

save himself—from this dreaded evil, the misguided man, during his latter days, extracted from her an inviolable assurance, never to become the wife of any individual who could not settle upon her, subject to no contingencies or chances, the sum of at least one thousand pounds.

Bessie, who was fancy-free, and a lively-spirited girl, by no means relished the slights and privations which poverty entails. She therefore willingly became bound by this solemn promise; and when her father breathed his last, declaring that she had made his mind comparatively easy, little Bessie half smiled, even in the midst of her deep and natural sorrow, to think how small and easy a concession her poor father had exacted, when her own opinions and views so perfectly coincided with his. The orphan girl took up her abode with the mother of David Danvers, and continued to reside with that worthy lady until the latter's decease. It was beneath the roof of Mrs. Danvers that Bessie first became acquainted with Mr. Worthington—that acquaintance speedily ripening into a mutual and sincere attachment. He was poor and patronless then, as he had continued ever since, with slender likelihood of ever possessing £100 of his own, much less £1000 to settle on a wife. It is true, that in the chances and changes of this mortal life, Paul Worthington might succeed to a fine inheritance; but there were many lives betwixt him and it, and Paul was not the one to desire happiness at another's expense, nor was sweet little Bessie either.

Yet was Paul Worthington rich in one inestimable possession, such as money can not purchase—even in the love of a pure devoted heart, which for him, and for his dear sake, bravely endured the life-long loneliness and isolation which their peculiar circumstances induced. Paul did not see Bessie grow old and gray: in his eyes, she never changed; she was to him still beautiful, graceful, and enchanting; she was his betrothed, and he came forth into the world, from his books, and his arduous clerical and parochial duties, to gaze at intervals into her soft eyes, to press her tiny hand, to whisper a fond word, and then to return to his lonely home, like a second Josiah Cargill, to try and find in severe study oblivion of sorrow.

Annie Mortimer had been sent to him as a ministering angel: she was the orphan and penniless daughter of Mr. Worthington's dearest friend and former college-chum, and she had come to find a shelter beneath the humble roof of the pious guardian, to whose earthly care she had been solemnly bequeathed. Paul's curacy was not many miles distant from the town where Bessie had fixed her resting-place; and it was generally surmised by the select few who were in the secret of little Bessie's history, that she regarded Annie Mortimer with especial favor and affection, from the fact that Annie enjoyed the privilege of solacing and cheering Paul Worthington's declining years. Each spoke of her as a dear adopted daughter, and Annie equally returned the affection of both.

Poor solitaires! what long anxious years they had known, separated by circumstance, yet knit together in the bonds of enduring love!

I pictured them at festive winter seasons, at their humble solitary boards; and in summer prime, when song-birds and bright perfumed flowers call lovers forth into the sunshine rejoicingly. They had not dared to rejoice during their long engagement; yet Bessie was a sociable creature, and did not mope or shut herself up, but led a life of active usefulness, and was a general favorite amongst all classes. They had never contemplated the possibility of evading Bessie's solemn promise to her dying father; to their tender consciences, that fatal promise was as binding and stringent, as if the gulf of marriage or conventual vows yawned betwixt them. We had been inclined to indulge some mirth at the expense of the little gray gossip, when she first presented herself to our notice; but now we regarded her as an object of interest, surrounded by a halo of romance, fully shared in by her charming, venerable lover. And this was good Cousin Con's elucidation of the riddle, which she narrated with many digressions, and with animated smiles, to conceal tears of sympathy. Paul Worthington and little Bessie did not like their history to be discussed by the rising frivolous generation; it was so unworldly, so sacred, and they looked forward with humble hope so soon to be united for ever in the better land, that it pained and distressed them to be made a topic of conversation.

Were we relating fiction, it would be easy to bring this antiquated pair together, even at the eleventh hour; love and constancy making up for the absence of one sweet ingredient, evanescent, yet beautiful—the ingredient, we mean, of youth. But as this is a romance of reality, we are fain to divulge facts as they actually occurred, and as we heard them from authentic sources. Paul and Bessie, divided in their lives, repose side by side in the old church-yard. He dropped off first, and Bessie doffed her gray for sombre habiliments of darker hue. Nor did she long remain behind, loving little soul! leaving her property to Annie Mortimer, and warning her against long engagements.

The last time we heard of Annie, she was the happy wife of an excellent man, who, fully coinciding in the opinion of the little gray gossip, protested strenuously against more than six weeks' courtship, and carried his point triumphantly.

THE MOURNER AND THE COMFORTER.

IT was a lovely day in the month of August, and the sun, which had shone with undiminished splendor from the moment of dawn, was now slowly declining, with that rich and prolonged glow with which it seems especially to linger around those scenes where it seldom finds admittance. For it was a valley in the north of Scotland into which its light was streaming, and many a craggy top and rugged side, rarely seen without their cap of clouds or shroud of mist,

were now throwing their mellow-tinted forms, clear and soft, into a lake of unusual stillness. High above the lake, and commanding a full view of that and of the surrounding hills, stood one of those countryfied hotels not unfrequently met with on a tourist's route, formerly only designed for the lonely traveler or weary huntsman, but which now, with the view to accommodate the swarm of visitors which every summer increased, had gone on stretching its cords and enlarging its boundaries, till the original tenement looked merely like the seed from which the rest had sprung. Nor, even under these circumstances, did the house admit of much of the luxury of privacy; for, though the dormitories lay thick and close along the narrow corridor, all accommodation for the day was limited to two large and long rooms, one above the other, which fronted the lake. Of these, the lower one was given up to pedestrian travelers—the sturdy, sunburnt shooters of the moors, who arrive with weary limbs and voracious appetites, and question no accommodation which gives them food and shelter; while the upper one was the resort of ladies and family parties, and was furnished with a low balcony, now covered with a rough awning.

Both these rooms, on the day we mention, were filled with numerous guests. Touring was at its height, and shooting had begun; and, while a party of way-worn young men, coarsely clad and thickly shod, were lying on the benches, or lolling out of the windows of the lower apartment, a number of traveling parties were clustered in distinct groups in the room above; some lingering round their tea-tables, while others sat on the balcony, and seemed attentively watching the evolutions of a small boat, the sole object on the lake before them. It is pleasant to watch the actions, however insignificant they may be, of a distant group; to see the hand obey without hearing the voice that has bidden; to guess at their inward motives by their outward movements; to make theories of their intentions, and try to follow them out in their actions; and, as at a pantomime, to tell the drift of the piece by dumb show alone. And it is an idle practice, too, and one especially made for the weary or the listless traveler, giving them amusement without thought, and occupation without trouble; for people who have had their powers of attention fatigued by incessant exertion, or weakened by constant novelty, are glad to settle it upon the merest trifle at last. So the loungers on the balcony increased, and the little boat became a centre of general interest to those who apparently had not had one sympathy in common before. So calm and gliding was its motion, so refreshing the gentle air which played round it, that many an eye from the shore envied the party who were seated in it. These consisted of three individuals, two large figures and a little one.

"It is Captain H—— and his little boy," said one voice, breaking silence; "they arrived here yesterday."

"They'll be going to see the great waterfall," said another.

"They have best make haste about it; for they have a mile to walk up-hill when they land," said a third.

"Rather they than I," rejoined a languid fourth; and again there was a pause. Meanwhile the boat party seemed to be thinking little about the waterfall, or the need for expedition. For a few minutes the quick-glancing play of the oars was seen, and then they ceased again; and now an arm was stretched out toward some distant object in the landscape, as if asking a question; and then the little fellow pointed here and there, as if asking many questions at once, and, in short, the conjectures on the balcony were all thrown out. But now the oars had rested longer than usual, and a figure rose and stooped, and seemed occupied with something at the bottom of the boat. What were they about? They were surely not going to fish at this time of evening! No, they were not; for slowly a mast was raised, and a sail unfurled, which at first hung flapping, as if uncertain which side the wind would take it, and then gently swelled out to its full dimensions, and seemed too large a wing for so tiny a body. A slight air had arisen; the long reflected lines of colors, which every object on the shore dripped, as it were, into the lake, were gently stirred with a quivering motion; every soft strip of liquid tint broke gradually into a jagged and serrated edge; colors were mingled, forms were confused; the mountains, which lay in undiminished brightness above, seemed by some invisible agency to be losing their second selves from beneath them; long, cold white lines rose apparently from below, and spread radiating over all the liquid picture: in a few minutes, the lake lay one vast sheet of bright silver, and half the landscape was gone. The boat was no longer in the same element: before, it had floated in a soft, transparent ether; now, it glided upon a plain of ice.

"I wish they had stuck to their oars," said the full, deep voice of an elderly gentleman; "hoisting a sail on these lakes is very much like trusting to luck in life—it may go on all right for a while, and save you much trouble, but you are never sure that it won't give you the slip, and that when you are least prepared."

"No danger in the world, sir," said a young fop standing by, who knew as little about boating on Scotch lakes as he did of most things any where else. Meanwhile, the air had become chill, the sun had sunk behind the hills, and the boating party, tired, apparently, of their monotonous amusement, turned the boat's head toward shore. For some minutes they advanced with fuller and fuller bulging sail in the direction they sought, when suddenly the breeze seemed not so much to change as to be met by another and stronger current of air, which came pouring through the valley with a howling sound, and then, bursting on the lake, drove its waters in a furrow before it. The little boat started, and swerved like a frightened creature; and the sail, distended to its utmost, cowered down to the water's edge.

"Good God! why don't they lower that sail! Down with it! down with it!" shouted the same deep voice from the balcony, regardless of the impossibility of being heard. But the admonition was needless; the boatman, with quick, eager motions, was trying to lower it. Still it bent, fuller and fuller, lower and lower. The man evidently strained with desperate strength, defeating, perhaps, with the clumsiness of anxiety, the end in view; when, too impatient, apparently, to witness their urgent peril without lending his aid, the figure of Captain H—— rose up; in one instant a piercing scream was borne faintly to shore—the boat whelmed over, and all were in the water.

For a few dreadful seconds nothing was seen of the unhappy creatures: then a cap floated, and then two struggling figures rose to the surface. One was evidently the child, for his cap was off, and his fair hair was seen; the other head was covered. This latter buffeted the waters with all the violence of a helpless, drowning man; then he threw his arms above his head, sank, and rose no more. The boy struggled less and less, and seemed dead to all resistance before he sank, too. The boat floated keel upward, almost within reach of the sufferers; and now that the waters had closed over them, the third figure was observed, for the first time, at a considerable distance, slowly and laboriously swimming toward it, and in a few moments two arms were flung over it, and there he hung. It was one of those scenes which the heart quails to look on, yet which chains the spectator to the spot. The whole had passed in less than a minute: fear—despair—agony—and death, had been pressed into one of those short minutes, of which so many pass without our knowing how. It is well. Idleness, vanity, or vice—all that dismisses thought—may dally with time, but the briefest space is too long for that excess of consciousness where time seems to stand still.

At this moment a lovely and gentle-looking young woman entered the room. It was evident that she knew nothing of the dreadful scene that had just occurred, nor did she now remark the intense excitement which still riveted the spectators to the balcony; for, seeking, apparently, to avoid all intercourse with strangers, she had seated herself, with a book, on the chair farthest removed from the window. Nor did she look up at the first rush of hurried steps into the room; but, when she did, there was something which arrested her attention, for every eye was fixed upon her with an undefinable expression of horror, and every foot seemed to shrink back from approaching her. There was also a murmur as of one common and irrepressible feeling through the whole house; quick footsteps were heard as of men impelled by some dreadful anxiety; doors were banged; voices shouted; and, could any one have stood by a calm and indifferent spectator, it would have been interesting to mark the sudden change from the abstracted and composed look with which Mrs. H—— (for she it was) first raised her head from her book to the painful rest-

lessness of inquiry with which she now glanced from eye to eye, and seemed to question what manner of tale they told.

It is something awful and dreadful to stand before a fellow-creature laden with a sorrow which, however we may commiserate it, it is theirs alone to bear; to be compelled to tear away that veil of unconsciousness which alone hides their misery from their sight; and to feel that the faintress gathering round our own heart alone enables theirs to continue beating with tranquillity. We feel less almost of pity for the suffering we are about to inflict than for the peace which we are about to remove; and the smile of unconsciousness which precedes the knowledge of evil is still more painful to look back upon than the bitterest tear that follows it. And, if such be the feelings of the messenger of heavy tidings, the mind that is to receive them is correspondingly actuated. For who is there that thanks you really for concealing the evil that was already arrived—for prolonging the happiness that was already gone? Who cares for a reprieve when sentence is still to follow? It is a pitiful soul that does not prefer the sorrow of certainty to the peace of deceit; or, rather, it is a blessed provision which enables us to acknowledge the preference when it is no longer in our power to choose. It seems intended as a protection to the mind from something so degrading to it as an unreal happiness, that both those who have to inflict misery and those who have to receive it should alike despise its solace. Those who have trod the very brink of a precipice, unknowing that it yawned beneath, look back to those moments of their ignorance with more of horror than of comfort; such security is too close to danger for the mind ever to separate them again. Nor need the bearer of sorrow embitter his errand by hesitations and scruples how to disclose it; he need not pause for a choice of words or form of statement. In no circumstance of life does the soul act so utterly independent of all outward agency; it waits for no explanation, wants no evidence; at the furthest idea of danger it flies at once to its weakest part; an embarrassed manner will rouse suspicions, and a faltered word confirm them. Dreadful things never require precision of terms—they are wholly guessed before they are half-told. Happiness the heart believes not in till it stands at our very threshold; misery it flies at as if eager to meet.

So it was with the unfortunate Mrs. H——; no one spoke of the accident, no one pointed to the lake; no connecting link seemed to exist between the security of ignorance and the agony of knowledge. At one moment she raised her head in placid indifference, at the next she knew that her husband and child were lying beneath the waters. And did she faint, or fall as one stricken? No: for the suspicion was too sudden to be sustained; and the next instant came the thought, This must be a dream; God can not have done it. And the eyes were closed, and the convulsed hands pressed tight over them, as if she would shut out mental vision as well; and groans and sobs burst from the crowd, and men

dashed from the room, unable to bear it; and women, too, untrue to their calling. And there was weeping and wringing of hands, and one weak woman fainted; but still no sound or movement came from her on whom the burden had fallen. Then came the dreadful revulsion of feeling; and, with contracted brow and gasping breath, and voice pitched almost to a scream, she said, "It is not true—tell me—it is not true—tell me—tell me!" And, advancing with desperate gestures, she made for the balcony. All recoiled before her; when one gentle woman, small and delicate as herself, opposed her, and, with streaming eyes and trembling limbs, stood before her. "Oh, go not there—go not there! cast your heavy burden on the Lord!" These words broke the spell. Mrs. H—— uttered a cry which long rang in the ears of those that heard it, and sank, shivering and powerless, in the arms of the kind stranger.

Meanwhile, the dreadful scene had been witnessed from all parts of the hotel, and every male inmate poured from it. The listless tourist of fashion forgot his languor, the way-worn pedestrian his fatigue. The hill down to the lake was trodden by eager, hurrying figures, all anxious to give that which in such cases it is a relief to give, viz., active assistance. Nor were these all, for down came the sturdy shepherd from the hills; and the troops of ragged, bare-legged urchins from all sides; and distant figures of men and women were seen pressing forward to help or to hear; and the hitherto deserted-looking valley was active with life. Meanwhile, the survivor hung motionless over the upturned boat, borne about at the will of the waters, which were now lashed into great agitation. No one could tell whether it was Captain H—— or the Highland boatman, and no one could wish for the preservation of the one more than the other. For life is life to all; and the poor man's wife and family may have less time to mourn, but more cause to want. And before the boat, that was manning with eager volunteers, had left the shore, down came also a tall, raw-boned woman, breathless, more apparently with exertion than anxiety—her eyes dry as stones, and her cheeks red with settled color; one child dragging at her heels, another at her breast. It was the boatman's wife. Different, indeed, was her suspense to that of the sufferer who had been left above; but, perhaps, equally true to her capacity. With her it was fury rather than distress; she scolded the bystanders, chid the little squalling child, and abused her husband by turns.

"How dare he gang to risk his life, wi' six bairns at hame? Ae body knew nae sail was safe on the lake for twa hours together; mair fule he to try!" And then she flung the roaring child on to the grass, bade the other mind it, strode half-leg high into the water to help to push off the boat; and then, returning to a place where she could command a view of its movements, she took up the child and hushed it tenderly to sleep. Like her, every one now sought some elevated position, and the progress of the

boat seemed to suspend every other thought. It soon neared the fatal spot, and in another minute was alongside the upturned boat; the figure was now lifted carefully in, something put round him, and, from the languor of his movements, and the care taken, the first impression on shore was that Captain H—— was the one spared. But it was a mercy to Mrs. H—— that she was not in a state to know these surmises; for soon the survivor sat steadily upright, worked his arms, and rubbed his head, as if to restore animation; and, long before the boat reached the shore, the coarse figure and garments of the Highland boatman were distantly recognized. Up started his wife. Unaccustomed to mental emotions of any sudden kind, they were strange and burdensome to her.

"What, Meggy! no stay to welcome your husband!" said a bystander.

"Walcome him yoursal!" she replied; "I hae no the time. I maun get his dry claes, and het his parritch; and that's the best walcome I can gie him." And so, perhaps, the husband thought, too.

And now, what was there more to do? The bodies of Captain H—— and his little son had sunk in seventy fathom deep of water. If, in their hidden currents and movements they cast their victims aloft to the surface, all well; if not, no human hand could reach them. There was nothing to do! Two beings had ceased to exist, who, as far as regarded the consciousness and sympathies of the whole party, had never existed at all before. There had been no influence upon them in their lives, there was no blank to them in their deaths. They had witnessed a dreadful tragedy; they knew that she who had risen that morning a happy wife and mother was now widowed and childless, with a weight of woe upon her, and a life of mourning before her; but there were no forms to observe, no rites to prepare; nothing necessarily to interfere with one habit of the day, or to change one plan for the morrow. It was only a matter of feeling; a great *only*, it is true; but, as with every thing in life, from the merest trifle to the most momentous occurrence, the matter varied with the individual who felt. All pitied, some sympathized, but few ventured to help. Some wished themselves a hundred miles off, because they could not help her; others wished the same, because she distressed them; and the solitary back room, hidden from all view of the lake, to which the sufferer had been borne, after being visited by a few well-meaning or curious women, was finally deserted by all save the kind lady we have mentioned, and a good-natured maid-servant, the drudge of the hotel, who came in occasionally to assist.

We have told the tale exactly as it occurred; the reader knows both plot and conclusion: and now there only remains to say something of the ways of human sorrow, and something, too, of the ways of human goodness.

Grief falls differently on different hearts; some must vent it, others can not. The coldest will be the most unnerved, the tenderest the most possessed; there is no rule. As for this poor

lady, hers was of that sudden and extreme kind for which insensibility is at first mercifully provided; and it came to her, and yet not entirely—suspending the sufferings of the mind, but not deadening all the sensation of the body; for she shivered and shuddered with that bloodless cold which kept her pale, numb, and icy, like one in the last hours before death. A large fire was lighted, warm blankets were wrapped round her, but the cold was too deep to be reached; and the kind efforts made to restore animation were more a relief to her attendants than to her. And yet Miss Campbell stopped sometimes from the chafing of the hands, and let those blue fingers lie motionless in hers, and looked up at that wan face with an expression as if she wished that the eyes might never open again, but that death might at once restore what it had just taken. For some hours no change ensued, and then it was gradual; the hands were withdrawn from those that held them, and first laid, and then clenched together; deep sighs of returning breath and returning knowledge broke from her: the wrappers were thrown off, first feebly, and then restlessly. There were no dramatic startings, no abrupt questionings; but, as blood came back to the veins, anguish came back to the heart. All the signs of excessive mental oppression now began, a sad train as they are, one extreme leading to the other. Before, there had been the powerlessness of exertion, now, there was the powerlessness of control; before she had been benumbed by insensibility, now, she was impelled as if bereft of sense. Like one distracted with intense bodily pain, her whole frame seemed strained to endure. The gentlest of voices whispered comfort, she heard not; the kindest of arms supported her, she rested not. There was the unvarying moan, the weary pacing, the repetition of the same action, the measurement of the same distance, the body vibrating as a mere machine to the restless recurrence of the same thought.

We have said that every outer sign of woe was there—all but that which great sorrows set flowing, but the greatest dry up—she shed no tears! Tears are things for which a preparation of the heart is needful; they are granted to anxiety for the future, or lament for the past. They flow with reminiscences of our own, or with the example of others; they are sent to separations we have long dreaded, and to disappointments we can not forget; they come when our hearts are softened, or when our hearts are wearied; but, in the first amazement of unlooked-for woe, they find no place: the cup that is suddenly whelmed over lets no drop of water escape.

It was evident, however, through all the unruliness of such distress, that the sufferer was a creature of gentle and considerate nature; in the whirlpool which convulsed every faculty of her mind, the smooth surface of former habits was occasionally thrown up. Though the hand which sought to support her was cast aside with a restless, excited movement, it was sought the next instant with a momentary pressure of contrition. Though the head was turned away one instant from the whisper of consolation with a gesture

of impatience, yet it was bowed the next as if in entreaty of forgiveness. Poor creature! what effort she could make to allay the storm which was rioting within her was evidently made for the sake of those around. With so much and so suddenly to bear, she still showed the habit of forbearance.

Meanwhile night had far advanced; many had been the inquiries and expressions of sympathy made at Mrs. H——'s door; but now, one by one, the parties retired each to their rooms. Few, however, rested that night as usual; however differently the terrible picture might be carried on the mind during the hours of light, it forced itself with almost equal vividness upon all in those of darkness. The father struggling to reach the child, and then throwing up his arms in agony, and that fair little head borne about unresistingly by the waves before they covered it over—these were the figures which haunted many a pillow. Or, if the recollection of that scene was lulled for a while, it was recalled again by the weary sound of those footsteps which told of a mourner who rested not. Of course, among the number and medley of characters lying under that roof, there was the usual proportion of the selfish and the careless. None, however, slept that night without confessing, in word or thought, that life and death are in the hands of the Lord; and not all, it is to be hoped, forgot the lesson. One young man, in particular, possessed of fine intellectual powers, but which unfortunately had been developed among a people who, God help them! affect to believe only what they understand, was indebted to this day and night for a great change in his opinions. His heart was kind, though his understanding was perverted; and the thought of that young, lovely, and feeble woman, on whom a load of misery had fallen which would have crushed the strongest of his own sex, roused within him the strongest sense of the insufficiency of all human aid or human strength for beings who are framed to love and yet ordained to lose. He was oppressed with compassion, miserable with sympathy, he longed with all the generosity of a manly heart to do something, to suggest something, that should help her, or satisfy himself. But what were fortitude, philosophy, strength of mind? Mockeries, nay, more, imbecilities, which he dared not mention to her, nor so much as think of in the same thought with her woe. Either he must accuse the Power who had inflicted the wound, and so deep he had not sunk, or he must acknowledge His means of cure. Impelled, therefore, by a feeling equally beyond his doubting or his proving, he did that which for years German sophistry had taught him to forbear; he gave but little, but he felt that he gave his best—he *prayed* for the suffering creature, and in the name of One who suffered for all, and from that hour God's grace forsook him not.

But the most characteristic sympathizer on the occasion was Sir Thomas —, the fine old gentleman who had shouted so loudly from the balcony. He was at home in this valley, owned the whole range of hills on one side of the lake,

from their fertile bases to their bleak tops, took up his abode generally every summer in this hotel, and felt for the stricken woman as if she had been a guest of his own. Ever since the fatal accident he had gone about in a perfect fret of commiseration, inquiring every half-hour at her door how she was, or what she had taken. Severe bodily illness or intense mental distress had never fallen upon that bluff person and warm heart, and abstinence from food was in either case the proof of an extremity for which he had every compassion, but of which he had no knowledge. He prescribed, therefore, for the poor lady every thing that he would have relished himself, and nothing at that moment could have made him so happy as to have been allowed to send her up the choicest meal that the country could produce. Not that his benevolence was at all limited to such manifestations; if it did not deal in sentiment, it took the widest range of practice. His laborers were dispatched round the lake to watch for any traces of the late catastrophe; he himself kept up an hour later planning how he could best promote the comfort of her onward journey and of her present stay; and though the good old gentleman was now snoring loudly over the very apartment which contained the object of his sympathy, he would have laid down his life to save those that were gone, and half his fortune to solace her who was left.

Some hours had elapsed, the footsteps had ceased, there was quiet, if not rest, in the chamber of mourning; and, shortly after sunrise, a side door in the hotel opened, and she who had been as a sister to the stranger, never seen before, came slowly forth. She was worn with watching, her heart was sick with the sight and sounds of such woe, and she sought the refreshment of the outer air and the privacy of the early day. It was a dawn promising a day as beautiful as the preceding; the sun was beaming mildly through an opening toward the east, wakening the tops of the nearest hills, while all the rest of the beautiful range lay huge and colorless, nodding, as it were, to their drowsy reflections beneath, and the lake itself looked as calm and peaceful as if the winds had never swept over its waters, nor those waters over all that a wife and mother had loved. Man is such a speck on this creation of which he is lord, that had every human being now sleeping on the green sides of the hills, been lying deep among their dark feet in the lake, it would not have shown a ripple the more. Miss Campbell, meanwhile, wandered slowly on, and though apparently unmindful of the beauty of the scene, she was evidently soothed by its influence. All that dreary night long had she cried unto God in ceaseless prayer, and felt that without His help in her heart, and His word on her lips, she had been but as a strengthless babe before the sight of that anguish. But here beneath His own heavens her communings were freer; her soul seemed not so much to need Him below, as to rise to Him above; and the solemn dejection upon a very careworn, but sweet face, became less painful, but perhaps more touching. In her wanderings she had now left the hotel to

her left hand, the boatman's clay cottage was just above, and below a little rough pier of stones, to an iron ring in one of which the boat was usually attached. She had stood on that self-same spot the day before and watched Captain H—— and his little son as they walked down to the pier, summoned the boatman, and launched into the cool, smooth water. She now went down herself, and stood with a feeling of awe upon the same stones they had so lately left. The shores were loose and shingly, many footsteps were there, but one particularly riveted her gaze. It was tiny in shape and light in print, and a whole succession of them went off toward the side as if following a butterfly, or attracted by a bright stone. Alas! they were the last prints of that little foot on the shores of this world! Miss Campbell had seen the first thunderbolt of misery burst upon his mother; she had borne the sight of her as she lay stunned, and as she rose frenzied, but that tiny footprint was worse than all, and she burst into a passionate fit of tears. She felt as if it were desecration to sweep them away, as if she could have shrined them round from the winds and waves, and thoughtless tread of others; but a thought came to check her. What did it matter how the trace of his little foot, or how the memory of his short life were obliterated from this earth! There was One above who had numbered every hair of his innocent head, and in His presence she humbly hoped both father and child were now rejoicing.

She was just turning away when the sound of steps approached, and the boatman's wife came up. Her features were coarse and her frame was gaunt, as we have said, but she was no longer the termagant of the day before, nor was she ever so. But the lower classes, in the most civilized lands, are often, both in joy and grief, an enigma to those above them; if nature, rare alike in all ranks, speak not for them, they have no conventional imitation to put in her place. The feeling of intense suspense was new to her, and the violence she had assumed had been the awkwardness which, under many eyes, knew not otherwise how to express or conceal; but she had sound Scotch sense, and a tender woman's heart, and spoke them both now truly, if not gracefully.

"Ye'll be frae the hotel, yonder?" she said; "can ye tell me how the puir luddy has rested? I was up mysel' to the house, and they tell't me they could hear her greeting!"

Miss Campbell told her in a few words what the reader knows, and asked for her husband.

"Oh! he's weel enough in body, but sair disquieted in mind. No that he's unmindfu' of the mercy of the Lord to himsel', but he can no just keep the thocht away that it was he wha helped those poor creatures to their end." She then proceeded earnestly to exculpate her husband, assuring Miss Campbell that in spite of the heavy wind and the entangled rope, all might even yet have been well if the gentleman had kept his seat. "But I just tell him that there's Ane above, stronger than the wind, who sunk them in the lake, and could have raised them from it, but it was no His pleasure. The puir luddy

would ha' been name the happier if Andrew had been ta'en as well, and I and the bairns muckle the waur." Then observing where Miss Campbell stood, she continued, in a voice of much emotion, "Ah! I mind them weel as they came awa' down here; the bairnie was playing by as Andrew loosened the boat—the sweet bairnie! so happy and thochtless as he gaed in his beautiful claes—I see him noo!" and the poor woman wiped her eyes. "But there's something ye'll like to see. Jeanie! gang awa' up, and bring the little bonnet that hangs on the peg. Andrew went out again with the boat the night, and picked it up. But it will no be dry."

The child returned with a sad token. It was the little fellow's cap; a smart, town-made article, with velvet band, and long silk tassel which had been his first vanity, and his mother had coaxed it smooth as she pulled the peak low down over his fair forehead, and then, fumbling his little fingers into his gloves, had given him a kiss which she little thought was to be the last!

"I was coming awa' up wi' it mysel', but the laddy will no just bear to see it yet."

"No, not yet," said Miss Campbell, "if ever. Let me take it. I shall remain with her till better friends come here, or she goes to them;" and giving the woman money, which she had difficulty in making her accept, she possessed herself of the cap, and turned away.

She soon reached the hotel, it was just five o'clock, all blinds were down, and there was no sign of life; but one figure was pacing up and down, and seemed to be watching for her. It was Sir Thomas. His sympathy had broken his sleep in the morning, though it had not disturbed it at night. He began in his abrupt way:

"Madam, I have been watching for you. I heard you leave the house. Madam, I feel almost ashamed to lift up my eyes to you; while we have all been wishing and talking, you alone have been acting. We are all obliged to you, madam; there is not a creature here with a heart in them to whom you have not given comfort!"

Miss Campbell tried to escape from the honest overflowings of the old man's feelings.

"You have only done what you liked: very true, madam. It is choking work having to pity without knowing how to help; but I would sooner give ten thousand pounds than see what you have seen. I would do any thing for the poor creature, any thing, but I could not look at her." He then told her that his men had been sent with the earliest dawn to different points of the lake, but as yet without finding any traces of the late fatal accident; and then his eyes fell upon the cap in Miss Campbell's hand, and he at once guessed the history. "Picked up last evening, you say—sad, sad—a dreadful thing!" and his eyes filling more than it was convenient to hold, he turned away, blew his nose, took a short turn, and coming back again, continued, "But tell me, how has she rested? what has she taken? You must not let her weep too much!"

"Let her weep!" said Miss Campbell; "I wish I could bid her. She has not shed a tear yet, and mind and body alike want it. I left her

lying back quiet in an arm-chair, but I fear this quiet is worse than what has gone before!"

"God bless my heart!" said Sir Thomas, his eyes now running over without control. "God bless my heart! this is sad work. Not that I ever wished a woman to cry before in my life, if she could help it. Poor thing! poor thing! I'll send for a medical man: the nearest is fifteen miles off!"

"I think it will be necessary. I am now going back to her room."

"Well, ma'am, I won't detain you longer, but don't keep all the good to yourself. Let me know if there is any thing that I, or my men, or," the old gentleman hesitated, "my money, madam, can do, only don't ask me to see her;" and so they each went their way—Sir Thomas to the stables to send off man and horse, and Miss Campbell to the chamber of mourning.

She started as she entered; the blind was drawn up, and, leaning against the shutter, in apparent composure, stood Mrs. H——. That composure was dreadful; it was the calm of intense agitation, the silence of boiling heat, the immovability of an object in the most rapid motion. The light was full upon her, showing cheek and forehead flushed, and veins bursting on the small hands. Miss Campbell approached with trembling limbs.

"Where is the servant?"—"I did not want her."

"Will you not rest?"—"I can not!"

Miss Campbell was weary and worn out; the picture before her was so terrible, she sunk on the nearest chair in an agony of tears.

Without changing her position, Mrs. H—— turned her head, and said, gently, "Oh, do not cry so! it is I who ought to cry, but my heart 's as dry as my eyes, and my head is so tight, and I can not think for its aching; I can not think, I can not understand, I can not remember, I don't even know your name, then why should this be true? It is I who am ill, they are well, but they never were so long from me before." Then coming forward, her face working, and her breath held tightly, as if a scream were pressing behind, "Tell me," she said, "tell me—my husband and child—" she tried hard to articulate, but the words were lost in a frightful contortion. Miss Campbell mastered herself, she saw the rack of mental torture was strained to the utmost. Neither could bear this much longer. She almost feared resistance, but she felt there was one way to which the sufferer would respond.

"I am weary and tired," she said; "weary with staying up with you all night. If you will lie down, I will soon come and lie by your side."

Poor Mrs. H—— said nothing, but let herself be laid upon the bed.

Three mortal hours passed, she was burnt with a fever which only her own tears could quench; and those wide-open, dry eyes were fearful to see. A knock came to the door, "How is she now?" said Sir Thomas's voice, "The doctor is here: you look as if you wanted him yourself. I'll bring him up."

The medical man entered. Such a case had not occurred in his small country practice before,

but he was a sensible and a kind man, and no practice could have helped him here if he had not been. He heard the whole sad history, felt the throbbing pulse, saw the flush on the face, and wide-open eyes, which now seemed scarcely to notice any thing. He took Miss Campbell into another room, and said that the patient must be instantly roused, and then bled if necessary.

"But the first you can undertake better than I, madam." He looked round. "Is there no little object which would recall!—nothing you could bring before her sight? You understand me?"

Indeed, Miss Campbell did. She had not sat by that bed-side for the last three hours without feeling and fearing that this was necessary; but, at the same time, she would rather have cut off her own hand than undertaken it. She hesitated—but for a moment, and then whispered something to Sir Thomas.

"God bless my heart!" said he; "who would have thought of it? Yes. I know it made me cry like a child."

And then he repeated her proposition to the medical man, who gave immediate assent, and she left the room. In a few minutes she entered that of Mrs. H—— with the little boy's cap in her hand, placed it in a conspicuous position before the bed, and then seated herself with a quick, nervous motion by the bed-side. It was a horrid pause, like that which precedes a cruel operation, where you have taken upon yourself the second degree of suffering—that of witnessing it. The cap lay there on the small stone mantle-piece, with its long, drabbled, weeping tassel, like a funeral emblem. It was not many minutes before it caught those eyes for which it was intended. A suppressed exclamation broke from her; she flew from the bed, looked at Miss Campbell one instant in intense inquiry, and the next had the cap in her hands. The touch of that wet object seemed to dissolve the spell; her whole frame trembled with sudden relaxation. She sank, half-kneeling, on the floor, and tears spouted from her eyes. No blessed rain from heaven to famished earth was ever more welcome. Tears, did we say! Torrents! Those eyes, late so hot and dry, were as two arteries of the soul suddenly opened. What a misery that had been which had sealed them up! They streamed over her face, blinding her riveted gaze, falling on her hands, on the cap, on the floor. Meanwhile the much-to-be-pitied sharer of her sorrow knelt by her side, her whole frame scarcely less unnerved than that she sought to support, uttering broken ejaculations and prayers, and joining her tears to those which flowed so passionately. But she had a gentle and meek spirit to deal with. Mrs. H—— crossed her hands over the cap and bowed her head. Thus she continued a minute, and then turning, still on her knees, she laid her head on her companion's shoulder.

"Help me up," she said, "for I am without strength." And all weak, trembling, and sobbing, she allowed herself to be undressed and put to bed.

Miss Campbell lay down in the same room. She listened till the quivering, catching sobs had given place to deep-drawn sighs, and these again

to disturbed breathings, and then both slept the sleep of utter exhaustion, and Miss Campbell, fortunately, knew not when the mourner awoke from it.

Oh, the dreary first-fruits of excessive sorrow! The first days of a stricken heart, passed through, writhed through, ground through, we scarcely know or remember how, before the knowledge of the bereavement has become habitual—while it is still struggle and not endurance—the same ceaseless recoil from the same ever-recurring shock. It was a blessing that she was ill, very ill; the body shared something of the weight at first.

Let no one, untried by such extremity, here lift the word or look of deprecation. Let there not be a thought of what she ought to have done, or what they would have done. God's love is great, and a Christian's faith is strong, but when have the first encounters between old joys and new sorrows been otherwise than fierce? From time to time a few intervals of heavenly composure, wonderful and gracious to the sufferer, may be permitted, and even the dim light of future peace discerned in the distance; but, in a moment, the gauntlet of defiance is thrown again—no matter what—an old look, an old word, which comes rushing unbidden over the soul, and dreadful feelings rise again only to spend themselves by their own violence. It always seems to us as if sorrow had a nature of its own, independent of that whereon it has fallen, and sometimes strangely at variance with it—scorching the gentle, melting the passionate, dignifying the weak, and prostrating the strong—and showing the real nature, habits, or principles of the mind, only in those defenses it raises up during the intervals of relief. With Mrs. H—— these defenses were reared on the only sure base, and though the storm would sweep down her bulwarks, and cover all over with the furious tide of grief, yet the foundation was left to cling to, and every renewal added somewhat to its strength.

Three days were spent thus, but the fourth she was better, and on Miss Campbell's approaching her bed-side, she drew her to her, and, putting her arms round her neck, imprinted a calm and solemn kiss upon her cheek.

"Oh! what can I ever do for you, dear friend and comforter? God, who has sent you to me in my utmost need, He alone can reward you. I don't even know your name; but that matters not, I know your heart. Now, you may tell me all—all; before, I felt as if I could neither know nor forget what had happened, before, it was as if God had withdrawn His countenance; but now He is gracious, He has heard your prayers."

And then, with the avidity of fresh, hungry sorrow, she besought Miss Campbell to tell her all she knew; she besought and would not be denied, for sorrow has royal authority, its requests are commands. So, with the hand of each locked together, and the eyes of each averted, they sat questioning and answering in disjointed sentences till the whole sad tale was told. Then, anxious to turn a subject which could not be banished, Miss Campbell spoke of the many hearts that had bled, and the many prayers that had ascended

for her, and told her of that kind old man who had thought, acted, and grieved for her like a father.

"God bless him—God bless them all; but chiefly you, my sister. I want no other name."

"Call me Catherine," said the faithful companion.

Passionate bursts of grief would succeed such conversations; nevertheless, they were renewed again and again, for, like all sufferers from severe bereavements, her heart needed to create a world for itself, where its loved ones still were, as a defense against that outer one where they were not, and to which she was only slowly and painfully to be inured, if ever. In these times she would love to tell Catherine—what Catherine most loved to hear—how that her lost husband was both a believer and a doer of Christ's holy word, and that her lost child had learned at her knee what she herself had chiefly learned from his father. For she had been brought up in ignorance and indifference to religious truths, and the greatest happiness of her life had commenced that knowledge, which its greatest sorrow was now to complete.

"I have been such a happy woman," she would say, "that I have pitied others less blessed, though I trust they have not envied me." And then would follow sigh on sigh and tear on tear, and again her soul writhed beneath the agony of that implacable mental spasm.

Sometimes the mourner would appear to lose, instead of gaining ground, and would own with depression, and even with shame, her fear that she was becoming more and more the sport of ungovernable feeling. "My sorrow is sharp enough," she would say, "but it is a still sharper pang when I feel I am not doing my duty under it. It is not thus that *he* would have had me act." And her kind companion, always at hand to give sympathy or comfort, would bid her not exact or expect any thing from herself, but to cast all upon God, reminding her in words of tenderness that her soul was as a sick child, and that strength would not be required until strength was vouchsafed. "Strength," said the mourner, "no more strength or health for me." And Miss Campbell would whisper that, though "weariness endureth for a night, joy comes in the morning." Or she would be silent, for she knew, as most women do, alike how to soothe and when to humor.

It was a beautiful and a moving sight to see two beings thus riveted together in the exercise and receipt of the tenderest and most intimate feelings, who had never known of each other's existence till the moment that made the one dependent and the other indispensable. All the shades and grades of conventional and natural acquaintanceship, all the gradual insight into mutual character, and the gradual growth into mutual trust, which it is so sweet to look back upon from the high ground of friendship, were lost to them; but it mattered not, here they were together, the one admitted into the sanctuary of sorrow, the other sharing in the fullness of love, with no reminiscence in common but one, and that sufficient to bind them together for life.

Meanwhile the friend without was also unre-

mitting in his way. He crossed not her threshold in person, nor would have done so for the world, but his thoughts were always reaching Mrs. H—— in some kind form. Every delicate daintiness that money could procure—beautiful fruits and flowers which had scarce entered this valley before—every thing that could tempt the languid appetite or divert the weary eye was in turn thought of, and each handed in with a kind, hearty inquiry, till the mourner listened with pleasure for the step and voice. Nor was Miss Campbell forgotten; all the brief snatches of air and exercise she enjoyed were in his company, and often did he insist on her coming out for a short walk or drive when the persuasions of Mrs. H—— had failed to induce her to leave a room where she was the only joy. But now a fresh object attracted Sir Thomas's activity, for after many days the earthly remains of one of the sufferers were thrown up. It was the body of the little boy. Sir Thomas directed all that was necessary to be done, and having informed Miss Campbell, the two friends, each strange to the other, and bound together by the interest in one equally strange to both, went out together up the hill above the hotel, and were gone longer than usual. The next day the intelligence was communicated to Mrs. H——, who received it calmly, but added, "I could have wished them both to have rested together; but God's will be done. I ought not to think of them as on earth."

The grave of little Harry H—— was dug far from the burial-ground of his fathers, and strangers followed him to it; but though there were no familiar faces among those who stood round, there were no cold ones; and when Sir Thomas, as chief mourner, threw the earth upon the lowered coffin, warm tears fell upon it also. Miss Campbell had watched the procession from the window, and told how the good old man walked next behind the minister, the boatman and his wife following him, and how a long train succeeded, all pious and reverential in their bearing, with that air of manly decorum which the Scotch peasantry conspicuously show on such occasions. And she who lay on a bed of sorrow and weakness blessed them through her tears, and felt that her child's funeral was not lonely.

From this time the mourner visibly mended. The funeral and the intelligence that preceded it had insensibly given her that change of the same theme, the want of which had been so much felt at first. She had now taken up her burden, and, for the dear sakes of those for whom she bore it, it became almost sweet to her. She was not worshipping her sorrow as an idol, but cherishing it as a friend. Meanwhile she had received many kind visits from the minister who had buried her child, and had listened to his exhortations with humility and gratitude; but his words were felt as admonitions, Catherine's as comfort. To her, now dearer and dearer, every day she would confess aloud the secret changes of her heart; how at one time the world looked all black and dreary before her, how at another she seemed already to live in a brighter one beyond; how one day life was a burden she knew not how to bear, and

another how the bitterness of death seemed already past. Then with true Christian politeness she would lament over the selfishness of her grief, and ask where Miss Campbell had learned to know that feeling which she felt henceforth was to be the only solace of her life—viz., the deep, deep sympathy for others. And Catherine would tell her, with that care-worn look which confirmed all she said, how she had been sorely tried, not by the death of those she loved, but by what was worse—their sufferings and their sins. How she had been laden with those misfortunes which wound most and teach least, and which, although coming equally from the hand of God, torment you with the idea that, but for the wickedness or weakness of some human agent, they need never have been; till she had felt, wrongly no doubt, that she could have better borne those on which the stamp of the Divine Will was more legibly impressed. She told her how the sting of sorrow, like that of death, is sin; how comparatively light it was to see those you love dead, dying, crippled, maniacs, victims, in short, of any evil, rather than victims of evil itself. She spoke of a heart-broken sister and a hard-hearted brother; of a son—an only one, like him just buried—who had gone on from sin to sin, hardening his own heart, and wringing those of others, till none but a mother's love remained to him, and that he outraged. She told, in short, so much of the sad realities of life, in which, if there was not more woe, there was less comfort, that Mrs. H—— acknowledged in her heart that such griefs had indeed been unendurable, and returned with something like comfort to the undisturbed sanctity of her own.

About this time a summons came which required Sir Thomas to quit the valley in which these scenes had been occurring. Mrs. H—— could have seen him, and almost longed to see him; but he shrunk from her, fearing no longer her sorrow so much as her gratitude.

"Tell her I love her," he said, in his abrupt way, "and always shall; but I can't see her—at least, not yet." Then, explaining to Miss Campbell all the little arrangements for the continuation of the mourner's comfort, which his absence might interrupt, he authorized her to dispose of his servants, his horses, and every thing that belonged to him, and finally put into her hands a small packet, directed to Mrs. H——, with instructions when to give it. He had ascertained that Mrs. H—— was wealthy, and that her great afflictions entailed no minor privations. "But you, my dear, are poor; at least, I hope so, for I could not be happy unless I were of service to you. I am just as much obliged to you as Mrs. H—— is. Mind, you have promised to write to me and to apply to me without reserve. No kindness, no honor—nonsense. It is *I* who honor *you* above every creature I know, but I would not be a woman for the world; at least, the truth is, *I could not*." And so he turned hastily away.

And now the time approached when she, who had entered this valley a happy wife and mother, was to leave it widowed and childless, a sorrowing and heavy-hearted woman, but not an un-

happy one. She had but few near relations, and those scattered in distant lands; but there were friends who would break the first desolation of her former home, and Catherine had promised to bear her company till she had committed her into their hands.

It was a lovely evening, the one before their departure. Mrs. H—— was clad for the first time in all that betokened her to be a mourner; but, as Catherine looked from the black habiliments to that pale face, she felt that there was the deepest mourning of all. Slowly the widow passed through that side-door we have mentioned, and stood once more under God's heaven. Neither had mentioned to the other the errand on which they were bound, but both felt that there was but one. Slowly and feebly she mounted the gentle slope, and often she stopped, for it was more than weakness or fatigue that made her breath fail. The way was beautiful, close to the rocky bed and leafy sides of that sweetest of all sweet things in the natural world, a Scotch burn. And now they turned, for the rich strip of grass, winding among bush and rock, which they had been following as a path, here spread itself out in a level shelf of turf, where the burn ran smoother, the bushes grew higher, and where the hill started upward again in bolder lines. Here there was a fresh-covered grave. The widow knelt by it, while Catherine stood back. Long was that head bowed, first in anguish, and then in submission, and then she turned her face toward the lake, on which she had not looked since that fatal day, and gazed steadily upon it. The child lay in his narrow bed at her feet, but the father had a wider one far beneath. Catherine now approached and was folded in a silent embrace; then she gave her that small packet which Sir Thomas had left, and begged her to open it on the spot. It was a legal deed, making over to Mary H——, in free gift, the ground on which she stood—a broad strip from the tip of the hill to the waters of the lake. The widow's tears rained fast upon it.

"Both God and man are very good to me," she said; "I am lonely but not forsaken. But, Catherine, it is you to whom I must speak. I have tried to speak before, but never felt I could till now. Oh, Catherine! stay with me; let us never be parted. God gave you to me when He took all else beside; He has not done it for naught. I can bear to return to my lonely home if you will share it—I can bear to see this valley, this grave again, if you are with me. I am not afraid of tying your cheerfulness to my sorrow; I feel that I am under a calamity, but I feel also that I am under no curse—you will help to make it a blessing. Oh! complete your sacred work, give me years to requite to you your last few days to me. You have none who need you more—none who love you more. Oh! follow me; here, on my child's grave, I humbly entreat you, follow me."

Catherine trembled; she stood silent a minute, and then, with a low, firm voice, replied, "Here, on your child's grave, I promise you. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." She kept her promise and never repented it.

LIFE OF BLAKE, THE GREAT ADMIRAL.

ROBERT BLAKE was born at Bridgewater, in August, 1599. His father, Humphrey Blake, was a merchant trading with Spain—a man whose temper seems to have been too sanguine and adventurous for the ordinary action of trade, finally involving him in difficulties which clouded his latter days, and left his family in straitened circumstances: his name, however, was held in general respect; and we find that he lived in one of the best houses in Bridgewater, and twice filled the chair of its chief magistrate. The perils to which mercantile enterprise was then liable—the chance escapes and valorous deeds which the successful adventurer had to tell his friends and children on the dark winter nights—doubtless formed a part of the food on which the imagination of young Blake, “silent and thoughtful from his childhood,” was fed in the “old house at home.” At the Bridgewater grammar-school, Robert received his early education, making tolerable acquaintance with Latin and Greek, and acquiring a strong bias toward a literary life. This *penchant* was confirmed by his subsequent career at Oxford, where he matriculated at sixteen, and where he strove hard, but fruitlessly, for scholarships and fellowships at different colleges. His failure to obtain a Merton fellowship has been attributed to a crotchet of the warden’s, Sir Henry Savile, in favor of tall men: “The young Somersetshire student, thick-set, fair-complexioned, and only five feet six, fell below his standard of manly beauty;” and thus the Cavalier warden, in denying this aspirant the means of cultivating literature on a little university oatmeal, was turning back on the world one who was fated to become a republican power of the age. This shining light, instead of comfortably and obscurely merging in a petty constellation of Alma Mater, was to become a bright particular star, and dwell apart. The avowed liberalism of Robert may, however, have done more in reality to shock Sir Henry, than his inability to add a cubit to his stature. It is pleasant to know, that the “admiral and general at sea” never outgrew a tenderness for literature—his first-love, despite the rebuff of his advances. Even in the busiest turmoil of a life teeming with accidents by flood and field, he made it a point of pride not to forget his favorite classics. Nor was it till after nine years’ experience of college-life, and when his father was no longer able to manage his *res angusta vita*, that Robert finally abandoned his long-cherished plans, and retired with a sigh and last adieu from the banks of the Isis.

When he returned to Bridgewater, in time to close his father’s eyes, and superintend the arrangements of the family, he was already remarkable for that “iron will, that grave demeanor, that free and dauntless spirit,” which so distinguished his after-course. His tastes were simple, his manners somewhat bluntly austere; a refined dignity of countenance, and a picturesque vigor of conversation, invested him with a social interest, to which his indignant invectives against

court corruptions gave distinctive character. To the Short Parliament he was sent as member for his native town; and in 1645, was returned by Taunton to the Long Parliament. At the dissolution of the former, which he regarded as a signal for action, he began to prepare arms against the king; his being one of the first troops in the field, and engaged in almost every action of importance in the western counties. His superiority to the men about him lay in the “marvelous fertility, energy, and comprehensiveness of his military genius.” Prince Rupert alone, in the Royalist camp, could rival him as a “partisan soldier.” His first distinguished exploit was his defense of Prior’s Hill fort, at the siege of Bristol—which contrasts so remarkably with the pusillanimity of his chief, Colonel Fiennes. Next comes his yet more brilliant defense of Lyme—then a little fishing-town, with some 900 inhabitants, of which the defenses were a dry ditch, a few hastily-formed earth-works, and three small batteries, but which the Cavalier host of Prince Maurice, trying storm, stratagem, blockade, day after day, and week after week, failed to reduce or dishearten. “At Oxford, where Charles then was, the affair was an inexplicable marvel and mystery: every hour the court expected to hear that the ‘little vile fishing-town,’ as Clarendon contemptuously calls it, had fallen, and that Maurice had marched away to enterprises of greater moment; but every post brought word to the wondering council, that Colonel Blake still held out, and that his spirited defense was rousing and rallying the dispersed adherents of Parliament in those parts.” After the siege was raised, the Royalists found that more men of gentle blood had fallen under Blake’s fire at Lyme, than in all other sieges and skirmishes in the western counties since the opening of the war.

The hero’s fame had become a spell in the west: it was seen that he rivaled Rupert in rapid and brilliant execution, and excelled him in the caution and sagacity of his plans. He took Taunton—a place so important at that juncture, as standing on and controlling the great western highway—in July, 1644, within a week of Cromwell’s defeat of Rupert at Marston Moor. All the vigor of the Royalists was brought to bear on the captured town; Blake’s defense of which is justly characterized as abounding with deeds of individual heroism—exhibiting in its master-mind a rare combination of civil and military genius. The spectacle of an unwall’d town, in an inland district, with no single advantage of site, surrounded by powerful castles and garrisons, and invested by an enemy brave, watchful, numerous, and well provided with artillery, successively resisting storm, strait, and blockade for several months, thus paralyzing the king’s power, and affording Cromwell time to remodel the army, naturally arrested the attention of military writers at that time; and French authors of this class bestowed on Taunton the name of the modern Saguntum. The rage of the Royalists at this prolonged resistance was extreme. Reckoning from the date when Blake first seized the town, to that of