

long eyelashes, glistening like the early dew on the moss-rose bud.

But the sorrows of happy childhood are brief:—when therefore the sunshine of joy again lighted up Ellen's lovely face, amidst the enchantments of the fancy-fair, then did Gertrude conclude her admonition.

"Here, my sweet love, is another crystal box, which I have bought as a keepsake for you—and which I give you on one condition; that you never spend the new, and bright half-crown, which I have placed as a monitor within it. Keep both, my Ellen, in remembrance of to-day: and whenever you are tempted to be careless of your treasures, or to yield to inclinations which your better judgment would condemn, let the sight of the crystal box remind you how soon those treasures may be lost to you for ever, and how one idle moment may render nugatory years of steady perseverance and caution: and let the recollection of the *Lost Half-crown* teach you, also, that losses and disappointments are felt with a tenfold bitterness, when they are the result of our folly."

Ellen assented to the proposal;—and Ellen has since passed from childhood to girlhood—and from girlhood to maturer years; but she still preserves the crystal box, from within which the important silver token has never been removed; for amidst various trials and disappointments, of which her infantine grief was indeed but too truly a type, she has ever felt the value of the lesson it inculcated—and thankfully acknowledges the benefit she has derived from Gertrude's keepsake, and her own mischance of

For the Pearl.

LUCY CLARKSON.*

A TALE OF SIMPLE LIFE.

Chapter IV.—The Return.

Thus time rolled on, until some months had elapsed, and then a change came over the chamber of the wife. Evenings and nights still wanted the husband's presence, and they still witnessed the fair watcher's vigils,—but she was no longer lonely,—no longer a sad recaller of the past,—no longer a brooder on the unpromising future. An unconscious and lovely stranger was there, like a sunbeam, dispensing mental warmth and vigour, as palpably, according to its kind, as ever material emanations were dispensed from the orb of day. A mother's pulse had commenced its healthy action in Lucy's heart, and while she embraced her babe, all other things were forgotten, or were seen through a medium very different from that which heretofore gave an atmosphere to objects. Brief and light were now the remains of gloom,—the calls of duty were more regarded, and according as they were made imperative, hindrances and annoyances decreased, and self-satisfaction gave a glow to the breast. She could not alter the past,—she could not modify the present according to her wishes,—she could not read the future,—but she could perform her duty; and she felt that by so doing she made that future of a past time, blessed,—and that she prepared a past, for the then future, which would be of happy memory. And well might that babe be the blessing which it was intended,—however the callous and sensual might sneer at the supposition. Its fair smooth forehead, blue eyes, and delicately rounded cheeks and chin,—finely tinted and pulpy, as the ripening peach, formed a picture of beautiful simplicity and innocence;—the mystery which hung round that germ of intelligence and active life, the helplessness which required a most tender protector,—the golden promises of the future,—all tended to make sweet music in the breast on which the infant was rocked to sleep.

A few more months and another change in Lucy's household was visible. Charles had answered the dearest wish of her heart by becoming more domestic; instead of fleeing to his riotous companions he enjoyed the company of his young wife,—and sometimes embraced his babe with the exquisite feelings of a father over his first-born. Lucy saw, too plainly, that her husband had other causes beside the presence of his wife and child for sobriety of conduct. Disappointments in business had been experienced, disarrangements of the money market had thwarted his prospects, and his concerns no longer moved on with their wonted smoothness. She rejoiced that these matters urged him more into the bosom of his family, instead of inducing him to drown reflection,—and she laboured to make the refuge he had chosen every way salutary and soothing to his mind.

A blow soon came which required all her virtuous resolution and magnanimity. Reynall became a bankrupt. The sad event had thrown its melancholy shadows before, yet it came like a thunder bolt, terrifying and marring, and leaving scathe and blackness, where once was light and beauty. Nevertheless the dreaded evil had not long been experienced, until it was found not quite so oppressive as was anticipated, and until the certainty appeared less torturing than the period of suspense and vain endeavour which preceded it. One of its worst consequences seemed the estrangement of supposed friends, the air of superiority

which some became invested with, who once scarcely considered themselves equals, and the tone of fault-finding and reproach—most heart-stinging—which some assumed, merely because fortune, as it is called, frowned where once it smiled: Not because Reynall was a worse man the day after his bankruptcy, than he was the day before, but because circumstances had made him unable to meet his engagements, and had made him more liable to the petty annoyances of life. Thus, as sympathy became more needed, it was less awarded; and Reynall felt all the mental agony attendant on a partial loss of *caste*, while he proved on what miserably hollow, and intrinsically valueless materials, that *caste* was founded. Virtue, talent, industry, had nothing to do with it, except so far as these were means of keeping up a certain rank and certain appearances in society. So it is, and so it will be, while society is constituted as it is; and the evil and oppression and shabbiness, involved in the fact, are in some degree redeemed by the effect which such infictions have on the health of commercial life.

The crisis had past,—a complete surrender and sacrifice of Reynall's property had nearly satisfied his claimants, and he found himself, almost penniless, alone in the world. Not indeed alone, except as regards business co-operation; not alone, a wife and child now looked up to him for protection and sustenance, and love for them was blent with the keenest anxieties respecting their future prospects. He felt the deepest horror brood over his heart, as he imagined the possible destitution and suffering of those whom he had expected to rear in delicacy and every comfort,—as he found himself cut adrift from all his usual holds on profitable existence,—and saw society, without one apparent opening for him or his, spread its repulsive surface in every direction. The single man, in such cases, suffers merely as an individual;—but the husband and the father, if deserving of those honourable names, finds his perceptions of misery increased an hundred fold, and he would flee to individual privation or pain, as to a state of comparative enjoyment. Happily, as it is with his misery, it is with his happiness; for the rays of the sun of prosperity are multiplied again and again in their reflection from the family circle.

Reynall at length found employment as supercargo in one of his own late vessels,—The *Endeavour*. She was bound on a long and hazardous voyage, and he was glad that it was so, as it afforded him better remuneration and more favourable opportunity of showing his enterprise and assiduity and commercial ability, than a trip of less consequence. Lucy, and the little Maria, were lodged more appropriately under their altered circumstances, and their natural protector took a tender and melancholy farewell, and left his lonely home, in the heart of the busy city, for adventures on the deep. On the evening of his departure Lucy hugged her babe with a more than tender melancholy to her breast, and shed bitter tears over the unconscious innocent. She felt for herself, for her child, and for him whose toil and danger was now to be the source of their support. She had not married exactly for love,—but common kindness from those with whom she lived; was repaid with affection, duty demanded her sympathies; esteem had grown rapidly with the improved conduct of her husband,—and Reynall's tall ship bore him rapidly from a wife as deserving of the title of loving, as many whose union had been more fully marked by the romantic passion,

Time rolled by, modifying feelings and circumstances with the lonely woman, as well as it did with the grand and gay and important personages of the world. She had heard from her husband, and his letter was a sweet drop in the cup of existence;—little Maria began its infantine fondlings and attempts at prattling, sometimes winning its mother from her cares,—and repeated assurances of unwavering affection had reached her from her sister, now Mrs. Fairfield. Indeed, in all her vicissitudes, the prairie cottage, and the friends of her youth, seemed the haven to which Lucy could confidently resort, if extremity should urge her from the path she had adopted.

And extremity seemed indeed to hover over her head. The time had arrived when Reynall should have returned, if every thing had gone on prosperously, and yet he had not been heard from except on his arrival at an intermediate port,—it was not known that he had reached his destination. Enquiries made by the owners, after the vessel, proved fruitless, and they began to fear, before Lucy knew that there were any serious grounds of apprehension. Deep anxiety indeed was her lot; but to her the sea was a vast, vague, wilderness, where wanderers might tarry for an indefinite period, without any means of imparting information, and whence they might return, unexpectedly, as if they fell from a cloud. The owners had more practical acquaintance with the great "highway of nations," and in the failure of the ordinary intelligence, they saw much cause of doubt and dread. Lucy observed, that they became more cautious in answering her enquiries,—and she imagined that hesitation began to appear in making her the usual advances from her husband's salary. Gloomy thoughts began to encumber all her faculties,—her little room was the scene of mournful watchings, tearful fondlings of her babe, and most ardent prayers for the return of the father and the husband.

At length a messenger waited on her to pay the last quota from

the owners of the *Endeavour*, and to make her acquainted with the fatal news, in a manner least likely to shock her feelings. She listened to the recital of doubt, and fear, and causes of apprehension, trembling like an aspen, but the winding up,—the news, that the wreck of the *Endeavour* had been met at sea and duly reported, and that only the slightest ground for hope existed that any of her crew still existed—overwhelmed her with speechless horror, and despair. The sympathizing messenger retired, and Lucy opened her eyes on a state of existence in which every thing seemed changed, seemed replete with images of sadness and horror, seemed repulsive, deformed, and almost without a bright spot. Her wailing for the lost, and the blankness which the approaches of despair occasioned, were, however, partially shaken off, for there was her babe to be cared for, and there was her own subsistence to be provided. She had too much of unsophisticated nature in her bosom,—too much respect for herself and those in whom she should be interested,—too strong a view of the state of probation which this life at best, and at worst, presents,—too much morality and spirit and religion, to sink abjectly under troubles, whatever their weight. She might sink, but she would sink struggling, and possessing the satisfaction of knowing that her own listlessness was not the chief cause. Hugging the remembrance of her husband to her heart, commiserating his fate, shrieking from contact with the world, and yearning over the prospects of her babe, she yet resolutely set about the discovery of some new path in life, for herself, and the little innocent, that now depended on her single arm. But the important question was, what path was open to her feet, or where could she force an opening by her feeble exertions. Speculation after speculation was indulged, until the lonely woman's brain became confused by such uncongenial meditations.

A letter from the Prairie came most opportunely, and after some vain endeavours to form some favourable course in the city, she submitted to comparative dependance in her father's home. It was a dependance which might be most lightly felt,—her presence was sought as a favour, she knew how much she could add to the comfort and perhaps wealth of the cottage, in the absence of her sister,—and for whom was the superfluity of that little estate intended, except for her and those dear to her? It was a return to home, to a beloved father and sister, and she shed tears of joy as she considered how the infant Maria would soothe her grandfather's declining years, and grow up amid the plenty and innocence and healthful occupations of rural life. The determination once formed, was eagerly put into practice, and with the remnant of her little means, she set out, by easy stages, for that home, the desertion of which had been the cause of so much vicissitude and anxiety.

She left B— with conflicting emotions:—The foolish schemes of pleasure and attraction, indulged on her entering it, how vain had they proved. What disappointment succeeded anticipation. What loneliness had she experienced amid its bustle,—what a sense of destitution amid its glitter and fashion. And her chief stay, how had he vanished from her side,—the small cloud seemed not to drift seaward and to be lost there, more unmarked, than him who was so precious to her little household. On the other side, she had some cause of more cheerful feelings. Her city life had been less marked with folly and suffering, than might have been expected, when one so inexperienced entered on it by so false a step. Her husband had become weaned from dissipating pursuits, and had grown domestic and affectionate, and had thus left a happy memory behind. His child remained, as a new care and delight, in which her soul centered,—and she was returning to those whom she dearly loved, and who, she was assured, loved her. These thoughts, blended with anticipations respecting those whom she had not seen for years,—occupied her mind, occasionally, during her tedious journey, until her attendant aroused her by announcing a distant view of the Prairie. There, indeed, was the broad flowery expanse, which she so well knew, and whose scenes were endeared above any other on earth. They approached the cottage, and the returning daughter soon found herself moving amid the well known and well beloved haunts of her youth. She could not shake off some feeling of degradation, at thus returning, in humility and loneliness, to a place which she deserted with too many evidences of waywardness and pride. And when she doubted what reception she might possibly meet when her whole story was known, she pressed her child the closer, as the only sure participator in all her griefs and joys. Her child, however, was not her only devoted companion,—Rolla had attached himself with twofold affection to his mistress, since he lost his master. He watched her every movement, when in sight, and seemed continually anxious not to lose that last hold which he had on man's sympathy, and to exhibit his affection with two-fold force, to that remnant of the family which he served. Often Lucy spoke to the half-conscious creature, of his absent master, and was often amused at the temerity of the infant Maria in playing with its glossy coat, and the tenderness with which the brute returned these welcome attentions. Rolla now trotted beside the vehicle which she sat in, and the deafening barks of Wolf and Watch were soon heard, as they gazed from the vicinity of the cottage on the approaching strangers. In a few minutes those