

yet she was not loved. Her piety was respected where she was well known, for it was genuine: but her society was not desired, nor her friendship sought. She seemed to say to those whose religion she doubted, "stand back; I am holier than ye." The world said, and perhaps, her manner justified the assertion, that she was like the Pharisee, and "thanked the Lord that she was not as others were."

Helen Lorimer, with far less appearance of shining, and no parade, diffused a light and charm around her which were felt by all who came within her sphere. Though her years were few, she had known much of suffering, and experience of her own heart's weakness taught her to be candid and cautious in judging others. She felt no less keenly than her mother the necessity of holiness for both herself and her fellow creatures, and was as ardently desirous to advance her Redeemer's cause and to benefit mankind. To glorify her Heavenly Father was the aim of her life, and she endeavored to let the light he had imparted shine in such a manner as to allure by its beauty and animate by its warmth. She did not often speak of religion, but her general deportment recommended it. The natural delicacy of her constitution, her frequent bodily sufferings, had given an habitual thoughtfulness to her aspect, and rendered her influence more decided; but though usually serious, she was never dull. Indeed, she was said to possess a remarkable degree of cheerfulness, which did not desert her in all her sickness. Religion was in her bosom a living, active principle, which evinced itself not in a constant reference to its effects on her own feelings and conduct, but in those effects themselves. The eye which affliction made so often languid, ever beamed with patient resignation; on the lips so frequently parched by fever dwelt the law of love; and sweetness, and gentleness, and humility, with a glowing sympathy in the joys and sorrows of others, daily characterized her demeanor. Those who knew her were drawn to admire and love the religion which made her so happy and serene, (when too many are fretful and impatient,) and from admiring and loving, to believing and to practise. Then Helen was so ready to perceive and acknowledge the existence of any good quality in another, though that other was unconverted, so willing to forgive injury offered to herself, so careful to please, and so watchful to avoid offending, that where she expressed disapprobation, her opinion was never deemed prejudice. All felt that she was too just to be unkind, too candid to be censorious.

Had Mrs. Laurens possessed more of her daughter's meekness and humility, she would have been much more useful. But this lady had no idea of persuading the world to pursue its best interests; she only wished to convince it of the absurdity of its blindness and folly as soon as possible. Alas! the means she employed often made the difficulty of its conversion the greater. Helen sought to melt away the ice of prejudice; her mother would not wait such a slow operation, but attempted to break it: she forgot that when broken it still was ice. She had one way with every body, without regard to the nice distinction of character, and though she sometimes succeeded, she more frequently failed in her purposes.

"What is the matter, Granville?" inquired Marion of her brother one afternoon, a few weeks after her father's marriage.

"Do you not know? Oh, I remember you dined out, to-day. Mrs. Laurens has made me fast, to-day, and given me a lecture besides for swearing."

Marion knew that her brother did wrong to swear; she had often told him so, but she was indignant at the punishment, as it was inflicted by her stepmother. She entered the parlor in no very good humor.

"I am glad you have returned home so early, Marion," said Mrs. Laurens, gravely, "I do not wish you to visit those people again; they make no pretensions to religion."

"If they have none, they do right to pretend to none. I detest hypocrites," Marion replied.

"But they should feel their deficiency and try to obtain what is so essential to their future happiness, and until I see them manifesting more concern about their eternal interests, none of this family must hold intercourse with them. Your father approves my decision, and I shall expect obedience from his children."

"My father approves? that is strange! I have known the Irvins from my infancy. Indeed, I should be bitterly grieved to give them up."

"You need not give them up. You may pray for them, but you must not visit them. How can their society profit you?"

"They love me, and I love them. Hearts are not so abundant as to be cast away."

"I will find you more worthy friends. Your father wishes you to read more; books are good companions. Pray, Frank," added she, turning to avoid the reply of Marion, "what interests you so much?"

"Ernest Maltravers," he answered, glancing a moment from the volume he was perusing.

"A bad book. You should improve your time better."

"Have you read it, Madam?"

"I! no, I never touch novels: I suppose that is one."

"You know nothing of the work itself then, Madam?"

"No."

"So I thought." And his lip slightly compressed at a judgment founded in ignorance, although he thought it not wholly incorrect. "Have you read this work, Miss Lorimer?" he asked.

"No," Helen replied, "I heard a literary friend of mine reprobate it so much, I feel no desire to peruse it."

"You suffer others to judge for you?" he said, contemptuously.

"Yes, when, as in this case, I respect their judgment," she said, gently.

"Will you," he observed, as Mrs. Laurens quitted the room, "allow me to read you some passages?"

She immediately assented, and when he finished, expressed her admiration. "I see you can be just, even to an author you disapprove. I have before this perceived that trait in your character, Miss Lorimer. To persons in general, too, you can be candid in judging." He alluded to her ineffectual attempts to dissuade her mother from objecting to the society of the Irvins for Marion. He had been sitting in the adjoining room, and Helen knew not he was there. Helen felt pained, for she knew he was thinking differently of her mother.

"Perhaps, Mr. Laurens," she said, "it is a consciousness of possessing many faults myself that makes me more charitable in judging others. Those who possess fewer may see more clearly. They, at least, have more right to remark upon them."

Frank respected too much her delicate vindication of her mother to pursue the subject. Indeed, his look asked for pardon, and he felt he was understood and forgiven.

"Will you walk with me, Granville?" said Helen that same evening, approaching the moody boy. He followed her. "My dear Granville," pursued she, "I am afraid you do not feel very kindly towards my mother for her apparent severity to-day; but, Granville, I am sure you must think swearing wrong."

"But I am not to be treated like a child," he said, sullenly.

"You were guilty of an unmanly action, therefore received the punishment of a boy. Believe me, Granville, my mother wishes to do her duty towards you all, and only punishes because she feels a responsibility rests on her to do so. She acts by the delegated authority of your father, and from the best and purest motives. She wishes to fulfil a mother's part to his children, and had you been her own son she would have done the same. The use of punishment you know is to fix the remembrance of the fault in the offender's mind. It was not to gratify any wrong feeling she acted thus, but with the hope of convincing you of error, or of preventing the repetition of what you know already was error."

"Had she reasoned with me, I should have followed her advice, but I will not be driven."

"Not to your good, my dear Granville? Perhaps my mother misunderstood your temper. We all may judge incorrectly, but will you reject her counsel, because she mistook the method which you think would have proved effectual? You know her object was your welfare, and her motive deserves your thanks."

But we will not extend this narrative by repeating all the arguments of Helen. Suffice that they proved successful, and Granville returned home in good humor with her, his stepmother, himself and all the world.

Helen's next object was to reconcile Marion to the request of Mrs. Laurens. She could not bear that any of the children should think harshly or feel unkindly towards her mother. Having delicately introduced the subject, she said, "I know, my dear Marion, that you think my mother exacting; but you do not now understand or appreciate her motives, which when you know her better you will acknowledge, do her credit. My mother has a high sense of right, and always endeavors to regulate her conduct by the strictest principles. She has more experience than we have, Marion; and to justify her, not to accuse your friends, allow me to say that she has heard from authority she deems unquestionable, that religion and all its professors are made the subject of ridicule at Mr. Irvin's table. I do not ask you to affirm or deny the report; I only ask you to judge my mother with candor. She thinks associations, to the young, all-important, and wishes yours and your sister's to be at least innocent, for believe me, the mind is sufficiently prone to error when all its habits and associations have been guarded vigilantly from infancy. You will feel obedience to her desires in this instance a sacrifice, but let no hostile feeling exist towards her, when you must be conscious her motive is your own welfare. Of the Irvins, personally, she knows little, therefore cannot be actuated by private animosity. At least, dear Marion, suspend your opinion of my mother until you are better acquainted with her."

Perhaps Helen Lorimer's manner was more impressive than her words. She was certainly successful whenever she attempted to plead with the young Laurenses. In seeking to obtain their regard for her mother, she won "golden opinions" for herself, which gave weight and importance to her influence. None had the hardihood to pain her by rebellion or accusations against Mrs. Laurens. "For Helen's sake I forgive her," "for Helen's sake I will bear it," was the rule of their conduct as respected Mrs. Laurens; their forbearance and consideration had the necessary effect on their moral characters; their hearts were im-

proved, their spirits disciplined. Indeed, the habit they thus acquired of viewing their stepmother through a dispassionate medium had its use in the regulation of their feelings towards her. They soon learned to regard her kindly and to appreciate her virtues.

Mr. Laurens was not able to send his daughters from home to be educated; they had possessed few literary advantages, and Marion owed her knowledge chiefly to her brother's instructions, and her own studious disposition. Helen's mind was highly cultivated, and the three girls all felt the benefit of her companionship. Her books were ever at their disposal and her aid always ready to advance their improvement. Ere the lapse of many months she had become their teacher, counsellor and guide, yet so gradual and imperceptible was the growth of her influence, they were totally unaware of its good effects on themselves. Her exceeding modesty and humility prevented any unpleasant sense of inferiority, and neither hesitated to expose their ignorance and errors to her gentle, indulgent eye.

We must pass rapidly over the two years which followed the marriage of Mr. Laurens, during which a marked change had taken place in the pursuits, interests and dispositions of his family. Helen Lorimer, whose gentle, lovely example had chiefly produced the improvement, was hastening to an early grave. Her physicians and her friends also, felt that she must die! She had shone as a star in the circle where she moved, whose light had gathered brightness as it journeyed on. She had lived with the habitual remembrance that she should meet each of her circle at the judgment bar of God, and sought so to shine before them, that her example might "day unto day, utter speech," "night unto night show knowledge." She knew and felt with deep humiliation and sincere contrition that her deportment had often reflected too dimly and obscurely the beams from above, but it was sweet to feel that the general character of her course had been to "glorify her Heavenly Father," and that she had endeavored to make all around her think favorably of that religion her life feebly shadowed forth. Rich, admired, beloved and mentally gifted, a longer sojourn on earth might seem desirable to one so young. But Helen, though content to live, was happy in the prospect of early death. Her faith was firm and unwavering, and her soul in peace. Much, very much, was she valued by the Laurenses. Mr. Laurens loved her because she was ever respectful and attentive to himself, and useful to his children; the little girls, for her generosity and unvarying kindness; Granville, because she sympathized with him and understood him; Marion, because she had been the best friend she ever had; the servants, because she was considerate and benevolent; and Frank, for the combined reasons that the others loved her.

We come to the closing scene of our young heroine's short, but not uneventful career. A long summer day was nearly over. The lengthening shadows on the verdant grass spoke of a declining sun, and soft and refreshing was the perfumed breeze which gently agitated the white curtains of Helen Lorimer's chamber window. That small room was tenanted by a group in whose breasts many a conflicting emotion dwelt. Mrs. Laurens was seated near the bed on which her daughter lay; her lips were slightly parted, as with a look of intense anxiety she listened to the almost inaudible breathings of the quiet slumberer. Traces of tears were yet visible on her cheeks, but there was that in her countenance which told of habitual resignation and self-control. On the opposite side of the bed stood Marion Laurens. Her flushed face as its color deepened and receded, her quivering lip, her tearful eyes bent constantly on the pale, mild sleeper, spoke the solicitude and anguish of deep and true affection. Her trembling hand was clasped in the attenuated one which rested on the counterpane, and bitter was the pang which shot through the young watcher's heart when she felt that ere long that clasp must yield to the icy touch of death. Harriet and Louisa sat beside their father near the centre of the apartment, looking grave and sad, but catching many a gleam of comfort from the whispers of their favorite companion, hope. Mr. Laurens sat with his fore finger pressed against his brow, as it was wont to be when his mind was unusually disturbed, Granville's face was concealed on his arm, which rested on the table, and Frank stood leaning against the mantle-piece, gazing intently on a white rose he held in his hand.

The brow of the sleeper slightly contracted; an expression of uneasiness ruffled the sweet serenity of her countenance and passed away. She started suddenly, and awoke. The first glance was wild, but the faces of those she loved brought back immediate consciousness, and a placid smile illumined her pale features.

"My dearest mother—Marion," she murmured, "how kind you are!" Her voice was singularly clear, though weak.

"Do you feel pain, Helen?" inquired Mrs. Laurens, tenderly. "Not now, ma; only a sense of weariness here," and she placed her hand on her breast, "but I have peace," added she, while a ray of spiritual light flitted over her countenance.

"Thank God!" said her mother, with great emotion; "perhaps you can sleep again, my love," she continued, after a moment's pause.

"No dearest mother, I would rather talk to you. Do you know"—and she hesitated, a faint color hovered an instant on