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THE FIRST DEBT.

A TALE OF EVERY DAY.

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Continued from our last Number.

CHAPTER III.

FROM their childhood, the good curate remarked a decided difference in the dispositions, manners, and pursuits of his daughters. Their features, taken separately, were strikingly alike, and cast in the same delicate mould; but the total dissimilarity of expression destroyed the resemblance which otherwise would have existed between them. There was a sweet seriousness, a gentle tranquillity, in the smooth, calm brow, and deep blue eyes of Alice Linhope, more touchingly interesting than the gay vivacious smiles, blooming cheeks, and arch dimples of the beautiful but wayward Sophia. Alice's face was full of sensibility, blended with modesty, and though seldom betrayed into a vivid display of her feelings, they were not less acute, or her heart less susceptible of amiable impressions than those who are accustomed to make a display of them on all occasions. She possessed a strong, comprehensive, and well informed mind, a quick perception of right and wrong, and unshaken perseverance in the performance of her duty. Educated in the school of adversity, she had learned to endure with patience all the ills which flesh is heir to. Her self denial was great; and even when a child she would cheerfully resign toys or sweetmeats to pacify the cries of her little sister; and as she advanced in life she took an active part in administering to the wants of her parents. To smoothe her father's restless pillow, to watch silently and unweariedly by his feverish couch, and to wait upon her aged grandmother, were to her not the tasks which many girls of her age would have considered them, but the spontaneous offerings of a tender and affectionate heart. Her character moulded itself upon her father's, and she possessed all his virtues in an eminent degree. To the religious instructions of that beloved parent she bent an attentive ear, and his pious admonitions were never forgotten, and influenced her conduct through life. The piety and affection of his dutiful child poured

into her afflicted father's wounds, and alleviated the sorrows of a heart sorely bruised in its conflicts with the world.

Let not my readers imagine that such a man as George Linhope was less interested in the welfare of his youngest daughter. He saw with heart-felt sorrow that her mother's partiality, and the thoughtless commendations bestowed upon her beauty by strangers, had sown the seeds of vanity in Sophia's breast, and that it would require the greatest care to weed them out. He found the task more difficult than he had at first imagined. Selfish, passionate, conceited, and impatient of control, Sophia scorned reproof, and remained indifferent to the most tender and earnest admonitions; and often when musing on these disagreeable traits in her character, the anxious father would exclaim with a sigh: "Surely an enemy hath done this!"

With Sophia Linhope self was the first grand object of her thoughts, and she could assume, to carry a favourite point, a blandness of manner, and artlessness of speech, which, aided by the natural graces of her person, were perfectly irresistible. Against this speciousness of look and manner, the good curate constantly warned his faulty child.

"If you possessed an honest heart, Sophy," he would say, "you would not attempt to dissemble its feelings, by adopting words which you know to be false, and assuming smiles which conceal envious and selfish thoughts. Nor think, Sophia, to act a lie is less criminal than to tell one. Falsehood in too many instances does not require the aid of words. It can be conveyed in a look—a smile—in the motion of a hand, and though voiceless, can be most eloquent, and is ever more dangerous in those forms in which it cannot be disputed, however deeply felt."

Sophia shrank from her father's reproving eye, and generally avoided his couch as the dullest and most irksome part of the room, and clung to her mother's side as a refuge from the wholesome les-