

THE SUNBEAMS WE SCATTER.

Dark clouds have indeed settled upon many a brow, and cast their deep shadows over many a weary heart, and these might at least be gilded, if not dispelled, would every human being but resolve to surround himself with as sunny an atmosphere as possible. We all know what a delight it is to see a golden beam forcing its way through the obscurity after a heavy leaden sky has overshadowed us for days; how the heart leaps up to welcome it, and how quickly we exclaim, "Well, this world is not so dark and dismal a place after all; there is gladness mingled with its sorrow, smiles with its weeping, life with its death."

Passing the other day along one of the squares of the metropolis, I observed a woman seated by the iron railing in front of a noble mansion. Her sunken eye and emaciated countenance told a tale of want and misery; but such sights are continually before us; sad tales are constantly breathed into our ears, and their frequent repetition renders the heart in a measure callous; yet, as there was something peculiarly touching about this poor woman I stopped a moment to watch the effect of her mute pleading. The quick footsteps moved on; some cast a cold look upon the sickly object; some neither saw nor heeded; while others gave a sharp rebuke which elicited no other reply than a silent tear, or a trembling of the ashy lip. As I still lingered in the hope of seeing some one exhibit a touch of human pity, a bright young creature approached, whose buoyant step showed clearly that the hand of sorrow had never yet been laid upon her; her luxurious dress spoke of wealth and indulgence, and her clear blue eye and loving glance indicated that an atmosphere of affection surrounded her in her happy home. The pale suppliant instantly attracted her attention, and stopping, she drew from her little silken purse the last coin it contained, exclaiming, "Poor soul! I wish I had something more to give you!"—"Heaven bless your sweet face!" was the eager reply, "but the kind word is better than gold." And before the fair girl could pass on, the woman seized her hand and pressed it to her pallid lips. A tear bedewed the bright eye; rich blood mantled the fair cheeks, as, with a checked and subdued step, the young stranger went her way; but the "Heaven bless your sweet face!"

the kind word is better than gold," dwelt in my memory, and I thought that *sunbeam* fell on the right spot, and has brought up a flower from the cold, dry soil.

* * * *

There was a school examination going on, that fearful ordeal before which so many young hearts quail; and I passed with the crowd into the formidable prison-like building. The class-rooms were filled with parents, friends, and visitors. At their desks the various classes were seated, waiting to be summoned to their trial. And it was a study to look at those young creatures, to read their characters, and speculate upon the yet unrolled page of their future destiny. Here the uplifted head, the dark, proud eye and mantling cheek spoke of self-reliance and the assurance of success; there a pale-faced student bent anxiously over his books, or gave the finishing touches to a theme about to be presented; here the unmistakable look of genius gave promise that a quick intuition and a ready wit would supply all deficiencies; and there, again, the careless demeanour and merry glance betokened a "dread of books and love of fun," an eager longing to be out upon the hill-side, or roaming through the green wood; but mingled in with these there were pale faces, and trembling hands, and hearts nervous with doubt and fear. Among the latter class one boy, who sat in a distant part of the room, had especially attracted my attention. Although his eye was intellectual, there was a pallor of the cheek, and a nervous tremor about it which indicated ill health, and an entire want of confidence in himself. As I looked with pity at the child, a gentleman, with whose peculiarly benevolent expression of countenance I had been struck upon first entering the room, approached him, saying, "Are you ready to go forward, my little fellow?" A tear dimmed the gentle eye of the child as he replied, "Oh no sir! This lesson, I do not understand it, and I cannot." A few words of judicious explanation, a kind look of encouragement, a soft pressure of the hand, and the cloud passed away. Presently the name of Edwin Wilson was called, when the little fellow stepped bravely forward, and, to the surprise of all who knew him as a timid child, acquitted himself to the entire satisfaction of his teachers; and the

"Well done, my boy!" from the principal examiner called up a flush of joy to his pale cheek. He returned with a buoyant step to his seat, whispering his stranger friend, "I shall never forget you, sir."—"Ah!" I thought, "that *sunbeam* has given warmth to a young heart, and will cause it to bring forth enduring fruit. that 'Well done, my boy,' will be life's watch-word."

* * * *

Heavily fell the rain, and wildly swept the winds through a narrow street at the back of the Royal Exchange, as a merchant, closing the door of his counting-house, prepared for his homeward walk. It was not alone his usual daily toil which now had the effect of so depressing his spirits, and saddening his views of life; he had met that day with deep disappointment and base ingratitude, involving heavy pecuniary loss. His plans, his prospects, his future career, which but the day before had seemed all glowing with sunshine, now looked dark and dreary; "the trail of the serpent was over them all." And as in his homeward path he drew near a church surrounded by its quiet burial-place, he felt that weariness of spirit and distaste of life with which most persons who have passed the spring-time of existence are familiar; and leaning on the low wall, as the headstones gleamed through the darkness of the night, he murmured: "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Heavy was his footstep as he left the spot, and proceeded to his own dwelling; there, too, all looked dark and cheerless—the windows were closed, and no warm ray of light found its way through them to welcome his approach. "Like the rest of the world!" he exclaimed—"like the rest of the world! Nothing to brighten or gladden me." Drawing the latch-key from his pocket, he turned the lock and entered. As the sound of his footstep was heard within, a young girl opened the parlour door, and came forward to greet him. "Father, dear father," she exclaimed, "how wet you are! I have been so troubled about you!" and pressing her warm cheek to his, she drew him into the apartment. Everything there told of thoughtful affection. An arm-chair was placed ready for him by the side of the blazing hearth; the hissing urn stood in its place upon the table, where a nicely prepared meal awaited him, and the ten-