

out of the cart, and I stepped politely up, and asked his name. "Excuse me, sir," he said. "I shall have no name at all in three minutes, and it is not worth while to trouble myself with so useless a piece of baggage for so short a time." I was a little vexed; but I formed my plan in a moment, and told the executioner what to do. As soon as the head was off, he took it up, and held the face right toward me. I had an open penknife in my hand, and I darted the point toward the pupil of the eye. The eyes closed instantly, remained closed for a moment, and then opened again. There was no sort of convulsive movement that I could detect about the features; and here was another indication. Still, I do not mean to say that these experiments were as satisfactory as I could have desired. It was lucky, however, that I seized that opportunity; for that very night my worthy friend of the pulley and the knife was struck with complete paralysis of his lower extremities. You may see him in the town, dragging about his legs in a go-cart. The man who was appointed in his room was a brutal fellow, without any real love for science, and I never could get him to give me any facilities whatever. One time, when I was applying to him, he growled forth a hope that he should have me under his hands some day; adding, "And then you will know as much about it as you want to know." I thought it best, after that, to hold aloof, and let him forget me.

HESTER.

CHAPTER I.

"THEY'RE only a ha'penny, sir—any one you like;—only a ha'penny."

"No!" said the gentleman addressed, with great emphasis and decision, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, but with inflexible determination straight before him.

"Oh sir, please do!" the first little voice said again. It was a very sweet, faint, childish voice, and there was a very earnest, plaintive tone in it, as it made its simple entreaty. Perhaps the gentleman thought so; for, with a sudden jerk of his head, he turned round, and fixed a pair of very bright gray eyes upon the little ragged creature who was struggling, not very successfully, to keep up with his rapid pace. He came to a stop as soon as he saw her, and planted his walking-stick firmly in the ground.

"They're all different, sir," the child said, eagerly but timidly presenting a little bird, formed of a flat piece of pasteboard, covered with black velvet, for the approbation of the stranger.

"And what do you think I'm going to do with that?" the gentleman asked fiercely, as he gazed with unspeakable contempt upon the diminutive object that was being held up to him.

"I thought you'd buy it, sir," the child said, in a frightened whisper, drawing in her hand again, and preparing to back out of sight.

"You thought I'd buy it, did you? And did you think I'd play with it too?" the gentleman said, with still increasing emphasis.

"I don't know, sir," the child answered, with her eyes fixed on his. "A good many gentlemen *do* buy them for their children," she added, after a moment's thought.

"For their children, do they? Well, I've got a child, so there's a halfpenny. Now give me one—a good one."

"There's the biggest, sir," the child said, with an instinctive feeling that the biggest was best suited to her customer. "Thank you, sir;" and she was moving away.

"Stay still!" growled the gentleman.

"Yes, sir," said the child, staying still accordingly.

"You must lead a very pleasant life, no work, no lessons, nothing to do all day but to play with these birds. Come, don't you?"

"I don't ever play, sir," she said—not saying it as if it were any thing strange.

"Not play!" cried the gentleman, quickly.

"Why, what on earth *do* you do, then?"

"Just go about with them all day, sir."

"Go about with *what*?"

"With the birds, sir."

"Oh, with the birds, do you? Well, there's nothing very hard in that."

"No, sir," said the child faintly, thinking he waited for an answer.

"And when you've sold the birds, what do you make of the money?"

"I take it home to my mother, sir."

"Oh, you've got a mother! And she sells birds somewhere else, I suppose?"

"No, sir, she makes them."

"And sits comfortably at home while she sends you out to sell them? Well, I like that!—And so she is making birds?"

"No, sir, these are the last."

"The last! What, won't she make any more?"

"We've used every thing up, sir."

"What—all the velvet?"

"Yes, sir, and the card and all."

"That's a bad job!"

"Yes, sir."

"And when did it all come to an end?"

"A week ago, sir."

"A week ago, did it? And what's your mother been doing since?"

"Starving, sir."

"Starving!" the gentleman cried, in such a voice that the child involuntarily retreated; "starving, and nobody doing any thing to help her! And are *you* starving too? Are you hungry?"

"Oh yes, sir!" she answered, in a tone as if *not* to be hungry was a thing she had never imagined.

"Oh, God help her!" cried the stranger suddenly to himself. "What, are you *always* hungry?" and he turned to her again; "did you *never* have enough?"

"I don't know, sir," the child hesitated; "I don't remember."

"It's a bad case—a shocking bad case," said the gentleman, frowning at the child, and shak-

ing his head so vehemently, that she got more alarmed than ever, and again began to retreat backward, but with a single step he was up to her again.

"Well, and what do you expect I'm going to do?"

"Sir?" stammered the child, with dim visions of a police-office floating through her brain.

"I say, what do you suppose I am going to do?"

"Oh, sir, please don't do any thing, because, because—" and she burst into tears, and looked round despairingly for some possibility of taking flight.

The gentleman looked confounded.

"Why, what do you think I *want* to do?" he cried, stamping his stick upon the stone pavement to give more emphasis to his words, a proceeding which was certainly unnecessary, for they almost made the child leap off her feet, and arrested her tears so completely that for very terror not another fell.

"I don't know, sir; but, if you please, sir—if you'd let me go now, I wouldn't ever trouble you again," the child murmured timidly, in very great childish distress.

"Let you go and starve—of course I will!—the very thing I'll do!" the stranger said, shaking his head at her more angrily than ever. "Come, what's your name?"

"Hester, sir."

"Hester, is it? Well, Hester, and where do you live?"

"In Monmouth-street, sir."

"A bad place—a very bad place. Up or down?" said the gentleman.

"Down," said the child on a venture, "down in a cellar."

"Ah!" said the gentleman, drawing a long breath between his teeth, "just the place to starve in. Well, Hester, I'll give you sixpence if you'll take me there."

With sparkling eyes, the child looked up at him: "Oh! will you, sir?" she cried.

"Will I? There it is for you. Why, Hester, you don't seem much used to sixpences?"

"Oh no, sir!" she said earnestly, as she turned it over and over.

"Well, well, you can look at it another time; come away now. No, stop a moment. Don't move from this spot!" and the gentleman darted from her side, disappearing so suddenly that she looked around her in blank amazement. Before she had recovered, he was back again with a couple of buns in his hand, which being of a most overgrown and unusual size, had caught his eye in a shop window.

"Now, Hester, begin to eat," he said gruffly. "There, now, you'll never hold them both, and the birds, and the sixpence too—give the birds to me; now eat quickly. Well, is it good, well made, well baked?"

"Oh yes, sir," was the earnest answer, more earnest in look than in words. "I haven't had one such a time," she ventured to add, for her fear was beginning to pass away beneath the rough kindness of her new friend.

"Not for such a time, haven't you, Hester? Well, but I suppose you look into the bakers' shops, and get half the pleasure of the things so, don't you?"

"Not lately, sir, since I've been very hungry," she said gently.

"Oh, Hester, you've been hungrier than ever of late, have you?" the stranger said, and the voice was almost soft, so that in amazement Hester looked up into his face, and saw that it too was very full of kindness.

"Oh, it's been much worse this last month or two, sir," she said, in a touchingly hopeless, uncomplaining tone; "some days we haven't had any thing at all."

"Nothing at all, Hester! And what have you done then?"

"There wasn't any thing to do, sir," the child said.

The gentleman walked on very quickly indeed, so quickly that Hester, running, was just able to keep up with him, and could only every now and then give a bite to her great bun, for to most people it is difficult to run and eat together, but especially to those who are starving, and have little breath to spare at any time. It was a very feeble, slow, unsteady kind of running too, such as might be expected from a child who could never remember once in its life to have had enough to eat.

"It just turns off the street, sir; it's down here," Hester said, quite breathless; but, with a great effort, catching the gentleman's coat tail as he was swiftly passing on. It brought him to a stand-still at once.

"Oh, it's down here, Hester, is it? Well, that's worse still! What! not got through the bun yet?" the gentleman said with an alarming gesture. "Ah, it's very clear you're not used to eating. Come along—go on in front, and point out the place. Now, now, Hester, you needn't run, just walk as I do. Why, bless me, it's my belief you've been running all this time! Now, is this the place, Hester?"

"Yes, sir. I think I'd better go in first."

"I certainly think you had: but take care, child—take care! Oh, heaven help her—what practice she's had! Now, Hester, take my hat, and put it down carefully, for I'm coming," and gently and cautiously he began the descent of the short, steep ladder.

"If you please, sir, I'll just take hold of your foot," Hester said from below.

"What?" roared the gentleman, abruptly stopping in his descent, and clinging with both hands and both feet to the ladder, immovable.

"Just to help you, sir, in case you should miss the steps," the child said.

"Ah, well, you may do that if you like, so that you don't throw me down. Yes, yes, I feel—now, that'll do. Give me my hat. Come, where's your mother? Has she gone out?"

"Gone out!" the child echoed mournfully; "oh! sir, she couldn't. It's the next room, sir; this isn't ours, only we've got no door of our own."

They passed through a low opening in the wall into an adjoining cellar, whose only light came through an aperture nearly at the top of the wall. It was not a window—had never been a window, but simply a square hole, through which a glimpse of the narrow, blackened street could be caught. The only air that ever entered the room came through it, and rain, and wind, and snow came through it too, all unhindered, for there was nothing that would serve for even a temporary shutter. There was no fireplace in the room, no sign any where of fire. The walls and ceiling were black with age and dirt; the floor was blacker still, for it was made of clay, moist, and uneven, and cold as ice. Within the cellar there was no furniture at all, except in one corner the skeleton frame of a bedstead—four posts of old deal, polished by wear, with transverse poles connecting them at the head; but the thing was a mere mockery, for there was nothing to support the wretched, torn mattress, and it lay in the centre of the four posts upon the damp, cold ground. From this corner there came a faint voice as they entered the room.

"Oh, thank God! I thought I should never see any one again," and then it went off into a low groan.

"Mother, mother, here's a good gentleman come: he's given me sixpence and two great buns. Look, mother dear—eat it."

The woman raised a thin, wasted hand, and took the cake, looking at it with a hungry, starved look, and then she shook her head, and bursting into tears, murmured, "I can't do it now."

"Oh, mammy!" the child said, sobbing too, but quite perplexed, not understanding why she couldn't eat.

"Good God! she's dying!" the stranger cried, with intense emotion; and in a moment he was on his knees on the bare ground. "My good woman, tell me what I can do? Is there no one living here to whom I can apply?—no doctor near? Try to rouse yourself! Oh, Hester, child, do what you can for your mother!"

The woman raised her eyes to his with a strange kind of amazement, with a look such as none but those who have no friend in the wide world can give; and then, after a moment, she said, "God bless you!" in a voice that trembled, and turned away her head.

"Hester, do you know where to find a doctor?" the gentleman said hastily.

"No, no, I don't want one," the woman faintly whispered; "he couldn't do any thing—it's been coming on a long time."

"Some wine!" the gentleman exclaimed; "that's the thing! Hester, there's money—go and get a bottle of wine at once. Quick, don't be a minute. Oh! God help us!—God forgive us!" he cried, pressing his hands together.

The dying woman's eyes were turned on him again.

"Hester didn't know it was so near," she said; "I kept it from her, and I hoped that to-day, or some day soon, I should die when she was away. But I didn't know how hard it was—how horrible it was—to die alone; I didn't think that, after all that's passed, the end could be so bad."

There was something strangely lethargic in her voice, as if starvation had deadened every feeling, even now in the hour of death.

"It mayn't be too late yet, it mayn't be too late," the stranger said, eagerly, taking the woman's thin hand in his, as tenderly as if she had been some one whom he loved; "but lie still until Hester comes; hush! lie still."

She was a delicate-looking woman, with regular features, and large dark gray eyes. The face was so worn and wasted with care, and suffering, and hunger, that there was little of beauty left now, but she must have been handsome once. Hester was very like her, but hunger had robbed her of her beauty too, and pinched and sharpened the little face.

"Here you are, Hester; well, have you got it? Oh, child, don't cry so! Now, my poor woman, raise your head; take care, can you swallow it? There, that'll do at first. Hester, lay her head right. No, wait a moment, wait a moment," and he tore off his outer coat; "here, put this under her. Oh! heaven help her, what is that pillow made of!"

"Oh, mammy dear! you're better now?" Hester whispered, trembling, and full of fear, she scarcely knew for what. "Couldn't you eat a little bit now!—try it; oh, mammy, do try it!"

But the woman shook her head, and feebly put the food aside again; then suddenly, as her child still bent over her, she stretched out her arms, and passionately clasped her to her bosom, crying, "Hester, Hester, my little child!" with bitter tears.

"Oh, mammy dear!" was all the weeping child could say, as she clung to her.

How many a dying mother, clasping her little child for the last time to her, has not felt so great a bitter, passionate anguish, that half-consciously in her heart she has bid defiance to death, and, with a wild rising in her soul, has said that it shall not part her from her child? And when the paroxysm of despair has passed, and she gives it into a loving Father's arms, and with clasped hands and gentler tears, says to her heavenly Father that she is resigned, and will be content to die, do we not say that faith is strong in her?

Strong in her! then what would it need to be in those who, dying, leave their children fatherless and friendless, without a roof to cover them, without a crust of bread to eat, without one single thing in this wide world to call their own; surrounded with dangers, with snares, with temptations; vice and sin on their right hand and on their left, and before and behind them nothing but starvation and death—what would it need to be in them? And what must

their agony be, as, without hope, and without faith, and, in their terrible despair, almost striving to believe that death is an eternal sleep, they take their last passionate embrace of the thing they are being torn from forever!

Kneeling by her side, the stranger tried to soothe and comfort her; and as she still wildly wept and clasped her child, he prayed her to be calm; but at the word she turned upon him with such sudden energy that he shrank back involuntarily.

"Calm!" she cried; "who are you who *dare* to tell me to be calm! Do you think because I lie here starving to death—because sorrow, and suffering, and misery, have been pressing down on me for years, killing me by slow torture—because I have no food, no money, no friends, do you think I am to be treated as if I had not still a woman's heart? What can you know of my agony—you, well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed? I was all that once; I know how the rich feel for us!" and she laughed with bitter scorn. "Look here, look at this child, she is all I have in the world, the only thing I have had for years; I have lived, and struggled, and suffered for her; I have done every thing but sin for her, and it was she alone who kept me from that, and now I am dying! I am dying! and what do you think will become of her? Oh, man! will you tell me to be calm again! I tell you, if you were to take my child—my child, the one solitary thing that my heart yearns over—if you were to take her and kill her before my eyes, I could almost thank you. I have tried to do it; I have tried, but I could not! Do you shrink from me? You didn't think this was in me; why did you give me your wine to rouse the devil in my heart? I had scarcely strength to speak, scarcely strength even to feel, when you came; it would all have been over now, but you have made me mad! Had not I suffered enough before that? could you not have let me die in peace? Oh, Hester, my child!" she suddenly cried, with a softened voice, stretching out her arms to her; "my child, my darling! come to me again. I say wild words, don't mind them; I am ill, oh! hold me close, close! Blessings on the dear arms, blessings on the dear lips!—my little child! my little child!"

Again they clung to one another, and the woman's fierce face was full of love again, and her burning eyes gushing out with tears. There was silence in the wretched room, except for their sobs, they, too, becoming presently faint and low, for the woman's momentary strength was fading from her, and her soul was about to pass away.

Then, in the stillness, the stranger spoke, bending over her, and speaking slowly and solemnly, that she might hear his words.

"Listen to me, that you may die in peace. As I kneel now in God's sight, I promise that I will take your little daughter home with me to my house, to live with me, and to be to me as my own child. By God's blessing she shall

never know hunger or poverty any more. Do you consent to this?"

She looked at him almost wildly, in an agony of half-believing, half-doubting joy. With one last effort of strength she grasped his arm, and said, "You are not mocking me?" in such a tone of passionate eagerness.

"God forbid!" the stranger cried.

She fixed her eyes upon him for one moment longer, and then such a look broke over her face, as though a ray of heavenly light had pierced through that dark, miserable room, and fallen upon her. Her joy and gratitude were unutterable; she could not speak them; but as she burst into new tears, she sobbed forth, "I think there is a God!" and hid her face, as if in shame and penitence.

"Yes, there is a God; a God who hears the prayers of the wretched and the sorrowful," the stranger said in a low, firm, gentle voice; "oh, woman, believe in Him!"

There was a few moments' pause.

"I do believe," she whispered, clasping her feeble hands; "oh, God forgive me!"

"Mother!" Hester murmured, half-fearfully, laying her head down upon her bosom.

"Oh, my darling, pray for me, too!" the softened woman said. "I have sinned—I have sinned; God be merciful to me!"

Solemnly and gently, still stooping over her, the stranger spoke again.

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

And as the last words died away, with one low, deep sigh, a life was yielded up, and a weary, suffering spirit was released from earth, and went away to find its long, deep rest.

CHAPTER II.

THERE was very little to be learned about the history of the woman who had died. Mr. Thurnell—such was the name of Hester's new friend—made all inquiries that were possible concerning her, but who she was, except that she had called herself Mrs. Ingram, or where she had lived before her arrival at this house, he was quite unable to ascertain. During the two years she had lived there, she had always been miserably poor, the woman of the house said; but it had got worse and worse toward the end, until every article of furniture in their wretched cellar had been sold, and they were sometimes for days together without food.

Hester herself had faint recollections of living once in a large house, and of some one whom she used to call "Papa," but who was never kind to her or to her mother. Every body, she thought, was very miserable, and the house seemed often in great confusion; and one night, she remembered, as if it had been a dream, that her mother came crying bitterly, and snatched her in passionate haste from the little bed in which she was sleeping, and carried her in her

arms out into the dark street, sobbing and weeping wildly. And from that night she did not think she had ever seen her father, or the house where she had lived, again; but she and her mother had staid always together, going about from place to place, and getting ever poorer and poorer, until they came here at last. She did not know how long they had been wandering, but it seemed to her a very, very long time.

And this was all that Mr. Thurnell could learn about the previous history of his adopted child.

The sun shone very brightly, and the air was very soft and warm for an April morning, as little Lily Thurnell stood at her father's gate, watching for her father's coming home. It was a rustic gate of twisted boughs, between two of which Lily's curly head looked out upon the road, for Lily was a little thing, not four years old, and there was quite room enough between the bars of that garden-gate for such a little head as hers to insert itself. So now looking through the wide bars of her prison, now gayly running through the winding walks of the great old garden, with the soft spring breeze blowing back her golden curls, and singing all the time all kinds of merry little songs, Lily spent an hour of that bright April morning before her father came.

But at last, from far away, her quick ears caught the sound of carriage-wheels, and flying to the house, she called aloud for some one to unlock the gate; then, standing in the open entrance, and clapping her little hands with joy, she waited with impatience for her father to alight.

"Well, my little pet, so you're all ready for us!" cried Mr. Thurnell's strong, cheerful voice; and in another moment Lily was caught up from the ground, and raised high in the air in her father's arms, and for two or three moments there was a mingled sound of hearty kisses, and merry laughter, and glad childish words of welcome; and then, without further prelude, Lily was on the point of launching forth into an account of every thing that had happened since her father went, when he laughingly stopped her with—

"Wait a little bit, Lily! We'll hear all about that presently, but there's something else to be done first. Don't you know I've brought you a little friend? Hester, my dear, give me your hand. There, Lily, down with you—down on the step. That's right! Now, my dears, kiss one another."

But Lily, standing on the carriage-step, hung her pretty head, and even showed a decided inclination to put her finger in her mouth, and Hester, from within, colored very deeply, and looked very timidly and distressfully on the ground.

"Come now, what is it?—what's the matter? Can't you look at each other? Lily, behave like a lady! Why, Lily, I'm ashamed of you!"

Upon which poor Lily's eyes began to fill with tears, and there seemed less chance than ever of her conducting herself like a lady; but,

fortunately, upon Hester the rebuke had a better effect, for she raised her eyes for a moment to Mr. Thurnell's face, then dropped them upon Lily, and finally, hesitating a moment, moved a little nearer to the door, and took Lily's two hands into hers.

"That's right, Hester! that's a good girl, my dear!" said Mr. Thurnell, approvingly.

Then, blushing a good deal, Hester knelt down, for Lily being such a little thing, and standing on the carriage-step, she was far below Hester, and stooping forward she gave Lily a very quick, tremulous kiss upon her soft, round cheeks, and whispered very gently and timidly, "Sister Lily!" And then Lily at last looked up. There must have been something in the quiet, gentle, sad little face to take away fear, and inspire confidence and love, for as Lily looked at her suddenly all her shyness passed away, and gazing for one moment on her, all at once, with a few murmured childish words, the little arms were raised, and the soft hands clasped round Hester's neck, and a little shower of kisses came down on her pale cheek. But while Lily laughed tears gathered fast in Hester's eyes, although she dropped their lids, and with her long, dark lashes hid them, smiling the while as Lily kissed her. And then they walked together, hand in hand into the house, and from that day—from that very hour, they grew to love each other.

Such a merry, light-hearted little creature was Lily Thurnell, that it seemed as if nothing like pain or sorrow could live near her. Sad as Hester was when she first came to her new house—sad, not only on account of her mother's death, but because for so many years sorrow and poverty had been her daily companions—not many days had passed before a strange, new feeling of joy began to put fresh warmth and life into her half-dead heart—before the slow, weary, unelastic step began to grow so light and gay that she herself was full of wonder at it—before the heavy-lidded eyes began to beam with a clear, hopeful light—before the pale, hollow cheek grew touched with rose, and the sad and sickly smile changed to a merry laugh, and the low, timid, tremulous voice grew strong, and sweet, and clear. It was a strange and touching thing to see how, in the light and warmth and happiness around her, the stunted life began at last to expand. She had suffered so much almost without knowing it—she had lived for so long so utterly without joy or hope—that gradually and unconsciously she had grown accustomed to her wretched life—had ceased ever to think that any change would come—ever almost to wish for it; all that was childlike in her had withered away—had been starved out of her; a listless torpor had by slow degrees crept over her, deadening the little life that still remained—day by day making her more insensible to the misery and poverty that was around her; every thing that was beautiful in her—every thing that was natural—had been, as it were, frozen up: now, at last, in

this new warmth the ice began to melt, the sluggish blood began to flow again, the almost forgotten hopes and feelings of her early childhood began once more, after their long sleep, to come to life. She was like one who had been blind receiving her sight again; and blind she had indeed been, living in ever-deepening darkness, knowing and seeing nothing of all the beauty that was in the world around her, forgetting even the little that she once had known.

She grew to be so happy in this new, kind home; not happy altogether as Lily was, for Lily seemed to live in sunlight and laughter, and to be herself a very embodied joy—a thing that never could know pain or grief; and Hester, changed and beautiful as all things were around her, could never forget what her life once had been, and thus she did not grow gay and laughter-loving like Lily, but had a grave, still look about her, very unlike the laughing sunshine of Lily's face, which never passed away, but grew ever more deeply sweet, and gentle, and calm. A smile lay always hidden in the dimples round Lily's rosy lips, a world of merry thoughts was always looking out from Lily's deep blue eyes, her voice was full of softest laughter, her step like that of one who ever hears some hidden music, her every movement was so full of grace, and joy, and love, that one might read all that was in her heart only by silently looking at her.

It was not in Hester's nature to be so very glad. Happy as she was, having almost every thing in the world that she could wish for, for herself, she kept always in her heart so deep a memory of all she once had been, that her joy, if it was not clouded, was at least subdued, and calmed by thoughts of others' griefs. With a pale cheek, with tearful eyes and quivering lips, she would listen to all tales of poverty and suffering, bursting sometimes into wild weeping, as though the poor and sorrowful were all her friends; and often meeting some poor child with hollow cheeks and sunken eyes, the impulse of her love and pity would become so strong, that she would throw her arms about it, sobbing so bitterly, as though *she* was the sufferer—trying to speak childish words of comfort to it—comforting it with all she had of more substantial things than words.

Even when she was young there was a strangely thoughtful look in her large gray eyes, which deepened still more as she grew up. Not but that they could look bright, too—both bright and gay, and could laugh almost as merrily as Lily's own; but in their ordinary expression there was a little touch of sadness, or, perhaps, rather of gravity than sadness; yet it passed mostly away when she raised the long-fringed lids that often, when she was silent or alone, threw a soft shadow across their clearness. It was very natural that she should be a little grave and thoughtful, for as her childhood passed away it could not be but she must often think about her unknown father—often long to hear some tidings of him—still

more often sorrow over her mother's sufferings and death. Happy as she was, it was most natural, that, as she grew up to womanhood, this thought, that she had no one in the world to claim her, no one who *owed* her love, should weigh heavily upon her. Mr. Thurnell was as a father to her, Lily like a sister, and as a father and sister she loved them; but yet, in many silent hours, an unutterable longing would come upon her to know something of her own people: cruel as she could not but believe her father was, her loving heart yet yearned so strangely toward him.

This was the one sorrow that she had, and she kept it a secret in her own bosom. Perhaps it was not hidden there from Mr. Thurnell's eyes, but if he guessed it, he guessed, too, her wish to hide it, and so hid from her his own knowledge. Most kind and good he was to her, and kind and good he was to all; for, beneath his rough exterior there beat a noble, warm, and generous heart. He treated Hester like his own child, and almost like his own child he loved her, and she returned his love so eagerly, so warmly, and with overflowing and unspeakable gratitude for all that he had done for her. Her gratitude from the first almost oppressed her: she had tried once or twice to thank him, and the thought of what he had saved her from moved her always so deeply that tears only came instead of words; but he well understood her, and ever tried to make her feel that she far more than rewarded him for his kindness to her.

And it was true, for as she grew up she became the good angel of the house. Lily was a bright little spirit, gay, and beautiful, and lovable, whose use in the house was to be a beam of sunlight, to make every body glad who looked at her, and listened to her merry voice and silver laughter; but, to tell the truth, sometimes Lily hid herself, as the sun himself *does*, for a little while, under a cloud. For Lily was a petted child, and just a little spoilt by petting; but so joyous and so beautiful, that every body loved her at first sight, and continued, too, with rare exceptions, to love her always, forgiving and half-forgetting her faults, for the sake of all that was noble and lovable in her. And of all her friends, none loved her half so dearly as Hester did, none admired her so warmly, none was so good and true a friend, though perhaps she, too, helped a little now and then to spoil her. And Lily loved her with her whole warm heart, and looked up to her, and, in a docile mood, would let herself be guided by her, and sometimes, when she was very humble, as she could be at times, she would even wish that she was as sensible, and as useful, and as even tempered as Hester, and, throwing her arms round Hester's neck, would ask her to forgive her all her willfulness and naughtiness, and to love her always, receiving such an answer—pretty, spoilt Lily!—as would put at once all her humble thoughts quite to flight again.

And so the two girls grew together, loving each other dearly, until Lily was eighteen, and Hester two-and-twenty.

CHAPTER III.

It happened in the early summer, about that time, when Lily was just past eighteen, that she went for a fortnight's visit to a country house, some twelve or fourteen miles from Mr. Thurnell's. Such visits were of very frequent occurrence, for both the girls were extremely intimate at this house of the Gilbournes', and were, one or other of them, continually running away to their friends there for a few days during the summer; but this particular visit of Lily's was a far more important one than she, or Hester either, had ever paid before, and brought very important and unexpected consequences after it—for in the course of it Lily fell in love. So, at least, every body said but Lily herself, who contended stoutly for months afterward that it was only Mr. Staunton who fell in love with her, and that she had nothing at all to do with it until long afterward, when, simply out of pure compassion for him, she was induced to follow his example. But whether Lily's account of the matter was the true one or not, about one thing there was no doubt at all—and even she herself was too happy to deny it—that when his example *was* followed, it was followed with her whole warm, true, loving heart. And, in truth, Mr. Staunton was worthy of all the love she gave him.

He was the nephew of a gentleman who had very recently settled in the neighborhood, a Colonel Staunton, of whom, however, little was known besides his name, and the fact that he was a wealthy man, for he was a confirmed invalid, and rarely or never left his house. He had been Mr. Staunton's guardian, and being still his nearest living relative, his consent was in due time asked, as a matter of courtesy, at least, if nothing more, to his nephew's marriage with Lily, and very cordially given; a little, as it seemed, to Mr. Staunton's relief. Besides signifying his approbation to his nephew, Colonel Staunton also addressed a courteous note to Mr. Thurnell, apologizing for his inability to call on him and his daughter, but warmly inviting them to visit him at his own house. The invitation was of course accepted, and they all went.

They reached the house early, for they were to spend the day there; and, while Hester and Lily had retired to remove the out-of-door portions of their dress, Mr. Thurnell, at Colonel Staunton's request, was at once ushered into his presence. In half an hour afterward, he returned to fetch Lily, and she, with Hester, for Lily was a timid little thing, and would not go alone, accompanied him to Colonel Staunton's room.

As they entered, Colonel Staunton rose to meet them, and came forward. He was like a man who had grown prematurely old. His hair was scarcely gray, and his age might not

have much exceeded fifty, but his eye was dim and sunken, his white and hollow cheeks seamed with wrinkles, his step feeble and unsteady, his whole appearance worn out and faded; and yet, in strange opposition to all else about him, his manner was almost courtly in its studied urbanity and ceremonious politeness. But it ill-suited him. The artificial smile with which he came forward to meet his visitors sat strangely on his pale, withered lips. The very first tones of his voice raised an involuntary suspicion of insincerity; the still visible remains of eminent handsomeness of form only seemed to make the faded face and figure more unprepossessing.

Lily came in a little in advance; before Mr. Thurnell could introduce her, he guessed that it was she who was to be his future niece, and at once addressed her:

"Miss Thurnell, I have to make a thousand apologies—and yet I scarcely know how to regret my inability to visit you, since I am indebted to it for the pleasure I now—"

The sentence broke off abruptly, and in an instant Colonel Staunton stood in perfect silence, but a great and sudden change had come over him. The false smile had passed from his lips; the whole studied expression of high-flown courtesy had vanished from his face; every thing that was artificial and unreal seemed in a moment, as if by magic, to have been torn away from him; more haggard even than before, more deadly pale, he stood still by Lily's side, holding the tips of her fingers in his hand; but her very existence was forgotten, for, looking beyond her, his eyes had fallen, and were fixed in wild amazement upon Hester's face.

For one instant every thing was silent, for all were thrown into a sudden, strange surprise; then, in a shaking voice, yet loud and passionate, Colonel Staunton cried, "Who is this girl?" and his eyes, not dim now, but burning with a fierce, uneasy light, flashed for an instant upon Mr. Thurnell, then fixed themselves again where they had rested first.

Mr. Thurnell stood by Hester's side, and answered steadily and calmly, "She is my adopted daughter; her name is Hester Ingram."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when, with a wild cry, they were echoed through the room.

"Hester Ingram! Hester Ingram a girl like that! Are you daring to mock me?" and from one to another of the astonished group his piercing glance went like a flash of fire; then, with a quick step forward, he was by Hester's side, with his hand upon her shoulder, grasping her firmly.

She shook from head to foot, her color went and came, her heart beat passionately with a wild hope, a wild fear; her eyes met Colonel Staunton's, as he gazed upon her, with a pleading, melting look, that seemed to move him strangely, for, as he looked on her, his lips began to tremble, his frowning brow began to be unknit, the fierce expression of his eyes began

to soften, as though the reflected light from hers was falling on them.

Some moments passed in perfect silence; then Colonel Staunton spoke again, and it was to Hester that he addressed himself. There was an assumed calmness in his voice as he began, and yet, against his will, it trembled.

"Your name, you say, is Hester Ingram. Will you permit me to inquire if Ingram was your father's name?" He bent his eyes more eagerly than ever on her face.

"I never knew my father's name," she answered, in a low, agitated voice; "my mother's was the same as mine."

"Her maiden name, you mean? her maiden, not her married name?" he asked, eagerly and impatiently.

"I do not know which. When I was very young, she left my father's house; I was too young to know what name she bore there."

"Go on!" he cried, impetuously. "She left her husband's house—where did she go? what became of her?"

"She went from one place to another. We were very poor—she died at last of starvation!" and, sobbing, Hester hid her face upon her hands. The piercing gaze fell from her face now at last.

"Give me a seat," he whispered, in a low, hoarse voice, and, almost staggering, he moved back a step or two, and, sinking on a chair, his head fell down upon his breast.

No one approached or spoke to him; but kind and strengthening words were whispered into Hester's ear, and kind, warm hands clasped hers. But she could not answer them: her whole soul seemed to be absorbed in the silent, intense gaze that she had fixed on Colonel Staunton's face. Suddenly, when more than a minute had gone by, he lifted his head again, and, rising for a moment from his chair, said slowly—

"Leave the room, all of you; let me speak alone with—my daughter."

A half-broken, stifled cry burst from Hester's bosom: not any word from her or any one. Silently, with only from Mr. Thurnell one pressure of the hand, they went away, and Colonel Staunton and Hester were left together.

"Hester! come near to me!" he said.

She came, almost mechanically, like one walking in her sleep; but when she had reached where he sat, and saw the hand that was coldly put out to meet her, something that the shock of his last words had deadened within her, sprang suddenly into life again. Forgetting every thing but what he was to her, she broke into a passionate flood of tears, and sobbing "Father!" she fell down at his feet, and clasped her hands around his knees.

He started at her sudden action, and for a moment almost shrank back from her; but, cold, and selfish, and almost heartless as he was, there was something so touching in the gush of undeserved, involuntary love with which she met him, that it awakened something like affection

even in his bosom, and, yielding to the sudden impulse that he felt, he raised her from the ground, and whispering, "My poor child!—my poor injured child," he held her closely in his arms, and let her weep upon his bosom.

They sat down side by side, and talked together. She told him all her and her mother's sorrowful wanderings—how they had grown so poor and full of misery—how help came only when it was too late to save her mother's life—how the bread, for want of which she died, when it was brought to her at last, she could not eat; and, as she spoke, bitterly weeping herself, more than one tear rose to her father's eyes. But when, at last, after they had talked together long, she ventured timidly to ask a question that from the first had trembled on her lips, to ask what thing it was that drove her mother from her husband's house, his brow grew clouded, and his voice was full of anger, and, scarcely answering her question, he launched out into loud and violent denunciations of his wife's conduct, which Hester bore in silence, with a heaving heart, until her love and reverence for her mother's memory overcame all other feelings, and she broke forth with an indignant protest against his unjust words.

He did not answer her when she ceased speaking: perhaps she said some things that touched his conscience; but sat in silence with a frown upon his brow, until his daughter, grieving already that she had said so much, pressed back her tears, and timidly, but with deep earnestness, again began to speak:

"Oh, my father, forgive me for angering you in this first hour! I may have spoken foolishly, speaking of what I do not understand; but think how dear my mother was to me, and pardon me; and if she did wrong to leave you, oh, think of all she suffered!—of the wretched death she died!—and forgive her too! Perhaps—father, I am very bold—perhaps there was some fault both on her side and yours;—perhaps each of you misunderstood the other;—perhaps—oh, I know this well!—this happens often between people of high, noble natures!—you could not harmonize together, and so there grew up bitterness between you. Oh, father! let me make excuses for you both—not for her only! Let me love you both! I have loved her all my life—I must love her till I die! but my heart is yearning—oh, it has yearned so many long years—to love my father, too!"

Her eyes had grown so full of tears, that she could not raise them to his face; but, with hands pressed together, with her head bent down, and trembling with an agitation that she could not still, she waited for his answer. It came, and thrilled her with delight, for he held her in his arms again, and bade her love him—love him, as she had loved her mother, and prayed God to bless her, thanking Him for having given him back his child, to be a comfort and a joy to him in his old age.

They sat again together, hand in hand, and, with the sudden glow of generous feeling still

upon him, Colonel Staunton spoke about his wife :

"If I was harsh just now in mentioning your mother, Hester, pardon me. She was a noble and high-minded woman, and I loved her : I loved her, if ever I loved any thing in the world ; but she—but—but—we both had faults. We were both warm-tempered. She was very haughty, haughty (and in the recollection of the past his brow began again to darken) as no woman should dare to be toward her husband. She left me in a moment of sudden passion. There was a quarrel, a violent quarrel ; Hester, can you expect that I should tell you more ? She was gone before I was aware of it, and when I knew it, every thing that it was possible to do, Hester—I give you my word for it—I did, to discover where she had gone, but the search was all in vain. After six months I gave it up, and left England. God knows, I forgive her now, all that she has made me suffer ! Mine has been a lonely life—a very lonely life, my child ! You have found your father a poor wreck, Hester ; and it might have been very different if I had had a kind wife or daughter near me. It is a sad thing to be nursed by none but servants, Hester—a very sad thing !"

Colonel Staunton spoke in such a feeling voice, that the tears sprang into Hester's eyes, and, full of pity, she pressed her lips upon his hand, and murmured, "My poor father !" in such a tone of sympathy, that he probably became more than ever convinced of the greatness of the injury that had for so long been done him.

"But my dear child will not let her father be left again to the care of strangers ! My daughter will be my kind nurse now—my kind nurse and my comforter—will she not ?"

"Yes, while I live !" was the answer that came from Hester's heart ; and again she pressed a long kiss on her father's hand, as if to seal her promise.

Thus Hester found her father : thus, at last, her life's wish was fulfilled, and in the fulfillment the whole current of her life was changed ; for she had to leave the house where fourteen years had passed over her head so peacefully and so happily ; she had to leave the generous, warm-hearted friends who had been kind and dear as a father and a sister to her, to become the unthanked nurse of an ailing, and overbearing, and selfish man, who, having acknowledged her as his child, and made her the heir of his property, considered that he had purchased the undoubted right to her ceaseless and faithful services while he lived. And she, in her gentle, patient way—it was strange how, with such parents, she had grown up so sweetly tempered—bent herself to his will, and, never murmuring, for ten long years devoted herself entirely to him, living in what sweet Lily Thurnell indignantly called, an absolute imprisonment—and called not untruly ; for ever, as the time passed on, Colonel Staunton grew more and more fretful and impatient if she left

him even for a few hours, complaining, with such bitter words, that it was hard his own daughter, a girl who had been a poor dependent upon a stranger's charity until her good fortune led him to discover her, should grudge the little attendance on him that he asked ; and so wringing her gentle heart—he soon learnt how easily it could be wrung—by talking with affected emotion of the relief his death would be to her, that at last she scarcely ever ventured from the house ; and for some years she never saw either Mr. Thurnell or Lily, except when they came, sometimes at long intervals, to visit her at her father's.

A little paler, and a little thinner, and a little sadder-looking, poor Hester grew with every year, and with ever-increasing anxiety and regret her kind friends watched the gradual change ; but she never complained, never said that she was ill or weary, never breathed, during all her years of trial, a single discontented word. She had learnt in her childhood such a lesson of patient suffering, that to bear without murmuring seemed almost natural to her.

After ten years had passed, Colonel Staunton died. He never, to the last moment of his life, recognized his daughter's noble spirit of self-sacrifice, but because he spoke kindly to her, and ceased his usual outbursts of ill-temper during the last few days of his illness, she thought herself repaid for all that she had done for him ; and when he died, she felt as sorrowful and desolate as though she had lost a real father and a friend. On the day of the funeral, Mr. Thurnell took her home with him again ; and there, once more, in the sunshine and the warmth, her heart expanded, and her joy returned, and her pale cheeks recovered their glow of health.

And in that home she still at this time lives, for she has never married, saying laughingly, that she has no time to spare upon a husband ; and, indeed, to judge by how fully her time is occupied now without one, it would seem that she must be tolerably in the right ; for Mr. Thurnell, though a hale old man, is troubled now and then with a fit of gout, and at such times Hester is his willing nurse ; and, of late years, too, he has been a good deal impressed with the opinion, that the spectacles of the present day are not at all to be compared with those of twenty years ago, and therefore he entertains any thing but an objection to Hester's reading out to him—and accordingly Hester does read aloud for two or three hours a day. Then Lily, who lives mostly in London, for Mr. Staunton is a lawyer there, is so continually beseeching Hester to come and stay with her, that she has, at least three or four times a year, to perform a little journey on the Great Western Railway for that purpose, and seldom returns home again without one or other of Lily's children, whose constitutions, they being already the strongest and healthiest little fellows in the world, grandpapa and Cousin Hester are always extremely anxious still more to strengthen and

improve by country air; and Hester is consequently rarely without a wild, high-spirited boy to take charge of, which—for she has an unconquerable love for helping him in all his games—occupies no little portion of her time. Then there are old women in little two-roomed cottages who always brighten at the sight of Hester's gentle, cheerful face upon the threshold; and mothers, with large families, who are not much skilled in needle-work, and never can get their children decently clothed, unless Hester buys, and cuts out, and sews for them; and fathers who are always falling out of work, and leaving the management of their affairs to Hester; and a school which Hester has built herself, and where she must go and teach: and so many more little duties and pleasures than it is possible to enumerate, to be got through every day of her life, that the only wonder is, how she finds any time—not for a husband, *he* is out of the question—but any at all even for herself.

And so, quietly, and busily, and peacefully, Hester Staunton's days pass on. Around her there is nothing but sunshine and content, and love; and, each making the other's life happy, she and her father—for once more they have become father and daughter to each other—thank God from day to day for the Providence that brought them first together.

SUCCESS IN LIFE.

For a bright manhood there is no such word as *fail*.

SUCCESS is generally regarded, in the opinion of the public, as the best test of a man: and there is some foundation for the opinion. But impressions greatly vary as to what constitutes true success. With the greater number it means success in business, and making money. Of one we hear it said—"There goes a successful man: he has made thirty thousand pounds within the last twelve months." Of another—"There you see a man who commenced life as a laborer; but by dint of industry, perseverance, and energy, he has amassed a large fortune, bought a landed estate, and lives the life of a country gentleman, though he can hardly yet write his own name: *that's* what I call success." Or of another—"That is Mr. —, the great astronomer, who was originally the son of a small farmer, and by diligent study and application he has now reached the first rank among scientific men; yet they say he is very poor, and can barely make the ends meet." We suspect that most people would rather exchange places with the laborer than with the astronomer, so ready are we to estimate success and worldly position according to the money standard.

The idea instilled into the minds of most boys, from early life, is that of "getting on." The parents test themselves by their own success in this respect; and they impart the same notion to their children. "Mak siller, Jock," said a Scotch laird to his son, "mak siller—honestly if you can, but mak it." The same counsel, if

not in the same words, is that which is imparted, at least by example, if not in express language, to most boys. They have set before them the glory of making their fortunes. That is their "mission," and many perform it diligently, heeding little else but money-making throughout life. Public opinion justifies them in their course—public opinion approving above all things the man who has "made his fortune." But public opinion is not always correct; and sometimes, as in this case, it is obnoxious to the sarcastic query of the French wit who once asked, "And, pray, how many fools does it take to make a public?"

Yet worldly success, considered in the money aspect, is by no means a thing to be undervalued. It is a very proper object of desire, and ought to be pursued—honestly. A man's success in the accumulation of wealth, indicates that he is possessed of at least some virtues: it is true they are of the lower sort—still they are estimable. It is not necessary that a man shall be largely gifted with intelligence, or that he shall have a benevolent disposition, to enable him to accumulate money. Let him scrape long and diligently, and he will grow rich in time. Diligence and perseverance are virtues enough for the mere money-maker. But it is possible that the gold, when made, may lie very heavy indeed upon all the other virtues, and crush both mind and heart under their load.

Worldly success *may*, however, be pursued and achieved with the help of intelligence; and it may be used, as it always ought to be used, as the means of self-improvement and of enlarged benevolence. It is as noble an aim to be a great merchant or manufacturer, as to be a great statesman or philosopher—provided the end is attained by noble means. A merchant or manufacturer can help on humanity as well as other men—can benefit others while he is enriching himself, and set before the world a valuable example of intelligent industry and enterprise. He can exhibit honesty in high places—for in these days we need examples of honesty very much; indeed, a wit has observed, that in the arithmetic of the counter, two and two do *not* make four. And to test that remark, you have only to gauge a modern pint bottle.

But many successful merchants have declared, that in the end "Honesty is always the best policy." The honest man may not get rich so fast as the dishonest one, but the success will be of a truer kind, earned without fraud, injustice, or crime. "He cozened not me, but his own conscience," said old Bishop Latimer, of a cutler who had made him pay twopenne for a knife not worth a penny. Even though honesty should bring *ill* success, still a man must be honest. Better lose all and save honor. "Mak siller" by all means, but make it honestly; otherwise, as the Scriptures express it, in such terrible words—"it will eat your flesh as it were fire."

Success in life is also attained through the practice of economy—another excellent virtue.