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THE CHALLONERS :

THE LAST LEAVES OF A FAMILY HISTORY.

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(Continued.)

CHAPTER III.

The foregoing scene is not, I confess, a very agreeable one; but the fault lies with the actors, not with the mere chronicler of their acts. It is no doubt a very painful and distressing thing when a brother and sister indulge in mutual recriminations, threats on one side, and either defiance or forced submission on the other. But such things do occur sometimes; and when they do, he who professes to relate their true history must of course record them.

Miss Challoner was somewhat surprised the next morning to find that her brother had gone out to breakfast. "To Mr. Moore's," the servant said; and as she knew the intimacy which existed between the two young men, she concluded that Allan had made a visit to his friend the pretext for avoiding an immediate meeting with herself; a meeting which certainly could not have been very pleasant to either of them. She was rather glad than otherwise, as it left her free to follow unobserved and unquestioned, her meditated plans.

The first of these was to order the carriage when she rose from table, and to drive into Stormington. She had procured from her maid before starting the address she required, and she went at once to the house of the mason John Ford.

Early as she considered the visit to be, it was already the middle of the working day. Under Rachel Ford's management, there was no idling, and all traces of the

morning meal and the subsequent household tasks had long since been put away. Mrs. Ford was ironing lace, her attention divided between her delicate work and her fretful sick boy; and in the window, engaged with her needle, sat Elsie, the object of Miss Challoner's visit to the humble home.

Strange as it may appear to some, it was the first time she had ever been in such an abode. A passing glimpse caught from the carriage, of the interior of a laborer's cottage or the workroom of an artisan, was all she knew of the homes in which the poor passed their lives from the cradle to the grave. She subscribed to charities; she gave largely from her own purse to those who needed it, and was always willing to relieve any distress that came to her knowledge, as far as money, or any other material help, could go; but to visit the poor—that she could not do. She did not understand them, or they her; she should be sure to do or say just the wrong thing if she went among them; and so she kept away. She glanced now round the small room which served the Fords as kitchen and parlor in one. The bare floor, the whitewashed walls, on which were fastened the shelves which held both the scanty supply of books and the family stock of crockery and earthenware; the curtainless windows, whose muslin blinds scarcely excluded the gaze of the passers-by in the street; the broad black fireplace where the kettle hung, and Mrs. Ford's