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"Give it to the poor woman with the sick baby," whispered Effie—[p. 23](#).

EFFIE MAURICE
OR
What do I Love Best
A TALE

London

CONTENTS.

[Pg 4]

CHAPTER I. THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.	5
CHAPTER II. PLANS PROPOSED.	10
CHAPTER III. NEW YEAR'S DAY.	15
CHAPTER IV. THE MISER.	35
CHAPTER V. THE POOR WIDOW.	43
CHAPTER VI. GENEROSITY AND JUSTICE.	52
CHAPTER VII. THE NEW BOOK.	58
CHAPTER VIII. ANOTHER OF MR. MAURICE'S LESSONS.	69
CHAPTER IX. THE FUNERAL.	76

CHAPTER I.

[Pg 5]

'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.'

'Mother,' said little Effie Maurice, on a Sabbath evening in winter, 'Mr L—— said to-day that we are all in danger of breaking the first commandment,—do you think we are?'

'Did not Mr L. give you his reasons for thinking so?'

'Yes, mother.'

'Didn't you think he gave good reasons?'

'I suppose he did, but I could not understand all he said, for he preached to men and women. Perhaps he thought children were in no danger of breaking it.'

'Well, bring your Bible—'

[Pg 6]

'O mother, I can say all the commandments, every word. The first is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." I thought this was for the Burmans and Chinese, and all those who worship idols where the missionaries go.'

'The poor heathen are not the only idolaters in the world, my child; we have many of them in our own Christian land.'

'What! *here*, mother? Do people worship idols in this country?'

'Yes, my dear, I fear we do.'

'*We* do, mother? You don't mean to say that you, and papa, and Deacon Evarts, and all such good people, worship idols?'

'Do you suppose, Effie, that all the idols or false gods in the world are made of wood and stone?'

'Oh no, mother, I read in my Sunday-school book of people's worshipping animals, and plants, and the sun, and moon, and a great many of the stars.'

'And gold and silver, and men, women and children, did you not?'

'Yes mother.'

'Well, if a man loves gold or silver better than he loves God, does it make any difference whether he has it made into an image to pray to, or whether he lays it away in the shape of silver dollars and gold eagles?'

[Pg 7]

Effie sat for a few moments in thought, and then suddenly looking up, replied,—'Men don't worship dollars and eagles.'

'Are you sure?' inquired Mrs Maurice.

'I never heard of any one who did.'

'You mean you never heard of one who prayed to them; but there are a great many people who prefer money to anything else, and who honour a fine house, fine furniture, and fine dress, more than the meek and quiet spirit which God approves.'

'And then money is the god of such people, I suppose, and they are the ones that break the first commandment?'

'Not the only ones, my dear; there are a great many earthly gods, and they are continually leading us away from the God of heaven. Whatever we love better than Him, becomes our God, for to that we yield our heart-worship.'

'I never thought of that before, mother. Yesterday, Jane Wiston told me that her mother didn't visit Mrs Aimes because she was poor; and when I told her that you said Mrs Aimes was very pious, she said it did not make any difference, ladies never visited there. Is Mrs Wiston's god money?'

[Pg 8]

'If Mrs Wiston, or any other person, honours wealth more than humble, unaffected piety, she disobeys the first commandment. But in judging of others, my dear, always remember that *you cannot see the heart*, and so, however bad the appearance may be, you have a right to put the best possible construction on every action.'

'How can I believe that Mrs Wiston's heart is any better than her actions, mother?'

'In the first place, Jane might have been mistaken, and money may have nothing to do with her mother's visits; and if she is really correct, Mrs Wiston may never have considered this properly, and so at least she deserves charity. I desire you to think a great deal on this subject, and when you understand it better, we will talk more about it.'

'I think I understand it now, mother. Every thing we love better than the God of heaven becomes our god, and if we don't bow down to pray to it, we give it our *heart-worship*, as you said, and that is quite as wicked. But after all, mother, I don't think there is any danger of my breaking the first commandment.'

[Pg 9]

'Do you remember the text Harry repeated at the table this morning? "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."'

Effie looked very thoughtful for a moment, and then laying her face in her mother's lap, she said: 'It is not because I am so good that I think so, mother; I know I am very wicked, but I am sure that I love my heavenly Father better than any thing else.'

'I am glad to believe you do,' said Mrs Maurice, drawing the child nearer to her and kissing her cheek. 'I am persuaded that calmly and deliberately you would not prefer the world to Him. But perpetual distrust of self, with constant trust in God, is your only ground of safety. Those who do not fall, may for a moment slip, and you with all the rest of us must watch and pray.'

CHAPTER II.

[Pg 10]

PLANS PROPOSED.

The conversation that Effie Maurice had had with her mother made a very deep impression on her mind; but still, with all the confidence of one who has had but few trials, she was grieved that any one should suppose she could for a moment forget her heavenly Father, or prefer any thing to His glory and honour. She repeated what her mother had said to her brother Harry, and he increased her self-confidence by recalling a great many little sacrifices she had made, which he was quite sure other young persons would not do.

'And now, Effie,' said the kind-hearted brother, 'we will talk no more about this, for it makes you very sober. Remember that to-morrow is New Year's day, and we've got the money to spend that Aunt Norton sent us, so we must be out early, or all the prettiest things will be sold. I went by Mr T.'s shop to-night, and it was all lighted up so that I could see great sticks of candy, almost as big round as my wrist, and jars of sweetmeats, and there was a rocking horse all saddled and bridled, and the neatest little whip you ever did see, and *such* a little rifle—but I forgot, girls don't mind those things; let me think—I dare say there were dolls, though I didn't look for them, and then such a pretty little rocking-chair all cushioned with purple silk, just about big enough for dolly, and heaps of other nice things—so we must be out early, Effie.'

[Pg 11]

'Harry—'

'What is it, Effie?'

'I was thinking—'

'What about? Do you want something I haven't mentioned? I dare say it is there.'

'No, I was thinking—I—I believe I will give my money to the missionaries.'

'Now, Effie!'

'Then I shan't make a god of it.'

'But Aunt Norton gave you this to buy some pretty things for yourself.'

'I know it, but—'

'And you have given ever so much to the missionaries.'

'Well, Harry, I don't know that I need any new toys.'

'When you see Mr T.'s shop—'

'I don't want to see Mr T.'s shop, that would be going in the way of temptation.'

[Pg 12]

Harry was silent a few moments,—he was two years older than Effie, and although sometimes dazzled by appearances, as in the case of the attractive toy shop, when he waited to think, his judgment was usually very good for one so young. At last he looked up with a smile, 'I've thought it out, Effie, we don't need any new toys; we might buy books for our little library, but father has promised us two or three more soon. Then our subscriptions to the Missionary Society, and the Bible Society, and the Colporteur Society, are paid (to be sure it wouldn't hurt us to give a little more), but I have just thought what to do with this money (that is, yours and mine together, you know), which I think is better than all the rest.'

'What is it?'

'We'll make a New Year's present of it.'

'To whom?'

'Can't you think?'

'To father, or mother?'

'No, I should love to buy them something, but they would rather not.'

'To old Phillis, then?'

'Old Phillis!—it *would* be a good notion to buy her a gown, wouldn't it, but I was thinking of John Frink.'

[Pg 13]

'You didn't mean to give it to *him*, I hope, such an idle, good-for-nothing boy as he is?'

'He isn't idle and good-for-nothing now, Effie. Since he began to go to the Sunday school he's as different as can be. Now if we could put our money together, and help him to go to school this winter (he can't even read the Bible, Effie,) I think it would do more good than anything else in the world.'

'Perhaps it would, but I never liked John Frink very well. He will learn to read the Bible at the Sunday school, and if he did know any more, I'm not sure he'd make a good use of it.'

'Perhaps he wouldn't, but we could hope, Effie, and pray, and then we should have the pleasure of knowing that our duty was done, as Mr L. said the other day. If John Frink should become reformed, only think of how much good he might do in that wicked family, and among the wicked boys here in the city, and then when he gets to be a man—'

'But if he isn't reformed, Harry?'

'That is just what Mr S. said to father, the other day, when he asked him for money to buy tracts for boatmen on the canal—"If they don't read them," said he.'

[Pg 14]

'Father told him that if we did our duty faithfully, it was all that is required of us, and we must leave the results in the hands of God. Now I think just so of John Frink, only that I can't help believing that he will reform. The Bible says, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Now, maybe, all the money you have given this year will do good, but perhaps this to John Frink most of all.'

'I believe you are right, Harry,' said Effie, 'but you will give me to-night to think about it.'

'Oh yes, to be sure, you could not give the money, with your whole heart, unless you believed it was to do good, and so you may think just as long as you please. Now your kiss, Effie, for I must go to bed. We will be up early, if we *don't* go to Mr T.'s shop.'

CHAPTER III.

[Pg 15]

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Harry Maurice was out 'bright and early,' wishing everybody a 'Happy New Year,' and making them happy at least for the moment, by the expression of his ruddy, laughing face. We love to see in children cheerfulness and contentment. Harry's head was full of plans for doing good, and though more than half of them were visionary, they seemed realities then, and so being in good humour with himself, he could not fail of being so with everybody else. Effie refused to go with him to Mrs Frink's, for she had her own little gifts to dispense, but she consented to take a walk with him in the afternoon, and even to call at Mr T.'s shop, for she concluded there could be no danger in looking at the toys after they had disposed of their money.

Harry's account of his reception at Mrs Frink's was anything but satisfactory to Effie, for

although he evidently endeavoured to make the best of it, he said not a single word of John's gratitude. 'I am afraid, Effie,' he rather mischievously whispered, 'if you had gone with me to Mrs Frink's you would have thought dirt was her god, for I believe she loves it better than anything else.'

[Pg 16]

'O Harry, I am sure it is wicked to make fun—'

'I didn't mean to make fun, Effie, but I'm sure I couldn't help thinking of the old man in Pilgrim's Progress with the muck rake, refusing the crown, all the time I was there.'

'Father told me that the man with the muck rake, meant the miser.'

'Well, I suppose it does, but I should think it might mean any body that is not a Christian, for such people, you know, are rejecting a heavenly crown for worldly things, which are in reality worth about as much as the trash the old man is raking together in the picture.' Effie stared at her brother in complete astonishment, for she could not but wonder how so small a head could contain such a wondrous amount of knowledge. Harry endured a stare for a moment with considerable dignity, but he was naturally a modest lad, and finally added, 'That is pretty nearly the substance of what Frank Ingham told me about it—I can't remember the words quite.'

After dinner was over, and Harry and Effie had distributed the remnants of it among several poor families that lived on an adjoining street, they set out on their walk. The day was extremely cold, but clear and still, and altogether as beautiful as any day in the whole year. Effie in cloak, hood, and muff, seemed the very picture of comfort as she walked along beside her brother in his equally warm attire, towards Mr T.'s shop.

[Pg 17]

'Are you cold? What makes you shiver so?' inquired Harry. Effie did not answer, but she drew her hand from her muff and pointed with her gloved finger to a little girl who stood a few yards from her, stamping her feet, and clapping her red bare hands, and then curling them under her arms as if to gain a little warmth from thence. 'Poor thing!' said Harry, 'I should think she would freeze, with nothing but that old rag of a handkerchief about her shoulders, and that torn muslin bonnet. I don't wonder you shivered, Effie, it makes me cold to look at her.'

'Let us see if she wants anything,' said Effie.

By this time the attention of the little girl was attracted by the children's conversation and glances, and she came running towards them, crying at every step, 'Give me a sixpence, please?'

[Pg 18]

'We have no money, not even a penny,' said Harry, 'are you very hungry?' The girl began to tell how long it was since she had had anything to eat, but she talked so hurriedly, and used so many queer words, that the two children found it very difficult to understand her.

'She is in want, no doubt,' whispered Harry to his sister, 'but father would say, it was best to give her food and clothing, not money.'

'I wish I had a sixpence, though,' said Effie.

The wealthy and the gay, the poor and the apparently miserable, went pouring by in crowds, and some did not hear the beggar-child's plea, others that heard did not heed it, while many paused from idle curiosity to gaze at her, and a few flung her a penny, and passed on. Harry and Effie too went on, frequently looking back and forming little plans for the good of the child, until their attention was attracted by other objects of compassion or admiration. Sleighs were continually dashing past them, drawn by beautiful horses, and filled with the forms of the young, the gay, and the happy. Old men, bowed down by the weight of years, hobbled along on the pavements, their thin blue lips distorted by a smile—a smile of welcome to the year that, perhaps, before its departure, would see them laid in the grave—and busy tradesmen, with faces strongly marked by care, or avarice, or anxiety, jostled by them; ladies too, in gay hats and large rich shawls, or the more comfort-seeking in cloaks and muffs; and poor women, with their tattered clothing drawn closely around their shrinking forms, were hurrying forward apparently with the same intent. Every variety of the human species seemed crowded on those narrow pavements.

[Pg 19]

Harry and Effie were only a few rods from Mr T.'s door, when Mr Maurice overtook them, on his way to some other part of the city. He smiled, as he always did, on his children, then putting a few pence into Effie's hand, whispered something about '*temptation money*,' and passed on.

'I shan't be tempted, though,' said the child, holding the coin before her brother's eyes.

'No, Effie,' replied the boy, 'it isn't wrong to spend this money for yourself, so you can't be tempted to do wrong with it. This is every body's day for pleasure, and you ought to enjoy it.'

[Pg 20]

'I have enjoyed it,' said Effie, looking upon her brother smilingly, 'and I guess somebody else has helped me.'

'I guess so, too,' was the reply, 'I think we have been a great deal happier than if we had come here in the morning.'

Children though they were, they were demonstrating the words of the Lord Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Mr T.'s shop was crowded to overflowing with children, a few grown people intermingling: and every one, from the errand boy, that, with his hard-earned pittance in his hand, was estimating the amount of good things it would purchase, to the child of the wealthy merchant, murmuring

because the waxen doll she contemplated adding to her store, was not in every respect formed to suit her difficult taste, seemed intent on pleasure.

Harry and Effie were as much pleased as any one, and some, who had seen with what readiness they had parted with their money in the morning, would have wondered at their taste for toys; but these children had one talent which a great many grown people as well as children would do well to imitate. It was not absolutely necessary that they should *possess* a thing in order to *enjoy* it. They had been taught when very young, to distinguish beautiful things from those that were merely novel, and although they liked (as I believe is natural) to call things their own, they could be pleased with what was calculated to produce pleasure, without envying its possessor, just as you would look upon a beautiful sunset, or a fine landscape, without thinking of becoming its owner. But Effie had a little money to spend, and this occasioned a great deal of deliberation, for to tell the truth, the little girl was so pleased with her day's work, that she was still determined on self-denial.

[Pg 21]

'Take care,' whispered Harry, as he watched her examining some trifles which he was pretty sure were intended for old Phillis, 'take care, Effie, that you don't get proud of your generosity—there is more than one way to make self a god.'

Effie blushed, and calling for some nuts, threw her money on the counter, saying to her brother, 'We can share them together in the evening.' The nuts were scarce stowed away in reticule and muff, when a poorly-clad young woman, very pale and thin, bearing in her arms an infant still paler, pressed her way through the throng, and gained the counter. She inquired for cough lozenges. It was a long time before she could be attended, but she stood very patiently, though seemingly scarce able to support the weight of her own person. Harry involuntarily glanced around the shop for a chair, and as he did so, his eye rested on a bright-faced little girl, close beside his sister, who was choosing and rejecting a great many pretty toys, and now and then casting a glance at the well-filled purse in her hand, as if to ascertain after each purchase the state of her finances.

[Pg 22]

'Beautiful!' she exclaimed, her eye glistening with pleasure at the sight of the purple cushioned rocking-chair of which Harry had told his sister.

'Is that all?' inquired a sad, low voice, and again Harry's eye turned to the poor woman who was purchasing the lozenges.

'Yes, ma'am, to be sure,' replied the pert shopkeeper, 'and a pretty large all too—what could you expect for a penny?'

[Pg 23]

The poor woman made no reply, but the hurried glance she gave her infant with its accompanying sigh, seemed to say, 'God help my poor baby then!'

Harry involuntarily thrust his hand into his pocket, but he quickly withdrew it, and glanced at the little girl who was purchasing the rocking-chair.

'This chair has cost so much,' she said, addressing the shopkeeper, 'that I have only a shilling left.'

'Oh, then,' whispered Effie, emboldened by her brother's looks of anxiety, 'give it to the poor woman with the sick baby.'

The little girl stared at her somewhat rudely, then turning to the woman, exclaimed, 'What! *that* one, with the horrid looking bonnet!' and, shaking her head, laughingly replied, 'Thank you, Miss, I have a better use for it.'

Effie was really distressed. The poor woman looked so pale and sad, and yet so meek and uncomplaining withal, that both brother and sister found themselves strangely interested.

'O how I wish we could do something for her,' whispered Harry. 'Will you please exchange my nuts for cough lozenges?' inquired Effie in a faltering voice, of the shopkeeper.

[Pg 24]

'Rather too busy, Miss.'

'But it will oblige me very much.'

'Happy to oblige you on any other day, Miss, but we really have no time for exchanges now.' By this time the poor woman had gained the door, and Effie, looking round, observed that her brother too was missing.

'He followed the woman with the baby,' said the little girl who had purchased the rocking-chair; then pursing up her mouth with an expression as near contempt as such a pretty mouth could wear, she inquired, 'Is she your *aunt*?'

The angry blood rushed in a flood to Effie's face, but she quickly subdued it, and with ready thought replied, 'No, my *sister*.'

It was now the turn of the stranger girl to blush, and at the same time she cast upon her new companion a slight glance of surprise. She then turned over with her fingers her new toys, glanced at the rocking-chair, and seemingly dissatisfied with all, again turned to Effie.

'Please give her this,' she said, putting the remaining shilling in her hand. 'I know what you mean, my mother taught me that, but—she is dead now.'

[Pg 25]

'If Harry finds where the poor woman lives,' returned Effie, 'we will go there together.' The little girl seemed to waver for a moment, then said hastily, 'No, I must go home—give the money to her,' and hurried away as fast as the crowd would permit. In a few moments Harry returned. He had found out where the poor woman lived, but it was a great distance, and he was too considerate to leave his sister alone. Harry was not one of those philanthropists who, in doing a great amount of good, become blind to trifles; for his father had taught him, that duties never interfere with each other, and he knew that he owed Effie every care and attention. I have often observed that those children, who are the most kind and considerate to brothers and sisters, always shew more justice and generosity to others, than those who think such attentions of but little importance.

Harry found out but little more of the woman, than that she was poor, and sick, and friendless. Her baby too, her only comfort, was wasting away before her eyes, whether of disease or for lack of food, she did not tell, and there was none to help her. [Pg 26]

'We will speak to father about her,' said Harry, as they proceeded homeward, 'perhaps he can do something for them,—it is a sweet little baby, Effie, with a skin clear and white, and eyes—oh, you never saw such eyes! they look so soft and loving, that you would think the poor thing knew every word you said, and how I pitied it. I could hardly help crying, Effie.'

'I am glad you followed the poor woman.'

'So am I. But Effie, you don't know how vexed I was with that selfish little miss, that bought the rocking-chair.'

'Harry!'

'Now, don't go to taking her part, Effie, it will do no good, I can tell you; she is the most selfish and unfeeling little girl that I ever saw. Because the woman wore an *old bonnet*, she couldn't help her—only think of that! how mean!'

'She—O Harry! now I know what mother meant when she talked to me so much about having charity for people, and told me that we could not always judge the heart by the actions. I thought as badly of her as you at first, but I'm sure now she is not unfeeling.' [Pg 27]

'Well, if she has any feeling, I should like to see her shew it, that's all. I tell you, Effie, if anybody ever made a god of self, it is that little girl we saw to-night. She thought her gratification of more consequence than that poor baby's life.'

'No, Harry, she is one of the thoughtless ones mother tells us so much about. If you had seen her when she gave me this money,' putting the silver piece into her brother's hand, 'you would never call her unfeeling.'

'Did you tease her for it?'

'No, I didn't ask her again, for I did feel a little vexed—yes, a good deal so, at first, but, Harry, I don't feel vexed now, I am sorry for her. There was a tear in her eye, I am pretty sure, though she was ashamed to have me see it, and her lips quivered, and she looked—oh, so sad, when she told me her mother was dead; I wish you could have seen her, Harry.'

'I would rather not see her again, for I can't bear proud people—' Effie was about interrupting her brother in defence of the little stranger girl, but at that moment a new object attracted their attention. It was a fine sleigh drawn by a pair of beautiful gray horses, that, with proudly arched neck and flowing mane, stepped daintily, as if perfectly aware of the fact that they were gentlemen's horses, and carried as fashionable a load as New York afforded. A little girl leaned quite over the side of the sleigh, and smiled and nodded to Effie, then waving her handkerchief, to attract still more attention, dropped something upon the ground. It was the child they had seen at the toy-shop. Harry flew to pick up the offering, and gave it to his sister. [Pg 28]

'Now, what do you think of her?' inquired Effie, as her eye lighted on the self-same purse she had seen but a little while before; 'I knew she must be kind-hearted—did you ever see anything so generous? Here is ever so much money, and all for the poor woman and her sick baby—why don't you speak, Harry?'

'Because—I—'

'You don't think she is selfish now, I hope?'

'I don't think anything about it, Effie, because I don't know. If she gave her own money she is generous, but if she begged it of somebody else to give—' [Pg 29]

'If she begged it of somebody else, it was generous in her to give it to this poor woman, instead of putting it to some other use.'

'Well, Effie, the money will certainly do the poor woman a great deal of good, and I rather think the little girl feels better for giving, so I am sure we ought to be glad.'

'I wish I could find out her name,' said Effie, 'perhaps it is on the purse.' Harry drew the silken purse from his pocket, and after examining it closely, found engraved on one of the rings the name of 'ROSA LYNMORE.'

In the evening the children related the events of the day to their mother, and found her

approbation a sufficient reward for all their self-denial. The conduct of Rosa Lynmore was duly canvassed, too; and, while Mrs Maurice praised her generosity, she endeavoured to shew her children the difference between this one impulsive act, and the constant, self-denying effort which is the result of true benevolence. 'This little girl,' she said, 'may make but a small sacrifice in parting with this money, not half so great as it would be to go and seek out the poor woman and administer to her necessities, but still we have no right to find fault with what is so well done, and I am sure, my children, that you do not desire it.'

[Pg 30]

'No, mother,' said Effie, 'I see now why you told me not to judge Mrs Wiston by appearances; if I had come away a little sooner, I should have thought this pretty Rosa Lynmore one of the most selfish little girls in the world. But now I know she was only thoughtless.'

'Well, I hope, my child, you will always remember not to judge hastily, and without sufficient reason; yet to be utterly blind to the apparent faults of those around you, is neither safe nor wise. It is not safe, because by being too credulous you may easily make yourself the object of imposition; and not wise, because, by such indiscriminate charity, you lose a useful lesson.'

'I think, mother,' said Harry, 'that I can see the lesson we can learn from Rosa Lynmore's faults.'

'I don't see that she has any faults,' said Effie, earnestly. 'I am sure, Harry, you ought not to make so much of that one careless little word about the bonnet; it was an ugly bonnet, with so deep a front that I dare say Rosa didn't see the poor woman's pale face.'

[Pg 31]

'You call it a careless word, Effie,' said Mrs Maurice, 'you admit that this little girl was guilty of thoughtlessness, and surely you cannot consider *that* no fault—but under certain circumstances this fault is more pardonable than under others. Now you know nothing of these circumstances, and so could not, if you wished, be Rosa Lynmore's judge. But, taking everything as it appears, you may draw your lesson without assuming a province which does not belong to you. Now, Harry, we will hear what you have to say.'

'It was not what Rosa *said*, that I meant, mother,—I was thinking of what we might learn to-day from all her actions, and I am sure I didn't want to blame her more than Effie did.'

'I supposed not, my son.'

'But, mother, Harry had reason to blame her more, for he didn't see how sorry she looked, and how her voice trembled when she said, "She is dead now."—meaning her mother, I shouldn't think a little girl would ever do right, without a mother to teach her.'

[Pg 32]

'Such children deserve pity, my love, and I am glad you have a heart to pity them, but I suspect that all little girls have wicked thoughts and feelings that they must strive against, and whether they are blessed with parents, or have only a Heavenly Father to guide them, they will have need to watch and pray. But Harry has not given his lesson yet.'

'Father told me a story the other day—an allegory he called it—about impulse and principle.'

'Principle went straight forward, and did whatever was right, and tried to make her feelings agree with it, but Impulse hurried along in a very crooked path, stopping here, and then bounding forth at the sight of some new object—one minute neglecting every duty, and the next, doing something so great that everybody was surprised, and praised her beyond all measure. Principle very seldom did wrong, and made so little show, that she was quite unobserved by the world in general, but Impulse was as likely to do wrong as right, and according as good or evil predominated, received her full share of praise or censure. Principle had an approving conscience, and however she might be looked upon by the world, she was contented and happy, while poor Impulse was half of the time tossed about by a light thing called Vanity, or gnawed by a monster named Remorse. I liked the story very much, and I couldn't help remembering it to-day, when the little girl dropped the purse over the side of the sleigh. I thought she was governed by Impulse, and though this is a good act, unless she has a better heart than most people, it is no true sign that the next one will be good.'

[Pg 33]

'Very true, my son, but you have not explained to Effie what you mean by impulse and principle.'

'You can explain it better than I can, mother. I don't remember half that father said about it.'

'Well, tell me as much as you can remember then.'

'Why, principle means ground of action, and people who are governed by principle always have some good reason for what they do, and do not act without thinking. Father says old people are more apt to be governed by principle of some kind, either good or bad, than children, for he says children generally act first, and think afterwards.'

[Pg 34]

'And impulse?' inquired Effie.

'People that act from impulse are altogether at the mercy of circumstances, and are driven about by their own feelings. They never wait to inquire whether a thing is right before they do it, but if it seems right for the minute it is sufficient.'

Harry's explanation seemed quite satisfactory to his mother, and what was just then of more importance, to Effie, who, it was but natural, should find some fault with a definition which seemed to throw anything like discredit on her new favourite. Any further allusion to the subject was, however, prevented by the entrance of Mr Maurice, who, as he had been out all day, making

charitable and professional instead of fashionable calls, had some very interesting stories to relate. But there was one so strange, and to the children so new, that it threw the rest quite into the shade, and absorbed their whole stock of sympathy. It was late before Mr Maurice finished his story, and as it may be late before our readers get to a better stopping-place, we shall reserve it for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 35]

THE MISER.

'In passing through a narrow back lane,' said Mr Maurice, after relating several tales of minor importance, 'I paused to look upon a low building, so old that one corner of it was sunken so much as to give it a tottering appearance, and if possible it was more dark and dismal than the others. It seemed to be occupied by several families, for a little gray smoke went straggling up from two or three crumbling chimneys, but the rooms were all on the ground floor. As I stood gazing at it, I was startled by a boy (about your age, Harry, or a little older perhaps) who came bounding from the door, and grasping my coat untreated me to go in and see his grandfather.'

'Did you go, father?' inquired Effie, 'wasn't you afraid?'

'Afraid! what had he to be afraid of?' exclaimed her brother, 'I should just as lief go as not.' Yet, notwithstanding the little boy's vaunt there was a slight tremor on his lip, and his large blue eyes grew larger still and darker where they were dark, while the whites became unusually prominent.

[Pg 36]

'Of course I went,' resumed Mr Maurice, in a sad tone, 'and a fearful spectacle did I behold. I had expected to see some poor widow, worn out by toil and suffering, perchance by anguish and anxiety, dying alone, or a family of helpless ones, such as I had often visited, or a drunken husband. I had often glanced at guilt and crime, but never would my imagination have pictured the scene before me. The room was dark and loathsome, containing but few articles of furniture, and those battered and defaced by age, and with a rickety bed in one corner, on which lay stretched in mortal agony the figure of a wrinkled, gray-haired old man, apparently approaching the final struggle. O my children, poverty, loneliness, want, are the portion of many on this fair, beautiful earth, but such utter wretchedness as appeared in that man's face, can only be the result of crime.' Mr Maurice was evidently deeply affected, and his wife and children were for a moment silent.

'Was he dying, father?' at length Harry ventured to inquire, in a subdued tone.

'He seemed very weak, except now and then when he was seized with convulsions, and then he would writhe and throw himself about, and it was more than I could do to keep him on his bed—I do not think it possible for him to survive till morning.'

[Pg 37]

'Didn't he say anything, father?'

'It was a long time before he said anything, but after I had succeeded in warming some liquid, which I found in an old broken cup, over the decayed fire, I gave him a little of it, and in time he became much calmer. Between his paroxysms of pain, I induced him to give some account of himself, and the circumstances that brought him to his present situation, and what think you was the prime moving cause of all this wretchedness?'

'I suspect he was very poor,' said Effie.

'Something worse than that I should think,' added her brother, 'perhaps he was a gamester.'

'Or a drunkard,' suggested Effie.

'Or both,' responded the mother, or perhaps he commenced by being merely a time-waster, and money-waster, and finally was reduced to what persons of that stamp are very apt to consider the necessity of committing crime, by way of support.

Mr Maurice shook his head. 'It was neither poverty, nor play, nor drunkenness, nor indolence, nor extravagance, that made that old man wretched, and yet he was the most wretched being I ever saw.'

[Pg 38]

'He was poor, though, wasn't he, father?'

'Poverty is but a small thing, Effie, and in our land of equal laws and charitable institutions, very few suffer from absolute want, but that old man was richer (in gold and silver I mean) than I am.'

'What! and lived in that dreadful place, father?'

'Oh! I see it,' exclaimed Harry; 'he is a miser.'

'Yes, Harry,' returned Mr Maurice, 'you are right, the love of money is the cause of all his misery. He came to this city a great many years ago, (he could not himself tell how many, for his memory evidently wavered,) and commenced business as a linen draper. He had one only daughter then, and he lavished all his earnings on her at first, but finally she married, and from that time he became wholly engrossed with self. He was never very fond of show, and so did not become a

spendthrift, but he adopted the equally dangerous course of hoarding up all his savings, until it became a passion with him. After a while he retired from business, but the passion clung to him with all the tenacity of a long established habit, and he became a usurer. He was known to all the young profligates, the bad young men who throng our city, and became as necessary to them as the poor avaricious Jew was in former days to the spendthrifts and gamblers in London. He told me frightful stories, my children, of tyranny and fraud, of ruined young men led on by him till they committed self-murder, of old men shorn of their fortunes through his ingenious villainy—'

[Pg 39]

'O father!' exclaimed little Effie, covering her eyes with her hands.

'All this,' said Mr Maurice, solemnly, 'was the result of the indulgence of a single bad passion.'

'But the little boy?' inquired Mrs Maurice.

'The husband of the daughter proved to be a miserable, worthless fellow, and for some time the old man sent them remittances of money, but after a while his new passion triumphed over paternal love, and the prayers of the poor woman were unheeded. Two or three years ago she came to the city on foot—a weary distance, the old man said, but he could not tell how far, bringing with her the little boy that first attracted my attention to-night. Her husband was dead, and her elder children had one by one followed him to the grave, till there was only this, the youngest left. She had come to the city, hoping that her presence would be more successful than her letters had been in softening the old man's heart, but she only came to die. Her journey had worn her out, and she was to be no tax upon the old man's treasures. She died, and the miserable grandfather could not cast off her only son. The little fellow's face looks wan and melancholy; as if from suffering and want, and he seems to have passed at once from a child into an old man, without knowing anything of the intermediate stage.'

[Pg 40]

'Poor boy!' said Mrs Maurice 'you didn't leave him alone with his grandfather, I hope?'

'No, I engaged a neighbour to spend the night with them, and called at my office on my way home to write a letter to a brother, of whom the old man told me, who is now residing in the country. The little grandson will probably be wealthy now, but I do not believe the enjoyment of it will make up for his past suffering.'

[Pg 41]

'I hope he won't be a miser,' said Effie.

'I shouldn't think it very strange if he should be,' replied her brother, 'the example of his grandfather is enough to spoil him.'

'But you forget, Harry,' said Mrs Maurice, 'what a terrible example it was. I think the little fellow will be likely to avoid it.'

'Very probably,' added Mr Maurice, 'there is more danger of his going into the opposite extreme.'

'I am sure, father,' said Harry, 'that it can't be so bad to spend money foolishly, as to hoard it up the way that old man did.'

'No,' said Effie, 'for he made a *god* of it, and it is better to care too little about it, than too much.'

'But the man that spends his money in frivolous pursuits, or what would be called slightly criminal adventures, who lavishes the money which God has given him to do good with, upon himself, seeking only his own gratification—'

'O father!' interrupted Harry, 'he made a *god* of himself.'

'Such a man,' continued Mr Maurice, 'may be led on from one step to another until he becomes as guilty as the old man of whom I have told you to-night.'

[Pg 42]

'If I were a man,' said little Effie, shuddering, 'I should be afraid to do anything lest I should do wrong.'

'And why so?' asked Mrs Maurice; 'you forget, my dear, that you, too, are exposed to temptations, that none of us are exempt from trials, and our only hope is in the promise that the child of God shall not be tempted above what he is able to bear.'

'Remember,' added Mr Maurice, taking the family Bible from its shelf preparatory to their evening devotions, 'to love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. And remember, when you are searching your hearts to discover their hidden idols, that the same Divine Being has said, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."''

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 43]

THE POOR WIDOW.

The next morning, in accordance with his children's wishes, Mr Maurice accompanied Harry to the residence of the poor woman they had seen at Mr T.'s shop. It was a miserable hovel, but after all there was an air of cleanliness and comfort about it, that the most abject poverty can seldom of itself destroy. A white curtain, mended it is true, in very many places, yet looking quite

respectable, still shaded the only window of the apartment. There were a few coals, on which was laid a single stick of wood, in the open fire-place, but it sent forth but a small quantity of heat, and the room felt damp and chilly. On a narrow bed drawn close to the fire lay the sick child, and beside it sat the mother plying her needle steadily, and every now and then casting an anxious eye upon her babe. She arose when Mr Maurice and Harry entered, and her reception of the boy was truly affecting. She told again and again of his following her the day before, and how kindly he had inquired if he could do anything for her, and then bursting into loud sobs, and leaning over the bed, she said nobody could do anything unless it was to cure her baby. Mr Maurice took the hand of the little sufferer, but it was burning hot, and the face, which was the day before pale, was now so flushed that Harry could scarcely recognise it.

[Pg 44]

'He has a fever,' said Mr Maurice.

'A fever! oh don't say so,' shrieked the poor woman, 'it was of that his father died—it is a cold, nothing but a cold! Oh, how could I be so foolish as to take him out!'

What could Mr Maurice do, but soothe her, and promise to be the child's physician? In a few moments she became calmer, and then she told him that her baby had been failing for a long time—day by day she could see that he grew poorer, but she could not tell why, till at last a cough had come, and concluding that it was occasioned by a cold, she had given the usual remedies, but without effect. The day before, having no one with whom to leave him, she had taken him out, and the fever that ensued was the result.

'Do you think I have killed my baby, sir?' she inquired mournfully; and she looked so long and earnestly into Mr Maurice's face for an answer, that he was obliged to reply 'No.' It was easy for him to discern that the death-blow was before received.

[Pg 45]

'Oh thank you,' replied the poor mother, joyfully, 'I was sure he must get well.' Mr Maurice was about to speak, but interrupted himself—should he undeceive her? Should he tear from her her last hope? perhaps it was weakness, but he could not do it. The blow was too sudden, too heavy, and it must be softened to her. She said nothing of poverty, but he knew by the rapidity with which she plied her needle in the intervals of conversation that she was toiling for her bread and fuel, and he secretly resolved to place her in a condition to devote herself entirely to the care of the child.

As Mr Maurice glanced around the room, noting each article it contained, and gaining from thence some item of knowledge concerning the character of its owner, his eye fell upon a shelf on which lay a few tracts, a Bible, and a hymn-book. 'I see,' said he, pointing to them, 'that whatever trial you may be called to pass through, you are provided with a better comforter than any earthly friend.'

[Pg 46]

The poor woman shook her head, 'They were my husband's, sir.'

'Your husband was a pious man, then?'

'He used to read the Bible and have family worship. Sometimes I went with him on Sunday to hear the minister, but I was always tired and drowsy, and could not keep awake.'

'I suppose you don't go at all now?'

'No, sir'

'Nor read the Bible?'

'No, not very often—I don't get time.'

'You surely have time on the Sabbath-day?'

'Oh, sir, that is the only leisure day I have, and then I like to take little James, and go with him to his father's grave, and when I get back, there's tea to make, (I never have tea but on Sundays, sir,) and somehow the time slips away till dark, when I go to bed. I can't afford to light a candle on Sunday nights.'

'Do you never visit your neighbours on that day?'

'Oh no, sir, since my husband died, I have not cared for going out, and a lone woman like me is but poor company for others, so they never come to see me.'

[Pg 47]

'You tell me of visiting your husband's grave—when you stand over it, do you ever think of the time you will meet him again?'

'Not often; he used to talk to me about it, but I never can think of anything but *him*, just as he lived, and I remember a great many kind things he used to say, and speak them over to the baby (little James—he was named for his father, sir,) in his own words.' And the poor woman bent over her work, and plied her needle faster than ever.

'It is natural,' said Mr Maurice, kindly, 'that you should remember your husband as he was when living, but it is strange that you so seldom think of seeing him again.'

'Oh, sir, that looks like a dream to me, I can't more than half believe it, but I know the other to be reality.'

'Yet one is as true as the other.' The woman sighed, and her countenance looked troubled, but

she made no answer.

'You believe the Bible?'

'Ye-es, sir—my James believed it, and so it must be true.'

'Then you will allow me to read you a chapter, I suppose.'

[Pg 48]

'If you please, sir, but it always seemed to me a very gloomy book, and I am afraid it will make me low-spirited.'

'No, I think not, it may raise your spirits.' Mr Maurice took down the Bible, and opened it at the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. A piece of torn paper lay between the opened leaves, and a few of the verses were marked with a pencil. As Mr Maurice proceeded to read, the face of the poor woman was gradually lowered till it almost rested on her bosom, and at last, yielding to the intensity of her feelings, she buried her face in the bed-clothes, and did not raise it again till the chapter was finished.

'Oh, many and many is the time he has read it to me!' she exclaimed, 'and he put in the mark only the day before he died, so that I might find it; but I could not, oh I couldn't bear to read it!'

'And why not?'

'Oh, I know it is true! I know I shall see him again! but, sir, he was a *Christian*.'

'And so prepared to die, was he not?'

'Yes, sir, and my poor baby—'

'If it is taken away it will go to him in heaven.'

[Pg 49]

'Oh no, oh no! my baby must not die! My James was good, and has talked to me hours, and hours, about being ready to die, but I used to laugh at him—*that* goes to my heart the worst, sir, to laugh at *him* who was as gentle as that baby, *him* who is in his grave now. Oh if I could forget *that*! He is in heaven, sir, but I—I shall never get there! It's of no use to read the Bible to me, and talk to me—James used to pray for me, but it was of no use, I am too wicked. But if you can save the baby, sir, if God will let the child live, I shall have a little comfort.'

Mr Maurice had succeeded in rousing the poor woman's feelings, but he found that she felt more acutely than he imagined, and he now brought to his aid the still small voice of the Gospel. He told her of the fountain in which sin might be washed away, he told her of the place where the weary might find rest, and pointed her to the Lord Jesus Christ, for mercy; but though she appeared to listen, her thoughts were evidently fixed upon her husband and child, and the truths he uttered fell unheeded on her ear. After talking some time, he again read a portion of the Bible, prayed with the poor woman, and went away.

[Pg 50]

'Oh, how I pity her, father,' said Harry, when they were on their way home. 'Do you really think the little baby will get well?—I do hope it will.'

'That is a natural wish, my child; but God knows what is best, and if He should see fit to remove it, we have no right to murmur.'

'No, father, but poor Mrs Gilman will feel so dreadfully, for then she will be entirely alone. She told us, you know, that before she married James Gilman she was a poor servant girl, and an orphan, and she don't know whether she has any relatives or not. It will be very hard for her to see everything she loves taken from her and buried in the grave.'

'So it will, my dear boy, and she deserves all our sympathy; but it may be that a kind Heavenly Parent, since she has no earthly ones to guide her, is using these means to draw the poor widow nearer to Him. If this chastisement is sent by His hand, it will undoubtedly be in love and mercy.'

'Do you think, father, that Mrs Gilman loves her little James too well?'

'I will answer your question by asking another, Harry. Do you think her love for the child interferes with that she owes to God?'

[Pg 51]

Harry was for a few moments silent. At last he answered, 'She certainly loves him better than she does God, and that is not right; but you always told Effie and me that we could not love each other too well.'

'And I told you right, provided *that* love is made subservient to a holier one. But your first duty is, in the words of our Saviour, "to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Obedience to this precept involves a great many other duties, but none of these should interfere with the great first command.'

'But, father,' inquired Harry, 'if Mrs Gilman should become a Christian, would she love her baby less.'

'No, she might love it more, but not with the same kind of affection she bears it now. This is a blind idolatry—her child is her all, and she cannot bear to part with it, even though it should join her lost husband, and wear a crown in glory. If she were a Christian, she would be able to say, "Thy will be done," and to place entire confidence in the Divine Master, and bow in submission to His requirements, even though they should call on her to resign this treasure.'

[Pg 52]

'Oh, how happy we should be, if we loved God better than anything else!' said Harry.

After they had arrived at home, and while Mrs Maurice was engaged in preparing some comfortable things for the poor woman, Harry was heard to whisper in his sister's ear, 'Poor Mrs Gilman makes a god of her baby, Effie.'

CHAPTER VI.

GENEROSITY AND JUSTICE.

Several days passed away, and little Effie was watching every opportunity for making applications of the truth her mother had taught her, but yet, (such is the deceitfulness of the human heart,) she still considered herself out of danger. If any little boys or girls who may perchance read this story, are as confident as Effie, we only ask them to watch over their thoughts and actions for as long a time as she did, and see if they do not discover their mistake. One day Mrs Maurice went to make a call on a lady of her acquaintance, and as Harry was engaged with his father, she allowed Effie to accompany her. It was a beautiful parlour into which they were ushered, and Mrs Town received them with due politeness. They were scarce seated when the servant announced another visitor, and a lady with whom Mrs Maurice was very well acquainted entered, and immediately stated the object of her call—to obtain subscriptions for a charitable society.

[Pg 53]

'I am tired of these societies,' said Mrs Town, 'do not you think, Mrs Maurice, that individual charity is preferable?'

'Undoubtedly, in many instances, but societies have done much good, and I am therefore disposed to countenance them.'

'But don't you think,' said Mrs Town, 'that a person is very apt to think by being a member of a society she is freed from individual responsibility?'

'There may be such people,' was the reply, 'and undoubtedly are, but they are those who give merely because they are expected to do so, and this is the easiest mode of cheating the world and themselves that could be devised.'

'Well,' replied Mrs Town, 'I have always made it a point never to place my name on a subscription list, so I shall be obliged to decline. I hope,' she said to the disappointed lady, who had been advised to call upon her because she was rich, 'I hope you will meet with better success elsewhere.'

[Pg 54]

'I hope I shall,' the lady could scarce forbear saying, as Mrs Town curtsied gracefully in answer to her embarrassed nod, but she soon calmed her excited feelings and passed on.

'Poor Mrs D.!' said Mrs Town. 'This must be very unpleasant business. I can't see what could induce a lady of her respectability to engage in it.'

'I know of no one who could perform the task better,' said Mrs Maurice.

'Certainly not, but—' Mrs Town paused, and then added, hesitatingly, 'it seems a little too much like begging.'

'It surely is begging,' said Mrs Maurice, with much animation, 'begging for the poor, the weak, the desolate, the unfriended—these have claims upon those who to-morrow may be in their places—and more, Mrs Town, it is begging for our brethren, our sisters—these have claims upon us that cannot be waived—but above all, it is begging for the King of kings, Him who hesitated not to give His own Son for us, and His claims cover all others. Not only our gold and silver are His, but ourselves.'

[Pg 55]

'Oh, my dear Mrs Maurice, I would not have you to suppose that I object to *giving*—by no means—it is only from an ostentatious display of charity that I shrink—this is a duty that should be exercised in private, a—' Mrs Town was interrupted in the midst of her vindication by a servant who entered and placed a note in her hand, which she folded closer and was about putting in her pocket—'Please, ma'am,' said the servant, 'she wishes you to read it now, and say if you can see her.'

Mrs Town glanced at the note and coloured slightly, but she had been too long accustomed to concealing her feelings for a stronger manifestation. 'Tell her to come to-morrow,' said she.

The servant was gone a moment and again returned, 'Please, ma'am,' said he, 'the woman won't go away, she says she *will* see you, for her husband is sick, and her children starving, and she must have her *pay*.' Mrs Town started from her seat: this was a strange comment upon her beautiful theory of individual charity. Mrs Maurice retired as soon as possible, and as she passed through the hall she saw a miserably-clad woman with a face extremely haggard and care-worn, whom she supposed to be the person claiming—not *charity*, but *justice*, of Mrs Town. Effie saw that her mother's face was unusually clouded, and she did not venture to comment upon the past scene, but she said to her brother as soon as they were alone, 'I am glad we are not rich like Mrs

[Pg 56]

Town, Harry, lest we should make a *god* of our money.'

Mrs Maurice did not, however, neglect at a suitable time to fix upon Effie's mind the impression she had received from the scene at Mrs Town's. 'Remember, my child,' she said, 'if you should ever live to become a woman, that *justice* should be preferred to *generosity*, and never talk of *giving* while some poor person may be suffering for that which is her just due.'

'Mother,' said Harry, 'Elisha Otis told me to-day that his father thinks people who talk so much of giving, are all hypocrites.'

'People who make a great noise about any good act which they perform appear somewhat pharisaical, but we have no right to condemn them upon that score *alone*, for it often proceeds from a great desire to do good. You know we are very apt to talk of that which most occupies our thoughts, Harry. But where did Elisha Otis's father get such notions of charitable people?'

[Pg 57]

'That is what I was going to tell you about, mother. You know how much Deacon Brown, gives—he heads all the subscription papers, and I heard father say the other day that he was a great help to the church; but Mr Otis says that he is never willing to pay people that work for him their full price, and then they have to wait, and dun, and dun, before they can get anything.'

'I am sorry to hear this, my son, very sorry.'

'Isn't it true mother?'

'It is true that Deacon Brown in some instances has seemed more generous than just, and this case is very good to illustrate what I before said; but Mr Otis makes it appear much worse than it is.'

'Then he don't cheat his workmen, mother?'

'No; but, by procrastination, thoughtlessness, or even perhaps the desire which business men may have to make a good bargain, he may do wrong, and so lay himself open to all these remarks. Bad qualities, you know, shew much plainer in a good man than a bad one, and are almost always made to appear worse than they really are. But let this be a warning to you, my boy—remember that *good* (not *great*) actions seldom cover faults, but faults obscure the lustre of many good actions, and destroy the usefulness of thousands of really good and pious people.'

[Pg 58]

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW BOOK.

'A present for you, Effie,' said Mr Maurice, a few days after the foregoing conversation, 'a present from your uncle William! it is in this nice little packet, now guess what it is.'

'O father—'

'No, but you must guess.'

'Why it's a book—say a book, Effie,' interposed Harry, 'with sights of pictures, I dare say, and may be pretty gilt letters on the back, too.'

[Pg 59]

'Is it a book?' inquired Effie, her little eyes dancing with pleasure, 'and from uncle William, too? Oh how good he is to remember a little girl like me!'

By this time Mr Maurice had unwound the cord and unfolded the paper, and displayed a neat little book—what think you it was? 'Peter Parley's Stories,' says one, 'The Love Token,' says another. No, you are both wrong. Effie Maurice was almost a woman before these books were written. Mrs Sherwood was then the children's friend, and some beautiful stories she told them, too. The book had neither pictures, nor gilt letters, but this did not spoil it for Effie, and she was soon so busily engaged in reading that she forgot that there was anything in the world but herself and the delightful book—more still, she forgot even her own existence, and thought only of the people about whom she was reading. A half-hour passed away and then Mrs Maurice reminded Effie of her room, and told her it had better be put in order.

'Yes, mother, in a few minutes.' The few minutes passed away, and Mrs Maurice spoke again.

[Pg 60]

'I will, mother.' Mrs Maurice saw that Effie forgot these words almost as soon as spoken, but instead of telling her at once to put up the book, and do as she was bidden, she allowed her to pursue her own course for this once, hoping by this means to cure her of a very bad habit.

Soon after, Mrs Maurice descended to the kitchen to give some directions, and Effie was left alone. Once the thought entered her mind that she had promised to visit Mrs Gilman that day, but she immediately concluded another time would do as well, and so continued her reading. After a while Harry, who had been out with his father, entered in great haste, with a packet of medicine in his hand.

'Effie,' he said, 'father wants you to take this to Mrs Gilman's when you go, it is for her little James, and I—'

'I am not going to-day, Harry.'

'Can't you go? Oh do! don't mind the book! you can read it another time.'

'So I can go to Mrs Gilman's another time.'

'Oh, but the medicine, Effie.'

[Pg 61]

'Can't you take it as well as I? It is too bad for me to have to be running there all the time.' It was very unusual for Effie to speak so peevishly, but Harry was in a very happy mood, so he merely exclaimed, 'Why, Effie!' and glanced at the book as much as to say, 'did you learn it there!' Effie saw the glance, and ashamed of her ill nature said, 'Oh it is such a good story, Harry! but if you can't go to Mrs Gilman's, why not send a servant?'

'Father said some of *us* ought to go; so do, Effie, just put up your book for this once. The medicine is to prevent the convulsions that frightened us so yesterday, but father is going out into the country (it is delightful sleighing!) and he says I may go. You know it isn't every day I can get a sleigh-ride, Effie.' And the delighted boy gave his sister such a very hearty kiss that she could not forbear answering good humouredly, especially as she had some suspicion that she had not spoken pleasantly at first, 'Well, I will go, Harry, but don't hinder me now, I shall get through the chapter in a few minutes.' 'Well, don't forget, and when I come back I will tell you about all I see.'

Effie finished her chapter and thought of the medicine, and wondered if it was really so important that it should go immediately; but she was now in the most interesting part of the story, and she continued to read a little farther. So the time stole away—I can't exactly tell how, but perhaps some of my little readers (especially if they have read the little book that delighted Effie so much) can imagine—till the dinner hour. By this time Effie had finished her book, and her father and Harry had returned from the sleigh-ride, the latter particularly in excellent spirits. Effie thought of the medicine as she sat down to the table, and in a moment all her enjoyment vanished; for she had been guilty of procrastination, she had broken her word, and what excuse had she to offer for her neglect? That she had scarcely known what she was about, was no excuse at all, for she knew she ought to have known. She could not, however, prevail upon herself to confess her fault, until after she had repaired it, and so decided to go to Mrs Gilman's immediately after dinner, and when she had set all right again, to tell the whole affair to her parents and brother.

[Pg 62]

Harry was full of stories about his ride, and she heard as well as she could about the farmer's big dog that at first wouldn't let them come in, and afterwards shook hands with them, and the cat that could open doors, and the hens and rabbits, but she forgot all about them in a moment, and only wished she could slide away from the table and nobody see her. At last the meal was ended, and they were about rising from the table when they were startled by a message from Mrs Gilman's. Her little boy was in convulsions.

[Pg 63]

'I will go immediately,' said Mr Maurice, 'poor little fellow! nothing can save him now—that medicine was my last hope.'

'Oh, father!' exclaimed Effie.

'Nay, my child—' Mr Maurice began, but he saw that it was not mere pity that produced so much agitation, and inquired hastily 'what is the matter?' Poor Effie attempted to speak, but burst into tears.

'Oh, Effie!' exclaimed her brother, grasping her arm, 'you couldn't have forgotten the medicine.' The poor child only sobbed the harder, and Harry, turning to the table, pointed to the little packet, thus explaining the mystery!

'And so for a selfish gratification you have endangered a fellow-creature's life,' said Mr Maurice, sternly.

[Pg 64]

'Oh, father!' exclaimed Harry, 'she's so sorry! Don't cry, Effie, don't cry!' he whispered, at the same time passing his arm around her neck, 'father didn't mean to be so severe, he is only frightened about little James—I am very sorry I didn't go, for it was too bad to make you leave the book.'

But all Harry's soothing words could not make Effie blind to her own neglect, and when she saw her father go out with an anxious, troubled face, and her mother looked so sorrowful without saying a single word to her, she could not help going back in her thoughts to Mrs Town, Rosa Lynmore, and even the miser, and thinking she was worse than any of them.

Her brother Harry still clung around her neck, and kept whispering she was not to blame, the fault was his, till Mrs Maurice called him away, and then very reluctantly he quitted her side. Poor Effie, thus left without sympathy, crept away to her own little room, and sat down, not merely to weep, but to enter into a regular self-examination. The truths she thus discovered were exceedingly humiliating, but the child began to feel that she needed humbling, and she did not shrink from the task. I do not know but Effie's self-condemnation was greater than the fault really called for, but it certainly was of great use to her, and made her humbler, and gentler, and more forgiving than she ever was before.

[Pg 65]

Effie did not see her father or Harry again that night, but when her mother came to see if she was warm in her little bed, she whispered in her ear, 'Oh, I have so many faults: and my heart is

full of false gods. I am afraid I never really loved my Heavenly Father.'

'Yet, Effie, a great many children, and some grown people, would consider this neglect of yours to-day a very small thing.'

'Oh, mother! I know it is not small, though I never thought it was so very wicked before.'

'And what makes you think it is wicked now?'

'Because it has led me to do so many wicked things. In the first place, it was wrong to read immediately after breakfast, for then is the time that you desire me to work.'

'Well, do you see any bad effect that the neglect of this rule may have on your future life?'

'I suppose I should make a very useless woman, if I should grow up in ignorance of work.'

[Pg 66]

'Yes, certainly you would; when I insist upon your attending to your few duties at a particular time—can you imagine the reason of this? Why not read the book this morning, and make up the lost time this evening?' Effie could not tell, and Mrs Maurice went on to explain the necessity of *order* in the distribution of time, and shewed her little daughter, that it was as necessary in the government of a house as in the government of a nation. 'But that is not the only bad effect,' she added, 'of your self-indulgence.'

'Oh no, mother, it made me disobedient to you, though I am sure I didn't think of being so at the time.'

'I dare say not, but you see when we once go wrong, we are like a traveller who has lost his path, and can be certain of nothing.'

'Then I forgot my duty to poor Mrs Gilman—I even made myself believe that there was no need of going to see her; and I was cross to Harry, and so selfish, that if I had not been ashamed to own it, I would have had him give up his ride and go with the medicine.'

'And he would rather have gone ten times than—'

[Pg 67]

'I know it, mother, rather a hundred times than have the baby die.'

'Or see you do so very wrong.'

'Oh, Harry has been crying about it, I know, though he can't feel half so badly as I do. But that was not all, mother—last of all, I broke my promise. I told Harry I would go as soon as I finished the chapter.'

'And all this,' said Mrs Maurice, 'is the result of what, under other circumstances, would be a mere innocent gratification, a pleasant pastime, and a useful exercise.'

'But, mother, when I once begun, I thought I could not stop.'

'Then that was the very moment when you should have stopped, and this one victory would have made others easier. Now I am not afraid, my dear, of your being led astray (at least at present) by things which you know to be wrong; your danger lies on the unguarded side, and yet it is as likely to prove fatal to your peace of mind, your piety, and your usefulness.'

'It never seemed to me before, that so much evil could come from such a small thing.'

'Then you have learned an all-important lesson, which I trust will not be soon forgotten.'

[Pg 68]

'But, mother, I shall always be afraid of doing wrong now—I don't even know what is right.'

'That shews me, Effie, that you begin to look upon yourself as you really are. If you are left to yourself, you will do wrong; but if you distrust self, and place all your confidence in God, and at the same time study to do right, you will not, for any long time, be left in darkness.'

The conversation of Mrs Maurice continued to a late hour; but as the remaining time was spent in encouraging poor Effie, who needed all that could be said to her, we will pass it over, and merely inform our readers that she awoke in the morning wiser, and even happier; for the joy that is felt in heaven over a repenting sinner, is reflected upon that sinner's own heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 69]

ANOTHER OF MR MAURICE'S LESSONS.

'Father,' said Harry, after the little family had gathered around the fire as usual, on the ensuing evening, 'it seems strange that people can love good books too well.'

'I believe they are not very apt to, Harry, especially boys who are so fond of snowballing and sliding, as a certain little fellow I met to-day.'

'Oh you mean me, now, father, but I thought you liked to have me play.'

'So I do; only look out that the books and play go together. One is for the mind, and the other is for the body, and both should be cared for.'

'Well, father, Mr Titus tells the boys, that the mind is the only thing worthy of attention, at least he talks as though he thought so; and so some of the larger boys think it is not scholarlike to play, and sit mewed up in the house from morning till night, like so many drones.'

'And so grow pale and sickly-looking, do they not?'

[Pg 70]

'Yes, sir; and what's more, I don't think they learn a bit faster than some of the rest of us.'

'Very likely, Harry—for whether they think proper attention to the body important or not, the state of the mind depends very much upon it. A healthy mind, that is, a perfectly sound, active, and energetic one, cannot dwell in a diseased body; and so your play, while it amuses you, and seems to others to be mere waste of time, invigorates the body, affords rest to the mind, and is in reality as essential to your well-being as the food you eat, or the clothing you wear in winter.'

'I wish Mr Titus could hear you say that, father.'

'Perhaps it would not be safe to talk so to all his boys, for I presume the most of them would at present be more benefited by what he says. Children seldom love study too well. Even our little book-worm, Effie, would never become too much engaged in anything but a story.'

'Father, Thomas Marvin says that he can't get to school for a while, and he can't spend the time in exercise; as he says fun takes his mind off his books, and makes him lose a great deal. He is intending to teach a school when he goes away from here, but I don't believe he will, for he looks sickly now. But he thinks it is very foolish to spend time in jumping about, and all that, when there are things so much more important to be done.'

[Pg 71]

'The body, which God has so wonderfully made, and which He watches over with such tender care, is very far from being beneath our notice, Harry; and while we should give the greater care to the immortal part, we should not neglect the other. I have been visiting a scholar to-day, who I doubt not was once of young Marvin's opinion in these things, and, poor fellow! he does not even see his folly now.'

'Please tell us about him, father,' said Effie, with interest, 'did he study so much to make him selfish and wicked?'

'I will tell you the story, and then you must be the judge,' returned Mr Maurice. 'I believe, however, that in this case selfishness was more out of the question than usual; he had too much zeal, "a zeal not according to knowledge." Lewis Varden was the son of a poor widow, who contrived to support a large family in comfort and to give them a good education. He was the youngest son, and perhaps from the circumstance of being too tenderly nurtured, and perhaps from some constitutional defect, was never so strong and muscular as his brothers, and so his mother determined that he should study a profession.'

[Pg 72]

'Lewis was particularly pleased with the arrangement, as he had a natural fondness for sedentary employments, and at sixteen had become so extensive a reader, as to be a kind of family encyclopedia. The question, however, remained to be decided whether he should study law or medicine, the only professions which among us are at all lucrative.'

'While he was yet wavering between the two, he lost his mother, and suddenly the whole object of his life, even his own character, became changed. Mrs Varden was what is usually called a good woman, that is, with a sharp eye upon her worldly interests, she maintained her standing in the church, and bore a fair reputation; but she was a worldly-minded Christian, and as such had not sufficiently encouraged in her children any peculiar love for holiness. She was, however, a devoted, self-sacrificing mother, as far as their worldly interests were concerned: and never was a lost parent more sincerely mourned.'

[Pg 73]

'From that time forth, Lewis seemed to lose all connection with the business part of the world, and he devoted himself more closely than ever to his books.'

'Yet among these books, the Bible now found a place, and occupied a large share of his attention. From reading it, because it suited his now serious thoughts, he began to love its contents, and finally he made them the guide of his life. He became a member of the church in the little village where he resided, and was soon regarded as a very promising young man.'

'His new friends were exceedingly anxious that he should study for the ministry, and he entered with alacrity upon his new duties. But not content with what he considered the circuitous way to usefulness usually taken, he determined by industry to cut it short, and so the noonday sun and midnight lamp found him at the same task. When worn out by his incessant mental labours, he would throw himself down and sleep for a little time; but his dreams were only a continuation of his waking thoughts, so that even in sleep he was studying still.'

[Pg 74]

'When his fellow-students expostulated, he laughed at the idea of his health being injured by incessant application, and seemed to be afraid that variety of employment would distract his attention. So he went on from week to week, and month to month, preparing his mind for usefulness, but his body for the grave. His pale brow grew yet paler, his cheek hollow, and his hand thin and colourless, but still he declared himself to be in perfect health, and no one knew his danger.'

'Finally, he was attacked by a cold, a very slight one, he at first thought, but it clung to him, and could not be shaken off. The poor fellow is now wasting away by consumption, but I cannot convince him of his danger, and to-day when I called on him at the house of his brother, I found him surrounded by books and papers, his large dark eye absolutely glowing with enthusiasm, and a deep red spot burning on either cheek.'

'Oh, father, what did you say to him?' inquired Harry, earnestly.

'A short time ago I recommended quiet and relaxation, telling him plainly that his disease was beyond the reach of medicine, so he understood my look of painful surprise at once.

[Pg 75]

'He only shook his head, laughingly, and said, "Ah, Doctor, this life is too short to throw away, and so I have gone to work. But you must not blame me," he said, observing that I was about to speak, "I am only planning a few sermons I intend to preach next summer."

'And then he went on to talk about his intentions, and inquired my opinion of some particular sentiments that he had been writing down, until he became so much excited that I was obliged to order the removal of all his papers. Poor fellow! he will never preach a sermon. In his impatience to become useful, he has destroyed his power to do good.'

'I don't think,' said Effie, 'that poor Mr Varden makes knowledge his *god* exactly, because he does it all for good; but it would be very wicked for Harry or me to do so, because we know how wrong it is. I wish everybody that praised people for studying too hard could know it is wicked.'

'But remember,' said Mr Maurice, 'that where one person's cheek is paled by hard study, fifty make themselves utterly useless by neglecting the bodily exercise which *moderate* mental effort demands. It is aversion to active employment, and not the love of knowledge, that has slain its hundreds and crippled its thousands.'

[Pg 76]

CHAPTER IX.

THE FUNERAL.

It was a bright and sunshiny day, and so warm as to make the snow moist and yielding beneath the foot—such a day as children love and choose for their happiest sports; but to at least two children it was anything but a day of pleasure. Poor Mrs Gilman's little James had lingered on beyond all expectation, and finally died, calmly and quietly, as if he had been composing himself for sleep. And so it was—a long sleep.

This was the day on which the little one was to be buried, and Harry and Effie were sincere mourners. Not like the poor mother—oh no, no one could feel like her—but they wept as one child of adversity weeps for another, all through life, from the cradle to the grave.

[Pg 77]

Children are sad when they see those of their own age falling like the spring flowers around them; and when the little infant grows cold and lifeless in its cradle, beneath a loving mother's eye, and is borne away to the silent, lonely graveyard, they insensibly grow thoughtful, and if they have been deprived of previous instructions, death becomes their teacher, and for a little time they grow wise beneath the influence of his lessons.

But Harry and Effie had not been thus deprived, and as hand in hand they followed the little coffin to the grave, through their tears of sadness and sympathy there gleamed out a bright and elevated expression, almost a happy one, which shewed that they looked beyond these sorrow-claiming objects, and saw the suffering child they had loved and pitied a redeemed spirit of light. They could see that the little flower, which had drooped and faded in the atmosphere of this world, grew bright and beautiful in the sunshine of immortal love. They knew that the kingdom of God was made up of just such little children—those who had died before they knew anything of the sin and wickedness of this world; or having known it, having grown old and gray beneath its heavy burden, had laid all at the feet of Jesus, and in spirit gone back to helpless, guileless infancy again.

[Pg 78]

They knew that their little friend now dwelt with that dear Saviour, who, when on earth, blessed little children, who gathers the lambs in His arms, and carries them in His bosom. Yet it was a sad day for them, for they mourned the dead, as mortals always mourn when mortals die, although they did not wish him back, and they pitied the living. More tears were indeed shed for Mrs Gilman, than for the child.

The contents of Rosa Lynmore's purse had been reserved by Mr Maurice for this sad occasion, he having supplied all previous wants; and it had been sufficient to give a decent burial to the little boy, who slept quietly at his father's side—to be awakened only when you and I, my dear reader, shall be aroused from the same slumber.

Mr Maurice was right when he said if Mrs Gilman was stricken, it would be in mercy; for her heart being weaned from the world, at last found a refuge from its loneliness in the consolations of religion, and left the broken reed of earthly love, on which it had leaned too confidently, for the Rock, Christ Jesus, the friend that never fails.

[Pg 79]

She entered Mr Maurice's family as a domestic, and has grown gray in its service.

Harry Maurice, it was for a long time thought, would become a preacher of the Gospel; but when he became old enough to judge, he decided in favour of his father's profession, declaring that he who fails to do good in one situation in life, would most decidedly fail in another.

Sweet little Effie! Her struggle with her heart on the occasion of the book was not the last; it was difficult for her to learn its deceitfulness, and she required repeated lessons.

As she grew older, however, she was always complaining of her own sinfulness, while every one else thought her the meekest, the gentlest, and most self-sacrificing being that ever lived. She had, indeed, become remarkably sharp-sighted to her own faults, and, in proportion, forgiving to those of others.

But at last a trial came. She was called on to leave all she loved on earth, and carry the Gospel to a far off benighted land. [Pg 80]

She wept at parting with her parents, but even then she whispered in her mother's ear thanks for the early lessons she had received, and added, 'But for these I might never have learned true self-denial, and might have preferred my dear home to the service of my Master.'

Effie loved her home sincerely, but she loved her Saviour who gave it to her better, and she will have her reward.

And now, my little readers, I have not told you this story simply to amuse you, although I should like to see you interested in its perusal, but I had a better object.

It is not enough that you should see your own faults, and try to mend them yourself; neither is it enough that you should pray, 'lead us not into temptation;' but you must '*watch and pray*' also, always remembering that however pleasant and beautiful this world is, there is a brighter and a better, where little children and old men may equally sit down together in happiness, having one God and one Father.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK EFFIE MAURICE ***

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