

THE  
ORPHAN.



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ABOUT three years ago I had occasion to visit the village of —, to spend two or three days. On the first evening after I arrived there, I had nothing to do, and therefore concluded to take a walk to see the village. It was one of those beautiful moonlight evenings, in which we are led to think about our childhood, and about the friends that we used to love. As I was engaged in thinking about many of my friends, who once were full of hope and animation, but now sleeping in the silent grave, I directed my way towards the church, which stood upon a hill, at some distance from the house.

As I came near the church, I

thought that I would take a walk in the grave yard, and read some of the monuments. I had scarcely arrived at the gate, which stood before the church door, when I heard some person, who was not in sight, singing in a soft manner, the following verses :

Where shall a child of sorrow find

A place for calm repose ?

Thou Father of the fatherless,

Pity the orphan's woes.

What friend have I in heaven or earth

That I can trust, but thee ?

My father's dead, my mother's dead,

O God remember me !

Thy gracious promise now fulfil,

And bid my troubles cease ;

In thee the fatherless shall find

Both mercy, grace, and peace.

I've not a secret care or pain,

But God that secret knows :

Thou Father of the fatherless,

Pity an orphan's woes.

The moment that I heard the commencement of this hymn, I stopped, for two reasons. One was, that I had some curiosity to hear it; and the other was, I felt fearful of disturbing the one who was singing it: for it was sung with a great deal of feeling, and accompanied by broken sighs, as if of one weeping. At that moment I discovered a poor girl, about fifteen or sixteen years of age, who was among the grave-stones; and who seemed to



be so much overcome with sorrow, that she did not notice that she had been seen or heard.

I could not help fearing lest my ap-

proach might alarm her ; or, at least, disturb her feelings : so I walked along as softly as I could. Whilst I was gently opening the gate, she again sung the two last lines as before :

“Thou Father of the fatherless,  
Pity an orphan’s woes.”

At that moment the noise of the gate shutting after I had gone through, caught her ear. She came forward, somewhat startled ; and said, “Who is there ?” “One,” replied I, “that can feel for the fatherless, and pity the orphan’s woes. Do not be afraid ; but tell me, whether the words you have been singing, apply to your own case ? Has death taken away your parents ?”

She burst into tears, and said, “Indeed, Sir, I have lost them both ; and am left without a friend on earth.”

“But I hope,” added I, “not without a friend in heaven.”

"I hope not," said the girl, "but my heart is very heavy. It is not a fortnight, since my poor mother was laid in that grave beside my father, who died last year."

"And what brings you here to night?" said I.

"Sir, I come here as often as I can in the evening, when my day's work is over, to look at these two graves; and think about my dear father and mother. They were the best that any poor child ever had; and my greatest comfort now, is to come here by myself, and think over all their kindness and love to me, whilst they were living." Her tears prevented her from saying more.

"And where did you learn that hymn, which I heard just now?"

"Sir," said she, "it is one that the minister of our parish made for some

children in the Sunday School, who lost their father and mother a few years ago. He called it, *The Orphan's Hymn*, and we sometimes used to sing it at church and in school. But I did not know then how soon it would be my own turn to feel the same loss, and sing this song for myself. But it is the Lord who has taken away my parents, and I desire to submit to his will."

"Did your parents bring you up in the fear of God, and did they endeavour to give you a knowledge of his blessed Gospel?"

"Oh yes, sir: they wished more to do that, than any thing else. They loved and feared God themselves; and they did all that lay in their power to teach me to do so too."

"And I hope from what I see of you," added I, "that their instructions have not been in vain. Can you read

the word of God, and can you understand the value of it?"

"I hope I do, Sir. I have learned from it, how good Jesus Christ has been to sinners. And although I am poor, friendless, and distressed, I



would not part with the hope which the word of God gives me, for all the world. My mother told me, a little



before she died, that she had nothing to leave me but a blessing, a Bible, and the prayers that she had been offering up for me ever since I was born. But she said, 'that is enough, if God is but pleased to accept them.' Indeed, sir, you cannot think what a dear good mother I have lost. And now I am obliged to live with some neighbours, who use me very ill, and force me to work beyond my strength, to get bread to eat. I have now no father nor mother to take care of me, and teach me the ways of God, as they used to do. I am young, and don't know much of the world; and I am afraid, lest, without some one to guide me, I may fall into temptations, such as their kind care might have prevented."

"Let this be your comfort," I replied, "when your father and mother

are taken away from you, then the Lord will be your friend. For God is the helper of the fatherless; and hath promised to the believing parent, that he may leave his fatherless children, and that God will preserve them."

"Those," said the girl, looking up with great earnestness, "those were the last words my dear mother spoke to me. I can never forget them."

"And do you not believe," replied I, "that the fatherless do find help and protection in God?"

"I do, sir," answered she, "and I am sure that he will *never* leave me, nor forsake me. I know that I am a sinner, and, as such, deserve only his anger; but, through his grace, I can trust in his word. And although I feel myself to be weak, helpless, and sinful, yet I desire to throw myself upon his care, and believe that he will protect me."

“And is it your heart’s desire to be a follower of those good parents, who, through faith, now inherit the promises, and are at rest with God?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the girl, with an affecting earnestness of manner; “to live as they lived, and to die as they died, is the greatest wish I have in this world.”

I was much pleased with the strong marks of filial piety and dutiful affection that were showed by this girl; so that I began to take quite an interest in her welfare. I therefore asked her what she was going to do to get a living. She said that she meant to enter into the service of some pious family, if the goodness of God would lead her into such a situation.

I was strongly taken with her simple way of talking; and thought that my meeting with her was ordered by

providence, for the purpose of giving me an opportunity for assisting a young and unprotected girl. I therefore offered her a place in my own family, to assist in the nursery.



For I was well convinced that a child, so dutiful as she had been to her parents, was the most suitable companion and attendant that I could have for my own children. I promised to give her that friendship and protection, which her situation and conduct so justly entitled her to.

She expressed her thanks in the most becoming manner; and told me

that I might call on the Clergyman of the parish, if I wished to make any inquiries about her.

The next morning I called upon the Clergyman, from whom I obtained the most satisfactory accounts of the girl I therefore took her home with me, and she has now lived three years in my family ; and has conducted herself all the time as a most faithful, affectionate and grateful girl. Twice in a year, I have indulged her with the permission of going to her native place to visit the graves of her parents ; and, I am persuaded, this privilege has had a very good effect on her disposition and conduct. She honoured her parents when they were alive, and she reveres their memory, now they are dead. The principles of true religion have taken deep root in her heart, and she is a living witness that God will

take care of those who love and trust him. She loves the Saviour, and believes that he will not only take care of her in this life, but that he will also take her to heaven, when she has done living on the earth. And therefore she tries to keep his commandments, and to live in such a manner as to please him.

I often think of the evening in which I saw her in the village church yard; and as often rejoice in thinking that the fatherless has found a father, and the Orphan's woes have been pitied and relieved.