

Literature, &c.

From Heath's Book of Beauty.
GRATITUDE.

BY CAPTAIN MARRYAT, R. N.

'Do good unto others, Ben; then you will have the approval of your own conscience and the gratitude of your fellow creatures.'

Such was the repeated injunction of my worthy father, and he continued to repeat it until his tongue was silent for ever. But I must give my readers a slight sketch of my father, and how he passed through his pilgrimage.

I should say that there never was a man who passed through life so placidly, and I may say, so happily. He was always deceived, and never found out that he was so in the whole course of his life; and if that was not happiness, I do not know what is. Born to an estate of £10,000 a year, he came into his property when he was of age, and he had no brothers or sisters to provide for. As simple in his habits as he was in his disposition, he spent little upon himself; and a true Christian in heart, he considered himself but as a steward in trust of his splendid income, and sought every means of doing good to others. Of the earlier part of his life I can say nothing, but I do recollect that, when I was a child of six or seven years old, my mother would loudly express her indignation at the way in which my father permitted himself to be plundered and robbed by undeserving people. Still there was little altercation, as my father was a very silent man. I have heard him say, in reply to my mother, that if we were charitable only to the good, our bounty would be very limited, and that kindness to a bad man might prevent his becoming worse, even if it did not reform him, and, at all events, he was grateful. My mother used to shake her head, but it was impossible to be angry with my father; he was so meek, so patient, so mild in his speech. However, my mother was called away, and I was left the only son, and my father's acts and injunctions met with no more reproof or remonstrance.

'Your mother was a good woman, a very good woman,' my father would say, 'but she was suspicious in her temper. I wonder what made her so?' And as a boy I wondered too; for I thought that in such a beautiful world everybody must be good. And my father would point out these beauties in creation, and ask me whether we ought not to feel grateful to the God who had made it so delightful for our use and enjoyment; I acknowledged the truth of what he said, and I felt sincerely grateful. Thus did I grow up at the knees of my father fully convinced that this was the best of all possible worlds, and that it was overflowing with gratitude, as well as with milk and honey.

I think that I was about ten years old when I had my first lesson of exception to this general rule. I was walking close to the park-gates, when I perceived a large butcher's dog who was tearing to pieces a small terrier, who laid under his feet alternately snapping and howling. I caught up some large stones, and hurled them one after another at the big dog until he made a hasty retreat, leaving the poor little terrier still yelping on the turf. In my philanthropy I hastened to take in my arms, the object of my commiseration, and was pressing it with sympathy to my bosom, when the little beast, still smarting, I presume, from its punishment, turned its head sharply, and seized me by the nose. I dropped it from my arms, doubly pained with the bite and such unexpected gratitude on the part of the little wretch. But we were not to part so easily. The brute hung on, and had I not been assisted by the gate-keeper, my nose would not have hung on much longer; as it was, I was disfigured for a long time, and the marks remain to this very day. As I remained in bed, for I was very ill, and indeed there was some suspicion that the dog was mad, I could not help thinking that there was not quite so much gratitude in the world as my father thought, and I told him so. His answer was, 'My dear boy we do not expect gratitude from animals, although dogs are very grateful. But recollect that the animal was excessively enraged, and anger is a more powerful passion than gratitude.' I agreed with my father in this last remark. In due course of time my nose got well, my scepticism was cured at the same time, and I followed my father in his path of benevolence.

It was not till I was fourteen that I had another severe lesson. I was riding in the green lanes with a groom behind

me, when I saw a gipsy unmercifully beating a white pony harnessed in a small cart laden with peat. I remonstrated, but it was useless. The man continued to belabor the poor beast over the head till, in its struggles, it put its foot into a deep rut and fell. As the man stood by, cursing the animal, I asked him if he would sell it, and I offered five pounds, which was certainly more than its value in its condition. The man consented; we assisted him in releasing the pony, and my groom led it home. I told my father what I had done, and he commended me for the act.

'We will let the poor animal have the run of the park,' said he: 'it has suffered much, but it shall end its days in peace.'

We then descanted upon the great merits of the horse, and afterward I went to the stables to see that my new protegee was properly looked after.

'He's a good-shaped 'un, Master James,' said the coachman, 'remarkably good-shaped. Put a little flesh on his bones, and he will be uncommon handsome, for he is only rising five.'

'Is he quiet and good-tempered, do think?'

'He's quiet enough now, sir, but what he will be I can't say: but one thing is certain, a pony, so well shaped as he is, did not get into a gipsy's care for nothing.'

In a few weeks my pony was quite another animal. He turned out, as the coachmen had predicted, a very handsome beast. I fed him with carrots and sugar to make him fond of me, and he would neigh when he saw me approach. One day I went into his stable, I had no carrots with me, but I went up to the manger and caressed him as usual: as I went away, the animal put down his ears, and flung out his hind legs with such force that I was felled to the ground. They carried me into the house, and when a surgeon arrived, he told us my leg was broken. This was but a poor return for all my kindness; but it was afterward found out that the vice of the animal was such that nobody would keep it, and that in consequence it had fallen into the hands of the gipsy.

My father, as usual, wanted to extenuate the conduct of the animal. He declared that it was frightened by my approaching its hind quarters, and that was the reason why it had kicked me. 'Fear, my dear boy, is a stronger passion than gratitude.' I did not agree with my father that the animal had been actuated by fear: but my leg got well, and I forgot my second lesson from dumb animals.

Had my father allowed me to go to a public school, I should have gained a little more knowledge of the world, but the curate of the parish was my preceptor, and he was a good kindly old man, and the dispenser of my father's charity. Nevertheless, as I grew up to man's estate, I did occasionally perceive that my father did not use that discrimination in his kind offices which he should have done, and that the housekeeper who introduced the constant claimants on his bounty appeared of a most unusually charitable disposition, putting her apron to her eyes and shedding tears when she came in to narrate the tale of woe of some unfortunate person who waited below in the kitchen for relief, and she generally received orders to give the suppliant a sum of money, and put it down in her book, and from the blessings which she invariably called down upon my father's head, it would almost appear that she was the relieved party. 'She's a good woman—she can feel for others,' my father would say: 'I shall not forget her in my will.' I think the housekeeper must have overheard him say this more than once. She was engaged to be married to the butler, and it appeared that the butler put off his marriage till my father's death (for he was very old and infirm.) I presume the butler wished to ascertain first what my father had left her in his will, for one day I overheard her say to him, 'I wish the old gentleman would make haste and walk off, if he lives much longer we shall be too old to marry, he has a shocking cough, however, that's some comfort!' When I heard this, I was very much shocked. I would not tell my father, as it would make him very unhappy, but I considered it a most ungrateful wish; but, thought I, on reflection, I have read of love, although I have never felt it, and I presume, 'it is a stronger passion than gratitude.' The housekeeper, however, had her wish—my father's malady increased and he died. After the funeral the will was opened: legacies were bequeathed to all the servants, and the housekeeper was left 200*l*. 'Th't very day she and the butler gave

warning, and I afterwards discovered that they had carried away a large portion of the linen, and the wines in the cellar, and had since set up a tavern a few miles from the town. This was a lamentable exception in the general rule of gratitude, I had a great mind to prosecute them, but the kindly feeling toward my fellow creatures, which had been so deeply impressed upon me in my bringing up, prevented me from punishing them as they deserved.

I was now a young man of twenty-two years of age, with a splendid fortune. Although my ideas of the world's gratitude were not so enthusiastic as those of my kind parent, I still did consider gratitude as the general rule, and this ingratitude was but an occasional exception to it. I therefore followed the bent of my philanthropy, and tried at least to deserve the good will of my fellow creatures. My first object was to benefit those more immediately around me, my tenants, and those who resided contiguous to my extensive property.

Natural education had just been taken up in a very earnest manner, and I resolved to found schools in two or three parishes; building them, and paying the expenses of the teachers. As soon as everything was ready for the reception, notice was sent to the poor parishioners that their children might receive their education gratis; but to my astonishment the children did not come. I inquired the reason, and found that some would not allow their children to come because they could make two pence a day by their work, others and the major portion refused because it was charity, and preferred to send their children to a school where they paid a penny per week to the school mistress. I reasoned with them, and after some little time a few were sent to my school, but those who did send their children took care to let me see that they considered it was a favour conferred on me and not on them. So I received very little gratitude for this attempt to benefit the community. I reduced the rents of all my tenants, and invariably allowed them to remain in arrears which they complained of bad times or misfortunes; but I found that I received little thanks for my forbearance. One tenant having excused himself for two years: it was pointed out to me by my bailiff that the ground was left untiled, and the man was a bed half the day. I therefore decided that it was necessary to act, and desired him to pay his rent. He stated his inability at the time and I asked when he would be able. He replied, certainly not that year, and perhaps not the year following. Convinced that he was incorrigible and lazy, I desired him to leave my farm, wishing to put in another tenant, but he refused, and upon some absurd pretence, because I gave notice of ejectment, he employed a pettifogging lawyer to bring an action against me. After a time he sent me word that he would leave the farm if I would give him £500, and being refused, he came down to £200, then £100, and then £50. At last, finding that I had brought actions, not only for ejectment, but also for rent, he thought proper to evacuate. There was not much gratitude in this affair at all events, and I determined to leave my bailiff to settle with my tenants for the future.

About a year after my father's death a distant relative died, and his wife called upon me stating her distress, and I thought, as she had a boy of fifteen unprovided for, that it would be a kindness to educate him, and provide for his future welfare. The widow was relieved, and the boy sent to school. Before the year was over, another cousin on my mother's side was left a little girl quite destitute, and I thought it my duty to protect her. The child was sent to me; a raw boned, gawky creature of twelve years old, with an awful squint in the left eye, which was drawn down into the corner. She was immediately sent to one of the best schools near the metropolis.

Possessed as I was of large property it may be easily be concluded that I was considered a great prize in the matrimonial lottery, and I was, I may say, almost besieged to take unto myself a wife out of my numerous relatives and acquaintances. Everybody called to see my house and grounds, and everybody brought their daughters, and I was asked everywhere, and had to give dinners in return; but whether it was I had acquired bachelor habits from the quiet and secluded way in which I had so long been with my father after my mother's death, or that I was frightened by the many traps and springs laid in my path by anxious mothers, certain it is that I never felt the least inclination

to change my condition; and at the age of thirty I was still unmarried, and set down by those around me as a confirmed bachelor. In the mean time my two proteges had grown up. The boy, whose name was Edward, had been sent to college, and had decided upon entering the church, as I had a valuable living which I could give him as soon as the old incumbent died. In the mean time he had taken orders, and was residing with me. The girl, Angelina, had now arrived at the age of nineteen, and it was not possible for her to remain any longer at school. This perplexed me; however as it was necessary that she should be removed, I decided upon sending for an elderly relation to remain as *chaperone* in the house. The offer was accepted, and as soon as the old lady was established, the young lady was sent for, and came home. She was no longer the awkward, scraggy child, but grown up into a very fine young woman; but although her figure was fine, and her features regular, the squint of the eye was so fatal to good looks that it was unpleasant to look at her. I found accomplished, humble, and affectionate; and very soon this addition to my establishment which I had so much dreaded became a source of comfort. The house was more cheerful, and all parties being good tempered, time passed merrily away.

Before six months were over I thought that I perceived an attachment growing up between my two proteges. That there was a little on her side I felt convinced, and I thought that uniting them would be a very good idea. I sounded Edward on the subject: his reply was any thing but satisfactory. He said that although he considered it his duty to pay every attention to any inmate of my house, he did not consider it at all likely that he should ever consent to be united to a young person who had such an unfortunate defect as Angelina had in her eye. There the subject dropped. Edward was a remarkably handsome young man, and as I thought that the girl was smitten, I was not sorry to be informed that the living had become vacant. Edward was for a minute installed; and with many expressions of gratitude he quitted us to take possession. For a year after he left everything went on quietly. Angelina appeared to think no more of him, and devoted herself entirely to me. By degrees I became more interested in her; and her defect from habit was not so perceptible, in fact, I gradually became attached to her, and she returned my affection with every mark of reciprocal feeling. After a time I made her an offer, and was accepted. It was arranged that our union should take place in six weeks. Angelina received the congratulations of all her friends, and I thought that I had every prospect of happiness. About this time a German doctor came over who had performed some considerable operations on the eye and had been very successful in cases of obliquity of vision. As I thought it would be very advantageous if this defect in Angelina could be cured, I went to town, found the surgeon out, and took him down with me to my country seat. He saw Angelina, and promised an effectual cure if she would submit to the operation. She consented; it was skillfully done, and for some weeks she remained in a darkened chamber until her eye could receive its strength. At last the light was gradually admitted, and it was found that the cure was perfect. I brought the glass to Angelina, and she beheld herself; and certainly, now that the defect was removed, it was hardly possible to select a young woman more beautiful than she was.

'Oh!' exclaimed she, as she firmly put her hand upon my shoulder, 'what a debt of gratitude do I not owe to you—what a creature I am of your bounty! You found me ignorant, friendless—you have sheltered me and protected me, honored me with your love, and now you have added the gift of beauty—how can I be sufficiently grateful?'

I folded her in my arms and replied—

'You can prove your affection and regard by consenting to be mine as soon as possible.'

It was arranged that the ceremony should take place in three weeks, and I wrote to Edward to come and officiate upon the happy occasion. Ten days before the day appointed Edward made his appearance, congratulating Angelina upon her improved charms. For myself I can only say that, like those who had loved but once, I became devotedly and ardently attached, as I counted the moments almost until she was mine, I was obliged to go up to town on legal business, and the lawyers, as usual, were so