as to the health of some of the parishioners. Jay made a flourish about his patients expecting him, but staid nevertheless, happy in the prospect of being an important personage for once again. Much amusement was excited by his talk of his patients; for it was well known that they were four-footed, and could hardly be much troubled with disappointed expectations about their medical adviser. Jay had gone down in the world since the fires. No profitable patients would employ him; and as he could not make a living out of paupers, however sickly they might be, he had become more and more of a cattle doctor and travelling quack, making excursions into the neighbouring country with pink pill-boxes, and blue-papered phials, and letting it be known that he was prepared to administer either politics or physic, according to the wants of those whom he courted. His figure began to correspond with his fortunes, and he did not this day feel it altogether satisfactory to have the attention of the whole congregation fixed upon it.

The rector explained that the rate-payers of the parish considered the present a good opportunity for laying open to their neighbours the state of parochial affairs, which had become so

critical that a communication of this sort could not be long delayed, and could scarcely be better timed than now, when a new vestry-clerk was about to enter upon his office, and when their respected friend Mr. Goldby was on the point of resigning his place among them to a successor, and would favour them with his parting advice, and the results of his experience. The rector then briefly exhibited the deplorable state of the place as to the funds for the recompense of labour, and for the support of the poor, and as to the proportion between the independent poor and paupers. It appeared that the amount bestowed by individuals in private charity had been doubled, trebled, quadrupled within a few years, till no further increase could be looked for: that the rate had grown in like manner, till the small shop-keepers could no longer answer the frequent calls of the collector; and every farmer in the neighbourhood had let more or less land out of cultivation, and been compelled to sacrifice portions of his capital, one after another, to the permanent and increasing damage of his income, and the certainty of his ultimate ruin. And what had been the effect upon the condition of the poor of all this expenditure? The poor were in an infinitely worse condition than before the expenditure had become large. The total population had increased one-sixth; the pauper population more than one-half; and while more were added to the list every day, there were no funds to answer the demand. The vestry-clerk, who had been left in quiet possession of the

accounts for many a month, had died in debt to the parish 300*l.*; and whence the deficiency was to be supplied was more than the wisest of the vestry could say.

The squire declared that this grievance should not trouble the parish any longer. He considered himself in a great measure answerable for Woollerton's misdeeds, as he had got him appointed, and had screened him, through an ill-grounded confidence, from such observation as should have been exercised upon him. He should the next morning send the vestry his cheque for 300*l.*, and withdraw himself as much as he could from the management of the affairs in which he had always taken a very conspicuous part. He had devoted his time and his money for years past, and seemed after all to have done nothing but harm. He should leave the poor to those who could deal more harshly with them than he had the heart to do.

The rector could not let this last observation pass without remark. They were the least harsh to the poor who most effectually obviated poverty, as those are the kindest parents who avoid spoiling their children. Every poor man in the parish would have been happier at this day, if the relief ordered by law had been restricted to the cases contemplated by the law; and all who were real friends to the poor would unite at the present crisis in bringing about that restriction. A comparison of the classes who were then receiving relief with those which the law contemplated, would show that the restoration must take place

gradually, but that it was highly necessary that it should take place. Dr. Warrener then mentioned that the proper objects for support from the rate were old and impotent persons, who could not be provided for by relations; and that idle persons were originally ordered to be taken into a workhouse, there to maintain themselves by labour.

“Now see,” said he, taking a list from the overseer, “how we have wandered from this intention! Passing over the aged and infirm, and deserted children, without inquiring whether they have relations who can maintain them, I find—

“Widows who, with their children, are able to work.”

Though Dr. Warrener was very careful not to look up from the paper he held in his hand, many eyes were turned upon some representative of each class as he read. Mrs. Brand now fidgetted on her seat, and Peter laughed. Dr. Warrener went on—

“Unmarried mothers and their children.”

The overseer, less considerate than the clergyman, looked full at Jemima when he said that such mothers made matters worse by marrying the paupers with whom they made acquaintance by becoming burdensome to the parish. A stranger would, perhaps, scarcely credit the scandal they had heard with their own ears that day—that, of the two couple who had just been asked in church, the two men were in jail and the two women in the workhouse. Jemima tried to ex-

change smiles with her sister, but Mrs. Brand was not quite so lost to shame as to make light of such an exposure. After the murmur of wonder and indignation had subsided, Dr. Warrener proceeded—

“Vagrants, for whom a lodging is provided, and whose number therefore increases from week to week.

“Apprentices, who having obtained a settlement by apprenticeship, threaten to bring pauper wives from other parishes.

“Household, aye, liveried servants, who make the parish pay for their imprudent marriages, while they eat and drink of the best, and receive their golden sovereigns as the quarter-day comes round.”

Wood, the squire's footman, who stood next the overseer, jogged his elbow, and said that he wished somebody would stop his reverence's tongue, as he was not going to apply for relief any more. The overseer smiled, and was glad to hear it. His reverence went on—

“Jobbers in workhouse clothing. Jobbers in the food and drink of the poor. Jobbers in the dwellings of the poor.”

The shoe-making vestry-man tried not to understand the allusion. Mrs. Woollerton thought she had no more concern in it now that her husband was dead; and Blogg, that having sold his last cottage in Myrtle Row, he need feel nothing at the detail that Jay now entered into, of the sickness and mortality which had prevailed there during the winter. The waste of life and

health had here been so fearful, that no attention was left for the less important expenditure of parish resources which had followed in its train. The next improper burden upon the rate was in favour of—

“ Lawyers, and magistrates’ clerks, for fees and law expenses, which would seldom or never be necessary if parish relief was not improperly claimed.

“ Collectors of the rate, who naturally charge higher the more trouble they have in extorting money from the rate-payers; and finally,

“ Able-bodied labourers.”

Goldby here rose to say that it was not now perhaps very wonderful to his neighbours, that his resources had not been equal to a variety of calls which were as little authorized by reason as by law. He had paid away all his savings for years to support persons who were no more contemplated by the Poor Laws at the time of their formation than the House of Lords; and his reward had been to have his property destroyed by fire, because his neighbours had been encouraged to think him not generous enough. He did not mean to complain now that it was all over, but he wished to relate (in connexion with the subject of relief to able-bodied labourers) a circumstance which showed the consequence of giving that relief. The friend who was to succeed him in his farm had offered work on the preceding day to some exceedingly indifferent labourers at two shillings per day. These men seemed to be unwilling to exchange parish idleness for fairly paid

labour, and refused the work unless they were dismissed at half past four o'clock, or paid extra for whatever work they did after that time. Half past four of a Midsummer day! But this was parish time; and not a minute longer would they work without more pay. A better man than any of them, who had suffered too long for their encroachments, was ready to engage himself without any such stipulation, but had been offered, the farmer was happy to say, the superior terms which his superior work deserved.

Ashly bowed low when he saw many eyes turned upon him, but was more grieved by Goodman's downcast looks than pleased at the compliment to himself. He made bold to say that he was truly thankful to have got work at length, and hoped, with all his heart, for every body's sake, that it would last; but he did not see how it was to last, if any other farmer was to be treated as Mr. Goldby had been. If he was as rich as the squire, he must be ruined by such doings.

The rector believed that every body present was of the same mind with Ashly, and it was therefore to be hoped that they might further agree on such alterations in their mode of management as might in time redeem the parish from its depth of pauperism. The present was not the place or occasion for entering upon the discussion of these new measures, but rather for pointing out——

He was interrupted by a question from an eager person at his elbow, who wished to know

whether he should receive no compensation for a bad bargain which he had made, on the supposition of the administration of the Poor Laws remaining what it had been. Sewell, who had just obtained a fixed allowance on reaching his fiftieth year, and on having spent the last remains of his legacy, had taken the fancy to become a trainper, and had mortgaged the parish allowance to the present applicant. As it appeared that the promise of the allowance being permanent had come from the squire, the applicant was referred to him, there being little probability that the parish would continue Sewell's payment.

The few words which Dr. Warrener wished to say before he dismissed his flock related to the deplorable change which had taken place in the morals, yet more than in the fortunes, of his parish. He could scarcely trust himself with his emotions of grief and shame when he approached this subject. He would only now ask those who heard him whether they saw age revered, infancy guarded, or youth well-trained; whether the sober man was not ridiculed, the industrious man pitied, and all who deserved most of society discouraged in every way. He thought he saw in the faces of many around him that they felt the place in which they were assembled to be profaned by such disclosures as had been offered that day; but he believed that the profanation had taken place long before, when profligates, and consumers of the honest man's substance, and those who had caused and countenanced such profligacy had met to worship in careless uncon-

sciousness of their guilt. If the exposure just made should lead to any degree of rectification of the morals of the parish, the place would have been put to as holy an use as on the most solemn occasion of worship.

The congregation separated as quietly as if at the close of such a celebration. The greater number waited in the church-yard to offer a farewell to Goldby, and entreat his forgiveness for the irreparable injuries he had suffered at the hands of themselves and their companions. He was more ready to pardon than they to entreat; and was, they thought, over-modest in giving his advice to use the advantages of the respectable new beer-shop with moderation, and to be considerate in their claims on his successor. He was recompensed for having his hand almost pulled off with hearty shakes before he reached the gate, by the hope that, as his misfortunes seemed at length to have touched the hearts of his neighbours, he might be the last martyr to the mal-administration of the Poor Laws in the parish of Thorpe.

THE END.

THE HAMLETS,

A TALE.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW

1833.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. The Orphans' Welcome	1
2. Age without Honour	14
3. Queen Elizabeth's Hospitality	35
4. Important Trifles	63
5. Delights of Office	80
6. Holiday Schooling	102
7. Ease with Dignity	119
8. Labour with Dignity	140
9. Last Homes	156

THE HAMLETS.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORPHANS' WELCOME.

It was a very warm May afternoon, when Mrs. Monk, the wife of Monk the fisherman, pursued her way homewards through the weary deep sand which extended between the hamlet of Hurst and her cottage on the beach. Slowly as she walked, the children who were her companions could scarcely keep up with her. She had carried her own little boy, of three years' old, through the roughly-paved street of Hurst, and had set him down on coming to the sand, where, if he fell, he could not easily hurt himself, and in crossing which he might take his own time. The two other children were not her own. They were the orphan children of a fisherman, who had been drowned in a late storm at sea; and Mrs. Monk's errand this afternoon had been to take charge of them from the parish—the overseer having offered to board them with her for eighteen-pence a week. Harriet was a stout girl of ten, and her pale-faced brother, Ben, just turned nine. They

now followed in the train of Mrs. Monk, and kept no more than a respectful distance as long as the child was willing to be half led, half carried by the two elder ones; but—when he wrenched his hand from Ben, to pick up a bit of red lobster-shell, Ben walked off by himself, as if offended, and Harriet found it a hard and warm task to get her charge along, crying, as he did, if she ran on a few steps to lure him forwards, and persisting in stopping every moment while she had hold of his hand. Mrs. Monk had disappeared among the boats, and Ben seemed to have found something curious on the margin of the tide, while Harriet and Fred were but midway over the sand.

Monk seemed to relish the warmth of the weather more than his wife had done. When she arrived, she found him basking on the ground, on the sunny side of his boat, asleep, as a passenger would have declared, but awake enough to half open his eyes when his wife's step approached, and ask her for the tobacco she was to bring him. He thought she never would have come back, and he wanted his tobacco.

Mrs. Monk was frightened to think that she had forgotten the tobacco; but if her husband knew what a bustle there had been——

What cared he for the bustle? She must just step back for the tobacco as quick as she could. It was plague enough that she had kept him waiting all this time.

Could not he just step himself? She had to give these children their suppers, and to manage

about a bed for them ; and she had been in the midst of so much disturbance all the afternoon, she was not fit to be kept standing any longer.

“ So you have brought the children back !— one of them will run to the shop ; do make haste and send one of them.”

Ben looked shy and alarmed, and Harriet offered to go.

“ I suppose,” said Mrs. Monk to her husband, “ you are thinking of putting out to sea, as you can’t get your own tobacco. I don’t like sending the girl back to the shop, such a bustle as there is there ; but, indeed, it is like to be a fine night for the fishing.”

“ No such thing ; it is like to be a rough night, and I am not going to put out with the risk of bad weather.”

“ If it is not too rough, such is just the weather for the mackerel. Dyer is gone out, I see, and Hart is making ready ; and they have both brought in a fine draught since you took your last trip.”

“ And they may bring in another, for any thing that I care ; I shan’t stir to-day. What sort of a bargain did you make about the children ?”

“ We are to have eighteen-pence a week for each of them ; the overseer left word with his wife that it is enough, and I could not say but it was.”

“ ’Tis little enough ; but you must get work out of them to make it answer. They ought to be able to do a deal at their age.”

* “I expect to find them willing; and it is good for young things to work. Indeed, I told Ben that you would take him out fishing to-night.”

“Then you told him wrong, and you may find him something else to do; I shan’t stir to-day.”

Not even to purchase his own luxuries, his wife perceived; and, as it was so, she only hoped he would doze till Harriet could be back with her purchase. It was very provoking that the tobacco should have been forgotten: but a scene had been going forward in the shop which might well serve to excuse the neglect. Reece, the shopkeeper, was the overseer; and, in consequence of his office, was more unpopular than it suits the interest of a shopkeeper to be. In striving to offend nobody, he had placed himself at the mercy of the people about him; and the consequences fell occasionally upon his wife; a timid woman, who was even less able than himself to bear them. Reece was known to be away this day, at Weston, on parish business; and the wives of certain bold paupers had taken the opportunity of frightening Mrs. Reece into giving them money in her husband’s absence. Mrs. Monk had seen her, after faint attempts to return argument for bullying, resort to a boot, one of a pair which stood on a high shelf, and pay therefrom a shilling to one applicant, and eighteen-pence to another, and even so much as half-a-crown to a shrill-voiced, red-faced dame,

who held up her fist in corroboration of her tongue.

Harriet came back in terror, lest she should be also chidden for delay. Mrs. Reece had not been able to attend to her till she had waited a long while; and no wonder, considering the confusion about the door. The constable had been called, and had carried away a woman who had seized the boot in which the money was contained; declaring that she would pay herself what she had a right to. This was going rather too far, even for the gentle Mrs. Reece, and she had ventured to call in the constable. A crowd gathered, of course, about the door; and when Harriet was there they had not dispersed. Mrs. Reece was crying; and it was reported that she repented what she had done, and was going to the magistrate to beg the woman off.

“Well, my dear,” observed Mrs. Monk to Harriet, “depend upon it, it is a better thing for you to be here than to have gone with Bessy. There, now don’t begin to cry, as soon as one mentions Bessy: you will see her very often, you know; quite often enough, in my opinion, if these bullying sort of people are the people she is to live amongst. It will be a wonder if she does not catch up their manners; and as for you and Ben, however little I may be able to do for you, depend upon it you will stand a better chance here than in Hurst Workhouse.”

Harriet knew little about the workhouse, but that her friend Bessy was going to live in it;

and she would have liked to be with Bessy. Bessy was five years older than Harriet; but they had been accustomed to play together, and to go backwards and forwards to school in company, till the farmer had been obliged to drop the school, and nobody had taken it up. Bessy had promised to see Harriet on the beach and on the down as often as she could; and the workhouse people had so much liberty, that this would probably be almost daily; but it was not the same thing to Harriet as if she could have Bessy always at hand, to say any thing to, and to take the lead in all they might have to do. She was very fond of Ben; but Ben might have been in the workhouse too. To make the matter worse this evening, Ben was very cross; whether from shyness (which always made him cross), or from being disappointed of going out to sea, his sister could not tell; but he did not seem to have a word to say to her when Mrs. Monk turned her back for a minute. He dared not yet show any ill-humour to Mrs. Monk or to her husband; Harriet had the benefit of it all.

Her uncomfortable thoughts were not soothed by what she overheard Mrs. Monk muttering to herself about her hopes that this was not the way they were to go on; her husband taking no care about the children, and they seeming so unhappy and so helpless. Harriet was longing for something to do; but she did not know her way about the holes and corners of the cottage, and could not ask to go to bed till she had found out where she was to sleep. She now thought

she could make an effort for Ben's sake; and she asked whether Ben might not go to bed.

"When he has had his supper; but I have had no time to get it for him yet. Shall you get it? Yes, to be sure you may: there is the bread on yonder shelf; and you may have the milk now, instead of waiting for it, if——O, here comes the milk! carry out that jug for it. What's the matter? What is at the bottom of the jug? O, my husband's beer has been in it. Well, wash it—quick!—at that tub of water. Here, let me wipe it with my apron. Now take in the milk. What! can't you cut the bread? Bless me! you must learn. Now, while Ben is getting his supper, come and see what sort of a place we can make for you to sleep in. Ben must sleep with Fred: they will make room to sleep, I warrant, though the place is small; and you can bundle up these things for a bed for yourself in yon corner, I dare say. Very well! you have made a bed before, I see, though you can't cut a crusty loaf. Now, how soon can you be up in the morning, do you think?"

Harriet, who had recovered her spirits by dint of bustling, had little doubt she could be up when Mrs. Monk pleased.

"Very well; then eat your supper, and I will tell you. You know you must set your mind to earning something; both of you, mind, Ben. I can't afford to have you lying about asleep on the down, or doing mischief on the beach, like many older than you that I am ashamed to see, every time I go out. I must look about for

employment for you ; and, meantime, you might as well bring me what wool you can get from the down : between this and shearing-time there will be a good deal on the bushes."

Harriet thought she should like this ; but where was she to put the wool as she got it ? Why, where did she suppose but into an apron that she might take for the purpose ? Harriet happened to have a bag ; and it was agreed that the bag, being the smallest, might do for Ben, and the apron for her. Two wedges of brown bread were put into the bag for their breakfast, and they might come home when they had gathered wool till they were very hungry. This settled, Ben was sent to wash his face at the tub, and go to bed. Harriet was wanted yet a little longer, to put away two plates and a basin ; to throw out some potato-peelings into the ash-hole, and blow the fire to boil the kettle for Monk's cup of tea. When all this was nearly finished, a low wail was heard from the next room. On inquiry, it was found to proceed from Ben ; not yet in bed, but standing in his shirt, wiping away his tears with its ragged sleeve. His grief was that he could not get into bed, as the baby was lying directly across ; his little feet appearing where Ben wanted to rest his weary shoulders, and the same little feet being old enough to kick rather vigorously on receiving a hint to get back into their proper places. This matter being arranged by Mrs. Monk in a moment, and Ben helped by the same hand to lie down without pushing Fred out upon the floor,

the boy was permitted to go to sleep, as soon as he could, under the conviction that he must not move half an inch to the right or to the left.

The children, dreaming anxiously in their unaccustomed beds of the next morning's rising, were happier than Monk and his wife over their tea. The fisherman had not energy to make his circumstances as good as they might be ; but he could complain as bitterly as any man of the declining state of the place, and the wrongs which he supposed himself subject to from certain dwellers in Hurst. He was this evening in high dudgeon, on account of the reported approaching departure of certain housekeepers, who had long been his customers for fish. He understood that Groves was about to remove to the next parish ; and he had himself seen bills in the windows of Moss's house, which was to be vacant at Michaelmas. He wondered what these people came for, if they must go away when they had taught their neighbours to depend upon them for custom, and——

“And for the rates,” observed his wife. “That is the root of the matter, they tell me. The rates are too high for any middling shopkeeper to bear ; so no wonder they talk of going somewhere where they will be taxed less for the parish.”

“As for that matter, they may as well go as stay ; for there is no getting them to pay. You had better look sharp after your three shillings a week for these children ; for I hear that, take

together all that are rated, not above one in five pays."

"Because they can't pay, I suppose."

"Well, but it is such a shame! What is to become of us poor, I wonder, if the better sort grudge us our right in such a way?"

"We must go out fishing in foul weather as well as fair, I suppose," replied the wife, glancing timidly, first out of the window, and then at her husband. "Not that I think it will be foul weather to-night," she continued.

"I am doubtful about it," said her spouse, shutting one eye, and looking up with the other through his own clouds of tobacco smoke into the sky, "I am doubtful still; but, at any rate, it is too late now."

"There is Wilkins's boat but a quarter of a mile beyond the reef," answered Mrs. Monk; "he is not in doubt, it seems."

"His head has not been on his shoulders so many years as mine, love. When it has, he will know better than to go, and get tossed, and drenched, and wearied, when the parish is bound to give him the worth of whatever fish he might find."

"But our rent-day comes round in a fortnight, and we have got nothing ready for it, but what I ought to have by me against my confinement."

"Keep it by you; the parish must pay the rent."

"What reason have we——"

"Have done with your reasons, will you? I

can't pay the rent, and I shall say so ; and let us see whether Reece dares make any objection to the parish doing so ; so much as I buy at his shop. Hold your tongue about my going out, I tell you : it is a pretty thing for you, who stay at home in peace and under shelter, to give me broad hints about putting out, to be tossed and blown about, while every body belonging to me is sound asleep. You may mind your own business, and hold your tongue."

The dame did both to such good purpose that scarcely another word could be extracted from her this night. She minded her own business—the business of the wives of such men as Monk ; she refreshed herself from her hard day's work with a scanty crust, because her husband, who had been doing nothing, ate up the rest of the loaf ; she lighted a fresh candle, to sit down and darn his stockings, when he threw himself, already half asleep, into bed ; she cautiously opened the lattice, because she was sickened with the smoke which still hovered in the apartment, and hastily shut the window again, when her husband gave fearful token that the winds of heaven were visiting his face too roughly. There was little room to wonder that she obeyed the other injunction—to hold her tongue. It was long since she was known to enliven her solitary work by a song, as in the days of her girlhood ; and her little boy was never overheard talking to himself, as children do whose young powers of speech are properly exercised by a cheerful mother.

The children's breakfast was secure, Mrs. Monk remembered, whatever her own might be. She heard them trudge off with it early in the morning, after having turned and turned again in their beds, and called in a whisper to each other to know whether it was time to get up. The matter was decided by guess-work at last ; for the sun was only just peeping up above the eastern waves when they went out, running over the shingle for the first fifty yards, as if escaping from a prison.

It was high noon when they returned, and Monk had been gone to sea some hours.

“ Well, my dears,” said Mrs. Monk, “ did you find any wool ? ”

The question was answered by the children throwing down the apron which they carried between them, and untying it, to show a very respectable bundle of flocks. Mrs. Monk pronounced this a good morning's work, and asked them if they were quite sure that none of their wealth came direct from any sheep's back. They declared that wherever there were sheep on the downs, there had been a shepherd, who would not have let them pluck wool from any but lawful places ; and they also exhibited more pricks and scratches than could have come from any but a most intrepid search among the furze-bushes. Mrs. Monk would now have been satisfied, if the children would have let her ; but they had more wonders to display.

“ You forget the bag,” said Harriet, with a broad smile, while Ben gave a caper before he

stood stock still to watch the effect of the disclosure.

“What; more wool still in the bag? Dear me!”

“Yes, more wool; a little more wool.”

“And something besides wool.”

“Now, don’t tell,” said the children, interrupting one another.

The sight was worth seeing when, at last, it did appear: four smooth, pure white eggs—the delicate eggs of the guillemot—came forth from the wool with which the bag was lined.

“Mercy, children! you have not been over the cliff, to be sure!”

“No, the cliff-ravens got these for us,” said Harriet. “We saw a big raven light, and we guessed what he had got; and we went when he flew away, and under some bits of chalk we found this egg.”

“No, no,” said Ben; “this one was the first we got: that other came from under the furze-bush. This was the one that lay in the hag-track.”

“Ah, so it is. Well, these other two are what we watched for, when once we had begun to find. There was somebody shooting below; and when the wills flew off the benches, the ravens popped down, and we followed them—O such a way—when they came up again. Are they not pretty eggs?”

“Very fine eggs, and quite fresh, no doubt: we may trust the ravens for getting fresh eggs. Now my advice is, that you take them to the

Cottage to sell. The young ladies may not know yet, being strangers, how much is thought of these eggs ; but you may as well try. I shall be glad if you make something of your first fetch of eggs. But, stop ; don't be in such a hurry to tie your bonnet, Harriet. The potatoes are just ready, and you must have your dinners first. Now can you creep up into the loft, and find a corner to stow the wool in till shearing-time ? Then we will have a cleaning of all you have got. Hand the apron up to your sister, Ben, while I take off the potatoes, and then make yourself tidy to go to the Cottage."

CHAPTER II.

AGE WITHOUT HONOUR.

MR. BARRY, the owner and inhabitant of the Cottage, was a gentleman of small fortune, who had only lately become a resident at Hurst. He had two daughters, the eldest of whom was now out of health, and it was on her account that the family had left London, and come to live on their sea-side property. They had now been at Hurst long enough to become aware that if its state had been understood by them some months before, they should have chosen some other part of the coast, notwithstanding the advantage of

having here a house of their own to live in. The curse of pauperism appeared to spread itself over the whole place, and, like one of the Egyptian abominations, penetrated into the recesses of every house. Mr. Barry found not only drunkenness in the streets, idleness on the downs, discontent in the farm-house, and pining misery in the hovel, but fraud, spreading from the transactions of the overseer's office till it tainted all the dealings of the place. The servants he had brought with him were no longer what they had been; and it became nearly as difficult to his daughters to deal with tradesmen as to escape from beggars. For his part, his income was not so large but that he felt the pressure of the heavy poor-rate to be a great grievance; and it was a melancholy thing to look forward to the annual increase which must be expected under the continuance of the present system. He was very explicit on the subject of his concern and apprehensions with the neighbouring gentlemen at whose houses he dined, and whom he met at church, or in his rides and walks: but though they agreed as to the evils of the general state of things (which nobody could pretend to think a good state), there was great difficulty in bringing any two to assent to any one remedial method. Mr. Rickman, the farmer, would hear no more against paying wages out of the rate than Copland, the builder, against discharging the rents from the same source. Colonel Lee did not see how the allowance system was to be dispensed with; and the

curate, Mr. Shaw, thought it the plain duty of Christians to give more and more willingly to the indigent, the more indigent there were. When it was hinted that Christian charity might do more honour to its name if it could supersede misery instead of palliating it, if it could lessen the number of the indigent, instead of reconciling the poor to indigence, he smiled, and promised a sermon on this new aspect of an old virtue, as soon as a tangible exemplification of it should be presented to him. On one point all these gentlemen were now, however, likely to arrive at the same conviction. The scenes of riot which had this day taken place in Reece's shop exhibited clearly the principle, that a shopkeeper is not the proper dispenser of optional relief among his customers. It was pretty evident that Reece must cease to be overseer, though it was not so certain that a successor could be found, who would not be more or less shackled by the same incumbrances of private interest. All the tradesmen of the place were circumstanced like Reece; and the farmers had ricks that might be burned by angry paupers, and must pay wages which might be conveniently eked out by parish-pay. If there had been a certain fixed mode of relief appointed, which neither farmer nor tradesman could think of altering, there would have been an end at once of temptation and suspicion; of apprehension on the part of the distributor of parish bounties, and of extravagant expectation on the part of the receivers. Such a fixed mode did not yet exist, however; and, in its absence,

the best measure seemed to be to appoint an overseer who bore the least possible relation of pecuniary interest to the people of Hurst. Mr. Barry was such an one ; and as he was willing to take the office upon himself at a particularly troublesome time, nothing was said against his appointment, though the farmer, the magistrate, the tradesman, and the clergyman had each his secret belief that the new overseer would fail in some wild scheme or another for the improvement of parish affairs.

Not that Mr. Barry was usually considered any thing of an enthusiast. No one could harbour such an idea who saw him jogging along on his tame pony, observing every thing he passed, and nodding at most things that he observed, as if they corroborated something in his own mind. His whole demeanour showed, as plainly as demeanour can show any thing, that though his good-humour would allow of other people being in the clouds as much as they would, he must beg to be excused from mounting there himself. He had always enough before his eyes, he believed, to occupy him fully ; and though others might soar for a wider lookout, it suited him better to take what was put in his way as subject matter for the moderate degree of thought and action which was necessary to his happiness. He was no more of a bustler than he was of a schemer ; no more of a meddler than of a visionary ; and no one would have thought of ascribing impracticable plans to him, if some of his declared notions had not been at variance

with the state of things, which seemed, by some natural necessity, to be sinking from bad to worse, and from worse to desperate.

It was settled, no one objecting, that Mr. Barry was to be overseer ; and Reece took down, for the last time, his parish pair of boots, in order to render up his account of the expenditure of the year. When he had produced a few shillings and sixpences from the right boot, and receipts for many hundreds of pounds from the left, his business was done, as far as he could pretend to discharge it. He could give no account of the money raised, except in as far as it might be deduced from a comparison of the list of rate-payers as it stood on Joy, the tailor's measure (Joy having been overseer three years before) with the list of arrears now presented on a slate. As for parish-books, if there were any, Reece was guiltless of all knowledge of them. The gentlemen might depend upon it all must be right enough if he kept money in one place, and carefully put away the receipts in another : but if it would satisfy them better to cast up the sums, they were welcome to do so, for any offence it would occasion to him. The gentlemen made use of the permission thus kindly offered, and found that the receipts exhibited an expenditure of 1245*l.*, and that the list of arrears required as close an examination as Reece's claim for the repayment of advances made in consequence of these arrears.

Mr. Barry entered on his office as quietly as if all was going right in it. He did not fret and

fume among the delinquent rate-payers, nor boast to the paupers that they had a new hand to deal with, and would find that that hand was about to turn over a new leaf. He was known to have visited the workhouse, and to have had it measured and examined by a builder. The railing which filled up the fourth side of the square in which the workhouse stood was removed, and the space built up of solid brick, like the three other sides; and even the door in this wall had no peep-hole left, except a very small wicket; so that the gaieties of the road could no longer be seen. Mr. Barry had also been observed walking to Weston, and trotting to the other neighbouring hamlet of Barham; and reports were abroad of the new overseer having insisted on there being a new governor of the workhouse, and of his having been permitted to make his own choice of this officer. Beyond these small movements, there was no bustle caused by the change of administration.

Mrs. Monk was one day dropping a few tears over a folly of her own, when Goody Gidney, an aged pauper, came over the sands, as was her frequent practice in summer, to chat with her, and spend a few sighs over the fancies of people who would not be satisfied with good old ways. Mrs. Monk's folly was the having told her husband that she had a little money laid by against her confinement; a communicativeness proved to be folly by his having given notice that he wanted the money particularly; not to pay his rent—the parish must do that—but for some secret pur-

pose: she suspected to risk in a smuggling adventure. This was an occasion which might excuse a few tears: the fancies over which Goody Gidney came to sigh were some of those which had been anticipated from the new overseer.

“Now, sit ye down,” said Mrs. Monk; “it is some time since I’ve seen you abroad, Goody.”

“And that’s the more wonder, as they have left us so little to look at at home. It is seventy years this Midsummer that I have had my seat inside the workhouse paling, to look out upon the road, morning and evening, summer and winter; and now they have filled up all with brick-work, so that there is nothing to be seen but a carrot-bed just under the wall. The place is so dull now, that the wonder is, as you say, that I have not been more abroad.”

“Seventy years, did you say, Goody? I knew you were well acquainted with the inside of the workhouse, but I had no notion you could have been there so long. Seventy years have you sat within those pales?”

“Not till next month; seventy years come Midsummer, was what I said. I was just past five years old when my mother brought me in with her; and I remember her setting me up on those very pales—only they have been painted often since—to see the geese on the down; for there was no row of cottages there then. After the geese, there was a potato-field there; and when the potato-field was let down, it was made the pound; and many a laugh we had at the

cattle that were put in. Then, when there was no cattle in the hamlet but the farmers', that were not likely to get into the pound, it was taken down, and the new row of cottages built."

"The new row!" exclaimed Mrs. Monk; "why, Goody, I was born in one of those cottages."

"May be so; for you are but a youngster, though your husband was just going out of his frocks, I remember, when I was thinking of marrying Tom Cocks, the villain that ran away and left me. There must be thirty years, I fancy, between you and your husband. Well, but as I was going to say, whatever might be opposite the workhouse, there was generally something passing to amuse us; especially in the season when so much company comes to the sea; and now it is all shut out with this ugly brick wall. However, it does not signify to me so much as to some others—to those who are to stay behind."

"Why, indeed, as the parson says, Goody, the passing shows of this world signify little to —"

"O, I don't mean that," replied the old dame; "I am not so old as you think for. What I am thinking of is our moving to Weston. They are going to remove us old folks and the children to Weston."

"After you have been steady to the same place for a long life! Well, that does seem hard; and what will you do at Weston?"

"They say we are to be more comfortable and

quiet at Weston than we can be here ; and I don't mean to deny that there may be more noise than suits old heads in our place : at least, I see some of the poor old creatures, that have not been long used to it, like me, grow very cross about the clatter of the men over their beer. But I' would put up with that rather than quit ; that is, if they left the paling as it was."

" But I don't understand about Weston ; nobody lives there but the market-gardener : the only other house that I know of is the squire's, and that has been shut up these six years."

" That is all true ; but the parish has a great concern in that small hamlet, though nobody lives there but the market-gardener. There was such a number of settlements got there by service in the squire's family, that it is a great expense, they say, to the parish. Now, if the different hamlets help one another, they think they can lessen the expense : so all the old and weakly folks and children are to go from this workhouse to live in the empty place they are making ready at Weston ; and any middle-aged, working people that claim relief at Weston are to be received here ; and some say that Barham is to be taken into the bargain too."

" Well, it seems to me an odd way of saving, to make two workhouses, when there was only one before ; but you will have a fine air, Goody, on that hill, and a sweet view as one need look upon, and quite within a walk of your old friends too. 'Tis an easy walk for you still, I should think."

“ Still ! what should hinder my walking as well as ever I did, I wonder ? ” said the offended dame ; “ I fancy we shall be better off as to seeing our friends than those that stay behind ; for ’tis said there is to be great strictness about going in and coming out of the workhouse.”

“ Ay, there is always talk of that when a new overseer comes in. I remember it when Rickman took it ; and in Reece’s early time ; and, to be sure, they both look as if they could be cross ; but to look at Mr. Barry—Dear me ! how it made me start ! seeing the young ladies outside, just when I was speaking of their father—Walk in, young ladies. Please to walk in, Miss Barry, and Miss Emily. It was the children you wanted, I dare say. We were glad you liked the eggs—they are considered a great dainty hereabouts. I am sorry to see Miss Barry look as if she wanted more such good nourishment.”

It was on business about the children that the ladies came ; not only to praise the eggs, and promise to take more whenever brought quite fresh, but to give notice of a certain arrangement about their schooling. The ladies repeated what Goody Gidney had told of the intended removal of part of the workhouse establishment to Weston : eleven old and sick people, and twenty-five children were to be there placed ; leaving forty-four able-bodied paupers behind. The easy, good-tempered governor was to look after the old and young, who were attached to him, and his wife was to be schoolmistress to the five-and-twenty children. Any children

who had been placed out by the parish, as Harriet and Ben were, were to be permitted to attend the school, on the condition of bringing to the workhouse, by a certain hour, a daily portion of grass for platting, from the marsh where it grew in abundance: which marsh they must pass on their way home. The Miss Barrys were anxious that Harriet and Ben should have the advantage of attending this school, and came to urge Mrs. Monk to let them go.

Mrs. Monk had not the least objection to the children learning whatever the ladies thought they should know; but she hoped they would consider the difference the schooling would make to her in respect of their work. It was hard enough to make it answer to keep them now, as it was. She conceived she had a title to all their labour, such as it was, and to all that it might be when they grew up to labour to better purpose. If they were out for five or six hours a day, wearing shoe-leather all the time, and came home tired, as she supposed they would, she could not undertake to keep them both for three shillings a week.

“You must speak to my father about that part of the business,” said Miss Barry; “for it is a matter that Emily and I have nothing to do with. The interests of the children are what we are thinking of; and it seems to me that we can hardly consider them too carefully.”

“Very true, Miss Barry. When one thinks of their poor mother, laid in the churchyard, and their father, down under the sea, and remember

that the same may happen to one's own any day, one would not look too close to one's own interest, except that they are the charge of the parish, and the parish should take care of its own."

"To be sure," interposed Goody Gidney, "that is what I have always said, when they have wanted to drive me out here and there, and nobody knows where, for a livelihood. 'I belong to the parish,' says I always, 'and the parish is bound to take care of its own.'"

"So to take care of its own," observed Miss Barry, "as that they shall least suffer for being under its charge. We are too apt to forget what we really mean when we talk of the parish, and to think of it merely as some place from which shillings and sixpences are to come when they are called for."

"Yes," said Emily, "we talk of the parish as if it were something separate from all of us; as we might speak of the parliament up in London, or the Indies, or the other side the world. But the parish is made up of you and me, and papa and Mr. Copland, and every body; and we have all agreed together to take charge of these poor orphans, and be what their parents might have been to them. Then comes the question how we shall bring them up; whether they shall remain ignorant, and turn out idle, as most parish-children have done here, or whether we shall have them taught as if we really cared for what we have undertaken to do for them."

“ I am sure I have done what is in my power, ladies. I have fed them better than I have fed myself, and sent them to their sleep many a time when I should have been glad enough of Harriet’s help ; and I will say that they have learned no wickedness here, and that I have taught them much that they did not know before, in the way of handiness about what they undertake.”

“ Very true, indeed, Mrs. Monk ; we have observed all this, and we are anxious that they should stay with you rather than be taken into the school ; which they must be, unless you can spare them daily. My father hopes that from this school the children will turn out quite different from what they were in the old work-house, and he makes it a rule that all the parish-children attend it. You must remember how much more likely they will be to repay you for your care of them, after being properly taught, than if they spent their whole time on the down, and in nursing your baby, and helping you in house matters. It is very right that they should do all these things, but we should take care that they know how to do more ; that they should be qualified to get free of the parish as soon as possible.”

“ Recollect what an advantage it will be to you,” added Emily, “ when Harriet can do your sewing for you, and Ben be trusted to sell your husband’s fish, and reckon the money right. Those will be the times when they will repay

you for sparing them now for four or five hours in the day."

Goody Gidney observed that parish children were left to shift for themselves in the workhouse in her day, without being made of so much consequence as boys and girls were considered now-a-days.

Emily rather thought these same neglected parish children had managed to make themselves of more consequence to the parish in the end than the parish quite liked. One such, she knew, had left two children, and fourteen grand-children a burden upon the rates. Another had never been able to settle, and had cost the parish more in removals than an abode of seventy years in the workhouse, like Goody's own, would have done. The bones of a third were swinging on a gibbet in some distant place, where he had carried the name of his parish to disgrace it; and several more had involved their native place in heavy fines to repair the mischief they had done in rick-burning and other violences. It was better, it appeared to Emily, to make children of consequence enough to keep them out of harm's way, and cure their ignorance, when they were young, than to drive them to distinguish themselves miserably when they grew up. How was the parish to answer to the parents of the orphans who grew up profligates and murderers,—much more to the great Parent who expressly deposited this charge,—for having acquitted itself no better of its responsibility?

Mrs. Monk acknowledged that she should

never forgive herself if Ben should become a rickburner, from her having done anything to prevent his knowing better. She should think his mother was looking down from the sky, and his father up from the sea, to reproach her: but it seemed to her rather a new thing to take the case of parish children so much to heart.

“If we consider,” said Miss Barry, “how many are made parish children by ourselves, the wonder is that we can be so careless as we have been about what becomes of them. Now and then it pleases God to throw little children on our mercy, by taking away their parents, and leaving them without natural guardians; but it much oftener pleases man to bring families under the cruel mercy of the parish by mismanaging the labour on which we all live, and by interfering with the course of industry. It pleases man to separate children from their natural guardians, by either tyranny or temptation, too strong for the poor and the ignorant to resist. The least that man can do in reparation is to place the children in no worse a condition than they would have been in the home provided by independent industry. If the parents are driven upon the parish, or tempted into the workhouse, nothing can repair the injury to them; but to bring up their little ones to such a destiny as that of parish children usually is, is an iniquity which God will no more pardon than man ought to endure.”

Goody Gidney took snuff in sign of offence at hearing paupers thus spoken of. She thought

she had gone through life very decently, and challenged any body to say any harm of her,—brought up, as she had been, by the parish. The ladies thought that if she was uncouscious of any impropriety in having lived seventy years at other people's expense, and in leaving the world without having done anything for society, except trying its patience, there was little use in argument. A glance from Mrs. Monk also showed them that Goody's destiny was not exactly that which she should covet for Harriet. It was thought that the old pauper had never earned so many pence as Harriet had received already for eggs, wool, and running of errands,—in which last occupation she was employed in the place of many an abler-bodied person who disliked the trouble of walking in hot weather, and preferred sleeping away the intervals of parish pay.

As Harriet ran in at the moment to give notice that Monk's boat was in sight, and coming in quick with a fair wind, the ladies inquired of her what she and Ben meant to do with their pence as they got them? Mrs. Monk sighed, and said there was a sad want of some safe and profitable place in which to store up small sums. The ladies were surprised to hear this complaint when they knew there was a Savings Bank at Barham: but they had to learn that the men of Hurst would not let any one belonging to them deposit money openly, lest the parish should know of it, and make a difficulty about paying their rents, and the allowance for

their children. When it had come out that Monk had prohibited his family from having anything to do with the Savings Bank, the young ladies asked whether they could be of use in taking care of any small sums the children might have from time to time. Mrs. Monk eagerly called Miss Emily out of Goody's hearing, and begged to be included in the offer, producing a bit of blue rag tied up, which yielded the eleven shillings she had long been saving to help to answer the expenses of her confinement.

While Mrs. Monk was hunting high and low for a pen to dip into the dusty ink, with which her husband had now and then to scrawl a bill for fish, and with which Emily was now wishing to write an acknowledgment of the eleven shillings, Harriet disappeared to watch again for the boat which was bringing Ben from his first trip. In a few minutes, both girl and boy reappeared, hauling along a pannier of fish, too heavy to be carried more than three steps without resting. They brought a message that Mrs. Monk was to go down and bring up the nets, and then be sorting the fish till Monk should come home from the public-house, where he was gone to refresh himself.

Ben had been very sick before he landed; and he looked rather crossly at Harriet as she stood clapping her hands to see how high the last wave carried the boat upon the beach; but when he bethought himself of showing how his hands were chafed with the line, and saw how proud Harriet was of his having caught an oar which was

near falling overboard, and how miserable at his having nearly fallen overboard himself, he grew grand and good-humoured, and thought Mrs. Monk might perhaps not trouble herself about the nets, but leave the contents of the boat in his charge. He insisted upon it that he knew perfectly well what was in the boat, and what was to be done, but was desired, with a wink, to go down and touch nothing, but wait till she should come. Perceiving that the wink related to themselves, (Goody having slipped away on finding that she had had her share of notice for this day,) the ladies took leave, hoping that the children's attendance at the school would be secured without their being removed from under Mrs. Monk's care.

The mood of complacency in which they left Mrs. Monk, from her having disposed safely of her money, and been honoured by a visit of consultation from the ladies, was soon disturbed by the fisherman, who returned wrathful at what he had heard at the public-house, and perhaps a little the worse for what he had taken in his heated and hungry state. He stalked in between his wife and the children, who were seated on the shingle, busy about the fish, blamed them for his stumble over a line which he had not perceived, and desired Mrs. Monk to make haste and fetch him what money she had. She tremblingly produced two sixpences and three halfpence, which were jerked angrily out of her hand upon the shingle, where it

would be well if the sixpences should prove recoverable among the large stones.

“What makes you so lazy?” he cried. “’Tis not what is in your pocket that I want, but what you have laid by. Up and fetch it, I say.”

“I have no more money than this,” she replied. “There is not a farthing in the house. You may go and see.”

“Then you lied when you said there was. You said you had got some against the autumn.”

“So I did, and so I have; and I am not going to spend it, or let any body spend it, before the autumn. I am not going to let the child that is coming wait on charity, any more than the child that is playing yonder, while I can work and save for them both. The money—and little enough it is—is safe, where you will not get it; which you would do if it was in the house.”

“If you have dared to go to the Savings Bank——”

“I have neither been nor sent, nor had any dealings with the bank, because you forbade me: but you will not forbid me making ready for my time, I am sure, husband, nor be angry at my doing what every decent wife should. Think how many husbands there are that make the contrary complaint!”

Monk did not deny this; but his wife did not know all. It was his belief that Barry must be mad, as to parish matters.—He had actually

given notice that no more rents would be paid from parish-funds; and, what was yet more absurd, that every dwelling in the hamlet was to be rated.

“Rated! why, he is not going to rate us?”

“Yes, but he is; and even poorer cottages than ours. So now you may see whether I am not likely to want all the money I can get. As for paying the rate, that is all nonsense; I can’t do it, and I won’t: but ’tis the not having my own rent paid that puzzles me. I have not had so much as a doubt about it these four years. I don’t see but what we must turn out when our landlord chooses to turn us out.”

“Where?”

“Into the workhouse, I suppose.”

“Oh dear! I suppose, husband, rather than that, you would go out fishing without so much minding the weather—you would not have a child of yours born in the workhouse!”

Monk believed that many as good as he had had children born in the workhouse, and thought no harm of it. All he knew was, that he could pay neither rent nor rate; and rate enough was like to be wanted to answer for Barry’s mad pranks. It was said he had refused to make payments to a distance in favour of those who had settlements at Weston; offering to take all home who could not do without relief: so, if half a dozen families came back into the workhouse, to save the little that was now paid to a distance——”

“The little! why, it is upwards of fifty pounds a year.”

“ Well, if it be, how will you maintain four or five families on fifty pounds a year ? ”

“ If they should choose to come, indeed, it would look something like waste then. I suppose our better sort of rate-payers will be making more haste than ever to places that are less burdened.”

“ To be sure they will, and leave us the burden.”

“ We being ourselves part of the burden ; you and I, grown up and hearty, as much as these young orphan things. Well, if each could bear his own burden, I could fancy I might reconcile myself to it very well ; paying our own rent, and somehow getting bread for our own children ; but as to making us bear a part of other people’s burdens, I can’t think what Mr. Barry means by proposing such a thing—except that it reminds me of what Miss Emily was saying, that the parish is not an empty name, but made up of them and us, and all that live in it ; and that we are all equally bound to help the helpless, as far as we can ; the poorest as well as the richest. This may be Mr. Barry’s reason for rating us all ; and this is the way, perhaps, to find out who are the helpless.”

And as she looked at her stout husband lifting Ben out of his way with the left hand, and shifting his boat with an application of the right foot, Mrs. Monk thought her husband would scarcely like to be called, in so many words, one of the helpless.

CHAPTER III.

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S HOSPITALITY.

It appeared, in course of time, that Mr. Barry had fully possessed certain of his neighbours of his wishes and designs with respect to the parish poor; for there were some who expressed neither surprise nor dismay at what astonished others not a little, and who did not attempt what was expected of them in opposition to the new plans.

There had been reports current for several days about the expected arrival of a new governor of the workhouse, on the departure of all but the able-bodied paupers for Weston, when it was made known in Hurst that the present Thursday was the oddest pay-day that had ever been known in the hamlet.

Monk had been to ask for his quarter's rent, thinking it as well to avoid all notice of what he had heard of the intention of making no more such payments. Mr. Barry had told him that the law did not authorize this mode of relief. Monk had declared himself unable to pay it, and had been offered an order for the workhouse, for himself and his family, as the only assistance offered by the law to those who could not provide themselves a shelter. Monk had muttered something about the magistrates, and departed very

angry at being offered the workhouse, though he had talked to his wife about claiming it.

Hornman, the labourer, had asked, as usual, for the half-crown and two eighteen-pences necessary to make up his wages, and had been taken by surprise with a refusal. On pleading the invariable custom since he had been a farmer's labourer, of supplying from the parish-fund the bread which his wages would not buy for his children, he was told that this bread might be had in the workhouse, if he chose to go there with his family; good bread, and plenty of it, clean clothing and lodging, to be paid for by the work to be done in the workhouse-yard. Hornman thought it out of the question to give up his employment, and eight and sixpence a week, in order to get relief, and was informed that he might then refuse it. He might shift for himself out of the house, or be provided for in it; but to allow him to unite the advantages of the two ways of living would be an injustice to the independent labourer.

The next man who applied declared that he and his young wife must starve if their five shillings were withheld, and made no scruple about entering the house; for which an order was therefore immediately supplied. A number of idle persons followed his example, knowing that it was considered no bad lot to live in Hurst workhouse, where the people had hitherto been allowed to do pretty much what they pleased, and whither many would have gone, long ere this, but for the convenience of receiving their

pay at home. They found to-day, however, that their notions were not at all suitable to the actual state of things.

The doors were thrown open to them without the slightest hesitation, and Millar, the new governor, received them kindly.

“ You will find every thing comfortable, I hope, as long as you are obliged to be here ; and I shall be happy to give any information which may help you to employment, and release you again. Meantime, you will find your work ready for you in the yard. I will show it you when you have changed your dress ; and my good woman will take charge of your wife.— Walk that way, friend, and you will find Mrs. Millar waiting to give you your dress.”

So there was to be a workhouse dress ! that was a new fancy : and what might the work be ?

“ Stone-cutting, and a daily portion allotted to each man.”

But Adams could not cut stone ; it was hard work, and he had never tried it.

“ Try it now, then ; and if you cannot do it, there are bones to be broken. You shall have a hammer ; and any body can break bones : but the stone-cutting is the superior sort of work.”

“ And what is my wife to do while I am breaking bones ? ”

“ She will be employed with the other women, at their side of the house. Mrs. Millar will see that she has what she wants, in the way of work and every thing else. Now move

on, if you please ; and when you are washed and dressed, I shall have done speaking to the people behind you."

It was so long since Adams had been in so clean a place, that he looked round him with some degree of awe, and walked as if he trod on eggs. The most splendid carpet could not have felt more strange to his feet than the well-scrubbed boards ; and no furniture could have excited his wonder more than the long row of white deal tables which stretched from end to end of the eating apartment. Not a speck, or a crack, or a cobweb was to be seen along the whole range of the whitewashed walls ; and the lattices, as clear as the air itself, afforded a fine view of the perspective of the cement lines of the outer wall.

When he had beautified himself with soap and water, to a degree which he had not practised since his mother taught him how to dress on a Sunday morning, Adams walked back through the same solemn silence, vexed at the creaking of his prodigious workhouse shoes ; made to last as long, apparently, as he could possibly abide in the place.

The silence remained no longer than during his passage to the yard ; where there was the grating of the saw, the thumping of the bone-hammer, and almost every other sound that could be anticipated, except that of loud voices. This, they were informed, could be no more permitted in the yard of a workhouse than of a farm or curing-house. Such conversation as did not

hinder their own or other people's business, they were welcome to ; but order was the rule of the house. Under this permission, nothing remained but to grumble over that hardest work of all—work which brings no disposable pay.

Adams had soon had enough of it. The stone-cutting shook his arms to the shoulder-blade, he declared ; and the bone-breaking seemed as likely to break his bones as those on which he was employed ; his back would never stand it. One other choice remained ; there was the corn-mill in the shed. On hearing of the corn-mill, five or six joined Adams in choosing that kind of work ; hoping that there would not be room for more than half of them, so that the other half might take their ease. To their great disappointment, it was found that the handle might be extended to any length, so as to admit the application of any degree of power, and that the entire population of the workhouse, when fullest, might be employed in grinding corn. Another provoking circumstance was, that the grinders had not the amusement of seeing the effects of their labour ; a partition having been put up between the mill and the handle. This was the fault of some mischievous paupers, preceding the present set. They had thrown dirt and pebbles into the corn, and thus compelled the governor to exclude their successors from the sight of their own work. It was not his fault that they worked at their handle like blinded horses in a mill.

No mill-horse ever tossed his head and shook his sides with more satisfaction on being unharnessed than these paupers made their way to the dinner-table, on the bell being rung. There was something, however, in the aspect of the apartment which at once quieted their glee. The cleanliness and order put them in mind of Sunday; of the old Sundays, which they did not like to look back upon; and there was nothing very tempting in the share of bread and mug of water which was set for each man. There was quite enough food for the most hungry labourer that ever longed for his dinner; yet where was the beer?

No beer was allowed in the workhouse. The labourers out of doors found it difficult to get beer; and why should the paupers, whom they helped to support, expect it?

No beer! Was ever such a thing heard of?—Then they would make haste and finish eating, that they might have time to smoke a pipe before they set to work again.

Not so: tobacco was even more out of the question than beer. How should their neighbours out of doors afford to give away luxuries, when they could barely get necessaries for themselves?

Great was the wonder what Goody Gidney would do without her snuff, and Adams's poor old father without his pipe; and all the aged women up at Weston without their tea. Much was said about cruelty—much that might have

been spared—for it was presently explained that tobacco, beer, and tea were allowed at Weston. It was granted that the aged, who had become unable to do without the little luxuries which they had earned for themselves in their better days, ought to be cheerfully supplied with these things, under the calamity of becoming paupers in their time of helplessness, but it was declared that all indulgences should be disdained by the strong who could not earn them.

As there was nothing to be done at table but to eat bread and drink water, under the eye of the governor, every one was rather glad of the signal to be moving again. Several had already begun tattooing the floor or the benches with heels and knuckles, and one or two seemed half asleep, when their munching was done; while certain fidgety persons near swung first one leg and then the other over the bench, leaned first one elbow and then the other on the table, and finally folded their arms and gazed all about for something to look at. These jumped up, like schoolboys from their lessons, when the half hour was up; but not all to hasten to work.

“I can’t work any more to-day, sir; that confounded grinding has half broke my back; I can’t work any more to-day.”

“I am sorry for that. You can’t eat any more to-day, then.”

“Lord! sir; I must have my supper.”

“Certainly, if you earn it. Not without.” And this was all that could be got out of Mr. Millar.

"I can't work any more to-day, sir," declared another; "I am not fit for work."

"I am sorry for that; what is the matter?"

"I am not well; no more fit for that work than a man just out of Barham Hospital."

"The doctor will call presently, and he shall see you. You can wait here till he comes."

The patient thought the fresh air of the yard would be better for him than being alone in a room; but till the doctor ordered fresh air, the quiet, airy room was considered by the governor to be the better place.

"If you will show me where I am to sleep, sir, I should like that better."

"You can't be quieter than you will be here till supper-time; and we do not allow going up and down stairs during the day. How long have you been ill?"

"O, I am often ill, with a pain of my own; I can't work when I have it bad."

"It has come on since noon, I think, has it not?"

"Why, yes, in part. 'Tis very bad now."

"Well, the doctor will soon be here. You can keep as quiet as you please till he comes."

The doctor came, and considered that there was no immediate danger, general as this pain of the inside seemed to be. He thought an emetic this afternoon, and plenty of camomile-tea to-morrow, would most likely send it away for a good while. He would probably have been proved right, if the case had continued as bad as when he saw it; for the mere sight and scent

of the emetic restored the patient to his place at the corn-mill, and prevented any return of the pain for that day.

The corn-mill was unavoidably noisy, like other corn-mills, and there were some delicate personages among these paupers who could no more abide noise than some others could reconcile themselves to quietness. While one was telling his neighbour that he would not stay to be sent to sleep with dulness over his meals three times a-day, another vowed he would not remain to have his head shaken to pieces with the grating of the mill. Others had misgivings of a different kind.

“I say, Jem, what’s to be the end of all this?”

“No end, that I see. Here we may work away, I suppose, sawing and sawing, grinding and grinding, as long as we have to stay.”

“Without ever seeing the colour of money for all our pains! Well, work is work every where; but it is twice as hard where one gets nothing for it.”

“Except such food as one can mostly manage to get without being kept in a prison for it. I had rather have half a meal, and eat it where and how I please, than a whole one in a prison. I have no notion of being made a prisoner because I am poor; I won’t stand it. I will go and tell the governor so.”

“And so will I; and it is odd if my wife is not of my mind by this time, if they deal with the women as they deal with us. My wife won’t

consent to go without her tea, I will answer for her. I'll go and see."

The governor came as soon as called, to be told that it was a very wicked thing to imprison people because they are poor; to which he fully agreed.

"Then why do you make prisoners of us, sir? All because we are poor."

"I always thought that a prison was a place where people were put in and kept in without their will; which is not the case here. You asked to come in; and if you choose to go away again, nobody hinders you."

"I'll take you at your word, sir, and go; I'd rather do any body's work than yours, any day, and have my liberty."

"With all my heart: if you can get other work, you have no business to be here. If you cannot, you will be thankful for having this place to come to, to earn food and shelter. As soon as you think you can get work, I would advise you to go. The doors will be open to-morrow morning."

"I'll go to-night, now, before the hour strikes."

"You know that you cannot. The overseer told you that our gates are opened only once a day."

"But you can bid them be opened."

"Certainly not, to let folks out at night to come back in the morning. The doors are open once a-day. Go or stay, as you please; but whichever you do, you make your choice for the

day. And now, if you mean to have your supper, it is time you were earning it."

"Where is my wife? I want to speak to her."

"She is at her work; you will have time to learn her mind in the morning, before you go."

There was no resource but work, as before, or idleness and hunger; so back to the corn-mill went the complainers. Those who were not complainers—the very few who had come into the house because they really could not find a living out of it—worked silently and steadily, as a means of getting bread. They did not turn aside at every noise that made itself heard from without, above the creaking and grating of their machine.

"Hark! what is that?" cried Adams, as the thump of a drum, and the squeak of a fife, and the melody of an organ penetrated the workshed.

"Music a going to the next fair, that is to be held to-morrow," answered Jem; "there's to be a fine donkey-race on the green, the first thing in the morning. Scott's donkey has been in training this fortnight."

Adams cursed himself if he would have come in these two days if he had known that. Now he could not get out till morning; and ten to one it was time enough to see the race. He knew that, formerly, no people were gayer at the fairs than those that came from the workhouse, and he saw no use in keeping them mewed up. He proposed that a general and very urgent request should be made to Millar to permit a holy-

day to take place next day, and the gates to be opened from an early hour.

Millar had made up his mind to answer all demands patiently, till the plan of the workhouse had become sufficiently known to preclude them. He replied, that while some who supported the workhouse were unable to cease their labour and take pleasure for a single day, it was out of the question that inmates of the house should make merry. They had no business, that he could perceive, with organ and drum within the gates, and he would not allow them to be hailed ; so organ and drum passed on, and the grumblers returned to their work, astonished to find that pauperism was any hinderance to gaiety.

In the morning, before the hour of opening the gates, the workhouse coats were, for the most part, thrown contemptuously into a corner, and the shoes stood upon one another in a heap ; the men, and some of the women, were walking impatiently about the yard, teasing to be let loose ; and when, at last, the word was given, they rushed through the portal, with ideas about pauperism very different from what they had had when they entered, twenty-four hours before. The few whom they left behind repaired to their work with a heavy heart, thankful to be saved from starvation, but hoping not long to owe their subsistence to legal charity.

Of the escaped paupers, some ran to witness the donkey-race and other spectacles of the fair ; trusting to get a meal and a lodging for that day, and to find work the next. Two went to

lodge a complaint with Colonel Lee, the magistrate; alleging that the overseer had, in the one case, refused the weekly allowance, invariably given till now, and in the other declined paying rent as requested. Colonel Lee inquired whether all assistance had been refused; and on being informed that the workhouse was offered in each instance, pronounced that nothing further could be claimed by law, and that no pretence remained for summoning the overseer. He comforted the applicants by hints that he thought theirs a hard case, but considered himself obliged to observe the letter of the law as carefully in the instance of an overseer as in that of paupers. The time was not yet come for him to perceive that the interests of a third party—the parish—interests outweighing those of paupers and overseer together, require also the strict administration of the law in question.

These two applicants carried back news of their defeat to their expecting brethren; some of whom were in favour of an appeal to another magistrate. As it appeared likely, however, that the neighbouring magistrates were all in a “conspiracy” against the paupers, it was judged better to enter into a counter-conspiracy against the overseer; and, till it could be matured, it was resolved to show the governor that they could and would have beer and tobacco, for all his tiresome good-natured looks and wise sayings.

In pursuance of this resolution, one bethought himself of the felling going on this week in

Colonel Lee's woods, and wondered whether employment could be got in barking the trees. The Colonel was propitious, his forester not objecting; and by dinner-time, two of the paupers of yesterday were busy amid blows as noisy as ever bone-hammer made, and at an occupation as fatiguing as grinding any kind of corn unmixed with pebbles. Another met a woman, belonging to a village four miles inland, with a basket full of limpets for sale. It occurred to him, that if limpets were worth fetching from a distance of four miles, he might probably make enough by them in Hurst, or, at least, in the neighbouring fair, to furnish his share of the intended pipe and pint per man. Down to the rocks he hastened, while the tide was yet low; and he might be seen dabbling in pools, slipping about on moist sea-weed, and picking the fish from every crevice, till he had filled his hat and his pockets. While thus employed, he was made to turn and look up by an extraordinary commotion among the sea-birds; an unusual number of which fluttered about him, or settled on the surface of the water, at safe distance from the shore, balancing themselves on the undulations, as if wholly at ease and careless of what the spoiler was doing about their homes. This spoiler was one who was come to rob the sea-fowl, because he was not permitted to rob his parish. With his pipe and pint, and spite against the governor in prospect, he was swinging, clambering, leaping, and prying, with no small success, in his search after eggs: a suc-

cess which would have furnished himself and his assistants with a dinner, even if the invalids and epicures of the neighbourhood had not purchased the dainty at a price which left something over when dinner was paid for.

The last who remained idle, and likely to be hungry, was Jem Collins. He had not ingenuity to think of any new plans, and not such a character for diligent toil as would induce any one to employ him when others were at liberty. When he found that he was not wanted at felling and barking, and that farmer Rickman did not desire his services, the only device he could suggest to himself was to go and pay a dutiful visit to his grandmother, in the workhouse at Weston, and take the chance of partaking of her dinner. It was some trouble to walk to Weston; but he began to consider what a good thing it was that the old folks were permitted to receive their friends, instead of being shut up like the able-bodied paupers at Hurst. By this means, he might get a sup of beer or tea sometimes, when he must otherwise go without; and might, at the same time, gratify his grandmother with the sight of the lad she was so fond of. She was very apt at hoping that he would grow up a credit to the parish that reared him; and he had so far fulfilled her trust, that he was, at twenty years old, six feet two inches high.

Jem Collins met with something by the way which made him postpone his filial duty for an hour. In traversing the marsh which lay between Hurst and Weston, he took it into his head to

quit the usual path, and strike across an expanse of rushes, which he thought would save him a few steps. A little bare head popped up from the rushes on one side of him, and a blue pinafore peeped out from the other, and immediately after, a scream of joy told him that he was "Jem Collins, Jem Collins," that Betsy had not seen she did not know when. They used to play together, and have plenty of fun in the workhouse at Hurst; but Betsy's removal to Weston had interrupted the acquaintance which she was now delighted to renew.

Betsy had come down into the marsh with Harriet and Ben, after school, for the purpose of gathering rushes for candles, while they plucked their usual quantity of grass for platting. The brother and sister had finished gathering the grass, and were now preparing a present of rushes for Mrs. Monk. All three had been merry together, till Jem Collins came; but he engrossed Betsy's attention, so that her companions were left to amuse and help one another as they might. She no longer heard when appealed to as to which of two rushes she should guess to be the longest, without measuring, and she pushed Ben away when he obligingly came to point out how to look for the finest tufts. Ben's temper was not made to bear this. He flung himself round on his heel, and seemed on the point of vowing never to gather another rush.

"What a shame of Betsy to behave so to you!" cried Harriet; "she well nigh drove you into the mud."

“Never mind her,” said Ben, restored in a moment, by seeing that he was cared for; “that is always the way with her, because she can’t bear me.”

“O, Ben!”

“O, she is very fond of you; she tells Jane Scott how you lend her things, and all that.”

“Does she, really?”

“But she can’t abide me; she says she can’t.”

“If I thought that ——” Harriet began flinging down her handful, while Ben went on proving his point, till he had worked her up to a determination never to say another word to Betsy. The brother and sister turned their backs to the two who stood gossiping at a distance, and grew into excessive good-humour with each other, while quarrelling with a sinning companion. They each pressed their best rushes upon each other. Ben helped to disengage Harriet’s pinafore from a brier, and Harriet frightened away a frog which had made Ben start, and without showing that she saw the start. They became very confidential also in their chat.

“I wonder what I lent Betsy,” said Harriet; “I don’t know any thing I have got to lend, but what I have in school, and that is not mine; so it is not so very good-natured.”

“O, but it is,” protested Ben; “because there are several that won’t lend in school. That was what Betsy meant; and it is very true, though she is such a cross thing.”

“Do you think any body else thinks me

good-natured? I wonder whether they think so at home."

"Yes, they do," pronounced Ben; "I heard them say something to one another once."

"Did you?—when?—what about?—what was it?"

"O, it was just after we came to them, when you were lifting up Fred and lifting him down again, and he would not be satisfied; I heard them say that they had a good bargain of you for Fred's sake."

"Which said it?—what were the words?"

"O, that is all I remember. Did you ever hear them say any thing about me?"

"No, never: but I am sure, if you had any thing to give away, they would say you were very generous. But I did hear something;—our governess whispered one day that you had a very pretty colour when you had been running."

Ben could not help smirking at this; but he immediately wished that he had something to give away. Harriet sympathized entirely in this. She thought it must be so very nice to give charity. She wondered whether Ben had ever thought of such a thing as she had often wished, and never told any body—she did not think she could tell any body.

"O yes; you will tell me."

"No; I don't think I can tell any body—I never did."

"O, do, do! tell me, tell me, dear."

This last word—an unusual one from Ben's

lips, together with the feeling of his arm round her neck—opened Harriet's heart entirely; she half choked between eagerness and shame as she said, "I should like to get up very early one morning, and go about doing good."

"O, so should I!" cried Ben, instantly firing, so as to make her glad she had told; "I wonder whether we could get out without any body hearing us?"

"I think I could jump down from the window; and you need not wake Fred."

"Then what should we do first?"

"We might go and ask Mrs. Scott whether she wanted any thing that we could do for her. And if she was not up, I think I could get her pitcher, and fill it at the spring, so that she would find it at the door full, instead of having to go herself. Perhaps, if you looked into the houses as you went along, you might see some baby that was ill, and we might stop its crying. I know how to stop a baby crying, unless it is very bad indeed. And then we might meet an old blind beggar-man that could not get over the land-springs by himself; you might help him over, and lead him safe up the down, while I was hushing the baby."

"But those are all such little things: I should like——"

"O, so should I, if we could—I should like to find out some people that are almost starving, and carry them whatever they want."

"There are so many people that are almost

starving, and they never do quite starve. No: I should like to take people to the fair, and buy whatever they took a fancy to, and a great deal more; I would buy——”

“ But you know, Ben, we have nothing to buy with, except my seven-pence and your five-pence, that the Miss Barrys have; and I don't think we may spend that at the fair till you have got your woollen cap to go to sea in, and I a better pair of shoes for Sundays. O, I do wish we had some money! I wish we could be generous!”

“ I am afraid we can't yet; but I am almost tired of hearing our governess and every body tell us about our duty in being grateful to the parish, and trying to keep off the parish. It seems such a little, easy sort of thing to do.”

“ So it does; but yet they say there are many on the parish that hoped once to do fine things. We must take care of that; for we can't be generous if we keep on the parish, you know.”

“ Can we if we keep off?”

“ Perhaps we can. Mrs. Monk says she knew a gentleman, a very rich gentleman, in London, that was once a parish-boy. You may find some grand way of getting rich, and then you will let me live with you——”

“ To be sure! It will be yours just as much as mine.”

“ And we will go out then before breakfast, as early as we like, and do a great deal of good. What shall we carry?”

“What do people want most? But I think others, besides rich people, do a great deal of good.”

“Jesus Christ was not rich, for one. I suppose he was very generous. Could we do anything that he did, do you think?”

“I can’t think of anything,” replied Ben, after a pause. “It was not he that gave a cup of cold water to somebody, was it? If it was, it would be something like your filling the pitcher.”

“He only told people to do it; but I never recollected that when I talked about Mrs. Scott’s pitcher. Here! here is the finest rush we have got yet; you had better put it in the middle of your bundle.”

“No; I won’t take it. You found it; you must keep it.”

This was declared impossible, and the final agreement was to unite the bundles, which really made a fine large one. Ben was unwilling to let the subject drop on which his waking dreams had evidently been of late employed.

“I have often wondered,” said he, “whether there is anything generous in taking care of Fred.”

“Not in taking care of him, because we are bound to do it; but there is one thing we might do about Fred that would be generous.”

Ben was eager to know what this was; but Harriet seemed to have even more difficulty in speaking out about it than about her favourite

scheme. At length her meaning appeared. She thought that it would be generous, not only to refrain from cuffing Fred when he was cross, but to smile at him, and help him to be good-humoured again. Ben was very near cuffing his sister for saying this; but he remembered his declaration that he would never forgive her if she did not say it, and changed his purpose. Squeezing his hands together at the back of his head, he let out that he knew he was very cross with Fred and every body sometimes; but, then, Fred and every body was very provoking sometimes; which Harriet did not pretend to dispute. She thought Betsy and Jem Collins very provoking to-day, talking and laughing, without ever thinking about Betsy's old companions. By the bye, a thought struck her: would not it be generous to forgive Betsy and Jem Collins? Ben thought it would, and that it would make the thing better still to offer them the bundle of rushes. Harriet hesitated for a minute about this last effort; but recollecting that Mrs. Monk really did not expect any rushes this day, she could not resist the temptation to do a generous thing.

"I said a little while ago," she observed to her brother, "that I would never speak to Betsy again, for your sake; but you will not mind my speaking to her to tell her that I forgive her, will you?"

Ben turned round to look at the gossiping pair, and gave a breathless sort of permission. Harriet accordingly went up, looking, in her own

idea, equally mild and solemn, to tell Betsy that she forgave her.

“ You forgive me ! What for ? ”

“ For not liking Ben so well as me, and for treating us so this afternoon, and for —— ”

The most provoking tears in the world would come just at the wrong moment. Jem laughed ; Betsy laughed after him ; Ben threw his hat at Betsy, and then turned to Jem, saying,

“ And I forgive you too for laughing, because you don’t know anything about what Harriet means. And you may have these rushes, if you like. They are the best we could find.”

“ And beauties they are,” cried Jem. “ Here, Betsy, shall I dress up your hat with them, or shall we play ball with it ? ’Tis a fine big ball.”

“ No, no,” cried Ben, eagerly. “ It will come untied if you toss it up. They are to make candles of. Here, I will show you.”

And in all good faith Ben began explaining the process, not at liberty, like Harriet, to perceive the winks which passed between Jem and Betsy. Harriet stood narrowly watching them for some time, and then put her arm on Ben’s shoulder, saying,

“ They are making game of us all the time, Ben. They don’t care a pin for the rushes.”

A more insulting laugh than ever followed this discovery ; the laughers running away, hand in hand, and looking behind them to see what became of the rush-gatherers. Harriet

slowly took up the bundle, which seemed to be suddenly scorned by Ben as much as by Jem.

"Throw them into the mud," he said. "They are nasty trumpery things, after all."

"Why, so they are; but they will make candles at home just as well as ever; and if Mrs. Monk does not want them, they will do for litter for Dawson's pig."

"Well, take them home for what I care; but it is all nonsense for us to try to be generous."

"Don't let us think any more about it to-day," said Harriet, secretly unwilling to give up her aspirations. "I am sure it is full time for us to be home, and we are to have new bread for dinner to-day. I saw Fred sucking the last crust of the old loaf this morning."

Somewhat cheered by this pleasant prospect they trudged home with their burden between them, not a rush being dropped by the way for Jem to make game of, if he should return by the same track.

Jem did return by the same track; but not till he had escorted Betsy home, accepted from her the loan of a sixpence which somebody had given her for a birth-day present, and eaten up two-thirds of his grandmother's dinner while paying his duty to her. He left the old lady with a fine appetite for her tea, and much gratified at her dear lad's approval of her new location. He was as easily convinced as she could desire, that the aged folks were much

quieter here than down below ; that they could sleep better of nights ; that it was a rare view from the yard bench ; that nobody grudged them their little comforts, as was the case when a score of rude fellows were bullying for tea and tobacco ; and that, on the whole, the removal had been nothing but a good to the party most concerned. She told a neighbour, while sipping her tea, that there was some pleasure in talking to her boy Jem, who agreed in all that was said, instead of insisting, like some of Goody Gidney's gossips, that the change was altogether a piece of tyranny, such as the whole parish ought to rise up against.

Jem's success in filching his dinner encouraged him in his idea of filching his pipe and drink in the evening. He was punctual in his attendance at the spot where his fellow paupers of the preceding day were to meet to laugh at the overseer, and beard the governor. They came from their limpet selling, their selling and barking, their egg quest, their collecting of pebbles for the roads, and of sand for domestic purposes,—each one with more or less of earnings,—either in his pocket in the form of money, in his hand in the shape of a mug of beer, or sticking from the corner of his mouth in the semblance of a tobacco-pipe. They sat down in a ring under the workhouse-wall, where they might enjoy the sea-breeze after their labour, and attract the attention of passers by, who might be going down to the shore for similar purposes of refreshment.

There they sat singing in praise of liberty and malt liquor, taking care that it should not be their fault if the governor did not learn this evening, that free-born Britons are made to work for themselves, and not for any parish task-master on earth. This was a doctrine no more objectionable to the governor than to Mr. Barry, who was coming up from a walk on the beach with his daughters just in time to hear a stanza about himself. He stood in full view, with a daughter on each arm, till the song was finished, laughing as much as any of them at every home stroke, and nodding an approving good night. Millar had seen him from the privileged wicket appropriated to the governor, and slipped out to meet him at the back of the premises.

"The plan seems to work well, so far," observed Mr. Barry. "How many have you left in the house?"

"Thirty; and we breakfasted forty-two this morning. We are to have an influx to-morrow, I hear; and to this we shall be subjected for some time, I suppose, till our system becomes better known."

"Ay, and you will have much trouble with them yet awhile, I fear. You may have some fiercer spirits to deal with than any of these who have left you to-day."

"Never mind me, sir. Trust me to manage them for a time, knowing as I do that they will be thankful enough for what we are about when the thousands that have been spent in keeping

up this house are at liberty to go into the people's pockets as wages."

"Yes, yes. But we must have much patience, and not look too soon for the time you speak of. We have much to go through first."

"True, sir; I am aware of that. Some of those who have looked for work in a spirit of defiance, will come back upon us when their fit of spite is over, and——"

"And they cannot all live upon such poor chance earnings as they have got to-day."

"No; but, meantime, one day's maintenance has been saved from the pockets of the farmer and the housekeeper, which will supply another day's work. This is something gained. Yes, yes. However little value there may be in the shell-fish and eggs, and other things that have been added to our parish resources to-day, such gains will be valuable enough to us, if they cause the farmers to call for another carter or ploughman each, and the housekeepers for each an extra dish of fish once or twice a week."

"And there may be some," observed Miss Barry, "who have learned this day that it is more pleasant to work than to depend on the parish."

"Both in and out of the house, depend upon it, Miss Barry. I have left a poor fellow at the mill, actually crying at their shouting without. I believe he would be off through the window, if he could, at the first glimpse of a likelihood of getting employment. But he is a bad work-

man, though willing enough ; and I fancy he will be one of the last to leave us."

" Poor fellow ! I hope they all meet with very different treatment now from what they did under the old system, Millar. The brutal way of speaking to the paupers, and the harshness of the management, always struck me as one of the worst features of the old plan. It was a thing I could never reconcile with the governor's known kindness of heart, and still less with the matron's."

" It was not their fault, sir ; it was owing to mixing up such different sorts of people together, and changing plans so often, that harshness was called in to do what method could have effected. The less we are ridden by would-be paupers, the easier it is to be duly kind to real paupers. One need hide one's compassion only so long as it is liable to be made the occasion of abuse and imposture. Take away impostors and encroachers, and real paupers will be regarded as people should be who are suffering under a very grievous and humbling misfortune. For my part, as I was saying to my wife, there are few kinds of misfortune that I pity more : and her answer is, that if the true misery and humiliation of it were known, there would be fewer pretenders to it, and fewer aiders and abettors of it."

" I am quite of your wife's opinion, and I hope the whole parish will be so too before long. Meantime, I have no doubt the poor

fellows may feel themselves well off in your hands. You will always bear in mind the rule that they are to have whatever comes below the limit of what is enjoyed by the independent labourers who help to support them. This is the limit prescribed by justice, and therefore by true charity; and this limit can never exclude personal respect and kindness, which are the due of the pauper, as of every other man."

CHAPTER IV.

IMPORTANT TRIFLES.

ABOUT a month after this time, Harriet got up very early one morning, and went out,—whether to do good, she could not at all determine within herself. She was afraid that some mischief might arise from her proceeding; but the Miss Barrys were such good ladies, and had been so kind to Mrs. Monk and the family, that it seemed wrong not to tell them of anything which concerned their father very nearly. They would tell her too whether she was doing right or wrong, and then she should know another time.

Miss Emily was only half-dressed when Harriet arrived, and Miss Barry was not up. Instead of making their little visiter wait or go away again, however, the young ladies showed

their respect for the value of her time by admitting her to their dressing room to tell her story. Her story was, that she was not quite asleep, the night before, when Monk came in from his evening gossip, and told his wife something that Harriet thought Mr. Barry ought to know, though she was sure Monk did not intend her to repeat it. Ought she to tell, or not?

Was it about public or private business?

Public, altogether. It was about the workhouse.

This being the case, Miss Emily thought Harriet should tell, as nobody could possibly have any proper private interest in the workhouse affairs, and the welfare of the whole parish was concerned in them. So Harriet told that a vigorous push was to be made next week to drive out the new system, and get back the old plans of allowance, rent paying, &c. It was agreed in the hamlet, that every labourer in the two hamlets who had a fancy for any parish assistance should demand on a certain day to be admitted into the workhouse. Now, the workhouse could, by no possibility, be made to hold two-thirds of the number who had already entered into the conspiracy; and it was considered certain that Millar must declare his hands to be full, and that Barry must consent to give relief as the people liked best to have it. Monk already began to talk of having his rent paid for him next quarter, though Harriet thought his wife did not wish it, but had rather

see him go out fishing a little oftener, and have something better to do with an odd sixpence than to spend it as he did when there was nothing to lay by for.

“ He did manage to pay his rent last quarter, did not he ? ”

“ O yes, miss ; and my mistress says, that if he once reconciled himself to the new plan, he would be as sorry as any body that it should be given up. The little he would have to pay in rate—— ”

“ Which would grow less and less, till it came to almost nothing. ”

“ Yes, miss ; that little would be much more than made up to him by several people staying and buying his fish, that talked of going away when the rates were so high. If he lost three or four of his customers, the parish must do more than pay his rent to make it up to him. ”

“ They will stay now, I have very little doubt ; for they begin to see that the rates are falling already, and are much more likely to fall when all are agreed to act upon the new plans. I will tell my father what you have let me know ; but I believe he is prepared for all the opposition that can be planned against him. You see how quietly the workhouse people go to church now ; and you know how they threatened at first to take a run on the down instead. ”

“ Just as if they ought not to go to church like other people, my mistress said ; and the more for being in a state of misfortune. But I

suppose the better sort liked to drop into church unobserved; and the worse, to make Sunday a pretence for going to some place that they liked better than church. My mistress says I shall not be able to go to church, miss, for the few Sundays that I am to be manager."

"Manager of what?"

"Of Fred, and everything, when my mistress is confined, miss. She is going to have nobody to nurse her but me, except just at first; and she thinks that so she can make the money do that you have of hers, without meddling with the rent, and ——"

"So Mrs. Monk tells you of all these things, Harriet; so she tells you that we have money of her's. Well, you are growing a great girl now, and you should be showing yourself a help to your mistress."

"I could not be manager for her without being told these things. I am most afraid about my master's coming home, and not finding all as it should be."

"If you do your best to have it so, he will make allowance, I dare say, and remember that you are a very young housekeeper."

"That won't prevent his saying what he is always saying to Ben and me. We are weary of hearing it; and it puts Ben out more than anything; so that I am always watching for it. He is for ever saying that we must go back to the workhouse."

"He means less unkindness, perhaps, than a person might who thought more ill of the work-

house than he does. Mr. Monk seems to think the workhouse the proper place for poor people."

"And my mistress is mortally afraid we should get used to hear of going back, and so not mind it. But it is not that that I am afraid of, so much as what Ben may do. He says if we can keep on a bit longer as we are, he can get out to sea, in one of the Newfoundland ships, or somehow."

"Leaving you to shift for yourself?"

"When he has once made sure of my not going back to the workhouse; he would not go till he had seen me in service, or somewhere safe. But I tell him that, there being only us two, it will be odd if we must live on the two sides of the world. If my master would cease his talk about the workhouse, Ben would be very well content to be a fisherman; for he has no further desire after the sea."

"And what sort of service would you like?"

"I've no great mind to any; but perhaps that is because I am not fit for any. I like dandling children, and teaching them to do things for themselves; and so, if I was any thing of a servant, I would be a nursemaid. But then there is the ironing of babies' caps: I could not do that; I am sure I dare not touch a lace border. The last time my mistress spoke sharp to me was about running the heater through the crown of Fred's nightcap."

"And have you mended it?"

"O, miss, it was too bad for mending, ever so much. I was like to thrust it into the fire be-

fore she saw it, I was in such a fright ; but Ben came in."

" And he made you ashamed of wanting to burn it ? "

" He took it to my mistress, and she was less sharp with me for having been sharp upon him first."

" And how did Ben like that ? "

" Why, when Ben is put out, it is commonly when he has been more or less wrong himself. He was not put out then, except that he thought she said more than she need. But it was almost a new cap, and quite spoiled ; and the thing that my mistress least likes is to have to lay out money just now. However, I put her off from it, about the caps, and Fred will soon have his cap again now ; I have got all but the strings, and I can finish the making in two more mornings ; and might have done it to-morrow, but for the coming here to-day. If farmer Rickman will give us three-halfpence for as many rushes as we can get this afternoon for litter, I can buy the tape for the strings as I come home ; for Ben will wait for his t ree-far-things, he says : he will not be easy, any more than I, till the cap is done."

" Well, I hope you will have paid both your debts before the end of the week, so as to have quite an easy mind on Sunday. Now try to fasten my gown, and let me see what kind of a lady's maid you would make."

Harriet blushed and laughed as she laid aside her bonnet, and applied her stout fingers to the

slender buttons of the lady's dress. She laughed yet more at the bare notion of her ever curling and dressing a lady's hair. She had been taught to crop Ben's hair, and keep it close cut; but this she thought was a very different thing from curling Miss Emily's; in which she was undoubtedly right.

"It is well you should learn to use your fingers' ends about small things," observed Miss Emily; "for there will be a young baby soon at home for you to help to take care of; and you little think, I dare say, how much a baby's temper and comfort depend on having its things put dexterously off and on. You have been more used to lift the boiler and scrub the floor, I fancy, than to manage a tender infant. How do you think you shall get through till your mistress is about again?"

"She has told me all I shall have to do, and _____,"

"Come, tell me about it. But it is a pity your cap is not here, for us to be going on with while we talk."

In great glee, Harriet lifted up her apron and showed her workbag under it. She had had no distinct idea of doing any thing to the cap while at Miss Barry's; but she could not bear to be parted from such a treasure as this article of her own buying and making. She laid it under her clothes when she put them off at night, and wore it under her apron all day long.

"Give it me," said Miss Emily, "and I will

do a piece for you : it is only fair, as I keep you talking here."

Harriet's countenance fell — she was bent upon doing every stitch of it herself ; but her respect for Miss Emily would not let her say so in any other way than by being suddenly melancholy.

"Does Mrs. Monk put a full border upon her child's nightcaps?" asked Miss Emily. "I wonder she finds time to iron them—to say nothing of the making."

"No, no, miss, Fred's caps have no border in general ; but I had a mind to make this a bit prettier than the one I burned. Don't you think it is prettier with a border, Miss Emily?"

"That depends very much upon how the border is put on. I doubt whether this will ornament Fred's cheeks. Who taught you to full on a border, Harriet?"

"Nobody. I looked close at my mistress's cap one day ; but I know this is not so neat."

"Would you like to learn to do it better—shall I pick this off, and show you the way?"

"It won't be done by to-morrow, then, ma'am, will it?"

"Perhaps not ; but it will be better worth giving away the next day."

"Ben reckoned so on its being done to-morrow ; I don't know what he would say."

"I think I do, if Ben is the boy I take him for ; he would say that you have no right to give an untidy cap in exchange for a tidy one."

“Why; that’s true. I did not think of that before. I shall thank you much, miss, for doing the unpicking; but——”

“But you wish the work to be all your own. So it shall be. Bring me that work-box. There is a border of mine there, that you may learn upon; and then you can do every stitch of your own yourself.”

As the lesson proceeded, Harriet was astonished to see how handsome her border would look when half its breadth was not taken up with the clumsy roll which, when starched, (as it was to be, at least on its first appearance), would prove a perpetual irritation to Fred’s temples.

“How will you manage about buying things when you are housekeeper, Harriet? Are you clever at getting articles good and cheap?”

“I have mostly got what I was sent for, without having to choose. When one is sent for a quarter of an ounce of tea, one can hardly miss; and the same with butter for breakfast: and that is the sort of buying I have been used to.”

“But you will not have time to run up to the shop every time Mrs. Monk will want a cup of tea, or a slice of bread and butter?”

“No, miss; and so she says she will make a great shopping one day soon; thinking she cannot spend some of her money better. She will get oatmeal enough for all the gruel wanted for the month, and a pound of sugar, and as much tea as she can afford after that. The meat and the bread she must trust to me to buy; but it

would not do to be running out every meal-time, when the baby must not be left."

"Certainly; nor yet to pay for the grocer's paper and string for ten times as many parcels as need be made up; nor yet to have the tea ground down to dust with constant weighing, so that you are tempted to put a third more than is wanted into the pot; to say nothing of the untidiness and waste of having scraps always about—a dry bit of cheese, and a soft bit of butter, and a little dust of tea which nobody relishes, and everybody may be tempted to put out of the way. Any man would be glad to see his half dozen scraps turned into a respectable wedge of cheese or pat of butter, and the pinches of brown sugar at the bottoms of three or four cups collected in a jar; and yet they let their wives go on buying in the smallest quantities they can get."

"If they have not the money at hand, miss, what can they do? as my mistress says. It is only when she is going to be confined, or on some such particular occasion, that she can get money enough to buy more than is just wanted for the day. My master will have tea; and my mistress has never money enough for more than a quarter of an ounce at a time, considering the sugar."

"Well, Harriet, if you can once manage to get the sugar for two days on the Monday, and the tea for two days on the Tuesday, the time may soon come when you can buy tea and sugar for three days at one purchase. If my sister and

I did not take care to consider this in our buying, my father would be just as likely to go into the workhouse before the end of the year as to help other people to keep out of it."

"Why, Miss Emily!"

"It is very true, I assure you. We are not rich; and it is only by looking to our shillings and pence that we can live as comfortably as we do: and if, by our way of buying things, we wasted a shilling on every pound of tea, and sixpence on every measure of butter, and three-pence on every pound of sugar, and so on, all through the house, we must, besides keeping another servant to run our errands, give up one comfort after another, till we should sink down into poor people."

Harriet could not fancy this at all.

"Well, I will show you an example. You know Butler? Yes, the carpenter, who lives down near the Point. Do you know what he has to live upon?"

"He gets eighteen shillings a week, one week with another, the whole year round. 'Then his son gets something.'"

"Nine shillings a week from farmer Rickman. So those three people—Butler, and his wife, and son—have upwards of seventy pounds a year to live upon. Butler had relief from the parish last year, when his wife was laid by for a week; and it was but yesterday that he asked for it again."

"Well, miss, I am sure they seem very poor."

"They do. I never saw a more comfortless

home than theirs. But I have not done my story. Do you know Mr. Day?"

"What, the blind gentleman at Barham?"

"The same. You call him a gentleman. What do you think of his being no richer than Butler? Mr. Day, and his wife and daughter, live on seventy pounds a year; and do you think he will ever ask for relief from the parish?"

"Dear me, no! But how do they live?"

"Very sparingly, indeed, but decently; as you may see by their appearance at church on Sundays. Mrs. Day does every thing about the house with her own hands; and Rachael Day waits upon her father, and takes care of all the needle-work and shopping; and they declare that they have enough to eat, and are never without decent clothing. But then they do without tea; and if they had it, they would not waste on paper and string as much in a month as would buy them a pound of mutton."

Harriet pondered for a long time what made the difference between a poor person and a gentleman. She could quite understand why Butler could never be called a gentleman; but why it should be an insult (as it certainly would be) to call Mr. Day a poor person, she could not at once make out. She wondered whether the difference lay in reckoning income by the week or by the year. She presently recollected that it was in her power to stock the house with one article, at least, before the days of her housekeeping. Did not Miss Emily think that candles burn down much quicker

when fresh made, than when they have been kept some time?—No doubt, and especially when made in summer. Ah! it was too late now to make any but a summer batch for this year; but Harriet thought she could prepare a sufficient stock for the nights when a light must be burning in Mrs. Monk's room from dark till sunrise. This was approved. But could she make broth, and boil potatoes?—O dear! Harriet thought everybody could do that. No such thing. Miss Emily had seen as much meat wasted in the making of broth as would have fed a child; and both the rich and poor would retain their relish for potatoes much longer than they do, if cooks—lofty and lowly—did their duty by them. Miss Emily had seen a slovenly fisherman's wife very lately let down the fire under her pot of broth, till it became necessary to use chips (a very expensive article), and blow the fire; a practice which wastes as much fuel as time. At length the water boiled away at such a rate, that there was fear the liquid would be all gone before the good man came home to his dinner; so the lid was taken off, giving entrance to the smoke; cold water was poured in to check the boiling from time to time; and the whole came upon table, at length, a curious compound of hard vegetables, sodden, tasteless meat, and water, flavoured equally with smoke and salt. As for potatoes, they were often pronounced waxy in texture and disagreeable in taste, when they need be neither the one nor the other, if they were but set on in cold wa-

ter instead of hot, and left to drain in the steam for a few minutes before being brought to table. A steamer to fit upon the saucepan might be bought presently for the value of the distasteful potatoes that are thrown into the ash-hole, or to the pigs. By the by, Miss Emily had heard her father remark that he had never seen so few pigs in any neighbourhood as about Hurst. How was it? Was there any reason why fishermen's cottages should not have a sty at the back, as well as country labourers'?

Harriet could only answer for the views of the people she lived with. Mrs. Monk had talked of a pig again and again; and Ben and Harriet had offered to feed and water it; but Monk never would hear of it. He did not see why they should be plagued with a grunter, when all that they would get by it would be that the parish would refuse to pay the owner's rent, on the plea that he had property.

"But there is an end of that reason now that his rent is paid for him no longer."

"Yes: and my mistress let drop one day lately that she should like to get a young pig in the early part of next year, and try if she cannot keep him so as to kill her own bacon the winter after. She has no doubt my master would find a bit of cold bacon a good relish at sea; and she promises he shall have none of the trouble of a pig."

"I rather think we shall see a few more grunters poking about among the boats before long," observed Emily. "There are many be-

sides Monk who have been afraid of seeming too comfortable, for fear of the parish leaving off helping them. Two or three, who have made up their minds that my father is the most obstinate man in the world, have managed to get things that they never could afford while they waited on the parish."

Perhaps that is why the Wilkinses have got the new cupboard put up, with Mrs. Wilkins's grandmother's china teapot in it, that every body thought was sold long ago; as she had not been heard to speak of it since they first went to the overseer. And Hart has put up a beautiful bench, with arms at each end, outside his house, where his wife may sit and net, when she is looking out for his boat. Ben has got leave to go and see it painted green."

"And I will promise to come and feed your pig when he takes his first meal in his new sty," said Miss Emily, smiling.

"O, Miss Emily, may I tell my mistress so; and Ben?"

"O, yes; and your master, too, if you like."

"But it will be winter, miss; after Christmas, you know."

"Well! I walk your way in winter as well as summer; and it must be a heavy snow that will prevent my coming to feed your new pig. I hope my sister may be well enough next winter to go down and watch the boats putting off and coming in. It is a sight she is very fond of."

"O, miss! O, dear! if we had a bench, like Hart's, for her to sit on, out of the wind when it

blows off shore. A bench, painted blue or green. Which do you like best ? ”

“ I think brown looks very neat, and it suits with the other colours about your cottage. But you must get the pig before you think of a bench.”

“ When I thought of a bench, I thought that Ben and I——But we have something else to do first. Something that——Do you know, Miss Emily, if I make a good manager when my mistress is confined, I am to have a whole day to myself at last, before I go to school again. Ben and I may do what we like for a whole day.”

“ I dare say you have made up your minds already what you shall do.”

Harriet's conscious smile was a sufficient reply. As she seemed to have some difficulty in abstaining from an explanation of her intentions, while they were evidently meant to be a secret, Miss Emily brought back the discourse suddenly to the nightcap border, which was by this time ready for a fresh experiment.

“ You see now, Harriet, how you are to go on with it. Put it by, and run home. You will be in time to wash Fred's face before he eats his crust ; and I hope your time has not been wasted, my dear. You have learned something ; and you may have done a service, by telling me what you did about the workhouse. Now run home ; and take care your heater is not too hot the next time you iron a cap.”

When Harriet had so arranged her bag, with

its precious contents, and patted down her apron, as to leave no bunch right or left, by which any one might guess at the existence of the nightcap, she was ready to go; and merrily she tripped along, thinking of savoury broth and a brown bench, of the difference between roving the down and being shut up in that dismal-looking workhouse, and of the comparative desirableness of sleeping sound in the dark—as she did all night at present—and sitting in Monk's arm-chair at midnight, with a rushlight burning dimly on the table, and a tender little baby lying across her lap, breaking the silence now and then by a soft squall; which was to be her position, she supposed, some time hence.—In the midst of these thoughts, an alarming thing happened. When she reached the brow of the cliff, and before she was on her guard, a puff of wind caught the right-hand corner of her apron, and carried it up, so that all the dwellers on the beach might have seen, if they had chanced to be looking up, that she carried the bag in which was the nightcap. She looked hastily about her, found she was not particularly observed, huddled up the bag in her apron till she should be out of the wind, and hopped, skipped, and jumped down the zigzag path. She presently saw signs of preparation about Monk's boat. Monk himself had on his red and blue cap; a sure token that he was going out. Ben was staggering down under an excessive load of nets and panniers; and little Fred followed, with an empty tin can, which he stopped to ring and

jingle against every large stone he passed. Harriet called loud—louder—louder still; but Ben not only did not turn, but swung his leg over the side of the boat, as if about to depart without giving one other look landwards.

“He will be gone! There, he is in! If he would stop just a minute now! Here he comes out again!—tucking up his trowsers to run the boat out. I may catch him yet.—How he does grow, to be sure! Six months ago he could no more have given such a push as that—I wish he would not tug so hard, and then I should be sure to catch him. There! now he sees me. How tiresome this deep sand is!”

To Ben’s questions of where she had been, and what she had been doing, she could give no answer at present, Monk was calling so impatiently. She must just say, that Ben must not expect the cap to be finished the next day, and that she had had another grand scheme put into her head to consult him about some time or other. Nothing that they could do just yet, but——

And Ben might make what he could of the “but,” till his impatient master should let him talk with his sister in peace and quiet.

CHAPTER V.

DELIGHTS OF OFFICE.

No rushes were gathered—no pennies were gained—no tape was bought this day, steadily

as Harriet had resolved that all these things should be achieved. But it was no new thing to Harriet to be obliged to surrender her purposes, and to make herself happy in some other person's way instead of her own, if she meant to be happy at all. Like many another little girl, it daily happened to her to find herself pinned down to work when she intended to play; to be made to think about the price of potatoes, when she would rather have been reckoning up glittering shells, and flinging about red and green seaweed. Like many another little girl, she was greeted with harsh scoldings, which she was not aware of having deserved, or with wearisome murmurs about little evils which she could not remedy, when she had hoped to be at liberty to listen to the wild music of the sounding shore; or, at her place of play, the down, to the sheep-bell and the herdsman's call; or, at her place of rest, the school, to another Shepherd's call to the weary and heavy-laden. Unlike many another little girl, Harriet could fulfil her own objects amid all these interruptions. She could meet Ben at each turn and winding of her daily course, soothe his suffering at hearing her blamed, and get quietly over it for his sake; show him, when his turn came, that there was one who understood him, while no one else did; plan pleasant things for Fred when he was naughty, to be executed when he should be good: and, above all, look forward, far beyond present toils, fears, and mortifications, to the day when she might be subject to nobody but

Ben; when she need not trouble any body to manage their affairs for them, and when she might bid him God speed in the morning, and have every thing comfortable for him against the evening.—Even this day—this anxious, busy day—when the neighbours were coming in and out, and nothing had been bought that ought to have been bought, and all was confusion, for which everybody seemed ready to blame her, these thoughts found an opening in her crowded heart to come and go, and put her in mind that this strange day would certainly come to an end. It was also necessary to remind herself that this rising gale would blow itself out, and leave a lull which would enable the fishing-boats to return home; and that meanwhile there was One who held the waters in the hollow of his hand, and could still the chorus of winds and waves with a word, when it pleased him rather to listen to the voice of human prayer. The gale rose through the day; and by the time twilight came on, and all was at length still within Monk's cottage, two women's voices were heard from the beach, anxiously calling to one another, till the gusts overpowered them.

Harriet could not go out to learn what her neighbours thought about the danger of those who were at sea. Her vision of the arm-chair was realized sooner than she had expected; and there she was sitting, with the new-born infant on her knees, fearing lest the rushlight should blow out, notwithstanding all her care to shield it from draughts; fearing lest the gruel should

not prove so good as it might be made ; fearing lest Fred should wake and make a noise ; fearing lest Mrs. Monk should take alarm at the storm, and praying incessantly her trembling prayer that her Parent—the Parent of the orphan—would promptly bring back her brother, and meanwhile keep his heart from sinking, as hers did, with every blast. It struck her that the watch of the nurse was not altogether so happy a thing as she had expected ; and she was just managing not to cry at the thought, when her mistress called her, and gave her something else to think about.

“ Harriet, what o’clock is it ? ”

“ I suppose, past nine. I have been watching for the church clock striking this long while ; but the wind is the other way, so that we shall not hear it. But it must be past nine.”

“ Much more than that, child, surely. Is not the wind very high ; one would think that the door and the windows were open, by the splash and the draught.”

“ They are both shut : but it does blow a little.”

“ I wonder where you have managed to put the candle ; it flickers so, I can’t bear it.”

“ I’ll put it in the other room ; there may be less of a draught there.”

“ There is a great smell of smoke—are you sure there is nothing burning ? ”

“ O no ; but it happens to be the same wind that always makes our chimney smoke. Your gruel is on, against you would like a little.”

Harriet must put down the baby beside its mother, and go and make sure that nothing was burning. Then she must step out, and learn when the last boat came in, and whether it was thought any more could make the land to-night. She brought back an opinion that the boats would keep out till daylight. She did not tell that there was not a fisherman's wife of them all who thought of sleeping this night.

"They may come, however," said Mrs. Monk; "so put a light in the window, child. It had better be the tin lamp, if there is any oil in it. A rushlight will not show far enough out."

The flaring lamp was placed in the window; gruel was called for, and found to have a slight flavour of smoke; Harriet was wondered at for having come in with the hem of her frock dripping, and she went and dried it, refraining from saying that it was impossible to go out at the door without being wetted, as the spray dashed up against the very window of the cottage. If Mrs. Monk had not been curtained up in a corner of the back room, she must have been aware of this; but Harriet was resolved that she should not know it from her.

"When are you going to bed, Harriet?" was the next question.

"Going to bed! I thought I might sit up with you all night."

"How should I go to sleep with you moving about all night?"

"But I am afraid I should not hear you call, if I were to fall asleep."

“ You would fall asleep just as much if you sat up, and perhaps let the baby drop too, if you have the fancy to nurse it. No, no. Go to bed.”

“ So as to be out of the way of knowing any thing about Ben till the morning,” thought Harriet, slowly preparing to take off her frock. She was once more called to Mrs. Monk’s bedside, to be told of this, that, and the other that must be done the next day.

“ And when you have done that, you must ——But never mind that now. My dear, I have to beg your pardon, Harriet, for being very cross and very troublesome.”

Harriet wanted to say, “ No, no,” but could not speak quite as she thought a good nurse should do : so Mrs. Monk went on.

“ I believe it is the wind that worries me. But to be sure, you may say the same ; for you must be thinking about Ben, as I am about my husband. But thinking about Ben has not made you cross ; so, the more shame for me.”

Harriet had just time to say, “ No, no,” before a kiss startled her—the first kiss for many a long month—a kiss which reminded her strangely of a dimly-remembered time when some one’s arms held her, some one’s bosom was a warm resting-place for her cheek. What did it now signify whether she lay awake or slept this night ?

She did sleep ; and sooner than would have been supposed possible by any one who did not know how great had been her fatigue of the day.

When she was awakened by the light going out, she found that the grey morning had stolen on so far that there was no need to replenish the lamp, and that, if she could steal out, without disturbing Mrs. Monk, there was a chance of getting some tidings for her by the time she awoke. Fresh blew the morning breeze, and hoarsely rolled the leaden-coloured sea, flecked with foam. But there was something which took away her breath more than the wind, and fixed her eye more than the foam—a boat, labouring in the billows, and making for the land. An old man and a young woman were awaiting it, and while doubtful whether it was theirs or Harriet's, all were full of sympathy for one another. But when it proved to be theirs, there was no more time to attend to Harriet. She was forgotten in the ecstasy of watching the contest with the breakers, pushed aside when the boatmen leaped ashore, and with difficulty favoured with the news that all that the fishermen had seen since daybreak was a boat at some distance, floating bottom upwards.

Could she, dared she go home? Harriet wondered.—Yes, if she could get in without having been missed—without danger of being questioned. She had not been missed, and half an hour after she was called up, as if from sleep, and did her duty by Fred, and the fire, and the floor, as usual. Having turned Fred out to play, she put off the thoughts of breakfast awhile, till she could better bear the idea of something to eat. Presently a neighbour or two came in to hear how Mrs. Monk had passed the night; and

one wanted warm water to wash the baby, and another a clean basin for some more gruel. While Harriet was holding out the latter, for the gruel to be poured in, Fred pushed in between her and the neighbour, hugging and coaxing something snow-white.

“Why, Fred, where did you get that sea-gull—who gave you that bird, dear?”

“Ben.”

“Ben! Where, where? Where is Ben?”

The child led the way to the door, Harriet at his heels; and thence, assuredly, might be seen Monk and Ben, pulling their boat up on the beach as leisurely as if nothing had threatened them at sea, and nothing awaited them at home. Harriet stole back to her mistress.

“May I just take the baby, and show him to my master? I will wrap him up very warm.”

“So, they are back safe! Thank God! My dear, I cannot let the baby go out yet. But you may ask my husband to come and see it, if he does not know already.”

When Monk had coolly shaken his dripping arms and legs, before entering his wife's room, Harriet looked to her brother with some degree of awe, for an account of the perils of the past night; but Ben seemed much more full of the rare quantity of fish they had caught in the gale than of the dangers of the gale itself. It must have been a severe one too, for several birds had come up in the nets with the fish; but if Ben had been frightened, he did not choose to say so, or he had forgotten it; and Harriet determined, as

she had done once or twice before, never to be in such a panic again.

Monk had business in the hamlet as soon as he had had his bread, cheese, and beer. Whatever had been his own experience, and that of his neighbours, of late, as to how little was to be had from the parish, he was resolved to lose nothing for want of asking. His business was to demand the weekly allowance for his new-born child; and he did so as if it had been a matter of course, which no one would think of refusing. There was a slight additional chance of succeeding, from the overseer having his hands full of business, and, it was supposed, his head and heart full of perplexity and trouble this day. This was the day of the intended rush to fill the workhouse to overflowing; by which the overseer might be forced to give relief according to some of the old methods. It was true, he had given out, the day before, that two empty houses, which stood a little apart, were to be fitted up as a supplement to the workhouse: but this was scarcely believed till they were seen this morning to be actually open, and that workmen were going in and out. On perceiving this, many of the conspirators were disposed to withdraw; as they had no intention of really submitting to workhouse drudgery and confinement. Some new courage was infused into them, however, by the tidings that Colonel Lee and farmer Rickman had been overheard, as they stood talking before the door, to wonder at any man daring so to waste the parish money as to offer to maintain a

whole family, when they only asked for a little help in the way of allowance. Barry had the law with him, certainly; and for a little while he must be allowed his own way: but the sooner such an extravagant fancy was put an end to the better. As for the rate having been so much less within three months, that might be accident; and there was little chance enough of its continuing to decrease, if six people were to be maintained when the support of only one was asked for. These remarks, finding their way from one gossiping group to another in the street, emboldened many to come and ask relief, as they had pledged themselves to do.

“Please, sir,” said a farmer’s labourer, when four or five applicants had received an order for the workhouse, and one or two had slunk away without, “please, sir, I must have the allowance again for my wife and myself. I’ll say nothing about the children this time; but my wages will not maintain us all. I have brought my certificate, sir.”

“What certificate?”

“About what wages I have. Before you were overseer, we always brought certificates from the farmers about the rate of wages for the week. Nine shillings this week, sir.”

“I do not ask for any certificates. You are the best judges of whether you want the relief the law offers you; and it is a point I never dispute. If you choose to give up your work, and go into the house, you shall have an order.”

“Please just to look at the certificate, sir;

and I have neighbours here who will speak to my character."

"I have nothing to do with your character. The law orders the relief of the indigent, without asking about their character. A knave must no more be allowed to starve than an honest man. Will you have an order for the house or not?"

While the man was explaining what a pity it would be that he should throw up his work for so small a sum as he contended for, farmer Rickman came up and looked at the certificate, to which the overseer would pay no attention.

"Do you mean," said he to the applicant, "that Dove pays you no more than nine shillings a week? Did farmer Dove sign this?"

"Yes, sir."

"He might have saved himself the trouble," observed Mr. Barry: "it has nothing to do with our business."

"Besides, I know him to be paying, as I am, fourteen shillings a week."

"That was before he took on so many new hands, sir. He has taken on half a score within these six weeks."

"And yet pays fourteen shillings a week to labourers of your class, to my knowledge. Ho! ho! I see! Here is a date very nicely altered. This certificate is a year old, and has been altered for the occasion. Mr. Barry, you will not give this fellow relief."

"That depends on whether he thinks he wants it."

“ Lord bless you, sir ! what am I to do with nine shillings a week ? ”

“ That is for you to judge of. If you cannot subsist, take this order for the workhouse. If not, make way for the people behind you. If you want time to consider, you may apply again an hour hence. After that, the gates will be shut.”

“ You will hear no more of him,” said Rickman, as the applicant moved off grumbling. “ Depend upon it, he has fourteen shillings. It is no new trick bringing these false certificates. It has even been laid to the charge of us farmers, that we have drawn them out falsely, to get our men relieved out of the rate. Whatever others may have done, I never did it. But I wonder you let the fellow off so easily.”

Mr. Barry again declared that it was no concern of his, and pointed out that one of the advantages of the new plan was its freeing the administrators of parish affairs from all the odium and responsibility of inquiring into character ; which appeared to him to have nothing to do with whether a man should or should not be starved.

The next case was one in point. A vagrant applied for funds to pursue his journey to his place of settlement.

“ Certainly, you shall have means to work yourself on, and a day’s subsistence for a day’s labour.”

The wanderer had never heard of people of his class being detained to labour.

“ Indeed ! the law authorizes no relief but in exchange for labour. We cannot afford journeys gratis to our own people ; of course, therefore, not to strangers. In yonder house you may subsist to-day, if you choose to earn your meals ; and at this time to-morrow, you can proceed.”

“ Somebody has been putting it into your head, sir, that I am an impostor.”

“ No such thing, I assure you. I never heard a word about you, and have nothing to do with whether you are an impostor or not. If you want food, you will work for it. If not, I suppose you will let it alone.”

“ He will take the chance of private charity,” said Colonel Lee, who had come to look on.

“ If our neighbours choose to give him charity, it is their own doing entirely, Colonel. They all know that he may be relieved out of the rates, if they do not wish to assist him. There needs be no mendicity in the parish under this system.”

“ Why, indeed, we are not likely to be much troubled with beggars, if our neighbours learn to send them to be relieved according to law. Beggars are not usually the class likely to covet a day’s subsistence in return for a day’s labour ; and if such an honest sort of one should appear now and then, he will be thankful for the food and shelter. This man, I fancy, will turn his back upon us as soon as he can.”

“ O, are you there, Monk ? You are the man that will help me to what I want,” said Mr.

Barry ; “ your wife is a good washerwoman, is not she ? ”

“ She took in washing before I married her.”

“ Very well. There is help wanted in washing in the workhouse, now and then, and I told Millar to offer the hire to your wife in the first place.”

“ Help wanted in washing in the workhouse ! ” exclaimed the Colonel : “ of all the women that go into the workhouse, are there none that can wash ? ”

“ Many an one, I dare say ; but the women who go into the workhouse usually get out again before washing-day comes round.”

“ What ! is it worse to them than to the men ? ”

“ Much the same, I fancy. We change nearly the whole set two or three times a week ; and some stay only a few hours. The only stationary ones we have had since I came into office, are two men ; one a bad character, and the other a poor workman, both of whom would fain get employment if they could ; and three women, only one of whom is able at present to wash : so that somebody must be hired to assist her. What say you, Monk ? ”

Monk bespoke the employment for his wife against the time when she should be able to undertake it. Meanwhile, he requested to be allowed eighteen-pence a week for his second child, for the same reason that he was allowed that sum on the birth of his first—that children are a great expense to a poor man.

As he must have anticipated, his demand

met with no more favour than similar ones from other people, who wanted it more. But, as he had not anticipated, some of his neighbours came forward to protest against his claim; to wonder why he should have more than others, and to tell of the fine draught of fish he had brought home, and of the indulgences he continued to obtain: all which Mr. Barry, for the twentieth time, explained did not concern him, or any body but Monk and his family. If the applicant wanted relief, he knew how he might get it; if not, he might let it alone. Monk was not at all pleased at some remarks that he overheard about the rate-payers being obliged to Mr. Barry for putting a stop to the encroachments of people who ought to be above asking for parish relief. He was afraid that the spirit of combination against the overseer was beginning to give way, and that he should have to resign his hope of his rent being paid for him, on his burdens being increased. Time was getting on; the crowd of applicants in his rear was dwindling away, and there was no appearance of the overseer's paper and ink not sufficing for the required number of orders for the workhouse.

Everybody drew back, to make way for the next group that appeared. The news was by this time spread through the neighbourhood that the boat, which had been seen floating bottom upwards, was found to be Dyer, the fisherman's, and that no doubt remained that Dyer and his eldest son had gone down in the storm. The poor man had left a wife, and five children too

young to provide for themselves. A neighbour now brought these children to Mr. Barry, and told him their story, leaving their case to the merciful consideration of the overseer. Everybody knew that the Dyers were miserably poor; their boat being almost their only property. The widow had actually, at this moment, not enough money in her possession to provide her children with food for this one day.

“This is a clear case,” said Mr. Barry; “the poor woman and her family must be taken the best care of. The children shall be received at Weston, and she shall go with them. There she can be as quiet as she likes, and be provided with comforts, till we can see what else can be done for her.”

The bystanders were rather surprised that Weston, rather than Hurst, was talked of for Mrs. Dyer.

“It is true,” he replied, “Mrs. Dyer is neither old nor sickly; but such an affliction as hers renders her the proper object of consideration and indulgence. The day when she becomes able to work will be the time for us to furnish her with employment. At present, subsistence and quiet are what she wants; and she shall have them.”

“Could not you afford an allowance in her case, sir? I don’t know what the neighbours will think of her being obliged to leave home, even though she may be more comfortable elsewhere.”

“I have no right to order an allowance in

any case whatever. If the neighbours are averse to her leaving home, they may enable her, if they so please, to remain there. I do not expect this of them, remember; though the time was when private charity visited the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and relieved them from worldly cares, till the mind had become once more fit for exertion. The time was when it was borne in mind, that as all classes of working men are not suffering alike at the same time, it is their duty to yield mutual help amidst the fluctuations of fortune. The time was, when the neighbours would have taken these poor children home, and waited by turns upon the mother with help and consolation; but that time was before parish interference had stepped in to close the hearts and hold back the hands of neighbours from each other. That time may come again—and I trust it will—but it is too soon yet to look for it; and I do not expect that Mrs. Dyer will find help any where but from the parish. And the parish shall do its best for her. It would be doing its worst to step between her and private charity (as it has been doing in other cases for this many a year), till there is scarcely any charity left among us, except that of two or three of the rich. The parish shall not be aiding in this bad work while I have the management of its funds. It shall do its best and kindest for Mrs. Dyer; leaving private charity open to do something better and kinder, if it can and will.”

“ Then what am I to tell Mrs. Dyer, sir? ”

“That she shall be welcome, with her children, to Weston ; where there will be nobody to disturb her, but such visiters as she may wish to see ; that she shall have work found for her when she is able to work ; and that the children shall be maintained and educated till she can maintain them herself.”

The neighbour withdrew with the children ; the two eldest of whom looked grave and wondering, while the younger ones had been at play under the table, or staring about them, in touching unconsciousness of their misfortune.

They were not destined to see the inside of the Weston house this day. On taking Mr. Barry's message into consideration, several neighbours were found to agree, that though they had little to say against the overseer's reasons, it seemed a pity that poor Mrs. Dyer should go from home in a hurry, when it might somehow turn up that she might do without. They could not have pretended to take upon themselves the expenses of a funeral ; but as there was unhappily no funeral, they thought they might manage to keep her where she was till she could look about her a little. At any rate, they would not mention moving to her this day. So the widow was advised not to trouble her head about any little matters for to-day, at least. The hovel in which she lived soon looked tidier than its wont, and there was no unseasonable mirth of children within it ; the little ones being taken home by the neighbours. Food appeared before it was asked for ; and ere the widow lay down to

weep through the long hours of the night, some kind hand had kindled the light which is so precious to the watcher, and a friendly voice had whispered promises for the morrow.

Even Monk caught the contagion of sympathy; perhaps the more readily from having been obliged to give up all hope of parish assistance for himself. He began to meditate whether (especially as his wife would for some time be much taken up with a young baby) the office of washerwoman in the workhouse might not be resigned in favour of Mrs. Dyer. There was a difference between giving, and giving up. He could not give; for it was impossible for him to do without his beer and his pipe, or any thing else that he had; and it would not do to pinch his wife very closely at present; but if he could continue to get his draught and whiff without his wife going out to wash—as he had always done yet—he might, perhaps, achieve the generous thing, and surrender the advantage to poor Dyer's widow. He considered it an important and very magnanimous surrender, and was not sure that he should find himself equal to it at last; for the toil was to be his wife's, and the money his, without giving up any thing for it, since Harriet was now growing very handy, and could set his dinner before him as comfortably as his wife herself.

Mr. Barry had his own thoughts upon the case all this day. He was, indeed, not much disposed to think of any thing else, or to talk as usual.

“ Papa is pleased that the empty house may be shut up again,” observed Emily; “ and that the people have not outwitted him. I think he had some fears at breakfast-time that half the hamlet would have declared itself in a state of pauperism before night; and now the workhouse is not half full, and will probably be nearly empty by this time to-morrow: for those who went in by agreement, must be angry enough at the conspirators who fell off and left them in the lurch. I do not wonder that papa looks pleased.”

“ As for that, my dear, those who really mean to do good will take pretty good care not to be outwitted. It shall go hard with me before I let our people do that. I am glad, of course, to have been spared the evil of proceeding to extremities in my experiment, and filling two houses with paupers, even for twenty-four hours. I would have kept them for twenty-four weeks or months, if they had chosen to persist; so convinced am I of the goodness of the principle on which we are now acting; but a more speedy operation is, of course, pleasanter in every way.”

“ The matter of the immediate expense is a very important one.”

“ It is. There is now every hope—there can be no doubt—that many hundred pounds will be saved from the profitless maintenance of paupers, to be laid out in rewarding labour; that is, in enabling the farmer and shopkeeper to lay out their own money in their own way, for the benefit of themselves and society; in enabling the labourer to support his household with a

spirit unhardened and ungrieved ; in enabling the pauper to make the comparison between freedom with toil on the one hand, and restraint with more irksome toil on the other. The rate has fallen one-third already, and is still falling ; and Rickman and Dove are paying their men fourteen shillings a week, instead of nine, as at this time last year."

"Then Groves and Moss will stay, I hope, and no more worthy people be driven away by the rates, leaving us less able than ever to bear the burden."

"I have more hope than hitherto of their staying. It was not merely the yearly sum to be paid in rates which alarmed them ; but the hardened spirit of the people, which gave promise of worse things perpetually. This day, they may have seen that spirit softened. This, girls, is the crowning event of the day. Charity—by which I do not mean money-giving—has come among us again ; and now I can fancy that I discern an end of pauperism, with all its guilt and all its miseries."

"What are we to do, papa ? Cannot we help to familiarize this charity ?"

"Eminently ; and the more from its being pretty well understood that you have not money to give away. Watch over this poor woman, in companionship with her other neighbours, and help her to supply her own wants. She will soon wish for employment, and we must have it ready for her."

"What shall it be ?"

“ We must see what she is fit for. If she can work, I have no fear of her being compelled to be idle. Looking for work is now a very different thing from what it was a year, or even four months, ago. Our able-bodied men may now leave it to children to get limpets, and cut rushes, and pick up stones to mend the roads. Our men are wanted for higher work than this; and the busier they are, the more there will be for the women to do. If you will find out what Mrs. Dyer is fit for, I may safely promise, I believe (that which I should have thought a rash engagement some months ago) that she shall have a bidding for her labour as soon as she wishes for one. Meantime, she is undoubtedly less forlorn than any poor widow who has met her affliction within our borders of late years.”

“ I wonder how her husband thought of her lot as he went down ? ”

“ Bitterly, most bitterly, if he was a man. But now, if a similar fate should overtake another husband and father of this place, he may be spared some of the misery of such dying thoughts as this poor man’s most probably were. He may think of his family as likely to be allowed their chance of thriving amidst the common influences of society, instead of being exposed to the blight of a corrupted legal charity.”

CHAPTER VI.

HOLIDAY SCHOOLING.

THE three weeks during which Harriet held the office of manager at home did more to make a woman of her than all the toils, troubles, and pleasures of preceding years. But she must be once more a child, for one day, at least; the day when she and Ben were to do as they pleased, before returning to school.

It pleased them to do a very important thing; a thing for which Ben had been preparing, at leisure times, during the whole three weeks while Harriet was hugging the baby or finishing Fred's nightcap, as the infant slept. It pleased Harriet and Ben, not yet to put up a cupboard within doors, or a bench without, or to make efforts after a pig, but to attempt something which might help in the acquisition of all these good things in time. It pleased them to try to shrimp; and Ben had secretly taken a lesson from a neighbour, and made a shrimping-net, and openly borrowed a basket for the occasion. Into this basket went a sufficiency of bread, sweetened with the extraordinary luxury of treacle. Water they were, of course, left to find for themselves. The net had been hidden, with due discretion, some way from home, and Ben took care that he was out of sight of the gable window of the cottage before he waved it over

his head, and cried "Hurra!" The shore under Crow's Cliff was the point where they had determined to begin. At any place nearer, there might be bathers; and the young folks chose to have their ground all to themselves. They ran the whole way, as if they had not had the entire day before them; and their hearts were just beginning to leap up at the sight of the rippling blue tide in which they were presently to be paddling, when they heard a sound which they did not like at all. It was a shot, striking short against point after point of the cliffs. Ben looked up, out, around, and could see nothing.

"There they are," said Harriet, "a good way off—a tall gentleman and a short; unless it is a boy.—Why, look there behind those rocks. The rocks are so brown with the weed, that one can scarcely see a dark coat behind them when the gentlemen stoop to point their guns. And there is the dog, brown too, frisking after the birds. But I doubt whether the gentlemen have shot any."

"It is always the way," grumbled Ben; "there is always somebody in the way. I shall put on my shoes again. I won't shrimp when any body is in sight."

"Well, you see the water will be more fit by and by; and I dare say the gentlemen will go away."

"That they won't. This is the great place for the birds to build, and that gun will be popping off all day. I wish I could chuck it into the sea."

"I think we had better go further," Harriet suggested, "or shrimp away without minding them. Let us walk just behind them, and see what they are doing."

Ben somewhat sulkily consented; and, carrying his shoes in one hand and his net in the other, while Harriet took up the basket, he was making a circuitous route behind the sportsmen, when a shot took effect, a bird fluttered and fell, and the dog seemed unaware of the circumstance,

"Run in and fetch it for the gentleman," said Harriet; "I think it is the first he has hit, and it is a pity he should lose it."

Ben dashed in knee-deep for the bird, and seemed to commit his ill-humour to the waves; so graciously did he run up to the sportsman with the prey. He found that the little gentleman was a boy about his own age, who loaded the pieces for his father (or whoever else his companion might be), but did not shoot. Ben found it rather interesting to watch the next attempt, and afterwards to run races with the dog for the falling birds. The shrimping seemed to have gone out of his mind for the present.

"Have you no shoes?" asked the gentleman, seeing that it made no difference in the boy's pace whether he ran over sand or shingle.—Ben pointed out that he had shoes.

"You live in yonder hamlet, I suppose—Whom do you belong to?"

“ Her. She is my sister.”

“ Nobody else? Then I suppose you are on the parish.”

“ In a manner; but it is not for long. We shall do for ourselves soon.”

“ Indeed! and what do you mean to be?”

“ A fisherman. I’ve been out to sea many times. They’d take me out as a boy now, if my master would spare me.”

“ There, George, when will you be able to say as much?”

“ So you do not like the being on the parish, boy?” said he; “ Did you ever see the inside of the workhouse?”

Yes, Ben had seen it; for there were no neighbours disposed to take him home when his father was lost. He had seen enough of the workhouse, during those few sad days, to wish very earnestly never to see it again.

While the gentleman went on questioning Ben about his circumstances, opinions, and feelings—employing him meanwhile in running hither and thither, in turns with the dog, Harriet wandered on along the shore, looking for a shrimping place as good as the one she had left behind. A long way off, she found one, which looked most tempting: a fine level of sand, affording a large extent of shallow water; a gap between the piled masses of the cliff, which showed the sky through, and invited her, by its being within reach, to make it the resting-place.

of her basket ; the perfect quiet of the place, from which the hamlet could be seen only indistinctly in the distance, and there being a drip of fresh water down the cliff, at which they might drink when dinner-time came ; all these things put together made Harriet glad that she had been sent on, if Ben would but come. Ben came, when she had bared her feet and tucked up her petticoats, and tried the coolness of the water with as many toes as she ventured to use for the experiment without the sympathy of Ben's. Ben wanted a higher sympathy from her. He brought a sixpence in his hand—the first piece of silver money either had ever possessed : for though Harriet had seven-pence, it had been told in copper into Miss Emily's lap. After a speculation as to what could induce the gentleman to give Ben so much, and a long consultation about where to put it that it might be safe, with trials of how it looked on different ledges and in different clefts of the rock, it was tied up, with as many knots as the coin contained pence, in the corner of Harriet's apron, and the work of the day was entered upon.

“ Give me the net ; it is my turn first, because I made the net,” said Ben.

“ Your turn first ! when I am two years older ! ” cried Harriet, beginning to push the net before her, after the manner of shrimpers. Ben hastened towards her, making a prodigious splash, and tried to pull it from her, disregarding all her warnings that he was driving the shrimps

away. She turned her back ; he dodged her. In fear of having it pulled from her before she had caught any thing, she uplifted it, and found no shrimps, nor any thing but a bit of green weed.

“ Now, you know nothing about the way.”
—Ben began.

“ We got more rushes in half an hour than we shall get shrimps to-day, after all,” thought Harriet ; but the remembrance of the friendship of the day of rush-gathering rose in time to prevent her prophecy coming true.

“ Well, I believe I do know nothing about the way,” said she ; “ you had better take the net first, and show me.”

“ No ; not take the net, but only show you how, without making a splash and a fuss,” said Ben, very graciously ; and nothing could now exceed the desire of each not to have the net. The shrimps, if they happened to hear, must have mourned over this politeness ; for it was a fatal omen to them. Up they came by handfuls, wriggling and hopping ; and a fine display they made when turned into a hole scooped in the sand for their reception. For nearly two hours might the clear voices of the boy and girl have been heard by any wanderer in this solitude, congratulating one another on the goodness of the net and the plenitude of the supply, and exclaiming at something or another that was happening every minute.

“ Look, what a monster !” “ There, you let that great fellow get away !” “ Will this round

thing eat like a shrimp when it is boiled?" "But, Ben, if we get eighteen-pence one week, how do we know that we shall earn as much the next? I think we had better get it two or three weeks forward before we say a word about it to the overseer or any body."

Ben thought he could not wait; but, meantime, wanted to know whether the creature he held by the tail was small enough to be thrown into the water again.

"I think now we might turn them all out, and sort them, and put the tiny ones into the sea, and the others into the basket. Here, do you empty the net this time, and I will reach down the basket."

"The basket! Where? Why, you silly thing," said Ben, when he saw the predicament of the basket, "what made you stick it there, where the salt water will spoil all our bread and treacle?"

His dismayed sister could only protest that there was no water in the arch when she wedged the basket in it. There was enough now, however, pouring through in gushes with every wave. Before she could get through the water, which had risen unperceived between her and the arch, the basket tottered, and then toppled into the waves; on whose bosom it was floating away, dispersing its contents in all directions, when Harriet caught it. The dinner was fished up, but found to be utterly spoiled. Those must be hungry indeed who could eat bread and treacle soaked in sea-water. - Harriet was very, very

sorry, and supposed they must either change Ben's sixpence somewhere for food, or get home earlier than they had meant, to hasten their supper. A sudden rush and spread of green water drove them back to hold their consultation nearer the cliff. This flow of the tide seemed to decide the choice of evils between fasting and changing the sixpence.

"There, now," said Ben, "we can't get back, I believe, if we would. It will be too late to want to buy our dinners when the tide goes down; so the sixpence is safe, and that is a good thing."

It was no more practicable to get forward than back. But they had fished quite as many shrimps as they expected, and there was a cave behind them which looked very pleasant; just the kind of retreat where people who lead Harriet's sort of life like to sit and do nothing, now and then. This cave was soon the only place left for them to amuse themselves in; the water flowing up to the very ledge at the entrance. On this ledge they sat down; Harriet to wring her gown-tail, and Ben to point out how very green this wave was upon the white sand, and the next greener, and another greenest of all, and to tell how far down he could distinguish the leech-line of his master's nets when out on such a clear sea as this.

"And what a sound every time now!" said Harriet; "it makes a noise as if it was quite in the cavern. And so it is, Ben; it has come up all that since we sat down."

“The faster it comes in, the sooner we shall get out,” said Ben.

“Ah! I am afraid you will be sadly hungry before we get back. But I hope it is just going to turn now.”

On the very point of turning, Ben thought: indeed it must be higher already than usual, to judge by the old appearance of such water-marks as he could find. There was no sign of the tide turning, however, for one five minutes after another. The gleams danced more multitudinously on the roof of the cavern; the shock of each wave resounded more hoarsely; and Harriet was detected by her brother sending a hasty glance round the place, as if questioning whether there was not a hole to creep out of. Ben stood up, with his arms by his sides, looking at her.

“I say, Harriet, suppose the tide goes on coming up in this way, so as to fill up this whole place!”

“Why, then, I suppose we must be drowned.”

“I’ll never be drowned, if I can get away,” cried Ben, running vehemently round the narrow space, and even pushing against its walls, which had stood since the creation.

“Why, Ben; stop! Stop, Ben! What do you do that for? I can’t bear to see you do that; you know very well you can’t get out.”

Ben sprang upon her, and hung round her neck, as if he meant to strangle her; probably to prevent her repeating these words. She disengaged herself as soon as she could, and crying, sat down at the furthest end of the place.

Whatever might be Ben's mood, at any time, nothing exerted so much influence over it as Harriet's tears. He now grew very quiet, and sat down by her. Harriet never wept long.

"What a——what an odd thing it would be," she said, "if we were to die by drowning, when father was drowned!"

Ben would now tell her what he had never meant to tell her—that he had fallen overboard in one of his trips with his master. Harriet's feeling on hearing this was not exactly what it would have been in Monk's kitchen. As she fixed her eyes upon the place where a new point of the cliff had just disappeared, she wanted most of all to know what drowning was like.

Ben could not tell her much about it, as he had tumbled in, and been pulled out before he well knew what he was about. It put him in a great fright, however; much greater than during the night when Harriet thought he would never come back again. At the remembrance of that night, Harriet smiled and said,

"Why, it was your being so far away, and I safe at home, that made me care so much that night. We are together now; and there is nobody else belonging to us," she continued, brightening; "so what may happen does not much signify."

"No; they are thinking little enough of us; gabbling at school, some of them; and master and mistress busy, and not thinking about us till night."

"If any body is thinking about us, 'tis Fred;

and he has not sense enough to know where we are and what might befall us."

"What will they all say when they hear it?" asked Ben. "You don't think every body will be talking about us, as they did about the Dyers, do you? And yet I heard a good deal about Joe Dyer, too; and he was less than a year older than me."

Harriet thought that might be owing to his having gone down with his father, whose life was a very important one. She was very glad that nobody knew of the silly quarrel between Ben and herself this very morning, about the net. It was strange to think they could have quarrelled about such a trifle, so short a time before they should be waiting as they were now. Ben was sure it was his fault that they had quarrelled so often as they had done; but he did not think, if he could get out now, that he should be so cross any more. He had often been angry with himself, but somehow, he never could say so at the right time; and Harriet seemed to have forgotten it all afterwards, so that it would have done no good to put her in mind. Harriet always knew this, all the time; but they had better not talk now of getting out any more. See how the water was coming up to their very toes; and there was such a small opening left at the mouth of the cavern, that they could not see one of the ships that she had watched when she first sat down. They were quite alone now, except——

Ben would not give up. He made haste to

show how a point of rock, which he did not remember to have seen till now, seemed to be popping up and down in the moving water. He thought it was becoming more and more largely visible. Harriet thought not. They agreed neither of them to speak till the matter was decided. In five minutes the point was completely covered.

“ We might have come upon the parish by and by, and had everybody against us,” said Harriet, “ and I don’t mind it, as if it was you only. I think we ought to be saying our prayers, Ben.”

“ I don’t know how—What do you think we should say ?”

“ I suppose we should say what we think—that we are ready to go, and not afraid of any thing, and that we have been very happy so far. I should say for myself that you have been a very good brother to me. I know I never cared much for any thing but because of you ; and I never should have been much afraid of any thing that might happen while I had you for a brother, Ben.”

Ben did not think he had been so happy as Harriet ; but that was his own fault, and he did not mean to be less thankful on that account. He had been more put out with people ; and he still thought they had used him hardly sometimes.—Very hardly, from not understanding him, his sister agreed.

“ There ! there goes the basket !”

Harriet caught it, and proposed putting it on a high projection, like a shelf, which she thought she could reach by climbing. She was afraid it was impossible for either of them to get upon it, or to find room to remain there in any posture; but the basket might stand there; and it was a pity somebody should not have it, and the net too. Ben thought the same of his sixpence; and when the tight, wet knots of Harriet's apron were at length loosened, the coin was laid conspicuously on the top of the shrimps, and the whole lodged on the shelf.

Harriet's cotton shawl fell from her shoulders into the water, while she was mounted, and the next ebb carried it out of reach. It seemed to herself very perverse; but she could scarcely help crying at seeing this one article of her property taken possession of by the waves, when there was every probability that they would presently swallow up herself and all she had.

No; not quite all. She wondered who would have the money of theirs that was in Miss Barry's hands. Miss Barry would soon know what had become of them, if she liked to ask. The sporting gentlemen could tell nearly enough where they went to give an idea what must have happened.—To think, Ben said, how near those gentlemen might be, and that from the mouth of this very cave the roofs of the houses in the hamlet might be seen, and that yet no one was stirring to save them!

A quieter power was now at work to save

them (as they soon perceived) than the less mighty force which man puts in motion in his contests with nature. The tide had at length turned, and inch after inch of slimy footing appeared. The water-line fell, till a white soil was once more visible, and the world opened again upon those who had well nigh left it. They had little to say during the reaction, under which they had now to suffer. At first they sat still: but when the water had nearly left the cave, their impatience to get out became excessive. When they emerged, at length, with flushed cheeks and chattering teeth, they felt, though full of thankfulness, as if it must have been very silly to be so frightened; and they avoided looking at each other.

When they had made a further escape from the shadow of the cliff to the sunshine on the down (being anxious to get a good way from the margin of the sea just at present) Ben turned round to propose that they should say nothing to anybody of what had happened.—“Say nothing! and why?” Because the mistress would perhaps blame them, and most likely never let them go out shrimping again. This last was not to be thought of, as shrimping was looked upon as the grand means, the strong ground of hope, of freeing themselves from the parish. Silence was therefore agreed upon.

Silence was kept. No explanation was given in answer to Mrs. Monk's surprise at seeing them home before night.

“ Well, I suppose you found you had had enough of being together, and so came home, very wisely. You are just come when I wanted you, Harriet. Here, take the baby while I set things straight a little for my husband. I have not been able to get a single thing done to-day, Fred was so wakeful and troublesome. I suppose it is because he has been used to have you put him to sleep and manage him. What have you got in your basket, Ben—shrimps! a quantity of shrimps! My dears, did you get all these yourselves? I do believe there will be four or five pints of them when they are boiled; and, one with another, I should not wonder if they bring you three-pence a pint. You shall finish the day to your liking. I will boil them for you presently, and then you may carry them up to sell, in time for people’s tea. Fill the saucepan, Ben, and fetch me down the salt, and then run and ask Mrs. Hart to lend you her pint measure. I dare say she will.”

“ May I get Ben his supper first?” asked Harriet.

“ It is full early for his supper, and I doubt whether there is any bread: but he can step to the baker’s from Mrs. Hart’s.”

Ben found a small crust, which he broke between himself and his sister, and ran off just in time to avoid witnessing the trouble Harriet was about to fall into about the loss of her shawl. It was missed, and she was called to account for it.

“ It fell off into the water, and it floated away. Ben tried all he could to get it.”

“ Then he may try all he can to get you another; for I cannot afford to give you things to be lost in that foolish way. You should have left it on the sands, with your shoes and stockings. It is always the way when you give children pleasure, that some mischief comes of it. It seems as if they could not make merry without losing or spoiling something.”

“ The shrimps might go to pay for it, only they are half Ben’s,” said Harriet.

“ Well; the fault was half Ben’s, I dare say. You were at some silly play in the water, I have no doubt.”

Harriet merely said, “ no,” and concluded within herself that the gains of the holiday must go to repair the losses of the holiday. She was, however, spared this mortification.

In a little while, Mrs. Monk saw from the window that the neighbours were hastening towards a particular spot on the beach, where something was apparently to be seen. She followed to learn what was the matter, desiring Harriet to stay within with the children. She soon returned with Harriet’s shawl, which she threw at her, saying that getting it back again was better luck than she deserved, and that it was to be hoped she would be duly ashamed of the trouble and concern she had occasioned to the gentlemen who brought it.—They had seen the children on the shore in the morning, they

said ; and not having observed them return before the spring-tide overflowed the whole beach, in the direction they had taken, and having seen this shawl washed up, the sportsmen had feared that the children might be lost, and had hastened back to the hamlet to ascertain whether the shawl was known there, and to give the alarm. They had been very good-humoured, Mrs. Monk said, on finding that their trouble had been in vain ; but she had felt herself bound to make as humble an apology as she could for Harriet's carelessness. Harriet duly thanked her proxy, and proposed running after the gentleman to return the sixpence ; the story of which she had not, till now, been allowed time to tell.—She was bidden to keep it, and not suppose that such as she was to think of offering sixpence to gentlefolks.

Mrs. Monk was certainly very cross to-day. She had often been cross of late. She mentioned it herself sometimes, and said she was wearing out, or growing old, or something. Every one who heard her say this, rallied her about talking of age, when her husband, who was many years older, seemed as hearty a man as ever. As for wearing out, unless there was some illness or grief that no one knew of, such a thing was difficult to account for ; since her husband had certainly got up in the world of late, being free of the parish, and no worse off at home than before, but rather better, from his venturing to get many little comforts about him that he did not think of

having, so long as the overseer's eyes were always upon him. Harriet was growing up, too, to be a more handy help than many women were blessed with. It was really a pity that Mrs. Monk should think of such a thing as wearing out.

Even Harriet ventured to hint this, when the shrimps had been sold for fifteen-pence, and the orphans thus became authorized to speak, as those who have a power, as well as a will, of their own.

CHAPTER VII.

EASE WITH DIGNITY.

HOWEVER much Mrs. Monk's neighbours might at first think it a pity that she should fancy any thing about being worn out, the time came when they began to entertain the same fancy. Whatever the cause might be, she certainly declined; and a weary decline it was. It was just five years from the time when she had taken the two orphans under her protection, that they performed the last offices of children to her; going from closing her eyes, to comforting the husband who survived her.

She had been tended carefully, and provided with far more comforts than some few years before she would have ventured to wish for; cir-

cumstances which she owed to her own merits. It was her training which had made Harriet the nurse and housekeeper which she was now found to be. It was her example which had accustomed Ben to the industry which now largely assisted to supply the wants of the family ; and it was her conduct as a wife which secured from Monk more consideration and manifestation of affection than she had ever enjoyed since the early days of their marriage.

Monk did, indeed, appear to want comfort when all was over, the body laid in the ground, and the funeral guests departed. What was he to do, in this time of his old age, he asked, with two young children, who, he always used to think, would be left under the care of a good mother whenever he should be past toiling and managing for them ?

This was a question which Harriet and Ben had expected, and to which they had prepared an answer, after some grave consultations in the sick chamber of their friend, and again over her coffin. Their answer was : Why should not they all go on living together, as they had done ? If Monk would continue his occupation just when it pleased him to go out to fish, and let Ben have the free use of his boat and other apparatus, there seemed little doubt that the rent could be raised, and the wants of the family provided for. Harriet would do what she could to prevent the children feeling the loss of a mother ; and as Monk grew older and less able to exert himself, Fred would be growing up into

a fitness to be either a sailor-boy—his favourite fancy—or something else that was useful ; and none of them would ever think of poor little Harry being a trouble.

Monk was quite ready to own that no other plan could yield equal promise of comfort to him ; but thought it hard that the parish should have no help to offer to persons in his kind of distress. In old times—and even now, in parishes not fifty miles off—there would be an allowance given to each of his children, and help to himself, and the entire charge of Harriet and Ben willingly resumed.

“ But we do not want it, or wish for it,” said Ben. “ After having been off the parish entirely now for more than three years, it would be a sin and a shame to go back to it.”

“ And the children shall not have to think about the parish, if we can help it,” added Harriet. “ As long as there is the Hurst school for them to go to, they need not look to the Weston one for instruction ; and, as for their ever having to labour a stroke, or taste a meal in the work-house here, I trust Providence has a better lot in store for them.”

Monk trusted so too ; but he was getting an old man, and the one that he looked to for every thing was gone, and there was no venturing to say, Who could tell how soon he might pass away ? He was reminded that the story of Harriet and Ben might be taken as a hint as to what was to become of his own boys. Harriet and Ben had been left more unprotected than

these children. They had been reared to a state of early independence, and were ready to testify their thankfulness by discharging offices of protection to other two, who might possibly have it in their power to repay to society, in their turn, the benefits they should have received. This was much better than owing any thing to the parish ; and there seemed every reason to think that the parties concerned lost nothing by such kindly arrangements.

“ No ; I don’t say they do,” replied Monk ; “ for I am sure it would have been a very different thing to her that is gone to have me come home with her parish allowance, once a week, and nothing more than that grudged money to comforter with : it would have been very different from her having you always at her beck and call, and Ben bringing in his half-crown sometimes, and no talk of the parish, from first to last of her illness. I don’t deny the good of this ; but it may not often happen that such as you and Ben are at hand at such times.”

“ Not where the parish is always at hand to be applied to first, I dare say,” said Harriet : “ but I do not see why there should not be plenty such as Ben and me, if orphans were timely taught and tended in some place out of the workhouse. In the workhouse, they do not know whom to look up to, to thank and repay for the care of them ; and so, too often, grow up thankless. But people must be bad indeed, be they orphans or any thing else, to take their rearing, and training, or any kind of help, and

not wish to give the same in their turns to some that want it as they once did. You will let us try to take care of Fred and Harry; and you will try yourself to be comfortable with us, will not you?—If we find we cannot get on, it is only to separate then instead of now: but, indeed, I have much hope, and so has Ben, that we shall get on.”

“ Well, my dear, you can but try, if you wish it; and if you do not find me so comfortable as I have been, you will not fancy I want to be going any where else. I shall never be comfortable any more.”

“ We do not expect, we never thought of making up to you for her that is gone. O no! it is little we can do; but what trouble we can save you we will.”

“ Harriet has something particular to say about that,” observed Ben: “ it is better to get every thing agreed upon completely beforehand, that there may be no difficulty afterwards.”

What Harriet had to stipulate was, that the management of the money affairs of the family should be left to those who were to direct its other affairs. If Monk would just fix upon the weekly sum which he thought would answer his expenses for his own little comforts, it would trouble him least to have that sum regularly, and not be further burdened about any other expenditure; and, for her own part, Harriet thought she and Ben could not justly undertake to do their part on any other plan.—Monk, who hated trouble at all times, and now was particularly

indisposed to exertion, had no objection to make ; and Harriet was immediately invested with the dignity of domestic manager, and Ben with the responsibility of providing the greater part of the resources.

The greater part ; for his sister determined that while she could earn money, the whole responsibility should not rest on Ben. Monk scarcely ever went out fishing after this time, and he took charge of the two pigs at the rear of the cottage ; finding it an amusement to feed and tend them in the morning, and throw odds and ends to them at other times of the day, when there was nothing to be seen on the beach. He did not object to being left in charge of the little one when Fred was at school ; and thus Harriet was set at liberty for hours together to go out shrimping, or to wait on the bathing parties who now frequented the place in summer. For this last service she was so well recompensed as to enable her to discharge the funeral expenses without begging for delay in the payment of her rent, or being obliged to sell one of the pigs ; which would have been a discouraging beginning of her housekeeping.

“ I am glad you came home before dark, Ben,” said his sister, one fine Midsummer evening, “ and that you let my master—(for so the young folks continued to call Monk)—I am glad you let my master go to bed first ; for I want to consult with you. But, are you very tired ? ”

“ A good deal ; but I am not for bed just yet.”

“ Well : about the rent. Quarter-day is close at hand ; but I need not tell you that, for we have both been counting the days since the month began, and shall till the quarter is past. Is my master sound asleep, do you think ? ”

Ben went to make sure, and shut the door securely while he pronounced him snoring. Harriet, meanwhile, lighted a candle, brought down a slate and pencil from a high shelf, and a little leathern bag which Miss Barry had given her to keep money in. Ben hung up a blind before the window, that no gleam of silver might find its way out, and set Monk's chair for his sister, and a stool for himself, preparatory to the important business of settling accounts. Their conversation was conducted in a whisper.

“ Now, Ben, do you take the pencil and reckon. How much do you expect to get for your fish to-morrow ? ”

“ Why, I have had but poor luck to-day, when I expected something better ; but I may get half-a-crown, leaving the smallest of the fish for our own dinners.”

“ I shall want a shilling of that for bread and salt ; and our stock of potatoes is nearly out : but we may reckon on sparing fifteen-pence of it for the rent. Here I put nine-pence to it from my shrimping to-day.”

“ That is two shillings ; and it is down on the slate.”

“ Here is your great five shilling piece ; that's seven. And three sixpences ; eight and six-pence. Now, have we the other six and six-

pence? Yes! here are seven shillings and three-pence halfpenny. Only think of our having nine-pence halfpenny over! if you sell your fish as you say."

"I think I shall. What will you do with the money left over?"

"There are plenty of ways to spend it. The window wants a pane. I saw Miss Emily glance at it, being stuffed, the last time she was here."

"And Harry's pinafore is all one great hole."

"He tore it from top to bottom, just when I had mended it: but though it looks such a big hole, it is not so bad to mend as some. I'll do it to-night. But he will soon want another or two. But there is a thing we shall have to pay, they say, that we must keep a little money for; though I dare not mention it to my master."

"O, then, I know you mean the rate. To me there [is a pleasure in paying that, instead of taking it."

"Ah! instead of taking it: and having ever taken it, it is our part to pay it. I wonder how much it will be."

"It can't be much upon us; so many more being payers now, and less wanted, by half, than there was when there were fewer to pay. If I thought it would not be more than nine-pence,
———"

"That is what I was going to say. You might take it when you take the rent, to show your readiness."

"But how will you manage about the window, and about Harry's pinafores?"

“ I will get enough for that before many days are over, if the lame lady goes on bathing. Besides, we have near three shillings in the Bank. We would not take it out, if we could help it ; but there it is, in case we really want it. But I should like to pay the rate with a grace.”

“ Then I’ll be off early with my fish, and get all paid and settled to-morrow, shall I ? ”

“ Yes, do : and remember to bring the receipts. Look here ! Here is where I keep my receipts. Double bags like these are convenient things ; money in one side, and receipts in the other.”

“ What receipts can you have ? I never thought of such a thing.”

“ Nor should I, but for something Miss Emily said to me once about buying too little of a thing at a time. I got half a pound of tea for my master, the last time I wanted soap for my washing, and the grocer gave me a receipt. And I chose to ask one of Dodd for the great piece of cheese, because we had been apt, before I was manager, to run scores there, and my mistress rather thought he charged us twice over sometimes.”

“ Well ; whatever way you manage, things are full as comfortable as they were before you were manager. That I will say for you.”

“ Will you ? can you ? I am so glad ; for I could not be sure myself. But we must remember that any thing that used to go wrong might not be my mistress’s fault, while she had not her own way, as I have.”

" 'Tis a pity she had not ; for my master seems as comfortable now as ever he used to be ; or, I should rather say, more. He does not seem to miss her as I thought he would."

" Ah ! you don't see him at times when I do. When he lies under the boats, or leans over the rail by the pig-sty, then is his time for thinking of her."

" I am sure I think of her much oftener than that."

" To be sure ! and so does he ; and so do I. Before I go to sleep, and when I wake, and as sure as ever Harry cries, I think of her. He is a winning boy, Harry, is not he ?"

" He is : but scarcely like to be so fine a fellow as Fred. If Fred is made a sailor-boy, as he wants to be, he will get credit at sea, depend upon it."

" I doubt whether his own father has such an opinion of him as we."

" He does not know him so well ; though that is a strange thing to be said about father and son. Besides he is against old people admiring any thing much ; and he calls himself old now."

" He is, to be sure. Sixty is a great age. I hope I shall not live to sixty, if I must leave off admiring such boys as Fred."

" If you think sixty such a great age, what do you think of eighty-three—Goody Gidney's age—what would you say if my master lives to eighty-three ?"

" That he shall be welcome to live with us

still, instead of going upon the parish for any part of the many years that Goody Gidney has been there."

"If we go on living together," said Ben——

"Ah!" said Harriet, smiling, "the time must come, I know, when you will be thinking of something different; but——"

"O, but I was thinking of it for you, not me. You are the eldest."

"O, but I was thinking about it for you; because it signifies more to you. However, we had better not even think at all about it, for one another or ourselves. We do very well at present; and this is the sort of life we always used to plan together; and I am sure I like it very much."

"So do I; a thousand times better than being ordered about and managed, as we were. We will never order Fred about as I used to be ordered. I used to say so to myself at the time, I remember. But, Harriet, I can't say that this is exactly the sort of thing we used to plan—it is not living, just us two together."

"No; but much better. More useful, though less free and quiet. It is far better than we ever had reason to think of; so do not let us say a word against it, Ben?"

"O no; not I. I like fishing when I am abroad, and seeing you manager when I am at home; and so I am content. And a shame it would be if I was not. So good night; I am going to bed."

"And I am going to mend Harry's pinafore."

And look where I put the money-bag, that you may know where to find it to-morrow, without asking, if you should happen to come for it when I am out. Good night."

Monk came in from a lounge with a neighbour the next day, just while Ben was showing his sister the receipts he had brought for the rent, and also for the rate, which had amounted to no more than five-pence, and was scarcely likely to be so much next time. Monk looked over Ben's shoulder (as Ben was looking over his sister's), and was not displeased. Instead of pitying them, as they expected he would, for being called on to discharge their duties as housekeepers in the parish; instead of railing at the oppression of the overseer, Monk seemed to look with complacency on a document, which was one of the very last he would some time ago have desired to see in his house. After putting on his spectacles twice to read it, he stuck it up between the two best brass candlesticks over the fireplace.

"Had not I better put it away with my other receipts?" inquired Harriet.

"No, no. Let it stay where it is. I like to see it. I will take care that no harm comes to it. I like to see it there.—Well, Ben, what handiwork next?"

"Mending the window. I got three-pence more for my fish than I reckoned upon; and that, with what I had left after paying the rate, helped me to a pane and some putty; and now I'm going to try my hand at glazier's work."

Harriet drew near her brother, when he was at his task, to discover whether he had inquired of the glazier the expense of brown paint. He had ; and he really thought that if the two jobs were done at one time, so as to waste no paint—the touching up the boat, and painting the bench—the bench might be afforded. The glazier had said the same thing as the carpenter, about the family having been old customers, and the willingness of all friends to deal handsomely with the young folks on their first setting out. So Ben thought Harriet might hope to see the bench up, and Miss Barry sitting on it, before the long evenings were all gone by. It was much to be desired that it should be done during the long early mornings, that the glazier's time might not have to be paid for, but the business be done by Ben himself, without interfering with his fishing. He had painted his master's name on the boat once, and knew how to use the brush.

As Harriet sat this afternoon on the step of the door, making a checked shirt for her brother, and talking to Harry, who was rearing a tower of sand on the outside, Monk wanted to pass more than once, with a neighbour or two, to show a curious bit of coral on the chimney-piece, which might just as well have been shown any day for the last ten years. It was observable that each visiter had something to say to Harriet about the rate, and the new plan of giving receipts for every payment.

At length, seeing no more neighbours at

liberty, Monk found out that it was likely to be a very fine evening, and that it was a great length of time since he had seen Goody Gidney. He would take Harry in his hand, and go and look in upon her. Harry could not leave his fortification, however ; and Monk went alone, looking really like something of the old man, Harriet thought, as she followed him with her eyes across the deep sand.

Goody Gidney replied to her guest's remarks on its being a long time since she had crossed his threshold, that it did not do for elderly people to put themselves in the way of seeing trouble. It was bad for the spirits to go into a house where there had been a death ; and besides, Monk was a leisure man now, and it was rather his part, considering his youth, to come and visit her.

“ Why, Goody, I have not so many years upon me as you, by upwards of twenty, I know ; but yet it is on account of age that I have time on my hands, as you heard. I have nearly given up fishing, because I am too old for the sea.”

“ Now, take my advice, and don't begin talking about being old long before you need, as people commonly do. I don't mean to give in to any such fancies till I am really old.”

“ And when will that be, Goody ? ”

“ O, one hears of many people, you know, that live to a hundred, and more ; and up to ninety-six is quite common : and I'm far enough from that yet.”

“ True, Goody. I rather wonder you let

yourself be moved up to this place as an old person."

"Why; it was not for me to take offence, when so many, not even elderly, came too. Jem Collins's grandmother is not above half way between you and me. It need not be long, you see, before you can get in. You will find it very comfortable and pleasant."

Monk thanked her, but had no present intention of ever coming; which Goody thought very odd and unnatural, expatiating on the advantages of the residence; its quiet, airiness, fine views, &c. Monk assumed an air of condescension as he answered:

"All these things may signify much to you, who have never known what it is to live in a home of your own. I have no doubt it is a fine exchange from the place below; considering the state it was in for most of the seventy years you lived there; but my case is different——"

"Very different from what it was, Mr. Monk. Where is she that made your home every thing to you? Gone, and left you with two young things.—Neighbour, I did not mean to make your countenance change so: but if you tempt me to speak of differences, you know——"

"She has left behind her some that make my case as different from yours as it was before; and we do not take it as the kindest thing in the world, Goody, to talk to those who help to support the workhouse of going in themselves. As long as our receipt for the rate sticks up before my eyes at home, as I left it just now, I shall

take it amiss to be supposed to design coming in, Goody."

"Bless my heart! neighbour, who could have guessed that you had grown so high since I saw you last?"

"'Tis not that I have grown high, Goody; nor has it all happened since you saw me last; but I do not pretend to deny that times are changed so far as that those who live and have long lived on the rate have no right to make themselves equals with those who pay to the rate."

"And a pretty piece of work you made about paying to the rate when it was first talked of! You did not hold up your head so mightily about it, then."

"Because then it seemed just the thing that would sink me quite. It is different now, for me and others. Wages are so much better—near double what the farmers used to give; and as it is a thriving place, more people have come to live, besides those staying who talked of going away; so that there is more encouragement to fish. One can pay the rate now without feeling it burdensome; and may find it unpleasant to hear any thing about coming into the workhouse."

"Very well! with all my heart. You know all my wish for you and yours used to be that you might be as well off as I was. And, as neighbour Collins was saying to me——"

"Ah! Mrs. Collins. I'll just say 'how do you do?' to her before I go down."

"Do. That is her place commonly; the seat

by the gate. She likes the sea view best, and I the road where people pass; so we each please ourselves. She knits too."

"And you? Do you knit or spin? To my recollection, I never saw you do either."

"Why should I, if I don't want it for amusement? I was going to say——Collins is rather downhearted to-day, on account of some news she has heard; and you may give her some certainty about the matter, perhaps; and that will settle her mind, at least."

Monk could not do any good, he feared. He had heard something of Jem Collins's conduct towards Betsy; but he did not know that any body expected any thing better from Jem Collins. As for the poor girl, she was done for; and he had desired Harriet to have no more to say to her, except just speaking when they met.

"About Jem himself," continued Monk, "I want to know what that fellow is doing. I shall go and ask the overseer whether he is on the parish still. I have no notion of our money going to support a vagabond like him."

"His grandmother will tell you presently whether he is in the workhouse or out of it," observed Goody.

"And if he is in, he ought to be turned out. There is no use talking about wanting work, now that people are coming from other parishes to work for Rickman and Dove."

"How some folks would have grumbled in my young days at people coming in from other parishes!" observed Goody.

“Because they came to get settlements, and ours had the name of a good parish. Now that settlements here can get them nothing better than a place in the workhouse, which nobody likes, there is no danger of their coming to encroach. As for ours having got the name of a bad parish, I say it is a better parish than ever it was for the character and comfort of the people in it. And that is the one thing to be considered.”

Goody Gidney, who never appeared to dream of her being of a different class in society from the dwellers below, agreed that she was indeed very comfortable now ; and against her character nobody had ever had any thing to say. She had reason to be thankful that she belonged to this parish.

Monk did not find his old friend such suitable society for him as he used to think her ; she was so utterly blind to the difference there was now between them. Instead of staying as late as the rules of the Weston house allowed, he went to inquire of Mr. Barry about Jem Collins, and one or two more idle fellows that ought not to be supported by him and his, and by other folks that had a right to speak about what should be done with the fund they helped to raise.

It was Mr. Barry's practice to receive on terms of equality all who came to say any thing to him on the administration of parish affairs. He now referred Monk to the accounts, which were deposited so as to be accessible to all the rate-payers of the hamlet, previous to their being sent up, with those of the neighbouring hamlets,

to the parish quarterly examination. There Monk might find (with so much minuteness were these accounts kept) an entry of every expense incurred on behalf of the particular persons he named, if they had been chargeable to the parish. He would find little to object to in the amount of relief given. It had, of course, been all within the workhouse, and the expenses of the two houses of Weston and Hurst had been, in all, only 200*l.* this last year. Monk was meditating a shake of the head, and an observation that this was a large sum, when he remembered that, at the time of Mr. Barry coming into office, the annual expenses had been between twelve and thirteen hundred pounds.

On this head Mr. Barry had just to say that the rates were about to fall more lightly than ever upon the housekeepers of the place. He had discovered that the fund, which was annually applied to the distribution of bread and blankets from the church-door was not appropriated to any such purpose by the benevolent person who bequeathed it. It was designed for the "relief of the poor," and the trustees were at liberty to spend it in any way which might seem to them to afford the most relief to the poor.

"Which is not according to the present plan, sir," said Monk.

"So I think. There used to be more jealousy, and quarrelling, and encroaching about it than the donation was worth; and now the difficulty is to find people willing to take it. Those who pay to the rate do not like to be ranked

with 'the poor,' for the sake of a gift which can come no oftener than once a-year. It was the seeing loaves put up to be bid for, as it were, that made me consider whether the money might not be spent upon those who really want it."

"Relieving the poorer housekeepers at the same time, Sir, by lessening the rate."

"Yes; the proceeds of this bequest will go a good way towards making up the small rates we shall want next year. There is another large charity belonging to the whole parish, whose object has died out, and whose funds are accumulating, without the trustees knowing what in the world to do with them. Col. Lee is stirring up the other magistrates to see whether that fund may not be legally applied to the maintenance of paupers. If he gets the thing done, Hurst, Barham, and Weston may find the relief to their rates no trifling one. In that case, I should not wonder if there is even an end of rate-collecting here altogether, in the ordinary way. I am sure the parish will always be ready to answer the call in case of the sudden misfortune of a large family; such as Dyer's, for instance."

"I suppose Mrs. Dyer is still employed about the workhouse, Sir. You know it was I that got her that employment, if you remember."

"I remember.—Yes. She is employed in washing and cleaning, when there is any thing to do; but that is seldom now. The two or three women who are there are those who are there for some good cause, and are therefore fixed, so far as to do the necessary business of

the house. There is hope of even their leaving in a little while.”

“ Poor Mrs. Dyer ! ”

“ O, she has other work, of course ; or she would be there herself. The elder boys are placed out, and she finds herself able to maintain the younger ones ; her friends remembering the importance to her of always having employment. She does not yet keep her pig, or show a bit of new furniture every year, like many of her neighbours ; but she does not want bread, and has never brought her children to take a meal in the workhouse.”

Monk hoped the parish had done its duty by the widow, as much as if she had had the daily maintenance of herself and her little ones from its funds, every day since her husband's death. And now he would go home, and get his best spectacles, and see, before he slept, how much Jem Collins had cost the parish. He would not look so close into a sober poor man's receipts—he should be ashamed to do it ; but Jem was any thing but a sober poor man ; and the sober of the parish ought to know what he cost them.

Emily observed to her father, when Monk was gone, that he did not appear to have the slightest recollection of having ever taken parish relief himself.

“ Never mind, my dear,” replied her father ; “ we will not recal it. The best thing we can wish for a working man is that no idea of parish relief should enter his head ; and the next best thing to never having had such an idea is to lose it.”

CHAPTER VIII.

LABOUR WITH DIGNITY.

HARRIET did not find her work grow less under her hands from her being at the head of the household. Though the purpose to her happiness was answered just as well by her having gained confidence in herself and dignity in the eyes of others, and being unmolested in the fulfilment of her little plans, the time had not yet come for any relaxation of exertion. She did not wish to relax till she had accomplished several things she knew to be desirable; through a pretty long series of which she saw a grand distinct object—the fitting out Fred properly as a respectable sailor-boy. She would not only do every stitch of his things herself, but Ben and she must buy them; and for this purpose pence and sixpences must find their way to the Savings Bank, from this day to that of making the final purchases. The thought of this achievement roused her many an early morning from her deep sleep, and enabled her to undertake another task, and yet another, at the end of a long day. Sometimes, too, it took her abroad when the family were at rest, and gave her courage to cast her net into waters, upon which only she and the moon looked down. When the tide served for shrimping at midnight, at midnight she went forth to shrimp; taking her rest before it, or after it, or the next night, as it might

happen. Mr. Barry always thought that if these young people showed a thoughtfulness and sobriety beyond their years, it was owing, not only to their early circumstances of orphanhood, but to their each being much engaged in a silent and solitary occupation. Ben had plenty of leisure to think over his past and plan his future life, while waiting for the time to draw in his nets, or while trimming his sail; and when alone, under the shadow of the cliffs, Harriet settled her mind about a thousand things that she might have had to decide hastily amidst the bustle of the family at home. She could never manage to lie awake and think, as she had heard that many good managers do. Such thinking always fell into dreaming, or into nothing, immediately: but when she was noiselessly pacing the sands, with bare feet, or gently splashing through the water, there was nothing to interfere with her thousand thoughts of Ben, and her hundreds of Fred and Harry. Monk was not very observant of little things; but even he discovered, at last, that most new and clever little methods of management, most rectifications of abuses in the household, most novelties of indulgence to the children, came after Harriet had been out shrimping at night.

This could not have been the case if Harriet had been afraid. But her mind was too full for such an engrossing feeling as fear. If anybody had questioned her, she would have asked what she should be afraid of. She liked shadow and moonlight equally by turns, had been taught no

superstitions, and had never received harm from any human being. She was so harmless herself, that it was not likely she ever would. Meantime, it was wise and kind of Ben to put no distrust into her mind, and to avoid making her think that she could go nowhere and do nothing without him. He believed that none but herself ever went to the stiller parts of the shore at the hours she chose; and he knew that if any went, it would only be people belonging to the hamlet, who would as soon think of quenching the beacon as harming Harriet. Ben often closed the door softly behind her, and sometimes delayed putting off in the morning till he saw her long shadow on the distant sands: but he never troubled her by offering to undertake night in addition to day fishing, for the sake of protecting one who needed no protection.

One night, he was too sound asleep to hear his sister let herself out at eleven o'clock, after having gone to rest with the children at seven. There was no moon; but the stars were bright enough to show her every little pool and bay left by the tide, even if there had not been the beacon to light her path with its periodical radiance. Now casting a red tint over the wet sand, now trembling over the heaving waves, and now bringing out the apparition of a dark boat, dancing in the tide, the lighthouse gleam left few parts of the scenery unrevealed in turn. If any one had been looking out, Harriet herself, swathed and barefoot, and with her net and basket slung over her shoulder, might have appeared to

come and go on the shore, as the light revolved. But all seemed to be already at rest in the cottages. A dog, here and there, was asleep on its master's threshold. No lights appeared through the windows, except where a young baby occasioned such an indulgence. Nothing moved in the hamlet but the light weathercock on the new bath-house. Nothing breathed but the night-breeze along the face of the cliffs. Nothing spoke but the sea's everlasting voice ; and that was at its gentlest, and at nearly the farthest recession of the tide. Now was the time for Harriet to think, when she had made up her mind whether the extreme point of the range of cliffs, the point behind which yon bright star had just risen, was the ten mile point or the thirteen ; and whether the dawn would begin to shine behind her ere the dull red line of sky before her should have become as grey as the sea. She had dismissed this, and bestowed a passing grateful thought on the difference between such a balmy air as this, and the cutting night-wind she had sometimes to encounter, when she was disturbed in her approach to other subjects by voices near her. At first she heard only one, a woman's voice, and fancied it might be calling her ; but, in a momentary lull of the waves, she distinguished a hoarser tone. They were not pleasant voices ; or, at least, not put to a pleasant use just now ; and she wished to avoid them, if she could make out precisely the direction in which they came. While pausing for another moment to listen, the broadest light of the beacon fell

towards her, casting two long shadows up to her feet, and disclosing her to the persons to whom those shadows belonged.

"Will you leave off, or must I make you?" said the man to his companion; "don't you see there is somebody listening to you?"

"'Tis Harriet, and she shall listen," cried Betsy. "Harriet, don't move off. I have something to tell you. I tell you that Jem Collins, that stands there, is a cruel, wicked wretch, that cares for nobody, if he can but please himself."

"Indeed, I feared so," replied Harriet.

"Ah! it is what every body will be telling me," cried Betsy; "I shall hear of nothing else all my days. I never would believe it. I believed him before every body, and gave him all I had, as often as he asked for it; ay, money, time upon time. And now he gives me up to go into the workhouse, and not a thing will he do for me or the child that's coming."

"I always told you," replied Jem, "that there was the parish to go to. There were Porter's two children, and Lambert's, and plenty more, that were taken care of by the parish; and neither Porter nor Lambert had any trouble, being too poor, as I am, to pay to the order. You knew that as well as I did."

"I never took you for such a one as Porter, or Lambert either; and you turn out ten times worse; for you won't help me when you know I have not the parish, nor any thing else, to depend on."

"That is the parish's fault, not mine. Ay.

Look about for the girl. She has slipped away from your foul tongue ; and no wonder. Let her go. What has she to do with it ? ”

Betsy was bent on making Harriet a listener to the dispute. She watched intently to discover the direction in which she had stolen away, and sprang upon her presently to bring her back.

“ O, I cannot come with you,” said Harriet ; “ never mind me ; I can do you no good now, Betsy ; and my master desired me——”

“ Not to speak to me, I suppose : but you shall ; and so shall many more, who don’t intend it now. Every soul shall hear me tell about Jem Collins. Come here, Jem ; come, and hear what I say about you.”

Jem had taken advantage of her leaving his side to make his escape ; and Betsy called to him in vain.

“ He is gone,” said Harriet ; “ do not look after him any more to-night, but go home, and try to be less angry against him. I don’t mean to say that he has not behaved very badly to you ; but where’s the use of telling every body so ? If I were you, I should just try to get through as quietly as I could.”

Harriet’s tongue clave to the roof of her mouth at the bare thought, “ if she were Betsy.”

“ Quietly ! I will never be quiet ! ” cried Betsy ; “ he coaxed me, and coaxed me, for long, and then he said he would marry me, and was getting money and every thing I had from me, under that pretence. And then, when it was

too late, he talked about Porter's children and the parish——"

"I think you had better go to Miss Barry," said Harriet; "she will tell you from her father, whether the parish can do any thing for you. And, indeed, there is no use in talking to me about it; I don't know any thing about what people ought to do when——"

"To Miss Barry! I went to her father more than a week ago."

"And could not he help you at all?"

"O, he got the Colonel to give the order upon Jem for the money. But they gave the order to me; Mr. Barry saying that it was no business of his, and that I must get the money from Jem. I have been trying ever since, and not one penny can I get."

"I am sure he might earn it," said Harriet indignantly.

"So he might, if he was not the idlest and the wickedest wretch that ever deceived any body. After all his speeches and promises! I'll expose him! I'll tell every girl in the parish to take care how she trusts to such as he."

It occurred to Harriet that this might be what Mr. Barry intended, when he declined interfering between Betsy and her lover.

"They will see quite enough, without your paining yourself to tell them, Betsy," said she. "Nobody thinks well of Jem Collins, or of any one who would act as he has acted by you.—Better take it as patiently now as you can."

“ Patiently ! Go and talk to them about being patient that are better treated by the parish than I am. Go to Porter’s woman, in the next parish, living comfortably with her two on what the parish ordered for them. Porter won’t pay, any more than Jem : but the parish does not lay the burden of that upon her, as my parish does upon me.”

Harriet had no thought of reasoning with poor Betsy just now ; but she did wonder who should bear the burden of the profligacy of one party, if not the other guilty party. To visit it upon the innocent rate-payers, that the guilty parties might go free, seemed very unjust. She thought Ben would have good reason to complain if he were compelled to pay any part of what Jem would not pay, for the support of Jem’s child, that Betsy might live at ease. It was a heavy burden for poor Betsy to bear ; but it was clear that Mr. Barry was letting it rest on the right shoulders.

“ I did not mean to stay ; I must not stay,” observed Harriet ; “ but just tell me what you mean to do ; for I am frightened for you.”

“ Do ! why, there is but one thing for me to do, unless I drown myself——”

“ For shame, Betsy ! you would not be so wicked.”

“ I’ll not do it till I have made every body know what Jem Collins is. You may depend upon that. I looked to him to get me out of service, which I hate. And now there is nothing left before me but the workhouse, which is ten

times worse. I have not a shilling ; and there is nobody to give me one, knowing that the workhouse is the proper place for such a friendless poor creature as I am now. So, there I must go. It makes me sick to think of it ; with that high wall all round, and nobody there, scarcely ; and the quiet and the work together ; while Jem will be out in the sun, and laughing and pleasing himself, just as if he had never heard of such a person as me. Or, perhaps, sometimes his laugh may be at me."

"Turn your thoughts some other way, Betsy," said Harriet, terrified at her companion's tokens of passion, and turning her back towards the beacon, that her own tears might not be seen. "There is no use in afflicting yourself in this manner. Turn your thoughts some other way."

"Which way?" was the fierce question ; to which Harriet could find no ready answer, Betsy's condition appeared so wholly forlorn. She was secure of necessaries and protection from injury ; but beyond this, there seemed not a hope for her.

"Go, go your ways," said Betsy presently. "I've called you to witness about Jem, and that was what I wanted. Go your ways now."

"If there was any thing that anybody could do for you," said Harriet—"It is not likely that any one could prevail with Jem, if you cannot. Better give up all thought of that, and put him out of your mind, and have nothing more to do with him ; particularly in the way of com-

plaining of him ; which will give occasion of triumph and talk to some people. But since it is certain that you will not let him delude you again——”

“ Not he, nor anybody ; depend upon that.”

“ Since you are not likely to be deluded again, you can give your mind to being patient under your lot, and getting such good-will by being steady, as may help you to be free of the work-house, in time.”

Betsy turned in disgust from the representation which held out no more than this. But what more could Harriet, or any one, hold out ? With many tears, Harriet asked this ; and the question and the sympathy softened Betsy.

“ Do go now, Harriet,” said she ; “ I shall not tell your master how long I kept you talking with me. He won’t hear it, unless you choose to tell him.”

“ O, he does not mean that I should never speak to you in any way ; only——He would not object, I am sure, to what we have been saying ; but——”

“ Well, I wonder, since he is so particular about you, that he lets you come out in this way, along the shore.”

“ I dare say he does not know what I do ; though Ben does. But I should tell him, if he asked, that I never met or saw any thing to be afraid of.”

“ Well ; I was always afraid, as long as I can remember.”

Harriet was inwardly surprised. She had hitherto taken Betsy for a rather bold girl. What was Betsy afraid of? she asked.

"I hardly know; but I never go near a shadow like that, without prying to see if there is nobody there; and when there is any rattle on the shingle——But I won't talk in that way to you, when you have so much further to go. But I could no more go on by myself, as you are doing now, or even with you, than——Though, to be sure, one might go with you, if at all; for I dare say nobody thinks of meddling with you, or with anybody belonging to you. But—do you really mean to go on to-night, now?"

"Indeed I do, and quickly; for there's the clock going twelve; and the tide will not wait for me. Don't you be out so late any more, unless you have business like mine."

"I can always get in, by a way of my own; and I shall have little enough liberty soon." And, under the irritation of this thought—a most painful one to a person of Betsy's tastes and habits—she turned away without saying good night.

"I wonder what made Betsy afraid, so long ago as she speaks of," thought Harriet, as she went on her way. "I do not wonder at her being apt to start at every thing now; but when she was younger, and before she got into any mischief, that I know of, I wonder what it could be. She used to say the same Scripture words with Ben and me at school, though I am afraid she has forgotten them many a time since—

‘The darkness and the light are both alike unto Thee.’ I always think of that when I find one night bright moonlight, and another almost pitch dark. But, except for taking care that the tide does not come up too high before I am aware, I do not remember having been troubled with taking care in my walks. I just remember, once or twice, on a very dark night, having a feeling come over me that I had when a child, and did not understand the beacon, as if the light, at the full, came quick and close up to my eyes, and away again: but it only made my breath come quick for a moment. I have often heard, though, that such fancies come thick into minds that are troubled, like poor Betsy’s. What is ever to be done about her? It is wretched to think of, any way. Nothing that Jem, or anybody, could do now for her would do her any good, that I see; and it will take such a weary time to win her way up again out of her shame. I could not wonder to hear her talk of drowning herself, though I know, and I told her, how wicked it would be. But I should be much tempted to do it in her case. And to think what is before me, instead of such a dreary look out as hers!—the sitting at the door, making Ben’s shirts, with Harry to prattle to me; and the getting Fred ready, as such a handsome little fellow should be; and Ben’s having a boat of his own, and never a sharp word between us two now, as there used to be; and the sea and the sunshine open to us, free as we are, and accountable to nobody. Ben says my master

gets to be guided by me in every thing. I am sure I have no wish for that, further than to make him comfortable. But how different from poor Betsy, when we used to sit together at school, and I thought her so much happier, because she was bigger and merrier. If one could but bring her out of her scrape, to be as I am!—But one can only pray God to heal and help her, and take care against being proud when one thanks him for oneself. It makes one wonder why he is so very good to Ben and me. But I will teach it to Fred and Harry, at quiet times, when they will take my meaning. I should like them to be sensible of it, whether or not they should be orphans, too, before they are fit to take care of themselves. Now, here's the place, and it is high time I was busy in it.—Betsy talked of looking into the shadow sometimes—I thought I saw something moving under the cliff just now; but, whether it is a fisherman, or a fisherman's wife, or any body else that is watching, they will do me no harm."

So Harriet lowered her net from her shoulder, and took her way into the midst of the pool; breaking the mimic stars on its surface into a million of sparkling fragments as she went.

She had crossed and recrossed, and carried a fresh prey to the shore several times when, as she stooped over her basket, she thought she perceived some one first sauntering under the cliff, and then pausing, as if to watch her; all which made no difference in her proceedings. When once more in the middle of the

pool, a voice accosted her ; and on turning towards it, she saw a figure standing on the margin. In answer to the “ I say, mistress,” she asked who it was.

“ Only Jem Collins. I just came after you to speak about Betsy, because you have more power over her than any body ; and you heard what she has been saying to-night.”

“ Which you cannot unsay, I should think.”

“ The thing is, I can’t maintain her and the child, if I wished it ever so much ; and the parish is the best help she had a right to expect.”

“ So I think, when she trusted to you.”

“ But if you or somebody do not stop her tongue, there’s not a soul in the place will hear a word I’ve got to say. I wish you would persuade her to hold her tongue, and not go about abusing me for what can’t be helped now. I wish you would persuade her”

“ I did try.”

“ Ah ! I thought you would, when you knew the whole.”

“ I did try ; but it was for her sake, not for yours.”

“ Well ; you women are jealous for one another, as you should be ; but if you fancy any body belonging to you to be in such a scrape ; suppose your brother Ben——”

“ Ben !” cried Harriet, in a tone which came back to her from the face of the cliff.

“ Well ; any body else that you care about. Where would be the use of raising the whole neighbourhood, about a thing that can’t be un-

done ; the parish not stepping in, as he expected, to shield him ? ”

“ No use, that I see ; for the only thing that can be done is done, without Betsy’s afflicting herself by talking as she does. The parish has taken care that all shall be warned against such as you, by letting it be seen how you treat Betsy. It was this being done already that made me advise her to take every thing as quietly as she can.”

“ Well ! thank you for that advice ; and I hope you will continue it.”

“ If Betsy asks me again, I shall say the same as I said to-night ; but not because you desire it. If you had come to ask me to comfort her, or to notice her, or to nurse her, I should have listened to you with some pleasure : but you come to ask for yourself, and not for her ; and so what you say has no weight with me.”

“ I did not think you had had it in you to be so hard-hearted, mistress ; and so sharp with one, too.”

Harriet did not think it necessary to justify herself from the charge of being sharp to Jem Collins. She went on with her business, and let him talk till he found he had no more to say. As he sauntered away, chucking pebbles into the water as he went, she paused for a moment to look after him, and glory in Ben’s activity of body and cheerfulness of spirit, which formed as strong a contrast with Jem’s entire demeanour as kindly innocence with selfish guilt.

This emotion sprang up again within her

when she next saw Ben, as she was returning in the sunrise—the very early sunrise—when few but Ben thought of being abroad. She was shading her eyes from the level rays, to see if any one was stirring among the cottages, when she perceived her brother sitting before the stern of his master's boat, with a paint-pot in one hand, and the brush in the other. When she came up, she saw that it was white paint, and that large letters were being formed on the stern.

“Why, Ben; what are you painting?”

“My own name. I did not intend to tell you till it was done; but now you see.—Master brought me this paint last night, and bade me change the name while my hand was in for painting. He says the boat should be mine, as I am always the one to go out in it now.”

“And very true; and very kind of him! But I think you are the first person hereabouts that ever had a boat of his own at your age, Ben.”

Ben smiled consciously, and took prodigious pains with the J then under his hands. He also told her that the bench was to be put up time enough to be painted this day, so as to be dry for company to sit on by next Sunday. If it was pleasant to make Ben's shirts while seated on the door-step, what must it be on the bench which his own hands had earned and painted? Harriet could not go to bed for three more hours, as Ben recommended. She was neither tired nor sleepy. She had rather take the other painting brush, and touch up the window-frame and door-posts, as there was much more paint than

Ben would want for his boat, and he was quite sure they might use it all.

All was finished, and the wondering children duly instructed how to go in and out without smearing their clothes, before Monk came forth to admire, and to receive Harriet's confession of how much she had had to say to Betsy. He soon saw enough of the horror and disgust which had been excited in her to be satisfied that she had received no contamination. The real danger of such contamination exists where parish charity interferes, to make crime a condition of privilege rather than of punishment.

CHAPTER IX.

LAST HOMES.

“GOODY GIDNEY dead!” “She would not have believed it herself, if the doctor had told her it was to be before she was ninety-six.” “They say she did not know what to make of being ill, and scolded the doctor right well for not curing her in a day.” These were the exclamations which resounded from all parts of the hamlet when Goody Gidney, who, it was thought, was never to die, had actually breathed her last, before the end of the summer. There were some who openly spoke of its being high time that the

parish should be relieved from the burden of a useless and thankless person, who had encumbered it for upwards of seventy-five years; others, interested in the correction of the social abuses of the place, admitted to themselves in silence that they felt a yet greater relief; and the kindest of the old woman's friends could do nothing more in the way of lamentation than recall what they described as her cheerfulness and contentment; a sort of cheerfulness and contentment which society could not afford to let many of its members indulge.

"Is there any body, Colonel,"—said Mr. Barry, "would you mention any two or three whom you would wish to be hired for bearers?"

"Hired, my dear sir! let the workhouse people be the bearers, to be sure."

"Willingly, if we had any; but there is not a man in the workhouse, but the governor."

"Is it possible?"

"Perfectly true. Poor Rowe, who is not the best of workmen (which kept him with us so long), was taken on by Dove a few days ago; and he seems to think he shall get on pretty well. He was the last we had. If you chose to make the women the bearers, we could not muster enough."

"Well, then, hire what is necessary. We need not grudge it, as it is the last we shall have to pay for Goody Gidney. If you had been made overseer while she might still have been called able-bodied, we should have paid

the last many a year ago. We must never admit such an incubus on the hamlet again."

"The people seem to feel much as you do about that. How they are talking about the poor old soul on every hand!"

"They would not, if she had not been so wonderfully cheerful and contented, as her friends praise her for having been. If she had shown the least desire to do her duty to society, or even the least sense of obligation to those who maintained her by the fruits of their toil, our people would have been the first to bid her not think about what it gave them pleasure to do for her. Our people are far, very far from being hard-hearted to their neighbours now, whatever they may have been formerly. It cheers one's very soul to see what they will do to help one another."

"Yes; it will be found so, I believe and trust, with all societies of people, every where, when help is seen to be really of use, and every man is allowed the disposal of his own. Wherever there is man, there will be charity, unless some disturbing power is introduced to turn his aims aside, and dishearten him."

"That is a happy faith to have."

"And is it not a wholesome one? Is it not a well-grounded one?"

"Certainly, if we may judge from what you have done here, by acting upon it. Well; you had better get this poor creature into the ground as soon as you can, that the people may leave

off talking about her. It can do them no good to dwell any longer on her encroachments. When do you mean the funeral to be ?”

“ I should have wished it to be to-morrow morning ; but to-morrow is open day at the Savings Bank, and I cannot leave my post. I make it a rule to be present, as overseer, at all pauper-funerals, now that they occur so seldom ; and I would not pick out Goody Gidney’s as the one to absent myself from.”

“ Could not you depute somebody to fill your place at the Savings Bank ? ”

“ Impossible ! Nobody is so much in the confidence of the depositors as the secretary for the time being. They have so much to say to me, that I would not turn them over to any one else till I go out of office, if I could help it.”

“ I wonder how many overseers in England are secretaries to the Savings Banks of their parishes. They have little enough to do in the management of deposits, I should think.”

“ Or in their office of overseer ; in the one or the other. I find that the less I have upon my hands as overseer, the more I have to do at the Savings Bank. Almost every man now who is above hopes and fears about the parish, that is, almost every man in the hamlet, has a larger or smaller deposit in the Bank ; and they see no more reason for reserve with the overseer about their little wealth than with any other man.”

“ Reserve as to their money-savings would be of little use while they offer to the eyes of their overseer so many other testimonies of their being

above the need of parish care. I seldom take a walk down to the beach without seeing something new about the houses. Who would have thought of poor Mrs. Dyer setting up a bathing-machine? and her cousin Scott having actually achieved a cow and a brood of poultry on the down? As for your daughters' protégés, Harriet and Ben, there is no saying what state of beauty their place may grow into in time."

"Ah! that bench has been an object of ambition this long while, as I have reason to know. It was first planned to be, among other purposes, 'a resting-place for my daughter in her walks, when we all thought she might never be better. Now that she is well, and wants rest no more than other people, it is still considered pre-eminently her seat; and I wish you had been with us when she took possession of it."

"I wish I had. You will very likely see me in the churchyard at the hour of the funeral. How will you have it followed?"

"By three out of the Weston house. There are only three that are capable."

"And the biggest child out of the school will make the fourth."

"I had rather avoid that. I keep the children as much as possible from being associated with grown paupers."

"Very right, very right! Some good-natured body will drop in and make the fourth, I dare say."

"There was nobody in Hurst good-natured enough to offer to appear to be a pauper even

for a single hour, and it was not the kind of favour that the overseer chose to ask of his neighbours. The governess of the Weston school, who ran no risk of being mistaken for a pauper, filled the place in the little procession. She could easily be spared, as she had now scarcely any pupils. One after another, they had been transferred to the flourishing school at Hurst; bringing their two-pence a week with due regularity, and thinking more highly of education the more completely it was disconnected with public and private charity. Only three or four sickly and friendless children remained at Weston, helping one another with their lessons this day, till their governess should return from the funeral.

Though there was no pretence of grief on the occasion, there was no levity. The few gazers who were in the churchyard abstained from all reflections on the dead; and if one whispered to another the hope that Heaven would grant him a more honourable departure, and a very different kind of burial, the observation was made with the quiet seriousness which befitted the occasion.

“Will you give just another look to the old place, before it is shut up?” said the overseer to Colonel Lee, pointing to the workhouse, as they were leaving the churchyard.

“Millar is leaving it to-day, is he?”

“This afternoon. He proceeds to X——, whither the fame of his management has reached, and where they want to instal him as gover-

nor. X—— is so large a place that it is scarcely to be hoped that its workhouse will be actually emptied, like ours ; but he may possibly so far reduce its establishment as to intrust it to other hands, five years hence, and travel on to do the same work in some new place.”

“ And many a five years may he live to carry on the work ! What a work it is ! Let there never be an end of honouring Howard for having explored the depths of prison-houses ; but he achieves a yet nobler task, who so sweeps out the abominations of our pauper-houses as to leave no temptations to guilt and idleness to harbour there. But, Barry, what will you do, in case of a vagrant appearing, or any other case arising ? ”

“ Open the house, and put in a governor from among our own people, who now perfectly understand our philosophy and methods. If it is but for a single night, the workhouse shall be opened.”

“ It will be long before you find any one to give you the trouble. A vagrant will rather pass on, an indigent man’s friends will rather help him over his difficulty than that either should be held up in the view of the hamlet as its solitary pauper.”

“ We have not had a vagrant these two years ; and if you will go in with me, you will see the last of our able-bodied indigent.”

Mr. and Mrs. Millar’s last goods and chattels were being driven from the gate as the gentlemen entered it. Betsy, with her baby on one arm

and her little bundle of clothes on the other, was making her last humble curtesy to her host and hostess. She did not look up as she passed the gentlemen.

“What is to become of that poor thing?” inquired the Colonel.

“She thinks she can pick up a living by hard work among her poor neighbours,” replied Mil-lar. “She will have a toilsome life of it; but she was bent upon going, and she has taken such pains, under my wife, to qualify herself for the kinds of labour the poor folks require, when they can hire help at all, that I hope she may find bread. If not, she knows where she may have it; but I believe she would work twenty hours out of the twenty-four, rather than come back. Well, wife; are you waiting for me? Perhaps, gentlemen, you would like to walk round with me while I lock up.”

Mrs. Dyer, who attended to receive the keys, in order to the discharge of her office of airing and cleaning the house from time to time, now followed, to see that the tables and benches were piled up, and the rest of the homely furniture stowed away so as to be kept clean and dry with the least trouble to herself. The footsteps of the party resounded as they traversed the empty rooms; and so did the turning of the locks, though the only rusty lock on the premises was that of the cell; a place allotted to disorderly paupers; the door of which had, however, stood open for many a year past. It required a strong hand to slip the bolt. The outer gate

was closed by Millar, with a slam so energetic as to make the whole party smile. When he had flung the weighty key into Mrs. Dyer's apron, he bowed to the gentlemen, in token of his office being now discharged.

“What a fine sea it is to-day!” observed the Colonel, when he had shaken hands with Millar and his wife, and watched them for a moment on their path. “What a fine rippling sea it is!” he repeated, taking the bridle of his horse from the groom, who was waiting for him near the edge of the cliff. “I shall ride home by the sands, where the women and children look so busy, while their husbands and fathers are standing out in that little fleet of boats.”

When the figures of the Colonel and his groom were vanishing in the distance of the sunny shore, Mr. Barry was still standing, as when they parted, looking abroad from the edge of the cliff. The most punctual man in the three hamlets was, for once, heedless of the time.

WICKEDNESS AND NULLITY
OF
HUMAN LAWS AGAINST MENDICANCY,
AND THE
ANTI-CHRISTIAN CHARACTER OF THE
IRISH POOR-LAW,

PROVED FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF

ALMS-GIVING, MENDICANCY, AND POOR-LAWS, ON
CHRISTIAN AND CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES,

IN A SERMON,

PREACHED IN ST. MICHAEL'S, LIMERICK,

(*On Whitsunday, the 4th of June, 1843,*)

ON BEHALF OF THE THOMOND-GATE MALE AND FEMALE
SCHOOLS,

BY

THE VERY REV. MICHAEL FITZGERALD,

P. P. of Ballingarry and R. C. Archdeacon of Limerick.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY J. BROWNE, 36, NASSAU-ST.

1843.

SERMON, &c.*

“ Then shall he answer them, saying : verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”—MAT. XXV. 45.

MY BRETHREN—In the few desultory observations which I am about to submit to you, I rely on your kind indulgence, that you will not expect from me any thing like what is usually implied in the idea of a Charity Sermon. I have not stood in a pulpit for more than a quarter of a century ; and if I do so now, it is to avoid giving offence, by refusal, to an old and valued friend. It is true that having been constantly engaged in the duties of a Parish Priest in the country, I had occasion from time to time to attempt the task of instruction. But to the simple and humble children of the soil, an unpretending,

* Such as happened to attend this sermon will perceive, that whilst all that was spoken is given with minute accuracy in this Report, a very considerable addition has been made, including nearly a third part of the whole matter of this publication. This part was included in the original plan and notes of the sermon, but was omitted by particular desire, lest it might reach a length that would operate injuriously to the interests of the charity. The part thus omitted is included in the present publication, because it completes the original design, and also because it is, in the judgment of the author, the most important and interesting portion, if he may presume to claim such character for any portion. The supplied portion is contained in pages 16, 17, 18, 19, and from 23 to end of 1st part. The second part of the sermon is printed *verbatim* as preached.

not to say homely, style of instruction is found the best adapted ; and mine, in nine cases out of ten, had the further disadvantage of being conveyed through the medium of the Irish language. Under these circumstances, and having lost in no small degree that ready command of the English language which usually follows on the education and public habits of a clergyman, I feel that on the present occasion I have undertaken a task beyond my strength. I may add, that there is no christian duty which a parish priest in the country has less frequent occasion to inculcate than that of alms-giving. Such instruction, thank Heaven, is wholly superfluous in the country parts of Ireland ; and in the scenes in which my lot has been cast, so far are the arts of persuasion from being necessary where the subject of alms-giving is concerned, that I verily believe that no human efforts could dissuade the poor rackrented farmer, the labouring cottier, or the half-employed village tradesman, from sharing his scanty store, and the shelter of his humble home, with all who come to claim it in the name of the God of Charity. Nowhere, within the broad dominion of the Catholic Church, is the precept of the Apostle, “to give not grudgingly or of necessity,” more literally complied with, than among the middling and humbler classes of our countrymen. The Apostle subjoins, “that God loves a cheerful giver ;” and in the gracious dispensations of God’s heavenly Providence may we not yet hope, that sooner or later he will stay his chastening

hand, and mete out to his faithful people of Ireland with that full measure wherewithal they mete unto him, in the person of his poor and afflicted members, and that he will at length shew to the merciful, mercy, even in "this life, a hundred-fold." What is true of the Christian people of the rural districts of the diocese is, I make no doubt, equally true of their more polished, their more opulent, and their more enlightened fellow-Christians in this great city. I have good reason to know that this far-famed city is not more remarkable for the proud historical associations connected with its name, than for the prompt and munificent liberality with which its numerous charitable institutions are upholden. It may then, perhaps, appear a superfluous task, in a locality so honourably distinguished, to insist on the high desert and indispensable obligation of almsgiving—indeed it ought to be such, one might hope, in any Christian assembly. But this is the age of Political Economy, a science, as it is called, which seems in some particulars to set itself up in opposition to the wisdom which is from above, and in none more than in its iron-hearted inculcations as to the treatment of the poor. If I mistake not, some of its leading teachers reprobate alms-giving, if not as a crime, at least as a weakness and a folly, and as a practice fraught with mischief to society. As there is in every large city what is termed a reading public, it may be that writings of this description may have led some of those who now hear

me, to regard the Christian duty of almsgiving in an unfavourable point of view. To ask for alms is already prohibited by law in England, and I believe some well-meaning persons look forward with satisfaction to the enactment of some such law in Ireland. Again, we learn from the writings of what I may call the new school at Oxford, that in England very generally, and perhaps in Ireland more generally still, among our Protestant fellow-subjects of all denominations, the doctrines of Free Grace and of Faith in the Atonement, are taught in a manner that might seem to many well calculated to cut up the root of good works, and seal up the fountains of Christian beneficence. If we can rely on No. 87 of the publications known by the name of *Tracts for the Times*, the tendency of the popular Calvinism is to decry good works as useless, or at least as non-essential to salvation, and to hold up what is termed self-righteousness as the state of mind most opposed to grace and salvation. Nothing can be farther from my intention on the present occasion than controversy of any kind, but it is clear that the religious views of so large a portion of the community, including so many of the great and powerful of the land, must give a colouring and a tone to public opinion; and that that state of opinion may influence the fashion of thinking of many, who do not by any means concur in the abstract doctrines to which that state of public opinion may be owing. Under these circumstances, and if only for the sake of form,

I shall in the first part of this discourse (if discourse it must be called) dwell on the reasonableness and necessity of the Christian duty of Alms-giving. In the second, I shall endeavour to shew that on the present occasion an opportunity is offered, of exercising this great Christian virtue in a manner that must be pleasing to God, since it is likely to prove extensively and lastingly useful to not a few of our fellow-creatures.

According to the fashion of thinking that obtains amongst us, the word Alms-giving has fallen into bad repute, owing to the pride and and irreligiousness, no less than to the selfish indifference to the sufferings of the poor, prevailing amongst the great majority of those who make the English language the ordinary vehicle of their thoughts.* The word "Alms" conveys to the minds of most people the idea of something mean, and threadbare, and abject; but like some other terms that have drifted down the current of popular usage from their original significancy, the word Alms may boast a very respectable descent. It is derived from the Greek word Ελεος, Mercy; and hence it signifies, according to its etymology, a deed of

* "This country [England] is the most uncharitable in the world; and the sums that we give in charity are a perfect pittance, and are shameful to the name of Christian, through pretty well for a nation governed, as this is, entirely on heathen principles. * * * We say nothing to America, which is only the realization of every English vice and principle in greater intensity."—*Theological Review*, No. LV. (July, 1840) p. 232.

mercy. But in Christian language it symbolizes the ripened and perfected fruit of the fairest and sweetest blossoms of the human heart. To Christian thoughts and ideas it shadows forth the outcome and flowerage of the purest and noblest feelings of our nature. Christian almsgiving is the blessed result of sincere and disinterested goodwill towards our fellow-man, and of affectionate and *respectful* sympathy in his sufferings and sorrows ; both sentiments being purified and exalted to a still higher tone by the motive and principle of reverence, love, and gratitude towards the common Father of Men who dwells on high. I will, however, for the moment dismiss the obnoxious term, and substitute in its stead a more high-sounding word, but still its perfect equivalent—Christian Beneficence. Now that beneficence to our brethren of the human family is the sacred and indispensable duty of every Christian, is a proposition which I must not undertake to prove. On its behalf I could adduce no arguments that are not in themselves so obvious, that to dwell on them would be to insult the understanding of my present hearers. In this respectable and enlightened Christian assembly I cannot suppose that there is one who is not schooled in at least the first elements of Christian morality. But putting Christianity aside for the moment, how can we reconcile it to our notions of the wisdom and goodness of our Father who is in Heaven ; that it is consistent with his holy designs, and the gracious dispensations of his

Providence, that one man should riot in wanton waste and profusion, whilst another pines and perishes under the emaciating and degrading want of the commonest conveniencies and necessities of life. We can conceive that a kind and even a provident father might be induced to rely so confidently on a favoured son, as to leave the entire heritage at his disposal. He might aim at drawing still closer the natural ties of family affection, in his anticipation of the generous dealing of his trusted heir with the other branches of the kindred stock. But if that heir should, to use the language of Scripture, waste his whole substance in riotous living, leaving the other children of the same common parent to feed on the husks of swine or perish with hunger, the common voice of mankind would pronounce him guilty, not only of unnatural cruelty towards his own flesh and blood, but also of a perfidious violation of the trust implied in the dispositions of his father and benefactor. Hence we find, that the common reason of mankind points to beneficence and works of mercy, as the means appointed by Heaven to correct or mitigate the inconveniences resulting from the unequal allotment of human conditions ; and all agree, that he who attempts to subvert this great law of nature, is guilty of treachery to man and treason to Heaven. *Dispersit dedit pauperibus*—"He distributed and gave to the poor," is laid down by the Spirit of God as a trait of human character inseparable from that holy fear which the same Spirit, in the preceding

psalm, had pronounced the height of wisdom ; and this principle of the inseparable connection between religion and beneficence, is so much in accordance with the common feelings of mankind, that in all ages and countries, and under every phase of religion, or of error assuming the guise of religion, beneficence has been ever accounted an essential part of religion, and the most sacred duty of man. This is a doctrinal point on which Confucius and Pythagoras, Zoroaster and Mahomet, are quite in harmony. It was a truth felt and acknowledged amongst the Peruvians and Mexicans, as well as amongst the Egyptians and Persians : it was a principle held as sacred amidst the pastoral simplicity of Arabia and Tartary, as amidst the polished refinement and high-wrought civilization of Greece and Italy. It is obviously an everlasting principle—a fixed law of our being—written by the hand of the Author of Nature in indelible characters on the human heart. As regards revealed religion, if I were to adduce one-half of the passages that are to be found in almost every single book of the New Law and of the Old, on the merit and obligation of alms-deeds, I should be guilty of a most unreasonable trespass on your time and attention. Indeed, if there be any duty inculcated in the sacred Scriptures with a frequency of repetition that seems to border on importunity, and with an emphasis that to the worldly-minded might seem exaggerated and excessive, it is that of almsgiving. In the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, in particu-

lar, where the Redeemer with his own divine lips describes the day of judgment, or at least some portion of its awful awards, almsgiving is represented as of such extreme importance, that one might imagine for the moment that all other Christian duties were thrown into shade, and “shorn of their just proportions.” The fires of hell, and the everlasting companionship of devils, are thundered forth as the inevitable consequences of neglecting this duty, with an almost angry vehemence of denunciation, which we find it hard to reconcile with the ordinary meekness of the mild and humble Redeemer. To me it seems wonderful, how those who pique themselves on their familiar acquaintance with the holy Scriptures, can reconcile this passage with the antinomian opinion that good works are superfluous, or at least not essential towards acceptance with God. And there are many other passages that to me, at least, would appear equally irreconcilable with these novel opinions to be found in the Epistles of the holy apostles Peter, Paul, James, and John, not to speak of other parts of the sacred writings. The Church of God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth, has, in every age, given the broadest and most literal interpretation to these beneficent maxims of her divine Head and Founder, and of those Apostles on whom, as a foundation, her everlasting superstructure has been raised; and she has ever held, that ‘Alms-giving, with *due dispositions*, and from *supernatural motives*, is one of the surest avenues to God’s favour and friend-

ship.' Hence it is, that amongst the bright and glorious features of the Catholic Church, stamped as they are with the evident impress of the Divinity, there is none more beautiful than her rich and bounteous charity towards her suffering children. In the eyes of those whose minds are imbued with the spirit of Catholicity, the poor have what I may call a sacramental character, inasmuch as they represent, and are in a certain sense identified with the person of our divine Saviour. The Church puts no far-fetched glosses, no strained interpretations, on the plain declarations and maxims of him who was the Light of the world. In the same spirit that she holds that he meant what he said and no more, when he spoke the words, "this is my body," and that he did not mean to riddle (if I may say so) with the countless millions of well-meaning worshippers who were destined (as he fully foresaw) to understand his words in their literal sense. In the same way she holds that his words were the words of truth and life, when he pronounced, "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink." She holds with the firm grasp of undoubting faith, that the Christian who relieves a poor brother, does not, like Abraham, "entertain Angels unawares," but that he shares his sufficient store, or his scanty pittance, as the case may be, with him who will one day come in the clouds of heaven, with great power and majesty, and command his angels to summon the whole human race,

from the four winds, before the everlasting throne of his judgment and dominion. The Christian must walk by faith, and not by sight. On this great Christian festival, we celebrate the day-spring that ushered in the bright sun of revelation, and chased away the dark and murky night of heathenism. It is our good fortune to bask in the noontide blaze that followed on that auspicious dawning. It is evident that light was intended by its beneficent Author to aid our moral vision—our spiritual perception of things. In the absence of the sun, objects dimly seen through the failing twilight present but a faint and confused outline. But the full light of day is sure to restore their true colours, their exact forms and proportions. It is clear that they who should see objects exactly after the same fashion, at stages of illumination so exceedingly different, must labour under a diseased or defective state of vision. Hence it is, that we cannot be said to be illuminated by the light of Christianity, if we view objects as the Heathens would have viewed them. It is evident we must have shut our eyes against the heavenly light, unless we behold it giving to every object its true shape, form, and character; lighting up the landscape with its sun-bright glories, and robing all nature around in the radiant mantle of its rich, its pure, its beautiful effulgence. The rays of the sun, slanting through the richly painted and gorgeous compartments of some gothic window, will give to the cold

and dull grave-stones beneath, a lustrous and unearthly tint: so the objects that appear mean and abject to carnal eyes, assume the bright and sunny hues of life and immortality to him whose views are coloured over and tinged with the pure and heavenly light of faith. What to earthly eyes can appear more dismally miserable, mean, and melancholy, than some feebly wailing and famished infant, expiring on the emaciated bosom of its pauper mother, in some fireless and cheerless abode of starving poverty, open on every side to the venomous breath of the winter blast. Yet in the views of faith, if his soul has been regenerated in the waters of baptism, that wan and withered child of misery, "all desolate, defiled, and unclean," as he appears, is an object whom even kings might well envy. In the eye of faith, that is in very truth—in the sober certainty of waking reality—he is a young heir, setting out to take possession of ampler fief, and prouder rank, than ever earthly potentate or people bestowed on some warrior, the saviour of a nation, returning triumphant from the bannered field of his fame. He is about to be crowned with the boundless and unspeakable glories of life and immortality. He is about to be associated with the angelic host, and to mingle in their bright and dazzling array. He is about to shine, resplendent as the sun. He is about to enjoy that stupendous, and to us inconceivable privilege enounced by St. John, that of "following the lamb whithersoever he

goeth." We have not faith. We do not realize in good earnest the views of faith. But the faith of God's church cannot fail. The spirit of God is ever present with her, to guide her unto all truth. The carnal man knoweth not the things that belong to the spirit of God; but the Church, and all those who are guided by the spirit of God, take hold of eternal life. They regard the prospective interests of a future state, as solid and substantial realities, and to forget what I may call the sacramental character of the suffering members of Christ, is to depart as widely as possible from that close attention, that firm reliance, that constant reference to the supernatural and invisible world, which form the very marrow and substance of Christianity. The Church therefore, has never failed to inculcate, as well by her teaching, as by her bright and blessed example, the maxim of the apostle, "not to give grudgingly, or of necessity." Her own acquisitions; her oblations, her endowments, have been ever largely, liberally, munificently shared with the poor. Her cathedrals, her chapter-houses, her hospitals, her monastic foundations, were no less the retreats of piety, learning, and ascetic seclusion, than the ever open and assured refuge of the children of poverty and affliction. Of the truly christian and generous spirit in which alms-deeds were practised in the abbeys of old, we have an instance recorded by one who was certainly no great friend to monastic institutions. Sir Walter Scott, in a note to

one of his works of fiction, preserves an anecdote of a religious community which, previously to the dissolution of the monasteries, was in the habit of doling out roast beef by the measure of feet and yards. The union work-houses of England, those modern substitutes for her ancient abbeys, deal out their largesses to the poor of the land with a much more sparing hand, and in measure far less lavish and wasteful. Some wretched artizan roaming in search of employment—of liberty to toil, which he courts in vain—arrives at the close of some dismal winter day, wayworn, and faint, and sick at heart, at the gate of the union work-house. Whether sad admission awaits him there will depend on the temper in which he may happen to find the gruff and pampered menial master. Admitted, he finds himself in a common ground-floor receptacle, fireless and bare, while a crust, some thin porridge, and straw to repose on, without blanket or bedding, are given him for the night unconditionally. But a breakfast on the same liberal scale must be earned by three hours labour in stone-breaking, and then “he is sent on his way rejoicing,” happy in the consciousness that there are now no abbeys in England to vex men’s souls with the alleged merit of good works, and to distend their stomachs with yards of roast beef. We read in the Proverbs, that “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel;” and one might be tempted by the instances so frequently detailed

in the *Times* newspaper, to apply the maxim to the existing system of poor law relief in the sister country. In Catholic countries, where the hand of the spoiler has not descended, and where the spirit of Catholicity has full scope, poor laws are quite superfluous. There almsgiving is considered a sacred duty—a part of the sacrificial ritual of Christianity. “Be careful,” says St. Paul, “to communicate and do good, for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased.” In those countries a law to prohibit and punish mendicancy would be looked upon with horror, as an impious attack on the fundamental doctrines and practices of Christianity. In vain would you allege that the law may justly prohibit alms-giving, where it has provided that none shall want the necessities of life. The attempt to supersede private beneficence, by providing for the poor so effectually as to render alms-giving superfluous, is an attempt as impious in principle as it is absurd and impracticable in effect. It is impious, because it is an attempt to falsify prophecy. Moses said, the poor shall never cease out of the land, and a greater than Moses said, ye have the poor always with you. The attempt is absurd, because the mercenary administration, and the fraudulent abuses inseparable from a system so demoralizing and unnatural, must generate burdens which the resources and industry of no political community could bear. This was fully exemplified in England, the wealthiest country in the world, under the old poor-law system.

The old poor-laws were intolerable to the wealthy; the new poor-law is intolerable to the poor. There is a medium, if one could find it. And it is found in Catholic countries, in a very moderate supply of public relief for the poor, but an exhaustless store of private beneficence, expanded to its utmost developement by the laws, the habits, the public opinion, but, above all, by the religion of the people. The Egyptians are said to hatch chickens by tens of thousands in ovens or hot-beds: if somewhat on the same principle, the state were to take charge of all children born into the world, and place them, when eight days old, under the tender care of nurses hired by the public, it would be as effectual a check on population as Malthus himself need desire, and the effect of the system on the moral and physical developement of the survivors would be far from favourable. Now, it seems to me that on christian principles, it is as contrary to the order of Providence and nature, to withdraw the poor from the protection and operation of private beneficence, as it would be to withdraw the tender babe from the wholesome nourishment and fond yearnings of its mother's bosom. Of this, at least, I am sure, that there is not one of "the relations dear, and all the charities of life," that has its duties prescribed more emphatically, and under heavier denunciations by the Redeemer, than the relation between him who hath the substance of this world and him who hath it not. The Church Catholic, therefore,

while she teaches with St. Paul, that every one should work diligently, eating (if possible) his own bread, has never invented any fine-drawn distinction between poverty and destitution. She leaves to English Commissioners, what are called tests, those dragons destined to guard the golden luxuries of the workhouse. Coarse and stinted food, forced labour, imprisonment and degradation, the snapping asunder of the strongest and tenderest ties of nature—and all for the purpose of affording relief and comfort—are discoveries in science, to which the Catholic Church has no claim ; for her wisdom is from above, and the God whom she worships, is the God of charity. The word pauper—that horrible word which christian lips should never apply to a fellow-being—is of pure English coinage. To English ears it sounds as something worse than felon ; and it was evidently devised for the purpose of conveying as much of hatred, contempt, and abhorrence for the poor, as two small syllables could be made to contain. Again, the law by which a wretched woman is shut up in the House of Correction for three weeks, and her infant of ten months old torn from her, to be sent to the workhouse, for no greater offence than that of begging a shilling from a fellow-christian, to save her from dying of hunger, is a law which in Catholic countries would be considered worthy of a community of cannibals ! And yet, such a committal was perpetrated by the Lord Mayor of London within a few weeks, but the infant,

we are told, shrieked so dreadfully at being separated from its mother, that the committal, and consequent separation, was delayed—until evening ! *

The Catholic Church has never stigmatized much less punished, poverty as a crime. She has never sought to degrade the poor ; on the contrary, she recollects, with St. James, “ that God hath chosen the poor rich in grace, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised ;” and she teaches her children, with the same apostle, not to “ despise the poor.” She recollects, that her divine Head and Founder, on at least one occasion, (that of sending to bespeak the apartment for the purpose of celebrating the Passover,) did that which a modern Poor-law Commissioner might construe into an act of mendicancy. There is great reason to think that in the flight into Egypt, and in other passages in the Saviour’s infancy, the Holy Family might have availed themselves of the same humble resource. However this may be, it is as certain as prophecy and gospel can make it, that the Redeemer, “ the Holy One of Israel, was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ;” and he himself feelingly observed, “ that the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, but that he himself had not where to lay his head.” A monarch can confer no higher mark of favour on him whom he de-

* The woman’s name was Mary Clarke, the *gentleman* who gave her a shilling, and then came forward to prosecute, rejoiced in the name, real or assumed, of Henry Bull ! !

sires to honour, than that of investing him with some ornament taken from his own royal person—a pelisse, or a sword, or the star of an order of knighthood, according to circumstances ; and surely that garb of poverty, if not of mendicancy, which the Saviour deigned to wear, can be considered no degradation by any one who has a spark of christian faith within his bosom ; therefore, in the views of the Catholic Church, poverty is not degradation, and mendicancy she holds in so high honour, that it enters as an element into some of her noblest institutions. Her mendicant orders have been for ages her pride and her glory. They have been foremost ever among the soldiers of the cross, and by their ministrations, the light of faith, and the treasures of eternity, have been borne to the remotest regions of the globe. Not to speak of the canonized and illustrious founders of those orders, and of their various affiliations—not to speak of a host of holy doctors, martyred missionaries, and sainted cenobites and solitaries, of “whom the earth was not worthy,” there have been sent forth from the schools of mendicancy, those to whom even political economists might well yield respect. In foreign countries Ximenes, Bartholomew, Las Casas, and Ganganelli, are quite above contempt ; and in our own, the names of Arthur O’Leary, Doctor James Doyle, and Theobald Mathew, mendicants all three, will be long remembered and honoured by Irishmen. In the eyes therefore of a Catholic,

who is such in truth, mendicancy carries with it no degradation. In a family one child thinks it no degradation, to ask a share in the toys which some partial visitor has placed at the disposal of a more favoured little one. In more advanced years, a brother arriving from a journey, hastens to make himself at home in the house of his brother, instead of seeking an inn. He has, perhaps, no legal claim to hospitality; but he has a claim which no one dreams of disputing. Yet such are precisely the views which faith suggests as to the claims of the poor; they are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. It is one of the first principles in the communion of saints, that we are all members one of another. We are all one crew embarked in the same vessel on the voyage of eternity; we are all fellow-probationers—all in the same condition of apprenticeship for immortality—“*Tyrones Æternitatis*”—and it is only because we lose sight of these and all the other views which faith presents—views as sublime as they are certain and real—that we despise the poor. “If the mind were in us that was in Christ Jesus, we would have compassion one of another;” we would be meek, we would be courteous in our intercourse with the poor. In Catholic countries, the relief which reason and religion enjoin, is given and accepted with mutual respect and mutual good will. Columbo, journeying on foot, reaches the gate of a convent, and thinks it no degradation to obtain needful re-

freshment for his boy Diego, the destined heir, in after years, of his high honours as Admiral of the New World, and the transmitter of his illustrious posterity almost down to our times. Contrast this with the treatment of a distinguished man, reduced by unavoidable misfortune to the sad necessity of appealing to public charity in England. Gourlay was a distinguished member of the Canadian Legislature about thirty years ago. He afterwards settled in England, where he was so opulent as to expend six thousand pounds in enclosing a park. He commenced business as a banker ; he failed, and was reduced to utter poverty. He was seen breaking stones on the high road, under the tender and merciful auspices of an English overseer of the poor ! Yes, they relieved his physical wants, after their churlish, their stinted, their barbarous fashion ; but they crushed his heart, they fevered his brain with the burning sense of indignity and wrong. May God preserve his faithful people of Ireland from imitating the iron-hearted, ostrich-like cruelty of England to the poor of the land*—a cruelty which sooner or later must bring down judicial

* “ England is the least charitable country in all the world.”—*British Theological Review*, (LV.) July, 1840, p. 234.

“ What must be the condition of the poor in this country, [England] when a penny or a piece of bread will bring people from far and near, and make their applications most inconveniently numerous ? What must the real state of poverty be, when all kinds of shifts must be resorted to, to prevent the numbers from being overwhelming, which would apply for the miserable pittance which the poor law provides, and the hospitality of an English work-house ? What must be the state of the poor, and the measure of hospitality in the provinces generally, when a bed of loose straw, eighteen inches wide, in company with sixty or a hundred other persons lying

calamities upon her. May antinomian religionists, or speculators in political economy, never obtain influence enough to harden the hearts of Irishmen against the cries of distress, or to intercept those cries by the wicked, impious, and anti-christian enactments of a law against mendicancy. Such a law, if an immoral nullity could be termed a law, would be an atrocious crime against the poor and the defenceless; and it would be nothing less than a felon parliament that would dare to light up such a persecution against Christ in the person of his poor. These may appear strong expressions, particularly when it is considered that to "give honour where honour is due," is a maxim sanctioned no less by religion than by the plainest dictates of good taste and good sense; but there have been felon parliaments before now, whose wicked laws, though enacted centuries ago, still press grievously on the necks of the poor of these countries. Much of the misery of our day may be traced to the sacrilegious spoliation of the patrimony of the poor by Henry, and his slavish and felon parliaments. Much of the existing misery may be traced to a funded national debt,* introduced when a felon parliament dethroned a rightful king, and bathed

on the floor of the same apartment, and two pieces of bread—and this during an uncertain and limited season—will cause the poor for a *hundred miles* round to flock together to London. Truly, this England is a country pre-eminently charitable!"—*British Theological Review*, No. LV. p. 237.

* See *Theological Review*, No. LV. (July, 1840.) page 254, for an exposition of the evils resulting to the poor from the state of society arising from the existence of a funded national debt.

realms in blood, to maintain a heartless, a blood-stained, and a perfidious usurper; and lastly, no small share of the poverty of Ireland in particular, is due to those penal laws by which a felon parliament trampled on those Irish rights and liberties which had been so nobly vindicated under the walls of Limerick.

The fact is, that in these and all other cases since the beginning of the world, in which lawgivers have justly incurred the execration of mankind, it was because they set themselves up against the great Lawgiver and Lord of Heaven. It was because they attempted to clog the wheels of the moral government of the universe with cobweb laws, based on principles either impious or immoral. To bring this principle to bear on the subject now in hand, I will observe, that in countries in which the seeds of a "faith working in charity," and "showing itself by good works," are extensively sown, and carefully cultivated, the poor of that land will reap a harvest of beneficence sufficient for all just and useful purposes. Hence it is, that in most Catholic countries, no other poor laws are needed than those resting on the sole sanction of the everlasting authority of Christ. But let us suppose a country where antinomian doctrines in religion are prevalent among the great majority of the people, including nearly all of the higher and more opulent class. Let us suppose at the same time, that there is in vogue in that country a species of bastard philosophy, that maligns Pro-

vidence, and denounces beneficence as little less than criminal ; in such a country it cannot but happen that the harvest of beneficence will fall short, and poor laws will be needed to save the rich from the despair of the poor. However, under the circumstance stated, if this antinomian and Malthusian spirit should happen to actuate the framers of the poor law, instead of beneficence the poor will find in the provisions of that law, the mere husk and outward shell of beneficence, —a dry skeleton of charity, without flesh or fatness. Unpromising as such a law may at first appear, it may admit of much improvement in its administration, on the same principle that very sanguinary laws often operate as a protection to offenders. Indeed, it seems certain, that in Ireland the high-minded, generous, and warm-hearted character of our people, fairly represented in the Irish boards of guardians, has done much to qualify the original iniquity and cruelty of the anglo-Irish poor law. But go one step further in the adoption of English poor law principles, and you touch forbidden ground. To prohibit mendicancy by law, is substantially an attempt to annul the commandment of Jesus—"Give to him that asketh of thee;" for how can you fulfil this command, if the terror of the jail, or what is worse in England, of the work-house, is employed to deter your suffering brother from appealing to your sympathy. If the importation of wine into Ireland were as strictly prohibited by law, as the importation of opium into China, it would

be to all intents and purposes an attack on Christianity. The necessary effect of such a prohibition would be, to frustrate the command given at the Last Supper—"Do this in remembrance of me." On the same principle I impeach and utterly deny and abjure the power of any legislature on this earth, to debar man from appealing, in the hour of his need, to the loving kindness and sympathy of his brother. It would be an impious attack on that everlasting ordinance of Jesus Christ—"Because I was hungry and you gave me to eat, because I was thirsty and ye gave me to drink, enter into the kingdom prepared for you." Where the obligation of giving is laid on by Jesus Christ, there must exist on the other hand a right equally clear, of receiving what is freely given, aye, and of asking, for all may ask for that which is of right theirs. Obligation and right are in this case, as in others, correlative terms; and to take away that right, Christ himself must appear on earth again.

The poor-house then, though it should stand within a yard of your door, cannot excuse you from the duty of alms-giving. If your brother be poor, he has a right to your alms by the *magna charta* of the everlasting empire of Christ: and what has he done that you should attain his blood, and punish him with the forfeiture of his christian and human privileges and rights. He refuses to assume the name and the garb of Pauper, and he is quite right! The name Pauper, though of Latin origin, bears in its present acceptation, the right

English stamp, and implies something so mean, so degraded, so abject, that he who has once borne it can never recover his self-respect, and that innate dignity which belongs to every man, and to every Christian. He refuses to associate with the vile, the vicious, with "those long wedded to disgrace." He refuses to share the common board, the common dormitory, to endure the contamination of their conversation and society—and he is quite in the right. The eternal law of God is at his side—St. Paul told him that "evil communication corrupts good manners." There is at this moment in a work-house in this county, a female inmate, who was once the respected and happy mistress of an opulent household; a household from which, in the course of years, hundreds were distributed, if not in money, at least in kind, as alms to the poor. And yet this honest matron must associate with the mothers of bastard children—nay herd with common prostitutes; share the same table, the same bed, the same seat, with those from whom, in her better days, her virtuous instincts would have impelled her to shrink with loathing! And is this a system of relief that ought to be tolerated in a Christian country? Again, you do not punish shop-lifters, sheep-stealers, or those guilty of attempts to commit unnatural crimes, with perpetual imprisonment. No! perpetual imprisonment, with food worse than that assigned to felons, is reserved for those whose only crime is poverty. You waste millions on the release of black

Africans, from a state that was bliss compared with the sufferings of the poor at your doors; and yet you doom the white because he is poor, to be the bond-slave of every poor-law official, from the commissioner with his thousands a year, down to the overseer of stone-breaking, whose services are requited with a pennyworth of tobacco by the month. "Your table groans with costly piles of food;" your menials fare sumptuously every day, and your brother, because he is poor, must day after day, week after week, year after year, recur to the same everlasting, unvarying sameness of coarse, stinted, unsavoury food. In a work-house in this county, animal food was refused to the poor inmates on last Christmas day. This house is on the estate of an English Earl, and his Agent is Chairman of the Board of Guardians. I have read of an English Earl in the olden time, who caused to be inscribed on his tomb the homely but not unmeaning words, "What I gave, I got." In what it was usual formerly to call the dark days of Popery, an English Earl would have fed a thousand poor during the Christmas holidays, and have said little about it. But we live in an enlightened age, and these wretches who would have deemed the coarsest animal diet—tripe, slinkveal, or the parings of bacon prime luxury, were doomed to the usual stint of potatoes and water-gruel on the great festival of Christmas. I will do that board of guardians the justice to say, that I firmly believe there was not one of their

number who would not willingly regale some scores of these poor wretches for that day, at his own private cost. But men will do in a corporate capacity, and under the sanction of inhuman and unnatural laws, that which they would shrink from with horror as individuals. But it is not enough to stint, to enslave, to doom to imprisonment, to compulsory and degrading labour, your poor brother, he must in addition to those foul wrongs be subjected to torture—the torture of his mind and feelings. Whilst yet in life and health he must endure “all the tender anguish nature shoots through the wrung bosom of the dying man.” Those ties which nature has bound in close and inextricable folds round the human heart, must in his case be violently rent and torn asunder. Throughout the realms of nature maternal instinct is one of the most powerful and pervading principles of animal existence. Nature forces you to respect this principle in the management and treatment of your domestic animals. It is only in the case of your unhappy fellow-creatures that you dare venture on the unnatural cruelty of separating the mother from her young. Human parents are bound by the laws of God and nature to “train the child in the way in which he should walk.” The Christian who neglects this sacred duty, is denounced by St. Paul as worse than a heathen. That parent would be a monster in nature whose heart did not yearn towards the children of his loins ; and yet you refuse relief to the poor, unless

they submit to the gross, the cruel, the incredible outrage of giving up the direction, the society, the very sight of their children. But you go further, you violate the express command of God, the divine and primeval bond of domestic life: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." You force the married poor to set at nought the counsel of the apostle: "Come together again, lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency." I ask, are the eternal laws of God thus to be placed in abeyance, that the eyes of the pampered children of luxury may not be plagued and disgusted with the sight of beggars? By what authority do parliaments and poor-law commissioners thus contravene the everlasting ordinances of the God of heaven and earth? Let me sum up in brief fashion: By what authority do you debar an honest christian matron from her claim of sisterhood, unless she submit to the degradation of herding with the most infamous of her sex—unless she consent to lose sight of those infants whom she has carried in her womb, and nursed at her breast, and who are, in her eyes, "the fairest among ten thousand?" By what right do you refuse to acknowledge the claim of a brother, because he will not separate from the wife of his youth, and submit to all the other atrocious and multiplied inflictions which I have attempted to enumerate? Can human laws excuse you whilst you kill by inches—whilst you degrade, torture, and persecute Jesus Christ in the person of his poor members? "Inasmuch as you

have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." Political Economists may look upon these as Utopian notions, but the vain and wicked devices of human policy must pass away, whilst the truth of God remaineth for ever. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;" but there is a God! and as a God of justice and beneficence, he must regard our system of poor-law relief as a foul abomination! Our poor-law system has been framed in an anti-christian, inhuman, fiend-like spirit of hatred and contempt for the poor. In its provisions, their rights, their feelings, their interests have been wickedly, nay, wantonly, trampled down and spurned; and so far is the poor man from being bound to accept relief on such terms, that in nine cases out of ten, the poor are bound in conscience to suffer every hardship, short of absolute loss of life, rather than accept of relief on terms so iniquitous and horrible. In spite of such a poor-law, your poor brother retains his claim upon you, strong as it came forth in the fiat of the eternal Judge. You can refuse him legally, but you do so, not with the hazard, but with the certainty of eternal damnation: "Go you cursed into everlasting fire." I hope that better principles may yet prevail, and that a day may come when the present union workhouses will be converted into houses of refuge for such among the aged poor, as may chance to have survived all human ties, and who will, in the winter of age, find their grey hairs respected, and expe-

rience that tenderness and humanity which is now exhibited to the pensioners of Kilmainham or Greenwich, or the inmates of those almshouses for the aged, described by Mr. Dickens, as existing at Boston, in America. I hope a time will come when the honest poor, who are ashamed to beg, but who are suffering under unavoidable poverty, will be relieved at their own homes, and without any breaking up of family ties; and that discreetly, respectfully, and bountifully, and principally by means of a heavy assessment on the income and property of the more opulent classes of the community, not omitting, by any means, those whose high-park walls and guarded gates effectually shut out their mendicant brethren of the dust from all access. Such a provision would be worthy of a christian country, and is rendered necessary, if not unavoidable, by those considerations founded on the religion and opinions of the great majority of our fellow subjects in these countries, to which I already adverted. Such a provision too ought to take effect in spite of the sacrifices which it might demand from a selfish and pampered generation. The law of a christian country ought to vindicate God's good providence, in spite of the selfish outcry of those who would willingly forget the day of judgment, in the unrestricted enjoyment of the endless luxuries which wealth can command in this age and country. *Fiat justitia!* But under the most favourable state of the law that could be rationally hoped for, the "poor shall not

cease out of the land," and alms-giving will continue to be a vital and indispensable duty. It is in fact an essential feature in the christian system, more essential, in a certain sense, than the Holy Scriptures themselves. Charity to our neighbour is inseparable from the genius and character of the new law: "By this shall men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." St. John, the beloved disciple, who has, I believe, sometimes been called the Apostle of Charity, from his particular addiction to the inculcation of this divine virtue, asks the question: "If a man see his brother in want, and shut the bowels of his compassion against him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?" We are told "that charity never faileth;" but I confess I know of no divine oracle that would preclude the success of the attempt made by Dioclesian, impious as it was, to leave no copy of the Holy Scriptures extant. If he had succeeded to the utmost extent of his designs, the letter of the Scriptures would have still been preserved, almost entire, in the writings of the primitive Fathers; and the word of God would have still subsisted, in all its saving strength and holy efficacy, in the teaching of the church, which is "the pillar and the ground of truth," for the gates of hell could not prevail against her. The Saviour would be with her to the end of the world, and the spirit of God would not fail to guide her unto all truth. But alms-giving is a sacrificial rite of Christianity—a tribute of

homage, gratitude, and love, to be offered to the person of the Redeemer, until the day when he shall come in the clouds of Heaven, to demand a terrible account of the exact fulfilment of this great, this essential, this ever-subsisting Christian ordinance. How could any human law supersede such an obligation ; but above all, how could its stringency be weakened in the least by the poor law actually existing among us. The present poor law in this country provides that the poor shall be kept alive ; but only on condition that that life shall be a dreary void—a living death—an utter estrangement from all enjoyment, save that which may arise from swallowing, in silence and gloom, a stinted mess of potatoes and water-gruel, twice in the twenty-four hours. In every other respect, every day which passes over the head of the poor man is to be like that which preceded, “blank, dreary, dismal, joyless, unendeared.” Every day in the year (that of the Saviour’s nativity not excepted) is to wear the same Ash-wednesday garb of heaviness and sadness. Life is to be for ten, fifteen, or twenty long and dreary years, a dull, stagnant pool, clothed in Dead-Sea blackness and stillness. Is the human mind capable of such endurance ? or can the lunatic asylum fail to recruit its numbers powerfully from the union work-house ? Must not such a system generate every fierce, and malignant, and desolating passion in the bosoms of its victims, unless religion work miracles in subduing the maddening impulses which such fiendish cruelty

must generate in its natural and necessary reaction. Such are the bitter and poisoned fruits of policy devoid of religion, for no religion would degrade itself by entering into alliance with such a system. God is charity: he hateth nothing of the things which he hath made; he ordained that the poor should never cease from the land; and he ordained, too, that they who have the substance of this world should deal, in such fashion with those who have it not, that these latter might have access, not only to the bare necessities of life, but also to those reasonable and moderate comforts and enjoyments, without which our present state can hardly be otherwise than unhappy. This, to my mind, he appears fully to have provided for when he said—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "All things whatsoever that ye would have men do unto you, the same do you in like manner also unto them." It requires, I think, no great skill in logic, no very elaborate chain of argument, to infer from these commandments, that our poor brother or sister ought not to be shut out from all comfort, joy, and happiness. So to doom them may be the law of man, but it is not, it cannot be, the law of God—for "God is charity." Having dwelt thus far on the universal obligation of the great Christian duty of almsgiving, I shall next proceed to shew that the occasion on which we are assembled, affords an opportunity for its laudable exercise.

SECOND PART.

MY BRETHREN—An opportunity is this day proffered for your acceptance, (and happy they who miss not, abuse not, opportunities,) of procuring at a small sacrifice a large amount of human weal, both temporal and eternal. The parish-priest of St. Munchin's,* at whose bidding I stand here, the feeble and unpractised advocate of a cause which he could plead himself to far better purpose, is well known to all who hear me. Though "strong for service still, and unimpaired," he has survived nearly all the contemporaries of the early part of his career in your city. He has not only been the parish-priest of one of your parishes for more than thirty years, but he was for the most part of that time the public servant, in another sense, of the whole community of your city. For twenty-five years at least he was, I shall not say the chaplain, but the spiritual nursing-father, of the dismally-miserable objects who filled the old poor-house of your city. How many hundreds of times did he endure the humiliating sights, and the faint and sickly smells which no care could exclude from wards crowded with debility, decrepitude, and dotage. From my own casual experience on one or two occasions, I can say that the duties of that poor-house

* Rev. Richard Walsh.

were some of the most painful that could fall to the lot of a clergyman; yet, for five-and-twenty years unsalaried and unrequited, did my reverend friend attend in that establishment almost daily, and its duties made a most serious addition to the ordinary cares and responsibilities of his position. In his presence I shall not presume to speak of my reverend friend in those terms which truth and justice would demand, but the enlightened and high-minded citizens of Limerick are too just, too generous, too discerning, not to appreciate the worth of such a man. I will content myself with asking, is there any one of those who know him, who doubts in the least the honest sincerity of his zeal!—is there any one who knows him, that has the slightest misgivings as to his singleness of purpose! and if this truly Christian clergyman, with the straitened resources of his humble suburban parish, makes an effort to bring the poor children of his flock to Christ, and to preserve their baptismal innocence untarnished and uninfected, amidst the mephitic moral influences of a crowded commercial city, can he fail of being assisted by the generous sympathies of the people of Limerick. He aims at converting the heaven-born gift of reading and writing to the glory of the Giver, by making it the vehicle of thoughts, and aspirations, and purposes, instinct with life and holiness. If he teach the fresh and innocent child to offer the sacrifice of praise with his young lips, to “lisp the eternal name of God with purity’s own cherub mouth,”

is there not reason to hope that that child will grow up a man of prayer ; that amidst the cares of advanced life his soul will be ever accessible to high and solemn thoughts ; and that his heart will be ever ready to pour forth from its fulness, those spiritual sacrifices that ascend like vialled odours before the throne of God. In these schools the young mind will be stored with all fitting knowledge of things temporal as well as eternal ; and that knowledge will be associated with early habits of self-denial—that habit, than which none is more valuable in a religious, a moral, and even an economical point of view ; and with this habit will be associated its kindred virtues of self-knowledge, self-respect, and self-control. I hesitate not to assert, that the Christian who will join in this benign, this blessed work, will send the stream of his bounty through a channel than which none can be more wholesome, more pure, more extensively and lastingly fertilizing and useful. Can I believe that there will be found in this Christian assembly one who will prefer to squander in sinful, or at least unmortified, indulgence—to abuse, as children their toys—the trifle by which he might promote the pure, the pious, and the godlike efforts of this honest and faithful shepherd. But I anticipate no such result : I know of old the open heart, the open hand of the Catholic people of Limerick ; I know how prompt and how generous are their free-will offerings on the altars of Christian charity.

It has been stated lately in Parliament, that

a sort of qualified heathenism prevails to a considerable extent in the manufacturing districts of England. I allude to this statement with no feeling of exultation, but rather with deep sorrow, that the sister country should be stained with so foul a blot. The Catholic religion, persecuted or abused though it be, has preserved this island from any such calamity. Ireland was once an Island of Saints, and I trust it will continue, to a certain extent to be an Island of Saints until the consummation of all things. Yet in vain do we confess God with our lips, if we deny him by our deeds ; and what better are we than heathens, if we “ look not to Christ, the author and finisher of our faith,” “ who when he was rich, for us became poor ? ” We must resemble Christ—we must be clothed with Christ : “ All those whom God predestinated to be saved, he made conformable to the image of his son.” Now how can we resemble him who went about doing good ? How can the mind be in us that was in him, unless we are ready, like him, to lay down our lives for our brethren ? Christ died “ that he might redeem us in his blood, that he might cleanse to himself an acceptable people ; ” and in primitive times at least, a Christian would not have hesitated to “ strive unto blood ” for the same glorious objects. But without wasting one drop of that purple tide that circles within your veins, Christ this day invites you to join him in the great work of human redemption ; and in order to point out to you the scenes in which that unbloody redemption is to be wrought,

I must ask you to accompany me in spirit and imagination for a short minute or two. The immortal spirit can expatiate unconfined in the boundless fields of thought, and in these few brief moments I must hurry you over a vast expanse of billowy, dark blue seas—over half an ocean—until somewhere near the Equator you alight in the close-crammed, dark, and infectious hold of a convict-ship. She must appear deep sunk in the waves—heavily laden with her odious and degraded live cargo—sullenly plunging and ploughing her ill-omened way through the great deep, towards the still distant shores of what I may call another world. Stand for a moment in that narrow, hot, and reeking den of infamy, where three or four hundred wretches, divorced for ever from all that can make life desirable, wedded for ever more to disgrace and misery, are laid down in irons, manacled, shackled, and leg-bolted. You cannot bear to breathe the noisome atmosphere for a few brief moments, loaded as it is with offensive animal effluvia and putrid exhalations. But these lost wretches are allowed to leave it only for ten minutes in twenty-four hours, and that only in calm and favourable weather. But it is not in its pestilential heat, and closeness, and fetidness, that this lurid and loathsome dungeon may be likened to a sort of anticipated hell. The furies—the malevolent passions—the despair of hell—are there! In despite of physical restraints, the unconquerable will still stubbornly clings to evil, and the hand, though

shackled and impotent, is red with blood!—for the heart is strong in its impulses to murder and destroy; and the most severe and jealous precautions are necessary to restrain these human tigers from throttling their keepers. But the tongue is unshackled, and amongst these coarse, hardened, and shameless criminals, we may suppose the language of the region is quite in keeping with the character of its inhabitants. It is easy to conceive that blasphemy, brutality, and lewdness form the staple of the conversation, and that every narrative of successful villainy, every sentiment breathing ferocious hatred and envy to man, and defiance to God, finds ready acceptance and applause in such a pandemonium as I have attempted to sketch. Oh! is it in the power of man or angel to transform this hideous moral deformity, or to wash away the deep stains of habitual and inveterate depravity. Can the leopard change his spots, or the Ethiop his skin? But let us go still further, and imagine the very natural sequel of such an opening scene. Imagine one of these lost wretches struck with calenture under the influence of a tropical sun, and removed in hot, hissing fever to some close and suffocating nook in the sick ward of the vessel. Imagine him racked with the fell agonies of mortal disease, and receiving the attentions usually bestowed on a sick convict—much akin to those usually exhibited towards worn-out domestic animals dying in a ditch of some loathsome disease. Imagine him, helpless, hopeless, utterly friendless.

No wife, no sister is nigh, to wipe the clammy sweats of death from his brow—no Christian priest to breathe hope and consolation into his soul. At length he feels his utter misery and abandonment. He reflects, when too late, on his mispent life: he thinks of the wife whom he left exposed to poverty and temptation: he thinks of those children to whom he left no inheritance but the evil of his example, and the shameful record of his misdeeds. Oh! would you not, if it were in your power, despicable as this wretch may be, gladly restore him to health, to home, to such happiness as might be his. But even if this were in your power, who could restore him to innocence, to character, to self-respect, to that moral dignity which is lost for ever. To restore all the blessings which he has forfeited would be a task almost too great for Omnipotence. The evil here is of such magnitude, that there is no balm in Gilead—no cure, so far as this world is concerned, can be found in Heaven above or on earth below. Yet does God on this day proffer to you Commission and Power, under his holy Providence, to cure ills irremediable even as these. Nay, he offers to you a still higher Privilege, that of arresting the Evil ere it arrive. *Venienti occurrere morbo*. Reason and Benevolence alike proclaim, that prevention is better than cure. Mr. Brunel may well be grateful for the transcendant skill which extracted the piece of gold which had been lodged for six weeks in his lungs, but what agonies of suspense would have been spared

him if the gold had never got there. Assist my reverend friend to train the poor children of his parish in Christian discipline, and he who without that training would form part of the live lumber of the convict-ship, will be a good husband, a fond and careful father, and the honest and exemplary owner of an humble perhaps, but still a contented and happy home.

There are, as you know, certain religious Orders in the Catholic Church, which combine ascetic discipline with active exertions in the sacred cause of charity, under its various aspects, and according to the various necessities of the poor and suffering members of Christ. These Orders have extorted not only reverence and admiration, but fostering and effectual protection from the most envenomed enemies of monastic institutions ; and they constitute, in their various branches, a sublime and beautiful embodiment of that spirit in which the Church Catholic combines what are in themselves inseparably allied in the designs of heaven, beneficence and holiness, the love of God and the love of man. The Orders named of Mercy, of Charity, of the Redemption of Captives, and many others, are the different branches of this noble tree, whose roots are fixed on earth, whilst it carries its glorious head, heavily loaded with fruits and blossoms, to the very height of heaven. The order of Christian Schools is a recent, but already a flourishing and fruitful branch of this majestic tree : and the Boys'

School, which it is my duty to bring under your notice on the present occasion, is connected with this order. It is needless to say that christian piety and morals, with all their blessed fruits, form the primary objects of these truly Christian Schools—not to speak of the benign and blessed example of these good men—not to speak of their patient and persevering zeal, and self-sacrificing devotedness to their duties—not to speak of the blessing of heaven which must attend on their efforts, it is clear that the combined and disciplined tactics of such an institute, must produce effects not to be expected in ordinary schools. The pupils of these schools, whilst they are instructed carefully in all temporal knowledge suited to their condition, will not fail to learn that true wisdom, which consists in the holy fear of God, with more certainty than is always derived from schooling of higher pretension: train up a child under the mild, pious, and beneficent tutelage of these venerable men, and there will be little fear that he will find his way into the hold of the convict ship; he will increase in grace and favour with God and man; and in whatever station his lot may be cast, he will adorn that lot by his piety, the purity of his morals, and the integrity of his principles. In an English University an aspiring tutor pursues with fond interest the promising career in life of some lordly pupil. He looks out to see him stem the tide of political tumult, and climb the giddy height of political ambition. Somewhat

after the same fashion, the good Brother of the Christian Schools looks out into that world he has renounced, to see some hopeful scholar of the very humblest class in life, breast the temptations of the world, and climb the heights of Virtue and Holiness. The short and simple annals of the poor make no conspicuous figure on the florid page of the Historian; but the good Monk knows that their obscure deeds and unnoticed sufferings, are recorded and blazoned on high. The sun sheds a warmer beam, and the rain descends in greater abundance, in the lowly valley than on the lofty peak by which it is crowned; and whilst the low sequestered dell is green with herbage, and fragrant with wild flowers, the Alpine pinnacle, though it may amaze us with its height, and dazzle with the bright tints of its everlasting snows, presents but a glazed and icy aspect—a sterile waste, to the gaze of heaven. The threadbare garb of poverty is, as the good monk well knows, of as much value in the sight of God and his Angels, as the ermined robe of royalty. The beggar covered with sores was found worthy of room in the bosom of Abraham; and sceptred kings, and queens blazing in jewels, might well envy some lowly son of toil or poverty whose history could, like that of Enoch, be summed up in the few, but pregnant words: “and Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.”

But reverse the picture—abandon the orphan

or outcast child of poverty, to roam at large a free commoner, in those haunts of idleness and vice, which are, of sad necessity, always to be found in a large commercial city. If you permit his earliest recollections, his earliest associations to be connected with dishonesty and sin; if you leave him to drink in wickedness, at his eyes and his ears, from his tender years; if, whilst his reason is weak, and his animal appetites strong, you abandon him unguarded and unshielded to every temptation, whether it arise from alluring instinct or evil communication—if he is allowed to pass his days neglected, unkempt, unwashed, in listless sloth, in your streets or on your quays—if his nights are spent in the haunts of coarse profligacy—what can you expect, but that as he grows in physical developement, he will graduate in crime—first, a prowling thief, next, a shoplifter; then, rising to deeds of higher emprise, he will become a burglar and a cut-throat, until utterly reprobate and lost, he becomes a burden, a nuisance, a curse to society—fit freight for the convict ship—fit food for the gallows—a being evidently marked out for immortality in hell!

“ And thinkest thou this, O man, that thou too shalt escape the judgment of God.” In the terrible judgment of the great day, when the first averment, the capital count on the indictment, will run thus: Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me: do

you flatter yourselves with the hope that you will not be called to account for the death of those on whose behalf you were appealed to in vain: "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." This is a decree of doom stamped with the signet seal of the Holy Ghost, and the whole context, too long to recite here, evidently shews that in the mind and meaning of the inspired apostle, he that loveth not, hateth.* Now, I ask you, can you be said to love this orphan or destitute child, who, born an outcast on earth, was doomed by your selfish parsimony, to be the outcast, the disowned, the disinherited of heaven? Was not that orphan once arrayed in the white stole of his baptismal innocence? Was not his pure and sinless soul, instinct with holiness—clothed with Jesus Christ as with a "lamb precious and undefiled?" Did not the faithful shepherd, alarmed at the dangers around, ask your aid? Did he not appeal to you to forego some trifling indulgence, to abstain from some purchase dictated by vanity or folly, that thus, without a moment's real suffering, or at most, some trifling and temporary inconvenience, you might assist him to shut up that innocent with the other younglings of his flock, in a safe and secure enclosure. In that enclosure he would have been carefully guarded, sedulously and fondly tended; he would have been led daily to the brink of the fountains of living waters; he would have been daily nourished with the sweet and wholesome food of

* 1. John, iii. 14 to 18.

sound doctrine ; he would have grown up to glad the eye and cheer the heart of that good shepherd ; he would have been the strength, the pride, the beauty of his humble fold. But you refused ; you preferred the gratification of some low appetite, or silly vanity, to the bright and undying glory of rescuing a soul from death ; you abandoned him to the wolves of “evil communication ;” you abandoned him to the vultures of the mind, his own evil passions ; and, I say, you slew him ! His blood is upon your head : you are answerable to the Eternal Judge for his death—not the death of his body, but the death of his soul—the second death, the death that knows no resurrection ! In vain will you avail yourself of the subterfuge of the sons of Jacob—*mala bestia devoravit eum*—an evil beast had devoured him. No, it was you whose avarice sold to the Ishmaelites that orphan boy, who had a brother’s claim on your tenderness and compassion. He was the child of the same eternal Father ; he was co-heir of the same Redeemer ; he was born again of the same Holy Spirit with yourselves, and you will have to answer for his blood to the Father of Spirits in the dreadful day of wrath and just retribution.

All this may appear to some amongst you as a mere attempt at rhetorical flourish ; but I tell you these are the fixed, solid, unchangeable views of faith, followed up to their legitimate, their unavoidable consequences. But I fear there are among the Christians of our time,

some who have little or no faith to regulate and guide their views of things. Faith is a vital and active principle. Faith, working in charity, is a fire that consumes the dross of selfishness, lights up generous emotions, and warms the heart with the glow of high and holy purposes. But the light of faith is in the souls of many; a light unaccompanied by heat; a light that cheers not, warms not, scarce bestows its colouring on the surface of objects. The light of faith to many is a glimmering, distant, phosphoric light, dispensing none of those blessings of which the light of heaven is the harbinger, or the minister, in the beneficent economy of nature.

But there is one pure and pious portion of my hearers to whom these reproaches can have no application. To that portion I appeal, I shall not say with confidence, for that feeling cannot be called confidence which rises to absolute certainty. It can require no effort, no eloquence, to evoke on an occasion like the present, the ancient, the ever-living, the beautiful spirit of the Christian women of Limerick. Isaiah declared that that church whose glories he saw dimly gleaming through the mists of futurity, should have queens for its nursing mothers; and there are in Limerick in the present times (as in times past), those to whom in every moral and christian attribute that exalts the female character above the level of ordinary humanity, even queens might yield precedence.

It is a consoling, a delightful reflection to my reverend friend, that he has already succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of many of their number on behalf of the poor female children of his flock. And I need not say that the ladies whose names are before the public, as the patronesses* of the Female Poor School of Thomond Gate, are distinguished by all those graces and virtues that exalt the female and christian character. But the nursery in which my reverend friend is anxious to secure these fresh and beautiful, but still frail and tender blossoms, from the blight of sin; that training by which he seeks to give a holy and heavenward direction to the natural gentleness and tenderness of female feelings; is under the particular superintendence of one most respectable lady, than whom none can be better fitted for the gracious, the angelic task.† I have no acquaintance with this lady, and know not if I have ever seen her, but to those to whom she is known, it is superfluous to say, that to the aristocracy of birth and station, she unites the aristocracy of sense and virtue, of taste and dignity, and, what is higher still, of exalted piety and fervent charity. These poor female children have the peculiar good fortune of being the “plants of her hand, and the children of her care;” and who can doubt that under such auspices, Christian purity—indeed all Christian virtues—must

* Mrs Payler, Mrs. O'Reilly, Mrs. Dr. Carrol, Mrs Captain Vereker.

† Mrs. O'Reilly.

grow up thriving, vigorous, and hardy plants, proof alike against the chill sea blast from the ocean, and the hot burning breath of the desert —proof alike against the stormy turbulence of angry passions, and the withering warmth of sensual seductions. It will be indeed a nursery rich in blossoms and flowers, but still richer in the fruits of everlasting life, beautifying earth, and wafting its fragrance as an odour of sweetness before the throne of the Most High. If the wealth of this lady were as ample as her charity; if the large possessions which she inherited from her ancestors were still at her disposal, it is more than probable the present appeal would not be needed, at least as regards the *female* school of St. Munchin's. But she gives to this humble school that which no gold could purchase. She gives to these poor children the light of her example—her time—her mind—her inestimable labours. Connected by birth or alliance with the best and noblest of the land, and well fitted to adorn that high circle in society to which she naturally belongs; yet is she seen in winter and summer, in rain and in sunshine, wending her way over Wellesley Bridge, to spend her day amidst these poor children. She disdains not to bring the resources of her strong and cultivated understanding to bear on the stupid or froward obstinacy of some coarse-tempered child of rude poverty, until by repeated efforts and trials she has made that temper as meek, as gentle, as docile, and as disciplined as her own. She

bears the close atmosphere of the crowded school-room, she endures the homeliness, the indolence, the rude petulance of these poor children; but she has her reward even in this world, when by slow but sure degrees she finds that she has succeeded; that she has taught them to appreciate, to admire, and at an humble distance to emulate the obedience and humility of Jesus—the laborious diligence, the meek, pious, and confiding resignation of Joseph—and the unstained purity of the immaculate Mother of God. And is there to be found one among the generous, the high-minded, the far-famed Christian women of Limerick, who will not be delighted to promote so noble an object. Who can doubt that they who graduate, if I may say so in such training, must go forth arrayed in all the beauties of holiness. They will come forth ripened into saints, and their course through life will be like that of angels sojourning here on the high behests of their immortal king.

Imagine one of these young persons residing in the bosom of her humble family, in some lowly abode of decent poverty. She will carry into that humble home the refinement inseparable, even in the lowest walk of life, from high-toned principle, and pure undeviating rectitude—a host of gentle virtues will flit around her—quiet, forbearing, placable, unselfish, she will not fail to win the warm affection of her humble family circle. Silently and unconsciously she will acquire an influence over the views, the principles, and the conduct of those

with whom she is connected by her position—that house will become a house of prayer, the calm and healthful abode of cleanliness, content, and order, as of charity, peace, and devotion. Behold the sick chamber where a mother or sister is chained down to the bed of pain and sickness; how watchful, how sedulous, how affectionate will her attentions be found; with the instinctive compassion and tenderness of the female heart, purified by the heaven-born fire of charity, she will emulate a ministering angel from on high, or what is perfectly equivalent, a Sister of Mercy here below. What an acquisition to a respectable family will a domestic servant be found, who has had the benefit of such training as I have attempted to describe; she will be no eye servant, for she will sincerely fear the Lord. How persevering, how punctual, how devoted in the discharge of her allotted duties will she be found? How scrupulous her honesty? How instinct will be her soul with feelings of modest and womanly decency? How acute will be her unaffected abhorrence for everything in thought, word, or deed, that could, in the slightest degree, sully that purity which she has been taught to cherish as the lily of virtues? How attentive to the duties of the Lord's-day! How instant in prayer!—how fervent in spirit, serving the Lord! Not to speak of the salutary influence of such an example on the other servants and children of a household, if we have a spark of faith must we not believe that

the prayers of such an one ought to bring down blessings on a family, and avert many evils, both spiritual and temporal? Suppose her placed in the honorable state of christian marriage, joined according to the ordinance of God to some honest man of her own class in life. Who can duly estimate the value of her influence—of her example as a wife and mother?—of the holy counsel—of the sage remonstrance, seasonably, discreetly pressed on the attention of the head-strong husband, or the erring child? Will not the effects of this influence, of this example, extend beyond the immediate occasion? Will not the memory and the edifying example of her virtues extend beyond the term of her life? Oh, my friends, let these admirable schools fall for want of due support, and you seal up, you dry up a a rich fountain, welling forth the waters of life and salvation to a generation yet unborn.

In the respectable presence in which I stand, I cannot, I dare not venture to exhibit the reverse of the picture, even if I had not already trespassed to so very unreasonable an extent on your time and attention. I dare not allude in particular detail to the frightful evils that follow from the neglect of early training in religion and morals of the female poor in a large city. These evils are of so obvious and so offensive a character, that they cannot fail to have obtruded themselves on your attention. I entreat you then to look to yourselves; to

avert the pouring out of these vials of wrath—avert the hot plague—the foul and fetid infection of the moral atmosphere of your city. Protect the youth of the rising generation in whom you take an interest, your own apprentices, your in-door and out-door servants, the sons of your household themselves from the arts and allurements of those whose steps, in the emphatical language of scripture, lead down to hell. Protect yourselves from having your ears and your eyes outraged by gross, rank, unblushing profligacy, brought home to your doors, and shewn under your windows. Shew mercy to the poor, and you will in this, as in most other instances, shew mercy at the same time to yourselves.

In conclusion, my brethren, let me beseech you to divest yourselves of those opinions which you may have unconsciously drawn, either directly or indirectly, from the dark, dreary, and desolating doctrines of political economists of a certain school. Let not God's immutable laws of justice and mercy be superseded or overawed in your minds by the vain or wicked devices of human policy. Do not delude yourselves with the belief that any thing short of absolute inability can release you from the vital and essential obligation of alms-giving. If you close your heart and your hand against Christ, in the person of his poor, nothing short of inability can arrest the judgment of the great day, or save you from existing to all

eternity as “victims salted with fire” in hell. This may appear a harsh mode of expression ; but, enlightened, high-minded, and aristocratic, as my present hearers may happen to be, compared to my ordinary hearers in the humble sphere of my own proper duties, I cannot preach for them any other Gospel than that to which I am accustomed. I cannot invent a new Gospel for their special accommodation. It was the meek and merciful Redeemer, with his own divine lips, that said : Go you cursed into everlasting fire ; and from the same divine lips proceeded the frightful declaration, that in hell every victim shall be salted with fire. Your inability to give alms will be weighed in the scales of the sanctuary ; it will be tested by the fiery ordeal of infinite truth, justice, and holiness ; it will not be measured by the fallacious standard of human opinion, or by the importunate demands of luxury, vanity, or fashion. Opinions and fashions change—it is the condition of their being ; but the law of God is fixed as the bases of the everlasting hills—*Veritas Domini manet in æternum*. In our days excessive refinement and overwrought civilization, whilst they plunge millions into the depths of misery, furnish, at the same time, so many objects of gratification to the ever-growing tastes and cravings of luxury, that the rich find no difficulty in bestowing all their abundance on their own insatiate and selfish longings after excitement and pleasures. But this taste for selfish indulgence in expensive luxury is not con-

fined to the higher classes. An unmortified spirit that will not be content with the simple conveniencies of life, is almost universal in every class raised above indigence. The great of the world three centuries ago, kings, and princes, and prime ministers, lordly, and even royal dames, a Duchess of Northumberland, or a Queen of England, were content with food and accommodations that would, in our days, be spurned with disdain, not only by the pampered children of wealth, but by their menial servants. But besides an unchristian, because an unmortified attention to ordinary comforts, do not some amongst you waste the gifts of God, for which you must render a strict account, in procuring objects merely calculated to gratify idle curiosity? Do you not fill your book shelves, your cabinets, and your various repositories with costly trifles—trumpery that you forget or despise before the purchase is a week old. “Go to now,” says St. James, “ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you: ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton.” But of you, my friends, I hope better things. I know you are too well instructed not to be aware that a christian who does not set aside a proportion, and a large proportion of his income, for the purposes of alms-giving, is walking in the broad way that leads to perdition. So thought the primitive Christians; so thought the primitive Fathers; and so think all who are really and truly Christians. You will, on this day, I make

no doubt, "offer to God those *sacrifices* with which he is well pleased; you will communicate and do good," and your deeds of mercy will ascend before his throne as an odour of sweetness. May that Spirit of Charity that descended on the day of Pentecost, kindle in our hearts his holy fires, that we may be united to God, the immortal, the invisible, the all-glorious, the all-bounteous, the all-beauteous, by the bonds of that deep, boundless, enthusiastic intensity of love, which he alone can justly claim. May we love in him, and for him, our neighbour originally formed to the Divine Image, and renovated by the Holy Spirit after the same divine model in the "righteousness of holiness and truth." May the spirit that erst purified the lips of Isaiah with fire, purify, not only our lips, but our hearts, that the dross of selfish and earthly attachments may be burned and purged away. May we be found "neither empty nor unfruitful" in the great and terrible day of the Lord, that so we may deserve to hear from the lips of him whose decree of doom must fix in adamant chain our everlasting destinies: Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you: I was hungry, and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink. Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these little ones, you did it unto me Amen.