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RACHEL GRAY BY JULIA KAVANAGH.

IN ONE VOLUME.

RACHEL GRAY.

A TALE

FOUNDED ON FACT.

BY JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR or "NATHALIE," "DAISY BURNS," "GRACE LEE."

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1856

PREFACE.

This tale, as the title-page implies, is founded on fact. Its truth is its chief merit, and the Author claims no other share in it, than that of telling it to the best of her power.

I do not mean to aver that every word is a positive and literal truth, that every incident occurred exactly as I have related it, and in no other fashion, but this I mean to say: that I have invented nothing in the character of Rachel Gray, and that the sorrows of Richard Jones are not imaginary sorrows.

My purpose in giving this story to the world is twofold. I have found that my first, and in many respects, most imperfect work "Madeleine," is nevertheless that which has won the greatest share of interest and sympathy; a result which I may, I think, safely attribute to its truth, and which has induced me to believe that on similar grounds, a similar distinction might be awarded to a heroine very different indeed from "Madeleine," but whose silent virtues have perhaps as strong a claim to admiration and respect.

I had also another purpose, and though I mention it last, it was that which mainly contributed to make me intrude on public attention; I wished to show the intellectual, the educated, the fortunate, that minds which they are apt to slight as narrow, that lives which they pity as moving in the straight and gloomy paths of mediocrity, are often blessed and graced beyond the usual lot, with those lovely aspirations towards better deeds and immortal things, without which life is indeed a thing of little worth; cold and dull as a sunless day.

JULIA KAVANAGH.

LONDON: DECEMBER 1855.

RACHEL GRAY.

CHAPTER I.

In one of the many little suburbs which cling to the outskirts of London, there is a silent and grass-grown street, of aspect both quiet and quaint. The houses are crazy, old, and brown, of every height and every size; many are untenanted. Some years ago one was internally destroyed by fire. It was not thought worth rebuilding. There it still stands, gaunt and grim, looking for all the world, with its broken or dust-stained windows, like a town deserted after a sacking.

This street is surrounded by populous courts and alleys, by stirring thoroughfares, by roads full of activity and commerce; yet somehow or other, all the noise of life, all its tumult and agitation, here

seem to die away to silence and repose. Few people, even amongst the poor, and the neighbourhood is a poor one, care to reside in it, while they can be lodged as cheaply close by, and more to their taste. Some think that the old square at the end, with its ancient, nodding trees, is close and gloomy; others have heard strange noises in the house that has suffered from fire, and are sure it is haunted; and some again do not like the silent, deserted look of the place, and cannot get over the fancy that, if no one will live in it, it must be because it is unlucky. And thus it daily decays more and more, and daily seems to grow more silent.

The appearance of the few houses that are inhabited, says little in favour of this unfortunate street. In one, a tailor has taken up his abode. He is a pale, serious man, who stitches at his board in the window the whole day long, cheered by the occasional song of a thrush, hopping in its osier cage. This tailor, Samuel Hopkins yclept, lives by repairing damaged vestments. He once made a coat, and boasts—with how much truth is known to his own heart—that he likewise cut out, fashioned, and fitted, a pair of blue nether garments. Further on, at the corner of the square, stands the house of Mrs. Adams, an aged widow, who keeps a small school, which, on her brass board, she emphatically denominates her "Establishment for Young Ladies." This house has an unmistakeable air of literary dirt and neglect; the area and kitchen windows are encumbered with the accumulated mud and dust of years; from the attic casement, a little red-haired servant-girl is ever gaping; and on hot summer afternoons, when the parlour windows are left open, there is a glimpse within of a dingy school-mistress, and still more dingy school-room, with a few pupils who sit straggling on half-a-dozen benches, conning their lessons with a murmuring hum.

With one exception, there is no other sign of commerce, trade, or profession in the whole street. For all an outward glance can reveal to the contrary, the people who live there are so very rich that they do not need to work at all, or so very genteel in their decay, that if they do work, they must do it in a hidden, skulking, invisible sort of fashion, or else be irretrievably disgraced.

The solitary exception to which we have alluded, exists, or rather existed, for though we speak in the present, we write in the past by some years, in one of the smallest houses in the street. A little six-roomed house it was, exactly facing the dreary haunted mansion, and exposed to all the noises aforesaid. It was, also, to say the truth, an abode of poor and mean aspect. In the window hung a dress-maker's board, on which was modestly inscribed, with a list of prices, the name of—

"RACHEL GRAY."

It was accompanied with patterns of yellow paper sleeves, trimmed in every colour, an old book of fashions, and beautiful and bright, as if reared in wood or meadow, a pot of yellow crocuses in bloom. They were closing now, for evening was drawing in, and they knew the hour.

They had opened to light in the dingy parlour within, and which we will now enter. It was but a little room, and the soft gloom of a spring twilight half-filled it. The furniture though poor and old-fashioned, was scrupulously clean; and it shone again in the flickering fire-light. A few discoloured prints in black frames hung against the walls; two or three broken china ornaments adorned the wooden mantel-shelf, which was, moreover, decorated with a little dark-looking mirror in a rim of tarnished gold.

By the fire an elderly woman of grave and stern aspect, but who had once been handsome, sat reading the newspaper. Near the window, two apprentices sewed, under the superintendence of Rachel Gray.

A mild ray of light fell on her pale face, and bending figure. She sewed on, serious and still, and the calm gravity of her aspect harmonized with the silence of the little parlour which nothing disturbed, save the ticking of an old clock behind the door, the occasional rustling of Mrs. Gray's newspaper, and the continuous and monotonous sound of stitching.

Rachel Gray looked upwards of thirty, yet she was younger by some years. She was a tall, thin, and awkward woman, sallow and faded before her time. She was not, and had never been handsome, yet there was a patient seriousness in the lines of her face, which, when it caught the eye, arrested it at once, and kept it long. Her brow, too, was broad and intellectual; her eyes were very fine, though their look was dreamy and abstracted; and her smile, when she did smile, which was not often, for she was slightly deaf and spoke little, was pleasant and very sweet.

She sewed on, as we have said, abstracted and serious, when gradually, for even in observation she was slow, the yellow crocuses attracted her attention. She looked at them meditatively, and watched them closing, with the decline of day. And, at length, as if she had not understood, until then, what was going on before her, she smiled and admiringly exclaimed:

"Now do look at the creatures, mother!"

Mrs. Gray glanced up from her newspaper, and snuffed rather disdainfully.

"Lawk, Rachel!" she said, "you don't mean to call crocuses creatures—do you? I'll tell you what though," she added, with a doleful shake of the head, "I don't know what Her Majesty thinks; but I say the country can't stand it much longer."

Mrs. Gray had been cook in a Prime Minister's household, and this had naturally given her a political turn.

"The Lord has taught you," murmured Rachel, bending over the flowers with something like awe, and a glow spread over her sallow cheek, and there came a light to her large brown eyes.

Of the two apprentices—one a sickly, fretful girl of sixteen, heard her not; she went on sewing, and the very way in which she drew her needle and thread was peevish. The other apprentice did hear Rachel, and she looked, or rather stared at the dress-maker, with grim wonder. Indeed, there was something particularly grim about this young maiden—a drear stolidity that defies describing. A pure Saxon she was—no infusion of Celtic, or Danish, or Norman blood had lightened the native weight of her nature. She was young, yet she already went through life settling everything, and living in a moral tower of most uninviting aspect. But though Jane settled everything, she did not profess to understand everything; and when, as happened every now and then, Rachel Gray came out with such remarks as that above recorded, Jane felt confounded. "She couldn't make out Miss Gray—that she couldn't."

"I'm so tired!" peevishly said Mary, the fretful apprentice.

At once Rachel kindly observed: "Put by your work, dear."

Again Mrs. Gray snuffed, and came out with: "Lawk! she's always grummy!"

Mary tossed away her work, folded her arms, and looked sullen. Jane, the grim apprentice, drew her needle and thread twice as fast as before. "Thank Heaven!" she piously thought, "I am not lazy, nor sickly, and I can't see much difference between the two—that I can't."

Rachel's work lay in her lap; she sat looking at the crocuses until she fell in a dream far in the past.

For the past is our realm, free to all, high or low, who wish to dwell in it. There we may set aside the bitterness and the sorrow; there we may choose none but the pleasing visions, the bright, sunny spots where it is sweet to linger. The Future, fair as Hope may make it, is a dream, we claim it in vain. The Present, harsh or delightful, must be endured, yet it flies from us before we can say "it is gone." But the Past is ours to call up at our will. It is vivid and distinct as truth. In good and in evil, it is irrevocable; the divine seal has been set upon it for evermore.

In that Book—a pure and holy one was hers—though not without a few dark and sad pages—Rachel Gray often read. And now, the sight of the yellow flower of spring took her back, to a happy day of her childhood. She saw herself a little girl again, with her younger sister Jane, and the whole school to which they belonged, out on a holiday treat in a green forest. Near that forest there was a breezy field; and there it was that Rachel first saw the yellow crocuses bloom. She remembered her joy, her delight at the wonderful beauty of the wild field flowers—how she and Jane heaped their laps with them, and sat down at the task; and how, when tired with the pleasant labour, they rested, as many yellow crocuses as before seemed to blow and play in the breeze around them. And she remembered, too, how, even then, there passed across her childish mind, a silent wonder at their multitude, an undefined awe for the power of the Almighty Hand who made the little flower, and bade it bloom in the green fields, beneath the misty azure of a soft spring sky.

And then swiftly followed other thoughts. Where was little, blue-eyed Jane, her younger sister, her little companion and friend? Sleeping in a London grave, far from the pleasant and sunny spots where God's wild flowers bloom. And she—why she was pursuing her path in life, doing the will of God Almighty.

"And what more," thought Rachel, "can I hope or wish for?"

"Now, Rachel, what are you moping about?" tartly asked her mother, who, though half blind, had a quick eye for her daughter's meditative fits.

Abruptly fled the dream. The childish memories, the holy remembrance of the dead, sank back once more to their quiet resting-place in Rachel's heart. Wakening up with a half-lightened start, she hastily resumed her work.

"I don't think there ever was such a moper as that girl," grumbled Mrs. Gray to herself.

Rachel smiled cheerfully in her mother's face. But as to telling her that she had been thinking of the yellow crocuses, and of the spots they grew in, and of the power and greatness and glory of Him who made them, Rachel did not dream of it.

"There's Mrs. Brown," said Mrs. Gray, as a dark figure passed by the window. "Go, and open the door, Mary."

Mary did not stir, upon which Jane officiously rose and said, "I'll go." She went, and in came, or rather bounced, Mrs. Brown—a short, stout, vulgar-looking woman of fifty or so, who at once filled the room with noise.

"La, Mrs. Gray!" she began breathlessly, "What do you think? There's a new one. I have brought you the paper; third column, second page, first article, 'The Church in a Mess.' I thought you'd like to see it. Well, Rachel, and how are you getting on? Mrs. James's dress don't fit her a bit, and she says she'll not give you another stitch of work: but la! you don't care—do you? Why, Mary, how yellow you look to day. I declare you're as yellow as the crocuses in the pot. Ain't she now, Jane? And so you're not married yet —are you, my girl?" she added, giving the grim apprentice a slap on the back.

Jane eyed her quietly.

"You'd better not do that again, Mrs. Brown," she said, with some sternness, "and as to getting married: why, s'pose you mind your own business!"

Mrs. Brown threw herself back in her chair, and laughed until the tears ran down her face. When she recovered, it was to address Mrs. Gray.

"La, Mrs. Gray! can't you find it?" she said. "Why, I told you, third column, second page, 'The Church in a Mess.' You can't miss. I have put a pin in it."

Spite of this kind attention, Mrs. Gray had not found "The Church in a Mess."

"Lawk, Mrs. Brown!" she said, impatiently, "where's the use of always raking up them sort of things! The badness of others don't make us good— does it? It's the taxes I think of, Mrs. Brown; it's the taxes! Now, Rachel, where are you going?"

"I am going to take home this work, mother."

Unable to find fault with this, Mrs. Gray muttered to herself. She was not ill-natured, but fault-finding was with her an inveterate habit.

"La! what a muff that girl of yours is, Mrs. Gray!" charitably observed Mrs. Brown, as Rachel left the room. For Mrs. Brown being Mrs. Gray's cousin, landlady, and neighbour, took the right to say everything she pleased.

"She ain't particlerly bright," confessed Mrs. Gray, poking the fire, "but you see, Mrs. Brown—"

Rachel closed the door, and heard no more. Whilst Mrs. Brown was talking, she had been tying up her parcel. She now put on her bonnet and cloak, and went out.

It is sweet, after the toil of a day, to breathe fresh air, London air even though it should be. It is sweet, after the long closeness of the work-room, to walk out and feel the sense of life and liberty. A new being seemed poured into Rachel as she went on.

"I wonder people do not like this street," she thought, pausing at the corner to look back on the grey, quiet line she was leaving behind. "They call it dull, and to me it is so calm and sweet." And she sighed to enter the noisy and populous world before her. She hastily crossed it, and only slackened her pace when she reached the wide streets, the mansions with gardens to them, the broad and silent squares of the west end. She stopped before a handsome house, the abode of a rich lady who occasionally employed her, because she worked cheaper than a fashionable dress-maker, and as well.

Mrs. Moxton was engaged—visitors were with her—Rachel had to wait— she sat in the hall. A stylish footman, who quickly detected that she was shy and nervous, entertained himself and his companions, by making her ten times more so. His speech was rude—his jests were insolent. Rachel was meek and humble; but she could feel insult; and that pride, from which few of God's creatures are free, rose within her, and flushed her pale cheek with involuntary displeasure.

At length, the infliction ceased. Mrs. Moxton's visitors left; Rachel was called in. Her first impulse had been to complain of the footman to his mistress; but mercy checked the temptation; it might make him lose his place. Poor Rachel! she little knew that this footman could have been insolent to his mistress herself, had he so chosen. He was six foot three, and, in his livery of brown and gold, looked splendid. In short, he was invaluable, and not to be parted with on any account.

Mrs. Moxton was habitually a well-bred, good-natured woman; but every rule has its exceptions. Rachel found her very much out of temper. To say the truth, one of her recent visitors was in the Mrs. Brown style; Mrs. Moxton had been provoked and irritated; and Rachel paid for it.

"Now, Miss Gray," she said, with solemn indignation, "what do you mean by bringing back work in this style? That flounce is at least an inch too high! I thought you an intelligent young person—but really, really!"

"It's very easily altered, ma'am," said Rachel, submissively.

"You need, not trouble," gravely replied Mrs. Moxton. "I owe you something; you may call with your bill to-morrow."

"I shall not be able to call to-morrow, ma'am; and if it were convenient now—"

"It is not convenient now!" said Mrs. Morton, rather haughtily. She thought Rachel the most impertinent creature she had ever met with—that is to say, next to that irritating Mrs. Maberly, who had repeated that provoking thing about Mr. So-and-So. Rachel sighed and left the house like all shy persons, she was easily depressed. It was night when she stood once more in the street. Above the pale outline of the houses spread a sky of dark azure. A star shone in it, a little star; but it burned with as brilliant a light as any great planet. Rachel gazed at it earnestly, and the shadow passed away. "What matter!" she thought, "even though a man in livery made a jest of me—even though a lady in silk was scornful. What matter! God made that star for me as well as for her! Besides," she added, checking a thought which might, she feared, be too proud, "besides, who, and what am I, that I should repine?"

CHAPTER II.

Rachel went on; but she did not turn homewards. She left the broad and airy strait, where Mrs. Moxton lived. She entered a narrow one, long and gloomy. It led her into a large and gas-lit square. She crossed it without looking right or left: a thought led her on like a spell. Through streets and alleys, by lanes and courts—on she went, until at length she stood in the heart of a populous neighbourhood. Cars were dashing along the pavement; night vendors were screaming at their stalls, where tallow lights flared in the night wind. Drunken men were shouting in gin palaces, wretched looking women were coming out of pawnbroker's shops, and precocious London children were pouring into a theatre, where their morals were to be improved, and their understandings were to be enlightened, at the moderate rate of a penny a head.

Rachel sighed at all she saw, and divined. "Poor things!" she thought, "if they only knew better." But this compassionate feeling did not exclude a sort of fear. Rachel kept as much as she could in the gloomy part of the streets; she shrank back nervously from every rude group, and thus she at length succeeded in attracting the very thing she most wished to shun—observation. Three or four women, rushing out of a public-house, caught sight of her timid figure. At once, one of them—she was more than half-intoxicated—burst out into a loud shouting laugh, and, seizing Rachel's arm, swung her round on the pavement.

"Let me go!" said Rachel "I am in a hurry." She trembled from head to foot, and vainly tried to put on the appearance of a courage she felt not.

"Give me something for drink then," insolently said the woman.

Rachel's momentary fear was already over; she had said to herself, "and what can happen to me without God's will?" and the thought had nerved her. She looked very quietly at the woman's flushed and bloated face, and as quietly she said:

"You have drunk too much already; let me go."

"No I won't," hoarsely replied her tormentor, and she used language which, though it could not stain the pure heart of her who heard it, brought the blush of anger and shame to her cheek.

"Let me go!" she said, trembling this time with indignation.

"Yes—yes, let the young woman go, Molly," observed one of the woman's companions who had hitherto looked on apathetically. She officiously disengaged Rachel's arm, whispering as she did so: "You'd better cut now—I'll hold her. Molly's awful when she's got them fits on."

Rachel hastened away, followed by the derisive shout of the whole group. She turned down the first street she found; it was dark and silent, yet Rachel did not stop until she reached the very end of it; then she paused to breathe a while, but when she put her hand in her pocket for her handkerchief it was gone; with it had disappeared her purse, and two or three shillings. Rachel saw and understood it all—the friend of Molly, her officious deliverer, was a pick-pocket She hung down her head and sighed, dismayed and astonished, not at her loss, but at the sin. "Ah! dear Lord Jesus," she thought, full of sorrow, "that thou shouldst thus be crucified anew by the sins of thy people!" Then followed the perplexing inward question: "Oh! why is there so much sin?" "God knows best," was the inward reply, and once more calm and serene, Rachel went on. At first, she hardly knew where she was. She stood in a dark thoroughfare where three streets met—three narrow streets that scarcely broke on the surrounding gloom. Hesitatingly she took the first. It happened to be that which she wanted. When Rachel recognized it, her pace slackened, her heart beat, her colour came and went, she was much moved; she prayed too—she prayed with her whole heart, but she walked very slowly. And thus she reached at length a lonely little street not quite so gloomy as that which she had been following.

She paused at the corner shop for a moment. It was a second-hand ironmonger's; rusty iron locks, and rusty tongs and shovels, and rusty goods of every description kept grim company to tattered books and a few old pictures, that had contracted an iron look in their vicinity. A solitary gas-light lit the whole.

Rachel stopped and looked at the books, and at the pictures, but only for a few seconds. If she stood there, it was not to gaze with passing curiosity on those objects; she knew them all of old, as she knew every stone of that street; it was to wait until the flush of her cheek had subsided, and the beating of her heart had grown still.

At length she went on. When she reached the middle of the street she paused; she stood near a dark house, shrouded within the gloom of its doorway. Opposite her, on the other side of the way, was a small shop lit from within. From where she stood, Rachel could see everything that passed in that abode. A carpenter lived there, for the place was full of rough deal boards standing erect against the wall, and the floor was heaped high with shavings. Presently a door within opened, the master of the shop entered it, and set himself to work by the light of a tallow candle. He was a tall, thin man, grey-headed and deeply wrinkled, but strong and hale for his years. As he bent over his work, the light of the candle vividly defined his angular figure and sharp features. Rachel looked at him; her eyes filled with tears, she brushed them away with her hand, for they prevented her from seeing, but they returned thicker and faster.

"Oh! my father, my father!" she cried within her heart, "why must I stand here in darkness looking at you? why cannot I go in to you, like other daughters to their father? why do you not love your child?" Her heart seemed full to bursting; her eyes overflowed, her breathing was broken by sobs, and in the simple and pathetic words of Scripture, she turned away her head, and raised her voice and wept aloud.

Rachel Gray was the daughter of the grey-headed carpenter by a first wife; soon after whose death he had married again. Mrs. Gray was his second wife, and the mother of his youngest daughter. She was kind in her way, but that was at the best a harsh one. Rachel was a timid, retiring child, plain, awkward, and sallow, with nothing to attract the eye, and little to please the fancy. Mrs. Gray did not use her ill certainly, but neither did she give her any great share in her affections. And why and how should a step-mother have loved Rachel when her own father did not? when almost from her birth she had been to him as though she did not exist—as a being who, uncalled for and unwanted, had come athwart his life. Never had he, to her knowledge, taken her in his arms, or on his knee; never had he kissed or caressed her; never addressed to her one word of fondness, or even of common kindness. Neither, it is true, had he ill-used nor ill-treated her; he felt no unnatural aversion for his own flesh and blood, nothing beyond a deep and incurable indifference. For her, his heart remained as a barren and arid soil on which the sweet flower of love could never bloom.

There was but one being in this narrow circle who really and fondly loved Rachel Gray. And this was Jane, her little half-sister. Rachel was her elder by full five years. When she was told one morning that Jane was born, she heard the tidings with silent awe, then with eager curiosity, climbed up on a chair to peep at the rosy baby fast asleep in its cradle. From that day, she had but one thought—her little sister. How describe the mingled love and pride with which Rachel received the baby, when it was first confided to her care, and when to her was allotted the delightful task of dragging about in her arms a heavy, screaming child? And who but Rachel found Jane's first tooth? Who but Rachel taught Jane to

speak; and taught her how to walk? Who else fulfilled for the helpless infant and wilful child every little office of kindness and of love, until at length there woke in her own childish heart some of that maternal fondness born with woman, the feeling whence her deepest woes and her highest happiness alike must spring. When her father was unkind, when her step-mother was hasty, Rachel turned for comfort to her little sister. In her childish caresses, and words, and ways, she found solace and consolation. She did not feel it hard that she was to be the slave of a spoiled child, to wash, comb, and dress her, to work for her, to carry her, to sing to her, to play with her, and that, not when she liked, but when it pleased Jane. All this Rachel did not mind—Jane loved her. She knew it, she was sure of it; and where there is love, there cannot be tyranny.

Thus the two sisters grew up together, until one day, without previous warning, Thomas Gray went off to America, and coolly left his wife and children behind. Mrs. Gray was a good and an upright woman; she reared her husband's child like her own, and worked for both, without ever repining at the double burden. When her husband returned to England, after three years' absence, Mrs. Gray lost no time in compelling him to grant her a weekly allowance for herself, and for the support of her children. Thomas Gray could not resist the claim; but he gave what the law compelled him to give, and no more. He never returned to live with his wife; he never expressed a wish to see either of his daughters.

He had been back some years when little Jane died at thirteen. She died, dreaming of heaven, with her hand in that of Rachel, and her head on Rachel's bosom. She died, blessing her eldest sister with her last breath, with love for her in the last look of her blue eyes, in the last smile of her wan lips. It was a happy death-bed—one to waken hope, not to call forth sorrow; and yet what became of the life of Rachel when Jane was gone? For a long time it was a dreary void—a melancholy succession of days and weeks and months, from which the happy light had fled—from which something sweet and delightful was gone for ever.

For, though it may be sweeter to love, than to be loved, yet it is hard always to give and never to receive in return; and when Jane died, Rachel knew well enough that all the love she had to receive upon earth, had been given unto her. Like the lost Pleiad, "seen no more below," the bright star of her life had left the sky. It burned in other heavens with more celestial light; but it shone no longer over her path—to cheer, to comfort, to illume.

Mrs. Gray was kind; after her own fashion, she loved Rachel. They had grieved and suffered together from the same sorrows, and kindred griefs can bind the farthest hearts; but beyond this there was no sympathy between them, and Mrs. Gray's affection, such as it was, was free from a particle of tenderness.

She was not naturally a patient or an amiable woman; and she had endured great and unmerited wrongs from Rachel's father. Perhaps, she would have been more than human, had she not occasionally reminded her step-daughter of Mr. Thomas Gray's misdeeds, and now and then taunted her with a "He never cared about you—you know."

Aye—Rachel knew it well enough. She knew that her own father loved her not—that though he had cared little for Jane, not being a tender-hearted man, still that he had cared somewhat, for that younger, and more favoured child. That before he left England, he would occasionally caress her; that when she died, tears had flowed down his stern cheek on hearing the tidings, and that the words had escaped him: "I am sorry I was not there."

All this Rachel knew. Her mind was too noble, and too firm for jealousy; her heart too pious, and too humble for rebellious sorrow; but yet she found it hard to bear, and very hard to be reminded of it as a reproach and a shame.

Was it not enough that she could not win the affection she most longed for? She was devoted to her step-mother; she had fondly loved her younger sister; but earlier born in her heart than these two loves, deeper, and more solemn, was the love Rachel felt for her father. That instinct of nature, which in him was silent, in her spoke strongly. That share of love which he denied her, she silently added to her own, and united both in one fervent offering. Harshness and indifference had no power to quench a feeling, to which love in kindness had not given birth. She loved because it was her destiny; because, as she once said herself, when speaking of another: "A daughter's heart clings to her father with boundless charity."

Young as she was when Thomas Gray left his home, Rachel remembered him well. His looks, the very tones of his voice, were present to her. Not once, during the years of his absence, did the thought of her father cease to haunt her heart. When, from the bitter remarks of her step-mother, she learned that he had returned, and where he had taken up his home, she had no peace until she succeeded in obtaining a glimpse of him. Free, as are all the children of the poor, she made her way to the street where he lived, and many a day walked for weary miles in order to pass by her father's door. But she

never crossed the threshold, never spoke to him, never let him know who she was, until the sad day when she bore to him the news of her sister's death.

He received her with his usual coldness—in such emotion as he showed, she had no share, like strangers they had met—like strangers they parted. But, though his coldness and her own timidity prevented nearer advances, they did not prevent Rachel from often seeking the remote neighbourhood and gloomy street where her father dwelt.

It was a pleasure, though a sad one, to look on his face, even if she went not near him; and thus it happened, that on this dark night she stood in the sheltering obscurity of the well-known doorway, gazing on the solitary old man, yet venturing not to cross the narrow street.

The wind blew from the east. It was cold and piercing; yet it could not draw Rachel from her vigil of love. Still she looked and lingered, wishing she knew not what; and hoping against hope. Thus she stayed, until Thomas Gray left his work, put up the shutters, then left the house by the private door, and slowly walked away to the nearest public-house.

The shop was once more a blank in the dark street. Rachel looked at the deserted dwelling and sighed; than softly and silently she stole away.

CHAPTER III.

It was late when Rachel reached home. She found her step-mother sitting up for her, rigid, amazed y indignant—so indignant, indeed, that though she rated Rachel soundly for her audacity in presuming to stay out so long without previous leave obtained, she quite forgot to inquire particularly why she had not come home earlier. A series of disasters had been occasioned by Rachel's absence; Jane and Mary had quarrelled, Mrs. Gray had been kept an hour waiting for her supper, the beer had naturally become flat and worthless, and whilst Mrs. Gray was sleeping—and how could she help sleeping, being quite faint and exhausted with her long vigil—puss had got up on the table and walked off with Rachel's polony.

There was a touch of quiet humour in Rachel, and with a demure smile, she internally wondered why it was precisely her polony that had been selected by puss, but aloud she merely declared that she could make an excellent supper on bread and beer. Mrs. Gray, who held the reins of domestic management in their little household, assured her that she had better, for that nothing else was she going to get; she sat down heroically determined to eat the whole of her polony in order to punish and provoke her step-daughter; but somehow or other the half of that dainty had, before the end of the meal, found its way to the plate of Rachel, who, when she protested against this act of generosity, was imperiously ordered to hold her tongue, which order she did not dare to resist; for if Mrs. Gray's heart was mellow, her temper was sufficiently tart.

The apprentices had long been gone to bed; as soon as supper was over,
Mrs. Gray intimated to Rachel the propriety of following their example.
Rachel ventured to demur meekly.

"I cannot, mother—I have work to finish."

"Then better have sat at home and finished it, than have gone gadding about, and nearly got a pitch plaster on your mouth," grumbled Mrs. Gray, who was a firm believer in pitch plasters, and abductions, and highway robberies, and all sorts of horrors. "Mind you don't set the house a fire," she added, retiring.

"Why, mother," said Rachel, smiling, "you treat me like a child, and I am twenty-six."

"What about that? when you aint got no more sense than a baby."

Rachel did not venture to dispute, a proposition so distinctly stated. She remained up, and sat sewing until her work was finished; she then took out from some secret repository a small end of candle, lit it, and extinguished the long candle, by the light of which she had been working. From her pocket she took a small key; it opened a work-box, whence she drew a shirt collar finely stitched; she worked until her eyes ached, but she heeded it not, until they closed with involuntary fatigue and sleep, and still she would not obey the voice of wearied nature; still she stitched for love, like the poor shirtmaker for bread, until, without previous warning, her candle end suddenly flickered, then expired in its socket, and left her in darkness. Rachel gently opened the window, and partly unclosed the shutter; the moon was riding in the sky above the old house opposite, her pale clear light glided over its brown walls and the quiet street, down into the silent parlour of Rachel. She looked around her, moved at seeing familiar objects under an unusual aspect. In that old chair she had often seen her father sitting; on such

a moonlight night as this she and Jane, then already declining, had sat by the window, and looking at that same sky, had talked with youthful fervour of high and eternal things. And now Jane knew the divine secrets she had guessed from afar, and Thomas Gray, alas! was a stranger and an alien in his own home.

"Who knows," thought Rachel, "but he will return some day? Who knows— who can tell? Life is long, and hope is eternal. Ah! if he should come back, even though he never looked at me, never spoke, blessed, thrice blessed, should ever be held the day..." And a prayer, not framed in words, but in deep feelings, gushed like a pure spring from her inmost heart. But, indeed, when did she not pray? When was God divided from her thoughts? When did prayer fail to prompt the kind, gentle words that fell from her lips, or to lend its daily grace to a pure and blameless life?

For to her, God was not what He, alas! is to so many—an unapproachable Deity, to be worshipped from afar, in fear and trembling, or a cold though sublime abstraction. No, Jesus was her friend, her counsellor, her refuge. There was familiarity and tenderness in her very love for Him; and, though she scarcely knew it herself, a deep and fervent sense of His divine humanity of those thirty-three years of earthly life, of toil, of poverty, of trouble, and of sorrow which move our very hearts within us, when we look from Bethlehem to Calvary, from the lowly birth in the Manger to the bitter death on the Cross.

We might ask, were these the pages to raise such questions, why Jesus is not more loved thus—as a friend, and a dear one, rather than as a cold master to be served, not for love, but for wages. But let it rest. Sufficient is it for us to know that not thus did Rachel Gray love him, but with a love in which humility and tenderness equally blended.

After a meditative pause, she quietly put away her things by moonlight, then again closed shutter and window, and softly stole up to the room which she shared with her step-mother. She soon fell asleep, and dreamed that she had gone to live with her father, who said to her, "Rachel! Rachel!" So great was her joy, that she awoke. She found her mother already up, and scolding her because she still slept.

"Mother," asked Rachel, leaning up on one elbow, "was it you who called me, Rachel?"

"Why aint I been a calling of you this last hour?" asked Mrs. Gray, with much asperity.

Rachel checked a sigh, and rose.

"Get up Jane—get up Mary," said Mrs. Gray, rapping soundly at the room door of the two apprentices.

"Let them sleep a little longer, poor young things!" implored Rachel.

"No, that I won't," replied her mother, with great determination, "lazy little creatures."

And to the imminent danger of her own knuckles, she rapped so pertinaciously, that Jane and Mary were unable to feign deafness, and replied, the former acting as spokeswoman, that Mrs. Gray needn't be making all that noise; for that they heard her, and were getting up. "I thought I'd make them hear me," muttered Mrs. Gray, hobbling down stairs.

There are some beings who lead lives so calm, that when they look back on years, they seem to read the story of a few days; and of these was Rachel Gray. Life for her flowed dull, monotonous and quiet, as that of a nun in her cloister. The story of one day was the story of the next. A few hopes, a few precious thoughts she treasured in her heart; but outwardly, to work, to hear idle gossip, to eat, drink, and sleep, seemed her whole portion, her destiny from mom till night, from birth to the grave.

Like every day passed this day. When it grew so dark that she could see no more to work, she put her task by, and softly stole away to a little back room up-stairs.

It was a very small room indeed, with a bed, where the apprentices slept; a chest of drawers, a table, and two chairs:—many a closet is larger. Its solitary window looked out on the little yard below; low walls, against which grew Rachel's stocks and wall-flowers, enclosed it. From the next house, there came the laughter and the screams too of children, and of babies; and from a neighbouring forge, a loud, yet not unmusical clanking, with which now and then, blended the rude voices of the men, singing snatches of popular songs. Dimmed by the smoke of the forge, and by the natural heaviness of a London atmosphere, the sky enclosed all; yet, even through the smoke and haze, fair rosy gleams of the setting sun shone in that London sky, and at the zenith there was a space of pure, ethereal blue—soft, and very far from sinful and suffering earth, where glittered in calm beauty a large and tranquil star.

Rachel sat by the window. She listened to earth: she looked at Heaven. Her heart swelled with love, and prayer, and tenderness, and hope. Tears of delight filled her eyes; she murmured to herself verses from psalms and hymns—all praising God, all telling the beauty of God's creation. Oh! pure and

beautiful, indeed, would be the story of these your evening musings, if we could lightly tell it here, Rachel Gray.

Reader, if to learn how a fine nature found its way through darkness and mist, and some suffering to the highest, and to the noblest of the delights God has granted to man—the religious and the intellectual; if, we say, to learn this give you pleasure, you may read on to the end of the chapter; if not, pass on at once to the next. These pages were not written for you; and even though you should read them, feel and understand them, you never will.

Our life is twofold; and of that double life, which, like all of us, Rachel bore within her, we have as yet said but little. She was now twenty six; a tall, thin, sallow woman, ungraceful, of shy manners, and but little speech; but with a gentle face, a broad forehead, and large brown eyes. By trade, she was a dress-maker, of small pretensions; her father had forsaken her early, and her step-mother had reared her. This much, knew the little world in which moved Rachel Gray, this much, and no more. We may add, that this some little world had, in its wisdom, pronounced Rachel Gray a fool.

Her education had been very limited. She knew how to read, and she could write, but neither easily nor well. For though God had bestowed on her the rare dower of a fine mind, He had not added to it the much more common, though infinitely less precious gift, of a quick intellect. She learned slowly, with great difficulty, with sore pain and trouble. Her teachers, one and all, pronounced her dull; her step-mother was ashamed of her, and to her dying day thought Rachel no better than a simpleton.

Rachel felt this keenly; but she had no means of self-defence. She had not the least idea of how she could prove that she was not an idiot. One of the characteristics of childhood and of youth is a painful inability, an entire powerlessness of giving the form of speech to its deepest and most fervent feelings. The infirmity generally dies off with years, perhaps because also dies off the very strength of those feelings; but even as they were to last for ever with Rachel Gray, so was that infirmity destined to endure. Shy, sensitive, and nervous, she was a noble book, sealed to all save God.

At eleven, her education, such as it was, was over. Rachel had to work, and earn her bread. She was reared religiously, and hers was a deeply religious nature. The misapplication of religion narrows still more a narrow mind, but religion, taken in its true sense, enlarges a noble one. Yet, not without strife, not without suffering, did Rachel make her way. She was ignorant, and she was alone; how to ask advice she knew not, for she could not explain herself. Sometimes she seemed to see the most sublime truths, plain as in a book; at other times, they floated dark and clouded before her gaze, or vanished in deep obscurity, and left her alone and cast down. She suffered years, until, from her very sufferings, perfect faith was born, and from faith unbounded trust in God, after which her soul sank in deep and blessed peace.

And now, when rest was won, there came the want for more. Religion is love. Rachel wanted thought, that child of the intellect, as love is the child of the heart. She did not know herself what it was that she needed, until she discovered and possessed it—until she could read a book, a pamphlet, a scrap of verse, and brood over it, like a bird over her young, not for hours, not for days, but for weeks—blest in that silent meditation. Her mind was tenacious, but slow; she read few books—many would have disturbed her. Sweeter and pleasanter was it to Rachel to think over what she did read, and to treasure it up in the chambers of her mind, than to fill those chambers with heaps of knowledge. Indeed for knowledge Rachel cared comparatively little. In such as displayed more clearly the glories of God's creation she delighted; but man's learning, man's science, touched her not. To think was her delight; a silent, solitary, forbidden pleasure, in which Rachel had to indulge by stealth.

For all this time, and especially since the death of her sister, she suffered keenly from home troubles, from a little domestic persecution, painful, pertinacious, and irritating. Mrs. Gray vaguely felt that her daughter was not like other girls, and not knowing that she was in reality very far beyond most; feeling, too, that Rachel was wholly unlike herself, and jealously resenting the fact, she teased her unceasingly, and did her best to interrupt the fits of meditation, which she did not scruple to term "moping." When her mind was most haunted with some fine thought, Rachel had to talk to her step-mother, to listen to her, and to take care not to reply at random; if she failed in any of these obligations, half-an-hour's lecture was the least penalty she could expect. Dear to her, for this reason; were the few moments of solitude she could call her own; dear to her was that little room, where she could steal away at twilight time and think in peace.

Very unlike her age was this ignorant dress-maker of the nineteenth century. Ask the men and women of the day to read volumes; why, there is not a season but they go through the Herculean labour of swallowing down histories written faster than time flies, novels by the dozen, essays, philosophic and political, books of travels, of science, of statistics, besides the nameless host of reviews, magazines, and papers, daily and weekly. Ask them to study: why, what is there they do not know, from the most futile accomplishment to the most abstruse science? Ask them too, if you like, to enter life, to view it under

all its aspects; why, they have travelled over the whole earth; and life, they know from the palace down to the hovel; but bid them think! They stare aghast: it is the task of Sisyphus—the labour of the Danaide; as fast as thought enters their mind, it goes out again. Bid them commune, one day with God and their own hearts—they reply dejectedly that they cannot; for their intellect is quick and brilliant, but their heart is cold. And thought springs from the heart, and in her heart had Rachel Gray found it.

The task impossible to them was to her easy and delightful. Time wore on; deeper and more exquisite grew what Rachel quaintly termed to herself "the pleasure of thinking." And oh! she thought sometimes, and it was a thought that made her heart bum, "Oh! that people only knew the pleasures of thinking! Oh! if people would only think!" And mom, and noon, and night, and bending over her work, or sitting at peaceful twilight time in the little back room, Rachel thought; and thus she went on through life, between those two fair sisters, Thought and Prayer.

Reader, hare you known many thinkers? We confess that we hare known many men and women of keen and great intellect, some geniuses; but only one real thinker have we known, only one who really thought for thought's own sake, and that one was Rachel Gray.

And now, if she moves through this story, thinking much and doing little, you know why.

CHAPTER IV.

It was not merely in meditation that Rachel indulged, when she sought the little room. The divine did not banish the human from her heart; and she had friends known to her, but from that back room window; but friends they were, and, in their way and degree, valued ones.

First, came the neighbour's children. By standing up on an old wooden stool in the yard, they could see Rachel at her window, and Rachel could see them. They were rude and ignorant little things enough, and no better than young heathens, in rearing and knowledge; yet they liked to hear Rachel singing hymns in a low voice; they even caught from her, scraps of verses, and sang them in their own fashion; and when Rachel, hearing this, took courage to open a conversation with them, and to teach them as well as she could, she found in them voluntary and sufficiently docile pupils. Their intercourse, indeed, was brief, and limited to a few minutes every evening that Rachel could steal up to her little room, but it was cordial and free.

Another friend had Rachel, yet one with whom she had never exchanged speech. There existed, at the back of Mrs. Gray's house, a narrow court, inhabited by the poorest of the poor. Over part of this court, Mrs. Gray's back windows commanded a prospect which few would have envied— yet it had proved to Rachel the source of the truest and the keenest pleasure.

From her window, Rachel could look clearly into a low damp cellar opposite, the abode of a little old Frenchwoman, known in the neighbourhood, as "mad Madame Rose."

Madame Rose, as she called herself, was a very diminutive old woman— unusually so, but small and neat in all her limbs, and brisk in all her movements. She was dry, too, and brown as a nut, with a restless black eye, and a voluble tongue, which she exercised mostly in her native language—not that Madame Rose could not speak English; she had resided some fifteen years in London, and could say 'yes' and 'no,' &c., quite fluently. Her attire looked peculiar, in this country, but it suited her person excellently well; it was simply that of a French peasant woman, with high peaked cap, and kerchief, both snow-white, short petticoats, and full, a wide apron, clattering wooden shoes, and blue stockings.

What wind of fortune had wafted this little French fairy to a London cellar, no one ever knew. How she lived, was almost as great a mystery. Every Sunday morning, she went forth, with a little wooden stool, and planted herself at the door of the French chapel; she asked for nothing, but took what she got. Indeed, her business there did not seem to be to get anything, but to make herself busy. She nodded to every one who went in or out, gave unasked-for information, and assisted the policeman in keeping the carriages in order. She darted in and out, among wheels and horses, with reckless audacity; and once, to the infinite wrath of a fat liveried coachman, she suspended herself—she was rather short—from the aristocratic reins he held, and boldly attempted to turn the heads of his horses. On week days, Madame Rose stayed in her cellar, and knitted. It was this part of her life which Rachel knew, and it was the most beautiful; for this little, laughed-at being, who lived upon charity, was, herself, all charity. Never yet, for five years that Rachel had watched her, had she seen Madame Rose alone in her cellar. Poor girls, who looked very much like out-casts, old and infirm women, helpless children, had successively shared the home, the bed, and the board of Madame Rose. For her seemed written the beautiful record, "I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was hungry, and ye fed me: athirst, and ye gave me drink; and I was houseless, and you sheltered me."

With humble admiration, Rachel saw a charity and a zeal which she could not imitate. Like Mary, she could sit at the feet of the Lord, and, looking up, listen, rapt and absorbed, to the divine teaching. But the spirit of Martha, the holy zeal and fervour with which she bade welcome to her heavenly guest, were not among the gifts of Rachel Gray.

Yet, the pleasure with which she stood in the corner of her own window, and looked down into the cellar of Madame Rose, was not merely that of religious sympathy or admiration. As she saw it this evening, with the tallow light that burned on the table, rendering every object minutely distinct, Rachel looked with another feeling than that of mere curiosity. She looked with the artistic pleasure we feel, when we gaze at some clearly-painted Dutch picture, with its back-ground of soft gloom, and its homely details of domestic life, relieved by touches of brilliant light. Poor as this cellar was, a painter would have liked it well; he would surely have delighted in the brown and crazy clothes-press, that stood at the further end, massive and dark; in the shining kitchen utensils that decorated the walls; in the low and many-coloured bed; in the clean, white deal table; in the smouldering fire, that burned in that dark grate, like a red eye; especially would he have gloried in the quaint little figure of Madame Rose.

She had been cooking her supper, and she now sat down to it. In doing so, she caught sight of Rachel's figure; they were acquainted—that is to say, that Madame Rose, partly aware of the interest Rachel took in such glimpses as she obtained of her own daily life, favoured her with tokens of recognition, whenever she caught sight of her, far or near. She now nodded in friendly style, laughed, nodded again, and with that communicativeness which formed part of her character, successively displayed every article of her supper for Rachel's inspection. First, came a dishful of dark liquid—onion soup it was—then, a piece of bread, not a large one; then, two apples; then a small bit of cheese— for Madame Rose was a Frenchwoman, and she would have her soup, and her dish, and her dessert, no matter on what scale, or in what quantity.

But the supper of Madame Rose did not alone attract the attention and interest of Rachel. For a week, Madame Rose had enjoyed her cellar to herself; her last guest, an old and infirm woman, having died of old age; but, since the preceding day, she had taken in a new tenant—an idiot girl, of some fourteen years of age, whom her father, an inhabitant of the court, had lately forsaken, and whom society, that negligent step-mother of man, had left to her fate.

And now, with tears of emotion and admiration, Rachel watched the little Frenchwoman feeding her adopted child; having first girt its neck with a sort of bib, Madame Rose armed herself with a long handled spoon, and standing before it—she was too short to sit—she deliberately poured a sufficient quantity of onion soup down its throat a proceeding which the idiot girl received with great equanimity, opening and shutting her mouth with exemplary regularity and seriousness.

So absorbed was Rachel in looking, that she never heard her mother calling her from below, until the summons was, for a third time, angrily repeated.

"Now, Rachel, what are you doing up there?" asked the sharp voice of Mrs.
Gray, at the foot of the staircase; "moping, as usual! Eh?"

Rachel started, and hastened down stairs, a little frightened. She had remained unusually long. What if her mother should suspect that she had gone up for the purpose of thinking? Mrs. Gray had no such suspicion, fortunately; else she would surely have been horror-struck at the monstrous idea, that Rachel should actually dare to think! The very extravagance of the supposition saved Rachel It was not to be thought of.

The candle was lit. Mrs. Brown and another neighbour had looked in. Gossip, flavoured with scandal —else it would have been tasteless—was at full galop.

"La! but didn't I always say so?" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, who had always said everything.

"I couldn't have believed it, that I couldn't!" emphatically observed
Mrs. Gray.

"La, bless you, Mrs. Gray! *I* could," sneered the neighbour, who was sharp, thin, and irritable.

Even Jane had her word:

"I never liked her," she said, giving her thread a pull.

"Who is she?" languidly asked Mary, letting her work fall on her knees.

"Never you mind, Miss," tartly replied Jane. "Just stitch on, will you?"

Mrs. Brown was again down on the unlucky absent one.

"Serve her right," she said, benevolently. "Serve her right—the set up thing! Oh! there's Rachel. Lawk, Rachel! what a pity you ain't been here! You never heard such a story as has come out about that little staymaker, Humpy, as I call her. Why, she's been a making love to—la! but I can't help laughing, when I think of it; and it's all true, every word of it; aint it, Mrs. Smith?"

Mrs. Smith loftily acquiesced.

"Oh! my little room—my little room!" inwardly sighed Rachel, as she sat down to her work. She hoped that the story was, at least, finished and over; but if it was, the commentaries upon it were only beginning, and Heaven knows if they were not various and abundant.

Rachel did her best to abstract herself; to hear, and not listen. She succeeded so well that she only awoke from her dream when Mrs. Brown said to her,

"Well, Rachel, why don't you answer, then?"

Rachel looked up, with a start, and said, in some trepidation,

"Answer! I didn't hear you speak, ma'am."

"Didn't you now!" knowingly observed Mrs. Brown, winking on the rest of the company.

"No, ma'am, I did not, indeed," replied Rachel, earnestly.

"Bless the girl!" said Mrs. Brown, laughing outright; "why, you must be growing deaf."

"I hope not," said Rachel, rather perplexed; "yet, perhaps, I am; for, indeed, I did not hear you."

"La, Miss Gray! don't you see they are making fun of you?" impatiently observed Jane. "Why, Mrs. Brown hadn't been a saying anything at all."

Rachel reddened a little, and there was a general laugh at her expense. The joke was certainly a witty one. But Mrs. Gray, who was a touchy woman, was not pleased; and no sooner were her amiable visitors gone, than she gave it to Rachel for having been laughed at with insolent rudeness.

"If you were not sich a simpleton," she said, in great anger, "people wouldn't dare to laugh at you. They wouldn't take the liberty. No one ever laughed at me, I can tell you. No Mrs. Brown; no, nor no Mrs. Smith either. But you! why, they'll do anythink to you."

Rachel looked up from her work into her mother's face. It rose to her lips to say—"If you were not the first to make little of me, would others dare to do so?" but she remembered her lonely forsaken childhood, and bending once more over her task, Rachel held her peace.

"I want to go to bed," peevishly said Mary.

"Then go, my dear," gently replied Rachel.

"You'll spoil that girl," observed Mrs. Gray, with great asperity.

"She is not strong," answered Rachel; "and I promised Mr. Jones she should not work too much."

"Not much fear of that," drily said Jane, as the door closed on Mary.

No one answered. Rachel worked; her mother read the paper, and for an hour there was deep silence in the parlour. As the church clock struck nine, a knock came at the door. Jane opened, and a rosy, good-humoured looking man entered the parlour. He was about forty, short, stout, with rather a low forehead, and stubby hair; altogether, he seemed more remarkable for good-nature than for intelligence. At once his look went round the room.

"Mary is gone to bed, Mr. Jones," said Rachel, smiling.

"To bed!—She ain't ill, I hope. Miss Gray," he exclaimed, with an alarmed start.

"Ill! Oh, no! but she felt tired. I am sorry you have had this long walk for nothing."

"Never mind, Miss Gray," he replied cheerfully; then sitting down, and wiping his moist brow, he added—"the walk does me good, and then I hear how she is, and I've the pleasure of seeing you all. And so she's quite well, is she?"

He leaned his two hands on the head of his walking-stick, and looking over it, smiled abstractedly at his own thoughts. Mrs. Gray roused him with the query—

"And what do you think of the state of the nation, Mr. Jones?"

Mr. Jones scratched his head, looked puzzled, hemmed, and at length came out with the candid confession:

"Mrs. Gray, I ain't no politician. For all I see, politics only brings a poor man into trouble. Look at the Chartists, and the tenth of April."

"Ah! poor things!" sighed Rachel, "I saw them—they passed by here. How thin they were—bow careworn they looked!"

Mrs. Gray remained aghast. Rachel had actually had the audacity to give an opinion on any subject unconnected with dress-making—and even on that, poor girl! she was not always allowed to speak.

"Now, Rachel," she said, rallying, "*will* you hold *your* tongue, and speak of what you know, and not meddle with politics."

We must apologize for using italics, but without their aid we never could convey to our readers a proper idea of the awful solemnity with which Mrs. Gray emphasized her address. Rachel was rather bewildered, for she was not conscious of having said a word on politics, a subject she did not understand, and never spoke on; but she had long learned the virtue of silence. She did not reply.

"As to the Chartists?" resumed Mrs. Gray, turning to Mr. Jones.

"Law bless you, Mrs. Gray, *I* ain't one of them!" he hastily replied. "I mind my own business—that's what I do, Mrs. Gray. The world must go round, you know."

"So it must," gravely replied that lady. "You never said a truer thing,
Mr. Jones."

And very likely Mr. Jones had not.

"And I must go off," said Mr. Jones, rising with a half-stifled sigh, "for it's getting late, and I have five miles to walk."

And, undetained by Mrs. Gray's slow but honest entreaty to stay and share their supper, he left Rachel lighted him out. As she closed the parlour door, he looked at her, and lowering his voice, he said hesitatingly:

"I couldn't see her, could I, Miss Gray?"

Poor Rachel hesitated. She knew that she should get scolded if she complied; but then, he looked at her with such beseeching eyes—he wished for it so very much. Kindness prevailed over fear; she smiled, and treading softly, led the way up-stairs. As softly, he followed her up into the little back room.

Mary was fast asleep; her hands were folded over the coverlet of variegated patchwork; her head lay slightly turned on the white pillow; the frill of her cap softly shaded her pale young face, now slightly flushed with sleep. Her father bent over her with fond love, keeping in his breath. Rachel held the light; she turned her head away, that Mr. Jones might not see her eyes, fest filling with tears. "Oh! my father — my father!" she thought, "never have you looked so at your child—never —never!"

On tip-toe, Mr. Jones softly withdrew, and stole downstairs.

"I'd have kissed her," he whispered to Rachel, as she opened the door for him, "but it might have woke her out of that sweet sleep."

And away he went, happy to have purchased, by a ten miles walk after a day's hard labour, that look at his sleeping child.

"Oh, Lord! how beautiful is the love Thou hast put into the hearts of Thy creature!" thought Rachel Gray; and though it had not been her lot to win that love, the thought was to her so sweet and so lovely, that she bore without repining her expected scolding.

"Mrs. Gray had never heard of such a think—never."

CHAPTER V.

The rich man has his intellect, and its pleasures; he has his books, his studies, his club, his lectures, his excursions; he has foreign lands, splendid cities, galleries, museums, ancient and modern art: the poor

man has his child, solitary delight of his hard tasked life, only solace of his cheerless home.

Richard Jones had but that one child, that peevish, sickly, fretful little daughter; but she was his all. He was twenty-one, when the grocer in whose shop his youth had been spent, died a bankrupt, leaving one child, a daughter, a pale, sickly young creature of seventeen, called Mary Smith.

Richard Jones had veneration large. He had always felt for this young lady an awful degree of respect, quite sufficient of itself to preclude love, had he been one to know this beautiful feeling by more than hearsay —which he was not. Indeed, he never could or would have thought of Mary Smith as something less than a goddess, if, calling at the house of the relative to whom she had gone, and finding her in tears, and, on her own confession, very miserable, he had not felt moved to offer himself, most hesitatingly, poor fellow I for her acceptance.

Miss Smith gave gracious consent. They were married, and lived most happily together. Poor little Mary's temper was none of the best; but Richard made every allowance: "Breaking down of the business—other's death—having to marry a poor fellow like him, &c." In short, he proved the most humble and devoted of husbands, toiled like a slave to keep his wife like a lady, and never forgot the honour she had conferred upon him; to this honour Mrs. Jones added, after three years, by presenting him with a sickly baby, which, to its mother's name of Mary, proudly added that of its maternal grandfather Smith.

A year after the birth of Mary Smith Jones, her mother died. The affections of the widower centred on his child; he had, indeed, felt more awe than fondness for his deceased wife—love had never entered his heart; he earned it with him, pure and virgin, to the grave, impressed with but one image—that of his daughter.

He reared his little baby alone and unaided. Once, indeed, a female friend insisted on relieving him from the charge; but, after surrendering his treasure to her, after spending a sleepless night, he rose with dawn, and went and fetched back his darling. During his wife's lifetime, he had been employed in a large warehouse; but now, in order to stay at home, he turned basket-maker. His child slept with him, cradled in his arms; he washed, combed, dressed it himself every morning, and made a woman of himself for its sake.

When Mary grew up, her father sent her to school, and resumed his more profitable out-door occupation. After a long search and much deliberation, he prenticed her to Rachel Gray, and with her Mary Jones had now been about a month.

"How pretty she looked, with that bit of pink on her cheek," soliloquized Richard Jones, as he turned round the corner of the street on his way homewards; and fairer than his mistress's image to the lover's fancy, young Mary's face rose before her father on the gloom of the dark night. A woman's voice suddenly broke on his reverie. She asked him to direct her to the nearest grocer's shop.

"I am a stranger to the neighbourhood," he replied; "but I dare say this young person can tell us;" and he stopped a servant-girl, and put the question to her.

"A grocer's shop?" she said, "there's not one within a mile. You must go down the next street on your right-hand, turn into the alley on your left, then turn to your right again, and if you take the fifth street after that, it will take you to the Teapot."

She had to repeat her directions twice before the woman fairly understood them.

"What a chance!" thought Jones, as he again walked on; "not a grocer's shop within a mile. Now, suppose I had, say fifty pounds, just to open with, how soon the thing would do for itself. And then I'd have my little Mary at home with me. Yes, that would be something!"

Ay; the shop and Mary!—ambition and love! Ever since he had dealt tea and sugar in Mr. Smith's establishment, Richard Jones had been haunted with the desire to become a tradesman, and do the same thing in a shop of his own. But, conscious of the extravagant futility of this wish, Jones generally consoled himself with the thought that grocer's shops were as thick as mushrooms, and that, capital or no capital, there was no room for him.

And now, as he walked home, dreaming, he could not but sigh, for there was room, he could not doubt it—but where was the capital? He was still vaguely wondering in his own mind, by what magical process the said capital could possibly be called up, when he reached his own home. There he found that, in his absence, a rudely scrawled scrap of paper had been slipped under his room door; it was to the following purport:

"Dear J.,

"Als up; farm broke. Weral inn for it.

"Yours,

"S. S."

This laconic epistle signified that the firm in whose warehouse Richard Jones was employed, had stopped payment Rich men lost their thousands, and eat none the worse a dinner; Richard Jones lost his week's wages, his future employment, and remained stunned with the magnitude of the blow.

His first thought flew to his child.

"How shall I pay Miss Gray for my little Mary's keep?" he exclaimed, inwardly.

He cast his look round the room to see what he could pledge or sell.
Alas! there was little enough there. His next feeling was,

"My darling must know nothing about it Thank God, she is not with me now!
Thank God!"

But, though this was some sort of comfort, the future still looked so dark and threatening, that Jones spent a sleepless night, tossing in his bed, and groaning so loudly, that his landlady forsook her couch to knock at his door, and inquire, to his infinite confusion, "if Mr. Jones felt poorly, and if there was anything she could do for him, and if he would like some hot ginger?" To which Mr. Jones replied, with thanks, "that he was quite well, much obliged to her all the same."

After this significant hint, he managed to keep quiet. Towards morning, he fell asleep, and dreamed he had found a purse full of guineas, and that he was going to open a grocer's shop, to be called the Teapot.

Richard Jones was sober, intelligent enough for what he had to do, and not too intelligent—which is a great disadvantage; he bore an excellent character; and yet, somehow or other, when he searched for employment, there seemed to be no zoom for him; and had he been a philosopher, which, most fortunately for his peace of mind, he was not, he must inevitably hare come to the conclusion, that in this world he was not wanted.

We are not called upon to enter into the history of his struggles. He maintained a sort of precarious existence, now working at this, now working at that; for he was a Jack of all trades, and could torn his hand to anything, but certain of no continual employment. How he went through it all, still paying Miss Gray, still keeping up a decent appearance, contracting no debts, the pitying eye which alone looks down on the bitter trials of the poor, also alone knows.

The poorer a man gets, the more he thinks of wealth and money; the narrower does the world close around him, and all the wider grows the world of his charms. The shop, which had only been a dormant idea in Richard Jones's mind, now became a living phantom; day and night, mom and noon it haunted him. When he had nothing to do—and this was, unfortunately, too often the case—he sought intuitively the suburb where Rachel Gray dwelt; ascertained, over and over, that within the mile circuit of that central point there did not exist one grocer's shop, and finally determined that the precise spot where, for public benefit and its own advantage, a grocer's shop should be, was just round the corner of the street next to that of Rachel Gray, in a dirty little house, now occupied by a rag and bottle establishment, with very dirty windows, and a shabby black doll dangling like a thief, over the doorway; spite of which enticing prospect, the rag and bottle people seemed to thrive but indifferently, if one might judge from the sulky, ill-tempered looking woman, whom Jones always saw within, sorting old rags, and scowling at him whenever she caught him in the act of peering in.

It was, therefore, with no surprise, though with some uneasiness, that coming one day to linger as usual near the place, James found the rag and bottle shop closed, the black doll gone, and the words, "To let" scrawled, in white chalk, on the shutters. Convinced that none but a grocer could take such a desirable shop, and desirous, at least, to know when this fated consummation was to take place, Jones took courage, and went on as far as Rachel Gray's.

Jane, the grim apprentice, opened to him,

"There's no one at home," she said.

Mr. Jones pleaded fatigue, and asked to be permitted to rest awhile. She did not oppose his entrance,

but grimly repelled all his attempts at opening a conversation. He entered on that most innocent topic, the weather, and praised it.

"It has been raining," was Jane's emphatic reply.

"Oh! has it? What's them bells ringing for, I wonder."

"They aint a ringing; they're a tolling."

Mr. Jones, rather confused at being thus put down by a girl of sixteen, coughed behind his hand, and looked round the room for a subject. He found none, save a general inquiry after the health of Mary, Mrs. Gray, and Miss Gray.

"They're all well enough," disdainfully replied Jane.

"Oh, are they! I see the rag and bottle shop is shut," he added, plunging desperately into the subject.

"S'pose it is!" answered Jane, eyeing him rather defiantly; for the rag and bottle woman was her own aunt; and she thought the observation of a personal nature.

Though much taken aback, Jones, spurred on by the irresistible wish to know, ventured on another question.

"You don't know who is going to take it next, do you?"

"Oh! you want to take it, do you?" said Jane.

"I—I!" exclaimed Jones, flurried and disconcerted. "La, bless the young woman! I aint in the rag and bottle line, am I?"

He thought by this artful turn to throw his young enemy off the scent; but her rejoinder showed him the futility of the attempt.

"I didn't say you was, did I?" she replied, drily.

Jones rose precipitately, and hastily desiring his love to Mrs. Gray, and his respects to Mary, he retreated most shamefully beaten. He did not breathe freely until he reached the end of the street, and once more found himself opposite the closed rag shop. How he had come there, he did not rightly know; for it was not his way home. But, being there, he naturally gave it another look. He stood gazing at it very attentively, and absorbed in thought, when he was roused by a sharp voice, which said,

"P'raps you'd like to see it within."

The voice came from above. Richard looked up. The first floor window was open, and a man's head was just thrust out of it. It looked down at him in the street, and apparently belonged to a little old man, to whom one very sharp eye—the other was closed up quite tight—and a long nose, which went all of one side, gave a rather remarkable appearance.

"Thank you, sir," replied Jones, rather confused. "I—I—"

Before he had got to the end of his speech, the old man vanished from the window, and suddenly appeared at the private door, beckoning him in.

"Come in," he said, coaxingly, like an ogre luring in an unwary little boy.

And, drawn as by a magnet, Jones entered.

"Dark passage, but good shop," said the old man. He opened a door, and in the shop suddenly stepped Richard Jones. It was small, dirty, and smelt of grease and old rags.

"Good shop," said the old man, rubbing his hands, in seeming great glee; "neat back parlour;" he opened a glass door, and Jones saw a triangular room, not much larger than a good-sized cupboard.

"More rooms up stairs," briskly said the old man; he nimbly darted up an old wooden staircase, that creaked under him. Mechanically Jones followed. There were two rooms on the upper and only storey; one of moderate size; the other, a little larger than the back parlour.

"Good shop," began the old man, reckoning on his fingers, "ca-pital shop; neat parlour—very neat; upper storey, two rooms; one splendid; cosy bed-room; rent of the whole, only thirty-five pounds a-year —only thirty-five pounds a-year!"

The repetition was uttered impressively.

"Thank you—much obliged to you," began Richard Jones, wishing himself fairly out of the place; "but you see—"

"Stop a bit," eagerly interrupted the old man, catching Jones by the button-hole, and fixing him, as the 'Ancient Mariner' fixed the wedding guest, with his glittering eye, "stop a bit; you take the house, keep shop, parlour, and bedroom for yourself and family—plenty; furnish front room, let it at five shillings a week; fifty-two weeks in the year; five times two, ten—put down naught, carry one; five times five, twenty-five, and one, twenty-six—two hundred and sixty shillings, make thirteen pounds; take thirteen pounds from thirty-five—"

"Law bless you, Sir!" hastily interrupted Jones, getting frightened at the practical landlord view the one-eyed and one-sided-nosed old man seemed to take of his presence in the house. "Law bless you, Sir! it's all a mistake, every bit of it."

"A mistake!" interrupted the old man, his voice rising shrill and loud.
"A mistake! five times two, ten—"

"Well, but I couldn't think of such a thing," in his turn interrupted
Jones. "I—"

"Well then, say thirty pound," pertinaciously resumed the old man; "take thirteen from thirty—"

"No, I can't then—really, I can't," desperately exclaimed Jones; "on my word I can't."

"Well, then, say twenty-five; from twenty-five take thirteen—"

"I tell you, 'tain't a bit of use your taking away thirteen at that rate," interrupted Jones, rather warmly.

"And what will you give, then?" asked the old man, with a sort of screech.

"Why, nothing!" impatiently replied Jones. "Who ever said I would give anything? I didn't—did I?"

"Then what do you come creeping and crawling about the place for?" hissed the old man, his one eye glaring defiance on Jones, "eh! just tell me that. Why, these two months you've crept and crept, and crawled, and crawled, till you've sent the rag and bottle people away. 'Sir,' says the rag and bottle woman to me, 'Sir, we can't stand it no longer. There's a man, Sir, and he prowls around the shop. Sir, and he jist looks in, and darts off agin, and he won't buy no rags, and he hasn't no bottles to sell; and my husband and me, Sir, we can't stand it—that's all.' Well, and what have you got to say to that, I should like to know?"

Jones, who never had a very ready tongue, and who was quite confounded at the accusation, remained dumb.

"I'll tell you what you are, though," cried the old man, his voice rising still higher with his wrath; "you are a crawling, creeping, low, sneaking fellow!"

"Now, old gentleman!" cried Jones, in his turn losing his temper, "just keep a civil tongue in your head, will you? I didn't ask to come in, did I? And if I did look at the shop at times, why, a cat can look at a king, can't he?"

Spite of the excellence of the reasoning thus popularly expressed, Jones perceived that the old man was going to renew his offensive language, and as he wisely mistrusted his own somewhat hasty temper, he prudently walked downstairs, and let himself out. But then he reached the street, the old man's head was already out of the first-floor window, and Jones turned the corner pursued with the words "creeping," "crawling." He lost the rest.

CHAPTER VI.

Rachel sat alone, working and thinking. The dull street was silent; the sound and stir of morning, alive elsewhere, reached it not; but the sky was clear and blue, and on that azure field mounted the burning sun, gladdening the very house-roofs as he went, and filling with light and life the quiet parlour of Rachel Gray.

Mrs. Gray was an ignorant woman, and she spoke bad English; but her literary tastes were superior to her education and to her language. Her few books were good—they were priceless; they included the

poetical works of one John Milton. Whether Mrs. Gray understood him in all his beauty and sublimity, we know not, but at least, she read him, seriously, conscientiously—and many a fine lady cannot say as much. Rachel, too, read Milton, and loved him as a fine mind must ever love that noble poet. That very morning, she had been reading one of his sonnets, too little read, and too little known. We will give it here, for though, of course, all our readers are already acquainted with it, it might not be present to their memory.

"When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent,
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide;
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask: but Patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve, who only stand and wait'"

"'They also serve who only stand and wait,'"

thought Rachel, brooding over the words, as was her wont, "and that is my case. Oh, God! I stand and wait, and alas! I do nothing, for I am blind, and ignorant, and helpless, and what am I that the Lord should make use of me; yet, in His goodness, my simple readiness to do His will, He takes as good service. Oh, Rachel! happy Rachel! to serve so kind a master."

Her work dropt on her lap; and so deep was her abstraction, that she heard not the door opening, and saw not Richard Jones, until he stood within a few paces of her chair. She gave a slight start on perceiving him; and her nervous emotion was not lessened, by remarking that he was rather pale and looked excited.

"Mary is very well," she said, hastily, and half smiling at the supposed alarm which had, she thought, brought him so suddenly in upon her.

"Of course she is—of course she is," he replied, nodding; then, drawing a chair near to Rachel's, he sat down upon it, and, bending forward, with his two hands resting on his knees, he said, in a deep, impressive whisper,

"Miss Gray, may I speak to you? I want you to advise me," he added, after a slight pause.

"To advise you, Mr. Jones!" echoed Rachel, looking up at him, with mild astonishment.

"Yes, Miss Gray," he firmly replied; and, slightly clearing his throat, he thus began: "Miss Gray, I aint a known you very long; but there aint another in this wide world whom I respect as I do you. And I think I have proved it; for haven't I given you my little Mary? I couldn't do more, Miss Gray," he added, with energetic earnestness. "Yes, Miss Gray, I do respect you; and that is why I want you to advise me. Now, this is the whole story:—

"From a boy, Miss Gray, I have wished to be in business. I was in business at Mr. Smith's, Mr. Smith was the grandfather of my little Mary, but not on my account; and that's not quite the same thing, you see. And I have wished to be in the grocery line, in particular, because of understanding it so much better, from having been brought up to it, like. Now, Miss Gray, here's the plain truth of the case. Some time ago, I found out, by chance, that there was not—actually, that there was not a grocer's shop in this immediate vicinity!" Here Mr. Jones held up his forefinger by way of note of admiration. "Well, Miss Gray," he resumed impressively, "that thought haunted me. Why here was the very place for me! A grocer was wanted. I found out, too, that the rag and bottle shop round the corner was just the place for me, and the people left, too; but bless you. Miss Gray, 't was all not a bit of use—for why—I hadn't got no capital! Well, Miss Gray, to make a long story short, a cousin of mine has just died, and left me all she had, poor thing, and that was sixty pound. Now, Miss Gray, what I want to know is this:—do you think that as a father—that is, the father of my little Mary—I'm justified in risking that money by setting up a shop, or that it's my duty to keep it all up for the child?"

He looked earnestly in Rachel's face. Ay, the child; it was still the child, and always the child. His own was not his own—it was but a trust held for his little Mary.

"Truly, Mr. Jones," said Rachel, smiling, "you can do what you like with your own."

"No, indeed, Miss Gray," he rejoined, a little warmly, "I must think of my little Mary first; and you see the whole question is, which is best for her. Why, I aint slep these three nights with thinking on it, and so, at last, I thought I'd come to you."

Who had ever asked Rachel for advice! Rachel the simpleton—Rachel the slighted and laughed-at dressmaker? Little did Mr. Jones know how nervous he made the poor girl; besides, she felt quite bewildered at the strange views he took of the case he submitted to her. At length she gathered courage, and looking earnestly in his face with her mild brown eyes, she spoke.

"Mr. Jones," she said, "it seems to me that as the money is yours, and that as your intentions are to turn it to a good account, you have a right to do with it as you please. I think, too, that you are likely to do very well as a grocer, for we really do want one about here. But I only tell you what I think. I do not advise. I really cannot. If you want advice, Mr. Jones, why, ask it of one who cannot mistake, for He is not liable to human error—ask it of God Almighty."

Richard Jones scratched his head, then hung it down ashamed. If he had dared, he would have asked of Rachel how he was to ask of God to advise him, and, especially, how he was to get the answer! Poor fellow! he had an excellent hearty some faith, much charity, but the world's net was around him. His life was not like that of Rachel Gray—a heaven upon earth. And Rachel, who laboured under the disadvantages of a narrow education, and a narrow life, who had not enough knowledge and enough experience of human nature to understand clearly that there were states of mind worlds lower than her own, did not suspect that she had given Richard Jones the worst of all advice—that which the receiver cannot follow.

Alas! who talks of God now! who listens like Adam in Eden to the voice of the Lord, and treasures in his or her own heart that source of all knowledge? And we complain that God goes away from us; that His face is dark, and behind the cloud; that in the days of adversity we find him not.

Jones rose confused, muttered thanks, then hastily changed the subject by asking to see his daughter. Even as he spoke, the door opened, and Mary entered.

She did not show much pleasure or surprise on seeing her father; it was not that she did not love him, but she was a spoiled child, too much accustomed to his fondness and devotion to set great value on either. She complained of the heat, then of the cold, sat down, got up again, and gave herself all the airs of a precocious woman. Her father, leaning on his stick, looked at her with admixing fondness, and occasionally nodded and winked at Rachel, as if inviting her to admire likewise. At length, with a half stifled sigh—for he never parted from his darling without regret—he again said he must go.

"And so, good-bye, my little Mary," he added, kissing her, but the peevish child half-turned her head away, and said his beard hurt her. "You hear her, Miss Gray," he exclaimed, chuckling, "does not care a pin for her old father, not a pin," and chucking Mary's chin, he looked down at her fondly.

"Dear me, father, how can you?" asked the young lady, rather pettishly. Upon which, Mr. Jones shook his head, looked delighted, and at length managed to tear himself away.

"And is it thus, indeed, that fathers love their daughters?" thought Rachel Gray, as she sat alone in the little back room on the evening of that day. "And is it thus, indeed! Oh! my father—my father!"

She laid down the book she had been attempting to read. She leaned her brow upon her hand; she envied none, but her heart felt full to over-flowing. Since the night when she had gone to look at her father, as we have recorded, Rachel had not felt strong or courageous enough to attempt more. Her nature was timid, sensitive and shrinking to a fault, and circumstances had made it doubly so, yet the repeated sight of Richard Jones's devoted love for his child, inspired her with involuntary hope. She had grown up in the belief of her father's rooted indifference; might she not have been mistaken? was it not possible that his daughter could become dear to Thomas Gray, as other daughters were dear to their father? Rachel had always cherished the secret hope that it would one day be so, but because that hope was so precious, she had deferred risking it, lest it should perish irretrievably. She now felt inwardly urged to make the attempt. Why should she not, like the prodigal son, rise and go to her father? "I will," she thought, clasping her hands, her cheeks flushing, her eyes kindling, "yes, I will go to-morrow, and my father shall know his daughter; and, perhaps, who knows, perhaps God Almighty will bless me."

Here the sound of a sudden tumult in the little court close by, broke on the dream of Rachel Gray. She looked, and she saw and heard Madame Rose gesticulating and scolding, to the infinite amusement

of a crowd of boys, who where teazing the idiot girl. The wrath of Madame Rose was something to see. Having first placed her protege behind herself for safety—as if her own little body could do much for the protection of another twice its size—Madame Rose next put herself in an attitude, then expostulated with, then scolded, then denounced the persecutors of the helpless idiot; after which washing her hands of them, she walked backwards to her cellar, scorning to turn her back to the foe. But the enemy, nothing daunted, showed evident intentions of besieging her in her stronghold, and though Madame Rose made her appearance at the window, armed with a broomstick, she failed to strike that terror into the hearts of her assailants, which the formidable nature of the weapon warranted. Fortunately, however, for the peace of the little French lady, that valiant knight-errant of modern times, the policeman, having made his appearance at the entrance of the court, a scutter, then a rushing flight, were the immediate consequence. Ignorant of this fact, Madame Rose ascribed the result entirely to her own prowess, and in all peace of mind proceeded to cook her supper. Then followed the little domestic scenes which Rachel liked to watch.

As Rachel looked, she took a bold resolve, and this was to pay Madame Rose a visit. They had met, the day before, in the street; and Madame Rose had addressed a long and voluble discourse to Rachel, in French, concluding with an invitation to visit her, which Rachel had understood, and smilingly accepted.

And now was the favourable moment to carry this project into effect. From the little room, Rachel heard Mrs. Brown's loud voice below in the parlour. Mrs. Gray was fully engaged, and not likely to mind her daughter's absence. Unheeded, Rachel slipped out.

A few minutes brought her round to the little courts and to the house inhabited by Madame Rose. It was dingy, noisy, and dirty; and as she groped and stumbled down the dark staircase, Rachel half repented haying come. The voice of Madame Rose directed her to the right door—for there were several. She knocked gently; a shrill "entrez," which she rightly interpreted as a summons to enter, was uttered from within; and pushing the door open, Rachel found herself in the abode and presence of Madame Rose.

She was received with a storm of enthusiasm, that rather bewildered than pleased her. Madame Rose welcomed her in a torrent of speech, with a multiplicity of nods, and winks, and shrugs, and exclamations, so novel in the experience of Rachel Gray, that she began to wonder how much truth there might be in the epithet occasionally bestowed on Madame Rose. For, first of all, she insisted on cooking a dish of onion soup for her expressly, a kindness which Rachel had all the trouble in the world to resist; and next, this point settled, she was loud and unceasing in the praise of the poor idiot girl, who sat mowing in her chair.

Rachel went and sat near her, and spoke to her, but she only got an unintelligible murmur for a reply. Madame Rose shook her head, as much as to say that the attainments of Mimi—so she called her—did not include speech. But Mimi was very good—very good indeed, only she could not talk, which was "bien dommage," added Madame Rose, as, had she only been able to speak, Mimi would certainly have done it charmingly.

"You should see her eating onion soup," enthusiastically added Madame Rose. "It is beautiful!" Then, seeing that Rachel was engaged in scrutinizing, with a pitying glance, the ragged attire of her protege, Madame Rose jealously informed her that, as yet, the toilette of Mimi had been a little neglected, certainly; but that, "with time, and the help of God," added Madame Rose, "Mimi should want for nothing."

"I have an old dress at home, that will just do for her," timidly said
Rachel "Shall I bring it to-morrow night?"

Madame Rose coughed dubiously—she had not understood; but a perfect knowledge of the English tongue, in all its most delicate intricacies, was one of her vanities. So, bending her head of one side, and patting her ear, as if to imply that there lay the fault, she evidently requested Rachel to repeat She did so; and this time, Madame Rose caught enough of her meaning to misunderstand her.

"I understand—I understand!" she exclaimed, triumphantly; and settling Mimi in her chair, she told her to be good, for that she was only going to fetch her an elegant dress presented to her by the goodness of Mademoiselle, and that she would be back in an incredibly short space of time; after which exhortation, Madame Rose prepared to accompany Rachel.

In vain, poor Rachel, alarmed at the prospect of her mother's anger, endeavoured to explain that she would bring the dress. Madame Rose, still triumphantly asserting that she understood, insisted on going out with her guest, and actually walked with her to her very door. In great trepidation, Rachel opened it, and unconscious of peril or offence, Madame Rose entered, clattering along the passage in

her wooden shoes; but Mrs. Brown's voice was just then at the loudest; the noise was not heeded.

Rachel took her up-stairs to the little back-room, and left her there, whilst she looked in the room which she shared with her mother, for the dress she wished to give Mimi; she soon came back with it, tied in a parcel, and now devoutly wished that she could see Madame Rose safe out of the place. But Madame Rose was in no mood to go. She had recognized the room and window where she so often saw Rachel; and she intimated as much, by a lively pantomime; first taking up a book, she held it before her, pretending to read; then she pointed to her forehead, to imply that Rachel was a thinker; and finally, to the horror and dismay of Rachel, Madame Rose shut her eyes, opened her mouth, and warbled a sufficiently correct imitation of the old hundredth.

The window was open; and even Mrs. Brown's voice could not drown these strange tones. They reached the ear of Mrs. Gray; and before Rachel had fairly recovered from the surprise and alarm into which the musical outburst of Madame Rose had thrown her, her step-mother appeared at the door of the little back room, and, in stern and indignant accents, asked to know the meaning of what she heard and saw. But, before Rachel could reply, the French costume of Madame Rose had betrayed her.

Mrs. Gray was of Scotch descent, and she had some of the old puritan spirit, to which, in the course of a long life, she had added a plenteous store of stubborn English prejudices.

Madame Rose was "an idolatrous furriner!" "a French beggar!" too; and that she should have darkened her doors!—that she should be familiarly sitting under her roof—chattering and singing in a back room, with her daughter, was an intolerable insult, a wrong not to be borne.

"I am amazed at you, Rachel!" she said, her voice quivering with indignation. "I am amazed at you. How dare you do sich a thing!"

The tones and the attitude of Mrs. Gray were not to be misunderstood; nor was little Madame Rose so dull as to mistake them. She saw that her presence was not welcome, and, with great dignity, rose and took her leave. Crimson with pain and shame, Rachel followed her out. She gave Madame Rose an humble and imploring glance, as they parted at the door, as much, as to say, "You know I could not help it." But the appeal was not needed. To her surprise, Madame Rose remained very good-humoured. She even laughed and shrugged her shoulders, French fashion, and indulged in a variety of pantomimic signs, closing with one more intelligible than the rest: a significant tap of her forefinger on her brown forehead, and by which Madame Rose plainly intimated it to be her firm conviction that the intellect of Mrs. Gray was unfortunately deranged. Thus they parted.

Violent were the reproaches with which Mrs. Gray greeted her daughter's reappearance. She exacted a strict and rigid account of the rise and progress of Rachel's acquaintance with that "mad French beggar;" was horror-struck on learning that the back-room window had been made the medium; and not satisfied with prohibiting future intercourse, took the most effective means to prevent it, by locking up the guilty zoom, and putting the key in her pocket.

To all this Rachel submitted; though, when she saw the door of her much-loved retreat closing on her, her heart ached. But when, in the height of her anger, Mrs. Gray railed at the poor little Frenchwoman, as little better than an idolater or an infidel, Rachel felt as if it touched her honour, not to suffer this slur on her humble friend.

"Mother," she said, with some firmness, "you cannot tell what she is; for you know nothing of her, save by idle reports. I have watched her life day after day, and I have seen that it is holy. And, mother," added Rachel, slightly colouring, from the fervour with which she felt and spoke, "you know it as I do: all holiness comes from God."

Unable to contradict, Mrs. Gray sniffed indignantly.

CHAPTER VII.

Hard indeed were the days that followed for Rachel Gray. The old quarrel had began anew. Why was she not like every one? Why did she pick up strange acquaintances?—above all, why did she mope, and want to be in the little back room? It was strange, and Mrs. Gray was not sure that it was not wicked. If so, it was a wickedness of which she effectually deprived Rachel, by keeping the back room locked, and the key in her pocket.

But, hard as this was, it was not all. Amongst Rachel's few treasures, were little pamphlets, tracts, old sermons, scraps of all sorts, a little hoard collected for years, but to their owner priceless. She did not read them daily; she had not time; but when she was alone, she took them oat, now and then, to look at and think over. On the day that followed the affair of Madame Rose, Mrs. Gray discovered Rachel's

board.

"More of Rachel's rubbish!" she thought, and she took the papers to the kitchen, and lit the fire with them forthwith.

"Oh, mother! what have you done!" cried Rachel, when she discovered her loss.

"Well, what about it?" tartly asked Mrs. Gray.

A few silent, unheeded tears Rachel shed, but no more was said.

But her very heart ached; and, perhaps, because it did ache, her longing to go and see her father returned all the stronger. The whole day, the thought kept her in a dream.

"I never saw you so mopish," angrily exclaimed Mrs. Gray, "never!"

Rachel looked up in her mother's face, and smiled so pleasantly, that Mrs. Gray was a little softened, she herself knew not why; but the smile was so very sweet.

And again Rachel sat up that night, when all were sleeping in the little house; again she burned her precious candle ends, and sat and sewed, to finish the last of the half-dozen of fine linen shirts, begun a year before, purchased with the few shillings she could spare now and then from her earnings, and sewed by stealth, in hours robbed from the rest of the night, after the fatigue of the day. But, spite of all her efforts to keep awake, she fell asleep over her task. When she awoke, daylight gleamed through the chinks of the shutters; it was morning. She opened the window in some alarm; but felt relieved to perceive that it was early yet. The street was silent; every window was closed; the sky, still free from smoke was calm and pure; there was a peace in this stillness, which moved the very heart of Rachel Gray. She thought of the calm slumbers of the two millions, who, in a few hours, would fill the vast city, with noise, agitation and strife; and she half sadly wondered that for the few years man has to spend here below, for the few wants and cravings he derives from nature, he should think it needful to give away the most precious hours of a short life, and devote to ceaseless toil every aspiration and desire of his heart.

It was too late to think of going to bed, which would, besides, have exposed her to discovery. So, after uniting her morning and evening prayers in one long and fervent petition of Hope and Love, she went back to her work, finished the little there was to do, then carefully folded up the six shirts, and tied them up in a neat parcel.

When this was done, Rachel busied herself with her usual tasks about the house, until her mother came down. It was no uncommon thing for Rachel to get up early, and do the work, while her mother still slept; and, accordingly, that she should have done so, as Mrs. Gray thought, drew forth from her no comment on this particular morning.

Everything, indeed, seemed to favour her project; for, in the course of the day, Mrs. Gray and Jane went out. Rachel remained alone with Mary.

"Why, how merry you are to-day, Miss!" said Mary, looking with wonder at
Rachel, as she busied herself about the house, singing by snatches.

"It is such a fine day," replied Rachel; she opened the parlour window; in poured the joyous sunshine —the blue sky shone above the dull brick street, and the tailor's thrush began to sing in its osier cage. "A day to make one happy," continued Rachel; and she smiled at her own thoughts; for on such a beautiful day, how could she but prosper? "Mary," she resumed, after a pause, "you will not be afraid, if I go out, and leave you awhile alone, will you?"

"La, bless you! no, Miss Gray," said Mary, smiling. "Are you afraid when you are alone?" she added, with a look of superiority; for she, too, seeing every one else around her do it, unconsciously began to patronize Rachel.

"Oh, no!" simply replied Rachel Gray, too well disciplined into humility to feel offended with the pertness of a child, "I am never afraid; but then, I am so much older than you. However, since you do not mind it, I shall go out. Either Jane or my mother will soon be in, and so you will not long remain alone, at all events."

"La, bless you! I don't mind," replied Mary, again looking superior.

And now, Rachel is gone out. She has been walking an hour and more. Again, she goes through a populous neighbourhood, and through crowded streets; but this time, in the broad daylight of a lazy summer afternoon. Rachel is neither nervous nor afraid—not, at least, of anything around her. On she

goes, her heart full of hope, her mind full of dreams. On she goes: street after street is passed; at length, is reached the street where Thomas Gray, the father of Rachel, lives.

She stops at the second-hand ironmonger's and looks at the portraits and the books, and feels faint and hopeless, and almost wishes that her father may not be within.

Thomas Gray was at his work, and there was a book by him at which he glanced now and then, Tom Paine's "Rights of Man." There was an empty pewter pot too, and a dirty public-house paper, from which we do not mean to have it inferred that Thomas Gray was given to intoxication. He was essentially a sober, steady man, vehement in nothing, not even in politics, though he was a thorough Republican.

Thomas Gray was planing sturdily, enjoying the sunshine, which fell full on his meagre figure. It was hot; but as he grew old he grew chilly, when, suddenly, a dark shadow came between him and the light. He looked up, and saw a woman standing on the threshold of his shop. She was young and simply clad, tall and slender, not handsome, and very timid looking.

"Walk in ma'am," he said, civilly enough.

The stranger entered; he looked at her, and she looked at him.

"Want anything?" he asked, at length.

She took courage and spoke.

"My name is Rachel," she said.

He said nothing.

"Rachel Gray," she resumed.

He looked at her steadily, but he was still silent.

"I am your daughter," she continued, in faltering accents.

"Well! I never said you was not;" he answered rather drily. "Come, you need not shake so; there's a chair there. Take it and at down."

Rachel obeyed; but she was so agitated that she could not utter one word. Her father looked at her for awhile, then resumed his work. Rachel did not speak—she literally could not. Words would have choked her; so it was Thomas Gray who opened the conversation.

"Well, and how's the old lady?" he asked.

"My mother is quite well, thank you. Sir," replied Rachel The name of father was too strange to be used thus at first.

"And you—how do you get on? You 're a milliner, stay-maker—ain't you?"

"I am a dress-maker; but I can do other work," said Rachel, thinking this, poor girl! a favourable opening for her present.

"I have made these for you," she added, opening and untying her parcel; and displaying the shirts to her father's view, and as she did so, she gazed very wistfully in his face.

He gave them a careless look.

"Why, my good girl," he said, "I have dozens of shirts—dozens!"

And he returned to his work, a moment interrupted.

Tears stood in Rachel's eyes.

"I am sorry," she began, "but—but I did not know; and then I thought—
I thought you might like them."

"'Taint of much consequence," he philosophically replied, "thank you all the same. Jim," he added, hailing a lad who was passing by, "just tell them at the 'Rose' to send down a pint of half-and-half, will you? I dare say you'll have something before you go," he continued, addressing his daughter. "If you'll just look in there," he added, jerking his head towards the back parlour, "you'll find some bread and cheese on the table, there's a plate too."

Rachel rose and eagerly availed herself of this invitation, cold though it was; she felt curious too, to inspect, her father's domestic arrangements. She was almost disappointed to find everything so much more tidy than she could have imagined. She had hoped that her services as house-keeper might be more required, either then, or at some future period of time. She sat down, but she could not eat.

"Here's the half-and-half," said her father from the shop.

Rachel went and took it; she poured out some in a glass, but she could not drink; her heart was too full.

"You'd better," said her father, who had now joined her.

"I cannot," replied Rachel, feeling ready to cry, "I am neither hungry nor thirsty, thank you."

"Oh! aint you?" said her father, "yet you have a long walk home, you know."

It was the second time he said so. Rachel looked up into his face; she sought for something there, not for love, not for fondness, but for the shadow of kindness, for that which might one day become affection—she saw nothing but cold, hard, rooted indifference. The head of Rachel sank on her bosom, "The will of God be done," she thought. With a sigh she rose, and looked up in her father's face.

"Good bye, father," she said, for her father she would call him once at least.

"Good bye, Rachel," he replied.

She held out her hand; he took it with the same hard indifference he had shown from the beginning. He did not seek to detain her; he did not ask her to come again. His farewell was as cold as had been his greeting. Rachel left him with a heart full to bursting. She had not gone ten steps when he called her. She hastened back; he stood on the threshold of his shop, a newspaper in his hand.

"Just take that paper, and leave it at the 'Rose,' will you? You can't miss the 'Rose'—it's the public-house round the left-hand corner."

"Yes, father," meekly said Rachel. She took the paper from his hand, turned away, and did as she was bid.

Her errand fulfilled, Rachel walked home. There were no tears on her cheek, but there was a dull pain at her heart; an aching sorrow that dwelt there, and that—do what she would—would not depart. In vain she said to herself—"It was just what I expected; of course, I could not think it would come all in a day. Besides, if it be the will of God, must I not submit?" still disappointment murmured: "Oh! but it is hard! not one word, not one look, not one wish to see me again; nothing—nothing."

It was late when Rachel reached home. Mrs. Gray, confounded at her step-daughter's audacity in thus again absenting herself without leave, had, during the whole day, amassed a store of resentment, which now burst forth on Rachel's head. The irritable old lady scolded herself into a violent passion. Rachel received her reproaches with more of apathy than of her usual resignation. They were alone; Jane and Mary had retired to their room. Rachel sat by the table where the supper things were laid, her head supported by her hand. At the other end of the table sat Mrs. Gray erect, sharp, bitter; scolding and railing by turns, and between both burned a yellow tallow candle unsnuffed, dreary looking, and but half lighting the gloomy little parlour.

"And so you won't say where you have been, you good-for-nothing creature," at length cried Mrs. Gray, exasperated by her daughter's long silence.

Rachel looked up in her step-mother's face.

"You did not ask me where I had been," she said deliberately. "I have been to see my father."

Not one word could Mrs. Gray utter. The face of Rachel, pale, desolate, and sorrow-stricken, told the whole story. Rachel added nothing. She, lit another candle, and merely saying, in her gentle voice—

"Good night, mother," she left the room.

As Rachel passed by the little room of the apprentices, she saw a streak of light gliding out on the landing, through the half-open door. She pushed it, and entered. Jane sat reading by the little table; Mary lay in bed, but awake.

"I did not know you were up," said Rachel to Jane, "and seeing a light, I felt afraid of fire."

"Not much fear of fire," drily answered Jane. Rachel did not heed her— she was bending over Mary.

"How are you to-night, Mary?" she asked.

"Oh! I am quite well," pettishly answered Mary.

Rachel smoothed the young girl's hair away from her cheek. She remembered how dearly, how fondly loved was that peevish child; and she may be forgiven if she involuntarily thought the contrast between that love, and her own portion of indifference, bitter.

"Mary," she softly whispered, "did you say your prayers to-night?"

"Why, of course I did."

"And, Mary, did you pray for your father?"

"I wish you would let me sleep," crossly said the young girl.

"Oh! Mary—Mary!" exclaimed Rachel, and there was tenderness and pathos in her voice; "Mary, I hope you love your father—I hope you love him."

"Who said I didn't?"

"Ah! but I fear you do not love him as much as he loves you."

"To be sure I don't," replied Mary, who had grown up in the firm conviction that children were domestic idols, of which fathers were the born worshippers.

"But you must try—but you must try," very earnestly said Rachel.
"Promise me that you will try, Mary."

She spoke in a soft, low voice; but Mary, wearied with the discourse, turned her head away.

"I can't talk, my back aches," she said peevishly.

"Mary's back always aches when she don't want to speak," ironically observed Jane.

"You mind your own business, will you!" cried Mary, reddening, and speaking very fast. "I don't want your opinion, at all events; and if I did—"

"I thought you couldn't talk, your back ached so," quietly put in Jane.

Mary burst into peevish tears. Jane laughed triumphantly. Rachel looked at them both with mild reproach.

"Jane," she said, "it is wrong—very wrong—to provoke another. Mary, God did not give us tears—and they are a great gift of his mercy—to shed them so for a trifle. Do it no more."

The two girls remained abashed. Rachel quietly left the room. She went to her own. She had prayed long that morning, but still longer did she pray that night. For alas!—who knows it not—the wings of Hope would of themselves raise us to Heaven; but hard it is for poor resignation to look up from this sad earth.

CHAPTER VIII.

We were made to endure. A Heathen philosopher held the eight of the just man's suffering, worthy of the Gods, and Christianity knows nothing more beautiful, more holy, than the calm resignation of the pure and the lowly, to the will of their Divine Father.

It was the will of Heaven that Rachel should not be beloved of her earthly father. She bore her lot—not without sorrow; but, at least, without repining. Perhaps, she was more silent, more thoughtful, than before; but she was not less cheerful, and in one sense she was certainly not less happy. Affliction patiently borne for the love of the hand that inflicts it, loses half its sting. The cup is always bitter—and doubly bitter shall it seem to us, if we drink it reluctantly; but if we courageously dram it, we shall find that the last drop is not like the rest It is fraught with a Divine sweetness—it is a precious balsam, and can heal the deepest and most envenomed wound.

This pure drop Rachel found in her cup. It strengthened and upheld her through her trial. "It is the will of God," she repeated to herself—"It is the will of God;" and those simple words, which held a meaning so deep, were to Rachel fortitude and consolation.

And in the meanwhile, the little world around her, unconscious of her sufferings and her trials—for

even her mother could not wholly divine them—went on its ways. Mrs. Gray grumbled, Jane was grim, Mary was peevish, and Mrs. Brown occasionally dropped in "to keep them going," as she said herself.

As to Richard Jones, we will not attempt to describe the uneasiness of mind he endured in endeavouring to follow out Rachel's advice. He did not understand its spirit, which, indeed, she could not have explained. They who make the will of God their daily law, are guided, even in apparently worldly matters,—not indeed, so as never to commit mistakes, which were being beyond humanity, but so, at least, as to err as little as possible concerning their true motives of action. Our passions are our curse, spiritual and temporal; and the mere habit of subduing them gives prudence and humility in all things:—wisdom thus becomes one of the rewards which God grants to the faithful servant.

But of this, what did Richard Jones—the most unspiritual of good men, know? After three days spent in a state of distracting doubt, he came to the conclusion that it was, and must be the will of Heaven that he should have a shop. Poor fellow! if he took his own will for that of the Almighty, did he fall into a very uncommon mistake?

Once, his mind was made up, he turned desperate, went and secured the shop. He had all the time been in a perfect fever, lest some other should forestall him, after which he became calm. "Did not much care about Miss Gray's opinion—did not see why he should care about any one's opinion," and in this lofty mood it was that Richard Jones went and gave a loud, clear, and distinct knock at Mrs. Gray's door.

Dinner was over—the apprentices were working—Rachel was dreaming, rather sadly, poor girl! for she thought of what was, and of what might have been. Mrs. Gray was reading the newspaper, when the entrance of Richard Jones, admitted by his daughter, disturbed the quiet little household. At once Mrs. Gray flew into politics.

"Well, Mr. Jones," she cried, "and how are you? I suppose you know they are raising the taxes—and then such rates as we have, Mr. Jones—such rates!"

Mrs. Gray was habitually a Tory, and not a mild one; but on the subject of taxes and rates, Mrs. Gray was, we are sorry to say, a violent radical. "She couldn't abide them," she declared.

"And so they axe raising the taxes, are they!" echoed Mr. Jones, chuckling. "Eh! but that won't do for me, Mrs. Gray. I'm turning householder—and hard by here too!" he added, winking.

Mrs. Gray did not understand at all. She coughed, and looked puzzled. Mr. Jones saw that Rachel had not spoken to her. He continued winking, chuckling, and rubbing his hands as he spoke.

"I am going into business, Mrs. Gray."

Mrs. Gray was profoundly astonished; Mary's work dropped on her lap as she stared with open mouth and eyes at her father, who chucked her chin for her.

"Yes," he resumed, addressing Mrs. Gray; "I had always a turn that way."

"Oh, you had!"

"Always, Mrs. Gray; but I hadn't got no capital; and for a man to go into business without capital, why, ma'am, it's like a body that aint got no soul."

"Don't talk so, Mr. Jones," said Mrs. Gray, to whom the latter proposition sounded atheistical, "don't!"

"Well, but what's a man without capital?" asked Mr. Jones, unconscious of his offence, "why, nothink, Mrs. Gray, nothink! Well, but that's not the question—I've got capital now, you see, and so I am going to set up a grocery business in the rag and bottle shop round the corner; and I hare called to secure your custom—that's all, Mrs. Gray."

He winked and chuckled again. Rachel could not help smiling. Mrs. Gray was grave and courteous, like any foreign potentate congratulating his dear brother, Monsieur mon frere, on some fortunate event of his reign.

"I called to tell you that, Mrs. Gray," resumed Jones; "and, also, to ask a favour of Miss Gray. I should be so much obliged to 'her, if she could spare my little Mary for half an hour or so, just to look over the house with me."

"Of course she can," replied Mrs. Gray for her meek daughter. "Go and put on your bonnet, Mary.'"

Mary, whom the tidings of the grocer's shop had most agreeably excited, rose with great alacrity to obey, and promptly returned, with her bonnet on.

It was Rachel who let them out.

"You need not be in a hurry to come back, dear," she whispered; "there's not more work than Jane and I can well manage."

Mary's only reply to this kind speech, was a saucy toss of the head. The little thing already felt an heiress.

"How much money have you got, father?" she promptly asked, as they went down the street,

"Sixty pounds, my dear."

"Law! that ain't much," said Mary, as if she had rolled in guineas all her life.

"Well, it isn't," he replied candidly, and exactly in the same spirit; for if there is a thing people promptly get used to, it is money.

Mary had always been her father's confidante; he now opened his whole heart to her, and was thereby much relieved. To his great satisfaction, Mary condescended to approve almost without restriction, all he had done. She accompanied him over the house and shop—thought "the whole concern rather dirty," but kindly added, "that when it was cleaned up a bit, it would do;" and finally gave it as her opinion, "that there wasn't a better position in the whole neighbourhood."

"Of course there ain't," said Mr. Jones, sitting down on the counter. "The goodwives must either buy from me, or walk a mile. Now it stands to reason that, rather than walk a mile, with babies crying at home, and husbands growling—it stands to reason, I say, that they'll buy from me. Don't it, Mary?"

"Of course it does."

"Well, that ain't all. You see I know something of business. The interest of capital in business ranges from ten to a hundred per cent according to luck; now I am lucky being alone, so we'll say fifty per cent, which is moderate, ain't it, Mary?"

"Of course it is," replied that infallible authority.

"Well then: capital, sixty pounds; interest, fifty per cent. Why, in no time, like, I shall double my capital; and when it's doubled, I shall double it again—and so I'll go on doubling and doubling until I'm tired —and then we'll stop. Won't we, Mary?"

The little thing laughed; her father gave her a kiss; got up from the counter, and with the golden vision of endless doubling of capital before him, walked out of the shop.

CHAPTER IX.

What airs little Mary took; how Jane taunted and twitted her, how Rachel had to interfere; how even Mrs. Brown chose to comment on the startling fact of a new grocer's shop, and what predictions she made, we leave to the imagination of the reader.

We deal with the great day, or rather with the eve of the great day. It was come. Rachel, her mother, Mary, and Mr. Jones were all busy giving the shop its last finishing touch; on the next morning the Teapot was to open.

"Well, Miss Gray, 'tain't amiss, is it?" said Jones, looking around him with innocent satisfaction.

He was, as we have said before, a sort of Jack-of-all-trades, and to him the Teapot doubly owed its existence. He had painted the walls; he had fixed up the shelves in their places; the drawers and boxes his own hands had fashioned. We will not aver that a professional glazier and carpenter might not have done all this infinitely better than Richard Jones, but who could have worked so cheap or pleased Richard Jones so well? And thus with harmless pleasure he could look around him and repeat:

"Well, Miss Gray, 'tain't amiss, is it?"

"Amiss!" put in Mrs. Gray, before her daughter could speak, "I should think not. You're a clever man, Mr. Jones, to have done all that with your own hands, out of your own head."

Mr. Jones rubbed his forehead, and passed his hand through his stubby hair.

"Well, Ma'am, 'tain't amiss, though I say it that shouldn't, and though 'tain't much."

"Not much, father!" zealously cried Mary, not relishing so much modesty, "why, didn't you nail them shelves with your own hands?"

"Well, child," candidly replied her father, "I think I may say I did."

"And didn't you make all them square boxes, a whole dozen of them?"

"Hold your tongue you little chit, and help Miss Gray there to put up the jams and marmalades."

"And didn't you paint the walls?" triumphantly exclaimed Mary, without heeding his orders.

"Who else did, I should like to know?"

"And the counter! who made the counter?"

"Not I, Mary. I only polished it up."

"Well, but what was it before you polished it up, father?" asked the pertinacious daughter.

"Not much to speak of; that's the truth. Why, bless you, Mrs. Gray," he added, turning confidentially towards her, "you never saw such a poor object as that counter was in all your born days. It caught my eye at the corner of one of them second-hand shops in the New Cut. The man was standing at the door, whistling, with his hands in his pockets. 'That's fire-wood,' says I to him. 'No 'tain't, it's as good a counter as ever a sovereign was changed on.' 'My good man,' says I, 'it's firewood, and I'll give you five shillings for it.' Law, but you should have seen how he looked at me. Well, to cut a long story short, he swore it was a counter, and I swore it was firewood, and so, at length, I give him ten shillings for it, and brought it home and cleaned it down, and scraped the dirt, inch thick, off, and washed it, and painted it, and polished it, and look at it now, Mrs. Gray, look at it now!"

"It's just like mahogany!" enthusiastically cried Mary, "ain't it. Miss Gray?"

"Not quite, dear," mildly said Rachel, who was truth itself, "but it looks very nice. But, Mr. Jones," she added, in a low timid voice, "why did you tell the man it was firewood, when you meant it as a counter?"

Jones wagged his head, winked, and touching his nose with his right hand forefinger, he whispered knowingly: "That was business, Miss Gray, and in business, you know—hem!"

"But the Teapot, father," cried Mary, "where's the Teapot?"

"Why, here's the Tea-pot," exclaimed Jones, suddenly producing this masterpiece of art, and holding it up aloft to the gaze of the beholders.

Such a Teapot had never been seen before, and, most probably, will never be seen again, to the end of time. Its shape we will not, because we cannot describe. It confounded Rachel, and startled even Mrs. Gray. She coughed, and looked at it dubiously.

"Where's the lid?" she said.

"Why, here's the lid; but it don't take off, you know."

"Oh! I see. And that's the handle."

"The handle! bless you, Mrs. Gray, it's the spout."

"Well, but where's the handle, then?"

"Why, here's the handle, to be sure," replied Jones, rather nettled, "don't you see?"

Mrs. Gray said she did; but we are inclined to believe she did not. However, Jones was satisfied; and, setting down the wooden Teapot—we forgot to say that it was flaming red—on the counter, he surveyed it complacently.

"I spent a week on that Teapot," he said "didn't I, Mary?"

"Ten days, father."

"Well, one must not grudge time or trouble, must one, Mrs. Gray? And now, ladies, we'll put away the Teapot, and step into the parlour, and have a cup of tea, eh?"

With the cup of tea, came a discussion of the morrow's prospects, and of the ultimate destinies of the

Teapot—the upshot of which was, that Mr. Jones was an enterprising public man, and destined to effect a salutary revolution in the whole neighbourhood. Such, at least, was the opinion of Mrs. Gray, warmly supported by Mary. Mr. Jones was silent, through modesty; Rachel, because she was already thinking of other things. They parted late, though the Teapot was to open early.

There is a report that it opened with dawn, Mr. Jones not having been able to shut his eyes all night for excitement. But it is more important to record that, until its close, late on the following evening, the Teapot was not one moment empty. Mary had remained at home, to assist her father; and she went through the day with perfect composure; but Mr. Jones was fairly overpowered: the cup of his honours was too full; the sum of his joy was too great. He blundered, he stammered, he was excited, and looked foolish. Altogether, he did not feel happy, until the shop was shut, and all was fairly over. He then sat down, wiped his forehead, and declared, that since he was married to his dear little Mary's blessed mother, he had never gone through such a trying day—never.

"It's a fine thing Mr. Jones has undertaken," gravely observed Mrs. Gray to Mrs. Brown.

But Mrs. Brown was inclined to look at the shady side of the Tea-pot.

"La bless you!" she kindly said, "it'll never do. I said so from the first, and I say so the last, it'll never do!"

"Oh, yes it will!" grimly observed Jane; "it will do for Mr. Jones, Mrs.
Brown."

"I hope not, Jane," said Rachel, gravely; "and I would rather," she added, with some firmness, and venturing for once on a reproof, "I would rather you did not think so much of what evil may happen to others. Sufficient to any of us is it to look forward to our own share of evil days."

She raised her voice as she began; but it sank low ere she concluded. Surprised at herself for having said so much, she did not look round, but resumed her work, a moment interrupted. The room remained deeply silent Jane was crimson. For once, Mrs. Gray thought her daughter had spoken sensibly; and for once, Mrs. Brown found nothing to say.

CHAPTER X.

A week had passed over the Teapot, and, sitting in the back-parlour with Mary, who was busy sewing, Richard Jones dived deep into his books, and cast up his accounts. He allowed for rent, for expenditure, for household, for extras, then his face, brimful of ill-disguised exultation, he said to his daughter: "Well, Mary, dear, 'taint much to boast of, but for a first week, you see, 'taint amiss, either. I find, all expenses covered, one pound ten net profit. Now, you know, that makes, first, fifty-two pound a-year; then half of fifty-two, twenty-six; add twenty-six to fifty-two, seventy-eight—seventy-eight pound a-year, net-profit. Well, it stands to reason and common sense, that as I go on, my business will go on improving too; in short, put it at the lowest—I hate exaggeration—well put it at the lowest, and I may say that by next Michaelmas, we shall have a neat hundred."

"Law! father, can't you say a hundred and fifty at once," peevishly interrupted Mary.

Mary's will was law.

"Well, I really think I can say a hundred and fifty," ingenuously replied Richard Jones, "now, with a hundred and fifty pound for the first year, and just five per cent, as increase of profit for the second."

"I'm sure it'll be ten per cent," again interrupted Mary, who, from hearing her father, had caught up some of the money terms of this money-making world.

"Well, I should not wonder if it would not," replied her docile papa. "We'll suppose it, at least; well that'd be fifteen pound to add to the hundred and fifty, or, rather, to the three hundred, and then for the next year it would be—let me see! Ah!" and he scratched his head. "I think I am getting into what they call compound interest, and, to say the truth, I never was a very quick arithmetician. At all events, it is pretty clear that at the end of ten years, we shall stand at the head of something like fifteen hundred pound, and a flourishing house of business," he added, glancing towards the shop—"a flourishing house of business," he continued, complacently passing his Angers through his hair.

Awhile he mused, then suddenly he observed: "Mary, my dear, hadn't you better go to bed?" Mary now slept at home. "You have to get up early, you know."

"Yes; but I ain't going to," she tartly replied. "It gives me a pain in my side," she added.

"Then you shall not get up early," authoritatively said Mr. Jones. "I'll not allow my daughter to work herself to death for no Miss Grays."

"I don't think I shall go at all to-morrow," composedly resumed Mary. "I don't like dress-making—it don't agree with me."

Mr. Jones had at first looked startled, but this settled the question.

"If dress-making don't agree with you, not another stitch shall you put in," he said, half angrily. "I think myself you don't look half so well as you used to, and though Miss Gray is as nice a person as one need wish to meet, I think she might have perceived it before this; but interest blinds us all—every one of us," he added, with a philosophic sigh over the weaknesses of humanity.

"I know what Jane will be sure to say," observed Mary; "but I don't care."

"I should think not! Law! bless you, child, I have got quite beyond troubling my poor brains with what other people thinks; and if I choose to keep my daughter at home now that I can afford to do so, why shouldn't I? It's a hard case, if, when a man's well off and comfortable, and getting on better and better every day—it's a hard case, indeed, if he can't keep his only child with him."

This matter decided, Mary went up to her room; her father remained by the fireside, looking at the glowing coals, and dreaming to his heart's content.

"If I go on prospering so," he thought, "why should I not take—in time, of course—some smart young fellow to help me in the shop? It stands to reason that customers like to be served quickly. Law, bless you! they hate waiting," he added, thoughtfully, addressing the fire, and giving it a poke, by way of comment, "the ladies always hate it. But, as I was saying, why shouldn't I take some smart young man, and he, of course— why, I know what he'd do—why, he'd fall in love with Mary, of course— and why shouldn't he?" inquired Jones, warming with his subject "Was I not a poor fellow once, and did I not marry my master's daughter?"

Mr. Jones gave the fire another poke. In the burning coals he saw a pleasing vision rise. He saw his shop full of customers; he served with slow dignity, assisted by a "tight, brisk young fellow," busy as a bee, active as a deer, for it was Saturday night, and the fair maids and matrons of the vicinity were all impatient. Then from Saturday it was Sunday; the shop was closed, the street was silent. Young Thomson was brushing his coat in the yard and whistling; Mary was upstairs dressing; another five minutes, and she comes down in straw bonnet lined with pink, clean printed muslin frock, mousseline-de-laine shawl, brown boots and blue parasol. The happy father saw them going off together with delighted eyes and brimful heart Then other visions follow; one of a wedding breakfast at which Mr. Jones sings a song, and another of half a dozen grandchildren, all tugging at his skirts, whilst he solemnly rocks the baby, and as solemnly informs the infant: "that he had done as much for its mother once."

Peace be with such dreams whenever they come to the poor man's hearth!

A little surprised at not seeing Mary as usual on the following morning, and thinking she might be unwell, Rachel Gray sent Jane to enquire. Jane soon returned, her face brimful of news.

"Well," said Rachel, "how is Mary?"

"Law bless you Miss, Mary's well enough."

"Why did she not come then?"

"She does not like dress-making no more."

And Jane sat down, and took up her work, and became deeply absorbed in a sleeve trimming. Rachel reddened and looked pained. She liked Mary; the pale, sickly child reminded her strongly of her own lost sister, and though she could allow for the natural tartness with which Jane had no doubt fulfilled her errand, yet she knew that Jane was true, and that as she represented it, the matter must be.

For a while she suspended her work, sadly wondering at the causeless ingratitude of a child whom she had treated with uniform kindness and indulgence, then she tried to dismiss the matter from her mind; but she could not do so, and when dusk came round, her first act, as soon as she laid by her work, was to slip out unperceived—for Mrs. Gray, highly indignant with Mr. Jones and his daughter, would certainly have opposed her—and go as far as the Teapot.

Mr. Jones was serving a customer. He did not recognize Rachel as she entered the shop, and hastily called out:

"Mary—Mary come and serve the lady."

"It's only me, Mr. Jones," timidly said Rachel.

"Walk in, Miss Gray," he replied, slightly embarrassed, "walk in, you'll find Mary in the back parlour, very glad to see you, Miss Gray."

Much more sulky than glad looked Mary, but of this Rachel took no notice; she sat down by the side of the young girl, and, as if nothing had occurred, spoke of the Teapot and its prospects. To which discourse Mary gave replies pertinaciously sullen.

"Mary!" at length said Rachel, "why did you not come to work to day, were you unwell?"

This simple question obtaining no reply, Rachel repeated it; still Mary remained silent, but when a third time Rachel gently said: "Mary what was it ailed you?"

Mary began to cry.

"Well, well, what's the matter?" exclaimed her father looking in, "you ain't been scolding my little Mary have you. Miss Gray?"

"I!" said Rachel, "no, Mr. Jones, I only asked her why she did not come this morning?"

"Because I would not let her," he replied, almost sharply, "dress-making don't agree with my Mary, Miss Gray, and you know I told you from the first, that if her health wouldn't allow it, she was not to stay."

And a customer calling him back to the shop, he left the parlour threshold. Rachel rose.

"Good-night, Mary," she gently said; "if you feel stronger, and more able to work, you may come back to me."

Mary did not reply.

"Good-night, Mr. Jones," said Rachel, passing through the shop.

"Good-night, Miss Gray," he replied, formally. "My best respects to Mrs.
Gray, if you please."

When people have done an insolent and ungrateful thing, they generally try to persuade themselves that it was a spirited, independent sort of thing; and so now endeavoured to think Richard Jones and his daughter— but in vain. To both still came the thought: "Was this the return to make to Rachel Gray for all her kindness?"

The conscience of Mr. Jones, little used to such reflections, made him feel extremely uneasy; and if that of Mary was not quite so sensitive, the dull routine of the paternal home added much force to the conclusion "that she had much better have stayed with Miss Gray." Mary was too childish, and had ever been too much indulged to care for consistency. At the close of a week, she therefore declared that she wished to go back to Miss Gray, and did not know why her father had taken her away.

"I—I—my dear!" said Richard Jones, confounded at the accusation, "you said getting up early made your side ache."

"So it did; but I could have got up late, and gone all the same, only you wouldn't let me; you kept me here to mind the shop. I hate the shop. Teapot and all!" added Mary, busting into tears.

Jones hung down his head—then shook it

"Oh! my little Mary—my little Mary!" he exclaimed, ruefully; and he felt as if he could hare cried himself, to see the strange perversity of this spoiled child, "who turned upon him," as he internally phrased it, and actually upbraided him with his over-indulgence.

A wiser father would never have thus indulged a pettish daughter, and never have humbled himself as, to please his little Mary, Richard Jones now did. That same day, he went round to Rachel Gray's; he had hoped that she might be alone in the little parlour; but no, there sat, as if to increase his mortification, Mrs. Gray, stiff and stern, and Jane smiling grimly. Rachel alone was the same as usual. Jones scratched his head, coughed, and looked foolish; but at length he came out with it:

"Would Miss Gray take back his daughter, whose health a week's rest had much improved—much improved," he added, looking at Rachel doubtfully.

Mrs. Gray drew herself up to utter a stern "No," but for once the mild Rachel checked and contradicted her mother, and said:

"Yes, Mr. Jones, with great pleasure. You may send her to-day, if you like. She has missed us, and we have missed her."

"Thank you, Miss Gray—thank you," said Jones, hurriedly rising to leave.

"Give Mary my kind love," whispered Rachel, as she let him out.

But Jones had not heard her. Very slowly, and with his hands in his pockets, he walked down the street. He had not grown tired of Mary's company; why had Mary grown tired of his? "It's natural, I suppose," he thought, "it's natural;" and when he entered the shop, where Mary sat sulking behind the counter, and he told her that she might go back to Miss Gray's, and when he saw her face light up with pleasure, he forgot that, though natural, it was not pleasant.

"You may go to-day," he added, smiling.

At once, Mary flew upstairs to her room. In less than five minutes, she was down again, and merely nodding to her father as she passed through the shop, off she went, with the light, happy step of youth.

"It's natural," he thought again, "it's very natural," but he sighed.

Mrs. Gray took in high dudgeon the consent her daughter had given to the return of Mary Jones. She scarcely looked at that young lady the whole day, and when she was gone, and Jane had retired to her little room, and mother and daughter sat together, Rachel got a lecture.

"You have no spirit," indignantly said Mrs. Gray. "What! after the little hussy behaving so shamefully, you take her back for the asking!"

"She is but a child," gently observed Rachel.

"But her father ain't a child, is he?"

Rachel smiled.

"Indeed, mother, he is not much better," she replied.

"I tell you, that you ain't got a bit of spirit," angrily resumed Mrs. Gray. "The little imperent hussy! to think of playing her tricks here! And do you think I'm agoing to stand that?" added Mrs. Gray, warming with her subject; "no, that I ain't! See if I don't turn her out of doors to-morrow morning."

"Oh! mother, mother, do not!" cried Rachel, alarmed at the threat; "think that she is but a child, after all. And, oh, mother!" she added with a sigh, "have you never noticed how like she is to what our own little Jane once was?"

Mrs. Gray remained mute. She looked back in the past for the image of her lost child. She saw a pale face, with blue eyes and fair hair, like Mary's. Never before had the resemblance struck her; when it came, it acted with overpowering force on a nature which, though rugged, and stern, and embittered by age and sorrows, was neither cold nor forgetful.

One solitary love, but ardent and impassioned, had Sarah Gray known, in her life of three-score and ten—the love of a harsh, but devoted mother for an only child. For that child's sake had its father, whom she had married more for prudential reasons than for motives of affection, become dear to her heart. He was the father of her Jane. For that child's sake, had she, without repining, borne the burden of Rachel. Rachel was the sister of her Jane. Never should Rachel want, whilst she had heart and hands to work, and earn her a bit of bread.

But when this much-loved child, after ripening to early youth, withered and dropped from the tree of life; when she was laid to sleep in a premature grave, all trace of the holy and beautiful tenderness which gives its grace to womanhood, seemed to pass away from the bereaved mother's heart. She became more harsh, more morose than she had ever been, and had it been worth the world's while to note or record it, of her too it might have been said, as it was of England's childless King, "that from one sad day she smiled no more." And now, when she heard Rachel, when in her mind she compared the living with the dead, strength, pride, fortitude forsook her, her stern features worked, her aged bosom heaved, passionate tears flowed down her wrinkled cheek.

"Oh! my darling—my lost darling!" she cried, in broken accents, "would I could have died for thee! would thou wert here to-day! would my old bones filled thy young grave!"

And she threw her apron over her face, and moaned with bitterness and anguish.

"Mother, dear mother, do not, pray do not!" cried Rachel, distressed and alarmed at so unusual a burst of emotion. After a while, Mrs. Gray unveiled her face. It was pale and agitated; but her tears had ceased. For years they had not flowed, and until her dying day, they flowed no more.

"Rachel," she said, looking in her step-daughter's face, "I forgive you. You have nearly broken my heart. Let Mary come, stay, and go; but talk to me no more of the dead. Rachel, when my darling died," here her pale lips quivered, "know that I rebelled against the Lord—know that I did not give her up willingly, but only after such agony of mind and heart as a mother goes through when she sees the child she has borne, reared, cherished, fondled, lying a pale, cold bit of earth before her! And, therefore, I say, talk no more to me about the dead, lest my rebellious heart should rise again, and cry out to its Maker: 'Oh God! oh God! why didst thou take her from me!'"

Mrs. Gray rose to leave the room. On the threshold, she turned back to say in a low, sad voice:

"The child may come to-morrow, Rachel."

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. Gray had never cared about Mary Jones; she had always thought her what she was indeed—a sickly and peevish child. But now her heart yearned towards the young girl, she herself would have been loth to confess why. Mary took it as a matter of course, Jane wondered, Rachel well knew what had wrought such a change; but she said nothing, and watched silently.

In softened tones, Mrs. Gray now addressed the young girl. If Rachel ventured to chide Mary, though ever so slightly, her step-mother sharply checked her. "Let the child alone," were her mildest words. As to Jane or Mrs. Brown, they both soon learned that Mary Jones was not to be looked at with impunity. Mrs. Gray wondered at them, she did, for teazing the poor little thing. In short, Mary was exalted to the post of favourite to the ruling powers, and she filled it with dignity and consequence.

But the watchful eye of Rachel Gray noted other signs. She saw with silent uneasiness, the fading eye, the faltering step, the weakness daily increasing of her step-mother; and she felt with secret sorrow that she was soon to lose this harsh, yet not unloving or unloved companion of her quiet life.

Mrs. Gray complained one day of feeling weak and ailing. She felt worse the next day, and still worse on the third. And thus, day by day, she slowly declined without hope of recovery. Mrs. Gray had a strong, though narrow mind, and a courageous heart. She heard the doctor's sentence calmly and firmly; and virtues which she had neglected in life, graced and adorned her last hours and her dying bed. Meek and patient she bore suffering and disease without repining or complaint, and granted herself but one indulgence: the sight and presence of Mary.

The young girl was kinder and more attentive to her old friend than might have been expected from her pettish, indulged nature. She took a sort of pride in keeping Mrs. Gray company, in seeing to Mrs. Gray, as she called it Her little vanity was gratified in having the once redoubtable Mrs. Gray now wholly in her hands, and in some sort a helpless dependent on her good-will and kindness. It may be, too, that she found a not unworthy satisfaction in feeling and proving to the little world around her, that she also was a person of weight and consequence.

But her childish kindness availed not. The time of Mrs. Gray had come; she too was to depart from a world where toil and few joys, and some heavy sorrows had been her portion. Mary and Rachel were alone with her in that hour.

Mary was busy about the room. Rachel sat by her mother's bed. Pale and languid, Mrs. Gray turned to her step-daughter, and gathering her remaining strength to speak, she said feebly: "My poor Rachel, I am afraid I have often teazed and tormented you. It was all temper; but I never meant it unkindly—never indeed. And then, you see, Rachel," she added, true to her old spirit of patronizing and misunderstanding her step-daughter, "Your not being exactly like others provoked me at times; but I know it shouldn't—it wasn't fair to you, poor girl! for of course you couldn't help it."

And Rachel, true to her spirit of humble submission, only smiled, and kissed her mother's wasted cheek, and said, meekly: "Do not think of it, dear mother—do not; you were not to blame."

And she did not murmur, even in her heart. She did not find it hard that to the end she should be slighted, and held as one of little worth.

A little while after this, Mrs. Gray spoke again. "Where is Mary?" she said.

"And here I am, Mrs. Gray," said Mary, coming up to her on the other side of the bed.

Mrs. Gray smiled, and stretched out her trembling hands, until they met and clasped those of the young girl. Then, with her fading eyes fixed on Mary's face, she said to Rachel:

"Rachel, tell your father that I forgive him, will you?"

"Yes, mother," replied Rachel, in a low tone.

"Rachel," she said again, and her weak voice rose, "Rachel, you have been a good and a faithful daughter to me—may the Lord bless you!"

Tears streamed down Rachel's face on hearing those few words that paid her for many a bitter hour; but her mother saw them not, still her look sought Mary.

"In Thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit," she murmured, and with her look still fastened on little Mary's pale face, she died.

Sad and empty seemed the house to Rachel Gray when her mother was gone. She missed her chiding voice, her step, heavy with age, her very scolding, which long habit had made light to bear.

The solitude and liberty once so dear and so hardly won, now became painful and oppressive; but Rachel was not long troubled with either.

We are told that "he whom He loveth He chasteneth;" and Rachel was not unloved, for she, too, was to have her share of affliction. Spite her sickly aspect, she enjoyed good health, and, therefore, when she rose one morning, shortly after her mother's death, and felt unusually languid and unwell, Rachel was more surprised than alarmed.

"La, Miss! how poorly you do look!" exclaimed Jane, laying down her work with concern.

"I do not feel very well," replied Rachel, calmly, "but I do not feel very ill, either," she added, smiling.

Her looks belied her words; vainly she endeavoured to work; by the united entreaties of Jane and Mary, she was at length persuaded to go up to her room. She laid down on her bed, and tried to sleep, but could not; she thought of her step-mother, so harsh, yet so kind in her very harshness; of her father, so cold and unloving; of her silent, lonely life, and its narrow cares and narrow duties, above which smiled so heavenly a hope, burning like a clear star above a dark and rugged valley; and with these thoughts and feelings, heightening them to intensity, blended the heat and languor of growing fever.

When Mary came up to know if Rachel Gray wanted anything, she found her so ill that she could scarcely answer her question. She grew rapidly worse. The medical man who was called in, pronounced her disease a slow fever, not dangerous, but wasting.

"Then there is nothing for it but patience," resignedly said Rachel, "I fear I shall be the cause of trouble to those around me, but the will of God be done."

"La, Miss! we'll take care of you," zealously said Jane, "shan't we,
Mary?"

"Of course we will," as zealously replied the young girl.

Rachel smiled at their earnestness; but their zeal was destined to be thrown in the shade by that of a third individual. On the fourth day of her illness, Rachel was awakened from a heavy sleep into which she had fallen, by the sound of angry though subdued voices on the staircase.

"I tell you 'taint a bit of use, and that you're not going to go up," said the deep, emphatic tones of Jane.

"Et je vous dis que je veux monter, moi!" obstinately exclaimed the shrill French voice of Madame Rose.

Jane, who was not patient, now apparently resorted to that last argument of kings and nations, physical force, to remove the intruder, for there was the sound of a scuffle on the staircase, but if she had strength on her side, Madame Rose had agility, and though somewhat ruffled and out of breath, she victoriously burst into Rachel's room.

"Take care, Miss, take care," screamed Jane, rushing up after her, "the
French madwoman has got in, and I couldn't keep her out."

"Don't be afraid, Jane," said Rachel, as the alarmed apprentice made her appearance at the door, "I am very glad to see Madame Rose. I tell you she will not hurt me, and that I am glad to see her," she added, as Jane stared grimly at the intruder.

She spoke so positively, that the apprentice retired, but not without emphatically intimating that she should be within call if Miss Gray wanted her.

Rachel was too ill to speak much; but Madame Rose spared her the trouble by taking that task on herself; indeed, she seemed willing to take a great deal on herself, and listless as Rachel was, she perceived with surprise that Madame Rose was in some measure taking possession of her sick room. She inquired after Mimi. Madame Rose shook her head, produced a square pocket-handkerchief, applied it to her eyes, then turned them up, till the whites alone were visible; in short, she plainly intimated that Mimi had gone to her last home; after which she promptly dried her tears, and, partly by speech, partly by pantomime, she informed Rachel that the apprentices were too busy sewing to be able to attend on her, and that she—Madame Rose—would undertake that care. Rachel was too ill and languid to resist; and Jane and Mary, though they resented the intrusion of the foreigner, were unable to eject her, for, by possession, which is acknowledged to be nine-tenths of the law, Madame Rose made her claim good, until the enemy had abandoned all idea of resistance.

And a devoted nurse she made, ever attentive, ever vigilant. For three months did Rachel see, in her darkened room, the active little figure of the Frenchwoman, either moving briskly about, or sitting erect in her chair, knitting assiduously, occasionally relieved, it is true, by Jane and Mary. She saw it when she lay in the trance of fever and pain, unable to move or speak; in her few moments of languid relief, it was still there, and it became so linked, in her mind, with her sick room, that, when she awoke one day free from fever, the delightful sensation that pain was gone from her, like the weary dream of a troubled night fled in the morning, blended with a sense of surprise and annoyance at missing the nod and the smile of Madame Rose.

Rachel looked around her wondering, and in looking, she caught sight of the portly and vulgar figure of Mrs. Brown; she saw her with some surprise, for she knew that that lady entertained a strong horror of a sick room.

"It's only me!" said Mrs. Brown, nodding at her. "You are all right now, my girl."

"I feel much better, indeed," replied Rachel

"Of course you do; the fever is all gone, otherwise you should not see me here, I promise you," added Mrs. Brown, with another nod, and a knowing wink.

"And Madame Rose," said Rachel, "where is Madame Rose?"

"Law! don't trouble your mind about her. Keep quiet, will you?"

Mrs. Brown spoke impatiently. Rachel felt too weak to dispute her authority, but when Jane came up, she again inquired after Madame Rose. Jane drily said it was all right, and that Miss Gray was to keep quiet; and more than this she would not say.

The fever had left Rachel. She was now cured, and rapidly got better; but still, she did not see Madame Rose, and was favoured with more of Mrs. Brown's company than she liked. At length she one day positively exacted an explanation from Jane, who reluctantly gave it.

"Law bless you, Miss!" she said, '"tain't worth talking about. Mrs. Brown can't abide the little Frenchwoman; and so, one day when she went out, she locked the door, and wouldn't let Mary open it; and when Madame Rose rang and rapped, Mrs. Brown put her head out of the window, and railed at her, until she fairly scared her away from the place."

"But what brought Mrs. Brown here?" asked Rachel, who had heard her with much surprise.

Jane looked embarrassed, but was spared the trouble of replying by the voice of Mrs. Brown, who imperatively summoned her downstairs. She immediately complied, and left Rachel alone. A mild sun shone in through the open window on the sick girl; she had that day got up, for the first time, and sat in a chair with a book on her knees. But she could not read: she felt too happy, blest in that delightful sense of returning health which long sickness renders so sweet. Her whole soul overflowed with joy, thankfulness, and prayer, and for once the shadow of sad or subduing thoughts fell not on her joy.

"Well, my girl, and how are you to-day?" said the rough voice of Mrs.
Brown, who entered without the ceremony of knocking.

Rachel quietly replied that she felt well—almost quite well.

"Of course you do. I knew I'd bring you round," said Mrs. Brown. "La bless you! all their coddling was just killing you. So I told Jane, all along, but she wouldn't believe me. 'La bless you, girl!' I said to her, 'I do it willingly, but ifs only just a wasting of my money,' says I."

"Your money, Mrs. Brown?" interrupted Rachel, with a start.

"Why, of course, my money. Whose else? Didn't you know of it?"

"Indeed, I did not," replied Rachel, confounded.

"La! what a muff the girl is!" good-humouredly observed Mrs. Brown. "And where did you think, stupid, that the money you have been nursed with these three months came from? Why, from my pocket, of course; twenty pound three-and-six, besides a quarter's rent, and another running on."

Rachel was dismayed at the amount of the debt. When and how should she be able to pay so large a sum? Still, rallying from her first feeling of surprise and dismay, she attempted to express to Mrs. Brown her gratitude for the assistance so generously yielded, and her hope of being able to repay it some day; but Mrs. Brown would not hear her.

"Nonsense, Rachel," she said, "I ain't a-done more than I ought to have done for my cousin's step-daughter. And to whom should Jane, when she wanted money, have come, but to me? And as to paying me, bless you! there's no hurry, Rachel. I can afford, thank Heaven, to lend twenty pound, and not miss it."

This was kindness—such Rachel felt it to be; but, alas! she also felt that these was on her, from that day, the badge of obligation and servitude. She was still too weak to work; she had, dining her long illness, lost the best part of her customers; until her full recovery, she was, perforce, cast on Mrs. Brown for assistance, and, of all persons, Mrs. Brown was the last not to take advantage of such a state of things. Mrs. Brown came when she liked, said what she liked, and did what she liked in Rachel's house. But, indeed, it was not Rachel's house—it was Mrs. Brown's. Rachel was there on sufferance; the very bed on which she slept was Mrs. Brown's; the very chair on which she sat was Mrs. Brown's. So Mrs. Brown felt, and made every one feel, Rachel included.

The effects of her rule were soon apparent. Every article of furniture changed its place; every household nook was carefully examined and improved, and every luckless individual who entertained a lingering kindness for Rachel Gray, was affronted, and effectually banished from the house, from irascible Madame Rose down to peaceful Mr. Jones.

Rachel carried patience to a fault; through her whole life, she had been taught to suffer and endure silently, and now, burdened with the sense of her debt and obligation, she knew not how to resist the domestic tyranny of this new tormentor. The easiest course was to submit. To Rachel it seemed that such, in common gratitude, was her duty; and, accordingly, she submitted. But this was a time of probation and trial: as such she ever looked back to it, in after life. To Jane, her patience seemed amazing, and scarcely commendable.

"I wonder you can bear with the old creetur, that I do," she said, emphatically.

"Mrs. Brown means kindly," said Rachel, "and she has been a kind friend to me, when I had no other friend. I may well hare a little patience."

"A little patience!" echoed Jane, indignantly, "a little patience! when she's always at you."

But Rachel would hear no more on the subject. If she bore with Mrs. Brown, it was not to murmur at her behind her back. Yet she was not so insensible to what she endured, but that she felt it a positive relief when Mrs. Brown went and paid one of her nieces a visit in the country, and for a few weeks delivered the house of her presence. Internally, Rachel accused herself of ingratitude because she felt glad. "It's very wrong of me, I know," she remorsefully thought, "but I feel as if I could not help it."

Her health was now restored. She had found some work to do; with time she knew she should be able to pay Mrs. Brown. Her mind recovered its habitual tone; old thoughts, old feelings, laid by during the hour of trial and sickness, but never forsaken, returned to her now, and time, as it passed on, matured a great thought in her heart.

"Who knows," she often asked herself, in her waking dreams, "who knows if the hour is not come at last? My father cannot always turn his face from me. Love me at once he cannot; but why should he not with time?" Yet it was not at once that Rachel acted on these thoughts. Never since he had received her so coldly, had she crossed her father's threshold; but often, in the evening, she had walked up and down before his door, looking at him through the shop window with sad and earnest eyes, never

seeking for more than that stolen glance, though still with the persistency of a fond heart, she looked forward to a happier future.

And thus she lingered until one morning, when she rose, nerved her heart, and went out; calmly resolved to bear as others, to act.

She went to her father's house. She found him sturdy and stern, planing with the vigour of a man in the prime of life. His brow became clouded, as he saw and recognized his daughter's pale face and shrinking figure. Still he bade her come in, for she stood on the threshold timidly waiting for a welcome; and his ungraciousness was limited to the cold question of what had brought her.

"I am come to see you, father," was her mild reply. And as to this Thomas
Gray said nothing, Rachel added: "My mother is dead."

"I know it, and have known it these three months," he drily answered.

"She died very happy," resumed Rachel, "and before she died, she desired me to come and tell you that she sincerely forgave you all past unkindness."

A frown knit the rugged brow of Thomas Gray. His late wife had had a sharp temper of her own; and perhaps he thought himself as much sinned against as sinning. But he made no comment.

"Father," said Rachel, speaking from her very heart, and looking earnestly in his face, "may I come and live with you?"

Thomas Gray looked steadily at his daughter, and did not reply. But Rachel, resolved not to be easily disheartened, persisted none the less. "Father," she resumed, and her voice faltered with the depth of her emotion, "pray let me. I know you do not care much for me. I dare say you are right, that I am not worth much; but still I might be useful to you. A burden I certainly should not be; and in sickness, in age, I think, I hope, father, you would like to have your daughter near you.

"I am now your only child," she added, after a moment's pause; "the only living thing of your blood, not one relative have I in this wide world; and you, father, you too are alone. Let me come to live with you. Pray let me! If my presence is irksome to you," added Rachel, gazing wistfully in his face, as both hope and courage began to fail her, "I shall keep out of the way. Indeed, indeed," she added with tears in her eyes, "I shall."

He had heard her out very quietly, and very quietly he replied: "Rachel, what did I go to America for?"

Rachel, rather bewildered with the question, faltered that she did not know.

"And what did I come to live here for?" he continued.

Rachel did not answer; but there was a sad foreboding in her heart.

"To be alone," he resumed; and he spoke with some sternness, "to be alone." And he went back to his planing.

With tears which he saw not, Rachel looked at the stern, selfish old man, whom she called her father. The sentence which he had uttered, rung in her heart; but she did not venture to dispute its justice. Her simple pleading had been heard and rejected. More than she had said, she could not say; and it did not occur to her to urge a second time the homely eloquence which had so signally failed when first spoken. But she made bold to prefer a timid and humble petition. "Might she come to see him?"

"What for?" he bluntly asked.

"To see how you are, father," replied poor Rachel.

"How I am," he echoed, with a suspicious gathering of the brow, "and why shouldn't I be well, just tell me that?"

"It might please Providence to afflict you with sickness," began Rachel.

"Sickness, sickness," he interrupted; indignantly, "I tell you, woman, I never was sick in my life. Is there the sign of illness, or of disease upon me?"

"No, indeed, father, there is not."

"And could you find a man of my age half so healthy, and so strong as I am—just tell me that?" he

rather defiantly asked.

Poor Rachel was literal as truth. Instead of eluding a reply, she simply said: "I have seen stronger men than you, father."

"Oh I you have—have you!" he ejaculated eyeing her with very little favour.

And though Rachel was not unconscious of her offence, she added: "And strong or weak, father, are we not all in the hands of God?"

From beneath his bushy grey eyebrows, Thomas Gray looked askance at his daughter; but love often rises to a fearlessness that makes it heroic, and Rachel, not daunted, resumed: "Father," she said, earnestly, "you do not want me now; I know and see it, but if ever you should—and that time may come, pray, father, pray send for me."

"Want you? and what should I want you for?" asked Thomas Gray.

"I cannot tell, I do not know; but you might want me. Remember, that if you do, you have but to send for me. I am willing, ever willing."

He looked at her as she stood there before him, a pale, sallow, sickly girl, then he laughed disdainfully, and impatiently motioned her away, as if his temper were chafed at her continued presence. Rachel felt, indeed, that her visit had been sufficiently long, and not wishing to close on herself the possibility of return—for she had one of those quietly pertinacious natures that never give up hope—she calmly bade her father good-bye. Without looking at her, he muttered an unintelligible reply. Rachel left the shop, and returned to her quiet street and solitary home.

Yet solitary she did not find it. True, Jane was out on some errand or other, but Mary was alone in the parlour. She sat with her work on her lap, crying as if her heart would break.

In vain she tried to hide or check her tears; Rachel saw Mary's grief, and forgetting at once her own troubles, she kindly sat down by the young girl, and asked what ailed her.

At first, Mary would not speak, then suddenly she threw her arms around Rachel's neck, and with a fresh burst of tears, she exclaimed: "Oh! dear, dear Miss Gray! I am so miserable."

"What for, child?" asked Rachel astonished.

"He's gone—he's gone!" sobbed Mary.

"Who is gone, my dear?"

Mary hung down her head. But Rachel pressed her so kindly to speak, that her heart opened, and with many a hesitating pause, and many a qualifying comment, Mary Jones related to her kind-hearted listener a little story, which, lest the reader should not prove so indulgent, or so patient as Rachel Gray, we will relate in language plainer and more brief.

CHAPTER XII.

Time had worn on: nine months in all had passed away since the opening of the Teapot.

We must be quite frank: Mr. Jones had not always made the one pound ten a week dear profit; and of course this affected all his calculations: the ten per cent for increase of gain included. There had been weeks when he had not realized more than one pound, others when he made ten shillings, ay and there had been weeks when all he could do—if he did do so—was to make both ends meet. It was odd; but it was so. Mr. Jones was at first much startled; but, he soon learned to reconcile himself to it.

"It stands to reason," he philosophically observed to Mary, "it's business, you see, it's business." The words explained all.

Another drawback was that the front room which was worth five shillings a week, as his landlord had proved to Mr. Jones in their very first conversation, and for which Mr. Jones had therefore allowed—on the faith of his landlord's word—thirteen pounds a year in his accounts— never let at all. This was the first intimation Mr. Jones received of the practical business truth, that it is necessary to allow for losses.

He had almost given up all thoughts of letting this unfortunate room, and indeed the bill had had time to turn shabby and yellow in the shop window, when one morning a young man entered the shop and in

a cool deliberate tone said: "Room to let?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Jones rather impressed by his brief manner.

"Back or front?"

"Front, Sir, front. Capital room, Sir!"

"Terms?"

"Five shillings a-week, Sir. A room worth six shillings, anywhere else. Like to see it, Sir? Mary—Mary, dear, just mind the shop awhile, will you?"

Mary came grumbling at being disturbed, whilst her father hastened upstairs before the stranger, and throwing the window open, showed him a very dusty room, not over and above well furnished.

"Capital room. Sir!" said Mr. Jones, winking shrewdly; "real Brussels carpet; portrait of Her Majesty above the mantel-piece; and that bed, Sir —just feel that bed, Sir," he added, giving it a vigorous poke, by way of proving its softness; "very cheerful look-out, too; the railroad just hard by—see all the trains passing."

Without much minding these advantages, the stranger cast a quick look round the room, then said in his curt way: "Take four shillings for it? Yes. Well then, I'll come to-night."

And without giving Mr. Jones time to reply, he walked downstairs, and walked out through the shop.

"Well, father, have you let the room?" asked Mary, when her father came down, still bewildered by the young man's strange and abrupt manner.

"Well, child," he replied, "I suppose I may say I have, for the young man is coming to-night."

"What's his name?" promptly asked Mary.

"I'm blest if I know; he never told me, nor gave me time to ask."

"But, father, you don't mean to say you let the room to him, without knowing his name?"

"But I didn't let the room to him," said Mr. Jones; "it was he took it."

"Well, that's queer!" said Mary.

"Queer! I call it more than queer!" exclaimed the grocer, now turning indignant at the treatment he had received; "but he shan't sleep in it, though, till I've got his references, I can tell him."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when into the shop again walked the stranger.

"My name is Joseph Saunders," he said, briefly, "and if you want to know more, apply to Mr. Smithson, number thirteen, in the alley hard by. He'll give you all the particulars."

Having delivered which piece of information, he once more vanished. Well, there was nothing to say to this; and Mr. Jones, who had an inquisitive temper, was preparing to dart off to Mr. Smithson's, who did indeed live hard by, when Mr. Joseph Saunders once more appeared.

"P'r'aps you'd like the first week," he said; and without waiting for a reply, he laid four shillings down on the counter, and again disappeared —this time to return no more. Mary was very much struck.

"He looks quite superior," she said, "quite. Saunders—Joseph Saunders! what a nice name."

"That's all very well," replied her father, sweeping the four shillings into the till, "but I must have a word or two to say with Mr. Smithson— for all that his name is Joseph Saunders."

He took his hat, and walked out to seek Mr. Smithson, an old and stiff dealer in earthenware, who lived within a stone's-throw of the Teapot. The day was fine, and Mr. Smithson was airing his pans and dishes, and setting them along the pavement, like traps for the feet of unwary passengers.

"Good-morning to you," began Jones, in a conciliating tone.

"Good-morning!" replied, or rather, grunted Mr. Smithson, without taking the trouble to look up.

"I have just come round to inquire about a young man—his name is Joseph Saunders. Do you know him?"

"S'pose I do?" answered Mr. Smithson too cautious to commit himself.

"Well then, s'pose you do—you can tell me something about him, can't you?"

"What for?" drily asked the earthenware dealer.

"What for!" exclaimed Mr. Jones, beginning to lose his temper, "why, because he's taken my front room, and I want to know what sort of a chap he is, and because, too, he has referred me to you—that's what for."

"Well, then," said Mr. Smithson, "I'll just tell you this: first, he'll pay his rent; second, he'll give no trouble; third, that's all."

With which Mr. Smithson, who had for a moment looked up, and paused in his occupation, returned to his earthenware.

"And what does he do?" asked Mr. Jones, not satisfied with this brief account.

"If you was to stay here from now till to-morrow morning," surlily replied Mr. Smithson, "you'd know no more from me."

Mr. Jones whistled, and walked off, with his hands in his pockets. He had been guilty of the unpardonable sin of not purchasing a shilling's worth of Mr. Smithson's goods since he had come to the neighbourhood, and of course Mr. Smithson felt aggrieved.

"Well, father," eagerly exclaimed Mary, as soon as she saw her father; "who is he? What is he? What does he do? Is he married—"

"Bless the girl!" interrupted Mr. Jones, "how am I to know all that? He'll pay his rent, and he's respectable, and more don't concern us; and it's time for you to go to Miss Gray, ain't it?"

With which limited information Mary had, perforce, to remain satisfied.

The new lodger proved to be what Mr. Jones graphically termed "a very buttoned-up sort of chap;" a tall, dark, silent, and reserved man, who paid his rent every week, went out early every morning, came home at ten every night, and vanished every Sunday.

We have already hinted that Mr. Jones had a spice of curiosity; this mystery teazed him, and by dint of waylaying his guest both early and late, he succeeded in ascertaining that he had recently left his situation in a large house in the city, and that he was in search of another. No more did Mr. Joseph Saunders choose to communicate; but this was enough.

For some time, the poor grocer had had a strong suspicion that he was not a very good business man; that he wanted something; energy, daring, he knew not what, but something he was sure it was.

"Now," he thought, "if I could secure such a young fellow as that; it would be a capital thing for me, and in time not a bad one for him. For suppose, that he becomes a Co., and marries Mary, why the house is his, that's all. Now I should like to know what man in the city will say to him: 'Saunders, I'll make a Co. of you, and you shall have my daughter.'"

Fully impressed with the importance of the proposal he had to make, Mr. Jones accordingly walked up one morning to his lodger's room; and after a gentle knock, obtained admittance. But scarcely had he entered the room, scarcely cast a look around him, when his heart failed him, Joseph Saunders was packing up.

"Going, Sir?" faintly said Jones.

"Why yes!" replied the young man, "I have found a situation, and so I am off naturally. My week is up to-morrow, I believe, but not having given notice, I shall pay for next, of course."

He thrust his hand in his pocket as he spoke. Poor Mr. Jones was too much hurt with his disappointment to care about the four shillings.

"Pray don't mention it," he said hurriedly, "your time's up to-morrow, and so there's an end of it all." Which words applied to the end of his hopes, more than anything else.

Mr. Saunders gave him a look of slight surprise, but said quietly: "No, no, Mr. Jones, what's fair is fair. I gave no notice, and so here are your four shillings." He laid them on the table as he spoke; and resumed his packing.

He forgot to ask what had brought Mr. Jones up to his room, and Mr. Jones no longer anxious to tell him, pocketed his four shillings and withdrew hastily, under pretence that he was wanted in the shop.

Mr. Jones had not acted in all this without consulting his daughter; she had tacitly approved his plans, and when he had imprudently allowed her to see how he thought those plans likely to end by a matrimonial alliance between herself and young Saunders, a faint blush had come over the poor little thing's sallow face, and stooping to shun her father's kind eye, she pretended to pick up a needle that had not fallen. And now she was waiting, below, for it was early yet, and she had not gone to Miss Gray's —she was waiting to know the result of her father's conference with Mr. Saunders. No wonder that he came down somewhat slowly, and not a little crest-fallen. All he said was: "He's got a new situation," and whistling by way of showing his utter unconcern, he entered the shop, where a dirty child with its chin resting on the counter, was waiting to be served.

Mary too had had her dreams, innocent dreams, made up of the shadow of love, and of the substance of girlish vanity. The poor child felt this blow, the first her little life had known, and childishly began to cry. Her eyes were red when she went to work, but she sat in shadow, and Jane, who seldom honoured Miss Jones with her notice, saw nothing. Rachel Gray was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to heed what passed around her.

It was only on her return, that finding Mary in tears, she drew from her the little tale of her hope and disappointment. It is not an easy task to console, even the lightest sorrow, for it is not easy to feel sympathy. Yet little as her grave mind, and earnest heart could understand the troubles of Mary Jones, little as she could feel in reality for the childish fancy to which they owed their birth, Rachel felt for the young girl's grief, such as it was, and by sympathy and mild reasoning, she soothed Mary, and sent her home partly consoled.

Of course, Mr. Saunders was gone—he had left too without any adieu or message. Mary's vanity was as much hurt as her heart.

Mr. Jones was not habitually a man of keen perceptions, but love is ever quick. It cut him to the heart to see his little Mary so woebegone. He looked at her wistfully, tried to check a sigh, and said as brightly as he could:

"Cheer up, Mary; law bless you girl, well have lots of lodgers yet; and as to that Saunders, I don't so much care about it, now he's gone. He was a clever fellow, but he hadn't got no capital, and as to taking a Co. without capital, why none but a good-natured easy fellow like me would dream of such a thing now a days; but, as I said, we'll have lots of lodgers—lots of lodgers."

"We never had but that one all them nine months," said Mary with some asperity.

"They're all a coming," said her father gaily, "They're all a coming."

And he said it in such droll fashion, and winked so knowingly that, do what she could, Mary could not but laugh.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mary was gone; Jane, had come in but to go up to her room. Rachel sat alone in the little parlour, reading by candle-light.

And did she read, indeed! Alas no! Her will fixed her eyes on the page, but her mind received not the impressions it conveyed. The sentences were vague and broken as images in a dream; the words had no meaning. Outwardly, calm as ever did Rachel seem, but there was a strange sorrow— a strange tumult in her heart.

That day the hope of years had been wrecked, that day she had offered herself, and been finally rejected. In vain she said to herself: "I must submit—it is the will of God, I must submit." A voice within her ever seemed to say: "Father, Father why hast thou forsaken me!" until, at length, Rachel felt as if she could bear no more.

Sorrows endured in silence are ever doubly felt. The nature of Rachel Gray was silent; she had never asked for sympathy; she had early been taught to expect and accept in its stead, its bitter step-sister Ridicule. Derided, laughed at, she had learned to dread that the look of a human being should catch a glimpse of her sorrows. If her little troubles were thus treated—how would her heavier griefs fare?

And now no more than ever did Rachel trouble any with her burden. Why should she? Who, what was she that others should care whether or not her father loved her! That he did not sufficiently,

condemned her to solitude. The pitying eye of God might, indeed, look down upon her with tenderness and love, but from her brethren Rachel expected nothing.

And thus it was that, on this night, after consoling the idle sorrows of an indulged child, Rachel, sitting in solitude, found the weight of her own grief almost intolerable. Like all shy and nervous persons, she was deeply excitable. Anger she knew not; but emotions as vehement, though more pure, could trouble her heart. And now she was moved, and deeply moved, by a sense of injustice and of wrong. Her father wronged her— perhaps he knew it not; but he wronged her. "God Almighty had not given him a child, she felt, to treat it thus, with mingled dislike and contempt Were there none to receive his slights and his scorn, but his own daughter?"

She rose, and walked up and down the room with some agitation. Then came calmer and gentler thoughts, moving her heart until her tears flowed freely. Had she not failed that day—had she not been too cold in her entreaties, too easily daunted by the first rejection? Had she but allowed her father to see the love, deep and fervent, which burned in his daughter's heart—he would not, he could not so coldly have repelled and cast her from him.

"And why not try again?" murmured an inner voice; "the kingdom of Heaven is taken by storm—and what is the kingdom of Heaven, but the realm of love?"

At first, this seemed a thought so wild, that Rachel drew back from it in alarm, as from an abyss yawning at her feet. But even as our looks soon become familiar with images of the wildest danger, so the thought returned; and she shrank not back from it. Besides, what had she to lose? Nothing! With a sort of despair, she resolved to go and seek Thomas Gray, and attempt once more to move him. "If he rejects me now," she added, inwardly, "I shall submit, and trouble him no more."

The hour was not late; besides, in her present mood, the timid Rachel felt above fear. She was soon dressed—soon on her road. This time neither annoyance nor evil befell her. She passed like a shadow through crowds, and like a shadow was unheeded. The night was dark and dreary; a keen wind whistled along the streets—but for either cold or darkness Rachel cared not. Her thoughts flowed full and free in her brain; for once, she felt that she could speak; and a joyful presentiment in her heart told her that she would, and should be heard—and not in vain.

Absorbed in those thoughts, Rachel scarcely knew what speed she had made, until, with the mechanical impulse of habit, she found herself stopping before the second hand ironmonger's shop. Wakening as from a dream, and smiling at herself, she went on. Rachel had expected to find the shop of Thomas Gray closed, and himself absent; but the light that burned from his dwelling, and shed its glow on the opposite houses, made her heart beat with joy and hope. Timidly, she looked in through the glass panes; the shop was vacant; her father was, no doubt, in the back parlour. Rachel entered; the door-bell rang. She paused on the threshold, expecting to see him appear from within, nerving herself to bear his cold look, and severe aspect; but he came not He was either up-stairs, or in some other part of the house, or next door with a neighbour.

There was a chair in the shop; Rachel took it, sat down, and waited—how long, she herself never knew; for seconds seemed hours, and all true consciousness of time had left her. At length, she wondered; then she feared—why was her father's house so silent and so deserted? She went to the door, and looked down the street. It was still and lonely; every house was shot up; and even from the neighbouring thoroughfare, all sounds of motion and life seemed gone.

Suddenly Rachel remembered the little public-house to which her father had once sent her. She had often seen him going to it in the evening; perhaps he was there now. In the shadow of the houses, she glided up to the tavern door—it stood half open—she cautiously looked in; and standing, as she did in the gloom of the street, she could do so unseen. The landlord sat dozing in the bar—not a soul was with him. Rachel glanced at the clock above his head; it marked a quarter to twelve. Dismayed and alarmed, she returned to her father's house. It so chanced, that as she walked on the opposite side of the narrow street, a circumstance that had before escaped her notice, now struck her. In the room above the shop of Thomas Gray, there burned a light. She stopped short, and looked at it with a beating heart. She felt sure her father was there.

Rachel re-entered the shop, and again sat down, resolved to be patient; but her nervous restlessness soon became intolerable. Seized with an indefinite fear, she rose, took the light, and entered the parlour: it was vacant. Passing under a low door which she found ajar, she went up a dark staircase. It ended with a narrow landing, and a solitary door; she knocked, and got no reply; she tried it, it yielded to her hand, and opened; but Rachel did not cross the threshold; she paused upon it, awe-struck at the sight she saw. The room was a small one, poorly famished, with a low and narrow bed, a table and a few chairs. On the mantle-shelf burned a tallow light, dim and lurid for want of snuffing; its dull glow fell on the motionless figure of Thomas Gray. He sat straight and stiff in a wooden chair, with a hand

resting on each arm. His face was ghastly pale, and rigid as death; his eyes stared on the blank wall before him, and seemed void of sight.

"My father is dead," thought Rachel. She entered the room and went up to him. But when she laid her hand on his arm, a slight convulsive motion showed her that he still lived. Ay, he lived, of that living death, which is worse than the true. Paralysis had fallen upon him without warning. Like a thief in the night it had come; and in a few brief seconds it had laid low the proud man's strength. Of that strength he had boasted in the morning; twelve hours had not gone round—where was it now?

Rachel did not lose her presence of mind. How she went out, found a doctor, and brought him back, she never exactly knew; but she did it.

The medical man looked at Thomas Gray, then at Rachel.

"You are his daughter," he said, kindly.

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Well, then, my poor girl, I am very sorry for you—very sorry. Your father may live years but I can hold out no prospect of recovery."

"None, sir?" faltered Rachel, looking wistfully in his face.

"Not the least. Better I should tell you so at once, than deceive you."

But Rachel would not—could not believe him. The sentence was too hard, too pitiless to be true.

"Father, father! do you know me?" she cried.

He stared vacantly in her face. Did he know her? Perhaps he did. Who can tell how far the spirit lived in that dead body? But if know her he did, gone was the time when he could hold intercourse with that long slighted, and now bitterly avenged daughter.

In vain she clung weeping around his neck, in vain she called on him to reply. He merely looked at her in the same vacant way, and said childishly, "Never mind."

"But you know me—you know me, father!" said Rachel.

Again, he looked at her vacantly, and still the only words he uttered were, "Never mind."

"His mind is gone for ever," said the doctor.

Rachel did not answer. She clasped her hands, and looked with wistful sadness on the old man's blank face. With a pang she felt and saw that now, indeed, her dream was over—that never, never upon earth, should she win that long hoped-for treasure—her father's love.

CHAPTER XIV.

In the grey of the morning, Rachel brought her father to the humble little home which he had voluntarily forsaken years before.

Thomas Gray was not merely a paralyzed and helpless old man, he was also destitute. Little more than what sufficed to cover his current expenses did Rachel find in his dwelling; his furniture was old and worthless; and the good-will of the business scarcely paid the arrears of rent.

But the world rarely gives us credit for good motives. It was currently reported that Thomas Gray was a wealthy man, and that if Rachel Gray did not let him go to the workhouse, she knew why. "As if she couldn't let him go, and keep his money too," indignantly exclaimed Jane, when she heard this slander; and, as discretion was not Jane's virtue, she repeated all to Rachel Gray. Poor Rachel coloured slightly. It seemed strange, and somewhat hard too, that her conduct should be judged thus. But the flush passed from her pale face, and the momentary emotion from her heart. "Let the world think, and say what it likes," she thought, "I need not, and I will not care."

Not long after Rachel brought home her father, Jane left her. The time of her apprenticeship was out; besides, she was going to marry. She showed more emotion on their parting, than might have been expected from her.

"God bless you. Miss Gray," she said several times; "God bless you—you are a good one, whatever the world may think."

The praise was qualified, and, perhaps, Rachel felt it to be so, for she smiled; but she took it as Jane meant it—kindly. Amity and peace marked their separation.

Rachel now remained alone with her father and Mary. The young girl was not observant. She saw but a quiet woman, and a helpless old man, with grey hair, and stern features blank of meaning, who sat the whole day long by the fire-side, waited on by his patient daughter. Sometimes, indeed, when Rachel Gray attended on her father with more than usual tenderness, when she lingered near his chair, looking wistfully in his face, or with timid and tender hand gently smoothed away his whitened hair from his rugged brow, sometimes, then, Mary looked and wondered, and felt vaguely moved, but she was too childish to know why.

And, indeed, the story of Rachel's life at this time cannot be told. It was beautiful; but its beauty was not of earth, and to earthly glance cannot be revealed. It lay, a divine secret, between her heart and God.

This peace was not destined to last Rachel and her father sat alone one morning in the parlour, when Mrs. Brown, who had found the street door ajar, burst in without preliminary warning. She was scarlet, and looked in a towering passion.

"You audacious creatur," she screamed; "you audacious hussey, how dare you bring that man in this house—in my house! How dare you?"

"He is my father," said Rachel, confounded, both at the accusation, and at the unexpected appearance of Mrs. Brown.

The reply exasperated Mrs. Brown. She had never felt any extraordinary friendship or affection for her deceased cousin; but she had always entertained a very acute sense of her cousin's wrongs, and had accordingly honoured Thomas Gray with no small share of hatred and vituperation, and that Rachel should not feel as she did on the subject, or should presume to remember that the sinner was her father, was, in Mrs. Brown's eyes, an offence of the deepest dye. She gave her feelings free vent. She was a vulgar woman, and had a flow of vulgar eloquence at her command. She overwhelmed Rachel and Thomas Gray with sarcasm, scorn and abuse, and Rachel answered not one word, but heard her out, still as a statue, and pale as death. Mrs. Brown, too, was pale, but it was with wrath.

"Do you know," she added, trembling from head to foot with that passion, "do you know that I could turn you out on the streets, you and your beggarly father—do you know that?"

Rachel did know it, and groaned inwardly. Mrs. Brown saw her agony, and triumphed in the consciousness of her own power. But the very violence of her anger had by this time exhausted it; she felt much calmer, and took a more rational view of things.

"I am a fool to mind what a simpleton like you does," observed Mrs. Brown, with that disregard of politeness which was one of her attributes; "for, being a simpleton, how can you but do the acts of a simpleton? As to bringing your father here, you must have been mad to think of it; for, if you can't support yourself, how can you support him? However, it's lucky I'm come in time to set all to rights. What's his parish? Marylebone, ain't it? I shall see the overseer this very day, and manage that for you; and it's just as well," added Mrs. Brown, divesting herself of bonnet and shawl, and proceeding to make herself at home, "that you didn't meddle, in it—a pretty mess you'd have made of it, I'll be bound. Well! and what do you stand dreaming there for? Make me a cup of tea—will you? I am just ready to drop with it all."

As a proof of her assertion, she sank on the chair next her, took out her pocket-handkerchief, and began fanning herself. But, instead of complying with Mrs. Brown's orders, Rachel Gray stood before that lady motionless and pale. She looked her in the face steadily, and in a firm, clear voice, she deliberately said:

"Mrs. Brown, my father shall never, whilst I live, go to a workhouse."

"What!" screamed Mrs. Brown.

"I say," repeated Rachel, "that my father shall never, whilst God gives his daughter life, go to a workhouse."

Mrs. Brown was confounded—then she laughed derisively.

"Nonsense, Rachel," she said, "nonsense. Why, I can turn you out, this very instant."

But the threat fell harmless, Rachel was strong in that hour; her cheek had colour, her eye had light, her heart had courage. She looked at the helpless old man, who had drawn this storm on her head, then

at Mrs. Brown, and calmly laying her hand on the shoulder of Thomas Gray, she again looked in Mrs. Brown's face, and silently smiled. Her choice was made—her resolve was taken.

"Will you send him to the workhouse, or not?" imperatively cried Mrs. Brown.

"No," deliberately replied Rachel.

"Oh! very well, ma'am, very well," echoed Mrs. Brown, laughing bitterly; "please yourself—pray please yourself. So, that is my reward for saving you from beggary, is it? Very well, ma'am; you and your father may pack off together—that's all."

"Be it so," rather solemnly replied Rachel, "be it so. What I leave in this house will, I trust, cancel the debt I owe you. Father," she added, stooping towards him, "lean on my shoulder, and get up. We must go."

With apathy Thomas Gray had heard all that had passed, and with apathy, he trembling rose, and complied with Rachel's intimation, and looking in her face, he uttered his usual childish: "Never mind."

But before they reached the door, Mrs. Brown, to the surprise and dismay of Rachel, went into violent hysterics. She was an over-bearing and ill-tempered woman, but her heart was not wholly unkind; and on seeing that Rachel so readily took her at her word, she was overwhelmed with mingled rage and shame. Hastily making her father sit down on the nearest chair, Rachel ran to Mrs. Brown's assistance. A fit of weeping and bitter reproaches followed the hysterics; and Rachel was convicted of being the most ungrateful creature on the face of the earth. In vain Rachel attempted a justification; Mrs. Brown drowned her in a torrent of speech, and remained the most injured of women.

The scene ended as such scenes ever end. There was a compromise; the victim made every concession, and the triumphant tyrant gained more than her point. In short, that her father might not want the shelter of a roof, Rachel agreed to remain in the house, and Mrs. Brown kindly agreed to come and live in it, and use Rachel as her servant and domestic slave, by which Mrs. Brown, besides keeping her firm hold on Rachel—no slight consideration with one who loved power beyond everything else—effected a considerable saving in her income.

"Oh! my father—my father!" thought Rachel, as she bent over his chair that night, and tears, which he felt not, dropped on his gray hair, "little do you know what I shall have to bear for your sake."

She did not speak aloud, yet he seemed vaguely conscious that something lay on her mind; for he shook his head, and uttered his eternal "Never mind—never mind!"

"And I will not mind—so help me God!" fervently answered Rachel aloud.

And she did not mind; but, alas! what now was her fate? Ask it not. She had made her sacrifice in the spirit of utter abnegation, and none need count the cost which she never reckoned.

CHAPTER XV.

The same cloud of trouble and sorrow that now darkened the daily life of Rachel Gray, soon gathered over her neighbours and friends. With boding and pain, she watched the coming of a calamity, to them still invisible.

Mr. Jones got up one morning, and felt exactly as usual. He took down his shutters, and no presentiment warned him of the sight that was going to greet his eyes.

The Teapot stood at the corner of a street which had naturally another corner facing it; that corner—let it be angle, if you like, critical reader—had, from time immemorial, been in the possession of a brown, tottering, untenanted house, whose broken parlour windows Mr. Jones had always seen filled with, blank oak shutters, strong enough for security and closing within.

But now, to his dismay, he saw half-a-dozen workmen pulling down the bottom of the house, and leaving the top untouched. His heart gave a great thump in his bosom. "I'm a lost man," he thought, "they're making a shop of it."

And so they were, but what sort of a shop was it to be? That was the question. Jones lost no time; he put down his shutter, thrust his hands in his pocket—his usual resource when he wanted to look unconcerned— sauntered awhile down the street, talked to some children, and finally came back to the workmen.

"Pulling it down," he said, after looking at them for awhile, "an old rubbishing concern—ain't it?"

"Pulling it down!" echoed one of the workmen, giving him a contemptuous look, "much you know about it."

"Well, but what is it to be?" asked Jones, looking as simple as he could, "stables?"

"Stables! a shop, stupid!"

"Oh! a shop! Ah! it's to be a shop, is it? And what sort of a shop— public-house? We want one."

"Better ask Mr. Smithson; the house is his."

"Oh! it's Mr. Smithson's, is it?"

Jones walked away much relieved.

Mr. Smithson had long talked of removing himself and his earthenware to some larger tenement than that which he now occupied; a pleasant neighbour he was not; but anything was better than the fear which had for a moment seized the heart of Richard Jones.

The workmen did not linger over their task, indeed, Mr. Smithson took care that they should not. Night and morning, the whole day long, Jones saw him after them; he watched him through the pots of Scotch marmelade that decorated the front of his shop window, and internally admired the indefatigable zeal Mr. Smithson displayed. Humbly, too, he contrasted it with his own deficiencies in that respect "I ain't got no spirit; that's the fact of it," confessed Mr. Jones in his own heart.

In a comparatively short space of time, the bricklayers had done their task; they were succeeded by the carpenters, who proved as zealous and as active. And now fear and trembling once more seized the heart of Richard Jones. What were those busy carpenters about? why were they fabricating shelves and drawers? drawers of every size, some small, some large, just such drawers as he had in his shop? He questioned one of their body: what was to be sold in that shop—did he know? The man could not tell, but rather fancied it was to be an oil and colour shop. Then it was not to be Mr. Smithson's own? Oh, no, certainly!

Jones walked away, a prey to the most tormenting anxiety. Was the man right—was he wrong? had he spoken the truth? had he deceived him? Was he, Jones, now that his business was really improving, was he threatened with a rival? Or was this but a false alarm, the phantom of his fears? what would he not have given to think so! His ease was the more distressing, that he dared unburthen his mind to none, to Mary least of any. She, poor little thing, far from sharing her father's fears, rejoiced in the prospect of a new shop.

"It'll make the street quite gay," she said to her father, "especially if it's a linen-draper's. I wonder if they'll have pretty bonnets."

She tried to obtain information on this interesting point, but failed completely. Suspense is worse than the worst reality. Richard Jones lost appetite and sleep. Slumber, when it came, was accompanied by such fearful nightmare, that waking thoughts, though bitter, were not, at least, so terrible. He could not forget the opposite shop; in the first place, because he saw it every morning with his bodily eyes; in the second, because it ever haunted that inward eye called by Wordsworth 'the bliss of solitude.' How far it proved a bliss to Richard Jones, the reader may imagine.

All this time the shop had been progressing, and now bricklayer, carpenter, glazier, and decorator haying done their work, it was completed and ready for its tenant, who, however, seemed in no hurry to appear. This proved the worst time for Richard Jones. To look at that shop all the day long, and not to be able to make anything of it; to wonder whether it were a friend or an enemy; whether it would give new lustre to the street on which he had cast his fortunes, or blast those fortunes in their very birth, was surely no ordinary trial. Well might he grow thin, haggard, and worn.

At length, the crisis came. At the close of November, a dread rumour reached his ears. The shop was to be a grocer's shop, and it was to open a week before Christmas.

That same evening, Mary came home crying, and much agitated. Mrs. Brown, with her usual kindness, had given information.

"Oh, father!" she exclaimed, "Mrs. Brown says it's to be a grocer's shop."

"So I have heard to-day," he replied, a little gloomily. "Never mind, child," he added, attempting to cheer up, and a rueful attempt it turned out, "never mind, I dare-say there's room for two."

He said it, but he knew it was not true; he knew there was room but for one, and that if two came, why, either both must perish after a fierce contest, or one survive and triumph over the ruin of the other's all. He knew it, and groaned at the thought.

"I wish you wouldn't father," said Mary, again beginning to cry.

"Mary, my pet, I can't help it," said Jones, fairly giving way to feelings too long repressed; "there aint room for two, that's the plain truth of it, and if another grocer comes, why, he must ruin me, or I must ruin him; and that aint pleasant to think of, is it?"

Mary was not without spirit.

"Father," she cried resolutely, "if it's to be, why, it's to be, and it can't be helped; but I wouldn't give in without trying to get the upper hand, that I wouldn't."

Her father shook his head disconsolately.

"Child," he said, "it's like setting an old horse against a mettlesome young one. That new fellow has got every advantage. Look at his shop, then look at mine; why, his is twice as big again. Look at his front— all plate glass; look at his counters—all polished oak!"

"Well, and can't you get the shop—our shop—done up too?" ambitiously asked Mary. "There's time yet."

"Why yes, there is—but the money, Mary dear!"

"Never mind the money."

"No more I would, my pet, if I had got it; but you see, the one pound ten a week hasn't kept up; and those things cost a precious deal."

Mary reflected a while. "S'pose," she suggested, "you got in a fresh stock of jams in glass jars, for the front window."

"And what shall we do with the old?"

"Eat them. And s'pose you add a few pots of pickles?"

"Pickles!" echoed Jones, looking doubtful.

"And s'pose," continued Mary, "you add macaroni, and sauces, and set up as a superior grocer."

Jones scratched his head.

"Law, child!" he said, "this aint a stylish neighbourhood—and who'll buy my macaroni and my sauces?"

"Why no one, of course," superciliously replied Mary. "It's not to sell them, you want them; it's for the look of the thing—to be a superior grocer, you know."

The words "superior grocer," gently tickled secret ambition. Mr. Richard
Jones seriously promised his daughter to think about it.

Mary had other thoughts, which she did not communicate to her father; and of these thoughts, the chief was to find out what had become of Mr. Saunders, and return to the old plan of enticing him into partnership. She was so full of this project, that, partly to get assistance, partly to take a little consequence on herself, she imparted it, under the strictest secrecy, to Rachel Gray; and at the close, she pretty clearly hinted, that if Mr. Joseph Saunders behaved well, he might, in time, aspire to the honour of her hand.

Rachel heard her silently, and looked very uncomfortable.

"My dear," she said, hesitatingly, "you must not think of anything of the kind; indeed you must not."

"And why shouldn't I?" tartly asked Mary, with a saucy toss of the head.

"Because, my dear," said Rachel, gently and sadly, "Jane is going to marry that Mr. Saunders, who ifs cousin to Mr. Smithson, who is putting him in the new grocer's shop."

For a moment, Mary remained stunned; then she burst into tears.

"He's a mean, sneaking fellow! that's what he is!" she cried.

"Oh, my dear—my dear!" gently said Rachel, "will you not take something from the hand of God! We have all our lot to bear," she added, with a half sigh.

But gently though Rachel spoke, Mary looked more rebellious than submissive.

"He's a mean—" she began again; the entrance of Mrs. Brown interrupted her.

Mrs. Brown was in a very ill humour. At first, she had behaved pretty decently to Rachel and her father; but of late, she had given free vent to her natural disposition; and it was not, we have no need to say, an amiable one. On the present occasion, she had, moreover, additional cause for dissatisfaction.

"And so," she exclaimed, slamming the door, and irefully addressing Rachel, "and so your beggarly father has been and broke my china cup! Eh, ma'am!"

Rachel turned pale, on hearing of this new disaster.

"Indeed, Mrs. Brown—" she began.

"Don't Mrs. Brown me," was the indignant rejoinder. "I tell you, I have never had a moment's peace, ease, and quiet, and never shall have—since you and your beggarly father entered this house."

For, by a strange perversion of ideas, Mrs. Brown persisted in asserting and thinking that it was Rachel and her father who had entered the house, and not she. And this, Rachel might have said; and she might have added that to bear daily reproaches and insults, formed no part of her agreement with Mrs. Brown. She might—but where would the use have been? She was free to depart any day she liked; and since she preferred to stay, why not bear it all patiently? And so she remained silent, whilst Mrs. Brown scolded and railed; for, as she had said to Mary, "we have all our lot to bear."

The lesson was lost on the young girl. No sooner was Mrs. Brown's back turned, than again Mary abused Mr. Saunders, Jane, Mr. Smithson and the new shop collectively, until she could go home to her father's. He already knew all, and gloomily exclaimed, "that it was no more than he expected; that it was all of a piece; and that there was neither honesty, gratitude, nor goodness left in this wicked world."

From which comprehensive remark we can clearly see that Mr. Jones is turning misanthropic. And yet the matter was very simple—an everyday occurrence. Smithson had seen that he might find it profitable to cut the ground under Jones's feet. Why should he not do it? Is not profit the abject of commerce? and is not competition the fairest way of securing profit?

CHAPTER XVI.

The reader may easily imagine Jane and Joseph Saunders married. It was an old engagement Imagine them, too, retained from their wedding tour to Gravesend. It is evening; and on the next morning, "The two Teapots" is to open.

Richard Jones spent a sleepless night, and took down his shutters as soon as a gray, dull light entered the street. It availed little; only a dirty child came in for a pennyworth of brown sugar. It was half-past eight when Saunders opened his shop; and just about that time a chill, drizzling rain began to fall.

The morning was miserable, and only a few wretched figures flitted about the wet street. No one entered the "Teapot;" but then not a soul either crossed the threshold of the rival shop.

And thus the dull morning wore on until the church clock struck ten. A sprinkling of customers then entered the shop of Richard Jones. They were one and all mightily indignant at the impudence of the opposite shop in coming there—a lady in a large, black, shabby straw bonnet in particular.

"Ay, ay, you may flare away—you may flare away," she added, knowingly wagging her head at it, "you'll have none of my custom, I can tell you. An ounce of your four shilling best, Mr. Jones, if you please?"

"Coming, ma'am, di-rectly," was the prompt reply. .

"I never heard anythink like it—never," observed another lady, with solemn indignation. "Did the low fellow think we wanted his shop!"

An indignant "no," was chorused around.

Richard Jones's heart swelled, and his throat too. He was much moved.

"Gentlemen," he began, "no, ladies, I mean—ladies, I have always done my duty since I was a boy, and, with the help of God, I mean to do my duty till I die." Pause and approving murmur. "And, ladies, I am no speech-maker—all I say is this: God forgive that villain opposite! You know the story. I'll not trouble you with repeating it. All I say is this: ladies, if my customers'll stand by me, I'll stand by my customers —I'll stand by my customers!" he repeated, looking round the shop with a triumphant eye, and giving the counter a hearty thump with his fist; and, poor fellow, you may be sure that he did mean to stand by his customers.

The oration proved very successful; altogether, the day was successful. The two Teapots remained vacant; the Teapot was thronged. All Jones's liege subjects were anxious to prove their loyalty; and though, when the gas was lit, Jones could discern a few dark figures within his rival's shop, Jones did not care. He felt certain they were but some of the low creatures from the alley, and be did not care.

The second day resembled the first, and the third resembled the second. Jones felt quite satisfied "that it was all right," until he cast up his accounts at the end of the week. To his surprise, he found that his expenditure was barely covered, and that, somehow or other, his gains had considerably lessened. He reckoned over and over, and still he came to the same result. "Well, 'taint of much consequence for one week," he thought, a little impatiently, and he put the books by.

"What's the matter, father?" asked Mary, looking up into his overcast face.

"What's the matter!" he echoed cheerfully; "why, the matter is, that you are a saucy puss—that's what's the matter," and he chucked her chin, and Mary laughed.

But the next week's examination revealed a still deeper gap. Jones scratched his head, and pulled a long face. It was not that he minded the loss, for it was a trifling one after all; but be had a secret dread, and it stood in the background of his thoughts, like a ghost in a dark room, haunting him. Could it be—was it possible—that his customers were playing him false—that they were deserting him—and he began to think and think, and to remember, how many pennyworths of this, and of that, he had sold to the children, and how few shillings worth he had sold to the mothers.

"Well, father, and how's this week?" asked Mary.

Jones rubbed his chin, and looked at her fairly perplexed—his wit was none of the brightest—as to how he might best elude the question.

"How's this week," he echoed; "well, this week is like last week to be sure. I wonder how that fellow Saunders is a getting on."

"Law! father, don't mind him," said Mary. "He's low, that's what he is— he's low."

Impossible for us to translate the scorn with which Miss Mary Jones spoke. It impressed her father. "Spirited little thing," he thought, and he drew her fondly towards him, and kissed her, and Mary fortunately forgot her question.

Week after week passed, and what had been a speck on the horizon, became a dark and threatening cloud. Richard Jones could not shut his eyes to the truth that his customers were deserting him. Even Mary perceived it, and spoke uneasily on the subject, of which her father at once made light.

"It's business, child," he said, "and business is all ups and downs; I have had the ups, and the downs I must have." Spite this philosophic reflection, Mr. Jones could not help thinking he had rather more than his share of the downs. He was embittered, too, by daily perceiving the defection of some staunch customer. That lady in the large, shabby, black straw bonnet, who had so spiritedly told "The two Teapots" to flare away on the day of its opening, was one of the first who forsook the "Teapot" for its rival. Many followed her perfidious example; but Mr. Jones did not feel fairly cut up, until he one evening distinctly saw Rachel Gray walk out of the opposite shop. The stab of Brutus was nothing to Caesar in comparison with this blow to Richard Jones.

And he was thinking it over the next morning, and stood behind his counter breaking sugar rather gloomily, when Rachel herself appeared. Mr. Jones received her very coldly.

She asked for a pound of sugar.

"And no tea?" he said, pointedly.

"None to-day," quietly replied Rachel; but she saw that he knew all, and she was too sincere to feign ignorance. "Mr. Jones," she said, somewhat sadly, "I must go where I am told, and do as I am bid; but,

indeed, why do you not keep better tea?"

"Better tea! better tea!" echoed Mr. Jones, in some indignation.

"Yes," quietly said Rachel, "better tea."

Mr. Jones smiled an injured smile, and rather sarcastically replied:

"Miss Gray, if you prefer that feller's tea to mine, you're welcome to leave your money to him, and not to me. 'Tain't because my daughter is prenticed to you that I expect nothink from you, Miss. All I say is this: don't go there at night, Miss Gray, and buy your tea, and then come here in the morning and buy your sugar. That's not giving a man your custom, you know it ain't. Don't do it; no offence meant, but I'm like you, Miss Gray, plain spoken, you see."

And he resumed the breaking of his sugar.

"I prefer!" sadly said Rachel, "when you know, Mr. Jones, that I am no one now, but must go by the will of another—indeed, you wrong me!"

Jones knew he did; but misfortune makes men wilfully unjust.

"Don't mention it," he interrupted, "ladies like new faces, and he's a young fellow, and I am an old one, and so there's an end of it."

Poor Rachel looked much pained. To be blamed by every one seemed her lot.

"Indeed, Mr. Jones," she said, "I must do as Mrs. Brown bids me, and she says your four shilling black is not equal to his four, and, indeed, Mr. Jones, I am sorry to say, that others say so too."

Mr. Jones did not reply one word; he fell into a brown study; at the close of it he sighed, and looking up, said earnestly:

"Miss Gray, let me have some of that tea, will you? and I'll see myself what it's like."

"Of course you will," said Rachel, brightening, "you shall have it directly—directly, Mr. Jones."

And without loss of time she hastened home, and almost immediately appeared again, bringing him the tea herself, and earnestly declaring that she was sure he had only to taste it, to set all right, to which Jones answered not a word, but rather gloomily thanked her for the trouble she had taken. When he was once more alone, he smelt the tea, shook his head and frowned; then he put it away until evening came round, when he gave it to Mary, and without further explanation, simply told her that was the tea they were going to have this evening. Unconscious Mary made the tea.

"La! Father," she exclaimed, as she poured the boiling water upon it, "what beautiful tea you've got; it's quite fragrant."

"Is it?" he echoed, faintly,

"Why, of course it is," she said, pettishly, "I am sure that fellow opposite ain't got nothink like it."

Richard Jones leaned his brow on his hand, and checked a groan. But when the tea was drawn, when it was poured out, when he raised the cup to his lips and tasted it, the man's courage forsook him; he put down the cup, and cried like a child.

"Father! father!" exclaimed Mary, frightened and bewildered.

"Oh! my darling!" he cried, "we're ruined—we're lost!—that tea is Joseph Saunders's tea; and he gives it for four shillings, and it's better than my five. And I can't give it, nor I can't get it neither," he added, despairingly; "for I have not got credit, and little cash; and I buy dear, and dear I must sell, or starve!"

Of this speech, all Mary understood, was that the tea she had been making was tea from Mr. Saunders's shop. She deliberately rose, poured the contents of the teapot on the ashes in the hearth; the contents of her own teacup, then of her father's quickly followed; then she sat down, folded her arms, and uttered a grim: "There! I only wish I could serve him so," she added after a pause.

But what Mary meant by this wish—to pour out Joseph Saunders like his own tea, seems rather a fantastic image, even for hate—the present writer does not venture to determine.

"It's all over!" sadly said Jones; "we can't compete with him. I'll shut up shop, and we'll go to some other neighbourhood, and live in our old way. After all, I'll not be a richer nor a poorer man than before my cousin left me the sixty pound."

"You ain't got no spirit!" cried Mary, turning scarlet with anger. "Give in to that fellow!—I'd have more spirit than that," she added with mighty scorn.

Her father attempted to remonstrate; but the wilful little thing would not listen to facts or to reason. She was sure Saunders could not keep up much longer—that she was. They had only to wait, and wear him out.

Alas! it is very hard to tear out ambition and pride from the heart of man, rich or poor. In an evil hour, Richard Jones yielded.

CHAPTER XVII.

And now, alas! fairly began the Teapot's downward course. Every effort of Richard Jones to rise, only made him sink the deeper. To use a worn out, though expressive phrase, he stirred heaven and earth to get better tea; but the spell to conjure it forth was wanting. Jones had very correctly stated the case to his daughter—he had not credit; he had little or no cash; what he purchased in small quantities, he bought dear; and he sold as he bought. And thus, unable to compete with superior, capital and energy, he declined day by day.

But if he fell, it was not without a struggle. He turned desperate, and resorted to a desperate expedient; he sold his goods at prime cost, and left himself without profit. But Jones did not care; all he wanted was to crush his opponent—that object accomplished, and he once more sole master of the field, he could make his own price, and gradually retrieve lost time, and heal the wounds received in the battle.

Business requires a cool head; competition has its limits, beyond which yawns the bottomless pit of ruin. Jones lost his temper, and with it his judgment. Not satisfied with the faint change for the better, produced by the first measure, he impatiently resolved "to settle that Saunders," by a second and still bolder stroke. He filled his shop-windows with placards, on which prices were marked, with notes of admiration. He pressed into his service a dozen of little boys, whose sole business was to slip bills under doors, and to throw them down areas, or to force them into the hands of unconscious passengers; and he crowned an these arts by selling under prime cost.

The customers could not resist this tender appeal to their feelings; they came back one and all—the Teapot once more was full—the two Teapots was deserted; and Richard Jones was triumphant.

We profess no particular regard for Joseph Saunders; but we cannot deny that he played his cruel game skilfully and well. He did not bring down his prices one farthing. Without emotion he saw his shop forsaken—he knew his own strength; he knew, too, the weakness of his enemy.

"Oh! It's that dodge you are after," he thought, thrusting his tongue in his cheek. "Well, then, it has beggared many a man before you; and we shall see how long you'll keep it up—that's all."

And to whosoever liked to hear, Saunders declared that Mr. Jones was selling at loss, and that he (Saunders) could not afford to do so; and was sorry the old man would be so obstinate. "Where was the use, when he could not go on?"

Nothing did Jones more harm than this assertion, and the knowledge that it was a literal truth; for though people worship cheapness, that goddess of modern commerce, it is only on condition that she shall be a reality, not a fiction; that she shall rest on the solid basis of gains, howsoever small; not on the sand foundation of loss, that certain forerunner of failure. Jones could not, of course, long keep up the plan of selling under cost; he was obliged to give it up. With it, ceased his fallacious and momentary prosperity.

"I thought so," soliloquized Saunders.

Reader, if you think that we mean to cast a stone at the great shop, you are mistaken. We deal not with pitiless political economy, with its laws, with their workings. The great shop must prosper; 'tis in the nature of things; and the little shop must perish—'tis in their nature too. We but lament this sad truth, that on God's earth, which God made for all, there should be so little room for the poor man; for his pride, his ambition, his desires, which he has in common with the rich man; we but deplore what all, alas! know too well; that the crown of creation, a soul, a man by God's Almighty mind, fashioned and called forth into being, by Christ's priceless blood purchased and redeemed to Heaven, should be a thing of so little worth—ay, so much, so very much less worth than some money, in this strange world of ours.

Few pitied Richard Jones in his fall. His little ambition was remembered as a crime; for success had

not crowned it. His little vanities were so many deadly sins; for gold did not hide or excuse them. To the dregs, the unhappy man drank the latter draught which rises to the lips of the fallen, when they see the world deserting them to worship a rival. A usurper had invaded his narrow realm, and crushed him; his little story was a true page from that great book of History, which we need not read to know how power decays, or to learn of man's fickleness, and fortune's frowns. Alas! History, if we did but know it, lies around us, as mankind lives in the meanest wretch we meet, and perchance despise.

It is a bitter thing to behold our own ruin; it is a cruel thing to look on powerless and despairing; and both now fell to the lot of Richard Jones. He had ventured all, and lost all. He was doomed—he knew it; every one knew it. But, alas! the cup of his woes was not full.

Mary had always been delicate. One chill evening she took cold; a cough settled on her chest; sometimes it seemed gone, then suddenly it returned again. "She felt very well," she said; and, strange to say, her father thought so too. Rachel was the first to see that something was wrong.

"Mary," she said to her, one morning, "what ails you? Your breath seems quite short."

"La! bless you, Miss," replied Mary, in her patronizing way, "I am all right."

They were alone; Rachel looked at the young girl; her eyes glittered; her cheeks were red with a hectic flush; her breathing was quick and oppressive. The eyes of Rachel filled with tears; she thought of her little dead sister in her grave.

"Mary," she said, "do not work any more to-day—go home."

Mary looked up in her face, and laughed—the gay laugh of an unconscious child, fearless of death.

"Why, Miss, you are crying!" she exclaimed, amazed.

"Am I?" said Rachel, trying to smile, "never mind, Mary; go home—or, rather, take this parcel to Mrs. Jameson, number three, Albert Terrace. It is a fine day—the walk will do you good."

Mary jumped up, charmed at the prospect. She tied her bonnet-strings before the looking-glass, and hummed the tune of "Meet me by moonlight alone." Mary was turned sixteen; and vague ideas of romance sometimes fitted through her young brain.

When she was fairly gone, Rachel rose, laid her work by, put on her bonnet and shawl, and quietly slipped round to the Teapot: ostensibly, she wanted to buy some tea: her real purpose was to call the attention of Mr. Jones to his daughter's state.

But, strange to say, Rachel Gray could not make him understand her; his mind was full of the two Teapots; of the villany of that Saunders; of the world's ingratitude; of his misfortunes and his wrongs.

"I dare say Mary feels it too," put in Rachel.

"Of course she does, Miss Gray—of course she does. The child has feelings. And then you know, Miss Gray, if that fellow hadn't a come there, why, you know, we were getting on as well as could be."

"I notice that she coughs," said Rachel

"Why, yes, poor child; she can't get rid of that cough—she's growing, you see. And then, you see, that Saunders—"

"And her breathing is so short," interrupted Rachel.

"Sure to be, on account of the cough. And, as I was saying, that
Saunders—"

"But, Mr. Jones, don't you think you had better see a doctor?" again interrupted Rachel.

"See a doctor!" exclaimed Jones, staring at her. "You don't mean to say my child is ill, Miss Gray?"

"I don't think she is quite well, Mr. Jones," replied Rachel, trembling as she said so.

He sank down on his seat behind the counter, pale as death. The obstinate cough, the short breathing, the hectic flush, all rushed back to his memory; unseen, unheeded, till then, they now told him one fearful story. With trembling hand he wiped away the drops of cold perspiration from his forehead.

"The doctor must see her directly," he said, "directly. I'll go and look for him, and you'll send her round. It's nothing—nothing at all, I am sure; she's growing, you see. But still, it must be attended to,

you know —it must be attended to."

A light laugh at the door interrupted him. He turned round, and saw Mary looking in at him and Rachel Gray, through the glass windows; with another laugh, she vanished. Rachel went to the door, and called her back.

"Mary, Mary, your father wants you."

The young girl came in; and, for the first time, her father seemed to see the bright red spot that burned on her cheek, the unnatural brilliancy of her blue eyes, the painful shortness of her breath. A mist seemed to fall from his eyes, and the dread truth to stand revealed before him; but he did not speak, nor did Rachel; Mary looked at them both, wondering.

"Well, what ails you two, that you stare at me so," she said, pertly. "I am so hot," she added, after a while. "I think I shall stay at home, as you said. Miss Gray."

She went into the back parlour, and sat down on the first chair she found at hand. Rachel Gray and her father followed her in. The poor child, who, because she had felt no actual pain, had thought that she could not be ill, now, for the first time, felt that she was so.

"What ails you, dear?" softly asked Rachel, bending over her, as she saw her gradually turning pale.

"La! bless you. Miss Gray, I am quite well—only I feel so faint like."

And even as she spoke, her head sank on the bosom of Rachel—she had fainted.

When Mary recovered to consciousness, she was lying on her bed, up stairs. Rachel stood by her pillow. At the foot of her bed, Mary caught sight of her father's face, ghastly pale. Between the two, she saw a strange gentleman, a doctor, who felt her pulse, put a few questions to her, wrote a prescription, and soon left.

"I must go now," said Rachel, "but I shall come back this evening, and bring my work."

Jones did not heed her; he looked stupified and like one bereft of sense, but Mary laughed and replied, "Oh! do Miss Gray, come and take tea with us."

Rachel promised that she would try, kissed her and left. With great difficulty she obtained from Mrs. Brown the permission to return.

They on whom the light of this world shone not, were rarely in the favour of Mrs. Brown. And only on condition of being home early did she allow Rachel to depart. Before leaving, she went up to her other's chair, he was not now quite so helpless as at first, and did not require her constant presence or assistance; though he still did not know her.

"I shall try and not be too long away," said Rachel in a low voice.

"Never mind," he muttered, shaking his head, "never mind."

"There's a precious old fool for you!" said Mrs. Brown laughing coarsely.

A flush of pain crossed Rachel's cheek, but to have replied, would have been to draw down a storm on her head; she silently left the house.

She found Mary feverish, restless, and full of projects. She would get up early the next day, and make up for lost time. She remembered all the work she had to do, and which she had unaccountably neglected. Her father's shirts to mend, her own wardrobe to see to; the next room to clean up, for a second lodger had never been found; in short, to hear her, it seemed as if her life had only begun, and that this was the day of its opening. In vain Rachel tried to check her soothingly; Mary talked on and was so animated and so merry, that her father, who came up every five minutes to see how she was, could not believe her to be so very ill as Miss Gray thought, or the Doctor had hinted. Indeed, when at nine Rachel left, and he let her down stairs, he seemed quite relieved.

"The child's only growing," he said to Rachel, "only growing; a little rest and a little medicine, and she'll be all right again."

But scarcely was Rachel out of the door, when she burst into tears. "My poor little Mary," she thought, "my poor little Mary!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was rather late when Rachel knocked timidly at the door, Mrs. Brown opened to her, and there was a storm on her brow.

"Well, ma'am," she began; "well, ma'am!"

"Oh! pray do not—do not!" imploringly exclaimed Rachel, clasping her hands.

For her excessive patience had of late rendered Mrs. Brown's violent temper wholly ungovernable. Irritated by the very meekness which met her wrath, she had, with the instinct of aggression, found the only vulnerable point of Rachel—her father. This was, indeed, the heel of Achilles. All the shafts of the enemy's railing that fell harmless on the childish old man, rebounded on his daughter with double force: deep and keen they sank in her hearty and every one inflicted its wound. And thus it was that Rachel had learned to look with terror to Mrs. Brown's wrath —that she now shrank from it with fear and trembling, and implored for mercy.

But there is no arguing with ill-temper. Mrs. Brown would neither give mercy, nor hear reason. Had she not lent twenty pound three and six to Rachel? Was not Rachel beholden to her for food, shelter, chemist's bill, and physician's fees? and should not, therefore, her will be Rachel's law, and her pleasure be Rachel's pleasure?

Poor Rachel, her patience was great, but now she felt as if it must fail; as if she could not, even for the sake of a roof's shelter, endure more from one to whom no tie of love or regard bound her—nothing but the burdening sense of an obligation which she had not sought, and for which she had already paid so dearly. She clasped her thin hands—she looked with her mild brown eyes in the face of her tormentor, and her lips quivered with the intensity of the feelings that moved her to reply, and repel insult and contumely, and with the strength of will that kept her silent.

At length, Mrs. Brown grew tired, for her ill-temper had this quality— it was vehement, not slow and irritating, the infliction ceased—Rachel remained alone.

Mrs. Brown had taken possession of the room that had once been Rachel's. Thomas Gray slept in the back parlour; and in order to remain within reach of aid, Rachel slept on the floor of the front room. In this room it was that Mrs. Brown had left her. Softly Rachel went and opened the door of her father's room; it was dark and quiet; but in its stillness, she heard his regular breathing—he slept, and little, did he know how much that calm sleep of his cost his daughter. She closed the door, and sat down in her own room; but she thought not of sleep; the tempter was with her in that hour. Her heart was full of bitterness—full even to overflowing. On a dark and dreary sea, her lot seemed cast; she saw not the guiding star of faith over her head. She saw not before her the haven of blessed peace.

The words "Thy will be done," fell from her lips; they were not in her heart. Nothing was there, nothing but wounded pride, resentment, and the sense of unmerited wrong.

In vain, thinking of her tyrant, Rachel said to herself, "I forgive that woman—I forgive her freely." She felt that she did not; that anger against this pitiless tormentor of her life smouldered in her heart like the red coal living beneath pale ashes; and Rachel was startled, and justly, to feel that so strange and unusual an emotion, anger against another, had found place in her bosom, and that though she bade it go, it stayed, and would not depart.

To be gentle is not to be passionless. The spirit of Rachel had been early subdued, too much subdued for her happiness; but it was too noble ever to have been quenched. It still burned within her, a flame pure and free, though invisible. But now, alas! the vapours of earthly passion dimmed its brightness: and it was darkened with human wrath.

Through such moments of temptation and trial all have passed; and then it is, indeed, when we are not blinded by pride, that we feel our miserable weakness, a weakness for which there is but one remedy, but then it is a divine one—the strength of God.

That strength Rachel now invoked. *De Profundis*, from the depths of her sorrow she cried out to the Lord, not that her burden might grow less, but that her strength to bear it, to endure and forgive, might increase eyen with it And strength was granted unto her. It came, not at once, not like the living waters that flowed from the arid rock, when the prophet spoke, but slowly, like the heavenly manna that fell softly in the silence of the night, and was gathered ere the sun rose above the desert.

Rachel felt—oh, pure and blessed feeling!—that her heart was free from bitterness and gall; that she could forgive the offender, to seventy times seven; that she could pray for her—not with the lip-prayer of the self-righteous Pharisee, but with the heartfelt orisons of the poor, sinning, and penitent publican; and again and again, and until the tears flowed down her cheek, she blessed God, the sole Giver of so mighty and superhuman a grace.

And well it was for Rachel Gray, that she forgave her enemy that night. Well it was, indeed, that the next sun beheld not her wrath. Before that sun rose, the poor, erring woman had given in her account of every deed, and every word uttered in the heat of anger:—Mrs. Brown had gone to her room strong and well. She was found dead and cold in her bed the next morning.

A coroner's inquest was held, and a verdict of "sudden death" recorded. And a will, too, was found in a tea-caddy, by which Mrs. Brown formally bequeathed all her property to Rachel Gray, "as a proof," said the will, "of her admiration and respect."

On hearing the words, Rachel burst into tears.

"Thank God! That I forgave her!" she exclaimed, "thank God!"

Well indeed might she thank the Divine bestower of all forgiveness. The legacy was not after all a large one. Mrs. Brown's annuity died with her; she left little more money than buried her decently; the ground lease of the house in which she had originally resided was almost out, and the bequest was in reality limited to the present abode of Rachel; but invaluable to her indeed, was the shelter of that humble home, now her own for ever.

And when all was over; when the grave had closed on one, who not being at peace herself, could not give peace to others, when Rachel and her father remained alone in the little house, now hushed and silenced from all rude and jarring sounds, safe from all tyrannical interference, Rachel felt, with secret thankfulness, that if her lot was not happy, according to human weakness, it was blest with peace and quiet, and all the good that from them spring. If a cloud still lingered over it, it was only because, looking at her father, she remembered the unfulfilled desire of her heart; and if on days otherwise now marked with peace, there sometimes fell the darkness of a passing shadow, it was only when she saw and felt too keenly the sorrows of others.

CHAPTER XIX.

Richard Jones still hoped: "Mary was so young!" He would hope. But it was not to be; he had but tasted the cup of his sorrows; to the dregs was he to drink it; the earthly idol on which he had set his heart was to be snatched from him; he was to waken one day to the bitter knowledge: "there is no hope!"

How he felt we know not, and cannot tell: none have a right to describe that grief save they who have passed through it; we dare not unveil the father's heart: we deal but with the external aspect of things, and sad and bitter enough it was.

In a silent shop, where the sugar seemed to shrink away in the casks, where the tea-chests looked hollow, where dust gathered on the counter, on the shelves, in the corners, everywhere; where all looked blasted and withered by the deadly upas tree opposite, you might have seen a haggard man who stood there day after day, waiting for customers that came not, and who from behind his shop windows drearily watched the opposite shop, always full; thriving, fattening on his ruin; or who, sadder sight to his eyes and heart, looked at the little back parlour, where on her sick bed his dying daughter lay.

Mary, as her illness drew towards its close, became fanciful, she insisted on having her bed brought down to the back parlour, and would leave her door open, "in order to mind the shop," she said. If anything could hasten her father's ruin, this did it: the few customers whom he had left, gradually dropped off, scared away by that sick girl, looking at them with her eager, glittering eyes.

He sat by her one evening in a sad and very bitter mood. She was ill, very ill, and for three days not a soul had crossed the threshold of his shop. His love and his ambition were passing away together from his life.

"Father," querulously said Mary, "why did you shut the shop so early?" For since her illness the young girl's mind was always running on the shop.

"Where's the use of leaving it open?" huskily answered Jones, "unless it's to see them all going to the two Teapots opposite."

"Well, but I wish you had not," she resumed, "it looks so dull and so dark."

It is very likely that to please her, Richard Jones would have gone and taken the shutters down; but for a knock at the private door.

"There's Miss Gray," said Mary, her face lighting.

Richard Jones went and opened it; it was Rachel Gray. The light of the candle which he held fell full

on his face; Rachel was struck with its haggard expression.

"You do not look well, Mr. Jones," she said.

"Don't I, Miss Gray," he replied, with a dreary smile, "well, that's a wonder! Look here!" he added, leading her into the shop where his tallow candle shed but a dim, dull light, "look here," he continued, raising it high, and turning it round so that it cast its faint gleam over the whole place, "look here; there's a shop for you, Miss Gray. How long ago is it since you, and your mother, and Mary and I we settled that shop? Look at it now, I say—look at it now. Look here!" and he thrust the light down a cask, "empty! Look there!" and he raised the lid of a tea-chest, "empty! Do you wish to try the drawers? Oh! they are all labelled, but what's in 'em. Miss Gray? nothing! It's well the customers have left off coming; for I couldn't serve them; couldn't accommodate them, I am sorry to say," and he laughed very bitterly. "I was happy when I came here," he resumed, "I had hope; I thought there was an opening; I thought there was room for me. I set up this shop; I did it all up myself, as you know— every inch of it; I painted it; I put the fixtures in; I drove every nail in with my own hand, and what's been the upshot of it all, Miss Gray?"

Rachel raised her soft brown eyes to his:

"It is the will of God," she said, "and God knows best, for He is good."

Richard Jones looked at her and smiled almost sternly, for suffering gives dignity to the meanest, and no man, when he feels deeply, is the same man as when his feelings are unstirred.

"Miss Gray," he said, "I have worked from my youth—slaved some would say; I hoped to make out something for myself and my child, and it was more of her than of myself I thought I wronged none; I did my best; a rich man steps in, and I am bewared—and you tell me God is good—mind, I don't say he aint—but is he good to me?"

Rachel Gray shook with nervous emotion from head to foot She was pained— she was distressed at the question. Still more distressed because her mind was so bewildered, because her ideas were in such strange tumult, that with the most ardent wish to speak, she could not. As when in a dream we struggle to move and cannot, our will being fettered by the slumber of the body, so Rachel felt then, so alas! for her torment she felt almost always; conscious of truths sublime, beautiful and consoling, but unable to express them in speech.

"God is good," she said again, clinging to that truth as to her anchor of safety.

Again Richard Jones smiled.

"And my child, Miss Gray," he said, lowering his voice so that his words could not reach the next room, "going by inches before my very eyes; yet I must look on and not go mad. I must be beggared, and I must bear it; I must become childless, and I must bear it. And the wicked thrive, and the wicked's children outlive them, for God is good to them, Miss Gray."

The eyes of Rachel filled with tears; her brow became clouded.

"Ah! Mr. Jones," she said, "do not complain; you have loved your child."

"What are you keeping Miss Gray there for?" pettishly said the voice of Mary, "I want her."

"And here I am, dear," said Rachel, going in to her, "I am come to sit a while with you; for I am sure your poor father wants rest, does he not?"

"I don't want any one to sit with me," impatiently replied Mary, "I am not so ill as all that."

"But do you sleep at night?"

"No, I can't—I am so feverish."

"Well, then, we sit up with you to keep you company," said her father.

This explanation apparently satisfied Mary, who began to talk of other things. She knew not she was dying; whence should the knowledge have come to a mere child like her. None had told her the truth. And she was passing away into eternity, unconscious—her heart, her thoughts, her soul full of the shadows of life.

Rachel saw and knew it, and it grieved her. She remembered her little sister's happy and smiling death-bed, and from her heart she prayed that a similar blessing might crown the last hours of little

Mary; that she might go to her God like a child to her father.

And when Richard Jones, after sitting up with them until twelve, went upstairs to rest awhile, and Rachel heard Mary talk of her recovery, and of projects and hopes, vain to her as a dream, she could not help feeling that it was her duty to speak. They were alone, "yes, now," thought Rachel, "now is the time to speak."

Oh! hard and bitter task: to tell the young of death; the hoping that they must not hope; to tell those who would so fondly delay and linger in this valley, that they must depart for the land that is so near, and that seems so far. Rachel knew not how to begin. Mary opened the subject.

"I shall be glad when I am well again," she said, "I am tired of this little room; it seems so dull when I see the sun shine in the street, don't it, Miss Gray?"

"I dare say it does: you remind me of a little story I once read; shall I tell it to you?"

"Oh! yes you may," carelessly replied Mary, yawning slightly; she thought
Miss Gray prosy at times.

"It is not a long story," said Rachel timidly, "and here it is; a king was once hunting alone in a wood, when he heard a very beautiful voice singing very sweetly; he went on and saw a poor leper."

"What's a leper?" interrupted Mary.

"Don't you remember the lepers in the Gospel, who were made clean by our Saviour? they were poor things, who had a bad and loathsome complaint, and this man, whom the king heard singing, was one; and the king could not help saying to him, 'how can you sing when you seem in so wretched a condition?' But the leper replied, 'it is because I am in this state that I sing, for as my body decays, I know that the hour of my deliverance draws nigh, that I shall leave this miserable world, and go to my Lord and my God.'"

Mary looked at Rachel surprised at the impressive and earnest tone with which she spoke.

"Well but, Miss Gray," she said, at length, "what is there like me in this story; I am not a leper, am I?"

"We are all lepers," gently said Rachel, "for we are all sinners, and sin is to the soul what leprosy is to the body; it defiles it, and we all should be glad to die; for Christ has conquered death, and with death sin ends, and our true life, the life in God begins."

Mary raised herself on one elbow. She looked at Rachel fixedly, earnestly; "Miss Gray," she said; "what do you mean?"

Rachel did not reply—she could not.

"Why do you tell me all these things?" continued Mary.

And still Rachel could not speak.

"Miss Gray," said Mary, "am *I* going to die?" She looked wistfully in Rachel's face, and the beseeching tone of her young childish voice seemed to pierce Rachel's heart; but she had began; could not, she dared not go back. She rose, she clasped her hands, she trembled from head to foot, tears streamed down her cheek; her voice faltered so that she could scarcely speak, but she mastered it, clear and distinct the words came out. "Mary, we must all obey the will of God; we came into this world at His will, at His will we must leave it."

"And must I leave it, Miss Gray?" asked Mary, persisting in her questioning like a child.

Rachel stooped over her; the fast tears poured from her face on Mary's pale brow, "yes, my darling," she said softly, "yes, you must leave this miserable earth of trouble and sorrow, and go to God your friend and your father."

The weakest, the frailest creatures often rise to heroic courage. This fretful, pettish child heard her sentence with some wonder, but apparently without sorrow.

"Don't cry, Miss Gray," she said, "*I* don't cry; but do you know, it seems so odd that I should die, doesn't it now?"

Rachel did not reply, nor did she attempt it; her very heart was wrung.
Mary guessed, or saw it.

"I wish you would not fret," she said, "I wish you would not. Miss Gray. *I* don't, you see."

"Ay," thought Rachel, "you do not, my poor child, for what do you know of death?" And a little while after this, Mary, who felt heavy, fell asleep with her hand in that of Rachel Gray.

CHAPTER XX.

Three days had passed.

The morning was gray and dull. He had sat up all night by Mary; for Rachel, exhausted with fatigue, had been unable to come. Poor little Mary, her hour was nigh; she knew it, and her young heart grieved for her father, so soon to be childless. She thought of herself too; she looked over the whole of her young life, and she saw its transgressions and its sins with a sorrow free from faithless dismay; for Rachel had said to her: "Shall we dare to limit for ourselves, or for others, the unfathomed mercy of God?"

"Father," she suddenly said, "I want to speak to you."

"What is it, my darling?" he asked, bending over her fondly. She looked up in his face, her cheeks flushed with a deeper hectic, her glassy eyes lit with a brighter light.

"Father," she said, "I have been a naughty child, have I not?"

"No—no, my little pet, never, indeed, never."

"I know I have been naughty, father; I 'have been,' oh! so cross at times; but, father, I could not help it—at least, it seemed as if I could not—my back ached so, and indeed," she added, clasping her hands, "I am very sorry, father, very sorry."

He stooped still nearer to her; he laid his cheek on her pillow; he kissed her hot brow, little Mary half smiled.

"You forgive me, don't you?" she murmured faintly.

"Forgive you! my pet—my darling."

"Yes, pray do," she said.

She could scarcely speak now; there was a film on her eyes, too. He saw it gathering fast, very fast. Suddenly she seemed to revive like a dying flame. Again she addressed him.

"Father!" she said, "why don't you take down the shutters?"

And with singular earnestness she fixed her eyes on his. Take down the shutters? The question seemed a stab sent through his very heart. Yet he mastered himself, and replied: "'Tis early yet; 'tis very early, my darling."

"No 'taint," she said, in her old pettish way, and then she murmured in a low and humbled tone: "Ah! I forget—I forget. I did not mean to be cross again. Indeed I did not, father, so pray forgive me."

"Don't think of it, my pet. Do you wish for anything?"

"Nothing, father, but that you would take down the shutters."

He tried to speak—he could not; only a few broken sounds gasped on his lips for utterance.

"Because you see," she continued with strange earnestness, "the customers will all be coming and wondering if they see the shop shut; and they will think me worse, and so—and so—"

She could not finish the sentence, but she tried to do so.

"And so you see, father." Again the words died away. Her father raised his head; he looked at her; he saw her growing very white. Again he bent, and softly whispered: "My darling, did you say your prayers this morning?"

An expression of surprise stole over the child's wan face.

"I had forgotten," she replied, faintly, "I shall say them now." She folded her thin hands, her lips moved. "Our father who art in heaven," she said, and she began a prayer that was never finished upon earth.

The dread moment had come. The angel of death stood in that hushed room; swiftly and gently he fulfilled his errand, then departed, leaving all in silence, breathless and deep.

He knew it was all over. He rose; he closed the eyes, composed the slender limbs, then he sat down by his dead child, a desolate man—a heart-broken father. How long he sat thus he knew not; a knock at the door at length roused him. Mechanically he rose and went and opened. He saw a man who at once stepped in and closed the door, and before the man spoke, Jones knew his errand.

"It's all right," he said, "I know, the landlord could scarcely help it; come in."

The bailiff was a bluff, hearty-looking man; he gave Jones a sound slap on the shoulder.

"You are a trump! that's what you are," he said, with a big oath.

Jones did not answer, but showed his guest into the back parlour.

"Halloo! what's that?" cried the bailiff, attempting to raise the bed-curtain.

"Don't," said Jones, in a husky voice.

Then the man saw what it was, and he exclaimed quite ruefully: "I am very sorry—I am very sorry."

"You can't help it," meekly said Jones, "you must do your duty."

"Why that's what I always say," cried the bailiff with a second oath, rather bigger than the first, "a man must do his duty, mustn't he?" and a third oath slipped out.

"Don't swear, pray don't!" said Jones.

"And if I do, may I be—" here the swearing bailiff paused aghast at what he was going to add. "I can't help myself like," he said, rather ruefully, "it's second natur, you see, second natur. But I'll try and not do it—I'll try."

And speaking quite softly, spite of his swearing propensities, he looked wistfully at Jones; but the childless father's face remained a blank.

"Make yourself at home," he said in a subdued voice. "I think you'll find all you want in that cupboard, at least 'tis all I have."

And he resumed his place by the dead.

"All I want, and all you have," muttered the bailiff with his head in the cupboard. "Then faith, my poor fellow, 'tain't much."

The day was chill and very dreary; the bailiff smoked his pipe by the low smouldering fire, and yawned over a dirty old newspaper. Two hours had passed thus when Jones said to him: "You don't want for anything, do you?"

"Why no," musingly replied the bailiff, taking out his pipe, and looking up from his paper, "thank you, I can't say I want for anything, but what have you to say to a glass of grog, eh?"

He rather brightened himself at the idea.

"I'll send for anything you like," drearily replied Jones, and it was plain he had not understood as relating to himself the kindly meant proposal.

The bailiff rather stiffly said, he wanted nothing.

"Well then," resumed Jones, slipping off his shoes, "I'll leave you for awhile."

"Why, where are you going?" cried the other staring.

"There," said Jones, and raising the curtain, he crept in to his dead darling.

The curtain shrouded him in; he was alone—alone with his child and his grief. A little child he had cradled her in his arms; many a time had she slept in that fond embrace, to her both a protection and a caress. And now! He looked at the little pale face that had fallen asleep in prayer; he saw it lying on its pillow in death-like stillness; and if he repressed the groan that rose to his lips the deeper was his anguish.

Oh, passion! eloquent pages have been wasted on thy woes; volumes have been written to tell

mankind of thy delights and thy torments. To no other tale will youth bend its greedy ear, of no other feelings will man acknowledge the power to charm his spirit and his heart. And here was one who knew thee not in name or in truth, and yet who drank to the dregs, and to the last bitterness his cup of sorrow. Oh! miserable and unpoetic griefs of the prosaic poor. Where are ye, elements of power and pathos of our modern epic: the novel? A wretched shop that will not take, a sickly child that dies! Ay, and were the picture but drawn by an abler hand, know proud reader, if proud thou art, that thy very heart could bleed, that thy very soul would be wrung to read this page from a poor man's story.

And so he lay by his dead, swelling with a tearless agony, a nameless and twofold desolation. Gaze not on that grief—eye of man: thou art powerless to pity, for thou art powerless to understand.

"Only think!" said a neighbour to Mrs. Smith, "Mr. Jones's shutters have been closed the whole day. I can't think what the matter is."

"Can't you," replied Mrs. Smith laughing, "why, woman, the shop is shut."

Ay, the shop was shut. The shop which Richard Jones had opened with so much pride—the shop which he had ever linked with his child, closed on the day of her death, and never reopened. He did not care. His little ambition was wrecked; his little pride was broken; his little cruise of love had been poured forth upon the earth by God's own hand; it was empty and dry; arid sand and dust had drunk up its once sweet waters.

What a man without ambition, pride, and lore may be, he had become in the one day that bereaved him.

Pity not him, reader; his tale is told; pity him whose bitter story of hope and disappointment but begins as I write, and as you read. For mortal hand has not sounded the bitter depth of such woes. In them live the true tragic passions that else seem to have passed from the earth; passions that could rouse the meekest to revenge and wrath, if daily dew from heaven fell not on poor parched hearts, as nightly it comes down from the skies above, on thirsting earth.

CHAPTER XXI.

A time may come when the London churchyard shall be remembered as a thing that has been and is no more; but now who knows it not? Who need describe the serried gravestones that mark the resting places in this sad field of death; who need tell how they stare at busy passers by through their iron grating—how they look ghastly, like the guest of the Egyptian feast, dead in the midst of tumult and riotous life.

Dreary are they when the sun shines on them, and their rank weeds, the sun which those beneath feel not, but more dreary by far when the drizzling rain pours down the dark church walls and filters into the sodden earth. And in such a place, and on such a day did they make the grave of Mary Jones.

Two mourners stood by: a woman and a man. When all was over, when earth had closed over the grave and its contents, the man sat down on a neighbouring gravestone, and looked at that red mound which held his all, with a dreary stolid gaze of misery and woe.

Rachel bent over him, and gently laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Mr. Jones, you must come!" she said.

He made no reply, he did not rise, and when she took his hand to lead him away, he yielded without resistance. She took him to her own house. Kindly and tenderly she led him, like a little child, and a child he seemed to have become, helpless, inert—without will, without power.

His own home was a wreck, the prey of creditors, who found but little there, yet sufficient, for their claims were few, to save him from disgrace. Rachel Gray gave him the room where his child once had slept, where he had come in to look at her in her sleep, and fondly bent over her pillow: he burst into tears as he entered it; and those tears relieved him, and did him good.

At the end of two days he rallied from his torpor; he awoke, he remembered he was a man born to work, to earn his daily bread, and bear the burden of life.

He went out one morning, and looked for employment. Something he found to do; but what it was he told not Rachel. When she gently asked, he shook his head and smiled bitterly.

"It don't matter. Miss Gray," he said; "it don't matter."

No doubt it was some miserable, poorly paid task. Yet he only spoke the truth, when he said it mattered little. He lived and laboured, like thousands; but he cared not for to-day, and thought not of to-morrow; the Time of Promise and of Hope had for ever departed. What though he should feel want, so long as he could pay his weekly rent to Rachel Gray, he cared not. There is an end to all things; and as for his old age, should he grow old, had he not the parish and the workhouse? And so Richard Jones could drag on through life, of all hopes, save the heavenly hope, forsaken.

But Heaven chose to chastise and humble still further, this already chastised and sorely humbled man. He fell ill, and remained for weeks on his sick bed, a burden cast on the slender means of Rachel Gray. In vain he begged and prayed to be sent to the workhouse or some hospital; Rachel would not hear of it. She kept him, she attended on him with all the devotedness of a daughter; between him and her father she divided her time. Earnestly Jones prayed for death: the boon was not granted; he recovered.

They sat together and alone one evening in the quiet little parlour— alone, for Thomas Gray was no one, when there came a knock at the door, and the visitor admitted by Rachel, proved to be Joseph Saunders.

"Mr. Jones is within," hesitatingly said Rachel

"And I just want to speak to him," briefly replied Saunders, "so that's lucky."

He walked into the parlour as he spoke; Rachel followed, wondering what was to be the issue. On seeing his enemy, poor Jones reddened slightly but the flush soon died away, and in a meek, subdued voice, he was the first to say "good evening."

"Sorry to hear you have been ill," said Saunders sitting down, "but you are coming round, ain't you?"

"I am much better," was the quiet reply.

"Got anything to do?" bluntly asked Saunders.

"Nothing as yet," answered Jones with a subdued groan, for he thought of
Rachel, so poor herself, and the burden he was to her.

"Well then, Mr. Jones; just listen to me!" said Saunders, drawing his chair near, "I know you have a grudge against me."

"You have ruined me," said Jones.

"Pshaw, man, 'twas all fair, all in the way of business," exclaimed
Saunders a little impatiently.

"You have ruined me," said Jones again; "but I forgive you, I have long ago forgiven you, and the shadow of a grudge against you, or living man, I have not, thank God!"

"That's all right enough," emphatically said Saunders; "still, Mr. Jones, you say I have ruined you. It isn't the first time either that you have said so, and with some people, I may as well tell you it has injured me."

"I am sorry if it has," meekly said Jones.

"And I don't care a button," frankly declared Saunders, "but as I was saying, that's your belief, your impression; and to be sure it's true enough in one sense, but then, Mr. Jones, you should not look at your side of the question only. Mr. Smithson meant to set up a grocer's shop long before you opened yours; he spoke to me about it, and if I had only agreed then, it was done; you came, to be sure, but what of that? the street was as free to us as to you; that I lodged in your house was an accident; I did not know when I took your room that I should supplant you some day. I did not know Smithson had still kept that idea in his head, and that finding no situation I should be glad to consent at last. Well, I did consent, and I did compete with you, and knocked you over, as it were, but Mr. Jones, would not another have done it? And was it not all honourable, fair play?"

"Well, I suppose it was," sadly replied Jones, "and since it was a settled thing that I was to be a ruined man, I suppose I ought not to care who did it."

"Come, that's talking sense," said Saunders, with a nod of approbation, "and now, Mr. Jones, we'll come to business, for I need not tell you nor Miss Gray either, that I did not come in here to rip up old sores. You must know that the young fellow who used to serve in my shop has taken himself off, he's going to Australia, he says, but that's neither here nor there; I have a regard for you, Mr. Jones, and

having injured you without malice, I should like to do you a good turn of my own free will; and then there's my wife, who was quite cut up when she heard you had lost your little daughter, and who has such a regard for Miss Gray, but that's neither here nor there; the long and short of it is, will you serve in my shop, and have a good berth and moderate wages, and perhaps an increase if the business prospers?"

Poor Richard Jones! This was the end of all his dreams, his schemes, his anger, his threatened revenge! And yet, strange to say, he felt it very little. Every strong and living feeling lay buried in a grave. His soul was as a thing dead within him; his pride had crumbled into dust, as Mary would have said: his spirit was gone.

The humiliation of accepting Joseph Saunders proposal,—and, however strange, it was certainly well and kindly meant—Richard Jones did not consider. He looked at the advantages, and found them manifest; there lay the means of paying Rachel, of covering his few debts, and of securing to his wearied life the last and dearly-bought boon of repose. Awhile he reflected, then said aloud: "I shall be very glad of it, lam very much obliged to you, Mr. Saunders."

"Well, then, it's done," said Mr. Saunders, rising, "good night, Jones, cheer up, old fellow. Good night, Miss Gray; Jane sends her love, you know. Sorry the old gentleman's no better." And away he departed, very well satisfied with the success of his errand.

"Oh! Mr. Jones!" exclaimed Rachel, when she returned to the parlour.

"Don't mention it," he said with a faint smile, "I don't mind it, Miss Gray."

"But could you not have stayed here?" she asked.

"And be a burden upon you I that's what I have done too long, Miss Gray."

"But until you found employment elsewhere, you might have remained."

"His house is as good as any; his bread is not more bitter than another's," replied Jones, in a subdued voice, "besides, now that my Mary is gone, what need I care, Miss Gray?" And as he saw that her eyes were dim, he added: "You need not pity me, Miss Gray, the bitterness of my trouble is, and has long been over. My Mary is not dead for me. She is, and ever will be, living for her old father, until the day of meeting. And whilst I am waiting for that day, you do not think I care about what befalls me."

CHAPTER XXII.

Once more Rachel was alone. Once more solitude and the silence of the quiet street, shrouded her in.

A new life now began for Rachel Gray. Like a plant long bent by adverse winds, she slowly recovered elasticity of spirit, and lightness of heart. What she might have been, but for the gloom of her youth, Rachel never was; but as the dark cloud, which had long hung over her, rolled away, as she could move, speak, eat, and think unquestioned in her little home, a gleam of sunshine, pale but pure, shone over her life with that late-won liberty. Her speech became more free, her smile was more frequent, her whole manner more open and cheerful.

Rachel lived, however, both by taste and by long habit, in great retirement, and saw but few people. Indeed, almost her only visitors were Richard Jones and Madame Rose. The little Frenchwoman now and then dropped in, looked piteously at Thomas Gray, shrugged her shoulders, nodded, winked, and did everything to make herself understood, but talk English; and Rachel listened to her, and laughed gaily at the strange speech and strange ways of her little friend.

Richard Jones was a still more frequent visitor. He came to receive, not to give sympathy. The society of Rachel Gray was to him a want of his life, for to her alone he could talk of Mary; he spoke and she listened, and in listening gave the best and truest consolation. Now and then, not often, for Rachel felt and knew that such language frequently repeated wearies the ear of weak humanity, she ventured to soothe his grief with such ailments as she could think of. And her favorite one, one which she often applied to herself and her own troubles was: "We receive blessings from the hand of God, shall we not also take sorrow when it pleases Him to inflict it?"

"Very true. Miss Gray, very true," humbly assented Richard Jones.

Of his present position he never spoke, unless when questioned by Rachel, and when he did so, it was to say that "Saunders and his wife were very kind to him, very kind. And I am quite happy, Miss Gray,"

he would add, "quite happy."

And thus like a hidden stream flowed on the life of Rachel Gray, silent, peaceful and very still. It slept in the shadow of the old grey street, in the quiet shelter of a quiet home, within the narrow circle of plain duties. Prayer, Love, Meditation and Thought graced it daily. It was humble and lowly in the eyes of man; beautiful and lovely in the sight of God.

And thus quiet and happy years had passed away, and nothing had arrested their monotonous flow.

It was evening, Rachel and her father were alone in the little parlour. Thomas Gray was still a childish old man, bereft of knowledge and of sense. Yet now, as Rachel helped him to his chair, and settled him in it, something, a sort of light seemed to her to pass athwart the old man's face, and linger in his dull eyes.

"Father!" she cried, "do you know me?"

In speech he answered not, but it seemed to her that in his look she read conscious kindness. She pressed his hand, and it appeared to press hers in return; she laid her cheek to his, and it did not seem lifeless or cold. Then, again she withdrew from him and said:

"Father, do you know me?"

He looked at her searchingly and was long silent: at length he spoke, and in a low but distinct voice, said: "Rachel."

In a transport of joy, Rachel sank at his feet and sobbing clasped her arms around him.

"Never mind, Rachel," he said, "never mind."

"Father, father," she cried, "you know me, say you know me."

But she asked too much, it was but a dawn of intelligence that had returned; never was the full day to shine upon earth.

"Never mind, Rachel," he said again, "never mind."

But though the first ardour of her hopes was damped, her joy was exquisite and deep. Her father knew her, he had uttered her name with kindness, in his feeble and imperfect and childish way, he loved her! What more then was needed by one who like the humble lover recorded by the Italian poet, had ever

"Desired much, hoped little, nothing asked."

Somewhat late that same evening, Richard Jones knocked at Rachel's door. As she opened to him the light she held shone on her face, and though he was not an observant man, he was struck with her aspect. There was a flush on her cheek, a light in her eyes, a smile on her lips, a radiance and a joy in Rachel's face which Richard Jones had never seen there before. He looked at her inquiringly, but she only smiled and showed him in.

And now, reader, one last picture before we part.

It is evening, as you know, and three are sitting in the little parlour of Rachel Gray. An autumn evening it is, somewhat chill with a bright fire burning in the grate, and lighting up with flickering flame the brown furniture and narrow room. And of these three who sit there, one is a grey, childish old man in an arm-chair; another, a man who is not old, but whose hair has turned prematurely white with trouble and sorrow; the third is a meek, thoughtful woman with a book on her knees, who sits silently brooding over the words her lips have uttered; for she has been reading how the Lord gives and how the Lord takes away, and how we yet must bless the name of the Lord.

The good seed of these words has not been shed on a barren soil. As Richard Jones sits and dreams of his lost darling, he also dreams of their joyful meeting some day on the happier shore, and perhaps now that time has passed over his loss and that its first bitterness has faded away, perhaps he confesses with humble and chastened heart, that meet and just was the doom which snatched from him his earthly idol, and, for a while, took away the too dearly loved treasure of his heart.

And Rachel Gray, too, has her thoughts. As she looks at her father, and whilst thankful for what she has obtained, as she yet longs, perhaps, for the full gift she never can possess; if her heart feels a pang, if repining it questions and says: "Oh! why have I not too a father to love and know me, not imperfectly, but fully—completely," a sweet and secret voice replies: "You had set your heart on human love, and

because you had set your heart upon it, it was not granted to you. Complain not, murmur not, Rachel, if thou hast not thy father upon earth, remember that thou hast thy Father in Heaven!"

THE END.

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