

her daughter now lived. Lucy had obtained a few pupils in the neighbourhood, and was necessarily much out; so Florence tried to cheer some of her aunt's solitary hours, and Robert was their never-failing theme. Now that his character was clear, how they longed for his return! and hoped and feared, until they were drawn closely together by this strong mutual bond of interest. Harry, too, had not written since his departure, and many were the anxious thoughts turned in that cottage to fervent prayers for the absent ones.

Summer came again, the hedges were gay with flowers, and the birds sang as Florence passed down the lane on her way to visit her aunt. Her step was more elastic than usual, and her heart was more hopeful. It may have been the brightness of the morning that cheered her spirits, but on nearing the cottage it also appeared to wear a more cheerful air. The lattice-windows stood open, and the fresh breeze played amongst the flowers, and wafted their breath into the room where sat Mrs. Manvers with a smiling face, from which all the care and anxiety that had marked it of late were banished.

Florence, surprised at the change, threw herself on her knees, and taking her hand said, "How much better you look to-day, dear aunt! But such a lovely morning, who could be sad? The birds and flowers have made me feel quite bright too."

"There is more than that to make me happy to-day, Florry. I have had good news."

"News, aunt! Oh! not—" and her voice faltered,—
"of Robert, or," she added, "of poor Harry?"

"Yes, of both. Robert is well and on his way home. He wrote several letters which we have never received, and is uneasy at our silence."

"And, aunt, what of Harry?"

"Alas! dear, no good news of him—he is in a bad state of health." Then, seeing the joyous expression