

Mrs. London

First Love



Mrs. Loudon

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CHAPTER I.

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“No hut shelters Comala from the rain.”

A family of travelling vagrants were overtaken on the high road just leading out of Keswick, on the Penrith side, by a gentleman on horseback. He had observed the same group begging during the entertainments of the regatta which had concluded but the evening before.

“Ho! ho! my good woman,” he said, as he passed in a sling trot, “I am glad to see your boy has found his second leg!”

The woman, who appeared to be young, and who would have been handsome, had not dirt and impudence rendered her disgusting, looked behind her, and perceived that a poor, sickly, ragged child, apparently about five years old, who followed her, tired of his crutches, which pushed up his little shoulders almost out of their sockets, had contrived to loosen the bandage of his tied-up leg, and slip it down out of the dirty linen bag, in which it usually hung on the double, and from which it was not always released, even at night, as so doing necessarily incurred the further trouble of tying it up again in the morning. She laid down her bundle, and stood still with her arms a-kimbo, till, with hesitating steps, and looks of suppressed terror, her victim came up; then glancing round, to ascertain that the gentleman was out of sight, she seized the child, snatched both the crutches from his trembling hands, and grasping them in one of hers, she

began to flog him without pity. He seemed used to this, for he uttered no sound of complaint; silent tears only rolled down his face.

“Ye villain!” said she at last, with a strong Cumberland accent, and gasping for breath, “it’s not the first time, is it? it’s not the first time I’ve beat you within an inch of your life for this. But I’ll do for you this time: that I will! You shan’t be a burden to me any longer, instead of a profit. If it wasn’t for the miserable looks of ye,” she added, shaking him almost to atoms as she wheeled him round, “that sometimes wrings a penny out of the folk, I’d ha’ finished ye long ago.” Then, with her great foot, armed with an iron-rimmed wooden shoe, she gave him a violent kick on the offending leg, continuing thus:—“Its best break the shanks on ye at ance, ye whey-faced urchin ye! and then ye’ll tak te yeer crutches without biddin’!”

Finding, however, that though he had staggered and fallen forward on both hands, he had yet risen again, and still contrived to stand, she once more lifted her foot, to repeat the kick with increased force: for she was as much intoxicated by drink as by rage, and really seemed to intend to break the child’s leg; but her husband, a sort of travelling tinker, coming up at the moment, and uttering a violent curse, struck her a blow that, poised as she just then was on one foot, brought her to the ground.

During the scuffle which ensued, the poor little sufferer, who had occasioned it all, crept through the hedge of a field by the road side, and hid himself under some bushes. But the woman, soon after pursuing in search of him, jumped the fence, and dropped among the very brambles where he

lay. She perceived him instantly, and shook her clenched hand, which so paralysed him, that he did not dare to move, though she for some time delayed seizing him. Finding that the inside of the hedge was covered with clothes for bleaching, she thought it best, the first thing she did, to secure a good bundle of so desirable a booty, and fling it over to her husband. She was just in the act of so doing, when the owner of the linen came into the field, and immediately set up the halloo of "Thieves! thieves!" upon which, dropping what she had collected, and giving up all thoughts of carrying the child with her, she made the best of her way, and disappeared not only from the spot, but from the neighbourhood.

About an hour after, when the poor boy, pressed by hunger, crept from his hiding place, a girl, who was left to watch the clothes, spying him, cried out, "Ha! you little spawn e—the devil! did she leave you to bring her the bundle?" And so saying, she pursued and beat him, till she drove him out of the field, and into the adjoining garden of an old woman, who was standing at the moment with a long pole in her hand, endeavouring to beat down, as well as her failing sight would permit, the few remaining apples from the topmost branches of her single apple-tree: the well laden lower boughs of which had been robbed of their goodly winter store but the preceding night.

On seeing a boy scramble through her hedge, she concluded, of course, that his errand was to possess himself of the said remaining apples, and, accordingly, uttering a yell of execration, she converted her fruit-pole into a weapon defensive and offensive, and hobbling towards the

poor child, drove him from her premises; over the boundary of which, long after he had so far escaped, she continued to address to him, at the very top of her voice, every opprobrious epithet of which she was mistress: her shrill tones the while collecting, at the heels of the fugitive, hooting boys, and barking curs innumerable. These, however, did not follow him far; and when they returned to their homes or their sports, he wandered about for the rest of the day, avoiding houses and people, and fearing that every one he met would beat him.

At length, towards evening, he found himself on the borders of the lake of Derwent, and seeing a boat fastened close to the land, he got into it; partly with the idea of hiding himself, and partly with a vague recollection of having often wished to be a sailor-boy, when begging about with his mother in sea-port towns. He rolled himself up in an old cloak which lay under one of the benches, where, exhausted by pain, hunger, and fatigue, he fell asleep.

Shortly after our poor wanderer had chosen this refuge, in stepped Master Henry St. Aubin, whose pleasure-boat it was, to take a sail *alone*, contrary to reiterated commands, and for no other reason, but because, for fear of accidents, he had been desired never to go without a servant. He pushed from the land, and began to arrange his canvass. He put up his main-sail, which filling immediately, bent his little bark on one side, almost level with the water, and made it fly across the lake in great style. When, however, it got under shade of the high mountains on the Borrowdale coast, the breeze slackened, and he determined to add his mizen and jib; but what was his surprise, when, on attempting to

remove the old cloak which lay near them, he discovered within its folds the sleeping boy. Supposing him to be a spy placed there to watch his movements, and report his disobedience, he began to curse and swear, kicked at him under the bench, and ordered him to pack out of his boat instantly. The poor child, but half awake, gazed all round him, got up as well as his bruises would permit, and was about to obey in silence; but, when, he saw how far they were from land, he hesitated; upon which Henry took up a rope's end, and lashed at him in the manner that sailors call starting, repeating at each stroke, "Jump, spy! jump!"

Driven almost wild with the pain of the blows, the child at last did jump; but, at the same moment, caught instinctively at the side of the boat, to which he hung with both hands, and so kept his head above water. Henry set up a loud laugh, and rowed out, towing him after him. Then, willing to make sport for himself, by terrifying the beggar brat, he attempted to push his fingers off the edge of the boat, but they clung to it with all the tenacity of self preservation; when the one hand was forced for a moment from its hold, the grasp of the other became but the more convulsively strong; and when the second was assailed by the united efforts of both of Henry's, the first returned to its former position.

At length, tired of the jest himself, Master St. Aubin turned into shallow water, leaped ashore, and suffering the half-drowned child to land as he might, bade him scamper, ere he had well got footing. Then, intent on pursuing his sweet, because forbidden amusement, he stepped back into his boat, which with its white sails, contrasted with the dark

woods of the coast it glided silently beneath, soon became as picturesque an object as though the urchin that guided it had been the most noble and adventurous of romantic heroes.



CHAPTER II.

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—“And I tremble amid the night.”

About the centre of the entrance of the vale of Borrowdale, conspicuously situated, stands that curious rock, called, by the native Cumbrians, Borrowdale-stane. In form and position it is much like a dismantled and stranded vessel, laying on its keel and leaning a little to one side. On the highest point of this rock, a station well known to the lovers of the sublime, stood a lady wrapped in a warm fur lined cloak. Her air, however, was much too fashionable and modern to harmonize in any degree with the wild desolation of the surrounding region, which, when viewed from the elevated position she thus occupied, as far as the eye could reach, resembled a stormy ocean: its gigantic billows formed by the congregated tops of mountains.

The evening was cold, approaching to frost; and the sun, though still much above the natural horizon, was just sinking from view behind the lofty chain of western hills: his last rays lingered a while on the most prominent parts of each stupendous height, then, gradually retiring, left point after point, which, like so many beacon lights extinguished by an invisible hand, successively disappeared, till all became shrouded alike in cheerless gloom and volumes of mist rolling down the sides of the mountains, a dense fog settled in the valley like a white and waveless lake.

The lady on the rock appeared to deem it time to return home, for, withdrawing her eyes from the distant view, she cast them downward in search of the path by which to descend; when, amid the rocks and huge rough stones which lay scattered beneath like the ruins of a former world, she thought she saw something move, though very slightly. She looked at it for a time; it quitted not the spot where she first descried it; yet, still it certainly did move! She descended, approached, and beheld a poor little boy, who seemed about five or six years old. He was sitting on the ground; the wretched rags, in which he was dressed, were dripping with wet; his poor limbs, which were all bent together, and drawn up close to his face, trembled extremely, while his little hands, with their long emaciated fingers, spread and hooked round his knees, seemed endeavouring to hold them, as though the violence of their motion was becoming too much for his frame to bear.

The lady stood looking down on him for a moment with mingled pity and surprise. He was slowly rocking himself from side to side: it was a movement quite expressive of despondency, his chin rested on the backs of the hands which held his knees, and his eyes wandered hopelessly among the bare stones that lay around him, while his head retained the same fixed position.

“Little boy, look up!” she said, taking one of his cold wet hands in hers. He raised his face; misery was depicted in every feature: his teeth chattered excessively, and his poor eyes, that swam in tears, were now lifted to hers with an expression truly piteous.

“Poor child! come with me,” she said. Something like hope began to dawn on his forlorn countenance; but she finished her sentence, in what she intended for the most comforting manner, by saying, “and I will take you home to your mother.”

He had not risen. He drew his hand from hers, turned on his face on the ground with the universal shudder of terror, and, clinging to the rocks, cried, “No! no! no!”

She endeavoured to soothe him, and to untwist his fingers from the fastenings, which, like so many fibres of roots, they had found for themselves among the crevices and broken fragments of his flinty bed; but he hid his face against the hard stone, and would not turn round. When she succeeded at length in detaching one of his hands, and was gently endeavouring to raise him, his inward shudderings increased so visibly that she became fearful of throwing him into convulsions: she desisted therefore, and, feigning to go away, removed a few paces; then stopped, and said, “Well! I am going; but won’t you tell me your name?”

“Edmund,” he sobbed out; without, however, raising his head.

“Well, Edmund,” said the lady, in a kind voice, “good night!” He turned, sat up, looked at her, and then all round, as though having had her near him, even for the last few seconds, the thought of being left alone for the night now struck upon his heart anew with fresh desolation; then, resuming the attitude she had first found him in, he began, as before, to rock himself from side to side and weep. “But where do you mean to sleep tonight, Edmund?” said the

lady; "I am sure you must be cold sitting on those hard stones with your clothes so wet."

"Yes, I am," he said, looking up wistfully again, "very cold, and very hungry." Then, hesitating a little, he suddenly stretched out his hand, and said, "I'll go with you, if you will hide me from every one."

"I will! I will, my poor child!" she exclaimed, flying back to him, kindly stooping over him, and, with some difficulty, assisting him to rise; for he was so stiffened it seemed scarcely possible to unbend his knees: nor did there appear to be one spark of vital heat remaining in the poor little creature! She drew a part of her warm fur mantle close over him, and endeavoured to soothe him and give him confidence in her protection.

"And will you stay here with me, then?" he whispered softly.

"I will take you to a much more comfortable place," she replied, "where there is a good fire, and a nice dinner for Edmund."

"And are you sure she won't find me there?" he said, still whispering.

"She shall never hurt you, while you are with me," the lady replied, "whoever she may be."

"Then I will go!" said Edmund; and he lifted his head and tried to smile through his tears. The lady, still sharing with him her warm cloak, now led him by the hand, while he held hers fast in both of his, and walked, with short uneven steps, so close to her, that she was every moment in danger of treading on his little bare feet; and thus did they arrive at

Lodore House, just as the first roll of the thunder resounded along the desolate valley they had so lately quitted.



CHAPTER III.

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“Vases filled with liquid beams, hang in chains
Of gold.”

“A sumptuous banquet
Spread, invites the taste.”

The cheerful, well-aired, already lit up dwelling, now entered by our wanderers of the valley, formed a striking contrast to the dreary scene they had just left. An excellent fire blazed in the hall, bronzed figures held flaming lamps aloft, and powdered, well-dressed, well-fed servants, bustled to and fro, bearing, towards the dining-room, dishes, which though covered, tempted the palate by the various savoury odours they sent forth. In short, every comfort, every elegance, nay, every luxury, evidently abounded beneath the roof of Lodore House.

It had indeed, some years since, been a mere shooting lodge, situated in the midst of an extensive property, on which, from its remoteness, no family mansion had ever been built. Mrs. Montgomery, however, its present possessor, had, since her early widowhood, made additions to the lodge in her own taste: and though on her daughter's account she regularly visited London during the fashionable season, at all other times she chose to reside in this romantic retirement. The lady, who had just entered, leading poor Edmund by the hand, was Frances Montgomery, the only child of Mrs. Montgomery. As Frances,

with her charge, crossed the hall already described, they met Henry St. Aubin, a nephew of Mrs. Montgomery's, a boy of about twelve years old. Frances called immediately for the housekeeper, and desired her own maid to bring some warm soup. While her attention was thus engaged, master Henry contrived to come up close to the poor little stranger, and say to him in an under tone, "Take care, you sir, you don't dare to tell, or I'll—" Frances feeling an additional pressure of Edmund's hand, turned suddenly round, and saw the frown still on Henry's face, with which he had thought fit to strengthen his arguments.

"How can you look so cross, Henry?" she exclaimed; "you actually frighten the poor child!"

"Pshaw!" said Henry, and went laughing into the drawing-room, where he attempted to entertain, by ludicrous descriptions of the pretty new pet Frances had found; while she proceeded to the housekeeper's room, and there, before a comfortable fire, herself assisted, in despite of the dinner-announcing voice of the gong, the operations of the two women she had summoned. They released the poor child from the wet rags which hung about him, sending a chill to his little heart; they put him up to the neck in warm water; and cautiously gave him, by a little at a time, some nourishing soup. Frances then called for meat, pudding, and every thing nice she could think of; and, lastly, for a supply of her own night things. By all these prompt exertions, the poor, naked, shivering, starving Edmund, was soon dressed in a long sleeved, high collared, full frilled sleeping chemise; his limbs warmly clothed in a pair of the housekeeper's worsted web stockings, which served him at once for

drawers and hose; a large dressing-gown of Frances's folded about him, and a pair of her dressing slippers on his little feet; and, thus equipped, he was seated in front of the fire, with all the other good things which had been called for, placed on a table before him.

It was with the greatest pleasure that Frances, who stayed to help him herself, saw him venture, thus encouraged, to eat some dinner; and what with the refreshment, the cleanliness, the glow of all the surrounding warmth on his cheeks, and the comfortable white dress up about his neck, he certainly appeared almost a new creature; though, when he looked up, there was still a wildness, the unsteady glance of fear mingled with the appealing expression of his eyes; and when he looked down, their long black lashes, sweeping his hollow cheeks, might well inspire the beholder with even a painful degree of compassion; yet when, notwithstanding his timidity, he smiled with gratitude and a sense of present pleasure arising from bodily comfort, Frances, at least, could not help thinking him grown already quite a beauty; and she ran to the dining-room door, and entreated her mamma just to come out for a moment and see what a fine child the poor boy was, now that they had washed and dressed him.

Lord L., hearing her voice, begged permission to follow, but was refused.

Frances' absence had, in the meantime, banished the smiles of Edmund, so that Mrs. Montgomery, on entering the housekeeper's room, exclaimed, with a laugh, patting her daughter on the cheek, "I cannot say much for his beauty, my dear!—But that is no reason why you should not save

the life of the poor child," she added; and, with the tenderness of one accustomed to a mother's feelings, she stroked his little head. He smiled again, and she continued, "but he may be pretty when he gets fat."

"And shall he stay here to get fat, mamma?" asked Frances eagerly.

"To be sure, my dear," replied Mrs. Montgomery, "we will never turn the poor little thing out of doors again, while it wants a shelter." Frances was delighted; caught up both her mother's hands and kissed them, and then the forehead of her protégé: nor did she leave him till he dropped asleep in a comfortable bed, with her hand in his to give him confidence.

Frances at length entered the dining-room, just as the domestic party engaged round the table were dispatching a third or fourth summons for her; the second course having by this time made its appearance. Lord L., who occupied his usual seat beside her chair, began to question her about the adventure of the evening. Compassion made her eloquent on the misery, the cold, the hunger, the wretchedness of poor Edmund; but when she came to his beauty, she faltered and looked at her mother with a beseeching expression.

Mrs. Montgomery laughed, and replied to the look, "Oh, yes! there was a sweetness when he smiled, that made me begin to think he would be pretty if he were fat; but now, the poor child is all eyes and eyelashes."

"Oh, mamma!" said Frances, "he has the most beautiful mouth I ever saw in my life, and such nice teeth!"

“Has he, my dear?” said Mrs. Montgomery, with provoking indifference: for she happened to be deep in a discussion on the nature of the poor laws, with Mr. Jackson, the clergyman.

Master Henry, meanwhile, was greedily devouring tart and cream, with his face close to his plate, and his eyes levelled at the dish, in great anxiety to be in time to claim the last portion which now remained on it; but, in his attempt to swallow what was before him, he missed his aim, and was a moment too late, though he thrust out his plate with both hands just as he saw a servant coming round; but the tart was dispatched to Lord L., to whom it had been offered, and who, being too much occupied to refuse it, had bowed. It lay before him a few moments, and went away untouched. Henry, vexed extremely, and desirous of revenge on Frances for the disappointment occasioned him by her lover, said, “If you are talking of the beggar brat, he is the image of a monkey! I was quite afraid he would bite me as I passed him in the hall.”

“I am sure, Henry,” retorted Frances, “he seemed more afraid of you, than you could be of him: and, by the bye, you need not, I think, have looked so cross at the poor child.”

“Cross!” repeated Henry, “I did not look cross. What reason do you suppose I had to look cross? I never saw the brat before in my life.”

Henry’s speech was accompanied by that hateful expression, which the eyes of an ill-disposed child assume, when it knows it is uttering falsehood!

“Henry!” said Mrs. Montgomery, with some surprise; “you need not look angry, much less guilty. No one can suppose

that you know any thing of the poor boy. But leave the room, sir: and remember you don't sit at table again, till you know better how to conduct yourself."

Henry obeyed, but slowly and sulkily; trailing one foot after the other, and determining to have revenge on the cause of his disgrace. He offered no apology, and therefore was not taken into favour again for the evening, though poor Mrs. Montgomery, as she passed to her own apartment, looked into that where he lay, and said, with a sigh, "Good night, and God bless you, child!"

To account, in some degree, for the unprepossessing manners of Master Henry, we shall introduce a few words respecting the young gentleman's birth, and hitherto unfortunately directed education.

CHAPTER IV.

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“Lifting at

The thought my timid eyes, I pass them o’er

His brow; and, if I would, I dare not love him:

Yet, dare I never disobey that eye,

Flashing outward fires, while, within its depths,

Where love should dwell, ’tis ever still, and cold,

To look upon.”

St. Aubin, Henry’s father, was a Frenchman, and totally without religion. A flourish of worldly honour, as long as no temptation had arisen, had sustained for him even a showy character. By this, a showy appearance, and showy manners, he had, what is called, gained the affections, that is, he had dazzled the fancy, of Maria, the younger sister of Mrs. Montgomery. Maria was a beautiful girl, and but seventeen. Her sister, who was also her guardian, for she was some years her senior, and their parents were dead, disapproved of the match, but in vain: Maria married St. Aubin, and was miserable! The marriage being a runaway affair, no settlements were entered into, which circumstance St. Aubin imagined would be in his favour; but, when he discovered that the consent of the guardians not having been obtained, gave them the power of withholding Maria’s fortune till she should be of age, and of then settling it on herself and her children, without suffering him to touch one shilling, his brutality was such, that Mrs. St. Aubin,

before the birth of her child, for she had but one, was broken-hearted.

She denied herself the consolation she might have found in the sympathy of her sister, for she wished to conceal from her the wretchedness she had brought upon herself, by acting contrary to her advice. She was, however, shortly removed out of the reach of that sister's penetration.

St. Aubin was deeply in debt when he married, and things had been ever since becoming worse and worse. He had always flattered himself that the guardians would not use the full power of which they spoke, and that by making fair promises he should be able, when once Maria was of age, to get the money, or the greater part of it, into his own hands; he had therefore laboured incessantly to put off the payment of every demand to the day of his wife's coming of age, and made all his arrangements with reference to that period. At length it arrived. He made application for his wife's fortune; but Mrs. Montgomery, in reply, reminded him, that her sister having married without her consent, had given her, as sole remaining guardian, a power, which she now saw it was her duty to exert; namely, that of refusing to pay down any part of the money. She should, therefore, she said, secure the whole of it in the hands of trustees, as a future provision for Maria and her child.

With this letter open in his hand, St. Aubin, foaming with rage, entered the room where his wife sat with Henry, then between two and three years old, playing on the ground at her feet, while she was absorbed in melancholy anticipations of the probable result of her husband's application. St. Aubin flung the letter in her face, swearing,

with horrid imprecations, that he would be the death both of her and her brat, and then blow out his own brains. Mrs. St. Aubin remained silent; but the shrieks of the child brought servants. By the time they arrived, however, St. Aubin was striding up and down the room, venting his rage on the open letter, which he kicked before him at each step.

Shortly after this final disappointment respecting Maria's fortune, St. Aubin found it necessary to take refuge from his creditors in the Isle of Man; whither he went accordingly, carrying with him his wife and child, and settling there with a very reduced establishment.

Not choosing, it would seem, to be hung for declared murder, he appeared determined, by every species of ingenious barbarity, to torture the wretched Maria out of her remaining shred of existence; and, among other devices, he daily and hourly made her shudder, by his vows of deep and black revenge on her sister.

One day, after sitting some time leaning his head on his hand, with a countenance resembling the thunder-cloud, lightning suddenly flashed from his eyes, imprecations exploded from his lips, he started to his feet, stood before his wife, and clenching his hand, uttered these words: "I tell you, Mrs. St. Aubin, that child, that I hate, because it is yours! that child, to whose future provision she has sacrificed me! that child I will rear, I will preserve, for the sole purpose of being the instrument of my revenge!—by his means, were it twenty years hence, were it thirty years hence, I will break her heart! Yes," he added, as if in reply to a look from Maria of astonishment, almost amounting to

incredulity, "and I have determined how I shall do it." He then resumed his sitting attitude, and again leaning his head on his hand, a long hour of utter silence followed, during which his unhappy wife sat at the other side of the table, not daring to arouse him by rising to leave the room.

Henry, at this time, promised to have in him a strange mixture of the dispositions both of his father and mother; or, in other words, of evil and good. The evil certainly did predominate; yet, had a careful hand early separated the seeds, cultivated the good, and cast out the bad, this ill-fated child might have been saved from perdition; or had he, with all his faults, been supplied with that only unerring standard of right, the practical application of sacred truths to moral obligations, even in after-life there might have been hope; but his father, as we have said, had no religion: he daily scoffed at whatever was most sacred, purposely to insult the feelings of his wife, and this before his child. One morning, he found Maria with the Bible before her, and Henry on her knee. He looked at them for a moment; then taking the child by the shoulder, he raised one foot level with the hand in which he held him, and kicked him, in a contemptuous manner, as he swung him to the middle of the floor, saying, that such a mammy's brat ought to have been a girl. Mrs. St. Aubin ran to raise the child from the ground. St. Aubin snatched up the sacred volume, open as it lay, and flung it after her, telling her, in a voice of thunder, that she was a psalm-singing fool, and ordering her not to cram the boy's head with any of her cursed nonsense. Indeed, in his calmest and best disposed moods, "You are a

fool, Mrs. St. Aubin!" was his usual remark on any thing his wife ventured to say or do.

Mrs. St. Aubin having ascertained that the child was not hurt, took up the book, arranged its ruffled leaves in silence, and laid it with reverence on the table. Her husband viewed her with a malicious grin till her task was completed; then, walking up to the table, he opened the treasury of sacred knowledge, and deliberately tore out every leaf, flinging them, now on one side, now on the other, to each far corner of the apartment; then striding towards the fire-place, he planted himself on the hearth, with his back to the chimney, his legs spread in the attitude of a colossal statue, the tails of his coat turned apart under his arms, and his hands in his side-pockets.

"Now," he said, looking at his wife, "pick them up!—pick them up! pick them up!" he continued, till all were collected.

Mrs. St. Aubin was about to place the sheets within their vacant cover on the table; but, with a stamp of his foot, which made every article of furniture in the room shake, and brought a picture that hung against the wall, on its face to the floor, he commanded her to put them in the fire. She hesitated; when seizing her arm, he shook it over the flames, till the paper taking fire, she was compelled to loose her hold.

"I ought to have reserved a sheet to have made a fool's cap for you, I think," he said, perceiving that silent tears were following each other down the cheeks of his wife. "Why, what an idiot you are! the child has more sense than you have," he added, seeing that Henry, occupied by surprise and curiosity, was not crying. "Come, Henry," he

continued, in a voice for him most condescending, “you shall carry my fishing basket to-day.”

Henry had been just going to pity his poor mamma when he saw her crying; but hearing his father say that he had more sense than his mother, he could not help feeling raised in his own estimation, and anxious to show his sense by flying with peculiar alacrity for the basket.

He had viewed the whole of the preceding scene with but little comprehension, as may be supposed, of its meaning, and with very confused ideas of right and wrong, being, at the time, not above six years old; but the practical lesson—and there are no lessons like practical lessons—made an indelible impression: all future efforts, whether of mother or aunt, usher or schoolmaster, layman or divine, to infuse into Henry precepts derived from a source he had seen so contemned by his father, were for ever vain. His father, he was old enough to perceive, was feared and obeyed by every one within the small sphere of his observation: for him, therefore, he felt a sort of spurious deference, though he could not love him. For his mother, who had always indulged him with the too great tenderness of a gentle spirit utterly broken, and who had wept over him many a silent hour, till his little heart was saddened without his knowing why, he naturally felt some affection; but then he daily saw her treated with indignity, and therefore did not respect either her or her lessons: for he was just at the age when a quick child judges wrong, a dull one not at all.

Henry had much of the violence of his father’s temper, with some of the fearfulness of his mother’s. In judicious hands, the latter, though no virtue, might have been made

to assist in correcting the former; the whole current of his fears might have been turned into a useful channel: in short, he might have been taught to fear only doing wrong, and, by a strict administration of justice, proving to him his perfect security from blame while he did right, he might have been given all that honest-hearted boldness in a good cause, which, throughout after-life, is so necessary to ensure dignity to the character of man, and the early promises of which, it is so delightful to see in the happy open countenance, in the very step and air of a fine frank boy, who has never had his spirit broken by undeserved harshness, or been rendered hopeless of pleasing by inconsistency.

Henry, on the contrary, when he had done no real wrong, was frequently treated with the most violent cruelty; while his very worst faults passed unreprieved, if they did not happen to cross the whims of his father: and this cruelty, thus inflicted on a helpless, powerless child, which could not resist, for ever raised in the breast of Henry, who was, as we have said, naturally violent, an ever unsatisfied thirst of vengeance; a sense too of the injustice of the punishments inflicted, a thing early understood by children, embittered his feelings, and the transient impressions thus rendered permanent, corroded inwardly, till they settled into a malice of nature, totally subversive of all that was or might have been good or amiable.

Alas! why will not parents reflect, how much the characters and happiness of their children, in after life, depend on the species of minor experience collected in infancy, and the few years immediately succeeding that

period. When intellect is matured, we may call upon it to judge of great events, to guide us in great undertakings, or lead us to signal self-conquests; but by this time, the feelings, the strong holds, whether of vice or virtue, are pre-occupied, and the passions, already in arms and in the field, too probably on the side of error, certainly so, if hitherto undirected. And hence it is, that in so many minds the kingdom within is found in a perpetual state of rebellion against the sovereignty of reason: or, in other words, hence it is, that so many people daily act by impulse, contrary to what they call their better judgment. Here, then, is the true task of the parent; to use, for the benefit of his child, that deliberate sense of right, which, in his own case, comes frequently too late for action. And how shall that parent depart in peace, who has not thus endeavoured, at least, to smooth the path of truth before the footsteps of his child?

When Henry was old enough for public education, Mrs. Montgomery wrote to her sister, to offer an allowance for the expenses of placing him at school. St. Aubin ordered his wife to accept the offer, and selected S—B—school, with the meanest description of lodging in the neighbouring village, as the cheapest he could hear of, that a part of the allowance, which was liberal, might remain in his own hands.

The school-house, at the period of which we speak, could accommodate but a very few of the boys, while the rest were generally lodged in the houses of the poor villagers; where, it is to be feared, they lorded it, and did just as they pleased.