

The Factory Girl (1814), by Sarah Savage

Today's readers may find *The Factory Girl* confusing in its lack of industrial details. There are a few moments when the factory's material environment appears—Mary's work is “reeling cotton,” a task “neither difficult nor laborious”—but if we are looking for the detail-rich setting of later nineteenth-century writing, we will not find it here. Cotton factories had been in the greater Boston area for at least a generation—George Washington visited a Beverly factory in 1789—and by 1814, in the aftermath of President Thomas Jefferson's embargo and the War of 1812, the industrial economy was achieving some national publicity. But for Savage, the factory is something else, a new kind of social problem, one suggested in the novel's first chapter by the deathbed warning of Mary's father, “that she does not work for any one, or with any body, who is not good.” The factory, in other words, designates a different social and moral environment. If the traditional community was one in which all neighbors were known, the factory is a place where one makes entirely new acquaintances: the novel's protagonist has apparently never met any of the workers who appear at the end of chapter one. If the work cycle of the traditional community was seasonal and collective, it is now hourly and individual, as Mary demonstrates when she negotiates the length of her workday and reflects on the careful use of home and leisure time. In an environment where one leaves home part of the day to work in a distinctive community, education, courtship, family, and morality all take on a different inflection. *The Factory Girl* is one of the first fictional works to reflect on that shift.

For Sarah Savage, the novel, published anonymously in 1814, marked the beginning of a long writing career. Her father

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was a shopkeeper, but there were writers in her family, including a first cousin, James Savage, an antiquarian involved in printing. We do not know how many works Savage published, although at least twelve have been identified by her biographer Margaret B. Moore. In 1820, she would publish *Filial Affection; or, The Clergyman's Granddaughter*, with James Talbot, also a novel, following in 1821. In 1823 she published a self-help book, *Advice to a Young Woman at Service*, in 1824 the moral tales *The Suspected Boy* and *The Badge*, in 1826 another moral tale entitled *The Two Birth-Days*, and in 1827 a history text, *Life of Philip, the Indian Chief*. All of these were prepared for younger readers, as were such later works as *Sunday-School Conversations* (1829), *Conversations on the Attributes of God* (1831), *Blind Miriam Restored to Sight* (1833), and *Trial and Self-Discipline* (1835), her last work.

As many of these titles indicate, they emerged from Savage's career in education: she ran a private school in Salem, Massachusetts, in the early 1810s, before starting, in 1813, a “Sabbath school” like that started by Mary in *The Factory Girl*. Sabbath-schools (later Sunday Schools) had been in existence for over half a century—there was a Methodist school in Virginia in the 1780s, and schools for religious instruction in Philadelphia and Newburyport, Massachusetts, in the early 1790s—but the great wave of such schools began in the early 1810s, with Savage a participant and contributor. As one Massachusetts newspaper reported, the Sabbath School's “primary object is the instruction of sons of indigent parents, who, from various causes, are unable to attend school on week days” (*Essex Register* June 26, 1816). The educational mission of such schools was spelled out in another newspaper notice:

Among the varied and useful operations of Christian beneficence, at the present day, Sabbath Schools occupy an important place. They were founded in 1781, by ROBERT RAIKES, Esq. of Gloucester, England. Already their benign influence has been felt in almost

every part of Christendom. Thousands, probably millions, have by these means been taught the rudiments of learning, the precepts of morality, and the doctrines of religion. Though they are not extensively needed in this country for literary purposes, yet for moral and religious purposes, it is believed they may be, and will be extensively adopted, and with great success... Might not the rising generation in this town be essentially benefitted, if each of the religious societies in town should adopt a system of Sabbath School instruction? Are there not some classes that demand *special* attention? Are there not benevolent and enterprising individuals, in sufficient numbers, ready to defray the expence, and perform the labours of such an undertaking? (*Essex Register*, May 23, 1818, 3)

As an illustration, an “African Sunday School,” associated with the antislavery Clarkson Society, was started in 1818, with this local commentary: “The behavior of those who do come to the school continues to be marked by that decorum and application which has greatly facilitated their progress in knowledge,” adding that “much of the scripture has been committed to memory by the younger pupils, and their minds stored with the interesting truths and sacred precepts of our holy religion, through the medium of catechisms, hymns, and other modes of religious instruction” (*Essex Register*, July 21, 1819, 3). Savage’s most thorough biographer, Margaret B. Moore, speculates that Savage may have written this newspaper account, which concludes with the observation:

The Clarkson Society are aware that a people, whose prevalent characteristic is the *love of amusement*, cannot at once be made to submit to the restraints of well ordered society, but it is hoped that they have in some instances been the means, if not of subduing, at least of making that propensity subservient to useful instruction.

What one notices in this discussion is less an emphasis on particular religious beliefs than on the power of religious instruction to reconstruct the self and make it more effective, economical, and durable. Thus in one of the conversations between Mary and her friend Nancy, Mary is at pains to stress that “time is the same valuable commodity at all seasons”; Nancy, humbly corrected, concludes that she “will wait no longer for the factory bell to call [her] up.” What started as a conversation about how to deal with the frivolous Lucy becomes in part a lesson about time management.

Thus while the Christian content and orientation of these schools and of *The Factory Girl*, which enacts the Sabbath-school program in novelistic form, is clear, it is worth noting that they express a somewhat generic, nonsectarian Protestantism. Savage appears to have never been a member of a particular denomination. She seems to have been similarly aloof to institutional politics. Although New England was politically divided about the policies leading up to and into the War of 1812, *The Factory Girl*, published as the war ended, alludes to no such conflicts, although it expresses patriotism: “the stimulating hope of rising into eminence,” Dr. Mandeville at one point notes, “in a free country like ours, may and ought to be cherished, for next to religion it is the best security for honest industry and laudable exertion.” And while the first edition of *The Factory Girl* appears to have attracted only local attention, the novel was reprinted in 1815, 1824, 1831, and 1854, with Savage receiving more and more positive attention for her writing before her death in 1837. When the 1824 reprint appeared, a New York magazine offered this assessment, assuming the author to be a man:

The stories are very simple; and the characters introduced are principally drawn from the humbler ranks of society. It is evident that the merit of these productions, there being nothing novel in the design, must depend entirely on the execution; and in this, we do not hesitate to say

that the author has been very successful. He has given us a lively and agreeable representation of American manners....This is an age of imitation...We therefore consider it as no slight merit in our author, that her works are free from designed resemblance to any popular writer, that they are not servilely formed after any fashionable model, but are true and original pictures from her own mind. (*The Minerva*, October 16, 1824, 29).

Suggestions for further reading: The earliest critical assessment of Sarah Savage's *The Factory Girl* reductively figures its plot as "the dreary relation of the self-effacement of a humble girl," as Henri Petter taxonomizes the novel as a prime example of "grievously didactic sentimentalism"; see, Petter, *The Early American Novel* (Ohio State Univ Press, 1971), 79. Recalibrating the modern critical reception of the novel, Cathy Davidson confessed that "as a feminist and a sociological critic" the fact that the novel featured a heroine who "organizes her fellow workers into a study group" spurred her interest in archival work; see, Davidson, *Revolution and the Word* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 12. The first critic to afford *The Factory Girl* sustained attention, Thomas B. Lovell, understands the text as "the earliest proponent in fiction" of "the salutary view of wage labor, which sees participation in productive activity as an expression of an almost innate human drive---and so sees productive activity as the basis for the constitution of the self"; see Lovell, "Separate Spheres and Extensive Circles: Sarah Savage's *The Factory Girl* and the Celebration of Industry in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *Early American Literature* 31:1 (1996), 1. For Karen Weyler, *The Factory Girl* serves as a transitional text in American literary history since it marks a turn away from a "preoccupation with issues relevant to the middle and upper classes" by imagining, for the first time, "new settings and subjects---the working poor and

the industrialization---topics which feature prominently in later sentimental novels of the nineteenth century"; see Weyler, *Intricate Relations* (U of Iowa Press, 2004), 184-185. In considering the import of Savage's titular reference to an industrialized workspace, Eric Schocket notes that while "the factory" serves as a catalyst for the plot's machinations, the text is really "a labor novel without labor---or, to be more exact, a labor novel where the laborious exercise of virtue so predominates that work as an exogenous activity, something in operation apart from a moral typology, simply does not exist"; see Schocket, *Vanishing Moments: Class and American Literature* (U Michigan Press, 2006), 41. Turning her attention to the religious tenets of the text, Sylvia J. Cook suggests that the utility of biblical literacy serves as central theme of *The Factory Girl*, noting that Mary's heroism resides in "her empathy with biblical characters, her pleasure in her understanding of the text, and her ability to convey the meaning to her pupils"; see Cook, *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 6. Gregory S. Jackson categorizes *The Factory Girl* as among the first U.S. novels written for young adults by figuring its concerns with "the harsh realities of early national life" as emblematic of a genre aimed at "preparing them for life-long vigilance against pride, anger, lying, and libidinous impulses"; see, Jackson, "Religion and the nineteenth-century American Novel," in Cassuto, *The Cambridge History of the American Novel* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 176. Nicole Eustace argues that the end of the novel "sent a clear message," one which builds upon the didacticism of the novel to underscore that "only when women were allowed economic independence could their marriage contracts epitomize the American ideal of free consent"; see Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (U Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 107. Most recently, Philip F. Gura suggests that while *The Factory Girl* "predates the establishment of most of the [religious] tract societies and was published commercially," the

novel is important in that “its story of a young woman who, owing to her strong religious training, resists selfishness and luxury set a standard in the nascent genre”; see Gura, *Truth’s Ragged Edge: The Rise of the America Novel* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), 47. Although it doesn’t examine *The Factory Girl*, an influential work about the relationship of domestic fiction to industrialization is Nancy Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: New York, 1987). Armstrong argues that a revolution in the structure of home life made the factory system possible. For biographical information about Savage, see the detailed essay “Sarah Savage of Salem: A Forgotten Writer,” by Margaret B. Moore, in *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 127 (1991), 240-59.

THE FACTORY GIRL.

BY A LADY.

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“The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” *St. Paul*.²

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PARKER.

NO. 4, CORNHILL.

1814.

² Galatians 5:22-23

THE
FACTORY GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles God.

BURNS.³

“I WILL go this morning, if you think it best, and hear what Mr. Crawford will say to me,” said Mary to her grandmother as she stood washing the cups and saucers after breakfast.

“I don’t know what to say to it, my dear;” replied Mrs. Burnam; “for tho’ this is your birth-day, and I have all along promised you, that when you were eighteen you should have my consent to try to earn something; yet, when the time comes, my heart misgives me. It will, indeed, it will, be a sad day to me when you go into the factory; for I shall be thinking all the time, what your poor father would say, were he alive, to have you get your bread in such a manner; not but what he would love you the better for being industrious, and so dutiful to your grandmother; for I know it is not to get fine clothes for yourself, but comforts for me, that makes you so desirous to go out to work: but I don’t think he would consent. Oh no, I am sure he would not consent to your being with people who were not good and serious. I never shall forget what he said to me on his dying bed: ‘My dear mother,’ said he, ‘with all my hard labour, I sha’n’t be able to leave you, and my poor little girl, very well in the world; for though you own this little snug house, and the clever bit of land about it, and have got along in times past, and been as good a liver, as most of the neighbours of our standing, yet when I am

³ These are the final lines of the Scottish poet Robert Burns’s “A Winter Night.”

gone you will find a difference; for you know I have never hired a stroke of work done, since father’s death; and when you come to hire labour, you’ll find it will take from the profits; the load of hay, that I always put by to sell for your niceties, must go to pay wages.—It makes me grieve when I think of it, till it comes to my mind that God has said, “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me;”⁴ that kind promise comforts me, dear mother.’ Here, Mary, your poor, dear father stopped, took both my hands, and as he squeezed them in his, gave as sweet a smile as ever he did when he was well; and there was such a bright pleasant look in his eyes, as I never saw before,—tho’ he always had an easy contented way of looking,—and I am sure a cheerful good child he was to me from his birth.

“When he had squeezed my hands a great while, he began again, and said: “Though you will have to work hard, mother, to get along, I know you will contrive to spare time to teach Mary (as you did me) to read the Bible, and to talk to her about what it contains.—Tell her, when she is old enough to understand you, that there was nothing her father took such delight in as the book that lays on the little round table: no, not even in her, when she was a playing, laughing baby, even though she was a great joy to my poor heart, after her dear mother left me, whom now I trust I am going to live with forever.’—And here again he gave such a heavenly sort of look as I never can forget; but he did not stop, he went on and said: ‘When Mary is grown up, she will, I am sure, want to return some of your goodness, (for the knowledge of the Bible, that you will give her, will make her dutiful;) and if she should incline to show her gratitude, by earning something for you, you will be careful, dear mother, that she does not work for any one, or with any body, who is not good; for then she may forget her Bible, and your advice, and go astray after all.’

⁴ Jeremiah 49:11

“How can I, my child, after all this, that your father said to me,” cried Mrs. Burnam, “allow you to leave me?”

“I would not, dear grandmother,” said Mary, “do any thing for the world to make you uneasy; or any thing you think my father would dislike were he alive; but I cannot think even *he* would have any objection to my working in the factory. The young people there are much better than you suppose. Mr. and Mrs. Danforth (who you know are good judges of correct behaviour) have told me there are some very good girls who work there.”

“I know,” replied Mrs. Burnam, “we ought not to judge people by any one particular action;—indeed we should not judge the heart at all, for we can’t look into any body’s but our own; and, perhaps some things, that appear bad to us, may be done with a very good meaning. Just, you know, as neighbour Blanchard thought our dear Mr. Danforth niggardly, till he found out, that what he saved by not living away showily, as too many young married folks do now a days, he gave to old Sarah Gould, to pay her house-rent. But I was only going to say, that as Mr. Crawford, the agent, had never, since he lived in Hampton been constant at church, I was afraid he did not set his work people a good example in other things; for I always mind, that those who love religion, and who wish to be upright and honest in all their dealings, like to go where they may join with others in praising their Creator, and where they may learn their duty to him, and to their fellow creatures.”

“You will set preaching there an hour, sister,” said Mrs. Holden, “till Mr. Crawford has left the factory, and got engaged in his own private affairs. If you mean to let the child go, do let her go at once. Such a fuss about nothing is enough to kill one. Some people are bound up in their own flesh and blood, and think of nobody else; you would not care a fig, what I suffered, so long as Miss Mary was made a lady, and sat prim’d up at home reading some nonsensical book or other.”—Notwithstanding this

rebuke from her selfish and irascible sister-in-law, Mary had set up the little breakfast table, and waited nearly two hours, before Mrs. Burnam granted her reluctant consent to the solicitations of her granddaughter; who, the moment she received it, hastened to Mr. Crawford, the superintendent of a cotton factory in the neighbourhood, to whom she offered her services, which were readily accepted; and on some abatement of wages, he complied with her request of having the privilege to leave the factory at sunset; the infirmities of her grandmother rendering her attentions necessary in the evening. The lightness of her heart, was only rivalled by her steps, as she returned home filled with anticipations of future pleasure, from having it in her power to procure for her grandmother the comforts which declining life made peculiarly needful. She never shall again want her cup of tea, thought Mary, or the little luxuries agreeable with it. “O how happy I shall be,” said she almost audibly, “when I see my dear grandmother sitting at her tea-table, enjoying her favourite repast, which I have earned for her.”—The glow of filial benevolence kept her unusually cheerful through the day; and it was not till she united with her grandmother at night in petitions for divine protection, amidst the temptations and difficulties to which she might be exposed, that she remembered there was any labour, or were any privations, attending her new situation; and the recollection of this only served to increase the fervency of her desires, that she might be blessed with healthful activity, and persevering diligence in the discharge of her duties.

She was summoned to her occupation the following Monday morning by the factory bell. Her employment, which was reeling cotton, was neither difficult nor laborious; and Mary thought if she had not been a stranger she should have felt quite happy. The factory had been newly established, and those employed in it were from distant towns, consequently every face was unknown to her, and naturally timid, that circumstance increased it to a painful degree; it was however soon relieved by

the benevolent attentions of a young woman who stood near her engaged in the same business, who perceiving her embarrassment, endeavoured by many little kind efforts to remove it.

Mary had no sooner left the factory, than numberless remarks were made upon her. Nancy Raymond, who had so good naturedly assisted her through the day, extolled her modest, pleasing manner, and declared she loved her already. Others less discerning, or perhaps less free from envy, pronounced her a stupid thing, declaring they had as lief have a wooden image to reel the cotton, for they did not believe she could turn her eyes. “Do you think,” cried Jane Sandford, “she has any muscles in her face?” “I doubt it,” answered William Raymond, “for when all those excellent stories were told, and there was all that capital joking, as we were walking home to dinner, I did not see her laugh once.” “And was that any thing against her, brother?” asked Nancy; “I like her the better,” added she, “for her serious way, for it makes me feel as if I could place some dependence upon her. And though she does not laugh and talk, as much as some do, I dare say she is never gloomy and ill-tempered. I minded when her spools were tangled, she did not get angry with them, as some of the girls do; but when she was almost out of patience, she turned round and looked at me with such a good-humoured smile, that it made her look quite handsome.”—“Stop, stop, Nancy, any thing but that,” exclaimed William, “you may say any thing, but that she is handsome; she may be very good, and all that; but is as ugly as—I suppose you won’t like, Nancy, to hear me say who, since you have taken such a fancy to her.” “Come, come, let’s go to supper, and laugh no more about the poor child,” said Jane Sandford, “she has, I dare say, the beauty my good mother is always advising me to get, the *beauty of the mind*; for they say she rises before day-light to read, and is kind to the sick, and dutiful to her grandmother, and, what I can hardly believe, sweetly patient with a terrible old scold, that lives with

them; all this and a hundred more fine stories are told of her, that I cannot remember now, while I am so cold, and hungry, and tired; but I must just say, that it would be strange, if all these pretty things did not sometimes peep through her eyes and make her look handsome. And now, *Miss* Nancy Raymond, please to loosen the *muscles* of your forehead, and answer me honestly, if I have not made up for having doubted whether your friend had any in her cheeks?”

Mary, unconscious of the interest she had excited, was quietly seated with her grandmother, endeavouring, as well as her ignorance on the subject would admit, to describe the complicated machinery of the factory. She had taken particular notice of it, knowing her grandmother’s curiosity would be raised to hear an account of what facilitated so much the art of spinning, in which, in early life, it had been her ambition to excel. Mrs. Burnam, though her humble station had precluded her from the advantages of a refined education, had an inquisitive mind, and by much observation had in some measure supplied the want of instruction. She did not know the meaning of the word *philosophy*; but yet, no one was more pleased to examine and observe the effects of the machines and instruments, that were used in the country business to which she had been accustomed; particularly if they were new inventions, or old ones improved. The term *natural history* she could not have defined; but was practically acquainted with some of its most useful branches, for she knew every tree of the forest, and every medicinal herb and root that grew within several miles around her; hardly a bird warbled within her hearing, of which she could not describe some peculiarity. She frequently made the remark, that if country people would attend to the engaging ways of the animals about their doors, with the beautiful and curious appearances of plants and flowers, they would have amusement enough, without attending to and prying into their neighbours’ affairs.

Several weeks passed away, and Mary, by her diligence and uniform pleasantness, had gained the good opinion of Mr. Crawford, as well as that of her companions. They found *she could smile and look about*; and they even determined to ask her to a dance they were shortly to have in a neighbouring town. William Raymond, who, to please his sister, gave her an invitation, was not a little vexed at her decided refusal; and told her, in a manner rather calculated to wound, than to gratify her feelings, that he supposed she thought it *wicked* to dance. “By no means,” she replied; “I shall be ready and happy to join you, next summer, whenever there is a dance on the green, before the factory.” “Then why,” asked William, “are you unwilling to go with us tomorrow evening? There is certainly no more harm in dancing in a house, than out of doors.” “No, there would not be,” answered Mary, “if you did not have to pay for the room and the musick, with the horses and sleighs for conveyance; besides the loss of a whole evening, which will take something from your wages at the end of the week.” “Well, what of all that?” said William, angrily, “I can afford it.” “But,” said Mary (with a look that seemed to ask forgiveness for her plainness) “yesterday, when poor old Cato came to the door, and asked for something—only a few pence to buy him a supper, you told him you had nothing for beggars; and when Nancy pleaded for him, you replied, that you had enough to do to maintain yourself, without giving to every body, and yet, you are willing to give your money to Nancy and me for our pleasure, when we can be happy enough without it.”

“But would you never,” said William, “have us take any pleasure? That is a hard doctrine; I hope Mr. Seymore don’t teach such, for, I promise you, if he does, I sha’n’t go to hear him very often.” “I can assure you,” said Mary, “Mr. Seymore never discourages cheerfulness; on the contrary, he is always urging us to the practice of those actions, which afford the highest enjoyment. The pleasures he recommends are, indeed, a little

different from those, Mr. Raymond, you seem to think so necessary; but, believe me, they are much better. He would direct us to give poor Cato a warm jacket and a comfortable supper, instead of gratifying ourselves with an expensive amusement; and, tell me truly, do you think you shall feel happier tomorrow evening while dancing, than you would to look into Cato’s room, and see him examining with joy the jacket you had given him, or eating by a warm fire the supper with which you had supplied him?” “I can’t answer the question now,” said William, hastily turning away to conceal his conviction; “we are determined on having the dance, and you had better go with us.”

Mary remained inflexible, even to the entreaties and more persuasive arguments of her friend Nancy, who declared half her pleasure would be destroyed if she did not go. “And then only consider,” said she, “how odd it will appear for you to stay at home; the girls will say you are proud, or that you set yourself up to be wiser than they—and then I shall be angry; so I may as well stay at home, as to go for any comfort I shall have. You say yourself, that nobody can be happy while they are fretted; and I could not help being put out, if you should be laughed about, and called a *new-light*,⁵ and *Miss Propriety*, and such sort of queer names, as some, I know, would like to call you, if they were not ashamed to, you are always so good-tempered and obliging.” “They will not talk as much about me, as you suppose, dear Nancy,” said Mary; “and if they should, you would not have me do what I believe to be wrong, to avoid any thing, which might be said of me. Besides, if by a *new-light* they mean one that loves religion, I am sure I should be proud of the title, if I truly deserved it. It would be strange indeed, if I, an ignorant girl, should be ashamed

⁵ *new-light*: during the early nineteenth-century US revival movement known as the Second Great Awakening, “new-lights” were evangelical Christians especially focused on personal salvation.

of being interested in that cause, which the wise and learned St. Paul thought it the greatest honour and privilege to espouse; and was not afraid, even before a king and other great men, to defend, and acknowledge his ardent love of it.”—“I wish,” said Nancy, interrupting her, “that I knew as much about those holy men as you do; for I believe you try to be like them, and that makes you so much better than other people. But I hope to be acquainted with their characters before long; for I have begun, as you advised me, to read a portion in the Bible every morning when I first get up. I have found the advantage of it already, for I have got so used to my work in the factory, that it don’t take up my attention, and foolish thoughts will come into my mind; but now I can drive them out, by reflecting on what I have read. I was pondering all yesterday on a passage that I cannot but think you have forgotten, if I understand the right meaning of it. This was the verse: ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven.’⁶ I understood it to mean, that we must not only do a great many good things, but must let our acquaintance see us do them in such a pleasant, agreeable kind of way, as should make them love and admire goodness, and thus they might be led to practise the same things themselves. Now, as you are always trying always to make every body happy, I thought you must have forgotten this command, or you would go to the dance with us, to let those, who a’n’t as much acquainted with you as I am, see that you can be cheerful, and yet be religious; for perhaps, if they were convinced of that, they might become religious too.”

Nancy could not have used a more powerful argument; for Mary’s correct judgment had taught her, that it was not only her duty to exercise the virtues, but that she must endeavour to make them appear amiable and desirable to others, by a conciliating manner, and an innocent conformity to general

customs. Though she was too humble to believe her influence extensive, she thought it right to act as if it were so. For she considered that Providence often employs humble means to effect important purposes; and that her imperfect example might, when she was least conscious of it, be used as an instrument for improving some, who had not been blessed with her advantages, or who were inferior to her in years. She hesitated therefore, what answer to give to Nancy, till, recollecting that in this instance it would be wrong to comply with the wishes of her friend, particularly after what she had said to William, she repeated the objections she had to such a party of pleasure for those who have but little more than the necessaries of life; and promised at the same time to obviate any ill appearance her not going might have, by a more uniform readiness to oblige, whenever it could be done consistently with her ideas of rectitude; and by greater vigilance in preserving an unbroken cheerfulness of temper.

CHAPTER II.

But with diviner beams, the sacred word
Shines o’er the soul, and guides it to the Lord.
Unerring guide, which heavenly light supplies,
Transforms the heart, and makes the simple wise .

MRS. STEELE.⁷

THE next evening, Mary stood at the window to give her gay friends a smile, as they passed. The merriest among them had not a heart more susceptible of social pleasure, than hers, or

⁶ Matthew 5:16

⁷ The lines come from Psalm 19 as translated by Anne Steele, a British Baptist poet; a three volume collection of her devotional poetry was published in 1780, with selections widely reprinted thereafter.

one more alive to exhilarating sights and sounds. No sooner had the lively sleigh-bells come within her hearing, than her imagination flew to the festive scene; the lighted ball-room, the spritely musick, the smiling faces were all before her; for a moment her fortitude forsook her, and she wondered at herself for declining to join so pleasant a party. But her regret was as transient, as the sound of the bells, and, as that died away, her serenity returned with all her amiable solicitude to render their little fire-side cheerful. She brushed the hearth; made a clear blaze; fixed her grandmother's chair in the warmest place; and made Mrs. Holden's so comfortable, and did it with such an air of kindness, that even she relaxed into good humour. Mary, sedulous to preserve it, redoubled her exertions to be entertaining, told all the amusing anecdotes her memory would furnish, and, when those failed, had recourse to singing. She was in the midst of her grandmother's favourite tune, when she was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Danforth, whose excellent character and long habits of intimacy had endeared them to Mrs. Burnam and her granddaughter in no common degree. They frequently spent the evenings together, which Mr. Danforth would sometimes enliven by reading, aloud, some useful or entertaining book. He was reading the character of Miranda, in "Law's serious Call,"⁸ and his auditors were listening with deep attention, when a rap drew Mary to the door, where with pleased surprise she found the physician, Dr. Mandeville, who occasionally visited her grandmother, having been formerly a boarder in the family, with Mr Seymore, their clergyman. Mrs. Burnam welcomed them with warm cordiality; while her features were expressive of the high gratification she felt, at receiving so

⁸ The book is William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, published in Britain in 1729. Several chapters considered Miranda as the model Christian woman, in contrast to her frivolous sister Flavia.

early a visit from the new settled minister. For though compared with her age he was very young, yet she revered him as her teacher, and had even asserted that, from all she had heard of his excellencies, she was inclined to believe him to be nearly as good as his predecessor. Nor could her judgment in this instance be called in question. For Mr. Seymore was a man of good sense and uncommon purity of character; in his manner (which was a faithful index of his heart) there was an unaffected simplicity, that impressed on all he said the stamp of truth. Humble as he was learned, he conciliated the affections, while he gained the respect of his parishioners.

His modesty was severely tried, by the honest and well meant, but rather blunt commendations of Mrs. Burnam, on his mode of preaching. "I know I should admire your sermons, sir," said she, "if I were well enough to go out and hear them, from what I learn of them from my granddaughter, who has got a pretty good memory, and is so desirous that I should enjoy some benefit from your excellent discourses, that she writes, what she can recollect, after meeting, for me to read at my leisure. I know, sir, I should like your preaching, because you not only teach us that we ought to do our duty, but you tell us so exactly *how* we ought to do it. One of my neighbours told me yesterday, she never knew how to instruct her children in religion, till your discourse upon that subject last Sunday had enlightened her mind."

"I listened, Sir," said Dr. Mandeville, "with the deep interest, and anxious feelings of a father, while you explained, and inculcated, the duties which we owe to our children; and particularly the obligation we are under to give them an early and intimate knowledge of the scriptures. I have always considered it a very important part of their education; for if it should fail of yielding immediate good consequences, it may, in the course of life, be the means of producing the best effects. For there seems to be in the memory the remarkable property of retaining,

oftentimes in a latent state, whatever has been deeply impressed upon it, and which old age, or some uncommon occurrence, that strongly agitates the mind, has the power of developing. I have frequently, in the course of my practice, been called to visit persons, in whom every idea of religion appeared to have been obliterated by the dissipation of pleasure, or an overstrained attention to their secular concerns; but when the leisure of sickness has recalled to more matured understandings the religious lessons of their childhood, it has often brought a conviction of their truth, so strong and clear, as, with divine grace, to have produced the most salutary change of views, and moral feeling.

“An early acquaintance with the pure morality, contained in the word of God, imperceptibly operates, also, in rectifying the heart; good dispositions are formed by its secret influence, before we are aware of it; and I believe with a late agreeable writer, that the amiable qualities, we sometimes perceive in unbelievers, may be traced to associations formed in childhood by reading the scriptures.”

“I am happy, my dear sir,” replied Mr. Seymore, “to hear you express sentiments so congenial with my own. It has always been a subject of sincere regret to me, when I have heard parents complain that they could not excite in their children a fondness for reading the Bible; for I have always considered the disinclination of the child, as arising from the inattention, or improper method of the instructor. Nothing can be interesting that is not understood. It cannot therefore be expected that a child, when it first begins to read, should find pleasure from perusing the scriptures in course. But select for it the beautiful and pathetic story of Joseph, or of Moses, Ruth, and many others, and we shall soon find curiosity awakened, and all the sympathy of the infant heart excited. I knew a child taught in this way, who on hearing the history of Job, when she arrived at the highest point of his suffering, clasped her little hands, and

exclaimed, (while her whole countenance was expressive of fearful apprehension,) ‘Oh! I am afraid now he will curse God.’—The parables of our Saviour are not only pleasing and instructive to the wisest theologian, but by their admirable simplicity they are adapted to the capacity of the most uninformed; what, for example, can be more entertaining to a child than the ‘Prodigal Son?’

“How easily might a lively interest be raised in the character of our blessed Redeemer, and a fervent love and gratitude be excited towards him, by a judicious choice of some of those striking instances of benevolence he displayed. His feeding by a miracle the hungry multitude; his weeping with the affectionate sisters of Lazarus, and restoring to them their beloved brother; the readiness with which he called to life the son of the distressed widow of Nain;⁹ and above all, the affecting proof he gave of tender compassion in what he suffered on the cross for all mankind; might, by simple and familiar comments, be made to produce the most agreeable and lasting impressions.

“It is, I conceive, sir, highly important that, in unfolding the rudiments of religion, the manner and language should be easy and natural; never made wearisome by long lectures, (for it is difficult to keep the attention of a child fixed on one subject,) but instilled by striking, frequent, and incidental hints. A parent should be in season, and out of season; ready to improve every opportunity, every uncommon providence, whether fortunate or adverse, of explaining some perfection of the Deity. True religion is an operative principle, pervading the whole character,

⁹ *Multitude, Lazarus, Nain*: each of these allusions refers to a miracle performed by Jesus, and expressive of compassion for the unfortunate. The feeding of the multitude occurs in Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, and John 6; weeping with Lazarus’s sisters occurs in John 11; and the resurrection of the widow of Nain’s son occurs in Luke 7.

interwoven with every affection, and chastening every passion; it must, in a word, be the spring of moral action. The grace of God can alone sow the seed, or bring to maturity this happy temper; but, it is our duty to prepare the soil. And how is this to be done, but by cultivating a knowledge of the scriptures, and by teaching the first dawn of reason to trace every event, and every appearance of nature, to the great Author of all things? The objects around them, the hills and the fields, the nosegays they gather, and the insects they pursue, may all be used, as means of directing their attention to God.”

“ Ah yes, Sir,” exclaimed Mrs. Burnam, who had been attentively listening to the conversation; “that is exactly what I have often thought. I did not know how to express it; for I never had much schooling: when I was a young woman, we did not have the advantages they do now. But, for all that, I was always fond of looking into the works of God, and of teaching my children to admire them.—Many people, who have to work hard, think they have not time for such things. But, sir, they would lose nothing by allowing a few minutes every day for such meditation. One goes to work with greater cheerfulness, after having considered a little the wisdom of that good Being who allots to all their portions. For though he may give some poverty and sickness, and to others hard labour and distress, yet we can’t but think, that he, who made every thing so well, must know what is best for us frail, ignorant creatures. And if he has taken such care to provide food and clothing for every little insect that flies about, (some so small we can hardly see them,) he will certainly do the same for rational beings, and give them what is proper for them. I have sometimes thought, that if brute animals were as discontented as man, we should be quick enough to blame them; and yet *we* don’t know what is best for us any better than they do. Suppose a butterfly should find fault with having wings, and should think, if it had not the incumbrance of those great sheets at its sides, it could fly much higher in the air, and

with much more ease. I think, sir, we should laugh, and tell the butterfly, it was a foolish little murmurer. So perhaps angels wonder at our folly; because they see clearly that we could never rise above the world, without what we call our troublesome incumbrances. But I am running away from the subject. I am an old woman, sir. When I interrupted you I was only going to say, I was glad to hear the remarks you have just made, because when my granddaughter Mary was a little girl, (for she had no mother but me, poor thing) I used to try to make God known to her by shewing her his wonderful works. I have often called her to look at a joint I have been separating, when cooking, to see how curiously one bone was set into another; or to examine the nice little even fringe that borders each side of every hair that makes up the feather of a bird; and many other such sort of things. And when I found she took delight in looking at them, I have given her a psalm or verse to read, in which God was declared to be the Maker of all things.”

“Your method,” replied Mr. Seymore, “was in my opinion perfectly correct; such hints, judiciously given and applied, will rarely fail of producing a good effect. The existence and perfections of God are manifested in all we behold, and may be proved to a child by simple, familiar remarks on the regular change of the seasons, the growth of plants, the ripening of fruits, and the numberless wonders and beauties of creation, which we who live in the country have always before us. We should teach them the goodness of God, while their little hearts are filled with joy; amidst their very sports, we should remind them from whom they receive all they enjoy; that it was God, who gave the fruit they are regaled with, and painted the blossoms they admire. A few remarks on the power of the Almighty, during a thunder storm, would have more effect, than a long discourse on that attribute, when the weather was calm and the mind at ease.”

“This conversation,” said Dr. Mandeville to Mr. Seymore, “reminds me of a subject, on which I have been

intending to speak to you. I am one of the proprietors of a cotton factory in this town. In these establishments the labours of children are so useful, as to render their wages a temptation to parents to deprive their offspring of the advantages of education; and, for an immediate supply of pressing wants, to rob them of their just rights—the benefit of those publick schools, which were founded peculiarly for the advantage of the poor. These thoughtless parents do not consider that they are taking from their children an essential good, for which money cannot compensate. Ignorance will necessarily lessen their future respectability in society, and check the stimulating hope of rising into eminence, which, in a free county like ours, may and ought to be cherished, for next to religion it is the best security for honest industry and laudable exertion. Can you not think, my good sir, of some plan for giving instruction to those unfortunate children? It would relieve my mind from much anxiety.” “Would not an institution,” replied Mr. Seymore, “similar to the Sunday Charity Schools, established in the manufacturing towns in England, in some degree answer your generous purpose?”¹⁰

“That,” said Dr. Mandeville, “has been my favourite object; but I was obliged to give it up, from want of success in all my applications for an instructor, as I can offer but a small reward for the service.” “O,” said Mary, with quickness, (forgetting her usual timidity,) “I wish I were capable of performing such a delightful task!” “Your ability, my good girl,” said the Doctor, “is fully equal to the duty, and I should consider myself happy indeed, to obtain such an instructress for our poor little labourers, but I cannot in conscience require it; you work at the factory through the week, and certainly need the grateful rest of the Sabbath to recruit your strength.”

Mrs. Burnam, who saw Mary was desirous of the office, though her modesty restrained a further expression of her wishes,

assured Dr. Mandeville that if he thought her grand-daughter was able to discharge the duties of such a station, she thought the gratification, it would afford her, would overbalance any injury the fatigue might occasion her.—Dr. Mandeville gladly accepted the proposal, which he had been prevented from making himself, from a tender regard to the health of Mary, whose gentle, unassuming manner, and faithful discharge of relative duties, had excited an interest in his benevolent heart. A humble station could not obscure from the discerning eye of Dr. Mandeville good sense and virtue, and wherever he found those qualities, he honoured and esteemed the possessor.

“Now, my dear Mary,” said Mrs. Burnam, when they were left alone, “you have your reward for all the exertion you have made to get a little learning. You would not have been able to teach this little school if you had not, by early rising and uncommon industry, saved time to study your books. We don’t know how much good may come of one right action. Your attention may be, in the end, the means of carrying some souls to heaven; for by teaching them to read the bible, you will give them the best guide to that better world.”

CHAPTER III.

“When, instead of regulating our actions by reason and principle, we suffer ourselves to be guided by every slight and momentary impulse of inclination, we shall doubtless be so variable and inconstant, that nobody can guess by our behaviour to-day, what may be expected from us to-morrow; nor can we ourselves tell whether what we delighted in a week ago, will now afford us the least degree of pleasure.”

¹⁰ *Sunday Charity Schools*: see the discussion in the headnote..

MRS. CHAPONE.¹¹

FRAUGHT with this favourite project, Mary went to the factory the next morning with a cheerful heart, and a countenance beaming with benevolence. William stood a moment to look at her, as she entered the door, struck with the contrast her sprightly appearance bore to the haggard looks and languid movements of her companions. He had passed the evening before with much less satisfaction, than he had expected. For though he had laughed, talked, and danced, with the prettiest and gayest young women of the party, he could not but wish that the gentle, modest Mary Burnam had made one of them. There is not, thought he, among these bright eyes one that has exactly that *taking way* with it, that hers had, while she talked of the poor old man. And once, when he had nearly raised a glass to his lips, he set it down again, for he recollected that perhaps the same poor man was suffering for that, which he was going to take without its being necessary.

William was endowed by nature with an amiable disposition; he was good-humoured, and had an agreeable manner, which generally recommended him. But he had been unfortunate in not having received, in childhood, those religious and moral impressions, which are usually most permanent and efficacious, when made on the mind by the precepts and example of affectionate parents, before prejudice and self-confidence have gained the ascendancy; or an intercourse with the world has lessened that delicacy of conscience, and sensibility to reproof, which is so apparent in amiable children. His affections, undirected by parental judgment to their proper object, and his passions uncontrolled by a knowledge of divine commands, he

was driven from object to object, without any view but present pleasure, or temporary advantage. His heart being thus left open, by a want of steady principles, to the attack of every passing allurements, he was more indebted, for his general good conduct, to those with whom he associated, than to his own firmness or stability. Whatever was new, captivated his imagination, and kept him in bondage, till another novelty unbound the chain, only to make way for new fetters.

The charitable feelings, and indifference to personal gratification, that Mary discovered, were refinements in virtue, to which he was unaccustomed; and he thought she must have some selfish motive, which she chose to conceal by pretended benevolence. But when assured by his sister, that she was actuated only by a desire to convince him of her sincerity in disapproving of those expensive amusements, which destroy the power of relieving the wants of the indigent, he could no longer doubt, the reason she assigned was genuine; especially when he found on recollection nothing in her general conduct, that did not harmonize with this instance of virtuous self-denial.

A character, superior to any he had been accustomed to contemplate, astonished and delighted him; and mistaking the admiration of the woman, thus suddenly conceived, for a love of the *virtue* which rendered her so pleasing, he determined to form his own life on the same model, and to make her conduct the rule of all his actions; looking forward to being the husband of Mary, as a sufficient reward for any sacrifices his new mode of life might require.

He improved the first opportunity to apologize for his rudeness in their last conversation, and to express his gratitude for the admonition, which had led him to a juster view of his duty, and to a resolution of performing it. The pleasure she expressed, and the kind, complacent manner, with which she urged him to perseverance, gave a new stimulus to exertion; and William soon became, from the gay, thoughtless young man,

¹¹ From *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), by the British writer Hester Chapone.

serious and self-denying, constant at church, and scrupulously careful in attending to the externals of religion. In Mary's society he found all the amusement he could relish; and the privilege of assisting in her garden, or Sunday-school, he thought an ample compensation for the rigid discipline he imposed upon himself.

Not insensible to his constant attention, and pleased with the goodness his actions seemed to demonstrate, Mary yielded to his solicitations, and gave her consent to the request that, on the day he should be made foreman of the factory, (an event he shortly expected,) he should be allowed to ask her grandmother's permission for their union. William talked to his sister of his pleasing prospects; and Mary listened with inward satisfaction to Nancy, while she repeated the fond anticipations of her brother. Even her own sober and well-regulated mind, would sometimes give way to the suggestions of fancy, and she would look forward with delight to the period when she might use the influence of a wife to lead the mind of William to clearer notions of the true spirit of christianity, and more uniform consistency of conduct. For she could not but sometimes discover, that the language of humility was dictated by vanity; that he censured others, without regard to the law of love; and that her approbation was too nearly the boundary of his desires. She could not but sometimes lament, that he was not more like her friend Mr. Danforth; and wished she could see in William the same command of temper, the same resignation of will, and the same unaffected benevolence, which distinguished him; and which was not displayed by singular and showy acts, but by a careful improvement of every opportunity to promote the happiness of those he could benefit; a constant readiness to give up his own convenience for the comfort of others, and an unremitting reference in his thoughts, words, and actions, to God, the great object of his dearest hopes and wishes. But, with fond partiality, she trusted the foundation of religion and virtue

was laid, and that a more intimate acquaintance with divine truths would complete the superstructure.

CHAPTER IV.

"No evil is insupportable but that which is accompanied with the consciousness of wrong."

DR. JOHNSON.¹²

THE return of summer, that season of innocent joy, found the heart of Mary in unison with all its gay appearances and pleasant sounds. Accustomed from infancy to early hours, she united her voice of grateful praise with the first musical notes that enlivened the morning, and vied with nature herself in the cheerful animation with which she received her grandmother, at their simple breakfast, which she took care should always be neatly prepared; for Mary added to the injunction of Solomon, that "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might," the direction of St. Paul to "Let all things be done decently, and in order."¹³

The roses looked in at the windows of their little white-washed parlour, the honeysuckle bordered the door that admitted its rich perfume, the locust gave sweetness to the air; but neither the flavour of the roses, the perfume of the honeysuckle, nor the sweetness of the locust, rose to heaven with such fragrance as the gratitude that glowed in the hearts of Mary and her grandmother. While they sat together at this happy repast, when undisturbed by the peevishness of Mrs. Holden, who always wasted the best part of the morning in bed, they could indulge in an unrestrained

¹² From Chapter 35 of Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759).

¹³ Ecclesiastes 9:10 and I Corinthians 14:40.

interchange of fond inquiries, and affectionate attentions. Mrs. Burnam then gave way to all her tender solicitude for her beloved grand-daughter, which in the presence of her sister-in-law she endeavoured to repress; for she justly considered, that knowingly to irritate even an unreasonable temper, when it can be innocently avoided, was hardly less criminal than the indulgence of anger itself. For Mrs. Holden, though indebted for a home and maintenance to Mrs. Burnam's generosity, could not see without jealousy the affection she lavished upon Mary; and giving way to her suspicious disposition, concluded that as so much was bestowed on another, there could be none left for her.

Mrs. Burnam, pitying the weakness and ill-temper which she could not cure, tried to alleviate the self-created misery of Mrs. Holden by many sacrifices of her own enjoyment, and by many restraints which she voluntarily imposed on herself.

Mary's happiness was much augmented by the establishment of the Sunday-school for the children of the factory, (of whom there were twenty, including boys and girls.) She had always pitied their unfortunate situation, deprived of every means of gaining moral or intellectual improvement, and now rejoiced that it was in her power to afford them any portion of those advantages. Indeed a general, directing an immense army, or an emperor giving laws to his subjects, could not have felt more interested in the result of his decisions, than did the pious, benevolent Sunday-school-mistress of Hampton, in the success of her simple regulations and humble instructions. And few are the kings, or military heroes, that enjoy such pleasure on success as she did, for it was unsullied by the recollection of cruelty, and unalloyed by a thirst of fame. Her love of glory was satisfied with the sound of one still small voice, that whispered she was doing service acceptable to heaven. The method she adopted, was to receive the children in the public school-house on Sunday, between the morning and evening divine service. The first exercise was an account, from the six eldest, of the text,

divisions, &c. of the morning sermon; the one who excelled was rewarded by the honourable office of assistant, and aided in preserving order, and performing many little services, which Mary had the talent of rendering highly desirable. This was followed by a recitation of the lessons they had been required to get in the preceding week, which consisted of select passages of scripture, enforcing moral duties; with a certain number of words which they had learned to spell in their intervals of labour; to this succeeded reading in rotation from the New Testament, each four or five verses; and all was closed by a short appropriate prayer, which Mr. Seymore had written and given to Mary to read on that occasion. She found little difficulty in governing, for she ruled her scholars by love. Proudly happy, indeed, was the favoured one, who received from her the reward of a flower, which was worn in triumph at the factory on the succeeding Monday, and afterwards carefully preserved as long as possible.

Mr. Seymore, knowing the character of Dr. Mandeville, whose benevolence exceeded his means of gratifying it, relieved him from the expense of supplying the children with books, &c. by using his exertions in forming a society in Hampton for that purpose. It consisted of one hundred persons, who gave annually twelve cents, or one cent monthly, as most agreeable to the circumstances or inclinations of the subscribers. These assessments, which amounted to twelve dollars yearly, were appropriated to the purchase of books; two thirds of the sum to be expended on such as were necessary for the use of the school, and the remainder laid out on moral tracts and other instructive works to be given amongst the children as rewards for uncommon merit.

From her useful occupations and innocent amusements, Mary was called to attend on the fatal illness of Mrs. Danforth; four weeks she was the unwearied nurse, the faithful attendant, and the sympathizing companion of her earliest friend; she did not leave her bedside till she received her grateful thanks,

and gentle benediction, on the morning of her death. Mary was deeply afflicted with the loss of this affectionate associate of her childhood and youth, but she endeavoured in the presence of her grandmother to repress her own grief, and that which she felt for Mr. Danforth and his two infant sons. For she knew that even sympathy, unless it can be brought into active usefulness, ceases to be amiable, when it afflicts those who depend on our cheerfulness for a large portion of their own. But though she could conceal her sorrow, it was not in her power to hide from the vigilant eye of her grandmother an indisposition that too constant watching with Mrs. Danforth had produced. "I am sure," thought Mrs. Burnam, as she tied the ribband round her mob cap, "I am sure something must be the matter with Mary, or she would have been here before now, to smooth out the bows of my ribband and fix the border of my cap." She was terrified, when she went below stairs, to find no preparations for breakfast; and hastening to Mary's room, found her just recovering from a faintness, that an attempt to dress herself had occasioned.

Dr. Mandeville was instantly called, who pronounced her disease, a slow nervous fever.

The first three weeks of her illness, which was very severe, she bore with an uncomplaining quiet serenity, that proved she did not forget, amidst the heat and painful restlessness of a fever, that there were virtues to be practised in that situation, as important, as the most active duties of health. By placid submission, and patient endurance, she did all in her power to alleviate the anxiety of her grandmother, whose attentions she uniformly received with a smile of gratitude and expressions of hope that the medicine she handed, or the cordial she prepared, would prove a restorative.

To the daily and almost hourly enquiries of William, which were brought by her friend Nancy, her answers were always so pleasant and cheerful, that he could hardly believe her as sick as was represented. For he did not know the power of

resignation, which can make the bed of sickness as "soft as downy pillows are."¹⁴ The performance of the exterior of religion had not infused its spirit into his heart, had not conformed his will to the will of God; he had learned indeed to say that we should resign ourselves to his disposal, but he had not learned to *do* it.

When the violence of Mary's disorder abated, it left her in a state of weakness that resisted for a time the power of medicine. But though it was not so extreme as to prevent her feeling a relish for the activity which she was unable to exert, and to anticipate with delight a return to duties which she could not then perform; yet the same habitual submission, which had blunted the acuteness of pain, silenced now every accent of fretfulness, and stopped every murmur of impatience; though morning after morning promised strength, and evening after evening confirmed the disappointment of the day. She had continued in this state nearly four months, when one morning in the latter part of autumn, as Dr. Mandeville sat by her, examining her pulse, "I wish, sir," said she, "you would allow me to go below stairs to-morrow, I think it would almost make me well." "So you shall if you will be prudent, my good girl," said her pleasant friendly physician, "for I suppose you are weary of seeing nobody but such an old man as myself. And by the bye," added he, "perhaps I may please another besides yourself, by allowing you to take a little fresh air; for one of my brother proprietors told me this morning that Crawford, our agent, had dismissed his foreman, and that William Raymond was to take his place to-morrow. I was pleased to hear it; for I understand he has been waiting for it a year past, to ask permission of a certain

¹⁴ The reference is to the hymn by Isaac Watts, "Christ's Presence Makes Death Easy," which concludes, "Jesus can make a dying bed / Feel soft as downy pillows are, / While on His Breast I lean my head, / And breathe my life out sweetly there."

excellent grandmother to allow him to marry a very clever young woman of whom I have some knowledge, and who I am well assured will make him a good wife, because she has been a dutiful grandchild. I would never advise a young man to marry a disobedient daughter—but stop, stop, I'll tell no more news, your pulse grows too quick, you will not be able to go below stairs tomorrow, you are quite too feverish," said the Doctor, smiling; "but perhaps quiet will be better than medicine, so I'll bid you good morning."

In compliance with Mary's request, when William first made his proposals to her of having a few weeks for deliberate consideration on the subject, he named to her the day on which he should be made foreman of the factory for making his proposals to her grandmother, expecting his promotion would take place within two weeks, but it had been delayed from month to month till the present time. When William represented to Mary his frequent disappointments, and his impatience to be authorized to visit her familiarly, and begged that he might be allowed to name an earlier day than that he had first appointed, she replied that an adherence to his engagement would be a pleasing proof, of his desire of gratifying her by affording her an opportunity of witnessing an instance of his self-command. At the commencement of her sickness his resolution was nearly subdued; but the pride and satisfaction he imagined he should feel, in relating to her his struggles, and giving such an evidence of the government he had acquired over himself, prevented the avowal which was frequently just ready to escape him. He entreated his sister to use her endeavours to keep alive the partiality with which Mary had acknowledged she regarded him. Nancy was not deficient in performing this office, for her brother was her favourite theme; and till the last four weeks of Mary's confinement, she would spend hours in talking with animated delight of the change in William's character, and of their pleasing prospects of future comfort. Though Mary, whenever her friend

spoke on the subject, preserved a modest silence, and would often check her volubility in the midst of some agreeable scheme of domestick arrangement or social enjoyment; yet these frequent descriptions of happiness had insensibly strengthened her own hopes of it. And in the few hours of the wakeful night succeeding Dr. Mandeville's visit and intelligence, she imagined the felicity of years.

One moment she beheld William the kindest and most virtuous of men, uniting with herself in procuring for her grandmother the comforts her age required, receiving with humility from her lips religious instruction, and useful advice. The next she saw him by his industry made the possessor of a fertile farm, and herself the busy dairy woman; and she smiled at the fancied approbation her grandmother and William bestowed on her housewifery. Her indigent neighbours were all assisted by her kindness, and her Sunday pupils were made both good and wise, by the ingenious plans she adopted for their benefit. An imaginary garden was laid out in squares for their cultivation, in which every flower that bloomed, and every plant that grew, was made productive of moral as well as of natural beauty; for the children sold the produce for the use of the poor—and Mary exulted in their benevolence, and her own invention.

Mary was pleased to find in the morning the weather was such, as even her grandmother did not think unfavourable for her release from confinement.

She quitted her chamber with the liveliest feelings of gratitude for recovered health. She spent much of the morning in preparing her mind for the expected interview with William, which, after so long an absence, occasioned some perturbation, particularly as it was to happen on a day which had been anticipated with feelings of such peculiar interest. Her serenity was continually disturbed by the obtruding recollection that at twelve o'clock William would renew his accustomed visit. As the hour approached, she wished something might prevent his

coming, and more than once rose to retire to her chamber—but the dreaded hour came, and went, without realizing the hopes and fears of Mary. William feels as awkwardly as myself, thought she; and again her anxiety was awakened when she looked forward to sunset—the sun was almost down, the little glass buffet was glittering with its last beams, when the latch was lifted so gently that Mary thought no hand but William’s could have raised it—it was the affectionate Nancy, who called to make a hasty inquiry after her health, and who seemed to have an increase of the dejection which Mary had observed in her for a month past—but no William came.

Day after day passed away, and Mary heard nothing from him, and though Nancy called every evening, her manner was so reserved and altered she could not summon resolution to ask after her brother. Apprehensions for his health now alarmed her, and she ventured to ask her grandmother if he had not sometimes called there, during her sickness. “Yes, indeed, my dear,” replied Mrs. Burnam, “through the first three months of your confinement, he used to come four or five times a day, and was so helpful and kind, and would so often speak of the comfort you must be to me, that I really began to love him, but he has not been here of late; it is now five weeks since I have seen him. When I asked his sister about him the other day, she began to cry; so I said no more about it. I did not mention it to you, for I thought it would make you uneasy to know Nancy was in trouble. Alarmed at this account, Mary waited impatiently for Nancy’s visit, who was no sooner seated than she asked if William was not well. “Yes, he is well,” replied Nancy; “but if he were sick I could not be more unhappy than he makes me by his fickleness. O, how much I have depended on his being made the foreman, for then I thought I might venture to call you sister. This day a week ago, was the very one on which he was to have asked your grandmother’s consent to your marriage. It was a sad, sad day to me; I almost cried myself sick, but it did no good, for I found he

had engaged himself to the young woman that took your place in the factory.” Mary turned away her head to conceal the increased paleness of her face, and the tears that started to her eyes. But in a moment she summoned fortitude to say, “if she is amiable, and better calculated to make William happy, I ought not to regret that he prefers her; and if he prefers her, I ought not surely to be angry that he should forget me.” Nancy wept, and sisterly affection hardly restrained her from expressing with warmth her indignation at the unworthy conduct of her brother. But Mary, always accustomed to trace her misfortunes to her own faults, rather than to those of others, found the cause of that severity, with which she felt her disappointment, more in the indulgence she had given her own imagination, than in the unkindness of William. For had I thought, she considered, that happiness does not depend on situation, or on the favour of any one, but my Creator; had I realized these truths as clearly, as I have sometimes supposed I did, I should not now feel so grieved at the loss of William’s partiality. Humbled with this lesson of self knowledge, she forgave, she even forgot that William had done wrong, and readily resigned herself to the means which she trusted Providence had used to make her acquainted with her own weakness and liability to error. So far from giving way to gloomy despondency, she was even more solicitous than ever to be cheerful, that she might remove from the mind of her grandmother any suspicion that she was unhappy.

CHAPTER V.

“Men must be taught, as if you taught them not,
And things unknown, propos’d as things forgot.
Without good breeding, truth is disapprov’d;
That only makes superior sense below’d.”

POPE.¹⁵

HAD William with the same sincerity scrutinized his heart, he would soon have discovered, that, at the very time he imagined himself at the height of excellence, he was actuated by selfish motives in all his boasted virtues; for no sooner was Mary removed by her sickness from the constant observation of them, than he began to relax in their performance.

The novelty of being good had ceased; Mary was absent; there was no eye to approve—no eye but his Maker’s; that he had never had in view; and religious duties became irksome, and, at length, disgusting. He began to wish that Mary had not such ‘particular notions,’ as he termed her steady adherence to the dictates of conscience; and secretly hoped, that, in every message she returned to the frequent inquiries he sent to her chamber, there would be some indication of a change in her views and feelings. William was in this state of mind, when a young woman of lively manners and handsome person, from a neighbouring town, engaged herself at the factory. He was first induced to observe her from the circumstance of her supplying Mary’s place; and soon thought the vacancy very agreeably filled by his new acquaintance, in whom he found such a similarity of opinions and desires, that he began to suspect she would make him a better companion for life, than Mary, whom he was now convinced he never could make happy. If I cannot make her happy, thought he, I ought certainly to give her up—Mary herself

would do so, were she in my place, she is always so careful not to be the means of uneasiness to any one. With these conclusive arguments William quieted his conscience, and openly avowed himself the admirer of Lucy Newcome, in whose character there was nothing very distinguishing, except a thoughtless levity. She would not have done a wrong action, knowing it absolutely to be such, but took no pains to learn the difference between right and wrong, and was very apt to think nothing reprehensible that was agreeable to her wishes. It was this trait that Nancy saw with sorrow; and though she endeavoured to conceal from general observation the defects of her intended sister, yet she could not refrain from lamenting them to Mary. “Whenever,” said she to her, as they sat together one evening, “I attempt to represent to Lucy the folly of spending all her leisure time in trifling company and chit chat, she turns my remonstrances into ridicule, becomes angry, and asks where I have learned that the tongue was not made for use, and the feet for walking abroad where one wishes to go.” “But perhaps, dear Nancy,” replied Mary, “you don’t recollect that you are almost a stranger to Lucy, and that most people are not fond of hearing their faults from any but those in whose affectionate regard they have the most perfect confidence; and who, they are well assured, do not reprove others with a view to show their own superiority, but from an unaffected zeal to serve them. Your motive is pure, but perhaps Lucy has not been acquainted with you long enough to be convinced that it is so.” “I did not indeed think of that,” said Nancy, “for I don’t remember ever being unwilling to hear my faults from any one. I considered it was no matter how they were made known to me, so long as I got at the knowledge of them.” “Every one has not your desire to know their duty,” answered Mary. “It reminds me of what I wrote down of the sermon last Sunday. I will run and get it, and read the passage to you. ‘As there is a promise,’ said Mr. Seymore, ‘that the sins of ignorance shall be punished with few stripes, many prefer remaining in that state, not considering

¹⁵ The lines are from Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* (1711).

that it is only that ignorance, which is *unavoidable*, that will escape the just condemnation of our righteous Judge. They do not allow themselves to consider, that if they neglect to read the scriptures, in which religious and moral duties are clearly explained, and the path which leads to heaven made straight and plain to every eye that looks upon it, that they are as guilty, as those who know the commandments which they transgress. But *their* indifference to spiritual knowledge, does not lessen our obligation to use every endeavour to awaken them to a sense of their mistake; it should only make us more solicitous that the *manner* of conveying instruction be pleasing, and as little calculated as possible to disgust or give offence. If, in giving what they are unwilling to receive, vanity is wounded, or anger excited, there is danger of its being rejected altogether; and to gratify their pride, a course of actions may be persisted in, even after a conviction of their criminality is felt. Example, under all circumstances, but more especially where the age, and advantages of education, &c. have been pretty similar, is the most efficacious way of giving advice. That silent lesson, like the noiseless dew which does not agitate the tenderest plant it fertilizes, can give no offence. Not being particularly directed to any one, it does not excite the alarm of a direct admonition, and that feeling of shame and inferiority that is so painful, and which many try to overcome by a sturdy defence of their sentiments and practice. These sensations are not produced by a view of goodness; when *real*, it is always accompanied by humility, which prevents the envy of the beholder, and many of those passions that are too apt to rise in the breast of one directly charged with folly and imprudence.”

“I admire,” said Nancy, “every thing our good Mr. Seymore says. I have no doubt example often has an effect; but in one instance, it has certainly failed, for I have been particularly careful, since I have known William’s partiality for Lucy, to show her my dislike of foolish amusements by not frequenting them; and have endeavoured to make her sensible of the value of a

leisure evening, by staying at home myself, and yet—” “Stop,” interrupted Mary, “we will not condemn Lucy, till *all* means have been tried, by example, to make her what you wish; you have tried only one, and perhaps that one may not have had the desired effect, from her supposing that, possibly, you preferred staying at home, because you were not noticed enough abroad, or had not dresses that suited you; or, worse than all, she may think it a mere freak, an oddity, which only lessens her esteem for you. But perhaps you would succeed, were you to strive by your own conduct to impress on her mind the importance of spending every moment to the best advantage; that time is the same valuable commodity at all seasons, in the morning, as well as in the evening.” “Ah now,” said Nancy, smiling, “I take your meaning; you think, while I indulge myself by laying a bed in the morning, I ought not to reprove Lucy for spending the evening abroad.” “Exactly so, dear Nancy,” said Mary; “you will forgive me, but I really think, with such a beam in our own eyes,¹⁶ it is not strange, if we should be suspected of not seeing clear enough to take the mote out of another’s. Not that I consider wasting the morning in bed a greater crime, than spending time idly in any other way; but I think it, I believe, a little more blameable than you do: it is an unnecessary indulgence for those in good health; and while we are guilty of excess in any pleasure, we cannot reasonably expect that our censure of those, that differ only in kind, will be regarded with attention, or heard with good-nature. Those, we may wish to benefit by our advice, will give us little credit for zeal in the cause of virtue, while they see us so strangely inconsistent, as to condemn their fondness for gay enjoyments, while we take care not to deny ourselves a single gratification that happens to suit our inclination.” “Well,” said Nancy, with a good-natured smile, “I will wait no longer for the factory bell to call me up. But I am afraid, were I to rise before daylight, I should not be

¹⁶ Luke 6:42 or Matthew 7:3

able to convince Lucy that that it was better to stay at home, than to go into company.”

“And I hope, my dear Nancy,” replied Mary, “you would not wish to convince her that staying at home is always better than visiting. We are commanded to love our fellow-creatures, and general benevolence is often increased by an acquaintance with those of respectable characters, whom Providence has placed within our reach. On an intimacy, we commonly find in them qualities to admire, which we did not suppose they possessed, that leads us to hope strangers may have virtues which we do not see, and disposes our hearts to kindness towards them. An intercourse with society has a tendency to weaken our pride and self-complacency. We are very apt to think ourselves more virtuous than other people, till we see them conducting under difficulties and trials better than we should in similar circumstances.

“There is still another advantage. We may discover in company what our prevailing desires are, if we are really as religious, as we imagine ourselves to be when alone and undisturbed by temptation. We may try our faith in the omnipresence of God, by the earnestness of our endeavours to preserve purity in conversation, and sincerity in manner. We may judge of our obedience to the command of the Saviour, to ‘love one another,’¹⁷ by the unwillingness with which we hear slander, and the readiness to vindicate, where it can be done with truth; and also by the pleasure we can take in witnessing the happiness and superior advantages of our companions. Of our humility, we may judge, by the meekness with which we bear the neglect and indifference of those, whose esteem and attentions we cannot but wish.”

“But you seem to be contradicting now, what I have often heard you say,” said Nancy; “that a few hours of mirth,

spent in company, would soon be passed away, and perhaps leave nothing worth remembering; but if the same time had been improved in reading a useful book, it might leave in the memory something agreeable to recollect through life.”

“Don’t you remember,” said Mary, “that Mr. Seymore told us last Sunday, that the duties of a christian formed an extensive circle, and that every virtue which composed the ample round required our attention, or the beautiful symmetry of the figure would be broken and injured?”

“Oh yes,” said Nancy, “now you repeat it, I remember it perfectly; though I had forgotten all but that part where he observed, that some people were apt to reduce all excellence to a certain point. I could not think what that meant, but now it seems clear.” “By confining all goodness, to the single act of staying at home to read,” said Mary, “we should do the same thing. I did not mean to condemn visiting altogether, but only that excessive fondness for company, that dissipates the thoughts and leaves no time for reading. Both are good in their turn, if we are careful to keep in mind, that reading will be of no advantage, unless we choose good books; and that visiting is time thrown away, if we do not practice, when abroad, the virtues we have learned to love in retirement.”

“But yet,” said Nancy, “you seem by your example to recommend reading, in preference to going out; for you are seldom from home of an evening.”—“General rules will not apply to all,” replied Mary, lowering her voice; “every one must consult his peculiar situation. I should gain the advantages of society at too great a price, to leave my grandmother alone, who depends on me for much of her amusement; and needs my attention on many accounts, particularly in the evening.”—“Ah,” said Nancy, with a look of affectionate approbation, “it is you who keep that same beautiful circle of Mr. Seymore’s as round and as bright as the sun.”

¹⁷ John 13:34-35

CHAPTER VI.

“Pure in her aim, and in her temper mild,
Her wisdom seems the weakness of a child.
She rather waves, than will dispute her right;
And, injured, makes forgiveness her delight.”

COWPER.¹⁸

ON ordinary occasions, the effort to be cheerful seldom fails of success, and Mary evinced by the sprightly alacrity with which she returned to her occupation in the factory, that even a disappointment in love may be borne with an even spirit, if the heart is properly affected with a sense of the watchful care of Providence; which not only directs, with infinite wisdom, great events, and important concerns, but orders, for our best good, the most minute incidents which are beyond our own control.

The awkward embarrassment of William, Mary could not but perceive, and she endeavoured to remove it by kindness and composure, that there might be nothing in their manner towards each other to remind Lucy of the attachment that had once subsisted between them. But Lucy had not the generosity herself to understand the disinterested conduct of Mary; she watched every word and action with the most scrutinizing suspicion; and though she saw nothing to excite her jealousy, she treated her with a cold indifference and reserve, which Mary tried to overcome by cordiality and frankness, and those little nameless attentions that her accustomed regard to the feelings of her associates always prompted.

“I am sorry, Nancy,” said Lucy one day, as Mary was standing by, “I did not get a blue ribbon for my straw hat; William says I have spoiled it, by trimming it with pink.” Before

Mary went to the factory the next morning, she took from the drawer, her blue ribbon, the ribbon she had purchased to please William: the sight of it suddenly revived the recollection of his former fondness for her. She thought (for Mary had the feelings of humanity) what additional beauty the delicacy of the colour would give to the complexion of her rival; the lid of the paste-board box that contained the ribbon was nearly again closed—but, though Mary had the passions of humanity, she had learned to subdue them, and before she had quite covered the box, the wound her delicate conscience had received by this sudden intrusion of envy, threw the blood to her face, and she instantly drew out the ribbon, folded it neatly, and presented it to Lucy with a smile of such genuine benevolence, as will give to the plainest features an inexpressible beauty. This was the last effort of a similar kind, that Mary was obliged to make; for she soon discovered by William’s conduct and conversation, that there had not been such a change of character, as she had imagined; and while she saw with sincere sorrow that he had returned to his former unconcern for his future interest, she acknowledged, with an increased reliance on the direction of heavenly wisdom, that the denial of favourite wishes often proves the greatest blessing; and events, which have been deplored as adverse, have, in their result, been frequently found the most fortunate. She rejoiced that she had not been united to a man, from whom she must have been estranged during the sacred hours of devotion, when the heart is most open to every amiable affection; to one who could not have taken a religious view of surrounding objects, from which a principal source of her happiness arose; for Mary saw the hand of the Deity in every blushing flower, and humming insect, and delighted to read his wisdom in the fair volume which nature presents.

William was soon married, and having drawn in a lottery a prize of four thousand dollars, he left the factory, hired a handsome house, bought a horse and chaise, and believing there

¹⁸ The lines are from British poet William Cowper’s 1782 poem “Charity.”

would be no end to his fortune, determined, for some time at least, to lead the life of a gentleman.

With trembling apprehension Mary thought she discovered an increased feebleness in her grandmother; her fears were strengthened by the readiness with which Mrs. Burnam accepted her proposal of staying at home with her. She found, on consulting Dr. Mandeville, that she must soon part with her tender and indulgent parent. Her weakness gradually increased, when one day, as Mary stood watching by her bedside with anxious solicitude, “I am going to leave you, my child,” said she, “but you will still have a parent; your Heavenly Father will never forsake you while you strive to keep his holy commandments, and call upon him with sincerity in prayer. Pray often, my child; it binds the christian armour more closely about us; and will enable you to bear up under the trials and difficulties which you must expect, and which you must try to encounter with a resigned and cheerful spirit, since our blessed Saviour has said, that we cannot be his followers, unless we take up our cross daily. When the world frowns, my child, you will not be cast down, if you have the light of that countenance which is life, and that ‘loving kindness which is better than life.’¹⁹ You were always kind to your fellow-creatures, and quick to forgive injuries: continue to be so, my Mary, for God is kind to us. Your poor aunt Holden will need your care: you will give it, I know, for your grandfather’s sake; she was his only sister, and he loved her. The dying blessing of my parents has been my comfort through life. I give you *mine*, my dear child, and I pray that it may comfort you.” Her voice faltered—an expression of maternal tenderness, and pious hope, came over her mild features, and in a few moments she fell into a gentle sleep, from whence she awoke only to utter a short prayer, and expired.

¹⁹ Psalm 63:3

The first emotions of nature Mary struggled in vain to suppress; for the eye that had been so lately turned on her with benignity was now closed, the voice was silent, that had never spoken to her but in accents of affection, and the hand was now motionless, that had always been ready to minister to her wants. “Oh my beloved grandmother,” cried she, “may I never forget your lovely character, or your last, dear, dear injunctions.” She had already found them salutary, for by prayer her spirits were composed, and she was able to seek her aunt, whom she found sitting alone. On Mary’s entering the room, Mrs. Holden exclaimed, while her face reddened to scarlet, “You would not care whether I were dead or alive; I might sit here and suffer from morning to night, and you would not come to me. Do you think nobody cared for your grandmother but yourself? I believe you think I have got no feeling.” “Oh no, my dear aunt,” interrupted Mary, “I do not think so; I have come now to try to comfort you, and ask you to take some refreshment.” “Don’t *dear me*, and talk so silly, Mary, I beg of you,” replied her aunt, “when you know, as well as I do, there is nothing in the house to eat.”

Mary now recollected she had provided nothing for dinner, and, imputing her aunt’s ill-humour to the true cause, she hastened to prepare some; and while her own heart was almost bursting with grief, she tried, by every little kind endearment she could think of, to quiet the ruffled temper and soothe the less keen affliction of her ungracious companion. Mary received, on this melancholy occasion, the most friendly attentions from Mr. Seymore, as well as from every one else who knew her. Her uniform sweetness of temper, and readiness to oblige and assist the sick, and those more indigent than herself, had endeared her in an uncommon manner to the neighbourhood in which she lived; there was not a dry eye, that saw her composed sorrowful countenance, as she turned from the churchyard, where the remains of her venerable parent had been deposited. “I pity that

child,” said an old man who stood bending over his staff; “for when I was a boy I lost my grandfather, and though now I am as grey as he was, yet I cannot even now think of his silver hair, or look at his oaken stick, without shedding a few tears. And they say Mary was mighty fond of her grandmother, and has a tender heart—a tender heart I know she has, for when I was sick, and my wife had the rheumatism, she came and took care of us both. I could not pay her, but Heaven will bless her.” Amidst all the kindness of her friends, Mary missed the sympathy of Mr. Danforth, whose heart, deeply imbued with religion, could pour forth to the afflicted the most consolatory language. With him she would not have felt the restraint, that Mr. Seymore’s learning and situation imposed; and his intimate knowledge of her grandmother’s virtues, and the interest he had always taken in their concerns, rendered him more capable than any one else of entering into her feelings. He had removed, a short time before, into a distant town to take possession of a farm he inherited on the decease of his father.

Mary found Mrs. Holden’s infirmities and dread of solitude would oblige her to relinquish her employment at the factory, and she determined to contract her personal expences, and to devote her time and the income of her little patrimony to the comfort of her aunt.

Mrs. Holden had one son, who, not having been heard of for several years, was supposed to have been lost on a voyage to the East Indies. His wife, an honest, good-natured woman, had endeavoured by uncommon industry to maintain herself and four children; but her health having declined, she lost the means of gaining a livelihood, and depended for maintenance on the charity of some distant relations with whom she lived, about twenty miles from Hampton, and some small remittances she regularly received from Mary, which after her engagement at the factory she was able to make. Thinking a visit might be beneficial to her health, Mary hired a waggon, and sent for her and her

children to spend a few weeks with her and her aunt, who she hoped would be amused with the company of her daughter and grand-children. The day after the younger Mrs. Holden arrived she was taken with the typhus fever, which after a month of extreme suffering proved fatal. Her children, four boys, who had been indulged to excess by their fond mother, were rendered more peevish and ungovernable by an attack of the same disorder, which confined them successively through six months. Mary attended them with the tenderness and solicitude of a parent, and it was not till they had recovered, and her mind was relieved from anxiety for their safety, that she found leisure to pay attention to her own affairs: she was astonished and almost terrified at the amount of the debt she had contracted, during the long-continued sickness in her family. The discontinuance of her wages at the factory, with the loss of a piece of ground which her grandmother had only held for her life, made her means so small as rendered it impossible she should keep the children longer than till they could otherwise be provided for. After having, by her aunt’s direction, written to their mother’s relations, and received for answer that they could do nothing for them, she consulted with Mr. Seymore how they might best be disposed of. He advised, that they should be put to service in families, till they were old enough to enter an apprenticeship to some reputable trade. Mary was pleased with this proposal, particularly as he offered to take one of the boys himself. With perfect confidence in the acquiescence of Mrs. Holden, she hastened to communicate the plan to her. “Is it possible,” cried her enraged aunt, “you are going to be so cruel as to make servants of those poor, dear, motherless children—turn me out of doors, ma’am; send me to the workhouse—I am ready to go; I don’t want to be a burden to you—I can pack up my clothes to-night, and leave you; but I will never see my son’s children working in a kitchen; no, that shall never be, while I have strength to speak.”

Mary mildly represented that it was out of her power, with the greatest exertions and strictest economy, to maintain so large a family; that the boys were not old enough at present to become apprentices, and that there was no situation in which they could be placed, but in private families or a factory. “Well, put them into the factory in this town,” cried Mrs. Holden; “I have no objection to that, though I wonder I have patience to listen to you, when I think of your presuming to put them out to kitchen service.” “But I am afraid,” replied Mary, “in the factory they would learn much evil, and no good. They would lose the advantage of schooling altogether, and *that* their mother seemed particularly desirous they should have.” “O dear, dear,” cried Mrs. Holden, bursting into tears, “what shall I do?—nobody to advise with me—nobody that cares for me or my children!” “Yes, my dear aunt, *I* care for you, and will do every thing in my power for you and the children,” said Mary, who now thought it best to drop the subject for that time; but Mrs. Holden, who habitually gave way to the impulse of her feelings, could think and talk of nothing else. Mary perceived her aunt’s anxiety for the children affected her health; she became uneasy on her account, and again applied to Mr. Seymore for advice. She represented to him Mrs. Holden’s repugnance to parting with the children, and her own unwillingness to do any thing to distress her aunt. “She is old, sir,” said Mary; “and there is something sacred in age, which I dare not offend. If I could contrive any way of keeping the boys with me, I think I should feel easier. The thought that I had voluntarily added affliction to the sorrows and infirmities, under which she now labours, would make me unhappy.”

“Your tenderness and respect to the weakness of age, my good Mary,” said Mr. Seymore, “is truly amiable—I cordially approve it; but you must remember, when duties interfere, they must be carefully weighed, before the choice is made between them. You will excuse me when I say, I am not unacquainted

with the disposition of your aunt; her irritable temper will always find some cause of complaint, and I doubt whether it would be right to sacrifice the interest of the children, and your own comfort, to gratify her unreasonable wishes.” “Do not, Sir,” said Mary, “take my comfort into the account. It will be but a few years before they will be old enough to learn trades. I am young and in good health, and ought to be able to bear a little inconvenience for so short a time. The children, having been sick since they have been with my aunt, her mind is so strongly impressed with the idea, that, without her attention, they will soon be so again, that I am convinced they could not be taken from her but by force.” “But even,” said, Mr. Seymore, “putting your embarrassment out of the question, and allowing that your aunt may be made more comfortable by having them with her, still I should hesitate to advise it; for is there not danger that the children may be materially injured by the unsteady conduct of their grandmother towards them, which, varying no doubt with her temper, will sometimes be excessively indulgent, at others hard and repulsive.” “I have felt fearful of that, sir,” said Mary, “but have thought, if I could keep a school, that difficulty would be partly removed; they would then (a considerable portion of the time) be obliged to submit to rules. I might instruct them also, while I should be enabling myself to maintain the family.” “To a design so praiseworthy,” said Mr. Seymore, “I am not disposed to make any more objections. I trust your benevolent exertions will be blessed. My narrow means will not allow me to give you pecuniary aid, but my utmost endeavours shall be used to obtain scholars for you. Whenever my advice or assistance can serve you, call upon me without hesitation.”

Mr. Seymore was not unmindful of his engagement; Mary soon became the instructress of a pretty large school. But though the profits of it were beyond her expectations, they did not meet her expences; and she was compelled to let her neat cottage, and the bit of land attached to it, and hire two chambers

in a neighbouring house. But even this sacrifice hardly enabled her to support her family, and she was often obliged to deny herself the common necessaries of life. “I wonder,” said Mrs. Holden, one day as they sat at table, “what you mean, Mary, by always eating potatoes for your dinner. Do you do it to make yourself sick? I suppose you think, while you look so pale and thin, that every body will pity you, and praise you for starving yourself to take care of me and mine—I hate such sly ways—but hypocrites will be found out some time or other.” The tear that trembled in Mary’s eye was dried by resignation, before it fell upon her cheek; and turning the subject as soon as possible, the repast was closed with cheerfulness, promoted by her example.

Mary, confined by her employment and various cares almost constantly at home, saw scarcely any one but her faithful friend, Nancy Raymond, who could visit her but seldom; for her brother, having got greatly involved in debt, had absconded, leaving his wife sick, with one child, to whom she devoted her time with the most affectionate attention.

CHAPTER VII.

“The reward of virtue, though often late, is sure.”²⁰

NEARLY a year since Mary left her own cottage had passed away, when one evening, as she was sitting at work, while her aunt was asleep in her chair, and the boys busily engaged in trying which could make the best bobbin machine for their cousin Mary, the door was suddenly opened by a stranger, who pressed forward to Mrs. Holden, exclaiming, “Ah, mother, how do you do?” “Who is it, what is the matter, Mary?” cried she, awakened from her nap by the loudness of the voice. “Why,

don’t you know me, mother?” said the stranger: “I am your son, George Holden.” “My son, my own dear son, is it you? are you indeed alive?” cried his mother. “I thought you were dead. I have mourned for you as much, as if I had followed you to your grave.” “Heaven be praised, I have got home safe at last, mother,” said the grateful sailor—“but my poor wife,” added he, as he turned to wipe from his rough sun-burnt cheek the tears he tried to conceal, “my poor wife is not here to welcome me.” “But here are your children heaven has preserved for you to welcome your return,” said Mary, directing his attention to the boys. “My children, my darling boys!” exclaimed the father, caressing them alternately, with an extravagance that astonished and almost alarmed them. “Heaven be thanked I have you once again in my arms. Many and many a long night have I sat at the helm and thought of these little fellows, till I have almost heard them prattle, and have seemed to feel their soft cheeks pressing against mine—poor rogues. But who has taken care of them since their mother’s death? Who am I to thank for their good looks?” “Cousin Mary has taken care of us,” said the eldest, “and taught us to read and to spell; and next month I am going to learn to write, if I am good, cousin Mary says, and don’t tease grandmother. Have I teased you, grandmother, since last Monday?” “Don’t talk so much, George,” whispered the youngest boy; “let’s hear him talk now,” fixing his eyes at the same time with deep curiosity on his father’s face. “My good cousin Mary Burnham,” cried the delighted father, turning quickly and seizing both their hands, “I wish I could thank you, but I can’t do it just now; there is such a high swell of my heart, that my gratitude is raised aloft to Him who made you so excellent, so benevolent.” “God is the proper object of your gratitude, my dear cousin, you owe me nothing,” said Mary, who felt, in witnessing such a scene of parental joy, fully compensated for all the sacrifices she had made. “Pray my son,” said Mrs. Holden, “give us some account of your travels, and why we have

²⁰ This epigraph seems original to the novel.

never heard a word from you.” “It is a long story, my dear mother,” replied he, “and my thoughts drive along with rather too fresh a gale to-night, to let me tell it, steadily; but to-morrow you shall have the whole history of my captivity in Algiers,²¹ and of my good luck the last six months.” The night was far spent before Captain Holden had finished his inquiries relative to his family and friends, and drawn from Mary, who reluctantly communicated the manner in which she had enabled herself to support his mother and children. The variations of his open countenance, were the only expressions of his feelings he had then the power to give; but the first object of his solicitude, the next day, was to inform Mary’s tenants that she wished to return to her house as soon as possible. Tired of the fatigue and dangers of a sea-faring life, Capt. Holden determined to purchase, with the property he had acquired in the last few months of his absence, a small farm, which was for sale in the neighbourhood at a cheap rate, with a grist-mill attached to it; from the profits of which, with an industrious cultivation of the land, he hoped to gain a maintenance. Till the necessary arrangements could be completed, he with his mother and children resided with Mary, whose cottage became once more the abode of cheerfulness. In the presence of her son, Mrs. Holden restrained her ill-humour; shame prevented the discovery to him of those defects, which his natural easiness of disposition rendered peculiarly disagreeable. Peevishness and discontent had mingled so little with his own feelings; he knew so little how to account for the fits of gloom, that occasionally visit the bad tempered, that no christian grace could be found so difficult to exercise, as becoming patience with

²¹ *Algiers*: a reference to the impressment and enslavement of U.S. sailors by the so called Barbary States of North Africa, often referred to as Barbary captivity. The trope of the missing and presumed dead sailor who returns from enslavement in Algiers was a commonplace in early nineteenth century U.S. fiction.

those, who, overlooking the abundant mercies that surround them on every side, search with eager eyes into every dark corner for some brooding calamity or imagined misery. Mary secretly hoped that the pleasant disposition and agreeable manners of Nancy Raymond would not be disregarded by her cousin. It was not long before her wishes were gratified; the benevolence and sweet temper of her friend had its effect on Capt. Holden, who declared to Mary that if he could obtain Nancy for his mate, he felt confident he could stem the difficulties of life, and get through the voyage with ease and safety.

Mary was agreeably surprised at this time by a visit from her friend Mr. Danforth, who came to Hampton to pass a few weeks for the purpose of enjoying her society, in which he found all the happiness which can arise from an interchange of congenial sentiments. Superior in cultivation to most common farmers, he understood and enjoyed the purity of Mary’s ideas, and the correctness with which she expressed them. He thought even virtue appeared more amiable when she talked of it, and the beauties of nature caught new graces when pointed out by her. Mary admired the excellence of his understanding, and revered his piety and exemplary character. Her friendship was founded on his good qualities, and the long intimacy that had subsisted between them; his attentions were received with gratitude as proofs of esteem, without any suspicion that she had inspired a more tender regard. Humility had blinded her to what was obvious to her common acquaintance; and long after her friends had exulted in his evident partiality, she was surprised when one day, after having given an animated description of the green before his house, hedged with the white thorn and sweet-brier, he said with an emphasis she could not mistake; “the shrubs are the same you gave me from your garden, before I left Hampton—I transplanted them, Mary, for remembrancers of you; will you, my friend, bless me by making them unnecessary for that purpose?” Mary, though diffident, was frank; her

modesty was the result of self-knowledge, and the reserve of a delicate mind, that has a quick sense of what will offend against propriety; but did not prevent, on further explanation from Mr. Danforth, an unhesitating acknowledgment of the value she set on the heart that was offered to her acceptance. They were shortly married, and Mary removed with her husband to Greenwich, the place of his residence. Her affectionate heart could not but feel regret on leaving her native village and earliest friends; but it was the regret of a rational mind, which considered that an exchange, rather than an accumulation of blessings, is the lot of humanity; and that it is unreasonable in man to expect at the “same time to fill his cup from the source, and the mouth of the Nile.”²² Every situation has its appropriate duties: and Mary was not unmindful that those of a second mother are not always the easiest, or the most pleasant to perform. But believing the difficulties, supposed inseparable from that station, might be in a great measure obviated by the exercise of benevolence, she made it her constant endeavour to overcome those little selfish feelings, which are so apt to destroy the peace of families: and considering herself always happiest, when most useful, the domestick vexations that disturb common minds passed lightly over hers, as the necessary accompaniments of that distinguished privilege, *the ability to do good*. The amiable tempers and engaging manners of Mr. Danforth’s children, naturally excited in Mary an affection for them, which she carefully cherished; knowing she could not reasonably expect their love, unless she gave them her own. They shared equally with her own children her solicitous and diligent attention; she was their instructress in health, and their nurse in sickness: nor was that all; nor was that all, she was truly the feeling, sympathizing mother. Ever keeping in mind that they were deprived of one of the richest blessings enjoyed in this life, a natural claim on maternal tenderness, she endeavoured to supply

²² The quotation comes from Chapter 29 of Johnson’s *Rasselas*.

the loss by the lively interest she took in their welfare, the unaffected gentleness with which she regulated their conduct, and the generous concern she manifested at all times to promote their happiness.

Mary found an ample reward in the gratitude of the children; a pleasing instance of which she never could mention without emotion. Mr. Danforth, to gratify their childish fondness for animals, had given each of his sons a lamb; the products of which had, in a year or two, amounted to a pretty considerable sum. Trusting in their discretion, their father gave them liberty, whenever they went to a market town, to expend it on whatever their taste or judgment should dictate. The long-anticipated day at length arrived when they should accompany their father to the city. Numerous were the indirect hints they gave their mother of some good that was in store for her, of some surprise that was preparing for her; and many were the significant bows and looks she received, as they rode exultingly from the door. During their ride home, Mr. Danforth enquired how they had disposed of their money. They laughed, and begged their father to ask no questions. When their mother was about to retire to bed, they requested her to look at a beautiful rose they had laid on her chamber table. What was her surprise to find on the table a neat portable writing-desk, and a handsome Bible, the latter was spread open, and the rose fastened to the following passage; “Her children rise up and call her blessed.”²³

²³ Proverbs 31:28