

it in ourselves and others. Mary's father selected himself the books his daughter read. It is true that the uniformity of her life in that quiet village rendered books a necessity of her existence; but her father gave such a turn to her reading that her unobscured became matured and her heart ennobled, without her susceptible imagination being in danger of being too much stimulated or over-excited. Firmly and unwaveringly he kept in view that one object of his life, to strengthen and build up the soul of his young daughter. He was a wise master-builder, one who had taken care to lay his superstructure on a solid foundation. For, although the events of futurity are not within our own control, yet God will, through all the rain and sunshine of this world, complete and render secure the building, and though, now and then, a storm may loosen a beam, or shake lintel or rafter, yet nothing can destroy the foundation, and all will issue in everlasting good.

Still and thoughtful stands Mary, now eighteen years of age, at the window of her sitting-room, looking out into the cold wintry landscape. Hill and meadow are covered with deep snow: it seems as if all nature were enveloped in a vast winding-sheet, and the storm rages over the groves, as if venting its maddest passion upon the leafless trees. Any one whose heart is light, or who lives in the midst of a large cheerful family circle, can manage to feel happy and sheltered in the dullest weather, caring no more for wintry days than do plants in a warm room.

But Mary's heart is troubled and heavy, and the sight of that wintry prospect fills her eyes with tears. Poor Mary's heart has lost its peace, and her faith, which has hitherto rather been the sweet reliance of a child than the firm trust of the experienced Christian, is not sufficient to support her in this extremity. A neighbouring parish has lately lost its pastor, whose place has become supplied by a young man, Hartmann, such was the name of the young minister, took an early opportunity of visiting Mary's father, and soon became an immense favourite with the aged pastor. Decided in his religious opinions, earnest and warm-hearted in disposition, the young man soon won the heart of the old one, and gained in him a true friend and a wise guide and counsellor. Hartmann's frequent visits, his sociality and his intellect, brought a pleasant change to the monotonous life of the parsonage. Mary soon learned to behold all things in the rosy hues of love. The common duties of the day were no longer irksome to her, for she had the evening to look forward to, those delightful evenings which were as wings wafting her away from prosaic realities to sunny lands of imagination. Hartmann enjoyed intercourse with the mind of so intellectual a girl, and seldom missed paying his evening visit to her father and herself. Frank and honourable as he was, he could not avoid giving her many proofs of his esteem and regard, proofs which were to Mary as pearls to be carefully strung together and worn as her choicest treasures. But such pearls are often mere tinsel, only dazzling us by their false glow, and making our clouded eyes insensible to the true value and beauty of that pearl of great price, for which we should be willing to relinquish all earthly possessions. Mary soon learned, by examining her own heart, that her inward peace diminished in proportion as she sought earthly good, even supposing that good to be the highest attainable in this world. The idea, however, of becoming Hartmann's wife had become so natural and so probable, that she saw no reason for checking the affection she felt herself beginning to feel for him. So passed an entire year. Hartmann had arrived with the earliest days of winter, and once again the autumnal wind shook the stubble and whistled in the variously-tinted leaves of the trees whose fruit had gone. During this time Mary's heart had been experiencing all the alternations of joy and grief which a passionate love can bring. But now sorrow had obtained the complete mastery over joy. For though Hartmann's manner to her remained the same as ever, friendly and kind though never tender, he began now to speak of alterations and preparations in his house, to take frequent journeys from home, and to discontinue (sometimes for days together) his visits to the parsonage. It was evident that the object of his fondest hopes was elsewhere. Mary suffered deeply, but in silence. It is true she had learnt to look on life from another point of view from that which is too frequent with her sex. She felt that wedded love, however happy, is not the highest object to which woman's heart can aspire. Her father had taught her to raise her hopes and her longings beyond the bounds of time and space. He had often told her, too, that whoever desires to serve God must be willing to deny

himself, take up his cross daily, and follow the Master's footsteps. All this she had been taught; but *knowing* and *learning* are not the same with *practice* and *experience*. Mary felt as if her dreams of earthly happiness had shivered into fragments; she tried to be resigned and patient, but the struggle was too hard, and cost her many bitter tears.

On the last fine evening of that autumn, the pastor was seated in a pleasant arbour in his garden, reading a book. His daughter sat beside him, making tea, but every now and then casting an absent gaze over the autumnal woods. A week had passed since they had seen Hartmann, and he had again been on a journey. She knew well what had probably been the object of that journey, yet a vain deceptive hope still cheered her. She almost expected some miracle would be wrought to spare her the misery of losing him. In this mood Mary sat at the tea-table, suddenly, however, a well-known step roused her from her reveries, and in another moment Hartmann was by her side. "Who knows," thought Mary to herself. The young man greeted father and daughter with his usual frank cordiality, told them the town news, and then, not without slightly reddening, nor without a shade of embarrassment in his manner, he told the pastor of the happy result of his journeys. A few days before, he informed Mary's father he had become affianced to his beloved Emily.

"You know my intended," he said, turning to Mary. "You will, I feel sure, show her attention and kindness, for the country-life into which she is about to enter for my sake, will be dull at first, after the cheerful home she will have to leave."

Poor Mary! The storms which, like heralds of death, came beforehand to usher in the winter, are like gentle breezes in comparison with the tempest which has sprung up in her heart. Waking and sleeping she repeated to herself Hartmann's terrible words, but it was long before she could completely realise the crushing thought that his love could never be hers. But when the first passionate sorrow had passed away, her thoughts reverted to the Divine source of all love and goodness, to Him whom she had been in danger of forgetting, in His creature, and whom, probably, she would not have remembered now, had he not blighted the flowers of her life. But she was to experience that the return to her Heavenly Father could only be accomplished through the deepest self-abasement. Blessed words of the apostle, "humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." Sweet and comforting accents are ye, to such as have been taught your true meaning. But melancholy days were now in store for poor Mary. The dull winter days, the intense, almost desolate stillness of her home, rendered, if possible, still sadder by occasional visits from Hartmann and his bride, the increasing infirmities of her father, and a thousand other cares and deep trials which a light heart might easily have borne, but which weighed heavily on one already so tried. All these things were to the pastor's daughter a daily exercise of faith and obedience. How deep is the truth conveyed in these words of Ewald's, in his excellent "Instructions for the Female Sex." "It is not as a punishment, but in mercy, that God sends us daily tasks when the paradise of the heart is lost."

But we are like foolish children who refuse to take healing medicine when they are sick on account of its bitterness; and thus Mary thought to find in these daily trials only a new source of sorrow, feeling indeed, somehow, that she was at a school, but not comprehending exactly what she was to be taught in it.

So passed that long, sad winter, but at length once again the warm sun of March imparted new life to the chill meadow and the soft winds of spring breathed once more upon the frost-bound earth, and even Mary, heavy as was her heart, shared in some degree in this universal gladness. She often went into the woods and fields, and joined in celebrating Nature's festival resurrection. One day she brought home from one of her rambles some of the spring's first-born children, the lovely snowdrops, and with them she decorated her father's quiet little study, because he was no longer able to go out and gather them himself.

"I wonder," said Mary to her father, as she arranged her spring bouquet in a vase on the study table, "I wonder how it is that these, the most fragile of all flowers, should be the earliest of all to come out into bloom. So many stormy days and so much ice and frost seem to threaten their very life, but they venture to show their pretty white heads in every