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"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL iii. 4.

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GENERAL LITERATURE.

A TRACT FOR HARD TIMES.

"MAN WANTS BUT LITTLE HERE BELOW."

THERE was an excellent Christian lady, a friend of my uncle's, at whose house I have often visited. When she was living in the first stile of affluence and elegance, (a stile to which she had been all her life accustomed, and which, she very naturally thought, she could not do without,) I recollect her being greatly disquieted at the loss of a favourite personal attendant, who married away. She could not find a new servant so expert and conformable to her tastes and habits as the old one had been; and she thought it was impossible to live with clumsy, awkward people about her. She could not endure herself in the country beyond a certain day in October, nor in London beyond a certain day in May. The lease of the town-house expired; and she was absolutely distressed at the impossibility of finding another in which she could live. All she looked at, she pronounced totally indigible: there was not a room fit for a library, a drawing-room, or a best bed-chamber; or, if the apartments were sufficiently capacious and elegant to meet her taste, there was a deficiency of some other convenience which she could not possibly live without; and it would at that time have seemed to her like the sentence of death, to intimate to her that she must dispense with her carriage, or her conservatory; or put up with pleasure grounds less extensive, or a retinue of servants less numerous than she had been accustomed to.

"Mrs. W.," said an eminent minister who visited the family, and who was also on terms of intimacy with my uncle—"Mrs. W. is a pious woman, but far too dependent on circumstances. That must have been a strangely erroneous education that could subject a woman of her native capabilities and dignity of mind, to the dominion of such trifles as ought to have an ascendancy only over the vain and silly. Our friend is not conscious of having her heart set upon money; she is too liberal in the distribution of her property for such a suspicion once to enter her mind; but it is too evident that her heart is set on the indulgences which money procures.

"Even her charities, in which her kind heart delights, are among the number. They have never cost her the exercise of self-denial. But should a reverse in circumstances put it out of her power to give at pleasure, I really think she would go demented."

"Perhaps," replied my uncle, "it might prove the very occasion of rousing her energies correcting her foibles, and elevating her affections. Such a reverse is not in her case very probable; at least, I trust her character may be improved without requiring the exercise of any discipline so severe."

The reverse, however improbable, was experienced. Years afterwards, I had the privilege of meeting my uncle and the minis-

ter referred to in the house of the same lady. It was not the same house, neither the splendid residence in — square, nor the elegant mansion in Brookdale, surrounded with delightful gardens, verdant lawns, and extensive pleasure grounds.

It was at a small house in a country town. The dwelling consisted of one parlour, about fourteen feet square; another much smaller; a kitchen, and three bed-chambers, with, I believe, an attic. The furniture was neat, but simple; there were a few, a very few cherished relics of by-gone grandeur; and there was a bookcase with a few choice volumes of divinity, the remains of a library which, years before, a room of thirty feet long was inadequate to contain; and instead of a train of domestics of every name and degree, there were two female servants; one, whose business it was to perform all the various duties of household service; the other, a girl, who having been in infancy left a destitute orphan, Mrs. W., in the days of her prosperity, had compassionated and provided for, and who now requited her benefactress by rendering her voluntary services as personal attendant and needle-woman. And there sat the fine old gentlewoman, her aspect as dignified and majestic as ever; but her locks were now silvered with age, and her cheek wore an expression of placidity and mellowness unknown before. A few antique ornaments, and inlaid writing-table and work-box, and a richly bound Bible, were recognized as having formed part of the boudoir at Brookdale; and a beautiful Italian grayhound which still crouched at the feet of his mistress, I well remembered to have caressed when a puppy. There was something touching in reflecting on the vicissitudes of human life; and I observed on the countenances both of my uncle and the minister, an expression of respect and sympathy. But it was soon dispelled by the easy cheerful conversation of her whose circumstances had excited it. I do not know that I ever listened to a more interesting and instructive conversation than that between the venerable lady and her two old friends. It seemed, indeed, to be on all sides the utterance of the heart, mellowed and purified by deep-toned piety. Some hours elapsed without the slightest allusion to any change of circumstances, and I believe, almost without a thought passing the mind of either party, whether their meeting was in one of the splendid saloons in — Square, or Brookdale; or in the humble parlour at —. The appearance of the servant to lay the dinner-cloth, and the necessity of displacing the company to make room for lifting out the table, led to a brief apology for the small size of the room, and the inconvenience of being obliged to employ the same apartment as dining parlour and drawing room. My mind reverted for a moment to the expression she had formerly uttered, "I could not live without it;" but there was no such expression now. It seemed as if she reproached herself for having even alluded to so trifling a grievance, or deemed it worth one passing sigh; and immediately in a tone

of cheerful gratitude, she spoke of the numerous mercies and comforts with which she was surrounded, and invited us to walk in her delightful little garden. It was of a size corresponding with that of the house, scarcely a plot in comparison with those which its proprietor once owned; yet she showed us the few choice flowers, and two or three fruit trees, and pointed to a delightful view from a little grassy mount; and all with an air of satisfaction and enjoyment, far more entire than she had discovered when surrounded by more than heart could wish. There was a myrtle which at first sight appeared dead, but on a closer inspection was found to be putting forth new shoots. "I am pleased at this," said the old lady; "I really thought the winter had entirely killed my myrtle, which I valued as a memorial of departed friendship. It is an indulgence. I little expected to see it revive; but thus it has been with many of those minor mercies, with which our gracious heavenly Parent so liberally indulges his children. Having been long habituated to the indulgence, we imagine it essential to our well being, and forget the hand by which it is bestowed. Then it is removed, or threatened, to teach us submission and dependence; and when the 'soul is even as a weaned child,' it is sometimes most unexpectedly restored. O, sir," said she, addressing herself to the minister, "God has been very gracious in the dispensations of his Providence to me, enabling me to enjoy what he bestows and continues, and teaching me that I can do without what he sees fit to withhold."

"Yes, my dear friend, God has dealt very graciously with you, in still permitting you to be surrounded with all that is needful for your temporal comfort and enjoyment; and incomparably more still, in sanctifying the dispensations of his Providence to you, and teaching you that lesson of high Christian attainment, 'in whatsoever state you are, therewith to be content;' and enabling you to experience that you can do all things, or resign all things, through Christ which strengtheneth you."

We were summoned to dinner. The repast was simple, but admirably served. It needed no apology, and Mrs. W. had too much good sense and taste to offer any, though it is probable her mind, as well as the minds of her guests, for a moment reverted to the elegance of her table in by-gone days. But if it were so, I can venture to say that, in point of real enjoyment, no one of the party was disposed to raise a comparison unfavorable to the entertainment of one dish and one attendant.

We were to sleep at Mrs. W.'s, the gentlemen having made a day on their way, returning from London, for the purpose of visiting their old friend. Next morning we were to proceed to my uncle's. In the afternoon, a walk was proposed, to visit some Roman antiquities. Before we started, our venerable hostess, with a very slight degree of embarrassment, apologized for having only two spare bed rooms at command, and those of very