

no one seemed to consider her case a hard one. Perhaps, if she had mentioned how hard she felt it, people might have agreed with her, but as it was, they saw her pale face, lit with its sad smile, and expressed their approval of her resignation. She had not much liking for books, but was never idle, working with her needle a little for herself, and a great deal for Gracie. Perhaps the most pressing sorrow she had was the reflection that there would soon come a time when she should still be alive, and yet unable to work ; when the palsy that at present had only reached her lower limbs should attack her diligent fingers. Then, indeed, it would be melancholy to sit at that barrack window with folded hands, awaiting death's tardy stroke. The cares of managing the little household upon the scanty sum that her husband allowed for its maintenance, were, it was true, delegated to Gracie, but she shared the responsibility with her, and took all the blame—and there was often blame—upon her own shoulders. The commissary, who grudged every shilling, however necessarily spent, preferred to find fault with his wife instead of his daughter, because it made the latter cry : not that he would have been rendered the least uncomfortable by any amount of woman's tears, but because the crying made Gracie's eyes red, and deteriorated from her personal appearance ; and her beauty was precious to him, as likely to prove a marketable commodity. Thus the girl escaped a good many jobations, which she did not indeed deserve any more than her mother, but which she would have gladly borne in her mother's place. The invalid, on the contrary, was well satisfied that any consideration, no matter what, should preserve her beloved daughter from the commissary's ire.

Imagine, therefore, her distress of mind when Gracie made her appearance out of the fly upon that day of the battle of Charlton Fair, with draggled raiment and torn bonnet. In this case Mrs. Ray felt that the dear child must bear her own burden of reproach and fault-finding. And heavy enough she knew it would be ; for Gracie had worn her best attire upon the occasion of that unlucky walk with Ella Mayne, and it would take many shillings to repair its damages.

"My dear child," cried she, as soon as she had assured herself that she had received no personal hurt, "what will your father say ? It was only last week that he paid three pounds on account to Miss Furbelow."

Her head shook from side to side with nervous agitation ; she flapped her poor thin fingers as though she had been a penguin ; it was terrible to see such affliction, about so insignificant a matter, in one so stricken.

"But, dear mamma, papa will understand that it could not be helped.