

had the grave closed over them when the child, who had been well through all the troubles, sickened and died of some infantine disease; and the poor widow, heartbroken at her sorrows, had but little strength for an expected trial that was to give a fatherless infant to her arms. In two months' time a new life came into that house of death; and through all these varied scenes of calamity, the young seamstress was a ministering angel, ever active, ready, cheerful. Her health returned as these demands were made on her energies. When not in the sickroom, she studied the details of the business; and the neighbours, when their fright was over, feeling ashamed of their desertion of the widow in her time of need, now vied with each other in promoting the business which at first, had been threatened with ruin. The widow as soon as she partially recovered, instructed her willing helper, who aided by the young sister, contrived to take all severe toil from the bereaved; and if health and comfort could have come to the widow, the house of sorrow would have lost its gloom. But Mrs. Pestonleigh never rallied. The second summer after the death of her husband she also departed, leaving her little girl Alice, the posthumous child, her sister Bertha, and the business in trust for them, to the friend who had come to her in her hour of need. So you see our seamstress had now her hands full—a family and a shop bequeathed to her. She was equal to it. She farmed off the printing business, taking a moderate profit from it, but not parting with it; and, having both taste and judgement, so increased the book and library department, that soon it was the best shop in town. She fulfilled her trust; gave Alice a good education; and offered, when she came of age, to resign the business to her. But Alice had other prospects. She became the wife of a captain of a merchant ship, and would only take a very moderate dower from one whom she rightly regarded as a mother. Bertha, delicate from childhood, had died years before. And so there was no impediment to the prosperity of the subject of my narrative. Simple in her mode of living, regular in her business pursuits, she grew gradually but surely rich. All the investments of her savings were wisely made; but money, for its own sake, she did not value. There was not a charitable institution in the town, or at length in the county, that she did not benefit; and it came to pass that her Exeter relatives found her out. They were somewhat scandalized at having a shopkeeping sister; but as she manifested no intention of visiting them, they had not the disgrace brought home to them; and in proportion to her firm refusals to come to them, were their entreaties that she would gratify their affectionate hearts by her presence. She did not comply; but there were other requests she was less resolute in refusing. Loans of money for the education of her nephews, or to replenish the wardrobes of her nieces, were often craved, and as often sent: as to whether they were ever repaid, I know not.

'To her sister who had married in India, and who came home a widow with a slender income and a broken constitution—to that dear sister she was a true friend. She took a charming cottage for her in a sheltered situation on the banks of the Tavey, and smoothed her declining years with the tenderest love.

'A cottage on the banks of the Tavey!' Major

St. Leger, 'why, are you speaking of any relation of your brother's wife all this time?' said Mrs. St. Leger, with surprise.

'Of course I am, my dear. Her sister Fanny, who so kindly paid for the education of our nephew George, and did a thousand acts of generosity during my brother's troubles. For we know, he added, looking at his wife, 'that Indian life is not all splendor and prosperity. There, as elsewhere, those who do the most work are the worst paid.'

'Well! but how was it you did not know of her residence here?'

'Why, I have not so long been here, you know, and when I came from Rome, I purposed going down to the west; and then I heard from one of the young Hales that his aunt Fanny had retired from business, and was travelling for a time: and I find she took a young girl, who had been a schoolfellow of her ward Alice, with her to Germany—the eldest sister of the Tiffanys—that began the friendship with them; and so for a time she has made her abode here, and tested the courtesy and hospitality of our venerable city.'

'Dear, goodness! It's very strange, I must say, for a gentleman's daughter to go into trade.'

'Oh! as to that, ladies, spare your wonder; some of our best nobility have had no higher origin. Here's a book,' he added tapping a volume, with *Mudie's* label, that lay on the table, which says 'Cornwallis and Coventry the Earls of Radnor, Essex, Dartmouth, Craven, Harwich, Tankerville, Pomfret, Darnley, Cowper, and Romney, are respectively descended from a city merchant, a London mercer, a silk manufacturer, a city alderman, a member of the skimmers' Company, a merchant tailor, a mercer, a Calais merchant: and good London citizens where the ancestors of the other noble families;* and very good ancestors too, better to my mind, than the pretty Mistress Nelly, or the crafty Duchess of Portsmouth, or the imperious Castlemaine, and other ill-omened birds of that feather.'

'Well, Major, but what became of the old lover with whom your story commenced?' said Mary Fitzlam.

'Oh! he went home and married his housemaid, a buxom lass of twenty and a pretty piece of business he made of it.'

'But my dear major,' interposed Miss Penelope Fitzlam, her eyes kindling with triumph, 'according to your theory, in thus acting he was only showing his superiority to "castle prejudices,"'

'Pardon me, Miss Pen. I'm no leveller, and I have no sympathy with all the wild talk about equality that some people delight in.

'This miserable old man might have found companionship for his declining years among his many relatives, or he might have chosen suitably as to age and education, and married well and wisely. But early youth naturally sprang from him; and when he chose a wife without education, or principle, I say he disgraced his family and stained his name. You ladies often quote Scripture; I do not. I abstain reverently from doing that which you as reverently, perhaps, feel constrained to do. But there's pithy little sentence of four words—"Be

* See *The History and Antiquities of North Allerton, in the country of York*, by C. T. Davison Inglewood, Esq. See also *Athenæum*, August 14th, p. 195.