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**HELEN EYRE.**

IN a beautiful Town in the south of Scotland, distinguished by the noble river that sweeps by its gardens, its majestic bridge, its old crumbling tower, and a Grandee's princely domains that stretch with their single gigantic trees, and many spacious groves, all around the clustered habitations, resided, for one-half year, an English Officer of Cavalry and a young and lovely woman, who was—not his wife. He was the youngest son of a noble family, and, with some of the vices, possessed many of the virtues of his profession. That he was a man of weak principles, he showed by having attached to him, by the tenderest ties, one who, till she had known him, had been innocent, happy, and respected; that he was not a man of bad principles, he showed by an attention to her as gentle, refined, and constant as ever husband paid to wife. He loved her truly and well. She was his mistress—degraded—despised—looked on with curious and scornful eyes—unspoken to but by his voice, solitary indeed when he was absent, and revived by his pre-

sence into a troubled and miserable delight, that even more than her lonely agonies told her that she was for ever and irretrievably lost. She was his mistress—that was known to the grave who condemned, to the gay who connived, and to the tender-hearted who pitied them both, her and her seducer ; but though she knew that such was her odious name, yet when no eyes were upon her but those of Marmaduke Stanley, she forgot or cared not for all that humiliation, and conscious of her own affection, fidelity, and, but for him, innocence too, she sometimes even admitted into her heart a throb of joy and of pride in the endearments and attachment of him whom all admired and so many had loved. To be respectable again was impossible—but to be true to the death unto her seducer, if not her duty, was now her despair—and while she prayed to God for forgiveness, she also prayed that, when she died, her head might be lying on his guilty but affectionate bosom. To fly from him, even if it were to become a beggar on the high-way, or a gleaner in the field, often did her conscience tell her ; but though conscience spoke so, how could it act, when enveloped and fettered in a thousand intertwisted folds of affections and passions, one and all of them as strong as the very spirit of life ?

Helen Eyre prayed that she might die: and her prayer was granted. He who should have been her husband, had been ordered suddenly away to America,—and Helen was left behind, (not altogether friendless,)

as her health was delicate, and she was about to become a mother. They parted with many tears—as husband and wife would have parted—but dearly as she loved her Marmaduke, she hoped that he might never see her more, and in a few years forget that such a creature had ever been. She blessed him before he went away even upon her knees, in a fit of love, grief, fear, remorse, and contrition; and as she beheld him wave his white plumes towards her from a distance, and then disappear among the trees, she said, “Now I am left alone for repentance, with my God!”

This unfortunate young creature gave birth to a child; and after enjoying the deep delight of its murmuring lips for a few days, during which the desire of life revived within her, she expired with it asleep in her bosom. Small, indeed, was the funeral of the English officer's fair English mistress. But she was decently and quietly laid in her grave; for, despised as she had been when living, she was only pitied now, and no one chose to think but of her youth, her beauty, her pale and melancholy face, her humble mien, and acts of kindness and charity to the poor, whom she treated always as her superiors—for they, though in want, might be innocent, and she had gone far astray. Where, too, thought many, who saw the funeral pass by, where are her relations at this moment? No doubt, so pretty and elegant a being must have had many who once loved and were proud of her—but such thoughts past by with the bier,—she was

buried, and a plain stone laid over her, according to her own desire : " HERE LIES HELEN EYRE, AN ORPHAN, AGED TWENTY-TWO YEARS."

There was one true Christian who had neither been afraid nor ashamed to visit Helen Eyre during the few last weeks of her life, when it seemed almost certain that life was near its close. This was Mrs Montgomery, the widow of a country gentleman of good family, who had for some years resided in the town. This excellent woman knew Marmaduke Stanley, and was not a stranger to the circumstances of this unfortunate and guilty connection. On his departure she had promised to take care that Helen Eyre should be looked after in her illness,—and, when the hand of death lay upon the poor friendless Orphan, she was frequently with her at her bedside, administering comfort and consolation. Such kindness from such a person, at such a time, supported the soul of the dying mother when it was most disconsolate ; it quieted all the natural fears of dissolution ; and when she, whose own life had been a model of all that was good and beautiful and lofty in the female character, bent down over the penitent sinner and kissed her fair young brow, now cold and clammy in the death-throes, that Christian kiss seemed to assure her that she might be forgiven ; and, if God, as we believe, beholds the creatures he has made, it was registered in Heaven.

Mrs Montgomery took the infant into her own house—and had written, to inform its father of what

had happened, when she read in a newspaper that, in a skirmish, Major Marmaduke Stanley had been killed. She then opened a letter he had left with her on his departure—and found that he had bequeathed his small fortune of four thousand pounds to Mrs Montgomery, that she might settle it properly on the mother of his child if she survived, if not, upon the infant.

The infant Orphan was christened Helen Eyre, after its mother, whom, frail as she had been, there was no need that her child, at least, should ever disown. No one wished to have the baby that now belonged to none. And this excellent lady, from no whim, no caprice, no enthusiasm, but touched at the heart with its utter and forlorn helplessness, by sorrow for its poor mother's transgression and early fate, and by something of a maternal affection for its dead father, resolved to adopt Helen Eyre as her own child, and to educate her in a woman's accomplishments, and a Christian's faith. Some smiled—some disdained—and a few even blamed—the kindness that could rescue an orphan from an orphan's fate. Many, too, wondered, they knew not why, when it was known that Major Stanley had left all his fortune to Mrs Montgomery for behoof of the child. But in a few months it was felt by every one, whatever they might choose to acknowledge, that the brave soldier had had a good heart, and that he had committed the interests of his Orphan, even before she was born, to one whose

character was summed up in that one word—a Christian.

It often seems as if those children who have fewest to love them in the world grow up the most worthy of love. Here was an Orphan—born in sin, in shame, and in sorrow—and now left alone on the earth—who grew up beautiful to all eyes, and captivating to all hearts. Before five summers had shone upon her blue eyes, the child was noticeable among all other children. Her mother had been lovely, and there was a time, too, it was said, when her presence had been welcome in the halls even of the noble, who had visited her parents in their pleasant dwelling beside their own Church. Her father, however deficient in more solid worth, had been the ornament of polished life; and it seemed as if nature preserved in this small and beautiful and graceful image the united attractions of both the unfortunate dead. The very loneliness of the sweet child, without a natural home in the world, could not but interest every good heart; but her exceeding beauty made an impression almost like that of love even upon the heartless—and “English Helen”—so she was familiarly called, to distinguish her from another child of the same Christian name at school, was a favourite with all. Besides, she was the adopted daughter of Mrs Montgomery, and that added a charm even to her beauty, her sweetness, and her innocence.

The heart of Helen Eyre expanded, month after

month, in the joy of its innocence, and felt the holy voice of nature whispering to it new feelings of love and affection. The children with whom she played had fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and many other friends. She had none. She loved the Lady who was so good to her, and by whose bed she slept at night on her own small couch. But she knew that it was not her mother with whom she lived. She had been told that both father and mother were dead; and sometimes the sweet child wept for those she had never seen, and of whom she knew nothing but that they had both been buried long ago. Something sad and melancholy, therefore, mixed itself with youth's native gladness, and a corresponding expression settled itself about her eyes, and often smoothed the dimples on her smiling cheeks. "English Helen's" own heart told her what she had often heard her childish companions say, that she was an orphan; but she knew that though that was something mournful, it could not be wicked, and that, therefore, people would pity her more—not love her less—because her father had been killed in the wars, and her mother had died soon after she was born of a broken heart.

One day Helen Eyre had wandered with some of her companions into the church-yard, near the Old Tower, and, attracted by the murmuring blossoms of a shady horse-chestnut tree, that hung its branches over several tombs and grave-stones, in a corner near the river side, she tripped into the shade, and letting fall

her eyes upon a grey slab, she read there her own name, the inscription on her mother's grave. She went home drowned in tears, and asked her guardian, if that was not the stone under which her mother was buried. The good old Lady went with her to the church-yard, and they sat down together upon that stone. Helen was now ten years old; and perhaps had heard, although she scarcely knew that she had, some dim intimations in the language of her play-fellows, which they themselves had not understood, that she was "a natural child." Mrs Montgomery spoke to her about her parents; and while the sweet child kept her weeping eyes fixed upon her face, as she spoke in a bewildered and perplexing grief, she came to know at last that her mother had been guilty of a great sin, but had been forgiven by God, and had died happy. The child was told, too, although that she could scarcely believe, that some might love herself less for that reason; but that the truly good would love her the more, if she continued to be what she now was, innocent, sweet tempered, and obedient to God's holy laws. "Your mother, Helen, was a kind, gentle, and religious being; and you must always think so, when you weep for her, here beside her grave, or elsewhere. When you are older, I will tell you more about her, and about your birth. But my beloved, my good, and my beautiful child, for I do not fear to call thee so, even to thy sweet face—be not ashamed—hold up your head, Helen, among



your companions, and my hands, as long as I live, will dress for thee that guileless bosom, and tend the flowing of that glossy hair. I am your mother now, Helen, are you not willing to be my child?" The orphan could make no reply, for her little heart was full, almost to breaking—and she could only kiss the hand that took hers gently into it, and bathe it with happy and affectionate tears. They left the church-yard; and before they reached the sweet cottage on the river's side, Helen was gazing with delight on the queen butterflies, as they for a moment expanded their rich, brown, mottled, and scarlet wings on the yellow lustre of the laburnums, and then glanced, careering away over the fruit trees into other gardens, or up into the sunshine of the open day.

In Scotland there prevails, it is believed, a strong feeling of an indefinite kind towards those whose birth has been such as that of poor Helen Eyre. This feeling is different in different minds; but, perhaps, in very few, such as seems reconcilable with a true Christian spirit. Scorn and aversion towards the innocent, however modified, or restrained by better feelings, is not surely, in any circumstances, a temper of mind any where expressly recommended, or indirectly instilled by any passages in the New Testament; and with reverence be it spoken, if we could imagine ourselves listening to the Living Christ, we should not expect to hear from his lips lessons of contumely, or hard-heartedness to poor, simple, innocent, orphan children.

The morality of society is not to be protected by the encouragement of any feelings which Christianity condemns ; and as such is the constitution of this world, that the innocent often suffer for the guilty, that is an awful consideration to deter from vice, but surely it is no reason for adding to the misfortunes of virtue. In coarse and vulgar minds this feeling towards illegitimate children is a loathing repugnance, and a bitter and angry scorn. And the name by which they call them is one that comes from their mouths steeped in inhuman pride, as if there were in it an odious contamination. Alas ! who are they that thus turn away with loathing from beings formed by God in his own image ? Are they all pure—and innocent—and aloof from transgression ? Or may not in such cases the scorn of the despicable, the mean, the cruel, the ignorant, and the licentious, fall upon the head of the generous, the just, the pure, the intelligent, the refined and the pious ? It is often so. Now, society has its own laws, and they are often stern enough ; but let them never, with the good, prevail against the laws of nature ; and let every mind that entertains the feeling now alluded to, be cautious, in justice to itself and to a fellow creature, and in due reverence of a common Creator, to separate from it all undeserved virulence, all unchristian contumely—all unbrotherly or unsisterly hatred, and then they will know to how little it amounts, and how easily it must be forgotten in the contemplation of excellence ;—and then, too, will they

feel a far deeper compassion for them in whose minds that other rooted passion of contempt so rankly grows. There were many who wondered that Mrs Montgomery could have adopted such an Orphan. And with that coarse wonder they turned away from that noble, high-born, high-bred, and, what was far better, tender-hearted, compassionate, and pious lady, and from the beautiful creature at her side rejoicing in protected innocence and awakened intelligence, beneath the light of her gracious affection.

As Helen Eyre grew out of her sweet girlhood into the ripening beauty of her virgin prime, this feeling regarding her became somewhat stronger. For now there was the jealousy—the envy—and the spite of little minds, painfully conscious of their inferiority, and impatient of total eclipse. They had the tone of the world's most worldly heart on their side; and it was easy, pleasant, safe, and satisfactory, to hang a cloud over her by one single word that could not be gainsayed, when it was felt that in itself the flower was fragrant and most beautiful. Campbell has, in the simple words of genius, spoken of the "magic of a name"—so likewise is there a blight in a name—a blight which may not fall on its object, but which can wither up the best feelings of our nature which the sight of that object was formed to cherish and expand. Helen by degrees instructed her heart in this knowledge, which from nature alone she never could have had—her guardian had told her the story of her

birth—she read in books of persons situated as she was—and although sometimes her heart rebelled at what could not but appear to her most impious injustice, and although even sometimes she felt a sort of angry and obstinate pride which she knew was wrong—yet such was the felicity of her nature, that the knowledge wrought no disturbance in her character; and she was now in her undisputed beauty, her acknowledged accomplishments, and her conscious innocence, humble but happy, sedate but not depressed, not too ready either with her smiles or tears, but prodigal of both when nature knocked at her heart, and asked admission there for grief or for joy.

Helen Eyre was no object of pity; for her bark had been drawn up into a quiet haven, and moored to a green shore overspread with flowers. Yet still she was an Orphan, and the world wore a different aspect to her eyes from that which it presented to other young persons, with troops of friends and relations, bound to them by hereditary connections, or by the ties of blood. They had daily presented to them food for all the affections of the heart; their feelings had not either to sleep or else to be self-stirred, for a thousand pleasant occurrences were constantly touching them with almost unconscious delight. Life to them offered a succession of pleasures ready made to their hands, and they had but to bring hearts capable of enjoyment. Little demand is made on such as those, so long as health continues, and their worldly

affairs are prosperous, to look often, or deeply, or steadily, into their own souls. But with this Orphan the case was very different. She was often left alone to commune with her own heart ; and unless thoughts, and feelings, and fancies rose up there, she must have been desolate. Her friends were often not living beings of the same age, and with the same pursuits as herself, for of them she came at last to have but few, but they were still, calm, silent, pure, and holy thoughts that passed in trains before her, when the Orphan was sitting in her solitude, with no one near to cheer her, or to disturb. When she read in the history of real life, or in the fictions of poetry, of characters who acted their parts well, and walked in the light of nature beautiful and blest, or tried and triumphant in the fires of affliction, these she made the friends of her heart, and with these she would hold silent communion all the day long. No eyes seemed averted from her, no faces frowned, nor did any harsh voices rise up among the dead. All the good over whom the grave had closed were felt to be her friends ; into that purified world no unkind feelings could intrude ; and the Orphan felt no bar to intervene between her beating heart, and those who were the objects of her profound and devout affection. From the slights, or the taunts, or the coldness of living acquaintances, Helen Eyre could always turn to these sacred intimacies and friendships, unbroken and unimpaired ; she could bring a tender light from the world of me-

mory to soften down the ruggedness or the asperities of present existence ; and thus while she was in one sense an Orphan, almost alone in life, in another she was the child of a family noble, rich, powerful, great, and good.

Of such a happy nature, and trained by the wisdom of her youthful innocence to such habits of emotion and thought, Helen Eyre felt—but not keenly—the gradual falling off and decay of almost all her school-friendships. Some of her companions left that part of the country altogether, and she heard of them no more—some went home in the neighbourhood, and in a short time recognized her when they chanced to meet by a civil smile, question, curtesy, or shake of the hand, and no more—some seemed to forget her altogether, or to be afraid to remember her—and some treated her with a condescending, and patronizing, and ostentatious kindness, which she easily understood to be a mixture of fear, shame, and pride. Such things as these Helen generally felt to be trifles ; nor did they permanently affect her peace. But sometimes, when her heart, like that of others, desired a homely, a human, and a lowly happiness, and was willing to unite itself in that happiness with one and all of its youthful friends, whoever they might be, poor Helen could not but feel the cruelty and injustice of such alienation, and perhaps may have wept unseen, to think that she was not allowed to share the affection even of the vulgar, the ignorant, and the mean. Many

who at school, before they had learned the lessons of the world, truly and conscientiously loved her, and were grateful to "English Helen" for the assistance she lent them in their various tasks, and for her sweet and obliging disposition in all things, began now to keep down their natural emotions towards her, and to give way to the common sentiment. Tawdry Misses, destitute of all accomplishments, and ignorant of all knowledge needful or graceful to woman's soul, were ashamed to be thought friends of Helen Eyre, and thought it necessary to explain, that she was only an acquaintance when they were at the Olivers' Boarding-school, adding, that she was to be pitied, for that although, like all persons in her situation, she was excessively proud, yet she was certainly very clever, and did not want heart.

No doubt, it would have been nothing very remarkable, had Helen Eyre, under such circumstances, become what such excellent judges esteemed her to be, irritable, unamiable, and proud. This treatment might have soured her disposition, and armed her against an unjust and cruel world. Some struggles she may have had against such feelings, for she was not without her frailties and imperfections; her cheek may have flushed, and her heart beat with indignation, when insulted by overweening civility, or spiteful scorn. Though she felt pride to be a vice, so was meanness; and Orphan as she was, and illegitimate too, conscious innocence and virtue, good-will to her

fellow-creatures, and piety to her Creator, gave her rights and privileges which were entitled to respect, and which, without blame, she might vindicate, when slighted, insulted, or abused. Therefore, though humble, she was not abased, and a mild pensive dignity overspread all her demeanour which abashed the mean, and won the commendation of all whose souls possessed a single spark of native nobility. Indeed, in her presence it was no easy matter to maintain or put into practice those unchristian principles which, when she was absent, burst forth in all their abject and slavish violence.

Her guardian, protector, and mother, Mrs Montgomery, was a woman who did not pretend to be altogether free from those prejudices, or feelings—which she knew were too often carried to a wicked and sinful degree. But having had Helen put into her arms when an infant, out of the yet warm bosom of her dead mother, she had then felt but as a human being and a Christian towards a helpless child. Affection kept pace with Helen's growth, beauty, virtues, and accomplishments; and not the slightest shade of this feeling now overcast her love. It had long been extinguished by the power of innocence and joy; and the knowledge of the strength of such prejudices in the minds of others had now only the effect of increasing her pride in her dear Orphan, and of adding a holier tenderness to her protecting love. " Shall she be despised whom every morning and every night I



see on her knees before her God—she whom that God has created so good and so beautiful—and who would die for the sake of my old grey hairs !” There was no occasion to conceal one thought from Helen Eyre—she knew her situation now perfectly and wisely—she acknowledged that her parents’ sins were a misfortune to her—she was willing to bear the burden of their errors—to suffer what must be suffered—and to enjoy meekly, humbly, and gratefully, what might be enjoyed. Were all the world to despise her—such was her gratitude and affection to her mother, that in that alone she could be satisfied—to live for her—to tend her declining age—and if surviving her, to dedicate the holiest thoughts of her retired life to her memory.

But there was one whom Helen Eyre could call her friend, one as young, as innocent, almost as beautiful as herself, and that was Constance Beaumont. Constance was the daughter of an old, indeed a noble family, and her mother, although justly proud of her rank in society, had not discountenanced her childish friendship with Helen, who lived under the roof of one of her own most respected friends. Still, this was a friendship which she had wished in her heart might insensibly fade away as her daughter advanced in life ; for although her nature was above all miserable scorn towards a young creature so worthy of all love, yet she properly wished that the heart of her only daughter should be among her own kin, and that its deepest and

tenderest sympathies should not be drawn away from the bosom of her own family. She had cheerfully allowed Constance to bring Helen to the Hirst during the vacations, and she could not but love the sweet Orphan. She saw that her daughter could never learn anything bad, or mean, or vulgar, from such a companion, but, on the contrary, could not fail to have every virtue expanded, and every accomplishment heightened, by communication with one to whom nature had been so lavish in her endowments. Mrs Beaumont had too much good feeling, and too much good sense, to seek to break off such a friendship in their riper years ; but it could scarcely be called blameable if she wished and hoped in her heart, that its passionate warmth might be abated. She had another reason for desiring this, which she scarcely yet owned to her own heart—she had an only Son, whose education in England was now completed, and who, she feared, might love Helen Eyre. The thought of such an alliance was unendurable—and Mrs Beaumont believed, that, dearly as she loved her Son, she would rather see him in his grave, than married to an illegitimate orphan.

That such was the state of this Lady's mind, Helen Eyre had too true a sense of her own condition not to know. Of her thoughts respecting her Son, indeed, she in her thoughtless innocence could suspect nothing, nor had she ever seen him but once when he was a schoolboy. But she knew that Mrs Beaumont was proud—though not offensively so—of her own ancestry and

of her dead husband's ; indeed, her stately manners were slightly tinged with pride—and Helen had never left the spacious and rich rooms of the Hirst, and its gallery of old ancestral Portraits, without a feeling, not of depression arising from her own insignificance, but of the wide distance at which she stood in rank from her best-beloved friend and sister, the amiable and graceful Constance. Neither could she help feeling that Constance must feel this too ; and every time she met or parted with her, there was now a faint sadness at her heart, and something that seemed to forebode separation.

But Constance Beaumont was too high-born to fear making a friend of one on whose birth there was a stain, even if she had not been too high-minded to suffer such a cause to interrupt their friendship. Strong and secure in her own high rank, and stronger and more secure still in her noble nature, no sooner did she discern the full extent of the general sentiment entertained towards Helen Eyre on the score of her birth, than every warm, pure, disinterested, and passionate emotion of her soul rose up yearning towards her, and she vowed, that as Helen had been the delight and blessing of her childhood and early youth, so should her heart be bound to her all life long, and own her at all times and in all places, with affection, gratitude, and pride. Accordingly, she never was in the town where Helen resided without visiting her—she kept up a constant and affectionate correspondence with her

—she insisted on seeing her frequently at the Hirst—and often, often, with all the eager joyfulness of lovers did these two beautiful and happy young creatures meet, almost by stealth, in the woods and groves, and among the gently sloping hills, to enjoy a solitary hour of impassioned friendship. Constance would not have disobeyed her mother in any positive injunction ; of these sisterly assignations she was conscious that her mother would not have approved ; but were the best and sweetest of all natural feelings to give way to a faint consideration of a doubtful duty ? Could such disobedience be called wrong ? And if it were so, might not the fault be repeated over and over again without remorse or self-upbraiding ? So Constance felt and so she acted—nor in thus being a dutiful friend, is there any reason to believe that she was an undutiful daughter.

Thus was opening upon her the sweet and dewy prime of the Orphan's life, when an annual Meeting took place of all the first Families in the county, and indeed of people of all ranks and conditions, on a large meadow by the river side, near the town, to witness the skill of the " Ancient Band of Border Bowmen." The sunny day flowed on in joyful and exhilarating pastimes, and in the evening there was a splendid Assembly. Mrs Montgomery was there, and Helen Eyre by her side. All the youth, beauty, and grace of the south of Scotland were present together, and although Helen Eyre was certainly one of the loveliest

of the lovely, it could not be said that she attracted universal attention. There were many circles formed round many attractive centres—none shone exactly like the moon among the lesser stars—but of these stars themselves some were brighter than others, or diffused a mellow lustre. Helen Eyre knew her own situation—neither proud nor ashamed; her dress was simpler than that of many others, but such as it became a lady to wear on such an occasion—a few pearls were round her soft auburn hair—and no eye looked upon her once, sitting half retired in her modest loveliness, without looking again and again—no heart, perhaps, but felt, after ranging over all the splendid galaxy, that there was one who had only to come forward, and seek, in order to gain the prize of grace, elegance, and beauty. The music—the dancing—the stir—the waving of plumes—the sparkling of gems—smiling countenances, and happy voices—all touched the Orphan to the very heart—that heart kindled with the joy of youth, and scarcely ever had Helen Eyre felt so happy and so embued with the bliss of life. All thoughts were banished but those of exhilaration and gladness—she surrendered up her spirit to the gaiety, the mirth, and the glee that were sparkling, and whispering, and moving all around her—and she felt that a Ball was indeed one of the most delightful things in this world.

Mrs Montgomery had her pride, too, in her Or-

phan, as well as any mother in her child ; and she took care that Helen Eyre should either have respectable friends—or none. This was the first Public Meeting at which Helen had been present ; and when she saw every one dancing around her, her light heart longed to join the groupe. She looked with sparkling and delighted eyes on her sweet Constance, distinguished wherever she moved along ; and at length that beautiful Girl came up to her, and whispered in her ear, that her brother, who had arrived from England too late for the archery, desired to be made acquainted with one of whom he had heard so much—Helen Eyre. Helen looked to Mrs Montgomery, and rising up, blushing, but unembarrassed, joined the dance with Henry Beaumont. As they took their place in the good old country-dance, (not very far from the top,) there was much tossing of heads—pursing of mouths—bridling up of elegant and inelegant figures—loud whispering—considerable tittering—and some little downright rudeness. But beauty will have its triumph ; and Helen Eyre stood unruffled in that small storm. Henry Beaumont, too, was a young man of birth and great estates—by far the most elegant and accomplished person in the room, and an Officer in the Guards ; and it was soon understood by the male part of the scorers, that it might not be quite prudent to express scorn or slight towards any body who stood opposite to him in the dance. There was a haughtiness in his eye some-

what distressing to upstart people, and he carried himself in a way not very describable, but quite intelligible to the meanest and most vulgar capacity. He was likewise upwards of six feet high—and when it was his turn to lead off with Helen Eyre, there was a most polite attention shown to all their movements. It is no great merit, surely, to dance well; but now it seemed as it were—for every eye was turned upon that graceful pair, and even the most senselessly and basely proud felt that it was a pity Helen Eyre had been so born, for that she excelled in every thing she tried, and was, indeed, most truly beautiful. Helen felt, and she enjoyed her triumph. To herself she attributed little of the politeness shown by young Beaumont; but her heart overflowed with gratitude towards Constance; and when she again took her seat beside Mrs Montgomery, scarcely could she refrain from tears, so touched was she by the noble kindness of her friend. The evening past away delightfully—Helen did not dance again—but she was frequently spoken to by young Beaumont, and whether her happiness gave a colour to every thing around her, or it was really so, she thought that all her acquaintances looked less coldly and distantly upon her, and that little or no distinction seemed now to exist between herself and the other young and happy creatures laughing and talking on every side. She even dreamt of this meeting in her sleep; and in that

dream it was not probable that she should see every body except young Henry Beaumont.

Henry Beaumont never concealed his feelings; and next day he declared to his mother, that all Scotland did not hold such another delightful creature as Helen Eyre! The old Lady heard these words with great gravity and solemnity, and said that she hoped her son would remember his birth, and not fall in love with such a person as poor Helen Eyre, however good and beautiful. “ Fall in love, mother—who talks of falling in love? I have not fallen in love—not I—but this much is certain, that I must inquire of all my partners how they are this morning ;”—and with that he flung out of the room, mounted his horse, and galloping across the country, as if at a steeple chace, he soon found himself walking in a pretty little garden on Tweedside with the good, worthy, old Mrs Montgomery and her fair Helen. He called upon none of his other partners that day at least, and his subsequent asseverations that he had not fallen in love became less and less vehement. The truth is, that he had fallen in love—that he was desperately enamoured—and being a young man of ardent feelings and headstrong will, he swore an oath within his soul, on parting from Helen that forenoon, that, if he could gain her love, he would make her his wife!

Henry Beaumont was not without pride—indeed it was his besetting sin. But his heart was full of tenderness, and the situation of Helen Eyre was such as



to bring all that tenderness up from its deepest spring. He was proud of his ancestry—perhaps of his own accomplishments—of his fine person—and of the power of his manners. He had been distinguished at a great public school, and afterwards at an English University, for the brilliancy of his talents. He no sooner joined the Guards, than he took his place, at once, among the most polished and elegant society in the world. He had met with universal admiration; and all these things together, although he well knew they possessed little intrinsic or permanent value, could not but influence his temper and disposition, before the gradually acquired wisdom of riper years had mellowed the impetuosity of youth, and extended its range of feeling and of thought. He was, therefore, considered by many a haughty and arrogant young man, and not altogether unjustly; but the native generosity of his heart was continually showing itself, and although mere acquaintances or strangers might be repelled by his demeanour, no man could be more esteemed or beloved by his friends. Now a new chord was touched in his heart. The sweet simplicity of Helen Eyre, combined, as it was, with perfect elegance and gracefulness, took his eye at the first glance—and although it could not be said to have gained, yet it certainly at once touched his affections. As the innocence of her heart and the intelligence of her mind indicated themselves unconsciously in every artless, yet well-chosen word, love and admiration of a better

kind stole into his breast; and her exceeding loveliness and beauty gave the warmth of passion to an attachment which was of rapid growth, and after a few interviews, was blended vitally with his very heart's blood. The tone of her voice now thrilled through every fibre of his frame—her image, during absence, haunted him, either sad or smiling alike irresistible and subduing—and seeing no real obstacle in the way of his happiness, he thought in his solitary rambles through the woods and over the hills, (for now he who had hitherto lived constantly in the stir of life, loved to be alone,) that Providence had kindly sent this angelic being to bless him as long as he lived on earth. He thought of her—now in her virgin beauty—now as his bride—now as his wife—now as the mother of his children—and his heart was sick, his very soul was faint in the fever of tumultuous passion, till calmed again by solemn thoughts of eternal union between himself and Helen here and in heaven.

The love which Helen Eyre felt towards him was of a very different kind. It was utterly hopeless, and therefore it was utterly indulged. She knew that she never could be his wife—that he would never stoop to marry her—that Constance even would not like to see her brother forming a connection below his own rank—and that his mother would rather see her poisoned or drowned, at least dead and buried, than the wife of her Henry. All these convictions gave her little or no distress, for they were not brought upon

her unexpectedly, to damp a heart that had been warmed by other thoughts—they formed the habitual knowledge of that humble heart, and they and thoughts like them had been instilled into her bosom, by her good and wise guardian, who knew that to save her from melancholy, it was necessary to show her the truth of life, and to remove all delusions. Helen Eyre, therefore, allowed her soul to rejoice within her, in the agitation of a new and heavenly happiness, whenever Henry Beaumont appeared with his smiling countenance, that brightened up the room, or the field, or the garden, with an effulgence of bliss. She knew her own innocence—her own resignation—and she knew, that if Mrs Montgomery, who was now very old, were to die, most solitary would be her own lot. Therefore, she spoke, smiled, and walked with Henry Beaumont, as with the only being on earth whom, in the sacred silence of her soul, she would, till her dying hour, perfectly love. He could not penetrate into her thoughts—he could not look, with these bold bright beautiful eyes, into the covert of her inner spirit, where they all lay couched night and day for ever—he would place his love on some one of whom he had no cause to be ashamed, and who would be welcomed to the hall of his fathers—he would then only bestow a passing smile, or word, upon the Orphan—but she, the Orphan herself, would cherish him in blameless and indulged passion in her bosom—and call down the blessing of God, morning and evening, and many a time besides, on the heads of himself,

his wife, whoever she might be, and the children that might rise up, like flowers, around their feet. A love so hopeless—so pure—so unselfish—and so unknown, it surely could be no sin for her to cherish, who had no relations of her own, and few friends indeed,—friends doomed, no doubt, to be fewer still, year after year, till at last she might have none to comfort her but her sweet Constance, whom other affections might also keep too often away, and the image of that brother—an image which, engraven on her heart, could only cease to be, when that heart was broken, or had wasted and withered away into the dust.

Helen was walking one evening by the river-side, and had descended into a small green glade on a wooded bank, from which there was a cheerful and splendid prospect of the town and the rich country round, when Henry Beaumont was at her side, and taking her hand into his, pressed it to his heart, and then led her to a stone-seat beside a little spring that bubbled up through the roots of the trees, and danced its short silvery course down into the Tweed. Poor Helen's breath came quickly when he pressed her to his bosom, and with a few burning kisses and breathing words, declared his love and passion, and that she must become his wife. A pang of joy went through her heart, and she could just faintly utter, "Your wife!" "Yes—my wife—say that it will be so—and may God forget me if I am not kind to you—my best and most beautiful Helen—all the days of my life!" "Oh! Sir—you could be un-

kind to no one—but think—oh think—who I am—unfit and unworthy to be the wife of Henry Beaumont!” He had an eloquent tongue—an eloquent eye;—and there was eloquence in the throbbing and beating of the heart that swelled his manly breast. He held Helen in his arms, as if she had been a frightened and palpitating dove—and she wished not to be released from that dear embrace. She, the poor despised and slighted Orphan, heard herself blessed by him who was the pride and flower of Scotland’s youth; his gentle, and tender, and respectful kisses stirred up all the holy thoughts that she had hidden in her heart, that they might lie there unseen for ever—and in that trance of bliss, they all overflowed—and a few words of confessed affection escaped her lips. “Yes—I love you beyond life and my own soul—but never, never, Sir, may I be your wife. Think who you are—and then who am I—and a voice will tell you that we never can be united.” With these words she broke from his arms, and knelt down, nor was it in his power, so confounded was he, for a few minutes to lift her up. “But though I know you never can marry me, remember—oh! never never cease to remember that I fell down on my knees before you—and vowed before that God who has hitherto preserved me in innocence and peace, to devote my soul henceforth to your love. Enough will it be for me to cherish your image for ever in my heart—to weep with joy when I hear you are happy—never to repine, nor envy her happiness

who may one day lie in your bosom—but since God sent me into the world an orphan unhappily born, let me strive to subdue my soul to an orphan's fate, and submit quietly and piously to the solitary years that may be awaiting me, when my mother's grey hairs are covered with darkness. Now, Sir—now, my beloved Henry Beaumont, let us either part, or walk away in silence, from this spot, which to me will be for ever a hallowed place—for of love and marriage never more must our speech be—they are not for us.”

Helen separated from her lover within a mile of her home—and had on her arrival there sufficiently recovered her self-command to be able to appear composed before Mrs Montgomery; but she had never concealed from her dear mother any incident that affected her happiness, and she knew that it was now her duty to make a full disclosure of what had passed. She did so—and had the satisfaction to find that her conduct brought tears of joy into her mother's eyes. The good old Lady assured her that God would reward her for the high-principled sacrifice she had made—and on retiring to her bed-room at night, she blessed her Orphan with more than wonted fervour and solemnity.

No sleep was there this night for Helen Eyre. She had made a great sacrifice—and nature now rose up against it. Why should she not become the wife of Henry Beaumont, if he loved her, as he said, better than all the world? Ought her birth to be a bar be-

tween her and a whole life of bliss? Would she be violating any duty—doing injury or wrong to any living creature—by yielding herself up in wedlock to the man she so tenderly loved, and whom, she knew, she could make happy? Were all the deepest—holiest—most awful affections of the soul to be denied to him and to her, merely because their union might offend a prejudice, or at best a feeling that surely never could be vital, nor set in just opposition to all that the human soul felt to be sanctified in its existence? What if his mother were to be offended—might she not be soothed and reconciled by constant esteem and humble respect, and be brought at last to look without reproachful eyes on the Orphan who made her son happy? But then, this prejudice against her she knew to be with many “a second nature;” and that it could not be rooted out without shaking perhaps many many other feelings, which, although not necessarily connected with it, had been so intertwined with it during the progress of life, that they too might suffer; so that to overcome this sentiment against her, a radical change or revolution never to be hoped for must take place in the mind of Mrs Beaumont. She saw, too, that Mrs Montgomery felt as she felt—and had approved of her conduct, solely because she knew that Henry’s high-born and haughty mother would never acknowledge her as his bride. So, Helen rose with the light—and as the bright, cheerful, singing morn advanced, her heart was insensibly re-

stored to its former serenity—and the Orphan was once more happy and contented with her lot.

Then, too, she thought what a heartless sin it would be, even if her marriage with Henry Beaumont could take place, to leave her old mother, who was now so weak and frail. She had been taken, when a baby only a few days old, under the protection of that Saint—and would she fly off on the wings of a selfish and ungrateful love, and forgetting these tottering steps and dim eyes, sink into the bosom of one whom she had known for a few weeks only, and to whom she owed nothing but a few impassioned words and vows? Such thoughts came across her heart. But she was no weak enthusiast even in virtue. And her own pure heart told her, that though it would never have allowed her to leave her mother who was much broken down, and too plainly sinking into the grave, yet that she might, without any violation or forgetfulness of her filial duties, have given Henry Beaumont a pledge to become his wife, when the event she feared and shuddered indeed to name, but which every one knew was near, had taken place. All these were bewildering thoughts—and, when poor Helen went into her mother's room, which she did every morning at a stated hour, her heart was labouring under a heavy load of emotion.

Helen drew the curtains, and was about to kneel down at the bedside, and bless her aged benefactress in prayer. But it seemed that she had not yet awoke;



and, stooping down, the Orphan affectionately whispered a few words into her ear, that she might gently dispel the slumber. But that was a sleep which neither low whisper, nor loud thunder-crash might disturb. Helen knew that her mother was dead ! And, for the first time in her life, for her heart was the mistress, and not the slave of its passions, she fainted at the side of the motionless body, with her arms laid softly over its breast.

Before the sun had reached its meridian, the death of Mrs Montgomery was known for many miles round the town where she had led more than twenty years of a benign and charitable life. The melancholy tidings soon reached the Hirst, and Constance Beaumont flew to comfort her dearest friend. Nor did her mother, who yet knew nothing of Henry's avowal of his love to Helen, think of preventing Constance from carrying comfort to the bereaved Orphan. Hers was a proud but a warm heart ; and having truly loved Mrs Montgomery, it was in tears that she saw Constance depart to cheer the poor creature who was now sitting by the corpse of her whom she had loved and respected from childhood, and whom she was, ere long, to follow to the grave. That thought of their ages being the same, was at once tender and solemn ; and something of the sanctity of that pure unmingled affection with which she regarded the memory of Mrs Montgomery, could not but attach to Helen Eyre, who had so long tended her declining age, and repaid, by the

most beautiful constancy of filial love, the cares which had been lavished in the warmth of nature, and the charity of Christian faith, upon her Orphan head.

Helen knew that Constance would, immediately on hearing of Mrs Montgomery's death, write her a letter of tender condolence; but she was not prepared for such excessive kindness, when that most amiable girl opened her bed-room door with her own hand, and with soft steps and streaming eyes, went up to her and kissed her cheek. The Orphan felt, in that embrace, that she was not yet solitary in the world. There was nothing to break this friendship, although much to crush that other love, and she was glad, even in her sorrow, to know, that through all the changes and chances of this life, she would still hold a place in the heart of Constance Beaumont. The dead stillness of the house was supportable, now that the arm of her sister was round her neck—and they soon went hand in hand together, and gazed on the beautifully serene countenance of her whose spirit was in heaven. Of the two Constance most loudly wept, for her tears fell more for the living than the dead. Who in all the world could be more solitary than the Orphan Helen Eyre? Yet her brow—eyes—cheeks and lips were all calm—there was no agitation—nothing like despair in her quiet motions—and the light of God's mercy shone radiantly upon her as she knelt down to a prayer of thanksgiving in that desolate house. Never before had the full perfection of her character been made ma-

nifest. Now it was tried, and met the sudden and severe demand. Her voice faltered not, nor did her heart quake. She was alone on the earth—but God was in heaven—and with that sublime thought Helen Eyre was now stronger in her utter destitution, than if without it she had been entrenched in the midst of an host of mortal friends. The spirit of her piety kindled that, too, of her beloved Constance—and they sat together in the silent house, or in twilight walked out among the secret trees, perfectly composed and happy, till the day of the Funeral.

That day was indeed one of sore trial—and Helen needed the support of her friend. Often, often—on every day since her death, had she stolen into the room where her Mother lay, and sat by the bedside as motionless as the figure that lay there; but the hour was come when these visits were to end, and the phantom was to be borne off into the chambers of decay. In the silence of her darkened bed-room, with Constance sitting at her couch, the Orphan heard the frequent feet of the company assembling at the funeral. The friends were silent. At last the funeral was heard to be departing from the house. At that moment Helen rose, and looking through an opening of the darkened window, she saw the bier in motion—slowly borne away up the avenue, below the shadow of the trees. A tall figure was at the right side of the coffin—one of the mourners. It was Henry Beaumont—his head was bowed down, and his face sedate in a

manly sorrow. "See how my brother weeps!" said Constance—and Helen did not fear then to call down the blessing of God upon his head, and then turning to Constance, she said, "Happy, happy art thou to have such a brother!" And as they were kissing each other, the Funeral disappeared.

Two days after the funeral Mrs Beaumont came for her daughter. She behaved with the greatest tenderness and sympathy to Helen Eyre, and had not sat long in company with the Orphan till her soul was even awed by the sanctity of her resignation. The flowers that the old Lady had so carefully tended did not miss her hands; the room bore no marks of the distraction or forgetfulness of passionate grief; Helen's dress was simple and graceful as ever; and except that her face was somewhat wan, and her voice occasionally tremulous, there were no other outward symptoms of sorrow. If the Orphan had thought of the future, it was plain that she felt that vista to terminate in the mystery of a darkness spread out in mercy from the hollow of God's awful hand, and that she was not about to terrify herself with phantoms of her own creation. If sorrow, sickness, or desertion by friends, were to be her lot, she would lay her hands upon the Bible, and endure the decree. But from the mildness of her expressive countenance, it seemed that her heart was confined chiefly to dreams of the happy past. She had no sins—and not many frailties with which to reproach herself—for these her contrition needed not

to be bitter—no harsh or hasty words—no unamiable or unfilial looks had ever past from her towards her benefactress—and as the humblest are permitted to enjoy the delight of conscious piety, and of a sincere wish to do well, so was Helen Eyre now happy in the remembrance of all her affection to her mother, and of every little daily and hourly act performed, not from duty, but in love.

Mrs Montgomery had bequeathed to the Orphan the pleasant dwelling in which she had past all her days ; and Helen desired no other place of retirement, till she should be called to the last final and profound repose. The sacred influence of death had quite suppressed—not extinguished her pure passion for Henry Beaumont ; and, without agitation, she sat now in the presence of his stately mother, nor feared ever to deserve her frowns. She had seen Henry walking a weeping mourner by the side of that coffin.—and the remembrance was now sad and delightful to her soul, nor, if he could be happy without her, did she wish ever to behold him more. A lonely life needed not to be a melancholy one—she had stores for thought laid up in her heart, young as it was, and powers of thought, too, confirmed by nature, and strengthened by contented innocence. And she feared not, when the years of her youth had glided away in the seclusion of those peaceful shades, that age would bring its own happiness and its own wisdom, nor was there any reason to fear even the coming on of feeble footsteps and of grey

hairs. Henry Beaumont's impassioned vows never could be realized—but that place where she had heard them might be visited often and often—and hers, she knew, was not a weak and repining heart, that would die of hopeless and unfortunate love.

While they were sitting together calmly and kindly, and the time was just at hand when Constance was about to give her friend a farewell kiss, she saw her brother coming down the avenue, and could not but feel agitated at his approach. For although Helen had said nothing to her of the avowal of his sentiments, he had himself told his sister of all that had happened, and sworn her for the present to secrecy. He entered the room—not with the same fervent air and expression, as when they last met, but with a tenderness that was far more irresistible to poor Helen's soul. A visit to an Orphan who had just buried her best—not her only friend—was not to be a visit of avowed love, but of sympathy and condolence; and Henry looked upon her with such profound pity, and such consoling gentleness of eye and voice, that his mother saw and felt that Helen Eyre was dearer to him than life. That sudden conviction gave her a pang, and her countenance fell and was darkened. It is a sore affliction to a mother's heart to have her fond, and proud, and aspiring hopes of an only son crushed—and nothing substituted in their stead, but what she conceives dishonour and degradation. But she knew the depth of her son's affection for Helen Eyre from

his anxiety to restrain and conceal it—and being well aware of his determined character, she perceived that there was no chance of averting from her house the stain of such a marriage, except it were to be found in the quiet and humble soul of the Orphan, who might be dissuaded from entering into a family to which an alliance with her would be considered a disgrace. Mrs Beaumont's agitation at last became manifest—and as frequently feelings are brought to a crisis of a sudden, and by some unexpected movement or sally of temper, so was it now—for Henry discerned what was passing in his mother's mind—and from an uncontrollable impulse, avowed his love for Helen Eyre, and his resolution to make her his wife. “She has confessed that she loves me—and no power on earth has a right to keep us asunder—Mother—I grieve to offend or distress you—but you must receive Helen Eyre as your daughter.”

At any other time, this bold avowal would have sent as much anger as grief into the proud spirit of Mrs Beaumont. But she had loved her dead friend with exceeding affection—her voice seemed yet to whisper along the walls—they were all sitting together in deep mourning for her loss—and the meek face of the guileless Orphan was enough to quiet all angry emotion, and to inspire something of the same calm spirit with which it was so serenely suffused. Helen sat almost unmoved, nor did she utter a word. But Henry's mood soon changed, and he knelt down at

his mother's feet, along with the affectionate Constance. Each took hold of one of her hands, kissed it, and bathed it in tears. "O Mother! withhold not your blessing from sweet Helen Eyre," said Constance, with a dewy voice of supplication.—"You know she will be the blessing of Henry's life here, and prepare his soul for Heaven. You know that she will be as loving and dutiful a daughter, even as myself—you know how your friend loved her, and blessed her name to you, and wept for the sake of all her goodness. O Mother! fear not that this marriage wants only your sanction to make it a happy marriage indeed!" The Lady's heart was melted within her, and she said, "Helen Eyre, thou art an Orphan no more—come and kneel down between my children."—Helen did so with many sobs of overwhelming happiness, and bowed down her head almost to the floor. The Mother of her Lover laid her hand upon that head, and blessed her in God's holy name; and then all three rising from their knees, Henry Beaumont pressed Helen Eyre to his bosom, and kissed away her tears then and for ever.

THE END.

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