

thought your society would prove a great comfort to me; but I see you have an engagement," she continued, looking at Annie's dress.

"None of the slightest consequence, compared with being a comfort to you, my dear Mrs. Blessington," replied the sweet girl. "Papa will make my excuse to Mrs. Fludyer—will you not?"

Mr. Bertram gazed on her as she turned towards him with a most approving smile—he would have spoken, but she prevented him.

"Do not let her think that her coming has disappointed me," she said in a low tone, "I would not leave her for a party of pleasure for worlds." Mrs. Blessington was deaf, and heard her not, as she glided from the room to take off her bonnet.

"Is she not a charming creature?" said I to Captain Selby.

"She reminds me," he replied, "of some good little angel, who has been sent for a while on earth, to bless and diffuse happiness on all around her; and one actually trembles for the moment of her recall."

On her return she sat down by Mrs. Blessington, on the sofa—and no one could have traced in her sweet countenance, the slightest regret.

Mrs. Fludyer's carriage was now seen driving up to the house. Annie coloured, and turned to her father—he nodded, and left the room to make her apology. He remained some little time absent, and on again seeing the carriage roll rapidly away, a glimpse of the happy, cheerful faces within met our view. Annie gave one look; then turning to her aged friend, interested herself in the important contents of a large work basket, containing various shades of worsteds, which the good old lady was working into a stool, and had brought with her to consult her upon their choice.

As the evening was particularly warm, the tea was carried on the lawn; after which, Annie led Mrs. Blessington over the shrubbery and into her flower garden, and knowing her fondness for these, gathered all her finest, with the assistance of Captain Selby, and placed them ready for her to take away at night. The reward she received was in seeing the perfect happiness she afforded by all these attentions, and when Mrs. Blessington took leave of her, she said: "I thank you, my dear child for your kindness—it has touched a heart not ungrateful, I assure you. God bless you."

"May God, indeed, bless my Annie," repeated Mr. Bertram, kissing her affectionately, as the old lady departed, "such little acts of Christian self-denial as you have shown to-night, will never go unrewarded, rest assured."

"How is it, Annie," I enquired, "that one so young could have already learnt to bear disappointment, with the philosophy of age?"

"All that is good, is learnt here," replied Annie, laying her hand impressively on a small Bible

which lay on the table. "When I looked at Mrs. Blessington's pale face, and thought of her age, I felt that her joys in this life were few and numbered and if she was kind enough to think that I could yield her any, and came to me in that hope, would I deprive her of one, out of those few—it would have made me unhappy to do so, therefore there was no merit in yielding up my own wishes."

As she uttered this, in a sweet, low, solemn tone, I perceived Captain Selby gaze on her with looks of admiration—an expression of pain then suddenly crossed his countenance, and he turned away towards the window to conceal a tear. Day after day only served to rivet our hearts more and more round this amiable girl. Captain Selby, who was now a constant visitor, in her presence seemed a different being; he was her companion as well as myself in all her visits to her poor neighbours, and kindly did he assist in alleviating their distresses—he worked constantly and unweariedly in her garden, which flourished under his experienced hand, while Mr. Bertram and I sat with our book and our work in the favourite arbour, joining occasionally in their conversation, or amused in listening to Annie's playful scoldings, when he had mistaken her orders. I shall ever look back to that visit as the happiest I passed.

Amongst our evening visits in the village, I remember one very humble cottage, which we reached rather late. It looked more the abode of poverty than the rest. On entering, we beheld a woman cowering over a few embers, left in the miserable, broken grate—her hair hung dishevelled from under her cap—her whole appearance bespoke the extremity of woe, or habitual negligence. "Why, Martha, is this you?" exclaimed Annie.

"Oh, Miss Annie, His name be praised, that you are here," replied the woman, starting up and clasping her hands, "I have been in great distress since I last saw you; but pray be seated," she continued, perceiving Captain Selby and myself, "they have not taken *all* yet."

On enquiring, we found that from many unforeseen losses, and the illness of a child, her husband, who was an honest hard working man, had become indebted to a severe landlord £5, and for this sum he had carried off all their little furniture worth taking, and had threatened them even with a prison until the rest should be paid.

"And why did you not come to my father, Martha," asked Annie, when the poor woman had sobbed out her tale of sorrow, "you well knew he would have done what he could to assist you?"

"I do know it, Miss Annie, I have reason to know it, but we both felt unwilling to trouble the minister, after his great kindness at Christmas—he does so much in the village, more than those who are rich, which he is not, more's the pity."

"But his wants are few, good Martha, therefore