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FRIENDS

AT THEIR OWN FIRESIDE;

OR,

PICTURES

OF THE

PRIVATE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

CALLED

QUAKERS.

BY MRS. ELLIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND"—"EDUCATION OF CHARACTER;" &c., &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1858.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY KING & Co., QUEEN STREET, NEW CANNON STREET.

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PREFACE.

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PREFACE.

THERE are few persons to whom it has not happened, at one time or other of their lives, to have urgent need for fixing their thoughts upon one particular object, in order to be able more patiently to await the issue of events over which they had no control.

Under such circumstances the following simple story was commenced. It had long been a favourite idea with me, to attempt something like a picture, painted in words, which should faithfully illustrate the social and domestic life of the Society of Friends. I had never found any picture of this kind which appeared to me to have been painted with a sufficiently intimate acquaintance with this peculiar people—a people only to be thoroughly understood, and appreciated, by members of their own body.

For this task I had ample materials in those indelible impressions which are made upon the mind in childhood, and early youth. But while solicitous to paint truthfully, it is only just to myself, and to the characters I have pourtrayed, to state distinctly that they bear no personal resemblance, which I am aware of, to any real or existing individuals. The scenes and circumstances of the story are also entirely imaginary. That in which I have endeavoured to adhere strictly to the truth, has been the kindness, the hospitality, the social fellowship, and the widely extended family claims, by which, as it seems to me, the Society has been held together almost as much as by the union of opinion and sentiment on subjects connected with religion.

In this respect I have earnestly endeavoured to do justice to some of the most peculiar, as well as some of the loveliest and most attractive features of my picture; and if in anything I have been tempted to "extenuate," I feel, on the other hand, that it would have been impossible for me to

"Set down aught in malice."

S. S. E.

HODDESDON,

April, 1858.

FRIENDS AT THEIR OWN FIRESIDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE intention of the writer of the following simple story being that of giving a perfectly true and graphic description of the domestic habits of the Society of Friends, the reader is requested in the outset to go back in the history of this Society at least fifty years; because it is scarcely possible, in their present altered habits and modes of life, to find, in clear development, those characteristic features which at one time rendered them so distinct and peculiar a people.

Backward as the members of this Society originally were in adopting the refinements, or rather the embellishments of artificial life, we shall have to regard the different characters about to be introduced as living in a state of simplicity scarcely consistent with their intelligence, cultivation, and real refinement. Of late years this kind of simplicity has been very much lost sight of; and

with the progress of what is called civilization, and the introduction of multiplied conveniences, ornaments, and luxuries, the Society has managed so far to make up for lost time, as to be at the present period scarcely behind any other class of the community, so that the establishment of a wealthy Friend has now but little to distinguish it from that of any other person, and not unfrequently might compete in elegance and luxury with that of the most fashionable.

But it was far otherwise at the time when the circumstances which constitute the frame-work of this story are supposed to have taken place. Even a sofa was a luxury then; and the writer has been assured upon unquestionable authority, that long after the introduction of sofas into general use, there were individuals who strongly objected to them, as not only unnecessary, but in many respects *undesirable*.

Still there was something in the pleasant homes of this class of people which, with all their simplicity, rendered them at once the most attractive and comfortable that can well be imagined. We might go farther and speak of their refinement—yes, their intrinsic and genuine refinement, for one of the most marked, as well as one of the

loveliest of those features which characterize the Society of Friends, has ever been a peculiar nicety in little things, an order, cleanliness, and regularity behind the scenes, which in no respect falls short of the highest refinement, at the same time that it imparts a moral dignity, as well as purity, to the whole of the establishment which is thus regulated and governed.

As this rule prevails so generally throughout the whole community, so its opposite, whenever found amongst the Society of Friends, forms a glaring instance of painful deviation, exceedingly offensive and troublesome to the rest of the members, who feel the dignity of their body to be implicated in such deviations, and well they may; for it would not be easy to find throughout the whole of society any individual more repulsive than a vulgar Friend.

Truly there was no vulgarity, to be reminded of, in the little cottage about to be opened to the reader's view, — no disorder — no confusion — no waste, and yet no grudging; but comfort, plenty, consideration, and hospitality for all.

The little party in the parlour consisted of three sisters between the ages of twenty and thirty — Rachel, Grace, and Isabel. We have not much to

say of the two older sisters, who must pass quickly from the scene, except that Rachel was bright, active, and apparently full of health, and energy ; while Grace, with a better figure, and somewhat softer manners, had a certain paleness and langour indicative of premature decay.

The three sisters dressed almost exactly alike, except for some slight difference at times discernible in the delicate shades of their drab or brown. The material of which their dresses were composed was always costly and beautiful ; but at that time it was never of silken texture, woollen stuffs of various descriptions, and for morning wear, a light print of the smallest possible pattern, constituted the only costume thought *desirable* for female Friends.

The reader must observe we do not say thought *right*. The nomenclature of this society consists in a remarkable manner of qualified terms ; so that speaking as well as dressing in *neutral tints* would seem to be one of the elements of their social intercourse.* Alas ! for human nature ; to what outbursts of feeling, to what explosions of extra-

*As a proof of this, the writer when a child was not allowed to enforce a statement even by saying—" I am sure."

vagance, has not this unnatural restraint given rise; until the more intimate communications of some young friends have come to be marked by a force and violence of expression scarcely ever needed, and seldom sought for by feelings to which there has been allowed, in early life, a more natural and copious flow.

The three sisters just introduced were not, in their natural temperament, of this extravagant order. A certain graciousness of manner, with a mixture of womanly gentleness and dignity, characterized them all. In their dress and deportment they were altogether Friends; but it would have been easy to discover, had any one searched their library, or examined the old pictures, and neatly framed engravings which hung around their walls—sometimes also, had any one listened critically to their conversation, and marked their allusions and quotations, it would have been easy to discover that either they or their ancestors had not always been equally strict in their measure of indulgence with regard to the various enjoyments to be derived from literature and art. Indeed, there is this striking fact almost universally prevailing as the foundation of that secret charm with which the conversation of many of the higher or-

der of Friends abounds—they have at some time or other been extensive readers of books which if not exactly forbidden, would be disapproved by the stricter members of their sect. The true test of character as regards any distinct and separate body of people, would be to confine its members entirely to that class of literature, and to those institutions, which emanate purely from themselves.

Amongst the higher order of Friends many have also seen the world under aspects which would make the narrow minded tremble; and thus they take along with them, into the closer walks of their more secluded lives, all the advantages derived from wide observation, and expansive thought. Had the reading of the Society been confined entirely to their own literature it is surely not going too far to say, they would scarcely have existed as an intelligent people at the present day. This fact is fraught with serious import; and as a fact it must ever remain strongly opposed to any boast of consistency which the members of the Society of Friends may feel disposed to bring forward.

The three sisters locked up their Shakespeare in a glass case lined with green silk, along with many other books which enriched, if they could not be said to adorn, a very pretty library, opening by

a bow window into a perfect bower of roses and sweet brier. No servant ever saw them opening this glass case except for purposes of dusting, and that they always did themselves; nor, indeed, were they very free to admit visitors into this room at all, especially their little nephews and nieces from the adjoining house, who, however, with the accustomed perverseness of children, were perpetually asking to see the pretty library, and making errands into the room whenever the door happened to be left unlocked.

As these children will be the real characters of the story, it may be as well to state here that they were the sons and daughters of Jacob and Rebecca Law, two worthy and well-to-do Friends residing in a commodious but somewhat antiquated mansion hard by. Indeed, the home of the three spinster-sisters of Jacob Law was in some sort an offshoot of this mansion, being situated within the limits of the general garden, though still enclosed, to a certain extent, within a garden of its own. Near to this, and in some manner connecting with the chief dwelling house, were other cottages and outbuildings, of various kinds, so that the whole bore considerable resemblance to a little colony, and truly there were few

things wanting to make it as complete a colony in all its comforts, helps, and uses, as any reasonable human settler could desire. Not that it bore the character of original completeness. It was evident that one part had grown to another, and that the present perfectness of the whole was the result of some active and observant mind having been long intent upon making the most and the best of everything. All that had been done was for comfort, convenience, and utility—nothing, or very little, for pure ornament; and certainly nothing for display. The neatness and compactness of the whole, constituted its chief beauty; and the ever-present aspect of comfort its principal charm.

If this all-pervading comfort shone out from the exterior of the pleasant and prosperous establishment, as cheerfulness shines sometimes from the human countenance, inviting to a more intimate acquaintance, what shall we say of the arrangements within? We will take the cottage first, and here it must be stated, by no means to the shame of the maiden ladies, that their income was but small, and that nothing could induce them to encroach upon their brother's, so that there was here no lavish expenditure upon

those comforts and elegancies, the value of which the sisters were so capable of appreciating. On a slight view, it is true their parlour looked the picture of elegance, as well as comfort; but on looking again the observer might discover that the elegance was entirely the result of a graceful adjustment of white muslin, with a nice arrangement of suitable furniture, and much appropriate placing of shells and seaweed, and careful gathering and assortment of flowers in their season; while throughout every department, and deep down into the recesses of every drawer and cupboard, was the perpetual scent of lavender, and rose leaves. Piles of white linen, and especially clear starched muslins, would come out redolent of these old garden perfumes; and when the bow window was opened, in came the ever-welcome breath of the violet, and the sweet brier, not less welcome.

Some people might have called it a kind of starched propriety which the sisters bore about with them, had they sat down only to contemplate their stiff muslin caps, and handkerchiefs, of which no single plait or fold was ever more than a hair's breadth out of its place; and, what would seem very wonderful to the uninitiated, was

never, even after washing and getting up, at all different in its crimping and plaiting from that of the cap or the handkerchief worn before it.

But escaping perpetually from this stiff muslin citadel, the sisters had many a warm impulse ready to gush forth ; with such fresh up-springing joy in nature—such heart-echoes to the song of birds—such welcomes for the spring, and the glad morning, and the sweet visitations of bright weather, moonlight, and soft dews, that besides the strong interest excited by all the greater events of life, they were never dull, nor knew what it was to sit listless for a single moment without an occupation or a thought.

But it is seventh day afternoon, and what can be the reason for their tea being delayed to-day until six o'clock instead of five? The table too is spread with a snow white damask cloth of their mother's own spinning ; while sundry preparations for a more substantial meal are going on in the kitchen, into which Rachel steps now and then to preside, giving orders, the servant thinks, a little more frequently than there is any need for ; she can make excuses, however, she understands all about it, and so she fries away without appearing to take any notice.

At last the quick steady trot of a horse is heard in the distance, for the window has been placed ajar for some time past, but is now hastily closed. Rachel's ever-blooming face flushes up a little more than usual; she wishes it would not do so, but it will in spite of the many times she has been upstairs to bathe it with cold water, and to smoothe the locks of hair, which, in spite of all her endeavours, will persist in curling around her temples, sometimes flying back in stray tendrils across the stiff border of her cap.

No gallant knight of olden time ever sprang from his horse with more alacrity than a young man dressed in a suit of brown, who now walks straight into the cottage; not, however, without a respectful greeting to the well known female servant, who takes the bridle of his horse until the groom from the other house shall arrive.

“I might as well have put my horse in Jacob's stable at once,” said the visitor, as he entered the little passage which led to the interior of the cottage; but there was evidently a very cogent reason why he should not go back, for the three sisters greeted him at once with smiling faces, and while he spoke to them all with the same pleased manner, he managed to keep hold of the hand of

one until he had walked up to the fireplace, nor are we quite sure that it was relinquished there. Meantime the servant having willingly resigned the care of the horse, brought in the savoury dishes with which she had been so busy, after which came choice cakes in great profusion, of various flavours, compounds, and merits, until the table could bear no more, and place had to be found upon the sideboard for such as were least likely to be wanted, but yet might possibly be *approved*.

It was a pleasant chat with which the refreshment was enlivened, and the two sisters to whom the visit did not especially appertain, looked as pleased with the guest as if he had been their lover, perhaps more so. Rachel's face became no paler, for besides having to preside over the tea, she had to encounter certain happy glances from a pair of full dark eyes, which always appeared to have more meaning in them than any other eyes in the world.

Pleased as the two sisters were with their guest, it was curious to observe how many things they found that evening to call them away from his agreeable society. Susannah, the oldest child of Jacob Law, when she ran into the cottage on some domestic errand—probably to inform the

visitor that there would be a bed for him at her father's house—found her two aunts busy upstairs crimping the borders of their first day caps; and though it might have appeared more respectful to deliver the message herself, they strictly forbade her going into the parlour, and not even upon her earnest solicitation would they hear of her asking Aunt Rachel how she would like things to be arranged for going to meeting in the morning.

The morning, however, found all necessary arrangements made in the best possible manner for the conveyance of each member of the two families to a small country meeting, held in a little rustic building at the distance of about a mile from Jacob Law's residence. As the day was fine the party from the cottage preferred to walk, the two sisters, being a little hindered, and so keeping at a considerable distance behind Rachel and her friend. In the afternoon a long conference took place between Jacob Law and the visitor; nor were the lovers in the evening permitted to be alone as on the previous day. It was the custom of Jacob Law to collect his whole family together in his kitchen, so that the Sabbath evening's reading of the scriptures should be held;

not only in the presence of the different members of his own family, but also of all the servants and work people residing upon the premises. Here, then, Rachel and her lover took their places amongst the rest, without a word or sign of reluctance, nor is it to be supposed that they grudged a single moment of the long silence which always followed after the chapter had been read.

On the following morning at an early hour, the visitor was obliged to depart. Rachel rose betimes and made breakfast for him alone. She had opened the parlour window for the scent of the sweet brier and the roses to come in. It was a bright but dewy morning, with a cloudless sky above, in which the larks were singing merrily, while the sparrows chirped upon the roof of the cottage, and the swallows twittered gaily in their happy flight.

“See how bright and pleasant everything appears,” said Rachel, waving her hand towards the garden.

“Yes;” said the happy guest, “everything does indeed look bright and pleasant now. I should feel as if my cup of joy was almost too full, if it were not for these frequent partings. Once more, and then”—

Rachel looked a glad response more intelligible than words, for the express object of this visit had been to make final arrangements for a union of that singular nature which had the entire approbation of all the parties most concerned. In this instance at least "the course of true love" seemed to be running straight onward, without impediment, towards perfect happiness.

CHAPTER II.

After the parting which took place on that bright morning,—a parting too full of hope to cost a single tear, the lovers never met again. In her charitable ministrations amongst the poor, Rachel Law committed the imprudence of entering a cottage whose inmates were suffering from the first symptoms of malignant fever. She had no knowledge of the real nature of the disease, until one of the family being suddenly carried off, she heard the alarming intelligence, and told her sisters what she had done.

Accustomed as the whole of the family were to the exercise of entire control over every outward manifestation of feeling, the sisters wisely expressed no apprehension; but they watched their treasure not the less carefully, and, surely enough, the fatal messenger came at the appointed time.

Friends and neighbours seemed all to believe that the buoyant spirit, and the vigorous agile frame, would struggle through; and the sufferer herself persisted in the same opinion so entirely, that she requested not to have her lover made acquainted with the severity of her illness. Her sisters took council together, however, and wrote such a letter as he would understand. But the letter reached its destination just after he had set out on a journey; and it was not then as now, for the first hint was more than a week in reaching him, and by the time he caught the idea of Rachel's danger, she was beyond the reach of mortal pain, where no danger would ever more disturb her rest.

Grace, the next sister to Rachel, and by far the most delicate of the three, took the disease so mildly that in her case it scarcely wore the character of the same malady. The consequences, however, were lingering decline, which in the course of little more than twelve months, left only one sister remaining of the happy trio, whose pleasant lives and whose perfectly united affection had once made that cottage a scene of almost uninterrupted enjoyment.

Isabel, the youngest, with whom this story has something more to do, did not escape unhurt from

the long nursing and anxiety of this eventful time. While attending upon her sister Grace, she had suffered severely from acute pain, which she kept almost entirely to herself, lest she should be debarred the privilege of discharging the duties of the sick room. So soon as the strain upon her efforts was relaxed, and the purpose which sustained her had ceased, it was found that her painful symptoms had assumed a serious character, and that lameness, if not actual inability to move from place to place, was likely to be her lot for the remainder of her life.

“I was not willing to give up all,” she said, in describing this calamity to a young friend, some years afterwards. “I wanted so much to be in my garden, and amongst my flowers, and I felt it a heavy trial to have to call for help, whenever I dropped so much as my needle. I have since been brought to feel how much worse it would have been had there been no kind help to come.”

We must now suppose ourselves looking in upon the cottage, some ten or twelve years after it had lost its loveliest occupants; for Isabel Law,—“Aunt Isabel,” as she was generally called, though quite as interesting, and perhaps more intelligent than her older sisters, had certainly a smaller share

of that personal beauty, which had rendered them in youth so attractive, and which often seemed to her fond recollections, as if it had scarcely left its equal upon this earth.

Perhaps there was another individual who thought so too. But the welcome visitor at the cottage was now an altered man. He was married—a father—a man of business, and a minister. The change which his affliction had wrought in him was inward and deep. He could not speak of it, and though he had all along kept up a sort of periodical visiting of the family, he conversed and conducted himself on these occasions very much like other visitors, as if nothing more than ordinary friendship brought him there. One great difference, however, had very soon become apparent. He became what is called more “Friendly” in his appearance, his hat grew broader, and his coat, instead of a collar that turned over, had one that stood up. His reading at the same time became more limited, his library was not locked-up like Aunt Isabel’s, but stripped of many costly volumes, which he took care not to sell or give away, but actually burned. And thus a time of severe searching and stripping left him somewhat of an anchorite in his personal and domestic habits, only

that he did what most people do under such circumstances,—he married; and in forming this new connection, he allied himself to a companion in many respects the exact opposite of the first object of his choice. Whether he was happy in this connection or not was a mystery never solved,—a secret never told. Indeed, he was not a man respecting whom it was easy to make calculations of any kind. He might have been a figure of marble or of wood, only for the life and the feeling which gave vitality and force to his public ministrations; so that his preaching, wherever he went, was received as a message of remarkable weight, to which few could listen without being deeply impressed.

Aunt Isabel's sorrow had not taken this turn. Deprived of the society of her sisters, she became more social, and more generally sympathising and affectionate with others. The young delighted in her companionship, for she was able to take an intelligent and lively interest in all their innocent pursuits. The more mature consulted her in seasons of difficulty, and referred to her decision many cases of temporal as well as spiritual perplexity; while to the old, she seemed ever to have ready for their need, that kind of support which is

derived from deep experience, combined with sound judgment and earnest thought.

Seldom, indeed, was the couch of Aunt Isabel, to which by her lameness she was almost entirely confined, left desolate; for either a poor neighbour came to ask advice under the pressure of difficulty, or a rich one sought the enjoyment of half-an-hour's intelligent and cheerful conversation; either the young people from the other house made excuses to come in, or the elders of that growing household had a question of importance to lay before Aunt Isabel; or, as we will suppose at the present moment, Jane Gordon came and brought her work to sit beside her, either silent, or in conversation, as the way might open.

Jane Gordon was not a member of the Society of Friends, nor, indeed, had any relative connection with those who were. She was one of a respectable family residing in the neighbourhood, and having sometimes had occasion to call at the cottage on business connected with schools, and different charities, she had had the good sense to discover, that under the plain cap, and the closely folded shawl of that, to her, remarkable looking lady, there were qualities both of head and heart, with which it was a high privilege to be brought into

close intimacy. Thus, despite her curls and laces, ribbons and flounces, which for the first moment of entrance seemed always to disturb the serene atmosphere of the little parlour, Jane Gordon became a pretty frequent visitor, and had, in time, the unspeakable satisfaction of learning to believe that she was always welcome.

In herself, undoubtedly, she was welcome; but there were difficulties in the way of receiving her as a familiar guest which happily Jane never knew; and had not Aunt Isabel been tolerably independent, as well as large hearted, she might have been compelled to request her young friend to discontinue her visits.

This adverse influence emanated from what was familiarly called "the other house," or more properly, the Grange. It was not against Jane herself, or in her own character, but there was a strong objection at that time prevailing almost entirely throughout the Society of Friends, against all familiar association with persons differing from them in religious views, and practices. Such persons were considered as being *of the world*; and beyond this, were frequently regarded by the stricter members of the society, as being unacquainted with *the truth*. Thus, parents in

particular, were anxiously solicitous that their families should not mix in any social manner with those who were beyond the line of demarcation; and with this exclusiveness of heart and feeling, the young members of such families generally grew up in a degree of ignorance with regard to the social customs of other denominations, which would scarcely obtain belief in the present day. To have heard music, but especially to have seen dancing, was at that time as extraordinary an item of individual experience, as it is now to have witnessed a battle, or a coronation. All was conjecture respecting the private habits, even of families residing within a very short distance; and in a still higher degree all was wonder, and often misconception, with regard to the religious observances of such families, their modes of worship, and their grounds of belief. Carefully instructed in the history of their own Society, early inspired with reverence for the self-denying sufferers and martyrs who had maintained their ground in support of what the whole society are accustomed to call "the truth," the children of the Friends very naturally acquired the habit of *feeling*, if they did not absolutely think, there must be something widely different from truth, and consequently

nearly approaching to error, in the principles and customs of that unknown world, against which they were so often warned, and from which they were so solemnly called upon to come out, and be separate.*

Thus one generation after another grew up to believe themselves right, and all other people wrong. Nor ought we to quarrel with a firmly rooted opinion of this kind, existing as it ever has done amongst the Friends, in connection with all those kindly and benevolent offices which ameliorate suffering, and sweeten the whole current of human life; in connection, too, with the most entire liberty of conscience, which has ever been one of their prominent principles. Hence their scrupulous and noble abstinence from all dictation and interference with others, has justly purchased for them the privilege of pursuing their own peculiar way, in that peace and quietness which they are so well able to enjoy.

* The writer can remember being astonished beyond measure, to hear that a visitor whom she admired and loved had been partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. This was the first visitor not a Friend who had been a guest for any length of time at her father's house, and had it been described to the writer how this lady had stood before an altar in white robes, holding a lighted candle in each hand, she would not have been more astonished.

Whatever injustice may have been done to the Society of Friends, by misconception of their motives and principles in the minds of others, they have paid back with interest by refusing to enter into such social intercourse as would have enabled both parties to understand each other better, and consequently to esteem each other more. But in order to comprehend this exclusive feeling more fully, and to do it more entire justice, it is necessary to bear in mind that the rules of the Society of Friends do not admit of mixed marriages. In other words a member of the Society cannot marry, in one of their meetings, and according to their formulas, one who is not a member. Consequently such marriages, if persisted in, must be performed in the usual manner by the officiating *Priest*, as the Friends in former times were fond of calling all stipendiary clergymen or ministers; and the fact of being married by a Priest, according to the ritual of the established church, is necessarily attended with forfeiture of membership altogether.

It is scarcely possible in the present day, when so many have voluntarily resigned their membership on conscientious and religious grounds, to imagine what it was to be *dismissed* at the time alluded to;

nor, indeed, could the real pain, the disgrace, the family affliction resulting from such dismissal, be understood without some insight into the social clanship by which the members of the body are bound together. Nor was it formerly the disunion alone which had to be considered; nor the rupture of old ties; with the breaking up of old habits and associations. There was a kind of isolation which those who ventured upon this step were always made to feel, accompanied with a sense of ignominy which it required a strong motive or a brave spirit to enable any one to endure. Then there were all the tender lamentations of those who wept over the lamb departing from the fold, blended perhaps with insinuations from other quarters, not the most charitable, as to the sincerity or correctness of the motive for such a step. So that all these influences, and many more than can be specified here, combined to hem in the whole community as by one social compact, almost as effectually as the novitiate is hemmed in within the convent walls.

There could not, perhaps, have been any calamity within the range of probability, more distressing to the family at the Grange, than that

one of their children, now rising up to maturity, should *marry out*. Hence they were never permitted to visit any families in the neighbourhood, nor, indeed, to hold social intercourse with any who were not of their religious denomination. If such persons happened to call at the Grange on any particular business, they were treated with respectful courtesy, but were never asked to prolong their stay, or to take a meal. The conversation with such callers was always carried on by the elder members of the family, and it was kept as closely as possible to the business in hand, the young people present sitting generally as mute as statues, and taking no part openly in what was going on; though it may readily be supposed that opportunities were thus afforded for making observations upon appearance, dress, and manner, and consequently for minute and sometimes satirical discussion afterwards.

Indeed, there will always most probably be this result from the carrying out of such exclusive systems,—that the young will seize every opportunity to peep askance, to wonder and remark; and that they will encourage amongst themselves a tendency to discuss what they have seen or heard with most objectionable personality, and often

with misplaced ridicule and contempt. Thus, while the world at large may amuse itself with satirizing the peculiarities of the Friends, there is, perhaps, no satire so severe as that by which the world is treated in return, amongst those who see so little of it, that every personal or individual feature which it develops is liable to be noticed without being understood.

But, as already said, there were strong personal and family reasons why Jacob Law and his wife Rebecca, should desire to close their doors against the world. Before Jane Gordon had become a regular guest at the cottage, Susannah, the oldest daughter of the other house, had attained her twentieth year, and her brother Reuben was but one year her junior; Lydia, the youngest, was then only fifteen, for death had made sad inroads into the little circle, and this girl, her parents' youngest surviving treasure, was perhaps regarded with more than her share of tenderness, owing to the loss of two older and one younger than herself.

But the heads of this family being very important personages, some farther and more minute description must attend their introduction to the reader's notice. First, Jacob Law, the father, a

prosperous man of business, with active stirring habits, was one of those large hearted citizens of the world, who, if sectarian at all, are so from habit, from early association, and chiefly from affection, warm and true towards individuals walking in a certain path, whose character and example have invested with a kind of sacredness the path itself. Jacob Law was in all respects a Friend, willingly, and decidedly a Friend, in the whole course of his life it had probably never entered his mind to desire to be anything else. He was a great reader of Friends' books; but he liked their practical experience as developed by the early career of the Society, better than their theological discussions—as who does not? He liked their staunch unflinching determination to do the simple right, because it was right, in defiance both of “men and devils.” He liked their stern isolated heroism; and to his mind there was a force and a sublimity surpassing all others in their reliance upon that deep and certain call of the Spirit to themselves individually, which led them forth, each one to execute his own mission regardless of mockery, persecution, suffering, and death.

All noble hearted men derive a certain satisfaction from standing by a cause which has been thus

supported, and not the less so when its enemies are more numerous than its friends. Jacob Law was no metaphysician. He could feel more strongly, and often to much better purpose, than he could reason. Thus in reading the lives of ancient Friends he learned to love and admire the individuals themselves; and so loving and admiring them he deemed it the most exalted calling upon earth to follow in their steps.

Here, however, Jacob Law, from some cause or other, was satisfied to stop. He himself seemed to have no particular call to heroism of any kind. Perhaps he found in his more immediate and personal duties that he had quite enough to do, and a work that was quite enough for him to discharge them aright. At all events he was eminently a practical man, and such was his well known energy of character, such the promptness, and decision which marked his business transactions, that he was much solicited to fill situations of usefulness in the neighbourhood, and already discharged the duties of many appointments, not having any immediate connection with the religious body to which he belonged.

If there were wanting in the naturally social and liberal character of Jacob Law some of those

elements which are usually regarded as the type of Quakerism, his wife Rebecca made up for his deficiency by something more on her part than a full amount. Rebecca Law was a woman of reputed delicate health, and a minister. Undoubtedly she had passed through much painful experience in watching over the illness and death of her children; and that especial call which she believed herself to have received during one of her seasons of affliction, had been engrafted upon a morbid sensibility to everything connected with herself and her own family; so that her domestic influence, though highly salutary in some respects, could not like her husband's be called a sunny influence.

But the manner in which the call, which Rebecca Law believed herself to have received, operated through all her social relations, would not be easily described; nor would any description, if attempted, be likely to make the secret and hidden operation of this influence intelligible to those who are unacquainted with the Society of Friends at their own Fireside.

CHAPTER III.

We have now to look in again at the little cottage parlour, and to imagine Jane Gordon seated beside her friend in earnest conversation. Jane had as usual presided at the tea table, a task from which she was ever ready to relieve Aunt Isabel, and she had now a variety of services to perform in the way of winding skeins of worsted, sorting out and arranging patterns of work for different purposes, all which she did with so much cleverness of hand, and cheerfulness of spirit; that it would have been hard indeed to deprive the poor lame sufferer of so lively a companion, and so efficient a help.

Jane had begun to interest herself very much in the principles and practices of the Society to which her friend belonged. She was no stranger to religious convictions, though one of a family in which such convictions, if at all at variance

with established custom, would be likely to be considered extravagant, uncalled for, and in bad taste. But Jane had learned to look at human life from a different point of view, and such was her admiration for Aunt Isabel, that she often thought a religion which could produce even one such character, must have something in it of reality and depth beyond what she had been accustomed to meet with elsewhere. Thus she frequently questioned her friend, and sometimes almost too closely, respecting the reasons for her peculiar habits, as well as the grounds of her belief.

It was by no means the most edifying part of Aunt Isabel's conversation when she replied to these enquiries; for, like her brother Jacob, she could live the Christian's life better than she could define the Christian's faith. It was pleasant to her, however, that Jane should be enquiring; and if she did not always satisfy her reasoning and ardent mind, she managed to give the subject so hopeful and yet so practical a turn, and she looked so patient and so good when her thoughtful eye beamed kindly upon her young companion, that Jane felt as much strengthened and encouraged, as if she had listened to the most powerful arguments—perhaps a little more so.

“ I suppose,” said Jane, one day, “ I may be allowed to attend one of your meetings if I like?”

“ Certainly;” replied Aunt Isabel, “ they are open to all.”

“ That is rather a cold invitation,” observed Jane.

“ We *invite* no one,” replied her friend.

“ I am afraid,” said Jane, smiling, “ I should not know how to behave myself.”

Her friend looked very grave, but offered no remark; and Jane also became very serious. Aunt Isabel observing the change in her countenance, said quietly, “ Those who are willing to be led by the only true guide are seldom kept without a knowledge of the way.”

Jane did not exactly mean anything so grave as that when she spoke of behaving herself; she meant how she was to look, sit, and fold her hands, to stand or kneel, and in all respects to conduct herself like other persons; but she had discovered that it was best to be silent whenever Aunt Isabel spoke in a particular tone, and put on a particular look, so she said no more about the matter then, and went on with her work.

Not many weeks after this conversation, Jane Gordon made her appearance one Sunday morning,

at the entrance of the little meeting house where a few scattered families of Friends were wont to assemble to spend an hour or more together, generally in perfect silence. Jane felt very nervous and frightened at first, because, as is generally the case, she had persuaded herself there was some strange mystery in the worship of this Society. While she stood wondering what to do, Jacob Law stepped kindly forward, shook her by the hand, and directed her to follow his daughters into the meeting, and seat herself on the form immediately behind them. Jane gladly did as she was instructed, and then followed a silence so profound, that she was afraid to interrupt it so much as by the lifting of her hand; it was not like the stillness of death, for now and then a dress was slightly rustled, or a foot changed its position and grated on the floor, or even a soft breathing might be heard, and sometimes a sigh; it was the stillness of warm, waking, palpitating life, a thing much more uncommon, and almost as awful as the stillness of death.

Jane fell into the deep silence like the rest, but had scarcely been able so far to divest herself of a sense of the strangeness of this new state, as to

begin really to think, when a slight movement took place amongst some who had not moved before, and two friends seated before her, looking as if they would never move again, took off their gloves, shook hands, and then rose and walked slowly and quietly out of the place. The silent sitting had lasted the usual length of time—about an hour and a half. With the first slight movement of the two friends, the whole assembly seemed to be instantaneously set at liberty, as if released from a spell. Hats and sticks were resumed amongst the men, who sat on one side, and who kept on their hats or took them off merely as a matter of choice; while the women, who sat on the other side, peeping a little round into each others long poked bonnets, began immediately to talk, and some of them to smile, even before they walked away.

The going out of this silent assembly would have been a time of great embarrassment to Jane Gordon, had she not caught the kindly recognition of Aunt Isabel, who beckoned her nearer, and shook her cordially by the hand, showing evidently by her manner that she was much pleased for Jane to have been there, and to have acquitted herself with such propriety.

“My brother’s chaise is too full for me to offer thee a seat,” said Aunt Isabel, with her accustomed politeness; “but the way is not far, and if it would be any accommodation to stop and dine with me—”

“Oh! don’t think of that,” said Jane; “I shall enjoy the walk.”

Perhaps she was not sorry to escape once more into the free and open air, for she hastened on with so light a step, that she soon found herself quite unintentionally, overtaking the younger members of the Law family, whose residence lay in the same direction as her own.

The two daughters Susannah and Lydia looked absolutely frightened, when they glanced back, to see whose step was treading so briskly after them, and found it was Jane’s; but their brother Reuben, although a little sheepish in his manner, drew back as she approached, and looked into her pleasant face in a way which indicated that he was not at all afraid.

Perfectly unconscious that there could be any apprehension of danger from making her acquaintance, Jane was quite ready to enter into conversation, as the young man walked beside her; for the sisters appeared inseparable, and

continued arm in arm, the younger evidently clinging to the older; and as the shady lane into which they had entered was extremely narrow, Jane had nothing for it but to continue walking with Reuben by her side, and as she walked to continue talking too.

It was not much that these two young people had to say, except about the trees which waved above their heads in a soft summer wind, and the wild flowers growing beneath their feet; but somehow or other they seemed to become very much acquainted with each other in an exceedingly short time, so that Reuben held out his hand at parting, and Jane returned the civility with as much cordiality as if they had known each other for years.

Not so the girls. On reaching the little gate which opened into their father's garden, they managed to get themselves sidled in, and away, without Jane exactly seeing how or when. Perhaps she was too much occupied with her young companion, who looked wistfully along the path she had then to pursue alone for about the distance of a mile, as if he longed, but dared not, venture so far to transgress the family rule as to accompany her home.

So they parted, and when the sisters and the brother were seated a short time afterwards at the dinner table, though the parents prudently made no remarks, the sisters, especially the younger, who had been so shy and silent as to be almost rude, discussed with wonderful interest and animation every line and feature of Jane Gordon's countenance, as if the phenomenon of her appearance amongst them that morning had been an event of the deepest moment.

"Then why did you not speak to her," said Reuben, "if you think her pleasant looking? I am sure I never saw such ill-behaved girls in my life. Indeed, I don't think there are any girls in the Society who know how to behave."

Rebecca Law looked steadily at her son, and then at her husband, but made no remark. Jacob Law stopped in his carving, and said hastily, "What's that, my boy?" But Reuben, with a tact which is not unfrequently the result of not daring to speak out, quickly changed the subject for another, about which he was profoundly indifferent, and began discussing that as if he cared for no other.

These Sundays at the Grange, it must be confessed, were rather lengthy days. The little

meeting which the family duly attended in the morning, was too distant to be held in the afternoon. Dinner on that day was even earlier than usual, so that many hours remained to be got rid of before there was any hope of tea. Rebecca Law was in the habit of retiring to her own room for a considerable portion of this time. There were surmises that she found the opportunity favourable for a comfortable nap; but when asked on her re-appearance, that most provoking question—"Have you been asleep?" She invariably answered, as persons thus provoked do answer,—“No!” Susannah Law, the oldest daughter, could generally have given as good an account of herself as any of the family, for she usually went up into a pleasant little sleeping room appropriated to her sister and herself, and there, seated by an old-fashioned window which overlooked the garden, she was accustomed to read diligently some good book suited to the day. Reuben and Lydia were by no means so well occupied, if indeed they might be said to be occupied at all. The fruit in the garden—strawberries, green gages, or apples, as the season might be, was apt to suffer considerably from their attacks on these afternoons. The rabbits, however, were

better attended to than usual, the pony had sometimes an extra feed of corn, and there were certain tricks to teach the dog which that animal profited by on these occasions, perhaps more than on any other.

Jacob Law had one rule for his first day afternoon from which he never departed. He always went over to the cottage to see his sister so soon as the dinner was comfortably over. In the winter he would draw his chair close to her cheerful fire, and then would carefully crack her nuts, and prepare her apples for her, besides persuading her to drink a glass of wine, and taking two or three himself. In the summer it was his practice to wheel her chair into the garden, where he would stand beside her, occupied with pleasant chat; or making occasional excursions amongst the fruit trees, and vegetables, would sometimes so far forget the sacredness of the day, as to discuss the advantages of pruning and training, and different kinds of management, for he liked nothing better than to see his sister's garden in the most perfect state of productiveness and order.

If the hours of the Sabbath between dinner and tea were not quite so strictly kept at the Grange

as by some other families, their apparent laxity was to some extent made up for on the evening of the Sabbath day. After a plentiful tea, at which some choice sweets, or other more than usual indulgence generally appeared, there was a pretty long time again for quietness and reading, and then from eight o'clock till nine, the kind of religious service already described was held in the kitchen, at which all the domestic servants, with others living on the premises, were expected to attend. The whole family, and even visitors who might be in the house, walked into the kitchen on these occasions and seated themselves around the room, a table with a Bible upon it, being placed before an arm chair appropriated to the master of the house. Next to him sat his wife Rebecca. The service consisted in a long silence first, and then the solemn reading of a chapter in the Bible by Jacob Law; after which there followed another silence longer than before, only that it had lately been interrupted once or twice by a few words slowly spoken in a very solemn but weak and broken voice by the mistress of the house. At first this broken utterance, so surprising to every one present, extended no further than to the repetition of a few short passages of scripture, but each time a few more words

were added, and the stillness which followed seemed more profound, and the awe deepened every time.

Strange! indeed, it might seem to those who were only casual lookers on, for there sat Jacob Law in the midst of his own people, a man of observation, and practical benevolence, deeply interested in their welfare, acquainted with their individual characters, their wants, and their temptations, longing with all the energy of his manly heart to do them good, and knowing also what was calculated to do them good, perhaps more than any one else, yet there he sat amongst them in perfect silence, week after week, and year after year. In all probability the idea never once entered his mind that he should open his lips and address them, because he felt no immediate spiritual intimation that such was the duty laid upon him. Strange! that amongst this set of people, of whom she saw and knew comparatively little, the voice of a weak woman should be raised in expressions to which a worldly ear might have listened long without discovering anything either appropriate or edifying; and yet that in the whole body of the society, no individual could have been found so daring as to suggest that the man under these circumstances

should have spoken, and the woman should have remained silent! No; the small weak utterance was listened to, both in these private meetings, and in those for public worship, with a reverence as profound as if a prophetess had spoken. The instrument was nothing—the voice was nothing, nor the utterance, nor the mode of speech. It was the message that was sent, and the directness of that message which constituted the whole force and burden of the words; and as such they were listened to with feelings of respect and solemn awe.

Let it not be supposed, however, that Rebecca Law was in herself a person of slight importance, either at home or abroad. Far, indeed, was this from being the case. It would be quite impossible to describe the *kind* of weight and dignity which accompanied her wherever she went, and much more so after she became a minister than before. Even her husband, a man not naturally remarkable for patience under authority, and who must have been secretly conscious of a vast superiority over his wife in worldly wisdom, was accustomed to assume a manner of quiet acquiescence in much that she said and did, as if he was afraid, that by setting up his own judgment, he might be presumptuously running counter to those intimations

from a higher source to which no limitations can be set by human wisdom.

Personally, Rebecca Law possessed many recommendations. We will not say that this had anything to do with her influence over her husband. She was fair and comely, with a bland and placid expression of countenance, which seldom varied, and never gave place to anything sudden or violent. Her dress was the perfection of neatness, and, somehow or other, notwithstanding its extreme plainness, was so adjusted as to set off her person altogether to the best advantage. In one respect it was remarkable, for she adhered to the old fashion of wearing tight sleeves, so short as to reach only just below the elbow, and terminating there in an exquisitely neat little cuff of the finest white cambric. To be sure, her arms and hands were remarkable for their beauty, and it would be too much to say, that she was wholly unconscious of this fact, when she folded them upon her clear muslin apron, or gathered around her person the pale drab coloured silken shawl, which was always spread over her comely shoulders.

In fact, they were a well matched pair in all their personal advantages, for seldom could be found a better looking man altogether than Jacob Law.

His frame, scarcely above the middle size, well knit, compact, and agile, was certainly not disfigured by the peculiar costume to which he adhered; for the exquisite material of his clothing, and the admirable fit of every portion of it, gave a smartness to his appearance, which many younger men might have envied. But his cordial beaming countenance was the great charm of Jacob's appearance. He *could* be angry—that was quite evident. He could speak sharply, and look with a sudden frown upon what he despised or disapproved. His judgment too was as rapid as it was generally correct; and that being the case, he sometimes wanted patience in cases of trifling hesitation or delay. All this was manifest in the quick flash of his keen dark eye, in his small but well proportioned head, his compact square forehead, his brow clear as the sky without a cloud, and in all his features, so closely chiselled that nothing extraneous or unsymmetrical seemed to have been left. His hair of a rich dark brown, slightly disappearing from his temples, and especially from the region of benevolence, which stood up high and full; his hearty and pleasant laugh disclosing an even and beautiful set of pearly teeth; and his complexion the clearest and brightest imaginable, gave him always somewhat the appear-

ance of having just enjoyed a good refreshing wash. These, and other lively and life imparting advantages of person and manner, rendered Jacob Law one of those pleasant companions whose society is always acceptable, without being at any time perhaps profoundly interesting. Indeed, health, and vigour both of body and mind, were the most striking outward characteristics of this good and happy man. If his mind was not of the most expansive range, it was unusually terse and sound, while the moral of his character was such as might have fitted him, under certain favourable circumstances, for acting a prominent part in any of these great emergencies which develop true heroism under its most attractive form. That his natural impetuosity, ever on the side of right, was sometimes a little chilled and fettered by the rigid rules of the society to which he belonged, no one could doubt who enjoyed much intercourse with Jacob Law. But of this he never complained. To whatever the discipline of the Friends, as a religious body, required, he submitted without a questioning word, and apparently without a rebellious thought.

In fact, nothing is more astonishing in connection with this society, than the entire and unre-

served submission of its members individually to one uniform rule of life and manners, so far as their public discipline is concerned. The proud man, and the vain woman, alike bow silently beneath this irresistible influence. The ambitious, and the lowly, are subdued to one common level. The delicate and the coarse—the tender and the stern—persons the most opposite in their natural tendencies, and differing widely from each other in the circumstances of their birth, education, and sphere of action, all obey the same law of universal conformity, and that without cavil or question. To question, indeed, would be to incur a large amount of disapprobation, implied, if not openly expressed. There are consequently few so daring as to manifest a questioning spirit. An outward conformity, as silent as it is sure, reigns paramount above all individual peculiarity. It admits of no reasoning. It holds no parley with inclination. The natural will must be broken—the creature must be brought low.

How far in private the creature manages to assert itself, and that perhaps with the greater determination, in consequence of its outward restraint may best be imagined by those who have studied human nature in its wants, as well as its capabilities.

The great struggle in a Friend's family is generally how to bring the younger members into this condition of unquestioning submission. Even within the secluded precincts of the Grange, there were tendencies to overstep the prescribed limits, especially with regard to dress, which gave Rebecca Law considerable uneasiness, though Jacob was disposed to be more lenient in such matters, so long as his children were dutiful, affectionate, and sober in their general deportment.

Of Susannah, the oldest, it might indeed be said, that she had scarcely ever occasioned her parents a moment's uneasiness. To all appearance the right and correct way was always more attractive to her than the wrong: at all events, no other tendency was betrayed by her exceedingly placid countenance, and gentle and orderly manners. It would scarcely have been possible for Susannah Law to be anything but a Friend, or for any other community than theirs to have produced such a character as Susannah's, combining at once such depth of feeling, with such entire mastery over every look, word, movement, or other manifestation of it.

But we have not come to the feeling yet. First, let us consider the subject externally, and suppose

a fair pale complexioned young woman rather above the middle size, with large white hands, and, like her mother's, beautiful arms, if she would permit them to be seen. Perhaps it was the costume to which Susannah strictly adhered and the exceedingly little adornment about her head, that made her face look large and somewhat bare. The plain stiff muslin cap with closely crimped border which she always wore did very little towards hiding her temples, nor was it much helped out by a thin fringe of soft light hair cut too closely to admit of anything approaching to a curl, and only just separated in the middle like that of a little child; for thick bands of hair, now liberally indulged in, were ornaments never dreamed of by young Quakeresses at the time of which we write. Susannah's cap might have been made of iron, it was so unalterable in its form—in the flutings of its crown, and the little frill into which it was gathered at the back of the head. Nor was there more tendency to caprice or change in the very small clear collar which surrounded her throat. Never was there to be seen the slightest alteration in either—never the least speck upon their whiteness, or the least ruffling of their texture.

But for the largeness and the paleness of her

face, Susannah Law might have been goodlooking, for her features were regular, and well formed, particularly her mouth, which was finely moulded, and expressive of the highest degree of purity and sweetness. Her blue eyes fully corresponded with this expression, but she had a habit of shrouding them under their heavy white lids, and looking down much more than was necessary, or quite agreeable. Indeed, there is a kind of implied retirement in the downcast look and manner thus assumed by many persons of Susannah's class, which produces an effect the reverse of encouraging to social intercourse. When Susannah sat in this way, as she so often did, with her soft white hands closely folded, and her eyes looking down, it would have seemed as unlikely to enter into conversation with her as with a marble statue. Yet, strange to say, this seeming automaton would know all that was going on—would hear and even see with a precision almost miraculous, so that a guest, who perhaps had never heard her voice, nor seen the colour of her eyes, would find his tastes consulted, and his wishes provided for, in a thousand little ways, as if some good fairy went about the house, doing the work of many hands by no other instrumentality than the silent stroke of her wand.

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Little as Susannah Law was, personally, like a fairy, her conduct in the household—for she it was who really conducted everything—resembled nothing so much as what is sometimes fancifully attributed to these kind people. No one could ever see that Susannah was busy. She made no noise in moving about the house; seldom had she need to ask questions; and never were her plans proclaimed aloud before being carried out. But the thing was done, and everybody knew it would be done if Susannah was only on the spot.

And yet few people ever thought about Susannah to an extent at all commensurate with the services she performed; she did not wish to be thanked, her thoughts were never about herself; she only wanted every one to be made comfortable, and that all things should be done in the best possible manner. So the family and household accepted all their comforts at her hand, and, with a perverseness not unfrequent, seemed really to think far less of her who did so much, than of her younger sister, who, we are sorry to say, did exceedingly little.

Wherever there is one thoroughly efficient person willing to do everything, there will be sure to be one, if not more—willing to do nothing.

If Lydia Law was quite satisfied that Susannah should do her share of work, she was equally well satisfied to receive her sister's share of caresses. In fact, she was the pet of the family ; and like pets in general, was a little addicted to presuming upon the favour she enjoyed, not the less so that she was evidently growing up into a beauty as well as a pet. Her beauty was, however, of a somewhat peculiar kind. It consisted not in regularity of features, or in anything that could be made a picture of, for her eyes were rather grey, her nose, though well formed, rather short, and her lips considerably too thick for the chisel of the sculptor. This fault, however, was in some measure redeemed by a beautiful chin, and by a remarkably fine turn of the cheek from the chin to the small white ear, just where the rich bright bloom of the complexion faded off into the snowy whiteness of the throat. Around the back of this alabaster throat there crept the loveliest little curls of soft rich auburn hair, and again upon her temples there would have gathered quite a mass of such curls, but that Susannah stroked them back, often taking the comb into her own hands to part her sister's hair afresh, and sometimes using water to it in order to smoothe down its tendency to

curl. And Lydia would remain very passive and quiet under this half caress ; but not unfrequently, when the smoothing operation was over, she would shake her head, and laugh, until all the bright curls started into life and beauty again, and poor Susannah's work had to be commenced afresh.

It was a pity that with so many personal recommendations, Lydia had no gracefulness—no manner. Her figure was slight and symmetrical, and pretty enough when perfectly at ease : but the moment she became embarrassed, had to address a stranger, to walk into a room where there was company, or to do anything out of the usual routine of domestic privacy, she seemed to lose the command of her muscles, and was sometimes as awkward as it was possible to be with so much youth and beauty, health, and elasticity of spirit. Both sisters were afflicted with this kind of shyness, but Susannah always betook herself to her statue-like stillness, and then her large white hands seemed to grow together, her eyes were bent upon the ground, and her lips closed with a kind of rigid gravity which few people would have attempted to interrupt.

Reuben Law was one whom it would be much more difficult to describe than his sisters ; indeed,

he had fewer striking characteristics. His sisters thought him extremely good-looking—perhaps he thought so too. But there was a restless and uncertain look about him which is never very satisfactory for the eye to dwell upon, however handsome the features; and, with considerable symmetry, as well as elasticity of figure, he had too much the air and manner of a person who does not know his own mind. That which he did really wish for, he seemed determined to have, but it was sometimes one thing, sometimes another, according to the impulse of the moment. In this respect he was the very opposite of his father. No wonder that Jacob Law sometimes came to an end of his patience in dealing with such a youth—no wonder that the youth, under the strict discipline of such a father, should sometimes complain of the sharp treatment he received.

Upon the whole, however, the family were thus far extremely harmonious and affectionate. No breach had yet occurred in their domestic union—no jar in their social concord. The world was yet a region unexplored to them, and life an untried conflict. According to human calculation perhaps no family could have less to fear; and

yet, they were each endowed with those elements of strife, and consequently of sorrow, which are capable of converting the fairest garden into a wilderness, and the noblest structure into a ruin.

CHAPTER IV.

Even now, as already hinted, there were symptoms beginning to appear of something like disagreement amongst the older branches of the family, of which the younger knew nothing. Aunt Isabel would not give up the visits of her young friend Jane Gordon, and with Jane's occasional attendance at meeting, and frequent presence at the cottage, there were opportunities for the young people to become acquainted, which it was not very likely they should try to avoid. Even Susannah had lately begun to throw aside her shyness and reserve, so far as to walk along the fields in conversation with Jane; while Lydia, rather addicted to extremes in her likings and dislikings, now began to entertain towards her one of those girlish attachments, which the plain good sense and straightforward frankness of

Jane offered little beyond ordinary courtesy to encourage.

The fact was, they saw so few persons beyond their own little range of hospitality; they so seldom came in contact with easy and polished manners; they heard so little of the world through direct communication with any one who wore rings, and addressed single individuals as if they were plural, that Jane was at first a perfect wonder to them; and then, as they came to know her better, an object of real interest and affection.

Jane also, on her part, was more attracted by these—her newly-made acquaintances, than she could have easily explained. They appeared to be so perfectly *naive* in all they said and did, that sometimes she could not help smiling at their simplicity, though she always loved them better for it. With all this simplicity too, they were so refined, so really delicate, and so dignified withal, that no small amount of admiration was mingled with the astonishment she felt at finding human beings, living and acting in this busy world, and yet so ignorant of its modes and customs.

“But why,” said Jane Gordon one day to her friend, after they had been speaking of the young people at the other house, “do they never visit you?”

“Oh, they come often to see me,” said her friend.

“Not when I am here,” observed Jane.

Isabel was busy with her work, and made no reply.

“Perhaps they don’t like me,” said Jane, half asking the question, but still there was no reply.

“Dear Miss Law,” she began again, after a few moments’ silence, and this time she spoke more seriously, “I do not think you are quite candid with me.”

“In what respect, my dear?”

“I have taken up the idea that you none of you really like my attendance at your meetings.”

“What cause hast thou for this opinion?”

“I don’t allude to you, yourself, of course, in what I say now; but I cannot be so dull as not to perceive that there are cold looks cast towards me, and a general want of cordiality, as if I was an intruder amongst you.”

“My dear, it is not usual with our Society to hold out inducements for any one to attend our meetings, unless they do so on serious grounds.”

“And pray, what other grounds can I have?”

“Time will prove.”

“You startle me by speaking in that manner. Surely I am not suspected of any wrong motive! Besides, what wrong motive could I have?”

“I did not say thou wast suspected of any such thing.”

“But do—I beg of you, do say that I am not.”

“I must answer for myself alone, and so far can assure thee, that my own mind is clear of any suspicion of thy motives.”

“And yet there is something wrong. I feel sure there is something. What on earth can it be?”

“My dear, I have often advised thee against that strong way of speaking.”

“Well,” said Jane, “I am trying very much to leave it off;” but just as she arrived at this part of her sentence, she stopped short; and, sad to say, blushed deeply, for there was the sound of passing feet along the gravel walk below the window, and the conviction suddenly flashed across her mind, why it was that some of the members of the Law family had lately looked so coldly upon her, when she met them, as she often did, at the door of their meeting-house.

But if Jane Gordon blushed while the quick step was passing, she did not look much paler

when Reuben entered, and seizing her hand somewhat hastily, gave it such a pressure as almost made her flinch.

“Silly boy!” she said to herself, “I know all about it now, and this is the very way to make matters worse.”

But Reuben committed himself no farther. His conversation was general, and indifferent. He did not seem like the same person as the one who had seized that hand so eagerly but a few moments before; for it is one of the results of the discipline already alluded to, that an outward manner can be maintained under all circumstances, which is no real index whatever of the true state of the mind.

Having once caught the idea which called those blushes into her cheek, Jane Gordon became alive to a thousand relative ideas which had never struck her before. She must so manage now, that Reuben should not escort her home. Her own servant was waiting for her, but that she felt was not a sufficient protection against the company of a third person. So Jane sat much later than she otherwise would have done; until Aunt Isabel, being a woman of considerable tact and presence of mind, devised a message to the

other house, upon which she sent her nephew, requesting him to make a point of seeing his father without loss of time.

“And now, my dear,” she said to Jane, as soon as the young man was fairly gone, “I would have thee put on thy bonnet, and go without delay, for I think it must be getting rather late.”

Jane, who perfectly understood the hint, ran up for her bonnet, and was very soon ready to go. Taking a hasty leave of her friend, she went out into the clear moonlight, her heart beating somewhat quicker than usual, because of the strange thoughts which had taken possession of her mind.

At a brisk pace she was soon tripping along, the dewy grass rustling under her light tread; and her servant had just hastened forward to unfasten a private gate which led into one of her father's fields, when a shadow fell across the moonlight, and Reuben Law was in another instant walking by her side.

Of course Jane started—of course she asked him why he had come—of course she bade him return immediately, and did many other things just as she ought, but still there remained upon the sparkling grass the shadows of two figures instead of one; until at last the servant grew so

tired of waiting at the little gate, that seeing who was with her young mistress, and considering that they were all near home, she walked deliberately up to the house, thinking, no doubt, it was the most natural thing imaginable for two young people to linger by the way, especially on such a lovely night.

Jane Gordon had up to this time been only half acquainted with the society of Friends. She had imagined them *really* subdued in their feelings and sentiments down to the level of their ordinary conduct. But when she heard from the lips of this youth the confession which he had long been wishing to make, and heard it in the strong, wild, impassioned language of romance rather than reality, she scarcely knew whether to smile or to be afraid, for it was like nothing else that she had ever heard or dreamed of. What she did was to tremble all over, and yet to keep speaking as if the matter was all nonsense, as indeed a good deal of it was—nonsense in expression, not in feeling: so far from that, it was the gravest act of Reuben Law's life, and the most earnest.

Jane Gordon had plenty of good sense, but she was very womanly, and being such, it would be useless to pretend that she was wholly insensible

to this strange outburst of feeling, with all its romance—all its folly, but at the same time with all its truth. Still she could not stay to hear it then, and there: the time, she said, was unsuitable, and the place—Reuben thought them both extremely suitable, but Jane insisted upon not being detained, and after a reluctant good-night on the part of her young lover, she hastened up along the garden path to her father's house, and immediately retiring to her own room, began to think.

To think, indeed! Here was a catastrophe! “The foolish boy!” Jane said to herself, until she grew tired of calling him a boy, and wished he had been a little older; for then there might have been some sense in what he said. Then she recollected that he was older than she had supposed,—that he was just twenty, while she herself was only twenty-two—a difference on the wrong side certainly, but one that in a few years would seem no difference at all.

We will not attempt to disclose all Jane's reflections, nor even one half of them; but we have a shrewd guess, that if any one could have looked into that chamber between the hours of twelve and one that night, they would have seen her

still in a deep reverie, with her hair in loose tresses lying spread upon her shoulders, no sleep beneath her eyelids, nor any visible heaviness, or tendency to seek repose. But Jane did sleep at last, and like many other persons under similar circumstances, she awoke the next morning considerably wiser—so much so, that she could say to herself—“That foolish boy,” without in reality wishing him a boy no longer. Indeed, the whole affair appeared by day-light, so perfectly absurd, that Jane determined to take no notice of it whatever, to make no difference in her behaviour, and not even to betray the least consciousness of anything more than usual having transpired. She resolved to take her accustomed walks, and if by chance Reuben and she should happen to meet, she would talk so fast on indifferent subjects that it would be impossible for him to make himself so foolish again.

So Jane did take her accustomed walks; she did meet with Reuben; she did talk fast; but somehow or other the subject was renewed in spite of all her sage resolutions, and renewed so often, and with such perseverance, that it came in time to be the subject more talked about between them than any other.

We have said that Jane Gordon was, in great measure, shut out from sympathy at home. She had unconsciously assumed a different character, and turned her thoughts into different channels from those of any one beneath her father's roof. Her sisters were gay and flippant, while she, though naturally cheerful, was inclined towards what was solid and serious. A little deeper even than this flowed the current of her inner feelings, for she had learned, above all things, to desire to lead a religious, as well as a useful and quiet life. Was it possible, she asked herself, that the devotion of this young warm heart, so freely and so frankly offered, could be the means designed by a kind Providence for rescuing her from a position altogether uncongenial to her feelings, and placing her within that pale of security and peace where, it seemed to her, as if evil could scarcely enter?

It is true that Jane Gordon did not find, in her more intimate conversations with Reuben Law, that the religious element was present in the degree she had expected; but it was not altogether absent; and he was so happy in her society, and so thankful for her kindness, that at this period of his life his character appeared capable of being moulded into everything amiable and good. What

woman does not like to feel that she has the power of entirely moulding such a character? Jane Gordon was but human. She accepted the gift of that young warm heart, at that time so unsullied by the world, and so entirely her own—her own in its first deep love, and in the freshest and best impulses it was capable of feeling.

But after allowing herself to go so far as to respond to this genuine and guileless affection, Jane soon became sensible that she had brought herself under the necessity of discharging a grave and somewhat painful duty. She saw that the time had come when this intercourse ought no longer to be kept secret; and, as Reuben resisted all her arguments in favour of his speaking openly on the subject to his parents, she determined to confide in Aunt Isabel, and to seek aid from her friendly and judicious counsel.

Thus far, Jane Gordon had no consciousness of wrong. It was an honest attachment which she had to confess. The circumstances of the two families were similar in property and rank and though there existed between them a difference of religious profession, she was, herself, so well disposed towards that of the Friends, that she saw no obstacle arising from that quarter. The last

thing Jane could have thought of in such an union was, that she should adhere to one faith and her husband to another. No, she would be entirely with him, or entirely separate; and, though not yet fully persuaded in her own mind, there was surely time enough for mature consideration on many points—even on this, the most important of all. The greatest objections, therefore, which Jane could think of, were such as related to the inexperience of her young lover. She was ashamed of this herself, and heartily wished it otherwise. But then she was going to be very prudent; and when at last she broke the subject to her friend, she followed up her confession with such a rapid declaration of all her good resolutions, that Aunt Isabel found no time for offering any comment, even had she been so disposed. Amongst other prudent plans, Jane told her, that she had determined upon an entire cessation of all intercourse until her own religious views should become more fixed; and, what seemed equally important, until the settlement of Reuben in some useful occupation should have given him the stability which his character so much needed.

All this sounded well, and unquestionably was well meant; but still Aunt Isabel was evidently

far from being satisfied. Indeed, she was both grieved and perplexed—grieved, that the premature avowal of this childish affection should have frustrated her own secret hopes and plans, for Aunt Isabel was a great planner—and perplexed as to whether she ought now to make an entire disclosure to her brother and sister of all that her young friend had confided to her knowledge. At last, however, she decided upon doing half this painful duty, and so telling her brother only, and trusting to his discretion for the rest.

It was a “trying business altogether,” Aunt Isabel said. . She even called them “foolish children;” and Jane felt the blood rush to her temples when she heard herself thus charged with foolishness. Happy as she and Reuben had been when they wandered in the pleasant fields together, it seemed now as if everything was going wrong. Innocent as had been their affection, and often deeply serious their converse—so full of sweet thoughts, high hopes, and noble resolutions, it seemed now as if they had incurred some harsh condemnation for what had past with them as the best and happiest portion of their lives.

Jane Gordon could not possibly understand the annoyance—the grief—the absolute fear which

seemed to take possession of her friend, and which only increased with every fresh allusion to the subject.

“You see,” said Jane, “I shall, no doubt, become a Friend in time, and then Reuben will be settled, and ——”

“My dear,” said Aunt Isabel, interrupting her rather hastily, “Thou art much too confident. Thou hast not even applied to be received into membership with us; and if thou shouldst apply now, the case is quite altered. I scarcely think thou wouldst be received.”

“There would be all the stronger reason why I should,” said Jane, rather sharply, for she was by no means flattered by the way in which her probable connection with the family was treated. “I should be sorry,” she continued, “to boast of myself or my family, but I think I may venture to say this, at least, that no one can understand Reuben better than I do, or would do more to secure his happiness and welfare.”

“My dear,” said Aunt Isabel, “that is not the question.”

“What is the question, then?”

“Thou art not a member of our Society, and Reuben cannot marry out. As I said before, thou

hast not yet applied to be received, nor am I satisfied that thou art altogether convinced of our principles, although I had hoped the time might come when this would be the case."

"You mean, then," said Jane, "that if I should apply now, my motives would be suspected."

"I do."

"I wonder who would suspect *me*?"

"I think, Jane, it is sometimes more becoming for persons to suspect themselves—for the young especially."

"Oh! not one's own sincerity, surely. One must know when one is sincere."

"An unsubdued inclination sometimes blinds the judgment."

"The judgment? yes. But you have often told me there is another guide more sure, and that the conscience—"

"The light within, my dear. But I think we had better change the subject."

Aunt Isabel said no more, but sighed heavily; and Jane also remained silent. There was more of wounded pride, and haughtiness of temper, in her look and manner, than she was accustomed to exhibit. She saw that her friend was pained, and she did not strive to soothe her—disappointed

in her, and she did not endeavour to regain the good opinion which she had ever valued so much. Perhaps she herself was disappointed too, and secretly had been feeling, without being conscious of the fact, that Reuben's family would have something to thank her for, if she should undertake to correct the faults of a somewhat wayward boy, on no more advantageous condition than that of waiting for her settlement in life until he should be in circumstances honourably to maintain an establishment of his own.

But, if Jane Gordon felt for a few moments thus annoyed, and ruffled; if she was tempted to indulge a captiousness of spirit by no means congenial to her nature, she could not actually leave her friend in this spirit, nor allow the night to close in without a complete reconciliation. Jane felt too, that if not absolutely wrong, she had been unamiable, ungentle, and almost unkind. To have done wrong, or even only to have felt wrong, is always more painful to a sensitive and honourable nature, than to have suffered wrong; and Jane now began to ask herself, whether this strange humiliating feeling, inwrought as it seemed to be, with that attachment which had recently promised so much happiness, might not prove the

beginning of troubles from which it would be impossible for her to extricate herself.

One after another, sad thoughts came crowding in upon her mind, until at last, over the work which she had tried to occupy herself in doing, the tears fell thick and fast, so that it was impossible to see what her fingers were about; and then, laying it down entirely, she crept nearer and nearer to the pale reclining figure; and, leaning over the end of the couch, laid her throbbing head upon her shoulder, and wept without restraint.

Soon, a kind, soft hand, was extended to her. Soon, a gentle, pitying voice, besought her to be comforted; and then her tears fell faster, though her heart became less sad. At last, Jane was herself again; confessing, with her accustomed frankness, how rash, how proud, how unamiable, she had been; and begging, with all the meakness of a chastened child, that Aunt Isabel would receive her back again into her heart, and tell her how best to avoid the consequences which her rashness seemed likely to bring upon herself and others.

Long, and earnestly, did the two friends talk together that night. True, they could not pos-

sibly regard the subject of their conversation from the same point of view; but such was their similarity of character in principle, and in that strong sense of right by which they were both anxious to test every action of their lives, that, before the usual hour of separation arrived, they had entirely agreed upon certain plans for the future, which the older of the two friends engaged to assist the younger in faithfully and perseveringly carrying out.

CHAPTER V.

ON the first day following this discourse, the interview between Jacob Law and his sister was prolonged beyond its usual length. No notice of the garden, on this occasion, mingled with the subject of their discussions, and the fruit upon the table remained untouched. We will not say the same of the wine. Indeed, we are rather disposed to think that an additional glass was resorted to by the father, during the effort of trying to see more clearly what it was best to do with his son. Long, and very earnestly, did the two consult and think together; for no small portion of the time was spent in looking silently into the fire, while the mechanical friction of the hands, and the unconscious swaying to and fro of the body, gave evidence of a degree of mental perplexity, not to be easily assuaged.

And here, it is necessary to speak of a little

domestic difficulty, which Jacob Law never disclosed to any one but his sister. It was, that he and his wife did not exactly see, eye to eye, with regard to the boy, Reuben. Like many other fond mothers, the wife seemed almost to doat upon the youth, simply because he was her only boy. Upon all the unfavourable developments of his character, she looked so partially, that the father had almost ceased to point them out to her notice; and thus, perhaps, had brooded upon them the more in secret, because he had no one to assist him in dealing with them openly. Indeed, what could a husband do, whose wife was so largely a recipient of that light which might at any time overpower his poor human reason, and set his worldly calculations at nought. Thus, prompt, decided, manly, as he was, Jacob Law found it almost impossible, on some occasions, to act in perfect unison with the feelings of his wife, and, at the same time, with the dictates of his own common sense; and, in this instance especially, a great struggle had to be gone through, before he could decide which course to take—whether to keep the matter to himself, and so act for himself with reason, and, as he believed, right for his guide; or so to deal with the affair, as that his

wife should have the chance, and, most probably, the choice of taking it entirely into her own hands, to be tested and finally adjudged according to evidence which he was in no condition to dispute.

In all probability, Jacob Law decided upon adopting the former course. At all events, it was apparent that, while his consultations with sister Isabel became more frequent and more lengthy than ever, there was no evidence of the mother experiencing any fresh anxiety about her son. The father, however, being naturally a hopeful man, as well as a man of abundant resources, was not long before he began, in some sort, to see his way out of the present difficulty. He even went so far one day, as to say to his sister, that he thought perhaps all might yet be well, if only the young woman could be trusted. Isabel thought she might. But would it not be desirable for them both to see, and converse with her together? "No, no," said Jacob to this proposition; "I don't want to have anything to do with her. The more separate we keep ourselves, the better."

Isabel would have been grieved, and almost offended, at this ungracious answer, had she not

known her brother well enough to interpret his harsh words into meaning that he did not want to grow to like the girl, as he felt afraid he should, if they met and conversed confidingly together. Indeed, hers was exactly the kind of character to please Jacob Law—frank, trusting, direct, and very sensible. Perhaps, also, he felt in his own heart, that hers was exactly the kind of character to strengthen and improve that of his son; and he consequently shrunk from the responsibility of seeing and knowing this for himself, and yet putting his absolute veto upon their future intercourse.

“Reuben,” said he, “is a fickle and uncertain boy. Let them only be brought to an entire separation, without maintaining any correspondence by letter, and he will soon forget the girl—there is little to fear on that ground.”

Aunt Isabel could ill bear this manner of speaking of her young friend. She did not even like the view of the matter which her brother was taking. “Well, Jacob,” said she, “we must do for the best at the present moment, and leave the rest. I see, with thee, that it will be desirable for Reuben to go away, and for them not to correspond. This, Jane herself has proposed.”

“But will she keep to her agreement if we bind her over to it?” said Jacob, rather testily.

“There will need no such bond with Jane, thou wilt find,” said Isabel. “A strong feeling of what is right will operate more effectually with her, than any mere verbal agreement.”

“Umph!” said Jacob Law, and there the matter ended for the present; not very pleasantly, so far as the lady was concerned, for in the secret of her heart she would fain have cherished a lingering hope that the intercourse so prematurely begun might not be finally and irrevocably dissolved.

Perhaps no one knew Jane Gordon so well as this attached and faithful friend; and no one certainly could have a higher estimate of her character, especially in those points in which it appeared so well suited to improve—almost to remodel that of Reuben Law. Even that very difference of their ages was on the right side in this respect, for already Jane had proved herself capable of exercising a silent influence over him, which from any other quarter he would have rebelled against, if not utterly rejected; and from her deeper experience, added to a thoughtfulness far beyond his own, Aunt Isabel thought there

was much to be anticipated. But the barrier remained the same, and must remain for years to come, for no one can be admitted hastily—not without a long season of trial, into membership with the Society of Friends.

But here again Isabel Law was hopeful—at least she would have been hopeful, but for what had taken place. There are no people, however, who can *leave things* so quietly and patiently as the Friends, so Aunt Isabel placed this trouble where she had left so many others, in the hands of One who had cared for and directed her thus far, and of whose tender care and wise direction for the future, she did not allow herself to doubt.

Jacob Law, from the very constitution of his character, was not always able to be quite so patient and quiet as his sister. He was troubled with a considerable amount of toothache about this time; and his family, always watchful and tender over his comfort, were assiduous in their proffered applications of soothing influences. But the fomentations, especially, were rejected, we are sorry to say, without a proportionable amount of gratitude on the part of the sufferer; and lastly, after many ineffectual struggles to overcome the enemy, Jacob announced his determination to set

out on horseback on a little journey of business, even while the snow was thick upon the ground. It was a matter, he said, in which no one could act for him; and his family, if not satisfied, were compelled to be silent, for Jacob Law's business was never interfered with.

It is probable that all this while the mother was as ignorant as her daughters of the real cause of the journey. Her accustomed abstraction from worldly matters would have rendered it extremely easy to baffle her penetration, had that been desirable. Indeed, it was seldom difficult to escape any minute enquiry on her part, except where her feelings had once become awakened, her apprehensions excited, or her peace in any way disturbed. On the present occasion, she permitted her husband to depart unquestioned, sufficiently satisfied that he was going to pay a visit to a family universally esteemed and looked up to by the Society of Friends.

And here we must introduce to the reader's notice a very different phase of this Society from any which has thus far been presented—a phase which may certainly be found amongst them as a body, though perhaps less frequently in the present day, than at the time of which we write.

George and Johanna Rutherford, with their son Paul, and a tolerably large household, composed the party in question. The heads of this family occupied a position in society not easily described; because so very seldom can there be found, in any other community, individuals so entirely immersed in all the associations and requirements of absolute trade, and that of no very dignified description, yet possessing at the same time so wide and so powerful an influence over classes of society, which, according to the world's estimate, would rank much higher than themselves.

George Rutherford was a cheese and bacon factor in the old fashioned but flourishing town of Layton, situate about twenty miles from the residence of Jacob Law. Here the Rutherfords had lived for many generations, by their industrious and saving virtues gradually working their way up to a position of great respectability, and, as was generally believed, of considerable wealth. This last recommendation, however, was far from being conspicuous in the habits of the present family. From time immemorial the aspect of their residence had worn the same external features. A shop with low projecting windows,

overhung by a range of old-fashioned apartments, was all that the mere passer-by could discern of George Rutherford's domestic or commercial circumstances. A closer inspection, however, might have discovered a scene of considerable bustle and activity within; while beyond, or rather situated at the back part of the premises, were extensive warehouses, and receptacles of various kinds, adapted to a large amount of property requiring no small number of hands to keep it in order, as well as to transmit it in various forms and quantities from the dealer to the purchaser.

Upon the number of hands thus employed depended in some sort the dignity of the master, as well as the importance of the mistress of this establishment. Friends in all parts of the country considered it a privilege to have their sons placed under the protecting care—to say nothing of the prosperous auspices, of George Rutherford. The hard work, the simple fare, and the unusually strict discipline of his establishment were recommendations of no slight value to parents believing, as many of them devoutly did, that the creaturely nature in their children required to be utterly subdued, before they could attain to the heavenly; and that this was the way to subdue it.

Hence, many of the young men employed by George Rutherford came from affluent and comfortable homes, while others bore about with them indisputable marks of a widely different bringing up; and yet all had to mix together without distinction, on perfectly equal terms: a system which was regarded not only as wholesome discipline for the present, but as admirably calculated for producing beneficial results in the future.

But as Jacob Law is about to arrive, and as his business is of rather an important nature, we must hasten to introduce the heads of the establishment to the acquaintance of the reader. And here we would beg that reader's candid consideration of one or two facts closely connected with this subject. First then, the faults, or rather the disagreeables of this worthy couple could not with justice be attributed exclusively to the religious society to which they belonged. That such persons could enjoy so large an amount of esteem and influence was certainly to some extent attributable to the peculiarities of that Society, but the persons themselves, or rather their type, might at that time have been found under many a roof beneath which modern refinement has re-

cently crept in, so far changing the whole external character, both of people and place, and so rapidly going on to change both, that any description, however true to the past, would scarcely obtain credit even now, and still less so perhaps in the course of a few years.

Jacob Law had so timed his visit as to arrive about the close of the day, indeed so as to escape the bustle and pre-occupation of business hours entirely. His journey was made on horseback, and after putting up at a well-accustomed inn, where he was always a welcome visitor, he managed to see some other parties with whom he had business to transact, before joining his friends at their supper-table. After that meal had been discussed he hoped to have a quiet hour of confidential intercourse, such as could scarcely be expected at any earlier hour. With the Rutherfords all other meals, however simple the fare, were lengthy and tedious occasions, for half the number of hands employed could only be spared from the shop and warehouse at once; so that Johanna had to preside over a double ceremony, if such it might be called, each time: the supper alone was taken singly, in consequence of many of the young men residing in the place, and so

repairing to their own homes to sup as well as sleep.

One long low room immediately over the shop sufficed for all these purposes. Its whole length was nearly occupied by a table, whose dimensions were never curtailed, so that drawing to the fire, or at all events making that pleasant half circle in front of it, which poets are so fond of praising, was a thing entirely out of the question. If the young men had ever found a moment's leisure, they would have been exceedingly puzzled what to do with it. Most certainly it was a thing for which no direct provision was made. The young men disappeared immediately after every meal: that was all domestically that was known about them; and so long as they all came in and took their places at the appointed time, or rendered some reason for their non-appearance, everything was supposed to be perfectly right. This was all, except that on First days a little fire was put into a narrow grate in a back room, without a carpet. There, on wood bottomed chairs, a few stools, and one form, they were expected to sit and read Friends' books, whenever they had no invitation out, or when the weather was such as not to admit of long rambling walks in the country. It was seldom, at

that time, that a more interesting style of literature was thought necessary for young men of business; and if it had been so thought by some members of the Society, the heads of this household would have been amongst the last to admit the idea.

That any close and intimate social bond could exist betwixt this family and that at the Grange, could only be accounted for upon the principle of union pervading the whole of the religious body to which both belonged, a principle so powerful in itself, as to overcome all personal considerations—all tastes—and even all repulsions. No greater proof of this could perhaps have been afforded, than by the spectacle of Jacob Law entering the long low room with one of his most cordial smiles upon his beaming countenance. It is true the host, and even the hostess, smiled too; but after so different a fashion, that to a looker-on it would scarcely have passed for the same act.

George Rutherford, however, *could* smile, and laugh too—a deep hoarse laugh, which singularly failed in awakening any similar response in others. Indeed, there were occasions of culpability detected, or of discipline enforced, when this laugh

broke forth with such force, and altogether in such a manner, that the sufferer would greatly have preferred being assailed with the most terrific denunciations of wrath or vengeance. It was a little—we will not say more than a *very little*, like the laugh of the slave driver when skilfully applying the whip. Altogether too, the stout cumbrous frame of the man looked so heavy and powerful, there was so large an amount of brute force in the contour and expression of his massive countenance, that whether he approved or disapproved, commended or rebuked, could never be a matter of indifference to those who were subject to his unswerving will, and his undisputed power.

We have taken, perhaps unadvisedly, the worst aspect of the man to consider first. Some persons—indeed many—and Jacob Law amongst the number, never found out that George Rutherford was anything but kind. He was stout, and rosy, with smooth broad forehead, and large thick lips—altogether what a casual observer would call a comfortable-looking man—somewhat burly, and he had a kind of hearty way with him which won upon his visitors, and often made them think him much the kindlier of the two presiding spirits in that household. The young men, however, all

preferred the wife, if they might be said to have any preference at all. Johanna Rutherford loved discipline for the sake of justice, not for the sake of any triumph it might give her over those who were unable to resist. If she did not flinch from inflicting discipline when necessary, she was still far enough from looking amused or pleased with its infliction. A solemn, stolid woman—people might have wondered whether she had ever experienced the sensation of affection in her whole life, had they never seen her helping out the viands at her table to all the apprentices, and assistants, and observed with what nicety and care she reserved the best slice for one youth at the board, who was understood to be sharing the common lot. This youth was Paul Rutherford, the only son of this worthy couple, with whom we shall have a good deal more to do, before our story is concluded.

Personally, it would scarcely be correct to speak of the type of such a woman as Johanna Rutherford, so few could be found bearing any generic resemblance to her. The wonder was, that any human being could look in a glass, and go away contented, with such an amount of disfigurement as her costume afforded. Nature had

not been kind to her in the bestowment of symmetrical proportions upon her figure. But it might have been easily improved by a little care. The head, for instance, was large and square—the features broad and full, with wide open pale eyes, nearly round in form. Had the same head been comfortably shrouded under some kind of coiffure, there was really nothing in the countenance to render it at all remarkably disagreeable. But instead of this, the hair, naturally thin and lanky, was cut short, both before and behind, and the cap, of the smallest possible proportions, was fitted so closely to the face as to afford no appearance of shelter or protection, because it was scarcely possible in a front view to discover any cap at all, except where a kind of mob extended under the chin.

In fact, the whole figure of the woman was quite as unkindly treated as the head; for instead of thick folds of drapery which might have served to conceal its disproportions, it was allowed the very scantiest length and width of garments which could be comprehended within the limits of decorum. Indeed, it is more than probable, that with Johanna Rutherford the idea of decorum pointed directly to the dismissal of whatever could

be done without. Thus, the bones of her large wrists and ankle joints were left exceedingly prominent, Johanna herself being a spare, lean woman, about the middle height, with high-pointed shoulders, a little less in their circumference than the broad waist below. Over these shoulders was spread the only superfluity in the whole costume, consisting of a small triangular silk handkerchief, of pale drab or brown, carefully hemmed all round, so as to prevent anything of so loose a nature as fringe escaping from the edge.

With this face, figure, and costume, Johanna Rutherford presented herself at every post of duty entirely unabashed, and in fact entirely unconscious of being less clothed than was desirable. Any idea of agreeableness to the eye would have been as foreign to her calculations as that of beauty to her soul. Had it been possible for such ideas to be presented to her, they would, in all probability, have been summarily dismissed as improper, if not absolutely wrong. So Johanna went along her hard dry way, shod always in the strongest leather, and never dreaming that from her, as well as from others, something might be asked, even as a duty, in the way of scattering flowers as

she went. But as she walked more faithfully than many, and with a tolerably humble spirit, the absence of the flowers could the more readily be excused.

Johanna and her husband were very different characters, but they agreed perhaps all the better that they were so. Humility being one of those qualities with which George was by no means largely gifted, he would have done badly with a wife whose rule of conduct could not be made on all occasions submissive to his authoritative will. To Johanna, this entire subserviency appeared to give no trouble, and to cost no sacrifice. At least, it had so appeared up to about the date of the present time; but as Paul, their only son, grew up to manhood, a close observer might sometimes have detected even in the broad, bare, and generally unmoved countenance of the mother, certain lurking indications of pain when a harsh judgment was pronounced upon the boy; or when a point of discipline was enforced, which, however good for others, she had reasons of her own for fearing might not be good for him. On such occasions, however, her lips were never opened, her voice never heard. The pain seemed to pass like a spasm, and all became solid, stony, motionless, as before.

Perhaps it was owing to this one secret—but perfectly-understood difference betwixt the father and the mother—that on the night of Jacob Law's arrival, George Rutherford, as soon as the supper was over, and the young men and servants had been in to listen to the evening reading, proposed that his guest and himself should be left alone. First, however, there was an enquiry for Paul, who had not been in with the rest; and before the father could settle to anything else Paul had to come in and render an account of his absence.

We have, then, to imagine Paul Rutherford a pleasant looking though scarcely handsome young man, walking straight up to shake hands with the guest, and then, without a symptom of embarrassment, turning towards his father, and saying in a fine smooth mellow voice,—“I have been sitting awhile with Jeremiah this evening, I heard he was not quite so well.” And then the youth, with the utmost coolness and self possession, went and described the state of Jeremiah's leg which had recently been injured by an accident in their warehouse. Only one thing was remarkable in all this, that the youth never once looked his father directly in the face, but stood a little behind him, looking rather over his shoulder. He was not in fact

much in the habit of looking people in the face, for though he had his mother's large eyes, they were accustomed in his case to make their observations upon life and manners, people and things, chiefly by side views, directed furtively from under the thick eyelids, which gave rather a sleepy expression to his countenance when at rest.

George Rutherford listened while his son was speaking, but responded only by a few hoarse deep sounds. He looked rather ominously, like one who is putting things together. At last he said, "Has Jeremiah's son come back from Hamburgh?"

Paul was busy at that moment lighting a candle for his mother.

"What, please?" said he by way of enquiry, when he turned around again to his father.

The question was repeated in no very pleasant tone.

"Yes," said Paul. "He came back last Seventh day."

"Then mind this," said the father drawing in his lips—"Thou goest no more to Jeremiah's, so long as that youth remains at home."

"Oh, very well," said Paul. "Farewell, Jacob." And he held out his hand to the guest by way of parting salutation for the night. "Farewell, father,"

he added, but his hand was not then held out, and with this he left the room, smiling and looking quite pleased, comfortable, and acquiescent.

Jacob Law thought the youth behaved very well on this occasion. He half wished his own son would always behave as well. And yet from some cause which he would have found it difficult to explain, he never quite liked Pål Rutherford. Perhaps he never quite believed in him, and this secret feeling constituted almost the only difficulty which stood in the way of that project which he had come for the express purpose of laying before his friend.

Long and earnestly did the two fathers talk together that night. George Rutherford was a loud communicative man, and Jacob Law was naturally frank, and candid, in the extreme; but they drew their communications from stores so essentially different—they poured forth their individual stream of thought from sources so far asunder, that but for the bond of union already spoken of, they would scarcely have been able to converse freely together for a single half hour.

As it was, however, the consultation not only lasted long, but terminated in the most cordial agreement, that Reuben Law should become a

member of the Rutherford establishment, for though he was destined finally to become a partner with his father in a very different kind of business, it was considered desirable for him to apply diligently to the department of accounts under a superintendence more strict than his father found it easy to enforce, and surrounded by circumstances which it was supposed would effectually wean him from the folly to which he had so thoughtlessly committed himself. This arrangement being satisfactorily made, Jacob Law felt himself at liberty depart at an early hour on the following morning.

CHAPTER VI.

While the important arrangements just described were occupying the minds of those who were most deeply interested in their results, another family compact was entered into, which seemed likely in some measure to fill the blank occasioned by the departure of Reuben Law from his own home. It is true it would have been difficult for any one else to fill his place in the hearts of those who were left behind; for with all his faults, and with all his weaknesses, there was something either in the youth himself, or in the fact of his being the only brother and the only son, which made him so general a favourite, that even the servants partook of the domestic sorrow when it was announced that Reuben must actually become an inmate with another family, and find a home beneath another roof.

In the midst of this general mourning, the youth himself either was, or pretended to be, but little

moved. He had thus far, in his experience, evinced an extremely light and easy manner of carrying off trouble of every kind, except one, and with that one he permitted few persons to interfere; so that, whatever it cost him in reality, he could talk and laugh in his usual style; and it was perhaps from this cause that his father supposed it more easy, than it really was, for him to forget.

Perhaps there could not have been any evidence of sorrow more touching to the servants on the morning of his departure, than the playful kindness with which he addressed them all, even jesting a little more than usual, as if it were the drollest thing possible to be sent away from his own happy and united family, to live with people, whose very shadows on the wall, he told his sister Lydia in his first letter, were hateful to him. He was not going to shed a tear—not he—in the midst of trunks, umbrellas, and carpet bags. So he went bravely from one member of the family to another, dispensing his farewell kisses, and pretending to mistake the old cook for his sister Susie, as he called her; until hysterical laughter burst forth, and he turned lightly away from them all, and would have skipped along the garden walk to the gate at which the carriage waited, but that

his movements were retarded by the clinging arms of sister Liddy, who held him closely to the last.

There was a stranger standing at Jacob Law's front door that day. He would gladly have helped with the packages, or have done anything useful and kind ; but he felt that he had no right to share in the parting salutations, since he had no part either in the sorrow or the love ; and therefore he stood aloof, not venturing even to offer the commonest service. Indeed, he was necessarily almost entirely overlooked ; and, consequently, as others retired wiping their eyes, he only stepped forward to watch the brother and sister walking so lovingly together along the garden, where they had so often walked before. It is just possible he might be thinking, as he stood in the doorway, how nice it must be to have a sister, or somebody leaning her head upon his shoulder, and clinging to him with a love like that. But then the face must be as pretty—the whole figure as attractive ; these were necessities of the case not very easily provided for.

The eyes which thus looked after the brother and sister—the heart which thus, by the power of sympathy, entered so deeply into their feelings—were just of the kind to be implicated by right in

such a scene, and such an occasion. Eyes! how shall they be described? Such eyes look at us from the pages of every story, and yet we never see them through the medium of description. We have all seen them for ourselves at one time or another of our lives. The present question is, whether Lydia saw them as she returned weeping into the house, after the carriage which had conveyed her brother away had turned the last corner of the road, and disappeared amongst the trees. For any evidence that Lydia betrayed of having seen these eyes, they might as well have been two handles in the door. She herself was too much occupied with her own eyes; and yet Lydia was one of those, sometimes supposed fabulous beings, who could weep large tears, and that in great abundance, without any disfigurement whatever either of her eyes, or of any other feature. We have most of us seen sorrow very deep and very true, which yet was anything but becoming to the mourners. But Lydia's, strange to say, was the very opposite of this. Even as a child, her clear large eyes would often fill brimful of tears without losing a particle of their beauty; while her rosy lips would pout, and even sob, without the least tendency to distortion. It was so now, only in a

still higher degree, as every charm was heightened in proportion; and so lovely altogether was that bending sorrowing form, that the youth who stood upon the steps at the door had well nigh, with an involuntary movement, extended his arm towards her in the way of support. He checked himself, however, and only said—

“I believe the new coach will be established on the tenth of second month, and then the communication with Layton will be much more frequent.”

Lydia made no remark; but passing by with the utmost apparent indifference, entered the house, and went up stairs to her mother's room, where Susannah was engaged in attempting to assuage a grief apparently much greater than her own.

The stranger with the deep, dark, handsome eyes, was no other than the son of that friend who once enjoyed the fairest prospect of being closely and happily allied to the family at the Grange. Rachel's lover, as already said, had married, notwithstanding his apparently irreparable loss; and, though in many respects he was a much altered man, he had never withdrawn himself from friendly intercourse with Jacob Law and his sister. Now that his own children were growing up, he seemed

even more desirous on their account, than on his own, that this intimacy should be strictly maintained; and it was at his especial, and often repeated request, that his son Robert was now placed under the care of Jacob Law, not only to learn his business, but to become a member of his household. For it was not at that time with Friends, as with others, that a youth could be satisfactorily accommodated in an ordinary lodging. He must be associated in his domestic relations with those whose habits were strictly in accordance with Friends' principles, and who would thus be likely to preserve him from dangerous contact with the world.

We have, perhaps, gone too far in speaking of repeated *requests* on the part of Robert Moreton's father. The habits of the Society of Friends scarcely admit of such a thing as persuasion. Even to be earnest and importunate in any request would be felt obtrusive, if not absolutely wrong. That people should be left to their own liberty is the general feeling, and not pressed to do anything which does not appear to them desirable as well as right. This must be felt, and acknowledged on both sides, in order to any compact being satisfactorily entered into. If not felt, and

that clearly and fully, in other words, if both parties are not entirely satisfied in their own minds—even beyond this, if, after weighing the subject carefully, and waiting patiently and submissively, to have the right way made manifest—if, after this, both parties do not see plainly that the thing may be, and ought to be, why press the matter? It is not supposed that anything at all important can safely be left to the decision of mere human judgment—still less to that of creaturely inclination. All must be referred to the immediate direction of an infallible guide; and consequently, any kind of persuasion urged on the plea of expediency, social esteem, or even domestic affection, would sound but as mockery, or worse, to those who openly admit of no other test of conduct, no other rule of life, than that simple right which is supposed to be made sufficiently clear to every one waiting for such instruction from the teachings of the guide within.

According to this rule, Jacob Law, in connection with the father of Robert Moreton, had thought, and felt; and their transactions with regard to the youth had been carried on accordingly. If human reason weighed at all with one, or creaturely inclination with the other,

it was unconsciously so to both; and when the compact was concluded, there remained a very comforting conviction on the minds of the two parents, that the right thing had been done. Secretly, however, though we pretend not that this had any weight in the matter, Jacob Law did sadly want an active assistant to supply the place of his own son, and the father of the stranger youth as secretly cherished a very natural desire to see his son, not only placed in an advantageous and guarded situation, but so placed as to be surrounded by associations, once more agreeable to himself, than any other which the world had been able to afford. What, if he had been required to pay dearly for his short-lived happiness! It might not be so with his son. The youth was tender, and impressible—of a more teachable spirit than the father at his age. Perhaps he would not require the same discipline. He was not so self-seeking, the father thought, and hence might never be in need of so severe a check. In short, he was a very precious youth, in the eyes of the parent, although it is possible he never expressed as much in words. Of all his children, Robert was, without doubt, the most refined, as well as the most amiable. He only

wanted a little manliness, and strength of character; and these were valuable qualities, which it was reasonable to hope might be attained by association with a character like that of Jacob Law.

It is not always, however, that persons of Jacob Law's quick, impulsive nature, see most clearly into the motives and feelings of others. In the present instance, this good-hearted man considered it nicely managed, that the stranger youth should enter his family just at the time of his son's departure. He imagined that the blank would thus be agreeably filled by one who certainly possessed a far larger amount of personal recommendations than Reuben. But, somehow or other, so perverse is human nature, the female part of the family did not accept this "nice arrangement" quite as it was intended. They would much have preferred weeping their grief away, at least for a few days, unobserved. To them it gave more pain than pleasure, to see any one, however handsome, filling the place of their absent one. So much so, that Susannah bestowed some pains upon so adjusting the chairs around the table, the first time the family sat down to dinner, as that no one should absolutely sit in Reuben's place. This was the more easily

managed, because the mother, taking advantage of her accustomed delicacy of health, preferred remaining in her own chamber, so that Susannah took the head of the table, Lydia and the new comer sitting opposite each other.

It was a somewhat dreary kind of meal, that first dinner after the brother was gone. Jacob Law did his best to get up a little cheerful conversation. He even attempted a jest or two, which, however, took little effect, for the youth was shy, and the sisters could neither converse nor smile. The younger was appealed to in vain, and the older so seldom did either, that little on such an occasion could be expected from her.

With Jacob Law it was almost a necessity as well as a pleasure, to be cheerful, hearty, and hospitable at his own table. He was a brewer by trade, and without in any respect transgressing the bounds of decorum, he could partake, and press others to partake, gratefully and cordially, of what he considered as good things given to be lawfully enjoyed. Whatever clouds might gather on his brow before dinner, were sure to be dispelled before rising from the table. And yet it would be doing him great injustice to insinuate that what are called the plea-

tures of the table, simply as matters of eating and drinking, were of much importance to him. It was the social meeting, the cordial response of household voices, the pleasant looks exchanged, the opportunity of hearing and telling domestic, and neighbourly news — all these, and many other agreeable associations, gathered, as it were, into a knot around the table, rendered the meal times at the Grange always pleasant seasons of refreshment to the master of the house. And even now, believing, as he did, that the best it was possible to do for his son had been done, he saw no reason for sitting down under a shadow like that of some irreparable loss; more especially as the removal was only to a distance of about twenty miles.

Happily for Jacob Law he had not yet learned to measure distance by anything but miles, nor separation by anything but space. Could he have looked in upon another table, so widely different from his own that it might have been separated by half the globe, he would have seen at that moment a heart sick youth swallowing down unsavoury mouthfuls of homely food so fast, that nothing but a resolute determination to swallow down also all tears, all disappointments, all vexations, could

have enabled any tenderly nurtured individual to dine as Reuben Law was dining that day, at the Rutherford table. It was the last time perhaps that he ever made that desperate attempt. There was one seated near him who very soon instructed him in the means of making his present condition personally less intolerable. And Reuben was a lover of personal comfort, he had been brought up to think much of it, not from the want, but the excess with which all his own enjoyments had been provided, and secured to him, by those who were accustomed to think of him before themselves. Vexed, mortified, and wounded, by discovering to what kind of situation and society his father had consigned him, Reuben was prepared by circumstances more than at any other time of his life for rushing into any amusement, or adopting any resource calculated to lull this sense of inexpressible mortification, as well as to make the unattractive aspect of every day more endurable. As already said, there was one seated at the same table who could help him in all this. He did so at first perhaps from pity, for he saw at once what Reuben was enduring. From what motives, with what feelings, and with what results, he did so afterwards, the course of this story must disclose.

In the mean time, and on the very day of Reuben's departure, there was company for the evening at the Grange. Jacob Law had asked the visitors to come that afternoon to tea, believing it would not only be a pleasant opportunity for introducing his young friend, but that the addition to their family circle would be agreeable and beneficial. Good man! He believed many things widely different from the reality, and perhaps few more so in prospect than this. So much so, that Lydia cried afresh, when reminded of the fact that visitors were coming to tea, while Rebecca Law decided more strongly than ever that under present circumstances, it was safest, and most suitable for her, to keep her room.

The fact was, the principal visitor was a widowed sister of Jacob Law's, lately come to reside near the Grange, in the hope of placing herself, her daughter, and her affairs in general, more immediately under the care and oversight of her brother. This sister, although a member of the Society of Friends, was so after a very different sort from the family at the Grange. The widow Greenfell herself had very little in her appearance to which the strictest member could object; but in the society she received, the embellishments of

her house, and table, and especially in the appearance, and manners of her daughter, there were certain symptoms of laxity which Rebecca Law was accustomed to attribute to a disregard to the teachings or leadings of truth; and such being the case, she objected more strongly perhaps than she liked to say, to any intimate association betwixt the widow's family and her own.

Jacob, always hopeful, persuaded himself that such association might do his sister's family good. Dora was an amiable girl: at all events she was a pretty one, and where could she meet with a more judicious adviser, or a less exceptionable example, than their Susannah; while Liddy's very dress, would be a pattern for her, for who could reasonably desire to look better than that dear girl? At all events, Jacob felt it his duty to have his sister near him, seeing it was her own wish to be so; and he was not the man to be deterred from what was right in itself, by any vague forebodings as to what might happen in the future.

Lydia Law, though she cried heartily for a short time, was really so much pleased with the little she had seen of her cousin, and so anxious to have her for a closer and dearer friend, that while dressing for the evening, she managed to

become wonderfully cheerful, so that by the time the last turn had been given to a short tress of silken hair, she was able to go down into the parlour without any trace of tears upon her face.

That old, wide, wainscotted parlour was always a picture of comfort in itself; but now, with its bright burning fire, piled up with logs of wood almost enough to last the whole evening, it seemed positively to smile and glow with hospitable welcomes. The low wide window, shrouded under dark wreathes of ivy, was not yet shut out by the drawing of the curtains; for the hours of visiting in those times, and amongst plain people, were very early, and some members of the family thought it pleasant and cheerful to the guests, to see on their arrival the broad bright light from that old window, spread all around amongst the neighbouring shrubs, and upon the walk along which they had to pass to the door.

On this occasion, especially, the light was more than usually welcome, for a sharp frosty air had induced the party to walk, and darkness closed in upon them before they were aware. The widow, well wrapped in the warmest winter clothing, passed the window first. To the surprise of the little party within, she was leaning on the arm of

a tall young man, who looked back occasionally to the slight little figure tripping close behind them, and ever and anon half slipping amongst the snow, and then stopping, and laughing, and losing a shawl or two, and so having to be helped on again by some kind caretaker; for girls like Dora Greenfell seldom look for a caretaker without immediately finding one, and sometimes two or three.

There was a great bustle in the hall when the door opened, and the stormy wind blew in as the guests made good their entrance, Susannah was immediately employed, after her silent fashion, in helping off a large accumulation of cloaks, snow boots, and other precautionary articles; but Lydia, as if arrested in her movements by the unexpected appearance of the tall stranger, stood waiting for an introduction, and scarcely received even her cousin Dora, as she had felt that she should a few moments before. Jacob Law, however, entered by another door just at this juncture, and immediately recognising the young man as a nephew of his sister's late husband, and one of whom he had been led to form a very favourable opinion, held out his hand to him with great cordiality, saying at the same time—,“ I am much

pleased to see thee, William Greenfell. It was very nice of thee to come."

The young man explained how he was on a visit to his aunt and cousin, and thought he might venture to accompany them.

"Surely, surely;" said Jacob, "and now walk in, and warm thyself, while Susannah takes the females up stairs."

Robert Moreton was already in the parlour, wondering all the while whose that deep manly voice could be, and what business it had there; but he also was introduced, and then a discussion about markets commenced, with comments on the price of barley, hops, and a vast variety of articles, respecting all which, Robert Moreton cared extremely little at present—the question was, whether he ever would care.

The Widow Greenfell, both in face and person bore a strong resemblance to her brother Jacob. Her complexion and hair were of the same colour, and her face also was remarkable for the same appearance of having been recently well washed. In figure she was small, but exceedingly comely, and in her costume she managed with great nicety to keep just within the boundary line of approval, and yet, to advance in costliness, as well as in

shiny and beautiful material, a few degrees beyond anything that was ever worn at the Grange. In the furnishing and embellishment of her house, the widow went much farther than this, so that plain homely friends, when they visited her, sometimes felt themselves rather uncomfortable. But there was not much harm thought of it, so the thing was allowed to pass as the mere indulgence of a weak and foolish fancy; not by any means as a precursor of those extensive innovations then only beginning to creep in.

In the same proportion as one generation is apt to steal onward in advance of another, Dora Greenfell far excelled her mother in the indulgence of the same kind of fancy. In fact, it seemed impossible to calculate to what lengths Dora would go, for she had a decided taste for dress, and she knew it. With her it was but the exercise of a natural instinct to decide at once what colours would harmonise, or what form would be most symmetrical and becoming. A fashionable lady might have smiled at the narrow scope which even Dora allowed herself for the exercise of this taste, for all things are narrow or expansive by comparison. But a very little acquaintance with Dora's toilette would have dis-

closed the secret, that there was not the slightest tinge approaching a pink, blue, black, or red, in any of the pale drab, or rich brown silks and ribbons which adorned her perfect figure, that had not been the subject of calculation, comparison, and deliberate choice. All points of deviation from good taste were also so quickly marked by her clear discriminating eye, that Lydia was almost afraid to appear before her with any thing new in her dress, lest it should be condemned on the first inspection, as not being the right thing, or in other words—not fit to be worn.

The same quick and delicate instinct, operating through all Dora's life and character, rendered her a wonderfully tasteful disposer of furniture in a room, and of ornaments and garniture of every kind; so that a bouquet of flowers, however wild, or however common, became something very different in her fair fingers, from what they would have been in almost any other hand: and if Dora was herself a fairer flower than any she could find by wood or stream—in the conservatory, or the parterre, was it much to be wondered at—was it anything to be blamed, that she should bestow even greater pains upon this flower than upon any other? Indeed, there was something in Dora's

face and person too, peculiarly calculated for setting off dress to the best advantage, and thus presenting perpetual temptation to the exercise of taste. Fair, with a bright colour, and slight in figure, without being in the least degree angular, or even thin, there was scarcely any shade or tint of colour which she might not wear with good effect, nor any form or fashion which did not gracefully adjust itself to her shape. Besides all this, she had wonderfully pretty ways—looks which no one could help looking at—and light playful movements, which, we must do Dora the justice to say, were not a whit less playful and pretty when she and her mother were alone, than when she found herself, as she sometimes did, surrounded by admiring eyes. In short, she was a good deal like a little bird—bright—sparkling—smooth of feather, and light of wing; to those who loved her, a messenger of joy—to those who were indifferent to her, still a perfect little gem.

It was curious to see a tall athletic young man, like William Greenfell, bearing, with his grave but kind dignity, all the good-natured teasing of his pretty cousin. She had made a match up, she told him that day, before setting out, between him and Susannah; and, many times during the eve-

ning, she vacated her seat in order to bring the two into closer contact, taking care, however, all the while, to do only what one of the party could understand, without bringing a blush to the cheek of the unconscious Susannah. Lydia, alone, was let into the secret, and perhaps she laughed a little more than was consistent with good manners, seeing that she could not explain herself. Her father called her rather sharply to account, for he did not like his business conversation with William Greenfell to be interrupted, by what he called the popping about of those silly girls; while poor Robert Moreton, wholly unacquainted with the underplay which the girls were carrying on, and equally unacquainted with the business, began to feel himself very much a stranger, until Susannah, who, by a quiet kind of intuition, seemed to know what everybody was feeling, took a chair by his side, and entered at once into conversation with him about his home.

Susannah Law, though by no means generally attractive like her sister, and her cousin, possessed one rare and almost irresistible charm. She had a beautiful mouth, with a sweet, clear, correct utterance, so that her words not only fell on the ear like music, but were so shaped forth as to give

them, while few in number, a more than ordinary effect upon the hearer. Robert Moreton looked up while he listened, to see if his companion was really the cold impassive Susannah; but her eyes instantly fell, and he saw only the marble beauty of those exquisitely chiselled lips, the pure white teeth, and the little sisterly smile, which it was impossible to restrain, because she was acting the kind part of a sister; and goodness, in a guileless nature, will make itself be seen as well as felt.

In this manner the evening glided away. Like most evenings at the Grange it had little to mark it with any distinct or striking character; and yet such evenings, often repeated, left behind them a general impression of cordiality, contentment, and kindly feeling, not always the accompaniment of evenings of a more exciting nature.

CHAPTER VII.

SUPPOSING Robert Moreton very naturally to have fallen in with all the domestic arrangements at the Grange, so as no longer to feel himself a stranger there, but rather an adopted child and brother, we will pass over a few intervening months, and look in again upon the family during the time of a short visit paid by Reuben Law to his home, and the friends of his early youth. It had been one of his father's stipulations that he should come but seldom home. Jacob had his own private reasons for this; but he put it upon the old plea of being *desirable*. It was desirable, he said, for the youth to be thoroughly broken in to business, and to business habits. Now, however, a few days had been granted him for thorough relaxation; and at his own urgent request, Paul Rutherford had been permitted to be his companion. Paul had not been expressly invited, at least not invited for his own sake, but a kind of intimation was

conveyed by letter that his company would be acceptable, if his parents thought well to spare him for a short season. Considering the circumstances of the case, and the esteem existing between the two families, less than this could scarcely have been said. So Paul Rutherford, in no way reluctant, accompanied his friend, for friends they were, and that in no ordinary degree, if constant and almost inseparable companionship is any test of friendship.

As might have been anticipated, the return of Reuben Law was hailed with almost universal joy. Neighbours made excuses and called; and workmen, with their wives and children, walked to and fro on the Sunday afternoon as near the garden as they thought respectful, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the young man, and hearing from him, as they always did, some pleasant word of recognition and remembrance.

The two young men had arrived late on the evening before; but, notwithstanding the hour, and the early habits of his aunt, Reuben could not rest without looking in at the cottage. Here he would fain have prolonged his visit, but Aunt Isabel insisted upon his spending his first evening with his parents, and finally dismissed him with

the promise of an interview of any length on the following day.

Reuben appeared to have no regard whatever to the fact of his friend Paul being thrown at once entirely amongst those who were all but strangers to him. Nor, indeed, was there much cause for uneasiness on behalf of one, who usually made himself at home wherever he went, being as little troubled with bashfulness as any young man of his age and circumstances could well be.

The ordeal to which he was now subjected was, however, more than ordinarily severe, for all were anxious to see, and know for themselves, something more of the character of Reuben's companion, of whom, in his letters, he spoke so often, though without any definite description. The father, especially, looked anxiously at his visitor, and listened thoughtfully to everything he said, but apparently without arriving at any conclusion. Not so the mother. From the first she appeared more than commonly pleased with her son's friend. She had mentally received him on trust before they met, as the worthy descendant of consistent and exemplary Friends; and now, when in her own person she became the recipient of all those studiously kind attentions, which Paul Rutherford

knew so well how to pay, and *to whom*, she became impressed with the encouraging belief, that a more desirable friend and associate could scarcely have been found for her son.

“Reuben,” she said, when expressing these sentiments to her husband, “is naturally volatile: this young man appears more than usually solid.”

Jacob Law made but an indifferent response. He could find no fault whatever with the young man, whose manners were very much what he would have desired for his own son. He only wished he would look people a little more directly in the face.

Rebecca suggested that he was modest, and a stranger.

“Modest!” said Jacob, with peculiar emphasis; and here the conversation ended for the present.

Still, Jacob Law was not the man to persist in any groundless and injurious prejudice, and every day—almost every hour, some weight was taken even by him, out of the unfavourable side of the scales in which the young man was weighed, and placed to his advantage in the other.

In the mean time Reuben enjoyed his promised interview with his aunt, if enjoyment it might be called, where subjects of painful interest were discussed. Many topics of this kind were freely but

feelingly entered upon, and especially, Reuben wished for a satisfactory explanation respecting the absence of Jane Gordon, who had gone to reside with an aged relative in a distant part of the country.

Aunt Isabel believed she was comfortable there. Her letters contained no complaint. Her relative was rather a trying person, she had heard ; but Jane had gone to be with her from a sense of duty. And then she had freedom in attending Friends' meetings, and several other advantages, which she could not partake of at home.

"It is a shameful thing," Reuben exclaimed, "that she was ever obliged to go."

"My dear," repeated his aunt, "it was entirely her own doing—entirely her own choice. The invitation was to an older sister, but Jane freely offered herself, and the other sister being more fond of excitement and gaiety, willingly relinquished the place to Jane. I really think it was better—much better that she should go."

"In one respect it might," said Reuben. "But how am I to see her there?"

"See her?" said his aunt. "I understand from Jane, there is an agreement between you neither to meet, nor to correspond, until her way shall be more clear with regard to Friends."

“And is the way at all clearing, I should like to know?”

“Her letters are pretty satisfactory. I own I should like more evidence that she sees with us in some matters.”

“In what?”

“In respect to dress, and modes of speech particularly. I do not think she has yet begun to use the plain language.”

“Aunt Isabel!”

“Yes, dear.”

“Does thou really mean to say that a sensible straight forward girl like Jane Gordon—a good noble hearted creature as she is, cannot be considered worthy to be my wife, unless she speaks this foolish language, which makes us so ridiculous, and wears a costume to be pointed at in the streets? Oh, Aunt Isabel! why did you all conspire to send me away from her? You don't know what you have done, and are doing now!”

And Reuben folded his arms upon the table, and bent down his head so as entirely to bury his face; while his aunt, greatly shocked by his violence, felt too much shaken to be able to speak.

Presently, however, Reuben looked up, smiling as if nothing had disturbed him. “I am a great

simpleton," he said, "and worse, to come here troubling thee, dear Aunt. Don't mind what I say." And he actually laughed, but in a manner which disturbed his Aunt still more than before.

"Dear Reuben," she said, laying her thin white hand gently upon his arm, "I do wish thou wouldst be more serious—more calm."

"Oh! I'm serious enough," said Reuben, his countenance changing immediately to a kind of bitter smile. "It's a very serious thing, I can tell thee, living with George and Johanna Rutherford—no play that."

"I hope, dear, thou finds thy situation comfortable?"

"Oh, very comfortable—exceedingly comfortable! So much so, that I only wish my father would spend a week in my place—just one week. I would not condemn my worst enemy to more."

"But they are kind to thee, dear; are they not?"

"If they knew how to be kind to any thing, I dare say they would be kind to me, for the sake of my father and mother."

"And thy friend Paul?—I trust he is a comfort to thee."

"Why, yes, he helps me on a little, but I hardly

know whether I should call him a comfort, altogether."

"Thy mother appears to think him a seriously disposed young man."

"Bless my mother!"

"What! dear? —What was that thou said? I did not quite catch it."

By this time Reuben had risen from his chair. He felt as if he must either laugh or cry, and it seemed so foolish to do either, that he determined to put an end to the conversation altogether.

"I'll tell thee what, dear Aunt," he said, "thou and I are speaking in different languages. I cannot talk in this way any longer."

"And why not, dear child?"

"Oh! don't call me dear child, I am not a child now, and I don't deserve to be dear."

"What can'st thou mean, Reuben? Nay, do not leave me in this way—thy manner is so strange."

"Aunt, I wish *I could tell thee* what I mean—I wish I *could* tell thee all."

"Is any thing wrong, my dear?"

"I hope not—not very wrong, at least—only, if my father could be brought to let me marry Jane Gordon—"

“What, now?—now, without a livelihood, and while thou art quite a boy?”

“Jane would be sufficient in herself, she is so managing and clever, and my father has plenty of money. You don’t understand these things.”

“Perhaps we think we understand them better than thou dost.”

”Ah! you understand one side, that I don’t dispute. But the other!—well it is getting late. And now, dear Aunt, don’t think too much of any thing I may have said. Go to sleep, and enjoy thy pleasant dreams. I sometimes fancy when I think of thee, that perhaps good angels come and close the curtains of thy bed every night. Is it not so, dear Aunt?”

“I don’t know. I am often favoured to experience great peace in the still watches of the night. And art not thou?”

“Nay, don’t ask me. Farewell.” And then after repeating his farewell, and kissing his Aunt with much affection, Reuben hastened away from the house.

There was a considerable space of time *unaccounted* for between his departure from the cottage, and his appearance again at his father’s house; but as all the family knew that he had been visiting

his aunt no one thought of making inquiries; and when he retired immediately to his own room, it was taken for granted, that the nature of the interview had been such as to render him but little disposed for general conversation.

The next morning Reuben was all himself again, ready for any conversation, any society, or any amusement, if such could be found. The two visitors did not own it to each other, and still less to those who were so kindly solicitons for their comfort; yet, it is just possible, they might find their present position a little dull, especially as the long day began early, and there seemed to be nothing to expect before the dinner hour. Reuben proposed a walk, and Lydia thought it would be nice to go and see Aunt Greenfell, and Dora; only that Susannah was engaged. So at last it was decided that the two young men should go alone, and although they did take a peep at the pretty Dora in her pretty drawing room, they had evidently found amusement elsewhere, for the dinner was kept waiting for them nearly half an hour.

“I suppose,” said Jacob Law, taking out his watch with some impatience, “that the Layton time is not quite with ours.”

Paul Rutherford, however, was so direct and

clear in his account of where they had been, and by what causes they had been detained, that the master of the house could not reasonably complain; and he soon became too much engaged with the hospitalities and attentions of the table to notice the smiles which now and then played about Reuben's face.

If, amongst the Society of Friends, there would seem little, to a casual observer, to render their social gatherings attractive and amusing, it would be difficult to find with any other class of persons, such true enjoyment of that friendly and family intercourse in which the Friends so frequently indulge. Amongst the more enlightened too, their conversation at such times is more than usually full of meaning, point, and freshness; so that the conversation of other classes sometimes appears but a common-place and poor affair in comparison. Conversation is in reality their *amusement*, though they would be sorry to admit the fact. Nothing short of absolute wrong can indeed be much more repulsive to a genuine Friend than the idea of having recourse to amusement under any circumstances, either as a necessity of nature, or a choice. It has been thought by many to be one of their greatest mistakes, that they will

not sufficiently believe in the health-imparting influence of innocent amusement, particularly as a means of keeping families together, and as affording opportunities for the animal spirits of youth to find exercise without extraordinary excitement, or dangerous excess. It is possible that they judge of both excitement and excess, even such as may sometimes be found in very scrupulous society, according to a standard peculiarly their own, and are thus led to condemn what is really innocent in itself, and not only safe, but wholesome to those who judge of amusement by a wider, though it may not be, a less correct and judicious rule.

To all families, and all persons, it must, however, be considered as a matter of right to choose their own boundary line in cases of this kind. Even amongst the Society of Friends some adopt a line much narrower than others. To those who had escaped from the iron thralldom of the Rutherfords, for instance, it was felt to be a delicious state of liberty to speak frankly, to laugh heartily, and to ramble at large with the young party at the Grange; and most thoroughly did the two visitors appear to enjoy this liberty on the present occasion. If, when there was nothing de-

finite to be done, they found the time pass slowly, it was not the fault of the people, or the place. To some extent it might be the result of sudden liberation from strict discipline, and incessant work. But it is more than probable there were causes already operating upon both, and most assuredly upon one, of a nature peculiarly calculated to produce a distaste for simple and quiet pleasures.

These causes, however, were not so deeply operative at present, but that they readily gave way before the more genial influence of such a house as that to which Reuben had been accustomed. There were many things combining in the present circumstances to render it a season of peculiar enjoyment.

It was the time of the bursting of spring buds, the music of happy birds, the blossoming of the wild furze, and the play of young lambs upon the banks already clothed in soft velvet-green. Who does not know the very spring of the earth beneath the foot at this cheering and hopeful season of the year?—the temptation to wander on, and on, by the side of the rapid brook, while the grass is not yet too long; or in amongst the copse, where the primroses spangle the earth with

stars, and the gentle blue bells hang their graceful heads. The very cawing of the rooks above has a kind of music in it at this time. It is peculiarly the season for the young, the happy, the innocent.

Were they all innocent?—all who composed that little party? They looked innocent, as they issued from the door after the old fashioned early tea at the Grange, to take a long rambling walk they knew not whither, nor did any of them very much care. It was enough for them to be at liberty, and together, out in the clear bright air, with the sun not set, and the soft greenery all around them, just promising, though scarcely daring, to push forth into beauty.

They were, however, an awkwardly associated little party—two women, and three men. What could be worse? Paul Rutherford, with kind and respectful attention, offered his arm to Susannah, and away they two walked without even taking the precaution to consult the others as to where they should all go together. Whether it was this, or the fact of Lydia being left with two gentlemen, and not knowing which to choose for her companion—whatever might be the cause, there was certainly a good deal of laughing

amongst the three, and a good deal of uncertainty in their movements, especially when Reuben chose to light a cigar ; so that the little party became separated without being aware of the fact, and then, when discovered, there was still greater merriment occasioned by the idea of Susannah having actually wandered away with a gentleman, and that into a kind of wood, for they had all half unconsciously directed their steps towards a copse which skirted the margin of a shallow winding stream. There it was that the loveliest primroses always grew. There the young people from the Grange had been accustomed from their childhood to play, and towards this spot their steps seemed always naturally to turn, whenever they went out to ramble without any definite object to direct them elsewhere.

Reuben Law, his sister declared, was perfectly intolerable as a companion, so he wandered on at a little distance, preferring his cigar to the "best of all good company." Lydia thought him very happy: perhaps he was so. At all events, he laughed loudly, and very often, so as to startle the wood pigeons from their roost, and to frighten the young rabbits into their holes. It looked like happiness, he was so merry. Except once,

when he lingered a little way behind, and on their looking back was seen standing fixed like a statue close beside the little whimpling brook, that murmured to him still in the language of his innocent childhood. The little brook wandered on, singing ever the same song. It never told the secret of a heavy tear having been dropt into its bosom, while darkened for a moment by that familiar shadow on its surface.

When the little party were around the supper-table that night, even Susannah looked so much brighter than usual, that a few jesting words at her expense were ventured upon by Reuben. She blushed deeply each time; but Paul, who did not choose to hear, took that opportunity for addressing some grave and weighty remarks to the heads of the family. This he knew well how to do; so well that Lydia could not help observing it, and remarked to her sister when they were alone, that she thought she should like Paul Rutherford better if he was less *proper* to her father and mother.

“I do not quite understand thee,” said Susannah.

“I mean,” continued Lydia, “that he is not quite the same to them as to us. His whole manner—even his voice seems different.”

“He is, I think, rather remarkably guarded,” observed Susannah.

“I suppose I don’t like guarded people so well as I ought,” said Lydia. “There’s Reuben, now—what a delight that dear boy is, and how he rattles on!”

“Lydia,” said Susannah, looking suddenly up, —“Dost thou perceive anything different about Reuben?”

“Different? — how? — what? Susannah. I can’t tell what thou means. He seems to me very brisk and bright.”

“Yes, in one sense, he certainly does.”

“In what sense then is he otherwise?”

“I did not say he was otherwise.”

“Now, Susannah, pray don’t be mysterious. Do speak out. Is anything the matter with Reuben?”

“Nothing, that I know of, dear. But please don’t press me farther.”

“Ah, that’s the way with you all,” exclaimed Lydia, pettishly—“always suspecting and condemning poor Reuben. If you would suspect Paul Rutherford, now, there might be some sense in it.”

“Please don’t speak to me in that manner,” said Susannah. And she uttered these words so

meekly, and in so subdued and sad a voice, that Lydia threw her arms around her neck, and kissed her again and again, declaring she would not leave off until she smiled once more, and said that all was peace.

And soon it was all peace again. But Susannah spoke no more about Reuben with any pointed meaning; nor, when Lydia indulged in further insinuation that Paul Rutherford was not quite so good as he appeared to be, did Susannah take up his defence. She cast her eyes down, as usual, but then she also blushed.

Ah! how much of gold and gems would Susannah Law have given to purchase exemption from that liability to blush. It was her great beauty—her charm, some people thought. Was it not the seal of nature set upon her cheek to testify that she was human like others, and perhaps not stronger than the rest.

CHAPTER VIII.

After the pleasant visit of the young men, which has just been described, they were sometime before they met again at the Grange; and when they did so, it was under circumstances which considerably changed the aspect of the scene, at least to one of the parties concerned.

It is not the intention of the writer of this simple story to enter upon any detailed account of the principles of conduct which render the Society of Friends so strikingly distinguishable from others. Neither would it be desirable to enter here upon any methodical description of that wonderful discipline by which the members are held together as a distinct body; only so far as may be necessary to account for certain phases of social and domestic character, some explanation of which is required by common justice.

The question of greatest interest pending just now, the reader will understand to be, the ad-

mission of Jane Gordon into membership with this Society.

The admission of a new member into their body, under what they call "convincement," for they never use the word conversion, at all times a serious and deliberate matter, was necessarily attended with rather more than usual caution in the present instance. Jane had wisely adopted the plan of removing to a part of the country where the previous circumstances of her life had been little known; and where, separated entirely from all former associations, she would herself be more at liberty to arrive at safe and just conclusions respecting the state of her own mind and feelings, with regard to the important step which she was contemplating.

In due time, then, and as she believed with much caution, and earnestness, her application was made in the quarter which she supposed to be the right one. She had long been a regular attender of the Friends' meetings, and as such, had been the recipient of kindness and hospitality. One thing, however, still was wanting—perhaps more than one; for Jane had never felt herself called upon to adopt the external peculiarities of the Society, in those minor matters which she even

went so far as to consider wholly unworthy of serious consideration. And such was the tone of her character, such her perfect uprightness in act, as well as word, that for no consideration, however closely connected with her own happiness, would she yield even a tacit assent to what she did not heartily concur in as a matter of right or duty.

Thus, when closely questioned on these points, Jane openly and clearly explained her want of agreement with the views of the Society, regarding the adoption of any particular mode of dress, or language ; and she even went so far as to state an opinion tending rather towards the undesirableness of these peculiarities altogether.

The friends who sat in consideration upon her case were very naturally alarmed. They knew not, perhaps, what to make of one so frank and free of speech, and yet at the same time so evidently in earnest. By way of relief under their difficulty, the case was suspended from time to time ; until Jane herself began to feel that if such were the sole grounds of objection, there was something really lowering to her sense of the dignity of true religion in thus making things of vital importance subservient, as it seemed to her, to the merest trifles. Perhaps neither of the parties clearly un-

derstood each other ; for it is not to be supposed that any of the more intelligent members of the Society would act upon so narrow a view, as that of seeing those little peculiarities really essential. Only the Friends have almost universally fallen into the habit of treating them as if they were ; and thus in all their appointments to offices of usefulness, and trust, are scrupulously careful that the duty shall not be placed in the hands of those who do not speak a particular language, and wear a particular dress. To speak this language, and to wear this dress, is called by them “consistency,” a word of incalculable weight and value in their estimate of things. One of their great tests of fitness for admission into membership would be, and very justly so, a willingness to take up the cross. But then their idea of the cross consists most frequently in this speaking a particular language, and wearing a particular dress ; so that where a disinclination to do this is manifest, considerable doubts, not unnaturally, arise as to whether that person is really in a state of fit preparation for membership.

It is just possible that Jane Gordon, being naturally prompt in her decisions, and having perhaps, not the most liberal or enlightened

persons to deal with, might be a little wanting in patience, and submission. At all events, the matter closed with her, by an entire renunciation of her claims to membership, if admission was not to be obtained on any other terms. She knew the consequences, only too well; and such was the revulsion of feeling she experienced on this occasion, that she began, perhaps for the first time, to suspect her own motives, and to fear that she had been betrayed by affection into believing that to be right in itself which was only set apart by inclination as most to be desired.

How often in the course of our temporal affairs, a concurrence of circumstances appears to set in exactly in the most unfavourable manner for our progress in what is essentially right, and good. Even to those who have faith to look beyond the mere outward aspect of things, it is difficult sometimes it raise the thoughts sufficiently up to that overruling for good, which is the only reconciler of such seeming contradictions. What, then, must it be to those who look only with human eyes, and feel only with human feelings, untaught—untouched, by any higher principle than stirs within an impulsive, and ungoverned nature.

Reuben Law was perfectly sensible, that the

habits of life he had recently formed, were not such as could lead to ultimate happiness, or indeed to good of any kind. But he had one hope of rescue from temptation—one anchor that he held by so tenaciously, that he seemed to care little what might threaten from any other quarter, so long as this anchor did not fail. He had no idea that it ever would, or could, fail him. His present folly, according to his way of regarding it, was but a kind of interlude between the acts of the great drama of his life. He was only waiting for the real scene to commence. The time seemed long; his impatience was in no way abated by delay. There was nothing in his present circumstances to beguile the weariness of the intervening period, but on the contrary, all was repulsive, dark, and miserable. It was absurd, he thought, to suppose that he might not amuse himself a little, while he waited. Again and again he told himself, that the reality of life was all to commence with him, and that this which filled up the intermediate time, was only like the toy which a child can easily throw aside, when called away to school. It probably never once entered his mind, to suspect that the amusement was growing to be the business of his life—the pastime, the reality.

Indeed, that one hope, which, when realized, was to do everything for him, so bounded all his future, and constituted the basis of all his calculations, that he attached extremely little importance to the present under any form. He only wished it was over, and thus employed himself pretty closely in getting rid of all idea that there was such a thing as a present time at all.

Under these circumstances, and with all these feelings strong upon him, Reuben received one day, a long letter from Jane Gordon. Surprised, and delighted, he unfolded the closely written pages, conscious of nothing but the fullness and richness of the feast that was before him. He had no fear—not he! Jane was his rock of safety; the sweet words of her letter the gushing waters bountifully provided for his refreshment in the desert pilgrimage he had to tread.

The letter began kindly—very kindly—but—There seemed ever a *but* as he read; and after awhile symptoms of leave taking began to manifest themselves. He could not understand it: the writing danced before his eyes; and yet Jane wrote always a clear free hand, most legible and unmistakeably true. What could have happened?

In the course of half an hour, Reuben Law

might have been seen with an open letter laid at his feet, standing, rigid as a statue, in a little bed room, with an attic window from whence he might have looked out over the tops of grey chimneys, far away into a rich fair landscape, intersperced with trees, and meadows, which had no beauty for him. It was an odious little room, it was a horrid country, and a hateful world, in which the young man found himself just then. Before night came he had applied to a temporary medicine for his intolerable anguish of mind. But the awaking on the morning of the morrow was even worse than the day before had been. He could not endure it, he told Paul Rutherford. He must set off immediately on a journey of some distance. He had already borrowed money in this quarter to a considerable extent, he must now borrow more. Paul could not eventually be a loser, he knew that very well. So, without any apology to the master of the establishment, in all probability without remembering that it had a master, away went Reuben in the most expeditious and expensive manner, leaving Paul to invent for his absence whatever excuses might occur to him.

The interview which Reuben now sought with Jane Gordon, was only what she had anticipated,

though she had done everything in her power to prevent its occurrence. If, however, the visit was anticipated, the nature of it, and the spirit in which it had been undertaken, were such as distressed and alarmed her beyond measure.

She had learned, in her first intimate acquaintance with Reuben, that he was a youth of strong impulses, but she had little idea how much the life he had recently been leading was calculated to excite and strengthen all that was passionate, and most dangerous in his nature ; while those happier influences, of which, in her society, he had shown himself susceptible, had been so entirely absent from the new discipline to which his father had thought right to consign him, that his whole nature appeared changed for the worse ; and, under the decision which he had come to hear confirmed, likely to become worse still.

There can scarcely be any conviction more harrowing to the feelings of a right-minded woman, than that the man she refuses will, inevitably, become worse for the severing of that bond which she has the power to keep unbroken if she will. Many apprehend these consequences without just cause ; for it is, perhaps, one of the most frequent of the many pleas brought forward

by men to work upon the feelings of women. Many believe too fondly, and without much reason on their side, that they, and they alone, can effect all the good most needed in their lover's character. Pure vanity inspires this hope with some, and the flattery of the lover tends powerfully to confirm it. But in the case of Jane Gordon it was simply the evidence of plain common sense which told her now, and had told her all along, that she was especially the friend which Reuben required; that her temper, disposition, and habits, were peculiarly calculated for producing beneficial effects upon his; and thus, while affection drew her nearer, and brought her into more intimate connexion with his real character and feelings, the hope of being useful to him, and through him to his family, invested this intercourse with a kind of sacredness which made her question with herself, very severely, whether it ought, under any circumstances, to be wholly given up.

In no human heart would it have been possible for considerations of this kind to operate with greater weight than in that of Jane Gordon. From every point of view, they had been faithfully regarded, examined, weighed again and again, both with and without the test of womanly

affection. But the result was still the same. In her own mind the strong conviction remained unshaken, that if she could not be admitted into religious communion with the Society to which Reuben Law belonged, she would never be the means of inducing him to leave it, nor should he leave it for her.

In vain did Reuben protest that to throw up his membership with the Society of Friends would be no sacrifice to him—that he was willing, and more than willing, to resign his connection with them at any moment—that, what some considered as religious privileges peculiar to this Society, were, to him, a kind of bondage, from which he longed to escape—that, if he had thought well of the Society of Friends before, he spurned and hated it now, for the narrow-mindedness of those who had had to do with this transaction—that he was, in reality, no Friend, and would soon prove to them that he was not. Indeed, there is every probability that he would have declared himself a Jew, or a Mahomedan, or anything else at that moment, had such profession been likely to serve the only purpose which he had in view; and, it is quite possible, that he could, with equal truth, have declared himself on the side of any belief,

or any error, at that time existing upon the face of the earth. The fact was, he knew nothing—cared for nothing—felt nothing—but that he was a wretch, and utterly miserable, and lost, if driven off from this his sole anchorage, and rock of safety.

“And yet it must be,” said Jane. “There is no alternative, and no hope of any change. I shall never apply again to be received, because I have no expectation of ever seeing these grounds of objection in a different light from that in which I see them now. It all hangs upon what is really so small and trivial a matter in itself.”

“Trivial, indeed!” said Reuben, now beginning to see the subject in a new light. “And, because it is so, surely it might be easily got over. In short, why should you not yourself conform? I would conform to anything for you.”

“Ah! if mere conformity were all, I do not think you would find me much behind yourself in that.”

“What is it then? You acknowledge the points of objection to be mere trifles in themselves.”

“Yes, in themselves. But if they constitute sufficient cause for my being admitted or not admitted into membership with a religious body,

they assume a different form, and are no longer trifles in this sense to me, but things of vast importance. It is, as such, that I cannot make a pretence of receiving them, because my heart and my conscience would give me the lie if I did."

Reuben looked earnestly at Jane as she was speaking. There seemed to him a kind of cold calculation in what she said. Never, under any circumstances, being himself particularly amenable to reason, nor accustomed to use any argument so potent as his own inclination, he could not understand how any one could speak in this way on a subject which he considered as belonging to the heart, not to the head. Like many men under his circumstances, he was alternately indignant and subdued—passionate and despairing—anything but reasonable, patient, and submissive. Time was passing rapidly. The whole universe—the past, and the future, as well as the present, seemed all to be gliding from beneath his feet. Child, as he still was, in all those elements of character which make us tearful, loving, and susceptible of kindness, he cast himself for the last time upon her pity—upon the compassion of her womanly heart.

Jane felt the appeal more like a dagger than an

embrace, for it penetrated to her inmost soul. She was herself lonely enough without him; desolate enough without something to live for, without some one to love her, and whom she might love. Ah! that something to live for, how much it is to a woman of noble and devoted nature, of active impulses for good! How poor in comparison, how utterly mean, empty, and despicable, is that life which has no object except self; and perhaps in relation to self, no purpose or necessity beyond providing food and raiment. No wonder that so many women with warm, yearning, generous hearts, shrink from the living death within this iron prison, in which self is the only occupant condemned to endless solitary confinement.

Jane Gordon maintained her deliberate purpose unchanged, much as it cost her to do so, and that it did cost her much, there was strong evidence in her quivering lip and trembling hand, in the deathly paleness of her cheek, and in the tones of her voice, which she strove in vain to command, but which melted away every moment with a tenderness inexpressibly touching to him, who had in idea so often heard that voice when far away, reproving him when he did wrong, com-

mending him when right, soothing, encouraging, always administering to his need, whatever it might be. No; love may forget the face, but the voice, never. And if, from a season of long silence, that familiar sound should lose anything in remembrance of its clearness or reality, let but the faintest tone of the same voice be heard again, and all comes back—all the various changes of that sweet instrument—its depth, its pathos, its persuasiveness, its power.

Could Jane Gordon have more entirely commanded her voice, this painful interview might have been sooner brought to a close. Closed it must be. There was no way made on either side, no good was likely to ensue from further parley. One of the party was unshaken in her determination to do that, which to her appeared to be simply and clearly right; the other remained unconvinced that it was right, and was consequently unreconciled to receive and submit to it as such.

So sadly did the two friends thus situated argue, and plead, and weep together. So sadly did they part, most sadly perhaps to her who knew it would be their last meeting upon earth. Men are more slow to believe what they do not wish. Accustomed from boyhood to the language

of power, they acquire a habit of persuading themselves that what they *will*, must necessarily be. Thus, perhaps, it was that Reuben Law departed at last, without actually believing that the voice, to which he had been listening, would never breathe its music on his ear again.

Yet, so it was. He passed out into the world alone; and without pilot, or compass, launched at once upon the troubled sea of life, as frail a bark as ever battled with its restless waves, or trusted to the smiling aspect of its treacherous calm.

CHAPTER IX.

If, when Robert Moreton tried to soothe the grief of the fair Lydia, he had nothing more sentimental to propose in the way of consolation than the establishment of a new coach, the fact itself, however unpoetical, proved eventually a source of much real gratification to the family at the Grange, in consequence of the increased intercourse thus afforded between them and their friends.

Indeed, it was no unusual thing during the course of the summer months, for Reuben Law to run down, as they called it, on the Seventh day afternoon, to spend the sabbath at his father's, taking with him almost always one companion, and sometimes more. When that crisis in his affairs arrived which has just been described, he remained for some time without any intercourse with his family. Subsequently however, acting upon better thoughts, he wrote frankly and freely to his father, telling him in a long and not very unreasonable letter, the sad history of his disappointment, and distress.

Of course Jacob Law was fully acquainted with those more public transactions in which Jane Gordon was put as it were upon her trial, as a candidate for membership ; but beyond this, he knew nothing, until Reuben himself explained the rest. Had his sole purpose in writing been to justify the object of his affection, and to raise her character in the esteem of his father, and his aunt, he could not have done so more effectually than by describing how she had resisted all his entreaties, and finally severed the bond between them, rather than lead him even one step out of the path of duty to his parents, and of what they believed to be safety for himself. But beyond this, the very frankness and confiding nature of his letter so won upon the father's heart, that Reuben was received with more than usual kindness on his first visit after this letter had been sent, though as he had begged that the facts it contained might never be mentioned to him again, they were scrupulously avoided as subjects of conversation by the whole family.

Jacob Law, however, and his sister Isabel, were all who knew the real state of the case. Rebecca the mother remained happily ignorant, and the sisters only knew so much as to increase their

sympathy and affection for one whom they regarded as being the subject of an interesting romance. So things went on, and Reuben tried to laugh as much, and to be as merry and as social as before, and sometimes he did laugh very much, so that his father had to call him to account. But this was always done kindly, for he was glad to perceive, as he thought he did, that the youth was not very deeply or lastingly affected by what had transpired.

Perhaps in no other society than that which is here described, could an affair of this nature have passed with so little outward evidence of anything having gone wrong—of any stroke having fallen—of any pleasant prospect having given place to darkness, and despair. In its external features life looked all the same. George Rutherford, for reasons of his own, and partly in consequence of his son being so clever at excuses, chose to take but little notice of the sudden disappearance of Reuben, especially as he came back again sooner than was anticipated, and so fell in with the accustomed routine of business, that there was little fault to be found; and as to enquiries, the case had been placed in such a point of view before him, that he looked upon it as the business

of the youth's parents to enquire, not his. It must be understood, however, that had Reuben been the son of parents less influential, or less respected, than his own, there would have been little delicacy exercised towards him in matters of this kind.

Indeed, Reuben was in all respects a favoured inmate of the family. From some cause which it would not be easy to explain, Reuben was a sort of favourite almost everywhere; and yet he had at the same time a tendency to be exceedingly troublesome, and often vexatious in little things. He was so capricious and impulsive, so set upon having his own way at the time when any strong inclination ruled his purposes; sometimes even so regardless of all arguments against attempting what was manifestly impossible; that his friends had need of all their affection to enable them to bear with him. But then on the other hand, he was so sensitive to kindness, so cheerful when pleased, and so cordial when his anger had spent itself, that those who had once loved him were little likely to be alienated, and those who had been offended by him were sure to forgive.

An inmate so determined to be on good terms with all, had probably never before shared in the

necessities—for we cannot call them luxuries, of the Rutherford household. Conversation, or rather talk, so cheerful had probably never before been heard at that homely board. Even Johannah, the presiding genius there, came in sometimes for a little kind attention, which she received with great astonishment, and with eyes so wide and eyebrows so strangely elevated, that Reuben told his sister he believed they would sometime go over the top of her head, and slip down behind. “Poor soul,” he used to say, “she accepts my civilities as if I addressed her in some conjurer’s gibberish; and she looks at me as if she expected to see me the next moment spinning on my head.”

“But is not Paul kind to his mother?” asked Susannah.

Reuben shrugged his shoulders.

“He is very kind to our dear mother,” his sister continued.

“Ah!” said Reuben, “that is a different thing altogether.” And he laughed as if his remark had a meaning in it. So whether that meaning really referred to her, or not, poor Susannah blushed so deeply, she was obliged to stoop very low over some work upon which her fingers were employed.

It was now the pleasant time of early autumn, of all times perhaps the most pleasant for rambling in the harvest fields at noon, or for moonlight walks at night. Pleasant also was the intercourse enjoyed by the young people at the Grange, varied as it often was, by an addition of one or more from the widow Greenfell's. So innocent and safe was all this intercourse supposed to be, that provided the young people were regular at mealtimes, and especially at times of family reading and silence, and providing their deportment was generally sober and seemly, no one thought of looking further into the engagements of the passing hour, nor of enquiring into the tone of thought and conversation by which their time was occupied. It was enough that no one was ever admitted to this intercourse who was not a "member of *Society*," as such membership is often called. It was enough that all were the children of esteemed and consistent friends—that they attended meetings regularly, said thee and thou, and dressed in the manner most approved by the Society at large. For the satisfaction of parental solicitude, no doubt, more than this was required; but for all purposes of social intercourse, and even liberty of action in a quiet and domestic way, this was enough.

And with all this outward uniformity, what was there beneath? It is often said and sung of youth, that it is the season of bright hopes and cheerful trust, and happy satisfaction ever with things as they are at the passing moment. But a little honest looking back upon our own youth, a little candid attention to the undisguised remarks and confessions of the youth that lives and acts around us every day, would reveal some facts a little different from this—that is, if the language of youth may be accepted as the transcript of its real feelings. Without attaching too much importance to these facts, there is some reason to suspect, from evidence of this nature, that youth is peculiarly the season for complaining; that the mutual confidences of youth are often deeply laden with individual grievance; and that when a youthful intimacy is most closely knit, it has too frequently for its element the sense of trial, or the suffering caused by oppression, and the sympathy demanded in alleviation of both.

Perhaps there are no young people who complain so constantly, and so bitterly of the restrictions to which they are subjected, as was customary with the Society of Friends, at the

time of which we write. They have indemnified themselves pretty well for all such grievances in later times; but as it was with many others then, so with the family at the Grange, they seldom met with young friends under similar circumstances, but their conversation was much occupied with subjects of this kind, which they discussed according to their individual tastes, feelings, and habits of thought. Lydia Law, for instance, was much disgusted with certain modes of dress. Dora Greenfell would not submit to be made a fright of for anybody. Reuben was indignant and sarcastic by turns. Paul was more quiet, but often more severe. Robert Moreton reasoned calmly, yet earnestly, against what he called the glaring inconsistency of Friends' consistency; while Susannah, alone of all the party, never opened her lips to complain, only she was false to her profession, so far that she deeply sympathised with some of those who did.

One thing which rather astonished some of the Law family, was that notwithstanding the licence used by Reuben in speaking of George and Johannah Rutherford, their son never defended them, but rather added pungency to such remarks, by throwing out some insinuation of graver import than the

light badinage of Reuben ever conveyed. Good manners prevented the sisters from taking part in this kind of entertainment, unless sometimes when Reuben mimicked his master, or told some absurd story of the simplicity and blank astonishment of the mistress of the house, when Lydia laughed outright. But Susannah always looked at Paul to see whether he was pained. To her watchful eye, it sometimes seemed that he was made to suffer by that wild mimicry; and she often pleaded with her brother in private, in the hope of inducing him to be more respectful, and more upon his guard; but he only laughed when she did so, or called his friend Paul an old hypocrite for pretending that he cared. Indeed, the way in which Reuben spoke of Paul was beginning to be quite a trouble to Susannah. What could it mean? Certainly nothing to the disadvantage of her brother's friend—that seemed impossible. It must then be to the disadvantage of her brother. Pity that he had not learned to profit more from such an example.

If, however, this querulous tone of conversation was the prevalent one amongst certain members of the social community at the Grange, it must not be supposed that all were equally in fault. There

were some, and especially one, who sometimes joined the party, whose very presence there was sufficient to impart a different character to their social meetings. William Greenfell, Dora's cousin, was one who preferred being a Friend as a matter of choice, even independently of principle. To him there was nothing ridiculous, still less contemptible, in being a Friend up to the crown of his hat, and down to the sole of his shoe. His coat, of the pure Friend's cut, was to him the most respectable garment in the world. Dora said he gloried in it, and would willingly burn as a martyr for his *thee* and *thou*. But it is more probable that he only gloried in the independence of daring to be singular in what he esteemed a good cause, and would, indeed, have suffered persecution, even unto death, rather than yield under the power of man one tittle of that liberty of conscience for which so many noble standard-bearers had fought a life-long warfare. He was not ashamed of his coat, not he. He would have stood with his hat upon his head before any potentate on earth; not in any respect for the sake of the coat, or the hat, as such, but because he bowed to no human authority in matters which had, as he believed, immediate relation to right and wrong.

It was curious to see, when William Greenfell came amongst them, how different some of the young people became; not Dora, certainly, for it was still more curious to see how, undeterred by his grave dignity, her light figure flitted about him; while her playful spirit, taking advantage of any accident or opportunity, would throw in its accustomed trifling in not unpleasing contrast with his strong common sense. Lydia wondered how she dared. For her own part she declared it impossible to overcome her fear of this grave personage. She could not even feel sufficiently at home with him to be quite herself in his company. Dora said she cared too much what he thought of her, and was far too anxious to avoid doing anything he might dislike; but this, Lydia utterly disclaimed. William Greenfell was nothing to her—never could be anything. In fact, she said, she scarcely troubled herself to think about him. Only, she observed—what woman does not?—that whatever the subject of his conversation might be, or however he might be occupied, he had always a pretty quick perception of her coming into the room, and could, at any time, without pause or hindrance in the grave business talk he was accustomed to carry on with her father, place for

her a chair exactly in the place and at the time she wanted it, besides paying her many little delicate attentions at table, at all which she wondered exceedingly, and thought he must be very clever to be able to think of so many things at once.

Upon all this there was another eye that gazed as watchfully—another ear that was turned with equal wonder to catch the tones of that deep manly voice as they softened down to a few words, and only a very few of familiar courtesy, whenever Lydia, or even her sister and Dora, required a little kind attention.

It was Robert Moreton who watched and listened, and felt all this with almost as much pain as admiration. What would he not have given to have been able to carry on that manly part without neglecting those offices of brotherly kindness so congenial to his disposition and habits, that they occupied too much the foremost place in his consideration, and thus became, as he thought he could read in Lydia's look and manner, sometimes more obtrusive than acceptable. Alas! for him, poor youth! He had to share a lot by no means uncommon. He had to see the first object of his wishes frustrated by the very efforts which he made to gain it.

This, and some other circumstances which at the same time began to take deep hold upon his feelings, would often drive Robert Moreton away from the society at the Grange, to seek that peace and security from troubled thought which always seemed diffused, like a kind of holy atmosphere, about the cottage of Aunt Isabel.

And there were reasons connected with her early life why Aunt Isabel attached herself, in a peculiar manner, to this young man; and, not the less so now, perhaps, that Reuben had lately been much more sparing of his visits, and much less confiding, in his intercourse with his aunt, than formerly. Robert had even made the discovery that Reuben sometimes accounted for his absence from his father's table, by stating that he had been at the cottage, when he had been there only for a few moments, and, once or twice, when he had been only in the garden by which the cottage was immediately surrounded.

Paul Rutherford was not likely to visit the lonely invalid without his friend, though it looked rather remarkable in one so devoutly solicitous to perform every duty in the most unexceptionable manner, that he should not, like so many others both young and old, seek the society of Isabel

Law, esteeming it a high privilege to sit with her even for a short season of social and pleasant converse. Something, however, there was, which perhaps Paul Rutherford could not himself have explained, that seemed to shut him out from the peaceful precincts of the cottage. He could not feel at home there. He did not like to sit under the calm steady eye of that most unsuspecting of women. So that, while in the habit of assenting in the most unqualified manner to all the kind and loving expressions the young people were accustomed to use in speaking of Aunt Isabel, he knew, in reality, less of her than any one, nor was she at all better acquainted with him. In one respect, however, her behaviour differed widely from his—she seldom, if ever, spoke of him. The change in Reuben's feelings towards herself, or rather his altered conduct, which she very naturally attributed to a change of feeling, pained her exceedingly ; but of that also she spoke little. Indeed, those who loved her best, thought they could discover an increased tendency in Aunt Isabel, about this time, to leave all such matters—especially all that pained or grieved her personally—in the hands of Him on whom she rested as the merciful disposer of her joys and sorrows,

alike merciful in both. There was evidently a change, though no one could have said in what it consisted; but all who were accustomed to visit much at the cottage, perceived the change, and spoke of it one to another with hushed voices and trembling lips.

Robert Moreton, on one of those Sabbath evenings when he withdrew himself from the party at Jacob Law's, had gone to the cottage with the firm determination, as firm at least as he was capable of making, of disclosing to this beloved friend, this faithful true adviser, the cause of a heavy burden which had for some time been weighing upon his heart. Much had lately transpired, in his intimate association with Paul and Reuben, to awaken apprehensions of a serious nature. Much had also transpired to make him feel unhappy in himself, he scarcely knew how, or why. Sometimes his conscience smote him with a fearful sense of unfaithfulness. Sometimes, in a sudden fit of recklessness, he was himself guilty of those very acts which in others he so much and so severely condemned. A feeling of darkness and confusion grew upon him. He wanted a friend to whom he might communicate with safety. He did not wish to betray

others more than himself, but all that was wrong seemed to be increasing so rapidly, that betrayal of any kind appeared better to him than that this state of things should be permitted to continue. He knew how much he should be hated if he divulged the secrets of those in whose confidence he had too deeply shared; but were not all great and good men brave in a righteous cause, and why should he fear the hatred of a fellow being, or flinch beneath the contempt of any one? It probably never occurred to him that his own mortified feelings were, to a great extent, the moving cause of this sudden heroism; and that, had he been more favoured just then in the quarter from whence favour would have been most acceptable, he might have been more lenient towards wrong in general, and consequently, less disposed to make himself the instrument of bringing the wrong to light.

Robert Moreton, however, was not remarkable for strength of purpose in any cause; and here, where the matter was more entirely one of feeling than he would have been disposed to admit, he was easily diverted from the design with which he entered the cottage, by a few words from his friend, who, taking him kindly by the

hand, said she had been thinking much of him that day, in connection with past times. There was an expression in the earnest look which she raised to his face while saying this which startled the young man, and so turned away his thoughts from the subject on which they had been engaged, that, drawing his chair beside his friend, he sat down, and in the gentle filial manner in which he had always treated Isabel Law, began to enquire about that far-gone past, always profoundly interesting to her, and scarcely less so to himself, from having so often heard her allude, in terms of deep feeling, to her early intimacy with his father. It was a subject at all times congenial to both, and seldom more so than at this moment.

“I have never understood clearly,” said Robert, “how my father came to be so intimate with your family; or if not intimate, so closely and tenderly attached that he cannot even now speak of you as he does of other people.”

“Does he speak of us much?” said Isabel, thoughtfully.

“No, not much. Indeed, very seldom; but once or twice, when I have sat up with him later than usual, he has begun of his own accord to speak of this cottage, especially.”

“Of this old cottage?”

“Yes; of the very windows, the door, the fireplace. Why, I knew exactly how it would all look before I came.”

“Truly, it has been but little changed in its outward aspect since then.”

“Perhaps my father is more changed. It has often struck me that he was like a man who had lived two lives, one quite separate and distinct from the other. In the midst of his present life, in the midst even of his daily occupations, I often can detect short glimpses of the past, as if that other life was ever present with him, though he cannot speak of it.”

Isabel fixed her eyes upon the fire for a while in deep thought, then, turning to her companion, she said—

“My dear, did it ever seem to thee that our other life would be like this second life of thy father’s?”

“I had not thought of it in that way,” said Robert; “but, perhaps, it will. And yet, I think the first life in my father’s case was the dearest to him—the best he loved, if it was not altogether the best.”

“No wonder it was the dearest,” said Isabel,

“and no doubt it was good in its way—good as a preparation for the work which had to be done.”

“Do tell me about it,” said Robert, gently laying his hand upon hers. “I want to hear about it this evening, especially. It will do me good.”

“Do thee good, child? Is anything the matter?” asked Isabel, looking affectionately into his face.

“Oh! not much;” said Robert, rising and walking to the window. “Indeed, I don’t know that anything is.”

And he made pretence to draw the curtains a little closer, and then stirred the fire, after which he sat down and asked again if he might be favoured that evening to hear something more than he yet knew of his father’s early life.

The interest he manifested on this subject was not unwelcome to his friend. Her own heart was full of it, and, perhaps, she felt with all a woman’s sensitiveness, that even her most private thoughts on this subject would find in her companion a sympathising and congenial hearer.

At first when Isabel Law began to speak, her voice was feeble, her expressions often interrupted

by thoughts too deep for words. But appearing to gain strength as she went on, her whole countenance and manner assumed a different aspect, as if a kind of new life was imparted by the thrilling interest of her recollections.

With all her simplicity of character, and singleness of heart, and perhaps in consequence of these very qualities, Isabel Law was remarkable for the interest she could keep up while relating even an ordinary narrative, or describing a familiar event. But now, when every feature of this early history was present to her mind, in forms so indelible, and in colours so distinct; and while she spoke out of the fullness of a heart, so capable of every tender line and trace of this far past, it might have afforded a rich treat even to an indifferent person, to sit and listen to her narrative, merely as such.

But Robert Moreton listened with far other feelings, than those of one who seeks only the amusement of the passing hour. His whole being seemed to be absorbed in the scenes and circumstances, which were thus made to pass so vividly before him. His spirit was carried back, and actually planted in the past, until he felt as if he had lived and grown there, passing through his father's experience rather than his own.

Long—long did this close and intimate communion last. It did not weary him, it could not have done that; but he thought the speaker began to be exhausted. The lights had grown dim,—the fire had burnt low,—he could not see the face of his friend. It was as well that he could not, for she was describing the death of her last sister. He laid his hand softly upon hers, and was intending when a few more words had been uttered, to say—“it is enough.” Suddenly, however, he was aware of a slight twitching in the arm which he held. At the same time the voice ceased, the head drooped, and the whole figure would have fallen forward, but for his supporting arms.

To call for assistance was the work of a moment, but it came in vain. The patient spirit had departed without a struggle, or a sigh—departed to join those with whom its communion had been so tender, and so sweet.

In a few moments the whole family from the other house flocked in. Robert Moreton had a short, but clear account to give; and Oh! how thankful he felt while giving it, that his original purpose had not been carried out, that he had done nothing to agitate or disturb, and had preferred no selfish claim to anxious consideration, or even

serious thought. Medical attention was quickly obtained, and the opinion of the doctors confirmed what all suspected, that death could not have been averted by human means, whatever help had been near. It would inevitably have occurred, the doctors said, in that sudden manner, at one time or another, under any circumstances.

Satisfied on this point, the relatives remained some time standing around the couch, on which the lifeless form had been laid. Now that the poor body had so entirely ceased to claim their care, there was more time to think of the irreparable loss which all had sustained, in the departure from amongst them of a spirit so chastened, so tender, and so true to the best interests of each, and all. It was an appropriate season for the most solemn silence, and the very room seemed filled with a silence which penetrated to every soul. In the midst of this, and while scarcely a breath could be heard, Rebecca Law knelt down and offered a few words of prayer. There was no ear at that moment so critical as to regard the words themselves. The tone in which they were uttered seemed to impart to them a kind of solemn import; while the very sound of itself was sufficient to burst open the flood gates of natural

grief, so that a suppressed sobbing might be heard all round the room.

In one quarter, however, these sobs amounted to absolute groans. It was poor Reuben who, from leaning on his sisters for support at last sunk down upon the ground, and there seemed absolutely to agonize with grief. In vain his sisters tried to raise him, and to soothe him by their caresses. Their white hands, and tears, and kisses, and gentle inclination of cheek to cheek, of forehead resting on the shoulder, of comforting restoratives, were all in vain—all powerless to reach the deep seat of the strong agony which convulsed his frame, and threatened to destroy his life. At last he sobbed himself a little into rest, and while Susannah turned to other duties which began more urgently to claim her attention, Lydia remained still seated on the ground with her brother's head upon her lap, heedless of all who came and went across the threshold of that awful room, so long as they too were not left quite alone with the dead.

CHAPTER X.

It might have been supposed in consideration of the peaceful and unostentatious character of their departed relative, that the family of Jacob Law would have been particularly solicitous in the ordering of the funeral, that all should have been as quiet and as private as the nature of the occasion would permit.

There are few things, however, in which the Society of Friends, at the time of which we write, were less consistent than in their manner of conducting funerals, not that they admitted of the least departure from their rigid rules with regard to outward display. All those trappings of grief, all those accessories of solemnity, which are regarded by others as portions of mere decency and propriety, are, and ever have been an offence, a mockery, almost an abomination to this society. But we still speak of the inconsistency of their

large gatherings, in seasons of bereavement by death; because for those who object to the wearing of mourning chiefly on account of the bustle and the anxiety it occasions, and the occupation to minds which they think ought at such seasons to be more profitably employed; it is surprising that those who feel these objections so strongly as to dare to be singular on that account, should yet allow the same solemn occasion to call together so vast a concourse of relatives and friends, that the houses in which they meet must necessarily become scenes of bustle, effort, and contrivance, to a degree almost commensurate with that which attends the preparation of the most elaborate mourning.

But there is besides this, another consideration to which some weight might reasonably be allowed. It is impossible in such large companies of old and young, serious and light, spiritual and worldly, collected perhaps from distant places, as well as near—it is impossible that all should grieve. The object in going has been with many to pay respect. They have paid it, and what then? Conversation to a certain extent must be kept up, and it is impossible, under such circumstances, to avoid all talk about common matters;

nor are we quite sure, that laughter and jesting might not sometimes be heard.

Of course it is far from being the intention of those most concerned that this should be the case, any more than it is the intention of those who approve of mourning, that it should draw away the thoughts from serious subjects; and often, the chief mourners in a bereaved family of Friends, sit apart from all this bustle, and all this social and lively intercourse, just as the chief mourners in other families sit apart from those who fabricate the black dresses, leaving all which has to be done in that way to an unconcerned and separate agency. The abuse of the custom either way does not prove that the custom itself is not well, and even commendably intended. With the absolute right or wrong of either, these descriptions of simple domestic scenes have nothing to do, only with their consistency; and, on this ground, we fancy there would have appeared a little discrepancy betwixt profession and reality, could any impartial person have stepped quietly within the inner department of Jacob Law's establishment, and there pursued a little minute observation for two or three days before the funeral. It is true, that Susannah Law, as already stated, possessed the

happy art of conducting all domestic operations with unusual quietness, regularity, and decorum; but there had to be a considerable amount of additional agency called in, and to all who worked under her directions it was not possible to communicate her method and her quietness.

The Society of Friends have ever been remarkable for their hospitality, founded, it may be, upon a kind of clanship, which binds its members together as one body, and a vast proportion of them by ties of relationship, which they are careful not to let drop. Thus, if a visitor who comes uninvited into a family is not exactly a cousin, he is perhaps the cousin of some cousin's wife; and hence, even to the remotest claim, and almost equally where there is no claim of relationship at all, a stranger never appears at any meeting but he is almost sure to have some invitation, if not many; and scarcely could such a stranger enter the house of any one belonging to that meeting, but he would be made to feel that he was welcome. Thus, on all occasions of large gatherings, such as that of a funeral, those who come to pay their tribute of respect feel no hesitation in flocking to the house of their bereaved relative or friend, without the slightest intimation

having reached them of their being expected ; so that the houses of well known Friends, with all their internal accommodations, have abundant need of that expansive quality for which they are remarkable, having often to receive, and provide for, without any previous notice, an amount of visitors which it would seem impossible that any private habitation, of moderate dimensions, should contain.

Another remarkable feature of these extraordinary meetings, and connected with this almost boundless hospitality, is, that while professing only to *accommodate*, and eschewing openly all pretence to luxury, as well as to display, the visitor almost invariably finds himself reposing in beds of the softest down, enveloped in endless coverings of the finest quality, and the most beautiful texture ; his apartment supplied with every means of comfort, and every invention for convenience ; while, at table, his palate is gratified by viands of the choicest flavour, and in such abundance that it might seem as if his business there was no other than to eat and sleep ; and all this is managed so quietly, and with so little remark, that it passes for being—what, indeed, it generally is—only an ordinary affair. For these, their constant and

most perfect preparations for comfort, they take no credit, and expect no praise; simply because they would have been both ashamed and sorry to do less. So the guest accepts the hospitality as a thing of course, and goes away prepared on his part to render a return in kind.

It would have been deemed a great breach of the duties of relationship to have left even the most distant connection uninformed of the death which had taken place. The family of Jacob Law were consequently pretty fully engaged in sending out announcements to every quarter in which a relation might be found. In this they were assisted by all but Reuben, whose grief, although less violent, was such as did not permit him to join in any of those useful and necessary occupations in which the others were more healthily engaged. Indeed, to say the truth of Reuben, he was not particularly addicted to such occupations as a matter of habit; nor, under any circumstances, did the sense of personal responsibility stand forth as a prominent feature in his character. Sometimes he would do an act of more than ordinary generosity or kindness; but the sterner duties of life he was only too well satisfied to leave to others.

Nor was there now at hand the assistance of his friend, Paul Rutherford, to be called in. So soon as the great alarm at the cottage had summoned the inmates from the other house, this young man had taken his departure, leaving behind him a short note for Reuben, with an apology to the family. Susannah thought it very delicate to withdraw himself at such a time. Some of the others thought he might have remained, at least to see whether he could serve them by transacting any business for them in the town. This he certainly could have done, and so might have spared the family much painful thought and effort. But he was gone—out of the way of sorrow and death, neither of which, it seemed, afforded any congenial atmosphere for him. So the family threw themselves very much upon the services of Robert Moreton for the transaction of their outward affairs, and glad at heart he was, to be useful in any way, and in all ways, at such a time—secretly the more glad perhaps, that William Greenfell was not there to take all the usefulness out of his hands, and thus to stand, as he so often did, between him and those whom it was his greatest happiness to serve.

Soon, however, various additions to the family

party began to arrive, and few of these were backward in rendering the services required. Indeed, the Friends have a peculiar way of seeing and understanding how services can be rendered without bustle, or obtrusiveness; so that, in any time of need, a visitor but recently arrived, will sometimes silently slide into the various duties and avocations of a family, as if forming an accustomed part of the household.

It is just possible that Susannah Law would rather have been left alone in her department; but Lydia was of a very different constitution of mind, and to her it was by no means displeasing to be surrounded by kind and sympathising helpers, to hold consultations, to receive suggestions, and thus to feel herself propped up, and supported on every hand.

As the company gathered, and increased, there was much to be done by a gentle social creature like Lydia, in the way of receiving the guests, and saying and hearing all those trifling expressions which would be empty without their accompanying looks and tones of kindness. Indeed, there would have been almost too much of this kind of duty devolving upon Lydia, had not her cousin Dora come to her assistance; and both

together seemed equal to any amount of hospitable courtesy. And very pretty it was to see the two cousins so beautifully dressed, as they took good care to be, gliding about from one guest to another, with that soft step, and gentle voice, and altogether subdued and quiet manner, which bespeak a sorrow less acute than deep. Dora could always accommodate herself to circumstances with great facility, whatever they might be: but in Lydia's look and manner, though perhaps less polished and graceful, there was more of natural softness, as well as feeling; and thus, while one was saying and doing exactly what was most suitable and becoming, the other accompanied what she said with a reality which rendered her interesting, rather than only charming.

We have spoken of their dress, and the reader must not lose sight of this striking characteristic of the domestic habits of the Society of Friends. They are always, with how much or how little study we pretend not to say, so dressed for the occasion, whatever it may be, that nothing can surprise them into disorder with regard to dress; nor can any absorbing interest, either of joy or grief, ever find them unprovided with the neatest of all possible caps, and collars, or kerchiefs of

the purest white. Nor is this scrupulous exactness confined to the female part of the community alone. It pervades the whole, and is so entirely habitual, in fact so much a part of their ordinary existence, that under every change of circumstance, and any emergency, they can maintain an under current of regard for these minor matters, without appearing to be in the least degree diverted from the more important topics of thought and conversation. With all this, it seems strange how little they are able to believe that persons more fashionably attired can do the same.

When, at last, the day of the funeral arrived, the residence of Jacob Law appeared to be fully occupied in every department. Many additional visitors, however, were expected for the day, and especially some ministering friends, whose presence was particularly acceptable; for, while the Friends can do nothing beforehand, nothing in the way of preparation, either for preaching, or prayer, believing that both must proceed from the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and, consequently, cannot be calculated upon, and still less commanded at any particular time or place, they are still much comforted, and often much edified, by these ministrations; especially

in seasons of trial, and indeed all the more so for that deep faith of theirs in the solemn fact of such utterances proceeding immediately from a divine source. Hence, therefore, they cannot, under any circumstances, not even when a meeting has been publicly convened, say beforehand that there will be either preaching or prayer. Yet there are certain recognised ministers in this community, whose presence is cordially welcomed amongst them, in the belief that through them some words of counsel or admonition, of warning or consolation, may be administered.

On the present occasion, it had been intimated to Jacob Law, that a friend of considerable distinction, and even of some rank, would be present. For there is such a thing as rank in the Society, say what they may against regard for worldly exaltation. We do not mean that without other recommendations such rank would be valued amongst them, but merely, that when these other qualities are found in connection with old standing family respectability, with wealth, superior education, and that consideration from the world which these advantages always command, we are by no means prepared to say that the Friends are more indifferent than others to

the pleasure which the coming amongst them in a kind and social way, of persons of this class, is calculated to afford. Thus, when it was announced that Samuel Marlborough and his wife were likely to be present at the funeral, there was an interchange of approving looks, and a general feeling circulating amongst the guests, that the occasion was one of increased importance, and interest.

It was much less the custom, at the time of which we write, than it is now, for hearses and other carriages to be used at the funerals of friends. It was thought more simple for the coffin to be carried by hand, and the custom of bringing together so large a company rendered the providing of carriages a matter of serious difficulty. In the present case, however, the meeting-house, and adjoining grave-yard, being rather distant, a hearse was engaged, as usual without covering or ornament of any kind; for it must be observed, that all black is most scrupulously avoided on these occasions, so that, even the coffin itself appears with its bare surface of plain wood, though always neatly polished, and made to look as substantial, respectable, and handsome as possible. The providing a supply

of carriages sufficient for the number of guests was a thing out of the question, though two or three coaches and chaises were obtained from the nearest town; but as many of the visitors brought their own conveyances, they were prepared, not only to take care of themselves, but to crowd in with them such of the relatives as had no accommodation of their own.

It was after all rather a curious looking procession in its external character, requiring, to render it seemly and solemn, exactly that for which the Friends are so remarkable—an unusual amount of forethought, system, order, and gravity of deportment. Without the black, without the state, without the accustomed trappings of woe, there is urgent need for all this order, and system, wherever a number of people are gathered together.

William Greenfell had been selected as the active agent in arranging and carrying on this perfect system, and with some assistance from Robert Moreton, he had carefully planned out beforehand exactly how each individual should ride or walk to the grave. According to this plan, so judiciously concocted, the names of all the guests were called over in couples, or in other

numbers, as the carriages might hold, each at the same time being made to understand in what order they should arrange themselves beside the grave; and as the carriages came up to the door, the nearest relatives of course went first, no cousin, however distant, being left out before a non-related person. In this order they were expected to approach the grave, and afterwards to walk into the meeting, taking their places in the same order, side by side, those connected with the departed relative occupying what are considered the highest seats.

On all ordinary occasions, it is an invariable rule with the society of Friends, that in these meetings the men sit on one side, and the women on the other; but in the case of a marriage, or a funeral, they allow a deviation from this rule, so far as the relatives are concerned. In mapping out the plan of procedure, relationship is the first thing considered, so that in the present instance, on alighting from the carriages, Jacob and Rebecca Law of course walked first after the bearers of the coffin. Susannah, Reuben, and Lydia, followed immediately after them; for it was impossible to make the nearest relations fit exactly into couples; and next to them came the

widow Greenfell, and Dora; thus William being only nephew on the husband's side, and consequently no relative whatever, was set at liberty for the carrying out of those offices of duty for which no one could have been better fitted.

When the bearers arrived at the side of the grave, which was very deep, and carefully lined with brick, the coffin was placed on the ground, the bearers retiring until summoned for further duty. All around upon the green sward, fresh boards had been carefully placed, in order that no delicate foot should feel the damp, as well as that every step might fall harmlessly upon the surrounding graves; for here, as at that time in all the burial grounds of the Friends, there was no protection or distinctive mark upon any grave—only the green mound, with no stone of memorial either at the head, or foot.

At the head of the deep opening Jacob and Rebecca Law took their places in solemn quietness, and their family standing by them, with other near connexions, formed a kind of half circle; and all looked down, their eyes being almost exclusively fixed either upon the coffin, the grave, or the ground immediately before them. In a conspicuous part of this circle stood Samuel Marl-

borough and his wife, way being made for them wherever they went, and great care being exercised by all the inferior agency around, lest a shawl should touch the ground, or an umbrella should want holding, or lest they should be jostled or inconvenienced in any way whatever.

After all had taken their places, a crowd of village people having collected around the outskirts of the funeral party, a deep silence ensued—so deep, that the faintest rustle of the falling leaf might be heard as it flickered down from the autumn bough. In the midst of this awful silence, a slight movement became evident, and then a voice of loud and deliberate utterance was heard. All, until then, had stood with covered heads; but now Samuel Marlborough had taken off his hat, while, kneeling on the ground, he poured forth a solemn prayer, intoned in a manner so peculiar—a manner that well might have startled a stranger into sudden wonder; while those who had grown up from childhood with that sound familiar to their ears, unconsciously had learned to associate that tone with the language of supplication, and of worship in general.

When this Friend had risen another silence ensued, and then, as if by a kind of intuition,

though in reality because of a signal from William Greenfell, the bearers came forward, and silently lowered the coffin into the deep grave. A few shovelfulls of earth were then cast in, and then, at another signal, the bearers ceased, and retreated again. A female voice was now heard—faint, quivering, and shrill. It was that of Rebecca Law, who quoted a few texts of scripture in the same slow manner, but with a different intonation, which, by degrees, swelled into something like a chant, so that, at last, it had the effect of making the words appear subservient to the sound. After this, there was another short silence, and then the party began to move with the same regular and solemn order towards the entrance of the meeting house ; each, as they passed the edge of the grave, in their turn, taking care to look directly in, down to the deep resting place, in which the mortal remains of their beloved friend were reposing.

It had caused some little wonder to the family at the Grange, that Robert Moreton's father had not intimated his intention to be with them on this occasion. Robert thought he was away from home, upon a journey ; but on walking from the grave it was discovered that he stood amongst the crowd ; and, of course, the recognition of his

familiar face was not neglected by any of the family, though manifested in so slight a manner it scarcely could be said that any eye was raised to his.

This Friend being what is called an acknowledged minister, his place was in the highest seat or gallery, beside Samuel Marlborough—the family, as already said, seating themselves below. The meeting was crowded to excess, for there were many real mourners, besides the relations; and in addition to the attractiveness of the spectacle to indifferent people, there could scarcely have been any private individual whose death was more lamented by the poor, and indeed by all who were accustomed to experience her sympathy or counsel in their times of need. It was indeed a real grief which brought many of them there, and often was the silence almost broken by the heavy sighs of those who scarcely dared to weep. Instead, however, of yielding to the excess of feeling, the stillness increased rather than gave way, for what is so powerful as stillness where many are met together. It was, however, interrupted in due time, by another and a very different voice from those which had already been heard. The utterance was now that of a strong-

hearted earnest man, without intonation, or peculiarity, except such as it derived from long experience of deep feeling, chastened by abundant sorrow. It was Robert's father who now spoke; and who, in all that company, could speak so appropriately? He was a man too whose countenance and bearing in all respects accorded with the occasion and the scene—serious, weighty, and subdued. His eyes were those of one who could look into both worlds, but had long been accustomed to fix their earnest gaze upon eternity. His address was one not to be easily forgotten. It occupied nearly the whole time of the meeting. The impression it was calculated to make was not deepened by a small and feeble prayer from Rebecca Law; after which, a short silence again ensuing, the meeting broke up; the public intimation that it did so consisting in the silent shaking of hands by the principal Friends in the gallery.

It is needless to follow out the day with further detail. The large company of relatives and friends retired in pretty nearly the same order in which they had left it, to the house of Jacob Law, where they were all accommodated and provided for, perhaps with the more ease that some of the company, pressed by their individual avocations, took

leave of the family at an early hour, in order to reach their own houses that night.

Once, after the large and plentiful dinner, while dessert and wine stood upon the table, but especially in the evening after tea, there occurred those peculiar silences into which the Friends are able to drop simultaneously, with scarcely any outward intimation of such being the tendency with any particular person. Indeed, the evening gathering resembled more an occasion expressly for worship, many short addresses being offered, and some prayers. With this, the solemn transactions of the day were closed, a deep impression remaining on the minds of many, if not of all, that the season had been one of peculiar spiritual refreshment, and of solid peace.

Amongst the many strange notions which have been formed respecting the Society of Friends, arising, no doubt, in great measure, from their external singularity, there is none more strange than that they do not allow themselves to grieve and mourn like other people.* It is certainly true, that all exhibitions of violent grief would be regarded by them as objectionable, because

* The writer has frequently been asked if it is true that they do not allow of weeping at funerals.

whatever the cause of grief may be, especially where it has to do with illness or death, it is considered by them as an essential part of their christian obedience to bow in patient submission to the will of God. In cases of bereavement, where the close of life has been peaceful, and the departing spirit supported by a well grounded hope of happiness in the world to come, they would consider a death-bed scene of this description too solemn, sacred, and even privileged an occasion, to be attended with any excessive manifestation of human sorrow.

In connection with these feelings, they appear to entertain a high idea of the profitable and edifying nature of these seasons of trial, and of mournful solemnity; and, for this reason it is, perhaps, even more than for the sake of evincing their respect, that they assemble in large bodies at the funerals of their friends, believing that such opportunities are particularly favourable to the awakening of serious thought, as well as to impressing the mind with solemn feelings as regards the necessity of preparation for the final call.

It is, however, just possible, that when the grave duties of the day of interment have been gone through, the Society of Friends return a

little more speedily than some others to the accustomed occupations of every day life, partly perhaps because that life does not, under any circumstances, differ so very widely from seasons of serious feeling and solemn thought; so that the transition is not apparently great from the house of mourning, to the ordinary circumstances of daily life. With them, as with many others, business affords a constant, and, as they believe, a lawfully available resource from the restraint and the monotony of grief. Perhaps with them also, as with many others, the all-absorbing claims of business beguile the mind into the belief, that because the head and the hand are busy, the heart must be doing well. At all events there is reason to fear, that this plea of business has done much to substitute, in the place of that spirituality of life and character for which the Friends were once so remarkable, an active money-seeking energy of character, in all respects as *worldly* as many pursuits of a more fashionable and ostentatious nature.

Had any one been disposed to doubt whether sorrow under its most agonising form could be exhibited by persons of the class here described, they need only have looked in at the half open

shutters of the cottage on the morning after the funeral.

At an early hour that morning—at least before the many guests had begun to move from their nightly quarters, Reuben Law was seen by the servants to take the well-known path towards that door at which he was never more to meet with the old welcome. The same servant, however, who had so often opened the door to him, still remained upon the spot, and with tearful eyes she willingly received him; though instructed by Jacob Law to keep all things within the house untouched until he could himself make the necessary arrangements amongst them.

Reuben only wanted just to step into the old parlour, he said, and he should like to be left alone. It was a still, damp, autumn morning, and the room looked very dark, until he unfastened one of the shutters, and let in a little of the dim morning light. As he did this, a robin, startled by the sound, began to chirp. A favourite cat then sprang up from the garden, and looked pitifully in at the window. There was no fire in the room—no welcome—no sweet voice of soothing for any living creature. A little drop will often make the cup of sorrow overflow. The

very song of this neglected bird, mournful as that of the robin always sounds amongst the falling leaves of autumn, seemed just to add the overflowing fulness to the grief with which poor Reuben's heart was swelling; and sinking into a chair, he folded both his arms upon the table, laid down his head, and sobbed like a child.

Long and deep was the sad outpouring of his soul. Ah! if it could only have found another channel besides that of tears! Long and deep was the agony—for it was nothing less—which seemed to concentrate into one point of suffering, all hopes destroyed, all memories embittered, all wretchedness endured. Here in this cottage—in this very room—had passed some of his best and happiest moments. Here, some of his resolutions had been formed which pointed to a life—how different from what he had recently been leading! Here, even now, he thought—but for the prejudice and cruelty of man—but for the stern requirements of a hard religion, he might find a home with one, who—but the thought maddened him. He had written and received no answer. He was shut out from man's esteem, and woman's tenderness; and if so, he was lost for ever. The little robin sang again, this time more cheerily.

Was there no way back? A voice seemed to whisper in his ear, "No, no." His heart replied, "With *her* there might be, but alone—never!"

Insensible to everything but his own miserable thoughts, Reuben remained so long shut in to the sole companionship of his sighs and tears, that he failed to hear an approaching step which, however, paused at the door, and so stood hesitating whether to proceed or not. It was Robert, who had been despatched by the sisters to summon their absent brother to the breakfast-table, and who, perhaps, a little guided by his own feelings, had directed his enquiries to the cottage.

With men it is so much more difficult to sympathise, than with women, that these two youths, though deeply touched by the same sorrow, and to some extent implicated in the same causes for compunction and regret, had seldom, if ever, exchanged a single word calculated to bring them nearer to each other; and still less to strengthen them in mutual resolutions to begin life afresh, and to pursue for the future a safer path than they had followed in the past.

To Reuben it is possible that no thought of this kind had ever occurred. His interests en-

tirely centering in a different object, he admitted no friend of his own sex into communion with his inner feelings. Paul Rutherford had become in some respects essential to him; but he had lately surprised some of his friends, and his sisters especially, by speaking, incidentally, of Paul in a manner which implied anything but respect. With Robert the case was very different. The first object of his thoughts—at least that which he believed to be the first, was how to begin a new and better life. To him the solemn scenes which had just transpired, had come with all the weight of an express call; and he even went so far as to believe, that if the call should now be neglected, some fearful judgment might be expected to fall either upon him, or his companions, or perhaps upon them all. He was prepared for any sentence, for any issue; and as he stood there in the entrance of that dimly-lighted room, watching that spectacle of grief before him, and listening to those heavy sighs, almost amounting to groans, he longed indescribably to utter some word of sympathy or fellow-feeling, that might bring his own heart into closer and more intimate communion with one that seemed to be almost on the point of breaking. But how intrude, or how

open the way? He feared almost to trembling, for what is so difficult as to lift the veil of a shallow friendship, so as to penetrate into the deep mysteries of the hidden soul beneath?

At last, the intruder ventured to speak, and th start, the look, the offended aspect of him, who desired, above all things, not to be interfered with, at once convinced him that nothing was to be expected from any attempt of his towards a closer intimacy. Robert had, consequently, nothing left to do but to discharge the business upon which he had been sent by the sisters; and he managed while doing this, to betray as little as possible that he had perceived anything particular in Reuben's look or manner.

Strange! that two women, even if enemies before, would have wept together on such an occasion; while these two youths, in reality, friends, had nothing to say to each other, except that the family at the other house had met for breakfast.

Susannah and Lydia both knew their brother better than to make any comment upon his absence; and the company being generally engaged in conversation, besides being pretty fully occu-

pped with what was spread before them, the two young men were able to glide into the room, and take their places at the table, without being noticed.

CHAPTER XI.

WE have now to request the reader to pass over with us the space of somewhat more than twelve months, and to imagine that time externally unremarked by any striking or sudden changes, yet fraught with internal interests of vast importance to those whom this story most concerns.

As regards some of the party already introduced, and especially Lydia Law, and her cousin Dora, the passing time seemed only to have expanded their beauty, and confirmed those habits of amiable and social cordiality for which both were so often and so justly admired.

With Susannah the change was greater, and of a widely different character. One frequent visitor there was at the Grange who could have told strange tales of the extraordinary metamorphosis which appeared to have transformed her very nature into something so unlike what

she had been, or rather what she had seemed to be, that her best friends would scarcely have known her, could they have seen her under any circumstances which brought these new or hidden features of her character to light. But he who knew her under this aspect, who in fact had shed this new light upon her life, developing the latent susceptibilities of a nature up to this time almost hidden from itself, would have been the last to disclose what he knew, and what was known to him alone.

It was Paul Rutherford whose society and intimate companionship had wrought this change. Throughout the whole time which we have overstepped, he had been the frequent associate of the young people at the Grange; still always welcome to the heads of the family, but on the part of Jacob Law more welcome from relative circumstances, than on his own account, for still he did not feel to understand the young man, nor was drawn any nearer to him. If his wife and children liked him, that was enough for him, provided only he found nothing to dislike, or disapprove. At Susannah he most wondered in secret; but then Susannah was prudent, and discreet, and she might see that in the young man which he

had not been able to discover. The one redeeming fact upon which hung all his confidence in Paul, was that he had found favour with Susannah, and this fact, though never directly revealed as a matter of importance, was pretty well understood by the whole family; so that by degrees every kind of jocular allusion to it ceased; and thus quietly, without any open remark or enquiry, the young man grew to be considered almost as a member of the family, and came, and went, or met them, when they attended their quarterly and other meetings, as if he had been a near relative, or long established friend.

Had the young man spoken openly and frankly to Jacob Law, every doubt on the part of the father would have been removed. But, instead of this, he allowed the intimacy, which he evidently took so much pains to cultivate, to go on from month to month, without ever giving it on his part any definite or certain character. Thus Susannah could not have told her father if she would: there was in reality nothing to tell, especially to a busy man of common practical sense like Jacob Law. That she was beloved, deeply and fervently beloved by one whom she admired and trusted, was enough for this single hearted

woman, who like so many of her sex, was far too delicate to ask for the practical import of those expressions which fell upon her ear so fraught with happiness for the present moment, that she scarcely cared what might be their burden for the time to come. And thus Susannah lived on through a kind of charmed existence, which no one could interrupt because it was exposed to none, and cherished beneath her plain and simple garb, perhaps as much of the ideal as may be found where fancy has more to do with external embellishment.

How often is the placid, the still, the apparently subdued character, entirely misunderstood in this respect. People think them cold, because they do not warm up at every passing event, nor bestow even an average amount of feeling upon the trivial affairs of every day. If the persons who pronounce this judgment had ever watched a mountain stream descending, and diverging into a thousand channels by the way, they would have known how much more likely it would be for the stream denied these outlets, hemmed in, and contracted between rocky walls, to fall at once with overwhelming force from the very weight of its pent up waters.

But we will not enter farther into this most quiet and unobtrusive intercourse. No one in fact, did enter into it, except those whom it most concerned. No one ever ventured to enquire why Paul and Susannah lingered after others in their evening walks; nor why, when a party of young persons set out in company, these two so naturally came to be classed together, that it would have implied a strange deviation from the habits of the family, had they been found separate.

Only one other fact in connection with this subject seems worthy of mention here. It was that Susannah's added happiness had just given to her appearance as well as her character, what both had so often seemed to want. People said of her that she was growing absolutely beautiful, and she really was so sometimes, when her eyes looked up as they could look, and when a delicate but radiant blush suffused her countenance. She became more frank too—more generally affable, and communicative. In fact, she was like one who had grown suddenly rich, and who without daring to disclose the recently found treasure, feels yet at liberty to dispense blessings to others from the hidden store.

Another feature in the domestic habits of the

Grange must not pass unnoticed. We have already said that the conversation of the young people was apt, perhaps too frequently, to turn upon the unnecessary restrictions, as they considered them, belonging to the Society with regard to dress, and manners. Conversation of this kind frequently indulged in—conversation, indeed, of any kind which has relation to grievances endured or punishments inflicted, is apt to grow with surprising rapidity where numbers are concerned, as being sharers in the same oppression, or sufferers under the same restraint.

Had Paul and Reuben been placed in their domestic circumstances under a more generous and enlightened system, it is probable they would never have rebelled in spirit as they now so often did. Reuben, especially, was apt to give vent in the presence of his sisters, to charges the most bitter and violent against the Society of Friends in general, and against George and Johannah Rutherford in particular; and in all these outbursts of violence, he was more than borne out by the colder but deeper scorn of his friend. And yet that friend, to the astonishment of all who knew him under both characters, could assume the most demure and even reverential aspect when in the

presence of the very persons against whom he was accustomed to direct his bitterest sarcasms.

Reuben most certainly did not admire this feature in the character of Paul, but he thought it clever, and droll, and he was growing fast to care less and less about principle, and more about being amused by any passing events. But while he laughed at the solemn face of his friend, Lydia felt absolutely frightened.

She had never particularly liked Paul Rutherford, only she now tried to like him, for her sister's sake ; but when she saw him in an instant altering his very voice, as well as his countenance, she felt an instinctive kind of shuddering, as if a serpent had suddenly crossed her path. Poor Susannah, saw nothing—heard nothing, that was suspicious, still less wrong. There was no serpent visible in her path—nothing but flowers. So she walked on contentedly, looking, and seeming to be, so sure that all was right, that others took their faith from hers ; and except at short intervals, when startled into suspicion, they believed also that nothing was, or could be, really wrong.

About the time of his aunt's death, the tone of Reuben's conversation had been more moderate. Robert Moreton especially appeared at that time

not unlikely to determine upon conforming in all their strictness to the severest requirements of the Society. But the effect produced on this occasion, was far from being deep, or lasting; and the three young men became more closely associated than ever, their conversation at the same time indicating more clearly how eagerly they were longing to escape from a thralldom which appeared indeed to be producing no salutary effects upon them.

If Paul was less violent than Reuben, he alone had personal injury, and wrong to speak of, and he did this without sparing any one, but especially his father. In fact, there had been for some time an increasing want of harmony between George Rutherford and his son. The father was of a fierce passionate nature, when roused, though in some measure subdued by a strong sense of outward seemliness, and decorum; but with all his natural brute force, and indomitable will, he found himself so often outwitted by the cooler temperament, and deeper calculation of his son, that the two had come to stand almost in the position of antagonism to each other, only that the very age and office of the father invested him by right with a supremacy which none could gainsay.

More than half the disputes arising betwixt the father and son had their origin in money matters. It was impossible for George Rutherford to conceive why any young man should require the amount of money which his son, by some means or other, seemed to be continually extracting from the parental grasp. Sometimes he was tortured by suspicions that his money was evaporating in some unaccountable way, beyond his actual knowledge. His sleep was disturbed, his rest rendered uneasy. He did not wish to betray to any one that it was possible for him to be deceived or wronged. And thus he became a victim to the worst evil that can befall a selfish and strong willed man,—a perpetual sense of being over-reached, and at the same time robbed, and injured.

About this time, there were other symptoms of a very serious nature beginning to threaten absolute and open insubordination, beneath the iron rule of this stern disciplinarian. Altogether the lion grew very uneasy in his lair. The young men who had so often eluded his watchfulness, began boldly to defy his authority; and this symptom appeared first in the quarter from which it pained him most to meet with defiance.

Reuben Law, with less firmness of character than many others, had yet at times a kind of daring, which made him go further than his friends in what was opposed to opinion, or contrary to rule. It was not in keeping with his character, to strive to be thought well of, when he was not striving to *do* well. To him it would have been impossible to put on the demure look of Paul, immediately after he had been heaping all manner of abuse upon the parties for whom that look was worn; and in the same way, he had lately begun to regard it as mean and cowardly to talk as he did amongst his companions, against the Society to which they belonged, and yet so to conform to their peculiarities in manners, and appearance, as to wear the outward semblance of believing things essential or desirable which he inwardly despised, and longed altogether to reject.

Robert Moreton was in this respect of the same opinion. He believed it not only false, but absolutely wrong, to wear a Friends' coat, while entertaining a strong conviction that the wearing of a particular garb or costume had been an injury to the Society as a religious body. At any rate, the young men said, one to another, they were no believers in broad brimmed hats, and coats with

standing up collars—not they; and just so far as importance was attached to these things, they were in their opinion a positive injury, and snare, which led many to depend upon mere externals, and served with others as a cloak for hypocrisy, and deceit.

Paul Rutherford considered the wearing of this costume as an allowable means of preserving peace at home. If really a trifle of no sort of importance in itself, surely it was but a small sacrifice by which to purchase exemption from persecution, and from the ill opinion of relatives and friends. So Paul had his dress-coat kept at Jeremiah's, in which he went out to many an evening party, where Reuben also figured in his dress-coat; but while Paul would have been made very uneasy had he been compelled to sit down at his father's table in the same dress, Reuben became, if possible, more uneasy, to sit down in his Friends' costume. Indeed, to do him justice, it must be owned of Reuben, that he had a thorough detestation of all small trickery, and deceit, especially if practised for the sake of gaining an insufficient end. We do not pretend that he had principle enough to spurn a great deception which might procure him a great enjoyment; but to deceive for no better

reason than because he was afraid to be perfectly honest, was indeed contemptible in his opinion, and rather than do that, he would defy the whole world.

So Reuben startled his companions one day by declaring his determination to begin to wear on all occasions, coats with turned down collars, and no other. Some who heard this declaration laughed, for they did not believe he had the moral courage to carry out his resolution. They knew, what it is impossible for members of other societies to conceive, how much real daring this purpose would require; and they doubted not, but Reuben's firmness would fail before the hour of trial should come. Others endeavoured gravely to persuade him to give the project up. But this advice only made him more daring, and defiant. Others encouraged him, for they thought if once the ice was broken for them, they might also plunge in.

To show that he was really in earnest, Reuben exhibited before his friends, in visible departure from the old established rule, a number of garments, some new, and others altered, but all constructed after the forms and customs of the world, and consequently all requiring a vast

amount of moral courage to put on, and wear. Great excitement very naturally pervaded the company of young men, who, looking and handling, and examining for themselves, were compelled to believe that Reuben was really in earnest.

Had intelligence been about to be communicated that day at dinner that Reuben had enlisted for a soldier, the apprehensions of each and all could scarcely have been worked up to a higher pitch. As time wore on, many and varied were the calculations as to how the thing would be taken. All knew exactly how Johannah Rutherford would look, but in what style the lion would comport himself was beyond the power of any one to surmise.

When the dinner hour arrived, Reuben, according to the custom of the family, walked in with the first set, for there was always a first and second party at that table. For some time no notice was taken, the master being too much occupied with what was immediately before him. At length, however, his appetite being somewhat appeased, his eye found time to wander to the offending collar. But how could he believe even the testimony of his senses? The fact was to him manifestly impossible. He looked again—

long and earnestly. The young men held down their heads, and some found it difficult to suppress their laughter, especially those who had caught a glimpse of Reuben's face, which wore evidently the expression of one who endeavours to *look* brave, whatever he may feel.

Johannah Rutherford stared wildly, but spoke not. Her face seemed to come out farther than usual from the little background of cap behind. No sound was uttered, except that something like a suppressed roar might be detected occasionally, as George Rutherford conveyed large portions of meat into his mouth. Thus his meal was hastily dispatched, when, rising from his seat before the others, he walked with large heavy strides towards the door. Here, standing still for a moment, and half looking round, he said, "Reuben Law, thou wilt please not to come to my table again in that coat."

"Oh, very well," said Reuben, as he rose, "then I must go home, for I have no other."

This was all that passed at the time, but in the evening when the young men were retiring, Reuben was requested to remain, and a long "opportunity" took place between him and the master of the house, which Reuben was not fond

of describing to any one, so much did it rouse his anger, and disgust, even to think of it.

The fact was, George Rutherford did not really wish to part with Reuben. He did not want, as he worded it, to be hard upon Jacob; and he tried all the means of persuasion that were possible to him, to induce the young man to return to the path of simplicity, and "truth." Such were his expressions, and there were many others which he used while endeavouring to be kind and gentle, which evidently produced impressions the very reverse of what were intended. Reuben afterwards declared it was infinitely worse to see the lion when insinuating, than when enraged. He had, however, to endure both; for, failing to melt by kindness, George Rutherford grew angry, and his anger was generally terrific. On this occasion, however, all that he could say, or threaten, proved ineffectual; and it was agreed, before separating for the night, that Reuben should return to his father's house on the following day.

He was sorry, George Rutherford said, *very* sorry to be under the necessity of taking such a step; but for the sake of example, it must be done. He was responsible for the conduct of the young men under his care, and he could not an-

swer to their parents, if, on account of the esteem he felt for Reuben's father, he should allow his son to remain with his family, even for another day. He had hoped different things from him, he said. He had hoped that the example of his own son in this respect——

“Oh! Don't say anything about that,” interrupted Reuben hastily.

The farther started. “What dost thou mean?” he said, bringing the whole force of his massive countenance to bear upon Reuben. “What dost thou mean?” he repeated, as he leaned forward in his chair, and looked searchingly into the young man's face.

“I mean nothing;” said Reuben, afraid lest he should bring trouble upon his friend.

“I believe thou dost mean something;” said George Rutherford, and he advanced his large person still nearer, as if ready to devour whatever information could be extracted. “Art thou acquainted with anything particular relating to my son?” he asked, eagerly.

But Reuben again interrupted him by saying that people ought to know their own children best; and that he should owe little thanks to his father if he asked any one else about him.

This was no answer—it proved nothing; and still those devouring eyes were fixed upon the speaker, greedily for his inmost thoughts.

“I’ll tell thee what,” said George Rutherford, after gazing in this way for a few moments”—I’ll tell thee what, young man. For the sake of thy father, and mother, I think perhaps I might be induced to pass this matter over, and to let thee remain with us, if thou wouldst give me privately—quite privately, thou knowest—a little insight into the habits of my son Paul.”

“Never!” exclaimed Reuben. “I don’t mind telling about myself, to those who have a right to ask, but nothing should induce me to tell of a friend.”

“Then there *is* something to tell? I feared as much.”

“Oh! don’t misconstrue my words. We are none of us perhaps exactly what we ought to be.”

“In what respect?”

“I cannot answer these questions; and I will not submit to be inquired of in this unfair manner. Ask Paul himself. It is no business of mine.”

George Rutherford rose from his seat, and walked once or twice across the room. Then stopping immediately before Reuben, he said, in a stern deep voice—“I suppose thou art aware

that matters of delinquency must be brought before our meetings?"

"Yes," said Reuben, "when they are proved."

"Perhaps they *are* proved—what hast thou to say to that?"

"That—for myself I don't care a button. And so farewell. I shall be off early in the morning, and only wish I could go to night."

Reuben's temper once thoroughly roused, there was no doing anything with him. George Rutherford knew this, and perceiving pretty clearly that all opportunity of working out his purpose had passed by, he suffered the young man to depart without another word; and then taking up his pen, he wrote a letter to Jacob Law, which he committed to the care of a servant to place in the hands of Reuben before he should set out on his journey in the morning.

CHAPTER XII

The departure of Reuben Law was an event of no trifling interest in the household of which he had been a favourite, and in some respects a distinguished member. More independent, both in character and circumstances, than many of his associates there, his presence had imparted a vigour to their general transactions, but especially a cordiality and cheerfulness to their social intercourse, which they knew it would be difficult to supply when he was gone; and they all looked forward with proportionate apprehension and sorrow to the loss they were about to sustain.

Nor was this melancholy feeling confined to the higher departments of the household. Wherever a number of young men, not positively disagreeable, are situated, especially if subjected to anything like unkindness or injustice, there will be sure to arise a powerful party of adherents to

their cause amongst the female portion of the kitchen community ; and seldom, even in cases of delinquency, will this class of adherents betray any secret transgression of family rule, if indeed they do not actually **abet**, and facilitate what is wrong.

In the present **instance**, the young men at George Rutherford's were not insensible to the many kind attentions which it was at all times easy for them to obtain from this quarter, and which they often found sadly wanting elsewhere. Amongst other household helps, there was a black-eyed Lizzie Brian, a girl of Irish extraction, whose adroitness in managing a difficult point was such as to render her peculiarly valuable in cases of emergency. Indeed, such was her general cleverness, that she contrived at once to make herself, to some extent, the confidant of the young men, and the main prop of the mistress in the conducting of her household affairs.

George Rutherford was not entirely without suspicion that Lizzie was almost as cunning as she was handsome. But whenever these suspicions became evident to her watchful eye, she could so adapt herself to circumstances, and so accommodate her very look and voice to the occa-

sion ; she was so supplied also with a never-failing fund of excuses, evasions, and expedients, that her master, with his duller intellect, became not only baffled in pursuit, but often persuaded against his grave judgment, to let things take their usual course, without further investigation. In all her skilful manœuvres, Lizzie was considerably aided by a handsome face, a clear and brilliant complexion, and by a pair of quick dark eyes, so bright as almost to dazzle the glance which might be fixed upon them for the purpose of discovering truth, or falsehood. The worst of Lizzie was, that no one, not even those with whom she was most intimate, could tell exactly when she was true, and when false. Indeed, she was not very particular herself, so long as what she considered a good end was to be brought about ; and if secured by a falsehood, she had only, according to her creed, to confess to her priest, and all was made right again, without much trouble to anybody.

When Reuben Law rose early on the morning of his departure this girl was the one to prepare his breakfast, and to present him with her master's letter, at the same time conveying some messages from Paul, which Reuben thought he

might as well have delivered in his own person. She was the one also to stand at the door, after she had let him out, wiping her eyes with her apron, and wearing a countenance expressive of the most poignant distress; at all which Reuben felt very much inclined to laugh, for he was by no means sure that this unusual exhibition of grief had been productive of a single tear.

As the vehicle which conveyed Reuben away approached the neighbourhood of his home, he began to feel as most travellers do, much more interested in what he should meet with, than in what he had left behind. Nor was this interest unmixed with painful apprehensions; for while he found the first step in his enterprise more easy than his friends had anticipated for him, he was quite sensible that the great trial to his feelings, as well as his fortitude, was yet to come. In musing upon what awaited him, his thoughts turned much towards his mother. He knew her partial fondness, which had followed him from childhood, never alienated even by his most wayward moods; and though he believed his mother to be blinded in her judgment by a tenacious adherence to trifles, which a stronger minded woman would be able to cast aside as such, yet he

dreaded for himself, as well as for her, the pain he was about to inflict. And for what was he doing this? For what was he bringing vexation, annoyance, and perhaps disunion, into his home? When he looked back to the days of his childhood, the reasons for what he was now doing seemed so entirely inadequate to be weighed against a mother's love, that his resolution almost failed him, and he wished he had some better motive, at least some motive more urgent, as the ground of those arguments with which he endeavoured to fortify himself before entering his father's house.

Altogether, Reuben did not find much comfort in his thoughts, much repose in his feelings. He wished he had been mounted on a horse, that he might have set spurs to its sides, and galloped off these disagreeable sensations. The coach by which he travelled, he pronounced to be unusually slow, and more than once he urged the driver to make better use of his whip. Yet, with a strange perverseness, not altogether foreign to such cases, no sooner did a turn in the road bring the travellers immediately in sight of the last halting place, than he began to wish there was another mile to go. Instead of lengthening out

the distance now, they wound rapidly round the side of a hill; and, obedient to his orders, dashed at a somewhat dangerous speed into the village of Health, situated on the slope of a range of high ground, and immediately overlooking the valley in which his father's house was standing amongst its neighbouring cottages, peaceful and pretty as ever.

And was he to destroy that peace for a mere whim and fancy of his own, which, if carried out, would make nobody any better, or wiser, or happier? Reuben's spirits had fallen very low before he reached this point, and here he had to leave the coach and to walk across the fields to the Grange. He was in no haste to go. The little inn at which the coach stopped looked clean and comfortable. The people knew him, and were always pleased to see him. They had been placed there by his father, to sell the good ale from the brewery at the Grange. What should hinder him from stepping in to fortify himself with a little creature-comfort, before encountering his father's searching eye? So Reuben sat down in the parlour of the little inn, for it was long before the dinner-hour at the Grange, and he did not exactly know how to get rid of the intervening time.

Whether or not Reuben came out from his place of refreshment a wiser and a better man, he certainly came out a bolder man; and was able to proceed with a lighter step and a fearless brow, across the fields which led to his father's residence. And now excuses for returning home in this unexpected manner presented themselves to his mind in quick succession, and abundant variety. But he wanted no excuses now. He feared no man or woman either—why should he?

The first person Reuben met near home was Robert Moreton, and with him he held a long colloquy. Robert was more gravely interested than the occasion might seem to warrant. He had himself arrived at the same conclusion as Reuben, that the right time had come for casting aside the outward badge by which the members of the Society of Friends were universally known. He had been watching for the right opportunity for making this conviction known. His coat was ready, but his resolution was not. So much more difficult it is to cause pain, and even disapprobation, when situated amongst those whose dispositions are benevolent, and their habits courteous, kind, and generally just. Now, how-

ever, Robert felt encouraged; and it was agreed, after much earnest consultation, that they should both do the bold act at once—that Robert should put on his coat, made according to the customs of the world, and that they should, both habited in this manner, go and present themselves to Jacob Law alone, before he joined his family at the dinner-table.

Robert was prepared with grave arguments for what they were about to do, which Reuben was not. Besides this, he was cool and collected, and the very act itself was with him the result of much heart-searching enquiry into the principles of the whole matter, as well as into his own motives for the step he was about to take. Upon the whole, he believed that he had with him that guide whose promptings he had been taught to consider unerring; and he was prepared even to tell of his peace of mind disturbed by the impression that his past course had not been a right one, and by strong convictions growing upon him that if he would only put away the fear of man, he should be permitted to enjoy the reward he most coveted—that of the testimony of his own conscience that he had done right.

Robert felt very clear about all this. But then

he was of too sensitive a nature not to feel very apprehensive as to consequences—very much grieved at the idea of causing pain, and still more grieved, perhaps, at having his motives mistaken, and his conduct thought ill of by those whom he most esteemed and loved. Such is the strength and the power of the unseen chain which this society is able to weave around its members! They are apt to charge the young with unwillingness to take up the cross and suffer for the truth, when they do not conform in external things; but they little know how much more resolution, sense of right, and self-sacrifice, is required on the part of many of those who have dared in these matters to deviate for conscience-sake.

Never, until this morning, had Robert Moreton really counted the cost of what he was about to do. Never had he felt in its full force, what it would be, suddenly to sink in the esteem of one whom he both loved and admired, as he did Jacob Law. His own heart told him how far he had been wrong in other things, though he still trusted he was right in this. But now he was about to begin a new life altogether. He had a stern purpose to carry out—a grave duty to perform; and such being the case, it behoved him, in an especial

manner, to keep his hands clean from the touch of all that might pollute, and then to consecrate himself to the work. Very different were the feelings of the two young men on this subject, though alike their outward act, and very different were the results of the experiments they were about to make.

We have said more than once that Jacob Law was a man of quick feelings, and somewhat hasty temper. Impatient of reasoning, which to him contained no reason, and feeling little respect for resolutions which appeared to him to originate in mere caprice, it was difficult sometimes to induce him to listen with even so much attention as common fairness demands, to explanations, or excuses, when the thing to be excused had previously taken possession of his mind as a manifest absurdity, or worse.

Thus it must be owned, that the two young men had at first a somewhat stormy interview with Jacob Law. Indeed, Reuben, always soon roused into anger by what he considered injustice, or wrong, had not sufficient command over himself to refrain from many hasty, imprudent, and even disrespectful expressions, altogether producing an effect the very opposite to that which had been

anticipated by his calmer tempered friend. Often during the interview Robert had deeply to regret that he had not in cooler moments, and when alone, laid bare his heart to this true, but somewhat hasty judging friend, thus doing better justice both to himself, and his companion. The time for this was passed now. He looked into Reuben's face, and saw him heated, passionate, and indignant, yet he knew him well enough to understand that beneath this air of defiance there lurked a degree of wounded feeling, which he was striving, as he thought manfully, to conceal.

At last the controversy ended, as such too often do, with a worse opinion of each other on all sides. Reuben thought his father had grown more austere, and exacting than formerly. He himself was older, and had now no right to be treated like a child. He had surely the common privilege of a man—that of acting as he liked in trifles, or what was he? what indeed was life, or liberty, or anything which men in general valued? And now that he was come to live at home entirely :—The thought was intolerable? Anger, sorrow, and bitterness, seemed to fill his very soul.

“Come with me,” said Robert, gently laying hold of his arm. But Reuben shook off

the conciliating touch. He was not quite himself; and for that reason, he was the more ready to reject all counsel, and to resist all persuasion. These are dangerous moments. Parents should watch them well. Jacob Law, in reality the kindest of fathers, knew not what he was doing—saw not the fire he was kindling, nor dreamed of the ruin which it is just possible that a little care on his part might then have averted. Reuben was exactly in that state of mind in which a single word of unexpected kindness has more effect than a thousand reproaches. But the kind word was not spoken. The wound was inflicted, but not bound up; and the feverish excitement of the moment made the rankling pain only more intense.

The manner in which Reuben had conducted himself in this interview, his unexpected return, and the letter which he had thrown, rather than given to his father, the novel appearance of Robert Moreton in his new coat, as he came to table that day unaccompanied by Reuben, who had gone out nobody knew whither, all tended to throw the family into a state of consternation and dismay, never experienced within that quiet household before.

Robert felt it his duty to explain, and he

endeavoured to do so before the assembled family. But Jacob Law would not listen to his explanation, and the sisters were too anxious about Reuben's absence to care very much for the remoter reasons which his friend endeavoured to lay before them. Rebecca Law was greatly overcome, and as usual retreated to her own room. Susannah followed, but Lydia, hoping much from the assistance of Robert, asked him in the most earnest manner, if he would go with her in search of her brother.

Robert was perfectly willing to commence his search, but he knew better than to take with him such a companion. Promising faithfully to take the utmost care of her brother, and assuring her that nothing serious could happen to him, and that all would soon again be well, he left the house, and directed his steps towards the village on the side of the hill.

Here, where Reuben had lingered before, he was soon found—found, all heedless now, disposed only to laugh at what had passed, but unfit in every respect to present himself to his family. Robert Moreton knew not at first what to do. Every moment spent in this place, and in this manner, was only making matters worse. By the

use of all tact which he could call to his aid, he succeeded at last in drawing his friend away from the house; and, once upon the wild hill side, far out of sight, and out of hearing, he sat down with him, on some grey stones skirting a little wandering brook, which wound its rapid way down into the green valley below.

Here the two friends sat long, and almost silently. It was no time for words. The afternoon sun fell on them, tempered by the fresh air of the heathery hill. The stream as it murmured over its pebbly bed, produced a lulling tendency to slumber; and while the shadows of a few scattered birch trees lenthened on the grass, Reuben bent his hot brow upon his folded arms and fell asleep.

His companion slept not. How could he? Glad at heart to see this calmness overspreading the features of his friend, he so adjusted the moss-covered stones as to construct for him a better pillow; and then spreading a handkerchief over his head, that the slanting sunbeams might not shine full upon it, he listened to his low breathing, alternately with the soft murmur of the brook; and thus listening he sunk into a reverie so deep, so sad, that the sense of his own existence for a

time seemed lost in that of the sleeper by his side.

How few of us there are who have not known at some time or other in the course of our experience, what it is to have our best endeavours look evil, like our worst; and life has few more melancholy moments than those in which this moral balance seems to be destroyed, and the whole foundation of right, so far as regards ourselves, swept away into an abyss of doubt and fear.

A complicated social condition has great influence in producing this state of feeling—a condition in which the manifold interests of a highly civilized community interweave and entangle, if they do not actually oppose, each other; and where the seemly, the safe, and the most approved, are qualities which obtain a certain pre-eminence over simple right.

From such an entanglement of artificial estimates and plausible appearances, it is good sometimes to escape to the bold simplicity of nature, where the sunshine lies in all its bright reality upon the mountain's brow, and the breeze, unfettered, sweeps the surface of the barren rock, or waves the green boughs of the forest. It is good

to escape from the narrow conventionalities of polished life—from its frippery and its falsehood; better still, to look upon the broad bare face of nature, and to feed, though it may be but for a moment, upon those elements of boldness and solidity, as well as truth and beauty, which constitute the wholesome and genuine sustenance of a large and noble soul.

But there is much to be gone through before this sustenance can be received into a system long disordered, and thrown out of harmony with itself—it may be, long fed on poisons. There is a heart-searching work that must be done—a stern judgment that must be pronounced—a brokenness of spirit that must be endured. Nature has no harmony for any ear that has long been stunned by internal discord. Neither the sky with its clouds, nor the earth with its teeming flowers, has beauty for the eye which has grown dim under the glare of artificial light. The fields have no golden harvest to lay at the feet of him who has worn out his energies in sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind. Scarcely before advanced age can any one have arrived at this state of barrenness, and emptiness of artificial existence; and therefore is it good, especially for youth, to

fly sometimes to the woods and wilds, the caves and mountains, the lofty crags and the flower-spangled dells, there to commune face to face with truth, and conscience, and reality, and life, and death, and eternity.

He who sat musing beside his unconscious companion, gazed upon a lovely scene that day; but it was scarcely lovely to him—at least he was unable to drink in its loveliness so as to quench the fever of his burning thoughts. What had he done that all the world looked dark? Nothing, or if anything, an act so simply right, that he felt himself rather entitled to reward than punishment.

And yet there was a general sense of wrongness, almost of guilt, surrounding him, and he was tempted to say, what is the use of acting for conscience sake, if by this means the heart enjoys no peace? He had forgot that peace, true peace, was never bought by piecemeal—never purchased by little acts of right, without the offering up of the whole soul—the entire being, and its attributes, in return for the great sacrifice of One who asks no partial service, and accepts of no divided heart.

The heavy sleeper slept on, but he who watched his slumbers, lived in that long reverie through an age of thought. To that communion with his

own heart he was no stranger, though never till now had he seen and felt so strongly the great realities of life—especially the great—the awful realities of that life which has no reference to holiness—no link of connection with eternal blessedness and peace.

What is the value of such a life?—the very air seemed whispering this question. What is the value of thy selfish calculations—thy hot pleasure draughts—thy feverish dreams—thy tossings of vain delight upon a false and glittering sea? The very woods and rocks seemed echoing back the question, and he who heard them found no answer. Gazing—away—away, into the far golden west, he watched the sun go down. No longer lines of narrowing light went creeping up the hills; but deepening shadows met and mingled, and the whole earth was clothed in sombre shade. It was time to awake alike from reverie, and from sleep. There was a real world below into which both dreamers must descend, and in which both had yet to bear their part.

CHAPTER XIII.

The afternoon which has just been described was that of a cloudless summer's day; and scarcely had the shadows of the trees begun to lengthen on the slope of the hills, when the two youths descended with the fading light into the valley; and as they did so, recollected, with some dismay, that their presence must have been anxiously looked for at the Grange, especially as a party of friends were expected that evening.

Robert Moreton feeling rather uneasy under this apprehension, urged forward his reluctant companion, who, only half restored to proper consciousness, appeared very little disposed to take any part in the hospitalities of his father's house. As they drew near they saw that their return had been anxiously anticipated, for Lydia Law was watching in the garden, at that particu-

lar spot which commanded a view of the road; and no sooner did her quick eye catch sight of them, than she waved her hand impatiently, at the same time pointing to the house, as if to indicate that the important guests had arrived.

That day at the Grange seemed to be altogether one of mal-occurrences, and yet this last occasion was one which in an especial manner demanded the prevalence of domestic harmony, and peace. It was no ordinary visit which thus claimed the respectful attention of every member of the household, but one of a religious nature, in which an elderly friend was engaged, under what was described as a concern, to visit the various families comprehended in a certain district, as belonging to different specified meetings.

It is impossible for those unacquainted with the private habits of the Society of Friends to form any adequate idea of the solemnity of some of these occasions, always, however, like other means of religious improvement, either solemn or otherwise, according to the character and frame of mind of the several parties concerned. In order more clearly to understand this kind of intercourse, it is necessary to divest the mind of all idea of any sudden impulse, or casual impression of duty

being the moving spring of these deep communings of the spirit with those towards whom its anxieties are so earnestly directed. The whole matter is one of deliberate and careful examination, before it can be undertaken. The individual, laden with this concern, has to lay his case before a public-meeting, to be examined, weighed, and decided upon by the most impartial judges. The whole plan of procedure, as regards the places to be visited, and the meetings to be held, whether public or private, or both, has to be clearly stated, and openly recognized; and then, after due consideration by the body of Friends comprising the meeting to which the individual belongs, permission to proceed is granted, or withheld, according to what appears unitedly to be right; and if, as is most frequently the case, the decision is favourable to procedure, a certificate of liberation to that duty is granted, and the individual in due time, goes forth on his mission; or on *hers*, as the case may be, for these labours of love are as frequently undertaken by one sex, as the other.

On such occasions too, it often happens that a simultaneous concern is awakened in some other mind, so that two friends, not previously united by any particular intimacy, perform this arduous

duty together. And where this is not the case, a constant supply of suitable attendants is provided, so that the ministering brother, or sister, who travels with an express commission, shall on no occasion be perplexed about mere matters of comfort, or convenience, but remain entirely passive, having all such things arranged for them, and that in the most quiet, and methodical manner, but at the same time with the utmost kindness, and respect. Nothing in fact can exceed the regularity and order with which these affairs are conducted. Nor are such occasions less remarkable for an entire devotedness to the one great end of the mission, so that every other business, purpose, or requirement, is made to give place to that.

One of the leading features of the Society being their almost unbounded hospitality, it is needless to say that on such occasions a more than usual liberality in this respect accompanies the welcome offered to such travellers, wherever they may go, each family esteeming it a privilege to discharge the duty of entertainment, and thus clearly manifesting their reverence for the Master, by the many offices of respect and kindness which they perform for the servant.

It is no less wonderful than gratifying to observe how all this is managed, without the least hurry or confusion, even without any outward and visible manifestation of the direct means by which so vast an amount of real comfort is produced. All money calculations, especially, are dismissed, or kept behind the scene, as utterly unworthy of notice. Indeed, on all occasions connected with the solemn worship of God, whether in public or private, there could scarcely be anything, not positively wrong, more opposed to the habits and feelings of this Society, than the jingling of money after a sermon, or a prayer. So profound is their reverence for that intercourse between the soul and its Maker, which they believe to be entirely the work of the Holy Spirit operating upon the hearts and the minds of those who wait submissively for its influence.

Of all the numerous families concerned in the present visitation, there were perhaps none more liberal in their hospitality than the inhabitants of the Grange. It is true they had seldom been mentally less prepared than now, after the disturbances of the earlier part of the day; but as reproof and admonition were reasonably to be apprehended from such visitors, so also were strength

and consolation; and with this hope the mother roused herself to prepare for the arrival of her guests. That which in her own weakness she felt wholly inadequate to contend with, she might thus entrust to other hands; and since the delinquency to be dealt with was one that must be obvious to all, she nerved herself for a full recognition of its extent, and of the trial it had brought upon her own spirit. What were the real feelings of the father on this occasion he disclosed to no one; but his countenance was certainly less sunny than usual, and his salutation less cordial, as he stood in the hall to welcome the friends on their arrival.

Their mode of travelling was in a large one-horse chaise, with ample head or cover, which could be put up at pleasure; and along with them, by way of escort, rode a well-mounted young man, a son of the friends from whose house they last came. In this manner the ministering friends were accustomed to travel at the time of which we speak—sent on from family to family in the best available conveyance, and with all honorable attendance, and escort; so that with them individually there was no necessity for the slightest care about the mode of progress, or the time. All

was done for them as already said, and done without murmur or delay.

But whatever might be the hidden feelings of the different members of the household, never did the comfortable parlour at the Grange assume a more cheerful aspect than on the present occasion. Susannah took good care that such should be the case, and her skill in management, as well as her habitual self command, were equal almost to any emergency. With Lydia it was very different. Her fair face was flushed with anxiety, which she made little effort to conceal. Her usually smooth brow was slightly contracted, while a nervous compression of her rosy lips indicated that her mind was ill at ease. The visitors, however, were not persons likely to be particularly observant of such matters; and before they had divested themselves of their travelling equipments, and fairly settled in for the evening, the master of the house had almost entirely regained his accustomed look and tone of cordial welcome.

With all the strong and hereditary feelings of the Society engrafted upon their early habits of thought, and action, it would have been impossible for the two youths, habited as they now were for the first time in their lives, not to experience

a most uncomfortable degree of restraint. With one, however, all feeling seemed to be deadened for awhile; but not so with the other. Robert Moreton a few hours ago had devoutly believed himself struggling, and even suffering, in a righteous cause; but such is the power of association, and of long habit, and such is the influence of parental, family, and social affection operating upon a grateful and sensitive nature, that as he came rather sheepishly forward to shake hands with the Friends, he felt for the moment exceedingly like a thief, or any other kind of guilty creature, who ought at best to be very much ashamed of himself.

It was certainly rather curious, as he forced himself into this act of courtesy, to see the upraised eyes, and astonished aspect of the old Friend, who, retaining the reluctant hand for a moment in his, looked round to the master of the house, asking deliberately and, in a mournful voice, "Is this the son of William Moreton, of Bankside?"

But a greater and more perplexing surprise was yet to come. Reuben Law stood behind, and he also had to shake hands with the Friends: he also was clothed in the same extraordinary manner. Upon this, however, the Friend made no direct remark;

only he took care to manifest pretty clearly what was the nature of his feelings, by turning again to the father, and saying in a yet more mournful tone—"Is this *thy* son, Jacob?"

Unable to make any comment upon the matter at the time, Jacob Law answered both questions rather shortly, only reserving an extra portion of contempt for that which applied to his own son. But the mother, sighing deeply, and audibly, looked up to the Friends with a distressed expression of countenance, which implied a more than ordinary appeal for sympathy, saying, in a voice of extreme sadness,—“Thou seest, James, the outsteppings of these young men.” James did see it, indeed, and his spirit became so burdened, that during the whole tea time, he scarcely spoke a word.

The companion of the old man was one of those characters, which it would scarcely be possible to find beyond the pale of the Society of Friends, and as his daughters will claim a little interest in the attention of the reader, a slight notice of their father, Gilbert Mansfield, may not be out of place here. He was a man who had passed through much affliction; trouble, more than age, having bowed his fine head, and whitened his once beau-

tiful hair. In addition to the education, birth, and bearing of a gentleman, he was a gentleman by nature, and perhaps for that very reason he had been the less fitted to engage in those sordid struggles which constitute so large a portion of most men's experience. At all events, he had fallen from a position of apparent affluence, to the most straitened and humiliating circumstances, to which any one can well be subjected, without having absolutely done wrong. There had been a time when, according to the strict discipline of the Society to which he belonged, others had been compelled to investigate the state of his business affairs; and it was but recently that he had been able to hold up his head, as a person free to walk the honourable path of exemption from all pecuniary claims. The case was peculiar, for no one acquainted with his circumstances could really blame Gilbert Mansfield himself. He was no speculator. He had not borrowed, nor appropriated other people's money; but after a series of what appeared to him to be unavoidable losses, he had laid the whole matter before the meeting to which he belonged; and such was the esteem in which he was universally held, that the Friends who had been deputed by the meeting to examine the state

of his affairs, when all had been satisfactorily settled, of their own accord jointly advanced on his behalf the means of establishing him in another kind of business, where the chances of any serious loss were much smaller than before. In this manner he was at present struggling on, sparing neither industry, nor care, but alas! advancing slowly in the way of hope, or profit.

Those who would have thought it hard to blame Gilbert Mansfield himself, were in many cases less charitably disposed towards his wife, whose decease after a lingering illness, had left him with the charge of a delicate and interesting family of four children. The mother had been a particularly lady-like woman, whom many of the friends considered a little too indulgent both to herself and to others, and who was regarded by the Society in general as far too solicitous to maintain a place and a figure before the world. The refinement and even elegance with which her table and her house had been furnished, occasioned no little scandal when it was discovered, how slight was the pecuniary structure by which this elegance had been for some time sustained; nor were the remarks which the fact called forth at all lessened in their bitterness by the consideration

that she herself had brought no fortune to her husband, only high notions, extravagant and self indulgent habits. They might have added, had they chosen to look on the brighter side of the picture, a delicate constitution, interesting person and manners, superior intellect, great attainments, and a spirit by nature, at once both high and sensitive.

Whether Gilbert Mansfield became an altered man, as he unquestionably was, both in person and character, in consequence of the death of his wife, or the depression of his circumstances, it would have been difficult to decide, both calamities happening so nearly at the same time. Certain it was, that he never seemed to be the same man again, but drooped both in person and in spirit. It is probable he never had possessed a particularly firm or lofty nature, though some considered him in his fallen state as only justly punished for certain worldly and aspiring tendencies, which the Friends are perhaps a little too ready to suppose must necessarily be associated with any extra amount of embellishment, if at all bordering on display. But whatever these tendencies in the case of Gilbert Mansfield might once have been, the very nature of the man seemed now

crushed out. Even his tall figure, once so erect and graceful, was now bent forward as if he bowed his head to meet humiliation. And that head so fine and high, with all its waving wreaths of silken hair—that face, with its pale features all so finely moulded, only attenuated now, so as to look like the mere framework of original beauty—how sad it was to see in contemplating both, that the boldness and the determination of the man, the hard battling nature, even the working and provisional faculties must always have been deficient there. Benevolence there was, perhaps, a little in excess; and the most profound reverence for all things high and holy. But from whence was the strength, the force, the stern majesty of determined action to come? No; while the tall thin figure stooped—while the head was bent down, and the white hands were folded in the attitude of unresisting submission, some mere casual observer might have entertained for the moment a slight feeling of contempt for the *man*; but when he could be drawn out into conversation, when his eyes looked upwards, when his lips were eloquent, as they could be in expatiating upon beauty and goodness—especially upon the wisdom or the mercy of God, then it

became evident that however low the place assigned on earth to natures of this mould, they are not far from assimilation with the best conception we are able to form of angelic beings. One test of resemblance one bond of brotherhood had been wanting. For that there had been groanings of spirit unutterable by mortal tongue; until at last, sustained by the steady and unswerving faith of the true believer, this lowly suppliant for mercy had not only received the assurance of peace, but had ventured sometimes to lift up his head like other men, because like others, he was not only permitted, but invited, to lay the burden of his sorrows at the Saviour's feet.

There was something in the gentle voice, the conciliating manners, and the humbled aspect of this man, which had always been particularly agreeable to Rebecca Law; and she was not backward on the present occasion in extending towards him all those little manifestations of personal kindness which were calculated to express something like a welcome into the same fold with herself. Not that Gilbert Mansfield had risen as yet up to the rank of an acknowledged minister; but he had for some time past

felt called upon in meeting to deliver with much trembling and weakness, small fragments of encouragement or advice, most frequently couched in the language of Scripture. The present was the first time he had ventured so far as to express a concern to visit others in a religious capacity, and just in proportion to the humble, downcast nature of the feelings which he most sincerely entertained with regard to himself, was his profound abasement under the awful charge which he now believed to be laid upon him.

To Jacob Law it was perhaps less comprehensible than to his wife, how any man should be thus bent down, while discharging what he clearly saw to be a duty; and in order to raise up what appeared to him an unnecessarily broken spirit, as well as to break through the general feeling of restraint, he did his best to introduce such topics of conversation as might make the long and plentiful meal more cheerful. All efforts of this kind, however, proved entirely unavailing, until the great business of the visit should have been transacted.

When *it is well*, or felt to be well with a house or family, the visitors who travel in this capacity will often both enjoy and diffuse a large amount

of cheerfulness. But when there is cause for painful anxiety, as seemed but too clearly to be the case in the present instance, an indescribable weight and gravity will sometimes pervade both the looks and the words of the visitors, such as no ordinary efforts of civility are at all capable of dissipating, and the members of the Society understand this too well to persevere in any such attempts.

On the present occasion it appeared most congenial to all parties, that a long and solemn silence should succeed to the refreshing meal. The servants of the household, well aware of the nature of the visit, and contemplating the serious tendency of the evening's engagement, maintained a quietness throughout the house which none would have dared to interrupt, however urgent might have been any ordinary demand upon the attention of the family.

It would be out of place here to attempt any description of what took place, or of what was said during this solemn opportunity, as such meetings and exercises are often called. Suffice it that many tears were shed by the young people; that those who had so visibly departed from the safe and narrow way were earnestly admonished

to return; and that after expatiating much upon the experience of early Friends, and the peace which they had found within the limits of simplicity and truth, and then sinking again into a long silence, the meeting broke up, with strong evidences of relief on the part of those who had ministered; though in the case of Gilbert Mansfield, little had been said beyond a few words of parental yearning over those who appeared not yet to have learned the true value of their privileges as members of the Society of Friends.

After this, all having been done to which these willing and obedient servants had felt themselves called, a more cheerful train of conversation was pursued; while all the domestic transactions of the household went on in the accustomed manner. After breakfast on the following morning, when a chapter in the Bible as usual had been read to the assembled family, a short address of a more general nature was delivered by the aged Friend; and then, a journey of considerable length having to be accomplished that day, the Friends departed, taking with them the same escort as before. It would, under other circumstances, have been the right and the privilege of either Robert Moreton, or Reuben Law, to conduct them to their next

stage of service. Neither of these young men, however, were now considered eligible for such a duty; for, notwithstanding a little private admonition extended to them alone, and separate from the rest of the family, notwithstanding too the many tears of the mother, and the daughters, they had appeared at breakfast in the same offensive fashion which had awakened such deep and painful anxiety on the previous night.

One word before entirely leaving this subject, lest the writer should be understood to charge the Society of Friends with attaching ideas of peculiar sanctity to one form of dress, and peculiar culpability to another. It is not the form, as such, but the *change*, the departure, the deviation from established rule, and custom, which causes the pain here described, and which, not unreasonably awakens grave suspicions, that when once a particular line of demarcation has been broken down, other deviations of a more important nature will inevitably follow. It seems impossible too, under such circumstances, for older Friends, or those of the more rigid school, to attribute to the young any other motive for this change, than a desire to throw off the restraints of simplicity, and even decorum, to break down,

as they so often say, the old landmarks—to throw themselves open to the assaults of the enemy; and especially to imbibe, along with their conformity to the habits of the world, that worst portion of a worldly spirit, which would be likely to lead, eventually, from frivolity to an entire disregard of the teachings of the conscience, or internal guide. With these all-pervading views engrafted upon the mind along with its earliest conceptions of right and wrong, no wonder that the cut of a coat, the turn of a bonnet, the fold of a dress, or the shade of a ribbon, should sometimes occasion the most poignant anxiety; not on account of the thing itself, but on account of the motives from which it is supposed to have originated, and the consequences which are expected to ensue.

CHAPTER XIV.

MANY circumstances concurred about this time to dissipate, and in some sense to alleviate, the painful interest which had been excited by the eccentric proceedings of the two young men at the Grange.

Amongst these, was the occurrence of one of those periodical gatherings of the Society, which form important eras in their experience, and their history. In these meetings, which are held regularly, for the purpose of general discipline, as well as for worship, an amount of interest is concentrated, which it would be impossible adequately to describe; for, whether these opportunities are regarded by the old or the young, the grave or the gay, by those who bear the burden of the discipline, or those who only meet for friendly intercourse, the whole gathering is of such importance, that vast expenses are incurred, vast preparations

made, and sometimes whole families travel together for a distance of many miles, at no small sacrifice of convenience, and domestic comfort. Indeed, it is the custom on these occasions, to make way for all to attend who can. Even the poor are frequently supplied from the funds of the Society with the means of being present at the meetings; and when the inclination to go is not very manifest, it is carefully stimulated by friends and relatives, in the belief that such assembling of the great body of the Friends together is likely to be the means of much individual as well as public benefit.

Nor is it only from the more solemn services of public worship that this benefit is anticipated; but also from the operation of that system of discipline which, for its regularity, and order, has no parallel in the whole of our social structure. In the official carrying out of this system, in the keeping of public records, in the dealing with particular cases of a personal nature, in appointments for service, and in the arrangement of all concerns belonging to education, and to social and domestic morals, the female part of the community fill no inferior place. And from this cause; chiefly, perhaps, from the habit of being present

when public business of this kind is transacted, as it must be in the most prompt, decided, and efficient manner; from the liability of each, at one time or other, to serve under some appointment for the discharge of duty; the women of this Society have acquired a high standing with regard to cleverness in business transactions, in addition to a certain dignity of character, which, when combined with softness of manners, invests them with a most rare and peculiar charm. Singular they may be, in their appearance, and address; but let there be something really to be done, and the women Friends are those who will do it, and that too in the most rational, decided, and effectual manner.

Still, it must be granted that, in their customary and periodical assemblies, there are many who attend with no higher purpose than just to meet their friends, or to enjoy the excitement of seeing who is there. We will not venture so far as to say that any go for the purpose of being seen; but, as human nature is pretty much the same under every kind of costume, we doubt not but there are preparatory arrangements which include about as much making up, turning, trimming, and adjustment to the person, as any of those

more lively and brilliant displays in which the gay world delights.

Far be it from the writer to insinuate that such was the case with either of the two fair cousins, Lydia and Dora, on the occasion of an annual gathering about to take place at the time of which we write. But certainly there had been many pleasant prospects clouded, many earnest consultations interrupted, and much innocent enjoyment sadly damped, by what had recently taken place in the family at the Grange; so that Lydia thought she should scarcely like to go, even if permission were granted by her parents. Dora was of a different opinion. She saw no reason, she said for "moping at home." The thing was but a trifle after all. It would soon blow over, and then every one would be just as good, and just as comfortable as before. Besides which, their attendance at the General Meeting would make a nice break in the family uncomfortableness; and as her uncle and aunt were under the necessity of going, it would be absolute folly to remain at home.

While listening to these potent arguments the fair fingers of Lydia were not idle, but continued to be rather languidly employed, sometimes sorting out the most delicate gloves from a number

that were all but white, and then adjusting the still more delicate strings of a new bonnet, so exquisitely constructed of the mildest possible dove coloured silk, that it would seem as if no human hands could have turned out a piece of work so spotless, and unruffled, in every shining thread. Then there were fringes to cut half off from little triangles of silk, in this instance perfectly white. And so the delicate fingers went on, still softly, but by no means giving the matter entirely up, even though the pensive eyes were cast down, and the lips continued to give utterance to the language of unabated sorrow.

“Come, come,” said Dora at last; “thee must go, cousin Liddy, and what’s more, thee shalt.”*

* If it should be observed here that the language of one of the speakers differs grammatically from that of others, this fact, so patent to all, can only be explained as one of those inconsistencies which the Society of Friends have allowed to creep in amongst their social habits; and which they themselves would find it very difficult to account for. This mode of speech is the more remarkable as it prevails only in the south of England, and in some parts of Ireland; varying in its degree, and mode of incorrectness, in different places. Indeed, it is truly wonderful that an enlightened body of people, in adopting for conscience sake, a more correct mode of speech than is generally used, should allow themselves thus to deviate, as widely from grammatical propriety, as from

“But Reuben! poor dear Reuben;” sighed Lydia.

“Well, do thee know,” said Dora, “I have had a good long talk with Reuben; and he seems as if he really did not wish to go—had quite rather not; and under present circumstances I think he is wise. Robert, I think, would like to go.”

“I don’t want Robert,” said Lydia, pouting and hanging down her head.

“No more do I,” observed her cousin; “only he would do to walk about with. To be sure, there is William.”

“Is William going?” said Lydia, looking up for the first time.

“Why, yes,” replied her cousin; “he is to take me in our chaise. How else should I go?”

Strange to say, the hesitating and reluctant Lydia, just as these words were uttered, rose up from her seat, and began in rather a spirited man-

good taste. Even in the North of England, where the broader *thou* is retained in all its integrity, the verb is seldom allowed to agree with its pronoun; so that a certain harshness is the result in one case, with something like affectation in the other—both equally at variance with the general habits of those by whom these peculiarities are adopted.

ner to count out half a dozen sweetly scented pocket handkerchiefs of the finest cambric, adding to this effort a few preparatory movements which plainly indicated that her mind was changed.

Dora made no further remark upon the change, but took it for granted that all would now go on to her heart's content; only that she summed up, on the satisfactory side of things, the circumstance of Susannah's remaining at home to take care of Reuben, and to get all settled by the time the heads of the family should return.

And so it generally was on such occasions, that Susannah held by the most difficult post of duty; and if there was any pleasure to be taken by others, she was the one to smooth the way, so that there should if possible be no regrets to mingle with their enjoyment. She could well afford this now, for she had her own secret store of happiness to live upon, and to sustain her throughout the performance of every duty. There is little doubt, however, but she would have done the same, had all her pleasant pictures been destroyed.

The mode of travelling in the days we write of, was more social than expeditious. Large family conveyances moved forward by easy stages along

the great high roads ; and well frequented inns were prepared to receive, into many a comfortable parlour, the guests who met sometimes in considerable parties by the way.

Our little procession consisted of two roomy chaises. That of Jacob Law contained himself, his wife, and daughter, the fair Lydia being placed between her parents on a low but somewhat prominent seat. The other chaise contained only Dora, and her cousin William Greenfell, who with the charge of his aunt's chaise, but his own rather spirited and dashing horse, found some difficulty in keeping always behind the more important vehicle. At every place of refreshment the two parties joined company ; and pleasant was their mutual interchange of cordial greetings when they did so ; for notwithstanding recent events, there was something so exhilarating in the fine weather, the excellent roads, and the prospect of social intercourse to come, that Jacob Law, who was constitutionally more than commonly alive to such influences, seemed to forget his troubles for awhile, and conducted himself as the master of the hospitalities by the way, with all his accustomed social kindness, and even with a cheerfulness which had the happy effect of rousing the drooping spirits of the whole party.

How different to such men is the present railroad speed of flying past every old accustomed rendezvous. Jacob Law would probably have been one of the most strenuous advocates of railway travelling, and yet he would have sadly missed those warm inn welcomes, in the enjoyment of which he found himself so much at home, especially while dispensing comfort and enjoyment to others.

So the little party journeyed on, until, on one occasion, there happened to be a somewhat earnest consultation amongst the three young people, Dora pleading, Lydia blushing, and William Greenfell condescending to express himself in a style very much like extravagance, if not absolute folly. In fact, he was heard to say, that Dora and he were completely tired of each others company, that she had called him the most wearisome of companions, and that unless Lydia would take pity upon him, and change places with her cousin, he should beg of Jacob Law to let him drive his chaise, so that Dora might be placed beside her uncle.

“That is the very thing I want,” said Dora. “I want to talk with uncle, and I intend to ride in Lydia’s place, at least for a few miles.”

While saying this, she lifted up her pleading face to Jacob, who was at that moment adjusting the harness of his horse, and with a look which few men would have been able to refuse, she asked him plainly to let her change places with Lydia for awhile.

In the mean time William Greenfell had rather adroitly half lifted Lydia into his chaise; and this time taking the lead, he drove out of the Inn yard, without another word, so that the three remaining travellers were compelled to make the best of what fell to their share.

“That horse of William’s travels well,” was the only remark which this adjustment of matters elicited from Jacob Law. And true enough, they had not gone more than a mile before the first chaise had fairly vanished out of sight. It was a long stage this time, and the last of the journey. Evening was drawing on, and the shadows of the trees in the sunset had begun to fall at intervals heavy and dark upon the road, before the trampling feet of many horses, and the roll of many wheels, all converging towards one point, announced that other parties besides ours, were drawing near the place of appointed duty for the morrow, but of rest for the advancing night.

We will not attempt to describe the great assembly of Friends from all parts of the kingdom who met for public worship in the morning of the following day; for it will be with little groups, rather than with the whole, that we shall have to do. It is sufficient that the place of meeting was a school—a large public school for members of the Society of Friends, established and maintained by the voluntary contributions of the entire united body; and that this great gathering was one which took place annually, for the purpose of examining into the state of the school, the progress of the pupils, and the general right working, and prosperity of the establishment.

It has ever been a marked and noble feature in the economy of that system by which the affairs of the Society of Friends are conducted, that they have no *poor* according to the usual application of that word; and that a sound and useful education is provided for all their members, so that none can remain ignorant except from choice, and none can have any plea for soliciting pecuniary help from other quarters. In the maintenance of this school especially, a praiseworthy example is afforded to the whole christian community; for no one receiving instruction here is

subjected to anything calculated to remind them individually of being objects of charity. Many parents, indeed, in easy and affluent circumstances, and large contributors themselves to the support of the school, taking advantage of what they believe to be the excellent method of instruction pursued, place their children under the same discipline with those of their poorer neighbours; and it is remarkable how the whole number, amounting to about three hundred, mix together without distinction, without knowing—and what is still more remarkable—without regarding the fact of their companions being either high or low in the scale of society beyond those walls.

It is true the discipline is somewhat narrow, and severe, to those who have been liberally and delicately nurtured at home. At the time of which we write, it was extremely so; for the Friends being always slow to follow in the track of improvement touching external matters, a degree of homeliness, not to say coarseness, almost beyond belief at the present day, was maintained to a very late period throughout all the domestic and personal arrangements of the school. If, however, the coarse stuff dress, little close caps, and checked aprons of the girls, with the long grey coats and

leathern lower garments of the boys, were calculated to excite a smile in some of the well-dressed visitors who assembled on the present occasion; or if the reader should ask whether such things could be possible in an age so refined, and enlightened, we have only to look from them to the little figures so often seen at the present day in the streets of London, in a costume still more remarkable, yet tolerated from the honorable distinction it confers upon what are familiarly called the "blue coat boys."

At the time of which we write, and even some years later, the children at this school ate their food off wooden trenchers—food, moist and dry; and on two days every week it was very moist indeed. This, and all other refreshments of the dinner table, had to be taken up as might be with a narrow knife, and often a strangely distorted fork of two prongs, exceedingly wide apart, the act of drinking being performed twice, on the passing along the table, for general use, of a tall tin can, which for the first time contained water, for the second exceedingly small beer.

A few other particulars of discipline, as well as diet, much more remarkable than these, might easily be noticed here, but that the afternoon of

the first day of meeting has arrived; and the company having dispersed for a short season of liberation from duty, some of them standing in little social groups about the grounds and garden. These, it must be observed, are spacious and admirably kept, affording evidence of that watchful care, strict oversight, and systematic order which, indeed, pervade the entire establishment. For, whatever it may be in its external aspect, it shares, in a large measure, that high merit which belongs to everything entirely under the management of the Friends; that it has no mean points of defect—nothing, in short, beneath the surface less to be commended than that above.

So the quiet social parties stroll about, sometimes enjoying the pleasure of some unexpected recognition, and sometimes penetrating into more remote and shady places, to indulge a confidential chat with old friends, perhaps long separated. Such are the innocent, cordial, and rational pleasures, in which these meetings abound.

It is scarcely necessary to say that here, the young and the lovely are as much objects of attraction as elsewhere; that a favourite in society maintains as much her little court; that a belle is

as much surrounded by her beaux; or that personal remark, and even gossip, are as rife here as in circles which present a very different aspect as regards bearing and costume. But, as already said, human nature is still the same, and consequently there were those to be found even here, whose conversation, or rather talk, was plentifully interspersed with comments upon appearance, dress, and all such matters, out of which a little scandal is but too likely to arise.

With one of these individuals Dora had become acquainted; and, we are sorry to be obliged to confess it, but Dora herself was not wholly exempt from this tendency. Her cousin William lectured her gravely on the subject; for if there was one style of conversation which he hated more than all others, and for which he really had not always the patience demanded by common civility, it was that which "tore up," as he called it, "people's wardrobes, assigning to them what clothes they should put on."

With a little touch of perverseness, Dora, on the present occasion, persisted in chatting with this acquaintance whenever they met; and, as choice directed them to that part of the public playground in which the boys had little gardens

of their own, interspersed with fairy walks, and often ornamented with tiny structures, upon which they expended both ingenuity and taste, our little party, consisting of William Greenfell, with Dora on one side and Lydia on the other, became suddenly aware, that standing near them, were two female figures in conversation so earnest and absorbing, as scarcely to regard what might be moving past or around them.

Observing how William had stopped lest he should encroach upon the privacy of this interview, the busy acquaintance came up, and said eagerly, "Do you know who those young women are? They are Gilbert Mansfield's daughters. That tall, pale, nun-like creature in the black silk dress and white crape shawl, is Alice, who broke her heart about a young officer."

"Let us go away," said William. But Dora was all curiosity to hear more; and even Lydia seemed disinclined to move, so much was she struck with the expressive looks and gestures, and with the general appearance of the two sisters.

"Only look at that shawl," said the speaker. "It is real China crape. They say he brought it for her from India."

"No, no," said Dora. "Jane Bradshaw told

friend Birt, it was her mother's, and everybody says her mother had beautiful things of all kinds."

"Well," observed the first speaker, "I only wonder Gilbert Mansfield allows that deep fringe. I am sure it looks very inconsistent with his visiting families, and speaking in meetings."

All the while the two sisters went on with their conversation, and never heard, never thought, never cared, whether they were observed or not. Wrapped in their own most earnest considerations, they seemed to be existing in a little world by themselves—a very sorrowful world it evidently was to one—a very real world to the other. That other, the younger of the two, was an official of the school, wearing the close cap, large muslin apron, and dark stuff dress of those who were engaged in teaching on the female side of the establishment. She was of short stature, somewhat broad, though very agile in figure, with fair and bright complexion, hazel eyes, and auburn hair. What was most remarkable in her features, was a certain boldness and nobility of the finely curved but somewhat protruding chin, with a mouth expressive of determination and vigour, both of mind and body. And although the subject

of interest at the present moment was visibly one of extreme sadness, the countenance altogether bore strong indications of a cheerful animated spirit, which could enter as cordially into sympathy with enjoyment as with sorrow, perhaps a little more so.

Had any one been looking about the world for a companion as well as instructress for their children, it would have been difficult to find one altogether more *likely* than Margaret Mansfield; and, though hemmed in by her present circumstances within rather a narrower sphere than her large heart and liberal nature would have chosen, the popularity of this junior teacher amongst the pupils was such as to awaken, not unfrequently, a slight touch of jealousy in the minds of those who stood higher than herself. This feeling, however, she was always the most prompt and anxious to meet by voluntarily resigning every pleasure, and avoiding every mark of favour which could in any way distinguish her from others.

Scarcely could a greater contrast be presented than by the appearance of these two sisters, who yet seemed equally absorbed in the same point of interest, to the exclusion of all others. The older sister might well in such a place become the

subject of remark, for except that her dress in its actual form was that of the Society of Friends, there was nothing in her look, or bearing, to denote her identity with them. Black was not at that time much used by the Society; yet Alice Mansfield always dressed in black, relieved by white. Ever since a certain period of her life, this had been her habit. Some people called it affectation, some romance. Many condemned it, and but few admired. Whether generally approved, or not, this somewhat solemn looking costume harmonised rather remarkably with the stately figure, high bearing, and pale abstracted look of the wearer, whose glossy braids of raven hair afforded no variety in the general tone and character of her appearance. Her eyes also, were of the same hue, while her cheek, in its almost deadly paleness, scarcely differed from the soft white shawl which gave so much offence.

There was perhaps something wanting towards the general aspect of conciliation, as expressed by the older sister, when addressed by any mere acquaintance; but this was more than made up for by the younger, whose very look, and especially her smile, was cordial and winning in the extreme; and such was her love, her enthusiastic

admiration, and devoted tenderness for her sister, as to leave little doubt but that the cold abstracted looking Alice possessed qualities of heart, as well as head, that were more than ordinarily endearing. As a kind of apology for her sister, Margaret would sometimes say it was worth a king's ransom to see Alice laugh. To this fact, however, there were but few witnesses, only sometimes when the sisters were alone, such was the frank, impulsive cheerfulness of the younger, that even Alice for awhile forgot her sorrows, and joined in the merry laughter of their early days.

The subject of their conversation on the present occasion appeared to be almost equally distressing to both. They had recently lost a young brother, a delicate child, who, under the direction and advice of Friends, had been early placed at that school. After a very short illness, he had died there, sinking too rapidly to admit of either his father or Alice reaching the scene of suffering before all suffering had ceased. Alice was now making inquiries respecting his illness, asking again and again if Margaret really thought he had been attentively cared for, and kindly nursed.

“Towards the last, I am quite sure he was,” said

Margaret; "I saw to that myself; besides I know there is no want of care in the nursery."

"But what brought the illness on?" asked Alice.

She had made the same inquiry many times, and Margaret still evaded; for little Arthur had been a delicate boy in mind as well as body, and there was reason to fear he had suffered in both, by being put upon by the other boys, made to do their errands, fetch the water for their gardens, and many other services, which his gentle spirit could not refuse. It was to see what had been Arthur's little garden, that the sisters had come to this part of the grounds. And here in a tiny plot of earth, which had now passed into other hands, were many affecting evidences of the poor boy's natural taste, and fancy. Especially a kind of temple, scarcely large enough for the shelter of a sparrow, with many other proofs of a refined and imaginative character, such as Arthur had possessed from childhood, but which would seem to have been sadly out of place in such a school as this.

"He should never have been sent here," said Alice, and just for a moment her dark eyes flashed, and there rose into her cheeks a colour so brilliant, that her whole countenance seemed almost set on

fire, only that it faded instantaneously into a whiteness like the hue of death.

Margaret looked into her sister's face, caught the infection of her feelings, and exclaimed—
“Oh! why are we so poor? If I had but a little money, even now!”

“It is too late,” sighed Alice, and just at that moment they were interrupted. Margaret, in uttering her exclamation, with clasped hands, unconscious of all around her, had dropped her handkerchief; and the next thing which the curious observers saw, was William Greenfell, who had silently left his party, now stepping forward, taking up the handkerchief, and presenting it to the fair owner with a grace the truest of all, because it was the grace of kindness. As he did this, he said gently in an undertone, “I hope you will excuse me; but I think you are overheard.”

When he presented the handkerchief, Margaret had started, and now, with that habitual consciousness of present things, which seldom forsook her, she blushed deeply, for she was forcibly struck with the absurdity of her last words, and perhaps with the inappropriateness of the scene altogether.

In acknowledgment of William's kind attention, Alice moved gracefully, with the nearest possible approach to a curtsy, but she did not speak. It was one of her personal peculiarities that she *could* thus move. How she had learned to do so, nobody knew. Most likely nature had taught her, for on no account would it be permitted amongst consistent Members of the Society of Friends, that a young person should be instructed in a definite and methodical manner, how to receive an act of courtesy, how to enter a room, or how in any other way so to manage the framework of the body as to render an outward act expressive of an inward emotion. Hence, much of that shyness, awkwardness, and hesitancy of manner which is really no index whatever of the true character of this people. The fact is, they really do not know what to do on first meeting with strangers, or encountering mixed society; for where the shaking of hands would be out of place, or that little nod with which a familiar friend is sometimes recognised, there is really no possible act of civility remaining to them; and they often walk bolt upright, or remain silent, motionless, and apparently unmoved, when their hearts are full of cordiality,

and their feelings are warm with social interest, and genuine kindness.

After William Greenfell's well-meant caution, the two sisters quietly retired, leaving the observant party a little ashamed of the part they had been acting, and making Lydia, in particular, disposed to admire her companion more than she had ever done before.

But an event of considerable moment was awaiting the sisters, and one of which they never dreamed while gazing on the little garden of their lost brother. The great assembly of Friends had scarcely dispersed, and all the different families settled down again in their own houses, when an official letter to the Mansfields, announced that an uncle on the mother's side, with whom they had held but little intercourse, was dead, and had bequeathed to his sister's children all the property he possessed. It is scarcely necessary to say, that this property, though not very considerable in itself, seemed like an ample fortune to those whom the joyful tidings most concerned.

CHAPTER XV.

WE must now turn our attention more especially to the family of Gilbert Mansfield, as there are phases of the picture yet to be drawn, requiring circumstances to be delineated which differ widely from those of the family at the Grange.

Gilbert Mansfield, as already said, had enjoyed many social and domestic advantages in early life. He had married young, and his home, under the happy auspices of a perfectly congenial union, had for some time been the favourite resort of a large and agreeable circle of friends, not by any means confined to members of the religious body to which he belonged. Amongst these, was a Mrs. Conway, an officer's widow, who was the most intimate and frequent companion of his wife. Much blame was attached by the Society in general to this laxity of intercourse with the world; but the wife of Gilbert Mansfield was not a woman to resign even a com-

mon acquaintance, much less an intimate and valued friend, at the dictation of any human being: scarcely did she ever admit the right of advice from any person, less capable than herself, of understanding the merits of the cases. Thus the intimacy went on, until the time of her death, and even after that; the widow and her only child, a boy just one year older than Alice Mansfield, were amongst the most familiar associates of the stripped, and somewhat helpless family.

At the time of the great change in Gilbert's circumstances, the noble constancy of Mrs. Conway, manifested itself in a manner to which no generous and grateful heart could have remained insensible. The younger children were taken for some time to be cared for beneath her roof; while Alice, upon whom the care of the household devolved, as yet herself but a child, found in her mother's early friend the best advice, and the surest help under all her difficulties.

For some years the widow's son was mostly absent at a military school, from whence he returned home a tall handsome man, and a soldier.

What was to be done? The scarlet coat made

a strange figure, as it might be seen, and that not very seldom, entering Gilbert Mansfield's now humble door; for the family had removed to a small house, and were living in a manner very different from their former style. But the youth, with something of his mother's nature, cared little for such matters, only thinking how neat and cosey the small parlour looked, and how lovely Alice, his favourite playfellow, had grown.

Yes, she was indeed lovely then, with dark, deep, flashing eyes, and a colour always heightened when the sounding step of the young soldier was heard along the path before the door. And, somehow or other, Alice could hear that step at an almost incredible distance, and recognise it too. Somehow or other, the habits of the youth also grew into a sort of lingering, and late-staying, when he did come. Margaret never knew exactly how late, for being three years younger than her sister, she went to bed early, like a good little child; while Alice remained up to transact many family affairs, and to make her father's supper a social and comfortable meal.

It would have been no easy duty, considering old ties and old associations, for Gilbert Mansfield to forbid the youth his house. He found it rather

difficult even to request him not to stay so late ; and strange to say, though the young soldier was thus admonished, and though he promised to do better, and actually kept his promise for a week ; yet again he was found seated beside his old playmate when the master of the house, tired with the strife of business, came in with aching head and heart, to spend a quiet hour before retiring for the night.

Perhaps the spectacle of these two happy creatures, who always had a sunny smile to welcome him, did not annoy or vex the desolate father as some appeared to think it should have done. Perhaps he was so weak, so lonely, so stripped of happiness himself, that he could not stretch out a hand for the purpose of sweeping away the happiness of any one, much less of those who were so dear ; for the boy was like his own child, and had always treated him like a father. What could be done ? Gilbert Mansfield let things take their course, and the two young people fell in love.

Nor let this word be lightly spoken. To one of them, at least, it was no light matter. There were few things connected with feeling or affection which Alice ever could take lightly ; and this least of all. For it was not a love of yester-

day. It had grown up with her, and about her, like her beauty; she knew not when it first began. She was of a constitution too to feel all things almost too real. By nature she was proud—perhaps a little passionate. People said she was haughty, like her mother. But to see her smile when the young soldier entered, or her look of sadness the moment after he was gone, was to read of floods of tenderness in that young heart of hers, so deep, and pure, and inexhaustible, as well might constitute the happiness of any one capable of appreciating the worth of woman's love.

Whether the young man was fully sensible of the mine of wealth which he possessed, it is impossible to know, for it was not long before a serious interference on the part of the Friends put a stop to this pleasant intercourse altogether. Had the father continued to have been an affluent and independent man, the interference would undoubtedly have been the same; but in all probability it would scarcely have produced the same effect upon his own mind and conduct.

It is this which we desire to make clearly understood—the immense power obtained by the Society, as a body, over individual action and

character; and that without the assumption of any kind of influence in the least degree resembling personal authority.

Not that, in the present instance, the father could have approved of such a connection for his daughter, especially as the profession to which the young man had devoted himself was more than any other opposed to the principles of Friends; but he might have felt more free to permit, for his daughter's sake, that which he now roused himself to endeavour to prevent, by all the weight which he was able to throw into his parental influence. The time had come too, when the young man must join his regiment, and his destination was to a distant quarter of the world. All things seemed to be tending one way. Alice must give him up, and, if possible, forget that he had ever been to her more than a mere acquaintance.

The mother of the youth was decidedly of the opinion that they must part without any engagement, either open or understood, because she saw clearly, that in Gilbert Mansfield's circumstances, it would be worse than unwise to subject him to the condemnation of those to whom he was so deeply indebted, and whose official duty seemed to be both to inspect and manage for him his social

and relative, as well as pecuniary affairs. And so strongly did Mrs. Conway set this view of the case before Alice, that it was made to appear the height of selfishness for her to persist in choosing her own course regardless of the consequences to her father.

It would be useless here to attempt any description of the effect of these arguments upon one, whose impetuous nature was at that time almost wholly unsubdued. Nurtured from childhood with the utmost tenderness by both parents, Alice had never learned the virtue of submission. Some learn this lesson early, and by slow degrees; others by one blow so crushing and terrible, that the broken spirit never rises again. Such was the case with Alice; and those who knew her later in life, with her tall attenuated figure, her thin pale features, her marble lips that seldom gave utterance to uncalled-for words, could form indeed but little idea of what she might have been, had circumstances more genial permitted her the full free exercise of all her young affections.

But without attaching too much importance to this early sorrow, there were after events which told severely upon a nature all too finely strung

to bear with equanimity the rough usages of life.

If Alice Mansfield never loved again in exactly the same way, she did love still. She could not help it. It was the chief element of life to her to feel, and cherish thoughts of tenderness for others. And there were many to claim such thoughts from her. Instead, therefore, of sinking into a state of selfish morbid helplessness, Alice struggled on with sisterly—with almost motherly solicitude to fulfil the highest duties of affection towards those whom Providence had placed around her.

One sister, and two brothers younger than herself, demanded no small amount of sisterly affection. The brother next in age to Alice was a cause of frequent and painful anxiety. At the time of leaving school he was a well grown, gentlemanly, and high-spirited boy. What was to be done with him, became a question of great perplexity.

As the affairs of Gilbert Mansfield had been submitted to the oversight, and finally to the management, of certain members of the Society, and especially as some had gratuitously assisted him with the means of commencing business again, it was but reasonable that the same parties should be consulted respecting the disposal of his son.

At all events, the father, naturally prone to lean upon others for advice, if not for absolute direction, and ever mindful of the obligation under which he was placed, felt none of that repugnance to confide the management of his affairs to others, which would have been experienced by a more self-dependent man. Thus, it was, that a few Friends, of whom George Rutherford was one, sat in consultation upon the case, and finally decided that the boy should be bound apprentice to a shopkeeper of rather humble standing in the town where his father lived.

Of course the boy himself was indignant at this sentence, for he had been educated at a somewhat superior school, his mother's friend defraying the expense; and within his own young ardent soul he had no doubt cherished widely different views respecting his future prospects, and career in life. All the family in fact were indignant, except the father. He looked distressed, but kept silence, regarding this dispensation as one of the chastisements which followed as a right and necessary consequence upon his former pride and self-indulgence. He wanted "to get low," he often said, and it seemed just now as if his friends were willing to help him to do so.

Indeed, it was not unfrequently the subject of remark, especially with George Rutherford, that the whole family wanted bringing down; that it would do them good to be made to find their proper level; that the spirit of the mother seemed to have descended to the children; and that in their present trials, it was not difficult to recognize the chastening rod by which alone they could expect to be brought as obedient children, back into the path of peace.

So the high spirited youth was placed out as an apprentice with a master whom he looked down upon as immeasurably beneath himself, and had to sweep the shop, and take down the shutters, and carry out goods to the different customers. And so, after a while, he disappeared—ran away, and enlisted for a common soldier. One letter, evidently dictated by the same unbroken spirit which it had been thought so desirable to subdue, he wrote to his sister Alice from Portsmouth, while waiting for the vessel which was to carry him to India. And then, for a long time, he was heard of no more; weeks, months, and years rolled on, but no other letter came, until at last his name became no longer a household word, but passed away like a dying echo from the lips of those who did not

think of him the less, because they found no utterance for their anxious thoughts.

Alice, indeed, had no one to whom she could unburden herself in words on subjects of personal, and painful interest; for it was her habit to spare her father all unnecessary pain, and especially the pain of having his memory re-awakened to a sense of family affliction. Thus in all things associated most intimately with her inner feelings, Alice dwelt comparatively alone, especially since it had been thought best that her sister should be sent away to school. The example of the oldest daughter was not considered likely to be salutary by Gilbert Mansfield's friends; and beyond this, his circumstances rendered it necessary that his children should begin early to be doing something for their own maintenance.

In pursuance of this plan, Margaret had no sooner completed her term of discipline as a pupil, than it was proposed to make her an assistant in the teaching department, in which capacity she became bound to serve for a certain number of years.

In all these arrangements for his family, Gilbert Mansfield remained passive, observing only after Alice had remonstrated against such an appropri-

ation of the best years of her sister's life, that it was not for him to choose, that he desired to submit to what seemed best; with many other expressions of a similar nature which, though exceedingly gratifying to those who decided for him, were anything but satisfactory to his daughter.

Margaret, though far from being meek and passive like her father, was of that happy disposition which can cheerfully embrace and make the best of duty under almost any form; and that it was her duty to comply with the wishes of her father and the Friends, she did not permit herself to doubt. Something she must do herself to spare her family,—that she knew, and eagerly desired. Her life at school had not been one of unhappiness. She had made many friends, and found many enjoyments; and the prospect of continuance there, with a little—though she knew it would be a very little—more liberty of action, presented no very repulsive aspect to her view. Alice wondered at her, admired her self-renunciation, and allowed her to go, without expressing half the objections which she really felt.

Indeed, Alice herself was gradually passing through a change, both mental and physical, which afforded hope that the peace and rest

for which her tried spirit so long had pined, might not be far distant. Many circumstances working together might be regarded as contributing to the same end. Among these was the death of the absent brother, who had found friends where least expected; and after a lingering illness, had closed his eyes in peace, expressing with all the simplicity of a chastened child, that hope in his death, which at one time seemed little to be expected from his life. It was through the never failing interest of his mother's friend, Mrs. Conway, that this kindness had been extended to him in his utmost need; and while the friends to whom she had commended him took care that his personal wants should be supplied, they did not leave his spiritual wants neglected; but cheered his couch of pain and sickness by faithfully reminding him of all those higher consolations which alone are available at such a time.

The simple account of the illness and death of this youth which these friends transmitted to Mrs. Conway, and through her to his family, were inexpressibly touching in their interest, but at the same time powerful in their instruction. And into the heart of his oldest sister, especially,

they sunk with deep meaning, producing impressions which nothing afterwards effaced.

To those who knew Alice best, it became evident that her health, too, was failing, though she made no complaint, sought no advice, nor ever seemed to look upon this fact as a subject of regret. All that could be positively said, was that her house duties had grown a little more difficult to discharge, that she rose later, was cold and languid during the early part of the day, but towards evening revived, and looked *better*, as her father thought; for then she brightened up, could talk, and smile, and even wore a little of the brilliant colour of her girlish days. Alas! good man, he knew not what that brilliant colour meant; and Margaret was away, and Arthur too, so there was no one to remark upon the shortness of her breathing, the frequent cough, and all the other symptoms which Alice herself so well understood. When the warm weather came, however, these painful indications considerably abated, and on the occasion of the general meeting to which she had been induced to accompany her father, there was little in her appearance or manner to awaken any fresh anxiety on her behalf. One change, however, the quick eye of her sister did observe.

She was more at peace with all the world—more gentle and more considerate towards those who jarred upon her sensitive and sometimes morbid feelings. This was all which ever had been wanting, Margaret thought, to make her sister the most lovely and angelic being upon earth; and as she looked up to her now, her eyes would sometimes fill with tears, not so much of sorrow as of gratitude, to think that He from whose liberal hand comes every good and perfect gift, had given just the crowning gem to all her sister's beauty, goodness, and inimitable excellence.

Nor was it merely the enthusiasm of fond and partial affection which drew this picture in the sister's loving heart. The change was real, deep, and blessed, though it found but little expression in words. A patient manner, a smile of willing resignation, an act or word of kindness extended to an unattractive object—these, with many other silent and unobtrusive indications of an inward change, penetrated to the sister's soul with greater force than any mere expression however full; and though, from the delicacy of her own feelings, she made no comment on the subject as a personal matter, yet the letters of the

sisters at this time, and their conversation when they met, were marked by unmistakeable evidence that the deep things of life, as well as death, were not by any means the least interesting or familiar to their minds.

Still, with all this earnestness, Margaret never lost her cheerful, frank, impulsive manner: a manner so strange, and seemingly out of place amongst the strict conventionalities and formal precedents of the great school, that she would have startled some of the higher agents connected with it, had not her obscure and subordinate position prevented any of her personal peculiarities from being brought into notice. Her pupils, as already stated, loved her all the better for this warm and genuine heartiness of manner; and she had the good sense to confine whatever was peculiar in her character within the narrowest limits in which pure nature could possibly be compressed. Thus, in the discharge of all her stated duties, she was in no way distinguishable from others similarly situated. Her little cap was as neat and close as theirs; her apron as smoothly spread upon her lap; her hands as demurely folded when at rest; and all the features of her bright and genial face as completely settled and composed, as if there

lurked beneath no energy or life, beyond what was demanded by the routine of daily duty in that narrow and monotonous existence.

But we have said that a letter of vast importance to the sisters awaited the return of Gilbert Mansfield and his daughter to their quiet home; and great indeed was the excitement which it caused, though neither the father nor the daughter confessed so much in words; yet the number of times that it was unfolded, and examined afresh, the dates that were calculated, and the coincidences recalled, with the many other relative considerations, some of them extremely unimportant, that were thoughtfully discussed, sufficiently indicated how difficult it was to leave the subject of the letter, so as to think to any purpose of another.

Great as the pleasure was which this letter so naturally excited to Alice, it still brought forcibly a certain sense of sadness. "It comes too late!" were the words she could not help repeating, after retiring to rest that night. Yet each time she reproached herself for permitting her thoughts to arrive at this conclusion. "Why should I think it too late?" she said to herself, "when there is dear Margaret to enjoy it still; yet, oh!

what might have been prevented, had this come earlier !”

And then casting herself upon the bed, where it was impossible to sleep, she put aside the curtains for the clear moonlight to shine into the room ; and thus she thought, and thought, until the silence of deep midnight seemed to find a voice which spoke to her of by-gone days, and forms, and faces, never to be recognised again on earth.

No doubt amongst these images, instinct as it seemed with all the vividness of reality, if not with real life, there lay upon a battle field the pale extended figure of a youth, with gory breast, and tangled hair. No doubt she wondered, as fond woman will, how all the little personal offices about the dead had been discharged—the raising of the head—the washing of the wounds—perhaps the last broken utterances caught upon some ear, indifferent, or intent on other sounds. So the night passed ; and so had passed many nights like this. No wonder that her eye grew heavier, and her cheek more hollow, ever since the time when, reading casually about a far-off battle, her eye glanced on until by accident it struck upon the name of “Conway,” just so far mentioned that

Lieut. Conway of such a regiment was stated to have been "found amongst the dead."

The mother of the youth before that time had left the neighbourhood where the Mansfields lived. Long before this, however, she had, from a sense of duty, entirely dropped the mention of her son in communicating with the family; and now she neither wrote to Alice on the subject of his death, nor was it ever mentioned in the house. Perhaps Gilbert Mansfield never knew of it, for he had come to lead a kind of silent meditative life, more and more abstracted from things of ordinary and merely temporal interest; so that Alice had some ground for hoping his attention had never been drawn to this; for there was scarcely anything she dreaded so much, as hearing it made the subject of conversation in her presence. Even sympathy the most sincere would have been utterly powerless to soothe or comfort her. It was "her own peculiar grief." Who could pretend to share it with her? No, there is no jealousy like that with which the heart broods over such a sorrow, no shrinking like that with which the touch of such a wound is sought to be avoided.

To Margaret alone did Alice ever name the fact. She did that but once, and as briefly as

possible. It was in a letter, and the short bare statement was accompanied with no farther comment than a request that the subject might never be mentioned to her in return. These expressions might have sounded somewhat harsh, and cold, to one who did not know the heart of the writer; but Margaret was well aware from what deep source they emanated; and she saw too, how the poor hand which wrote them must have trembled, for the characters were scarcely legible, and Alice usually wrote a fine bold hand, which her partial sister fancied was the index of her clear and perfect character.

So the long night wore on, the more devoid of any tendency to rest, because of this strange occurrence of good fortune, so unexpected that it called into existence a thousand plans, and calculations, all impracticable, and groundless without this new foundation on which the feverish imagination of Alice now built so many pleasant structures for others—none for herself.

Margaret was coming too—dear, happy Margaret!—coming to spend a little interval of rest from duty, the only one allowed in a long season of hard services. What subjects there would be for the two sisters to talk over now, what projects

to discuss—what independence for the father! what joy for one remaining child!

With all these pleasant prospects glowing before her, it was no wonder that Alice could not sleep; and while thus occupied with busy thoughts, the purple dawn of early morning stole into her chamber, before she was aware that the moonlight had departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

The character of Gilbert Mansfield is not delineated here for the purpose of showing, how weak as well as poor in spirit, a good man, and a gentleman, may become under the pressure of adverse circumstances ; but to bring out into light that strange and almost inconceivable power which is exercised by the Society of Friends over the minds and actions of the different members of their own body. Of course this power is greater or less according to the personal character of those upon whom it operates ; and it must in fairness be confessed, that in the present instance, there was no great amount of natural firmness or decision to stand in the way if its entire mastery over individual wish or purpose. But the most extraordinary part of this system of entire subjection of the natural will is that no mere personal

authority is exercised, or would be submitted to on any consideration, even by the meekest, and most passive member of the community. Indeed, the gentlest spirit, and the most entirely subdued under the enforcement of system, rule, and precedent, would, without doubt, resist the personal dictation of any single human being. So far as personal interference then is spoken of, it must be understood not to be that of any voluntary or self-appointed agency, but rather the working out of rule, and precedent, by those who are appointed to such service, on behalf of the united body. In using the word *Friends* also, in its influential signification, certain individuals are always implied in whom there is recognized a kind of delegated right to interfere ; not by any means in the way of any voluntary putting forward of one person's wish to decide upon the affairs of another. On this ground, and this alone, Gilbert Mansfield submitted patiently and willingly, to what appeared according to the view of Friends, to be best.

At the expected time, so eagerly anticipated by her sister, Margaret Mansfield joined her family at home. To describe the expression of her happy countenance as she entered the house, would be

no easy task ; for she had been made immediately acquainted with the good news that seemed likely to be realized in an addition of comfort and enjoyment too vast to admit of any definite calculation ; all which added a kind of exultation to her naturally glad spirit, delighted as she was to be set free for a short period from the daily routine of somewhat uncongenial duty. This intense and abounding joy was manifested by almost every word, look and act, and in a manner peculiarly her own. Alice at first felt almost overwhelmed by this great accession of life in the household ; but Margaret knew always just how far to go, and quickly perceiving the difference betwixt her sister's feelings, and her own, she managed so far to control herself, as to become almost as gentle and as grave as the other members of the little party which she had come to enliven.

It would have been exceedingly at variance with Gilbert Mansfield's usual tone and manner, had he betrayed any outward manifestation of joy on the occasion of an increase to his merely temporal comforts. It is true his smiles, as well as his pleasant words, were a little more frequent than sometimes ; but this he believed was owing

to the natural and lawful satisfaction experienced in having both his daughters with him for awhile beneath his own roof. The little accession of property upon which Margaret was so eagerly calculating presented a very different aspect to his view. "Friends must be consulted;" this was ever the first impulse with him ; and he scarcely knew what they would consider best to be done under his circumstances. To invest the property for the benefit of his daughters in after life appeared to him the most likely way of proceeding ; and so to go on at home exactly as they had been going on for years. He knew of nothing better than this, nor dreamed for a moment of the plans growing already into maturity in the young hearts which beat so near his own, and yet how differently.

The sisters had indeed a plan. "A glorious plan," Margaret called it ; and, as they shared the same chamber, they hastened to get together for the night to talk the matter fully over, in order that their decision respecting the disposal of their little fortune might be perfectly unanimous, before anything definite was said to their father on the subject.

"After all," said Alice, when they had fairly

closed the door, and were shut in together, "I am afraid my father will want to be consulting with Friends, as he always does, and then there is no knowing what the consequences may be."

"But the money is our own—entirely our own," said Margaret with great energy.

"Why, child," said her sister, "thou art not of age."

"No," replied Margaret, "but I shall be next eleventh month, and there is nothing like getting my father accustomed to our plan before the time of action comes. We must settle all that to-morrow."

"I feel so foolishly afraid," sighed Alice, and then, as her accustomed fit of coughing came on, she sunk upon a seat, and Margaret saw how thin and feeble she had grown; and she heard too the short quick breathing, shorter, she fancied, than even a few weeks before.

Soon, however, Alice revived, and, with something more than her usual cheerfulness, she entered upon the subject of profound interest, for neither of the sisters could talk on any other; and it was then agreed, that on the following evening they should have a clear, full, and decided explanation with their father. The interview

might be painful; that they feared it must be if they should be compelled to assert their own will in any degree of opposition to his; but that it would be kindly conducted they had no manner of doubt, any more than that they themselves were right. The very habit of weakness and indecision into which their father had fallen, demanded of them the assertion of a certain dignity and determination, which might jar upon his feelings, and give him all the pain of filial disobedience. Still the right thing must be done; and the intermediate time seemed long, especially to Margaret, so eager was her ardent spirit to get any act of necessary duty performed, and especially one presenting more than ordinary difficulty.

In her present state of health, it is quite probable that Alice would not have been equal to the necessary effort alone. But Margaret was a host in action, and Alice succeeded in dismissing many fears, entirely from the hope derived from this willing and most substantial prop.

It is not the least melancholy feature connected with a character like Alice Mansfield's, that in proportion as all earthly hope becomes extinct, the natural bravery of the spirit fails, and a thousand fears present themselves what were never known

before. Yet what is there to fear? The secret of this anomaly is solved by experience, and perhaps by that alone. The same character would have known these fears before, but for having been carried onward and above them by hope and energy, and chiefly by an intensity of purpose which milder natures never know. Thus animated—thus almost inspired, the petty obstacles and even dangers of ordinary life were scarcely seen, and never cared for. But the hope having faded, the energy died out, the purpose become extinct; there is nothing left but fear; and in proportion to the weakness, and the littleness of all motive for action, the dangers and difficulties lying in the way of any given act become great, and often insurmountable. It is not then so much that the tired traveller cannot tread the rugged path, as that he is conscious of no sufficient reason or inducement for encountering its difficulties, and thus he fears, or seems to fear them.

If Alice Mansfield felt afraid on the evening of her conversation with her sister, she certainly was not bolder in the morning; for the morning, as usual, found her languid, spiritless, and indisposed to action.

“I shall be better in the evening,” she said, in

reply to her sister's anxious looks. "I shall be better and stronger when our work has to be done. In the meantime, perhaps, it would be well for me to keep a little quiet."

So Margaret busied herself about the house—a rare treat for her; for, as she often said when coming into the room to her sister with a little vase of flowers, or a tray of refreshments, "I was made for a housemaid, I believe, I like so much to set things to rights, and to see them all neat and tidy. At all events, I was never made for a teacher."

"And yet," said Alice, with a look of pity, "What years thou hast spent in teaching—poor child!"

"Oh, I don't mind it now," said Margaret—"Not the least bit in the world. My time is nearly over, and then!"—And then she went on, putting her rosy lips very near to the pale cheek of her sister, and speaking in a kind of half whisper—"Would'nt it be nice to have a little cottage in a garden for father, and thee, and me?"

"It would be nice with thee, I think, almost anywhere," said Alice, lifting her cheek to be kissed, while tears gushed into her eyes. But she forced herself to laugh the next moment,

saying only how weak and foolish she had become, owing, a good deal she fancied, to being so much alone.

Margaret, with her accustomed tact, allowed the tears to pass unnoticed, urging upon her sister a cup of chocolate, which she had brought, and which, at the same time, she praised rather extravagantly as the work of her own skilful hands.

In this manner, with frequent short visits from Margaret, rather than any lengthened stay with her sister, the day wore on. In the afternoon she made Alice lie down to rest for a long time, telling her she had an immense amount of shopping to do, and one or two calls to make, so that she should not return before tea time at the earliest.

When Margaret did return, which was rather sooner than she had said, she found Alice up, and looking so much better, that her appearance might well have awakened some surprise, only that this feature of her malady was already familiar to those who knew her best.

Alice was the talker now, and Margeret, in her fond admiration, wondered whether any woman upon earth could talk so sensibly, express herself so well, and with so clear and sweet a voice. But alas! that voice, so perfect once in

all its intonations, was altered now, and altering fast. Margaret had perceived this change on first entering the house. She did not mention the fact, but the sound fell upon her ear like a kind of knell. It might after all be nothing. Alice said she had taken cold. Perhaps that was the cause; and there might still be years, and years, to come, in the little cottage, where Alice would live the longer for having trees, and fields, and flowers, around her, and birds to sing to her, and a sister then at liberty, and wholly hers, to nurse, and care for her. Yes, that was indeed a joyful picture, and not the less so because of the strong contrast it presented with present things, and the great need there was for change. The little parlour which the Mansfields now occupied was very close, and looked into a street. There was no garden to the house, and Alice had been passionately fond of flowers. Alas! she had been fond of all things pure, and beautiful, and sweet, of some things gorgeous too; and well, perhaps *too* well, could her nature have assimilated with the costly embellishments of affluent and polished life. It was for her then, more than for herself, that Margaret's heart was now so busy building the little cottage and adorning it with all

the flowers of nature, as well as with all the elegance of art. She had a right she thought to let her heart indulge its dearest wishes now, since her sister's state of health rendered that a duty which would once have been only an indulgence.

Many preliminary steps, however, had yet to be taken, and just now the interview with their father was that which demanded most attention. As usual, he came in to join his family this evening with wearied frame, but smiling countenance; and, after partaking of the latest meal of the day, in a comfortable and social manner, the sisters, exchanging looks with each other, told him they wanted a little chat before he went to bed, and hoped he was at liberty to attend to what they had to say.

Of course the good man willingly complied, how could he have done otherwise, especially when Margaret, placing herself upon a low stool at his feet, took both his hands in hers, and looked up into his face with an expression so filial, and affectionate, that all the parental feelings of his heart were stirred to more than their accustomed depth; and stooping down, he kissed the glowing cheek of his child, as fondly as if she had been an infant still.

“Well, now,” said Margaret, settling herself upon the footstool, “I think I shall begin.” And with that, she entered upon the quaintly told little narrative of the few leading facts of the case; and then she described the thoughts and wishes which had been excited in her mind, and her sister’s, respecting the disposal of the little property bequeathed by their uncle.

“Ah! well, my dear;” said Gilbert Mansfield, interrupting his daughter, “It will be time enough to talk about that, some months hence. The announcement of a bequest is a very different matter from having the money in hand.”

“I know all that;” said Margaret, “and besides, I am not of age.”

“No, surely, child; I believe thou art not;” said her father.

“But I shall be, soon,” resumed Margaret, “and we both—Alice and I, both want to settle ——.”

“We want, dear father,” said Alice, afraid the impulsive girl was getting on too fast—“we want to know exactly what is thy own mind and wish in this matter?”

“Mine?” said the father; “why, really, I have not given it due consideration yet.”

“We are all together now ;” said Alice, and then hesitating a moment, she went on again—“together now, and at liberty to talk the matter fully over. There is no knowing when we may be so quietly together again.”

“No, surely ;” said the father, “it is best to be prepared for whatever may be the will of Providence concerning us.”

“But the money, dear father ;” said Margaret. “Hast thou not thought of the money, and what it will be best to do with it ?”

“For my own part,” replied Gilbert, “I should feel most easy to lay the matter before Friends.”

“Friends ! exclaimed Alice, with a sudden flash of her early spirit darting from her eyes. “We surely need not consult with any beyond ourselves respecting what we shall do with our own !”

Gilbert Mansfield looked up. He was a little shocked at the tone and manner of his daughter ; but he replied quickly—“Why yes, to be sure, I forgot myself. The money will be yours, not mine.”

“Oh, don’t say that !” exclaimed both sisters at once.” Never say that again,” repeated Margaret. And then she begged of her father, more

seriously, that he would tell them what he really did wish them to do; because, if he had no plan of his own—if he had fixed upon nothing in his own mind, she and her sister had a few thoughts which they would like to lay before him.

By degrees the plan was opened, and explained; the principal feature in the view which the sisters had taken, being that of returning every portion of the money which had been kindly advanced on their father's account, and which they felt sure that no business talents of his would ever be able to increase. On the contrary, they had reason to believe that some slight deterioration had taken place, and that, to make restitution of the whole would require a little addition from their own resources.

The boldness, directness, and decision, with which his daughters expressed themselves on this subject, was at once alarming and distasteful to Gilbert Mansfield. He liked to move gently, and with full assurance that he was right. But his assurance must be derived from an inward source, and must rest upon certain feelings of his own mind, not by any means upon such reasonings as his daughters seemed a little forward and hasty in setting up. In fact, he had never

looked at the subject in this light. He said he had felt peace in using, to the best of his ability, the means which had been placed in his hands; and such peace he now seemed inclined to accept, as a token that it was right for him still to retain what was not really his own.

“Yes;” said Margaret, rather hastily, when her father spoke of peace. “But there has been nothing gained by the money that was lent thee; and after all it was not thy own.

“I feel that it was committed to my keeping;” said her father, “and in that, it differs little from every other worldly good. I did not seek for it nor accept it unadvised.”

“Well, suppose we let that matter pass,” said Margaret, finding how difficult it was to reason with one who had so completely submitted every power of thought, and almost every action to influences of which she did not presume to be a judge. “Suppose we leave the past, and talk only of the future. Alice is very delicate. My term of duty as a teacher will soon be over now. My sister and I are both anxious that the remainder of thy days should be passed in peace, and quietness, free from all toils and vexations of business. So we think that with the means which will soon

be ours, we might retire to some little cottage more in the country, where we could live quite simply; and in this way we think we should have quite enough to live upon—just we three together, in a nice, comfortable, independent way.

Gilbert Mansfield shook his head. The word independence, so often used by his daughters, did not quite commend itself to his feelings. It seemed to savour of an unsubdued and carnal mind, and sounded in his ear a little like the setting up of the creaturely will.

Still, he said, if Friends should think well of this mode of proceeding, he did not know that he should feel any insuperable objection.

“But,” said Margeret, and she spoke very softly this time, knowing that she was getting upon delicate ground, “we don’t want thee, dear father, to speak to Friends at all about this matter. We think we have a right—Oh! do not take what I say unkindly—we think we have a right to act for ourselves, in this instance; and it must be right, dear father—indeed it must, to live upon our own means, and to pay back to everybody what we owe them.”

“Yes” said Alice, “this loan has been gall and bitterness, to me for years.”

“Thou hast never said so much as that before,” observed her father.

“No” she replied, “because I saw no way out of the difficulty. But I do now, and I feel that we ought to, and we must get free from all money obligations.”

“Ah, well!” sighed Gilbert, “as I told you before, there’s a long time yet for weighing the matter fully.”

“No, no,” said Alice, “we must agree upon this subject to-night. We do not know what to-morrow may bring with it.”

“And it is not a mere verbal acquiescence,” Margaret added, “that we want, so much as a cordial acknowledgment, heart to heart, and mind to mind, that the thing is right, and must be done.”

“There, I think, child, thou art going too far,” said Gilbert. “We must wait to see how the way opens before us. There is such a thing as running in advance of our guide.”

Alice rose from her seat, exhausted both in mind and body by this fruitless colloquy; and with a dignity well calculated to overawe a spirit like her father’s, she laid her hand upon his arm and said, “Father, I am of age. It is my firm deter-

mination that our money shall be appropriated first, to paying back every farthing of that which has been lent to thee, and then that we shall live as best we may, without business of any kind; that so thy old age may be free from worldly strife, and peaceful as it ought to be. So farewell, dear father, for I feel that I must retire."

The father spoke not, nor did his daughter move to go; but gently folding her arms around his neck, she pressed her lips to his cheek, whispering at the same time—"and please forgive me, dear father, if I have said anything unkind, or amiss."

Gilbert Mansfield, always quickly touched by tenderness, returned his daughter's embrace, saying in his kindest manner—"Ah! my dear children, I often think I might have been better to you both."

"Oh not to us, dear father, not to us;" said both daughters at once—"better to thyself perhaps, but not to us."

And thus with mutual interchange of gentle words, and kindly feelings, the little party separated for the night, the two sisters going silently up to their chamber.

Margaret was the first to speak. "Oh dear!"

she said, "if our poor Arthur had lived, I do believe he would have been exactly like his father."

"Yes, Margaret ;" said her sister, "that conviction has so reconciled me to his death, that sometimes I feel almost glad he is safely gathered to his rest."

"And glad also, we ought to feel," said Margaret—"at least more glad than sorry, that our precious father has so nearly run his earthly course."

"To think," said Alice "of only now beginning such a life as his, in such a world as this !"

"I like to think of him in heaven," said her sister—"of the time when all this long trial, to look back upon, will be but as a moment, and when the weakness of his sweet character will give place to the strength of that love which will then be all in all."

"And dost thou like to think of me in Heaven?" asked Alice, softly drawing her thin white fingers over Margaret's shining hair.

"I am afraid," said Margaret, "I like too well to think of thee on earth."

Alice sighed deeply ; and then that cough came on, which now so sadly broke her nightly rest. Margaret knew her sister ought if possible to sleep, yet finding her wakeful, and disposed to

conversation, she could not resist the natural impulse to throw out now and then a bright suggestion about the cottage—where it would be likely they could find one suitable, or how it could be managed that their father should be near a meeting, so as not to have too far to walk. With many other interesting thoughts and pictures, such as will come crowding upon the mind at night, especially after any great excitement.

To all these suggestions Margaret put a little note of interrogation at the end, such as “we will do so, and so—wont we, dear?” and up to a certain time, Alice had responded promptly, and faithfully, even adding now and then a good idea of her own. Suddenly, however, the responses ceased. Margaret put her little interrogation again. Still there was no answer. She started up in the bed—“What is it, dear?” she asked; but all was silent still. The room was very dark. She put her ear close to her sister’s face. Alice was awake—why was it that she did not speak? Margaret felt too that her sister’s hands were busy with a handkerchief pressing it closely to her lips. A sudden terror came upon her; and rushing to the candle, which had long been extinguished; she lighted it again, and brought it to the side of the bed where her sister lay.

With one hand Alice waved her back, but with the other she still held the handkerchief to her lips—that handkerchief so stained!

“My precious love!” exclaimed Margaret, when she knew what was the matter, and then she burst into an agony of weeping. Seldom did she so far forget herself. In a few moments every tear, every pang of grief, was forced back as if into the centre of her heart, and with perfect self possession, though trembling violently all over, she set about to do everything which her unpractised hand could find to do.

Alice, however, was not long in partially recovering; and bidding her sister give her only a glass of cold water, after which she was to be very still, a considerable period of total silence elapsed before any explanation could take place.

The explanation was scarcely more cheering to Margaret than her own alarming apprehensions, for her sister told her that the present was only an accustomed attack, though somewhat more severe than usual; that lately they had been much more frequent; and that, in short, a strong conviction was growing upon her own mind, that her time on earth would not be long.

At short intervals, with many interruptions in her breathing, this melancholy truth was told.

During all the time Margaret never spoke, only with her fingers she pressed both eyelids down, as if, by forcibly stopping the actual tears, she could in some measure stop the tide of grief, which now seemed ready to overwhelm and sweep away every foundation of that happiness upon which she had been building her pleasant future.

After slightly recovering, Alice had requested that the light might be put out; and now, in the darkness of deep night, with that strange quickening of vitality which ever seems to belong to this precursor of death, she spoke so fully, yet so sweetly to her sister of her past and present feelings, and of many things closely connected with her inner life; she spoke, too, so hopefully of the life towards which she knew that she was fast hastening, that something almost like a solemn joy—a peace past all mere human understanding seemed to pervade the stillness of that awful night. And so deep was the impression, so perfect the sisterly communion of those two faithful hearts, overshadowed by the wings of love, that on the morrow, strange to say, and ever afterwards, they could speak of death as they had never done before; and Margaret soon began to look with steadiness into her sister's face while reading there the sentence of their separation. It was only,

however, after some days, and after many earnest conversations, that she was able to do so much as this. To her, the bitterness of death had passed in that dark hour of terror when the real truth was so suddenly made manifest. Now, the angelic countenance of her sister was clothed to her view in a more than human beauty, prophetic of the glory and the blessedness so soon to be enjoyed.

On the morning after the sad night, Alice kept her room until a later hour than usual, while poor Margaret went about the house like one in a dream. Sometimes a sudden burst of gushing tears would send her away into a room alone to hide herself. But this strong natural impulse she was determined to restrain, knowing but too well what was before her, yet scarcely, even in her weakest moments, wishing it otherwise. Such is the power, even over other minds, of that solemn preparation for departure from the world, which leaves nothing behind, to be placed for one moment in comparison with the blessedness of beholding the Redeemer face to face, of being like Him—of being for ever where He is.

In proportion, however, as the truth became evident to the sister's mind, as the time of earthly intercourse seemed narrowing—shrinking every

day into the compass of months and weeks—almost of days, the preciousness of this intercourse increased so much in value, that moments were counted for hours, and hours for days. And yet how fast they flew! This narrowing of time—this clinging to a tree—a branch—a twig—how well is it understood by those who have loved and lost by death, the nearest and dearest of their earthly treasures. At first the inevitable calamity is reconciled, perhaps, because the space of years may intervene between it and us—then one year at least—another summer, perhaps, for what is there which we do not calculate upon from that bright season—then a month or two—or three. So hope creeps on, persuading itself into an onward movement, though at each step conviction loses ground; as those who would escape a deluge please themselves with having gained some unexpected height, even while the great flood of water is widening, and rising all around them. But it is the preciousness of these last hours of intercourse with which the heart has most to do; and yet how few amongst us have not had to feel, that their true value was never half appreciated until they were gone for ever.

CHAPTER XVII.

ABOUT a week after Margaret Mansfield's return home, she was sitting alone in the little parlour, looking very thoughtfully upon a piece of work which she held in her hand, though not thinking of the work at all, when suddenly there burst from her lips this latter extraordinary exclamation—

“Oh dear!” I think it must be very nice to have a good, kind, managing husband—somebody who would always know what to do, whatever might happen. I'm sure I don't know what to do, nor can I think of anybody likely to help me.”

As she uttered these words, she was startled by a short, decided knock at the outer door. Some people have the happy knack of coming just when they are wanted—others quite the contrary. To which of these two classes of individuals might the preceding announcement apply? The servant

opened the parlour door, and in walked William Greenfell.

A somewhat comical expression flitted for a moment over Margaret's face, as she recalled the words which had just escaped her lips; but this expression immediately gave place to the look of great anxiety, which her countenance now habitually wore.

The visitor needed no introduction, so well are the members of adjacent meetings generally acquainted with each other, though they may never have conversed. Holding out his hand, therefore, he asked of Margaret, somewhat abruptly, though with much feeling in his voice and manner, how her sister was.

Alice had become very ill. It was not easy to answer this enquiry with composure, and while Margaret struggled to make the necessary effort, she forgot for a moment the common courtesies of her position.

The visitor retreated, and both remained silent, until at length he said—"I had a little business with Gilbert Mansfield this afternoon, and he asked me to come in to tea. I hope I shall not occasion any trouble or inconvenience?"

"Oh, dear, no;" said Margaret, recollecting

herself: "Do pray sit down. My father, I dare say, will be in very soon. It only wants about a quarter of a hour to his usual time."

"Only a quarter of an hour?" said the visitor, "then I am afraid I must be rather abrupt. It is true, Margaret Mansfield, that I had business with thy father; but it is equally true, that I thought perhaps—I am really afraid of making too free."

"Oh, no;" said Margaret, "pray go on."

"Well then," the visitor resumed, "I heard of thy sister's severe illness, and I thought it possible that thou thyself might want a little assistance in some way or other. Do please, employ me, if there is anything I can do for thee, or thy father, or——"

Margaret looked up into the speaker's face, then down upon her work, and burst into tears.

The visitor let her weep on in silence. He knew it was best that natural feeling for awhile should have its way; and Margaret was not one to indulge in any excess of emotion, especially before a comparative stranger. But there was something in the spontaneous kindness of this unexpected offer, coming too at the time when it was most needed, and from one who looked and spoke

like the very personification of help, which startled her completely out of her habitual self possession, opening at once those springs of grateful feeling, which so often found their best expression in a flood of tears. Margaret's, however, were soon dried; and then she frankly owned that she did indeed want help, and should be thankful above all things for a little wise counsel how to act.

"I don't know that I can promise much wise counsel," said William; but I will give thee the best I can; and if there is anything really to be done, my time is at my own disposal, and at thine."

"There are so many things to explain;" said Margaret, looking towards the door in expectation of her father's appearance. "Such delicacy too is required towards my dear father, and yet such firmness; and now I seem to stand alone, for Alice can do nothing, nor is it fit that she should even be consulted. Oh, she *was* such a help!"

"I can believe that," said William. "But there are some things which a man can do, perhaps more easily, if not better than a woman."

"Yes, without doubt;" said Margaret, half ashamed of having appeared in any way to undervalue the efficiency of that assistance which had

been so generously offered. I believe it is the help of a sensible man, who knows everything better than we do, that I want just now, above all things; and I do not know who could think and judge for us better than thyself, if the trouble is not too great."

"Never speak to me again about trouble;" said William, with great earnestness; "but here I think is thy father. I must see whether he can trust me a little."

If there was one human being above all others whom Gilbert Mansfield felt predisposed to trust, it was the young man whom he now greeted as his guest. In fact, he was trusted by so many, and consulted so often about other people's affairs, that although still young, having scarcely attained the age of twenty-five, his attention was almost as much demanded by business, both public and private, as if he had gone through the experience of half a century.

Especially the stricter members of the Society of Friends were in the habit of drawing largely upon the services of one, who possessed the rare merit of being able to acquit himself with dignity and self-possession in all kinds of intercourse with his fellow men; and yet to maintain unflinchingly

his consistency as a Friend, using always what is called by them the "plain language," and wearing, without looking very remarkable, the distinguishing dress of the Society.

But there were other reasons, perhaps never suspected by himself, why Gilbert Mansfield entertained this favourable predisposition towards the young man. It is seldom that two persons of weak, undecided natures are of much value to each other. And in the case of stronger characters, endowed with a large amount of energy, and will, it seldom happens that two thus largely gifted make the most harmonious of friends. Indeed, it would seem, that human fellowship being necessarily defective as regards every single individual, requires that we should supply some quality in which our friends are deficient, and that they should render the same good service to us. Thus, in the present instance, the very sight of a figure so firm and manly, and a face so frank and cordial as William Greenfell's, produced an unusually agreeable effect upon one who not unfrequently shrunk from open communication with his fellow men, in all probability from a secret and indefinite fear lest his own inner life should be too hastily penetrated; or lest his thoughts and

views, before they were fully matured, should be dragged to light, and tested by some coarser and more worldly rule than he was accustomed to apply.

With William Greenfell there was nothing of this kind to be apprehended; for though more than commonly prompt, and decided in action, he was by no means apt to force his own opinions upon others, merely as such. He, therefore, with the utmost respect and urbanity of manner, addressed himself to the master of the house on topics calculated to lead to further intimacy, if such intimacy should be desired. Margaret could not but admire the manner in which he did this, and she had soon the satisfaction of perceiving, that any length to which she might be likely to go in claiming the services so unexpectedly offered, would not only be permitted, but cordially approved by her father.

The simple expression—"Don't let me detain thee," addressed to the master of the house, which the visitor so judiciously brought in at the right time, immediately produced the desired effect, and as he added that he should be under the necessity of waiting an hour before his horse would be ready to set out on its journey home, Gilbert

Mansfield apologising for leaving him, said he had letters to make ready for the post; and shaking hands in the most cordial manner, he then left the room.

A long and earnest conversation ensued. Margaret spoke fully, and freely, as if talking with a brother. The burden of her present anxiety was, how she could manage to have her sister removed from their town residence into a better air; or rather how she could find a more suitable home, and the means of placing her safely and comfortably in it.

“It seems so hard,” she said, “that there should be the money ready for us, and yet that we cannot take even so much as would supply my sister’s need.”

“Could she bear the removal?” asked William.

“I think so,” Margaret replied, “and the doctors urge it. But of course much would depend upon the distance.”

“It must be to some warmer place, I suppose?”

“I don’t know that so much. Indeed, I hardly know how to tell thee, but I don’t think there is much hope; and—and—I only want the time to be spent in greater quiet, with all things around

her more pleasant than they can be here. Perhaps I am wrong to set my heart so much upon this matter."

"Does thy sister seem to desire the change?"

"Oh, yes, or I should think less about it."

"I suppose it is natural, and very often the case."

"My sister always loved the country, and flowers, and beautiful things."

"Well, we will see what can be done," said William, rising to go. "It must take a little time, perhaps a few days. Canst thou wait patiently, believing I will do my best?"

"Indeed I can," said Margaret, "and yet, in any other hands, I should say the thing was impossible, on account of the money."

"I suppose a hundred pounds or so, to be replaced—" said William hesitating.

"Oh, please don't mention anything like a loan," Margaret exclaimed. "We have had enough of borrowed money already; and I think it would harass my sister more than any country air would do her good."

William Greenfell looked for a moment rather perplexed, but quickly recovering himself, he shook hands with Margaret, and then hastily took

his leave, saying she should either see him, or hear from him in a few days.

During the time of their conversation, he had taken many notes, and especially had requested the loan of certain papers, which Margaret easily obtained, because they had been placed in her sister's possession. In her present state of mind, and with the confidence which her visitor had inspired, she would have trusted him with anything, and certainly had no hesitation in placing in his hands certain official documents which were necessary to enable him to act on behalf of the sisters in relation to the property bequeathed.

The relief to Margaret's feelings after he was gone, it would be difficult for language to describe. She still had not the remotest idea of any definite form under which help was to come. But her nature was naturally a trusting one, when she had good foundation for confidence; and perhaps, too, she had a little womanly leaning to the belief that the best and most efficient help is likely to be rendered by a good substantial man. At all events her look and manner became visibly more cheerful; for though she had still the one great sorrow darkening in her future, she could now discharge from her mind the burden of anxiety about those

minor matters, which often stamp the countenance with stronger marks of care than are produced by deeper feelings.

No time was lost by him who had charged himself with so many offices of brotherly trust and kindness. The duties which lay before him were by no means easy to perform ; for, on the one hand, there was a delicacy of feeling, almost amounting to morbid sensitiveness, to deal with ; and on the other, there was such urgent and immediate need, that he was in danger of overlooking first one consideration and then the other, in his anxiety to allow due weight to both.

On the day following this interview, William Greenfell might have been seen in earnest conversation with Jacob Law, as they sauntered along a private path over the fields which separated the Grange from the residence of his aunt Greenfell. This residence was to him a kind of home, to which he repaired whenever inclination or duty led him into the neighbourhood. At the present time his aunt and cousin were absent, enjoying a little tour in a distant part of the country, but he felt equally at liberty to occupy the house, and was always treated by the servants as a member of the family. He had arrived here late on

the evening of his interview with Margaret, and had taken the earliest opportunity of seeing Jacob Law in the morning before the commencement of his daily occupations.

Almost the first thing they had done, after a serious and confidential talk together, was to repair to the cottage in the garden, once occupied by Aunt Isabel; and, after throwing open the shutters, they had walked into every room, sometimes testing the fastening of a door, the closing of a window, or the turning of a key; but especially looking carefully about into holes and corners, to see whether the inroads of time or weather had made the place untenable.

It looked very much, from the manner in which they went about, as if the cottage was going to be occupied again; and so busy were both, and so intent upon the matter in hand, that even Jacob did not stop to sigh over the scenes he had witnessed, or the hours he had enjoyed, beneath that roof. No, his mind was much too full just now with calculations about carpenters, plasterers, bell-hangers, and other mechanics, whose services are not always to be had at a moment's notice in the country.

(Notwithstanding the amount of work to be

done, with the many perplexities belonging to the doing of it, which in a moment presented themselves to the quick eye of Jacob Law, he had, upon the whole, a pleased and animated look, which indicated that there was *good* to be done as well as business; for never did his countenance light up with such inspiring cheerfulness and energy, as when there was some plan to be devised for increasing the comfort and happiness of some deserving person; or some service to be rendered in which he could lend a helping hand.'

After the cottage had been duly examined, these two friends, as already said, walked on through the fields, they scarcely knew whither; for so earnest and close was their intercourse, that they spoke in under tones, and seemed as if they would never be able to separate. Every time they drew near the Grange, or again approached the public road which led immediately past the widow Greenfell's garden, there was some fresh suggestion to throw out, some new difficulty to be met, or some pleasant thought to communicate; so that, while pacing backwards and forwards, the time at length arrived for two rival coaches to dash along their perilous way, first appearing on the brow of the hill, then changing horses at the

village of Heath, and after that, descending into the valley, and whirling past the house and grounds near which the two earnest talkers were now standing; for, in spite of the importance of the subject they had been so closely discussing, such was the local interest attaching to the mad rivalry of these coaches, that even Jacob Law, much as he disapproved, could not always resist the temptation of looking out to see whether Peter, his favourite driver, was first in the race.

William Greenfell, in all probability regarding the whole affair as a piece of absurdity beneath his notice, was yet obliged to pause in his remarks on the subject in hand; because his companion, stepping forward, and looking over a low-clipped hedge by the side of the road, exclaimed "Well done, Peter! thou hast gained the day this time, however."

Peter, with his heavily-loaded vehicle, was at that time just starting from the village inn where he had changed horses. There was rather a sharp turn from the village street down the side of the hill; and it was always a critical moment to the lookers on, while that turn was being passed. For this Jacob was watching, but his companion looked only at his eager face, as he

strained his sight to discover how the coach was coming down the road, for there was a clump of trees standing rather in the way.

In another moment Jacob Law had cleared the hedge, and stood upon the road, unconsciously holding up both his arms, as if to catch some falling weight. The coach was swinging from side to side in the most frightful manner, the horses having become unmanageable.

William was now alive to all the interest of the moment. It was impossible to be otherwise, and he too stood by the side of the road, watching with the most intense anxiety, for the catastrophe which appeared inevitable.

It came with even greater violence than had been anticipated; and well was it for the unfortunate travellers, that such able and ready assistance was at hand; for amongst the terrible confusion that ensued, several passengers, including two or three children, were snatched out of the way of the struggling horses, and dragged to a place of safety by the side of the road.

It was soon discovered that the calamity was greater even than had been feared. The coachman was taken up insensible, some thought dead; and in that state was carried into the nearest house,

which happened to be that of the widow Greenfell, the back offices of which extended to the road along which the coach was passing, and that so near, that no one for a moment hesitated about placing the poor sufferers beneath that roof, as the only available shelter for the moment.

The quiet orderly servants were of course thrown into a state of great dismay; not without reason, wondering in their own minds, how their mistress would like it. But neither Jacob Law, nor William Greenfell, were men to be opposed by any feeble powers, or arguments of theirs; so they had nothing for it but to bestir themselves, as in all probability they had never done before, bringing all appliances for help and comfort at a moment's notice, and thus making sad havoc amongst the beautiful white linen, the damask cushions, rich carpets, and furniture, for which their mistress' establishment was so remarkable.

While all this bustle and confusion was going on, greatly increased by a troop of men and boys who had come up, and who strove to force their way after Peter, the favourite coachman, until Jacob Law forbade them to set a single step within the door, saying, that if any thing could

save the man's life it was perfect quietness; one circumstance had been totally overlooked, until this discontented mob, loitering about the premises, heard the groans of a man, whom they soon discovered lying amongst the long grass beneath a hedge, to which he had probably crawled during the time of the great confusion. A general shout announced this discovery, nor was the tumult lessened on finding out that the man was a foreigner, or, at all events, that the little English he could at the moment command, amounted to no more than a few ejaculations of an exceedingly pitiful nature.

It was soon announced to the two gentlemen that another sufferer required their attention; and on repairing to the spot, they were shocked to find a young man who was indeed a foreigner, and evidently a gentleman, lying on the ground, in the most helpless condition, with more than one of his limbs broken, or dislocated. In all probability it never once entered the heads of either of these prudent men, that the widow Greenfell's house was not the place for this sufferer; that Peter, the coachman, might lie on the kitchen floor until help could be obtained, without danger of scandal to the family; but

that a highly bearded gentleman from the Continent was a very different kind of guest. The fact was, they were both habitually so prompt in their kindness, both so much accustomed to make kindness the first governing motive in their actions, and they were at the present moment so forcibly impressed with the sad condition of this forlorn and helpless stranger, that they hesitated not for a single second, but carried him in their own arms up into the very best bedroom in the house, placing him as easily as they could, amongst the downy pillows, and sparing neither lawn, nor damask, in their endeavours to produce some little alleviation of the agony he was enduring. Happily, perhaps for him, a period of insensibility succeeded, and for some time it was a matter of serious doubt, whether two deaths would not be the consequence of this mad risk of human life, and safety.

Whatever amount of consideration might in the first instance have been bestowed upon questions of prudence, or propriety, the time for such calculations was soon passed, for on the arrival of the village doctor, every other reflection gave place to the awful sentence which he immediately pronounced upon Peter the coachman. There was

no hope for him, whatever. He might live for a few hours, or more, but consciousness in all probability would never return.

“And so unprepared for death!” said Jacob Law, in a low sad tone, as if only thinking aloud —” Poor Fellow ! he will be sadly missed”

The remembrance of his happy jovial face, and the kindly words he always had both for boys, and men ; to say nothing of his gentleness to women, and children, and his readiness to help them under every difficulty—in fact, his universal good will, so well known in the neighbourhood, was more than Jacob Law could bear to think of ; and while a general exclamation of sorrow burst from those who stood around, he was seen to press his handkerchief to his eyes at frequent intervals, though employed in bathing with his own hand a deep cut across the temples of the sturdy man, whose fresh colour was fast fading from his cheeks.

In this case there was so little to be done, that the doctor without delay went up to the other patient now in considerable danger of being left alone, such was the melancholy interest attaching to the death of a man, so long and so well known in the neighbourhood.

William Grenfield, however, who knew less of

these circumstances than those who lived in the place, had undertaken the chief care of the foreigner ; and he was the better able to do so, because of some slight knowledge which he possessed of the German language, in which the stranger spoke. In fact, he had soon lost the power of using even the few words of English which had served all useful purposes by the way, until this terrible calamity rendered other expressions necessary. On hearing the sound of his native tongue, however imperfectly uttered, his countenance indicated a momentary satisfaction, and he began immediately to explain, as he could find strength to do so, how he was travelling from Hamburg to London on very urgent business—so urgent that if he should be detained, he did not know what might be the consequences.

Observing how much he became excited on this subject, William endeavoured to allay his fears, until the doctor should arrive, when he said they must be guided by his opinion. All hope of any possible removal for sometime however vanished with the doctor's examination of the case. He even talked of amputation being necessary, and such was the suffering to which his operations

subjected the patient, that all idea of proceeding in his journey was effectually dismissed.

“Here, indeed, is business to be done,” said William to himself, as he sat by the bed. “But whatever happens, I must not forget that which I had first in hand.” So saying, he took out his watch. It was later than he had supposed. A sleeping draught had been administered to the patient. Surely some trustworthy nurse might now supply his place.

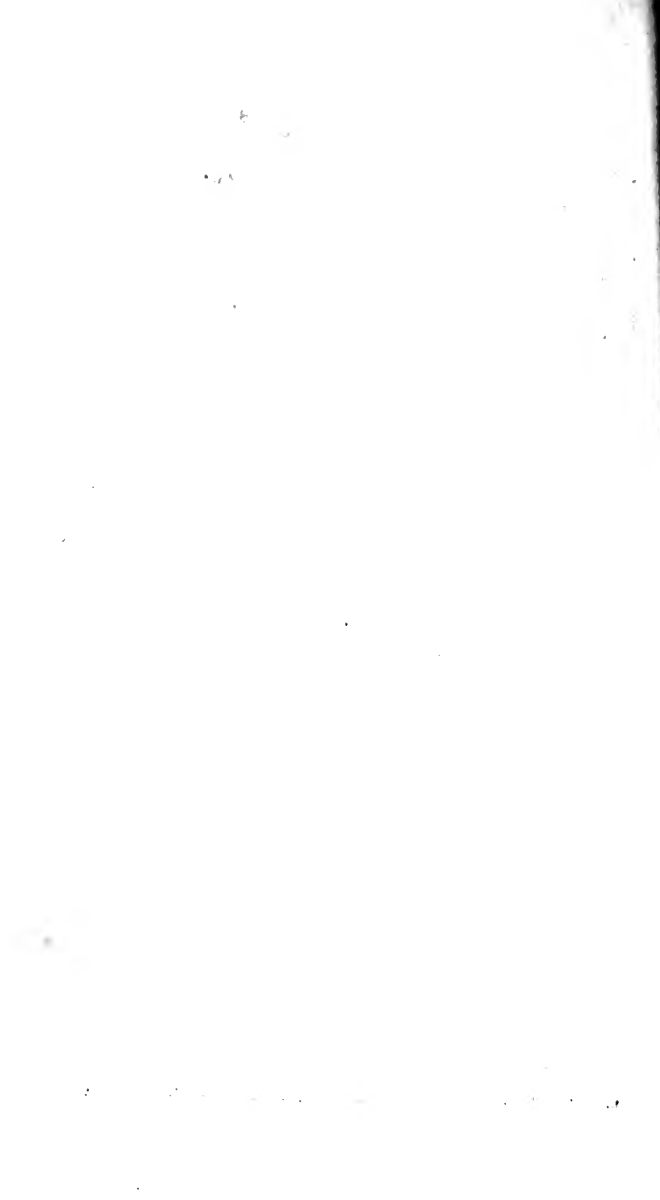
A consultation was held with Jacob Law, who always seemed to know where help was to be had, and what kind of help would be most suitable. Already everything of this kind had been settled in his own mind.

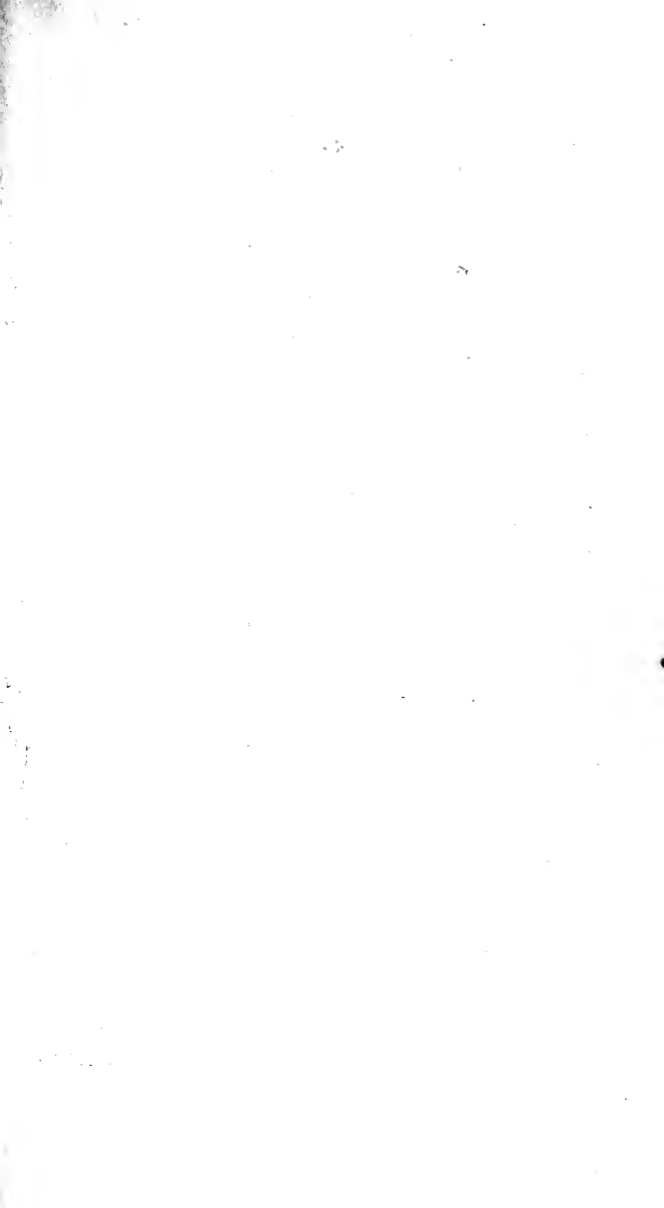
A trustworthy woman, he said, was coming from the village; the gardener and his wife would sleep in the house; Robert Moreton or Reuben would also be there for the night. So there could be no reason why William Greenfell should not be set at liberty to pursue the course which they had together laid out, before this sad accident claimed their attention.

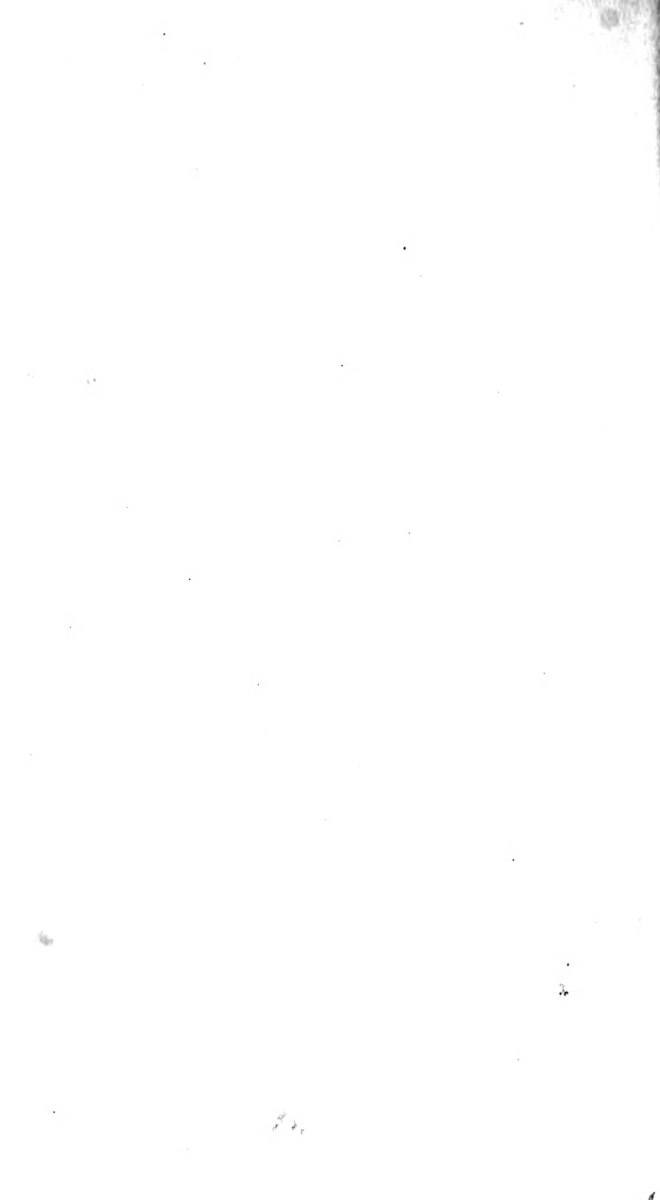
With this, the two friends separated, not without some appearance of mutual satisfaction, not-

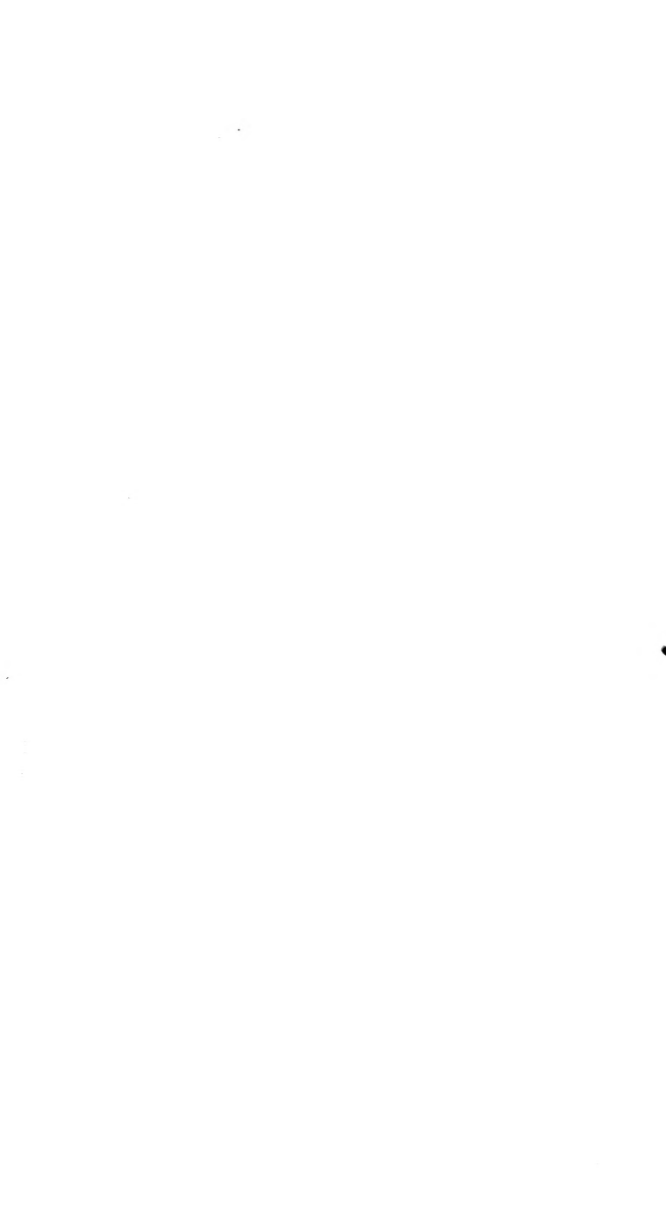
withstanding the nature of the services to which they had felt themselves called, for they were both men who derived much of their healthy cheerfulness from the prompt discharge of active and important duty.

END OF VOL. I.













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