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Down East  
Project



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Frederic Colville

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Frederic Colville

June 3<sup>th</sup> 1836

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HISTORY  
 OF  
 WIDOW GRAY  
 AND  
 HER FAMILY:  
 OR,  
 THINGS AS THEY OFTEN ARE.

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE MILITARY BLACKSMITH,” &c.

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Second Edition.

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“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”—Psalm cxxvi. 6.

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MDCCCXXVII.





# WIDOW HUBBARD

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The following story is intended for young people, on their quitting school, and entering different situations in life. It is a story of a young woman who, after leaving school, finds herself in a difficult situation. She is a widow, and her husband has died, leaving her with a young child and a large debt. She must find a way to support herself and her child. She goes to work as a governess, but her employer is a cruel man who treats her badly. She eventually escapes and finds a better situation, but she must overcome many hardships along the way. The story is a classic example of a rags-to-riches story, and it is intended to teach young people about the importance of hard work, perseverance, and the ability to overcome adversity.



# WIDOW GRAY

AND

## HER FAMILY

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**I**N a village placed at the foot of the range of high and varied hills that skirt along the banks of the rapid river Strathminow, lived a happy and pious family of the name of Gray. Early in life, Roger Gray had been united to Mary Miller with the approbation of their parents. The united savings of their unmarried days had furnished their neat little cottage, leaving

them a small sum for an evil hour. Their daily wants they hoped to supply by the labour of their hands.

Thus they entered upon the duties and the comforts of the wedded state: their hearts were full of love and affection for each other; but they had a trembling remembrance that *this* is not our rest, that we are here but strangers and pilgrims, daily hastening to eternity.

Years of domestic comfort passed away. Roger and Mary Gray had two stout girls, and one little boy just able to walk alone, and trying to lisp his father and mother's names. He already knew the hour when his father would be coming, and placed himself upon a step at the door, that he might catch the very first glimpse of his tall figure as he returned from his work at the neighbouring quarry. From this station the moment little Allan Gray saw his daddy, he called to his mother and sisters, and then made the best of his way with toddling steps to meet him. The sight you would have

supposed removed all Roger Gray's fatigue, and he generally entered his humble cottage with Allan in his arms, and his wife and girls with him, experiencing a warm and happy feeling in these domestic ties, that amply rewarded him for the toil and fatigue needful for their support.

Thus this couple lived. They had seen sickness and death enter the families of many of their neighbours. Such warning of the uncertainty of every earthly tie had ever filled their hearts with tender sympathy for the sufferers, and with love and gratitude to that God who had thus preserved them. They had often wondered at how much had been given them; and Roger Gray, with heart-searching tenderness, had warned and prayed for his dear Mary and himself, that they might not make idols of their pleasant things: That, as they had received good at the hand of the Lord, they might not doubt his love, or repine at his will, when he should see fit to send evil tidings and days of trial. When so

employed, Roger's faith seemed to stand on firmer ground, his eye kindled, his head became erect, and from the bottom of his soul he desired to have his will subdued to the will of God. Mary looked at him, then at her darling children; she drew them close to her, and melting into tears, prayed that God would preserve those she held so dear, that were indeed the desire of her heart and eyes. To toil for them, to watch them in sickness and in health, seemed easy; but to lose them! the very thought sent a sickness to her heart.

One evening, in a cold and bleak November, Mary Gray was busily employed preparing supper for her husband and children. The fire was mended—the hearth was neatly swept—the children were in expectation. Susan had that day got a Bible at school, as a reward for her regular attendance; it was wrapped in her apron, and pressed close to her breast, impatient for the moment when she should show it to her father, and see his smile of approbation.

Ellen was finishing her last row of knitting; and little Allan was asking when his daddy would be in, for that his stick was broke, and he wanted another. The usual hour was past. Mary was busying herself in making things, already neat, still neater. She felt anxious, but chided her heart for its constant fearfulness. At that moment a trampling of feet was heard: Mary started—listened—then rushed to the door, just as several men approached, carrying in her husband, pale, and covered with blood. Mary saw no more—the light forsook her eyes, and she fell lifeless to the ground. When she recovered to a consciousness of her misery, the body of Roger Gray was extended on the bed in the next room; and she was told by those who carried him in, (the tears coursing fast down their weather-beaten faces,) that just as the work of the day was done, and part of the men left the quarry, a large mass of rock, which had not been supposed insecure, had given way, and, with a tremendous crash, fallen to the

ground, split, and, in doing so, struck Roger Gray on the head, and wounded several others. They gave their true-hearted sympathy to the sorrow-stricken widow. They said it would be well for every one if they were as ready for death; that not a better neighbour was left in all Strath-minow. He had indeed been a good man; but their tears spoke their feelings with all the sincerity of their untaught words.

Poor Mary Gray heeded them not. The sudden blow had even for a time stifled feeling. She sat pale, motionless, and did not shed a tear; but when they all withdrew, leaving her with only one affectionate neighbour—when she saw the countenance of him she loved so well, so changed—when she began to *feel* what had really taken place; that their tie in this world was for ever broken; that he was no longer her friend—her guide—her Christian husband—the agony of that moment had well nigh broke her heart, and often in after life came over her with a



thrill of horror, that defied every comfort, but such as is shed in the soul by Him who pities and supports his suffering servants, even as a father pitieth his children. When poor Mary saw her orphan children—when she thought that their whole support and guidance devolved upon her alone—that to her were committed three immortal beings, she shrank dismayed from the task. Never before had the duties of a parent appeared so great, so many, and so awful. The idea of responsibility, added to the pangs of woe, at the sad and sorrowful loss she had sustained, deprived her of all power of exertion. She sorrowed as those that have no hope, and feared, as if she was left to her own unaided strength in the fulfilment of her arduous task.

But Mary, though for a time bowed down, and fainting, had felt the support which faith in Christ imparts. She was one of that little flock whom God will never leave nor forsake. After the first weeks of grief were passed away, she began to chide her-

self for the immoderate sorrow she had indulged;—to remember that her beloved husband was now tasting of those joys that are at God's right hand for evermore, that her tears were only selfish, and that her part was so to live, as that, in God's good time, she might also inherit the promises. This led her to consider the duties that now lay upon her to fulfil: and here again her timid spirit almost sunk within her. The entire support of her children devolved upon her: Could she support them? Could she defray the expense of an education that would fit them to support themselves in after life, should God spare them to grow up? And, above all, could she train them up in that Christian faith in which they should go? To such training a most positive blessing was annexed. How deep, how awful, then, was the responsibility of those who alike slighted the promise and the precept! Of herself, Mary felt quite unequal to so arduous a task; but sweetly did the supports held

out to the widow and the orphan dwell upon her mind. She tried to cast her fatherless children upon God, and to trust to his gracious promise that he would be a father to them, and the stay of her widowed heart. She remembered that he had said, "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness;" that "he will perfect his strength in our weakness." Widow Gray was meditating upon these texts, and with a feeble faith desiring to be enabled to receive them with confiding trust. Her tears flowed, but they were partly tears of penitence for the immoderate sorrow she had indulged—for the way in which she had resisted the chastening hand of her God. She had put away all comfort from her; she had felt bereft of every earthly enjoyment. Her children, instead of a blessing, and a call to

renewed exertion, were but a load of anxiety and deep distress—the very sight of them aggravated her sorrow. Little did she, in this moment of guilty despondency, foresee how she should one day bless God for giving her these supports to her old age.

While these reflections were passing through Mary Gray's mind, and at one moment leading her to seek the forgiveness of God through her compassionate Saviour, for the rebellion to his will that had mingled largely in her sorrow; and at others leading her to seek the consolation and the strength she required, with a fervour and intense desire she had never yet done; her children felt, in her softened tenderness, a return of that mild and maternal love that had hitherto listened with fondness to all their requests and childish prattle. The little creatures had been awed to silence by the melancholy that surrounded them, and anxious to go out that they might play with the children of the neighbourhood. Now they again drew near their

mother with their former care and affection. Little Allan, one day that he saw his mother shedding tears over her work, drew away her apron, saying, "Don't cry for daddy any more. He is with God; and I will be a good boy, that I may go to him, for heaven is a happy place; and 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' There, mammy, is a verse that Susy taught me last night." Mary Gray took the child in her arms, and, though not without a fresh burst of tears, blessed God for the words of comfort she had heard from his infant lips, and renewed her fervent prayer that she might fulfil the duties of a mother to him—that the real good of her children might be her first object upon earth, till that time when she should follow her husband into that life which is eternal.

Susan and Ellen, seeing their mother listen with pleasure to little Allan, instantly offered to repeat a hymn they had learnt at school. On being permitted, with glowing cheeks and beating hearts,

lest their hymn, as well as Allan's verse, should make her tears flow afresh, they repeated the following lines:—

“ How sweetly parts the Christian's sun,  
Just like the summer's monarch set ;  
'Midst cloudless skies his journey done,  
To rise in brighter regions yet.

“ O where the Christian ends his days,  
Lingers a lovely line of rays,  
That speaks his calm departure blest ;  
And promises to those who gaze,  
The same beatitude of rest.”

Mary Gray's tears did flow, but they were tears of softened woe. She felt she was strengthened and comforted by these very dear children, the charge of whom filled her with so many anxious fears.

From that day she devoted herself to study the duty of a parent, and to fulfil it in all its extensive claims. Her children were trained early to habits of industry and submission; but her training was, in fact, more by example than either

by precept or punishment, though neither the one nor the other was entirely omitted. When the children, young as they were, saw poor widow Gray rise with the sun, that she might send them neat and clean to school; then go out to her laborious occupations in the fields, or sit down to her needle without the loss of a moment of time, they early felt ashamed to neglect the learning she paid to procure for them. If their meals were scanty and of the coarsest fare, the mother ever had the smallest portion; but when, with hands and eyes lifted up to Him who has promised that our bread and our water shall be sure, they saw Mary devoutly thanking God, that for another day she had experienced the faithfulness of the promise, and been enabled to support her children in independence; Susan and Ellen learnt to eat their daily bread with thankful hearts, and to check every desire for greater profusion.

The next neighbours to this poor family were people of a very different character

indeed. James Smith was shoemaker to the village of Strathminow. He was a good workman; his wife had been a milliner girl in Edinburgh; and while James supplied the inhabitants with shoes, his wife did so with caps and bonnets of the showiest colours. They had five children, three boys and two girls. They were the richest people in Strathminow. James not only supplied shoes, but also much conversation. Was there a sick neighbour? James visited the family, and acted in the capacity of doctor, generally recommending something to *keep up the spirits*. Was there a bargain to be made, or a field of potatoes to be sold? James attended, and, with many words, assisted both sellers and purchasers. Was there a wedding, christening, or even a funeral? James generally formed one of the chief speakers. His wife, on the other hand, occasionally visited her former mistress in Edinburgh, and returned to Strathminow enlightened with regard to the newest



fashions, and capable of delivering lectures as long as her husband's upon the form of a cap or the trimming of a bonnet. But though they had plenty of time for these lectures, neither had time or inclination for reading the Word of God. Little Susan Gray could have told you more of the way in which guilty men can find acceptance with God, than either James Smith or his wife.

The Smiths, like every one else in Strathminow, had pitied Mary Gray when she lost her husband. They had shed a few tears over the melancholy particulars; and had been in to see the body of Roger, and the poor widow while still lying in a faint. Mrs Smith had given the orphan children their supper with her own, and neither she nor her husband had slept quite so sound as usual that night. They had fancied, as they heard the winter's storm moaning through the leafless trees, that it was the widowed Mary Gray lamenting the husband of her youth. They

had wondered what she would do with her three children; but after determining that she would endeavour to procure aid from the parish for them, and that she could support herself, they thought little more of her; and long before Mary's tears were dried, James Smith and his wife had almost forgot Roger Gray had ever existed.

It is hardly possible to form an idea of children brought up more differently than the young Grays, and their neighbours the Smiths. Mrs Smith in every thing studied to give her children the most expensive education that Strathminow could afford. She wished them to have the best of every thing, she said. Their father and she could very well afford to pay for it,—none in the place better. This sentiment was easily instilled into the children's minds. They very early fancied themselves the best in Strathminow, though in what their superiority consisted they had never yet considered.

Mary Gray also most earnestly desired

to give her orphan children the best she possibly could ; but how different was her estimate of what was best for them ! With what care did she repress every proud, every saucy feeling in them ! How carefully did she instil, that the favour of God is better than life ! How earnestly did she pray to God to enlighten their young hearts, that, however poor they might be in this world, they might be honest, industrious, and full of the grace of God !

One Sabbath, when Mary Gray was prevented going to church by little Allan having the measles, Susan and Ellen Gray joined the young Smiths on their way home from church, when the following dialogue passed between them.

*Nanny Smith.* “ Susan and Ellen, you will come with us to the bank of the river. We have found a nice place to play there.”

*Susan.* “ We must go home to our mother. It is the Sabbath day.”

*Nanny.* “ But you do not go to the Sabbath School, why must you go home ?”

*Ellen.* "We do not yet go to the Sabbath School, but mother hopes to get us admitted by next quarter. We had no shoes, and could not go so far; but now we have got a pair of new shoes each, and so has Allan."

*Nanny.* "I have often wondered you could walk without shoes. I am sure I could not do it; but since you are not going to the School, why not come and play with us?"

*Susan.* "Because mother never allows us to play on the Sabbath day, now that we are old enough to understand the command of God, to keep it holy."

*Nanny.* "The command of God! what do you do on the Sabbath day then?"

*Susan.* "The command of God is to keep it holy to the Lord—every part of it holy."

*Nanny.* "But it is our day of pleasure. We in summer generally take a long walk or some diversion on that day."

*Susan.* "It is our day of pleasure too, but God has told us what kind of plea-

sure we must try to attain on the Sabbath, which he has blessed and hallowed."

*Nanny.* "And what, then, is your pleasure on that day?"

*Susan.* "Our good mother is at home all that day. She instructs us, she reads the Bible to us, she tells us about God. He has been our father and our mother's God, and he will not forsake or leave us, if we do not forsake his paths. Mother says, the mountains may depart, and the hills melt away; but one word or promise of God's Word shall never fail."

*Nanny.* "And do you never go out on the Sabbath? I would weary if I was in the house all day."

*Susan.* "I weary a little sometimes, but then I know my sinful heart is the cause of this. To my mother, it is, I am sure, a day of pleasure. I often think, before the Sabbath closes, that she looks stronger, and moves about with a firmer step, while she grows so mild, that her very looks are love and gentleness: Every anxiety that may

have troubled her, and filled her with restlessness and anxiety but the day before, seems laid up with God. She often says, He will sustain me, why should I fear? Has he not delivered me in six troubles? and shall I distrust him in the seventh?"

*Nanny.* "Well, that is all very extraordinary; with us it is quite different. We go to church, and we like to go, for there are few other days on which we put on our fine clothes. To the sermon I do not listen; at least only to the text, for father asks us that at night. When we come out of church, we are busy looking at our neighbours; for mother likes to see us the smartest in Strathminow: and when any of the neighbour children get a new thing, she generally gets the like for us. In the afternoon some of our neighbours come to see us, or we go and visit them; and we are always sorry when Sunday is done, for mother makes us work busy on other days."

*Susan.* "But have you no fear of disobeying God? Has he not commanded us

to keep the Sabbath day holy? Has he not promised a blessing to all those who do so; to those who do not speak their own words, or think their own thoughts on that day; who remember it is not their day, but God's?"

*Nanny.* "We all do so, and so do a great many of our neighbours, and no harm happens to us; on the contrary, we are better off than any one else in Strath-minow."

*Susan.* "So the rich man was better off than Lazarus: He fared sumptuously every day, and was clothed in purple and fine linen. Poor Lazarus was a beggar—no one heeded him, no one pitied him while on earth. He, like my dear mother, had to carry all his sorrows to his God at once: But at death, what a change! The one cast into hell fire—no hope of mercy. The poor, despised, suffering Lazarus, translated to heaven. There is no sorrow there—God himself shall wipe away every tear. Our compassionate Saviour, who

suffered and who died for us, and who now encourages us to pray to him, and to trust in him, will still be our light, our strength, our God. Surely, with such hopes before us, it is well worth our while to strive to enter in at the strait gate, though it should at times be a little difficult."

By this time the young people were at the door of widow Gray's cottage. Susan and Ellen went in with sober looks, and hearts willing to listen to the instruction of their pious mother—to learn the path in which they should go; and when native corruption made them feel this service a weariedness, they knew they must apply by *faith* and *prayer* to him who can alone change the heart, and who has declared himself "more ready to hear than we are to ask."

The young Smiths returned home with some feelings of awe upon their spirits; but neighbour Mackay and his daughter were come to invite all the Smith family to tea. Mr and Mrs Henderson, the wealthy grocer and his wife, from the



town of —, were come out to spend the day with them. This prospect of earthly pleasure quickly wiped away every thought of eternity; and the sins of another Sabbath were added, which, if not deeply repented of—if not washed out in the atoning blood of Christ Jesus, would swell the load of woe, which fills that place of torment, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched.

After this period, the two families continued, for several years, to prosecute their different ways of life. The Smiths still continued to enjoy this world's goods, and to hold themselves the highest people in Strathminow. Poor widow Gray, by submitting to many privations, and struggling hard with her reduced and adverse situation, had succeeded in giving her daughters a very good education, and regular habits of industry; and to her son (for whom she more especially lamented the loss of a father's watchful care) she had given every advantage in her limited

power. He was now a fine boy of twelve years old, and it was time to place him in some profession. Many a prayer had, through life, been offered for him; and now Mary Gray's supplications were more frequent and more earnest than ever that God would direct her. Allan's inclinations she knew were strongly fixed on being a mason. From his earliest years he had said he would follow this trade. He had watched the building of several houses in Strathminow, and, when permitted to handle the various tools, or to mix a little mortar, had inwardly longed for the period when he too should mount a ladder, and add stone upon stone to the walls of a house. Then he would look at his mother's poor and almost ruined cottage, and, with a beating heart, anticipate the time when he should be a good mason. He would then repair and make all things close and snug for his dear, his kind mother. His young imagination pointed to him her tearful smile of approbation, and

he fancied he heard the blessing she pronounced on her boy.

Widow Gray did all in her power to forward the wishes of her son. She applied in various directions, and hoped that his working for a longer period than usual, would supply the apprentice fee she was unable to pay. All her endeavours were unsuccessful, and day after day Allan heard the tale of her disappointment with inward sorrow. To fail in a favourite object, is a difficult lesson to learn at twelve years old ; but to feel himself, week after week, a burden upon his mother, became quite intolerable, and he soon determined to accept of any employment that should offer. His mother opposed this determination, and did not give up hopes of placing him in the line he preferred. While she was arguing in this way, thinking only of the good of her boy, she was adding another patch to his coat, and she looked anxious and uneasy. Allan could stand the sight no longer, and throwing his

arms round her neck, whilst his tears flowed with all the unrestrained violence of youth, he exclaimed, "Dear mother, I will not be so determined to be a mason; I will be any thing that enables me to win my bread for myself. Have you not often told me, that in any situation God can make us happy? but I cannot deserve his favour if I am one moment longer a load upon you. Farmer Black offered to hire me as a servant some months ago, but I was then so set on being a mason, that I did not tell you. I will now go and tell him the truth, and see if he will take me." Allan waited for no reply; he set off, feeling his heart lightened by having formed a right determination. The road had never passed away so rapidly and so cheerfully. Farmer Black was at home, and after listening to Allan's story, and asking him several questions, that showed a strong suspicion that he would not adhere to his determination, but return to his wish to be a mason, he, however, a-

greed to try him ; and quickly all pecuniary matters were settled, and Allan was to begin his service the following week. This once settled, he set out, still in high spirits, on his return home—he had done a right thing—he would not now be a load on his mother. But during his walk of six miles, from farmer Black's to his mother's cottage, many a thought of a different cast passed through his mind. The idea of parting with his sisters, of exchanging his present affectionate home for that of farmer Black's, (who had that day appeared to him a harsh kind of man, and made some rigorous exactions) ; his wages were also to be so small for the first three years, that when he had time to consider the matter, he well knew that with them his mother would find difficulty in clothing him, and certainly no overplus to supply any of her many wants.

Silent and thoughtful, he entered the well-loved cottage ; his mother looked up in some agitation, and said with a sigh,

“Allan, are you hired?” “Yes, mother,” replied Allan, in a suppressed tone. At that moment Susan and Ellen came in from their field labours. When informed that Allan was engaged by farmer Black, and to go to his place the commencement of next week, gloomy dejection spread over them, as well as the oppressed widow and her son. Little was said by any of the family. They were accustomed to suffer, and submission had been so early instilled, and so eminently shown them by their mother, that without yet feeling all that reverence for the holiness and wisdom of God, together with the warm sense that He never *willingly* afflicts his children, which combined to produce this most difficult grace in so vigorous a degree in widow Gray’s mind; her children felt that a murmur was wrong, and if it would not have been checked by the rebukes of their own conscience, it would have been by their mother—it would have given her pain.

The silence that ensued was interrupted by Mrs Smith entering with a new suit of clothes she had just got for her eldest son previous to his going to Edinburgh, apprentice to a goldsmith. She came, in the vanity of her heart, to show them to widow Gray, as well as to her other neighbours. After displaying their various merits, and telling how much she had paid for them, she turned to Allan, saying, "What would you give for such a fine dress, young man?" then left the house, without even perceiving the different feelings that filled the hearts of the family she visited.

This little incident ruffled the young Grays a good deal. Susan could not suppress her tears, and Allan, while he made her a sign to conceal her emotion from their mother, had great difficulty in mastering his own varied feelings.

Widow Gray looked round upon them with a look of tender affection; then said, Ellen, reach me the Word of God; it is

only there we see things as they really are. She opened the sacred volume at Col. iii. 12. She read several verses in a solemn voice, often pausing as she proceeded; then added, These are difficult duties to perform, difficult feelings to attain, but they are the heavenly feelings of him, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again—of him who knoweth our utter weakness, and has promised to create us anew; and if we are his children, she added in a firmer voice, may we not say with humble boldness, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” “The Lord is my strength.” The solemnity of their mother’s manner, and the holy confidence with which she repeated the words of inspiration, subdued all the bitter feelings



which their own oppressed situation, in contrast with their more prosperous neighbour, had awakened. They promised not to indulge one envious or murmuring thought—to strive to be in all things contented. Allan said he would not change situations with Andrew Smith, if he was at the same time to change mothers with him.

Allan Gray, according to his agreement, went to farmer Black's at the appointed time; and this first sorrowful parting with one child was soon followed by Susan and Ellen going to service. Widow Gray made every inquiry regarding the moral and religious character of the families where she endeavoured to place her daughters; and after feeling satisfied that they would be under the roofs of those who feared God, she hired them both away from her. They went instructed by her tender care, and she remained at home to pray for them. Her solitude now knew no variety, but in the occasional visits of

her children, and her soul no wish but for their good, and her own greater degree of sanctification.

Susan was placed with a lady in the country; and notwithstanding her mother's inquiries, in spite of the regular service of God being maintained in her house, Susan did not like her—did not think well of her, because she contrasted her warm temper with that of her mother; and certainly the comparison was more honourable to widow Gray than to the rich and prosperous lady. Susan was not happy, and complained to her mother of the many evils she had to undergo; often adding, "I will not stay." Her mother remonstrated strongly, and assured her daughter, that in every situation she would find evils—trials to endure, and difficulties to overcome.

Susan listened, and thought she agreed with her mother; but the first time she was found fault with, her determination to quit her place recurred to her, and she

became careless of pleasing, and inattentive in little things. One day being hastily (though justly) found fault with, for some instance of neglect, she gave up her place. A few minutes after she had done so, she felt sorry for her rashness; and the idea of her mother's neglected advice weighed upon her spirits. As the period, however, approached, when she was to quit Mrs Lenox, this wore off; and Susan, happy to be home again, supposed she would easily procure another place. In this she was mistaken. Her mistress, though warm in temper, was a woman of strict veracity. She could not give Susan a very good character; and the one she received from her (though not so favourable as she wished) she felt to be perfectly just. Thus situated, after many fruitless attempts, Susan found herself, the eldest of her mother's family, out of place, and a load upon her. Most bitter were her reflections, when she at last gave up hopes of procuring a situation. She

felt ashamed to look at her mother, or her brother or sister. She felt unworthy of the exertions which had been made for her in the years of her infancy. She indeed had received a mother's affection and duty, in the sight of both God and man; but she had failed in the very first step of her course.

Seeing these feelings of self-abasement in her daughter, widow Gray uttered not one reproach: She received her child with her usual gentleness; and when she saw her eyes fill with tears when her brother and Ellen paid their occasional visits, bringing with them some small token of their affection for their mother, she ever had something gentle and kind to say of Susan. "She knew," she said, "she loved her as well as her other children, though at present she had it not in her power to do any thing for her." This tenderness was not lost on Susan: She was of a candid spirit, and had been too carefully trained in self-knowledge and truth, to

deceive herself, or to mistake *gentleness* for *approbation*: She spent many an hour in lamenting over her folly. She implored the pardoning mercy of God through Christ Jesus; and she humbly accepted of every kind of work, however severe or unpleasant it might be, which the country round offered her.

During this period of Susan's stay at home, there was a savings bank opened by some benevolent individuals in the neighbourhood of Strathminow. In this bank many an industrious parent deposited their weekly saving; laid by the few pence that slowly, but surely accumulated, and enabled them to clothe a child, or pay for sending it to school.

On the papers given out by the society was the text, "He that provideth not for his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Many and various were the explanations given to this plain text of Holy Writ. Mr and Mrs Smith said it would be a fine provision

indeed. Did the gentry think they were to give only pence and sixpences to their children? They would leave that to the *poor*. Their family would be better off. But, alas! amidst all this pride of boasting, where was the provision laid up for their family, should sudden death cut them off? It was as scanty as their own provision for eternity.

Thomas Boyd, the tailor in Strathminnow, was the first to put into the savings bank. He said the text was the very truth itself. He both saved and hoarded all he could, and laid up all his treasure where moth and rust doth corrupt.

Widow Gray said, that if in her younger years such a bank had been established, it would have been a great assistance to her with a young family: That it was very difficult for a poor person to keep their rent, and the school-wages of their children together, when they saw them want so many things: That many a penny she would have put in, that was un-

avoidably spent while it remained in her own hands. She exhorted her children to avail themselves of it while they were servants, and were provided with every thing but clothing. She said, "My dears, if it keeps you from all that fine dress which many of the servants indulge in, it will do you great and lasting good; but may you always have something to spare for the poor, and for those who possess not the Word of Life. Remember that, though "he that provideth not for his own house hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" yet that the Apostle also says, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him!" Susan listened to all her mother said, and firmly determined that, if God should spare her life, and she should be again in a place, she would allow herself in no indulgence, till she could both return to her mother some of the

comforts she was now deprived of, and also place something regularly in the bank for an evil day.

Many a lesson Susan learnt, and much profit in after life did she reap from her present pain, self-abasement, and mortification. Oh ! if I could describe to my young readers the way in which she now deplored her own folly in quitting Mrs Lenox's service, and placing herself in a situation of far greater difficulty and inconvenience than she had ever experienced in that lady's house ! Often as she returned home, wearied and wet from her labour with some of the neighbouring farmers, or from keeping a child whose mother was absent or busy, she would look back to the regular, easy service she had quitted, and think of the plans she used to form of procuring her dear mother some of the many things she required when she should receive her wages. How different was the reality from the pleasant anticipations ! She was now a load on that parent ; and in the silent kindness with which she was



treated, when any thing brought the conduct of her brother and sister in contrast with her own, she felt all her mother's affection, and her own consciousness of error was doubled. She also knew better than her mother the real difference of her conduct with that of Allan's. Farmer Black was not a kind master. Allan was not happy, but he met with no *real* injustice; and he not only firmly submitted to the hardships of his situation, but carefully concealed them from his mother, knowing that they would distress her. He either answered her questions on that subject, by playfully inquiring whether she would wish him to be as happy with farmer Black as he had been with his mother; or by more seriously saying, that when he felt any thing difficult to bear, he only hoped it would lead him more earnestly to seek the favour of God—then he would be a gainer by every little hardship. Susan often stole out of the room when she thus heard her brother evade the tender

inquiries of his mother, and bitterly she wept over her own folly, and humbled herself under the chastening hand of God. All her former pride and presumption of heart seemed at times placed before her;—she wept, and prayed, and clung to the promises of Scripture, that our backslidings should be healed; and when disposed to faint under the pain she had brought upon herself, she felt how far such feelings are from the repentance that is unto life; and trusting anew in the love of her compassionate Saviour, who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities—she learnt to walk by faith, and to make all her requests with prayer and supplication known unto God.

The Smiths were in all the pride of earthly prosperity; no one could make or trim a bonnet like Mrs Smith. No one in all the parish dressed like the Miss Smiths. They often cast a pitying contemptuous glance at Susan; but with them she would not in her saddest moments

have changed; for she had, in the midst of humiliation and adversity, been taught to know God.

Ellen had been nearly a year with Mrs Ramsay: she was active, diligent, and obliging, and had given great satisfaction to her mistress. Her sister's distress at being out of place made her sad, and she often most earnestly wished it was in her power to assist her. One day Mrs Ramsay had given Ellen leave to visit her mother, and had spoken to her with such kindness, that she felt encouraged (though with a glowing cheek and beating heart) to tell her that her sister was out of place. Mrs Ramsay inquired into her qualifications, and appeared surprised to find she was older than Ellen. Ellen by degrees told Mrs Ramsay all the truth, dwelling with the earnestness of feeling upon poor Susan's distress at being a load upon her mother. Mrs Ramsay, touched by her affection, not only promised her assistance, but in the course of a week gave

her the joyful intelligence that her sister, Mrs Murray, would take Susan as her under housemaid, and that she might that evening be the bearer of this intelligence to her mother's cottage. Ellen could not find words to thank her kind mistress, but inwardly she determined she would serve her with her whole heart and power; and that in *deed* if not in *words* she would testify her gratitude.

Arrived at Strathminow, she entered the well-known cottage. Widow Gray and Susan were seated at work, both silent, the latter very sad. Her mother had caught cold, and been ailing slightly for some days, but would not give up her work, only answering Susan's request that she would do so, by saying, "idleness always did me harm." Ellen's information quickly dispelled every gloom from Susan's heart and countenance. Hope and joy animated her, and she now for the first time ventured to say, "Now, mother, you will see what I have felt at being

a burden upon you ; you shall see that I am your affectionate child, as well as Allan and my sister, though of late my conduct has been little like one."

Widow Gray's eyes filled with tears, when she replied, " And do you think, Susan, I have not understood the language of your melancholy countenance ; that I have not often suffered for you, my dear child ? but I am sure you have learnt many lessons—lessons which you will I trust be the better of all your life. In this way God teaches us often by our own experience. The errors we fall into, the sins we commit, form a great part of that experience. I now feel less anxious about you, than I do about my prosperous Ellen." Susan felt most grateful for this affectionate and judicious encouragement ; and Ellen, though she reddened, and said with a half-wounded feeling, " And what do you fear for me, mother ?" was too generous not to rejoice at the approbation bestowed upon her dear self-abased sister.

Quickly were Susan's preparations made, and soon was she placed with Mrs Murray. With very different feelings did she enter this lady's service from those with which she had served Mrs Lenox, and very different were the characters of her two mistresses. Mrs Lenox was active, managing, and warm in her temper. Mrs Murray was a young woman, lately married, delicate in health, and indolent in her habits, who took little charge of any thing near her. Her house and family were therefore in bad order; the knowledge that this was the case distressed her, (for her conscience was alive to her responsibility,) but she did not possess energy enough to put in execution the plans of amendment that were formed in moments of reflection and conviction. In this state Susan found the family of Mrs Murray; but she had had time to consider what were the duties of a faithful servant—to consider that if she received Mrs Murray's wages, and lived in her house,

she was bound in return to give her time and best services, as in the sight of God. I am Mrs Murray's servant, thought Susan, but I am also the servant of him who seeth the heart, and who has said, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ: Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

From the circumstances I have mentioned, it may be supposed that Susan had considerable difficulties to encounter on first going to Mrs Murray's. That the servants of an indolent mistress would partake of the same indolence; and that some of them would look with an evil eye at the conscientious, active service, which

they did not mean to imitate, was to be expected: But Susan met *all* with such steady good humour, and so regularly did her own duty, that they first *respect-ed* her, and in time *loved* her. Think not, however, my reader, particularly if you are young, that Susan's situation was ever unattended with difficulty. No; she often met with trials, which, at Mrs Lenox's, would have filled her heart with angry passions, and made her determine to quit her place. These difficulties she now viewed as part of the discipline of God. She carefully studied the meaning of every chastisement; and often in doing so, discovered some pride—some neglect of earthly duty—some error which required correction; or else she found that her heart was cold and lukewarm in the service of her God; that she had wandered away from her Shepherd—her Guide—her Saviour; and that she required this rebuke to warn her of her danger, and to call upon her to return to her strong-hold.



Then how gentle did the trial appear !  
how mixed with tender mercy !

Susan, steady to her purpose, when the time of receiving her wages arrived, first carried some to her mother, then placed a portion of the remainder in the savings bank at Strathminow. She had felt all the pain of being dependent on one she ought now to assist, and she hoped never again to be placed in a similar situation, from her own folly. Susan urged Ellen to do the same, and repeated all that their mother had said. Ellen promised to do so ; but the day after she received her wages, a pedlar entered the kitchen at Mrs Ramsay's, and there displayed so many beautiful articles of dress, that Ellen forgot her good resolutions, and spent, not what she intended for her mother, but all she intended for the savings bank.

In this way the two sisters went on for years ; Ellen often determining to place something in the bank ; Susan really doing so every half-year.

Ellen was fond of dress, and could not deny herself the pleasure of being as fine as her neighbour servants. The thought of a future day was not strong enough in her mind to check this propensity. Susan, who had profited by her former painful experience while out of place, was now strictly frugal in her expences, and, after all, was neater, and more tidy in her person than Ellen. It is true that, on the Sabbath day, she had only a plain clean gown, and did not aim at any finery; but she could listen to the sermon, and could feel the value of the Word of life, without one wandering thought to the dress and appearance of a fellow servant. Ellen felt this difference between her sister and herself, and at moments lamented it; for she could not, when dressed to her highest wish, prevent comparing herself in thought with some other silly girl who had come to the house of God, only thinking of the poor perishing body.

Widow Gray now looked back with gratitude and adoration to the way in which the promises of God had been fulfilled to her. She saw her two daughters comfortably placed in families to which they were sincerely attached; and her son Allan, who had fulfilled with strict fidelity his engagements with farmer Black, had learnt his business so well, and had found it so interesting to him, that he had now forgot his boyish desire to be a mason, and was just engaged as foreman with a wealthy farmer, close to Strathminow, from whom he was to get a house and stated wages.

To this new and comfortable house Allan wished his mother to move, and to end her days with him. She looked up when he made this proposal to her—then burst into a flood of tears. Allan, astonished and distressed, inquired the reason of an emotion much more violent than he generally saw agitate his mother. She could not for a time answer his inquiries, or re-

gain her composure ; but when able, she told him that gratitude to God, and his kindness, had overcome her : That he had ever been her dutiful boy, and that her full heart had no means of expressing her gratitude to God, who from the days of her widowhood had supported her ; till she now saw her three children, for whom she had offered so many prayers, all settled comfortably ; and him, without an earthly father's care, far richer than ever that father had been. Truly she might say, her God had been the widow's stay, and the orphan's help.

Allan, relieved to find his mother's tears had no more painful cause, now again urged her to comply with his request, and take up her abode with him. He dwelt on the comforts of his new house ; and, looking round, added, " This is such a comfortless place, even when I was a child it was almost in ruins ; but in your new house all is so convenient and warm."

Widow Gray laid her trembling hand on her son's arm, while she gently said to him, "Don't be vexed, Allan; your kindness cheers my old heart; but I cannot quit this house, poor as it appears to you. It was here I lived with your father—it is here that my soul has tasted largely of the goodness of the Lord; the very walls of this house recal some of his tender mercies, or fatherly chastisements to me—it is here that I have, with a trembling faith, cast myself upon his care, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. My hope has at times been so faint, that to my own apprehension it was gone; and it is *here* that I can now praise him who has been better to me than all my guilty fears; who has built me up, prospered me, and blessed my dear children; enabling me now to say, when my days must be drawing to a close, 'I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that

day.' I have now no fears, Allan : When I walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death, my Saviour will be with me ; and you will lay my earthly tabernacle by the side of my beloved husband. Oh ! how sinfully have I mourned for him ! but soon we shall be ever with the Lord." Widow Gray clasped her hands together, and raised her streaming eyes to heaven, as if she indeed already tasted some of that heavenly rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Allan never after that day urged his mother to quit her house. He felt the many ties she had to it, and it was her happiness he desired ; but he denied himself many things, that he might get it repaired for her ; and in every way that she would permit him, he added to the comfort of her declining years. He also came to her after he was done with his daily labour.

One evening, when he was about eighteen, with considerable embarrassment and

emotion, he proposed that the voice of praise and prayer should again be heard in her house. The service which had been so devoutly, so regularly performed by the father, was resumed by the son. Widow Gray could discern a more trembling hope, and a less firm faith than had filled the parent's heart ; but she blessed her son with her whole heart, and said to him, that if he lived to be himself a parent, he would then understand the joy and rejoicing of her soul.

So calmly, so peacefully, did Widow Gray's days pass on, that she herself only perceived, that, as was said of Jacob, "The time drew nigh that Israel must die." She became very weak, she felt how feeble the thread of life was ; and often lay down at night with the idea strongly impressed upon her mind, that she might never again rise. She prayed that the blow might be lightened to her children ; but she had felt God's power to support, when the husband of her youth

was torn from her, and she now saw all so guided by God in one merciful plan of Providence, that, regarding every coming event, her heart was stayed upon God, and she was at peace. Oh ! how different was this heavenly peace that reigned in this poor widow's heart, from the cold, selfish indifference of worn out affections and chilled feelings, in unrenewed and unsanctified old age !

During the summer, Mrs Ramsay, and her sister Mrs Murray, were absent together on a visit. They allowed Susan and Ellen to remain part of the time with their mother. The sight of them had rendered her uncommonly cheerful.— Her children told her that she was growing young again ; and she, ever unwilling to cast a gloom upon their spirits, said nothing ; but she felt that the hour of her departure was at hand. With holy fervour she pressed upon them the importance of religion, of living every day with that watchful circumspection they



would wish to have done when they came to die—to make religion the first business of their lives—to strive to enter in at the strait gate—to make their calling and election sure—not to be guided implicitly by any one, but with their Bibles in their hands, and their hearts lifted up to God for the teaching of his Spirit, to study to know their blessed Saviour's will, and to experience his power resting upon their souls.

While giving these last instructions to her children, she stopped suddenly, and appeared faint and oppressed. Her children, alarmed, conveyed her to bed, and saw, with pleasure, that she gradually revived; but that night she was restless and very ill. They watched and nursed her with the fondest affection: She, however, did not get better, though the illness was mild, and she often said that it was like the rest of God's gentle dealings with her—that the pins of her tabernacle were loosening very gently, but she felt they

were loosening—that she would soon be in glory.

Her children were now in great alarm and perplexity. The time Susan and Ellen were permitted to remain at home was just expiring, and their mother said they must return to their services—that Allan would do all she wanted, and that God was her support. The girls knew not what to do. Their mother's little store of savings was nearly expended, and Allan's wages would not support them all. Susan now felt the benefit of her steady economy. She could now ease her mother's dying bed, and could procure those comforts for her, that were repaid by blessings and prayers for her child. Susan also obtained permission from her indulgent mistress to remain with her mother, till she either saw her better, or for ever released from suffering. Poor Ellen, on the other hand, conscious that she had wasted upon herself, and upon the mere vanities of life, all that now enabled Susan to contribute

to the support of the family, durst not add to their expense by even remaining a few days. She received her mother's blessing; she heard her pray that God would lead and guide her; but she departed almost broken-hearted, leaving Susan and Allan to merit and receive the daily and hourly blessings of her ever grateful heart. They soothed her sufferings while Ellen returned to her service, and to hide her unpitied tears from the eyes of strangers, instead of shedding them with those who felt as she felt. Much consolation then did her fine garments give her. The very sight of her last purchased bonnet, as she opened her trunk to take out her Bible, went to her heart like a sharp dagger. She sat down giddy with grief, and bitterly she reproached herself for her guilty folly. She lamented over that vanity which had led her on, and made her wish to imitate the example of her neighbour servants.

Her eyes were now opened, and she inquired what would have come of her if

even a slight illness had thrown her out of place. She must either have been dependent upon friends, who could ill afford to support her, or she must have begged her bread from door to door—exchanged her favourite gowns for the tatters given her by charity, often with an unpitying and suspicious hand.

Widow Gray continued ill for some time; Allan and Susan relieved each other day and night. If she had watched by their infant beds, they now as tenderly watched by hers. She became very weak and spoke little; her hands and eyes were often lifted up to God. Her children well understood this silent language. Her whole life had impressed the lesson that she lived to God—that her soul had found safety in the atoning blood of Christ Jesus. Still, as they hung over her in much distress, they earnestly desired that she might be again enabled to speak to them, to tell of her faith and hope. Allan said this would add nothing to the testimony

her conduct and state of mind had afforded them; but while he spoke in this way, he too earnestly desired this soothing consolation.

Susan had watched by her mother all night, and was lain down, while Allan took her place. Mary Gray sunk so low, that Allan thought her spirit had taken its flight. He softly called Susan, and at the same moment Ellen entered the house. They silently gathered round their mother's bed, with their eyes fixed on her death-like countenance. In a few moments her colour returned a little: She opened her eyes, looked fixedly on her children; then, with effort, said, "My dear children, remember you must also die. God preserve you till the day of his appearing." After a long pause, she said, with energy, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death—I have got the victory through Christ. Eternity—Lay me by my husband—These mortal frames rise together." Her children sunk

on their knees round her bed. She ceased to breathe—the colour passed away from her lips—the fixed look of death stole over her countenance. Her children felt they had now no earthly parent. Still so solemn, so calm was the scene, that they uttered no expression of grief. Heaven seemed brought into their view;—their mother was happy—was with the Saviour she had trusted so confidently. A feeling of their own loss was suspended for a time by the solemnity of the scene. Allan said, in a suppressed tone, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

Soon, however, this calm was interrupted, and then nature spoke. Mary Gray’s children felt no murmuring thought; but they were bereaved. The tenderest, the best of parents, was taken from them—she who affectionately loved them—who was their friend—their counsellor—their guide. For many days they mourned her loss; and, to the latest period of their

lives, their mother was never mentioned without heartfelt respect, and seldom without a tear. With Allan and Susan Gray, that tear was one of softened love *only*; but with poor Ellen, even to the day of her death, the remembrance of her mother came loaded with self-reproach. She had not been the support she ought to have been. The lesson was severe, but it was effectual. Ellen never after that period indulged in any love of dress: She became as frugal and economical as her sister.

When Allan Gray returned from laying his honoured mother's head in the grave, and when the friends who had spent the mournful hours of the funeral with the two girls were withdrawn, leaving them alone in the deserted cottage, they felt all the pressure of their loss, and together sought the consolation they required. Allan knelt down with his sisters, and devoutly prayed that their father and their mother's God might also be their God:

that they might, like them, be enabled to choose that better part that should never be taken from them; and like them, experience the support and the guidance of their compassionate Saviour in every difficulty and danger of life; till, passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death, they were re-united to those who were already in the presence of God. Every thing connected with their mother had a holy peace shed over it: Even their sorrow, though deep, was of this character. Each one returned to their different employments, sobered, chastened, but not cast down. They met with the sympathy due to the character of the mother they mourned, from all deserving people, and that sympathy soothed them.

And what is become of the Smiths all this time? At the period of Widow Gray's death their day of prosperity still shone brightly. They were in the best house in Strathminow. Their poor neighbours often said, that the "world went well with



them ;” but others remarked, that they were laying up treasures for themselves, “ where moth and rust doth corrupt :” that riches often make to themselves wings and fly away ; but that the “ righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”

When John Purdie, who kept the public house in Strathminow, died, James Smith took it, and, for a time, many a customer he had. James warmly recommended the ale he brewed and the whisky he sold : You would have supposed the whole country offered none good but his. His wife and daughters entertained the company that were drawn together by the report of the good liquor which James had to dispose of, and for a time all apparently went on well.

Shortly, however, some people began to remark, that James Smith’s face was getting very red, and that he, at times, spoke in an incoherent manner ; his wife and he were also often heard scolding dreadfully. Still Mrs Smith and her daughters were

the smartest people in Strathminow—none dressed like them. By degrees, the suspicions that James Smith drank were changed into certainty. Debt after debt was contracted. His creditors became troublesome; and intoxication, that first began in a love of company, was continued and indulged in to drown thought, and escape the reproaches of his own conscience.

Mrs Smith, irritated at seeing her husband ruining himself, now scolded from the morning to the night, which only made James fly his home the more. I need not dwell on a scene too frequently exhibited in this country. James ruined his family: and that family, brought up in pride and vanity, sunk at once into poverty and degradation. The fine garments of Mrs Smith and her daughters, were either sold by themselves from necessity, or pawned by the father to procure the indulgence of his favourite vice. Nanny and Mary Smith, finding their home truly wretched, frequently endea-

voured to go into service; but such were their habits of indolence, that they always returned home in a short time, to swell the tide of ill humour, variance, and strife that reigned in this miserable habitation.

While these events were, in rapid succession, hastening the ruin of the Smiths, the young Grays had, indeed, prospered in this world's goods. Following the footsteps of their parents, they continued sober, industrious, and pious.

Allan Gray, possessed of the good opinion of all those who knew him, was entered upon the lease of a small farm he had taken from his late master. Susan was just married to a young carpenter in good business, and with her husband was settled in the very house the Smiths had formerly inhabited. Ellen was still with Mrs Ramsay, and beloved and respected by the whole family.

While the unfortunate Mr and Mrs Smith had taken shelter in widow Gray's now very ruinous cottage; there they lan-

guished out a few miserable years, and then died unpitied, with hearts still clinging to a world they must now quit.

While every one else said it was only what they deserved, and recalled the many instances of their former pride and insolence, the young Grays, who had learnt the evils of poverty, and knew the patient endurance and active exertion it required, alone endeavoured to assist, first the dying parents, and then the two daughters. They seemed to have forgot all the saucy pride they had met with, and with patient affection endeavoured to assist them, and to teach them to seek that God in Christ, who has said, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as wool;" to awaken them to a feeling of their danger and guilt.

While so engaged, what was the mortification of these good young people to hear, that Nanny Smith was gone off with a soldier, who had been one of a recruiting party stationed at Strathminow! Never

was she afterwards heard of by her unfortunate sister, who, sickened with hopeless misery and distress, after languishing a time, was for the rest of her life supported by the parish. She became half an idiot; and would at times dress herself in shreds of various showy colours, and, fancying herself in all her former finery, call upon the children and passengers to admire her.

The Grays often spoke of how different their lot in life had been from the unfortunate Smiths; and, by the contrast, the memory of their pious parents was endeared to them; sin was dreaded in its first and most secret advances; and their hearts were filled by love to God, who had so mercifully turned them from darkness to light, and led them to that path which is *peace*.

THE END.









12





