

JOHNSON RICHARD

THE
BLOSSOMS OF
MORALITY

Richard Johnson

The Blossoms of Morality

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Содержание

PREFACE	5
Ernestus and Fragilis	6
Juvenile Tyranny conquered	10
The Book of Nature	13
The Unexpected Reformation	17
The Recompence of Virtue	21
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	24

The Blossoms of Morality Intended for the Amusement and Instruction of Young Ladies and Gentlemen

PREFACE

THE very flattering encouragement the Public have been pleased to give "The Looking-glass for the Mind, or Intellectual Mirror," has invited the Editor of that work to intrude once more on their indulgence. As a general preceptor, he wishes to be useful to the rising generation, and with that view recommends to their serious perusal "The Blossoms of Morality."

The Looking-glass is a *very free* translation of some of the most interesting tales of Mons. Berquin, and other foreign writers, whose works in the juvenile line undoubtedly merit the highest encomiums, and claim the most extensive patronage of their fellow-citizens. It certainly must be allowed, that great merit is due to those foreign celebrated writers, who, after studying the higher branches of literature, instead of attempting to acquire honour and fame by delivering lectures on the abstruse sciences, have condescended to humble themselves to the plain language of youth, in order to teach them wisdom, virtue, and morality.

With respect to the present work, though we have not so largely borrowed from foreign writers, yet we have endeavoured to supply that deficiency by the introduction of original matter. The juvenile mind very early begins to enlarge and expand, and is capable of reflection much sooner than we are generally apt to imagine.

From these considerations, we have carried our ideas in this volume one step higher than in the last: and, though we have given many tales that may contribute to amuse the youthful mind, yet we have occasionally introduced subjects which, we hope, will not fail to exercise their judgment, improve their morals, and give them some knowledge of the world.

For instance: in the History of Ernestus and Fragilis, which is the first, and one of the original pieces inserted in this volume, the youthful reader is led to reflect on the instability of all human affairs; he is taught to be neither insolent in prosperity nor mean in adversity; but is shown how necessary it is to preserve an equality of temper through all the varying stages of fortune. He is also shown, how dangerous are the indulgences of parents, who suffer children to give themselves up to indolence and luxury, which generally, as in this history, terminate in a manner fatal to all the parties concerned.

May these Blossoms of Morality, in due time, ripen to maturity, and produce fruit that may be pleasing to the youthful taste, tend to correct the passions, invigorate the mental faculties, and confirm in their hearts true and solid sentiments of virtue, wisdom, and glory.

Ernestus and Fragilis

THE faint glimmerings of the pale-faced moon on the troubled billows of the ocean are not so fleeting and inconstant as the fortune and condition of human life. We one day bask in the sunshine of prosperity, and the next, too often, roll in anguish on the thorny bed of adversity and affliction. To be neither too fond of prosperity, nor too much afraid of adversity, is one of the most useful lessons we have to learn and practise in the extensive commerce of this world. Happy is the youth whose parents are guided by these principles, who govern their children as good princes should their subjects, neither to load them with the chains of tyranny, nor suffer them to run into the excesses of dissipation and licentiousness. The following History of Ernestus and Fragilis is founded upon these general principles.

Ernestus and Fragilis were both the children of Fortune, but rocked in two different cradles. Philosophy and Prudence were the nurses of the first, and Vanity and Folly lulled the second to his repose. Ernestus was early used to experience the various changes of the air, and accustomed to a regular diet; while Fragilis was treated in a very different manner, being kept in a room where, it was supposed, no rude wind could intrude itself; and hurtful delicacies were given him, under the idle notion, that strength is to be acquired in proportion to the dainties and excesses of our meals.

Hence it is no wonder if, after a few years had strengthened their limbs and mental faculties, that there appeared an indisputable difference between the two youths.

Ernestus was all life and gaiety, and soon showed a propensity to be at the head of all kinds of mischief. Though this disposition often got him into disgrace with his parents, yet he always showed much contrition and sorrow when he really found he had injured any one, and seldom slept after the commission of a boyish crime till he had made ample amends to the party injured.

Fragilis had very different passions, and very contrary notions of things. Being accustomed to be indulged with whatever he cried for, his ideas soon wandered from real to imaginary wants, and as these could not possibly be gratified, he naturally became peevish, fretful, and ill-natured. Whenever the mind is affected, the body must partake of the shock it occasions. Fragilis was weak, rickety, and feeble; and the remedies they applied to relieve him only contributed to increase the evil.

As the two little heroes of my history lived in the same neighbourhood, and their parents were nearly equal in point of fortune, they consequently became intimate companions, and frequently visited each other. It was easily to be discovered which of these two children would one day figure most on the busy stage of the world. Ernestus and his lady with pleasure beheld in their little son an ample share of spirit and activity, kindness and affability, resolution and integrity. The parents of Fragilis, however, had not the same pleasing prospect in their favourite and darling; for he was of a dull and gloomy turn, seldom contented with any thing, perpetually wrangling with every one about him, and constantly pining after those things which he knew were not to be procured.

Ernestus made a rapid progress in his literary pursuits, under the tuition of his masters; for his application to his books was equal to the genius nature had bestowed on him. On the other hand, Fragilis advanced very slowly in the paths of science; for his genius had been spoiled by the pernicious indulgences of his parents in his infant years, and he had been suffered to acquire a habit of indolence, which made the least labour of body or of mind tiresome and disgusting.

These circumstances, however, did not seem to interrupt the rising friendship between these two youths, their connections growing stronger as they ripened in years. They were joint proprietors in their kites, their tops, their marbles, and their dumps; though Ernestus was generally the manufacturer of the first and last articles. Indeed, the kites made by Fragilis were always too heavy, and not equally balanced on both sides; consequently they were difficult to be raised into the air, and when there, they had a wavering and unsteady motion; whereas, those made by Ernestus were light and elegant, darted into the air like an eagle, and remained there as steady as a hawk resting on its wings; his

dumps had the elegance of medals; and his tops and marbles were so judiciously chosen as to claim the admiration of all the neighbouring youths.

The time at length arrived, when it is usual for parents to begin to think of sending their children from home, to engage in the busy commerce of the world, and to learn how to provide for themselves. The feathered inhabitants of the woods and groves give up every pleasure to that of rearing their little brood; but, as soon as they have acquired a proper degree of maturity, they then drive them from their nests, to form new connections, and to shift for themselves. Man, more helpless than birds, requires the assistance of the parental hand, for some years, to rear and cherish him; nor do their cares and anxieties for him cease till life is no more.

Though Ernestus loved his parents with all the affections of a dutiful child, yet he could not help rejoicing at the idea of embarking in the bustle of the world, and making a figure as a man. On the other hand, Fragilis could not prevail on himself to quit the apron-string of his mother, and engage in the rude clamour of a commercial life, in which so much attention, thought, and industry, are required. Neither could his parents part with their darling, whose constitution they had spoiled, and rendered unfit for business. Ernestus, in a short time after, by his own desire, was placed as a clerk in a merchant's house in London; while Fragilis continued with his parents, to squander away his time in destructive scenes of indolence and luxury.

Five years had glided away as it were imperceptibly, when Ernestus found himself disengaged from the ties of his clerkship. His person was by this time arrived at the state of manhood, his figure was graceful and genteel, and his mind was improved from the polite companies he had engaged in at his leisure hours. As business had ever been the first object of his attention, and as he had thereby made himself of no small consequence to his late master, the latter, to connect him more closely with his interests, offered Ernestus his daughter in marriage, and a considerable share in the trade of the house. Such a flattering offer could not admit of a moment's hesitation, especially as a secret passion had long mutually glowed in the bosom of each party. They were married, and they were happy.

Soon after this period, a most dreadful inundation happened on the sea-coast, on the very spot where the houses and lands of the parents of Ernestus and Fragilis were situated. Dreadful indeed it was, for it not only washed down their houses, but drowned some hundreds of cattle, and left that as a part of the briny ocean, which, but a few hours before, was beautiful meadows and gardens, adorned with every thing pleasing to regale the appetite, or please the eye.

Deplorable indeed was now the situation of those two families: their houses washed away, their cattle destroyed, and all their fruitful lands, on the produce of which their fortunes depended, were irrecoverably lost, and become of no value. Surely, to support such a situation with any tolerable degree of tranquility of mind, requires more courage and philosophy than generally fall to the lot of imperfect mortals!

After the first transports of terror and affright were a little abated, and calm reason and reflection succeeded the sad emotions of horror and despair, the old Ernestus thus addressed the fair partner of his misfortunes: —

"My dearest Emelia," for that was the name of his amiable lady, "in the midst of this terrible misfortune, we have the happiness to reflect, that what has befallen us is not derived from any fault of our own, but by the pleasure of Him who gave us every thing, and who has a just right to take what he pleases from us. Though he has taken from us our house and lands, he has still graciously left us our beloved son, who will not fail to console us in our misery, and who will perhaps help us in our distresses. Though we are deprived of our fortune, we have the pleasing consolation to reflect, that, by bringing him up in the school of Prudence and Industry, we have secured him from sinking under the wreck of our present calamity. Nothing can more contribute to soften the calamities of good parents, than to reflect that their children are not exposed to partake of their miseries."

The heart of this amiable spouse was, for some time, too full of grief for the misfortune she felt, to give any immediate reply: but, at last, recovering her usual spirits and sensibility, she withdrew her head from the bosom of her generous husband, on which it had been for some time tenderly reclined.

"Ah! my beloved partner of happiness and misery," said she, "why am I thus sorrowful and wretched? why do I thus fly in the face of Providence, for depriving us only of the baubles of life? Have I not still left an amiable and tender husband, and a dutiful and beloved son. These are treasures which I still possess – treasures infinitely beyond those I have lost – treasures that will support me in the stormy hour of adversity, and enable me to make a mockery and derision of every thing that the cruel hand of fabled Fortune can inflict."

She then caught her husband in her arms, and there fainted, rather through excess of joy than grief. Virtuous minds, however they may be distressed for a moment, by unforeseen accidents, soon find an inexpressible consolation in the integrity of their hearts.

Such was the character of Ernestus and his lady, that this dreadful calamity was no sooner known, than all the neighbouring gentry flocked round them, and seemed to contend with each other for the honour of assisting such distinguished characters. What is the empty parade of riches acquired by fraud, rapine, and plunder, when compared to the heartfelt satisfaction which virtue in distress must have here felt?

It may reasonably be supposed, that it was not long before this dreadful calamity of these amiable parents reached the ears of young Ernestus. A youth, brought up in the wilds of modern extravagance, would have exclaimed, perhaps in bitter terms, on being thus suddenly deprived of a fine patrimonial estate; he would, probably, have even arraigned the severe hand of Providence, and have dared to utter impieties against his omnipotent Maker!

Such was not the conduct of Ernestus. His parents had taken care to give him, not a flighty and frothy, but a rational and manly education, the foundation of which was honour, probity, and virtue; not folly, luxury, and vanity. It is a just proverb, that the first seasoning sticks longest by the vessel, and that those who have been accustomed, in their early days, to tread the paths of Prudence, will seldom, when they grow up, run into those of Folly.

Ernestus received the news of this terrible calamity, just as he and his lady returned from a party of pleasure. It is too often found, that after pleasure comes pain, and never was it more truly verified than in this instance; with this exception, that here the one was not the consequence of the other.

He tenderly embraced his lady, took leave of her for the present, and instantly set out for the fatal scene of ruin, to assist, console, and comfort, his unfortunate parents. What passed between them in the first moments of their meeting, afforded such a scene of tenderness and affection, as exceeds the possibility of description to reach: the feelings of the heart, in such a situation, exceed every thing the most lively imagination can fabricate.

Ernestus found his dear parents had taken shelter in the house of an old gentleman, who lived in the neighbourhood, who was immensely rich, and had neither children nor relations living. Here they enjoyed all the consolation and comfort their generous hearts could wish for; nor was the young Ernestus suffered to contribute his mite to their aid. "It is enough," said the old gentleman of the house, "that you have lost your patrimony; but I have riches sufficient, and have no near relation to succeed me. How can I dispose of it better than in cherishing the distressed, and in taking virtue by the hand to raise it above the wrecks of fortune?"

In a little time after, this worthy old gentleman paid the debt of nature, and left the bulk of his fortune to the parents of Ernestus; who, by this act of generosity, were become as opulent as ever, and consequently resumed their former figure in the world. The fortune of young Ernestus was every day increasing, from his great success in commerce, till he at length found himself master of a sufficient independency, when he quitted trade; and he and his lady retired to the country, where they passed their days under the same roof with their parents, happy in themselves, and diffusing happiness to all who lived within the circle of their knowledge.

We could wish here to drop the curtain, and leave the mind filled with those pleasing ideas, which the good fortune of the family of Ernestus must raise in the bosoms of the generous and humane – but we must return to the unhappy family of Fragilis.

Young Fragilis, owing to the mistaken manner in which he was brought up, was feeble and enervated at that age, in which youths generally grow strong and robust. Hence it happened, from the sudden inundation of the waters, that it was with great difficulty he could save his life. However, though he escaped the fury of the unrelenting waves, he caught such a cold, that a fever ensued, which, heightened by the fright he had received, proved too much for his weakly constitution to support, and put a period to his existence in a few days.

Trying indeed was the situation of Mr. Fragilis and his lady: in one day, deprived of all their wealth and possessions, and in a few days afterwards of their only son, whom they loved to excess, whom they ruined by false indulgences, and by whom they were reproached for their mistaken conduct in his dying moments. To be reproached by the only object they loved in this world, as being in some distant degree instrumental to his death, was too cutting a consideration for them to bear. They felt the wound effectually, it festered in their hearts, and they soon followed their son to his untimely tomb.

Reflect, ye too tender and indulgent parents, how dangerous it is to rear your children in the lap of Luxury and Indolence, since you thereby make them unfit members of the community, frequently a heavy load to themselves, and always a source of anxiety and fear to their mistaken parents. Without health, strength, and vigour, life is but a burthen; why should then so many parents take such trouble to deprive their children of the three principal blessings of this life, which, when once lost, are never known to return?

Juvenile Tyranny conquered

MR. Wilson, his lady, and little family, left the noise and bustle of the city, to pass the more agreeable half of the year amidst the delights of rural scenes and prospects. Mr. Wilson, to a refined education, had added much knowledge and experience in the commerce of the polite world. His lady, though an amiable and sensible woman, had, in the education of her children, given rather too much into the fashionable errors of the metropolis.

As soon as they were properly settled in their rural retirement, Mr. Wilson thus addressed his lady: "I flatter myself, my dear, that you will now leave me at liberty to manage our two children, in the manner that shall appear to me most proper; for I wish to eradicate those seeds of pride, obstinacy, and perversity, which the little circle of their acquaintance in London has sown in their minds, and to which the corrupted manners of the city have given deep root."

Mrs. Wilson seemed a little angry at this introduction, and wished to know what were those defects he imagined to have discovered in the minds of her two little ones: she entreated him not to conceal them from her, as it was equally her duty to assist in every thing where the happiness of their children was concerned.

"I do not wish, my dear," replied Mr. Wilson, "to complain of your conduct as a wife; but I think you are too fond and indulgent as a mother, you encourage them too much in the pride of dress, and fill their minds with the love of those things, which, so far from being of any use to them, may in time be productive of the worst of evils. Children, who are taught to value themselves only on their dress, or in proportion as they expect a superiority of fortune to others, will with difficulty consent to be governed by the rigid rules of prudence, or submit with cheerfulness to those laborious studies, from which alone true greatness is derived."

Mrs. Wilson laughed at the oddities of her husband, as she called them, and represented him as one born in the beginning of the last century. She considered it as an indispensable duty to educate her children in conformity to the manners of the times, and the modes of education almost universally adopted in the fashionable world.

Mr. Wilson, however, was of a very different opinion, and considered nothing so dangerous to the morals of his children, as to suffer them to be brought up in the modern school of extravagance and pride. He owned it was a privilege which most wives claimed, of being permitted to spoil their daughters in their own way; and if, out of complaisance, he gave up that point, he hoped he should be permitted to educate his son as he thought proper.

The first thing he should endeavour to break him of, he said, should be his pride, which induced him to despise every one who was not dressed like himself, or whom he otherwise thought beneath him. Mr. Wilson considered it as very pernicious, to suffer children to value themselves merely on account of their dress or fortune.

Mrs. Wilson, however, could not be convinced of the truth of these arguments. "I suppose," said she, "you would have him brought up like a ploughman, or as if he were born to nothing greater than little Jackson, the son of the gardener, who lives at the bottom of your grounds."

The conversation now began to grow serious, and the gentleman could not help saying, he most heartily wished that his son, born as he was to an ample fortune, possessed all the good qualities which were conspicuous in that *poor* boy. He very judiciously observed, that what the world generally calls a *polite* education, often falls short of producing those happy effects, which Nature sometimes bestows on uncultivated minds. Children of humble birth are often despised, merely on account of their poverty, without considering, whether Nature may not have done more for them than for the children of Fortune. "Happy should I think myself," said he, "if my son and heir possessed half the civility and condescension which are so much taken notice of and admired in that little fellow you seem inconsiderately to despise."

Mrs. Wilson, though a little disconcerted by these observations, seemed by no means inclined to give up the argument. "Did I not know otherwise," said the lady, "I should suspect you of being prejudiced against every thing the world considers as polite, in favour of poverty and rusticity. With all your boasted qualifications of this little Jackson, what would you say, should I clearly prove to you, that he possesses secret faults, such as may be hurtful to your son; that he is guilty of robbing yours and every orchard in the neighbourhood? that he gluttonizes on the fruits of his robberies in private? and that, though he is so very complaisant with the children of Fortune in the presence of their parents, he is a tyrant over the little ones in private?"

Mr. Wilson observed, that if his lady could prove little Jackson to be guilty of one half of the crimes she had laid to his charge, he would instantly order, that he should never more be suffered to enter his house.

The lady then proposed to make a fair and candid experiment of this matter. "I will," said she, "order a little feast for our son and daughter, and young Jackson shall be one of the party. We will find an opportunity to conceal ourselves, when we shall hear every thing that passes. From thence we shall have an opportunity of judging whether you or I be right."

The proposal was so just and reasonable, that both parties instantly agreed to it. Some fruit and other things were immediately ordered to be brought into the parlour, and Miss and Master Wilson were sent for, as well as little Jackson. As soon as the latter entered, the little lady and her brother complained of the strong smell of dung he brought with him; and, though he was very clean and decent, they were afraid of his coming too near them, lest he should spoil their fine clothes.

Though Mr. Wilson did not approve of this kind of behaviour in his children, he took no notice of it at present, but desired that they would be all happy together, while he and his lady took a walk into the garden. They then left the room, but softly entered it at another door, before which a screen was designedly placed, by which means they plainly overheard every thing that passed among the young folks.

The first thing they heard, was their little daughter calling to her brother to come and sit by her; at the same time telling young Jackson he must stand, and think himself happy that he was, at any rate, permitted to remain in their company. The little fellow seemed no ways displeased at this treatment, but told them he was not at all tired, and was very happy to be with them in any situation.

Master Wilson and his sister then divided the fruit into three parcels, as though they intended one of them for young Jackson; but, as soon as they had eat up their own shares, they began upon that intended for him, and eat it all up without giving him a taste, and even made ridicule of him all the time. They told him they would give him the parings of the apples, which were as much as such a poor creature as he could expect, and that he ought to think himself happy he could be indulged with them.

Young Jackson told them he was not hungry, and he hoped they would not deny themselves any thing on his account. They promised him they would not, and then set up a loud laugh; all which Jackson bore without uttering the least word of complaint.

At last, Miss Wilson and her brother having eaten up all the fruit, without permitting poor Jackson to taste a bit of it, they ordered him to go into the garden, and steal them some apples, promising, if he behaved well, to give him one for his obedience.

"I cannot think of doing any such thing," replied Jackson. "You indeed forced me twice to do so, and then went and told the gardener that I stole them for myself, though you very well know I did not eat a morsel of them."

"Poor thing!" said the young gentlefolks in derision, "and did they serve you so? Well, we insist on your going and doing the same now, or, look you, that cane in the corner shall be laid across your shoulders. We will teach you, that it is the duty of you beggars to obey us gentlefolks."

Jackson still persisting in his refusal to be again guilty of any thing of the kind, Master Wilson took up the cane, and gave poor Jackson two or three blows with it, as hard as he could, while Miss Wilson stood looking on, encouraging her brother, telling Jackson at the same time, that if he

complained of being beaten to their papa, they would again accuse him of stealing fruit, and that their words would be sooner believed than his.

Poor Jackson replied, that he would rather be beaten all day than do so dishonest a thing as they desired him. He observed to them, that this was not the first by many times that he had been beaten by them unjustly and wantonly, and he did not suppose this would be the last. However, he said he should put up with it, without complaining to any one.

Mr. Wilson and his lady could not patiently hear any more, but instantly came from behind the screen. – "Sweet children, indeed!" said Mrs. Wilson. "We have, behind that screen, unseen by you, heard all you have been saying, and in what manner you have treated that poor little fellow!" Little Jackson was all in a tremble, and told her, that they were only at play, and meant no harm. But this would not satisfy the lady, who was now convinced of the bad conduct of her son and daughter.

"You wicked children," said she to them, with a resolute look and stern voice, "you have accused this innocent child of gluttony and theft, while you only are the authors of those abominable crimes. You have not scrupled to tell me the grossest falsehood, such as God will one day call you to account for, and severely punish you in the next world, where it will not be in my power to intercede for you. This moment ask pardon of that little boy, whom you have so unjustly treated, and sincerely ask pardon of God, for the wickedness you have been guilty of!"

Her children were so overcome with shame, confusion, and sorrow, that they both fell down at their mother's feet, and with tears of sincerity most humbly begged pardon of God and her, promising never to be again guilty of such crimes. Little Jackson ran to them, and endeavoured to lift them up, while the tears stole down his cheeks in abundance. "Do not be angry with them, madam," said he to the lady, "for we were only in play; and I am sorry I am come here to breed so much uneasiness. But, if you are angry with them, let me humbly beg of you to forgive them."

Mr. Wilson also interfered, and promised, if their mamma would forgive them this time, to be bound for their better conduct in future. The lady ordered them instantly to rise, to kiss little Jackson, and beg his pardon. This they did in so affecting a manner, as gave the most pleasing satisfaction to both their parents, who were now fully persuaded, that reason and tenderness will do more with children than the iron hand of correction.

The Book of Nature

MY dear papa, said young Theophilus to his father, I cannot help pitying those poor little boys, whose parents are not in a condition to purchase them such a nice gilded library, as that with which you have supplied me from my good friend's at the corner of St. Paul's Church-yard. Surely such unhappy boys must be very ignorant all their lives; for what can they learn without books?

I agree with you, replied his father, that you are happy in having so large a collection of books, and I am no less happy in seeing you make so good a use of them. – There is, however, my dear child, another book, called *The Book of Nature*, , which is constantly open to the inspection of every one, and intelligible even to those of the tenderest years. To study that book, nothing more is required, than to be attentive to the surrounding objects which Nature presents to our view, to contemplate them carefully, and to explore and admire their beauties; but without attempting to search into their hidden causes, which youths must not think of, till age and experience shall enable them to dive into physical causes.

I say, my dear Theophilus, that even children are capable of studying this science; for you have eyes to see, and curiosity sufficient to induce you to ask questions, and it is natural for human nature to wish to acquire knowledge.

This study, if it may be so called, so far from being laborious or tiresome, affords nothing but pleasure and delight. It is a pleasing recreation, and a delightful amusement.

It is inconceivable how many things children would learn, were we but careful to improve all the opportunities with which they themselves supply us. A garden, the fields, a palace, are each a book open to their view, in which they must be accustomed to read, and to reflect thereon. Nothing is more common among us than the use of bread and linen; and yet how few children are taught to know the preparation of either! through how many shapes and hands wheat and hemp must pass before they are made into bread and linen!

A few examples will serve to show, how far we ought to study nature in every thing that presents itself to our view, and therein trace out the handy-works of the great Creator.

The first preacher that proclaimed the glory of the supreme God was the sky, where the sun, moon, and stars shine with such amazing splendour; and that book, written in characters of light, is sufficient to render all inexcusable who do not read and contemplate it. The Divine Wisdom is not less admirable in its more humble productions of what the earth brings forth, and these we can survey with more ease, since the eye is not dazzled by them.

Let us begin with plants. What appears to us mean and despicable, often affords wherewith to astonish the sublimest minds. Not a single leaf is neglected by Nature; order and symmetry are obvious in every part of it, and yet with so great a variety of pinking ornaments and beauties, that none of them are exactly like the others.

What is not discoverable by the help of microscopes in the smallest seeds! and with what unaccountable virtues and efficacies has it not pleased God to endow them! Nothing can more demand our admiration, than the choice which our great Creator has made of the general colour that beautifies all plants. Had he dyed the fields in white or scarlet, we should not have been able to bear either the brightness or the harshness of them. If he had darkened them with more dusky colours, we should have taken little delight in so sad and melancholy a prospect.

A pleasant verdure keeps a medium between these two extremes, and it has such an affinity with the frame of the eye, that it is diverted, not strained by it, and sustained and nourished, rather than wasted. What we considered at first but as one colour, is found to afford an astonishing diversity of shades: it is green every where, but it is in no two instances the same. Not one plant is coloured like another, and that surprising variety, which no art can imitate, is again diversified in each plant, which is, in its origin, its progress, and maturity, of a different sort of green.

Should my fancy waft me into some enamelled meadow, or into some garden in high cultivation, what an enamel, what variety of colours, what richness, are there conspicuous! What harmony, what sweetness in their mixture, and the shadowings that temper them! What a picture, and by what a master! But let us turn aside from this general view, to the contemplation of some particular flower, and pick up at random the first that offers to our hand, without troubling ourselves with the choice.

It is just blown, and has still all its freshness and brightness. Can the art of man produce any thing similar to this? No silk can be so soft, so thin, and of so fine a texture. Even Solomon's purple, when contrasted with the flowers of the fields, is coarse beyond comparison.

From the beauties of the meadows and gardens, which we have just been surveying, let us take a view of the fruitful orchard, filled with all sorts of fruits, which succeed each other, according to the varying seasons.

View one of those trees bowing its branches down to the ground, and bent under the weight of its excellent fruit, whose colour and smell declare the taste. The quantity, as well as the quality, is astonishing. Methinks that tree says to me, by the glory it displays to my eyes, "Learn of me what is the goodness and magnificence of that God, who has made me for you. It is neither for him, nor for myself that I am so rich: he has need of nothing, and I cannot use what he has given me. Bless him, and unload me. Give him thanks; and since he has made me the instrument of your delight, be you that of my gratitude."

The same invitations catch me on all sides, and, as I walk on, I discover new subjects of praise and adoration. Here the fruit is concealed within the shell; there the fruit is without, and the kernel within: the delicate pulp without shines in the most brilliant colours. This fruit sprung out of a blossom, as almost all do; but this other, so delicious, was not preceded by the blossom, and it shoots out of the very bark of the fig-tree. The one begins the summer, the other finishes it. If this be not soon gathered, it will fall down and wither; if you do not wait for that, it will not be properly ripened. This keeps long, that decays swiftly; the one refreshes, the other nourishes.

Among the fruit-trees, some bear fruit in two seasons of the year, and others unite together spring, summer, and autumn, bearing at the same time the blossom and green and ripe fruit; to convince us of the sovereign liberality of the Creator, who, in diversifying the laws of nature, shows that he is the master of it, and can at all times, and with all things, do equally what he pleases.

It is observable, that weak trees, or those of an indifferent pith, are those that bear the most exquisite fruits; and the higher they grow, the less rich is their productions. Other trees, which bear nothing but leaves, or bitter and very small fruit, are nevertheless useful for the important purposes of building and navigation.

If we had not seen trees of the height and bigness of those that are in forests, we could not believe that some drops of rain falling from heaven were capable to nourish them; for they stand in need of moisture not only in great plenty, but also such as is full of spirits and salts of all kinds, to give the root, the trunk, and branches, the strength and vigour we admire in them. It is even remarkable, that the more neglected these trees are, the handsomer they grow; and that if men applied themselves to cultivate them, as they do the small trees of their gardens, they would do them more harm than service. You, therefore, O Author of all things! thus establish this indisputable proof, that it is you alone who have made them; and you teach man to know, that his cares and industry are useless to you. If indeed you require his attention to some shrubs, it is but to employ him, and warn him of his own weakness, in trusting weak things only to his care.

Let us now turn to the scaly inhabitants of the water, and what a number and variety of fishes are there formed!

At the first sight of these creatures they appear only to have a head and tail, having neither feet nor arms. Even their head has no free motion; and were I to attend their figure only, I should think them deprived of every thing necessary for the preservation of their lives. But, few as their exterior

organs are, they are more nimble, swift, artful, and cunning, than if they had many hands and feet; and the use they make of their tail and fins shoot them forward like arrows, and seem to make them fly.

How comes it to pass, that in the midst of waters, so much impregnated with salt that I cannot bear a drop of them in my mouth, fishes live and sport, and enjoy health and strength? How, in the midst of salt do they preserve a flesh that has not the least taste of it?

It is wonderful when we reflect, how the best of the scaly tribe, and those most fit for the use of man, swarm upon our shores, and offer themselves, as it were, to our service; while many others, of less value to him, keep at a greater distance, and sport in the deep waters of the ocean.

Some there are that keep in their hiding places unknown to men, whilst they are propagating and growing to a certain size, such as salmon, mackerel, cod, and many others. They come in shoals, at an appointed time, to invite the fishermen, and throw themselves, as it were, of their own accord, into their nets and snares.

We see several sorts of these scaly animals, and those of the best kind get into the mouths of rivers, and come up to their fountain head, to communicate the benefits of the sea to those who are distant from it. The hand that directs them, with so much care and bounty for man, is at all times, and every where to be seen; but the ingratitude of man, and the capricious wanderings of his heart, often make him forgetful of the greatest bounties.

From the scaly inhabitants of the water, let us turn our attention to the feathered animals of the air. In several dumb creatures we see an imitation of reason which is truly astonishing; but it nowhere appears in a stronger degree, than in the industry and sagacity of birds in making their nests.

In the first place, what master has taught them that they had need of any? Who has taken care to forewarn them to get them ready in time, and not to be prevented by necessity? Who has told them how they must be contrived? What mathematician has given them such regular plans for that purpose? What architect has directed them to chuse a firm place, and to build upon a solid foundation? What tender mother has advised them to line the bottom of them with materials so soft and nice as down and cotton? and when these are wanting, who suggested to them that ingenious charity, which urges them to pluck from their breast with their bill, as much down as is requisite to prepare a convenient cradle for their young ones?

In the second place, what wisdom has traced out to each kind a particular way of making their nest, where the same precautions are kept, but in a thousand different ways? Who has commanded the swallow, the most industrious of all birds, to come near man, and chuse his house to build her habitation, immediately in his view, without fearing to have him for a witness, but on the contrary, seeming to invite him to survey her works? She does not imitate other birds, who build their nests with hay and small twigs: she uses cement and mortar, and makes her whole work so solid, as not to be destroyed without some labour. Her bill is her only instrument; and she has no other means of carrying her water, than by wetting her breast while she expands her wings. It is with this dew she sprinkles the mortar, and with this only she dilutes and moistens her masonry, which she afterwards arranges and sets in order with her bill.

In the third place, who has made these little feathered animals sensible, that they are to hatch their eggs by sitting over them? that both the father and mother must not be absent at the same time from the nest; and that if one went in quest of food, the other was to wait till its partner returned? Who has taught them that knowledge of calculating time, so as to make them able to know precisely the number of days of this rigorous attendance? Who has told them how to relieve the egg of the burthen of the young one, perfectly formed therein, by first breaking the shell at the critical moment, which they never fail to perform?

Lastly, what lecturer has read lessons to birds, to teach them to take care of their young, till they have proper strength and agility to shift for themselves? Who has taught them that wonderful sagacity and patience, to keep in their mouths either food or water, without permitting them to pass into their stomachs, and there preserve them for their young ones, to whom it supplies the place of milk? Who

has made them capable of distinguishing between so many things, of which some are adapted to one kind, but are pernicious to another; and between those which are proper for the old ones, but would be hurtful to their young? We have daily opportunities of seeing the anxieties of mothers for their children, and the tenderness of nurses for the little ones committed to their charge; but it will admit of a doubt, whether we see any thing so perfect in the nursing of the human race as we see among the feathered inhabitants of the air.

It cannot be for birds alone that the Omnipotent Creator has united in their natures so many miracles, of which they are not sensible. It is obvious, that his design was to direct our attention to Him, and to make us sensible of his providence and infinite wisdom; to fill us with confidence in his goodness. Think of these things, my Theophilus, and do not fail to read the Book of Nature, from which you will learn to perceive your own insignificancy, and the omnipotency of him who made you.

The Unexpected Reformation

LITTLE Marcus was the only child of a wealthy tradesman, who had acquired an ample fortune by the sweat of his brow, and the reputable character he had invariably supported in the course of his business. He had always been an enemy to those little arts which some people put in practice to deceive those they have dealings with, being fully persuaded in his own mind, that no fortune could be so pleasing and grateful as that acquired by integrity and honour.

Being much hurried in his business, both he and his amiable spouse agreed, that it would be more prudent to send young Marcus into the country for his education, where he would not be likely to receive those pernicious examples he would every day see before him in the metropolis.

After a very nice enquiry, they were satisfied with the account they received of an academy at the distance of about a hundred miles from London, for the good management of which they were referred to several young gentlemen, who had there received their education, and were universally admired for their learning and prudence.

The master of the academy considered all his pupils as his children; he was equally attentive to instruct them in the different branches of science, and to admonish them against those errors which young people are naturally prone to run into. He endeavoured to excite their industry by proper encouragement, and, by example, to implant in their minds the seeds of honour and probity. He had also taken the most prudent precautions in the choice of those who were to assist him in so arduous an undertaking.

From so promising a situation, every parent would naturally expect the most happy consequences; but their son Marcus, whether from too tender a treatment at home, or not having been properly attended to, had an unhappy turn of mind, and an utter aversion to every kind of study. His thoughts were perpetually wandering after childish pastimes, so that his masters could make him comprehend nothing of the rudiments of science. The same marks of indolence appeared in the care of his person; for every part of his dress was generally in disorder; and though he was well made and handsome, yet his slovenly appearance made him disgusting to every one.

Let me advise my young readers to be particularly attentive, next to their studies, to the neatness of their persons; for no character is more prejudicial to a youth than that of a sloven. But do not let them mistake me, and suppose that I mean, by neatness in their dress, foppish and ridiculous apparel.

It may easily be supposed, that these defects in his conduct rendered him contemptible in the eyes of those children who were at first much behind him, but soon overtook him, to his inevitable disgrace. His master was so much ashamed of him, as well on account of his ignorance as slovenliness, that whenever any visitors came to the school, poor Marcus was sent out of the way, lest such a figure as he was might bring disgrace on the academy.

It might reasonably be expected, that so many humiliating circumstances would have made some impression on his mind; but he continued the same course of inconsistency, indolence, and dissipation; nor did there appear the least dawn of hope, that he would ever return into the paths of industry and prudence.

His master was very uneasy on his account, and knew not how to act: to keep him at his school, he considered as a robbery on his parents, and to send him home as a dunce and a blockhead would be a cutting consideration to his father and mother. He would sometimes say to his unworthy pupil, "Marcus, what will your father and mother think of me, when I shall send you home to them, so little improved in learning and knowledge?" It was, however, in vain to talk to him; for he seldom made any answer, but generally burst into tears.

Two years had glided away in this miserable manner, without his having made the least progress in learning, and without showing the least inclination for study. One evening, however, just as he

was going to bed, he received a letter sealed with black wax, which he opened with some degree of indifference, and then read as follows:

"MY DEAR MARCUS,

"This morning has deprived me of the most affectionate husband, and you of the most tender parent. Alas, he is gone, to return no more! If there be any thing that can enable me to support this dreadful calamity, it is only in what I receive from the recollection, that I have left in my son the dear image of his father. It is from you only therefore I can look for comfort; and I am willing to flatter myself, that I shall receive as much pleasure from your conduct as I do from my tender affection for you. Should I find myself disappointed in my hopes, should you be only like your father in person, and not resemble him in his industry, integrity, and virtue, sorrow and despair will put a period to my miserable life. By the person who brings you this letter, I have sent you a miniature picture of your father. Wear it constantly at your bosom, and frequently look at it, that it may bring to your remembrance, and induce you to imitate, all the purest virtues and uncommon endowments of the dear original. I shall leave you in your present situation one year longer, by which time I hope you will be complete in your education. In the mean time, do not let this slip from your memory, that my happiness or misery depends on your conduct, industry, and attention to your studies. That God may bless you, and give you patience cheerfully to tread the rocky paths of science, is my sincere wish."

The errors of Marcus were the consequence of bad habits and customs he had imbibed in his infancy, and not from any natural depravity of the heart. He had no sooner read this letter than he found every sentiment of virtue awakening in his bosom. He burst into a flood of tears, and frequently interrupted by sighs, exclaimed, "O my dear father! my dear father! have I then lost you for ever?" He earnestly gazed on the miniature picture of his parent, pressed it to his bosom, while he, in faltering accents, uttered these words: – "Thou dear author of my existence, how unworthy am I to be called your son! How shamefully have I abused your tenderness, in idling that time away for which you have paid so dearly! But let me hope that reformation will not come too late."

He passed that night in sorrow and contrition, he bedewed his pillow with tears, and sleep was a stranger to his troubled mind. If he happened but to slumber, he suddenly started, imagining he saw the image of his deceased father standing before him in the dreadful garb of death, and thus reproaching him: "Ungenerous youth! is this the manner in which you ought to return my past cares and attention to your interest? – Thou idle sloven, thou ungenerous son! awaken from your state of indolence, and properly improve the little time you have left for the pursuit of science, which you have hitherto so shamefully neglected; and do not, by an unpardonable inattention to yourself, shorten the few remaining days of your dear mother's life!"

I hope my youthful readers are well convinced that there are no such things as ghosts or apparitions, and that they are nothing more than the effects of a troubled imagination. Such was the case with Marcus, who fancied he saw his father on the one hand, reproaching him for what was past, and his dear mother on the other, exhorting him to better conduct in future. "What a wretch I am," said he to himself, "to act in this manner! When my time for leaving this academy shall arrive, and I must appear before my mother to give proofs of my literary knowledge, what must be the pangs of her maternal heart, when she shall find that the child, on whom she had placed all the prospects of her future felicity, is an ungrateful, ignorant, and unworthy wretch? She will call on the friendly hand of Death to take her from such an insupportable scene!"

Poor Marcus thus lay rolling on the thorny bed of trouble and anxiety, till, at last, totally overcome by grief and despair, he fell asleep. As soon as he awoke in the morning, on his bended knees he implored the assistance of the Almighty in the reformation he intended to make in his

conduct. He instantly hastened to his master's chamber, and there threw himself on his knees before him: "Behold, sir," said he, "prostrate before you, an ungrateful wretch, who has hitherto treated, with the most shameful indifference, all the wise lessons you would have bestowed on him. Yet, unworthy as I may be of your future instructions, let me implore you, for the sake of my dear mother, whose life I fear I shall shorten by my unworthy conduct, to extend your bounty to me once more, and I will endeavour to convince you, by my future conduct, how much ashamed I am of what is past."

His master raised him up, took him in his arms, and tenderly embracing him, they shed tears together. "My dear Marcus," said his master to him, "to be sensible of your errors is half way to reformation. You have, it is true, squandered away, in the pursuit of trifles, two years that ought to have been employed in the acquisition of useful science. You have still one year left, and, as you appear to stand self-convicted of the imprudence of your past conduct, I would not wish to drive you to despair; but to encourage you by saying, that, by proper application, great things may be done, even in the remaining year. Begin this moment, lose no more time, and may God give you resolution to proceed suitably to my wishes, and your own interest."

Marcus seized the hand of his master, tenderly kissed it, and then retired, being totally unable to utter a single word. He instantly ran to his chamber, there eased his heart in a flood of tears, and then set about the necessary business. He applied himself so closely to his books, and made therein so rapid a progress, as astonished his master and teachers. His companions, who had hitherto treated him with the utmost contempt, began to love and revere him. Marcus, thus encouraged by the different treatment he now received, pursued his studies with the utmost attention and alacrity. He was no longer despised for his wickedness and perversity, but admired and caressed for the affability and goodness of his temper. Formerly no severities or entreaties could make him attend to his studies; but they were now forced to use some degree of violence to make him partake of necessary recreations.

In this manner his last twelvemonth passed on, and he viewed with regret the approach of that time when he was to leave school, and engage in pursuits of a different nature. He was hereafter to study men, and endeavour to acquire a knowledge of the latent motions of the human heart, perhaps the most difficult study in the commerce of this world.

The time allowed him being expired, his mother ordered him up to London. By the end of the year, the change he had made in his conduct so operated in his favour, that his departure was regretted by all his school companions; and, when he took his leave, sorrow visibly appeared in the countenance of every one. It was a pleasing reflection to his master, that a youth he had given up as lost, should on a sudden reform, and, in the circle of one year, make as great a progress in the sciences as the generality of youths do in three.

The journey afforded Marcus the most pleasing reflections; for he had now nothing to apprehend from the interrogatories of his mother, with respect to his education; and though he sincerely lamented the two years he had lost, yet he could not but feel the effects of the happy employment of the third.

His schoolmaster had before acquainted his mother of the happy reformation in her son, and the great improvement he had made since the death of his father. These considerations, added to the natural feelings of a mother, made their meeting a scene of the most tender delights and heartfelt transports.

Marcus lost only a week in paying visits to his relations and friends, and then applied himself to his father's business with unremitted assiduity and the most flattering success. In a few years he took an amiable partner for life, with whom he lived happy and contented. He was blessed with dutiful children, to whom he would frequently give this lesson: "My dear children, do not forget, that time once lost is not to be recalled; and that those hours you trifle away in your early years, you will severely lament the loss of when you shall have reached the age of maturity. An old age of ignorance is despicable indeed; for he who has neglected properly to cultivate his mind in his youth, will embitter the evening of his life with self-accusations and reproaches. Happy the youth

who, having toiled hard during spring in the garden of science, sits down in the autumn at leisure to regale on the fruits of his labour!"

The Recompence of Virtue

THE northern confines of France boast of a small spot of ground, where virtue renders law unnecessary, and procures the inhabitants a state of peace as pure and unsullied as the air they breathe. In process of time, this territory fell into the hands of a widow, who merited a much more valuable patrimony.

Madam Clarisse, for that was the lady's name, joined benevolence of heart to a cultivated mind and an elevated genius. The place afforded neither physician nor apothecary; but Madam Clarisse supplied the want of them by her own knowledge of the medical qualities of different roots and plants. Her conduct evidently proved how much good a generous heart is capable of doing, even where Fortune has not been lavish of her smiles.

This lady had a servant maid, whose name was Maria, and who had seen twelve revolving suns in her service. Her attachment to her mistress, her disinterested behaviour, affability, and attention, procured her the just esteem of all who lived in the neighbourhood. It was a happiness for this girl, that she had all her life been brought up on this spot of innocence, and had not been exposed to the corrupting and pestiferous air of the metropolis.

Madam Clarisse had the highest opinion of the good qualities of Maria, and had entertained a strong affection for her. Maria, who in her turn tenderly loved her mistress, and was a little older than her, always wished that her good lady might be the longer survivor; but Providence had ordered it otherwise. Madam Clarisse was attacked with a disorder, which, on its first appearance, was supposed to be of no consequence; but, by the improper treatment of her physicians, who mistook her disorder, it at last proved fatal.

The visible approach of death did not disturb the peace and tranquility of the mind of this virtuous lady: her bosom was fortified with religious consolations; her heart had never been the receptacle of evil; and, while every one around her was bewailing her approaching dissolution, she alone seemed peaceful and tranquil. The salutary regimen she exactly followed, protracted her death for a little while, and her courage gave her strength. She was not confined to her bed, but walked about, and had the village girls around her, whom she instructed in the principles of religion and virtue.

One delightful morning, in the blooming month of May, she rose very early, and took a walk in the fields, accompanied by Maria, who never forsook her. She reached the summit of a verdant hill, from whence the eye wandered over the most delightful prospects. She sat down on the enamelled turf, and Maria by her side.

"What a delightful view!" said she. "See, Maria, that verdant meadow, over which we have so frequently walked! It is not long since, if you remember, that we there met the good old Genevive, who bent beneath the load on her back, while she carried in her hand a basket full of apples: you insisted on taking the load from her, and, in spite of all her resistance, I seized her basket of apples. Do you not remember what joy and pleasure every step afforded us, how grateful the good creature seemed, and what a hearty breakfast we ate in her cottage?"

"Look a little to the right, and there you see the willow-walk by the lake, in which, when we were young, we used so frequently to angle. How often have we there made ozier baskets, and then filled them with cowslips and violets! You recollect that cottage in front of us, the peaceful habitation of Myrtila, for whom you in two days made up the wedding clothes I gave her. To the left, see the entrance of the wood, where I used every holiday to keep my evening school in the summer, for the instruction of the peasants' children. How happily those moments glided away, while surrounded by my youthful neighbours! How many sweet and delightful tales has the lovely Priscilla there told, and how many enchanting songs did the sweet Miranda there warble forth, while the feathered songsters seemed to stop their own notes to listen to her divine warblings! Methinks every thing around me

brings back something pleasing to my reflection, and gives an inexpressible delight to my present sensations!

"You are sensible, Maria, that there is a school in this village kept by a poor old woman. Many who attend her school can pay for instruction without any inconvenience, while there are others, who, for want of money, are obliged to keep their children at home in ignorance. Had I any hopes of living a few years longer, I should be much pleased with the idea, that I should by that time have saved a hundred crowns, which would have been sufficient to provide education for the children of those who cannot afford to pay for it; but, since it is the will of God that such shall not be the case, I submit without repining."

Here Maria turned her head aside, in order to conceal from her lady the tender tear that stole down her cheeks. Madam Clarisse perceiving the situation of her amiable servant, "My dear Maria," said she, "why do you weep? We shall again meet each other to part no more, and for the present let my serenity console you. I have not a doubt but you will always have a sure asylum in my house long after I shall have left it. Had it pleased God, I should have been happy to have it in my power to make some provision for you; but I cannot; and it is for me to submit."

Lifting up her hands, she exclaimed, "Accept, O gracious God! my most grateful acknowledgments for having placed me in a situation far from the temptations and vanities of this world. A stranger to headstrong passions and delusive pleasures, I have passed my tranquil life on this retired spot of innocence, secure from the tumultuous pursuits of pride and vanity, and a perfect stranger to the gnawing pangs of jealousy or envy. Innocence and peace, and all the tender feelings of friendship and humanity, have been my constant companions. In that critical and awful moment, when the remembrance of past actions is not to be supported by the wicked, my mind enjoys inexpressible serenity and composure."

Madam Clarisse here stopped short, and her head sunk on the bosom of Maria; who, looking on the face of her amiable mistress, found it turned pale, and her eyes closed-never more to be opened! – Thus cracked the cordage of a virtuous heart; – good night, thou amiable woman; may choirs of angels sing you to your rest!

Maria was undoubtedly much afflicted at the death of her lady, and her sorrow on that account, added to the fatigues she had undergone, threw her into a fever, from which her recovery was for a long time doubtful. Nature, however, at last conquered her disorder, when she determined to quit that place, as soon as her strength would permit her. When she found herself capable of pursuing the journey, she packed up the little matter she had, and first repaired to the church-yard where her amiable lady lay buried. Having there paid the tribute of a tear upon her grave, she instantly set out for Charleville, her native place, sincerely regretted by the minister and people, who knew not what was become of her.

Two years had elapsed, and no news was heard of Maria, though every possible enquiry was made in the neighbourhood. About that time, however, the minister of the parish received a parcel containing some money, and the following letter with it:

"At last, my dear reverend sir, I am enabled to send you the hundred crowns which my worthy lady, in her expiring moments, so ardently wished to be possessed of, not for her own use, but for the emolument of others. Her wishes shall now be fulfilled, and the pious work she projected shall be completed. Had not this been the all I am possessed of in this world, I would have brought it myself. I am too poor to support myself among you; but I am happy in my poverty, and feel no anxieties but those occasioned by the loss of my dear lady. I beseech you to put this money out to interest, and inform the mistress of the school that it is for her use. This I hope will enable her to take under her care the children of such poor people, who cannot afford to pay for their education. If I have any favour to ask of Heaven, it is only this, that I may, before I am called hence, be enabled to save a little money, in order

to be in a condition to pay you a visit. Should I live to see this school established on the plan my deceased lady wished for, I shall then be perfectly happy, and shall quit this world without envying those who roll in the gifts of fortune, but have not a heart properly to use them. – Maria."

The curate, who was a man of generous feelings, read this letter with admiration, and the next day, in the church, communicated the contents of it to his congregation, who could not refrain from tears on the relation of so generous an action. According to Maria's request, he placed the hundred crowns out to interest; and thus, from the produce of two year's incessant labour of this amiable woman, was a foundation laid for the education of the poor children of the parish.

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