

resided in the village; and she breathed her last.—Judith Hawkins, or rather Judith Dawson, was disliked and shunned if possible even more than her mother had been. The poor man who was so unhappy as to make her his wife was little better than an idiot, and she consequently exerted undisputed authority in the family.—This woman violently and pertinaciously persisted that the Hall, and the immense wealth left by the late Mr. Willoughby, was her mother's; that it had been willed to Molly by that gentleman in consideration of her long and faithful services; and that there was a document yet in existence (though it had been suppressed by the person interested) which would prove the truth of her statements. These assertions greatly affected the sensitive mind of Gertrude. She thought it not improbable that her uncle had in a fit of anger willed away the property which he had previously designed for her.—His dying words in a great measure corroborated the supposition; yet, as justice was certainly on her side, and the pretended heiress lay in a state which gave no prospect of light being thrown upon the subject, she hesitated not to take possession of the disputed wealth.

The Hall underwent partial rebuilding and thorough repair, and the rector's family subsequently left the little parsonage, and took up their abode in it. Mr. Vivian was now a rich man; but he was too deeply interested in the profession to which he had devoted himself, to relinquish it because he no longer stood in need of its emoluments. He merely engaged a curate to assist, to whom he paid the whole of the proceeds of the living, and still went amongst his flock, like a father amongst his beloved children. Gertrude had it now in her power to exercise benevolence without making those self-sacrifices which she had hitherto done, and she and her husband went hand in hand in works of love and charity.

Contrary to the wishes of Mrs. Vivian, the two domestics who had resided so many years with Mr. Willoughby left the house at his death, and removed into one of the southern shires. As these people had always shown great attachment to her, she was much surprised at their determination. No mention was made of them in the will; but deeming their services deserving a recompense, she presented them with a handsome sum ere she suffered them to depart.

Gertrude now filled up her establishment from her husband's parishioners; and strange as it may appear, amongst these was Susan Dawson, the daughter of her bitter foe. This girl had become attached to Mr. Vivian from having been a pupil in the village school at which that lady presided, and she now begged permission to become an under-servant in her nursery. Gertrude was too generous to permit the misconduct of the mother to affect her treatment of the daughter. She moreover, saw that to remove her from the contaminating influence of evil example would probably be to save her from ruin, and she therefore acceded to her request without hesitation.

Another seven years elapsed with little change, excepting that Mr. Vivian's family increased in number, and, if possible, enjoyed an increase of happiness. A fresh vicissitude, however, now took place in Gertrude's eventful life. Great events frequently spring from apparently trifling causes, and we must here enter into the detail of some seemingly insignificant matters, in order to proceed with our story.

Some relatives of Mr. Vivian, who had been abroad for several years, wrote to intimate an intention to visit him *en route* on their return to their residence in England. As this family consisted of the master and mistress, servants and children, much preparation was necessary for their accommodation. Mrs. Vivian, therefore, proposed that chambers, which had not been made use of since the death of her uncle, should be comfortably furnished for the reception of her own domestics, and that they should give up their apartments for the time to the strangers. This proposition met with general approval, with but one exception, and that was to the room which had been occupied by Molly Hawkins. A superstitious dread of their knew not what made the ignorant people shrink from the thought of sleeping in a chamber which she had tenanted. Susan Dawson, who was superior to such fears, volunteered, however, to become the occupant. The old woman was her grandmother, and perhaps she was a little indignant at the odium cast upon her character. The servants were loud in their opposition to what they termed her folly. They were sure, they said, some evil would happen to her: and by a singular coincidence, the girl had not occupied the chamber many nights, ere she was taken suddenly and seriously ill. The cause did not certainly originate in the apartment, or any thing connected with it, but no reasoning could persuade the superstitious people out of their preconceived opinions on the subject.

Judith, bad as she was, was not wholly without natural affection; and hearing that her child was lying ill at the Hall, she broke a vow she had made, never to enter a house in which Mrs. Vivian was mistress, and even solicited permission to attend her daughter in the capacity of nurse. Gertrude could not refuse so reasonable a request, though it was far from agreeable to her to have a person of Judith Dawson's habits as an inmate of her quiet dwelling.

The crisis of Susan's malady proved favourable; but as she was for some weeks in a state of extreme weakness, and unable to leave her chamber, her mother still continued to attend her. Judith was one day reaching down a book from a closet in compliance with the request of the invalid, when her hand unconsciously touch-

ed a secret opening, which disclosed a small aperture in the wall, wherein something lay concealed; she seized on it with the eagerness of a vulture lighting on unexpected prey.

'Cannot you find the book, mother?' asked the sick girl, drawing aside the curtain as she spoke. The almost fiendish expression which sat upon the countenance of her parent terrified her. 'What is the matter?' she demanded, scarcely knowing whether to believe she was in a state of sanity or not.

'Nothing—nothing,' was the woman's reply; and she strove to conceal the parchment, for such it was, which she had purloined, in her apron.

'Mother, you have taken something from that closet; whatever it may be, it is neither yours nor mine. I entreat of you to restore it to its place.'

Judith answered by a burst of wild laughter. Finding all attempts at concealment vain, she resolved to terrify her into silence. 'I have found that which will show who is mistress of this mansion,' she exultingly said, holding up the scroll to Susan's view; 'but I charge you to speak of it at your peril. Mrs. Vivian will learn her downfall soon enough.'

The menacing words which fell from the lips of her parent, the horrible gestures which accompanied them, and the presentiment that some evil was impending, operated so powerfully on the feelings of the sick girl, that she sunk back on her pillow in a state of insensibility. A relapse of the disorder was the result. But though her life was now in imminent danger, Judith did not scruple to leave her, and set out that very night on a journey to London, that she might have legal advice on the matter which was uppermost in her thoughts.

Dread of her mother's resentment, and disinclination to expose her faults, induced Susan to regard her injunction to silence; but the concealment preyed on her mind, and affected her already enfeebled frame to such a degree, that though the malady was subdued, it was apprehended that she would sink into a decline. Susan's fondness for the children, and her general good conduct, had much endeared her to her mistress, and Mrs. Vivian proposed visiting an adjacent watering-place, for the sole purpose of affording her the benefit of change of air and sea-bathing. The family were on the eve of departure, when apprised, through the medium of a man of law, that proceedings would forthwith be commenced against Gertrude Vivian for the unlawful possession of certain property, which could be proved to belong to one Judith Dawson, in right of her mother Mary Hawkins, whom he affirmed to have been the lawful heiress to the said property.

This letter threw the Vivians into consternation. The matter had remained quiet so long, that they had almost forgotten that their right had been disputed. The rector was willing to hope that no positive document had been found; but Susan, to whom the intelligence was tenderly communicated by her gentle mistress, now felt it to be her duty to reveal all she knew on the subject. This confession threw a fresh aspect on the affair; still Mr. Vivian hoped it could be proved that the testator was in a state of imbecility when the more recent will was dictated and signed; on this ground his wife could maintain her own right to be inviolate. The visit to the watering-place was of course set aside, and Susan earnestly begged permission to accompany them to London. She felt herself placed in a most painful position. Her conscience, judgment, and every sentiment of affection and gratitude, induced her to espouse the cause of the Vivians—to espouse it in opposition to a parent.

We will not dwell upon the process of law; suffice it to say, that when the new will was brought before the court, it was found to be legal. It had been duly signed by the late Mr. Willoughby's two domestics, John and Margaret Webb; and these persons, having been subpoenaed by Judith Dawson, were obliged to confess, when put to their oath, though it was with evident reluctance, that their late master was to all appearance perfectly sane when the will received his signature.

The fact was, that Webb and his wife had been prevailed on to give their sanction to what they felt to be an unjust act; and they had left the neighbourhood on the death of their master, with the hope of escaping any further involvement in the unhappy affair, should the will in favour of the old woman ever come to light.

By these means Gertrude was dispossessed of her uncle's property, and, with her family, once again returned to the rectory. Mrs. Dawson did not make, as may be supposed, a very good use of the wealth she had acquired by such means. She launched out into the most reckless extravagance, and gathered together a number of dissolute and unprincipled people, whose persuasions and intemperate example had so powerful an effect on the weak mind of her husband, that he fell a victim to the excesses in which he was induced to indulge. No words can give an adequate idea of the distress endured by Susan. The holy influences of such a home as she shared in the rector's family had naturally tended to elevate her character, as well as refine her manners; and she now positively refused to share any part of the ill-gotten wealth. As Mrs. Vivian could no longer afford to keep up her former establishment, she sought a situation in a distant town, that she might be removed from the more immediate knowledge of what was passing in her native village.

Growing weary at length of the amusements which a country village afforded, Mrs. Dawson purchased a

handsome house in one of the principal squares in the metropolis. She here spent her time in frequenting places of public resort, or in giving expensive entertainments. There are always a set of persons to be met with who will flutter around the wealthy, be their pretensions to respectability or their moral worth what it may. The widow, therefore, found it an easy matter to fill her spacious drawing-rooms with guests who wore at least a fashionable appearance. If their characters had been investigated, it would have been discovered that not one of them could bear a very strict scrutiny.

A career of reckless vice is not often of long duration. Such was the case with the course pursued by this worthless woman. In less than three years after she became possessed of Mr. Willoughby's property, she met with an accident which suddenly terminated her miserable life.

The dreadful intelligence was communicated to Susan by the attorney who had acted for her mother in the late law affair; and he made it known in so abrupt and unfeeling a manner, that her sensitive mind for a time sunk under it, and she was again thrown upon a bed of sickness. The first shock over, however, she made a strong effort to undertake a journey to her native village, with the view of paying a visit to her late master and mistress.

It was the winter season, and night had closed in ere the chaise in which she travelled reached the place of its destination. She was an unexpected guest, but not on that account unwelcome. The family group, collected around a blazing fire in the little parlour, now consisted of eight smiling faces. Mr. Vivian was reading aloud from an amusing and instructive volume, whilst his wife and elder daughters were engaged with the needle. It was a beautiful picture of domestic harmony and happiness, and it so powerfully affected the mind of the visitor, that she could not utter a word in reply to the various questions put to her regarding her health, and whether, judging from her haggard aspect, any misfortune had befallen her.

'It is not in the power of wealth to purchase such peace as I find here,' she mentally soliloquised, 'nor can it, I think, even add to it.'

The family had not heard of the death of Mrs. Dawson. Great was therefore their surprise when Susan, on recovering her self-possession, put into the rector's hands a paper signed by herself, giving up all claim to the property, which, she affirmed, had been legally, but nevertheless unjustly, held by her late mother. Astonishment for some moments chained Mr. Vivian's lips; but when he did speak, it was to express the admiration he felt for this noble act. Gertrude embraced her as she would have done a sister or a daughter. 'Dear Susan,' she said, 'your exemplary conduct has conferred more real honor upon you than a coronet could have bestowed. You love us, and you imagine that you owe us a debt of gratitude, but I am convinced that a higher motive has instigated you to this self-sacrifice. A deep sense of justice, which the laws of man cannot controvert, though they may render it nugatory, has been the leading spring of your actions, and you would have relinquished a claim you felt to be unjust had we been total strangers to you.'

'You have rightly judged me, dear Mrs. Vivian,' Susan made answer.

Gertrude, with the perfect concurrence of her husband, would have forced a considerable sum upon the noble-minded girl, who was thus the means of reinstating them in their former affluence, but she positively refused its acceptance. It was her wish to resume her former position in the family, but they would not hear of her being received otherwise than as a friend. Another offer was, however, made her, which was, to become the mistress of an establishment of her own. A young farmer in the neighbourhood, charmed with the part she had taken in the affair, now came forward as a suitor for her hand, and was accepted.

It need scarcely be told that Mr. and Mrs. Vivian did all in their power to advance the interests and promote the happiness of the young couple. They educated their children, and advanced their interests in life. Nearly threescore years have passed since the above-related transactions occurred. The inhabitants of the Hall and the inmates of the farm now lie in the little churchyard, but the name of Susan Dawson is remembered in her native village, and her moral worth is still the theme of panegyric among its inhabitants.

MONEY.—Wherever you go you will find a money-worshipper, just as you would a Jew in every land. If you listen to the conversation of people as they pass along the street, ten to one they are speaking about money. If you take a trip in a steamer, and overhear the passengers talking upon deck, you are almost sure to find that the subject is money. They cannot even admire a rural scene as they pass it without calculating its value in money. A cockney cannot look at a field of corn, or piece of marsh land, or an old quarry in a rock, but he must tell you how much money he could make out of that *per annum*, if he had the management; and most likely he concludes by saying what a fool the proprietor is, to make so little use of it. To make money is the great end and object of every man's life; and with money, and money chiefly or only, is every thing to be done—money to build schools, money to build prisons, money to build churches, money to build wash-houses, money to get rid of nuisances, such as church-