

and our Creator. Break it, and our ruin is inevitable—and remember that he who affirms he has no time to serve God, can feel no love. If he have the wish, he will find the means.”

The day may possibly arrive when I may give the subject more reflection,” said Lord Avon, walking towards the door; “at present I fear my mind is pre-occupied.”

“Ah! my young friend, that postponing to a convenient season is too dangerous to allow me to pass it over; it is true you are now in the plenitude of youth and vigour, yet these must not be depended on,—too many instances of their mutability are daily spread before us. Duties are ours—events are God’s.”

Lord Avon looked over his shoulder and smiled, as he was leaving the room, merely bowing his head in answer to this observation, while Mr. Milman, gazing for a moment after him, mentally said: “How hardly shall they who trust in riches enter the Kingdom of God.” A few days subsequent to this conversation, Lord Avon received a visit from one of his friends, Sir Arthur Clifton, in consequence of a letter he had written him, entreating he would come and enliven his solitude, else he would certainly hear that he had committed suicide in a fit of despair. “What could possess my noble paternity to draw the cords of discipline so tight, Heaven knows!” he wrote; “but break they must soon. Another week spent in this unknown corner of the world would destroy me quite.”

“Mr. Milman felt vexed at the coming of the stranger, who, he saw at a glance, was one of those wild and thoughtless companions the Earl of Windermere desired so much to keep separate from the society of his son; and, to prevent their being too long together, he politely invited him to dinner, which the other as politely declined, pleading an engagement with his friend. Mr. Milman could say no more; but with regret beheld Lord Avon leave the house, accompanied by Sir Arthur. The day passed and he came not back; the shades of evening darkened into night, and still he was absent. Mr. Milman sat up watching for him until long past midnight. When at length the young man made his appearance, with a flushed check and haggard eyes, he started on perceiving Mr. Milman, and began a stammering apology for having detained him up so long. Mr. Milman said very little, aware that he was not in a state to receive advice; but he gazed on him in grave displeasure. They parted at the door of Lord Avon’s chamber, when his man, Austin, was summoned to attend him; in the course of the following day he took occasion to represent to his Lordship the impropriety of his conduct, stating that, as Lord Windermere had, in the fullest confidence placed him under his care, he felt it to be his duty to watch over him and preserve him from all evil,—that the Earl had expressed

a strong desire to separate him from his wild associates—consequently, while he remained at Rosedale, he must entreat that he would hold no more intercourse with Sir Arthur Clifton, else he would be under the unpleasant necessity of writing to his father, to say that he could no longer undertake a charge over which he possessed no control. This rebuke, though gently uttered, gave great offence to Lord Avon, who, drawing himself proudly up, said with a kindling eye, “That he really could not submit to the control Mr. Milman considered it necessary to exercise—that at the age of eighteen, he thought he might choose his own companions. Mr. Milman might act as he pleased, but as Sir Arthur Clifton had come for a few days into the neighbourhood at his request, he intended to give him as much of his society as possible.”

“Very well, my Lord,” returned Mr. Milman, with much gravity; “then I have but one course to pursue—if I cannot fulfil my trust conscientiously, I must with sorrow relinquish it.” He left the room as he spoke, while Lord Avon muttering an expression of anger, hurried into the garden, walking with rapid steps along the path that led to the lake, where he found Emmeline amusing herself in building a little fanciful grotto, with shells and stones she had collected together for that purpose. She was kneeling down with her back towards him as he drew near, accompanied by his dog Blouse, who, the moment he perceived his young favourite, bounded forward, and in his exuberant joy destroyed her labours, levelling the fairy fabric to the ground. “Oh, you naughty dog,” exclaimed the child, sorrowfully looking down upon the ruins; “how in an instant have you deprived me of my pleasure, I wish you had not come this way.”

“I wish to God that I had never come to Rosedale,” said Lord Avon, impatiently calling his dog, and passing Emmeline, without expressing any regret at the mischief that had been done. She started at the tone of his voice, and the frown that knit his brows, then dashing away the tears that had gathered in her eyes, she sweetly said: “Poor dog, he did not mean to vex me—and even if he had I ought to forgive him.” At this moment her attention was attracted by a bird’s nest, which a sudden gust of wind had cast from the branch of a tree into the water. The sympathy of Emmeline was immediately called forth, as she watched the parent bird hovering over her young, in evident distress, and breaking off a bough, she leaned forward, endeavouring to draw the nest towards her—but unfortunately losing her balance, she fell with a violent plunge into the lake. The piercing cry she uttered brought Lord Avon instantly to the spot; he endeavoured to grasp her white dress, but she was carried out beyond his reach. At his bidding, Blouse jumped in, and seizing her frock in his mouth, held her up while his master wading in after her, caught her in