





“ I THINK THIS BELONGS TO YOU, SIR. ”

RIGHT  
IS RIGHT.

Part the Second.



“HAPPY DAYS.”

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LONDON:

GEORGE BRIDGE AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW.

# Right is Right.

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## CHAPTER I.

### FANNY IN THE COUNTRY.

OLD COURT, in Sussex, is a large farmhouse, and, as its name would lead us to suppose, it is an old one also. It is built on a hill, four or five miles distant from the sea-coast, nicely sheltered, however, from the cold sea breezes, by a fine plantation of firs. On one side of the house is the farm-yard, with its barns, granaries, stables, and stacks; on the other, separated from it only by a narrow road, is the village church-yard, with its green grave-mounds and white tomb-stones, and ancient gray church, covered from foundation to tower top, with a thick great coat of ivy. Lower in the valley is the village itself, which is just a small cluster of cottages with white-washed walls, straw thatched roofs, and red-bricked chimneys, so big in comparison with the cottages themselves, that one is apt to suppose there can be room inside for nothing but fire-places. Near the church is a pretty parsonage-house, which looks partly into the farm-

yard of Old Court, and partly across the country for miles and miles, over rich meadows, fields, and hop-gardens, two or three towns, and more than a dozen villages, until earth and sky seem to meet, and almost to fade, the one into the other. A beautiful part of England is Sussex, and Old Court is in one of the finest portions of it.

Twenty-five years ago, the pretty parsonage-house just mentioned was inhabited by a little elderly gentleman, who had been for many years the parish clergyman. A lonely life he must have led there ; for his whole household consisted of an old deaf housekeeper, and a servant-maid, while it was a very rare occurrence for him either to visit his neighbours, or to be visited by them. No one knew much of Mr. Herbert—for that was the vicar's name—except that he was very kind to the poor, especially when they were sick, and to the children in the village, for whom he had always a kind word whenever he met them.

It was not often, however, that Mr. Herbert was seen, either in the village, or anywhere else, except in church. It was believed that he spent the larger part of his time in his library, which contained many rare old books and fine paintings. Of course, Mr. Herbert was thought to be a very learned man ; and some of the people in the village went so far as to say

that he not only composed his own sermons, but that he wrote many large books ; but what they were, I could never learn. He was very neat in his dress, and rather old-fashioned ; but then, as I said, he was himself elderly. When he did go out, it was in a full suit of black, with rich silk stockings, and bright silver buckles to his low shoes, which were also made to shine like polished ebony. The kerchief round his neck was always tied in one particular fashion, and as to its colour, or its no colour, surely snow could hardly be more pure and white. White also was his hair ; but whether age or hair-powder made it so, who could decide ? Perhaps it was both. He was generally very grave, and rather slow in speech ; but sometimes he laid aside or forgot these habits, and could laugh and chat like a child ; but this was when he was in the company of children.

What a different sort of person was Mr. Bell, over the road, at Old Court Farm ! and what a different kind of house from the parsonage was that same farm ! Fancy, in the first place, a short, fat, red-faced, brown-haired, and very happy-looking man, in thick laced boots, leather gaiters, and white round frock, such as Sussex farmers delight to wear ; and, in the second place, a perpetual movement of men and maids, ducks, geese and hens, pigs and dogs, cows, oxen, and horses, with all their various voices. Fancying all this,

you will have before you Mr. Bell himself, and Mr. Bell's farm-yard, into which Mr. Herbert had the privilege of a full view at any time of the day, from the window—or one of the windows—of his library.

In one particular, however, the parsonage-house and Old Court Farm were alike. As in the one there was no Mrs. Herbert, so, in the other there was no Mrs. Bell, for the farmer had never thought fit to marry.

One afternoon, in the month of May, as the little clergyman was sitting in his library, he saw the farmer, dressed in his best, ride out of the farm-yard in the old-fashioned chaise which he was in the habit of using, when, on market-days, he went to market, and in which he also rode every Sunday to a chapel about four miles from his farm. But as this particular day was neither market-day nor Sunday, and as besides this, it was afternoon, and not morning, Mr. Herbert, perhaps for a full minute, forgot what he was before thinking about, to wonder where his neighbour Bell could be going. The sound of the wheels, however, was soon lost in the distance, and Mr. Herbert almost at the same time, left off wondering about Mr. Bell.

About two hours later, on the same afternoon, the chaise was again heard, and this time, drawing nearer and nearer to the farm. Once more Mr. Herbert, who was still in his favourite library, lifted

his eyes, and soon perceived that Mr. Bell had not returned alone. Indeed, the chaise was pretty well filled, for there were two or three trunks, two bonnet-boxes, and, what was more, there were two ladies, to whom all this luggage doubtless belonged. One of these was a middle-aged person, as far as Mr. Herbert could judge. She seemed to be in bad health, or at least to be suffering from great weakness. Her face was very pale, and when the chaise stopped at the front gates of Old Court Farm, she had to be almost lifted out of it by Mr. Bell, who carefully supported her to the hall door.

The other stranger was a little girl, perhaps about nine or ten years old. With her, at any rate, there was nothing the matter, if plump cheeks, dimpled chin, and laughing bright eyes, go for anything at all in the way of tale-telling. She sprang out of the chaise with a quick, light step, and tripping up the path behind the sick lady, left Tom, the stable-man, who was holding the horse's head, to take what care he pleased of trunks and bonnet-boxes.

All this Mr. Herbert observed before he once called to mind that he was acting rather unpolitely. He then, with a soft sigh, quietly drew down his blind, and betook himself again to the book he had before been reading; but not until he remembered having heard some days before that Mr. Bell had a sister in London who,



having been dangerously ill, was expected to visit Old Court farm for the sake of her health. This lady no doubt was that sister, and the little girl might be her daughter.

A few days after this arrival, Mr. Herbert was walking across a meadow behind Mr. Bell's farm-yard, when the same little girl whom he had seen get out of the chaise, ran after him. She ran so nimbly and softly that she was close behind the old gentleman before he noticed her.

'Sir, sir,' she eagerly cried out, 'I think this belongs to you, sir, does it not?'

The gentleman turned round. 'What is it, my little maid?' he asked.

'This, this, sir,' she answered, holding out as far as her short arm could stretch, a small and very elegant silver pencil case.

'Indeed it does belong to me,' he replied. 'I must have been very careless to drop it. But where did you pick it up my dear little girl, and what made you think it to be mine?'

'O, I was almost sure it was yours, for no one but you has been in this meadow since I came into it; and I found it quite on the path, where I am sure it was not just now. I am so glad I found it,' she said.

'And I am very glad too,' replied Mr. Herbert, 'for I should have been sorry to lose my pencil in such a careless manner. And yet, how could it have escaped from my pocket?'——'Ah,' he continued, after feeling his waistcoat——'Ah, there is a little

naughty hole here I find. I am glad, my dear child, that you did not wish to keep what you found.'

'Oh sir, that would not have been right. It does not belong to me you know.'

'And if it had not been mine ; or if you had not seen me, would you then have kept it ?

'No indeed, sir, that would not have been right either. I should—I should have asked mama what to do,—or uncle Bell.'

So Mr. Bell is your uncle, and your mama is the lady whom I saw getting out of Mr. Bell's chaise a few days ago ? am I right ?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I am glad of that,' said Mr. Herbert ; for Mr. Bell and myself are very good friends, and I think he will let me make friends with you if I ask him : and your mama also ; but I fear she is not well ?'

'She has been ill—very ill indeed, sir,' replied the little girl, with tears in her eyes ; 'but she is better, *ever so much* better now, sir. She says she gets stronger every day. I came out to gather a bunch of cowslips for her. Mama is *so* fond of cowslips.'

'That is right—quite right, young lady. And do you think your dear mama would like any other kind of flowers ?'

'I do not know, sir ; uncle Bell has plenty of flowers in his garden, only mama does so like wild cowslips.'

‘Well, I will not offer you a nosegay, then. But do you think your mama would let me call on her some day?’

‘O yes, sir,—at least, I dare say she would. But I do not know who you are, sir.’

Mr. Herbert smiled.—‘Very true, my dear little girl. But your uncle knows me. Will you give Mr. Herbert’s respects to him, and tell him that I have made acquaintance with you, and that I hope he will introduce me to mama?’

The little girl curtsied, and was running off—

‘Stop, my child; I have told you my name; now will you let me know yours?’

‘Fanny—Fanny Mason, sir.’

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It is astonishing how soon some persons seem to understand and like each other when they happen to be brought together. Mr. Herbert did not fail to make his promised call upon Mrs. Mason; and he had not been half-an-hour in her company before they were conversing with each other like old friends. After this, once, at least, and often twice a week, the prim clergyman was sure to step across the road to spend an hour with the visitor at Old Court.

And oftener—much oftener—than twice a week,—for it soon came to be of daily occurrence—did Fanny and Mr. Herbert

meet, and exchange a few kind words. Sometimes he would invite her to walk round his little garden, and see his choice flowers—he was very fond of flowers—and his bees, with their glass hives, through which the little girl could observe their busy proceedings. Now and then, the kind clergyman and his young friend were seen strolling together into the fields, very busy—almost as busy as bees—in searching for rare and curious plants and flowers. There was one, especially, which Fanny thought the most extraordinary thing she had ever seen. This was the Bee-Orchis. It was quite amusing to see the white-headed old gentleman, with a garden trowel in his hand, hunting over the fields, from corner to corner, with the bright-eyed, eager little girl close at his heels, and to hear them both uttering cries of pleasure when another specimen was carefully placed in the little basket she carried. Those were happy days for Fanny, which she thought of many years afterwards—which I believe she often thinks of now with delight. They were especially nappy, because of the many useful and agreeable stories which she heard from her kind companion, and because, also, every day she knew her mother was becoming stronger, and would soon, she hoped, join them in their rambles.

Mr. Herbert was, for his part, as happy as Fanny. He found that he had made acquaintance, not only with a merry,

honest little girl, but with one who, for her age, was both clever and useful. He was surprised that she knew so much of what is in books and of what is not in books; and he judged rightly that much pains had been taken in teaching her all that she knew. It was this that made him say to her one day,—

‘ You must come and see me in my library. I have a few books that I think you would like to read—some which perhaps you have never seen: and there are some pictures which I am sure would please you. I must ask your mama if she can spare you for a whole afternoon.’

Nothing surely could have happened better! The very next day was showery; and Mr. Herbert, mindful of his promise, managed to dine earlier than usual, and to step across the road himself, to make sure of his visitor, taking care to wrap her in a cloak, that she might not get wet.

The little girl was mightily pleased. She had never seen so many books before—not in one room at least; and she wondered whether it really could be that one person had read them all.

But there was one set of books which took almost all of her time and attention that afternoon. They were full of beautifully coloured plates of flowers and fruit. Full of information were they too, about the where, and the when, and the how, of plants and flowers, trees and fruit.

Mr. Herbert waited very patiently while Fanny turned leaf after leaf of these wonderful books; and kindly explained, as they went on, much that they contained. He described to her the different parts of a flower, and taught her the names by which they are called by *botanists*, or persons who make plants their study. At length, when Fanny seemed almost tired of this amusement, Mr. Herbert told her he would send the books across to Old Court, for her to look at while she remained in the country.

‘And now,’ he said, ‘I have something else to show you.’ Then he went to a closet, and took from it what is called a portfolio, which he laid upon the table, and opened.

‘See,’ he said, ‘here are some drawings and paintings which will please you.’

He then showed them, one by one to the little girl, talking to her all the while.

‘This windmill I drew when I was a boy, and that was more than fifty years ago. Then I had a dear little sister, as well as kind parents. Alas, alas! they are no longer in this world; see, here is a painting of the church-yard, in which they lie buried. *That* is their tomb. I did not draw this myself. I tried many times, but could not. My hand would not keep steady; so I got a friend to take the mournful sketch for me.’

‘This basket of flowers, I painted about forty years ago. Ah, the flowers soon

withered ; and the hand that painted them is withering also.'

'And this,' exclaimed Fanny ; 'did you paint this too, sir ?'

It was a beautiful painting which she held in her hand—a painting of rich and rare fruit. Fanny did not at first observe that whoever had begun, had never quite finished the painting ; but she did notice how much her kind old friend's hand trembled when he gently laid it on her arm, and caused her to stand by him, with the painting still in her hand, as he spoke :—

'Listen, my dear, happy young friend. There was once—ah, it seems but yesterday, and yet it was more than forty years ago—there was once, a long way from this village, a very happy home. It was the home of a young minister who had a kind, gentle, loving wife, and a darling little girl, at that time about three years old. It pleased God then to make that young man feel that no happiness in this world is sure and lasting. Sickness came, and then death. The young mother was taken away to her better home in heaven ; while little Mary and her father were left behind for a time, full of grief at the loss they had to bear.'

Tears now began to come into Fanny's eyes ; she thought of her own dear mama, and how sad it would have been had *she* died at the time she was so very, very ill.

'You may think,' Mr. Herbert con-

tinued, 'what a great loss this was to poor little Mary. But she soon became cheerful again—for sorrows do not last long with such little ones—and before long she was a very great comfort to her father. She grew up to be a good obedient child. It was very rarely indeed that she vexed or grieved any one. I believe the reason of this was that her Heavenly Father kept her from sin, and put the love of wisdom and piety in her soul,—else she might have become a shame and sorrow instead of a comfort to her earthly parent. Do you understand this, my dear young lady?'

Yes, Fanny thought she did partly understand it; for her own parents had shown her, again and again, that we need the help of God to do any thing right and acceptable to Him.

'I cannot tell you, Mr. Herbert went on to say; 'how much happiness little Mary brought back to her father, who never felt lonely when she was by. You will not be surprised, therefore, that he liked to keep her near him, and that instead of sending her to school, away from her home, he had a teacher for her in his own house, and that he himself took pleasure in giving her what instructions he was able. By-and-by, Mary was no longer a child, and the older she became, the more reason did her father see for thanking God for such a precious gift to him. But no: it was not a gift—Mary was only put into that father's



care for a time ; and the time soon came when she too was to be restored to her Father in Heaven.

‘ One day, when nearly fifteen years old, Mary was sitting in her father’s study—her favourite place. She hoped that day to finish a picture which had been her occupation for many weeks, and was intended as a present to her father on her birth-day. He stood then by her side, looking at the beautiful colours she was laying on, and helping her a little with his advice—for it was he who had first taught her how to draw and colour :—well, he was looking on, when all at once she laid down her pencil, and said in a low tone,—“ Papa, I cannot do any more now. My head is in such pain.”

‘ I cannot go on with this little history any farther, my child,’ said Mr. Herbert, in a mournful voice ; ‘ only to say that dear Mary never took a pencil in her hand again. In a few weeks she was laid in her mother’s grave ; and since then, the greatest pleasure on earth that her poor lonely father has felt, is in the thought that both Mary and her mother are where sorrow and sickness can never come ; that their spirits are in heaven with Christ their Saviour.’

Fanny looked inquiringly into the face of her kind companion. It was a look which seemed to say,—‘ I wonder whether you have been talking about yourself now ?’

At least, Mr. Herbert took her to mean as much.

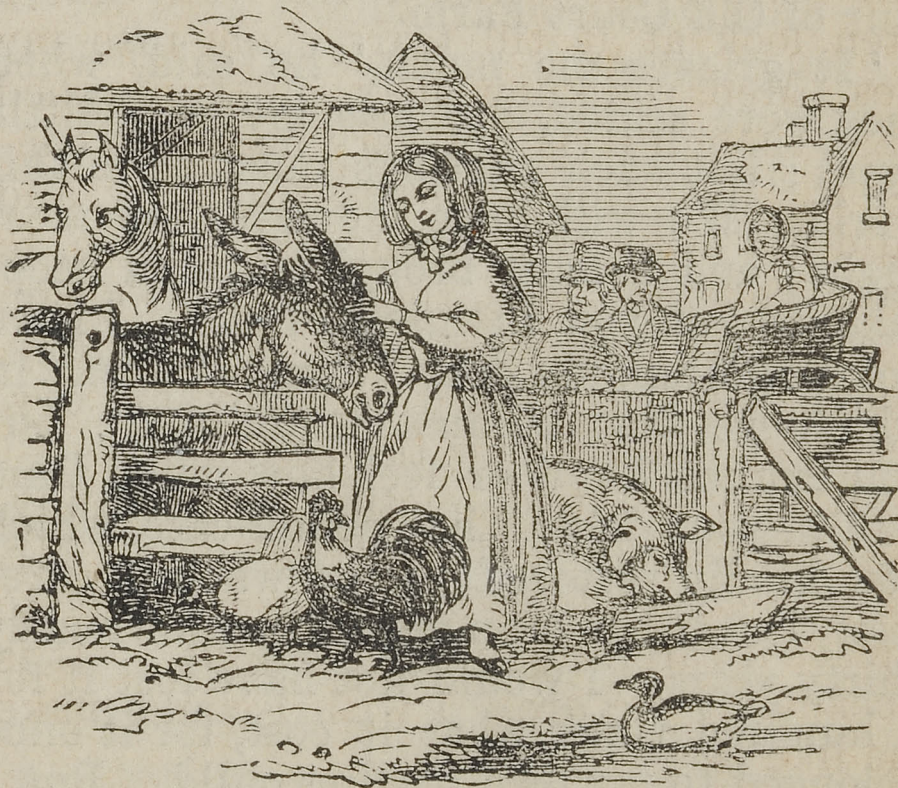
‘Yes,’ he said; ‘she was *my* Mary; and the picture you now hold in your hand is the picture which, twenty-eight years ago, she began, but never finished. See, that bunch of grapes was the last she was at work upon. *There*, on that one grape is the last touch she gave; all the others below, you see are not completed. And now you do not wonder, do you?—that I prize this painting very highly; and you will believe me when I tell you that I often look at it till tears come into my eyes. Men, you know, may sometimes shed tears, though it is not very manly to confess it. Well, this is a sorrowful story, and I did not ask you to come and see me, to make you sad. See, there is a fine gleam of sunshine to close in this showery day, and the garden paths, I dare say, are dry. Let us go and see how the bees do.’

‘It is a beautiful picture,’ said Fanny, half to herself, and half aloud, as Mr. Herbert gently took it from her hands to replace it carefully in the portfolio. ‘It is a beautiful picture. I wish I could make one like it.’

‘Do you really wish so?’ said Mr. Herbert, in a voice that sounded gladly. ‘And would you like to learn? And could your dear mama trust me to teach you until she returns home and is able to attend again to such things herself?’

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June, July, August passed away, and still Fanny and her mother remained at Old Court Farm. At length, towards the end of September, every thing was got ready for their return home. The very next day, uncle Bell was to take them in his chaise to the London Road, and see them safely in the coach ; and I am happy to say that Mrs. Mason was now so well and strong that there was no need of lifting her either into or out of coach or chaise.



Only one thing more remained for Fanny to do, after she had, for the last time, gone round the farm, and said 'good-bye' to geese, chickens, cows, horses, and donkey—which last animal, by the way, had become a great favourite with her, for it had

trotted with her upon its back, many a mile, without showing any stubbornness or discontent. Well, there was one more 'good-bye' to say that evening; so while mama was busy in putting clothes into trunks, and bonnets into bonnet-boxes, Fanny prepared to run across the road to the parsonage. But before she had reached the garden gate, she was met by Mr. Herbert himself, carrying in his hand a parcel carefully wrapped in a silk handkerchief. So she returned with him to the best parlour of Old Court Farm.

'It grieves me much,' he said, when they were seated, 'to lose my good little pupil; but such partings must be in this world. We will hope, however, to meet again; and I have brought a small keepsake, to put you in mind of me. I have not forgotten, my dear Fanny, the way in which we first became acquainted; but you cannot know or feel how much I am still in your debt. That pencil-case, which you kindly restored to me when I carelessly lost it, has been my companion nearly thirty years. I would not have lost it for a hundred times what it cost, for it once belonged to my own darling child. But I shall not speak of this now. Will you please to accept what it gives me great pleasure to offer you?'

It was a very handsome colour-box, with every thing necessary for a young artist.

Fanny's face flushed with pleasure and

gratitude when she saw the gift. She had never once thought of receiving any reward for her little act of honesty. Besides, had not Mr. Herbert taken great pains with her in teaching her, as well as given her and her mama very much of his pleasant society.

Mr. Herbert was pleased that the little girl was pleased. He told her that she must not forget what he had endeavoured to teach her, for that some day he should visit London—he had a relation in London not far from Fanny's home—and that then he would expect a fine drawing or painting as a keepsake from her. He asked permission, also, to write now and then to her; and got her to promise that she would write to him in return.

The kind clergyman, moreover, had not forgotten that Fanny had told him of a brother Edward, and a sister Sarah—dear blind Sarah—and for both of these he had put up a little gift, if Fanny would be so kind as to be the bearer of them, with his love.

It was an hour after this that Mr. Herbert left Old Court; for he had a good long conversation with Fanny's mother and uncle. And when he at last rose to leave the room, and kissing his little friend, solemnly prayed that God would bless her, and keep her in the ways of pleasantness and peace, I am sure you will not wonder that Fanny felt sad and sorrowful, though

she was the possessor of the most beautiful and complete box of colours she had ever seen.

But thoughts of home soon dispelled her sadness ; and in less than twenty-four hours, Fanny, with her mother, found themselves once more in their pleasant London home ; and her father, her brother Edward, and dear sister Sarah, listening to all the pleasant things she had to tell about her uncle, her uncle's farm, Mr. Herbert, his church, his garden, and his bees, and her old quiet, good-tempered friend, the donkey.



## CHAPTER II.

## A MYSTERY.

ONE evening, about four years after Fanny's return from Old Court Farm, her brother Edward, now nearly eighteen years old, was returning from the city:— but first of all, I ought to explain what business Edward Mason had in the city, the city of London— great, big, ugly London, as he had once called it.

I must tell you then that, very soon after a certain visit he had made, in company with his dear blind sister Sarah, to the house of a certain tea-merchant, Mr. Tierney, that gentleman offered to take Edward into his employment for three or four years, so as to fit him for becoming either a warehouseman, or a counting-house clerk, like his father.

No one could be more surprised at this kind offer than Edward himself, for he had quite believed that Mr. Tierney could think of him only with pity, if not with contempt. Edward did not at this time know, or fully understand, what I wish every boy and girl could and would understand—that no person whose opinion is worth having, ever thinks contemptibly of another for doing right, even when that right-doing is caused by some former wrong-doing.

Mr. Tierney's offer was too kind and good to be slighted; and though Mr. Mason had intended to keep Edward at school a little longer, it was at once settled that as soon as his fourteenth birthday came, he should begin his new duties as a boy of business.

And Edward had worked hard during the four years he had been employed by Mr. Tierney. He had done so for his own sake and his parents'; for he knew that he had little to look forward to in life but his own industry for his own help, while he desired not only to be able to provide for himself, but also to assist his parents, at least in providing for his sisters. The thought of them was at any time enough to stir this affectionate brother up to fresh diligence. Edward worked hard also, just because it was his duty to do so, and because it was required of him. Mr. Tierney was a generous man, and a man of good sense. At times, too, he was kind and affable: but Edward found out before long how different, in many respects, he was from his own father. All the persons in his employment felt it to be a very difficult thing to please Mr. Tierney;—he expected too much from them, and when all was done, he rarely seemed satisfied.

Edward, during these four years, had had many little troubles on account of this unhappy disposition in his employer. He would have thought it less strange, and



easier to be borne, had he known, what indeed was the case, that much of Mr. Tierney's uncomfortable and disheartening discontent was caused by ill health, and real bodily suffering. But Edward did not then know this, for Mr. Tierney never complained of being unwell ; and he was ready sometimes to say, ' Well, I never can please him, and so I might as well not try.'

But Edward did try, notwithstanding ; for he had his parents and his sisters too—especially dear blind Sarah,—to encourage him ; so that though he often returned home at night half worn out with his day's vexation, he was able to return to business again in the morning, with a fresh determination to struggle on manfully, and overcome every difficulty. ' Do not forget your old motto, my boy,' Edward's father used sometimes to say to him. ' Do not forget that " Right is Right." Only do what is right, and leave all things else to take their course.'

If it could have been told that, though Mr. Tierney was sometimes testy and sometimes almost unreasonable, there was not a person, young or old, in his warehouses or counting-house for whom he felt greater esteem than for Edward Mason—there was not one whom he would more willingly trust than that same lad—many a heart-ache would perhaps have been saved in those four years of servitude and trial. But I am inclined to think it

was best as it was, and that Edward Mason, when he was within a week of the time at which his four years' engagement would come to an end, had no means of knowing whether or not he had given satisfaction to his employer, nor whether that employer had any wish to keep him.

'I had rather,' he said to his sister Sarah, one day; 'I certainly had much rather remain with Mr. Tierney than go anywhere else; for though he is sometimes harsh and hasty, I cannot help respecting him; besides that it was kind, and very kind of him to take me when I was a boy. But if he does not need me any longer, I have no fear of wanting employment long. I have already had a situation offered me!'

'Indeed!' said Sarah.

'Yes,' replied her brother, 'Mr. Brown, in Fenchurch Street, asked me yesterday if I were going to leave Mr. Tierney.'

'Brown—Brown—' said Sarah; 'any relation to the boy you went to school with?'

'His father.—Ah, poor Tom, he does not go on well, somehow. I fancy he never learned to know that "Right is right."—Well, Mr. Brown offers me sixty pounds for the first year, if I will take a clerk's place, and engages to double the salary at the end of two years, if we can agree. But I do not altogether like it. In fact I would prefer remaining where I am if I can.'

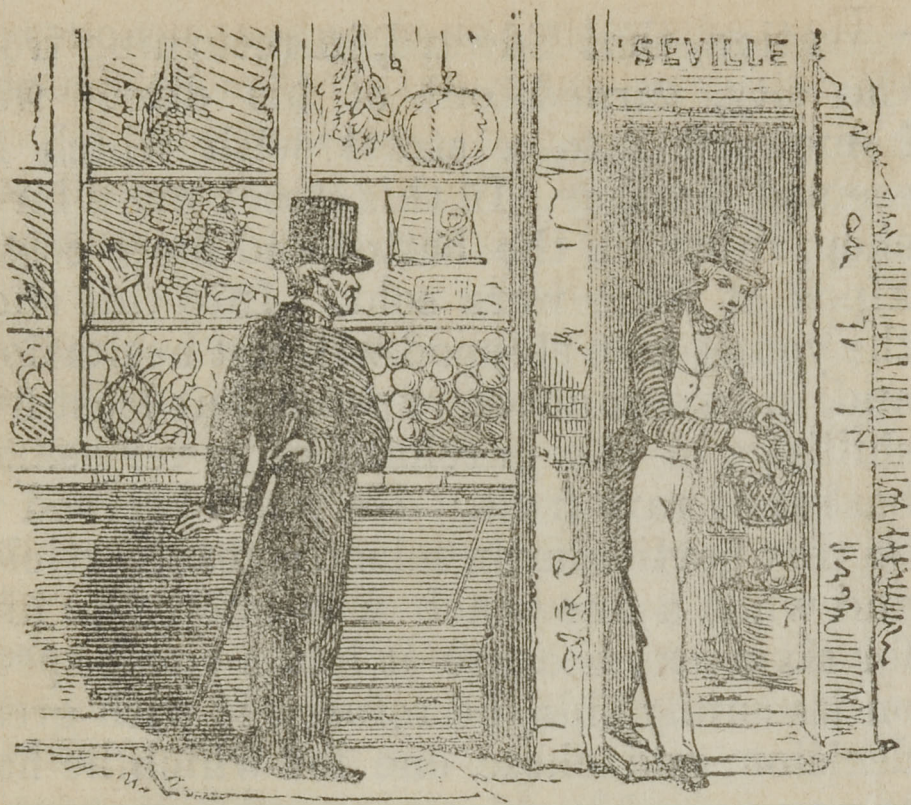
It was a few evenings after this con-

versation, that Edward, in returning from the city, turned out of his direct way homeward into a street with which he seemed familiar. In this street was a large shop, in which the better and more costly kinds of fruit were sold. Into this shop the young man stepped without hesitation, and, in two minutes, expended at least five shillings in the purchase of a very small basket of rare fruit. He was observed to be very particular in selecting each article; and when a fine peach was offered to him for sixpence, because it had a small speck on its sunny side, he refused it with great decision, and chose one for which he had to pay a double price.

Having thus completed his purchases, which he carefully covered with vine and lettuce leaves, he threw down his five shillings with great apparent indifference, and passing from the shop, hurried on as fast as he could walk, taking care, however, to carry the little basket of fruit so as not to attract the attention of those he met:—so, at least, thought one person, who, in looking through the window, had secretly witnessed his proceedings in the fruit-shop.

Edward Mason had not long left the fruit-shop when another gentleman entered. He seemed in a great hurry, and did not look remarkably good-tempered just then. He tried, however, to speak pleasantly.

‘You have some fine peaches ma’am. What is the price?’



On hearing the reply, he said—

‘Dear, dear, very dear, ma’am. A high price for a sweet mouthful.’

‘They are scarce, at present, sir,’ the shop-woman replied. ‘It is early for peaches yet; and this has been a bad season for ripening.’

‘Um,’—said the gentleman: ‘well I must do without peaches then until they can ripen quicker. Let me have half-a-pound of filberts. By the way, I saw a young gentleman leave your shop a minute or two ago. Do you know him?’

‘No, sir, I do not,’ she answered; ‘but I fancy he lives somewhere in this neighbourhood.’

‘He frequently visits you then, eh?’

‘Rather often of late, sir.’

‘He seems rather choice about peaches;’ said the gentleman, with a kind of laugh or sneer—it was hard to tell which.

‘Yes, sir, he is rather: but he seems to be able to afford the best; so we have no right to find fault.’

‘True, true,’ replied the customer; and this time, no one could doubt that he sneered:—‘so he spends his money freely, does he?’

By this time the shop-woman began to think that she had no right to talk to one customer about another. She therefore gave an answer which seemed very little to please the inquisitive gentleman, who, finding he could not obtain all the information he wished, left the shop in quite as angry a mood as he entered it.

‘So, so,’ muttered Mr. Tierney to himself, as he walked homewards—for he it was who, unknown to Edward, had chanced to see him making his extravagant purchase:—‘So, so; a fortunate thing that I passed by just when I did. Only to think of it! a shilling for a peach! why, I, even I, never did, and never will give such an enormous price. Five shillings for trash—mere trash! why, when I was his age, though twenty times better able to afford it, it did not cost me five shillings a-quarter for fruit. Five shillings a-quarter! no, nor five shillings a-year.’

‘A shilling for a peach! I am glad and sorry both. Lucky for me it is, that

I have found it out in time : but, unless I had seen it with my own eyes, I could not have thought it. I had a better opinion of the lad. So saving as he has seemed to be too ; and so industrious and sober, I must say *that* for him, come what will ; but—a shilling for a peach !—a boy, too, whom I took almost for nothing, because I thought his father was poor and honest. Well, I am sorry, really sorry for poor Mason. He cannot know, at all events, how extravagant his son is. I have a good mind to tell him, but—no, no, no ; never interfere in family matters. That is my system, and a good one too.

‘ A shilling for a peach ! Five shillings in one night for trash ; and how much more on any other night in the week who can tell ! The woman said she saw him rather often. Oh, my poor, poor, cash-box, if Master Edward had got his fingers in as I intended, good-bye it would have been to the shillings and pounds too, I guess. Well, well ; I believe I am all right so far. It surely could not have been *my* money he has spent hitherto. I will take care of the future. I must fill up his place, though ; that is certain. There are my own boys,—ah, that will do. They must come in a little sooner than I intended, that will be all. And let me catch them at this work. A shilling for a peach—a single peach !’

## CHAPTER III.

## THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

IF Mr. Tierney could, or rather, if he *would*, but have looked in upon Edward at his home that evening, he might have been satisfied that the money he had seen spent, had not, at any rate, been squandered in self-indulgence. But the truth is, though Mr. Tierney did not himself know it, he was in one of his most uncharitable, dissatisfied moods that night. And perhaps the reason of this might be that he was more than usually unwell. Not that this is a full excuse for ill-temper or hasty temper, because every person should guard against the particular temptation which most besets them, or the one fault to which they are most liable ; and it is every one's duty to himself, to find out what that temptation or fault is. But we must not be hard upon this gentleman, lest somebody should say in our ears,

'The faults of your neighbour with freedom you blame,  
But tax not yourself, though you practice the same.'

In one thing Mr. Tierney was right ; for if, indeed, a young man like Edward

Mason, could squander five shillings at a time in the mere indulgence of a pampered appetite, there would be little hope of any future good in him,—at least till that fault were amended.

But Edward Mason had not acted so foolishly. He no sooner reached home than, going straight into the little sitting-room, he carefully uncovered his dear-bought fruit, and exclaimed,—

‘Here Fanny, is the very thing you wanted to make your painting complete. Is not the peach a perfect beauty?’

‘It is indeed, dear Edward; and what fine green-gages and apricots! I only hope I shall be able to make it worth your while to have spent so much money upon me. It is very, very kind of you.’

‘You must work hard, my little lady,’ Edward continued, ‘or Mr. Herbert will be here before you are ready for him.’

‘Fanny does work hard, Edward,’ said Mrs. Mason; ‘you must see what she did before you were out of bed this morning.’

‘But Edward,’ said his father, ‘you really ought not to be at all this cost yourself. Do let me bear a part of it.’

‘Not a shilling, father; not a penny; you know that was our bargain from the beginning. The cost is nothing—nothing to speak of. At any rate, I can save it in some way or other;—but mama,’ continued he, ‘there is one favour I have to ask of *you*.’



‘What is it, Edward? You know I never make promises in the dark.’

‘Why, you know the mornings are getting cold and dark, and poor Fanny is in great fear lest her old friend should make his appearance before she is ready for him. So I think if you would give her two or three hours in the day—what you call *working* hours—I for one shall be obliged to you—very much obliged indeed.’

‘And your new shirts, Edward,—what will you say if they are not finished?’

‘Why, that I will very gladly wear my old ones threadbare. Come now, mama, you will promise, will you not?’

‘Mama has already promised,’ said Sarah; ‘we made a bargain about that before you came in; and you will not have to wait long for your shirts either. Mama would be as greatly disappointed as any of us if Fanny were not ready in time.’

‘And I, for another,’ exclaimed Mr. Mason, with a good-humoured laugh, ‘am glad of this new arrangement. It will be advantageous to all parties, I think.’

‘Why, what good will it do you, papa?’

‘Good!—I shall not have to wait so long before I can taste the fruit which makes my mouth water every time I see it. And when I get Fanny’s gracious permission to put my teeth into it, it will not be stale and half-rotten, as that pear was which the mischievous puss made me a fine present of only yesterday.—Pah!’

‘Do not believe him, Edward,’ said Fanny. ‘Papa *would* take the only part of it that was rotten—and that was not rotten, only a little sleepy. He made me eat the rest. And very nice it was. And you need not be afraid, dear Edward, that I shall not finish the painting. Another fortnight will do it, especially now that mama will not mind my working at it a little in the afternoon ; and it will be just a month before Mr. Herbert comes to London. I had another letter from him this morning.’

‘Well, I shall be glad to see him at last,’ replied Edward : ‘he has been a long time talking of this journey. I wonder whether he does everything as deliberately.’

‘Not a word against Mr. Herbert,’ said Fanny quickly ; ‘you are not even to laugh at his old-fashioned shoe-buckles. He is a kind, good, dear old friend.’

I shall not write any more of this conversation, which if Mr. Tierney had heard :—

But Mr. Tierney did not hear it ; and when Edward returned from the city the following evening, he brought the news, which grieved more than surprised his parents and his sisters, that he should, next week, cease to be in that gentleman’s employment. The next thing was to consider Mr. Brown’s offer, which was thought to be too good to be refused : and so, without the loss of a day, Edward quietly

transferred his services from Mr. Tierney's tea warehouses, to the counting-house in Fenchurch Street, where we must for a little while leave him.

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A month soon passes, whether well or ill-employed. But to Fanny this particular month appeared to glide away less rapidly than usual, for her painting was finished—and not only finished, but framed and glazed, before her old friend, Mr. Herbert, made his appearance: and, if deliberate, he was this time punctual.

At length, one morning, a knock was heard at the door, and Fanny, who was very knowing in door-knocks, exclaimed, 'I am sure that is Mr. Herbert!'

Yes it was the kind old clergyman, powdered hair, shoe-buckles and all, only that the buckles were covered by stout black gaiters.

I cannot tell you all that passed at this morning visit. Of course, Mr. Herbert was older than when he last said 'Good-bye' to Fanny and her mother; but he did not look older. Of course, also, Fanny was older, and she showed all the difference that four years would be likely to make in a young lady who had been ten, but was now fourteen years of age. And fourteen, you may be sure, had a kind warm welcome for seventy; and seventy did not think it any harm—no, not the

least—to stroke the glossy hair, and kiss the willing lips of fourteen.

Well, we may fancy them—Mr. Herbert, Fanny, Fanny's mother and dear blind Sarah, comfortably seated by a good London fire—for it was October, and near the end of it too—happily chatting about Old Court, and old times at Old Court, and about the drawing lessons in the library at the parsonage. And then you may be sure that Fanny would take the opportunity of slipping out of the room, and returning with her work of love, and blushing the while, ask her kind old teacher if the trifle were worth his acceptance.

I shall not attempt to describe the pleasure which Mr. Herbert felt on receiving this unexpected gift, nor how his eyes glistened with happy emotion when he saw—and he was not long in finding it out—that the grateful little girl had kept in her memory, for four long years, the unfinished picture which she had seen in his library, and had successfully striven to imitate it. Neither shall I repeat the kind and judicious praises which Fanny received for her very great progress in an art which was still a great source of delight to her aged friend.

All these matters I may pass over, to be filled up according to the fancy of my young readers; but I must not omit to say that this was the first of many, indeed of almost daily visits, which the Masons

received from Mr. Herbert during the two months he remained in London. Nor should I forget to mention that Edward, from the first evening they met, felt no inclination whatever to laugh, even at the old-fashioned shoe-buckles (which were not always hidden by the gaiters) of his sister Fanny's 'kind, good, dear old friend.'

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Mr. Herbert had been some weeks in London, when the gentleman whom he had left his country home to visit, invited a friend or two to dinner. After dinner there was, of course, a dessert, and as this dessert consisted of very choice fruit, it was exceedingly natural that Mr. Herbert should think of Fanny's painting. Thinking about it, it was almost as natural that he should speak of it. And having spoken of it, it was polite, at least in the gentlemen present, to wish to see it. This request, the good-natured clergyman was quite ready to gratify; and a servant was requested to bring it into the dining-room.

When they saw it, the gentlemen praised it—all of them; and I will do them the justice to believe that they really meant what they said, when they pronounced it to be a very beautiful and spirited painting, especially for so young an artist as Mr. Herbert's former pupil.

To a person so benevolent as Mr. Herbert, it was not difficult to speak kindly of

any one ; it was especially easy for him to speak thus of Fanny Mason and her friends ; and he particularly dwelt upon the circumstance, which somehow had come to his knowledge, that the painting they were now looking at, was not copied from other paintings, but that every part of it had been carefully drawn and coloured from nature.

Now it happened that among the gentlemen present was one who was a very great admirer of drawings and paintings. He had been at great expense in purchasing such luxuries, though he would have thought it very great extravagance to give 'a shilling for a peach.' This gentleman had also been exceedingly anxious that his two daughters should excel in this very delightful art ; and he had accordingly engaged an artist of very high character as their teacher.

Now, this same gentleman listened very attentively to all that Mr. Herbert had to say about the young lady who had so well and skilfully executed this picture, — especially noticing what was said about its being drawn from nature. Then he sunk into a kind of reverie, or brown study, from which he presently roused himself to ask,—

'I think you said, sir—I beg your pardon, but I believe you did say,—the name of your young friend is Mason ?'

Mr. Herbert replied that it was.

‘And her brother—I think you say she has a brother? I ought to apologise for putting the question to you; but I have a reason for it.’

‘Yes, she has a brother,’ replied Mr. Herbert—‘a brother Edward; and a fine steady industrious spirited young fellow he is too.’

‘He is, sir,’ said the gentleman; ‘I have reason to know it. Gentlemen, you will excuse my leaving you so early; but I have an engagement which I cannot any longer put off.’ Saying this, he rose from the table, and a few minutes afterwards left the house.

‘Mr. Tierney is not quite well this evening,’ said one of the guests, after the gentleman had left them.

‘He is never well long together, I believe,’ said another. Poor man! he is greatly altered since I first knew him.’

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About half-an-hour later that evening, there was a hasty knock at Mr. Mason’s door; and when it was opened, Mr. Tierney entered.

He had first, a short conversation with Edward, in which all the mystery of the extravagant fruit purchase was explained, so readily and frankly, that Mr. Tierney blamed himself afresh for not seeking that explanation earlier. He then made a liberal offer to Edward for his future services, if

he could honourably give up his new situation. But this was not in Edward's power.

'At any rate,' said Mr. Tierney, 'you will let me know when at any time I can serve you; and if I cannot secure your services, give me the satisfaction and pleasure of feeling that we are friends.'

Edward was willing to do this. He had never felt other than grateful to Mr. Tierney, for his former kindness; and he told him so. And when they shook hands, Mr. Tierney felt sure that Edward had forgotten the unjust suspicions of his former employer.





## CHAPTER IV.

## THE TRIUMPH OF PRINCIPLE.

EDWARD MASON had not been many months employed as the clerk of Mr. Brown, when he discovered that there was much unhappiness in that gentleman's family. This was not because it was a large family, for Mr. Brown was a widower, and his only child was Edward's old school-fellow, Thomas.

One would think that a father and son might live together without constantly quarrelling with each other, especially when surrounded by every comfort that money could procure. But it was not so with the Browns; and Edward saw every day fresh reason to be thankful that *he* was one of a family in which, though there was not much money, there was a great deal of love.

If the truth were known, I fear it would be found that young Brown had been greatly neglected, and at the same time, greatly indulged, when a child—that his habits had not been well formed, nor his principles cared for—so that he grew up to be an obstinate, self-indulgent youth. His father had, indeed, given him a good *school-*

education ; but *home* education had never been attempted or thought of.

And now that Thomas was a young man, he showed a strong determination to have his own way. His father wished him to pay some attention to business ; but this wish was treated with contempt and disobedience. What ! spend his time in poring over day-books and ledgers ? No, he knew a far pleasanter method than that. His father had plenty of money, he knew : and he knew, also, plenty of ways of spending it.

Time passed on ; and Edward Mason advanced, step by step, in the respect of his employer, and in his knowledge of business, until he became the principal clerk in the counting-house, and was entrusted with the management of Mr. Brown's most important affairs. This, however, was the progress, not of months, but of years ; and I wish every boy—yes, and every girl too, who reads this history, to know that the true secret of real excellence, and almost as certainly of prosperity too, is not to despise small things, to be faithful in the least, as well as in larger affairs, and never to forget, but always to act upon the principle that 'Right is right,' even in the most trifling actions of our lives.

As Edward Mason became more and more necessary to his employer, he received such additions to his salary as enabled him to make some return to his parents for all

their past care and kindness ; and I verily believe this gave him more pleasure than any thing else his money could procure.

But while Edward was rising in the esteem of Mr. Brown, his unhappy school-fellow, Thomas, was the source of constant trouble to his father. Whenever he appeared at the counting-house in Fenchurch Street, it was to demand money for some fresh extravagance, or to help him out of some new trouble ; and then a disgraceful quarrel was almost sure to follow. At length these visits came to an end, and it was soon known that Mr. Brown and his son had parted, with a determination never again to see or speak to each other ; and what had become of the miserable young man was not certainly known for two or three years.

At the end of that time, Edward Mason, who had now been seven years in his employer's service, had occasion to take a journey to a distant part of the country ; and, passing through the streets of a large town, fancied he saw a person in the dress of a working-man, whose face was familiar to him. He stopped, and the man stopped also. It was Thomas Brown. Adversity had taught him some lessons of wisdom. He had suffered much, and not in vain. His former habits of idleness and extravagance had been thrown off, and he was now working hard, as a common porter, for half-a-crown a day ; and he told

Edward that he was far happier in that situation than he had ever been in his life before.

Edward urged him to write to his father, and seek his forgiveness—promising to use all his influence with Mr. Brown, to induce him to receive his son again into his favour, and to place him in a situation more suited to his education and former way of life ; and this, after some hesitation, Thomas promised he would do.

But this proper course had been delayed until now it proved too late. Before Edward returned from his journey, he received news that Mr. Brown had been suddenly taken dangerously ill. He immediately returned to London ; but before he arrived, Mr. Brown was scarcely sensible enough to know any one about him ; and after lingering a short time in this state, he expired.

And then was seen how great had been his anger against his prodigal son. When the WILL was read, it was found that about one-half of his property was left to charitable institutions, a few hundreds to distant relations, and the remainder to—Edward Mason. There was not a word, from beginning to end, about the son who, having been first ‘left to himself,’ had brought such bitterness to his father.

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Edward's father and mother, and his

two sisters, a few weeks after Mr. Brown's death, had met together as usual after the business of the day. But it was easy to be seen that something they had upon their minds made them less cheerful than formerly, and that they felt very little inclination to talk to each other. They seemed to be anxiously waiting the arrival of some one, whose absence made them almost impatient. At length, a brisk step was heard on the garden path, and the next minute the door was opened, and Edward entered. There was such happiness in his very look and tone, as he spoke a kind word to each, that the feeling spread at once through the whole family.

'It is all right,' thought Mr. Mason to himself, while Edward's mother wiped away a tear which would come, do what she could to keep it in. It was not a tear of sorrow, though.

'Dear Edward,' said Sarah—blind Sarah—taking her brother's hand, as he sat down beside her—'Dear Edward;—the temptation has not overcome you, I know.'

Edward smiled; but his hand trembled. No one but himself knew how powerful that temptation had been. '*It has not overcome me,*' he said.

'Thank God!' exclaimed Mr. Mason—it was not a vain, thoughtless, and therefore profane expression; but the language of devotion and heart-felt gratitude.—'Thank God!' he repeated, 'that my son

has not been tried beyond what he was able to bear !’

‘And that he has not forgotten,’ Edward added, ‘his own father’s example, and the motto which twenty years ago he learned from that example ;—“ *Right is right.*”’

Just then, another step was heard—another knock at the door—and in walked Mr. Tierney.

‘My good friend Edward, I have heard strange news in the city to-day, and I could not rest without knowing the truth. They tell me that you have given up Mr. Brown’s legacy to his son. Tell me, is it a false report ?’

‘Quite true, sir,’ said Edward ;—‘as an honest man I had no choice left me.’

‘Some others would have thought differently,’ replied Mr. Tierney.

‘I could not think as they do, sir,’ Edward answered : ‘and if I had acted otherwise than I have done, I should expect a curse to cling to me all my life. It would have been money ill-got, sir, and that, I have heard you say, seldom prospers.’

‘And you have kept back absolutely nothing for yourself ?’

‘Nothing,’ replied Edward ; ‘I felt I had no right to do so.’

‘And did young Brown offer nothing ?’

‘No, sir, and I believe he will not. His is one of the cases which sometimes happen, in which a spendthrift becomes miser.’

‘Well, my good friend—my noble friend—and what do you mean to do when the business in Fenchurch Street is disposed of to a stranger, as I hear it is likely to be?’

‘That is the very thing I intended to see you about to-morrow, sir,’ replied Edward: ‘you told me once, you know, to come to you, if you could in any way serve me——’

‘Come to my counting-house to-morrow; come to-morrow Edward, as early as you can make it convenient; and it shall go hard with us both if we cannot strike out some plan for you. Good night now. Good night, sir; good night, madam, and good night young ladies. I broke in upon you abruptly I fear; but you must forgive me. I could not have rested to-night without knowing the truth.

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I have very little more to say; and it shall be said in a very few words.

If you, my dear reader, should lately have walked over London Bridge, towards the borough of Southwark, about nine o’clock in the morning, you may have met, supposing the morning to be fine, an elderly gentleman with white hair, and a fine open cheerful countenance, walking briskly towards the city, in company with another gentleman, perhaps not far from forty years of age, who in everything except the colour of the hair, bears a strong

resemblance to his older companion. Were you to turn and follow them, you would find that they part at the foot of the bridge, or near it; that the elder gentleman walks on through King William Street, while the younger one turns into a part of the city nearer to the river. Following him to the end of his walk you will see him entering into a large warehouse, on the door of which is a bright brass plate, bearing the names of 'TIERNEY, MASON, and TIERNEYS;' and should you wish to know more, the porters who are loading a wagon at the door will tell you, if you ask them, that the gentleman who has just entered is the leading business partner; that his name is Edward Mason; and that his younger sister eight or ten years ago, became the wife of Mr. Tierney's eldest son.

