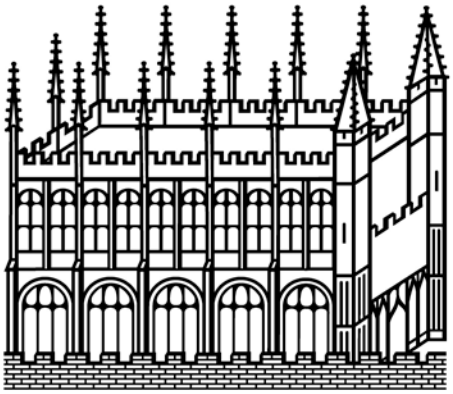

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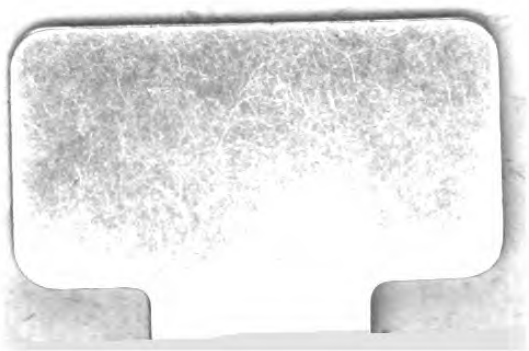

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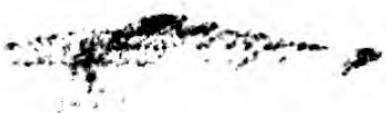
A

# SIMPLE STORY.

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.



A

# SIMPLE STORY.

IN

FOUR VOLUMES.

By Mrs. INCHBALD.

VOL. IV.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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1791.

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A

# SIMPLE STORY.

## CHAPTER I.

*A letter from Giffard, Lord Elmwood's Houſe Steward, to Miſs Woodley.*

" Madam,

" MY Lord, above a twelvemonth
" ago, acquainted me he had permitted
" his daughter to reſide in his houſe;
" but at the ſame time he informed me,
" the grant was under a certain reſtric-

" tion, which, if ever broken, I was to
" ſee his then determination (of which
" he alſo acquainted me) put in execu-
" tion. In conſequence of Lady Ma-
" tilda's indiſpoſition, Madam, I have
" ventured to delay this notice till morn-
" ing — I need not ſay with what con-
" cern I now give it, or mention to
" you, I believe, what is forfeited. —
" My Lord ſtaid but a few hours yeſter-
" day, after the unhappy circumſtance
" on which I write, took place; nor
" did I ſee him after, till he was in his
" carriage; he then ſent for me to the
" carriage door, and told me he ſhould
" be back in two days time, and added,
" ' Remember your duty.' That duty,
" I hope, Madam, you will not require
" I ſhould mention in more direct terms.
" — As ſoon as my Lord returns, I have
" no doubt but he will aſk me if it is

 " fulfilled,

" fulfilled, and I ſhall be under the
" greateſt apprehenſion, ſhould his com-
" mands not be obeyed.

" If there is any thing wanting for
" the convenience of yours and Lady
" Matilda's departure, you have but to
" order it, and it is at your ſervice—
" I mean likewiſe any caſh you may have
" occaſion for. I ſhould preſume to
" add my opinion where you might beſt
" take up your abode; but with ſuch ad-
" vice as you will have from Mr. Sand-
" ford, mine would be but aſſuming.

" I would alſo have waited upon you,
" Madam, and have delivered myſelf
" the ſubſtance of this letter; but I
" am an old man, and the changes I
" have been witneſs to in my Lord's
" houſe ſince I firſt lived in it, has en-

" creaſed my age many years; and I
" have not the ſtrength to ſee you upon
" this occaſion. — I loved my deceaſed
" Lady — I love my Lord — and I love
" their child — nay, ſo I am ſure does
" my Lord himſelf; but there is no ac-
" counting for his reſolutions, or for the
" alteration his diſpoſition has lately un-
" dergone.

" I beg pardon, Madam, for this
" long intruſion, and am, and ever will
" be, (while you and my Lord's daugh-
" ter are ſo) your afflicted humble ſer-
" vant,

" ROBERT GIFFARD.

" *Elmwood Houſe*,
" *Sept.* 12."

When

When this letter was brought to Miſs Woodley, ſhe knew what it contained before ſhe opened it, and therefore took it with an air of reſignation—yet though ſhe gueſſed the momentous part of its contents, ſhe dreaded in what words it might be related; and having now no eſſential good to expect, hope, that will never totally expire, clung at this criſis to little circumſtances, and ſhe hoped moſt fervently, the terms of the letter might not be harſh, but that Lord Elmwood had delivered his commands in gentle language.—The event proved he had; and loſt to every important comfort, ſhe felt grateful to him for this ſmall one.

Matilda, too, was cheered by this letter, for ſhe expected ſomething worſe; and the laſt line, in which Giffard ſaid

he knew "His Lordſhip loved her." ſhe thought repaid her for the purport of the other part.

Sandford was not ſo eaſily reſigned or comforted — he walked about the room when the letter was ſhewn to him — called it cruel — ſtifled his tears, and wiſhed to ſhow his reſentment only — but the former burſt through all his endeavours, and he ſunk into grief.

Nor was the fortitude of Matilda, which came to her aſſiſtance on the firſt onſet of this trial, ſufficient to arm her, when the moment came ſhe was to quit the houſe — her father's houſe — never to ſee that, or him again.

When

When word was brought that the carriage was at the door, which was to convey her from all ſhe held ſo dear, and ſhe ſaw before her the proſpect of a long youthful and healthful life, in which miſery and deſpair were all ſhe could diſcern; that deſpair ſeized her at once, and gaining courage from it, ſhe cried,

"What have I to fear if I diſobey my father's commands once more?—he cannot uſe me worſe.—I'll ſtay here till he returns—again throw myſelf in his way, and then I will not faint, but plead for mercy.—Perhaps were I to kneel to him—kneel, like other children, and beg his bleſſing, he would not refuſe it me."

"You muſt not try." ſaid Sandford, mildly.

"Who," cried ſhe, "ſhall prevent my flying to my father? — Have I another friend on earth?—Have I one relation in the world but him?—This is the ſecond time I have been commanded out of the houſe.—In my infant ſtate my cruel father turned me out; but then, he ſent me to a mother—now I have none; and I will ſtay with him."

Again the ſteward ſent to let them know the coach was waiting.

Sandford now, with a determined countenance, went coolly up to Lady Matilda, and taking her hand, ſeemed reſolved to lead her to the carriage.

Accuſtomed to be awed by every ſerious look of his, ſhe yet reſiſted this; and cried, "Would *you* be the miniſter of my father's cruelty?"

"Then,"

"Then," ſaid Sandford ſolemnly to her, "farewell—from this moment you and I part.—I will take my leave, and do you remain where you are—at leaſt till you are forced away.—But I'll not ſtay to be turned out—for it is impoſſible your father will ſuffer any friend of yours to continue here, after this diſobedience.—Adieu."

"I'll go this moment," ſaid ſhe, and roſe haſtily.

Miſs Woodley took her at her word, and hurried her immediately out of the room.

Sandford followed ſlow behind, as if he had followed at her funeral.

When ſhe came to that ſpot on the ſtairs where ſhe had met her father, ſhe ſtarted back, and ſcarce knew how to paſs it.—When ſhe had—"There he

held me," ſaid ſhe, "and I thought I felt him preſs me to his heart, but I now find I was miſtaken."

As Sandford came forward, to hand her into the coach, "Now you behave well;" ſaid he, "by this behaviour, you do not entirely cloſe all proſpect of reconciliation with your father."

"Do you think it is not yet impoſſible?" cried ſhe, claſping his hand. "Giffard ſays he loves me," continued ſhe, "and do you think he might yet be brought to forgive me?"

"Forgive you!" cried Sandford.

"Suppoſe I was to write to him, and entreat his forgiveneſs?"

"Do not write yet." ſaid Sandford, with no cheering accent.

The

The carriage drove off — and as it went, Matilda leaned her head from the window, to ſurvey Elmwood Houſe from the roof to the bottom. — She caſt her eyes upon the gardens too — upon the fiſhponds — the coach houſes even, and all the offices adjoining — which, as objects that ſhe ſhould never ſee again — ſhe contemplated, as objects of importance.

## CHAPTER II.

RUSHBROOK, who, at twenty miles diſtance, could have no conjecture what had paſſed at Elmwood Houſe, during the ſhort viſit Lord Elmwood made there, went that way with his dogs and gun in order to meet him on his return, and accompany him in the chaiſe back — he did ſo — and getting into the carriage, told him eagerly the ſport he had had during the day; laughed at an accident that had befallen one of his dogs; and for ſome time did not perceive but that his uncle was perfectly attentive. — At length, obſerving he anſwered more negligently than uſual to what he ſaid,

Ruſhbrook

Ruſhbrook turned his eyes quickly upon him, and cried,

"My Lord, are you not well?"

"Yes; perfectly well, I thank you, Ruſhbrook." and leaned back againſt the carriage.

"I thought, Sir," returned Ruſhbrook, "you ſpoke languidly — I beg your pardon."

"I have the head-ach a little." anſwered he: — then taking off his hat, bruſhed the powder from it, and as he put it on again, fetched a moſt heavy ſigh; which no ſooner had eſcaped him, than, to drown its ſound, he ſaid briſkly,

"And ſo you tell me you have had good ſport to-day?"

"No, my Lord, I ſaid but indifferent."

"True, ſo you did. — Bid the man drive

drive faſter — it will be dark before we get home."

"You will ſhoot to-morrow, my Lord?"

"Certainly."

"How does Mr. Sandford do, Sir?"

"I did not ſee him."

"Not ſee Mr. Sandford, my Lord?— but he was out, I ſuppoſe—for they did not expect you at Elmwood Houſe."

"No, they did not."

In ſuch converſation Ruſhbrook and his uncle continued till the end of their journey.— Dinner was then immediately ſerved, and Lord Elmwood appeared much in his uſual ſpirits; at leaſt, not ſuſpecting any cauſe for their abatement, Ruſhbrook did not obſerve any alteration.

Lord

Lord Elmwood went, however, earlier to bed than ordinary, or rather to his bedchamber; for though he retired ſome time before his nephew, when Ruſhbrook paſſed his chamber door it was open, and he not in bed, but ſitting in a muſing poſture, as if he had forgot to ſhut it.

When Ruſhbrook's valet came to attend his maſter, he ſaid to him,

"I ſuppoſe, Sir, you do not know what has happened at Elmwood Houſe?"

"For heaven's ſake what?" cried Ruſhbrook.

"My Lord has met Lady Matilda." replied the man.

"How? Where? What's the conſequence?"

"We don't know yet, Sir; but all the ſervants ſuppoſe her Ladyſhip will not

not be ſuffered to remain there any longer."

"They all ſuppoſe wrong," returned Ruſhbrook haſtily — "My Lord loves her I am certain, and this event may be the happy means of his treating her as his child from this day."

The ſervant ſmiled and ſhook his head.

"Why, what more do you know?"

"Nothing more than I have told you, Sir; except that his Lordſhip took no kind of notice of her Ladyſhip that appeared like love."

Ruſhbrook was all uneaſineſs and anxiety to know the particulars of what had paſſed; and now Lord Elmwood's inquietude, which he had but ſlightly noticed before, came full to his obſervation. — He was going to aſk more queſtions;

tions, but he recollected Lady Matilda's misfortunes were too ſacred, to be talked of thus familiarly by the ſervants of the family; — beſides, it was evident this man thought, and but naturally, it might not be for his maſter's intereſt the father and the daughter ſhould be united; and therefore would certainly give to all he ſaid the oppoſite colouring.

In ſpite of his prudence, however, and his delicacy towards Matilda, Ruſhbrook could not let his valet leave him till he had inquired, and learnt all the circumſtantial account of what had happened; except, indeed, the order received by Giffard, which being given after Lord Elmwood was in his carriage, and in conciſe terms, the domeſtics who attended him (and from whom this man

had gained his intelligence) were unacquainted with it.

When the ſervant had left Ruſhbrook alone, the perturbation of his mind was ſo great, that he was, at length, undetermined whether to go to bed, or to ruſh into his uncle's apartment, and at his feet beg for that compaſſion upon his daughter, which he feared he had denied her.— But then again, to what peril did he not expoſe himſelf by ſuch a ſtep? Nay, he might perhaps even injure her whom he wiſhed to ſerve; for if his uncle was at preſent unreſolved, whether to forgive or to reſent this diſobedience to his commands, another's interference might enrage, and precipitate him on the latter.

This conſideration was ſo weighty, it reſigned Ruſhbrook to the ſuſpenſe he

muſt endure till the morning; when he flattered himſelf, that by watching every look and motion of Lord Elmwood, his penetration, would be able to diſcover the ſtate of his heart, and how he meant to act.

But the morning came, and he found all his prying curioſity was of no avail; Lord Elmwood did not uſe one word, one look, or action that was not cuſtomary.

On firſt ſeeing him, Ruſhbrook bluſhed at the ſecret with which he was entruſted; then contemplated the joy he ought to have known in claſping in his arms a child like Matilda — whoſe tenderneſs, reverence, and duty, had deprived her of all ſenſation at his ſight; which was in Ruſhbrook's mind an ho-

nour, that rendered him ſuperior to what he was before.

They were in the fields all the day as uſual; Lord Elmwood now cheerful, and complaining no more of the head-ach.—Yet once being ſeparated from his nephew, Ruſhbrook croſſed over a ſtile into another field, and found him ſitting by the ſide of a bank, his gun lying by him, and he himſelf loſt in thought. He roſe on ſeeing him, and proceeded to the ſport as before.

At dinner, he ſaid he ſhould not go to Elmwood Houſe the next day, as he had appointed, but ſtay where he was, three or four days longer. — From theſe two ſmall occurrences, Ruſhbrook would fain have extracted ſomething by which to judge the ſtate of his mind; but upon the

the teſt, that was impoſſible — he had caught him ſo muſing many a time before; and as to his prolonging his ſtay, that might ariſe from the ſport — or, indeed, had any thing more material ſwayed him, who could penetrate whether it was the effect of the lenity, or the ſeverity, he had dealt towards his child? whether his continuance there was to ſhun her, or to ſhun the houſe from whence he had baniſhed her?

The three or four days for their temporary abode being paſſed, they both returned together to Elmwood Houſe.— Ruſhbrook thought he ſaw his uncle's countenance change as they entered the avenue, yet he did not appear leſs in ſpirits; and when Sandford joined them at dinner, the Earl went with his uſual cheerfulneſs to him, and (as was his cuſtom

after any ſeparation) put out his hand cheerfully to take his. — Sandford ſaid, "How do you do, my Lord?" cheerfully in return; but put both his hands into his boſom, and walked to the other ſide of the room. — Lord Elmwood did not ſeem to obſerve this affront—nor was it done as an affront—it was merely what poor Sandford felt; and he felt he could *not* ſhake hands with him.

Ruſhbrook ſoon learnt the news that Matilda was gone, and Elmwood Houſe was to him a deſert—he ſaw about it no real friend of her's, except poor Sandford, and to him Ruſhbrook knew himſelf now, more diſpleaſing than ever; and all his overtures of atonement, he, at this time, found more and more ineffectual.—Matilda was exiled; and her ſuppoſed triumphant rival was, to Sandford,

ford, more odious than he ever had been.

In alleviation of their baniſhment, Miſs Woodley with her charge had not returned to their old retreat; but were gone to a farm houſe, no more than about thirty miles from Lord Elmwood's: here, Sandford with little inconvenience viſited them; nor did his patron ever take notice of his occaſional abſence; for as he had before given his daughter, in ſome meaſure, to his charge; ſo honour, delicacy, and the common ties of duty, made him approve rather than condemn his attention to her.

Though Sandford's frequent viſits ſoothed Matilda, they could not comfort her; for he had no conſolation to

beſtow that was ſuited to her mind—her father had given no one token of regret for what he had done. He had even inquired ſternly of Giffard on his returning home,

"If Miſs Woodley had left the houſe?"

The ſteward gueſſing the whole of his meaning, anſwered, "Yes, my Lord; and *all* your commands in that reſpect have been obeyed."

He replied, "I am ſatisfied." And, to the grief of the old man, appeared really ſo.

To the farm-houſe, the place of Matilda's reſidence, there came, beſides Sandford, another viſitor far leſs welcome — Viſcount Margrave. — He had heard with ſurpriſe, and ſtill greater joy, that

that Lord Elmwood had once more ſhut his doors againſt his daughter. — In this her diſcarded ſtate, he no longer burthened his lively imagination with the dull thoughts of marriage, but once more formed the idea of making her his miſtreſs.

Ignorant of a certain decorum which attended all Lord Elmwood's actions, he ſuſpected that his child might be in want; and an acquaintance with the worſt part of her ſex informed him, that relief from poverty was the ſure bargain for his ſucceſs.—With theſe hopes, he again paid Miſs Woodley and her a viſit; but the coldneſs of the former, and the haughtineſs of the latter, ſtill kept him at a diſtance, and again made him fear to give one alluſion to his purpoſe: but he returned home reſolved to write

write what he durſt not ſpeak—he did ſo — he offered his ſervices, his purſe, his houſe — they were rejected with contempt, and a ſtronger prohibition given to his viſits.

## CHAPTER III.

LORD Elmwood had now allowed Ruſhbrook a long vacation, in reſpect to his anſwer upon the ſubject of marriage; and the young man vainly imagined, his intentions upon that ſubject were entirely given up.—One morning, however, as he was attending him in the library,

"Henry"——ſaid his uncle, with a pauſe at the beginning of his ſpeech, which indicated that he was going to ſay ſomething of importance, "Henry——you have not forgot the diſcourſe I had with you a little time previous to your illneſs?"

Henry

Henry heſitated—for he wiſhed to have forgotten it—but it was too ſtrongly impreſſed upon his mind. Lord Elmwood reſumed,

"What! equivocating again, Sir?—Do you remember it, or do you not?"—

"Yes, my Lord, I do."

"And are you prepared to give me an anſwer?"

Ruſhbrook pauſed again.

"In our former converſation," continued the Earl, "I gave you but a week to determine—there has, I think, elapſed ſince that time, half a year."

"About as much, Sir."

"Then ſurely you have now made up your mind?"

"I had done that at firſt, my Lord—if it had met with your concurrence.

"You wiſhed to lead a batchelor's life, I think you ſaid?"

Ruſh-

Ruſhbrook bowed.

" Contrary to my will?"

" No, my Lord, I wiſhed to have your approbation."

" And you wiſhed for my approbation of the very oppoſite thing to that I propoſed?—But I am not ſurpriſed—ſuch is the gratitude of the world—and ſuch is yours."

" My Lord, if you doubt my gratitude——"

" Give me a proof of it, Harry, and I will doubt of it no longer."

" Upon every other ſubject but this, my Lord, heaven is my witneſs your happineſs——"

Lord Elmwood interrupted him. " I underſtand you—upon every other ſubject, but the only one, my content requires, you are ready to obey me.—I thank you."

" My

" My Lord, do not torture me with this ſuſpicion; it is ſo contrary to my deſerts, that I cannot bear it.

" Suſpicion of your ingratitude!—you judge too favourably of my opinion—it amounts to certainty."

" Then to convince you, Sir, I am not ungrateful, tell me who the lady is you have choſen for me, and here I give you my word, I will ſacrifice all my future proſpects of happineſs—all, for which I would wiſh to live—and become her huſband as ſoon as you ſhall appoint."

This was ſpoken with a tone ſo expreſſive of deſpair, that Lord Elmwood replied,

" And while you obey me, you take care to let me know, it will coſt you your future happineſs.—This is, I ſuppoſe, to enhance the merit of the obligation—

gation—but I ſhall not accept your acquieſcence on theſe terms."

" Then in diſpenſing with it, I hope for your pardon."

" Do you ſuppoſe, Ruſhbrook, I can pardon an offence, the ſole foundation of which, ariſes from a ſpirit of diſobedience?—for you have declared to me your affections are diſengaged.—In our laſt converſation did you not ſay ſo?"

" At firſt I did, my Lord—but you permitted me to conſult my heart more cloſely; and I have ſince found that I was miſtaken."

" You then own you at firſt told me a falſehood, and yet have all this time, kept me in ſuſpenſe without confeſſing it."

" I waited, my Lord, till you ſhould enquire——"

" You

"You have then, Sir, waited too long." and the fire flaſhed from his eyes.

Ruſhbrook now found himſelf in that perilous ſtate, that admitted of no medium of reſentment, but by ſuch daſtardly conduct on his part, as would wound both his truth and courage;—and thus, animated by his danger, he was reſolved to plunge boldly at once into the depth of his patron's anger.

"My Lord," ſaid he, (but he did not undertake this taſk without ſuſtaining the trembling and convulſion of his whole frame) "My Lord—waving for a moment the ſubject of my marriage—permit me to remind you, that when I was upon my ſick bed, you promiſed, that on my recovery, you would liſten to a petition I ſhould offer to you.

"Let

"Let me recollect." replied he.—"Yes—I do remember ſomething of it.—But I ſaid nothing to warrant any improper petition."

"Its impropriety was not named, my Lord."

"No matter—that, you yourſelf muſt judge of, and anſwer for the conſequences."

"I would anſwer with my life, willingly—but I own that I ſhrink from your anger."

"Then do not provoke it."

"I have already gone too far to recede—and you would of courſe demand an explanation, if I attempted to ſtop here."

"I ſhould."

"Then, my Lord, I am bound to ſpeak—but do not interrupt me—hear

me out, before you baniſh me from your ſight for ever."

"I will, Sir." replied he, prepared to hear ſomething that would diſpleaſe him, and yet determined to hear with patience to the concluſion."

"Then, my Lord,"—(cried Ruſhbrook, in the greateſt agitation of mind and body) "Your daughter"——

The reſolution Lord Elmwood had formed (and on which he had given his word to his nephew not to interrupt him) immediately gave way.—The colour roſe in his face—his eyes darted lightning—and his hand was lifted up with the emotion, that word had created.

"You promiſed to hear me, my Lord;" cried Ruſhbrook, "and I claim your promiſe."

He now ſuddenly overcame his violence of paſſion, and ſtood ſilent and

reſigned to hear him; but with a determined look, expreſſive of the vengeance that ſhould enſue.

"Lady Matilda," reſumed Ruſhbrook, "is an object that wreſts from me the enjoyment of every bleſſing your kindneſs beſtows.—I cannot but feel myſelf as her adverſary — as one, who has ſupplanted her in your affections — who ſupplies her place, while ſhe is exiled, a wanderer, and an orphan."

The Earl took off his eyes from Ruſhbrook, during this laſt ſentence, and caſt them on the floor.

"If I feel gratitude towards you, my Lord," continued he, "gratitude is innate in my heart, and I muſt alſo feel it towards her, who firſt introduced me to your protection."

Again the colour flew to Lord Elmwood's face; and again he could hardly reſtrain himſelf from uttering his indignation.

"It was the mother of Lady Matilda," continued Ruſhbrook, "who was this friend to me; nor will I ever think of marriage, or any other joyful proſpect, while you abandon the only child of my beloved patroneſs, and load me with rights, which belong to her."

Here Ruſhbrook ſtopped—and Lord Elmwood was ſilent too, for near half a minute; but ſtill his countenance continued fixed, with his unvaried reſolves.

After this long pauſe, he ſaid with compoſure, but with firmneſs, "Have you finiſhed, Mr. Ruſhbrook?"

"All that I dare to utter, my Lord, and I fear, I have already ſaid too much."

Ruſhbrook now trembled more than ever, and looked pale as death; for the ardour of ſpeaking being over, he waited his ſentence, with leſs conſtancy of mind than he expected he ſhould.

"You diſapprove my conduct, it ſeems;" ſaid Lord Elmwood, "and in that, you are but like the reſt of the world—and yet, among all my acquaintance, you are the only one who has dared to inſult me with your opinion.—And this you have not done inadvertently; but willingly, and deliberately. But as it has been my fate to be uſed ill, and ſevered from all thoſe perſons to whom my ſoul has been moſt attached; with leſs regret I can part from you, than if this had been my firſt trial."

There was a truth and a pathetic ſound in the utterance of theſe words, that ſtruck Ruſhbrook to the heart — and he beheld himſelf as a barbarian, who had treated his benevolent and only friend, with inſufferable liberty; void of reſpect for thoſe corroding ſorrows which had imbittered ſo many years of his life, and in open violation of his moſt peremptory commands. — He felt that he deſerved all he was going to ſuffer, and he fell upon his knees, not ſo much to deprecate the doom he ſaw impending, as thus humbly to acknowledge, it was his due.

Lord Elmwood, irritated by this poſture, as a ſign of the preſumptuous hope that he might be forgiven, ſuffered now his anger to burſt all bounds; and raiſing his voice, he exclaimed in a rage,

" Leave

" Leave my houſe, Sir. — Leave my houſe inſtantly, and ſeek ſome other home."

Juſt as theſe words were begun, Sandford opened the library door, was witneſs to them, and to the imploring ſituation of Ruſhbrook. — He ſtood ſilent with amazement!

Ruſhbrook aroſe, and feeling in his mind a preſage, that he might never from that hour, behold his benefactor more; as he bowed in token of obedience to his commands, a ſhower of tears covered his face;—but Lord Elmwood, unmoved, fixed his eyes upon him, which purſued him with enraged looks to the end of the room. — Here he had to paſs Sandford; who, for the firſt time in his life, took hold of him by

the hand, and ſaid to Lord Elmwood, "My Lord, what's the matter?"

"That ungrateful villain," cried he, "has dared to inſult me.—Leave my houſe this moment, Sir."

Ruſhbrook made an effort to go, but Sandford ſtill held his hand; and ſaid to Lord Elmwood,

"He is but a boy, my Lord, and do not give him the puniſhment of a man."

Ruſhbrook now ſnatched his hand from Sandford's, and threw it with himſelf upon his neck; where he indeed ſobbed like a boy.

"You are both in league." exclaimed Lord Elmwood.

"Do you ſuſpect me of partiality to Mr. Ruſhbrook?" ſaid Sandford, advancing nearer to the Earl.

Ruſhbrook

Ruſhbrook had now gained the point of remaining in the room; but the hope that privilege inſpired (while he ſtill harboured all the juſt apprehenſions for his fate) gave birth, perhaps, to a more exquiſite ſenſation of pain, than deſpair would have done. — He ſtood ſilent — confounded — hoping that he was forgiven—fearing that he was not.

As Sandford approached ſtill nearer to Lord Elmwood, he continued, "No, my Lord, I know you do not ſuſpect me, of partiality to Mr. Ruſhbrook — has any part of my behaviour ever diſcovered it?"

"You now then only interfere to provoke me."

"If that were the caſe," returned Sandford, "there have been occaſions, when I might have done it more effectually — when my own heart-ſtrings were breaking,

breaking, becauſe I would not provoke, or add to what you ſuffered."

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Sandford." he returned, mildly.

"And if, my Lord, I have proved any merit in a late forbearance, reward me for it now; and take this young man from the depth of deſpair in which I ſee he is ſunk, and ſay you pardon him."

Lord Elmwood made no anſwer—and Ruſhbrook, drawing ſtrong inferences of hope from his ſilence, lifted up his eyes from the ground, and ventured to look in his face: he found it compoſed to what it had been, but ſtill ſtrongly marked with agitation. — He caſt his eyes away again, in confuſion.

On which his uncle ſaid to him — "I ſhall poſtpone your obedience to my orders, till you think fit once more to provoke

provoke them — and then, not even Sandford, ſhall dare to plead your excuſe."

Ruſhbrook bowed.

" Go, leave the room, Sir."

He inſtantly obeyed.

While Sandford, turning to Lord Elmwood, ſhook him by the hand, and cried, " My Lord, I thank you—I thank you very kindly, my Lord—I ſhall now begin to think I have ſome weight with you."

" You might indeed think ſo, did you know how much I have pardoned."

" What was his offence, my Lord?"

" Such as I would not have forgiven you, or any earthly being beſides himſelf—but while you were ſpeaking in his behalf, I recollected there was a gratitude ſo extraordinary in the hazards he ran, that almoſt made him pardonable."

" I gueſs

"I gueſs the ſubject then," cried Sandford; and yet I could not have ſuppoſed"——

"It is a ſubject we cannot ſpeak on, Sandford, therefore let us drop it."

At theſe words the diſcourſe concluded.

## CHAPTER IV.

TO the relief of Ruſhbrook, Lord Elmwood that day dined from home, and he had not the confuſion to ſee him again till the evening.—Previous to this, Sandford and he met at dinner; but as the attendants were preſent, nothing paſſed on either ſide reſpecting the incident in the morning.—Ruſhbrook, from the peril which had ſo lately threatened him, was now in his perfectly cool, and diſpaſſionate ſenſes; and notwithſtanding the real tenderneſs which he bore to the daughter of his benefactor, he was not inſenſible to the comfort of finding himſelf, once more in the poſſeſſion of all

all thoſe enjoyments he had forfeited, and for a moment loſt.

As he reflected on this, to Sandford he felt the firſt tie of acknowledgement—but for his compaſſion, he knew he ſhould have been at that very time of their meeting at dinner, away from Elmwood Houſe for ever—and bearing on his mind a ſtill more painful recollection, the burthen of his kind patron's continual diſpleaſure. Filled with theſe thoughts, all the time of dinner he could ſcarce look at his companion, but with tears of gratitude, and whenever he attempted to ſpeak to him, gratitude choaked his utterance.

Sandford, on his part, behaved juſt the ſame as ever; and to ſhow he did not wiſh to remind Ruſhbrook of what he had

had done, he was juſt as uncivil as ever.

Among other things, he ſaid, "He did not know Lord Elmwood dined from home, for if he had, he ſhould have dined in his own apartment."

Ruſhbrook was ſtill more obliged to him for all this; and the weight of obligations with which he was oppreſſed, made him long for an opportunity to relieve himſelf by expreſſions.—As ſoon, therefore, as the ſervants were all withdrawn, he began:

"Mr. Sandford, whatever has been your opinion of *me*, I take pride to myſelf, that in my ſentiments towards *you*, I have always diſtinguiſhed you for that humane, diſintereſted character, you have this day proved."

"Humane, and diſintereſted," replied Sandford, "are flattering epithets

thets for an old man going out of the world, and who can have no temptation to be otherwiſe."

"Then ſuffer me to call your actions generous and compaſſionate, for they have ſaved me——"

"I know, young man," cried Sandford, interrupting him, "you are glad at what I have done, and that you find a gratification in telling me you are; but it is a gratification I will not indulge you with—therefore, ſay another ſentence on the ſubject, and" (he roſe from his ſeat) "I'll leave the room, and never come into your company again, whatever your uncle may ſay to it."

Ruſhbrook ſaw by the ſolemnity of his countenance, he was ſerious, and poſitively aſſured him he would never thank him more; on which Sandford took his ſeat again, but he ſtill frowned, and it

was

was many minutes before he conquered his ill humour.—As his countenance became leſs ſour, Ruſhbrook fell from ſome general topics he had eagerly ſtarted in order to appeaſe him, and ſaid,

"How hard is it to reſtrain converſation from the ſubject of our thoughts; and yet amidſt our deareſt friends, and among perſons who have the ſame diſpoſitions and ſentiments as our own, their minds, too, fixed upon the ſelf-ſame objects, is this conſtraint practiſed —and thus, ſociety, which was meant for one of our greateſt bleſſings, becomes inſipid, nay, often more wearisome than ſolitude."

"I think, young man," replied Sandford, "you have made pretty free with your ſpeech to-day, and ought not to complain of the want of toleration on that ſcore."

"I do complain," replied Ruſhbrook, "for if toleration was more frequent, the favour of obtaining it would be leſs."

"And your pride, I ſuppoſe, is above receiving a favour."

"Never from thoſe I eſteem; and to convince you of it, I wiſh this moment to requeſt a favour of you."

"I dare ſay I ſhall refuſe it.—However—what is it?"

"Permit me to ſpeak to you upon the ſubject of Lady Matilda?"

Sandford made no anſwer, conſequently did not forbid him — and he proceeded.

"For her ſake—as I ſuppoſe Lord Elmwood may have told you—I this morning raſhly threw myſelf into the predicament from whence you releaſed me —for her ſake, I have ſuffered much—

for

for her ſake I have hazarded a great deal, and am ſtill ready to hazard more."

" But for your own ſake, do not." returned Sandford drily.

" You may laugh at theſe ſentiments as romantic, Mr. Sandford, but if they are, to me they are nevertheleſs natural."

" But of what ſervice are they to be, either to her, or to yourſelf.

" They are painful to me, and to her would be but impertinent, were ſhe to know them "

" I ſhan't inform her of them, ſo do not trouble yourſelf to caution me againſt it."

" I was not going—you know I was not—but I was going to ſay, that from no one ſo well as from you, could ſhe be told my ſentiments, without the danger of giving her offence.

"And what impreſſion do you wiſh to give her, from her becoming acquainted with them?"

"The impreſſion, that ſhe has one ſincere friend—that upon every occurrence in life, there is a heart ſo devoted to all ſhe feels, that ſhe never can ſuffer without the ſympathy of another—or can ever command him, and all his fortunes to unite for her welfare, without his ready, his immediate compliance.

"And do you imagine, that any of your profeſſions, or any of her neceſſities, would ever prevail upon her to put you to the trial?"

"Perhaps not."

"What, then, are the motives which induce you to wiſh her to be told of this?"

Ruſhbrook pauſed.

"Do

"Do you think," continued Sandford, "the intelligence will give her any ſatisfaction?"

"Perhaps not."

"Will it be of any to yourſelf?"

"The higheſt in the world."

"And ſo all you have been urging upon this occaſion, is, at laſt, only to pleaſe yourſelf."

"You wrong my meaning—it is her merit which inſpires me with the deſire of being known to her—it is her ſufferings, her innocence, her beauty——"

Sandford ſtared—Ruſhbrook proceeded: "It is her——"

"Nay, ſtop where you are," cried Sandford; "you are arrived at the zenith of perfection in a woman, and to add one qualification more, would be an anti-climax."

"Oh!" cried Ruſhbrook with warmth, "I loved her, before I ever beheld her."

"Loved her!" cried Sandford, with aſtoniſhment, "You are talking of what you did not intend."

"I am, indeed," returned he in confuſion, "I fell by accident on the word love."

"And by the ſame accident ſtumbled on the word beauty; and thus by accident, am I come to the truth of all your profeſſions."

Ruſhbrook knew that he loved; and though his affection had ſprung from the moſt laudable motives, yet was he aſhamed of it, as of a vice—he roſe, he walked about the room, and he did not look Sandford in the face for a quarter of an hour.—Sandford, ſatisfied that he had judged

rightly, and yet unwilling to be too hard upon a paſſion, which he readily believed muſt have had many noble virtues for its foundation, now got up and walked away, without ſaying a word in cenſure, though not a word in approbation.

It was in the month of October, and juſt dark, at the time Ruſhbrook was left alone, yet in the agitation of his mind, ariſing from the ſubject on which he had been talking, he found it impoſſible to remain in the houſe, and therefore walked into the fields; — but there was another inſtigation, more powerful than the neceſſity of walking — it was the allurement of paſſing along that path where he had laſt ſeen Lady Matilda, and where, for the only time, ſhe had condeſcended to ſpeak to him diveſted of

haughtineſs, and with a gentleneſs that dwelt upon his memory beyond all her other endowments.

Here, he retraced his own ſteps repeatedly, his whole imagination engroſſed with her idea, till the ſound of her father's carriage returning from his viſit, rouſed him from the deluſion of his trance, to the dread of the confuſion and embarraſſment he ſhould endure, on the next meeting with him. He hoped Sandford might be preſent, and yet he was now, almoſt as much aſhamed of ſeeing him, as his uncle, whom he had ſo lately offended.

As loath to leave the ſpot where he was, as to enter the houſe, he remained there, till he conſidered it would be ill manners, in his preſent humiliated ſitua-

tion, not to ſhow himſelf at the uſual ſupper hour, which was immediately.

As he laid his hand upon the door of the apartment to open it, he was ſorry to hear by Lord Elmwood's voice, he was in the room before him; for there was ſomethimg much more conſpicuouſly diſtreſſing, in entering where he already was, than had his uncle come in after him. — He found himſelf, however, re-aſſured, by overhearing the Earl laugh and ſpeak in a tone expreſſive of the utmoſt good humour to Sandford, who was with him.

Again, he felt all the awkwardneſs of his own ſituation; but making one courageous effort, opened the door and entered. — Lord Elmwood had been away half the day, had dined abroad, and

it

it was neceſſary to take ſome notice of his return; Ruſhbrook, therefore, bowed humbly, and what was more to his advantage, he looked humbly. — His uncle made a ſlight return to the ſalutation, but continued the recital he had begun to Sandford; — then ſat down to the ſupper table — ſupped — and paſſed the whole evening without ſaying a ſyllable, or even caſting a look in remembrance of what had paſſed in the morning. — Or if there was any token, that ſhewed he remembered the circumſtance at all, it was the putting his glaſs to his nephew's, when Ruſhbrook called for wine, and drinking at the time he did.

## CHAPTER V.

THE repulſe Lord Margrave received, did not diminiſh the ardour of his purſuit; for as he was no longer afraid of reſentment from the Earl, whatever treatment his daughter might receive, he was determined the anger of Lady Matilda or of her female friend, ſhould not impede his pretenſions.

Having taken this reſolution, he laid the plan of an open violation of all right; and determined to bear away that prize by force, which no art was likely to procure.— He concerted with two of his favourite companions, but their advice was, "One ſtruggle more of fair means."— This

This was totally againſt his will; for, he had much rather have encountered the piercing cries of a female in the laſt agonies of diſtreſs, than the fatigue of her ſentimental harangues, or elegant reproofs, ſuch as he had the ſenſe to underſtand, but not the capacity to anſwer.

Stimulated, however, by his friends to one more trial, in ſpite of the formal diſmiſſion he had twice received, he intruded another viſit on Lady Matilda at the farm.—Provoked beyond bearing at ſuch unfeeling aſſurance, Matilda refuſed to come into the room where he was, and Miſs Woodley alone received him, and expreſſed her ſurpriſe at the little attention he had paid to her explicit deſire.

"Madam," replied the nobleman, "to be plain with you, I am in love."

"I do

"I do not the leaſt doubt it, my Lord;" replied Miſs Woodley: "nor ought you to doubt the truth of what I advance, when I aſſure you, that you have not the ſmalleſt reaſon to hope your love will be returned; for Lady Matilda is reſolved *never* to liſten to your paſſion."

"That man," he replied, "is to blame, who can relinquiſh his hopes, upon the mere reſolution of a lady."

"And that lady would be wrong," replied Miſs Woodley, "who ſhould entruſt her happineſs in the care of a man, who can think thus meanly of her, and of her ſex."

"I think highly of them all," he replied; "and to convince you in how high an eſtimation I hold her in particular, my whole fortune is at her command."

"Your

"Your entire abſence from this houſe, my Lord, ſhe would conſider as a much greater mark of your reſpect."

A long converſation, as unintereſting as this, enſued; till the unexpected arrival of Mr. Sandford, put an end to it. —He ſtarted at the ſight of Lord Margrave; but the Viſcount was much more affected at the ſight of him.

"My Lord," ſaid Sandford boldly to him, "have you received any encouragement from Lady Matilda to authoriſe this viſit?"

"None, upon my honour, Mr. Sandford; but I hope you know how to pardon a lover?"

"A rational one I do—but you, my Lord, are not of that claſs, while you perſecute the pretended object of your affection."

"Do

" Do you call it perſecution that I once offered her a ſhare of my title and fortune—and even now, declare my fortune is at her diſpoſal?"

Sandford was uncertain whether he underſtood his meaning — but Lord Margrave, provoked at his ill reception, felt a triumph in removing his doubts, and proceeded thus:

" For the diſcarded daughter of Lord Elmwood, cannot expect the ſame propoſals, which I made, while ſhe was acknowledged, and under the protection of her father."

" What propoſals then, my Lord?" aſked Sandford haſtily.

" Such," replied he, " as the Duke of Avon made to her mother."

" Miſs Woodley quitted the room that inſtant. — But Sandford, who never felt

felt reſentment but againſt thoſe in whom he ſaw ſome virtue, calmly replied,

"My Lord, the Duke of Avon was a gentleman, a man of elegance and breeding; and what have you to offer in recompence for your defects in theſe?"

"My wealth," replied he, "oppoſed to her indigence."

Sandford ſmiled, and anſwered,

"Do you ſuppoſe *that* wealth can be eſteemed, which has not been able to make you reſpectable?—What is it that makes wealth valuable?—Is it the pleaſures of the table? the pleaſure of living in a fine houſe? or of riding in a fine coach?—Theſe are pleaſures, a Lord enjoys, but in common with his valet.—It is the pleaſure of being conſpicuous, which makes riches deſirable—but if we are conſpicuous only for our vice and folly,

folly, had we not better remain in poverty?"

"You are beneath my notice."

"I truſt I ſhall continue ſo—and that your Lordſhip will never again condeſcend to come where I am."

"A man of rank condeſcends to mix with any ſociety, when a pretty woman is the object."

"My Lord, I have a book here in my pocket, which I am eager to read; it is an author who ſpeaks ſenſe and reaſon — will you pardon the impatience I feel for ſuch company; and permit me to call your carriage?"

Saying this, he went haſtily and called to the ſervants; the carriage drove up, the door was opened, and Lord Margrave, aſhamed to be expoſed before his attendants, and convinced of the in-

utility of remaining any longer where he was, departed.

Sandford was ſoon joined by the ladies; and the converſation falling, of courſe, upon the nobleman who had juſt taken his leave, Sandford unwarily exclaimed, "I wiſh Ruſhbrook had been here."

"Who?" cried Lady Matilda.

"I do believe," ſaid Miſs Woodley, "that young man has ſome good qualities."

"A great many." returned Sandford, mutteringly.

"Happy young man!" cried Matilda: "he is beloved by all thoſe, whoſe affection it would be my choice to poſſeſs, beyond any other bleſſing this world could beſtow."

"And yet I queſtion, if Ruſhbrook is happy man." ſaid Sandford.

"He cannot be otherwiſe," returned Matilda, "if he is a man of underſtanding."

"He does not want underſtanding neither," replied Sandford; "although he has certainly many indiſcretions."

"But which Lord Elmwood, I ſuppoſe," ſaid Matilda, "looks upon with tenderneſs."

"Not upon all his faults," anſwered Sandford; "for I have ſeen him in very dangerous circumſtances with your father."

"Have you indeed?" cried Matilda: "then I pity him."

"And I believe," ſaid Miſs Woodley, "that from his heart, he compaſſionates you. — Now, Mr. Sandford," continued ſhe, "though this is the firſt time I ever heard you ſpeak in his fa-

vour, (and I once thought as indifferently of Mr. Ruſhbrook as you can do) yet now I will venture to aſk you, whether you do not think he wiſhes Lady Matilda much happier than ſhe is?"

"I have heard him ſay ſo." anſwered Sandford.

"It is a ſubject," returned Lady Matilda, "which I did not imagine you, Mr. Sandford, would have permitted him to have mentioned lightly, in your preſence."

"Lightly!—Do you ſuppoſe, my dear, we turned your ſituation into ridicule?"

"No, Sir,—but there is a ſort of humiliation in the grief to which I am doomed, that ought ſurely to be treated with the higheſt degree of delicacy by my friends."

"I don't

"I don't know on what point you fix real delicacy; but if it conſiſts in ſorrow, the young man gives a proof he poſſeſſes it, for he ſhed tears when I laſt heard him mention your name."

"I have more cauſe to weep at the mention of his."

"Perhaps ſo—But let me tell you, Lady Matilda, that your father might have preferred a more unworthy object."

"Still had he been to me," ſhe cried, "an object of envy.—And as I frankly confeſs my envy of Mr. Ruſhbrook, I hope you will pardon my malice, which is, you know, but a conſequent crime."

The ſubject now turned again upon Lord Margrave; and all of them being firmly perſuaded, this laſt reception would put an end to every further intru-

ſion from him, they treated his preten-ſions, and himſelf, with the contempt they inſpired — but not with the caution they deſerved.

CHAP-

## CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning early, Mr. Sandford returned to Elmwood Houſe, but with his ſpirits depreſſed, and his heart overcharged with ſorrow.—He had ſeen Lady Matilda, the object of his viſit, but he had beheld her conſiderably altered in her looks and in her health;—ſhe was become very thin, and inſtead of the vivid bloom that uſed to adorn her cheeks, her whole complexion was of a deadly pale—her countenance no longer expreſſed hope or fear, but a fixed melancholy—ſhe ſhed no tears, but was all ſadneſs.—He had beheld this, and he had heard her inſulted by the licentious propoſals of a nobleman, from

whom there was no ſatisfaction to be demanded, becauſe ſhe had no friend to vindicate her honour.

Ruſhbrook, who ſuſpected where Sandford was gone, and imagined he would return that day, took his morning's ride, ſo as to meet him on the road, at the diſtance of a few miles from the caſtle; for, ſince his perilous ſituation with Lord Elmwood, he was ſo fully convinced of the general philanthropy of Sandford's character, that in ſpite of his churliſh manners, he now addreſſed him, free from that reſerve to which his rough behaviour had formerly given birth.—And Sandford on his part, believing he had formed an illiberal opinion of Lord Elmwood's heir, though he took no pains to let him know that his opinion was changed, yet reſolved, to make him reſtitution

reſtitution upon every occaſion that offered.

Their mutual greetings when they met, were unceremonious but cordial; and Ruſhbrook turned his horſe and rode back with Sandford;—yet, intimidated by his reſpect and tenderneſs for Lady Matilda, rather than by fear of the rebuffs of his companion, he had not the courage to name her, till the ride was juſt finiſhed, and they came within a few yards of the houſe—incited then by the apprehenſion, he might not ſoon again enjoy ſo fit an opportunity, he ſaid,

"Pardon me, Mr. Sandford, if I gueſs where you have been, and if my curioſity forces me to inquire for Miſs Woodley's and Lady Matilda's health?"

He named Miſs Woodley firſt, to prolong the time before he mentioned Matilda; for though to name her gave him

him extreme pleaſure, yet it was a pleaſure accompanied by confuſion and pain.

"They are both very well," replied Sandford, "at leaſt they did not complain they were ſick."

"They are not in ſpirits, I ſuppoſe?" ſaid Ruſhbrook.

"No, indeed." replied Sandford, ſhaking his head.

"No new misfortune has happened, I hope?" cried Ruſhbrook, for it was plain to ſee Sandford's ſpirits were unuſually caſt down.

"Nothing new," returned he, "except the inſolence of a young nobleman."

"What nobleman?" cried Ruſhbrook.

"A lover of Lady Matilda's." replied Sandford.

Ruſh-

Ruſhbrook was petrified. — "Who? What lover, Mr. Sandford?—explain?"

They were now arrived at the houſe; and Sandford, without making any reply to this queſtion, ſaid to the ſervant who took his horſe, "She has come a long way this morning; take care of her."

This interruption was torture to Ruſhbrook, who kept cloſe to his ſide, in order to obtain a further explanation; but Sandford without attending to him, walked negligently into the hall, and before they advanced many ſteps, they were met by Lord Elmwood.

All further information was put an end to for the preſent.

"How do you do, Sandford?" ſaid Lord Elmwood with extreme kindneſs; as if he thanked him for the journey

which

which he ſuſpected that he had been taking.

"I am indifferently well, my Lord." replied he, with a face of deep concern, and a tear in his eye, partly in gratitude for his patron's civility, and partly in reproach for his cruelty.

It was not now till the evening, that Ruſhbrook had an opportunity of renewing the converſation, which had been ſo barbarouſly interrupted.

In the evening, no longer able to ſupport the ſuſpenſe into which he was thrown; without fear or ſhame, he followed Sandford into his chamber at the time of his retiring, and entreated of him, with all the anxiety he ſuffered, to explain his alluſion when he talked of a lover, and of inſolence to Lady Matilda.

Sandford

Sandford ſeeing his emotion, was angry with himſelf that he had inadvertently mentioned the ſubject; and putting on an air of ſurly importance, deſired if he had any buſineſs with him, that he would call in the morning.

Exaſperated at ſo unexpected a reception, and at the pain of his diſappointment, Ruſhbrook replied, "He treated him cruelly, nor would he ſtir out of his room, till he had received a ſatisfactory anſwer to his queſtion."

"Then bring your bed," replied Sandford, "for you muſt paſs your whole night here."

He found it vain to think of obtaining any intelligence by threats, he therefore ſaid in a timid and perſuaſive manner,

"Did you, Mr. Sandford, hear Lady Matilda mention my name?"

"Yes."

"Yes." replied Sandford, a little better reconciled to him.

"Did you tell her what I declared to you?" he aſked with ſtill more diffidence.

"No." replied Sandford.

"It is very well, Sir." returned he, vexed to the heart—yet again wiſhing to ſooth him.

"You certainly, Mr. Sandford, know what is for the beſt — yet I entreat you will give me ſome further account of the nobleman you named?"

"I know what is for the beſt," replied Sandford, "and I won't."

Ruſhbrook bowed, and immediately left the room.—He went apparently ſubmiſſive, but the moment he ſhowed this ſubmiſſion, he took the reſolution of paying a viſit himſelf to the farm at which Lady Matilda reſided; and of learning, either from Miſs Woodley, the people of

of the houſe, the neighbours, or perhaps from Lady Matilda's own lips, the ſecret which the obſtinacy of Sandford had withheld.

He ſaw all the dangers of this undertaking, but none appeared ſo great as the danger of loſing her he loved, by the influence of a rival — and though Sandford had named "inſolence," he was in doubt whether what had appeared ſo to him, was ſo in reality, or would be ſo conſidered by her.

To prevent the cauſe of his abſence being ſuſpected by Lord Elmwood, he immediately called his groom, ordered his horſe, and giving thoſe ſervants concerned, a ſtrict charge of ſecreſy, with ſome frivolous pretence to apologize for his not being preſent at breakfaſt (reſolving

ing to be back by dinner), he ſet off that night, and arrived at an inn about a mile from the farm at break of day.

The joy he felt when he found himſelf ſo near to the beloved object of his journey, made him thank Sandford in his heart, for the unkindneſs which had ſent him thither.—But new difficulties aroſe, how to accompliſh the end for which he came;—he learnt from the people of the inn, that a Lord with a fine equipage had viſited at the farm, but who he was, or for what purpoſe he went, no one could inform him.

Dreading to return with his doubts unſatisfied, and yet afraid of proceeding to extremities that might be conſtrued into preſumption, he walked diſconſolately (almoſt diſtractedly) about the fields, looking repeatedly at his watch,

and wiſhing the time would ſtand ſtill, till he was ready to go back with his errand compleated.

Every field he paſſed, brought him nearer to the houſe on which his imagination was fixed; but how, without forfeiting every appearance of that reſpect which he ſo powerfully felt, could he attempt to enter it? — he ſaw the indecorum, reſolved not to be guilty of it, and yet walked on till he was within but a ſmall orchard of the door. Could he then retreat? — he wiſhed he could; but he found that he had proceeded too far to be any longer maſter of himſelf. — The time was urgent; he muſt either be bold, and venture her diſpleaſure, or by diffidence during one moment, give up all his hopes perhaps for ever.

With that ſame diſregard to conſequences, which actuated him when he dared to ſupplicate Lord Elmwood in his daughter's behalf, he at length went eagerly to the door and rapped.

A ſervant came—he aſked to "Speak with Miſs Woodley, if ſhe was quite alone."

He was ſhown into an apartment, and Miſs Woodley entered to him.

She ſtarted when ſhe beheld who it was; but as he did not ſee a frown upon her face, he caught hold of her hand, and ſaid perſuaſively,

"Do not be offended with me.—If I mean to offend you, may I forfeit my life in atonement."

Poor Miſs Woodley, glad in her ſolitude to ſee any one from Elmwood Houſe, forgot his viſit was an offence,

till he put her in mind of it; ſhe then ſaid with ſome reſerve,

"Tell me the purport of your coming, Sir, and perhaps I may have no reaſon to complain?"

"It was to ſee Lady Matilda," he replied, "or to hear of her health.—It was to offer her my ſervices—it was, Miſs Woodley, to convince her, if poſſible, of my eſteem."

"Had you no other method, Sir?" ſaid Miſs Woodley, with the ſame reſerve.

"None;" replied he, "or with joy I ſhould have embraced it; and if you can inform me of any other, tell me I beſeech you inſtantly, and I will immediately begone, and purſue your directions."

Miſs Woodley heſitated.

"You know of no other means, Miſs Woodley." he cried.

"And yet I cannot commend this." ſaid ſhe.

"Nor do I.—Do not imagine becauſe you ſee me here, that I approve my conduct; but reduced to this neceſſity, pity the motives that have urged it."

Miſs Woodley did pity them; but as ſhe would not own that ſhe did, ſhe could think of nothing elſe to ſay.

At this inſtant a bell rung from the chamber above.

"That is Lady Matilda's bell," ſaid Miſs Woodley; "ſhe is coming to take a ſhort walk.—Do you wiſh to ſee her?"

Though it was the firſt wiſh of his heart, he pauſed, and ſaid, "Will you plead my excuſe?"

As

As the flight of ſtairs was but ſhort, which Matilda had to come down, ſhe was in the room with Miſs Woodley and Mr. Ruſhbrook, juſt as that ſentence ended.

She had ſtept beyond the door of the apartment, when perceiving a viſitor, ſhe haſtily withdrew.

Ruſhbrook, animated, though trembling at her preſence, cried, "Lady Matilda, do not avoid me, till you know that I deſerve ſuch a puniſhment."

She immediately ſaw who it was, and returned back with a proper pride, and yet a proper politeneſs in her manner.

"I beg your pardon, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "I did not know you; I was afraid I intruded upon Miſs Woodley and a ſtranger."

"You do not then conſider me as a ſtranger, Lady Matilda? and that you

do not, requires my warmeſt acknowledgements."

She ſat down, as if overcome by ill ſpirits and ill health.

Miſs Woodley now aſked Ruſhbrook to ſit—for till now ſhe had not.

"No, Madam," replied he, with confuſion, "not unleſs Lady Matilda gives me permiſſion."

She ſmiled, and pointed to a chair—and all the kindneſs which Ruſhbrook during his whole life had received from Lord Elmwood, never inſpired half the gratitude, which this one inſtance of civility from his daughter excited.

He ſat down, with the confeſſion of the obligation, upon every feature of his face.

"I am not well, Mr. Ruſhbrook," ſaid Matilda, languidly; "and you muſt

muſt excuſe any want of etiquette at this houſe."

"While you excuſe me, Madam, what can I have to complain of?"

She appeared abſent while he was ſpeaking, and turning to Miſs Woodley, ſaid, "Do you think I had better walk to-day?"

"No, my dear," anſwered Miſs Woodley; "the ground is damp, and the air cold."

"You are not well, indeed, Lady Matilda." ſaid Ruſhbrook, gazing upon her with the moſt tender reſpect.

She ſhook her head; and the tears, without any effort either to impel or to reſtrain them, ran down her face.

Ruſhbrook roſe from his ſeat, and with an accent and manner the moſt expreſſive, ſaid, "We are couſins, Lady Matilda—in our infancy we were brought

up together — we were beloved by the ſame mother — foſtered by the ſame father,"——

"Oh!" cried ſhe, interrupting him, with a tone expreſſive of the bittereſt anguiſh.

"Nay, do not let me add to your uneaſineſs," he reſumed, "while I am attempting to alleviate it. — Inſtruct me what I can do to ſhow my eſteem and reſpect, rather than permit me thus unguided, to ruſh upon what you may conſtrue into inſult and arrogance."

Miſs Woodley went to Matilda, took her hand, then wiped the tears from her eyes, while Matilda reclined againſt her, entirely regardleſs of Ruſhbrook's preſence.

"If I have been in the leaſt inſtrumental to this ſorrow," —— ſaid Ruſhbrook,

brook, with a face as much agitated as his mind.

" No," ſaid Miſs Woodley, in a low voice, " you have not—ſhe is often ſo."

" Yes," ſaid Matilda, raiſing her head, " I am frequently ſo weak that I cannot reſiſt the ſmalleſt incitement to grief.—But do not make your viſit long, Mr. Ruſhbrook," ſhe continued, " for I was juſt then thinking, that ſhould Lord Elmwood hear of this attention you have paid me, it might be fatal to you."—Here ſhe wept again, as bitterly as before.

" There is no probability of his hearing of it, Madam," Ruſhbrook replied; " or if there was, I am perſuaded that he would not reſent it; for yeſterday, when I am confident he knew that Mr. Sandford had been to ſee you, he receiv-

ed

ed him on his return, with unuſual marks of kindneſs."

"Did he?" ſaid ſhe—and again ſhe lifted up her head; her eyes for a moment beaming with hope and joy.

"There is ſomething which we cannot yet define," ſaid Ruſhbrook, "that Lord Elmwood ſtruggles with; but when time ſhall have eradicated,"——

Before he could proceed further, Matilda was once more ſunk into deſpondency, and ſcarce attended to what he was ſaying.

Miſs Woodley obſerving this, ſaid, "Mr. Ruſhbrook, let it be a token we ſhall be glad to ſee you hereafter, that I now uſe the freedom to beg you will put an end to your viſit."

"You ſend me away, Madam," returned he, "with the warmeſt thanks for the reception you have given me; and

and this laſt aſſurance of your kindneſs, is beyond any other favour you could have beſtowed.—Lady Matilda," added he, " ſuffer me to take your hand at parting, and let it be a teſtimony that you acknowledge me for a relation."

She put out her hand—which he knelt to receive, but did nor raiſe it to his lips—he held the boon too ſacred—and looking earneſtly upon it, as it lay pale and wan in his, he breathed one ſigh over it, and withdrew.

## CHAPTER VII.

SORROWFUL and affecting as this interview had been, Ruſhbrook, as he rode home, reflected upon it with the moſt inordinate delight; and had he not ſeen decline of health, in the looks and behaviour of Lady Matilda, his felicity had been unbounded.—Entranced in the happineſs of her ſociety, the thought of his rival never came once to his mind while he was with her; a want of recollection, however, he by no means regretted, as her whole appearance contradicted every ſuſpicion he could poſſibly entertain, that ſhe favoured the addreſſes of any man living—and had he remem-

remembered, he would not have dared to name the ſubject.

The time ran ſo ſwiftly while he was away, that it was beyond the dinner hour at Elmwood Houſe, when he returned.——Heated, his dreſs, and his hair diſordered, he entered the dining room juſt as the deſert was put upon the table.—He was confounded at his own appearance, and at the falſehoods he ſhould be obliged to fabricate in his excuſe; there was yet, that which engaged his attention, beyond any circumſtance relating to himſelf—the features of Lord Elmwood—of which his daughter's, whom he had juſt beheld, had the moſt ſtriking reſemblance; while her's were ſoftened by ſorrow, as his were made auſtere by the ſelf-ſame cauſe.

" Where

"Where have you been?" ſaid his uncle, with a frown.

"A chace, my Lord—I beg your pardon—but a pack of dogs I unexpectedly met."——For in the hacknied art of lying without injury to any one, Ruſhbrook, to his ſhame, was proficient.

His excuſes were received, and the ſubject ceaſed.

During his abſence that day, Lord Elmwood had called Sandford apart, and ſaid to him, that as the malevolence which he once obſerved between him and Ruſhbrook, had, he perceived, ſubſided, he adviſed him, if he was a well-wiſher to the young man, to ſound his heart, and counſel him not to act againſt the will of his neareſt relation and friend.——"I myſelf am too haſty," con-

continued Lord Elmwood, " and, unhappily, too much determined upon what I have once (though, perhaps, raſhly) ſaid, to ſpeak upon a topic where it is probable I ſhall meet with oppoſition. — You, Sandford, can reaſon with moderation.—For after all that I have done for my nephew, it would be a pity to forſake him at laſt; and yet, that is but too likely, if he provokes me."

" Sir," replied Sandford, " I will ſpeak to him."

" Yet," added Lord Elmwood, ſternly, " do not urge what you ſay for my ſake, but for his — I can part from him with eaſe—but he may then repent, and, you know, repentance always comes too late with me."

" My Lord, I will exert all the efforts in my power for his welfare.—But what

is the ſubject on which he has refuſed to comply with your deſires?"

"Matrimony—have not I told you?"

"Not a word."

"I wiſh him to marry, that I may then conclude the deeds in reſpect to my eſtate.—And the only child of Sir William Winterton (a rich heireſs) was the wife I meant to propoſe; but from his indifference to all I have ſaid on the occaſion, I have not yet mentioned her name to him; you may."

"I will, my Lord, and uſe all my perſuaſion towards his obedience; and you ſhall have, at leaſt, a faithful account of what he ſays."

Sandford the next morning ſought an opportunity of being alone with Ruſhbrook—he then plainly repeated to him what Lord Elmwood had ſaid, and ſaw

him liſten to it all, and heard him anſwer with the moſt tranquil reſolution, "That he would do any thing to preſerve the friendſhip and patronage of his uncle—but marry."

"What can be the reaſon?" aſked Sandford—though he gueſſed.

"A reaſon I cannot give to Lord Elmwood."

"Then do not give it to me, for I have promiſed to tell him every thing you ſay to me."

"And every thing I *have* ſaid?" aſked Ruſhbrook haſtily.

"As to what you have ſaid, I don't know whether it has made impreſſion enough on my memory, to enable me to repeat it."

"I am glad it has not."

"And my anſwer to your uncle, is

to be ſimply, that you will not obey him?"

"I ſhould hope, Mr. Sandford, that you would expreſs it in better terms."

"Tell me the terms, and I will be exact."

Ruſhbrook ſtruck his forehead, and walked about the room.

"Am I to give him any reaſon for your diſobeying him?"

"I tell you again, that I dare not name the cauſe."

"Then why do you ſubmit to a power you are aſhamed to own?"

"I am not aſhamed—I glory in it—Are you aſhamed of your eſteem for Lady Matilda?"

"Oh! if ſhe is the cauſe of your diſobedience, be aſſured I ſhall not mention it, for I am forbid to name her."

"And

"And as that is the caſe, I need not fear to ſpeak plainly to you.—I love Lady Matilda—or, perhaps, unacquainted with love, it may be only pity — and if ſo, pity is the moſt pleaſing paſſion that ever poſſeſſed a human heart, and I would not change it for all her father's eſtates."

"Pity, then, gives riſe to very different ſenſations—for I pity you, and that ſenſation I would gladly exchange for approbation."

"If you really feel compaſſion for me, and I believe you do, contrive ſome means by your anſwers to Lord Elmwood to pacify him, without involving me.—Hint at my affections being engaged, but not to whom; and add, that I have given my word, if he will allow me a ſhort time, a year or two only, I will, during that period, try to diſengage them, and uſe all my power to render

myſelf worthy of the union for which he deſigns me."

"And this is not only your ſolemn promiſe — but your fixed determination?"

"Nay, why will you ſearch my heart to the bottom, when the ſurface ought to content you?"

"If you cannot reſolve on what you have propoſed, why do you aſk this time of your uncle? For ſhould he allow it you, at the expiration, your diſobedience to his commands will be leſs pardonable than it is now."

"Within a year, Mr. Sandford, who can tell what ſtrange events may not occur, to change all our proſpects? Even my paſſion may decline."

"In that expectation, then—the failure of which you yourſelf muſt anſwer

for — I will repeat as much of this diſcourſe as ſhall be proper."

Here Ruſhbrook communicated his having been to ſee Lady Matilda, for which Sandford reproved him, but in leſs rigorous terms than he generally uſed in his reproofs; and Ruſhbrook, by his entreaties, now gained the intelligence who the nobleman was who had addreſt Matilda, and on what views; but was reſtrained to patience, by Sandford's arguments and threats.

Upon the ſubject of this marriage, Sandford met his patron, without having determined exactly what to ſay, but reſted on the temper in which he ſhould find him.

At the commencement of the converſation he ſaid, "Ruſhbrook begged for time."

"I have given him time, have I not?" cried Lord Elmwood: "What can be the reaſon of his thus trifling with me?"

Sandford replied, "My Lord, young men are frequently romantic in their notions of love, and think it impoſſible to have a ſincere affection, where their own inclinations do not firſt point out the choice."

"If he is in love," anſwered Lord Elmwood, "let him take the object, and leave my houſe and me for ever. — Nor under this deſtiny can he have any claim to pity; for genuine love will make him happy in baniſhment, in poverty, or in ſickneſs: it makes the poor man happy as the rich, the fool bleſt as the wiſe."—

The

The ſincerity with which Lord Elmwood had loved, was expreſſed more than in words, as he ſaid this.

"Your Lordſhip is talking," replied Sandford, "of the paſſion in its moſt refined and predominant ſenſe; while I may poſſibly be ſpeaking of a mere phantom, that has led this young man aſtray."

"Whatever it be," returned Lord Elmwood, "let him and his friends weigh the caſe well, and act for the beſt —ſo ſhall I."

"His friends, my Lord?—What friends, or what friend has he upon earth but you?"

"Then why will he not ſubmit to my advice; or himſelf give me a ſubſtantial reaſon why he cannot?"

"Becauſe there may be friendſhip

without familiarity—and ſo it is between him and you."

"That cannot be; for I have condeſcended to talk to him in the moſt familiar terms."

"To condeſcend, my Lord, is *not* to be familiar."

"Then come, Sir, let us be on an equal footing through you.—And now ſpeak out *his* thoughts freely, and hear mine in return."

"Why then, he begs a reſpite for a year or two."

"On what pretence?"

"To me, it was preference of a ſingle life—but I ſuſpect it is—what he imagines to be love—and for ſome object whom he thinks your Lordſhip would diſapprove."

"He has not, then, actually confeſſed this to you?"

"If

"If he has, it was drawn from him by ſuch means, that I am not warranted to ſay it in direct words."

"I have entered into no contract, no agreement on his account with the friends of the lady I have pointed out," ſaid Lord Elmwood; "nothing beyond implications have paſſed betwixt her family and myſelf at preſent; and if the perſon on whom he has fixed his affections, ſhould not be in a ſituation abſolutely contrary to my wiſhes, I may, perhaps, confirm his choice."

That moment Sandford's courage prompted him to name Lady Matilda, but his diſcretion oppoſed—however, in the various changes of his countenance from the conflict, it was plain to diſcern that he wiſhed to ſay more than he dared.

On which Lord Elmwood cried,

"Speak

" Speak on, Sandford — what are you afraid of?"

" Of you, my Lord."

He ſtarted.

Sandford went on —— " I know no tie — no bond — no innocence, that is a protection from your reſentment."

" You are right." he replied, ſignificantly.

" Then how, my Lord, can you encourage me to ſpeak on, when that which I perhaps would ſay, may offend you to hear?"

" To what, and whither are you changing our ſubject?" ſaid Lord Elmwood.—" But, Sir, if you know my reſentful and relentleſs temper, you ſurely know how to ſhun it.

" Not, and ſpeak plainly."

" Then diſſemble."

" No,

"No, I'll not do that — but I'll be ſilent."

"A new parade of ſubmiſſion.—You are more tormenting to me than any one I have about me — Conſtantly on the verge of diſobeying my commands, that you may recede, and gain my good will by your forbearance. — But know, Mr. Sandford, that I will not ſuffer this much longer. — If you chuſe in every converſation we have together (though the moſt remote from ſuch a ſubject) to think of my daughter, you muſt either baniſh your thoughts, or conceal them — nor by one ſign, one item, remind me of her."

"Your daughter did you call her?— Can you call yourſelf her father?"

"I do, Sir — but I was likewiſe the huſband of her mother. — And, as that huſband, I ſolemnly ſwear."——He was proceeding with violence.

"Oh!

"Oh! my Lord," cried Sandford, interrupting him, with his hands claſped in the moſt fervent ſupplication—"Oh! do not let me draw upon her one oath more of your eternal diſpleaſure — I'll kneel to beg that you will drop the ſubject."

The inclination he made with his knees bent to the ground, ſtopped Lord Elmwood inſtantly.— But though it broke in upon his words, it did not alter one angry look — his eyes darted, and his lips trembled with, indignation.

Sandford, in order to appeaſe him, bowed and offered to withdraw, hoping to be recalled. — He wiſhed in vain — Lord Elmwood's eyes followed him to the door, expreſſive of pleaſure at his abſence.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE companions and counſellors of Lord Margrave, who had ſo prudently adviſed gentle methods in the purſuit of his paſſion, while there was left any hope of their ſucceſs; now, convinced there was none, as ſtrenuouſly commended open violence;—and ſheltered under the conſideration, that their depredations were to be practiſed upon a defenceleſs woman, who had not one protector, except an old prieſt, the ſubject of their ridicule;—aſſured likewiſe from the influence of Lord Mulgrave's wealth, that all inferior conſequences could be overborne, they ſaw no room for fears on any

any ſide, and what they wiſhed to execute, with care and ſkill premeditated.

When their ſcheme was mature for performance, three of his choſen companions, and three ſervants, trained in all the villainous exploits of their maſters, ſet off for the habitation of poor Matilda, and arrived there about the twilight of the evening.

Near four hours after that time (juſt as the family were going to bed) they came up to the doors of the houſe, and rapping violently, gave the alarm of fire, conjuring all the inhabitants to make their way out immediately, as they would ſave their lives.

The family conſiſted of few perſons, all of whom ran inſtantly to the doors and opened them; on which two men

men ruſhed in, and with the plea of ſaving Lady Matilda from the pretended flames, caught her in their arms, and carried her off; while all the deceived people of the houſe, running eagerly to ſave themſelves, paid no regard to her, till looking for the cauſe for which they had been terrified, they perceived the ſtratagem, and the fatal conſequences.

Amidſt the complaints, the ſorrow, and the affright of the people of the farm, Miſs Woodley's ſenſations wanted a name —terror and anguiſh give but a faint deſcription of what ſhe ſuffered—ſomething like the approach of death ſtole over her ſenſes, and ſhe ſat like one petrified with horror.—She had no doubt who was the perpetrator of this wickedneſs; but how,

how was ſhe to follow? how effect a reſcue?

The circumſtances of this event, as ſoon as the people had time to call up their recollection, were ſent to a neighbouring magiſtrate; but little could be hoped from that.—Who was to ſwear to the robber?—Who undertake to find him out!—Miſs Woodley thought of Ruſhbrook, of Sandford, of Lord Elmwood, but what could ſhe hope from the want of power in the two former?—what from the latter, for the want of will?—Now ſtupified, and now diſtracted, ſhe walked about the houſe inceſſantly, begging for inſtructions how to act, or how to forget her miſery.

A tenant of Lord Elmwood's, who occupied a little farm near to that where

Lady

Lady Matilda lived, and who was well acquainted with the whole hiſtory of her's and her mother's misfortunes, was returning from a neighbouring fair, juſt as this inhuman plan was put in execution. —He heard the cries of a woman in diſtreſs, and followed the ſound, till he arrived at a chaiſe in waiting, and ſaw Matilda placed in it, by the ſide of two men, who preſented piſtols to him, as he offered to approach and expoſtulate.

The farmer, uncertain who this female was, yet went to the houſe ſhe had been taken from (as the neareſt) with the tale of what he had ſeen; and there, being informed it was Lady Matilda whom he had beheld, this intelligence, joined to the powerful effect her ſcreams had on him, made him reſolve to take horſe immediately, and with ſome friends, fol-

low the carriage till they ſhould trace the place to which ſhe was conveyed.

The anxiety, the firmneſs diſcovered in determining on this undertaking, ſomewhat alleviated the agony Miſs Woodley endured, and ſhe began to hope, timely aſſiſtance might yet be given to her beloved charge.

The man ſet out, meaning at all events to attempt her releaſe; but before he had proceeded far, the few friends that accompanied him, began to reflect on the improbability of their ſucceſs, againſt a nobleman, ſurrounded by ſervants, with other attendants likewiſe, and, perhaps, even countenanced by the father of the lady, whom they preſumed to take from him;—or if not, while Lord Elmwood beheld the offence with indifference, that

indifference gave it a ſanction, they might in vain oppoſe.—Theſe cool reflections tending to their ſafety, had their weight with the companions of the farmer; they all rode back, rejoicing at their ſecond thoughts, and left him to purſue his journey and prove his valour by himſelf.

## CHAPTER IX.

IT was not with Sandford, as it had lately been with Ruſhbrook under the diſpleaſure of Lord Elmwood — to the latter he behaved, as ſoon as their diſſention was paſt, as if it had never happened—but to Sandford it was otherwiſe —the reſentment which he had repreſſed at the time of the offence, lurked in his heart, and dwelt upon his mind for ſeveral days; during which, he carefully avoided exchanging a word with him, and gave every other demonſtration of his anger.

Sandford, though experienced in the cruelty and ingratitude of the world, yet

could not without difficulty brook this ſeverity, this contumely, from a man, for whoſe welfare, ever ſince his infancy, he had laboured; and whoſe happineſs was more dear to him, in ſpite of all his faults, than that of any other perſon.—Even Lady Matilda was not ſo dear to Sandford as her father—and he loved her more that ſhe was Lord Elmwood's child, than for any other cauſe.

Sometimes the old man, incenſed beyond bearing, was on the point of ſaying to his patron, "How, in my age, dare you thus treat the man, whom in his youth you reſpected and revered?"

Sometimes inſtead of anger, he felt the tear, he was aſhamed to own, ſteal to his eye, and even fall down his cheek.—Sometimes he left the room half de-

termined to leave the houſe—but theſe were all half determinations; for he knew him with whom he had to deal much too well, not to know that he might be provoked into yet greater anger; and that ſhould he once raſhly quit his houſe, the doors moſt probably would be ſhut againſt him for ever.

In this humiliating ſtate (for even many of the domeſtics could not but obſerve their Lord's diſpleaſure) Sandford paſſed three days, and was beginning the fourth, when ſitting with him and Ruſhbrook juſt after breakfaſt, a ſervant entered, ſaying, as he opened the door, to ſomebody who followed, "You muſt wait till you have my Lord's permiſſion."

This

This attracted their eyes to the door, and a man meanly dreſſed, walked in, following cloſe to the ſervant.

The latter turned, and ſeemed again to deſire the perſon to retire, but in vain; he ruſhed forward regardleſs of his oppoſer, and in great agitation, cried,

" My Lord, if you pleaſe, I have buſineſs with you, provided you will chuſe to be alone."

Lord Elmwood, ſtruck with the ſtranger's earneſtneſs, bade the ſervant leave the room; and then ſaid to him,

" You may ſpeak before theſe gentlemen."

The man inſtantly turned pale, and trembled—then, to prolong the time before he ſpoke, went to the door to ſee if it was ſhut—returned—yet ſtill trembling, ſeemed unwilling to ſay his errand.

"What have you done," cried Lord Elmwood, "that you are in this terror? What have you done, man?"

"Nothing, my Lord," replied he, "but I am afraid I am going to offend you."

"Well, no matter;" (he anſwered careleſsly) "only go on, and let me know your buſineſs."

The man's diſtreſs increaſed—and he cried in a voice of grief and affright—"Your child, my Lord!"——

Ruſhbrook and Sandford ſtarted; and looking at Lord Elmwood, ſaw him turn white as death.—In a tremulous voice he inſtantly cried,

"What of her?" and roſe from his ſeat.

Encouraged

Encouraged by the queſtion, the poor man gave way to his feelings, and anſwered with every ſign of ſorrow,

"I ſaw her, my Lord, taken away by force— two ruffians ſeized and carried her away, while ſhe ſcreamed in vain to me for help, and tore her hair in diſtraction."

"Man, what do you mean?" cried the Earl.

"Lord Margrave," replied the ſtranger, "we have no doubt, has formed this plot—he has for ſome time paſt beſet the houſe where ſhe lived; and when his viſits were refuſed, he threatened this.—Beſides, one of his ſervants attended the carriage; I ſaw, and knew him."

Lord Elmwood liſtened to the laſt part of this account with ſeeming compoſure—then turning haſtily to Ruſhbrook, he ſaid,

"Where

"Where are my piſtols, Harry?"

Sandford roſe from his ſeat, and forgetting all the anger between them, caught hold of the Earl's hand, and cried, "Will you then prove yourſelf a father?"

Lord Elmwood only anſwered, "Yes." and left the room.

Ruſhbrook followed, and begged with all the earneſtneſs he felt, to be permitted to accompany his uncle.

While Sandford ſhook hands with the farmer a thouſand times; and he, in his turn rejoiced, as if he had already ſeen Lady Matilda reſtored to liberty.

Ruſhbrook in vain entreated Lord Elmwood; he laid his commands upon him not to ſtir from the caſtle; while the agita-

agitation of his own mind, was too great, to obſerve the rigour of this ſentence upon his nephew.

During the haſty preparations for his departure, Sandford received from Miſs Woodley the ſad intelligence of what had happened;—but he returned an anſwer to recompence her for all ſhe had undergone.

Within a few hours Lord Elmwood ſet off, accompanied by his guide the farmer, and other attendants furniſhed with all requiſites to aſcertain the ſucceſs of their enterpriſe—while poor Matilda little thought of a deliverer nigh, much leſs, that her deliverer ſhould prove her father.

## CHAPTER X.

LORD Margrave, black as this incident of his life muſt make him appear to the reader, ſtill nurſed in his conſcience a reſerve of ſpecious virtue, to keep him in peace with himſelf.—It was his deſign to plead, to argue, to implore, nay even to threaten, long before he put his threats in force;—and with this and the following reflection, he reconciled—as moſt bad men can—what he had done, not only to the laws of humanity, but to the laws of honour.

"I have ſtolen a woman certainly;" ſaid he to himſelf, "but I will make her

her happier than ſhe was in that humble ſtate from which I have taken her.—I will even," ſaid he, " now that ſhe is in my power, win her affections—and when, in fondneſs, hereafter ſhe hangs upon me, how will ſhe thank me for this little trial, through which I ſhall have conducted her to happineſs!"

Thus did he huſh his remorſe, while he waited impatiently at home, in expectation of his prize.

Half expiring with her ſufferings, of body as well as of mind, about twelve o'clock the next night, Matilda arrived; and felt her ſpirits revive by the ſuperior ſufferings that awaited her—for her increaſing terrors rouſed her from the death-like weakneſs, brought on by fatigue.

Lord

Lord Margrave's houſe, to which he had gone previous to this occaſion, was ſituated in the lonely part of a well-known foreſt, not more than twenty miles diſtant from London:—this was an eſtate he rarely viſited; and as he had but few ſervants here, it was a place which he ſuppoſed would be leſs the object of ſuſpicion in the preſent caſe, than any other of his ſeats. To this, then, Lady Matilda was conveyed—a ſuperb apartment allotted her—and one of his confidential females placed to attend upon her, with all reſpect, and aſſurances of ſafety.

Matilda looked in this woman's face, and ſeeing ſhe bore the features of her ſex, while her knowledge reached none of thoſe worthleſs characters of which this perſon was a ſpecimen, ſhe imagined that

that none of thoſe could look as ſhe did, and therefore found conſolation in her ſeeming tenderneſs.—She was even prevailed upon (by her promiſes to ſit by her ſide and watch) to throw herſelf on the bed, and ſuffer ſleep for a few minutes—for ſleep to her was ſuffering; her fears giving birth to dreams terrifying as her waking thoughts.

More wearied than refreſhed with her ſleep, ſhe roſe at break of day, and refuſing to admit of the change of an article in her dreſs, ſhe perſiſted to ſit in the torn diſordered habit in which ſhe had been dragged away; nor would ſhe taſte a morſel, of all the delicacies that were prepared for her.

Her attendant, for ſome time obſerved the moſt reverential awe; but finding this

this had not the effect of gaining compliance with her advice, ſhe varied her manners, and began by leſs ſubmiſſive means to attempt an influence.—She ſaid her orders were to be obedient, while ſhe herſelf was obeyed—at leaſt in circumſtances ſo material as the lady's health, of which ſhe had the charge as a phyſician, and expected equal compliance from her patient—food and freſh apparel ſhe preſcribed as the only means to prevent death; and even threatened her invalid with ſomething worſe, a viſit from Lord Margrave, if ſhe continued obſtinate.

Now loathing her for the deception ſhe had practiſed, more, than had ſhe received her thus at firſt, Matilda hid her eyes from the ſight of her; and when ſhe was obliged to look, ſhe ſhuddered.

This

This female at length thought it her duty to wait upon her worthy employer, and inform him the young lady in her truſt would certainly die, unleſs there were means employed to oblige her to take ſome nouriſhment.

Lord Margrave, glad of an opportunity that might apologize for his intruſion upon Lady Matilda, went with eagerneſs to her apartment, and throwing himſelf at her feet, conjured her if ſhe would ſave his life, as well as her own, to ſubmit to be conſoled.

The extreme diſguſt and horror his preſence inſpired, cauſed Matilda for a moment to forget all her weakneſs, her want of health, her want of power; and riſing from the place where ſhe ſat, ſhe cried, with her voice elevated,

"Leave me, my Lord, or I'll die in ſpite of all your care; I'll inſtantly expire with grief, if you do not leave me."

Accuſtomed to the tears and reproaches of the ſex—though not of any like her—he treated with contempt thoſe menaces of anger, and ſeizing her hand, carried it to his lips.

Enraged, and overwhelmed with ſorrow at the affront, ſhe cried, (forgetting every other friend ſhe had,) "Oh! my dear Miſs Woodley, why are you not here to take my part?"

"Nay," returned Lord Margrave, ſtifling a fit of laughter, "I ſhould think the old prieſt, would be as good a champion as the lady."

The

The memory of Sandford with all his kindneſs, now ruſhed ſo forcibly on Matilda's mind, that ſhe ſhed a ſhower of tears, on thinking how much he felt, and would continue to feel, for her ſituation. —Once ſhe thought on Ruſhbrook too, and thought even *he* would be vext for her.—Of her father ſhe did not think—ſhe dared not — one ſingle time that thought intruded, but ſhe hurried it away—it was too bitter.

It was now quite night again; and near to that hour when ſhe came firſt to the houſe.—Lord Margrave, though at ſome diſtance from her, remained ſtill in her apartment, while her female companion had ſtolen away. — His inſenſibility to her lamentations — the agitated looks he ſometimes caſt upon her — her

weak and defenceleſs ſtate, all conſpired to fill her mind with horror.

He ſaw her apprehenſions in her diſtracted face, diſheveled hair, and the whole of her forlorn appearance — yet, notwithſtanding his former reſolutions, he could not reſiſt the deſire of fulfilling all her dreadful expectations.

He once again approached her, and again was going to ſeize her hand; when the report of a piſtol, and a confuſion of perſons aſſembling towards the apartment prevented him.

He ſtarted—but looked more ſurpriſed than alarmed — her alarm was augmented; for ſhe ſuppoſed this tumult was ſome experiment to intimidate her into ſubmiſſion.—She wrung her hands,

and

and lifted up her eyes to heaven, in the laſt agony of deſpair, when one of Lord Margrave's ſervants entered haſtily and announced,

"Lord Elmwood."

That moment her father entered—and with all the unreſtrained fondneſs of a parent, folded her in his arms."

Her extreme, her exceſs of joy on ſuch a meeting, and from ſuch anguiſh reſcued, was, in part, repreſſed by his awful preſence. — The apprehenſions to which ſhe had been accuſtomed, kept her timid and doubtful — ſhe feared to ſpeak, or claſp him in return for his embrace, but falling on her knees, clung round his legs, and bathed his feet with her tears. —— Theſe were the happieſt moments that ſhe had ever keown—perhaps too, the happieſt *he* had ever known.

Lord Margrave, on whom Lord Elmwood had not even caſt a look, now left the room; but as he quitted it, called out,

"My Lord Elmwood, if you have any demands on me,"——

The Earl interrupted him,—"Would you make me an executioner? The law ſhall be your only antagoniſt."

Matilda, quite exhauſted, yet upheld by the ſudden tranſport ſhe had felt, was led by her father out of this wretched dwelling—more deſpicable than the cottage built with clay.

## CHAPTER XI.

OVERCOME with the want of reſt for two nights from her cruel fears, and all thoſe fears now huſhed; Matilda ſoon after ſhe was placed in the carriage with Lord Elmwood, dropped faſt aſleep, and thus inſenſibly ſurpriſed, leaned her head againſt her father in the ſweeteſt ſlumber that imagination can conceive.

When ſhe awoke, inſtead of the uſual melancholy ſcene before her view, ſhe heard the voice of the once dreaded Lord Elmwood tenderly ſaying,

"We will go no further to-night, the fatigue is too much for her; — order

beds here directly, and ſome proper perſon to ſit up and attend her."

She could only turn to him with a look of love and duty; her lips could not utter a ſentence.

In the morning ſhe found her father by the ſide of her bed.—He inquired "If ſhe was in health ſufficient to purſue her journey, or if ſhe would remain where ſhe was?"

"I am able to go with you." ſhe anſwered inſtantly."

"Nay," replied he, "perhaps you ought to ſtay here till you are better?"

"I *am* better," ſaid ſhe, "and ready to go with you."——Half afraid that he meant to ſend her from him.

He perceived her fears, and replied, "Nay, if you ſtay, ſo ſhall I—and when

when I go, I ſhall take you along with me to my houſe."

"To Elmwood Houſe?" ſhe aſked eagerly.

"No, to my houſe in town, where I intend to be all the winter, and where we ſhall live together."

She turned her face on the pillow to conceal her tears of joy, but her ſobs revealed them.

"Come," ſaid he, "this kiſs is a token you have nothing to fear."—And he kiſſed her affectionately.—"I ſhall ſend for Miſs Woodley too immediately." continued he.

"Oh! I ſhall be overjoyed to ſee her, my Lord—and to ſee Mr. Sandford—and even Mr. Ruſhbrook."

"Do you know him?" ſaid Lord Elmwood.

"Yes," ſhe replied, "I have ſeen him two or three times."

The Earl hoping the air might be a means of re-eſtabliſhing her ſtrength and ſpirits, now left the room and ordered his carriage; while ſhe aroſe, attended by one of his female ſervants, for whom he had ſent to town, to bring ſuch changes of apparel as were requiſite.

When Matilda was ready to join her father in the next room, ſhe felt a tremor ſeize her, that made it almoſt impoſſible to appear before him.—No other circumſtance now impending to agitate her heart, ſhe felt more forcibly its embarraſſment at meeting on terms of eaſy intercourſe, him, of whom ſhe had been uſed

uſed to think, but with that diſtant reverence and fear, which his ſeverity had excited; and ſhe knew not how ſhe ſhould dare to ſpeak to, or look on him, with that freedom her affection warranted.

After ſeveral efforts to conquer theſe nice and refined ſenſations, but to no purpoſe, ſhe went at laſt to his apartment. — He was reading; but as ſhe entered, he put out his hand and drew her to him. — Her tears wholly overcame her.—He could have intermingled his—but aſſuming a grave countenance, he commanded her to deſiſt from exhauſting her ſpirits; and, after a few powerful ſtruggles with herſelf, ſhe obeyed.

Before the morning was over, ſhe experienced

perienced the extreme joy of ſitting by her father's ſide as they drove to town, and of receiving during his converſation, a thouſand proofs of his love, and tokens of her laſting happineſs.

It was now the middle of November; and yet, as Matilda paſſed along, never to her, did the ſun riſe upon a morning ſuch as this — never did her imagination comprehend, that the human heart could feel happineſs true and genuine as hers.

On arriving at the houſe, there was no abatement of her felicity. — All was reſpect and duty on the part of the domeſtics — all paternal care on the part of Lord Elmwood; — and ſhe ſeemed to be at that ſummit of her wiſhes which annihilates

annihilates hope, but that the proſpect of ſeeing Miſs Woodley and Mr. Sandford, ſtill kept this pleaſing paſſion in exiſtence.

## CHAPTER XII.

RUSHBROOK was detained at Elmwood Houſe during all this time, more from the perſuaſions, nay prayers, of Sandford, than the commands of Lord Elmwood. He had, but for Sandford, followed his uncle and expoſed himſelf to his anger, ſooner than have endured the moſt piercing inquietude, which he was doomed to ſuffer, till the news arrived of Lady Matilda's ſafety.—He indeed had little elſe to fear from the known, firm, courageous character of her father, and the expedition with which he undertook his journey; but lover's fears are like thoſe of women, and no argument

argument could perſuade either him or Miſs Woodley (who had now ventured to come to Elmwood Houſe) but that Matilda's peace of mind might be for ever deſtroyed, before ſhe was ſet at liberty.

The ſummons from Lord Elmwood for their coming to town, was received by each of this party with delight; but the impatience to obey it, was in Ruſhbrook ſo violent, it was painful to himſelf, and extremely troubleſome to Sandford; who wiſhed, from his regard to Lady Matilda, rather to delay, than hurry their journey.

"You are to blame," ſaid he to him and Miſs Woodley, "to wiſh by your arrival, to divide with Lord Elmwood that tender bond, which ties the good who confer obligations, to the object of

their benevolence. — At preſent there is no one with him to ſhare in the care and protection of his daughter, and he is under the neceſſity of diſcharging that duty himſelf; this habit may become ſo powerful, that he *cannot* throw it off, even if his former reſolutions urge him to it.—While we remain here, therefore, Lady Matilda is quite ſafe; but it would not ſurpriſe me, if on our arrival (eſpecially if we are precipitate) her father ſhould place her again with Miſs Woodley at a diſtance."

To this forcible conjecture, they ſubmitted for a few days, and then moſt gladly ſet out for town.

On their arrival, they were met, even at the door of the ſtreet, by Lady Matilda; and with an expreſſion of joy, they did not ſuppoſe her features could have

have worn.—She embraced Miſs Woodley ! hung upon Sandford !—and to Mr. Ruſhbrook, who from his conſcious love only bowed at an humble diſtance, ſhe held out her hand with every look and geſture of the tendereſt eſteem.

When Lord Elmwood joined them, he welcomed them all ſincerely ; but Sandford the moſt, with whom he had not ſpoken for many days before he left the country, for his alluſion to the wretched ſituation of his daughter—And Sandford (with his fellow travellers) now ſaw him treat this daughter with an eaſy, a natural fondneſs, as if ſhe had lived with him from her infancy. — He appeared, however, at times, under the apprehenſion, that the propenſity of man to jealouſy, might give Ruſhbrook a pang at this dangerous rival in his love and for-

tune — for though Lord Elmwood remembered well the hazard he had once ventured to befriend Matilda, yet the preſent unlimited reconciliation was ſomething ſo unlooked for, it might be a trial too much for his generoſity, to remain wholly diſintereſted on the event.—Slight as was this ſuſpicion, it did Ruſhbrook injuſtice. — He loved Lady Matilda too ſincerely, he loved her father's happineſs, and her mother's memory too faithfully, not to be rejoiced at all he witneſſed; nor could the ſecret hope that whiſpered him, " Their bleſſings might one day be mutual," increaſe the pleaſure he found, in beholding Matilda happy.

Unexpected affairs in which Lord Elmwood had been for ſome time en-

gaged, diverted his attention for a while from the marriage of his nephew; nor did he at this time find his diſpoſition ſufficiently ſevere, to exact from the young man a compliance with his wiſhes, at ſo cruel an alternative as that of being for ever diſcarded. — He felt his mind, by the late incident, too much ſoftened for ſuch harſhneſs; he yet wiſhed for the alliance he had propoſed; for he was more conſiſtent in his character than to ſuffer the tenderneſs his daughter's peril had awakened, to derange thoſe plans which he had ſo long projected. Never for a moment did he indulge — for perhaps it would have been an indulgence— the idea of replacing her exactly in the rights of her birth, to the diſappointment of all his nephew's expectations.

Milder now in his temper than he had been for years before, and knowing he could be no longer irritated upon the ſubject of his daughter, he once more reſolved to truſt himſelf in a conference with Ruſhbrook on the ſubject of marriage; meaning at the ſame time to mention Matilda as an opponent from whom he had nothing to fear. But for ſome time before Ruſhbrook was called to this private audience, he had by his unwearied attention, endeavoured to impreſs upon Matilda's mind, the ſofteſt ſentiments in his favour.—He ſucceeded —but not as he wiſhed.—She loved him as her friend, her couſin, her foſter brother, but not as a lover.—The idea of love never once came to her thoughts; and ſhe would ſport with Ruſhbrook like the moſt harmleſs child, while he, all impaſſioned, could with difficulty reſiſt

reſiſt telling her, what ſhe made him ſuffer.

At the meeting between him and Lord Elmwood, to which he was called, for his final anſwer on that ſubject which had once nearly proved ſo fatal to him; after a thouſand fears, much confuſion and embarraſſment, he at length frankly confeſſed his "Heart was engaged, and had been ſo, long before his uncle offered to direct his choice."

Lord Elmwood deſired to know "On whom he had placed his affections."

"I dare not tell you, my Lord,"—returned he, infinitely confuſed; "but Mr. Sandford can witneſs their ſincerity, and how long they have been fixed."

"Fixed!" cried the Earl.

"Immoveably fixed, my Lord; and yet the object is as unconſcious of it to

this moment as you yourſelf have been; and I ſwear ever ſhall be ſo, without your permiſſion."

"Name the object." ſaid Lord Elmwood, anxiouſly.

"My Lord, I dare not—the laſt time I named her to you, you threatened to abandon me for my arrogance."

Lord Elmwood ſtarted.——"My daughter!—Would you marry her?"

"But with your approbation, my Lord; and that ——"

Before he could proceed a word further, his uncle left the room haſtily—and left Ruſhbrook all terror for his approaching fate.

Lord Elmwood went immediately into the apartment where Sandford, Miſs Woodley, and Matilda, were ſitting, and cried

cried with an angry voice and with his countenance diſordered,

" Ruſhbrook has offended me beyond forgiveneſs. — Go, Sandford, to the library, where he is, and tell him this inſtant to quit my houſe, and never dare to return."

Miſs Woodley lifted up her hands and ſighed.

Sandford roſe ſlowly from his ſeat to execute his office.

While Lady Matilda, who was arranging her muſic books upon the inſtrument, ſtopped from her employment ſuddenly, with her face bathed in tears.

A general ſilence enſued, till Lord Elmwood, reſuming his angry tone, cried, " Did you hear me, Mr. Sandford ?"

Sandford now, without a word in reply, made for the door — but there Matilda impeded him, and throwing her arms about his neck, cried,

"Dear Mr. Sandford, do not."

"How!" exclaimed her father.

She ſaw the impending frown, and ruſhing towards him, took his hand fearfully, and knelt at his feet.—"Mr. Ruſhbrook is my relation," ſhe cried in a pathetic voice, "my companion, my friend — before you loved me he was anxious for my happineſs, and often viſited me to lament with, and conſole me. — I cannot ſee him turned out of your houſe without feeling for him, what he once felt for me."

Lord Elmwood turned aſide to conceal his ſenſations—then raiſing her from the floor, he ſaid, "Do you know what he has aſked of me?"

"No,"

"No,"—anſwered ſhe in the utmoſt ignorance, and with the utmoſt innocence painted on her face;—"but whatever it is, my Lord, though you do not grant it, yet pardon him for aſking."

"Perhaps *you* would grant him what he has requeſted?" ſaid her father.

"Moſt willingly—was it in my gift?"

"It is." replied he. "Go to him in the library, and hear what he has to ſay;—for on your will his fate ſhall depend."

Like lightning ſhe flew out of the room; while even the grave Sandford ſmiled at the idea of their meeting.

Ruſhbrook, with his fears all verified by the manner in which his uncle had left him, ſat with his head reclined againſt a bookcaſe, and every limb extended with the deſpair that had ſeized him.

Matilda

Matilda nimbly opened the door and cried, " Mr. Ruſhbrook, I am come to comfort you."

" That you have always done." ſaid he, riſing in rapture to receive her, even in the midſt of all his ſadneſs.

" What is it you want?" ſaid ſhe. " What have you aſked of my father that he has denied you?"

" I have aſked for that," replied he, " which is dearer to me than my life."

" Be ſatisfied then," returned ſhe, " for you ſhall have it."

" Dear Matilda! it is not in your power to beſtow."

" But he has told me it *ſhall* be in my power; and has deſired me to give, or to refuſe it you, at my own pleaſure."

" O Heavens!" cried Ruſhbrook in tranſport, " Has he?"

" He

" He has indeed — before Mr. Sandford and Miſs Woodley. — Now tell me what your petition is?"

" I aſked him," cried Ruſhbrook, trembling, " for a wife."

Her hand that had juſt then taken hold of his, in the warmth of her wiſh to ſerve him, now dropped down as with the ſtroke of death—her face loſt its colour — and ſhe leaned againſt the deſk by which they were ſtanding, without uttering a word.

" What means this change?" ſaid he; " Do you not wiſh me happy?"

" Yes." ſhe exclaimed: " Heaven is my witneſs.— But it gives me concern to think we muſt part."

" Then let us be joined," cried he, falling at her feet, " till death alone can part us."

All

All the ſenſibility — the reſerve — the pride, with which ſhe was ſo amply poſſeſſed, returned to her that moment.— She ſtarted and cried, "Could Lord Elmwood know for what he ſent me?"

"He did." replied Ruſhbrook —"I boldly told him of my preſumptuous love, and he has given to you alone, the power over my happineſs or miſery. —Oh! do not doom me to the latter."

Whether the heart of Matilda, ſuch as it has been deſcribed, *could* ſentence him to miſery, the reader is left to ſurmiſe — and if he ſuppoſes that it could *not*, he has every reaſon to ſuppoſe that their wedded life, was — a life of happineſs.

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