

have been excited. Three children sate by his fireside—Richard, Edward and Eleanor. As the fond father beheld the comeliness of each expand day by day, he neglected no means of making the mind equal in its attributes to the person. Assiduously did he endeavor to teach them the first principles of the many sciences with which he was himself acquainted. Forbidding all intercourse between his family and the neighborhood, he attentively watched the conduct of its youthful members, training them to the strict observance of every moral duty, and correcting promptly the slightest tendency to an infraction of its rules. I lived near to him. My father and mother died ere I had strength or experience sufficient to encounter the trials and difficulties of the world alone. Then did the kind Mr. Willson become my benefactor. He took me to his own home, clothed and fed me better than I had ever been before, and employed me in such light work as I could perform about his house. Seeing me diligent and attentive to my duty, he took pains also to instruct me in reading and writing. This instruction was indeed the greatest bounty that could have been conferred on me, for, from it I have derived the principal enjoyment of my later years.

“When I entered Mr. Willson’s house, all within spoke of union and peace. Under the happy discipline that he had established, forbearance and courtesy ensured contentment; while all felt that the true happiness of an individual springs from a contemplation of it in others. * * * * A few years elapsed, and what a change had taken place! The quiet of that happy home had been disturbed; the paternal injunctions had at length been set at nought. The companionship of the vicious is seldom slow in undermining even the firmest foundations of virtue. Ridicule has oftentimes been found an over-match for principle.

“I never have seen these truths more forcibly illustrated, than they were in the case of Edward Willson. His naturally good disposition rendered him attentive and obedient to his father’s instructions during childhood; but when, by reason of his age, that restriction began necessarily to be abated, he thoughtlessly courted the society of those whose morals could not but injure his own. His progress from virtue to vice was gradual. Well did his companions know that any sudden appearance of gross depravity would drive him at once from among them. It was therefore on some occasions with seeming deference that they listened to his remonstrances against their improprieties, while on others they encountered them with bitter sarcasm, such as placed the youth in

a state of doubt, whether it were not better for him to abandon, than continue, the advocacy of principles that were only deemed absurd by his associates.

“On one occasion, a convivial party detained the unfortunate young man beyond his usual hour of return. The family were in distress at his absence.

“‘Doubtless,’ said his father, ‘he is in company with some of the scamps of this neighbourhood, whom he has learned to love so well of late.’

“‘Fear not, dear father,’ returned the gentle Eleanor; ‘fear not—some unforeseen occurrence has detained him. He will soon be home.’ But even while she spoke in Edward’s defence, a starting tear told too plainly how she doubted her own words.

“‘Nay, Eleanor,’ replied her father sternly; ‘no unforeseen occurrence detains him—rather some drinking-party.’

“‘I cannot believe,’ said Richard, ‘that my brother has acquired an inclination for such scenes; the education that he has received, in common with myself, will ever keep us both, I trust, from indulging in iniquitous habits.’

“‘Has not Edward recently become intimate with Morrison and Watts, and other fellows, whose character is too dark for comment? They have already accomplished the boy’s ruin, or I judge them wrong.’

“Richard did not answer.

“‘Speak, sir; is this the truth, or is it not?’

“‘I will not deny,’ returned the son, ‘that he has sometimes been seen with those you mention, but excuse me if I do not think that circumstance at all warrants your conclusion.’

“‘Why not?’

“‘Because, sir, I have never witnessed any change in his deportment towards us—not the slightest.’

“‘But I have, Richard, if you have not; I have noticed his abstracted air, his forced smile, and incoherent conversation. A father’s anxiety is easily aroused, but not so easily allayed.’

“The poor old man buried his face within his hands, and groaned aloud. Richard started up.

“‘My dear father,’ he exclaimed, ‘be consoled; I will seek my brother, and bring him home safe with me. Abram will accompany me.’

“During this conversation, I had remained silent, my situation forbidding interference. But when the young man spoke of going in search of Edward, I rose and prepared to follow him. He whispered a word or two to his sister, who stood weeping at the door, and we left the house together.

“If I had ever dared to think of Eleanor