The grateful negro: and The birthday present

Maria [tales from two or more works]

Edgeworth
THE GRATEFUL NEGRO,

AND

THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

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MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.
IN the island of Jamaica there lived two planters, whose methods of managing their slaves were as different as possible. Mr. Jefferies considered the negroes as an inferior species, incapable of gratitude, disposed to treachery, and to be roused from their natural indolence only by force; he treated his slaves, or rather suffered his overseer to treat them, with the greatest severity.

Jefferies was not a man of a cruel, but of a thoughtless and extravagant temper. He was of such a sanguine disposition, that he always calculated upon having a fine season and fine crops on his plantation, and never had the prudence to make allow-

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ance for unfortunate accidents. He required, as he said, from his overseer, produce and not excuses.

Durant, the overseer, did not scruple to use the most\(^1\) cruel and barbarous methods of forcing the slaves to exertions beyond their strength. Complaints of his brutality from time to time reached his master's ears; but, though Mr. Jefferies was moved to momentary compassion, he shut his heart against conviction; he hurried away to the jovial banquet, and drowned all painful reflections in wine.

He was this year much in debt; and therefore, being more than usually anxious about his crop, he pressed his overseer to exert himself to the utmost.

The wretched slaves upon his plantation thought themselves still more unfortunate when they compared their condition with that of the negroes on the estate of Mr.

\(^1\) *The Negro Slaves*, a fine drama, by Kotzebue. It is to be hoped that such horrible instances of cruelty are not now to be found in nature. Bryan Edwards, in his *History of Jamaica*, says that most of the planters are humane; but he allows that some facts can be cited in contradiction of this assertion.
Edwards. This gentleman treated his slaves with all possible humanity and kindness. He wished that there was no such thing as slavery in the world; but he was convinced, by the arguments of those who have the best means of obtaining information, that the sudden emancipation of the negroes would rather increase than diminish their miseries. His benevolence, therefore, confined itself within the bounds of reason. He adopted those plans for the melioration of the state of the slaves which appeared to him the most likely to succeed, without producing any violent agitation or revolution. For instance, his negroes had reasonable and fixed daily tasks; and, when these were finished, they were permitted to employ their time for their own advantage or amusement. If they chose to employ themselves longer for their master, they were paid regular wages for their extra work. This reward—for as such it was considered—operated most powerfully upon the slaves. Those who are animated by hope can perform what would seem impossibilities to those who are under the depressing
influence of fear. The wages which Mr. Edwards promised, he took care to see punctually paid.

He had an excellent overseer, of the name of Abraham Bayley,—a man of a mild but steady temper, who was attached not only to his master's interests, but to his virtues, and who therefore was more intent upon seconding his humane views than upon squeezing from the labour of the negroes the utmost produce. Each negro had, near his cottage, a portion of land, called his provision-ground, and one day in the week was allowed for its cultivation.

It is common in Jamaica for the slaves to have provision-grounds, which they cultivate for their own advantage; but it too often happens that, when a good negro has successfully improved his little spot of land, when he has built himself a house and begins to enjoy the fruits of his industry, his acquired property is seized upon by the sheriff's officer for the payment of his master's debts. He is forcibly separated from his wife and children, dragged to public auction, purchased by a stranger, and
perhaps sent to terminate his miserable existence in the mines of Mexico, excluded for ever from the light of heaven! and all this without any crime or imprudence on his part, real or pretended. He is punished because his master is unfortunate.

To this barbarous injustice the negroes on Mr. Edwards' plantation were never exposed. He never exceeded his income; he engaged in no wild speculations; he contracted no debts; and his slaves, therefore, were in no danger of being seized by a sheriff's officer,—their property was secured to them by the prudence as well as by the generosity of their master.

One morning, as Mr. Edwards was walking in that part of his plantation which joined to Mr. Jefferies' estate, he thought he heard the voice of distress at some distance. The lamentations grew louder and louder as he approached a cottage, which stood upon the borders of Jefferies' plantation.

This cottage belonged to a slave of the name of Cæsar, the best negro in Mr. Jefferies' possession. Such had been his
industry and exertion, that, notwithstanding the severe tasks imposed by Durant the overseer, Cæsar found means to cultivate his provision-ground to a degree of perfection nowhere else to be seen on this estate. Mr. Edwards had often admired this poor fellow's industry, and now hastened to inquire what misfortune had befallen him.

When he came to the cottage, he found Cæsar standing with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon the ground. A young and beautiful female negro was weeping bitterly, as she knelt at the feet of Durant the overseer, who, regarding her with a sullen aspect, repeated, 'He must go. I tell you, woman, he must go. What signifies all this nonsense?'

At the sight of Mr. Edwards, the overseer's countenance suddenly changed, and assumed an air of obsequious civility. The poor woman retired to the farther corner of the cottage, and continued to weep. Cæsar never moved. 'Nothing is the matter, sir,' said Durant, 'but that Cæsar is going to be sold. That is what the woman is crying for. They were to be married; but we'll
find Clara another husband, I tell her; and she'll get the better of her grief, you know, sir, as I tell her, in time.'

'Never! never!' said Clara.

'To whom is Cæsar going to be sold, and for what sum?'

'For what can be got for him,' replied Durant, laughing; 'and to whoever will buy him. The sheriff's officer is here who has seized him for debt, and must make the most of him at market.'

'Poor fellow!' said Mr. Edwards; 'and must he leave this cottage which he has built, and these bananas which he has planted?'

Cæsar now, for the first time, looked up, and fixing his eyes upon Mr. Edwards for a moment, advanced with an intrepid rather than an imploring countenance, and said, 'Will you be my master? Will you be her master? Buy both of us. You shall not repent of it. Cæsar will serve you faithfully.'

On hearing these words, Clara sprang forwards, and clasping her hands together, repeated 'Cæsar will serve you faithfully.'
Mr. Edwards was moved by their entreaties, but he left them without declaring his intentions. He went immediately to Mr. Jefferies, whom he found stretched on a sofa, drinking coffee. As soon as Mr. Edwards mentioned the occasion of his visit, and expressed his sorrow for Cæsar, Jefferies exclaimed, 'Yes, poor fellow! I pity him from the bottom of my soul. But what can I do? I leave all those things to Durant. He says the sheriff's officer has seized him; and there's an end of the matter. You know money must be had. Besides, Cæsar is not worse off than any other slave sold for debt. What signifies talking about the matter, as if it were something that never happened before! Is not it a case that occurs every day in Jamaica?'

'So much the worse,' replied Mr. Edwards.

'The worse for them, to be sure,' said Jefferies. 'But, after all, they are slaves, and used to be treated as such; and they tell me the negroes are a thousand times happier here, with us, than they ever were in their own country.'
'Did the negroes tell you so themselves?'

'No; but people better informed than negroes have told me so; and, after all, slaves there must be, for indigo, and rum, and sugar we must have.'

'Granting it to be physically impossible that the world should exist without rum, sugar, and indigo, why could they not be produced by freemen, as well as by slaves? If we hired negroes for labourers, instead of purchasing them for slaves, do you think they would not work as well as they do now? Does any negro, under the fear of the overseer, work harder than a Birmingham journeyman or a Newcastle collier, who toil for themselves and their families?'

'Of that I don't pretend to judge. All I know is, that the West India planters would be ruined if they had no slaves; and I am a West India planter.'

'So am I; yet I do not think they are the only people whose interest ought to be considered in this business.'

'Their interests, luckily, are protected by the laws of the land; and though they are
rich men, and white men, and freemen, they have as good a claim to their rights as the poorest black slave on any of our plantations.'

'The law, in our case, seems to make the right; and the very reverse ought to be done—the right should make the law.'

'Fortunately for us planters, we need not enter into such nice distinctions. You could not, if you would, abolish the trade. Slaves would be smuggled into the islands.'

'What, if nobody would buy them! You know that you cannot smuggle slaves into England. The instant a slave touches English ground, he becomes free. Glorious privilege! Why should it not be extended to all her dominions? If the future importation of slaves into these islands were forbidden by law, the trade must cease. No man can either sell or possess slaves without its being known; they cannot be smuggled, like lace or brandy.'

'Well, well!' retorted Jefferies, a little impatiently, 'as yet, the law is on our side. I can do nothing in this business, nor you neither.'
'Yes, we can do something; we can endeavour to make our negroes as happy as possible.'
'I leave the management of these people to Durant.'
'That is the very thing of which they complain. Forgive me for speaking to you with the frankness of an old acquaintance.'
'Oh! you can't oblige me more. I love frankness of all things! To tell you the truth, I have heard complaints of Durant's severity; but I make it a principle to turn a deaf ear to them, for I know nothing can be done with these fellows without it. You are partial to negroes; but even you must allow they are a race of beings naturally inferior to us. You may in vain think of managing a black as you would a white. Do what you please for a negro, he will cheat you the first opportunity he finds. You know what their maxim is: "God gives black men what white men forget."

To these commonplace desultory observations, Mr. Edwards made no reply; but recurred to poor Cæsar, and offered to
purchase both him and Clara at the highest price the sheriff's officer could obtain for them at market. Mr. Jefferies, with the utmost politeness to his neighbour, but with the most perfect indifference to the happiness of those whom he considered of a different species from himself, acceded to this proposal. 'Nothing could be more reasonable,' he said; 'and he was happy to have it in his power to oblige a gentleman for whom he had such a high esteem.'

The bargain was quickly concluded with the sheriff's officer, for Mr. Edwards willingly paid several dollars more than the market price for the two slaves. When Cæsar and Clara heard that they were not to be separated, their joy and gratitude were expressed with all the ardour and tenderness peculiar to their different characters. Clara was an Eboe, Cæsar a Koromantyn Negro. The Eboes are soft, languishing, and timid; the Koromantyns are frank, fearless, martial, and heroic.

Mr. Edwards carried his new slaves home with him, desired Bayley, his overseer, to mark out a provision-ground for Cæsar, and
to give him a cottage which happened at this time to be vacant.

'Now, my good friend,' said he to Cæsar, 'you may work for yourself, without fear that what you earn may be taken from you, or that you should ever be sold to pay your master's debts. If he does not understand what I am saying,' continued Mr. Edwards, turning to his overseer, 'you will explain it to him.'

Cæsar perfectly understood all that Mr. Edwards said; but his feelings were at this instant so strong that he could not find expression for his gratitude. He stood like one stupefied! Kindness was new to him; it overpowered his manly heart; and, at hearing the words 'my good friend,' the tears gushed from his eyes—tears which no torture could have extorted! Gratitude swelled in his bosom; and he longed to be alone, that he might freely yield to his emotions.

He was glad when the conch-shell sounded, to call the negroes to their daily labour, that he might relieve the sensations of his soul by bodily exertion. He per-
formed his task in silence, and an inattentive observer might have thought him sullen.

In fact, he was impatient for the day to be over, that he might get rid of a heavy load which weighed upon his mind.

The cruelties practised by Durant, the overseer of Jefferies' plantation, had exasperated the slaves under his dominion.

They were all leagued together in a conspiracy, which was kept profoundly secret. Their object was to extirpate every white man, woman, and child in the island. Their plans were laid with consummate art; and the negroes were urged to execute them by all the courage of despair.

The confederacy extended to all the negroes in the island of Jamaica, excepting those on the plantation of Mr. Edwards. To them no hint of the dreadful secret had yet been given; their countrymen, knowing the attachment they felt to their master, dared not trust them with these projects of vengeance. Hector, the negro who was at the head of the conspirators, was the particular friend of Cæsar, and had imparted to
him all his designs. These friends were bound to each other by the strongest ties. Their slavery and their sufferings began in the same hour; they were both brought from their own country in the same ship. This circumstance alone forms amongst the negroes a bond of connection not easily to be dissolved. But the friendship of Cæsar and Hector commenced even before they were united by the sympathy of misfortune; they were both of the same nation, both Koromantyns. In Africa, they had both been accustomed to command; for they had signalized themselves by superior fortitude and courage. They respected each other for excelling in all which they had been taught to consider as virtuous; and with them revenge was a virtue!

Revenge was the ruling passion of Hector; in Cæsar's mind, it was rather a principle instilled by education. The one considered it as a duty, the other felt it as a pleasure. Hector's sense of injury was acute in the extreme; he knew not how to forgive. Cæsar's sensibility was yet more alive to kindness than to insult. Hector
would sacrifice his life to extirpate an enemy. Cæsar would devote himself for the defence of a friend; and Cæsar now considered a white man as his friend.

He was now placed in a painful situation. All his former friendships, all the solemn promises by which he was bound to his companions in misfortune, forbade him to indulge that delightful feeling of gratitude and affection, which, for the first time, he experienced for one of that race of beings whom he had hitherto considered as detestable tyrants!—objects of implacable and just revenge!

Cæsar was most impatient to have an interview with Hector, that he might communicate his new sentiments, and dissuade him from those schemes of destruction which he meditated. At midnight, when all the slaves except himself were asleep, he left his cottage, and went to Jefferies' plantation, to the hut in which Hector slept. Even in his dreams, Hector breathed vengeance. 'Spare none! Sons of Africa, spare none!' were the words he uttered in his sleep, as Cæsar approached
the mat on which he lay. The moon shone full upon him. Cæsar contemplated the countenance of his friend, fierce even in sleep. 'Spare none! Oh yes! There is one that must be spared. There is one for whose sake all must be spared!'

He wakened Hector by this explanation. 'Of what were you dreaming?' said Cæsar.

'Of that which, sleeping or waking, fills my soul! Revenge! Why did you waken me from my dream? It was delightful! The whites were weltering in their blood! But, silence! We may be overheard!'

'No; every one sleeps but ourselves,' replied Cæsar. 'I could not sleep—without speaking to you on—a subject that weighs upon my mind. You have seen Mr. Edwards?'

'Yes. He that is now your master.'

'He that is now my benefactor, my friend!'

'Friend! Can you call a white man friend?' cried Hector, starting up with a look of astonishment and indignation.

'Yes,' replied Cæsar, with firmness. 'And you would speak, ay, and would feel,
as I do, Hector, if you knew this white man. Oh, how unlike he is to all of his race, that we have ever seen! Do not turn from me with so much disdain. Hear me with patience, my friend!'

'I cannot,' replied Hector, 'listen with patience to one who, between the rising and the setting sun, can forget all his resolutions, all his promises!—who, by a few soft words, can be so wrought upon as to forget all the insults, all the injuries he has received from this accursed race; and can even call a white man friend!'

Caesar, unmoved by Hector's anger, continued to speak of Mr. Edwards with the warmest expressions of gratitude, and finished by declaring he would sooner forfeit his life than rebel against such a master. He conjured Hector to desist from executing his designs; but all was in vain. Hector sat with his elbows fixed upon his knees, leaning his head upon his hands, in gloomy silence.

Caesar's mind was divided between love for his friend and gratitude to his master; the conflict was violent and painful. Gra-
titute at last prevailed. He repeated his declaration, that he would rather die than continue in a conspiracy against his benefactor.

Hector refused to except him from the general doom. 'Betray us if you will!' cried he. 'Betray our secrets to him whom you call your benefactor—to him whom a few hours have made your friend! To him sacrifice the friend of your youth, the companion of your better days, of your better self! Yes, Cæsar, deliver me over to the tormentors; I can endure more than they can inflict. I shall expire without a sigh, without a groan. Why do you linger here, Cæsar? Why do you hesitate? Hasten this moment to your master; claim your reward for delivering into his power hundreds of your countrymen! Why do you hesitate? Away! The coward's friendship can be of use to none. Who can value his gratitude? Who can fear his revenge?'

Hector raised his voice so high, as he pronounced these words, that he wakened Durant the overseer, who slept in the next
house. They heard him call out suddenly, to inquire who was there; and Cæsar had but just time to make his escape before Durant appeared. He searched Hector’s cottage; but, finding no one, again retired to rest. This man’s tyranny made him constantly suspicious; he dreaded that the slaves should combine against him, and he endeavoured to prevent them, by every threat and every stratagem he could devise, from conversing with each other.

They had, however, taken their measures hitherto so secretly that he had not the slightest idea of the conspiracy which was forming in the island. Their schemes were not yet ripe for execution; but the appointed time approached. Hector, when he coolly reflected on what had passed between him and Cæsar, could not help admiring the frankness and courage with which he had avowed his change of sentiments. By this avowal, Cæsar had in fact exposed his own life to the most imminent danger from the vengeance of the conspirators, who might be tempted to assassinate him who had their lives in his
power. Notwithstanding the contempt with which, in the first moment of passion, he had treated his friend, he was extremely anxious that he should not break off all connection with the conspirators. He knew that Cæsar possessed both intrepidity and eloquence, and that his opposition to their schemes would perhaps entirely frustrate their whole design. He therefore determined to use every possible means to bend him to their purposes.

He resolved to have recourse to one of those persons who, amongst the negroes, are considered as sorceresses. Esther, an old Koromantyn negress, had obtained by her skill in poisonous herbs, and her knowledge of venomous reptiles, a high reputation amongst her countrymen. She soon taught them to believe her to be possessed of supernatural powers; and she then worked their imagination to what pitch and purpose she pleased.

She was the chief instigator of this intended rebellion. It was she who had stimulated the revengeful temper of Hector almost to frenzy. She now promised him
that her arts should be exerted over his friend, and it was not long before he felt their influence. Cæsar soon perceived an extraordinary change in the countenance and manner of his beloved Clara. A melancholy hung over her, and she refused to impart to him the cause of her dejection. Cæsar was indefatigable in his exertions to cultivate and embellish the ground near his cottage, in hopes of making it an agreeable habitation for her; but she seemed to take no interest in anything. She would stand beside him immoveable, in a deep reverie; and, when he inquired whether she was ill, she would answer no, and endeavour to assume an air of gaiety; but this cheerfulness was transient, she soon relapsed into despondency. At length she endeavoured to avoid her lover, as if she feared his further inquiries.

Unable to endure this state of suspense, he one evening resolved to bring her to an explanation. 'Clara,' said he, 'you once loved me; I have done nothing, have I, to forfeit your confidence?'

'I once loved you!' said she, raising her
languid eyes, and looking at him with reproachful tenderness; 'and can you doubt my constancy? O Cæsar, you little know what is passing in my heart! You are the cause of my melancholy!'

She paused, and hesitated, as if afraid that she had said too much; but Cæsar urged her with so much vehemence and so much tenderness to open to him her whole soul, that, at last, she could not resist his eloquence. She reluctantly revealed to him that secret of which she could not think without horror. She informed him that, unless he complied with what was required of him by the sorceress Esther, he was devoted to die. What it was that Esther required of him Clara knew not; she knew nothing of the conspiracy. The timidity of her character was ill-suited to such a project; and everything relating to it had been concealed from her with the utmost care.

When she explained to Cæsar the cause of her dejection, his natural courage resisted these superstitious fears, and he endeavoured to raise Clara's spirits. He
endeavoured in vain; she fell at his feet, and with tears, and the most tender supplications, conjured him to avert the wrath of the sorceress by obeying her commands, whatever they might be!

'Clara,' replied he, 'you know not what you ask!'

'I ask you to save your life,' said she. 'I ask you, for my sake, to save your life, while yet it is in your power!'

'But would you, to save my life, Clara, make me the worst of criminals? Would you make me the murderer of my benefactor?'

Clara started with horror.

'Do you recollect the day, the moment, when we were on the point of being separated for ever, Clara? Do you remember the white man's coming to my cottage? Do you remember his look of benevolence, his voice of compassion? Do you remember his generosity? O Clara, would you make me the murderer of this man?'

'Heaven forbid!' said Clara. 'This cannot be the will of the sorceress!'

'It is!' said Cæsar. 'But she shall not succeed, even though she speaks with the
voice of Clara. Urge me no further; my resolution is fixed. I should be unworthy of your love if I were capable of treachery and ingratitude.'

'But is there no means of averting the wrath of Esther?' said Clara. 'Your life'——

'Think first of my honour,' interrupted Cæsar. 'Your fears deprive you of reason. Return to this sorceress, and tell her that I dread not her wrath. My hands shall never be imbrued in the blood of my benefactor. Clara! can you forget his look, when he told us that we should never more be separated?'

'It went to my heart,' said Clara, bursting into tears. 'Cruel, cruel Esther! Why do you command us to destroy such a generous master?'

The conch sounded to summon the negroes to their morning's work. It happened this day that Mr. Edwards, who was continually intent upon increasing the comforts and happiness of his slaves, sent his carpenter, while Cæsar was absent, to fit up the inside of his cottage; and, when Cæsar returned
from work, he found his master pruning the branches of a tamarind tree that overhung the thatch. 'How comes it, Cæsar,' said he, 'that you have not pruned these branches?'

Cæsar had no knife. 'Here is mine for you,' said Mr. Edwards. 'It is very sharp,' added he, smiling; 'but I am not one of those masters who are afraid to trust their negroes with sharp knives.'

These words were spoken with perfect simplicity. Mr. Edwards had no suspicion, at this time, of what was passing in the negro's mind. Cæsar received the knife without uttering a syllable; but no sooner was Mr. Edwards out of sight, than he knelt down, and, in a transport of gratitude, swore that with this knife he would stab himself to the heart sooner than betray his master!

The principle of gratitude conquered every other sensation. The mind of Cæsar was not insensible to the charms of freedom. He knew the negro conspirators had so taken their measures that there was the greatest probability of their success. His heart beat high at the idea of recovering
his liberty; but he was not to be seduced from his duty, not even by this delightful hope; nor was he to be intimidated by the dreadful certainty that his former friends and countrymen, considering him as a deserter from their cause, would become his bitterest enemies. The loss of Hector's esteem and affection was deeply felt by Cæsar. Since the night that the decisive conversation relative to Mr. Edwards passed, Hector and he had never exchanged a syllable.

This visit proved the cause of much suffering to Hector, and to several of the slaves on Jefferies' plantation. We mentioned that Durant had been awakened by the raised voice of Hector. Though he could not find any one in the cottage, yet his suspicions were not dissipated; and an accident nearly brought the whole conspiracy to light. Durant had ordered one of the negroes to watch a boiler of sugar. The slave was overcome by the heat, and fainted. He had scarcely recovered his senses when the overseer came up, and found that the sugar had fermented, by
having remained a few minutes too long in the boiler. He flew into a violent passion, and ordered that the negro should receive fifty lashes. His victim bore them without uttering a groan; but when his punishment was over, and when he thought the overseer was gone, he exclaimed, 'It will soon be our turn!'

Durant was not out of hearing. He turned suddenly, and observed that the negro looked at Hector when he pronounced these words, and this confirmed the suspicion that Hector was carrying on some conspiracy. He immediately had recourse to that brutality which he considered as the only means of governing black men: Hector and three other negroes were lashed unmercifully, but no confessions could be extorted.

Mr. Jefferies might perhaps have forbidden such violence to be used, if he had not been at the time carousing with a party of jovial West Indians, who thought of nothing but indulging their appetites in all the luxuries that art and nature could supply. The sufferings which had
been endured by many of the wretched negroes to furnish out this magnificent entertainment were never once thought of by these selfish epicures. Yet so false are the general estimates of character, that all these gentlemen passed for men of great feeling and generosity! The human mind, in certain situations, becomes so accustomed to ideas of tyranny and cruelty, that they no longer appear extraordinary or detestable—they rather seem part of the necessary and immutable order of things.

Mr. Jefferies was stopped, as he passed from his dining-room into his drawing-room, by a little negro child of about five years old, who was crying bitterly. He was the son of one of the slaves who were at this moment under the torturer's hand. 'Poor little fellow!' said Mr. Jefferies, who was more than half intoxicated. 'Take him away, and tell Durant, some of ye, to pardon his father—if he can.'

The child ran eagerly to announce his father's pardon; but he soon returned, crying more violently than before. Durant would not hear the boy; and it was now
no longer possible to appeal to Mr. Jefferies, for he was in the midst of an assembly of fair ladies, and no servant belonging to the house dared to interrupt the festivities of the evening. The three men, who were so severely flogged to extort from them confessions, were perfectly innocent. They knew nothing of the confederacy; but the rebels seized the moment when their minds were exasperated by this cruelty and injustice, and they easily persuaded them to join the league. The hopes of revenging themselves upon the overseer was a motive sufficient to make them brave death in any shape.

Another incident, which happened a few days before the time destined for the revolt of the slaves, determined numbers who had been undecided. Mrs. Jefferies was a languid beauty, or rather, a languid fine lady who had been a beauty, and who spent all that part of the day which was not devoted to the pleasures of the table, or in reclining on a couch, in dress. She was one day extended on a sofa, fanned by four slaves, two at her head and two at her feet,
when news was brought that a large chest, directed to her, was just arrived from London. This chest contained various articles of dress of the newest fashions. The Jamaica ladies carry their ideas of magnificence to a high pitch; they willingly give a hundred guineas for a gown, which they perhaps wear but once or twice. In the elegance and variety of her ornaments, Mrs. Jefferies was not exceeded by any lady in the island, except by one who had lately received a cargo from England. She now expected to outshine her competitor, and desired that the chest should be unpacked in her presence.

In taking out one of the gowns, it caught on a nail in the lid and was torn. The lady, roused from her natural indolence by this disappointment to her vanity, instantly ordered that the unfortunate female slave should be severely chastised. The woman was the wife of Hector; and this fresh injury worked up his temper, naturally vindictive, to the highest point. He ardently longed for the moment when he might satiate his vengeance.
The plan the negroes had laid, was to set fire to the canes, at one and the same time, on every plantation; and when the white inhabitants of the island should run to put out the fire, the blacks were to seize this moment of confusion and consternation to fall upon them, and make a general massacre. The time when this scheme was to be carried into execution was not known to Cæsar; for the conspirators had changed their day, as soon as Hector told them that his friend was no longer one of the confederacy. They dreaded he should betray them; and it was determined that he and Clara should both be destroyed, unless they could be prevailed upon to join the conspiracy.

Hector wished to save his friend; but the desire of vengeance overcame every other feeling. He resolved, however, to make an attempt, for the last time, to change Cæsar's resolution.

For this purpose, Esther was the person he employed; she was to work upon his mind by means of Clara. On returning to her cottage one night, she found, suspended
from the thatch, one of those strange fantastic charms with which the Indian sorceresses terrify those whom they have proscribed. Clara, unable to conquer her terror, repaired again to Esther, who received her first in mysterious silence; but after she had implored her forgiveness for the past, and with all possible humility conjured her to grant her future protection, the sorceress deigned to speak. Her command was, that Clara should prevail upon her lover to meet her on this awful spot the ensuing night.

Little suspecting what was going forward on the plantation of Jefferies, Mr. Edwards that evening gave his slaves a holiday. He and his family came out at sunset, when the fresh breeze had sprung up, and seated themselves under a spreading palm-tree, to enjoy the pleasing spectacle of this negro festival. His negroes were all well clad; their turbans were of the gayest colours, and their merry countenances suited the gaiety of their dress. While some were dancing, and some playing on the tambourine, others appeared amongst the distant
trees bringing baskets of avocado pears, grapes, and pine apples, the produce of their own provision-grounds; and others were employed in spreading their clean trenchers, or the calabashes, which served for plates and dishes. The negroes continued to dance and divert themselves till late in the evening. When they separated and retired to rest, Cæsar, recollecting his promise to Clara, repaired secretly to the habitation of the sorceress. It was situate in the recess of a thick wood. When he arrived there, he found the door fastened; and he was obliged to wait some time before it was opened by Esther.

The first object he beheld was his beloved Clara, stretched on the ground, apparently a corpse! The sorceress had thrown her into a trance by a preparation of deadly nightshade. The hag burst into an infernal laugh when she beheld the despair that was painted in Cæsar's countenance. 'Wretch!' cried she, 'you have defied my power; behold its victim!'

Cæsar, in a transport of rage, seized her by the throat; but his fury was soon checked.
'Destroy me,' said the fiend, 'and you destroy your Clara. She is not dead; but she lies in the sleep of death, into which she has been thrown by magic art, and from which no power but mine can restore her to the light of life. Yes! look at her, pale and motionless! Never will she rise from the earth, unless, within one hour, you obey my commands. I have administered to Hector and his companions the solemn fetish oath, at the sound of which every negro in Africa trembles. You know my object.'

'Fiend, I do!' replied Cæsar, eyeing her sternly; 'but, while I have life, it shall never be accomplished.'

'Look yonder!' cried she, pointing to the moon: 'in a few minutes that moon will set; at that hour Hector and his friends will appear. They come armed! armed with weapons which I shall steep in poison for their enemies. Themselves I will render invulnerable. Look again!' continued she; 'if my dim eyes mistake not, yonder they come. Rash man, you die if they cross my threshold.'
'I wish for death,' said Cæsar. 'Clara is dead!'

'But you can restore her to life by a single word.'

Cæsar at this moment seemed to hesitate.

'Consider; your heroism is vain,' continued Esther. 'You will have the knives of fifty of the conspirators in your bosom, if you do not join them; and, after you have fallen, the death of your master is inevitable. Here is the bowl of poison in which the negro knives are to be steeped. Your friends, your former friends, your countrymen, will be in arms in a few minutes; and they will bear down everything before them. Victory! wealth! freedom! and revenge! will be theirs.'

Cæsar appeared to be more and more agitated. His eyes were fixed upon Clara. The conflict in his mind was violent; but his sense of gratitude and duty could not be shaken by hope, fear, or ambition; nor could it be vanquished by love. He determined, however, to appear to yield. As if struck with panic at the approach of the confederate negroes, he suddenly turned to
the sorceress, and said, in a tone of feigned submission, 'It is in vain to struggle with fate. Let my knife, too, be dipped in your magic poison.'

The sorceress clapped her hands, with infernal joy in her countenance. She bade him instantly give her his knife, that she might plunge it to the hilt in the bowl of poison, to which she turned with savage impatience. His knife was left in his cottage; and, under pretence of going in search of it, he escaped. Esther promised to prepare Hector and all his companions to receive him with their ancient cordiality on his return. Cæsar ran with the utmost speed along a by-path out of the wood, met none of the rebels, reached his master's house, scaled the wall of his bed-chamber, got in at the window, and wakened him, exclaiming, 'Arm! arm yourself, my dear master! Arm all your slaves! they will fight for you, and die for you; as I will the first. The Koromantyn yell of war will be heard in Jefferies' plantation this night! Arm! arm yourself, my dear master, and let us surround the rebel leaders while it is yet time.
I will lead you to the place where they are all assembled on condition that their chief, who is my friend, shall be pardoned.'

Mr. Edwards armed himself and the negroes on his plantation, as well as the whites; they were all equally attached to him. He followed Cæsar into the recesses of the wood.

They proceeded with all possible rapidity, but in perfect silence, till they reached Esther's habitation, which they surrounded completely before they were perceived by the conspirators.

Mr. Edwards looked through a hole in the wall, and by the blue flame of a caldron, over which the sorceress was stretching her shrivelled hands, he saw Hector and five stout negroes standing, intent upon her incantations. These negroes held their knives in their hands, ready to dip them into the bowl of poison. It was proposed by one of the whites to set fire immediately to the hut, and thus to force the rebels to surrender. The advice was followed; but Mr. Edwards charged his people to spare their prisoners. The moment the rebels saw that
the thatch of the hut was in flames, they set up the Koromantyn yell of war, and rushed out with frantic desperation.

'Yield! You are pardoned, Hector,' cried Mr. Edwards in a loud voice.

'You are pardoned, my friend,' repeated Cæsar.

Hector, incapable at this instant of listening to anything but revenge, sprang forwards and plunged his knife into the bosom of Cæsar. The faithful servant staggered back a few paces; his master caught him in his arms. 'I die content,' said he. 'Bury me with Clara.'

He swooned from loss of blood as they were carrying him home; but when his wound was examined, it was found not to be mortal. As he recovered from his swoon, he stared wildly round him, trying to recollect where he was and what had happened. He thought that he was still in a dream, when he saw his beloved Clara standing beside him. The opiate, which the pretended sorceress had administered to her, had ceased to operate; she wakened from her trance just at the time the Koro-
mantyn yell commenced. Cæsar's joy!—We must leave that to the imagination.

In the meantime, what became of the rebel negroes and Mr. Edwards?

The taking the chief conspirators prisoners did not prevent the negroes upon Jefferies' plantation from insurrection. The moment they heard the war-whoop, the signal agreed upon, they rose in a body; and before they could be prevented, either by the whites on the estate or by Mr. Edwards' adherents, they had set fire to the overseer's house and to the canes. The overseer was the principal object of their vengeance; he died in tortures, inflicted by the hands of those who had suffered most by his cruelties. Mr. Edwards, however, quelled the insurgents before rebellion spread to any other estates in the island. The influence of his character and the effect of his eloquence upon the minds of the people were astonishing; nothing but his interference could have prevented the total destruction of Mr. Jefferies and his family, who, as it was computed, lost this night upwards of fifty thousand pounds. He was never afterward
able to recover his losses, or to shake off his constant fear of a fresh insurrection among his slaves. At length, he and his lady returned to England, where they were obliged to live in obscurity and indigence. They had no consolation in their misfortunes but that of railing at the treachery of the whole races of slaves.—Our readers, we hope, will think that at least one exception may be made in favour of The Grateful Negro.
THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

"Mamma," said Rosamond, after a long silence, "do you know what I have been thinking of all this time?" "No, my dear.—What?" "Why, mamma, about my cousin Bell's birthday; do you know what day it is?" "No, I don't remember." "Dear mother, don't you remember it's the 22d of December; and her birthday is the day after to-morrow?—Don't you recollect now? But you never remember about birthdays, mamma. That was just what I was thinking of, that you never remember my sister Laura's birthday, or—or—or mine, mamma."

"What do you mean, my dear? I remember your birthday perfectly well."
"Indeed! but you never keep it, though."
"What do you mean by keeping your birth-
day?' 'O mamma,' you know very well, as Bell's birthday is kept. In the first place, there is a great dinner.' 'And can Bell eat more upon her birthday than upon any other day?' 'No; nor I should not mind about the dinner, except the mince-pies. But Bell has a great many nice things—I don't mean nice eatable things, but nice new playthings—given to her always on her birthday; and everybody drinks her health, and she's so happy.'

'But stay, Rosamond, how you jumble things together! Is it everybody's drinking her health that makes her so happy? or the new playthings, or the nice mince-pies? I can easily believe that she is happy whilst she is eating a mince-pie, or whilst she is playing; but how does everybody's drinking her health at dinner make her happy?'

Rosamond paused, and then said she did not know. 'But,' added she, 'the nice new playthings, mother!' 'But why the nice new playthings? Do you like them only because they are new?' 'Not only—I do not like playthings only because they are
new; but Bell does, I believe—for that puts me in mind—Do you know, mother, she had a great drawer-full of old playthings that she never used, and she said that they were good for nothing, because they were old? But I thought many of them were good for a great deal more than the new ones. Now you shall be judge, mamma; I'll tell you all that was in the drawer.'

'Nay, Rosamond, thank you, not just now; I have not time to listen to you.'

'Well then, mamma, the day after to-morrow I can show you the drawer. I want you to be judge very much, because I am sure I was in the right. And, mother,' added Rosamond, stopping her as she was going out of the room, 'will you—not now, but when you've time—will you tell me why you never keep my birthday—why you never make any difference between that day and any other day?' 'And will you, Rosamond—not now, but when you have time to think about it—tell me why I should make any difference between your birthday and any other day?'

Rosamond thought—but she could not
find out any reason; besides, she suddenly recollected that she had not time to think any longer, for there was a certain work-basket to be finished, which she was making for her cousin Bell, as a present upon her birthday. The work was at a stand for want of some filigree-paper, and as her mother was going out, she asked her to take her with her, that she might buy some. Her sister Laura went with them.

'Lady,' said Rosamond, as they were walking along, 'what have you done with your half-guinea?' 'I have it in my pocket.' 'Dear! you will keep it for ever in your pocket. You know my godmother, when she gave it to you, said you would keep it longer than I should keep mine; and I know what she thought by her look at the time. I heard her say something to my mother.' 'Yes,' said Laura, smiling; 'she whispered so loud, that I could not help hearing her too. She said I was a little miser.' 'But did not you hear her say that I was very generous? and she'll see that she was not mistaken. I hope she'll be by when I give my basket to Bell—
won't it be beautiful? There is to be a wreath of myrtle, you know, round the handle, and a frost ground, and then the medallions—

'Stay,' interrupted her sister; for Rosamond, anticipating the glories of her work-basket, talked and walked so fast that she had passed, without perceiving it, the shop where the filigree-paper was to be bought. They turned back. Now, it happened that the shop was the corner house of a street, and one of the windows looked out into a narrow lane. A coach full of ladies stopped at the door, just before they went in; so that no one had time immediately to think of Rosamond and her filigree-paper, and she went to the window, where she saw her sister Laura looking earnestly at something that was passing in the lane.

Opposite to the window, at the door of a poor-looking house, there was sitting a little girl weaving lace. Her bobbins moved as quick as lightning, and she never once looked up from her work. 'Is not she very industrious?' said Laura; 'and very honest too,' added she in a minute after-
wards; for just then, a baker with a basket of rolls on his head passed, and by accident one of the rolls fell close to the little girl. She took it up eagerly; looked at it as if she was very hungry; then put aside her work, and ran after the baker to return it to him. Whilst she was gone, a footman in a livery laced with silver, who belonged to the coach that stood at the shop-door, as he was lounging with one of his companions, chanced to spy the weaving-pillow which she had left upon a stone before the door. To divert himself (for idle people do mischief often to divert themselves) he took up the pillow, and entangled all the bobbins. The little girl came back out of breath to her work; but what was her surprise and sorrow to find it spoiled! She twisted and untwisted, placed and replaced, the bobbins, while the footman stood laughing at her distress. She got up gently, and was retiring into the house, when the silver-laced footman stopped her, saying insolently, 'Sit still, child.' 'I must go to my mother, sir,' said the child; 'besides, you have spoiled all my lace—I can't stay.' 'Can't you?'
said the brutal footman, snatching her weaving-pillow again; 'I'll teach you to complain of me.' And he broke off, one after another, all the bobbins, put them into his pocket, rolled her weaving-pillow down the dirty lane, then jumped up behind his mistress's coach, and was out of sight in an instant.

'Poor girl!' exclaimed Rosamond, no longer able to restrain her indignation at this injustice; 'poor little girl!'

At this instant her mother said to Rosamond, 'Come now, my dear, if you want this filigree-paper, buy it.' 'Yes, madam,' said Rosamond; and the idea of what her godmother and her cousin Bell would think of her generosity rushed again upon her imagination. All her feelings of pity were immediately suppressed. Satisfied with bestowing another exclamation upon the 'Poor little girl!' she went to spend her half-guinea upon her filigree-basket. In the meantime, she that was called the 'little miser' beckoned to the poor girl, and, opening the window, said, pointing to the cushion, 'Is it quite spoiled?' 'Quite!
quite spoiled! and I can't, nor mother neither, buy another; and I can't do anything else for my bread.' A few, but very few, tears fell as she said this.

'How much would another cost?' said Laura. 'Oh, a great—great deal.' 'More than that?' said Laura, holding up her half-guinea. 'Oh no.' 'Then you can buy another with that,' said Laura, dropping the half-guinea into her hand; and she shut the window before the child could find words to thank her; but not before she saw a look of joy and gratitude which gave Laura more pleasure, probably, than all the praise which could have been bestowed upon her generosity.

Late on the morning of her cousin's birthday, Rosamond finished her work-basket. The carriage was at the door—Laura came running to call her; her father's voice was heard at the same instant; so she was obliged to go down with her basket but half wrapped up in silver paper—a circumstance at which she was a good deal disconcerted, for the pleasure of surprising Bell would be utterly lost if one bit of the
filigree should peep out before the proper time. As the carriage went on, Rosamond pulled the paper to one side and to the other, and by each of the four corners.

'It will never do, my dear,' said her father, who had been watching her operations. 'I am afraid you will never make a sheet of paper cover a box which is twice as large as itself.'

'It is not a box, father,' said Rosamond, a little peevishly; 'it's a basket.'

'Let us look at this basket,' said he, taking it out of her unwilling hands; for she knew of what frail materials it was made, and she dreaded its coming to pieces under her father's examination. He took hold of the handle rather roughly, when, starting off the coach seat, she cried, 'O sir! father! sir! you will spoil it indeed!' and when, after drawing aside the veil of silver paper, she saw him grasp the myrtle-wreathed handle, she said with increased vehemence, 'Indeed, sir, you will spoil the poor handle!'

'But what is the use of the poor handle,' said her father, 'if we are not to take hold
of it? And pray,' continued he, turning the basket round with his finger and thumb, rather in a disrespectful manner, 'pray, is this the thing you have been about all this week? I have seen you all this week dabbling with paste and rags; I could not conceive what you were about. Is this the thing?' 'Yes, sir. You think, then, that I have wasted my time, because the basket is of no use? But then it is for a present for my cousin Bell.' 'Your cousin Bell will be very much obliged to you for a present that is of no use. You had better have given her the purple jar.'

'O father! I thought you had forgotten that—it was two years ago; I'm not so silly now. But Bell will like the basket, I know, though it is of no use.'

'Then you think Bell is sillier now than you were two years ago!—well, perhaps that is true. But how comes it, Rosamond, now that you are so wise, that you are fond of such a silly person?' 'I, father?' said Rosamond, hesitating; 'I don't think I am very fond of her.' 'I did not say very fond.' 'Well, but I don't think I am at all
fond of her.’ ‘But you have spent a whole week in making this thing for her.’ ‘Yes, and all my half-guinea besides.’

‘Yet you think her silly, and you are not fond of her at all; and you say you know this thing will be of no use to her.’

‘But it is her birthday, sir; and I am sure she will expect something, and everybody else will give her something.’

‘Then your reason for giving is because she expects you to give her something? And will you, or can you, or should you, always give merely because others expect, or because somebody else gives?’ ‘Always!—no, not always.’ ‘Oh, only on birthdays!’

Rosamond, laughing: ‘Now you are making a joke of me, papa, I see; but I thought you liked that people should be generous,—my godmother said that she did.’ ‘So do I, full as well as your godmother; but we have not yet quite settled what it is to be generous.’ ‘Why, is it not generous to make presents?’ said Rosamond. ‘That is a question which it would take up a great deal of time to answer. But, for instance, to make a present of a thing that you know
can be of no use to a person you neither love nor esteem, because it is her birthday, and because everybody gives her something, and because she expects something, and because your godmother says she likes that people should be generous, seems to me, my dear Rosamond, to be, since I must say it, rather more like folly than generosity.'

Rosamond looked down upon the basket, and was silent. 'Then I am a fool, am I?' said she, looking up at last. 'Because you have made one mistake?—No. If you have sense enough to see your own mistakes, and can afterwards avoid them, you will never be a fool.'

Here the carriage stopped, and Rosamond recollected that the basket was uncovered.

Now we must observe, that Rosamond's father had not been too severe upon Bell when he called her a silly girl. From her infancy she had been humoured; and at eight years old she had the misfortune to be a spoiled child. She was idle, fretful, and selfish; so that nothing could make her happy. On her birthday she expected, however, to be perfectly happy. Everybody
in the house tried to please her, and they succeeded so well, that between breakfast and dinner she had only six fits of crying. The cause of five of these fits no one could discover; but the last and most lamentable, was occasioned by a disappointment about a worked muslin frock; and accordingly at dressing-time her maid brought it to her, exclaiming, 'See here, miss, what your mamma has sent you on your birthday. Here's a frock fit for a queen—if it had but lace round the cuffs.' 'And why has not it lace around the cuffs? Mamma said it should.' 'Yes, but mistress was disappointed about the lace; it is not come home.' 'Not come home, indeed! and didn't they know it was my birthday? But then I say I won't wear it without the lace—I can't wear it without the lace, and I won't.'

The lace, however, could not be had; and Bell at length submitted to let the frock be put on. 'Come, Miss Bell, dry your eyes,' said the maid who educated her; 'dry your eyes, and I'll tell you something that will please you.'
‘What, then?’ said the child, pouting and sobbing. ‘Why,—but you must not tell that I told you.’ ‘No,—but if I am asked?’ ‘Why, if you are asked, you must tell the truth, to be sure. So I’ll hold my tongue, miss.’ ‘Nay, tell me, though, and I’ll never tell—if I am asked.’ ‘Well, then,’ said the maid, ‘your cousin Rosamond is come, and has brought you the most beautifullest thing you ever saw in your life; but you are not to know anything about it till after dinner, because she wants to surprise you; and mistress has put it into her wardrobe till after dinner.’ ‘Till after dinner!’ repeated Bell, impatiently; ‘I can’t wait till then; I must see it this minute.’ The maid refused her several times, till Bell burst into another fit of crying; and the maid, fearing that her mistress would be angry with her if Bell’s eyes were red at dinner-time, consented to show her the basket.

‘How pretty! But let me have it in my own hands,’ said Bell, as the maid held the basket up out of her reach. ‘Oh no, you must not touch it; for if you should
spoil it, what would become of me? 'Become of you, indeed!' exclaimed the spoiled child, who never considered anything but her own immediate gratification. 'Become of you, indeed! What signifies that? I shan't spoil it; and I will have it in my own hands. If you don't hold it down for me directly, I'll tell that you showed it to me.' 'Then you won't snatch it?' 'No, no, I won't indeed,' said Bell; but she had learned from her maid a total disregard of truth. She snatched the basket the moment it was within her reach. A struggle ensued, in which the handle and lid were torn off, and one of the medallions crushed inwards, before the little fury returned to her senses.

Calmed at this sight, the next question was, how she should conceal the mischief which she had done. After many attempts, the handle and lid were replaced, the basket was put exactly in the same spot in which it had stood before, and the maid charged the child to look as if nothing was the matter.

We hope that both children and parents will here pause for a moment to reflect.
The habits of tyranny, meanness, and falsehood, which children acquire from living with bad servants, are scarcely ever conquered in the whole course of their future lives.

After shutting up the basket they left the room, and in the adjoining passage they found a poor girl waiting with a small parcel in her hand. 'What's your business?' said the maid. 'I have brought home the lace, madam, that was bespoke for the young lady.' 'Oh, you have, have you, at last?' said Bell; 'and pray why didn't you bring it sooner?' The girl was going to answer, but the maid interrupted her, saying, 'Come, come, none of your excuses; you are a little idle, good-for-nothing thing, to disappoint Miss Bell upon her birthday. But now you have brought it, let us look at it.'

The little girl gave the lace without reply, and the maid desired her to go about her business, and not to expect to be paid; for that her mistress could not see anybody, because she was in a room full of company.
‘May I call again, madam, this afternoon?’ said the child timidly.

‘Lord bless my stars!’ replied the maid, ‘what makes people so poor, I wonders! I wish mistress would buy her lace at the warehouse, as I told her, and not of these folks. Call again! yes, to be sure. I believe you’d call—call—call twenty times for twopence.’

However ungraciously the permission to call again was granted, it was received with gratitude. The little girl departed with a cheerful countenance, and Bell teazed her maid till she got her to sew the long-wished-for lace upon her cuffs.

Unfortunate Bell! All dinner-time passed, and people were so hungry, so busy, or so stupid, that not an eye observed her favourite piece of finery; till at length she was no longer able to conceal her impatience, and turning to Laura, who sat next to her, she said, ‘You have no lace upon your cuffs. Look how beautiful mine is!—is not it?’ Don’t you wish your mamma could afford to give some like it? But you can’t get any if she would, for this was made on
purpose for me on my birthday, and nobody can get a bit more anywhere, if they would give the world for it.' 'But cannot the person who made it,' said Laura, 'make any more like it?' 'No, no, no!' cried Bell; for she had already learned, either from her maid or her mother, the mean pride which values things not for being really pretty or useful, but for being such as nobody else can procure. 'Nobody can get any like it, I say,' repeated Bell; 'nobody in all London can make it but one person, and that person will never make a bit for anybody but me, I am sure. Mamma won't let her, if I ask her not.' 'Very well,' said Laura, coolly, 'I do not want any of it; you need not be so violent; I assure you that I don't want any of it.' 'Yes, but you do, though,' said Bell, more angrily. 'No, indeed,' said Laura, smiling. 'You do, in the bottom of your heart; but you say you don't to plague me, I know,' cried Bell, swelling with disappointed vanity. 'It is pretty for all that, and it cost a great deal of money too; and nobody shall have any like it, if they cried their eyes out.'
Laura received this declaration in silence—Rosamond smiled; and at her smile the ill-suppressed rage of the spoiled child burst forth into the seventh and loudest fit of crying which had yet been heard on her birthday.

‘What’s the matter, my pet?’ cried her mother; ‘come to me, and tell me what’s the matter.’ Bell ran roaring to her mother; but no otherwise explained the cause of her sorrow than by tearing the fine lace with frantic gestures from her cuffs, and throwing the fragments into her mother’s lap.

‘Oh! the lace, child!—are you mad?’ said her mother, catching hold of both her hands. ‘Your beautiful lace, my dear love!—do you know how much it cost?’

‘I don’t care how much it cost—it is not beautiful, and I’ll have none of it,’ replied Bell, sobbing; ‘for it is not beautiful.’

‘But it is beautiful,’ retorted her mother; ‘I chose the pattern myself. Who has put it into your head, child, to dislike it? Was it Nancy?’ ‘No, not Nancy, but them, mamma,’ said Bell, pointing to Laura and Rosamond. ‘Oh fie! don’t
point,' said her mother, hastily putting down her stubborn finger; 'nor say them, like Nancy. I am sure you misunderstood. Miss Laura, I am sure, did not mean any such thing.' 'No, madam; and I did not say any such thing that I recollect,' said Laura, gently. 'Oh no, indeed!' cried Rosamond, warmly, rising in her sister's defence.

No defence or explanation, however, was to be heard, for everybody had now gathered round Bell, to dry her tears, and to comfort her for the mischief she had done to her own cuffs. They succeeded so well, that in about a quarter of an hour the young lady's eyes, and the reddened arches over her eyebrows, came to their natural colour; and the business being thus happily hushed up, the mother, as a reward to her daughter for her good humour, begged that Rosamond would now be so good as to produce her 'charming present.'

Rosamond, followed by all the company, amongst whom, to her great joy, was her godmother, proceeded to the dressing-room. 'Now I am sure,' thought she, 'Bell will be
surprised, and my godmother will see she was right about my generosity.'

The doors of the wardrobe were opened with due ceremony, and the filigree-basket appeared in all its glory. 'Well, this is a charming present, indeed!' said the godmother, who was one of the company; 'my Rosamond knows how to make presents.' And as she spoke she took hold of the basket, to lift it down to the admiring audience. Scarcely had she touched it when, lo! the myrtle wreath, the medallions, all dropped, the basket fell to the ground, and only the handle remained in her hand.

All eyes were fixed upon the wreck. Exclamations of sorrow were heard in various tones; and 'Who can have done this?' was all that Rosamond could say. Bell stood in sullen silence, which she obstinately preserved in the midst of the inquiries that were made about the disaster.

At length the servants were summoned, and amongst them Nancy, Miss Bell's maid and governess. She affected much surprise when she saw what had befallen the basket, and declared that she knew nothing of the
matter, but that she had seen her mistress in the morning put it quite safe into the wardrobe; and that, for her part, she had never touched it, or thought of touching it, in her born days. 'Nor Miss Bell neither, ma'am,—I can answer for her; for she never knew of its being there, because I never so much as mentioned it to her that there was such a thing in the house, because I knew Miss Rosamond wanted to surprise her with the secret; so I never mentioned a sentence of it. Did I, Miss Bell?'

Bell, putting on the deceitful look which her maid had taught her, answered boldly, 'No;,' but she had hold of Rosamond's hand, and at the instant she uttered this falsehood she squeezed it terribly. 'Why do you squeeze my hand so?' said Rosamond, in a low voice; 'what are you afraid of?' 'Afraid of!' cried Bell, turning angrily; 'I'm not afraid of anything—I've nothing to be afraid about.' 'Nay, I did not say you had,' whispered Rosamond; 'but only if you did by accident—you know what I mean—I should not be angry if you did;—only say so.' 'I say I did not!' cried Bell,
furiously. 'Mamma! mamma! Nancy! My cousin Rosamond won't believe me! That's very hard—it's very rude, and I won't bear it. I won't.' 'Don't be angry, love, don't,' said the maid. 'Nobody suspects you, darling,' said her mother; 'but she has too much sensibility. 'Don't cry, love, nobody suspected you. But you know,' continued she, turning to the maid, 'somebody must have done this, and I must know how it was done. Miss Rosamond's charming present must not be spoiled in this way, in my house, without my taking proper notice of it. I assure you I am very angry about it, Rosamond.'

Rosamond did not rejoice in her anger, and had nearly made a sad mistake by speaking aloud her thoughts—'I was very foolish'—she began, and stopped.

'Ma'am,' cried the maid, suddenly, 'I'll venture to say I know who did it.' 'Who?' said every one eagerly. 'Who?' said Bell, trembling. 'Why, Miss, don't you recollect that little girl with the lace that we saw peeping about in the passage? I'm sure she must have done it; for here she was
by herself half an hour or more; and not another creature has been in mistress's dressing-room, to my certain knowledge, since morning. Those sort of people have so much curiosity,—I'm sure she must have been meddling with it,' added the maid.

'Oh yes, that's the thing,' said the mistress, decidedly. 'Well, Miss Rosamond, for your comfort she shall never come into my house again.' 'Oh, that would not comfort me at all,' said Rosamond; 'besides, we are not sure that she did it; and if'——

A single knock at the door was heard at this instant. It was the little girl, who came to be paid for her lace. 'Call her in,' said the lady of the house; 'let us see her directly.'

The maid, who was afraid that the girl's innocence would appear if she were produced, hesitated; but upon her mistress's repeating her commands, she was forced to obey. The child came in with a look of simplicity; but when she saw the room full of company she was a little abashed. Rosamond and Laura looked at her and at one another with surprise, for it was
the same little girl whom they had seen weaving lace. 'Is not it she?' whispered Rosamond to her sister. 'Yes it is; but hush!' said Laura; 'she does not know us. Don't say a word, let us hear what she will say.'

Laura got behind the rest of the company as she spoke, so that the little girl could not see her.

'Vastly well!' said Bell's mother; 'I am waiting to see how long you will have the assurance to stand there with that innocent look. Did you ever see that basket before?' 'Yes, ma'am,' said the girl. 'Yes, ma'am!' cried the maid; 'and what else do you know about it? You had better confess it at once, and mistress perhaps will say no more about it.' 'Yes, do confess it,' added Bell, earnestly. 'Confess what, madam?' said the little girl; 'I never touched the basket, madam.' 'You never touched it; but you confess,' interrupted Bell's mother, 'that you did see it before. And pray how came you to see it? You must have opened my wardrobe.' 'No, indeed, ma'am,' said the little girl; 'but I
was waiting in the passage, ma'am, and this door was partly open; and looking at the maid, you know, I could not help seeing it.' 'Why, how could you see through the doors of my wardrobe?' rejoined the lady.

The maid, frightened, pulled the little girl by the sleeve.

'Answer me,' said the lady, 'where did you see this basket?' Another stronger pull. 'I saw it, madam, in her hands,' looking at the maid; 'and'—'Well, and what became of it afterwards?' 'Ma'am,'—hesitating,—'miss pulled, and by accident—I believe, I saw, ma'am—miss, you know what I saw.' 'I do not know—I do not know; and if I did, you had no business there; and mamma won't believe you, I am sure.'

Everybody else, however, did believe; and their eyes were fixed upon Bell in a manner which made her feel rather ashamed.

'What do you all look at me so for? Why do you all look so? And am I to be put to shame on my birthday?' cried she, bursting into a roar of passion; 'and all for this nasty thing!' added she, pushing
away the remains of the basket, and looking angrily at Rosamond.

'Bell! Bell! Oh fie! fie! Now I am ashamed of you; that's quite rude to your cousin,' said her mother, who was more shocked at her daughter's want of politeness than at her falsehood. 'Take her away, Nancy, till she has done crying,' added she to the maid, who accordingly carried off her pupil.

Rosamond, during this scene, especially at the moment when her present was pushed away with such disdain, had been making reflections upon the nature of true generosity. A smile from her father, who stood by, a silent spectator of the catastrophe of the filigree-basket, gave rise to these reflections; nor were they entirely dissipated by the condolence of the rest of the company, nor even by the praises of her godmother, who, for the purpose of condoling with her, said, 'Well, my dear Rosamond, I admire your generous spirit. You know I prophesied that your half-guinea would be gone the soonest. Did I not, Laura?' said she, appealing, in a sarcastic tone, to where
she thought Laura was. 'Where is Laura? I don't see her.' Laura came forward. 'You are too prudent to throw away your money like your sister. Your half-guinea, I'll answer for it, is snug in your pocket—is it not?' 'No, madam,' answered she in a low voice.

But low as the voice of Laura was, the poor little lace-girl heard it; and now, for the first time, fixing her eyes upon Laura, recollected her benefactress. 'Oh, that's the young lady!' she exclaimed, in a tone of joyful gratitude—'the good, good young lady who gave me the half-guinea, and would not stay to be thanked for it; but I will thank her now.'

'The half-guinea, Laura!' said her godmother. 'What is all this?' 'I'll tell you, madam, if you please,' said the little girl.

It was not in expectation of being praised for it that Laura had been generous, and therefore everybody was really touched with the history of the weaving-pillow, and whilst they praised, felt a certain degree of respect, which is not always felt by those who pour forth eulogiums.
Ah, madam!' said Rosamond to her godmother, 'now you see—you see she is not a little miser. I'm sure that's better than wasting half a guinea upon a filigree-basket;—is it not, ma'am?' said she with an eagerness which showed that she had forgotten all her own misfortunes in sympathy with her sister. 'This is being really generous, father, is it not?'

'Yes, Rosamond,' said her father, and he kissed her;—'this is being really generous.'

'The thing I like the best of all others, father,' said Rosamond, half pleased, half vexed; 'what is that, I wonder? You don't mean praise, do you, sir?' 'Nay, you must decide that yourself, Rosamond.' 'Why, sir,' said she, ingenuously, 'perhaps it was once the thing I liked best; but the pleasure I have just felt makes me like something else much better.'