

# Precaution



# Precaution

by

James Fenimore Cooper

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## CHAPTER I

"I WONDER if we are to have a neighbor in the Deanery soon," inquired Clara Moseley, addressing herself to a small party assembled in her father's drawing-room, while standing at a window which commanded a distant view of the house in question.

"Oh yes," replied the brother, "the agent has let it to a Mr. Jarvis for a couple of years, and he is to take possession this week."

"And who is the Mr. Jarvis that is about to become so near a neighbor?" asked Sir Edward Moseley.

"Why, sir, I learn he has been a capital merchant; that he has retired from business with a large fortune; that he has, like yourself, sir, an only hope for his declining years in a son, an officer in the army; and, moreover, that he has a couple of fine daughters; so, sir, he is a man of family in one sense, at least, you see. But," dropping his voice, "whether he is a man of family in your sense, Jane," looking at his second sister, "is more than I could discover."

"I hope you did not take the trouble, sir, to inquire on my account," retorted Jane, coloring slightly with vexation at his speech.

"Indeed I did, my dear sis, and solely on your account," replied the laughing brother, "for you well know that no gentility, no husband; and it's dull work to you young ladies without at least a possibility of matrimony; as for Clara, she is—"

Here he was stopped by his youngest sister Emily placing her hand on his mouth, as she whispered in his ear, "John, you forget the anxiety of a certain gentleman about a fair incognita at Bath, and a list of inquiries concerning her lineage, and a few other indispensables." John in his turn colored, and affectionately kissing the hand which kept him silent, addressed himself to Jane, and by his vivacity and good humor soon restored her to complacency.

"I rejoice," said Lady Moseley, "that Sir William has found a tenant, however; for next to occupying it himself, it is a most desirable thing to have a good tenant in it, on account of the circle in which we live."

"And Mr. Jarvis has the great goodness of money, by John's account," caustically observed Mrs. Wilson, who was a sister of Sir Edward's.

"Let me tell you, madam," cried the rector of the parish, looking around him pleasantly and who was a pretty constant and always welcome visitor in the family,

"that a great deal of money is a very good thing in itself, and that a great many good things may be done with it."

"Such as paying tithes, ha! doctor," cried Mr. Haughton, a gentleman of landed property in the neighborhood, of plain exterior, but great goodness of heart, and between whom and the rector existed the most cordial good-will.

"Aye, tithes, or halves, as the baronet did here, when he forgave old Gregson one half his rent, and his children the other."

"Well, but, my dear," said Sir Edward to his wife, "you must not starve our friends because we are to have a neighbor. William has stood with the dining-room door open these five minutes."

Lady Moseley gave her hand to the rector, and the company followed them, without any order, to the dinner-table. the party assembled around the hospitable board of the baronet was composed, besides the before-mentioned persons, of the wife of Mr. Haughton, a woman of much good sense and modesty of deportment; their daughter, a young lady conspicuous for nothing but good nature; and the wife and son of the rector—the latter but lately admitted to holy orders himself.

The remainder of the day passed in an uninterrupted flow of pleasant conversation, the natural consequence of a unison of opinions on all leading questions, the parties having long known and esteemed each other for those qualities which soonest reconcile us to the common frailties of our nature. On parting at the usual hour, it was agreed to meet that day week at the Rectory, and the doctor, on making his bow to Lady Moseley, observed, that he intended, in virtue of his office, to make an early call on the Jarvis family, and that, if possible, he would persuade them to be of the party.

Sir Edward Moseley was descended from one of the most respectable of the creations of his order by James, and had inherited, with many of the virtues of his ancestor, an estate which placed him among the greatest landed proprietors of the county. But, as it had been an invariable rule never to deduct a single acre from the inheritance of the eldest son; and the extravagance of his mother, who was the daughter of a nobleman, had much embarrassed the affairs of his father, Sir Edward, on coming into possession of his estate, had wisely determined to withdraw from the gay world, by renting his house in town, and retiring altogether to his respectable mansion, about a hundred miles from the metropolis. Here he hoped, by a course of systematic but liberal economy, to release himself from all embarrassments, and to make such a provision for his younger children, the three daughters already mentioned, as he conceived their birth entitled them to expect. Seventeen years enabled him to accomplish this plan; and for more than eighteen months Sir Edward had resumed the hospitality and appearance usual in his family, and had even promised his delighted girls to take possession, the ensuing winter, of the house in St. James' Square. Nature had not qualified Sir Edward for great or continued exertions, and the prudent decision he had taken to retrieve his fortunes,

was perhaps an act of as much forecast and vigor as his talents or energy would afford; it was the step most obviously for his interests, and the one that was safest both in its execution and consequences, and as such it had been adopted; but had it required a single particle more of enterprise and calculation, it would have been beyond his powers, and the heir might have yet labored under the difficulties which distressed his more brilliant but less prudent parent.

The baronet was warmly attached to his wife; and as she was a woman of many valuable and no obnoxious qualities, civil and attentive by habit to all around her, and perfectly disinterested in her attachments to her own family, nothing in nature could partake more of perfection in the eyes of her husband and children than the conduct of this beloved relative. Lady Moseley had her failings, however, although few were disposed to view her errors with that severity which truth and a just discrimination of character render necessary. Her union had been one of love, and for a time it had been objected to by the friends of her husband, on the score of fortune; but constancy and perseverance prevailed, and the protracted and inconsequent opposition of his parents had left no other effects than an aversion in the children to the exercise of parental authority in marrying their own descendants; an aversion which, though common to both the worthy baronet and his wife, was somewhat different in its two subjects. In the husband it was quiescent; but in the wife, it was slightly shaded with the female *esprit de corps* of having her daughters comfortably established, and that in due season. Lady Moseley was religious, but hardly pious; she was charitable in deeds, but not always in opinions; her intentions were pure, but neither her prejudices nor her reasoning powers suffered her to be at all times consistent. Still few knew her that did not love her, and none were ever heard to say aught against her breeding, her morals, or her disposition.

The sister of Sir Edward had been married, early in life, to an officer in the army, who, spending much of his time abroad on service, had left her a prey to that solicitude to which she was necessarily a prey by her attachment to her husband. To find relief from this perpetual and life-wearing anxiety, an invaluable friend had pointed out the only true remedy of which her case admitted, a research into her own heart, and the employments of active benevolence. The death of her husband, who lost his life in battle, caused her to withdraw in a great measure from the world, and gave time and inducement for reflections which led to impressions on religion that were sufficiently correct in themselves, and indispensable as the basis of future happiness, but which became slightly tinctured with the sternness of her vigorous mind, and possibly at times were more unbending than was compatible with the comforts of this world; a fault, however, of manner more than of matter. Warmly attached to her brother and his children, Mrs. Wilson, who had never been a mother herself, yielded to their earnest entreaties to become one of the family; and although left by the late General Wilson with a large income, ever since his death she had given up her own establishment, and devoted most of her time to the formation of the character of her youngest niece. Lady Moseley had submitted this

child entirely to the control of the aunt; and it was commonly thought Emily would inherit the very handsome sum left at the disposal of the general's widow.

Both Sir Edward and Lady Moseley possessed a large share of personal beauty when young, and it had descended in common to all their children, but more particularly to the two youngest daughters. Although a strong family resemblance, both in person and character, existed between these closely connected relatives, yet it existed with shades of distinction that had very different effects on their conduct, and led to results which stamped their lives with widely differing degrees of happiness.

Between the families at Moseley Hall and the Rectory, there had existed for many years an intimacy founded on esteem and on long intercourse. Doctor Ives was a clergyman of deep piety, and of very considerable talents. He possessed, in addition to a moderate benefice, an independent fortune in right of his wife, who was the only child of a distinguished naval officer. Both were well connected, well-bred, and well disposed to their fellow creatures. They were blessed with but one child, the young divine we have mentioned, who promised to equal his father in all those qualities which had made the doctor the delight of his friends, and almost the idol of his parishioners.

Between Francis Ives and Clara Moseley there had been an attachment which had grown with their years, from childhood. He had been her companion in their youthful recreations, had espoused her little quarrels, and participated in her innocent pleasures for so many years, and with such an evident preference for each other in the youthful pair, that, at leaving college to enter on the studies of his sacred calling with his father, Francis rightly judged that none other would make his future life as happy as the mild, the tender, the unassuming Clara. Their passion, if so gentle a feeling deserves the term, received the sanction of their parents, and the two families waited only for the establishment of the young divine, to perfect the union.

The retirement of Sir Edward's family had been uniform, with the exception of an occasional visit to an aged uncle of his wife's who, in return, spent much of his time with them at the Hall, and who had openly declared his intention of making the children of Lady Moseley his heirs. The visits of Mr. Benfield were always hailed with joy, and as an event that called for more than ordinary gayety; for, although rough in manner, and somewhat infirm from years, the old bachelor, who was rather addicted to the customs in which he had indulged in his youth, and was fond of dwelling on the scenes of former days, was universally beloved where he was intimately known, for an unbounded though eccentric philanthropy.

The illness of the mother-in-law of Mrs. Wilson had called her to Bath the winter preceding the spring when our history commences, and she had been accompanied thither by her nephew and favorite niece. John and Emily, during the month of their residence in that city, were in the practice of making daily excursions in its

environs. It was in one of these little drives that they were of accidental service to a young and very beautiful woman, apparently in low health. They had taken her up in their carriage and conveyed her to a farm-house where she resided, during a faintness which had come over her in a walk; and her beauty, air, and manner, altogether so different from those around her, had interested them both to a painful degree. They had ventured to call the following day to inquire after her welfare, and this visit led to a slight intercourse, which continued for the fortnight they remained there.

John had given himself some trouble to ascertain who she was, but in vain. They could merely learn that her life was blameless, that she saw no one but themselves, and her dialect raised a suspicion that she was not English. It was to this unknown fair Emily alluded in her playful attempt to stop the heedless rattle of her brother, who was not always restrained from uttering what he thought by a proper regard for the feelings of others.

## CHAPTER II

THE morning succeeding the day of the dinner at the Hall, Mrs. Wilson, with all her nieces and her nephew, availed herself of the fineness of the weather to walk to the Rectory, where they were all in the habit of making informal and friendly visits. They had just got out of the little village of B-, which lay in their route, when a rather handsome travelling carriage and four passed them, and took the road which led to the Deanery.

"As I live," cried John, "there go our new neighbors the Jarvises; yes, yes, that must be the old merchant muffled up in the corner. I mistook him at first for a pile of bandboxes. Then the rosy-cheeked lady, with so many feathers, must be the old lady—Heaven, forgive me, Mrs. Jarvis I mean—aye, and the two others the belles."

"You are in a hurry to pronounce them belles, John," said Jane, pettishly; "it would be well to see more of them before you speak so decidedly."

"Oh," replied John, "I have seen enough of them, and—" he was interrupted by the whirling of a tilbury and tandem, followed by a couple of servants on horseback. All about this vehicle and its master bore the stamp of decided fashion, and our party had followed it with their eyes for a short distance, when, having reached a fork in the roads, it stopped, and evidently waited the coming up of the pedestrians, as if to make an inquiry. A single glance of the eye was sufficient to apprise the gentleman on the cushion (who held the reins) of the kind of people he had to deal with, and stepping from his carriage, he met them with a graceful bow, and after handsomely apologizing for the trouble he was giving, he desired to know which road led to the Deanery. "The right," replied John, returning his salutation.

"Ask them, colonel," cried the charioteer, "whether the old gentleman went right or not."

The colonel, in the manner of a perfect gentleman, but with a look of compassion for his companion's want of tact, made the desired inquiry; which being satisfactorily answered, he again bowed and was retiring, as one of several pointers who had followed the cavalcade sprang upon Jane, and soiled her walking-dress with his dirty feet.

"Come hither, Dido," cried the colonel, hastening to beat the dog back from the young lady; and again he apologized in the same collected and handsome manner, then turning to one of the servants, he said, "Call in the dog, sir," and rejoined his companion. The air of this gentleman was peculiarly pleasant. It would not have

been difficult to pronounce him a soldier, had he not been addressed as such by his younger and certainly less polished companion. The colonel was apparently about thirty, and of extremely handsome face and figure, while his driving friend appeared several years younger, and of altogether different materials.

"I wonder," said Jane, as they turned a corner which hid them from view, "who they are?"

"Who they are?" cried the brother; "why the Jarvises, to be sure; did n't you hear them ask the road to the Deanery?"

"Oh, the one that drove, he may be a Jarvis, but not the gentleman who spoke to us—surely not, John; besides, he was called colonel, you know."

"Yes, yes," said John, with one of his quizzing expressions, "Colonel Jarvis, that must be the alderman; they are commonly colonels of city volunteers. Yes, that must have been the old gem'mun who spoke to us, and I was right after all about the bandboxes."

"You forget," said Clara, smiling, "the polite inquiry concerning the old gem'mun."

"Ah! true; who the deuce can this colonel be then, for young Jarvis is only a captain, I know. Who do you think he is, Jane?"

"How do you think I can tell you, John? But whoever he is, he owns the tilbury, although he did not drive it, and he is a gentleman both by birth and manners."

"Why, Jane, if you know so much of him, you should know more; but it is all guess with you."

"No; it is not guess—I am certain of what I say."

The aunt and sisters, who had taken little interest in the dialogue, looked at her with some surprise, which John observing, he exclaimed, "Poh! she knows no more than we all know."

"Indeed I do."

"Poh, poh! if you know, tell."

"Why, the arms were different."

John laughed as he said: "That is a good reason, sure enough, for the tilbury's being the colonel's property; but now for his blood. How did you discover that, sis,—by his actions, as we say of horses?"

Jane colored a little, and laughed faintly. "The arms on the tilbury had six quarterings."

Emily now laughed, and Mrs. Wilson and Clara smiled, while John continued his teasing until they reached the Rectory.

While chatting with the doctor and his wife, Francis returned from his morning ride, and told them the Jarvis family had arrived. He had witnessed an unpleasant accident to a gig, in which were Captain Jarvis and a friend, a Colonel Egerton. It had been awkwardly driven in turning into the Deanery gate, and upset. The colonel received some injury to his ankle, nothing serious, however, he hoped, but such as to put him under the care of the young ladies probably for a few days. After the exclamations which usually follow such details, Jane ventured to inquire who Colonel Egerton was.

"I understood at the time, from one of the servants, that he is a nephew of Sir Edgar Egerton, and a lieutenant-colonel on half-pay, or furlough, or some such thing "

"How did he bear his misfortune, Mr. Francis?" inquired Mrs. Wilson.

"Certainly as a gentleman, madam, if not as a Christian," replied the young clergyman, slyly smiling. "Indeed, most men of gallantry would, I believe, rejoice in an accident which drew forth so much sympathy as both the Miss Jarvises manifested."

"How fortunate you should all happen to be near!" said the tender-hearted Clara.

"Are the young ladies pretty?" asked Jane, with something of hesitation in her manner.

"Why, I rather think they are; but I took very little notice of their appearance, as the colonel was really in evident pain."

"This, then," cried the doctor, "affords me an additional excuse for calling on them at an early day, so I'll e'en go to-morrow."

"I trust Doctor Ives wants no apologies for performing his duty," said Mrs. Wilson.

"He is fond of making them, though," said Mrs. Ives, speaking with a benevolent smile, and for the first time in the little conversation.

It was then arranged that the rector should make his official visit, as intended by himself; and on his report the ladies would act. After remaining at the Rectory an hour, they returned to the Hall, attended by Francis.

The next day the doctor drove in, and informed them the Jarvis family were happily settled, and the colonel in no danger, excepting from the fascinations of the two young ladies, who took such palpable care of him that he wanted for nothing; and they might drive over whenever they pleased, without fear of intruding unseasonably.

Mr. Jarvis received his guests with the frankness of good feelings, if not with the polish of high life; while his wife, who seldom thought of the former, would have been mortally offended with the person who could have suggested that she omitted any of the elegancies of the latter. Her daughters were rather pretty, but wanted, both in appearance and manner, the inexpressible air of *haut ton* which so

eminently distinguished the easy but polished deportment of Colonel Egerton, whom they found reclining on a sofa with his leg on a chair, amply secured in numerous bandages, but unable to rise. Notwithstanding the awkwardness of his situation, he was by far the least discomposed person of the party, and having pleasantly excused the awkwardness of his situation, he appeared to think no more of the matter.

The captain, Mrs. Jarvis remarked, had gone out with his dogs to try the grounds around them; "for he seems to live only with his horses and his gun. Young men, my lady, nowadays, appear to forget that there are any things in the world but themselves; now I told Harry that your ladyship and daughters would favor us with a call this morning—but no—there he went, as if Mr. Jarvis was unable to buy us a dinner, and we should all starve but for his quails and pheasants."

"Quails and pheasants!" cried John, in consternation, "does Captain Jarvis shoot quails and pheasants at this time of the year?"

"Mrs. Jarvis, sir," said Colonel Egerton, with a correcting smile, "understands the allegiance due from us gentlemen to the ladies, better than the rules of sporting. My friend, the captain, has taken his fishing rod, I believe."

"It is all one, fish or birds," continued Mrs. Jarvis, "he is out of the way when he is wanted; and I believe we can buy fish as easily as birds. I wish he would take pattern after yourself, colonel, in these matters."

Colonel Egerton laughed pleasantly, but he did not blush; and Miss Jarvis observed, with a look of something like admiration thrown on his reclining figure, "That when Harry had been in the army as long as his friend, he would know the usages of good society, she hoped, as well."

"Yes," said her mother, "the army is certainly the place to polish a young man"; and turning to Mrs. Wilson, she abruptly added, "Your husband, I believe, was in the army, ma'am?"

"I hope," said Emily hastily, "that we shall have the pleasure of seeing you soon, Miss Jarvis, at the Hall," preventing by her promptitude the necessity of a reply from her aunt. The young lady promised to make an early visit, and the subject changed to a general and uninteresting discourse on the neighborhood, the country, the weather, and other ordinary topics.

"Now, John," cried Jane in triumph, as they drove from the door, "you must acknowledge my heraldic witchcraft, as you are pleased to call it, is right for once at least."

"Oh, no doubt, Jenny," said John, who was accustomed to use that appellation to her as a provocation, when he wished what he called an enlivening scene; but Mrs. Wilson put a damper on his hopes by a remark to his mother, and the habitual respect of both the combatants kept them silent.

Jane Moseley was endowed by nature with an excellent understanding, one at least equal to that of her brother, but she wanted the more essential requisites of a well-governed mind. Masters had been provided by Sir Edward for all his daughters, and if they were not acquainted with the usual acquirements of young women in their rank of life, it was not his fault. His system of economy had not embraced a denial of opportunity to any of his children, and the baronet was apt to think all was done when they were put where all might be done. Feeling herself and parents entitled to enter into all the gayeties and splendors of some of the richer families in their vicinity, Jane, who had grown up during the temporary eclipse of Sir Edward's fortunes, had sought that self-consolation so common to people in her situation, which was to be found in reviewing the former grandeur of her house, and she had thus contracted a degree of family pride. If Clara's weaknesses were less striking than those of Jane, it was because she had less imagination, and that in loving Francis Ives she had so long admired a character, where so little was to be found that could be censured, that she might be said to have contracted a habit of judging correctly, without being able at all times to give a reason for her conduct or her opinions.

### CHAPTER III

THE day for one of the stated visits of Mr. Benfield had now arrived, and John, with Emily, who was the old bachelor's favorite niece, went in the baronet's post-chaise to the town of F—, a distance of twenty miles, to meet him, in order to accompany him in the remainder of his journey to the Hall, it being a settled rule with the old man, that his carriage horses should return to their own stables every night, where he imagined they could alone find that comfort and care to which their age and services gave them a claim. The day was uncommonly pleasant, and the young people were in high spirits, with the expectation of meeting their respected relative, whose absence had been prolonged a few days by a severe fit of the gout.

"Now, Emily," cried John, as he settled himself comfortably by the side of his sister in the chaise, "let me know honestly how you like the Jarvises, and particularly how you like the handsome colonel."

"Then, John, honestly, I neither like nor dislike the Jarvises or the handsome colonel."

"Well, then, there is no great diversity in our sentiments, as Jane would say."

"John!"

"Emily!"

"I do not like to hear you speak so disrespectfully of our sister, whom I am sure you love as tenderly as I do myself."

"I acknowledge my error," said the brother, taking her hand and affectionately kissing it, "and will endeavor to offend no more; but this Colonel Egerton, sister, is certainly a gentleman, both by blood and in manners, as Jane—" Emily interrupted him with a laugh, which John took very good-naturedly, repeating his remark without alluding to their sister.

"Yes," said Emily, "he is genteel in his deportment, if that be what you mean; I know nothing of his family."

"Oh, I have taken a peep into Jane's *Baronetage*, where I find him set down as Sir Edgar's heir."

"There is something about him," said Emily, musing, "that I do not much admire. He is too easy—there is no nature. I always feel afraid such people will laugh at me as soon as my back is turned, and for those very things they seem most to

admire to my face. If I might be allowed to judge, I should say his manner wants one thing, without which no one can be truly agreeable."

"What's that?"

"Sincerity."

"Ah! that's my great recommendation; but I am afraid I shall have to take the poacher up, with his quails and his pheasants, indeed."

"You know the colonel explained that to be a mistake."

"What they call explaining away; but unluckily I saw the gentleman returning with his gun on his shoulder, and followed by a brace of pointers."

"There's a specimen of the colonel's manners, then," said Emily, smiling; "it will do until the truth be known."

"And Jane, when she saw him also, praised his good nature and consideration in what she was pleased to call relieving the awkwardness of my remark."

Emily finding her brother disposed to dwell on the foibles of Jane, a thing he was rather addicted to at times, was silent. They rode some distance before John, who was ever as ready to atone as he was to offend, again apologized, again promised reformation, and during the remainder of the ride only forgot himself twice in the same way.

They reached F— two hours before the lumbering coach of their uncle drove into the yard of the inn, and had sufficient time to refresh their own horses for the journey homeward.

Mr Benfield was a bachelor of eighty, but retained the personal activity of a man of sixty. He was strongly attached to all the fashions and opinions of his youth, during which he had sat one term in parliament, having been a great beau and courtier in the commencement of the reign. A disappointment in an affair of the heart drove him into retirement, and for the last fifty years he had dwelt exclusively at a seat he owned within forty miles of Moseley Hall, the mistress of which was the only child of his only brother. In figure he was tall and spare, very erect for his years, and he faithfully preserved in his attire, servants, carriages, and indeed everything around him, as much of the fashions of his youth as circumstances would allow. Such, then, was a faint outline of the character and appearance of the old man who, dressed in a cocked hat, bag wig, and sword, took the offered arm of John Moseley to alight from his coach.

"So," cried the old gentleman, having made good his footing on the ground, as he stopped short and stared John in the face, "you have made out to come twenty miles to meet an old cynic, have you, sir? but I thought I bid thee bring Emmy with thee."

John pointed to the window, where his sister stood anxiously watching her uncle's movements. On catching her eye he smiled kindly, and pursued his way into the house, talking to himself.

"Aye, there she is indeed. I remember now, when I was a youngster, of going with my kinsman old Lord Gosford to meet his sister, the Lady Juliana, when she first came from school" (this was the lady whose infidelity had driven him from the world); "and a beauty she was, indeed, something like Emmy there; only she was taller, and her eyes were black; and her hair, too, that was black; and she was not so fair as Emmy, and she was fatter, and she stooped a little—very little; oh! they are wonderfully alike though; don't you think they were, nephew?" He stopped at the door of the room, while John, who in this description could not see a resemblance, which existed nowhere but in the old man's affections, was fain to say, "Yes; but they were related, you know, uncle, and that explains the likeness."

"True, boy, true," said his uncle, pleased at a reason for a thing he wished, and which flattered his propensities. He had once before told Emily she put him in mind of his housekeeper, a woman as old as himself, and without a tooth in her head.

On meeting his niece, Mr. Benfield (who, like many others that feel strongly, wore in common the affectation of indifference and displeasure) yielded to his fondness, and folding her in his arms, kissed her affectionately, while a tear glistened in his eye; and then pushing her gently from him, he exclaimed, "Come, come, Emmy, don't strangle me, don't strangle me, girl; let me live in peace the little while I have to remain here—So," seating himself composedly in an arm-chair his niece had placed for him with a cushion, "so Anne writes me, Sir William Harris has let the Deanery."

"Oh yes, uncle," cried John.

"I'll thank you, young gentleman," said Mr. Benfield, sternly, "not to interrupt me when I am speaking to a lady,—that is, if you please, sir. Then Sir William has let the Deanery to a London merchant, a Mr. Jarvis. Now I knew three people of that name: one was a hackney coachman, when I was a member of the parliament of this realm, and drove me often to the house; the other was *valet-de-chambre* to my Lord Gosford; and the third, I take it, is the very man who has become your neighbor. If it be the person I mean, Emmy dear, he is like—like—aye, very like old Peter, my steward."

John, unable to contain his mirth at this discovery of a likeness between the prototype of Mr. Benfield himself in leanness of figure, and the jolly rotundity of the merchant, was obliged to leave the room; Emily, though she could not forbear smiling at the comparison, quietly said, "You will meet him to-morrow, dear uncle, and then you will be able to judge for yourself."

"Yes, yes," muttered the old man, "very like old Peter, my steward; as like as two peas." The parallel was by no means as ridiculous as might be supposed, its history being as follows:

Mr Benfield had placed twenty thousand pounds in the hands of a broker, with positive orders for him to pay it away immediately for government stock, bought by the former on his account; but disregarding this injunction, the broker had managed the transaction in such a way as to postpone the payment, until, on his failure, he had given up that and a much larger sum to Mr. Jarvis, to satisfy what he called an honorary debt. In elucidating the transaction Mr. Jarvis paid Benfield a visit, and honestly restored the bachelor his property. This act, and the high opinion he entertained of Mrs. Wilson, with his unbounded love for Emily, were the few things which prevented his believing some dreadful judgment was about to visit this world, for its increasing wickedness and follies. As his own steward was one of the honestest fellows living, he had ever after fancied that there was a personal resemblance between him and the conscientious merchant.

The horses being ready, the old bachelor was placed carefully between his nephew and niece, and in that manner they rode on quietly to the Hall, the dread of accident keeping Mr. Benfield silent most of the way. On passing, however, a stately castle, about ten miles from the termination of their ride, he began one of his speeches with:

"Emmy, dear, does Lord Bolton come often to see you?"

"Very seldom, sir; his employment keeps him much of his time at St. James', and then he has an estate in Ireland."

"I knew his father well—he was distantly connected by marriage with my friend Lord Gosford; you could not remember him, I suspect." (John rolled his eyes at this suggestion of his sister's recollection of a man who had been forty years dead.) "He always voted with me in the parliament of this realm. He was a thoroughly honest man; very much such a man to look at as Peter Johnson, my steward. But I am told his son likes the good things of the ministry. Well, well, William Pitt was the only minister to my mind. There was the Scotchman of whom they made a marquis; I never could endure him—always voted against him."

"Right or wrong, uncle?" cried John, who loved a little mischief, in his heart.

"No, sir—right, but never wrong. Lord Gosford always voted against him, too; and do you think, jackanapes, that my friend the Karl of Gosford and—and—myself were ever wrong? No, sir, men in my day were different creatures from what they are now. We were never wrong, sir; we loved our country, and had no motive for being in the wrong."

"How was it with Lord Bute, uncle?"

"Lord Bute, sir," cried the old man with great warmth, "was the minister, sir—he was the minister; ay, he was the minister, sir, and was paid for what he did."

"But Lord Chatham, was he not the minister too?"

Now nothing vexed the old gentlemen more than to hear William Pitt called by his tardy honors; and yet, unwilling to give up what he thought his political opinions, he exclaimed, with an unanswerable positiveness of argument:

"Billy Pitt, sir, was the minister, sir; but—but—but—he was *our* minister, sir."

Emily, unwilling to see her uncle agitated by such useless disputes, threw a reproachful glance on her brother, as she observed timidly:

"That was a glorious administration, sir, I believe."

"Glorious indeed! Emmy dear," said the bachelor, softening with the sound of her voice, and the recollections of his younger days. "We beat the French everywhere—in America—in Germany; we took—(counting on his fingers)—we took Quebec—yes, Lord Gosford lost a cousin there; and we took all the Canadas; and we took their fleets. There was a young man killed in the battle between Hawke and Conflans, who was much attached to Lady Juliana—poor soul! how much she regretted him when dead, though she never could abide him when living—ah! she was a tender-hearted creature!"

Mr. Benfield, like many others, continued to love imaginary qualities in his mistress, long after her heartless coquetry had disgusted him with her person—a kind of feeling which springs from self-love, which finds it necessary to seek consolation in creating beauties, that may justify our follies to ourselves; and which often keeps alive the semblance of the passion, when even hope, or real admiration, is extinct.

On reaching the Hall every one was rejoiced to see their really affectionate and worthy relative, and the evening passed in the tranquil enjoyment of the blessings which Providence had profusely scattered around the family of the baronet, but which are too often hazarded by a neglect of duty, that springs from too great security, or an indolence which renders us averse to the precaution necessary to insure their continuance.

## CHAPTER IV

"YOU are welcome, Sir Edward," said the venerable rector, as he took the baronet by the hand. "I was fearful a return of your rheumatism would deprive us of this pleasure, and prevent my making you acquainted with the new occupants of the Deanery, who have consented to dine with us to-day, and to whom I have promised, in particular, an introduction to Sir Edward Moseley."

"I thank you, my dear doctor," rejoined the baronet; "I have not only come myself, but have persuaded Mr. Benfield to make one of the party; there he comes, leaning on Emily's arm, and finding fault with Mrs. Wilson's new-fashioned barouche, which he says has given him cold."

The rector received the unexpected guest with the kindness of his nature, and an inward smile at the incongruous assemblage he was likely to have around him by the arrival of the Jarvises, who, at that moment, drove to his door. The introductions between the baronet and the new comers had passed, and Miss Jarvis had made a prettily worded apology on behalf of the colonel, who was not yet well enough to come out, but whose politeness had insisted on their not remaining at home on his account, as Mr. Benfield, having composedly put on his spectacles, walked deliberately up to the place where the merchant had seated himself, and having examined him through his glasses to his satisfaction, took them off, and carefully wiping them, he began to talk to himself as he put them into his pocket—"No, no; it's not Jack, the hackney coachman, nor my Lord Gosford's gentleman, but"—cordially holding out both hands—"it's the man who saved my twenty thousand pounds."

Mr. Jarvis, whom shame and embarrassment had kept silent during this examination, exchanged greetings sincerely with his old acquaintance, who now took a seat in silence by his side; while his wife, whose face had begun to kindle with indignation at the commencement of the old gentleman's soliloquy, observing that somehow or other it had not only terminated without degradation to her spouse, but with something like credit, turned complacently to Mrs. Ives, with an apology for the absence of her son.

"I cannot divine, ma'am, where he has got to; he is ever keeping us waiting for him;" and addressing Jane, "these military men become so unsettled in their habits, that I often tell Harry he should never quit the camp."

"In Hyde Park, you should add, my dear, for he has never been in any other," bluntly observed her husband.

To this speech no reply was made, but it was evidently little relished by the ladies of the family, who were a good deal jealous of the laurels of the only hero their race had ever produced. The arrival and introduction of the captain himself changed the discourse, which turned on the comforts of their present residence.

"Pray, my lady," cried the captain, who had taken a chair familiarly by the side of the baronet's wife, "why is the house called the Deanery? I am afraid I shall be taken for a son of the church, when I invite my friends to visit my father at the Deanery."

"And you may add, at the same time, sir, if you please," dryly remarked Mr. Jarvis, "that it is occupied by an old man, who has been preaching and lecturing all his life; and, like others of the trade, I believe, in vain."

"You must except our good friend, the doctor here, at least, sir," said Mrs. Wilson, who, observing that her sister shrank from a familiarity she was unused to, took upon herself the office of replying to the captain's question. "The father of the present Sir William Harris held that station in the church, and although the house was his private property, it took its name from the circumstance, which has been continued ever since."

"Is it not a droll life Sir William leads," cried Miss Jarvis, looking at John Moseley, "riding about all summer from one watering-place to another, and letting his house year after year in the manner he does?"

"Sir William," said Dr. Ives, gravely, "is devoted to his daughter's wishes; and since his accession to his title, has come into possession of another residence in an adjoining county, which, I believe, he retains in his own hands."

"Are you acquainted with Miss Harris?" continued the lady, addressing herself to Clara; though, without waiting for an answer, she added, "She is a great belle—all the gentlemen are dying for her."

"Or her fortune," said her sister, with a pretty toss of the head; "for my part, I never could see anything so captivating in her, although so much is said about her at Bath and Brighton."

"You know her then?" mildly observed Clara.

"Why, I cannot say—we are exactly acquainted," the young lady hesitatingly answered, coloring violently.

"What do you mean by exactly acquainted, Sally?" put in the father with a laugh. "Did you ever speak to or were you ever in a room with her, in your life, unless it might be at a concert or a ball?"

The mortification of Miss Sarah was too evident for concealment, and it happily was relieved by a summons to dinner.

"Never, my dear child," said Mrs. Wilson to Emily, the aunt being fond of introducing a moral from the occasional incidents of every-day life, "never subject yourself to a similar mortification, by commenting on the characters of those you don't know. Ignorance makes you liable to great errors; and if they should happen to be above you in life, it will only excite their contempt, should it reach their ears, while those to whom your remarks are made will think it envy."

"Truth is sometimes blundered on," whispered John, who held his sister's arm, waiting for his aunt to precede them to the dining-room.

The merchant paid too great a compliment to the rector's dinner to think of renewing the disagreeable conversation, and as John Moseley and the young clergyman were seated next the two young ladies, they soon forgot what, among themselves, they would call their father's rudeness, in receiving the attentions of a couple of remarkably agreeable young men.

"Pray, Mr. Francis, when do you preach for us?" asked Mr. Haughton; "I'm very anxious to hear you hold forth from the pulpit, where I have so often heard your father with pleasure. I doubt not you will prove orthodox, or you will be the only man, I believe, in the congregation, the rector has left in ignorance of the theory of our religion, at least."

The doctor bowed to the compliment, as he replied to the question for his son, that on the next Sunday they were to have the pleasure of hearing Frank, who had promised to assist him on that day.

"Any prospects of a living soon?" continued Mr. Haughton, helping himself bountifully to a piece of plum pudding as he spoke. John Moseley laughed aloud, and Clara blushed to the eyes, while the doctor, turning to Sir Edward, observed with an air of interest, "Sir Edward, the living of Bolton is vacant, and I should like exceedingly to obtain it for my son. The advowson belongs to the earl, who will dispose of it only to great interest, I am afraid."

Clara was certainly too busily occupied in picking raisins from her pudding to hear this remark, but accidentally stole, from under her long eyelashes, a timid glance at her father, as he replied:

"I am sorry, my friend, I have not sufficient interest with his lordship to apply on my own account; but he is so seldom here, we are barely acquainted," and the good baronet looked really concerned.

"Clara," said Francis Ives in a low and affectionate tone, "have you read the books I sent you?"

Clara answered him with a smile in the negative, but promised amendment as soon as she had leisure.

"Do you ride much on horseback, Mr. Moseley?" abruptly asked Miss Sarah, turning her back on the young divine, and facing the gentleman she addressed.

John, who was now hemmed in between the sisters, replied with a rueful expression that brought a smile into the face of Emily, who was placed opposite to him.

"Yes, ma'am, and sometimes I am ridden."

"Ridden, sir, what do you mean by that?"

"Oh! only my aunt there occasionally gives me a lecture."

"I understand," said the lady, pointing slyly with her finger at her own father.

"Does it feel good?" John inquired, with a look of great sympathy. But the lady, who now felt awkwardly, without knowing exactly why, shook her head in silence, and forced a faint laugh.

"Whom have we here?" cried Captain Jarvis, who was looking out at a window which commanded a view of the approach to the house; "the apothecary and his attendant, judging from the equipage."

The rector threw an inquiring look on a servant, who told his master they were strangers to him.

"Have them shown up, doctor," cried the benevolent baronet, who loved to see every one as happy as himself, "and give them some of your excellent pasty, for the sake of hospitality and the credit of your cook, I beg of you."

As this request was politely seconded by others of the party, the rector ordered his servants to show in the strangers.

On opening the parlor door, a gentleman, apparently sixty years of age, appeared, leaning on the arm of a youth of five-and-twenty. There was sufficient resemblance between the two for the most indifferent observer to pronounce them father and son; but the helpless debility and emaciated figure of the former were finely contrasted by the vigorous health and manly beauty of the latter, who supported his venerable parent into the room with a grace and tenderness that struck most of the beholders with a sensation of pleasure. The doctor and Mrs. Ives rose from their seats involuntarily, and each stood for a moment, lost in an astonishment that was mingled with grief. Recollecting himself, the rector grasped the extended hand of the senior in both his own, and endeavored to utter something, but in vain. The tears followed each other down his cheeks, as he looked on the faded and care-worn figure which stood before him; while his wife, unable to control her feelings, sank back into a chair and wept aloud.

Throwing open the door of an adjoining room, and retaining the hand of the invalid, the doctor gently led the way, followed by his wife and son; the former, having recovered from the first burst of her sorrow, and regardless of everything else, now anxiously watched the enfeebled step of the stranger. On reaching the door, they both turned and bowed to the company in a manner of so much dignity,

mingled with sweetness, that all, not excepting Mr. Benfield, rose from their seats to return the salutation. On passing from the dining parlor, the door was closed, leaving the company standing round the table in mute astonishment and commiseration. Not a word had been spoken, and the rector's family had left them without apology or explanation. Francis, however, soon returned, and was followed in a few minutes by his mother, who, slightly apologizing for her absence, turned the discourse on the approaching Sunday, and the intention of Francis to preach on that day. The Moseleys were too well bred to make any inquiries, and the Deanery family was afraid. Sir Edward retired at a very early hour, and was followed by the remainder of the party. "Well," cried Mrs. Jarvis, as they drove from the door, "this may be good breeding, but, for my part, I think both the doctor and Mrs. Ives behaved very rudely, with the crying and sobbing."

"They are nobody of much consequence," cried her eldest daughter, casting a contemptuous glance on a plain travelling chaise which stood before the rector's stables.

"T was sickening," said Miss Sarah, with a shrug; while her father, turning his eyes on each speaker in succession, very deliberately helped himself to a pinch of snuff, his ordinary recourse against a family quarrel. The curiosity of the ladies was, however, more lively than they chose to avow; and Mrs. Jarvis bade her maid go over to the rectory that evening, with her compliments to Mrs. Ives,—she had lost a lace veil, which her maid knew, and she thought it might have been left at the Rectory.

"And Jones, when you are there, you can inquire of the servants; mind, of the servants—I would not distress Mrs. Ives for the world; how Mr.— Mr.— what's his name— Oh!— I have forgotten his name; just bring me his name too, Jones; and, as it may make some difference in our party, just find out how long they stay; and—and—any other little thing, Jones, which can be of use, you know."

Off went Jones, and within an hour she had returned. With an important look, she commenced her narrative, the daughters being accidentally present, and it might be on purpose.

"Why, ma'am, I went across the fields, and William was good enough to go with me; so when we got there, I rang, and they showed us into the servants' room, and I gave my message, and the veil was not there. Why, ma'am, there's the veil now, on the back o' that chair!"

"Very well, very well, Jones, never mind the veil," cried the impatient mistress.

"So, ma'am, while they were looking for the veil, I just asked one of the maids, what company had arrived, but—" here Jones looked very suspicious, and shook her head ominously—"would you think it, ma'am, not a soul of them knew! But, ma'am, there was the doctor and his son, praying and reading with the old gentleman the whole time—and—"

"And what, Jones?"

"Why, ma'am, I expect he has been a great sinner, or he would n't want so much praying just as he is about to die?"

"Die!" cried all three at once. "Will he die?"

"Oh yes," continued Jones, "they all agree he must die, but this praying so much, is just like the criminals. I'm sure no honest person needs so much praying, ma'am."

"No, indeed," said the mother. "No, indeed," responded the daughters, as they retired to their several rooms for the night.

## CHAPTER V

THERE is something in the season of spring which peculiarly excites the feelings of devotion. The dreariness of winter has passed, and with it, the deadened affections of our nature. New life, new vigor, arises within us, as we walk abroad and feel the genial gales of April breathe upon us; and our hopes, our wishes, awoken with the revival of the vegetable world. It is then that the heart, which has been impressed with the goodness of the Creator, feels that goodness brought, as it were, into very contact with the senses. The eye loves to wander over the bountiful provisions nature is throwing forth in every direction for our comfort, and fixes its gaze on the clouds, which, having lost the chilling thinness of winter, roll in rich volumes, amidst the clear and softened fields of azure so peculiar to the season, leading the mind insensibly to dwell on the things of another and a better world. It was on such a day, that the inhabitants of B— thronged toward the village church, for the double purpose of pouring out their thanksgivings, and of hearing the first efforts of their rector's son in the duties of his sacred calling.

Among the crowd whom curiosity or a better feeling had drawn forth, were to be seen the flaring equipage of the Jarvises, and the handsome carriages of Sir Edward Moseley and his sister. All the members of the latter family felt a lively anxiety for the success of the young divine. But knowing as they well did, the strength of his native talents, the excellence of his education, and the fervor of his piety, it was an anxiety that partook more of hope than of fear. There was one heart, however, among them, that palpitated with an emotion that hardly admitted of control, as they approached the sacred edifice, for it had identified itself completely with the welfare of the rector's son. There never was a softer, truer heart than that which now almost audibly beat within the bosom of Clara Moseley; and she had given it to the young divine with all its purity and truth.

The entrance of a congregation into the sanctuary will at all times furnish, to an attentive observer, food for much useful speculation, if it be chastened with a proper charity for the weaknesses of others; and most people are ignorant of the insight they are giving into their characters and dispositions, by such an apparently trivial circumstance as their weekly approach to the tabernacles of the Lord. Christianity, while it chastens and amends the heart, leaves the natural powers unaltered; and it cannot be doubted, that its operation is, or ought to be, proportionate to the abilities and opportunities of the subject of its holy impression—"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required." While we acknowledge that the thoughts might be better employed in preparing for those humiliations of the spirit and thanksgiving of the heart which are required of all,

and are so necessary to all, we must be indulged in a hasty view of some of the personages of our history, as they entered the church of B—.

On the countenance of the baronet, was the dignity and composure of a mind at peace with itself and mankind. His step was rather more deliberate than common; his eye rested on the pavement, and on turning into his pew, as he prepared to kneel, in the first humble petition of our beautiful service, he raised it toward the altar with an expression of benevolence and reverence that spoke contentment not unmixed with faith.

In the demeanor of Lady Moseley, all was graceful and decent, while nothing could be properly said to be studied. She followed her husband with a step of equal deliberation, though it was slightly varied by a manner which, while it appeared natural to herself, might have been artificial in another. A cambric handkerchief concealed her face as she sank composedly by the side of Sir Edward, in a style which showed, that while she remembered her Maker, she had not entirely forgotten herself.

The walk of Mrs. Wilson was quicker than that of her sister. Her eye, directed before her, was fixed, as if in settled gaze, on that eternity which she was approaching.

The lines of her contemplative face were unaltered, unless there might be traced a deeper shade of humility than was ordinarily seen on her pale but expressive countenance. Her petition was long; and on rising from her humble posture, the person was indeed to be seen, but the soul appeared absorbed in contemplations beyond the limits of this sphere.

There was a restlessness and varying of color in the ordinarily placid Clara, which prevented a display of her usual manner; while Jane walked gracefully, and with a tincture of her mother's manner, by her side. She stole one hastily withdrawn glance to the Deanery pew ere she kneeled, and then, on rising, handed her smelling-bottle affectionately to her elder sister.

Emily glided behind her companions with a face beaming with a look of innocence and love. As she sank in the act of supplication, the rich glow of her healthful cheek lost some of its brilliancy; but on rising it beamed with a renewed lustre, that plainly indicated a heart touched with the sanctity of its situation.

In the composed and sedate manner of Mr. Jarvis, as he steadily pursued his way to the pew of Sir William Harris, you might have been justified in expecting the entrance of another Sir Edward Moseley in substance, if not in externals. But the deliberate separation of the flaps of his coat, as he comfortably seated himself, when you thought him about to kneel, followed by a pinch of snuff, as he threw his eye around the building, led you at once to conjecture, that what at first had been mistaken for reverence, was the abstraction of some earthly calculation; and that his attendance was in compliance with custom, and not a little depended upon the

thickness of his cushions, and the room he found for the disposition of two rather unwieldy legs.

The ladies of the family followed, in garments carefully selected for the advantageous display of their persons. As they sailed into their seats, where it would seem the improvidence of Sir William's steward had neglected some important accommodation (some time being spent in preparation to be seated), the old lady, whose size and flesh really put kneeling out of the question, bent forward for a moment at an angle of eighty with the horizon, while her daughters prettily bowed their heads, with all proper precaution for the safety of their superb millinery.

At length the rector, accompanied by his son, appeared from the vestry. There was a dignity and solemnity in the manner in which this pious divine entered on the duties of his profession, which disposed the heart to listen with reverence and humility to precepts that were accompanied with so impressive an exterior. The stillness of expectation pervaded the church, when the pew-opener led the way to the same interesting father and son whose entrance had interrupted the guests the preceding day at the Rectory. Every eye was turned on the emaciated parent, bending into the grave, and, as it were, kept from it by the supporting tenderness of his child. Hastily throwing open the door of her own pew, Mrs. Ives buried her face in her handkerchief; and her husband had proceeded far in the morning service, before she raised it again to the view of the congregation. In the voice of the rector there was an unusual softness and tremor, that his people attributed to the feelings of a father about to witness the first efforts of an only child, but which in reality were owing to another and a deeper cause.

Prayers were ended, and the younger Ives ascended the pulpit. For a moment he paused; when, casting an anxious glance to the pew of the baronet, he commenced his sermon. He had chosen for his discourse the necessity of placing our dependence on divine grace. After having learnedly, but in the most unaffected manner, displayed the necessity of this dependence, as derived from revelation, he proceeded to paint the hope, the resignation, the felicity of a Christian's death-bed. Warmed by the subject, his animation soon lent a heightened interest to his language; and at a moment when all around him were entranced by the eloquence of the youthful divine, a sudden and deep-drawn sigh drew every eye to the rector's pew. The younger stranger sat motionless as a statue, holding in his arms the lifeless body of his parent, who had fallen that moment a corpse by his side. All was now confusion. The almost insensible young man was relieved from his burden; and, led by the rector, they left the church. The congregation dispersed in silence, or assembled in little groups, to converse on the awful event they had witnessed. None knew the deceased. He was the rector's friend, and to his residence the body was removed. The young man was evidently his child; but here all information ended. They had arrived in a private chaise, but with post-horses, and without attendants. Their arrival at the parsonage was detailed by the Jarvis