

"Before that period arrives," said Algernon, regarding her with deep commiseration, "Mark will have paid the forfeit of his crimes, and your child will be the heir of immense wealth."

"You believe him to be a dying man," said Elinor, quickly. "He will live—a change has come over him for the better; the surgeon gave strong hopes of his recovery this morning: sinner that I am! could he have looked into my heart, he would have been shocked at the pain which this communication conveyed. Algernon, I wished his death. The awful sentence has been reversed—it is the mother, not the father of the unhappy infant, that will be called hence. God knows that I am weary of life. But I shall be glad to die, could I but take the poor babe along with me. Should it, however, survive its unfortunate mother, promise me, Algernon, by the love of our early years, to be a guardian and protector to my child."

She endeavoured to sink at his feet, but Algernon prevented her.

"Your request is granted, Elinor, and for its dear mother's sake, I promise to cherish the infant as my own.

"It is enough!" said Elinor; "I thank my God for this great mercy, and that I have been permitted to clear my character to you. Now, leave me, Algernon, and take my blessing with you, and only remember in your prayers, that such a miserable creature as Elinor Wildegrave still lives."

The violent ringing of the miser's bell made Elinor start, and, snatching up the light, and hastily unlocking the door, she waved her hand to Algernon, and instantly disappeared. Algernon remained for some minutes rooted to the spot, his heart still heaving with the sense of intolerable wrongs; then slowly descending to the servant's hall, he bade Ruth summon his attendants, and slipping a guinea into the delighted maiden's hand, bade a long adieu to the home of his ancestors.

As Elinor had predicted, the miser slowly recovered; and, for a few months, his severe illness had a salutary effect upon his mind and temper. He was even inclined to treat his wife with more respect; and when informed by the midwife, of the birth of a son, he received the intelligence with less impatience than its sorrowful mother had anticipated. But this gleam of sunshine did not last long. He began loudly to complain of the expences which his long illness had incurred, and proclaimed the necessity of making every possible retrenchment to replace the money. Poor Elinor did not live long to endure these fresh privations. She sank into a lingering decline, and before her little boy could lip her name, the turf had closed over his heart-broken mother. Small was the grief expressed by the miser, for the death of his gentle partner. To avoid all unnecessary expence, she was interred in

the church-yard, instead of occupying a place in the family vault, and no stone was erected, during the life-time of the Squire, to her memory.

It was matter of surprise to the whole neighborhood, that the young child survived his mother. His father left nature to supply her place; and, but for the doating love of poor Ruth, who came night and morning to wash and dress him, and feed him, out of pure affection for her dear mistress, the little Anthony would soon have occupied a place by his unfortunate mother. As to the Squire, he never cast a thought upon his half-clad, half-famished babe, without bitterly cursing him, as an additional and useless expence. Anthony was a quiet, sweet tempered little fellow; the school in which he was educated, taught him to endure with patience, trials which would have broken the heart of a less neglected child. But, except the kindness which he received from Ruth, who was now married to a labourer, and the mother of children of her own, he was a stranger to sympathy or affection; and he did not expect to receive from others the tenderness which he never experienced at home.

The mind of a child, like the mind of a grown person, requires excitement; and as Anthony could neither read nor write, and the miser seldom deigned to notice him, he sought abroad those amusements, which he could not obtain at home. By the time he had completed his seventh year, he was to be seen daily mingling with the poor boys in the village, with his face unwashed, his hair uncombed, without a shoe or stocking to his feet, and his clothes more ragged and dirty than those of the most indigent of his young associates. In this deplorable condition, he was one day eagerly engaged in the exciting game of chuck-farthing, into the mysteries of which he seemed to enter with all the avidity of a gamester, when a handsome, elderly gentleman, rode up to the group, and demanded of the rosy urchin, if he would run before him, and open the gate that led to the Hall.

"Wait awhile!" cried the young gambler, adroitly poisoning the halfpenny he was about to throw, on the tip of his finger; "if I win by this toss, I will shew you the way to my father's ——"

"Your father!" returned the gentleman, surveying attentively the ragged child. "Are you the gardener's son?"

"No, no," replied the boy, laughing and winking to his companions; "not quite so bad as that, either. My father is a rich man, though he acts like a poor one, and lets me, his only son, run about the streets without shoes. But did I belong to skin-flint Pike, instead of one slice of bread to my milk, I might chance to get none. My father is the old Squire, and my name is Anthony Hurdlestone."

"Alas!" sighed the stranger, "who would have