

demanded a moderate remuneration for the same. To this application Mark returned for answer—“That he had not forced his son upon his protection—that Algernon had pleased himself in adopting the boy—that he had warned him of the consequences of taking such an extraordinary step at the time—and that he must now abide by the result. That he had wasted his substance in a foolish and extravagant manner, but that he, Mark, knew better how to take care of his.”

“Your father, Tony, is a mean, pitiful scoundrel!” cried the heart-broken Algernon, crushing the unfeeling letter together in his hand, and flinging it with violence from him. “But I deserved to be treated with contempt when I could so far forget myself as to make an application to him! Thirty years ago, and I should have deemed begging my bread from door to door an act of less degradation. But time, Tony, changes us all, and misfortune makes the proudest neck bend beneath the yoke. My spirit is subdued, Anthony,—my heart crushed—my pride gone; I am not what I was, my dear boy. This blow will deprive you of a father—aye, and of one that loved you too. I would rather share the kennel with my dogs than become an inmate of the home that awaits you.”

“Home!” sighed the youth. “The wide world is my home. the suffering children of humanity my lawful kinsmen.” Seeing his uncle’s lip quiver, he took his hand, and affectionately pressed it between his own, while tears, in spite of himself, fell freely from his eyes: “Father of my heart! would I could, in this hour of your adversity, repay you all I owe you. But, cheer up, something may yet be done. He has never seen me as a man. I will go to him—will plead with him—nature may assert her right; the streams of hidden affection, so long pent up in his iron heart, may overflow, and burst asunder these bars of adamant. Uncle, I will go to him this very day, and may God grant me success.”

“It is in vain, Anthony; avarice owns no heart, has no natural affections. You may go—but it is only to mortify your pride, agonize your feelings, and harden your kind nature against the whole world.”

“It is a trial!” said Anthony. “But I will not spare myself; duty demands the attempt; and, successful or unsuccessful, it shall be made.”

He strode towards the door. His uncle again called him back.

“Do not stay long, Anthony; I feel ill and low spirited. Godfrey surely does not know that I am in this accursed place. Perhaps he is ashamed to visit me here. I do not blame him. Poor lad! poor lad! I have ruined his prospects in life by my selfish extravagance; but I never thought it would come to this. If you see him on your way, Tony, tell him.”—and here his voice faltered,—“tell him that his poor old father pines to see him—

that his absence is worse than imprisonment—than death itself. I have many faults—but I have loved him only too well.”

This was more than Anthony could bear, and he sprang out of the room.

With a heart overflowing with generous emotions, and deeply sympathising in his kinsman’s forlorn situation, he mounted the horse which he had borrowed from a friend in the neighbourhood, and took the road that led to his father’s mansion—that father who had abandoned him, while yet a tender boy, to the care of another, and whom he had never met since the memorable hour they had parted.

Oak Hall was situated about thirty miles from N— Park, and it was near sunset when Anthony caught the first glimpse of its picturesque church spire and square towers amongst the trees. With mingled feelings of pride, shame, and bitterness, he passed the venerable mansion of his fathers, and alighted at the door of the sordid hovel, that its miserable possessor had chosen for his home.

The cottage in many places had fallen into decay, and admitted, through countless crevices, the wind and rain. A broken chair, a three-legged stool, and the shattered remains of an old oak table, deficient of one of its supporters, but propped up with bricks, comprised the whole of the furniture of the wretched apartment. The door was ajar, which led into an interior room that served for a dormitory. Two old, soiled mattresses, in which the straw had not been changed for years, thrown carelessly upon the floor, were the sole garniture of this execrable chamber. Anthony glanced around with feelings of uncontrollable disgust, and all his boyish antipathy returned. The harsh words, the still harsher blows, and the bitter curses, he had been wont to receive from the miser, came up in his heart, and, in spite of his better nature, steeled that heart against his ungracious parent. The entrance of Mark Hurdlestone, whose high stern features once seen could never be forgotten, roused Anthony from the train of gloomy recollections, and called back his thoughts to the unpleasant business which brought him there. Mark did not at the first glance recognize his son in the tall, handsome youth before him, and he growled out, “Who are you, sir, and what do you want?”

“Mr. Hurdlestone,” said Anthony, respectfully, “I am your son.”

The old man sat down in the chair. A dark cloud came over his brow. He knitted his straight, bushy eyebrows, so closely together, that the small fiery dark eye gleamed like a spark from beneath its gloomy pent-house.

“My son—yes, yes, I’ve heard say that ’tis a wise son that knows his own father. It must be a very wise father, I think, that can know his own son. Certainly, I should never have recognized mine in the gay magpie before me. And what