TEMPT NOT; OR HARRY RUTHVEN'S MISTAKE.

CHAPTER I.

"Indeed, papa," said Harry Ruthven, "if I had thought you would have been so much annoyed about it, I should not have given Joe the money, but I could not bear to hear those men calling you mean and stingy. Joe Warden said that no gentleman—certainly not the old Laird—would have allowed a faithful old servant to go away without giving him something with which to treat his companions before leaving them."

"But, Harry, you surely cannot have forgotten that whatever my uncle may have tolerated here, I do not allow the use of intoxicating drinks in my house, and that I may dismissed Joe chiefly because he has repeatedly disobeyed me in this respect."

"Yes, papa," answered Harry, still anxious to excuse himself, "but that was different you know, and you need not have cared how Joe spent the money when he was no longer your servant. At any rate, I did not like to hear them speaking so about you, so I gave Joe the guinea grand'mamma sent me last week; and indeed, papa, I did not think I was doing wrong, and they all said I was so generous," said poor, simple Harry, trying to avoid Mr. Ruthven's sad, stern eye.

"So you sacrificed grandmamma's gift to the honor of the Ruthven family! Well, I only hope you may never live to regret your rash act of mistaken generosity, my son, or sorrow as I have sorrowed for a similar mistake. So the good folks of Denley thought I was mean, did they? I tell you, Harry, I should have no words strong enough to express my contempt for the meanness of a man in my position, and holding my views, who would give his money for any such purpose."

"I don't understand, papa, how it would be *mean*"

"Why, Harry, if I consider drunkenness a most loathsome thing, and would feel thoroughly ashamed to be seen in a state of intoxication myself, would it not be unspeakably *mean* in me to help to make others what I scorn to be myself?"

"Yes, I see, papa, but I never heard any one speak so seriously about it before. What makes you think so differently from other people?"

"I have good reason, my boy, but the story is too sad a one to tell you—and yes, perhaps it might be a warning to you."

"Oh! is it a story, papa, and about yourself? Do please tell me it."

"Well, I think I will, Harry, but let us wait until the evening, so that the others may hear it too. You know the 'Children's Hour' is the orthodox time for story-telling."

CHAPTER II.

Joe Warden, the Ruthven coachman, was quitting the service of his kind master, the Laird of Ruthven, at what we call in

Scotland the Whitsunday term, so it was not very late in the evening when the children assembled, "'tween the gloamin' an' the mirk," to hear papa's promised story. There had been a refreshing shower of rain during the afternoon, and every object in nature seemed purer and sweeter from its gentle influence. The early rosebuds at the windows, which had hitherto kept their delicate petals safely inclosed within their green protections, now allowed them to show their coy beauty to the eye of Eve. So, while song-birds warbled their evening hymn joyously in the "clear shining after rain," Mr. Ruthven began:—"In my younger days, children, there used to be far more drinking to excess in the middle and upper classes than there is now. I remember well, when I used to spend my holidays here, in my uncle's time, how he and his guests used to pride themselves on the quantity of wine they could drink without being visibly the worse of it. Among my uncle's servants his head gardener was my greatest favorite, and as the liking was mutual we spent as much time as possible together. He was ten years my senior, and when I, a delicate city boy, arrived at Ruthven to enjoy and benefit by the fresh country air for a week or two in midsummer, I used to consider it a magnificent treat to be allowed out for an afternoon with young Henderson. He it was who taught me all sorts of healthy sports in which country boys delight; led me to the spot in Ruthven Den where the wild strawberries ripen best to this day; and showed me how to use the fishing-rod as cunningly as you, son Harry. But as I grew older the more childish of these sports were gradually relinquished, and manlier ones took their place; yet still, as in former years, it was David Henderson who taught me to hunt, skate, curl, &c., &c. This humble friend of mine lived in the pretty lodge at the west gate, which is standing empty just now. His young wife acted as portress, whilst he was busy in my uncle's old-fashioned gardens."

"O, papa, how nice it would be if your David Henderson were there still! Why did he ever go away?" cried the children, who were just as fond of rural pastimes as their father had been in his younger days.

"He might have been there still," answered Mr. Ruthven, sighing, "had it not been for an imprudent act of mine,—but to continue my story—

"One Christmas my uncle had a great many guests in Ruthven Hall, and a few young people had been invited for my sake. It had been a green Christmas, to our great disappointment, and though we tried our best to amuse ourselves with long walks and indoor games, still the time passed slowly, and many were our longings for two or three days of hard frost. At last, one morning, just as we were giving up hope, Henderson came up to the hall to say that the ice was bearing. A skating party was quickly formed, and off we set, followed by many warnings, sage advice, and good wishes from my uncle and his companions, who promised to come down in the afternoon to see the fun. We were, of course, all excitement, and the skating was splendid until noon, when Henderson, who was still near us, said he thought it would be prudent to keep away from the southern extremity of the lake. At first we did so, but somehow, after a time, one or two of us found ourselves on the forbidden ground. Suddenly, I fancied I felt the ice giving way under my feet, and remembering David's warning tried to hasten off the spot as quickly as possible, but it was already too late; there was a loud crash, and I sank helpless, down, down, until I felt the rush of the ice-cold water over my head. I cannot tell you, dear children, how long I remained in this sorry plight before help came; but my uncle, who had just come up, told me afterwards that David Henderson saw my danger before I sank, and with as much haste as the precarious state of the ice would admit of, approached the dangerous spot, and was enabled, though not without risking his own safety, to snatch me from what, but for his promptness, might have proved a watery grave. It all seemed like a dreadful dream when I returned to consciousness, and found myself lying on a couch, in front of a blazing fire in the housekeeper's room. She, kind woman, would have made an invalid of me for the rest of the day, but I rebelled and insisted on joining my friends at the dinner-table."

CHAPTER III.

"In the evening my uncle sent for Henderson, in order, as he said, that he might personally thank the preserver of his heir. Willingly," said Mr. Ruthven, after a short pause, "would I blot out from my memory what followed. When Henderson en-