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The Favourite Child.

(Continued from 340.)

Mr. Ainsworth had the reputation of being an extremely good-natured man. In fact, he really was good natured; but it was only in proportion with the extent to which his own ends were facilitated in their accomplishment. Had these been more subject to failure, his reputation on the score of temper might have suffered some abatement; but the very equanimity of his deportment, the smooth, easy, and yet determined manner in which he transacted business, gave him a sort of mastery over more impetuous and turbulent spirits, which he was not slow to turn to his own account.

Every one has his besetting sin. Mr. Ainsworth's was the love of money—the love of gaining and keeping money, and in addition to this, of having it known that he possessed it. The accomplishment of this last object, however, involved him in perpetual contradictions to his natural will. Yet it would little have answered his purpose to be rich, had no one known that he was so; and he was consequently under the painful necessity of publishing this fact through the medium of good dinners, elaborately got up, and ostentatious displays of occasional hospitality, which he felt all the while strongly disposed to think cost him more than they were really worth. On all other occasions, his expenditure, and that of his family, was limited to the strictest economy. "Eat nothing, wear nothing, and buy nothing, that you can possibly do without," was the ruling maxim of his life; "and you will be gainers by it in the end," was the no less frequent conclusion to this sage advice. Had he at the same time proposed to his family a motive worthy of their efforts, all might have tended to their real good. He had himself, however, no motive beyond that of accumulating wealth, and therefore he knew of none to propose to his children, higher, or more noble, than that of being "gainers in the end."

Accustomed in early life to the habits of unresisting obedience, active, industrious, and somewhat like her father in the bias of her mind, Miss Ainsworth had been easily trained up to fall in with all such domestic arrangements as were most conducive to the one great end. On the death of her mother, which took place when she was little more than sixteen, she had been intrusted with the keys of office, and ever afterwards had found her element in what is called domestic management.

The reputation of Mr. Ainsworth's daughters, for their skill and industry in this department, was certainly well deserved. It was their father's highest praise, that they saved him the expense of at least one servant. They had recipes, and cheap methods, for making every thing that could be eaten, and doing every thing that could be done. Nothing therefore, was ever purchased in its manufactured state, which their hands could turn to proper use. For the raw material only, Mr. Ainsworth paid his money, and he had the advantage of their labour gratis. In proportion to this labour, was the care with which every thing they made was preserved for its appointed purpose; and, like the servants with whom they chiefly associated, they learned to believe the great end of domestic economy was to make a better display than their neighbors, on those grand occasions when their father invited his friends.

The bride, of course, had been witness to many of these displays soon after her marriage, and on these happy days, when guests polite and flattering had pressed her to take what was most agreeable, she had been in high good humour—even almost gay. It was when all was put away again that discomfort and desolation seemed to stare her in the face. In vain she endeavoured to cope with these hitherto unknown enemies. The ingenuity of her maid threw some lights upon the scene.

Betsy had at last found an opening for the relief of her mind, in constant tale-bearing from the kitchen. She had never seen such doings in all her life—"every thing locked up—perfect star-

vation—the fire put out as soon as the cooking was done—salt butter, and sour beer! It might do for those who had been used to nothing better, but—"and such a concentration of contempt and indignation was embodied in this but, that the word seemed scarcely large enough to bear its own burden.

At the conclusion of one of these eloquent declamations, a plan was devised between the mistress and the maid to have their own little provision store—just what was "absolutely necessary—what health, in short, required." Nor was Betsy slow in suggesting expedients for carrying this plan into effect. Their new order of things, however, was a little more expensive than either had expected, and for the remainder of the week they were decidedly short of money. The bride now found that her husband's allowance was not likely to prove sufficient; and how to remedy this inconvenience was beyond even Betsy's powers of invention to devise.

Isabel had hitherto been a stranger to premeditated deception. She had feared no one, and therefore had nothing to conceal. She could scarcely be said to fear any one now, yet there was a sort of obstinate method in the family, which defied all innovation; and though her request for any particular indulgence might not have been denied, it would have given rise to so much amazement, so much reasoning on its cause, and calculation as to its consequence, that something even more absolute than direct denial seemed to be placed in the way of her gratification. And thus it was that she became, under the teaching of her maid, an apt scholar in the first practice of deception.

It so happened that the Misses Ainsworth, so clever in every branch of economy, wanted either time or talent to make their own dresses, and they consequently employed a young woman, who was so poor that she worked for them on the lowest possible terms. They were accustomed to say of her, "it was quite a charity to employ her, she worked for them so cheaply."

Isabel had been favourably struck with the appearance of this person, and, thinking she might aid in the accomplishment of one of her own little schemes, asked her one day for her address.

Maria for that was her name, blushed deeply, and evaded the question. Isabel asked her again, when she turned to Betsy and said, "if your maid ma'am would like to call at my lodgings, I live at No. 3,——street, on the third story."

Isabel might easily have read in the countenance and manner of the girl, that this communication was made with great pain; but she was just then too intent upon her own affairs; and, bidding her maid write down the address, thought no more about the matter.

The important scheme which at that moment filled her mind—was the purchase of a dress which had pleased her fancy, and the possibility of having it made up by this young woman, and brought secretly to the house, without her husband or her daughters ever knowing that it had not been a part of her bridal equipment. Some weeks however, elapsed before this plan could be carried into effect, owing to the demand upon her purse from other quarters, and during that time she heard nothing of the poor dress-maker.

It was one fine morning, after Mr. Ainsworth had set off on his usual walk to the city—a mode of passing to and fro which he adopted purely for the preservation of his health—that Isabel and her maid sallied forth to visit some of the most fashionable shops in town. The identical fabric was at last found, but not without a little mortification experienced by both, to discover that it was at least double the price which had been anticipated—on the part of the mistress, because her weekly allowance was falling more and more short of her desires; and on the part of the maid, because this deficiency had lately been supplied in the form of loans from her own purse, to an extent which she began to look upon as rather serious, considering the situation of her mistress.

A new dress, however was in her estimation so great a treasure, and afforded so cheering a hope of some former one being