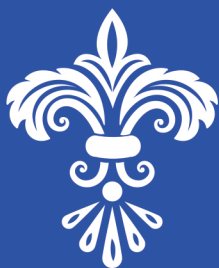


MORAL TALES



MARIA
EDGEWORTH

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Moral Tales by Maria Edgeworth was first published in the early 19th century, a time when literature often reflected the social attitudes and language of its era. While these stories were intended to instruct and entertain, some passages contain descriptions and terminology related to race, class, and gender that may be considered outdated or offensive today.

Maria Edgeworth was known for her progressive views on education and social issues, often advocating for moral integrity, personal responsibility, and the value of character over social status. However, like many works from its time, Moral Tales contains perspectives that do not align with modern values, particularly in its portrayal of people of African descent and other marginalized groups.

This edition preserves the text as it was originally written, recognizing its historical significance and the opportunity it provides for reflection and discussion. We encourage readers to engage with these stories critically, considering both the cultural context in which they were written and the lessons they continue to offer.

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MORAL TALES

by

Maria Edgeworth



W. Harvey.

T.S.Engleheart

When he returned to this woman's house for his handkerchief, he found her sitting upon a low stool, in her laundry, weeping bitterly, her children stood round her.

Forester





Moral Tales.

She started up, rushed forwards, threw herself at the feet of Laniska and exclaimed, "save me!"

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PREFACE.

It has been somewhere said by Johnson, that merely to invent a story is no small effort of the human understanding. How much more difficult is it to construct stories suited to the early years of youth, and, at the same time, conformable to the complicate relations of modern society—fictions, that shall display examples of virtue, without initiating the young reader into the ways of vice—narratives, written in a style level to his capacity, without tedious detail, or vulgar idiom! The author, sensible of these difficulties, solicits indulgence for such errors as have escaped her vigilance.

In a former work the author has endeavoured to add something to the increasing stock of innocent amusement and early instruction, which the laudable exertions of some excellent modern writers provide for the rising generation; and, in the present, an attempt is made to provide for young people, of a more advanced age, a few Tales, that shall neither dissipate the attention, nor inflame the imagination.

In a work upon education, which the public has been pleased to notice, we have endeavoured to show that, under proper management, amusement and instruction may accompany each other through many paths of literature; whilst, at the same time, we have disclaimed and reprehended all attempts to teach in play. Steady, untired attention is what alone produces excellence. Sir Isaac Newton, with as much truth as modesty, attributed to this faculty those discoveries in science, which brought the heavens within the grasp of man, and weighed the earth in a balance. To inure the mind to athletic vigour is one of the chief objects of good education; and we have found, as far as our limited experience

has extended, that short and active exertions, interspersed with frequent agreeable relaxation, form the mind to strength and endurance, better than long-continued feeble study.

Hippocrates, in describing the robust temperament, tells us that the *athletae* prepare themselves for the *gymnasium* by strong exertion, which they continued till they felt fatigue; they then reposed till they felt returning strength and aptitude for labour: and thus, by alternate exercise and indulgence, their limbs acquire the firmest tone of health and vigour. We have found, that those who have tasted with the keenest relish the beauties of Berquin, Day, or Barbauld, pursue a demonstration of Euclid, or a logical deduction, with as much eagerness, and with more rational curiosity, than is usually shown by students who are nourished with the hardest fare, and chained to unceasing labour.

“Forester” is the picture of an eccentric character—a young man who scorns the common forms and dependencies of civilized society; and who, full of visionary schemes of benevolence and happiness, might, by improper management, or unlucky circumstances, have become a fanatic and a criminal.

The scene of “The Knapsack” is laid in Sweden, to produce variety; and to show that the rich and poor, the young and old, in all countries, are mutually serviceable to each other; and to portray some of those virtues which are peculiarly amiable in the character of a soldier.

“Angelina” is a female Forester. The nonsense of *sentimentality* is here aimed at with the shafts of ridicule, instead of being combated by serious argument. With the romantic eccentricities of Angelina are contrasted faults of a more common and despicable sort. Miss Burrage is the picture of a young lady who meanly flatters persons of rank; and who, after she has smuggled herself into good company, is ashamed to acknowledge her former friends, to whom she was bound by the strongest ties of gratitude.

“Mademoiselle Panache” is a sketch of the necessary consequences of imprudently trusting the happiness of a daughter to the care of those who can teach nothing but accomplishments.

“The Prussian Vase” is a lesson against imprudence, and on exercise of judgment, and an eulogium upon our inestimable trial by jury. This tale is designed principally for young gentlemen who are intended for the bar.

“The Good Governess” is a lesson to teach the art of giving lessons.

In “The Good Aunt,” the advantages which a judicious early education confers upon those who are intended for public seminaries are pointed out. It is a common error to suppose that, let a boy be what he may, when sent to Eton, Westminster, Harrow, or any great school, he will be moulded into proper form by the fortuitous pressure of numbers; that emulation will necessarily excite, example lead, and opposition polish him. But these are vain hopes: the solid advantages which may be attained in these large nurseries of youth must be, in a great measure, secured by previous domestic instruction.

These Tales have been written to illustrate the opinions delivered in “Practical Education.” As their truth has appeared to me to be confirmed by increasing experience, I sat down with pleasure to write this preface for my daughter. It is hoped that the following stories will afford agreeable relaxation from severer studies, and that they will be thought—what they profess to be—*Moral Tales*.

R.L. EDGEWORTH

FORESTER

Forester was the son of an English gentleman, who had paid some attention to his education, but who had some singularities of opinion, which probably influenced him in his conduct toward his children.

Young Forester was frank, brave, and generous, but he had been taught to dislike politeness so much, that the common forms of society appeared to him either odious or ridiculous; his sincerity was seldom restrained by any attention to the feelings of others. His love of independence was carried to such an extreme, that he was inclined to prefer the life of Robinson Crusoe in his desert island, to that of any individual in cultivated society. His attention had been early fixed upon the follies and vices of the higher classes of people; and his contempt for selfish indolence was so strongly associated with the name of gentleman, that he was disposed to choose his friends and companions from amongst his inferiors: the inequality between the rich and the poor shocked him; his temper was enthusiastic as well as benevolent; and he ardently wished to be a man, and to be at liberty to act for himself, that he might reform society, or at least his own neighbourhood. When he was about nineteen years old, his father died, and young Forester was sent to Edinburgh, to Dr. Campbell, the gentleman whom his father had appointed his guardian. In the choice of his mode of travelling his disposition appeared. The stage-coach and a carrier set out nearly at the same time from Penrith. Forester, proud of bringing his principles immediately into action, put himself under the protection of the carrier, and congratulated himself upon his freedom from prejudice. He arrived at Edinburgh

in all the glory of independence, and he desired the carrier to set him down at Dr. Campbell's door.

"The doctor is not at home," said the footman, who opened the door.

"He *is* at home," exclaimed Forester with indignation; "I see him at the window."

"My master is just going to dinner, and can't see any body now," said the footman; "but if you will call again at six o'clock, maybe he may see you, my good lad."

"My name is Forester—let me in," said Forester, pushing-forwards.

"Forester!—Mr. Forester!" said the footman; "the young gentleman that was expected in the coach to-day?" Without deigning to give the footman any explanation, Forester took his own portmanteau from the carrier; and Dr. Campbell came down-stairs just when the footman was officiously struggling with the young gentleman for his burden. Dr. Campbell received his pupil very kindly; but Forester would not be prevailed upon to rub his shoes sufficiently upon the mat at the bottom of the stairs, or to change his disordered dress before he made his appearance in the drawing-room. He entered with dirty shoes, a threadbare coat, and hair that looked as if it never had been combed; and he was much surprised by the effect which his singular appearance produced upon the risible muscles of some of the company.

"I have done nothing to be ashamed of," said he to himself; but, notwithstanding all his efforts to be and to appear at ease, he was constrained and abashed. A young laird, Mr. Archibald Mackenzie, seemed to enjoy his confusion with malignant, half-suppressed merriment, in which Dr. Campbell's son was too good-natured, and too well-bred, to participate. Henry Campbell was three or four years older than Forester, and *though* he looked like a gentleman, Forester could not help being pleased with the manner in which he drew him into conversation. The secret magic of politeness relieved him insensibly from the torment of false shame.

“It is a pity this lad was bred up a gentleman,” said Forester to himself, “for he seems to have some sense and goodness.”

Dinner was announced, and Forester was provoked at being interrupted in an argument concerning carts and coaches, which he had begun with Henry Campbell. Not that Forester was averse to eating, for he was at this instant ravenously hungry: but eating in company he always found equally repugnant to his habits and his principles. A table covered with a clean table-cloth; dishes in nice order; plates, knives, and forks, laid at regular distances, appeared to our young Diogenes absurd superfluities, and he was ready to exclaim, “How many things I do not want!” Sitting down to dinner, eating, drinking, and behaving like other people, appeared to him difficult and disagreeable ceremonies. He did not perceive that custom had rendered all these things perfectly easy to every one else in company; and as soon as he had devoured his food his own way, he moralized in silence upon the good sense of Sancho Panza, who preferred eating an egg behind the door to feasting in public; and he recollected his favourite traveller Le Vaillant’s¹ enthusiastic account of his charming Hottentot dinners, and of the disgust that he afterwards felt, on the comparison of European etiquette and African *simplicity*.

“Thank God, the ceremony of dinner is over,” said Forester to Henry Campbell, as soon as they rose from table.

All these things, which seemed mere matter of course in society, appeared to Forester strange ceremonies. In the evening there were cards for those who liked cards, and there was conversation for those who liked conversation. Forester liked neither; he preferred playing with a cat; and he sat all night apart from the company in a corner of a sofa. He took it for granted that the conversation could not be worth his attention, because he heard Lady Catherine Mackenzie’s voice amongst others; he had conceived a dislike, or rather a contempt for this lady, because she showed much of the pride of birth and rank in her manners. Henry Campbell did not think it necessary to punish himself for

1

Le Vaillant’s Travels in Africa, vol. i. p. 114.

her ladyship's faults, by withdrawing from entertaining conversation; he knew that his father had the art of managing the frivolous subjects started in general company, so as to make them lead to amusement and instruction; and this Forester would probably have discovered this evening, had he not followed his own thoughts, instead of listening to the observations of others. Lady Catherine, it is true, began with a silly history of her hereditary antipathy for pickled cucumbers; and she was rather tiresome in tracing the genealogy of this antipathy through several generations of her ancestry; but Dr. Campbell said "that he had heard, from an ingenious gentleman of her ladyship's family, that her ladyship's grandfather, and several of his friends, nearly lost their lives by pickled cucumbers;" and thence the doctor took occasion to relate several curious circumstances concerning the effects of different poisons.

Dr. Campbell, who plainly saw both the defects and the excellent qualities of his young ward, hoped that, by playful raillery, and by well-timed reasoning, he might mix a sufficient portion of good sense with Forester's enthusiasm, might induce him gradually to sympathize in the pleasures of cultivated society, and might convince him that virtue is not confined to any particular class of men; that education, in the enlarged sense of the word, creates the difference between individuals more than riches or poverty. He foresaw that Forester would form a friendship with his son, and that this attachment would cure him of his prejudices against *gentlemen*, and would prevent him from indulging his taste for vulgar company. Henry Campbell had more useful energy, though less apparent enthusiasm, than his new companion: he was always employed; he was really independent, because he had learned how to support himself either by the labours of his head or of his hands; but his independence did not render him unsociable; he was always ready to sympathize with the pleasures of his friends, and therefore he was beloved: following his father's example, he did all the good in his power to those who were in distress; but he did not imagine that he

could reform every abuse in society, or that he could instantly new-model the universe. Forester became, in a few days, fond of conversing, or rather of holding long arguments, with Henry; but his dislike to the young laird, Archibald Mackenzie, hourly increased. Archibald and his mother, Lady Catherine Mackenzie, were relations to Mrs. Campbell, and they were now upon a visit at her house. Lady Catherine, a shrewd woman, fond of precedence, and fully sensible of the importance that wealth can bestow, had sedulously inculcated into the mind of her son all the maxims of worldly wisdom which she had collected in her intercourse with society; she had inspired him with family pride, but at the same time had taught him to pay obsequious court to his superiors in rank or fortune: the art of rising in the world, she knew, did not entirely depend upon virtue or ability; she was consequently more solicitous about her son's manners than his morals, and was more anxious that he should form high connexions, than that he should apply to the severe studies of a profession. Archibald was nearly what might be expected from his education, alternately supple to his superiors, and insolent to his inferiors: to insinuate himself into the favour of young men of rank and fortune, he affected to admire extravagance; but his secret maxims of parsimony operated even in the midst of dissipation. Meanness and pride usually go together. It is not to be supposed that young Forester had such quick penetration, that he could discover the whole of the artful Archibald's character in the course of a few days' acquaintance; but he disliked him for good reasons, because he was a laird, because he had laughed at his first entrée, and because he was learning to dance.

THE SKELETON.

About a week after our hero's arrival at Dr. Campbell's, the doctor was exhibiting some chemical experiments, with which Henry hoped that his young friend would be entertained; but Forester had scarcely been five minutes in the laboratory, before

Mackenzie, who was lounging about the room, sneeringly took notice of a large hole in his shoe. "It is easily mended," said the independent youth; and he immediately left the laboratory, and went to a cobbler's, who lived in a narrow lane, at the back of Dr. Campbell's house. Forester had, from his bed-chamber window, seen this cobbler at work early every morning; he admired his industry, and longed to be acquainted with him. The good-humoured familiarity of Forester's manner pleased the cobbler, who was likewise diverted by the eagerness of *the young gentleman* to mend his own shoe. After spending some hours at the cobbler's stall, the shoe was actually mended, and Forester thought that his morning's work was worthy of admiration. In a court (or, as such places are called in Edinburgh, a close) near the cobbler's, he saw some boys playing at ball: he joined them; and, whilst they were playing, a dancing-master with his hair powdered, and who seemed afraid of spattering his clean stockings, passed through the court, and interrupted the ball players for a few seconds. The boys, as soon as the man was out of hearing, declared that he passed through *their* court regularly twice a day, and that he always kicked their marbles out of the ring. Without staying to weigh this evidence scrupulously, Forester received it with avidity, and believed all that had been asserted was true, because the accused was a dancing-master; from his education he had conceived an antipathy to dancing-masters, especially to such as wore silk stockings, and had their heads well powdered. Easily fired at the idea of any injustice, and eager to redress the grievances of *the poor*, Forester immediately concerted with these boys a scheme to deliver them from what he called the insolence of the dancing-master, and promised that he would compel him to go round by another street.

In his zeal for the liberty of his new companions, our hero did not consider that he was infringing upon the liberties of a man who had never done him any injury, and over whom he had no right to exercise any control.

Upon his return to Dr. Campbell's, Forester heard the sound

of a violin; and he found that his enemy, M. Pasgrave, the dancing-master, was attending Archibald Mackenzie: he learnt, that he was engaged to give another lesson the next evening; and the plans of the confederates in the ball-alley were arranged accordingly. In Dr. Campbell's room Forester remembered to have seen a skeleton in a glass case; he seized upon it, carried it down to his companions, and placed it in a niche in the wall, on the landing-place of a flight of stone stairs down which the dancing-master was obliged to go. A butcher's son (one of Forester's new companions) he instructed to stand at a certain hour behind the skeleton, with two rushlights, which he was to hold up to the eye-holes in the skull.

The dancing-master's steps were heard approaching at the expected hour; and the boys stood in ambush to enjoy the diversion of the sight. It was a dark night; the fiery eyes of the skeleton glared suddenly upon the dancing-master, who was so terrified at the spectacle, and in such haste to escape, that his foot slipped, and he fell down the stone steps: his ankle was sprained by the fall, and he was brought to Dr. Campbell's. Forester was shocked at this tragical end of his intended comedy. The poor man was laid upon a bed, and he writhed with pain. Forester, with vehement expressions of concern, explained to Dr. Campbell the cause of this accident, and he was much touched by the dancing-master's good nature, who, between every twinge of pain, assured him that he should soon be well, and endeavoured to avert Dr. Campbell's displeasure. Forester sat beside the bed, reproaching himself bitterly; and he was yet more sensible of his folly, when he heard, that the boys, whose part he had hastily taken, had frequently amused themselves with playing mischievous tricks upon this inoffensive man, who declared, that he had never purposely kicked their marbles out of the ring, but had always implored them to make way for him with all the civility in his power.

Forester resolved, that before he ever again attempted to do justice, he would, at least, hear both sides of the question.

THE ALARM.

Forester would willingly have sat up all night with M. Pasgrave, to foment his ankle from time to time, and, if possible, to assuage the pain: but the man would not suffer him to sit up, and about twelve o'clock he retired to rest. He had scarcely fallen asleep, when his door opened, and Archibald Mackenzie roused him, by demanding, in a peremptory tone, how he could sleep when the whole family were frightened out of their wits by his pranks?

"Is the dancing-master worse? What's the matter?" exclaimed Forester in great terror.

Archibald replied, that he was not talking or thinking about the dancing-master, and desired Forester to make haste and dress himself, and that he would then soon hear what was the matter.

Forester dressed himself as fast as he could, and followed Archibald through a long passage, which led to a back staircase. "Do you hear the noise?" said Archibald.

"Not I," said Forester.

"Well, you'll hear it plain enough presently," said Archibald: "follow me down-stairs."

He followed, and was surprised, when he got into the hall, to find all the family assembled. Lady Catherine had been awakened by a noise, which she at first imagined to be the screaming of an infant. Her bedchamber was on the ground floor, and adjoining to Dr. Campbell's laboratory, from which the noise seemed to proceed. She awakened her son Archibald and Mrs. Campbell; and, when she recovered her senses a little, she listened to Dr. Campbell, who assured her, that what her ladyship thought was the screaming of an infant was the noise of a cat: the screams of this cat were terrible; and, when the light approached the door of the laboratory, the animal flew at the door with so much fury, that nobody could venture to open it. Every body looked at Forester, as if they suspected that he had confined the cat, or that he was in some way or other the cause of the disturbance. The cat, which, from his having constantly fed and played with it,

had grown extremely fond of him, used to follow him often from room to room; and he now recollected, that it followed him the preceding evening into the laboratory, when he went to replace the skeleton. He had not observed whether it came out of the room again, nor could he now conceive the cause of its yelling in this horrible manner. The animal seemed to be mad with pain. Dr. Campbell asked his son whether all the presses were locked. Henry said he was sure they were all locked. It was his business to lock them every evening; and he was so exact, that nobody doubted his accuracy.

Archibald Mackenzie, who all this time knew, or at least suspected the truth, held himself in cunning silence. The preceding evening he, for want of something to do, had strolled into the laboratory, and, with the pure curiosity of idleness, peeped into the presses, and took the stoppers out of several of the bottles. Dr. Campbell happened to come in, and carelessly asked him if he had been looking in the presses; to which question Archibald, though with scarcely any motive for telling a falsehood, immediately replied in the negative. As the doctor turned his head, Archibald put aside a bottle, which he had just before taken out of the press; and, fearing that the noise of replacing the glass stopper would betray him, he slipped it into his waistcoat pocket. How much useless cunning! All this transaction was now fully present to Archibald's memory: and he was well convinced that Henry had not seen the bottle when he afterwards went to lock the presses; that the cat had thrown it down; and that this was the cause of all the yelling that disturbed the house. Archibald, however, kept his lips fast closed; he had told one falsehood; he dreaded to have it discovered; and he hoped the blame of the whole affair would rest upon Forester. At length the animal flew with diminished fury at the door; its screams became feebler and feebler, till, at last, they totally ceased. There was silence: Dr. Campbell opened the door: the cat was seen stretched upon the ground, apparently lifeless. As Forester looked nearer at the poor animal, he saw a twitching motion in one of its hind legs;

Dr. Campbell said, that it was the convulsion of death. Forester was just going to lift up his cat, when his friend Henry stopped his hand, telling him, that he would burn himself, if he touched it. The hair and flesh of the cat on one side were burnt away, quite to the bone. Henry pointed to the broken bottle, which, he said, had contained vitriolic acid.

Henry in vain attempted to discover by whom the bottle of vitriolic acid had been taken out of its place. Suspicion naturally fell upon Forester, who, by his own account, was the last person in the room before the presses had been locked for the night. Forester, in warm terms, asserted, that he knew nothing of the matter. Dr. Campbell coolly observed, that Forester ought not to be surprised at being suspected upon this occasion; because every body had the greatest reason to suspect the person, whom they had detected in one *practical joke*, of planning another.

“Joke!” said Forester, looking down upon his lifeless favourite; “do you think me capable of such cruelty? Do you doubt my truth?” exclaimed Forester, haughtily. “You are unjust. Turn me out of your house this instant. I do not desire your protection, if I have forfeited your esteem.”

“Go to bed for to-night in my house,” said Dr. Campbell; “moderate your enthusiasm, and reflect coolly upon what has passed.”

Dr. Campbell, as Forester indignantly withdrew, said, with a benevolent smile, as he looked after him, “He wants nothing but a little common sense. Henry, you must give him a little of yours.”

In the morning, Forester first went to inquire how the dancing-master had slept, and then knocked impatiently at Dr. Campbell’s door.

“My father is not awake,” said Henry; but Forester marched directly up to the side of the bed, and, drawing back the curtain with no gentle hand, cried, with a loud voice, “Dr. Campbell, I am come to beg your pardon. I was angry when I said you were unjust.”

“And I was asleep when you begged my pardon,” said Dr. Campbell, rubbing his eyes.

“The dancing-master’s ankle is a great deal better; and I have buried the poor cat,” pursued Forester: “and I hope now, doctor, you’ll at least tell me, that you do not really suspect me of any hand in her death.”

“Pray let me go to sleep,” said Dr. Campbell, “and *time* your explanations a little better.”

THE GERANIUM.

The dancing-master gradually recovered from his sprain; and Forester spent all his pocket-money in buying a new violin for him, as his had been broken in his fall; his watch had likewise been broken against the stone steps. Though Forester looked upon a watch as a useless bauble, yet he determined to get this mended; and his friend Henry went with him for this purpose to a watchmaker’s.

Whilst Henry Campbell and Forester were consulting with the watchmaker upon the internal state of the bruised watch, Archibald Mackenzie, who followed them *for a lounge*, was looking over some new watches, and ardently wished for the finest that he saw. As he was playing with this fine watch, the watchmaker begged that he would take care not to break it.

Archibald, in the insolent tone in which he was used to speak to a *tradesman*, replied, that if he did break it, he hoped he was able to pay for it. The watchmaker civilly answered, “he had no doubt of that, but that the watch was not his property; it was Sir Philip Gosling’s, who would call for it, he expected, in a quarter of an hour.”

At the name of Sir Philip Gosling, Archibald quickly changed his tone: he had a great ambition to be of Sir Philip’s acquaintance, for Sir Philip was a young man who was to have a large fortune when he should come of age, and who, in the meantime, spent as much of it as possible, with great *spirit* and little judgment. He had been sent to Edinburgh for his education; and he spent his time in training horses, laying bets, parading in the public walks, and

ridiculing, or, in his own phrase, *quizzing* every sensible young man, who applied to literature or science. Sir Philip, whenever he frequented any of the professor's classes, took care to make it evident to every body present, that he did not come there to learn, and that he looked down with contempt upon all who were *obliged* to study; he was the first always to make any disturbance in the classes, or, in his elegant language, *to make a row*.

This was the youth of whose acquaintance Archibald Mackenzie was ambitious. He stayed in the shop, in hopes that Sir Philip would arrive: he was not disappointed; Sir Philip came, and, with address which Lady Catherine would perhaps have admired, Archibald entered into conversation with the young baronet, in conversation that might be called, which consisted of a species of fashionable dialect, devoid of sense, and destitute of any pretence to wit. To Forester this dialect was absolutely unintelligible: after he had listened to it with sober contempt for a few minutes, he pulled Henry away, saying, "Come, don't let us waste our time here; let us go to the brewery that you promised to show me."

Henry did not immediately yield to the rough pull of his indignant friend, for at this instant the door of a little back parlour behind the watchmaker's shop opened slowly, and a girl of about seven years old appeared, carrying, with difficulty, a flower-pot, in which there was a fine large geranium in full flower. Henry, who saw that the child was scarcely able to carry it, took it out of her hands, and asked her, "Where she would like to have it put?"

"Here, for to-day!" said the little girl, sorrowfully; "but to-morrow it goes away for ever."

The little girl was sorry to part with this geranium, because "she had watched it all the winter," and said, "that she was very fond of it; but that she was willing to part with it, though it was just come into flower, because the apothecary had told her, that it was the cause of her grandmother's having been taken ill. Her grandmother lodged," she said, "in *that* little room, and the room was very close, and she was taken ill in the night—so ill, that she could hardly speak or stir; and when the apothecary

came, he said," continued the little girl, "it was no wonder any body was ill, who slept in such a little close room, with such a great geranium in it, *to poison the air*. So my geranium must go!" concluded she with a sigh: "but, as it is for grandmother, I shall never think of it again."

Henry Campbell and Forester were both struck with the modest simplicity of this child's countenance and manner, and they were pleased with the unaffected generosity with which she gave up her favourite geranium. Forester noted this down in his mind as a fresh instance in favour of his *exclusive* good opinion of the poor. This little girl looked poor, though she was decently dressed; she was so thin, that her little cheek-bones could plainly be seen; her face had not the round, rosy beauty of cheerful health: she was pale and sallow, and she looked in patient misery. Moved with compassion, Forester regretted that he had no money to give where it might have been so well bestowed. He was always *extravagant* in his generosity; he would often give five guineas where five shillings would have been enough, and by these means he reduced himself to the necessity sometimes of refusing assistance to deserving objects. On his journey from his father's house to Edinburgh, he lavished, in undistinguishing charity, a considerable sum of money; and all that he had remaining of this money he spent in purchasing the new violin for M. Pasgrave. Dr. Campbell absolutely refused to advance his ward any money till his next quarterly allowance should become due. Henry, who always perceived quickly what passed in the minds of others, guessed at Forester's thoughts by his countenance, and forebore to produce his own money, though he had it just ready in his hand: he knew that he could call again at the watchmaker's, and give what he pleased, without ostentation.

Upon questioning the little girl further, concerning her grandmother's illness, Henry discovered, that the old woman had sat up late at night knitting, and that, feeling herself extremely cold, she got a pan of charcoal into her room; that, soon afterwards, she felt uncommonly drowsy; and when her little grand-daughter

spoke to her, and asked her why she did not come to bed, she made no answer: a few minutes after this, she dropped from her chair. The child was extremely frightened, and though she felt it very difficult to rouse herself, she said, she got up as fast as she could, opened the door, and called to the watchmaker's wife, who luckily had been at work late, and was now raking the kitchen fire. With her assistance the old woman was brought into the air, and presently returned to her senses: the pan of charcoal had been taken away before the apothecary came in the morning; as he was in a great hurry when he called, he made but few inquiries, and consequently condemned the geranium without sufficient evidence. As he left the house, he carelessly said, "My wife would like that geranium, I think." And the poor old woman, who had but a very small fee to offer, was eager to give any thing that seemed to please the *doctor*.

Forester, when he heard this story, burst into a contemptuous exclamation against the meanness of this and of all other apothecaries. Henry informed the little girl, that the charcoal had been the cause of her grandmother's illness, and advised them never, upon any account, to keep a pan of charcoal again in her bedchamber; he told her, that many people had been killed by this practice. "Then," cried the little girl, joyfully, "if it was the charcoal, and not the geranium, that made grandmother ill, I may keep my beautiful geranium:" and she ran immediately to gather some of the flowers, which she offered to Henry and to Forester. Forester, who was still absorbed in the contemplation of the apothecary's meanness, took the flowers, without perceiving that he took them, and pulled them to pieces as he went on thinking. Henry, when the little girl held the geraniums up to him, observed, that the back of her hand was bruised and black; he asked her how she had hurt herself, and she replied innocently, "that she had not hurt *herself*, but that her schoolmistress was a very *strict* woman." Forester, roused from his reverie, desired to hear what the little girl meant by a *strict* woman, and she explained herself more fully: she said, that, as a favour, her grandmother

had obtained leave from some great lady to send her to a charity school: that she went there every day to learn to read and work, but that the mistress of the charity school used her scholars very severely, and often kept them for hours, after they had done their own *tasks*, to spin for her; and that she beat them if they did not spin as much as she expected. The little girl's grandmother then said, that she knew all this, but that she did not dare to complain, because the schoolmistress was under the patronage of some of "the grandest ladies in Edinburgh," and that, as she could not afford to pay for her little lass's schooling, she was forced to have her taught as well as she could *for nothing*.

Forester, fired with indignation at this history of injustice, resolved, at all events, to stand forth immediately in the child's defence; but, without staying to consider how the wrong could be redressed, he thought only of the quickest, or, as he said, the most manly means of doing the business: he declared, that if the little girl would show him the way to the school, he would go that instant and speak to the woman in the midst of all her scholars. Henry in vain represented that this would not be a prudent mode of proceeding.

Forester disdained prudence, and, trusting securely to the power of his own eloquence, he set out with the child, who seemed rather afraid to come to open war with her tyrant. Henry was obliged to return home to his father, who had usually business for him to do about this time. The little girl had stayed at home on account of her grandmother's illness, but all the other scholars were hard at work, spinning in a close room, when Forester arrived.

He marched directly into the schoolroom. The wheels stopped at once on his appearance, and the schoolmistress, a raw-boned, intrepid-looking woman eyed him with amazement: he broke silence in the following words:—

"Vile woman, your injustice is come to light! How can you dare to tyrannize over these poor children? Is it because they are poor?"

Take my advice, children, resist this tyrant, put by your wheels, and spin for her no more."

The children did not move, and the schoolmistress poured out a torrent of abuse in broad Scotch, which, to the English ear of Forester, was unintelligible. At length she made him comprehend her principal questions—Who he was? and by whose authority he interfered between her and her scholars? "By nobody's authority," was Forester's answer; "I want no authority to speak in the cause of injured innocence." No sooner had the woman heard these words, than she called to her husband, who was writing in an adjoining room: without further ceremony, they both seized upon our hero, and turned him out of the house.

The woman revenged herself without mercy upon the little girl whom Forester had attempted to defend, and dismissed her, with advice never more to complain of being obliged to spin for her mistress.

Mortified by the ill success of his enterprise, Forester returned home, attributing the failure of his eloquence chiefly to his ignorance of the Scotch dialect.

THE CANARY BIRD

At his return, Forester heard, that all Dr. Campbell's family were going that evening to visit a gentleman who had an excellent cabinet of minerals. He had some desire to see the fossils; but when he came to the gentleman's house, he soon found himself disturbed at the praises bestowed by some ladies in company upon a little canary bird, which belonged to the mistress of the house. He began to kick his feet together, to hang first one arm and then the other over the back of his chair, with the obvious expression of impatience and contempt in his countenance. Henry Campbell, in the meantime, said, without any embarrassment, just what he thought about the bird. Archibald Mackenzie, with artificial admiration, said a vast deal more than he thought, in hopes of effectually recommending himself to the lady of the house. The

lady told him the history of three birds, which had successively inhabited the cage before the present occupier. "They all died," continued she, "in a most *extraordinary* manner, one after another, in a short space of time, in convulsions."

"Don't listen," whispered Forester, pulling Henry away from the crowd who surrounded the bird-cage; "how can you listen, like that polite hypocrite, to this foolish woman's history of her *extraordinary* favourites? Come down-stairs with me, I want to tell you my adventure with the schoolmistress; we can take a turn in the hall, and come back before the cabinet of minerals is opened, and before these women have finished the ceremony of tea. Come."

"I'll come presently," said Henry; "I really want to hear this."

Henry Campbell was not listening to the history of the lady's favourite birds like a polite hypocrite, but like a good-natured sensible person; the circumstances recalled to his memory the conversation that we formerly mentioned, which began about pickled cucumbers, and ended with Dr. Campbell's giving an account of the effects of some poisons. In consequence of this conversation, Henry's attention had been turned to the subject, and he had read several essays, which had informed him of many curious facts. He recollected, in particular, to have met with the account² of a bird that had been poisoned, and whose case bore a strong resemblance to the present. He begged leave to examine the cage, in order to discover whether there were any lead about it, with which the birds could have poisoned themselves. No lead was to be found: he next examined whether there were any white or green paint about it; he inquired whence the water came which the birds had drunk; and he examined the trough which held their seeds. The lady, whilst he was pursuing these inquiries, said she was sure that the birds could not have died either for want of air or exercise, for that she often left the cage open on purpose, that they might fly about the room. Henry immediately looked round the room, and at length he observed in an inkstand, which stood