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XXII.

THE  
CONFESSIONS OF AN ELDERLY LADY  
AND OF AN  
ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.

BY THE  
COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

LONDON:  
SIMMS AND M'INTYRE,  
13, Paternoster Row,  
and  
Donegall St. Belfast.

1848.



*Gottem mee Fine Lucetick*

THE CONFESSIONS

OF AN

ELDERLY LADY.

BY THE

COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

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LONDON:  
SIMMS AND M'INTYRE,  
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1848.





THE CONFESSIONS  
OF AN  
ELDERLY LADY.

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How interminably long the days are! Though broken by repasts, visits, airings, and reading, still they creep on with leaden feet. Heigh-ho! It was not thus in the days of my youth. Then the hours seemed to have wings, and flew away so rapidly that I often wished to retard their flight. But everything is changed! The very seasons are no longer the same; and their productions bear no more comparison with those that I remember, than—what shall I say?—than the young persons, misnamed beauties, in these degenerate days, do with the lovely women who were my contemporaries. Yes, the flowers have lost their fragrance, the fruit its flavour, and the vegetables taste as if created by some chemical process. The newspapers, too, partake the general change; and are, for the most part, filled with the movements of stupid lords and silly ladies; or the speeches of some demagogue, placarded into notice by the praise of one party and abuse of another. Parliamentary debates, instead of displaying the magniloquent march of sonorous words that were wont to charm my youthful ears, rendering each speech worthy of a place in that excellent work, entitled “*Enfield’s Speaker*,” are now reduced to colloquies, quite as familiar as if the



debaters were seated round their tables after dinner, and had only their convivial guests, and not the nation, as audience. To be sure, people did assert that Dr. Johnson wrote the reported speeches, but so much the better, say I; for they will stand as honourable records of the abilities of my contemporaries, when the world no longer remembers the rumour of their Johnsonian parentage, and will form an admirable contrast to the inflated commonplaces, or flimsy theories of the present time.

I have but one consolation for the degeneracy of the age, and that consists in the conviction that few records of it will descend to posterity. People seem to lose all respect for the past; events succeed each other with such velocity that the most remarkable one of a few years gone by, is no more remembered than if centuries had closed over it. The present race seem to think only of the actual minute. They are prodigals, who give no thought to their predecessors, and no care to their successors. People were not thus heartless in my youthful days—but everything is changed!

The magazines, too, how they are fallen off! No longer do two interesting looking heads, ycleped, “*A tête-à-tête*,” or “*The fair deceiver and the enamoured Philander*,” meet the gaze, initiating one into some recent *morçeau* of amusing scandal. No—the portrait of some would-be-beauty, or modern author, stares one in the face, endeavouring to look handsome, or clever, with all her or his might; but as it is not often that artists succeed in bestowing either of these expressions on their subjects, they are frequently as unkindly treated by art as by nature.

Then the matter of these magazines—how infinitely inferior are they to those of my youth! Pretentious philosophical disquisitions on recent discoveries in science—sketchy tales, with shadowy personages—crude reviews on as crude literary productions—poems guiltless of thought—and a *réchauffée* of the events of the past month, as insipid as *réchauffées* generally are.

The editors of the ephemeral productions to which I allude, ambitious to contain in their pages some attractive

article, and knowing the craving appetites of their readers for personalities, dress up a forgotten anecdote, or obsolete scandal, with the sauce *piquant* of inuendoes and exaggerations; or else with tales professing to treat of fashionable life, with characters that bear no more resemblance to living ones, than do the figures on which milliners and tailors display their garments for sale. But their conclusions satisfy the crowd, who, unable to penetrate the sanctuaries of aristocratic life, cannot judge of the coarseness and want of truth of the pretended representations.

The study of history I carefully eschew—for modern historians are all would-be-philosophers; who, instead of relating facts as they occurred, give us their version, or rather perversions of them, always coloured by their political prejudices or distorted to establish some theory, and rendered obscure by cumbrous attempts to trace effect from cause. They tell us not only what potentates, heroes, and statesmen said, or are imagined to have said, but also, not unfrequently, favour us with what they *thought*; though they do not quite satisfy us as to the authenticity of the sources whence they derived their information. Poetry I have been compelled to abandon ever since Byron demoralized the public taste, by substituting passion for sentiment, and originated a herd of servile imitators of all his defects, but who possess not one ray of the genius that redeemed them.

Dryden, Waller, Pope, were the poets read in my youth. Their lofty thoughts came to us in as lofty diction, like the beauties of that day, attired in their court-dresses. Novels were then an agreeable resource. Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa Harlowe—how often have I dwelt on your pages, my sympathy excited and my reason satisfied. Yes—Richardson's heroines were not only women, but, with the exception of Pamela, they were gentlewomen, a class that seems now to have passed away from our modern novels, as wholly as they have from society: a genus ycleped "ladies" being substituted, which no more resembles their dignified progenitors, than the flimsy draperies of the modern

originals of these meretricious shadows, do the substantial velvets and brocades in which my stately contemporaries were attired.

Times are indeed sadly changed! Fashion, a nondescript which, like Milton's allegorical personification of death, has no definite shape, has now usurped the place of decorum; and, like death, levels all distinctions. This same fashion is a monstrous growth of these degenerate days, which, like the idol of Juggernaut, often crushes those who prostrate themselves before her revolving wheel. It is the sworn foe to all that is good and respectable; and encourages only the parvenus which spring up beneath its unwholesome shade, as does the fungus beneath that of some tree, whose deleterious moisture gives it birth.

Well I, at least, have not bowed down and worshipped this colossal idol. I have not left the residence of my ancestors, because fashion had proscribed its precincts, to become the neighbour of some returned nabob, or retired bill-broker, with no recommendation save his ill-acquired wealth. I have not dismantled my mansion of its cumbrous but richly carved furniture, to adopt, at a later period, a composition in imitation of it. No—I saw the rage for Grecian and Roman decoration pass by, as calmly as I have since seen them replaced by the angular *ameublement* of the melo-dramatic Emperor of the French; and have lived to witness the solid magnificence of the fourteenth Louis, revived by those who are as incapable of comprehending, as of emulating the splendour and abilities of that dignified model for kings. I smile at beholding the ill-executed imitations in the mansions of my acquaintance, of the costly furniture which, from mine, has never been displaced; while they would gladly purchase back their ancestral possessions from the brokers who have collected them to sell again at more than thrice their original cost.

Yes, it is very satisfactory to my feelings to witness the restoration of true taste in furniture, at least; almost as much so as it was to see Louis XVIII. restored to the throne of his forefathers, whence his less fortunate

brother has been exiled. We have fallen upon evil days; "the march of intellect," as they call it, has been in my opinion a triumphal march over the prostrated privileges of sovereigns, who dare no longer consider their subjects as their unalienable property, nor govern by the good old monarchical principle of "*Je veux.*"

This is a melancholy and an unnatural state of things; but I console myself with thinking that it cannot last, though, alas! it bids fair to endure my time; consequently, I am somewhat disposed to adopt the philosophy of the fifteenth Louis, and exclaim, "*Après nous le déluge.*"

I wish I had children, for I should, in that case, have had now around me a third generation of scions from the parent stem, who might have loved me, and whom I might have loved; at all events, over whose destinies my fortune would have given me an influence, and next to loving, and being loved, is the pleasure of governing. But this wearisome solitude, imposed by age and infirmities, and uncheered by fond faces, or affectionate voices, it is hard to bear. Nature has implanted in every breast the yearning desire to be an object of sympathy and affection to its fellow. The young feel it, but they feel too the glad consciousness of possessing the power to excite and repay the sentiment; while the old are too well aware how unlovely is age, not to distrust the appearance of an attachment they fear they are incapable of creating. They become suspicious and peevish from this humiliating self-knowledge, and consequently less worthy of the affection for which they yearn.

Every one now writes, and the occupation may serve to amuse me, even though its fruits fail to amuse others; and thus I who love to live in the past, may borrow from it the means of rendering the present less insupportable. Shall I then take courage, make my confessions to the public, and trust to it for absolution? It is an indulgent monster after all, which swallows much that is bad. Why, therefore, should I fear it? But who will read the confessions of an old woman? and in an age when everything old, except furniture, plate, and wine, is



exploded? *N'importe*, if those only wrote who were sure of being read, we should have fewer authors; and the shelves of libraries would not groan beneath the weight of dusty tomes more *voluminous* than luminous. Yes, I *will* write my memoirs.

“Did your ladyship speak?” asked that much enduring woman, my *dame de compagnie*, one of the most uncompanionable of that class of persons denominated companions. My conscience does sometimes reproach me for sundry pettish reproofs, and petulant phoos and pshaws, addressed to this modern Griselda, who “assents to all I will, or do, or say,” with a meekness very trying to a temper like mine. She, however, is at least ten years my junior, and will, in all human probability, live to enjoy the comfortable provision I have secured her in my will; thinking perhaps that she has well earned it, by a twenty years’ daily and hourly practice of that difficult virtue—Patience.

Yes, I *will* write my confessions, and “nought extenuate, or set down aught in malice.” As a proof of my sincerity, I shall record my dialogue with my *dame de compagnie*.

“Mrs. Vincent, ring the bell, if you please—here, that will do; you always ring it as if you imagined the servants to be deaf.”

“I beg your ladyship’s pardon; but, if you will be pleased to recollect, you, this morning, complained that I rang the bell so gently that the servants never heard the first pull.”

“Pray don’t ask me to be pleased to recollect; I never am pleased to recollect such puerile fiddle-faddle. Your memory is so tenacious, that you can quote every syllable I utter in the course of a week.”

It will be perceived by the malicious reader, that in my petulance, I was unconsciously comprising my own conversation within the contemptuous epithet of fiddle-faddle. But whether my unhappy companion was equally acute, I cannot determine; for she was far too well disciplined to allow any indication of discovery to be perceptible.

“Why don’t you ring the bell again? you see no one has answered.”

Enter John.

“And so, John, here has Mrs. Vincent been ringing this last half hour. It really is *too* provoking that none of you will answer the bell.”

“Very sorry, indeed, your ladyship; but I only heard the bell once.”

“There, you are convinced, Mrs. Vincent; I always tell you that you do not ring sufficiently loud; I wish you would remember this another time. Let me consider, what did I want? What did I require, Mrs. Vincent?”

“Indeed, madam, I do not know; your ladyship did not inform me.”

“There it is, you never remember what I want; it really is enough to vex a saint.”

“I’m sure, madam, I am very sorry.”

“So you always say, I hear nothing but ‘I beg your pardon,’ and, ‘I am very sorry,’ all day long.—Place the easy chair with an extra pillow before my writing-desk, wheel the desk close to the window, and put a tabouret for my feet. There, that will do. See that the pens are good, the ink not too thick, and lay a quire of foolscap wove paper on the desk; not that abominable glazed paper which dazzles my eyes. I intend to write, Mrs. Vincent, yes, to write a good deal, unless it should fatigue me: so wipe my spectacles. You had better remain in the room, to see that the fire does not go out. You can read, if you like it; but mind you do not make a noise in turning over the leaves, you know you have a trick of doing so. And remember, too, you do not make that disagreeable sound to which you are much addicted, a sort of clearing of the trachea, which is extremely trying to my nerves. There again, Mrs. Vincent, have I not told you a thousand times not to give way to that offensive habit of sighing? I cannot bear it.”

“I beg your ladyship’s pardon, I am very sor—”

“Oh! dear—Oh! dear, I never can say a word to you, that you do not forthwith answer me with, ‘I beg your pardon, I am very sorry.’”

“Indeed, madam—”

“Don’t say another word, spare my nerves; you know, or ought to know, that I detest explanations.”

If my readers are not disgusted with this specimen of my irritability and egotism, I will proceed with my task.

My first recollections point to Walsingham Castle, where my happiest days were passed. Well do I remember a certain dressing-room in it that breathed the mingled odours of every fragrant flower, odours ever since associated in my mind with the memory of that chamber and its inmate. Reclined in an easy chair, propped by pillows, a fragile form, draped in muslin of a snowy whiteness, used to meet my gaze. A pale, but beautiful face, with large lustrous eyes, whose tender expression is even now remembered, used to welcome me with smiles. A soft delicate hand used to smooth my curls, and draw me fondly to her heart; and a low sweet voice, that only uttered words of love, used to greet me. Never can I forget the warm tears that often fell on my face and shoulders, when strained in the convulsive embrace of that lovely being.

“Why does mamma weep when she kisses me?” demanded I, one day, of the upper nurse.

“You must not ask questions, Lady Arabella,” was the satisfactory reply; a reply that generally met all the interrogatories I addressed to the pragmatical Mrs. Sydenham.

Good Mrs. Mary, as I designated her assistant, was less taciturn; and to my reiterated demand of why mamma wept? told me, with a deep sigh, and melancholy shake of the head, that it was because mamma was going to leave me, and was sorry.

“But she shan’t go, if she does not like it,” answered I, with the wilfulness that even then characterised me; “I won’t let her go.”

“Poor child,” murmured good Mrs. Mary, and a tear trembled in her eye.

The next time I entered the odorous dressing-room, mamma appeared to me suffering more than usual. Papa was sitting by her side, and held one of her hands in his.

She embraced me fondly, and he took me on his knee. They looked at me, and then at each other, with an expression so piteous, that it reminded me of good Mrs. Mary's explanation of mamma's tears, and I uttered imploringly, "Do not go away, dear sweet mamma, stay with papa and Arabella."

She burst into a passion of tears, and my father too became greatly agitated.

"Oh! yes," resumed I, "good Mrs. Mary told me you wept because you were sorry to go away."

She sobbed in agony, and caught me to her breast, and my father pressed us both in his arms.

I saw my mother no more in the fragrant dressing-room; but was afterwards taken a few times to her bedroom, whence my father seldom moved. She looked paler than ever, and her voice was so low that it could only whisper; still it uttered fond words, and sounded sweetly in my ears. Every one moved so gently, and spoke so softly in that room, that my steps only were heard; the other persons glided about like shadows. My father looked nearly as pallid as my mother, and scarcely ever glanced from her; unless when he turned to conceal the tears that were continually springing to his eyes.

One day I was sent for, and found my mother supported by pillows, and her eyes half closed. My father had been reading aloud to her; and I heard her murmur, "Thy will, not mine, be done, O Lord!"

He took me in his arms, and held me to her. She pressed me faintly, but fondly; a few burning tears fell on my face, and she pronounced, in accents broken by the approach of death, a mother's last blessing. I, too, wept, though, alas! I knew not then what bitter cause I had for tears; and when my father offered to withdraw me from her fond embrace, I clung passionately to her. At this moment the clergyman was announced: she relaxed her hold of me, and I was taken from the chamber violently sobbing.

I remember that when I reached the door I looked back, and caught her tearful eyes strained to see me to the last. What agony was then in their expression!



I never saw my mother again, for she died in two hours after I was torn from her. To this early bereavement of the truest, tenderest friend that youth can ever know, I attribute all the errors of my life.

The next day, and the following one, I asked repeatedly to be taken to mamma. Mrs. Sydenham looked grave, said it could not be; and good Mistress Mary wept, and, though always affectionate to me, appeared still more so, notwithstanding that Mrs. Sydenham more than once reprimanded her, and sternly desired her not to spoil me.

In a week after, I was dressed in black, and noticed that all the household was similarly clad. I objected to this change in my dress, and said that mamma would not like my ugly black frock, as she was only fond of pretty white ones. This remark produced a few more tears from good Mistress Mary, who was again rebuked by Mrs. Sydenham, for being, as she termed it, always whimpering. I had an instinctive dislike to the upper nurse, and a preference to Mary, whose tears, though I knew not their source, soothed me.

The next day, the sounds of many carriage-wheels, and the champing of steeds, drew me to the window of my nursery, which overlooked the court of the castle. I clapped my hands in childish glee, when I saw the *cortège*, decked with nodding plumes, that moved slowly and proudly along.

“Where are all these fine carriages going?” asked I, “and why are so many of them black?”

“They are taking away your mamma,” answered Mary, as well as her tears and sobs would allow her.

I, too, began to weep, exclaiming that they should not take my own dear, sweet mamma away; but the *cortège* continued to advance, until the last nodding plume vanished from my tearful sight, and I sank on the bosom of good Mary, exhausted by my sorrow. How silent was the whole castle! Not a sound was heard save the tolling of the church-bell, that came booming on the ear from the distance, or the chimes of the great clock, as it marked the flight of time.

The gloom chilled me, and yet it was in unison with my feelings; for though too young to comprehend the misfortune that had befallen me, a mysterious sympathy seemed to render silence and sorrow congenial to me.

The following day my father sent for me. I found him in the library, so pale and care-worn, that, young as I was, the alteration in his appearance struck me forcibly. He was clad in deep mourning, and his eyes indicated that tears had lately been no strangers to them.

I rushed into his arms, and wept as I hid my face in his bosom, to which I fondly nestled, as I had been wont to do to the maternal one. He dismissed the attendant; and as he bent his head over mine, I felt his tears fall on my hair and neck, and heard the deep sighs that heaved his breast.

“You weep, dear papa,” said I, “because my own sweet mamma is gone away. She, too, wept, for she was sorry to leave you and me. Do you remember, papa, how she cried and kissed us both?”

He clasped me convulsively, called me his last, his only comfort.

“But won't dear mamma come back to us?” asked I.

“No, my precious child, never; but we shall go to her.”

“Oh! I am so glad; I hope, papa, it will be soon. And shall we too go in that black coach, with all the nodding feathers? and will the bells toll, as when dear mamma went? How glad I shall be that day; and you, papa, will you not be glad?”

My poor father sobbed aloud, and I repeatedly kissed his cheek.

“Look here, my dear Arabella,” said he, opening the miniature case now before me, “do you know this face?”

“'Tis my own mamma; my dear, sweet mamma,” answered I. “Oh! let me always have it to look at.”

From this period, I spent a considerable portion of every day with my father, who never failed to show me the cherished miniature, or to talk to me of its dear and lost original.

A year elapsed before he left the solitude of Walsingham Castle; during that epoch he made me comprehend that my mother was dead. How well I recollect the feeling of awe that crept through my young heart, as he explained the nature of this tremendous but inevitable passage to eternity. Yet, though awed, I loved to dwell on the subject; and death, and a union with my mother, henceforth became an association of ideas in my mind, that robbed the one of its terrors, and softened the regret entertained for the other.

My father, never of a robust constitution, began to show symptoms of confirmed ill health, in less than a year from the decease of my mother. So fervent had been his attachment to her, that time, though it soothed the bitterness of grief, could not obliterate her image, or console him for her loss; and I believe, that had he been childless, he would have hailed death as a release from an existence which had lost all charm for him since she had been torn from his arms.

It was solely for my sake that he submitted to a *regime* the most abstemious, and to a system of medical care, which condemned him to the most monotonous mode of existence imaginable. I was his constant companion; seated on a low tabouret, by his invalid chair or sofa, I established all my toys in his library, built card houses on his couch, accompanied him in all his airings, prattling to him every thought that passed through my infant mind, and never leaving him but with sorrow.

A fear that I inherited the malady of my mother, or his own delicacy of constitution, operated continually on his imagination, rendered morbidly apprehensive, by a degree of sensibility rarely belonging to the male character, and nursed into existence by the loss he had sustained, and the seclusion in which he lived.

Mrs. Sydenham had been discharged soon after my mother's death, owing to some symptoms of dislike displayed towards her by me; and good Mrs. Mary, in consequence of the partiality I had evinced towards her, was elevated to the place of upper nurse.

Various and minute were the questions put by my

poor dear father to her, when she brought me every morning to the library.

“How had I slept—had I eaten my breakfast with appetite—had I been cheerful?” were interrogatories daily made. My countenance was anxiously examined, and my pulse felt, by the affectionate and nervous valetudinarian; and a physician was in regular attendance, to report on the state of my health.

No wonder, then, that I soon began to discover that I was an object of no little importance to the house; a discovery almost always dangerous to the discoverer, whether infant or adult. Consequently, I speedily displayed some infallible proofs of my acquired knowledge, by indulging in sundry caprices and petulancies not peculiarly agreeable to good Mrs. Mary; and very alarming to my poor father, when repeated to him, in my nurse’s phraseology, which thus represented my ebullitions of ill humour: “Lady Arabella had been a little uneasy all the morning. Her ladyship had made a good breakfast, it was true, but she had refused to allow her mouth to be washed after, which she, good Mrs. Mary, was afraid was a sign of something feverish in the habit. Her little ladyship had thrown by all her dolls—in short, she had not been as cheerful as usual.”

Well did I observe the anxiety this intelligence occasioned my too indulgent parent; and my pride was gratified by it. The bell was rung, Dr. Warminster, the Halford of his day, sent for, and all good Mrs. Mary’s information detailed to him with scrupulous exactitude. My pulse was felt, my tongue examined, my eyes scrutinised; and after the termination of this profound investigation, I was pronounced, *ex cathedrâ*, to be in a state of perfect health.

“But, my dear doctor,” asked my father, “how do you account for her uneasiness? Do you not think it must have proceeded from some incipient feverish excitement acting on the system, some nervous derangement—eh, my good doctor?”

“I think, my dear lord,” was the answer, “that your little girl requires at this period a governess more than a



physician; and advise, by all means, your lordship's providing her with one, as soon as a person befitting the situation can be found."

"A governess, doctor, you surprise me," replied my father, "What can a governess have to do with the symptoms of uneasiness I have related?"

"A good one may prevent a repetition of them, my lord. The truth is, your daughter is now of an age to stand in need of a more intellectual person than Mrs. Mary; one who can control her temper and direct her pursuits, as well as attend to her health."

"I assure you, doctor, that her temper is faultless," said my father, "and with regard to her pursuits, she is as far advanced as most children of her age. She can already spell several words, and is peculiarly intelligent."

"Her intelligence I admit," responded the doctor, with a peculiar smile, "but her progress in learning I think not very forward. Why, let me see, Lady Arabella must be now eight years old; and I do not know a child of that age that cannot read fluently, and speak two or more languages."

How attentively I listened to this dialogue! and how cordially did I dislike Doctor Warminster, who made so light of my acquirements!

My poor father looked distressed, and half offended; for I believe, that, judging from the precocious shrewdness of my observations, viewed through the flattering medium of parental affection, he had hitherto considered me a sort of prodigy. The truth is, that from never having mingled with other children, and having lived so continually with my father, my intellectual faculties had attained a maturity disproportioned to my age and acquirements. I could *think* long before I could *read*; and now, that for the first time, I became aware that children of my age were more advanced in education than myself, my vanity was cruelly wounded; and I determined, with that strong volition that even then formed a peculiar characteristic of my nature, to forthwith apply myself to study.

When Doctor Warminster withdrew, I approached

my father, and looking in his face, asked him, in a reproachful tone, why I had not been taught to read? He appeared embarrassed, but tenderly embracing me, said that my studies should forthwith commence.

“What is a governess?” demanded I.

“A lady, my dear,” replied my father, “who undertakes to instruct children in all that it is necessary that that they should know.”

“Then let me have a governess directly, papa; however she must be a nice, pretty governess, not an old ugly woman like Mrs. Sydenham, but one who will teach me to read very soon, and help me to build card-houses on your sofa.”

Never shall I forget the expression of perplexity which my poor father’s countenance exhibited at this request.

“Why, my child,” answered he, “when you have a governess, you must study your lessons with her in another apartment;” and he sighed deeply as he finished the sentence.

“But I *won’t* learn my lessons anywhere else but here,” rejoined I petulantly; “and my governess *shall* teach me *here!*” And I burst into a paroxysm of tears.

This exhibition of my temper convinced my poor father of the justice of Doctor Warminster’s observations, relative to the necessity of having a governess for me. But it did not suggest to him the prudence of checking my wilfulness; for instead of reprehending my peevishness, he fondly embraced and soothed me, promising that I should have a nice governess; though he was less explicit as to his intentions respecting her professional duties, a point which I had determined on exacting being performed in his presence in the library.

A few letters were next day addressed to the nearest female relations of my father, stating his desire of procuring a governess for me. I know not whether he informed them that good looks were an indispensable requisite in the lady who was to undertake the office; but I *do* know that the half-dozen Mistresses and Misses who came recommended by them, might have served as

specimens of female ugliness. A glance at me, who returned it by a look of undisguised disapproval of the candidates, induced my father to dismiss each successively, with a polite intimation that they should hear from him in a few days.

Then came letters of remonstrance from the ladies who had sent them; each being extremely surprised that her *protégée*, Mrs. or Miss Tomkins or Thomson, had not been engaged, as she was precisely the most suitable, desirable, and appropriate person in existence. All these letters, of course, my father was compelled to answer; and the difficulty and anxiety of inventing plausible excuses, which should be satisfactory to the patronesses, and yet not unjust or offensive to the objects of their recommendation, increased the nervous trepidation of the poor invalid in no common degree.

I now began to think that a pretty governess was an unattainable good; and in proportion to this belief, became my impatient desire to possess so precious a rarity. My father, with some hesitation and embarrassment, informed Doctor Warminster of his wish to procure a *young* lady as governess; and added, that his poor dear Arabella positively insisted that good looks should distinguish the person to be selected for the situation.

I was present when this statement was made, and could as little imagine why my poor father's pale cheek became tinged with red, as I could divine why Doctor Warminster first looked surprised, then smiled in a peculiar way, and at length, rubbing his hands, and positively chuckling outright, repeated:—

“A *young* and *pretty* governess, my lord? why, bless my soul, youth and beauty are so generally objected to in teachers, that I am rather surprised—that is, I am somewhat astonished that your lordship should consider them as indispensable requisites.”

My father's cheek became still more red, as he hesitatingly replied:—

“You mistake, my good doctor, it is not I, but my daughter, who entertains this desire; and my poor Arabella has been so accustomed to be indulged, that in

a point on which she seems to have set her heart, I do not wish that she should be thwarted."

"But your lordship is aware, that a young and pretty woman living in the house of a single man, may give rise to surmises injurious to her, and not agreeable to her employer."

My father looked still more embarrassed, but he falteringly replied:—

"My reputation, doctor, ought to be, I should hope, a sufficient guarantee against all such surmises. No one who knows me could suppose, that I could so far forget what is due to my only child, as to place an instructress over her, of whose morals I had not the best opinion."

"I beg your lordship's pardon; *I* did not presume to doubt your morals, nor those of the young lady, whoever she may be, who is to fill the situation of governess to Lady Arabella; I only alluded to what the world would be likely to say on such a subject."

"I won't have an ugly governess, that I won't," said I, bursting into tears, for I had conceived the impression that Doctor Warminster was opposed to my having a pretty one.

The doctor smiled spitefully, as I thought, and my poor father wiped my eyes, and kissed my cheeks. Encouraged by his caresses, I repeated: "I *will* have a pretty governess! a *very* pretty governess! shan't I, dear papa?"

As I thus vociferated, I looked triumphantly at the doctor, who took his leave, promising to seek for the sort of person "that would satisfy the fastidious taste of Lady Arabella."

The following week brought a letter from the widow of a beneficed clergyman on one of my father's estates, detailing, that from her scanty income and large family, she was anxious to place one of her daughters in some family as governess, and entreating his lordship to exert himself with his female relations to procure her a situation. She added, that she hoped the youth of her daughter would not be an insuperable objection, as she was remarkably steady.



“Why, this is the very thing,” said my father.

“What, papa?” asked I.

“I think, my dear,” answered he, “that I have at last found you a governess.”

“Oh, I am so glad, so very glad,” and I clapped my hands with joy; “is she very young, dear papa? and is she very, *very* pretty?”

“Yes, very young, my dear,” replied my father, “and very good, I am sure; for her father was an exemplary man, and her mother, I have heard, is an amiable woman.”

“But is she very pretty, papa?”

“I don’t know, my love, for I have never seen her; but, dear Arabella, remember what I have often told you, that it is better to be good than pretty.”

“But I will have her pretty and good too; for all pretty people are good, and ugly people are bad and cross.”

“Indeed you are wrong, my child.”

Doubtless he was proceeding to demonstrate my error; but I interrupted him, by saying—

“No, indeed, papa, I am not wrong; don’t you remember how pretty, how very, very pretty my own dear sweet mamma was, and you often told me no one was ever so good?”

He pressed me to his breast, and a tear moistened my cheek; but I had not yet finished my exordium, so continued:—

“And you, dear papa, you are very pretty, and who was ever so good?”

He kissed me again.

“But naughty Mrs. Sydenham, who was always cross and disagreeable, she was ugly, very ugly, was she not, papa? while good Mrs. Mary is pretty, though not so pretty as I want my governess to be. Yes, all pretty people are good, and ugly people are naughty, so I *will* have a *pretty* governess.”

The allusion to my mother, and perhaps the compliment to himself, silenced, if they did not convince, my too indulgent father; and he determined to write to Mrs.

Melville, to send up her daughter, as he wished to engage a governess for his little girl. If Miss Melville suited, she would be retained; and if not, a compensation would be bestowed upon her for the trouble and expense of the journey.

I counted the hours until an answer was received, and shortly after Miss Melville, attended by her brother, arrived. How my heart palpitated when she was announced! and how I longed to have the deep bonnet and black veil, which, though turned back, still shaded her face, removed, that I might ascertain if she was indeed *very* pretty.

“Tell her to take off her bonnet, dear papa,” whispered I.

“No, not now, my dear,” said he, *sotto voce*.

The sound of her voice pleased me, it was low, soft, and clear, and there was a timidity in her manner, that prepossessed me in her favour.

My father kindly desired that her brother might remain in the house, and ordered an apartment to be prepared for him, and good Mrs. Mary was summoned to conduct Miss Melville to hers.

“Let me go with her,” said I, influenced by the curiosity I experienced to behold her face; and taking her hand, I led her up the grand staircase, though good Mrs. Mary was for conducting her by the back stairs. When we had entered the room prepared for her, I scarcely allowed her to remove her gloves, before I entreated her to take off her bonnet; nay, I began to untie its strings myself, so impatient was I to examine her face. An exclamation of delight escaped me as I beheld it; for never did a more lovely one meet human gaze. A profusion of chestnut-coloured silken ringlets shaded a countenance of exquisite beauty, on which candour and innocence had set their seal; and a figure, slight, but of rounded symmetry, was revealed when the large cloak in which it had been enveloped was removed.

Her beautiful face became suffused with blushes as I exclaimed, clapping my hands all the while:—

“O yes, she is *so* pretty, *so* very, *very* pretty! Now,

I have a nice pretty governess, I never will let her leave me!" and I kissed her affectionately.

I thought, but perhaps it might be only fancy, that good Mrs. Mary did not seem so delighted with my new governess as I expected she would be, for I had already made up my mind that all who loved me should love her; consequently, I resented this imagined slight to my new favourite.

I left her, while she prepared to change her travelling dress for another, and rushed frantic with joy to my father, vehemently exclaiming: "Oh! dear papa, she is *so* beautiful, *so* very, very beautiful, that I am sure she must be good!"

I was disappointed by the air of indifference with which this information was received, and was disposed to reproach my father with his insensibility, but I observed that he looked more pale and languid than usual, and therefore, from an instinct of affection, forbore.

Doctor Warminster coming in soon after, pronounced that my father had caught a cold, and manifested a feverish tendency; consequently commanded that he should confine himself to his chamber for a day or two, and see no one.

How I hated the doctor for this command, for I had set my heart on astonishing my father by the beauty of Miss Melville, and could not support, with common patience, the idea of any postponement of the gratification of my impetuous wishes.

"Perhaps, my dear doctor, you would do me the favour of seeing Miss Melville and her brother," said my father. "You will, in a conversation with her, ascertain whether she is capable of discharging the duties of the situation which I wish her to fill; for, if otherwise, the sooner she knows that she cannot retain it, the less painful will be the loss of it to her."

"I won't have my pretty governess sent away," sobbed I, "I love Miss Melville, and I *will* have her stay with me always."

My father gave a look of helpless languor to the doctor, who in return shrugged up his shoulders, a

favourite movement with him when not pleased, and left the library to see Miss Melville and report progress.

“I know *he* won't like my pretty governess,” said I; “for he wanted me to have an ugly old cross one, I know he did; and I don't like nasty, ugly Doctor Warminster, that I don't!”

“Really, my dear Arabella,” replied my father, “you are now unjust and unreasonable. Doctor Warminster has been always kind and attentive, and you grieve me when I see you thus obstinate and ungrateful.”

“You grieve me,” was the severest reproof I had ever heard from my kind father's lips, and its power over me was omnipotent. It immediately rendered me docile; and, as I kissed him, I promised never again to designate Doctor Warminster, as being “nasty” or “ugly;” two expressions which, my father observed, were exceedingly unbecoming in the mouth of a young lady.

I counted the minutes impatiently during the doctor's absence. At the end of an hour, however, he returned, and confirmed my report as to the appearance of Miss Melville, by stating it to be, according to his guarded phraseology, “peculiarly prepossessing. But what is more important,” continued he, “the young lady appears sensible, modest, intelligent, and well educated, and, notwithstanding her youth, I hope your lordship will have reason to be satisfied with her. The brother, too, is a well-mannered, gentlemanly person, who wishes to enter the church, for which he has been brought up.”

My father appeared highly gratified by this account, while I, though greatly pleased at having my favourable impressions relative to my pretty governess confirmed, felt abashed at the consciousness of the injustice I had rendered to Dr. Warminster.

The indisposition of my poor father proved more serious than even his physician had first apprehended. It confined him to his bedroom for above a fortnight, to which I was prohibited more than a daily visit of five minutes' duration, perfect quiet being pronounced essential to his recovery. But even in that limited space I forgot not



to repeat the warmest praises of dear, good Miss Melville, omitting the epithet "pretty," which she had requested me never to apply to her.

"But you *are* pretty, prettier than any one," would I say, in remonstrance to her request on this subject; "and the truth should always be spoken, papa has often told me."

"We are all formed by the Almighty," would Miss Melville answer, "it is His will that we should be plain or otherwise, and we should never attach any importance to the matter."

The fortnight of my father's illness being spent entirely with my governess, enabled me to make a rapid progress in learning. Her gentleness, and patient attention, were assisted by my own anxious desire, and I was delighted, when not at my lessons, to be read to by Miss Melville. Though the time passed quickly and agreeably in my new studies, still I longed for my dear father's convalescence, that I might enjoy his society as well as Miss Melville's, and that I might also witness his surprise and pleasure at beholding her. He evinced, however, no desire on this point; on the contrary, he had been some days in the library, and had resumed his ordinary routine of life, and yet he still postponed a compliance with my oft reiterated request to see her.

What he refused to my entreaties, he at length yielded to my tears; and it was agreed that Miss Melville should be invited to the library that evening. I watched, anxiously watched his countenance, as she entered the room. But, to my great surprise and disappointment, I discovered no symptom of the rapturous admiration I had childishly anticipated. His reception of her was polite, nay, kind; and her timidity, which had no rustic awkwardness in it, but evidently arose from native modesty, rendered him still more affable to her.

Vain of the little I had already acquired, I now displayed all my learning to my delighted father, who was as surprised as gratified by my rapid progress.

Two hours fled quickly and happily away: Miss Melville was requested to give a list of all the books

required for my scholastic pursuits, and politely offered permission to use any works the library contained, for her own perusal. She then left my father's presence, evidently pleased with her reception; and my father seemed no less so with her.

The next day, her brother was received by my father, who, after a long conversation, found him so sensible and well-informed, that he wrote a letter to his friend the Bishop of ———, to recommend him for holy orders; being fully determined to bestow on him a small living in his gift.

This unlooked-for good fortune delighted Miss Melville, who devoted every hour, and I may add, every thought, to my improvement, which was as rapid as it was gratifying to my father. Our evenings were always spent in the library; where, in a short time, at my request, a piano-forte was installed, from which Miss Melville drew sounds that answer only to a master-hand. We soon persuaded her to accompany them with her voice; and it would be difficult to say, whether the father or daughter listened with more pleasure to her dulcet tones.

Having heard my father desire Doctor Warminster to look out for a gentleman to read to him, an hour or two a day, his own sight being too weak to permit his studying without pain, I entreated him to let Miss Melville undertake this office. At first he declined, but at length yielded, as he generally did, to my pertinacious perseverance.

The flexibility and delicate sweetness of her voice, the distinctness of her enunciation, and the correctness of her style, at once surprised and charmed him. How triumphant was I, at witnessing this effect, though I longed to be able to share this new task with her. Two hours a day were henceforth devoted to this occupation. The books selected had a reference to my studies. History, travels, and belles lettres were perused. I soon learned to point out, on the map, the different places named in the books, and made no inconsiderable progress in chronology. My mind expanded; every day marked my improvement, and my father witnessed it with grati-

tude and pleasure. His health, too, appeared to become less delicate, now that he had a constant and cheerful society, and music, which always soothed and cheered him.

Six months flew by, and found me each day more fondly attached to Miss Melville. In her gentle ear was poured every thought of my youthful mind, and on her sympathy did I always count, and never in vain in all my pleasures or pains, and the latter were but "few and far between." The manner of my dear father towards this charming young woman, was marked by a respectful kindness that never varied, a kindness as remote from familiarity as from *hauteur*. Hers towards him was the deferential attention of a modest young woman, who never presumed on his affability, but was anxious to merit a continuance of it. Doctor Warminster soon became one of her warmest friends, and was never tired of commending her to my father.

We were all happy, when a letter arrived, announcing a visit from a maiden aunt of my father, who rarely visited London, but who, when she came, took up her abode at his mansion. Young as I was, I could perceive that this announcement gave him pain; and when he communicated it to Doctor Warminster, the good man shook his head and shrugged his shoulders in a manner that indicated quite as expressively as words could do, that the expected arrival afforded him no satisfaction. I had no recollection of the Lady Theodosia Conningsby, but beholding the impression her intended visit conveyed, I began to form a thousand fancies relative to her. I observed that my father became thoughtful and nervous, from the moment her intention of coming was announced until she made her appearance; and this alteration in him impressed me with no pleasurable anticipations with regard to the cause of it.

Punctual to the hour she had named, Lady Theodosia Conningsby's old-fashioned chariot, surmounted by capacious imperials, and high bonnet-cases, rolled to the door. Two ancient servitors, in rich liveries, made in a fashion as obsolete as that of the chariot, slowly descended from the roomy dicky-box, and as slowly assisted their mistress

to alight, who, followed by her female attendant, bearing in her arms a lap-dog, entered the house.

When Miss Melville and I were summoned to the library in the evening, we found Lady Theodosia seated *vis-à-vis* to my father, in a large arm-chair. Her appearance was remarkably *outrée*—her dress being that *a-la-mode*, some half a century before. She was tall and extremely thin, her face long and meagre, her nose sharply pointed, her lips thin and descending at the corners, and her chin of inordinate length, and singularly protruded, as if in search of a view of the rest of her face. But her eyes! There is no possibility of rendering justice to them. They were of a light greenish hue, and were so obliquely placed in their sockets that when fixed on one object, she seemed to be regarding some other in a precisely contrary direction.

In short, her whole appearance would have been considered grotesque, had not an expression of extreme ill-nature and acerbity pervaded every portion of her physiognomy, and the obliquity of her vision increased this repulsive and sinister character.

“Give me leave to present to you Miss Melville,” said my father politely—and Miss Melville curtsied to Lady Theodosia, who vouchsafed not the slightest notice in return.

“This is my daughter,” continued my father, who had not observed her ladyship’s rudeness to my governess. “Arabella, go and welcome Lady Theodosia.”

I approached her with reluctance—and she pressed her skinny and parched lips to my forehead. I was for retreating after this salutation, but she sternly told me to remain, that she might examine my face, and see which of the family I most resembled. She drew forth a pair of spectacles, carefully wiped them, placed them astride her nose, and then deliberately surveyed me.

“I think, nephew, that she resembles my grandmother very strongly—don’t you agree with me? You, of course, never saw the Duchess, but her portrait you must remember. I was considered to bear a very striking family likeness to her.”



My poor father, to whom I turned an appealing glance, could with difficulty repress a smile that played about his lips; and Miss Melville looked intently at the carpet to avoid meeting my eyes.

“ Arabella has the family nose,” continued Lady Theodosia, “ yes, we all have that feature high and prominent, a beauty peculiar to those of noble and ancient race. The Bourbons all have it. Her eyes, too, are exactly like those of my grandmother. Do you not remember the portrait?”

“ I confess the likeness does not strike me,” replied my father.

“ Whom then *do* you think she resembles?” demanded Lady Theodosia in an imperious tone.

“ Her dear mother,” replied my father—and his lip trembled with emotion, as it never failed to do when she was alluded to.

“ I see not the slightest likeness,” answered she, “ on the contrary, I think the child bears a most remarkable family resemblance to *our* family,” laying a peculiar emphasis on the word *our*.

My father, who detested arguments, refrained from dissenting. But this tacit admission of her opinion by no means satisfied the pertinacious old lady.

“ I perceive, nephew, that you do not agree with me,” resumed she.

“ I confess we differ,” said my father, deprecatingly, “ but every eye, you know, varies in its perception on those points.”

“ No, nephew, I can admit no such fallacy. The eyes must be strange eyes indeed,”—and here she squinted most abominably—“ that do not discover that Arabella’s are as like those of her grandmother’s portrait as it is possible for eyes to be, and bear a strong resemblance to mine.”

“ No they don’t—do they, papa?” exclaimed I—all my incipient vanity wounded by the assertion, and tears starting to the lids of the libelled orbs. A beseeching look from my father, and a terrified one from Miss Melville, prevented me from finishing the sentence,

which would have been extremely offensive to Lady Theodosia.

“Upon my word, I cannot compliment the young person who enacts the part of governess to your daughter on her pupil’s progress in politeness,” said Lady Theodosia, haughtily and bitterly. “Had you, nephew, engaged Mistress Jefferson, whom I recommended, I think Lady Arabella would have been guilty of no such instance of ill-breeding as that to which I have been a digusted witness.”

Miss Melville’s cheeks were suffused with blushes, and my poor father felt scarcely less embarrassed at the unfeeling rudeness of his callous and acrimonious aunt.

“May I inquire *why* you did not attend to *my* recommendation, and to whom you are indebted for the young person before me, whose extreme juvenility and inexperience render her totally unfit for so grave and important a task?”

Tears now stole down the fair cheeks of Miss Melville, which I observing, immediately ran and embraced her, begging her not to weep at anything that old cross lady said.

“’Pon my word, this is too bad, nephew,” said my aunt, angrily, “I never beheld such a spoilt and rude child in my life as your daughter. But this comes of having *young* governesses, who fancy themselves beauties forsooth, and who are, perhaps, encouraged in the erroneous belief by those who have the folly to employ them.”

“Really, Lady Theodosia, I must entreat,” said my father, agitated beyond measure, “that you will reserve your strictures for another occasion.”

“Will your lordship excuse my withdrawing?” said Miss Melville, with that meekness that ever characterised her.

“Pray, by all means let her go—I always think that such persons are wholly out of their place when I see them intruded into the society of their superiors,” observed Lady Theodosia.

I followed Miss Melville from the library, leaving my

poor dear nervous father to support, as best he might, the continuation of his disagreeable aunt's discussion; and tried all my efforts to sooth Miss Melville, who wept bitterly at the rudeness to which she had been exposed.

When Dr. Warminster came next day, he found my poor father confined to bed, and more indisposed than he had lately been. Miss Melville had been summoned at an early hour of the morning to Lady Theodosia's dressing-room, whence a long lecture from her ladyship sent her back—her cheeks crimsoned, and her eyes bathed in tears. It was at this moment that Doctor Warminster entered the school-room.

“Bless me, bless me, what is the matter?” asked the good man, on beholding the agitation of my governess. Sobs and tears were the only answer he received for five or six minutes; but when he had taken from the family medicine chest some sal volatile, and presented a glass of water, into which he had poured a few drops of it, to Miss Melville, she shortly became able to articulate.

“O doctor! you do not—cannot believe—the dreadful reports which Lady Theodosia asserts are circulated relative to me!”

“What reports? I know not even to what you refer; and I dare be sworn they originated wholly and solely in her ladyship's own brain, always prolific in ill-nature.”

“She has said such cruel, cruel things to me, doctor!” and here the poor girl's tears streamed afresh. “Some of them,” and she blushed to her very temples, “I could not repeat—they are too dreadful. She declares that my residence beneath the roof of an unmarried man is a gross violation of all decency, that my reputation is destroyed for ever, and that I must leave the house. O doctor! my poor mother—my sisters—my brother—what will they, what can they say, when they hear this dreadful calumny? But they know I am innocent!” and she wept bitterly. I heard no more, for I stole hastily from the apartment, ran to that of my father, and mounting on his bed, threw myself sobbing into his arms, exclaiming—

“Papa! papa! that nasty cross old lady has scolded

poor dear Miss Melville, and made her cry, and said she shall not live with you and me. Do, dear papa, send that cross old lady away, and do not let my dear pretty governess leave me!"

My tears gushed plentifully at the dread of losing Miss Melville, and I declared with sobs that I could not be happy, I could not live, without my own pretty, dear, good governess. My poor father appeared greatly agitated, but Doctor Warminster, who now came to his room, informed him that he had succeeded in soothing the wounded feelings of Miss Melville.

"As your lordship is too much indisposed to bear being harassed by any scene with this very troublesome lady, who has deranged all the comfort of your house, perhaps it would be as well for me to seek an interview with her, and endeavour to make her sensible of the mischief she has caused."

"How kind of you, my dear friend," replied my poor father, "do pray see her, and let me know the result."

In half an hour the doctor returned more discomposed than I thought he could ever have been rendered; for he was habitually a calm, dispassionate man.

"By Jove, my lord," said he, "Lady Theodosia is a perfect she-dragon! she maintains that Miss Melville stands in a relation to your lordship which renders it improper, nay, impossible to countenance her, or submit to remaining beneath the same roof. She has told the poor innocent young lady her opinion, and your lordship may judge its effect. To talk reason to this obstinate old lady is useless; she says that nothing but Miss Melville's leaving the house, and your placing some Mrs. Jefferson in her place, can induce her to believe the young lady not guilty."

"Good heavens! what shameful conduct!" observed my father, "what is to be done?"

"Nothing that I know of," replied the doctor, "except to let the unmanageable old lady take herself off, and then the house will again be restored to its usual peace."

"I shall write her a few lines," resumed my father,



“for it is impossible to let her entertain so erroneous an opinion of Miss Melville.”

The note was written—what its contents might be I know not; but the result was that the old-fashioned chariot conveyed its mistress and suite next day to the house of another relation, and we were relieved from her disagreeable presence.

A timidity, painful to witness, and impossible to dissipate, had now replaced Miss Melville's former gentle gaiety, and easy yet respectful manners. In a few days, my father received a letter from his aunt, and another from the female relative with whom she had taken up her abode; and the evident discomposure their perusal produced, proved that they were not of a conciliatory character. But as he threw them indignantly into the fire, as soon as read, I never had an opportunity of judging whether the epistolary style of Lady Theodosia was as offensive as the conversational.

In a very brief time after this occurrence, came Mrs. Melville to reclaim her daughter. She, too, had been written to by Lady Theodosia, and in terms of such insulting reproach, relative to her daughter's supposed position in my father's house, that she immediately thought it necessary to come in person and remove her. My father learned this intention, and the cause, with real regret; but I wept in agony, and refused to be comforted. The good Doctor Warminster endeavoured to reason Mrs. Melville out of the scruples she entertained as to the propriety of leaving her daughter with me, though of the perfect innocence of that daughter she never had a doubt; but he could not prevail on her to alter her determination. My kind and good father was lavish in his generosity towards mother and daughter; who left the house lamenting the necessity of the measure.

Previous to their departure, and to console me for it, a portrait was taken of Miss Melville. I have treasured it ever since, and even now cannot regard it without an affectionate recollection of the beautiful and amiable original.

Never shall I forget the evening that followed her

leaving the house, where her presence had so long diffused cheerfulness. Her pianoforte stood silent, her accustomed chair empty, and her sweet clear voice was no longer heard reading aloud to my father, or gently and affectionately checking my froward impatience. Incessant weeping brought on a violent headache, followed by fever, during the paroxysms of which I continually demanded Miss Melville, my own dear good pretty Miss Melville. My father, who anxiously watched over me, listened to my entreaties for my governess with sorrow, but promised, if I would be calm, and do all that Dr. Warminster required, that he would take me into the country as soon as I became well, to see dear Miss Melville. This promise cheered me, and from the moment it was made I began to get better. I insisted on having her portrait on my bed; how often was the miniature now before me pressed to my feverish lips, and bathed with my tears—and how often did I ask my father to repeat to me his promise that as soon as I was able to travel, we should go to the country to see Miss Melville.

In a fortnight more, we were on our route to Melford, the village where her mother resided, attended by good Doctor Warminster, who did not think me sufficiently strong to forego his care. I could scarcely be kept quiet at the inn, while the doctor went to announce our arrival, and to request that Miss Melville should come to me.

The kind-hearted girl burst into tears when she saw my altered face, on which my recent malady had left visible traces; and my father was evidently touched with this proof of her affection for me.

Days stole on, and found us still dwelling in the inn at Melford, my health improving, and my poor father's less suffering than usual. Every allusion to leaving Miss Melville again brought tears to my eyes, and an anxiety that alarmed the fears of my father.

“What is to be done, my good doctor?” asked he one day, after an exhibition of my grief at a reference to our departure—“my child cannot be reasoned out of her feelings in the present delicate state of her health. She is my only comfort, my only hope, doctor, the last scion

of the family stock; what is to be done? There is no sacrifice I would not make to secure my poor Arabella the society and care of this estimable young lady, but I know not how to accomplish it."

"A mode has occurred to me, my lord," replied the doctor, musingly, "it is a singular one, and I should dread naming it to any person of your lordship's rank, were I not acquainted with the engrossing affection you entertain for your only child; and emboldened by the phrase you lately used, that there was no sacrifice you would not make to secure her the society of Miss Melville. May I proceed, my lord?"

"Certainly, doctor, though I am totally at a loss to imagine what sacrifice can secure the object we wish to obtain."

"Your lordship is aware, but probably not to the full extent, for the young lady in question, and her mother, with that delicacy which characterises them, have concealed it as much as possible, of the injury inflicted on their feelings, and on Miss Melville's reputation, by the slanderous reports circulated relative to her position in your lordship's family, by Lady Theodosia Conningsby."

"Yes, doctor, too well do I know it, for from my female relations, whose *protégées* I have refused to accept as governesses, have I received letters of recrimination, caused by the evil reports to which you allude."

"Has it never occurred to your lordship, how Miss Melville's presence beneath your roof might be secured without a possibility of scandal—*not* as Miss Melville, but as a married lady—in short, my lord, as Countess of Walsingham!"

"Good God, doctor! you have taken me quite by surprise. No, I never thought of such a possibility. The affection I entertained for Arabella's mother, always precluded the thought of giving her a successor in my heart, or in my house. My health, too, is so extremely delicate, as you are aware, that I stand more in need of a nurse than of a wife."

"But why might not your lordship find the best of all nurses in a wife? and, surely, a more gentle and amiable

companion could not be found than Miss Melville. I observed how much her society solaced your solitude when she was beneath your roof, and what a gloom her absence occasioned. But in the present case, we are to consider the happiness of your daughter, as you so will it, even more than your own; and as that appears to depend on the society of this young lady, it is for your lordship to reflect whether you will, or will not, secure this advantage for her, by the only means in your power."

The result of this conversation, which the good doctor repeated to me many years after, was, that he was commissioned by my father, to make proposals of marriage to Miss Melville; who, much to her honour, though truly grateful, was by no means dazzled by them: nay, only yielded, at length, to the repeated representations of the doctor, that my health would, in its present delicate state, inevitably fall a sacrifice to a separation from her, to whom I was so fondly attached.

The marriage shortly after took place: and never had my father cause to repent it; for Lady Walsingham devoted her whole time to the duties of her new situation, and proved the truest, gentlest friend to him, and the most affectionate guide and mistress to me.

We went abroad for some years, visited the South of France and Italy; from the mild climate of which my father's health derived considerable benefit. But his wishes pointing to home, we returned to England, and having spent some months at Walsingham Castle, we took up our abode in London, that I might have the advantage of masters in finishing my studies.

And now it was that the malignity of my father's female relations manifested itself by every means in their power. Cards from each of them were left at his door, inscribed for *me*, lest, by any chance, the mistress of the mansion should imagine them to be intended for her. Lady Theodosia Conningsby had spared neither time nor trouble in propagating the most injurious reports against the wife of her nephew, who she everywhere represented as an artful, designing young adventuress, who had first seduced her poor, unhappy, weak-minded nephew, and



then inveigled him into marriage. I was stated to be a victim to the tyranny of my step-mother, and my father was said to be the slave of her will.

The acquaintances to whom these falsehoods were repeated, were not slow in giving them circulation. My mother's family were apprised of them, and never having ceased to feel the wound their pride had received, from the selection of a governess as a successor to a scion of their aristocratic race, they lent a ready credence to every disadvantageous rumour relative to Lady Walsingham.

I became an object of general interest to the female members of both families, who, during the period of my father's widowhood, had never evinced the slightest anxiety about me. Letters were written to my father by them, requesting that I might be permitted to visit them occasionally. He would have returned a haughty and decided negative to such requests, for he felt indignant at the implied insult offered to his excellent wife, but she entreated so urgently that I might be suffered to go to them, that he at length yielded to her wishes. The good Dr. Warminster, too, advised a compliance, giving for reason that a refusal would only serve as a confirmation to the evil reports in circulation.

Never shall I forget the first visit I paid. I was then in my twelfth year, but from having always associated only with persons arrived at maturity, my mind was more formed than that of most children of that age. It was to the Marchioness of Rocktower, the aunt of my mother, that this first visit was paid; a cold, stately, formal being, who looked as if she had been born an old lady, and never had passed through the gradations of infancy or girlhood. She kissed my forehead, examined my features, and protested that she was glad to find I so strongly resembled my poor dear mother—yes, I was a perfect Oranville, there was no mistaking the family likeness. "How is it that you are alone, my dear?" she then added.

"I wanted mamma to come with me," answered I; "but she would not."

"What! do you call *her* mamma?"

"Oh! yes, ever since she has been Lady Walsingham."

“I wonder they did not exact the epithet before,” murmured she spitefully. “And have you no governess, Arabella?”

“Mamma is my governess; she teaches me all my lessons, except dancing, music, and drawing, and for these I have masters.”

I forgot to state, that the Marchioness had a lady present at this interview, to whom she turned with significant glances at each of my responses to the queries put to me; and who replied to them with an ominous shake of the head, or a murmur between a sigh and a groan.

“And who stays with you while you take your lessons?” resumed Lady Rocktower.

“Mamma. I always have my masters early in the morning, before papa is up, and mamma rises early to be present.”

The two ladies exchanged mournful glances and sighed aloud.

“Poor child!” ejaculated the Marchioness; and “Poor child!” echoed her companion.

“And who came with you in the carriage here; for you surely were not suffered to come alone?”

“Mamma came with me to the door, and so I wished her to come in! but she would not,” answered I, artlessly.

“How mean! how unworthy! what a want of spirit! to come to a door which she knows never shall be open to her,” broke forth the Marchioness.

“Yes, very mean, quite dreadful!” repeated the other lady, piously casting up her eyes to the ceiling.

“Who is mean and dreadful?” asked I, with a strong suspicion that these insulting terms, though totally inapplicable, were by them meant to apply to Lady Walsingham.

“You must not ask questions, my dear,” replied the Marchioness, “it is very rude and ill-bred to do so.”

“Yes, very rude and ill-bred,” repeated her echo.

“Are you very happy at home? Speak the truth, you may tell *me*; I am, you know, your own aunt, my poor dear child.”

“I always speak the truth,” answered I, reddening

with indignation. "Mamma taught me always to speak the truth."

"It quite wounds my feelings, to hear her call that person mamma," said Lady Rocktower. "Oh! if my lost niece could have imagined it, she who loved *him* so much! It is indeed dreadful to think of the selfishness of men."

"Very dreadful!" repeated the other lady.

"But you have not told me whether you are happy at home, my poor child," whined Lady Rocktower, with a piteous face, and a dolorous tone of voice; prematurely prepared to condole on the confession of misery, which her malice had imagined.

"Happy?" repeated I, "oh, ever so happy!"

"Poor child, she is told to say this," exclaimed Lady Rocktower, in a voice that was meant to be a whisper, but which, owing to her deafness, was louder than she intended.

"Doubtless she is!" groaned her friend, again casting her eyes up to the group of painted Cupids on the ceiling, who seemed maliciously to smile at the antiquated dames beneath.

"I was *not* told to say so," cried I, angrily; "I always speak the truth—I *am* happy at home, and have a fond kind papa and mamma;" and tears came into my eyes.

The two ladies exchanged glances again, which glances seemed to say that one of them had gone too far in her comments.

"I only meant, my love, that all children, who have had the misfortune to lose a mother, that is, an *own*, real mother, cannot be so happy as—as if they had *not* lost her," said my grand-aunt, trying with all her might to look mournful.

"Yes, they cannot be so happy as if they had *not* lost her," echoed the toady.

"But you, I suppose," resumed the Marchioness, "do not at all remember your *own* mother; you, unhappy child, were so young when she died. What a dreadful blow that was to me!"

"A dreadful blow, indeed," groaned the echo.

"I wrote to offer to go to Walsingham Castle, to nurse her during her last illness, though at that period I was anxiously watching the progress of Mr. Vernon's, the celebrated oculist, treatment of the cataract in the eyes of my poor dear Jacko; a treatment which, alas! terminated so fatally. The poor dear creature sank under it! That was, indeed, a heavy affliction."

"Yes, a very heavy affliction, indeed," responded the parasite.

"Who was Jacko?" asked I.

"What! did you never hear your father speak of Jacko?" demanded Lady Rocktower, in a tone of the utmost surprise.

"Never," answered I.

"What hearts some people have!" groaned her ladyship.

"What hearts, indeed!" repeated her companion.

"Mrs. Lancaster, be so good as to bring me the miniature of my niece; it is on the table in my dressing-room; and bring, also, the portrait of my poor dear Jacko, which is by it."

Mrs. Lancaster bustled off, with an activity really surprising for one of her years and unwieldy size; and quickly returned with the picture.

"Look here, my dear," said Lady Rocktower, "this is the portrait of your lovely lost mother. I dare say you never saw her picture before."

"I have one just like this, in a locket," answered I, "with mamma's hair at the back, and I see her portrait every day in the library, and in the drawing-room."

"How unfeeling!" interrupted Lady Rocktower, which was, like all her phrases, echoed.

"And I have a large picture of her in my school-room," resumed I proudly, "which my second mamma had hung up there for me."

"How artful!" murmured the Marchioness.

"How artful!" reiterated Mrs. Lancaster.

"What is artful?" demanded I.

"You must not ask questions, it is very ill-bred to



do so," was the reply of my grand-aunt, and, "Yes, very ill-bred, indeed," was again murmured forth from the lips of her companion. The portrait of Jacko was not in the place where it was supposed to have been; and I did not request Lady Rocktower to have it sought for, lest I should be told that I was ill-bred.

At length, the carriage was announced; and I bade farewell to my grand-aunt, leaving, probably, as unfavourable an impression of me on her mind as mine retained of her. I scarcely need add, that I received no more invitations to visit her, for her curiosity had been satisfied and her malevolence disappointed.

What a relief did it seem to throw myself into Lady Walsingham's arms, which I did the moment I entered the carriage.

"Oh! dear mamma, never send me to see that disagreeable old lady any more. I don't like her at all, indeed I don't; nor that other fat old woman that repeats every word Lady Rocktower says."

How affectionate were the tones, in which I was told that I must never dislike any one, but more especially my relations; and how firmly, but gently, was I checked when I commenced repeating the questions that were asked of me, and the comments that were so improperly made in my presence. Young as I was, an impression that Lady Rocktower disliked my stepmother, had taken possession of my mind; and I resented it by entertaining for her ladyship a similar sentiment.

My father, though he questioned me not, checked not my communications relative to this visit, when mamma was absent from the library; and embraced me fondly, when he heard my artless remarks, all so indicative of my grateful affection for Lady Walsingham.

"Who was Jacko, papa," asked I, "of whom Lady Rocktower was so fond?"

"A huge monkey, and by far the most detestable animal I ever had the misfortune to come in contact with," was the answer. "He once bit my hand severely, because I prevented him from attacking you, when your nurse took you to my aunt's; and she was highly indig-

nant at my chastising him, seeming to think her monkey of much more importance than my child."

This anecdote completed my dislike of her ladyship, which not even the bequest of her fortune to me, some ten years after, could eradicate.

When I visited the female relatives on the paternal side, they all and each discovered that I was exceedingly like my father's family. I was, as they asserted, a true Walsingham, and not at all like my mother's family, which they seemed to consider as a piece of singular good fortune.

My father, having heard from me the observation made by Lady Rocktower of the meanness, the unworthiness, of driving to a door that would never open to receive the presumptuous loiterer on the outside of it, fully understood its malice; and prohibited Lady Walsingham from accompanying me on any of my future visits. Her female attendant, a most respectable young person, far superior to the generality of *femmes de chambre*, ever afterwards escorted me on these occasions; and then I heard not a few comments on the insolence and pride of some people, who so soon forget themselves, that they forsooth were too fine to continue to enact the parts, by the performance of which they had elevated themselves from their original obscurity.

Never did I observe a single symptom of pique or discontent evince itself in my amiable stepmother, at the conduct of my father's relatives. The fulfilment of her duties appeared to be the source whence her enjoyments were derived. The comfort of my father, and the improvement and happiness of myself, were the constant objects of her attention; and such was the sweetness of her temper, and the winning gentleness and cheerfulness of her manners, that her society diffused a general happiness.

Time rolled on: and at the period I completed my sixteenth year, nowhere could be found a family more fondly united, or between the members of which a better understanding invariably subsisted. Her brother was the only member of her family who frequented our

house; for she, with a delicate perception of my poor father's dislike to an extensive circle of visitors, never obtruded her relations upon him; though her correspondence with, and presents to them, were frequent.

A liberal provision had been made for them, by my father on his marriage; and her brother, who was now in possession of the living which had accrued to him through the same source, was, I have stated, an occasional inmate of our mansion, whenever his duties permitted his absence from his flock. Nature never formed a finer model of manly beauty than Frederick Melville, and the heart was worthy of the shrine. His presence never failed to bestow increased cheerfulness on our family party. My father entertained a strong partiality for him, which was displayed in many a costly gift dispatched to the parsonage, as well as in the marked gratification his society conferred. Lady Walsingham loved him, as only a sister can love an only brother, ere she has experienced a warmer and less pure attachment; and I —loved him, with all the wild idolatry of a passionate heart, now first awakened from its childish slumber, yet still unconscious of the nature of the sentiment that animated it.

Many are those of my sex, who might have passed the first years of youth, without a knowledge of the passion they more frequently *imagine* than *feel*, had they not acquired its rudiments from female companions or the perusal of novels; somewhat in the same manner as hypochondriacs suppose themselves to experience the diseases of which they either hear or read. The ephemeral fancies young ladies dignify with the appellation of love, no more resemble the real sentiment, than do the imaginary maladies resemble those for which they are mistaken: but the effects of both are equally dangerous. Many a girl has madly rushed into a marriage, believing herself as madly in love, who has had to deplore her infatuation through a long life of consequent penance; and many a *malade imaginaire* has sunk under the real results of a supposed visionary disease.

Mine was not a precocious passion forced into life by

such unhealthy or extraneous excitements. I had never read of, or conversed on the subject, till long after its wild dreams haunted my pillow, and its engrossing tenderness filled my heart. Well do I remember the suffering I endured, when Frederick Melville first began to replace the unceremonious familiarity with which he had been wont to treat me, during my childhood, by a more reserved and deferential manner. Filled with alarm, I demanded of Lady Walsingham how I had offended her brother, for he no longer behaved to me as formerly.

“Remember, my dear Arabella, that you are no longer a child,” replied she; “and that therefore he would err if he continued to treat you as one.”

I felt a gleam of pleasure at this acknowledgment of my being no longer a child. The truth was, I had never been treated as one, consequently no change was visible in the manners of those with whom I lived; hence, I was not as sensible of my approach to womanhood as those young persons are, who impatiently await their emancipation from the nursery school-room, and its roast mutton and rice-pudding dinners.

“I am sure,” said I, and the tears filled my eyes, “if people cease to like me, or to show their affection, because I am no longer a child, I shall regret my infancy, and wish to resume it. But *you* have not changed your manner towards me, neither has my father; why then should Mr. Melville? I am sure, dear mother, though your good nature prompts you to conceal the fact, that this change in his manner has occurred because he no longer likes me as he did.”

And my tears flowed afresh.

The anxiety Lady Walsingham’s countenance displayed, though she endeavoured to disguise it, convinced me that my suspicions were well founded, and increased my sorrow, in spite of all her efforts to reason me out of it.

When we met at dinner, I remarked that her eyes bore evident traces of tears. Frederick too looked more grave than I had ever seen him; and my poor father, in general the least talkative of the little circle, was now the most so. He proposed music in the evening, to



which we assented, though little disposed; and I played an accompaniment, while Lady Walsingham and her brother sang one of my father's favourite *duos*. The tones of his voice seemed to sink into my very soul; low, plaintive, and full of rich melody, their deep pathos excited anew the tenderness, already but too much developed in my heart.

The sister and brother sang only sacred music, to which they had been accustomed from infancy; and their voices were in such perfect harmony, that even the most fastidious critic would have listened to them with delight. For me, no other voices ever possessed the same charm; and I thought I had never heard them breathe forth sounds of such exquisite and softened melancholy, as on that memorable night. The *duo* ended, they paused to hear the accustomed request to repeat it—a minute elapsed—yet no word escaped the lips that had been wont to applaud them.

“Hush! he sleeps,” whispered my mother, gently approaching with stealthy steps the easy chair in which my father reclined; but no sooner had she reached it, than a shriek of horror burst from her lips, and she fell insensible at his feet.

We rushed to the spot—oh God! never shall I forget the agony of that moment! Even now after the lapse of more than half a century, the scene seems present to my imagination.

My father, my dear, kind, indulgent father, was a corse!—the vital spark was extinct for ever, and his gentle spirit had passed away without a groan. Though years, long years, have since elapsed, leaving many a furrow on my brow, and inflicting many a pang on my heart, that fearful evening has never been effaced from my memory. Then was the golden veil of youth, that had lent to life its brightness, first rudely rent asunder. Then came, for the first time, the soul-harrowing conviction of the uncertainty of life, and the brevity of its blessings; a conviction that destroys the confidence in happiness which forms so considerable a part of the happiness itself. Alas! the dear object of so much

affection was now a cold and lifeless corse! snatched from us without a word of warning, without even a farewell look. I could not at first believe the fatal truth. No! he could not be gone for ever—he could not thus have left us; and I clasped my arms around the neck which they had so often entwined, and pressed my lips to that dear face, calling him by every fond and tender name to which my frantic affection could give utterance; until, exhausted by my agony, I sank, powerless as an infant, into the arms of my attendant, and lost, in temporary insensibility, my sense of the overwhelming affliction that had befallen me.

Never shall I forget the awaking from that sleep: the dim, vague recollection of some terrible event, slowly making itself understood to my bewildered mind; then, the shudder of intense agony with which the fatal truth stood revealed, and the unutterable pangs which it renewed in me. No! such a lesson, though only one among many of those which all must learn, can never be effaced from the mind.

The shock had produced a nervous fever, under which I languished for several days, totally helpless; yet, with a full, an overpowering consciousness of the loss I had experienced. Lady Walsingham never left my bedside. Hers was the gentle hand that smoothed my pillow, and gave the cooling beverage to my fevered lip; hers the sweet voice that whispered mild entreaties to me to be comforted, even while the tremulousness of its tones betrayed how little she had acquired the difficult task of conquering her own grief.

Doctor Warminster attended me through this malady with an affectionate interest never surpassed; all the friendship he had so long entertained for my lost parent, seemed transferred to my stepmother and self; and our chief source of consolation was derived from the assurance he so frequently gave us, that the life of the dear departed had been prolonged far beyond the doctor's hopes, by the calm and cheerful mode in which it had been passed, owing to the indefatigable care, and delicate attentions, of all those around him.

My poor father had a disease of one of the arteries of the heart, which had declared itself soon after my birth; and any sudden or violent emotion might have produced a fatal result at any moment. This was the cause of his sedentary existence, and had eventually terminated it; but the awful fiat found him in readiness to meet it. For years he knew, that though in the midst and zenith of life, he might be instantaneously summoned to leave it; and he prepared himself for the event with the calmness of a philosopher, and the resignation of a Christian. Now it was that I first learned that an imprudent disclosure of his disease, made to my poor mother by Lady Theodosia Walsingham, shortly after her last accouchement of a son, who lived but a few hours, had given her such a shock as to lead to a total derangement of health, which conducted her to the grave in a few months. Dr. Warminster feared then, that the extreme grief of my poor father would occasion his death. But the dying entreaties of my mother, that he would not give way to regret, but live for their child, triumphed over the selfish indulgence of his sorrow; though he never ceased to remember her, whose dread of losing him had consigned her to an early grave.

He determined to do all that could prolong life for my sake; and, contrary to a resolution formed over the death-bed of my mother, never to give her a successor, married to secure me the society of Miss Melville, when he found it was considered essential to my happiness. Never was a husband and father more sincerely mourned, than was my dear parent; and never did a human being more deserve to be lamented!

The first time I left my room after this sad catastrophe, my mind softened by grief, and my frame weakened by illness, I saw Frederick Melville. He, too, had deeply shared the general regret, for he was truly attached to his patron; and the awful suddenness of the blow rendered it more painful. When he took my hand, his own trembled; and the extreme palor of my face seemed to shock him.

“You will not now be cold and distant to me,

Frederick," said I, while tears streamed down my cheeks, "when I have no longer any one but my mother and you to love me?"

He pressed my hand gently, and assured me that he had never felt otherwise than warmly interested in my happiness, and that I wronged him if I doubted his affectionate friendship. These words reassured me—for how little does it require to nourish hope in a youthful breast?—and the softened kindness of his manner, even still more than his words, tranquillized my feelings.

My dear father had bequeathed a handsome competency to each member of the Melville family, and a large dower to Lady Walsingham, who, with her brother, was named my guardian. The unentailed estates, and personal property to a large amount, were willed to me, charged with provisions to the old servants, and a considerable bequest to good Doctor Warminster. A thousand vague hopes sprang up in my mind at finding I was thus in a manner linked with Frederick Melville. I was pleased at being, for more than four years, as it were, dependent on him, and felt that I would gladly prolong the dependence for life.

"You are now one of the richest heiresses in England, my lady," said good Mrs. Mary to me one day, presuming that her long services licensed her to be more communicative than English servants generally are. "Your ladyship will marry some great rich lord, I am sure, and perhaps I may see you a duchess."

"You will see no such thing, I can tell you," answered I, angry even at the supposition. "I am already rich, and of ancient family. Why, then, should I marry for the ridiculous purpose of obtaining that which I already possess? Why may I not marry to please myself, and so make some one I love rich and distinguished?"

"Lord, my lady, sure your ladyship would never go to demean yourself by marrying some one as is not somebody. Every rich and grand lady likes to marry some one than is richer and grander than herself, if possible, for *then* she can be sure she is married for *real* love; whereas, my lady, if she marries some one as is a



nobody, she can never know but what he married her only *because* she *was* a great and rich lady—and that thought would be very vexatious to a woman's mind."

I stole a glance at the mirror opposite, and the face I there beheld told me that *I* might hope to be loved for myself, even though I was a rich heiress. I suppose good Mrs. Mary, who wanted none of the sagacity of her sex and class, guessed what was passing in my mind, for she immediately added—

"To be sure, when ladies are as handsome as your ladyship, they will always be sure to have lovers in plenty, even if they had no fortune; but still, if I was a great rich heiress, though ever so beautiful, I would be afraid to marry a poor gentleman, from the notion that afterwards the suspicion would be coming into my head that my money had some share in making him propose for me."

Mean and unworthy as this thought was, a thought that never would have entered my head, had it not been presented through the medium of Mrs. Mary, it now made a disagreeable impression on me; and I began to think that to be "a great rich heiress," as Mary called it, was not, after all, so desirable a position as I had been disposed to think it. How much evil finds access to youthful minds through conversing with servants; the very best of whom are, by the want of education, and the narrowness of their ideas, totally incapacitated from communicating other than mean and selfish thoughts.

I now began to look on myself as one who would be an object of general attraction, and I became inflated with pride; but there was something so peculiarly dignified, as well as gentle, in the manners of Lady Walsingham and her brother, that no opportunity of evincing this new defect offered. Nothing could exceed the affectionate attention of my stepmother; it seemed rather increased than diminished since the melancholy change in our family; as if she would repay to his child the debt of gratitude she owed to my father.

The conduct of Frederick was uniformly kind, but still there was a degree of reserve, if not coldness in it, that

was far from satisfactory to me. He had prolonged his stay at the earnest desire of his sister, but the period now drew near when he must return to his living, and I counted the days in which I had yet to enjoy his society, as those only count them who love for the first time. Lady Walsingham had a portrait taken of him by an eminent artist, who succeeded in rendering it an admirable likeness. The morning on which it was sent home, that desire to speak of the object of our affection, which is one of the peculiar characteristics of the passion that had obtained possession of my young heart, tempted me to ask Mrs. Mary whether she had seen Mr. Melville's picture.

"Yes, my lady, I have, and extremely like it is. Mr. Melville is a very handsome gentleman, (and she looked narrowly at me,) and much resembles Lady Walsingham. I was sure her ladyship would have his picture taken."

"Why so, Mistress Mary?" asked I.

"Oh, don't you remember, my lady, how her ladyship, that is before she was her ladyship, or perhaps ever expected to be, when she was going away back to her mother's, had her picture taken, and left with your ladyship?"

"Yes, I remember very well; it was I who made her sit for it."

"Well, then, my lady, if that picture had *not* been made, I think your ladyship would have got used to Miss Melville's absence; you would not have had that bad illness; my poor dear lord would not have taken you down to the country, nor have married my lady. It all came of that picture."

And here, good Mistress Mary put on a most lugubrious countenance, and sighed deeply.

"I shall always rejoice then at having had the picture made," answered I, more than half offended at the implied censure Mistress Mary's observation and sigh conveyed. "But what can all this gossiping of yours have to do with Mr. Melville's portrait?"

"Why, your ladyship must be conscious that as the

brother is as handsome as the sister, some rich young lady may see the picture; perhaps, then, see *him*; then, fall in love with and marry him, so that he may have as much good luck as my Lady Walsingham had."

I felt my cheeks glow at this palpable insinuation; I was angry with Mary for presuming to convey it, and yet, unworthy as I was, I fancied that the portrait *might* have been taken with an intention of keeping his image before me. Strange as it may appear, I wished Frederick Melville to love me, ay, passionately wished it; desired too, that he would demand my hand; and yet I desired to find in him that consciousness of the difference between our positions, which should render his love so timid as to require an act of heroic generosity on my part, to give him the hand he fondly aspired to, but dared not demand. A whole romance was formed in my head, though as yet I had never perused one; but love is a magician that can work strange marvels.

While these thoughts were passing in my mind, good Mistress Mary was fidgetting about my dressing-table, anxious to resume the subject which my abstraction had interrupted.

"I would not be at all surprised, my lady," commenced Mary, "if some rich heiress were to fall in love with Mr. Melville, for he is indeed as handsome a gentleman as ever I saw, (I felt better disposed towards her) and so sensible and steady too. Well, all I hope is that if such a thing should happen, it will take place before he has ever been in love with anything else, for it's a cruel thing, my lady, to have either man or woman crossed in love. And though people may be tempted by grandeur and riches to give up their first sweetheart, still they must have an unhappy mind whenever they think of it; and some persons do say, but, for God's sake, your ladyship, don't go for to get me into trouble by repeating it—they do say that Lady Walsingham broke the heart of as handsome a young gentleman as any in Sussex, to marry my poor dear lord."

"Is it possible?" demanded I, forgetting in my awakened curiosity the indecorum I was committing, in

thus questioning a servant relative to the widow of my father, the kindest, truest friend, save him, I ever knew.

“Oh! indeed, my lady, it’s all true; I saw the young gentleman myself when we were down staying at Cuckfield, looking even then as pale as a sheet, and Mrs. Bateman as keeps the George Inn, told me the whole story.”

“But, perhaps, Mary, Lady Walsingham never loved the young gentleman you saw, though he was in love with her.”

“Lord bless your heart, my lady, the whole village knew as how they were sweethearts, and engaged to be married, and as loving as two turtle-doves. But when Miss Melville come to Lonon, and seed this fine house, and all the grandeur of being a lady, she took to pleasing your ladyship so much that your little ladyship couldn’t abide nobody else; and pleased, too, his poor dear lordship, as is no more, till he thought there was no one like her. And then, when she pleased your ladyship and his lordship, until neither of ye could live without her, then she gets that beautiful picture taken, and off she goes, guessing pretty well, I’ll be sworn, that she’d be soon sent for to come back. And so Mrs. Bateman said, when I told her all about her pleasing my lord and my little lady so much, and about the picture.”

Mistress Mary’s tongue, thus encouraged, ran on glibly, and I was in no humour to check it. The truth is, though I blush, old as I am, while making this avowal, the artful tale, thus related, produced an impression on me.

“And so, my lady,” continued Mary, “Mrs. Bateman says to me, ‘Mistress Mary,’ says she, ‘it may be all very well for Miss Melville to be made a countess, and to walk in the coronation with a gold crown on her head, side by side, cheek by jowl, as the saying is, with the grandest in all England. But will *that* comfort her when she knows the green grass is growing over the grave of her true love, who died all for her marrying another. Oh! Mistress Mary,’ says Mrs. Bateman, ‘I know what it is to cross a first love, for all you would not think it now,



because I'm so changed; but when Mister Bateman came a courting to me, there was another lad, a widow's son, with whom I had broken a tester, and taken many a moonlight walk.'"

A summons from Lady Walsingham interrupted the sequel of Mrs. Bateman's love story, to the evident discomposure of its narrator, who appeared unconscious how little interest the adventures of the hostess of the George Inn excited in my mind.

"I sent for you, dear Arabella," said my stepmother, "to consult you about a change I wish to be made in Frederick's portrait. It looks too cold, too severe, and I should like the expression to be softened. What do you think?"

Trifling as was this appeal to me, it bore such a curious coincidence with Mrs. Mary's observations and surmises, that it struck me as being a convincing proof of their justice; and I felt chilled, if not disgusted, by this seeming cunning. Wayward and wicked that I was! to allow the low suspicions of a menial to prejudice me against one whose whole conduct towards me and my father, ought to have left no room in my breast for aught save implicit confidence and boundless gratitude! But such is the inherent evil of some natures, that an ill-founded assertion, even from an unworthy source, can efface the remembrance of years of experienced goodness.

"You do not tell me what you think, Arabella," resumed Lady Walsingham, as I stood, lost in abstraction.

"I like the picture very well as it is at present," answered I, somewhat coldly, "and your brother, as a clergyman, ought not to look as gay as a fine gentleman."

"You mistake, my dear Arabella," rejoined Lady Walsingham, "I do not wish the portrait to look gay; *that* would not be in character with the profession of the original; but a soft gravity, that is, a seriousness, devoid of severity, would please me better."

"Did you ever see so handsome a young man as your brother, mother?" asked I, urged by an instinct of irrepressible curiosity, and I looked steadfastly and scrutinizingly in her face.

She positively turned as pale as marble, faltered for a moment, and then answered—

“Your interrogation is strange; but I did once know a young man whom I thought quite as handsome,” and she sighed deeply.

“Who was he, may I inquire?” asked I.

“He was a neighbour of ours in Sussex,” replied Lady Walsingham, “but he is now no more.”

The ashy paleness of her face ought to have silenced my unfeeling curiosity, but it did not.

“When did he die, mother?” again demanded I.

“The year I last left my maternal home,” was the answer; and it was received by me as proof strong as holy writ of the truth of all Mistress Mary’s statement.

My stepmother was no longer the pure, the disinterested, high-minded woman I had from infancy imagined her to be. She stood before me shorn of her beams, a cold, calculating, ambitious person, rending asunder the fond ties of love, to wed with one she only meanly and selfishly preferred in consequence of his rank and fortune. I saw in her the destroyer of him who loved her even unto death, and the designing plotter, who was now bent on accomplishing, for her brother, the same fortunate destiny she had achieved for herself. At this moment Frederick Melville entered, and, for the first time, I beheld him without pleasure. My mind was soured, and my imagination chilled, by the unworthy suspicions that had taken possession of it. Not that I had determined to resist his suit, whenever he might proffer it. Oh! no, my affection was too rooted for such an effort of self-control, though it was not sufficiently strong or noble to resist suspicion. But I determined to torment the brother and sister, for a brief space, and alarm their cupidity or ambition, by the display of an indifference which I was far from feeling; and, when I had sufficiently tortured them, I would graciously extend the olive-branch, and bestow on my terrified lover the hand I believed he was passionately longing to possess, but durst not demand.

How strange is the human heart! here was I, a woman, and a vain woman, too, who would have resented with

anger any doubt expressed of the personal attractions I believed mine, now acting as if my wealth and station were my sole charms; yet wanting the self-respect or dignity that ought under such a belief to have impelled me to a totally different conduct.

When, however, Frederick Melville took his leave, without having, by either a look or word, expressed anything more than a friendly interest towards me, I felt deeply mortified; and unbidden tears, shed in the solitude of my chamber, proved that though absent he was not forgotten. How did I now blame myself, for having, as I imagined, by my coldness restrained the expression of Frederick's attachment. What would I not have given for one more interview with him, in which I might, by a renewal of former kindness, have elicited some symptom, if not declaration of the attachment, of which I so ardently longed to be assured; and which now, that it was withheld, appeared doubly essential to my happiness! How often did I find my eyes dwelling involuntarily on the portrait! and yet not half so frequently as my thoughts reverted to the dear original. The chairs and sofas on which I had seen him seated, the inanimate objects that decorated the saloons which I had heard him commend, all were now invested with a tender interest in my imagination. A rose, which he had presented to me many months before, I had carefully preserved between the leaves of a book; and never did a day elapse without my looking at it, nay more, pressing its faded and withered leaves to my lips. Ah! none but woman's heart can ever feel as mine did then, when in solitude and silence, occupied solely by one dear image, I created a bright world of mine own; nor dreamt that *he* who lent it all its rainbow hues, would ere long shroud it in sadness and gloom.

Lady Walsingham rarely mentioned her brother's name to me, and when I introduced it, seemed more disposed to change the topic than to expatiate on it. But even this reserve on her part appeared, to my prejudiced mind, as the effect of artifice; and I inwardly smiled at my detection of it. Yet there were moments, too, when look-

ing on her fair and open brow, where candour seemed to have set its seal, that, struck with her resemblance to Frederick, I longed to throw myself into her arms, and confess how dear he was to me. But a sense of modesty, that guardian angel of female youth, checked the impulse, and sent me again to the solitude of my chamber; there, to murmur his name, and breathe those sighs which are half hope, half prayer, and which never yet emanated but from a young female heart.

My frequent abstractions, and pensiveness, Lady Walsingham attributed, or seemed to attribute, wholly to regret for my dear father. She would dwell for hours on his virtues, in commendation of which she was eloquent; and even to my prejudiced mind, her praises carried conviction of the sincerity that dictated them.

The seclusion in which we lived nourished the affection that had usurped my breast—there it reigned despotic sovereign; and though I deeply, truly mourned the dear parent I had lost, I mourned not as those do who have no engrossing passion to whisper hopes, which in spite of tender regret for the past, can make the future bright and cheering. There is no magician like Love—he had now spread his witcheries around me, and I saw all through the brilliant medium of his spells.

The year of mourning passed slowly away. We had now been some months without a visit from Frederick, and his sister continued the same system of reserve, avoiding as much as possible all mention of him. This system increased, instead of diminishing my attachment; I became pensive and abstracted, my health began to suffer, and Lady Walsingham consulted Doctor Warminster. He, good man, was inclined to attribute my indisposition to the extreme seclusion in which we lived; he advised more air, more exercise, more society, and dwelt on the necessity of amusement being taken into our scheme of cure. Cheerfully did my affectionate stepmother enter into all his views, though solitude would have been more congenial to her own taste. Still, I did not become better; and the good doctor began to be alarmed. I observed that Lady Walsingham and he had



frequent consultations, and that she daily grew more pensive. She gave up sitting in the room in which Frederick's portrait was placed, though it had hitherto been her favourite apartment; and this change I considered as an unkindness, the motive of which I attributed to a desire of still more exciting my attachment to him, by thus seemingly opposing it.

One day, while Dr. Warminster was feeling my pulse, he suddenly asked Lady Walsingham when her brother was to be in town. I was conscious that my heart throbbed at the question, and I suppose my pulse indicated its effect; for the doctor looked more grave than ever, and cast a significant glance at my stepmother, who answered that she did not expect him soon. That night while undressing, I observed that Mistress Mary seemed big with some intelligence, which she only wanted a word of encouragement to communicate. Latterly, a sense of propriety had induced me to check her loquacity, by abstaining from asking her any questions; but now impelled by a vague curiosity, I led her to divulge the news she was anxious to promulgate.

"And so your ladyship of course has heard as how my lady's brother is soon to change his condition?" said Mary.

Now, strange as it may appear, this figure or phrase of Mary's, of "changing condition," though a frequent and favourite one with persons of her class, I had never heard before; and imagined it to mean a change of position or residence.

"No, indeed," said I, "I have heard nothing on the subject."

"Well, to be sure, how sly and secret some people can be," resumed Mistress Mary. "Perhaps they think that after all, he may be got to break his sweetheart's heart, the same as others broke theirs; and be the cause of their being sent to the grave, as that poor young gentleman in Sussex was. But he is a clergyman, and has the fear of God before his eyes; and so will remain true and constant to his sweetheart, of which I'm glad enough, for though he is a very handsome and a very good young

gentleman, I would not like to see a great rich heiress, and a lady of title too, demean herself by marrying a poor parson."

"Why, what do you, what can you mean?" demanded I impatiently.

"Nothing at all, your ladyship, but that the Rev. Mr. Melville is agoing to be married to a Miss Latimer, a great beauty they say, with whom he fell in love at Cambridge."

I was so wholly unprepared for this intelligence, that it fell on me like a painful shock. I neither screamed nor fainted, though I felt nearly ready to drop from my chair; but I became so deathly pale that Mistress Mary grew alarmed, and poured out a glass of water, of which I swallowed a portion, saying that I had a sudden spasm.

I dismissed Mary as soon as possible; for I longed to be alone, that I might, free from the restraint of a witness, give way to the agony that was destroying me.

Never shall I forget that night! when the rich heiress, the spoiled child of fortune, who thought she had only to express a wish to have it instantly gratified, first discovered that she loved in vain; that *he*, on whom she had lavished all the idolatry of her first affection, preferred another, and would soon be lost to her for ever. Fearful was the conflict in my mind, as through the long night I counted hour after hour, sleep still refusing to visit my tear-stained lids. I wept in intolerable anguish, the destruction of all my air-built hopes, my fairy dreams of happiness, my pride, my love, my delicacy, all rankling beneath the deep wounds inflicted on them. And *he*, on whom I doted, even while I thought, dreamt, but of him, *he* was wholly occupied by another, totally regardless of me! There was bitterness, there was agony in the thought!

Then came the reflection, that I had been deceived, yes, deceived and duped; and I unjustly, ungratefully condemned Lady Walsingham for not having told me of her brother's love for another. Now were Mistress Mary's insinuations explained; Lady Walsingham had long known of her brother's attachment, and hoped to

induce him to conquer it, and, like her, to sacrifice love to ambition. How unworthy! and yet, while admitting the unworthiness, I was weak enough to wish that her endeavours and hopes had been crowned with success; and that I, on any condition, had become the wife of him I so fondly, passionately loved. Then came the humiliating doubt of my own personal attractions; a doubt fraught with tenfold chagrin to one who had hitherto believed herself supremely handsome.

“Oh! why,” exclaimed I, in a paroxysm of tears, “why was I not born beautiful enough to attract, to win him from my rival! What avail my wealth, my station, and all the boasted advantages I am said to possess, when they could not attain for me the only heart I desire to make mine; the only being on whom my eyes can ever dwell with rapture!”

My mind was in a piteous state, agitated by various and contending emotions; one moment governed by jealous rage, and the next subdued to melting softness by the recollections of past days. Then came the unjust belief, that I had been deceived, wronged, by my stepmother. She *must* have known that he loved another—why then allow me to indulge the dangerous illusion that he ever could be anything to me?

How prone are we to blame others, when we ourselves only are in fault. I really now felt angry with Lady Walsingham, and visited on her the censure that could only apply to myself. I thought of my dear lost father, and my tears streamed afresh when I reflected that, had he been spared to me, how would he have sympathised in this my first and cruel disappointment; he, whose indulgent fondness had ever shielded me from sorrow. Now was it that the fatal system of indulgence, hitherto so injudiciously pursued towards me, met its punishment; for, in proportion to the facility afforded to the gratification of my wishes up to this period, was the bitterness with which this disappointment was endured.

The morning found me ill, mentally and physically ill. My swollen eyes and pale cheek alarmed Mistress Mary, and her report quickly brought my stepmother to my

bed-side. To her anxious inquiries, she met only tears and sullenness; but though evidently surprised at my ungraciousness, it extorted no look or expression of anger or impatience from her. Doctor Warminster was sent for, and he, having administered a composing draught, seated himself by my bedside, to watch its effects. His gentleness soothed, while it rendered me ashamed of my own petulance; and in answer to his repeated interrogatories, I at length admitted that something had occurred to give me pain.

“But why, my dear child, for so you must permit me to call you, do you evince an unkindness to Lady Walsingham, so unusual, and, I must add, so unmerited? This is not amiable, it is not grateful, towards one who is so fondly, so sincerely devoted to you. If you were acquainted with the total abnegation of self, the uncomplaining patience, with which your stepmother has borne the most cruel disappointment that can befall a female heart, a disappointment where an affection of the tenderest nature had existed, you would, I am sure, feel an increased respect and regard for her; and avoid even the semblance of ingratitude for the years of solicitude, and never-ceasing attention, you have experienced from her.”

“If she have experienced a disappointment of the heart,” answered I, sullenly, “whose is the fault? Did she not, with cold and calculating selfishness, break the bonds that united her to the lover of her choice, in order to become a countess, and to acquire the wealth in which he was deficient?”

The good doctor’s face assumed an expression of severity, mingled with surprise, that somewhat moderated the expression of my ill humour.

“Who can have been so wicked, and so unjust, as to have invented this falsehood, to impose on your credulity?” demanded he, indignantly.

“Was not Lady Walsingham engaged to marry a young gentleman in Sussex? and did she not break through her engagement, in order to wed my father? and did not the poor young man die in consequence of the



disappointment?" asked I, with the air of one who is convinced of the truth of what she utters.

"It is true, she was engaged to marry a young gentleman in Sussex, to whom her affections had been plighted. But his mother, influenced by the evil and scandalous reports circulated by Lady Theodosia Walsingham, insisted on his breaking off the engagement; and though he, convinced of the innocence of Miss Melville, was willing, nay anxious to brave the displeasure of his only parent, the young lady, from a sense of duty, though fondly attached to him, declined to become his wife. When your noble, your generous father, with a view solely to your happiness, made her through me the offer of his hand, she unequivocally declined it; until I urged that your health, nay, perhaps your life, depended on her answer. She made your worthy father acquainted with the real state of her heart; and he honoured her the more for her candour, while acknowledging that his own affections, except for his child, were interred with the wife he had never ceased to love and mourn. A consumption which was hereditary in the family, had previously rendered all hope of the recovery of her rejected lover vain; her acceptance of his hand could not have retarded his death, and her union with your excellent father did not expedite that melancholy event. Lady Walsingham had no reserve with her noble husband; he knew the deep disappointment she had endured, and the regret she never ceased to feel for the object of her youthful attachment. He was fully aware, that not to ambition, but to affection for *you*, did he owe the hand of Lady Walsingham; and he honoured and esteemed her, for the exemplary manner in which, concealing every symptom of sorrow, she devoted her whole thoughts, her whole time, to her husband and his child. And this, Lady Arabella, is the person you could misjudge, and of whom you could listen to false and evil reports emanating from some malicious calumniator! I must confess, I am shocked by the ingratitude you have evinced."

So was I also; and ashamed, as well as shocked. How did the conduct and motives of my amiable stepmother, thus explained to me, make me blush for my own! And

yet a latent feeling, a base suspicion, with regard to her reasons for wishing to engage her brother to wed me, still lurked in my mind. The good doctor saw that, though penitent for having believed the tale against my stepmother, my dissatisfaction had not yet entirely subsided, though I forebore to express it.

“I will now, Lady Arabella,” continued he, “give you another proof of the disinterested conduct of Lady Walsingham. When your noble father, on your completing your sixteenth year, aware of the precarious tenure of his existence, and anxious to procure for you a protector, imagined that Mr. Melville, from his personal and mental qualifications, might not be an unsuitable husband for you, signified his wishes to Lady Walsingham,” (how I felt my heart beat, and my cheeks blush, at this part of the good doctor’s discourse!) “her ladyship immediately pointed out the disparity of station and fortune between you and her brother; and urged your claims to a more noble and brilliant alliance. Lord Walsingham, however, who had studied the character of Mr. Melville, feeling persuaded that your happiness might be more secure in a union with him, than in a marriage with one of higher birth and proportionate opulence, persevered in his desire of the subject being proposed to Mr. Melville by his sister. Well do I remember the deep regret with which your good father learned that Mr. Melville’s affections were engaged to a young and portionless lady, the daughter of a clergyman at Cambridge. This discovery was made only the last day of your father’s life; and Lady Walsingham, seeing how much it disappointed her noble-minded husband, wept for his sorrow; though she could not do otherwise than respect the disinterestedness of her brother, in adhering to his first choice, notwithstanding the great temptation offered to him.”

Now was the delicacy and prudence of my stepmother’s conduct entirely revealed, and the reserve of her brother explained. And these were the persons whom I had wronged by my mistrust! whom I had believed capable of playing a game to secure me and my fortune! How unworthy did I appear in mine own eyes, though my sus-

pitions were happily, as I thought, known only to myself. Mistress Mary, who had been the medium of infusing them into my mind, lost a considerable portion of my favour; for I in this instance acted with the injustice to which so many are prone, that of avenging, on the instrument of their unworthy curiosity and suspicion, the blame which they may have incurred, and almost solely deserve. My vanity too was now less deeply mortified by discovering that Frederick Melville had lost his heart ere I had attained an age to admit of my being a candidate for it. How I longed to behold the woman who was capable of inspiring a passion that could thus resist the temptation that my poor dear father had held out. Then came the thought, that my preference for Frederick Melville had been detected by the fond eyes of my parent, and that it was this detection which led to his offering him my hand. Lady Walsingham, too, had observed the state of my heart, and tried to wean it from its first attachment. My soul was penetrated with a deep sense of the unbounded love of the parent I had lost, and of the delicacy and affection of her to whose care he had bequeathed me. My sullenness and petulance melted away, like ice beneath the sun, as I reflected on their goodness: and I was no longer the rich heiress, who could command love and condescend to reward it, but the orphan, who was disposed to be grateful for affection, and once more anxious to merit it.

The doctor saw that a salutary change had occurred in me; and my gentle stepmother was soon made happy by being permitted to lavish on me all the demonstrations of that tenderness which she so truly felt. No word of explanation ever passed between her and me, relative to my disappointment with regard to her brother. With womanly delicacy and tact, she avoided all semblance of knowing my attachment, though the softness of her manners indicated a sympathy that I was now thoroughly capable of estimating. When I looked on her still beautiful but pensive face, and I reflected how courageously she had borne up against the destruction of her youthful hopes of happiness, I was incited to vanquish the regret,

that, in spite of my best resolves, still would prey on me. Pride, the besetting sin of my nature, and the most successful adversary that ever coped with love, came to my aid, and assisted me, perhaps still more powerfully than reason, in conquering my girlish passion. To continue to love one whose heart was given to another, was mean, was unfeminine; and I half vanquished my weakness in feeling it to be one.

Still I heard nothing of Frederick Melville's marriage. Was it postponed from a fear of my not being able to support it? There was insult in the supposition; and I determined to do all in my power to bring the nuptials to a speedy conclusion.

Seated, one day, in the drawing-room appropriated to Lady Walsingham, and in which hung the portrait of her brother, I made a desperate effort, and asked her when Frederick was to be married. She answered, hesitatingly, that the precise time had never been named.

"Would it not be better, dear mother," said I, "that the marriage took place at once? Theirs has been a long attachment, and all who esteem them must desire to see it rewarded. Would it not be kind to have a miniature copy made of Frederick's portrait?" and I looked at it with a steady gaze, "as a nuptial present to his betrothed: and we, dear mother, must send suitable gifts to the bride."

All this was said so quietly and naturally, that Lady Walsingham saw not how much the effort cost me; but pride instigated it; and what this despot commands, he generally supplies his votaries with the power of executing. Lady Walsingham had so little of this leaven of fine natures in hers, that she now began to think that she had been in error when she imagined that I had entertained more than a sentiment of friendship for her brother; and I did all in my power to encourage the delusion. She wrote, therefore, to advise Frederick to have the marriage completed; and, at my request, invited the bride elect and bridegroom to come to London, that the ceremony might be celebrated beneath our roof. I busied myself in preparing wedding gifts for the bride, and



counted the hours until she arrived. I saw that Lady Walsingham occasionally feared that I was playing a part; but so skilfully did I enact it, that at length I deceived even her.

Miss Latimer and her father arrived. How my heart throbbed when I saw her enter! yet I had sufficient self-control to conceal every symptom of agitation, if I could not subdue the deep emotion. She was exquisitely beautiful. A Madonna countenance, such as the divine Raphael loved to paint, in which softness and modesty lent additional charms to features of the most delicate proportions, and a complexion of unequalled brilliancy. But why attempt to describe what a portrait of her, painted at my request, so much better explains? Here it is; yet lovely as is the picture, it did not render justice to the fair original. No longer did I wonder that Frederick Melville, for her sake, resisted the temptation offered to him by my wealth: her beauty alone would have justified his choice even to the most fastidious critic of female loveliness; but her gentle sweetness of disposition, and unassuming good sense, enhanced her personal attractions.

When Frederick arrived, no symptom of emotion was visible in the frank and cordial greeting which I gave him; while he, imposed on by the easy cheerfulness of my manner, resumed his ancient cordiality, and unreservedly manifested, in my presence, all the tenderness he felt for his betrothed. The firm resolution to conceal and vanquish an attachment, is an effectual step towards the accomplishment of that difficult task: and the necessity of witnessing the beloved object's demonstrations of affection for another, though a painful, is a still more efficacious remedy.

I accompanied Eliza Latimer to the altar, and heard him I loved plight to her those vows which I once hoped—ah! how vainly hoped—might have been pledged to me; and though this effort cost me a pang, and a severe one, I was repaid by the salutary effect which this termination of all hope, this positive and eternal barrier between us, produced. To bestow a thought or a sigh

on him who was now, in the sight of God and man, and by his own free will and choice, the husband of another, would have been not only wicked, but mean; and I fear pride, more than reason or religion, assisted my firm resolve to subdue every trace of my ill-starred attachment.

The new married pair set off for one of my country-seats, to spend the honey-moon; and left me, if not happy, at least self-satisfied with the consciousness of having well performed the difficult *rôle* I had imposed on myself. My attachment to Lady Walsingham had returned in all its pristine force. A secret sympathy united us; and, though never expressed, its influence was sensibly felt by both. It was perhaps this bond of union that precluded her from discovering the great defect of my character, which was an ungovernable pride; or, at least, it might have prevented her from taking sufficient pains to eradicate or soften it. Hers was too meek a spirit to cope with mine: she shrank from opposition, and was more prone to lament errors in those she loved, or to avoid all occasion of eliciting their display, than to exert the necessary firmness for combating and triumphing over them.

I soon saw this sole weakness in her otherwise faultless character; and availed myself of my knowledge of it to acquire an undisputed empire over her. An increased delicacy of health, of which I had lately shown symptoms, alarmed the sensitive affection of Lady Walsingham: and Doctor Warminster, on being consulted, recommended that the effect of a milder climate should be tried for the approaching winter. I eagerly acceded to the proposal, and in a short time after, my stepmother and I, attended by a numerous suite, left England for Italy.

I pass over the surprise and pleasure which our stay in the French capital, during the first few weeks, afforded me. I was of an age when every novelty charms; and I was travelling with a person whose sole study was to increase my stock of enjoyments.

While at Paris, we met, at the English ambassador's, the Marquis of Clydesdale, a young man remarkable for

personal attractions, and not less so for an amiability of manner and general information, that rendered his society peculiarly agreeable to, and universally sought after, by his compatriots. An expression of seriousness, amounting almost to melancholy, pervaded the countenance of Lord Clydesdale, and, in my opinion, lent it an additional interest; and an occasional pensiveness and abstraction detracted not from this feeling. I found myself unconsciously comparing the countenance of Lord Clydesdale with that of one still remembered, though no longer loved; and I was compelled to own, that, for intellectual expression, that of his lordship possessed the superiority. The air noble and *distingué*, peculiar to, and only to be acquired by good company, was strikingly conspicuous in Lord Clydesdale; and gave a dignified ease to his movements, that impressed the beholders with a conviction that he was no ordinary person.

We had met three or four times after our introduction, and had only exchanged a few casual words of commonplace civility; until one day at a dinner at the ambassador's, happening to be placed next him at the table, we insensibly fell into conversation. We soon discovered that we were about to spend the winter at the same place in Italy; and this circumstance led to his giving me many interesting details of that country, where he had already sojourned some two or three years before. The originality and justice of his remarks, and the unpretending frankness and simplicity with which they were made, impressed me highly in his favour. Perhaps they owed something of their charm to the handsome countenance, and dignified bearing of him who uttered them; for my youthful predilection for beauty still influenced me, more than I was willing to admit, even to myself.

The next day saw the Marquis of Clydesdale a visitor at our hotel; and each succeeding one marked the progress of an intimacy that was gradually formed between us. He lent me books, conducted Lady Walsingham and myself to the studios of the different artists of merit, and attached himself to us at the various *soirées* at which we met.

I soon became accustomed to his presence; nay, more, when he was absent, I experienced a void in our circle, that the society of no other man, however amiable, could fill up. I found myself impatiently expecting his arrival, at the hour he was in the habit of coming; and felt my heart beat quicker as I recognised his well-known step, or heard the tones of his voice. Those were happy days! In the course of life there is perhaps no epoch so delightful, as the first hours of a passion, budding into flower, but not yet full blown; when hope silences the whispers of doubt, and security has not destroyed the trembling anxiety that lends to love its strong, its thrilling excitement. I hardly dared to ask myself whether I was beloved; though I was conscious that my own heart had received an impression that rendered a reciprocity of sentiment essential to my peace. Happy in the present, fearing to anticipate the future, I *felt* as if in a blissful dream, from which I dreaded to awaken.

More than one nobleman, of my own country, had sought to find favour in my eyes at Paris. It was in the French capital that I first entered into general society; for my extreme youth prior to the death of my dear father, and the seclusion in which we had lived ever since that melancholy event, had precluded my presentation at court, or my introduction into the circles in which my station and fortune entitled me to take a place. Consequently, until my arrival at Paris, I had no opportunity of seeing or being seen.

My vanity was not a little gratified by observing that I was the principal magnet of attraction, in the re-unions to which all the English of distinction flocked. It required some such balm, to sooth the mortification I had experienced in my first preference; and though a thought would sometimes intrude, that perhaps my wealth was even more seductive, in the eyes of my admirers, than myself, still my mirror showed me a face and figure that might, even if unaccompanied by the powerful adjuncts of broad lands and funded thousands, have captivated male hearts. I remarked, and with pain, that as each suitor approached to win attention, Lord Clydesdale gave way to



them, with the air of a man who, having no intentions himself, determined not to interfere with those of others.

How did this conduct, on his part, wound and pique me! I discouraged my admirers, by such a decided and marked indifference towards them, that they soon perceived how trifling was their chance of success, and withdrew, leaving the field open to Lord Clydesdale, who resumed his place by me, with an air of satisfaction, but with no indication of any intention of maintaining it, against any new pretender to my hand. The anxiety I now experienced was far more poignant than that which I had known, when Frederick Melville was the object of my girlish flame. It was now I began to think that *first love*, whatever may be said or sung of it, is not so arbitrary or durable in its influence as young ladies imagine; and that, however unromantic it may sound, a second love is not inferior in the hopes, fears, and tenderness, to which it gives birth. It has only one deterioration, and that is the humiliating consciousness that it may, like the former one, subside. Yet, even this consciousness, like that of the inevitable certainty of death, sometimes produces little effect on the feeling, and as little on the conduct of mortals.

The Duc D'Entragues, a descendant of one of the most ancient houses in France, and remarkable for good looks, and a certain animation of manner and vivacity of mind, peculiar to his countrymen, which, if it produce not wit, at least resembles it so strongly as often to impose on those who are not very competent judges, now paid his court to me. Unlike my English suitors, he was not to be checked by coldness, or disgusted by indifference. The manifestations of both, which I was not slow in making, as soon as I discovered that his attentions meant more than mere *politesse*, were received by him as proofs of the natural *gaucherie* of manner, universally attributed to English ladies by foreigners. He was so impressed with a belief of his own fascinations, that he could not doubt their effect on me; and approached me with the air of a man certain of success, but grateful to the vanquished for the facility of his victory.

I became provoked by this exhibition of self-complacency and conceit, and redoubled the *hauteur* of my manner. Lord Clydesdale, as was usual with him, resigned his place by my side, whenever the Duc approached; and this conduct on his part confirmed the hopes of my confident admirer. I became piqued and offended with Lord Clydesdale, and, I fear, often permitted indications of my displeasure to be visible; but they produced no change in him, and he still continued to be a frequent, nay, almost a daily visitor at our hotel.

One morning Lady Walsingham was surprised by a letter from the Duc D'Entragues, requesting an interview. He came at the appointed hour; and,—in a pompous speech, in which, notwithstanding *la politesse Française*, he allowed *his* sense of the honour he was conferring, to be somewhat too evident,—formally demanded my hand. Lady Walsingham referred him to me; and he entered the saloon, where I was at work, congratulating himself and me, on the agreeable circumstance of not having encountered any resistance from *Madame ma Mere*:—

“Mothers,” he added, “being generally desirous of preventing their daughters from forming matrimonial engagements early in life, lest they should have their seeming age increased by the circumstance of being prematurely rendered grandmothers.”

I blushed with anger, which he attributed to *mauvaise honte*; and attempting to seize my hand, he poured forth a rhapsody of compliments, a portion of which he meant for me, but a far larger part for himself. I could scarcely induce him to suppress his self-gratulations, in order that I might explain to him how misplaced they were, at least, as far as I was concerned: and the expression of his countenance became perfectly ludicrous, as I explicitly and haughtily gave him an unqualified refusal.

What! refuse to be a Duchesse, and of one of the most ancient houses in France? He did not exactly *say* this, but he implied something very like it. Why then had my mother given her sanction? but, above all, why could I, as a dutiful daughter, presume to reject the alliance my mother had approved? Such a thing never had been

heard of in France, where the hands of sons and daughters are disposed of by their parents, without even a reference to the feelings of the parties most concerned.

It was an amusing scene to behold two people, under our peculiar circumstances, defending the customs of their separate countries; the lover, in the warmth of his defence of the superior wisdom and propriety of his own national institutions, for a time losing all sight of the violent passion he pretended to experience. When, however, he did recur to it, or rather when he resumed a repetition of the catalogue of the honours and advantages which I might inherit as Madame la Duchesse D'Entragues—among which, a *tabouret* at the chaste court of Louis XV. was not omitted—I, in referring to Lady Walsingham, accidentally mentioned the words *Belle Mere*.

“How!” demanded he eagerly, “is Madame la Comtesse de Walsingham *not* your mother,—your own real mother?”

“Certainly not,” replied I, “how could it be possible? she is only twenty-five years old; and I shall soon be eighteen.”

“How very odd,” said he, “yes, now that I remember, though it never struck me before, Lady Walsingham is *not* an old woman; *ma foi*, nor a plain one neither. *Au contraire*, she is good looking: and only twenty-five, did you not say? *C'est bien drole* that I never remarked this before. Permit me to ask whether Madame la Comtesse has a large fortune?”

I answered in the affirmative, and stated the amount of her revenue, highly amused at observing the sudden interest excited by my information in the Duc's mind, relative to one whom, according to his own confession, he had scarcely even regarded during an acquaintance of some weeks.

“I never comprehend your English money,” observed he, thoughtfully, “Six thousand pounds a year, I think you said; how much is that in our money? How many thousand louis-d'or does it make?”

“You are doubtless, Monsieur le Duc, thinking of transferring the honour meant for me to my stepmother.”

“Another proof of my homage and *tendresse* for you,” replied he, bowing low, “when being so unfortunate as to be rejected by the lovely daughter, I wish to become in some way or other connected with her, by addressing my suit to her amiable relative. Would that you had a sister, charming Lady Arabella, who at all resembled you, but who was less cruel;” (and he tried to look sentimental) “but as, unfortunately, you have not, I must hope for consolation with *Madame votre Belle Mere.*”

Highly diverted by the natural levity, and assumed sentimentality of my *ci-devant* admirer, I asked him how he possibly could have believed that Lady Walsingham could have a daughter of my age.

“To say the truth,” answered he, frankly and gaily, “I never thought about the matter. I heard she was your mother; and we Frenchmen, when once a lady, and above all an English lady, has passed her teens, never know whether she is twenty-four or forty-four; all from your island are so fair and rosy. However, now that my attention is called to the subject, I must admit that *Madame la Comtesse de Walsingham* is *bien, tres bien en vérité*, but the beauty of *Miladi Arabella* so far eclipses that of all other women, that I must be pardoned for overlooking that of *la belle mère*. We forget the stars when the moon is shining, and only remark them when that bright orb is not visible.”

The Duc and I parted on more friendly terms than we had ever met before. His gaiety and frivolity amused me; and the perfect frankness with which he displayed his equal indifference for her who had rejected him, and for her to whom he was intending to be a suitor, had something so irresistibly comic in it, that it was impossible not to be entertained. When he was leaving the room, I could not repress the desire of telling him that, in case his suit was unsuccessful with my stepmother, I knew an English lady at Paris who I thought would have no objection to become *Duchesse D’Entragues*.

“Ah, *mechante!*” said he, smiling; but, on observing the gravity I assumed, he returned, and continued:—

“*Eh bien!* should I be so unhappy as not to be ac-



cepted by Madame la Comtesse, I will remember your *aimable* offer, charming Lady Arabella, and claim its fulfilment; for, *en vérité*, I admire your nation so much, that I am determined to have an English wife."

The Duc lost not a moment in laying his proposals at the feet, as he gallantly expressed himself, of my step-mother, who was more surprised than gratified by this transfer of his matrimonial intentions. She could scarcely believe it possible that he could so speedily and unblushingly avow a sentiment for her, that little more than an hour before he had professed to entertain for me; and he appeared to find it as difficult to comprehend that she could refuse his suit; having flattered himself, from the facility with which she, as he fancied, received his overtures for me, that *she* thought him irresistible.

All the temptations held out to me were repeated to her, with the additional one, of the possibility of her rivalling the reigning favourite of that day at Versailles, the celebrated Madame du Barry, and of acquiring an almost regal influence at Court.

The delicacy of Lady Walsingham precluded her from informing me of this courtier-like inducement; but the Duc subsequently repeated it himself to some of my friends, as a proof of the want of spirit and of ambition of that low-born Englishwoman. But, what could he expect from the daughter of a *priest*—the offspring of sacrilege? He had not, however, he added, known this shocking circumstance until after he proposed, or never would he have offered her his hand. It was only in such an irreligious country as England that a priest durst acknowledge himself to be a father; or that the daughter of such an impure source could find a husband.

The Duc was in so perfect a state of ignorance of our religion, customs, and manners, that he could not comprehend that the ministers of our church were at liberty to marry; hence he concluded Lady Walsingham to be the offspring of sin and shame.

In two days after his rejection, the *femme de chambre* of Lady Walsingham, a young Englishwoman of remarkable beauty, with tears and blushes, informed her mistress

that the French Duc was tormenting her with insulting proposals and letters. He had accidentally beheld the pretty Fanny; and, being disappointed in his offers to the two ladies of the family, addressed less honourable, but perhaps more sincere vows, to the maid. She gave his letter to Lady Walsingham; and I begged it of her. The following is a faithful transcript of it:—

“My pretty heart, you have charm me. I loaf you, and tink you much too pretty to be von femme da chambre. If you will loaf me, I vill make you von grande ladi. You shall have von *charmant entresol, des bijoux, a femme de chambre*, and a carriage, and never notings to do but amuse yourself, and loaf your devoted

LE DUC D'E.

“My valet de chambre vill bring me your ansire.”

Vexed as we were at this unprincipled attempt to corrupt the pretty and innocent Fanny, we could not resist a smile at the delectable *billet-doux*, which made no other impression on her to whom it was addressed than indignation.

We quitted Paris in a few days, leaving the Duc D'Enragues to look out for new conquests, and to ridicule the want of taste of Englishwomen of all classes. Lord Clydesdale remained at Paris but a short time after our departure; and our next meeting was at Naples. The pleasure exhibited in his countenance at our *rencontre*, again awakened hope in my heart; whence it had lately been nearly banished, from observing his avoidance of everything like marked attention. Our brief separation seemed to have thrown him off his guard; or, perhaps, it might be, that knowing the environs of Naples, and witnessing our desire to explore them, good nature tempted him to offer himself as our cicerone. No day passed in which we were not together; and each one found me still more assured of the deep hold he possessed over my affections, and less sanguine of that which I longed to obtain over his.

There were so few English travellers at Naples, and the Neapolitans mingled so little with them, save on occasions of large balls, at which the English minister had the privilege of presenting his compatriots, that our

habitual circle was much more circumscribed than at Paris. This seemed to gratify Lord Clydesdale, and increased the intimacy between us. We seldom parted at night without making an arrangement for some excursion for the following day; and time flew with a rapidity known only to those whose hearts are filled by a passion, which, in presence of its object, and surrounded by new and exciting scenery, gives a tenfold power to the wings of the hoary veteran.

The habitual pensiveness of Lord Clydesdale's manner seemed gradually to disappear, and to be replaced by a cheerfulness which, if it amounted not to gaiety, was more attractive to me. I have remarked that the generality of my sex prefer those of the other who are of a grave and sentimental turn; provided always, that the gravity proceeds not from dulness, but from a reflective cast of mind, which increases their respect, while it adds to the interest they experience. I have known a pale face and a pensive manner make impressions on female hearts that had successfully resisted the attacks of ruddy countenances and exhilarating gaiety: the possessor of these *agrémens* being more calculated to amuse than interest, are rarely remembered when absent. Women seldom forget the man who makes them sigh; but rarely recur to him who has excited their mirth, even though a brilliant wit may have been displayed in his *bon mots* and good stories. He, therefore, who would captivate the fastidious taste of *le beau sexe*, must eschew too frequent smiles, even though he may have fine teeth; and must likewise avoid occasioning or promoting the exhibition of those pearly ornaments in her he wishes to permanently please.

The newly acquired cheerfulness of Lord Clydesdale, however, gratified me beyond measure, because I attributed it to the effect of my presence on him: and I hailed it as the harbinger of an explicit acknowledgment of my power, and a demand for the hand I longed to give him; the heart having already anticipated his solicitation.

While returning from the beautiful and romantic island of Ischia, where we had sojourned for a few days,

and gliding over a moonlit sea, smooth and polished, as though it were a vast mirror spread out to reflect the heavens, Lord Clydesdale first spoke to me of love. Even now, though age has thrown its snow, not only on my tresses but on my heart, that evening is remembered nearly as vividly as if it had lately passed. Nay! What do I say? Infinitely more vividly; for the events of recent years seem to me more vague and indistinct than those of my early youth. As we approach the grave, our mother's breast, a second childhood is mercifully granted us; and we retain only the impressions which were stamped on the heart by the affections, while those of reason fade from the brain. Nature engraved the first, but experience formed the second. One is *felt*; the other has only been *thought*.

Yes, even now, in mental vision, I behold with a clearness to which my dim eyes can no more assist me, the dark blue unruffled sea of the unrivalled Bay of Naples, with the glorious orb of light, and the thousand brilliant stars reflected on its glassy bosom. I hear the stroke of the oars, every movement of which sends forth a phosphoric effulgence from the surface of the waters, like a glittering sheet of molten silver. I hear the plaintive hymn of the peasants returning in the market-boats from Naples; or the gay *barcarole* of the fishermen, mingled with the sounds of guitars and soft voices, that float past us. I see the island of Procida in our rear, on the left, with Cape Misenum; and on the right, the fairy island of Nisida rising, like an enchanted castle at the touch of some necromancer, from the bosom of the deep. Yes, all the scenes are present to my imagination, with the delicious reverie to which they gave birth, and the face of him I loved, on which the beams of the moon shed a light that increased the intellectual character of its beauty.

We had been silent some time, each occupied, or rather abstracted, and softened by the influence of the balmy air of that luxuriant climate, and the surrounding loveliness of nature. At length he spoke—

“Such a night and such a scene as this are rarely



granted to us of the cold and sunless north. There is something soothing, calm, and holy in its influence; and yet, though sweet and soothing, it is melancholy too."

His voice was low and musical, and his countenance was in harmony with its tone; for it was mild, but mournful.

"This repose and beauty of nature," resumed he, "make one feel increased tenderness for those dear to us, still spared, with whom we share the enjoyment: but it also brings back the memory of those we have loved and lost—with whom we can share it no more. Can you, fair Arabella, who as yet have known only the cloudless spring of life, comprehend that while mourning an object, once inexpressibly dear, and still fondly remembered, the heart may awaken to another attachment; may again indulge emotions believed to be for ever departed; and may dare to hope to meet sympathy where now all its wishes point? When I saw you, dear Arabella, I thought I could never love again; I was so certain that my heart was dead to that passion, and buried in the early grave of her who first taught it to throb with tenderness, that I fearlessly trusted myself in the dangerous ordeal of your society. I found I was in error; such attractions have proved their irresistible empire; and I love you truly, tenderly. May I indulge a hope that you will be my sweet consoler for past disappointment and sorrow; and that you will teach this care-worn heart to forget all but you?"

He paused, and I was speechless from emotion. At length, then, the certainty of knowing myself beloved was mine! a certainty that, previously to its existence, would, I fancied, have conferred unutterable happiness upon me. Did it now produce this effect? Alas! No! The felicity such a conviction would have bestowed was destroyed by the mortifying fact of ascertaining that he had loved another; that the bloom and freshness of a first passion could never be mine; and that I inspired only a second, perhaps a much less fervent affection than my predecessor had excited, in the heart where I wished to have reigned alone! Severe was my disappointment, as

jealousy—ay, jealousy of the dead—shot its envenomed arrows through my heart.

I could have wept in very bitterness; but shame, womanly shame, checked this exposure of the secret feelings of my soul; and silent and trembling I almost feared to trust myself with words.

“You answer me not, dearest Arabella,” resumed Lord Clydesdale, his voice tremulous with emotion, “have I then deceived myself in thinking that I might hope to create an interest in that gentle heart?”

Tears involuntarily filled my eyes; I longed to, but dared not tell him that my silence proceeded from no want of the sentiment he desired to create—but, alas! rather from an excess of it, which rendered me wretched at the knowledge that he had loved before. A thought of rejecting his suit, now that I found with what bitter feelings an acceptance of it would be accompanied, crossed my mind; but I turned affrighted from the contemplation of banishing from my sight, the only being whose presence was necessary to my happiness. No! I would accept the portion of his heart that might still be mine—I would deign to occupy a small niche in that temple, dedicated to the worship of the dead. I, proud and haughty as I was, would try to be satisfied with the ashes of a fire which another had kindled; but even this humiliation was less painful than to lose him altogether. These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind. The misery of years was compressed into the brief period which had elapsed since his avowal of affection; and already my heart had grown old in suffering. I gave him my hand, for I could not speak; and he pressed it fondly to his lips, while he murmured words of tenderness, which soothed, though they did not satisfy, the demon jealousy that was writhing within my tortured breast. Had any one told me that I should thus feel when first assured of his preference, how would I have denied the possibility! Tears I might have believed would flow; for joy and grief declare themselves by this dew of the heart: but I would have asserted that mine would be tears of joyful tenderness, of grateful, softened happiness. What were

they now? The waters of bitterness, springing from a fountain newly opened in the soul, and never again to be sealed, except by death.

Before we separated on that eventful night, he asked permission to inform Lady Walsingham that I had *not rejected him*. The very terms he used softened me; for they indicated that he had remarked, that my manner of receiving his suit was more like a non-rejection than a positive acceptance of it; a delicate and discerning homage that gratified my sensitiveness.

Never did hermit or philosopher reflect more on the disappointments that await the hopes of mortals, than did I, through the long and sleepless night which followed Lord Clydesdale's declaration of love: that declaration which I fancied was to have conferred unmingled felicity. As the whispered words of tenderness he had breathed in my ear were recalled, the recollection that similar words had been poured into the ear of another, came to torment me. The soft glances of love with which he sought to meet my eyes when urging his suit, had been often fixed on another, perhaps a fairer and dearer face; and the gentle pressure of his hand had often been felt by one who had enjoyed all the bloom and freshness of his first affections. Had he ceased to love her? that he had not ceased to remember and mourn her, he had confessed; and now *my* fond and fervent affection was to be repaid by the comparatively cold and languid one of a disappointed and exhausted heart.

And yet there were moments in which my better feelings prevailed—moments in which I pitied the sorrow he had endured, and almost determined to sacrifice my selfish regrets, and devote my life to his happiness. Yes, I would be the soother of the traces left by past grief; and the creator of new hopes, new blessings. I would generously stifle my own disappointment in pity to his; I would question him on all that he had endured, identify myself by the force of my sympathy with his mournful recollections of her he had lost; and teach him gently, gradually, to forget her, in his devoted attachment to me. How ardently did I long to hear every particular

connected with his former passion. Was the object beautiful?—How strange is the human heart! My vanity led me to wish that she had been fair in no ordinary degree; for there is something peculiarly humiliating to a woman vain of her own pretensions to beauty, in becoming the successor of a plain one, in the affections of a husband. And yet I had a latent dread, that if she had been as lovely as I was disposed to imagine her, the recollections of her attractions might eclipse the reality of mine. In short, my ill-governed mind was in such a state of morbid excitement, that I scarcely knew what I desired. Only one sentiment stood prominently forth above all others, and that was disappointment,—deep and bitter disappointment, arising in the consciousness that all the wild and fond illusions of love, which I wished him whom I adored to have entertained for the first and only time for me, he had already experienced. Then came the thought, that I too had loved before; and yet in this my second attachment, none of the fond illusions that characterised the first were wanting.

There was some comfort in this recollection; until it was followed by the painful one, that my first affection, having been unpartaken by him who inspired it, had never been cemented by the thousand nameless but powerful associations that only a mutual tenderness can bestow. Mine was nothing more than a mere girlish fancy, never matured by sympathy, or rendered indelible by reciprocity. I forgot in the excitement of the actual present, all the sufferings of the less vivid past. The waking dreams, sleepless nights, and tear-stained pillow, were all forgotten; and the passion which, while it existed, I had believed to have been as violent as indestructible, was now considered to be nothing more than an evanescent preference. Strange infatuation! the repetition of which has induced some mortals, with susceptible feelings, to regard their hearts as plants, that, though subject to the laws of nature in casting off their leaves at certain periods, can always put forth fresh shoots, and bloom again as genially as before. I even excused the intensity of my present sentiments over



those of my past, by the superiority of the object which had given them birth. The graceful, the dignified Lord Clydesdale, with his noble air and polished manners, cast into shade the handsome person, but grave and simple demeanour, of Frederick Melville. Nay, I now wondered how I ever could have been captivated by him, and smiled at my own delusion.

Such are some of the incongruities of that almost inexplicable enigma—a woman's heart.

When Lady Walsingham congratulated me next day on the prospect of happiness that now opened to me, and expressed her warm approbation of my suitor, I could scarcely restrain my tears; and I looked so little joyous on the occasion, that she positively imagined she had been in error, in supposing that Lord Clydesdale had interested my feelings. Little did she know the tumult to which my mind was a prey at that moment! for though I had so often experienced her sympathizing kindness, a latent sentiment, it might be vanity, or shame, or both, prevented me from avowing my real sentiments.

When Lord Clydesdale came, the increased tenderness and animation of his manner re-assured me. The solicitude with which he marked my pallid cheeks and swollen eyes, was so apparent, that hope whispered that love alone could have excited such interest. I longed, yet feared, to question him of the past, when we were alone. I dreaded to revive an image in his recollection, which I desired, oh! how anxiously desired, might be banished from it for ever; and yet the thought of her whose memory I dreaded to recall, was so predominant in mine, and filled me with such painful emotions, that I felt that I could have no peace until he should have reposed in my breast the mournful tale of his former attachment. Often did the question hover on my lips; and as often did it die away, without my being able to frame words that would elicit his confidence without betraying the secret jealousy which was torturing me. There is a conscious unworthiness in jealousy, which, if the victim be proud, makes her shrink from its exhibition.

I felt this powerfully, and added to it, was the dread of forfeiting his esteem, by the display of this egotistical passion. I am now surprised when I reflect on the duplicity with which I affected a strong sympathy in his regret for her he had lost; and still more surprised, when I remember how completely he was the dupe of this pretended sympathy. His love for me seemed positively to have been increased tenfold, by the interest I evinced in the fate of my predecessor. My generosity, so superior, as he said, to that of the generality of females, delighted him.

How little did he know the heart of woman! For though there may be *many* who might be gentle enough to regret an unknown individual of their own sex, who is represented as having gone down young, beautiful, and good, to an early grave, while yet love and hope would fain have bound her to earth, few have sufficient self-control to conquer her jealous emotions, while listening to the recapitulation of the perfections of the lost one; or the grief her loss had excited in the breast of the object of her own affection. A man precludes a similar confidence from the woman he loves, by openly displaying his total want of sympathy, in any allusion to previous attachments, even should a woman be so devoid of tact as to make them; while we of the softer sex, though pained to the heart by such disclosures, shrink from checking them, though they are hoarded in the memory, to be often dwelt upon, but never without pain.

This peculiar dislike to the belief of a lover ever having before experienced the tender passion, has been often ascribed to vanity; but I believe it originates in a delicacy less reprehensible, and consequently more entitled to commiseration. Devoid of refinement and delicacy must that woman be, who, having accepted a suitor, entertains him with lamentations *for*, or descriptions *of*, the one who preceded him: like the lady, who, when married a second time, dwelt so fondly and perpetually on the merits of her poor dear first husband, that she compelled his successor to *declare*, that however much *she* might regret the defunct, *he* still more truly

mourned his death. It is this indelicacy that led a man, who knew human nature well, to assert that a man should never marry a widow, however attractive, whose first husband had not been *hanged*; as that ignominious catastrophe furnished the only security for her not continually reverting to him.

But to resume the thread of my narrative: no day elapsed, that Lord Clydesdale did not inflict a jealous pang on my heart, by some unconscious reference to past times; until at last my apparent sympathy lured him into a more explicit disclosure of his feelings; and he related the story of his first love.

It was a simple one! but the intensity of his emotion in repeating it, the warmth with which he dwelt on the personal and mental charms of her he had lost, wounded me to the soul. Yet, though writhing under the infliction, I so skilfully concealed my sufferings, that he was the dupe to my affected interest about one to whose death alone, I owed his present affection. There is a great though secret pleasure in talking of any former attachment, that has not been dissolved by circumstances humiliating to vanity. Those broken by inconstancy are seldom recurred to, because they are mortifying to self-love. But to dwell on a love that ended but with life, and to repeat incidents strongly indicative of the force of the attachment of the deceased, is one of the greatest, though apparently the least, egotistical gratifications to which our *amour propre* can have recourse. One can repeat how well she loved him, in a thousand varied ways, without shocking the ears of the confidant by his self-eulogiums; yet each of these examples of the passion that has been felt for the narrator, may be considered as indubitable proofs of his attractions and merits.

Lord Clydesdale's first love was a young and fascinating creature, born with the germ of a disease that seems ever to select the fairest objects for its prey. Consumption, which, like the Pagans of old, adorns its victims for the sacrifice, had rendered the beauty of the youthful Lucinda Harcourt still more dazzlingly bright.

The hectic of her cheek, the lustre of her eye, and the deep vermilion of her lips, those sure and fatal symptoms of the destroyer, which, like the canker-worm in the rose, feeds on its core while the external petals still wear their fresh hue, were considered by her lover as charms peculiarly her own, and not as indications of incipient disease. Even in relating her lingering illness, and mournful death, he seemed unconscious that she fell a prey to a malady hereditary in her family, and to which her mother owed her death in the bloom of youth. No, with the delusion inherent in mortals, which ever seeks, even in misfortune, some salve from vanity, he attributed the untimely death of the fair Lucinda to the unwonted agitation produced by the excessive attachment, with which he had inspired her youthful breast, and the anxiety attending the period, previous to his formal demand of her hand; for it appears that he had, though deeply smitten, taken a considerable period to reflect, before he proposed for her. He spoke in such panegyrics of the transparency of her complexion, and the sylph-like fragility of her form, that I almost longed to possess these infallible symptoms of disease; as I dreaded his comparing my healthful but less attractive bloom, and rounded figure, with the evanescent charms he so rapturously described.

“Have you no picture of her?” asked I, trembling, lest he should draw forth from his breast, a treasured miniature carefully concealed from prying eyes.

“Yes,” replied he, “I have an admirable resemblance of her, which you shall see, and which has never left my breast since I lost her, until you, fair and dear Arabella, listened to my suit.”

I involuntarily placed my hand within his, at this acknowledgment; for I felt grateful for the delicacy of the renunciation of the portrait. Nay, in consideration of it, I almost forgave the warmth of his praises of her; for, slight as the circumstance was, it made a great impression on me.

The next day he brought the miniature, and though I had been prepared to expect beauty of no ordinary kind,



I confess that the extreme loveliness of the portrait surprised—ay, and shall I own the truth?—displeased me. If I had previously indulged a jealousy of the fair Lucinda, what were my jealous pangs now, that I beheld the radiant beauty of her face! The artist had caught the almost seraphic expression of her countenance, that fine and elevated expression, where the purity of the angel seems to have already descended on the suffering saint. It wanted only a halo round the head, to be one of the best personifications of a martyred saint ascending to heaven; and I, even I, could not repress the tear that fell on the crystal that covered it, though the source whence it sprang was not free from alloy.

This apparent sympathy, while it rendered me dearer to Lord Clydesdale, lured him into a still more frequent recurrence to the object of his first love. He judged more favourably of me than I deserved, in imputing to me a freedom from that envy and jealousy, from which so few of my sex are exempt; and I had not courage to risk the forfeiture of this good opinion, by acknowledging how little it was merited. Had I avowed my weakness, how much unhappiness should I not have escaped! But no, pride, the most dangerous passion which can approach love, forbade it; and I yielded to its unwise suggestions.

It was agreed between Lord Clydesdale and myself, that our marriage should not take place until our return to England. But as we were considered affianced, we spent the greater part of every day together; and each day seemed to cement our mutual affection, as we drew plans for the future, and built castles in the air. Life is at best but a shadowy scene, some charm of which vanishes every day; the actual enjoyments, few and far between, often poisoned by untoward circumstances, or followed by painful regret. Are we not then wise, in creating for ourselves the innocent pleasure of fancy-building? where Hope, the syren, helps to erect the structure, and almost cheats Reason into believing the possibility of its completion. Those were indeed blissful days! when beneath the blue skies of genial Italy, and wandering by the as blue waters of the Mediterranean

sea that mirrored them, the balmy air of the delicious climate of Naples, made its influence known by exhilarating our spirits, and diffusing its softness over our feelings. And yet the bliss was not unalloyed! When was that of mortals ever so? though each believes himself worthy of happiness, and likely, if not sure, to attain it.

The more tenderness Lord Clydesdale seemed to evince, and the more warmth I myself experienced, the more susceptible did I become of the assaults of the fiend jealousy; each successive attack lacerating my heart more cruelly. Every allusion to the lost Lucinda tortured me; and yet I had myself at the commencement encouraged these allusions. Now that I believed myself beloved, and felt with what passionate tenderness I repaid the affection of Lord Clydesdale, a recurrence to his former passion appeared an insult, and an injustice, that I was disposed to resent with an anger that required the exertion of all my reasoning powers to subdue.

At length I took courage, and asked him to let me have the portrait of Lucinda. He looked surprised—hesitated; and then demanded why I wished to possess it? I acknowledged that I considered it so exquisitely beautiful, that while it remained in his keeping I should always dread his contemplation of it might elicit comparisons highly disadvantageous to my own inferior attractions. This avowal drew from him some of those praises peculiar to love, which, however exaggerated, are never unacceptable; and he yielded the portrait, though with reluctance, on my solemn promise that it should be carefully guarded and considered a sacred deposit.

The possession of this long-coveted treasure soothed and calmed the demon in my breast for many days; yet each time I gazed on it, the angelic softness and beauty of the countenance re-illuminated the nearly extinguished spark of jealousy in my mind. I have, after contemplating it long and attentively, sought my mirror, and tried to think the image it reflected was not so very far inferior to this captivating picture, as jealousy whispered it to be. But, alas! not all the suggestions of vanity

could blind me to the immeasurable superiority of the countenance of Lucinda, that dead rival, who in her grave, as I fancied, still triumphed over me. It was true, my finely chiselled features and the perfect oval of my face might have contested with her the palm of beauty; but the expression—Oh! how infinitely did mine fall short of hers! I forgot in contemplating my own countenance that the baleful passions of envy and jealousy which pervaded my heart at that moment, lent their disfiguring influence to my face. No wonder, then, that I was conscious of the vast difference between a physiognomy, expressive only of a heavenly calm, and that in which worldly and sinful feelings were delineated.

The sunshine produced by my lover's renunciation of the portrait had made itself manifest many days; when, one luckless evening, while seated on the balcony of the palazzo we inhabited, and engaged in that dreamy, tender, conversation into which lovers are prone to fall, on my expressing some doubt of the depth and devotion of his love, he passionately seized my hand, and exclaimed,

“Yes, adored Lucinda!—Arabella—I would say—”

“You need not complete the sentence,” interrupted I, coldly; “it is but natural that the name of the object which is most dearly treasured in your memory should sometimes escape from your lips.”

“This is unjust and cruel, Arabella,” said he, “you know, or ought to know, how inexpressibly dear you are to my heart, when all its feelings, all its regrets have been bared to your view. Why have you deceived me by an apparent sympathy, if you could not bear with an occasional, an involuntary recurrence to the past?”

The gentleness of his reproach, which had so much more of sorrow than of anger in it, disarmed my displeasure. I felt ashamed of my petulance, and had an instinctive presentiment that by this selfish ebullition I had forfeited some portion of his esteem.

“I should be unworthy of your affection, dearest Arabella,” resumed he, “were I capable of deceiving you by asserting that I ever could banish the memory of her who in life was so beloved. But that memory,

mournful though it be, precludes not the fondest, truest affection for you. Nay, you should consider the constancy of my attachment to one in her grave, as a gage of that which shall bind me to the only being on earth who could console me for her loss."

I refused not the hand he now pressed to his lips; a few kind words and gentle tears on my part marked our renewed amity, and we parted that night as lovers part after a reconciliation of their first misunderstanding; for the harsh name of quarrel I could not give it.

But, though we met in fondness next day, and every day for many weeks, confidence was banished between us. The name of Lucinda, or any reference to her, never escaped his lips; but this self-imposed silence and constraint tortured me more than his former lavish praises or tender regrets had ever done. The demon jealousy whispered, that though the name was banished from his lips, her image had become more tenaciously fixed in his heart; and that an opinion of my selfishness and want of self-control had led to this reserve and increased seriousness on his part. This conviction haunted and goaded me; yet I dared not trust myself to utter a word of it to him. I feared to sink still lower in his estimation, or to be hurried into some expression of harshness that might lead to a serious misunderstanding, perhaps a rupture; and such a result, even in moments of the greatest mental excitement, I dared not contemplate, so warm and fervent was my attachment to him.

How narrowly, and with what lynx eyes, did I examine his countenance every day when we met. A shade of sadness on his brow, or an involuntary sigh, angered me; they were received as incontrovertible proofs that his thoughts were on my dead rival.

Our *tête-à-têtes* were no longer marked by that outpouring of the soul, that boundless confidence which had formerly existed between us; and both were conscious of this change, though anxious to conceal it from each other. His conversation now referred wholly to the future; he avoided all reference to his past life, as if it had been stained by some crime of deep die; and I felt as if there



was a gulf between us—that is, between our souls' communion. The consciousness of this gulf having been created by my own waywardness, added to the bitterness of my feelings: I became silent and abstracted; and though he was never ceasing in his attentions, the sense of our mutual constraint now robbed them of their greatest charm in my estimation.

It was at this period that Sir Augustus Fauconberg, an intimate friend of Lord Clydesdale, arrived at Naples. He established himself in the same hotel with him, and was presented to us. He was one or two years senior to Lord Clydesdale, and remarkably good-looking, accomplished, and agreeable. His presence was a relief to us all; for his vivacity, though finely tempered by good breeding, never failed to enliven those with whom he associated. A short time before, I should have considered the presence of a stranger in our limited circle as an unwelcome interruption to the frequent *tête-à-têtes* I enjoyed with my affianced husband; for Lady Walsingham devoted much of her time to feminine occupations, and left us much alone; but now, those *tête-à-têtes* had lost their chief attraction. The chain of love still bound us, but the flowers that wreathed and concealed its links had, one by one, withered and dropped off. Neither of us wished for freedom, nor dared anticipate division, but all the sweetness of love had departed; we were not happy together, and yet we dreaded to try if we could support separation.

One evening I had remarked, with anger blended with sorrow, that Lord Clydesdale appeared to be more than usually depressed. Instead of soothing him by kindness, I maintained a sullen silence; and even when he bade us adieu for the night, I returned not the pressure of his hand, but suffered mine to remain cold and passive within his grasp, as if it had been a lifeless substance.

My heart reproached me for this unkindness, during the night; and I made good resolves for the coming day. Indeed, so salutary were my reflections, that I determined henceforth to conquer my waywardness; and by resuming my former confiding tenderness, win back his.

I longed, impatiently longed, for his visit; I counted the hours that must intervene before the arrival of that which usually brought him to our palazzo; and attired myself with more than my accustomed care, that I might appear more attractive in his eyes. I seemed to awake from a disagreeable dream; and the recollection of my own too frequent fits of silence and sullenness, to which his forbearing gentleness, and constant affection, formed a striking contrast, rose up to reproach me. Yes, I would amply repay him for all my past suspicions and unkindness, and never more give way to them. In this frame of mind I left my chamber. My mirror told me that never had I looked more attractive. I had attired myself in his favourite colours, wore a bracelet and ring, his gifts, and, with a throbbing heart, awaited his coming.

Hour after hour elapsed, and he appeared not; a thousand vague forebodings of evil haunted me—I could settle to no occupation, but kept continually walking on the balcony that overlooked the street by which he must approach, in order to catch a glance of him.

At length Lady Walsingham entered the saloon, and observed that she had thought Lord Clydesdale was there. When informed that I had not seen him, she appeared really uneasy; for, though she then mentioned not the report to me, she had that morning heard that an epidemic disease had, during the last few days, been making great ravages in the town; and, consequently, coupled his unusual absence with this startling intelligence. A servant was instantly despatched to the hotel where Lord Clydesdale resided, to inquire for him; and my fears were excited, and Lady Walsingham's confirmed, by the information that Lord Clydesdale had not left his chamber that day.

“But here, my lady,” said our servant, “is a letter which the porter forgot to send your ladyship, and which ought to have been delivered this morning.”

To break the seal and devour the contents of this billet, was the work of a moment. A few lines stated that a slight imposition would confine the writer to his apartment for that day, but that the next would see him

at our palazzo. An air of constraint pervaded this note, which I instantly attributed to his desire of concealing the extent of his malady. My heart died within me as the idea of his danger presented itself to my mind; and ardently did I wish that I were his wife, that I might have the privilege of watching over his sick couch, as love only can watch. I magnified his danger until the most painful images were conjured up to my terrified imagination. I fancied him ill—dying—and I, though his betrothed, precluded, by the usages of the world, from alleviating his sufferings or receiving his last sigh. How impatiently did I writhe under these bitter thoughts! how execrate my own folly for ever having annoyed him by my petulance, or wounded him by my selfish and wayward jealousy! What resolutions, instigated by “the late remorse of love,” did I form, never again, should it please Heaven to restore him to me, to give him cause for reproach or chagrin. Yes, I would conquer my own feelings, and attend solely to his. Though aware how deeply, how tenderly I was devoted to him, I knew not until the thought of his danger took possession of me, how wholly, how passionately my soul doted upon him.

I threw myself into a *bergère*, and covering my face with my hands, wept in uncontrollable anguish, heedless of the attempts at consolation made by my tender and true friend Lady Walsingham. She was suggesting the expediency of sending an English physician to Lord Clydesdale, when the door of the apartment was thrown open, and Sir Augustus Fauconberg entered.

“Tell me, I entreat you, tell me how he is?” I exclaimed, reckless of betraying my tearful agitation. He hesitated and looked aghast. This conduct verified my fears.

“I am prepared for the worst,” resumed I; “I see his danger in your face; it is confirmed to me by your hesitation. Let me, I implore you, hear it at once, or this suspense will destroy me.”

“I really do not comprehend,” replied he, with a face of astonishment. “Who is ill or in danger? for I am

not aware that any individual in whom we take an interest is in that predicament."

I viewed this speech as a good-natured subterfuge, used to avoid declaring the real state of the case; and it almost maddened me. Lady Walsingham, observing me to be incapable of articulating another word, so overpowered was I by my feelings, here interposed; and stated that we had heard that Lord Clydesdale was confined to his chamber by indisposition.

"I assure you I was totally ignorant of it," answered Sir Augustus; "but the truth is, I told Clydesdale last night that I intended to proceed to Sorento to-day with some friends of mine, so that he believes me gone. They changed their plans, and, as I had risen early, I have been making an excursion in the environs. Still, I think there must be some mistake, for I saw Clydesdale's *valet-de-chambre* this morning, and he said nothing of the circumstance."

"It is, nevertheless, I fear, but too true," replied Lady Walsingham, "for Lady Arabella received a note from Lord Clydesdale, which, though it makes light of his indisposition, refers to it as the cause for not coming here to-day."

"When did the note arrive?" demanded Sir Augustus.

"Only a short time before you entered."

"And Lady Arabella has received no other note from Clydesdale?"

"No other," answered I, still weeping.

"It is strange," resumed Sir Augustus, "for I saw Clydesdale write you a note last evening, and heard him give orders that it should be sent to your palazzo early in the morning."

"And was he then in perfect health?" asked Lady Walsingham.

"Most certainly," replied Fauconberg, "but rather more serious than usual, which I attributed to the recollection that this day was the second anniversary of the death of a person once dear to him; every recurrence to whom his friends avoid, knowing the subject to be fraught with pain to him."



In an instant, my tears were dried, the burning blushes of shame and anger that suffused my cheek seemed to effect this operation; and the fiend jealousy awoke in my breast, to renew the infliction of a thousand pangs. So, while I, reckless of observation, exposed my love and anguish, at the bare thought of his danger, to the gaze of others, *he* having voluntarily excluded himself from my presence, was weeping over the memory of another love; and leaving me to endure all the alarm and wretchedness which his acknowledgment of indisposition could not fail to excite. The subterfuge too, of affecting illness—it was unworthy—it was base! The whole current of my feelings became changed. Such conduct was not to be borne. No, I would, whatever the effort might cost me, break with him for ever; and his friend, Sir Augustus Fauconberg, who had been a spectator of my weakness, when I believed him ill, should now be a witness of the firmness with which I could eternally resign him.

Such were the thoughts that flitted through my troubled brain, making my temples throb, and my heart's pulses beat in feverish excitement. I silenced every whisper of love, every dictate of reason. Pride, ungovernable pride, and indomitable jealousy, now took entire possession of my heart, banishing every gentle and feminine emotion. If, a short time before, while suffering agonies at the bare notion of my lover's illness, any one had told me that the assurance of his being well could fail to convey to me the most ecstatic joy, I should have pronounced the fulfilment of the prediction impossible. There is nothing to which I would not have cheerfully submitted to have had this blissful assurance. But now—it only gave me torture, and excited rage. Such are the revolutions to which evil passions can lead those who are so unfortunate as to submit to their empire!

I sought my chamber, and giving way to my wild and wrathful impulse, seized a pen, and wrote to Lord Clydesdale to declare that I considered our engagement at an end. I stated that my determination was irrevoc-

cable, and that any attempt to change it would be as unavailing as offensive to me.

I despatched this ill-judged and intemperate letter, proud of this supposed conquest over self, this triumph of my evil nature over my better. I would not wait for a calmer moment, lest my heart might relent, and be disposed to pardon him who was still dear to it. No, while mourning a *dead* mistress, he should have cause to grieve for a *living* one; and I was obdurate enough to take a malicious pleasure in thus overwhelming him with a new affliction, while he was meditating on a former one.

I never reflected that the excuse of a slight indisposition, urged by Lord Clydesdale to account for not coming on that day, was only made to avoid offending me, by candidly stating the true cause of his absence. It was my injustice, my petulance, that compelled him to have recourse to this deception, a deception adopted only to spare my weakness. I expected to receive a deprecating answer to my angry renunciation of him, notwithstanding my prohibition; nay more, I was not without hopes that he would come to plead his cause in person. But, as hour after hour elapsed without bringing any tidings of him, I began to tremble at heart, though I affected a careless exterior, at the probable consequences of my own folly.

Lady Walsingham, with that intuitive perception which belongs exclusively to women, had penetrated the state of my feelings. She deplored, but pitied their wilfulness; and gently endeavoured to soothe them. She dwelt on the compassion and forbearance due to the regrets of those who mourn an object beloved, even though a brighter prospect opens on the bereaved heart, by a new attachment.

“But if the former object be still mourned,” answered I, “why should the mourner seek another love? Such a course is being unfaithful to the dead, and unjust to the living.”

“You are yet too young, dear Arabella,” replied Lady Walsingham, “to have fathomed the secret recesses of the human heart, in which the desire of happiness is

indigenous and indestructible. If robbed of the object of its affection, the grief that follows, though deep and sometimes durable, is not eternal. The regret, which during the first bitterness attending such a calamity, was violent and engrossing, becomes by the operation of time every day mitigated. The lover is conscious of this gradual change, and at first shrinks from what he believes to be an infirmity of his nature. He summons memory, with all her potent spells, to awaken the grief that slumbers; he dwells upon all the charms of the lost one, recalls all her love; and imagination, excited by recollection, supplies the place, and for a brief space, enacts the part of grief. Gratitude aids this self-deception, which is peculiar to fine natures; the lost are thought of, talked of, and referred to, with tenderness, long after the survivor is consoled for their loss: nay, he frequently perseveres in premeditatedly offering this homage to the manes of the departed, as an expiation for an involuntary oblivion of them. You know not, and may you never know, dear Arabella, the shame, the tender regret, and self-reproach, with which a sensitive mind first becomes sensible that it *can* be consoled for a loss, the regret for which, when first experienced, was imagined to be eternal. But when the place once occupied by the departed, is usurped by a new, perhaps a dearer object—for grief increases the susceptibility, and tends to make the second attachment more fond than the former—in proportion to the sensitiveness of the feelings of the lover, will be the recollections given to the dead; recollections that do not rob the living of the slightest portion of his tenderness, but which rather originate in his deep consciousness of the force of his present attachment. He who devoted not a pensive thought to the memory of a buried love, will never be capable of fidelity to a living one. Such regrets are not the offspring of sorrow: they are the funeral flowers with which, while animated by hope of happiness, the survivor decks the grave of one for whose loss he is consoled.”

My feelings became softened towards Lord Clydesdale, as I listened to the mild reasoning of Lady Walsingham;

and when she informed me that his friend Sir Augustus Fauconberg had acknowledged to her, that he never imagined Lord Clydesdale could have loved again, so tenderly devoted had he been to his first attachment, and so fondly was it repaid by its object, I severely blamed my own wilfulness in having inflicted pain, where I should have offered consolation. Oh, how I longed for him to come, or write to deprecate the anger which was now subdued, that I might convince him of my repentance and affection! Every noise in the anteroom made my heart throb, every step that approached I hoped might be his; and in this belief I have started from my chair to meet him with an extended hand, and words of love hovering on my lips.

Lady Walsingham, anxious to make an impression on me, related all that Sir Augustus Fauconberg had told her, of the personal charms, cultivated mind, and angelic disposition of Lady Lucinda Harcourt. She dwelt on the profound tenderness of this young and lovely creature for her betrothed husband; and on the heavenly resignation with which she prepared herself for another world, though blessed with all that could render existence desirable. She related the long and lingering illness, and the death-bed farewell of this fair being; and the overwhelming affliction of her affianced husband, who fled from England, to seek in a strange land the power of supporting a blow, that seemed to have for ever destroyed his earthly hopes.

When she described the satisfaction experienced by Fauconberg, at discovering from Lord Clydesdale that his heart had yielded to a second attachment, in which he looked forward to the enjoyment of the happiness he had believed to have been lost to him for ever, I could not restrain my tears; and as they flowed plenteously down my cheeks, I felt that I had never loved Lord Clydesdale so fondly as at that moment. Had he then entered, yes, proud as I was, I would have confessed my fault, and atoned for it, by every future effort to control the waywardness of my nature and the petulance of my temper. Alas! such happiness was not in store for me.



I had madly dashed the cup from my lip: and it was decreed that it should never more be offered!

But let me not anticipate my story. The long evening wore away, without bringing me any tidings of my lover. How did I count the weary hours, on the dial of that pendule, on which I had so often marked their rapid flight, when, after a long visit he rose to depart, and I disbelieved that the hour of separation was yet come! How often during that interminable evening had I resolved to write to him, and seek a reconciliation; but pride, and it may be, female reserve, prohibited this concession. Though supported by the hope that the morrow would see him at my feet, still my heart was troubled that the sun should have gone down on our anger, and that our estrangement should have endured a single night.

Even now, though half a century has elapsed since that night, I have not forgotten the tender remorse, the good resolves, and the overflowing affection with which I dwelt on his noble qualities, and my own unworthiness. For the first time, my tears flowed for her who had preceded me in his heart, as I pictured her to myself in all her youth and beauty, in all her gentleness and love, descending to the untimely grave, whence he could not save her. All that I now experienced of affection for him, she had felt; and in giving my tears to her memory, I seemed to be shedding them for myself, such an identity did my now altered feelings appear to create between our sentiments. Yes, I would for the future partake his recollections of her; her name should be a sacred bond of union and sympathy between us. I would think of her as a dear, a lost sister, and emulate him in guarding her sweet memory from oblivion. With these gentle thoughts I sank into slumber, and awoke to—despair.

Never did the sun shine with greater splendour, or on a more lovely scene, than presented itself to my eyes, on awaking the morning after my fatal letter to Lord Clydesdale. I hailed the bright sky as an omen of reconciliation—of happiness: and my spirits rose from the weight that had oppressed them, as I joyfully anticipated an

interview with him so dear to me. I had only completed my toilet, when a letter, bearing a superscription in his well-known writing, was presented to me, and I pressed it to my lips before breaking the seal, so impressed was I with the thought that it was to announce his visit. Alas! I had only perused a few lines, when the fatal truth stood revealed, and *I* was a desolate, a deserted woman. Even while I was cheating myself with joyful anticipations of our meeting, nay, chiding the tardy moments that intervened, he, on whom my soul doated with all the fervour of youthful love, was hurrying from me with cruel haste! and now was many, many miles distant. He no longer breathed the same air with me,—and yet I was unconscious of this change!

O prescience! vainly attributed to the sympathy of affection, never more could I put faith in thee! when no secret foreboding whispered me that *he* was flying from me; when no perceptible alteration in my being warned me that the most fatal hour of my life was at hand!

And he could leave me, without one word of adieu, one last lingering look of love! Too, too well had he obeyed my imperious, my fatal mandate to see me no more. Why,—oh! why, had he not sought me?—one word, one look, would have banished every harsh feeling between us. But no, he accepted (nay, perhaps, had eagerly desired) the first opportunity of breaking the bond that united us. My peevishness and unreasonable jealousy had wearied and disgusted him; he foresaw that our union could not tend to our mutual happiness, and he burst the chain that my folly and wilfulness had rendered so galling. Yes, the fault was wholly mine: and deeply, incessantly did I expiate it, by a despair that tolled the eternal knell of my departed hopes.

In bitterness of spirit, I turned from the bright sun, whose splendour but an hour before I had blessed as an omen of happiness. Now its brilliancy was as a mockery to the darkness that veiled my soul: I shut out its light, and having secured myself from interruption, by locking the door of my chamber, I gave way to the poignant sorrow that filled my breast almost to suffocation, in a



paroxysm of tears. I wept in uncontrollable anguish until the violence of my emotions had nearly subdued my physical force. At some moments, forgetful of all but my love and despair, I determined on pursuing him, on seeking an explanation, and on beseeching him to let my recent conduct pass into oblivion. Yes, I would tell him all that I had suffered within the last twenty-four hours; and all the atonement I had determined on making, for the uneasiness I had caused him. Surely when he was acquainted that my unreasonable jealousy was but the effect of love, he would overlook, he would pardon the folly and injustice into which it had hurried me.

Such were the thoughts that passed rapidly through my mind, and, as they presented themselves, I rose from the couch, on which in my despair I had thrown myself, with the resolution of communicating my intention of seeking him to Lady Walsingham. But then came the suggestions of reason, of delicacy, of pride, to my aid; and, shall I own it, those of the last mentioned passion were the most potent in guiding my decision. How could I announce to the modest, the dignified Lady Walsingham, that, casting aside the maidenly reserve which befitted me, I was about to pursue a lover who fled from me! No, this was impossible; I would not, I *could* not, bring myself to such a degradation. But no sooner had I decided on the utter impracticability of this last delusive whisper of hope, than despair took possession of my tortured heart, and I gave way to all its wild, its unholy dictates, until reason reeled on her throne, and my brain throbbed in agony.

I perused again and again my lover's epistle, its gentleness touched me more than the strongest remonstrances could have done, and rendered the writer dearer to me than ever. Here is the letter, which I have carefully preserved, though some of the words it contains were half effaced by my tears. It was long ere I could read it unmoved, but time blunts the arrows of affliction, or else it renders us more callous to their assaults.

"This letter will be given to you, dear, too dear Arabella, when I shall be many miles distant. You have commanded me to see

you no more, and I obey; my reluctance being only vanquished by the belief, that such a step, painful as it is to me, will best secure your future peace.

“When I saw you first, my heart was, as I imagined, dead to love. Your beauty, your fascination, soon convinced me of my error; but even when I discovered my weakness, I endeavoured to steel myself against the entertainment of a second affection, lest you, in all the pride of youth and beauty’s first triumphs, should reject the offering of a heart, that had already experienced for another a deep, a true passion. But your gentleness, your apparent pity, riveted the chains your charms had forged; and I placed my happiness in your hands, and dared again to indulge hope for the future. The consciousness of the strength of my new attachment, induced me to reveal to its object the sorrows created by a former one. I related them as the mariner, when safe in a haven of rest, narrates to the person most dear to him the perils he has endured when absent from her, and for which he looks to her for consolation. I had no thought, no feeling concealed from you; and the extent of my confidence must have assured you of that of my affection. When mistress of every sentiment of my heart, judge of my bitter disappointment at discovering that your manner towards me became totally changed. Coldness and constraint usurped the place of confidence and sympathy; and I found myself compelled either to conceal the fond recollection of the dead, or to offend the living object of my tenderness. Such was my attachment to you, that I adopted the first alternative. I scrupulously avoided speaking of the past; and this anxiety not to displease you, led to a restraint that impaired, if it did not destroy, all the charm of our intercourse. Day after day I marked your increasing coldness; yet still I had not courage to depart, and by my absence rid you of communion that seemed to importune, rather than gratify you. You have broken the bond that united us: you, cruel Arabella, have pronounced the sentence of separation, and I leave you with every wound bleeding anew, opened by the hand that I once thought had closed them for ever. Pardon this intrusion, which you forbade; and may every happiness be yours.

“CLYDESDALE.”

Lady Walsingham had frequently tried to gain admittance to my chamber during the long hours that had elapsed since I had shut myself in it; but I resisted all her entreaties to open the door, until a late hour in the evening, when, exhausted by the effects of mental and bodily suffering, I allowed her to enter.

All the soothing attentions that an affectionate heart and feeling mind could offer, were showered on me by this amiable and most excellent woman; who bore the



wayward petulance attendant on this my cruel and self-incurred disappointment, with a gentleness and patience that in some degree restored me to a sense of shame for my want of self-control. I reposed in her sympathizing breast all the circumstances which had led to the misunderstanding with Lord Clydesdale, anticipating that she would encourage the hope that still animated me by whispering that he might return, and our union yet take place. But she held out no such delusive prospect; she had seen enough of him to be convinced that the step he had taken was the result of a belief, that, however temporarily painful it might be, the separation was necessary to our mutual peace; and that therefore his determination would be immutable.

This conduct on the part of Lady Walsingham was as wise as it was merciful. By destroying hope, she disarmed love of its most potent ally: and after a few weeks, I learned to reflect on my disappointment with less bitterness; though, for years, it cast a cloud of melancholy over the sunshine of my young life, and is even still remembered with sadness. I tried to think that Lord Clydesdale and I were unsuited to each other, that our union could not have been productive of happiness; but, alas! conscience whispered that *he* was faultless, and that all the error was on *my* side.

Pride now reminded me, that, though with a bruised heart and wounded spirit, I was still called on to enact a part in the drama of life. I was a fair and wealthy heiress, on whom all eyes were fixed; and must not permit even the most insignificant of the herd who sought my society, to imagine, that any one who had been known to have worn my chains could throw them off. Lord Clydesdale was universally considered to be my devoted admirer, but had never been publicly acknowledged as my accepted suitor; consequently, his departure was not likely to lead to any surmises derogatory to my dignity, unless I betrayed by any alteration in my general demeanour, that it affected me. What sacrifices does pride exact from her victims! sacrifices that less unworthy motives had never obtained. Reason—nay, religion

itself, have rarely had such influence in quelling grief, or at least in checking its external symptoms, as has this unbridled, this all-subduing passion. At its dictates the tear is dried, the sob is stifled, the sigh is sent back, ere half breathed, to the oppressed heart; the quiver of agony is banished from the lip, nay it is forced into the indication of a cheerful smile, and gaiety is assumed, while the heart is pining in anguish, rendered more intolerable by the mockery to which its wretched owner is compelled.

In obedience to this all-commanding power, I schooled myself to appear more gay and careless than I had ever been at any previous period. Yet often did I start at the sound of my own laugh, to which my tortured breast seemed to render funeral echoes, as even while the smile played on my lip, my thoughts were far distant, wandering with him whose image was never banished from my heart. Frequently have I left a brilliant *réunion*, where I seemed to constitute the magnet of attraction, and retired to my solitary chamber to weep over the recollection of the past. No, there is no slavery so insupportable as that which we impose on ourselves, to cheat those who perhaps care little for us, and for whom we care not.

Many of the persons whose attentions Lord Clydesdale's presence and assiduities had checked, now returned to importune me with them. Among those whose pretensions to please least annoyed, though they totally failed to interest me, were Il Principe di Monte Rosso, and his *fidus Achates*, Il Duca di Carditella. Both these nobles professed a chivalrous adoration for me, worthy the days of romance, and displayed it *a la Napolitain*. They sang duets beneath my balcony at night; their boat followed mine in the evenings over the moonlit sea; and the lava of Vesuvius, their native volcano, whose flames their own for me professed to emulate, was offered to me in every shape into which the ingenuity of art could torture it, to remind me of their *tendresse*. Such was their attention to my comfort, though that was a word as unknown to their southern ears as the

reality was to their habits, that on one occasion, when Lady Walsingham observed that the butter provided by our major-domo was of a very objectionable quality, Il Principe declared that the superintendent of his villa sold the best butter in all the neighbourhood of Naples; and recommended it so zealously that we knew not precisely which he wished most to serve, his farmer or myself. Il Duca di Carditella frequently assured us that the wine sold by the porter at his palazzo, and made from the vines on his estate, was superior to all other, and even urged our servant to give it a trial. I figured to myself an English Duke puffing his own wine or butter to engage purchasers, and, above all, to the lady of his love; and could not resist smiling at the contrast between such conduct and the sonorous and ancient titles of the perpetrators. Whenever Il Principe sighed, and this was not seldom, Il Duca echoed: each compliment that one offered at the shrine of my beauty, and each profession of the profound sentiment which that beauty had excited, was repeated nearly verbatim by the other, without the least apparent embarrassment to either.

This modern Pylades and Orestes always came and departed together; and their mutual harmony seemed in no way impeded by the passion they professed to entertain for the same object. There was something so singular in this *brotherhood* in love, that though it failed to interest, it succeeded in sometimes amusing me.

One day when Il Principe was calling all the saints in the calender, even St. Januarius himself, to witness how perfectly he adored me, and Il Duca was strenuously emulating him in his vows, I inquired, with as serious a face as I could assume, how, in case I should, by any possibility, (though I admitted not the probability of such an event), prefer one to the other, the rejected suitor could support the disappointment; or the accepted one be so selfish as to enjoy a boon of which his brother in love had been deprived.

“Let not such a reflection oppose a single obstacle to your decision, charming lady,” exclaimed both, nearly

in the same words, "for we have sworn that he who becomes your husband, shall select the other for your *cavalier servénte*."

Strange to say, neither of my admirers seemed to be aware of having said aught that could either shock or surprise me; and would have considered any expression of such feelings on my part, as a proof of northern barbarism and prejudice.

After visiting all the principal places of resort in Italy, and passing above four years in that beautiful land, we returned to our own country; with my notions of happiness considerably changed, and my hopes of attaining it, oh! how infinitely diminished; and yet my heart beat quicker too when I found myself again on my native shore. I concluded that *he* who was so often and fondly recalled to memory must be there, that we should in all human probability meet: and what might not a meeting accomplish between hearts that still loved? for, judging his by my own, I concluded that I still occupied a place in it. But, even should we *not* meet, was it not a blessing to inhabit the same country, breathe the same air, and know that a few hours might bring us together? Those only who have truly loved will comprehend this negative sort of happiness; but *they* will know that even this is eagerly grasped at, and will appreciate its effects on me.

I was now of age; and that important epoch was to be marked by *fêtes* and rejoicings at Walsingham Castle, where I was to receive my neighbours, and feast my tenantry and dependents. Previous to going there, Lady Walsingham and I accepted an invitation to the rectory of her brother, who, with his pretty wife and three rosy-cheeked children, we found in the enjoyment of as much happiness as, perhaps, was ever permitted to mortals. I might also add as much health, if that advantage was not an essential requisite in the other blessing, there being no happiness without it. The fact was, the felicity accorded to this excellent couple had been so wholly free from anxiety, or any of the trials to which persons of susceptible natures are liable, that the result had been an



increase of *embonpoint* to both; more indicative of rude health than advantageous to beauty.

On looking at Frederick Melville, the once pale, interesting, but now lusty and fresh-coloured father of a family, I could scarcely forbear a smile at the recollection of my former girlish predilection for him. How inferior, how immeasurably inferior was he to Lord Clydesdale, in appearance as well as in manner. This alteration in his looks, but still more, the total change in my own taste and opinions, led me to reflect on the folly of permitting girls to marry the first object that attracts their juvenile fancy; without allowing a reasonable time to elapse, in order that the stability of the sentiment may be ascertained. How few young women would at twenty select the admirer as a partner for life who might have captivated them at seventeen? and how many of the desperate passions, supposed to be eternal, would fade away like a dream before the influence of reason, if subjected to the ordeal of a couple, or of even one year's absence.

The happiness of Frederick Melville and his wife was much too unimaginative and commonplace for my refined notions. The *ideal* coloured every vision I formed of domestic life, and entered into every scheme of enjoyment. I shrank from the realities of actual existence to revel in day dreams; and in the superabundance of my folly recoiled from the possibility of ever finding myself reduced to the level of Mrs. Melville, a homely, busy, but most happy wife. Their daily occupations and simple pleasures seemed insipid and tiresome to me. Their intellectual recreations were limited to the *utile*, rather than to the exalted and elegant in literature; and their routine of usefulness, and absence of high thought, the epithet with which I dignified the sentiments engendered by study of poetry and belles lettres, allowed the countenances of both to wear an habitual expression of cheerfulness rather than of sensibility.

In the vanity of self-imagined superiority, I fancied my mind to be of a too elevated character to be content with a blameless lot like theirs; erroneously believing the

morbid fastidiousness of my ill-directed feelings to be an indubitable proof of this supposed superiority, when it clearly indicated precisely the reverse: as the factitious bodily force sometimes exhibited in delirium, is, by the ignorant, mistaken for constitutional strength.

When, after a morning passed in the perusal of my favourite authors, among whom the most romantic school of poets were the preferred, I have found Mrs. Melville, with health glowing on her cheek, and the vivacity it inspires beaming in her eyes, returned from visiting the poor, or superintending her domestic arrangements, I have pitied her destiny, and almost despised the mind that could be happy under it. The vigorous discharge of actual duties, I was as indisposed to comprehend as unwilling to perform; consequently, I undervalued those who did both. Great sacrifices, I fancied, I should heroically make; but the minor ones, which we are constantly called on to offer, and for which no praise is given, appeared to me to be beneath my attention. It is thus that too many people console themselves for leaving unfulfilled the numerous duties, the discharge of which cheer and sweeten life, while the great sacrifice they suppose themselves ready to make, is perhaps never required. To preside over a husband's household, attend to his personal comforts, nurse his children, visit the poor, pray *with*, and work *for* them, and receive him always with joyful *smiles*, was, in my opinion, to become that most uninteresting of all creatures, a homely housewife. Consequently, I deemed that it argued ill for the taste and refinement of Frederick Melville, that his attachment to his wife seemed to increase in proportion to her indefatigable discharge of this dull and vulgar routine of duties.

I had figured the parsonage to myself as an old-fashioned house, modernized into a simple but elegant villa, with myrtles, woodbine, and roses, peeping into each window. The furniture, light, tasteful, and luxurious—no splendour, but all that persons of refined habits could require. The picture I formed comprised a small but most comfortable drawing-room, opening into a conservatory redolent of sweets—a library containing the

choicest authors—a boudoir, with all its fairy elegancies, and an Æolian harp placed in its window, to catch the sighing of the night-breeze on its strings. I fancied all the decorations peculiar to female taste, and all the graceful implements indicative of feminine occupation. Each apartment was to be filled with rare flowers, and the presiding deity simply, but most becomingly attired, was to languidly, but sweetly, do the honours of this imaginary little paradise; repaying her husband for a thousand nameless attentions—not by the bustling activity of a housekeeper, but by the gentle smiles and soft words peculiar to heroines in novels.

This was the picture my fancy had drawn of Addlethorp Rectory; though the name had always jarred on my ear, and suggested the necessity of bestowing on the spot a more euphonious denomination. The married lovers must, according to my notions, in the constant communion of thought and study, have grown somewhat paler, and more pensive—that palor arising from deep thought, and that pensiveness which excess of happiness produces on high-toned minds, by making them tremble for its duration.

How, then, were my expectations disappointed by the reality of Addlethorp Rectory and its owners! Instead of a modernized villa, a square, red brick, mansion, met my view. No myrtles, woodbine, or roses, peeped into the windows; and the green boxes of mignonette which supplied their places, odorous though they were, seemed to me to be but a sorry substitute. The garden into which the windows of the principal rooms opened, might have satisfied even my fastidious taste; but those rooms sadly shocked my notions of elegance and comfort—shining oak panels, and book-cases to correspond, stowed with volumes of no rich hues of binding, were its most conspicuous features. No mirrors were to be seen, and no silk draperies met the eye; but white dimity curtains, with chairs, and a sofa that seemed to have been made before the possibility of reclining in it had been taken into consideration: for its form and texture defied such a position. A work-table, on which was placed a basket

well filled with nondescript pieces of linen, ycleped plain work, and all the homely apparatus of a village sempstress, lay by it.

To be sure, the room was scrupulously clean and cheerful, and wanted nothing for positive use, though it contained no article for mere ornament. Still, its rustic plainness struck me as being disagreeable; and the increased plumpness and gaiety of its owners, shocked my preconceived notions. The whole house and its arrangement were equally plain and simple. Everything was perfectly clean, but all of the cheapest texture and most simple form. I could have fancied myself in the dwelling of some primitive quaker, who disdained ornament or elegance: yet never had I beheld, in the most splendid saloons, rich in all that unbounded wealth and refined taste could lavish on them, such happy faces as in the homely parlour of Addlethorp Rectory.

The conversation of the rector and his wife was little calculated to excite any interest in a mind teeming with all the morbid sentiments that filled mine. To hear that *old Farmer Brookby's* health was much amended; Dame Gateby's leg not broken, as was supposed; and poor Martha Dobson's case not so hopeless as was feared, only excited in me *ennui* and dissatisfaction, while this intelligence created in Mr. and Mrs. Melville the most lively interest. The rapid progress which her pupils at the charity school were making; the good qualities of the curate and his wife; and thankfulness to Providence for having placed her lot among such good people, were the themes most frequently chosen by Mrs. Melville, while she plied her needle; little aware how callous a listener she had for her "short and simple annals of the poor;" but to which Lady Walsingham lent no cold ear.

"I see no harp here," said I, one day, to Mrs. Melville, during our short *séjour* in the parsonage—"I remember you excelled on that instrument."

"It is an expensive acquisition," replied she; "and as I have a pianoforte, I thought it more prudent not to purchase a harp. Besides, the truth is, I should not have had time to practice; for what with my household avo-



cations, my children, my school, my garden, and, though last not least, my poor, I find little spare time for music."

"But does not all this daily recurrence of occupation weary and depress you? *I* should soon sink under it, I am sure."

"O! dear, no; on the contrary, it keeps me more cheerful; for the consciousness of endeavouring to fulfil one's duties, exhilarates the spirits."

"But do you not feel very solitary and dull, when Mr. Melville is compelled to be absent?"

"It is true, I miss his presence very much at the hours at which we are accustomed to meet; but I have so many things to attend to, that I have not leisure to be dull. Besides, I look forward with such delight to his return, and have so many little preparations to make to welcome him, that this occupation alone would sustain my cheerfulness."

"May I, without being indiscreet, inquire in what consist these preparations?"

"In a thousand trifling things, which, though trifling, nevertheless have a lively interest for those who are fondly attached to each other."

Come, come, thought I to myself, all the romance of love is not yet over. Here, amid all the duties, I shall hear of some little schemes of pleasure, some delicate attentions, such as placing fresh flowers in his room, or surprising him with some unexpected little gift of affection. Yes, yes, housewife as she is, she is still a woman at heart, and has not forgotten all the sentiment of love.

"But you have not yet told me your preparations," resumed I.

"Well, then, to commence. *Imprimis*: I make some new article of dress for him: shirts, cravats, bands, gown, or in short, anything he may require; and which I know he will wear with double pleasure as being made by me. I teach the baby some new word, and the eldest a hymn that he will like to hear. I copy out, in a large hand, some of his sermons; prepare different little articles of confectionary, to which he is partial, and endeavour,

as well as I can, to supply his place to his parishioners—thus occupied, time passes imperceptibly.”

“But do your thoughts never revert to a more gay life, to a more brilliant position?”

“Never, I assure you; who would not prefer happiness to gaiety, and comfort to splendour? I possess both; and most thankful am I for such inestimable blessings.”

“It has occurred to me more than once since I have been here, dear Mrs. Melville, that your dwelling might be rendered more elegant—more worthy of its inmates.”

“I am sorry you do not like Addlethorp Rectory, we are very partial to it; and no wonder, we have been so happy here”—and she looked around, as if she loved the very walls, and the clumsy tasteless furniture.

“You mistake me, dear Mrs. Melville; I do not dislike your residence; I only wished it possessed more elegance—more of those luxurious comforts that one sees in the generality of houses. For instance, I would have the red brick front that makes one hot to look at it, concealed by parasitical plants. This apartment should be enlarged by two projecting bay windows, opening into the garden. That settee should give place to a comfortable lounge sofa, well lined with eider-down pillows; two *bergères* should fill up the space occupied by yonder straight-backed chairs, that forbid ease; a carpet of such an ample pile, that no footstep could be heard to fall on it, should replace this one, and a mirror or two should reflect back the treasures of the garden. A sober-tinted silk should form the curtains and covers of the chairs and sofa, instead of that cold and cheerless looking white dimity; and a few light and elegant tables and consoles with richly bound books scattered over them, should give the finish.”

“The room would doubtless gain much by your proposed change of decoration, dear Lady Arabella; but would it then be as suitable for the wife of a minister of the gospel?”

“Do you then imagine that elegance is incompatible with religion?”

“By no means; I only think that a clergyman and

his wife should set the example of humility to those with whom example has more effect than precept; and that lessons on the advantages of that virtue from the pulpit, might fail to make the desired impression, if the residence of the preacher was known to abound in those luxuries against an indulgence in which he warned his hearers. But, independent of this motive, the expense of the alterations you suggest would offer an insuperable objection."

"I imagined that Mr. Melville's benefice brought in a considerable revenue."

"So it does; one amply sufficient to gratify our simple tastes, enable us to ameliorate the condition of our poor parishioners, and lay by a modest provision for our children. But were we to indulge in the expensive luxuries you propose, our means, ample as they are, would be inadequate to these objects; and the fine things you speak of would only serve to reproach us for the sacrifice of our duties and principles, at the shrine of a vanity which in us would be worldly and culpable. It is very natural for Lady Arabella Walsingham, born and nursed in the bosom of wealth and splendour, to think the elegancies of life to which she has ever been accustomed essentially necessary to her personal comfort; but for us, their absence is no privation."

"*Chacun a son gout,*" thought I, by no means satisfied with the result of my suggestions.

"But you have not told me," resumed I, "why you do not conceal the red brick front of the house, by parasitical plants?"

"Merely because they engender insects that fill the rooms and annoy the children."

"What," thought I, "submit to behold that fiery-looking front, staring one in the face, when it might be concealed, because the plants breed insects that annoy children; really this is being very considerate."

I knew not the heart of a mother; I was unworthy of such a boon; and in my egotistical vanity, believed myself, with all my overweening selfishness, superior to the excellent person before me.

I left Addlethorp Rectory without regret; and during my journey to Walsingham Castle, listened silently to Lady Walsingham's occasional comments on the happiness of her brother and his family; a happiness so little suited to my taste as to create no envy in my breast.

Every inn where we stopped to change horses during the last day of our route poured forth its inmates to stare at and welcome the owner of Walsingham Castle. At a few miles' distance from it, a cavalcade of the tenantry, headed by my steward, met me; and notwithstanding my resistance, unharnessed the horses and drew the carriage to my paternal home, amid the joyful acclamations of a vast concourse of people.

I had not seen this abode since my infancy, and retained no recollection of it, consequently its feudal splendour now struck me with delight. A flag emblazoned with the Walsingham arms proudly floated from the ramparts; the bells of three neighbouring churches tolled merrily, and the wives and daughters of my tenantry, attired in their Sunday clothes, stood curtsying to the ground, while they offered *bouquets* of flowers, enough to have filled at least a dozen carriages. A new sense of my own importance was now added to my other vanities. I looked proudly around me, acknowledging by dignified bows the homage that was offered to me.

How easy it is for the rich to make themselves beloved! A few gracious smiles had already won the hearts of those good people, who rent the air with shouts of applause. When I entered the hall I paused, overcome with delight at the grandeur of its appearance. Coats of mail, helmets, shields, and arms, crowned with the armorial banners of the family, were ranged along its lofty walls; and an oriel window of ancient stained glass, through which the setting sun threw its bright rays, diffused a variety of the most gorgeous hues over the polished steel of the armour, and the marble pavement of the hall. Here were assembled the grey-headed servitors of my father, with good Mistress Mary at their head, all blessing and welcoming me to my home. I fancied myself invested with an accession of height, as



with a stately assumption of dignity that would not have shamed La Dame Chatelaine of a melo-drama, I walked through the long train of retainers, dispensing nods and smiles around; and ascended the flight of marble steps that led to the principal suite of state rooms.

Here new delight awaited me. Apartments of vast proportions, furnished in a style of unrivalled magnificence, the walls glowing with the most admirable productions of the Italian school, met my view. I seemed to be some heroine of romance, long banished, but at length restored to her hereditary rights; and, as my glad eyes gleamed around, I was ready to exclaim, "And all this is mine—really mine!"

Yet, even at that moment when, inflated by pride and vanity, I gloried in my possessions, memory recurred to *him* whom I once hoped would have shared with me the possession of this splendid castle; and I would have almost resigned it to have had my hand placed in his, and to have had a right to call him mine. Such were the thoughts that flashed across my mind, as I slowly paced through the *enfilade* of apartments, until I came to one of less vast proportion, and of more modern decoration. There hung the portraits of my father and mother; and as my eyes fell on his mild and benevolent face, which seemed to welcome me to my ancestral home, a flood of gushing tears relieved the oppression that impeded my breathing. This pensive and dear countenance reminded me, for the first time since I entered the castle, of Lady Walsingham. I blushed crimson at the recollection of this ungracious and egotistical proof of my negligence; and, turning, I found her pale and melancholy; her eyes, too, fixed on the portrait of him who would have welcomed her more kindly than did the daughter who owed so much to his widow. I pressed Lady Walsingham to my heart in silence; and she as mutely dried her tears, and returned my embrace.

"I have not yet bidden you welcome to *our* home, dear mother," said I, "may it ever prove as happy a one as *he* would have rendered it!" and I looked on his portrait.

"When you have selected a lord for this castle, dear

Arabella," replied she, "I shall seek another home: until then, your home shall be mine."

A suite of rooms had been, by my instructions, prepared for Lady Walsingham, filled with every object that I thought likely to conduce to her comfort. Nothing that taste or elegance could suggest was left undone by the upholsterer that had taken my orders; nor was he less attentive to those which related to my own apartments. All the classical decorations that I had ever admired in Italy or praised in France, joined to the exquisite neatness and comfort peculiar to England, were here united; and, as I examined the details and enjoyed the *ensemble*, I was not a little elated.

I stood before a vast mirror, half draped by the pale blue silk hangings with rich silver fringes, that lined the walls of my dressing-room; and, as I contemplated my own image, vanity whispered, that even without the immense wealth and high nobility which I possessed, that form and face might well aspire to captivate. As I gazed on my mirror, I almost questioned the possibility of any man whose heart was not already occupied, resisting my powers of attraction; until memory reminded me that *he*, whom alone I wished to fix, had thrown off my chains the moment they pressed too heavily on him; and this reflection checked the over-weening self-complacency in which I was indulging.

I spent six months at Walsingham Castle; receiving from and giving a succession of *fêtes* to the whole neighbourhood. I found myself an object of universal attraction, and, as I make no doubt, of envy; though the demonstrations of it were so skilfully concealed that I was unconscious of the existence of the sentiment. The young ladies all copied my dress, the most indisputable proof of female admiration; and the elderly ones, more especially those who had unmarried sons or nephews, plied me with all the delicate attentions and adroit flatteries with which match-making dames assail wealthy heiresses. Never, however, for a moment, did I now doubt that my own personal claims to admiration were not the cause of the homage I received.

My vanity increased with the food continually administered to its craving appetite; and, in proportion to this increase, was my astonishment that Lord Clydesdale had the self-control to free himself from my chains. Yet the knowledge that he had done so, though it wounded my *amour propre*, and still rankled at my heart, impressed me with a high opinion of his strength of mind, rather than with any suspicion of my own weakness.

How I longed to meet him again, and once more to subjugate his heart; for it seemed a reproach to my powers of captivation, that he *could* fly from me. Every object that pleased, every point of view that charmed me, were thought of with a reference to *how he* would approve them. I associated his beloved image with every scene around me; and almost cheated myself into believing that we might yet be united.

It was this delusive hope that caused me to rejoice when the time came for leaving Walsingham Castle; believing that in the metropolis my encounter with Lord Clydesdale was inevitable.

With a heart beating with joyful anticipations, I again found myself in London; and those anticipations seemed on the eve of being realized, when I read the announcement of Lord Clydesdale's arrival in town. When I drove through the streets, I fancied every tall distinguished looking man must be he. I looked for him in vain at the opera; and never accepted an invitation without expecting to meet him. Still, day after day passed away, and I saw him not!

"Where could he be?" was a question I asked myself every night, as, fatigued and dispirited, I sought my couch; but the question was an enigma beyond my power of solving.

Well has it been said, that "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" mine was sick. But as my hope of meeting Lord Clydesdale faded away, my desire to encounter him became more ungovernable. It had now grown to be the object of my daily thoughts—my nightly dreams. A meeting must, as I fancied, inevitably lead to a reconciliation, and a renewal of our engagement.

One glance would explain all; and no false pride on my part should prevent a perfect *eclaircissement*. Yes, I would avow my faults, and atone for them; and all would yet be well, could we but meet.

An invitation to dine at the Duchesse of Mellincourt's had been accepted by Lady Walsingham and me. As the day approached, I wished to find an excuse for declining it, for my spirits were depressed by the continual disappointment of not seeing him, whom alone I wished to behold. Two days previous to the dinner, I met the Duchesse of Mellincourt at Lady Fotheringay's; when, alluding to the dinner engagement, she mentioned that Lord Clydesdale was to meet us at her house. I found it difficult to repress the emotion this news excited; I felt inclined to embrace her in the joy that filled my heart; and I went home to indulge once more in dreams of happiness, and to study a toilet that should set off my person to the utmost advantage.

Never had I bestowed so much attention on this, to most women, momentous subject. Long did I waver between a robe of pale rose or cerulean blue; but at length I decided that simple, but always elegant, white should be the toilette, with delicate pink and silver bows on the robe and in my hair, and pearls for my neck and arms. I thought the time would never arrive, so slowly did it seem to creep: I went to dress full two hours before my usual period; repeatedly changed the arrangement of my hair, and indefatigably consulted my mirror, to be assured that all was right.

We were among the first guests that arrived at the Duchess's. I almost feared to raise my eyes, lest they should too suddenly encounter him whom they languished to behold. Guest after guest arrived, and as the groom of the chambers announced each aristocratic name, I listened with painful eagerness to hear his pronounced.

When at length the maitre d'hotel's notice *que le diner est servi* summoned us to table, and that I saw the guests seated, I looked anxiously to observe whether there was a vacant place; and experienced a bitter sense of disappointment at finding every seat occupied. My joyful



anticipation and *recherché* toilet were then all in vain; he who occasioned the one, and to please whom the other was studied and adopted, came not. I could have wept over this cruel disappointment, but pride came to my aid; and while my heart was tortured I forced a smile to my lips, and compelled myself to answer the commonplace questions addressed to me by the persons around me.

Talk of Spartan stoicism, what is it compared to that which a proud woman is obliged to assume when in the midst of society she finds herself "a cynosure for curious eyes," with the painful consciousness, that were one tear of those that are struggling to gush forth, suffered to be visible, she would become the object, not of general interest and sympathy, but of idle and malevolent curiosity, and occasion countless faults and injurious rumours. Of how many pangs does this knowledge quell every external symptom, how many tears are suppressed and sighs stifled, until in the privacy of her own chamber, unseen by mortal eye, a free vent can be given to them. And yet people call women weak and destitute of self-control!

When dinner was nearly over, Lady Hallifax, who sat opposite to me, observed to one of the party that she expected to have met Lord Clydesdale.

"I saw him yesterday," continued she, "and he mentioned that he was to dine here to-day. I told him that he would meet Lady Walsingham and Lady Arabella, who I knew were friends of his, for Lady Walsingham had told me they knew him in Italy. But I must not make either of you, ladies, blush by repeating the very high eulogiums he bestowed upon both, and eulogiums from Lord Clydesdale are not indiscriminately given, for he is the most fastidious person possible."

"I received an excuse from him this morning," replied the Duchess of Mellincourt, "stating that he was suffering under a violent headache."

"I fancy he is grown a little hypochondriacal of late," said Lady Ardenfield; "for he sent similar excuses to Lady Mordaunt's and to Lord William Crofts, and I saw

him the day after each dinner in apparently perfect health."

How I writhed while listening to this statement; I had dined at both the parties to which Lady Ardenfield referred; and it now became obvious to me, that he had absented himself from them, and also from the Duchess of Mellincourt's, to avoid meeting me. Had I then become an object of such distaste to him that he could not bear to encounter me? or did his reluctance proceed from a dread of again exposing his heart to the power of my fascinations? Need I tell my own sex which supposition gained belief in my mind? Yes; I now became convinced that he still retained too tender a feeling towards me, to admit of his trusting himself in my presence; and this belief consoled me in some degree for the disappointment occasioned by his absence. But then came the reflection, that if thus carefully bent on avoiding me, how was I to meet him? and my hopes became faint, and my spirits again sank at the prospect of days passed in vain expectation, and nights as in vain regrets—I thought the evening interminable. The commonplace observations exchanged in the drawing-room, the lackadaisical compliments by the men, and the simpering complacency with which they were received by the women, appeared to me to be more than usually insipid. I offended more than one of the satellites that hovered round me by my total inattention to the *petits soins*; and had I not been an heiress as well as a belle, might have risked losing my popularity. But heiresses have been from time immemorial privileged persons, and my abstraction and *brusquerie* were therefore pronounced to be *tres piquant*, and quite delightful when compared with the over-anxious civilities of the portionless young ladies who abound in every society.

Day after day, and week after week rolled away, bringing with them the same dull round of engagements that the upper circles misname amusements; and yet I never caught even a passing glance of Lord Clydesdale—still his image occupied my thoughts by day, and my dreams by night. I longed to question those acquainted

with him, whether he was still in London; but I feared to betray my emotion, even while making the demand, and consequently refrained from inquiry. His pertinacity in avoiding me, seemed only to have excited an increased desire on my part to behold him again; and the facility with which I accomplished every other object, rendered my defeat in this, the dearest of all, more difficult to be borne. I became daily more imperious, more capricious, and unamiable. Yet this inequality of temper and haughtiness of manner, deterred not a numerous train of suitors from endeavouring to propitiate me. The perfect indifference I manifested to all, inspired each individual with hopes of rendering himself agreeable by submission and perseverance; but, angered by their want of spirit and tact, I severely tested their powers of forbearance. It was, however, proof against all the trials to which I subjected it; until unqualified rejections left them no room for hope, and restored to me the peace which their importunities had ruffled.

Notwithstanding all my vanity, I shrewdly suspected that my fortune had a greater influence over these pretenders to my hand, than the personal attractions, relative to which they paid me such florid compliments. This suspicion offended my *amour propre*; and I avenged its humiliation by a contemptuous negligence of manner towards my suitors that might, if it had been adopted by Penelope of old, have enabled her to have sooner rid herself of her more troublesome ones. But my Ulysses came not to relieve me from mine; so I was compelled to dismiss them in *propria persona*. When they discovered the impartiality I displayed towards them, they unanimously joined in decrying me. I was pronounced to be a proud, capricious, and heartless woman, who never had, or never could, love any creature but self! and whose fortune, large as it was, would be insufficient to make amends for my ill temper. Lady Walsingham and I heard of their revengeful strictures from many sources. She wished that I could have behaved with more politeness to them; adding, that it was always considered that the highest compliment a man could pay to a woman, was to demand her hand.

“Yes, my dear Lady Walsingham,” have I answered, “provided he does not demand also the large fortune that appertains to that hand. A portionless demoiselle has reason to consider it a compliment when a man solicits to become her husband, because she must know that he can have no pecuniary motive. But those needy aspirants who seek to prop up their falling fortune by that of an heiress, deserve no ceremony from her, and no pity from others, when they are foiled in their mercenary speculations.”

How infinitely high did Lord Clydesdale rise in my estimation when I contrasted his conduct with theirs. Alas! every man who tried to render himself agreeable to me, lost even the claims he possessed to become so, when judged by a comparison with him who was my *beau-ideal* of perfection.

At length the season drew to a close, and it became necessary to determine where the autumn and winter should be passed. I should have proposed a return to France and Italy, but that some spell seemed still to attach me to the country that *he* inhabited. I therefore determined to remain in England; and to pass the ensuing months in a round of visits to the various houses to which we were invited.

About this period, I began to remark the frequent visits of Lord Westonville, a nobleman of an agreeable exterior and gentlemanly manners, but of reserved habits. He, among all the men who hovered round me, was the only one who did not appear to offer homage, or make any effort to conciliate my favour. This seeming indifference, while it gave me a better opinion of him, as compared with my suitors, served also to excite a certain degree of interest or curiosity relative to him.

“What, then,” thought I, on observing the frequency of his calls, and “the lingering, coy delay” with which he continued to prolong their duration, “he, too, like all the others, aspires to please the rich heiress. Poor man! he, too, will share their fate; and subject himself to the mortification of a refusal, as soon as he has declared himself in form.”



And yet there was something so amiable about him, that *malgré* my woman's vanity, I wished to spare him the humiliation of a rejection, by preventing him from placing himself in the position of receiving one. I therefore increased the coldness of my manner towards him, to the utmost extent to which politeness permits its votaries to go.

Yet, strange to say, his visits continued to be as frequent as before; and, still more strange, he appeared wholly regardless of my *hauteur*. He seemed perfectly consoled for my taciturnity by the unaffected cheerfulness of Lady Walsingham's conversation, and I concluded, that discovering my distaste to his attentions, he had transferred a portion of them towards her, for the purpose of conciliating her influence in his favour. I smiled internally, at anticipating the disappointment that awaited him, and expected every day to hear my stepmother commence a covert plan of attack, by praising the knight, whose cause she seemed to encourage, if not espouse. Still she said nothing; and my curiosity became more piqued. Unable to repress it, I one day remarked to her, that Lord Westonville had now become the most constant and assiduous of our visitors.

"I hope his presence is not disagreeable to you, my dear Arabella," replied Lady Walsingham, looking somewhat embarrassed.

"Ho, ho," thought I, "now I shall hear what I have so long been expecting. It is evident she wishes that I should be favourably disposed towards him."

"Why, as to being disagreeable to me, *ma chere belle mere*," answered I, "as long as he chooses to confine his attentions to mere friendship, I can have no objection to his visits; but beyond that, I acknowledge that they would not be acceptable."

"I rather feared so," said Lady Walsingham; "and this fear has had great weight with me. Still I hoped, that when better acquainted with Lord Westonville, who is really an estimable man, you might have conquered your repugnance. Your feelings, of course, my dear Arabella, have the greatest weight with me."

“In a case like the present they are doubtless of the utmost importance,” replied I.

“Am I then to conclude that such a union would be painful to you?” asked Lady Walsingham; “because, in that case, I would at once put an end to his hopes.”

“Such a union is quite out of the question, and the sooner you tell him so, the better.”

“But, surely some delicacy is due to his feelings; his proposals have been so generous, so—”

“Really, my dear Lady Walsingham, I cannot discover the generosity. Ladies with large fortunes of their own, can seldom, if ever, experience any great generosity on the part of their suitors.”

“I perceive that your dislike to Lord Westonville is insurmountable,” said *ma belle mere*, “and therefore I shall not accept his hand.”

“Not accept his hand!—good heavens, you astonish me—I had no idea—you have taken me quite by surprise,” replied I, totally forgetful, at the moment, what a silly figure I must make by avowing the error into which my vanity had plunged me. “Then Lord Westonville’s views are directed to *you*?”

“I have only lately been aware of his predilection,” answered Lady Walsingham; “but I should never have permitted his attentions, had I imagined that your feelings were so repugnant to my accepting him. I never have been, never can be, unmindful of all that I owe to you and your excellent father,” resumed she; “and ill would it become me to bestow my hand on one who, however irreproachable, had inspired you with a sentiment of dislike, that might interrupt the harmony that has ever subsisted between us, or prevent my acting as hitherto, as your chaperon, companion, and friend.”

When I looked at the beautiful woman before me, I could hardly understand how I had been so blind to her great personal attractions, of which habit alone could have rendered me forgetful. My own overweening vanity had also helped towards this obliviousness; and, truth to say, the idea of her exciting admiration, or love, when I was present, seemed to me to be as wholly out of the

question as if she were old and ugly, instead of being still young and beautiful.

I felt ashamed to avow the mistake into which my egregious vanity had hurried me; and Lady Walsingham, who was occupied with her own thoughts, appeared not to have observed it. Making an effort to conceal my embarrassment, I embraced her, and murmured something about my repugnance being caused wholly by the dread of parting from her.

“I expected that you would have felt this regret, my dearest Arabella; indeed, I should have been hurt if you had not. Yet, let me assure you that if my marriage was to separate me from you, before yours had more naturally led to this result, I should never have had courage to contemplate such a measure. But, with so many suitors, it is impossible that you should not select some one on whom to bestow your hand; and when that hour arrives, my continued residence beneath your roof would not be necessary, and, certainly, would not be agreeable to your husband.”

Talk not to me of an event that is now never likely to occur. You know the cruel disappointment my own folly has occasioned me; a disappointment, the effects of which have not yet ceased to be felt with bitterness. But no more of that—I shall never marry. Yet I must not, therefore, permit you to renounce a union that secures you a protector and companion for life. No! that would be too selfish.”

“I had determined,” resumed Lady Walsingham, “on informing Lord Westonville that I should, with his permission, take a year to consider his proposals; not, however, holding him bound to any engagement, though I should deem myself excluded from entertaining any other proposition of a similar nature during that period. If his attachment be as sincere as I am willing to believe, he will not object to so reasonable a plan; and within that period my *chaperonage* for you, dear Arabella, may be no longer necessary.”

“I see by the smile on your lips, *ma belle mere*, that you are incredulous with regard to my determination of

leading a life of single blessedness. But time will prove that this resolution is a firm one; and, *en attendant*, I do not see why you should compel Lord Westonville to the probation of a year, satisfied as you already are that he is amiable, sensible, and suitable; in fact, to exhaust all the panegyrical *bles*, unexceptionable. If his lordship will condescend to pass a few months of every year at my *chateau*, and receive me as a guest at his, I may still enjoy all the advantages of your *chaperonage*, with the addition and acquisition of his lordship's protection to the *belle fille* of his wife. I promise to be as amiable a hostess as possible to him, and as little troublesome a guest as may be. Do, pray, dear Lady Walsingham, adopt my plan; it is much more reasonable than yours; and I am sure Lord Westonville will thank me for the suggestion."

People are always willing to follow advice when it accords with their own wishes; Lady Walsingham's pointed towards the counsel I gave, and it required only a little perseverance on my part, and the display of Lord Westonville's impatience, to determine her to yield.

The truth was, that being still in the bloom of life, with a natural timidity of disposition which led her to seek protection and companionship, it was not to be wondered at, that, finding a man of high station, prepossessing appearance, cultivated mind, and agreeable manners, who preferred her to any of the reigning belles of the day, with whom he could not have failed to have found favour, she was disposed to accept his hand.

Time, that omnipotent effacer of *eternal* passions, had obliterated the youthful one of *ma belle mere*; or, if not wholly obliterated, had left only a pensive recollection of it that could in no degree interfere with the duties or happiness of a wedded state. Her position, even in the lifetime of my dear father, had never been one of perfect ease; for, though treated by him with consideration and kindness, the absence of all warmer feelings towards her in his heart must have made her continually sensible, that to his love for me alone she owed the station to which he had elevated her. This consciousness, operating on a



very timid disposition, served to render her more like a governess than a mistress of the house. Indeed, she never acted as such, exercising no authority, and confining herself to a scrupulous attention to my poor father's personal comforts and my improvement.

After his death, she sank into the timid and retiring companion, instead of assuming that influential dignity to which, as my father's widow, she was entitled. It was, consequently, but natural that she should listen with complacency to the offer now made to her, the acceptance of which would secure her a protector and companion for life; and he who aspired to her hand being in every way so unexceptionable a *parti*, that few women would have rejected him, or have felt otherwise than flattered by his preference.

Though no one could be more sensible of Lady Walsingham's merits and attractions than myself, still so occupied had my mind lately been by the conviction of my own supremacy, that I never expected that any man could bestow aught more than the tribute of an evanescent admiration on her inferior charms, when he had an opportunity of contemplating mine; and, consequently, when I paused before the mirror, and complacently gazed on the image it reflected, I confess that some pity, as well as surprise, was mingled in the opinion I formed of Lord Westonville's taste, or rather, according to my notions, want of taste.

I began, in spite, however, of this egotistical delusion, again for the first time to believe that my charms were not so extremely irresistible as I had hitherto imagined them to be; and this belief awakened some salutary reflections in my mind. Would that I had encouraged them! they might have saved me from some follies and more regrets. But, like most vain people, I silenced the admonitions of reason, and continued to cherish an overweening self-admiration.

Fearing that I had revealed to my stepmother the weakness of having supposed that I was the object of Lord Westonville's preference, I anxiously watched to discover to what extent she had detected me. But such

was the simplicity of mind, and singleness of heart, of this excellent women, that I really believe the circumstance had quite escaped her; or if it had not, her manner conveyed no symptom of her having observed it. A vain women would have not only quickly discovered my mistake, but would have as quickly let me see that she had made the discovery, by resenting the implied slight to her attractions, and ridiculing the erroneous estimate of my own.

But Lady Walsingham was not a vain women; and consequently, had no incentive either to detect the vanity of others, or to reap a triumph for her own. How many of our sex, who would otherwise have been estimable, have had their noblest qualities sullied by this one, but engrossing passion, which, "like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest;" rendering them eager to quarrel with the vanity of every other human being, in order to avenge the jealousy and *exigeance* of their own. How often do we hear women exclaim, "I cannot support Lady So and So, or Mrs. So and So, she is so intolerably vain;" never recollecting that this anger furnishes the most irrefragable proof, that they possess, in no ordinary degree, the very quality they condemn; for it is an indisputable fact, that only vain people wage war against the vanity of others.

But to quit this digression, and return to my story. It was agreed that the nuptials of Lord Westonville with *ma belle mere* should be solemnized at Walsingham Castle in three months; and that the intervening period should be passed in a round of visits. When I beheld the regret with which Lord Westonville quitted his future bride the morning of our departure from London, a sentiment almost amounting to envy took possession of my mind. *She* was cared for, *her* absence was lamented, and her presence desired; while I was, as it were, alone in the world, necessary to no one, and left to support, as best I might, the humiliating consciousness of my insulated state.

Never, until Lady Walsingham's engagement with Lord Westonville, had I imagined myself as otherwise

than an enviable person. My position, my beauty and fortune, and the crowd of admirers which these advantages drew around me, had induced me to believe that I was the magnet of general attraction; and had only to extend a gracious smile to any of my adorers in order to behold him at my feet. But now my feelings were changed. The homage and respectful tenderness I saw lavished on Lady Walsingham by her accepted suitor, a homage offered in as seemingly total an obliviousness of my presence as if I were not in existence, wounded my *amour propre* so extremely, that I was almost disposed to look favourably upon some one of the individuals, whose addresses I had so superciliously rejected but a short time previously, in order to secure to myself a similar devotion.

Such is the strange inconsistency of human nature, verifying the truth of the lines of our inspired bard—

“O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another’s eyes!”

The first visit we paid, was to the seat of the Marquis of Doncaster, in the eyes of whose fastidious Marchioness I had been so fortunate as to find favour; a distinction rarely accorded even to the most meritorious, and consequently sought with greater avidity by those who valued it, as many other worthless objects are valued, for its rarity.

The Marquis was a dull, pompous, but not an ill-tempered man. Naturally disposed to entertain a very high opinion of himself and his possessions, this feeling had been encouraged by the partner he had selected to share them; until he had arrived at that happy, though not unfrequent state of mind, in which people are so wholly engrossed by self as to become totally oblivious of others, except in relation to themselves. The Marchioness of Doncaster never for a moment forgot that she was of ancient descent, possessed immense wealth, and arrogated great importance; neither was she disposed to permit any one else to forget these distinctions. The slightest symptom of a want of recollection on these points, produced an increase of *hauteur* on her part, and not unsel-

dom, a sententious diatribe on the respectful deference which she considered to be her due.

Such is the weakness or meanness of the generality of people, that she found no lack of persons willing to propitiate her favour by a system of subserviency, that served to render her still more dictatorial; falsely attributing to her own acknowledged superiority, that which was but the proof of the unworthiness of her flatterers. She and her lord lived in a state of complete illusion, and this illusion constituted their happiness. They continually quoted each other's opinions, as if they considered them worthy of forming a code to regulate the conduct of their acquaintance; but never were they kind enough to defer, or refer to the sentiments of any other person. If by chance some individual, not versed in the peculiarities of the noble host and hostess, ventured to state the *on dits* of some other magnet of the land, *they* instantly drew up to the utmost extent of their stateliness, and silenced the speaker by saying, "Lord Doncaster and I am of a totally different opinion," or "the Marchioness and I think otherwise."

These sentences were considered to be conclusive; and, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, to admit of no appeal. I was not a person likely to propitiate the Marchioness by any undue deference to her opinions, as I had long indulged in nearly as erroneous a belief in the infallibility of my own; but the antiquity of my family, or as she was pleased to term it, my illustrious descent, aided perhaps by my large possessions, and an occasional and unamiable display of *fierté* in my manner, had won her regard.

To Lady Walsingham she was condescendingly polite; but the condescension was so ostentatiously manifested, as not unfrequently to render the politeness more disagreeable and offensive than the most studied negligence would have been.

The house bore undeniable demonstrations of the character of the owners—magnificence had banished comfort; and the very chairs seemed to have been designed with a reference to the peculiarities of the



Marquis and the Marchioness; the backs being so unusually perpendicular, that the slightest approach to a reclining posture was rendered impracticable. The sofas were so far removed from the formal circle in which the chairs were placed, that they were useless; and these last were so cumbrous, that to move one of them out of its accustomed station was a Herculean task. The dimensions of the furniture were of Brobdignagian proportions, totally defying any effort of ordinary strength to displace them; and I have seen the Marchioness compelled to require the assistance of two of her footmen to draw the ponderous fire-screen to protect her visage from the effects of the fire.

The bed and dressing-rooms appropriated to visitors, though containing all that wealth could place in them, bid defiance to comfort, even still more obviously than the saloons. No *bergère* or sofa on castors, to admit of their being wheeled near the fire, were to be found in them. Heavy carved and gilded ones were placed formally against the walls of the vast apartments, from which it would have required the strength of half-a-dozen lacqueys to have removed them. The dressing-table, with its accessories in massive silver, stood in the centre; and at such a distance from the windows as to preclude a clear view in the mirror of the countenance of the person who used it. This circumstance, perhaps, might account for the undue and unequal distribution of rouge that was wont to appear on the cheeks of the noble hostess; one of which was generally much more florid than the other. Probably this circumstance, too, might be cited in explanation of the occasional elevation of one of her eyebrows; the black wax, that imparted to them their raven hue, being not unfrequently placed *above*, instead of *on*, the brow.

The first day of our arrival, the only guests assembled to meet us were the rector of the parish, and the doctor, with their respective wives. The appearance of both these worthies might have served to convince even the most incredulous person, of the superior advantages enjoyed by him to whom was delegated the care of souls,

over him to whom was intrusted the cure of bodies. The reverend doctor was a man of extraordinary obesity and rubicund countenance; while the medical doctor looked as if he had swallowed half the physic he had prescribed for others, so thin was his frame and so pallid his face. Their helpmates resembled their liege lords in a remarkable degree, Mrs. Warburton being almost as fat as the reverend doctor, while Mrs. Hollingford looked in a state of advanced atrophy.

Never had I witnessed such extreme obsequiousness as that exhibited by these four individuals to the Marquis and Marchioness of Doncaster. They assented to every observation uttered by either, generally adding, "your ladyship is always right," or "your lordship is perfectly correct." They did ample justice to the dinner, which was more remarkable for its copiousness than for the talents of the cook. The reverend doctor united the fastidiousness of an epicure, in his entreaties for the most delicate morsels, with the gluttony of the gourmand in the rapidity with which he caused their disappearance; while the M.D. positively devoured like a famished man, determined to make the best use of his time.

"What is the news, Doctor Hollingford?" demanded Lord Doncaster, when the removal of the soup and fish allowed a few brief minutes of repose to that gentleman.

"No news, my Lord Marquis, the country never was so dull; scarcely a patient amongst the gentry. But among the poor, nothing but coughs and sore throats; the apothecary of the county dispensary declares he never furnished so much medicine before; and for my part, I do nothing but ride all over the parish, and write prescriptions."

"How very strange," said Lady Doncaster, "that while the upper classes are so well, the lower ones should be so unhealthy, notwithstanding they live in the same climate. Such a circumstance justifies my hypothesis, that the upper class are as superior in physical as they are in mental powers to the lower orders."

"That's just what I say, your ladyship," observed Mrs. Hollingford, "the wealthy are rarely ill. Now,

there's Mr. Goldsworthy, the retired brewer, who is as rich as a Jew, he has now been two whole years in the parish, and never once sent for the doctor. Why, it's a perfect shame! How does he think doctors are to live?"

A look of unutterable contempt from Lady Doncaster, was all the notice taken of this remark; but the reverend divine continued the subject, saying, "I don't quite know what to make of this same Mr. Goldsworthy. He has never been once to my church since he came here, which I hold to be very indecorous, and disrespectful to me."

"The two sins of omission you have both related, explains the cause of Mr. Goldsworthy's uninterrupted health," replied the Marquis of Doncaster, with a species of laugh vulgarly denominated a chuckle. "By not going into your damp church, reverend sir, he escapes cold; and by not sending for the doctor, he avoids the necessity of taking physic. Eh, gentlemen, eh, eh, what do you say to that?"

"Your lordship is so very droll;" uttered one, and "your lordship is pleased to banter," said the other.

At this moment, a portion of a glass of wine which Dr. Warburton was gulping down rather too rapidly, went wrong, and produced all the symptoms of strangulation. His rubicund face became of a dark purple hue, his eyes appeared starting from their orbits, and a convulsive noise was heard to issue from his throat. Doctor Hollingford started from his seat, drew a case of lancets from his pocket, and prepared to remove Dr. Warburton's coat for the purpose of trying the effects of phlebotomy; but Mrs. Warburton rushed to the defence of her husband, and placing herself between him and the doctor, exclaimed that he should not be bled. The *maitre d'hotel*, more judicious than the doctor or the suffering man's angry wife, untied his cravat; and Mrs. Warburton, having now succeeded in sending back the mortified and disappointed Dr. Hollingford to his seat, applied her finger and thumb to the snuff-box which she took from her husband's pocket, and conveyed a large pinch of the pungent powder into his nostrils.

“Have a care, madam, what you do,” said the angry and baffled doctor, “the consequences may be attended with great danger; the already overcharged vessels of the head may not be capable of resisting the undue excitement of sternutation, at such a moment.”

This reasonable remonstrance produced no other effect on the enlightened Mrs. Warburton, than to induce her to administer a still larger pinch of snuff to the nostrils of her convulsed husband, who now, in addition to the hiccup, began sneezing repeatedly and violently, sending forth, at each effort, most unseemly aspersions over the dishes. Lady Doncaster ordered the *entrées* within reach of the undesirable irrigation to be forthwith removed; and looked the very incarnation of dismay and anger at this untimely interruption of the repast. Her lord seemed more disposed to smile at than sympathize with Dr. Warburton's painful situation, who still continued to sneeze, though he, with one hand manfully resisted his wife's efforts to force on him another pinch of snuff.

Doctor Hollingford kept his eyes fixed on the reverend divine with a glance of such intense curiosity, that I was uncharitable enough to think, that he would not have been sorry, had his prediction of the danger to which Mrs. Warburton's treatment exposed the life of her husband, been verified, and thus established a proof of his prescience and skill. But he was doomed to be disappointed; for, after a quarter of an hour's suffering, Dr. Warburton was restored to his usual state of composure. But not so his wife; who, holding the snuff-box open, while the doctor struggled against her administering another pinch, his hand came in contact with the box, and sent its contents into her eyes, as she in a recumbent posture approached him. She bore not this accident patiently, but uttered piercing cries, closing her eyes tenaciously, as if to retain all the pungent powder that they had received. Dr. Hollingford again approached her to offer his advice, and again was repulsed, with less of urbanity than decorum warranted.

“Yes, yes, you want to make a job of me,” exclaimed



the fat lady, "I know you do, but you shall have no fee from me, I can tell you."

"For the matter of that, ma'am," replied Mrs. Hollingford, "I'd have you to know that my husband, Dr. Hollingford, is not a man to think of fees, when a fellow-creature is in peril, as all the poor in the parish can vouch. But *some* people are so very suspicious and stingy, that it is difficult for other people to escape their censures."

"If by some people you mean me, ma'am," answered Mrs. Warburton, still wiping her eyes, and horribly distorting her countenance, "I can assure you that"—

"Ladies, I beg," said Lady Doncaster, "that you will remember that Lady Walsingham, Lady Arabella Walsingham, Lord Doncaster, and myself, can feel very little interest in your local differences, and therefore I request that you will restrain the expression of them for a more fitting occasion."

This was said with the Marchioness's most stern and dignified air, and produced the desired effect; for Mrs. Warburton "hoped her Ladyship would have the goodness to excuse her warmth;" and Mrs. Hollingford humbly "begged her Ladyship's pardon."

Peace being restored, though it was evident that the angry feelings of the ladies of the D.D. and M.D. were by no means appeased, notwithstanding that a fear of offending the noble host and hostess induced them to subdue every external symptom of irritation, Lady Doncaster announced that, by letters received that morning from London, she was informed, that their friend Lord Westonville was shortly to lead to the hymeneal altar, the Lady Theodosia Fitz Hamilton.

"A very suitable and proper marriage," replied Lord Doncaster, "unobjectionable in every point of view."

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "Lady Theodosia is a most dignified and high-bred young woman; one who has a proper consciousness of her own elevated position, and who will never permit others to forget it."

"Lady Doncaster is in this instance, as in all others, perfectly correct," observed the Marquis; "Lady Theo-

dosia is precisely the model I should select to represent the female aristocracy of England. No weak condescension about her; no undignified desire to please."

"I am highly gratified by the match," resumed Lady Doncaster, oracularly, "for, as my Lord observes, Lady Theodosia is indeed a model for all women, and a union with her must insure the happiness of Lord Westonville."

"I am strongly disposed to disbelieve the report," said I, somewhat maliciously.

"And pray why, Lady Arabella?" demanded Lady Doncaster, with her most stately air.

Lady Walsingham cast an imploring glance at me; but I could not resist adding, "Simply, because I happen to know, that Lord Westonville has proposed to, and been accepted by, another, and I think more eligible person."

"But, you will excuse me, Lady Arabella, if I say, that ladies are sometimes prone to insinuate that gentlemen have proposed to them, who never entertain any such intention."

"In the present instance, there can be no mistake," replied I, "for Lord Westonville himself talked to me of his approaching nuptials with the lady to whom I referred."

"You astonish me," answered the Marchioness, with an expression that more plainly expressed, "you enrage me."

"Yes, you really surprise me, as Lady Doncaster justly observed," said her sapient lord; "and had you not mentioned that you heard Lord Westonville himself confirm his intention of wedding another lady, I should hardly have permitted myself to credit the assertion; for the Dowager Duchess of Wilmington, who wrote the other statement to Lady Doncaster, is extremely accurate in the intelligence she conveys."

"I hope the lady in question is of ancient descent, for I cannot bear the thought of a *mésalliance*; and I trust she possesses the same dignified manners that characterise Lady Theodosia?"

Poor Lady Walsingham blushed to her very temples;

but luckily no one observed this betrayal of her keen sense of the illiberal remark of her haughty hostess.

"The lady is of high rank," answered I, "and her manners I have always considered very distinguished and agreeable. To be sure, she does condescend to please; and never fails to succeed."

"Then," retorted the hostess, angrily, "she must be, in my opinion, deficient in the dignity that ought to appertain to a high-born woman. I never could tolerate the idea of a lady of rank so far forgetting what is due to herself and sex, as to seek to obtain, by propitiation, the homage and the suffrage which her station ought to command."

"Lady Doncaster speaks my sentiments on this point," said her lord, looking pompously and half angrily; "I must say, I never could tolerate the modern system which, if it degenerates not into vulgar familiarity, is at least too much calculated to make people forget the line of demarcation which should ever subsist between a lady of ancient and noble lineage, and the mere pretenders to fashion; who, by the influence of wealth, force themselves into a society they are so little fitted to adorn."

"Lord Doncaster's notions on this subject are well worth attention and adoption," observed his lady wife, smiling complacently on him.

"Your ladyship and his lordship's notions on *all* subjects, must ever be worth attending to," remarked the reverend doctor; "and happy are those who have an opportunity of being edified by them."

"Happy, indeed," ejaculated Dr. Hollingford, in a tone partaking of a groan and a thanksgiving. "Why, no later than yesterday, Sir Gregory Tomkinson observed to me, that affairs would never go right until the Marquis of Doncaster was at their head."

"What signifies the opinion of a city knight?" retorted Dr. Warburton, "when Sir John Haverstoke, one of the most ancient baronets in England, ay, and a man possessing a clear estate of twelve thousand pounds a year, told *me* last Sunday, after church (for he makes it a point never to omit attending divine worship), that his

lordship was the nobleman on whom all eyes were turned to be prime minister."

"Though the opinions of Sir John Haverstoke are certainly worth attending to, as representing those of the landed interest in the county, still those of Sir Gregory Tomkinson are not to be despised; for I have observed, no more occasions than one, that he is a sensible and discriminating man."

This speech was uttered by the noble host with an affectation of humility and condescension that was highly amusing; and the approval of Sir Gregory from so high a quarter carried balm to the wound inflicted by Dr. Warburton on the feelings of the worthy M.D.

"But, for my part," resumed Lord Doncaster, "nothing would be more disagreeable to me than finding myself compelled to accept office. Indeed, nothing short of a royal command would induce me to do so; for, as Lady Doncaster very properly observed, when we talked the matter over, a person of my high rank and fortune can gain no accession of dignity by holding office; and the fatigue and trouble present an insuperable objection, as I stated in a certain influential—indeed, I may say, illustrious quarter, when certain propositions were more than hinted at."

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "my lord and I are placed in a position that precludes us from experiencing the temptations of ambition; and I never could submit to be, as prime minister's wife, compelled to receive a heterogeneous mass of people, to whom it would be necessary to enact the gracious."

The D.D. M.D. and their respective wives, looked with increased awe and reverence at the noble host and hostess; but fortunately, a signal from the latter led us to the drawing-room, and released us from the prosy flatteries of the toad-eating doctors, and the self-complacent replies of the gratified host.

We found our *séjour* at Doncaster Castle so irksome that we abridged it, and proceeded towards home, judging by this specimen of country houses that our own was preferable to any we might encounter.



The eccentricities of our late host and hostess furnished abundant subject for my ill-natured comments during the first day of our route homewards; notwithstanding that Lady Walsingham, with the kindness that always characterised her, interposed the shield of her good nature between their defects and the severity of my animadversions. She censured the too prevalent habit in guests of violating the right of hospitality, by criticising those infirmities which the confidence of friendship has alone developed, and which in a less intimate intercourse would probably have never been revealed.

“But who, my dear Lady Walsingham, would offer this hospitality, did they not intend to enliven the *tædium vitæ*, by detecting the follies of their guests; the recapitulation of which, after their departure, serves as an agreeable mode of varying the monotony of a country-house existence? The guests are generally aware of this dissecting process, and repay it in kind. Now, I dare be sworn that at this moment Lord and Lady Doncaster are pitying ‘that poor dear mild Lady Walsingham, (who, though, to be sure, a *leetle* dull, is nevertheless a very inoffensive good sort of a person) at being compelled to live with that flippant imperious Lady Arabella, who seems to think, forsooth, that because she comes of an ancient lineage, and is an heiress, she is superior to the rest of the world.’”

“How can you, Arabella, be so suspicious and satirical?”

“And how can you, *ma chere belle mere*, be so very unsuspecting and good-natured?”

This was the mode in which Lady Walsingham’s reproofs were made and received. She was, in truth, the very soul of womanly charity, ever ready to put the most favourable construction on the actions of others, and to require none for her own; for they were pure and blameless as her soul. Yet, strange to say, it was perhaps this unusual gentleness and benevolence in her, that urged me to a not unfrequent practice of the contrary qualities. Her extraordinary forbearance irritated me at times; and led to my expressing opinions that were

not always founded in justice. She judged the world by the fair model of human nature best known to herself, while I drew my conclusions from the unfavourable specimen of it offered in my own character. We were both wrong; but *her* error was the more amiable.

On arriving at the Marquis of Granby Inn, at North-allerton, where we were to remain for the night, we after a light repast sought our separate chambers. After having dismissed my attendant, I recollected that I had forgotten a book in the sitting-room to which I attached a peculiar value, it having been the gift of Lord Clydesdale. Fearful of its getting into other hands, I seized a light, and was hurrying in search of it, when my foot was caught in a rent of the stair-carpet, and I was falling to the ground; but was saved by being caught in the arms of a person who was ascending.

Flurried and rendered nervous by this accident, I trembled so violently that the person who had arrested my fall still supported me; fearful lest I should again be exposed to a similar danger. I turned to thank him, when—Oh! merciful Heaven!—I recognised in the stranger him who for months and years had occupied every thought, filled every dream, and was allied to every hope of my dotting heart! A passionate burst of tears relieved me; and “Do I again see you, Clydesdale? Dear—always *dear* Clydesdale!” broke from my lips, as clinging to him, and subdued by the surprise and joy of seeing him, I wept on his bosom. “Cruel Clydesdale! how could you fly from me? Ah! if you knew the days of care, the nights without sleep, that I have passed since you left me!”—And here my tears and sobs precluded me from finishing the sentence.

All this scene passed on the public staircase of a crowded inn; and that there were no witnesses of it seems nothing short of a miracle. He trembled nearly as much as I did, and bore me into the sitting-room to which I had been proceeding when we met, and the door of which stood open. When he had placed me on a chair, I fixed my eyes fondly on his face—that face which memory had so often and tenderly recalled to my

mind. Its paleness and solemnity so shocked and alarmed me, that, forgetful of the pride and delicacy of my sex, and awake only to the dread of again losing him, I passionately poured forth the confession of my unchanged, my unchangeable love; the truth of which the energy of my manner and the tears that bathed my cheeks too well attested. He made many efforts to interrupt me while I spoke, but I would not be checked. The feelings so long pent up in my heart now burst forth, and could not be repressed. What, then, was my agony at discovering that his countenance became still more pale and solemn as I proceeded!

“Is it, can it be, Clydesdale,” I exclaimed in deep humiliation, “that you no longer love me?”

“The position in which this fatal *rencontre* places us,” replied he, and he trembled while he spoke, “compels me to avow that, welcome as would once have been the confession you have made me, dear Lady Arabella, it now comes too late; for, I—I am the husband of another.”

Never shall I forget the overpowering agony of that moment! how I wished it was the last of my existence! He, even he, the traitor, seemed to feel for the misery he had inflicted, but the expression of pity on his countenance nearly maddened me.

“Leave me! leave me, for ever,” I passionately exclaimed. “You shall be obeyed,” answered he, with sadness. “But do not let us part in unkindness. You have not, believe me, a truer friend.”

“Leave me,” I again exclaimed, “unless you would see me driven to some act of insanity.”

He slowly left the room, and I—stole to my chamber, to which my trembling limbs could scarcely bear me, like a degraded and guilty creature, whose heart was torn between the conflicting emotions of love and shame. When I reflected that I had poured into the ear of the husband of another, the mad, the immodest avowal of a passion, which I could no longer entertain, or he reciprocate, without guilt and infamy, the deepest sense of humiliation took possession of my mind. I writhed in

mental torture under this degrading consciousness of my own folly; tears of agony flowed down my burning cheeks; and I dreaded to meet the light of day, deserted and despised as I now felt myself to be.

Jealousy also added its sharp pangs to those inflicted by disappointed love and shame. He, whom alone I ever really, truly loved, was now lavishing on another those marks of affection which I once believed would be mine, and mine only—nay, was perhaps, at that moment, repeating to her my indelicate, my inexcusable conduct.

When had he married, and how had it occurred, that the intelligence of his nuptials had not reached my ears? It was strange; it was unaccountable!!

Never shall I forget the anguish I endured that night. Sleep deigned not to visit my pillow for even a few brief moments; and I counted the weary hours as the clock told them, wishing that each might be the last of an existence now rendered hateful to me.

I arose when day had dawned, and endeavoured, by the application of rose-water, to remove from my eyes the redness occasioned by weeping. My temples throbbed with pain, and my limbs ached; yet, though severely suffering from indisposition, I could still think of guarding appearances; and before my maid had entered my chamber, I had succeeded in ameliorating, if not in effacing the symptoms of my grief, sufficiently to make the old excuse of "a severe headache" explain the cause of my altered looks.

"There has been a new married couple in the house, last night, my lady," said my *femme de chambre*, with that craving desire to communicate intelligence peculiar to her class. "The Marquis of Clydesdale and his bride. They were married yesterday morning, your ladyship; and are on the road to one of his lordship's fine country seats. The bride is a great beauty, and is daughter to the Duke of Biggleswade. I knew the lady's maid in my last place, and she told me all about it after her ladyship had gone to bed."

I dismissed Mrs. Tomlinson for a cup of strong coffee,



anxious to abridge her communications, every word of which inflicted a fresh pang; and trembling lest she should prate of the *love* of the happy couple, which I had not yet acquired sufficient fortitude to hear of, without the risk of betraying emotions that might give rise to suspicions of the state of my heart.

How strange, and oh! how much to be regretted, was the coincidence of my finding myself in the same house with Lord Clydesdale, and on such an occasion! Yet this meeting was occasioned wholly by my own obstinacy, in resisting the entreaties of my late host and hostess to prolong my stay with them for another day. Had I yielded, how much of humiliation had I been spared! But it was fated that through life my wilfulness was to draw down its own punishment.

How was I to act towards Lady Walsingham? Should I confess my interview with my *ci-devant* lover, and the mortifying position in which I had placed myself, trusting to her affectionate sympathy for an alleviation of the misery I was enduring? I longed to give a free course to the pent tears, that were every moment struggling to start forth; and to weep on that gentle bosom which had from early youth so often supported my aching head, when pain or sorrow had assailed me.

But pride, ungovernable pride, forbade this indulgence, and dictated a line of conduct which added to my chagrin, by rendering deception and hypocrisy absolutely necessary. Oh! the martyrdom of smiling when tears are ready to gush forth; of talking on indifferent subjects, when all thoughts and feelings are concentrated on a prohibited one; or of speaking on that *one* with an assumed carelessness, to support the appearance of which requires a self-control almost beyond the reach of woman.

Yet this was the conduct I adopted; for not even to Lady Walsingham, dearly as I knew she loved me, and implicitly as I was aware that I might confide in her, could my pride permit me to relate the truth, however soothing might be the tender sympathy it could not fail to awaken. No! I would affect a perfect indifference on the subject of Lord Clydesdale's marriage; and whatever

the effort might cost me, no human being should discover the agony I was enduring. It is thus that our own defects, and there is not a more pernicious one in its consequences than pride, adds new stings to the misfortunes that assail us. Disappointment loses half its bitterness when it is confided to some affectionate friend who listens with sympathy, and who shares if she cannot alleviate the sting. Yet of this consolation did I deprive myself, urged by that indomitable pride that had so often led me astray; and which was the severest avenger of the follies it had occasioned, by rendering me still more deeply conscious of their humiliating effects.

When I met Lady Walsingham at breakfast, no word of hers indicated her knowledge that Lord and Lady Clydesdale had sojourned beneath the same roof with us the night before—that they were in fact still beneath it. I had risen much earlier than my accustomed hour, anxious to quit the inn before those I so much wished to avoid had left their chamber. But my evil destiny still pursued me; for, while Lady Walsingham and I stood at the window, impatiently waiting to hear our travelling carriage announced, that of Lord Clydesdale drove up to the door to receive its owners. To withdraw from the window, would be to expose my secret feelings to Lady Walsingham; and therefore I stood, with the semblance of calmness, though my very heart throbbed with intense pain. She made some excuse for absenting herself from the room, and I thanked her for this delicate attention; though I feared it indicated a knowledge of my weakness that I had hoped she had not acquired. I was, consequently, left alone, and determined, whatever pain the effort might cost me, to behold the wife of him, to whom I had hoped to have stood in that near and dear relation. I waited not long, for in a few minutes the bridegroom led forth his bride, and assisted her to ascend the carriage. There was an affectionate solicitude apparent in the performance of even this trivial action, that indicated a more than ordinary tenderness, and therefore inflicted an acute pang on my heart. There was a time when I was the object of similar attentions from him; attentions

performed with an earnestness of affection, more flattering to her who received them than all that mere gallantry ever suggested.

The person of Lady Clydesdale was tall and graceful, and her face, of which, when she was seated in the carriage I had a full view, was one of the most beautiful I had ever beheld. Its surpassing loveliness too well explained why mine was forgotten; and as I gazed on it for the few minutes that intervened ere the servants were ready to start, I fancied that I might have better borne his marriage had the object of his selection been less beautiful. Yet perhaps it was well for me that her loveliness had made such a forcible impression on my mind; for, from the moment I had beheld her, I never could think of him without associating her image with his. Hence, by slow degrees I learned to repress the painful recollection of my unhappy disclosure, but not until many a bitter thought and sleepless night had expiated my folly.

Lady Walsingham never recurred to the subject: and I, though anxious to display my affected indifference by conversing on it with *nonchalance*, had not resolution sufficient to name it. Her affectionate attentions to me seemed to increase daily, and strange to say, not unfrequently occasioned me more of pain than pleasure, as I fancied they originated in the pity excited by the contrast of our respective prospects.

On arriving at Walsingham Castle, the neighbouring nobility and gentry again flocked to visit me. Among them was one, whom at my former *séjour* in the country I had not seen, though his name was frequently mentioned. Lord Wyndermere was then on the continent; and was represented to me as a man of great personal attractions and accomplishments, with a highly cultivated mind. His father had been so extravagant as to leave his estate heavily encumbered at his death; and his successor's income was represented as being totally inadequate to the support of his rank and station.

As a boy, Lord Wyndermere had been much beloved in the neighbourhood, and was now always spoken of with

respect and regard. He had only lately returned to Wyndermere Abbey, a fine old seat about twenty miles distant from mine, where he was residing with a very limited establishment; but his society was universally sought and appreciated in the circle in which I lived.

We soon met; and I found that report had not exaggerated his merits. A thoughtfulness of manner, amounting almost to pensiveness, distinguished him from the common herd of young men, whose frivolity and gaiety never appeared to greater disadvantage than when contrasted with his mild seriousness. This gravity, so unusual at his age, was generally attributed to the straitened circumstances in which he found himself placed; and it served to increase the interest he excited. His poverty, and the dignified equanimity with which it was borne, was a passport to my favour; which was the more readily yielded to him, from his making no effort to acquire it.

He was polite to all; but there was a reserve in his very politeness that precluded familiarity; and to me he was less attentive—though always scrupulously well-bred—than to any other of the ladies who formed our society. I am fully persuaded, that had Lord Wyndermere possessed affluence, he would have only created a commonplace sentiment of good will in my mind: but his high birth and scanty means awakened a thousand of those romantic and commiserating thoughts and feelings peculiar to women, which generally terminate in the creation of a warm interest in their minds at least, if not in their hearts.

I often detected him gazing on me, and observed, that on such occasions, he seemed embarrassed, and avoided looking at me again for some time. Though I was ready to admit the superiority of Lord Wyndermere over most part of the men of my acquaintance, I nevertheless considered him immeasurably inferior to Lord Clydesdale; and the consciousness of this inferiority, which never forsook me, precluded me from entertaining any warmer sentiments towards him than esteem and pity. Notwithstanding my indifference, after a month or two had



elapsed, during which period we frequently met, I began to be piqued as well as surprised, at discovering that he was more assiduous to any or every woman of our circle than to myself. His attentions to them, however, never exceeded that polite gallantry so universally adopted by all gentlemen at that period; still to me, he was more cold, more ceremonious, and avoided, rather than sought occasions for conversing with me. Yet when I have been talking to others, I have remarked, with a truly feminine vigilance, that he invariably ceased speaking, and listened with a deep interest. This inconsistency of behaviour aroused a certain degree of curiosity in my mind; and that woman is in danger in whom this sentiment is awakened. Pity and curiosity are said to be exclusive attributes of the female character; the first I do believe to be a distinctive feature; but the second, and less amiable quality, appertains equally to both sexes. I will leave to casuists to determine which of the two sexes are the more entirely influenced by it, while I acknowledge that I was governed by both at this epoch; even though the wound inflicted on my peace by the late death-blow to its long-cherished hopes, still bled and rankled.

Lord Westonville now came to claim his bride, and for the first time of my life, I found myself *de trop*, though in my own house. His brief separation from the object of his affection served to increase his passion for her. He had eyes only for her, was never happy when she was not present; and notwithstanding his good breeding, it was obvious that the presence of a third person was by no means agreeable to him. He was anxious that the honey-moon should be passed *tête-à-tête*; but how was this natural wish to be accomplished without leaving me unprotected? an indecorum not to be tolerated in the good old times of etiquette and propriety to which I refer.

I quickly discovered, by various nameless trifles, all that was passing in the mind of my stepmother's future husband; and the discovery awakened serious reflections in my breast. If I thus felt the annoyance of being

*de trop* in my own house, how much more unbearable would it become when I found myself in his; and yet to dwell without a *chaperon* was impossible. The few female relatives who might have filled this onerous office towards me, were all too personally disagreeable to me, to admit of my submitting to their society.

What therefore was I to do, or where bestow my person for even a few weeks, while *ma belle mere* was enacting the part of bride? I was positively humiliated, as all these puerile annoyances presented themselves to my imagination: my dependent position galled my vanity, and led to some sober reflections on the advantages of a wedded life, which precluded the necessity of *chaperons*. Sincere and warm as was my attachment to Lady Walsingham, I could not at all tolerate the idea of forming a *tiers* in her future domestic circle, with the consciousness that my presence would be an irksome restraint on her lord. Then to find myself always a secondary object, a continual witness to the homages offered to another. No! it was not to be borne; and I almost "wished that heaven had made me such a man." Yet not exactly quite such a man, but in short some *convenable parti*, whose presence would relieve me from all necessity of *chaperons*; and whose devoted attentions would convince me, that I too might be worshipped in my own temple.

While making these reflections, shall I confess that the handsome but serious face of Lord Wyndermere more than once occurred to my mind? *He* would not have been an unsuitable husband; for though poor, he, it was quite evident, was no fortune-hunter; and his family was as ancient and noble as my own. It would have been very desirable also, to prove to those in general, who might suspect my former attachment to Lord Clydesdale, and to that individual himself in particular, that it never could have been of a serious character, by my so speedily following his example in marrying. But it was useless for *me* to think of this subject, as it was quite obvious Lord Wyndermere had never bestowed a thought upon it. Nevertheless, I *did* think of it occasionally, and especially when the sighs and whispers of the doting

Lord Westonville reminded me that my presence interrupted the impassioned eloquence of his conversation to his future bride.

One of the nearest of my neighbours was a very handsome widow, a Mrs. Temple Clarendon, remarkable for the fascination of her manners, and the exemplary propriety of her conduct. Left a widow at twenty-two, with an enormous jointure, the whole of which was to be forfeited in case of her contracting a second marriage, she, now in the fourth year of her widowhood, appeared to have renounced all thoughts of matrimony, and was but lately returned from the continent, where she had spent three years. I quickly formed an intimacy with this lady: congenial tastes and habits cemented it into friendship, and I considered it as peculiarly fortunate, when, having confided to her my embarrassment with regard to accompanying *ma belle mere* on her honeymoon expedition, she obviated the difficulty by kindly and warmly soliciting me to take up my abode with her during the absence of the future Lady Westonville.

I yielded a ready assent—Lord Westonville looked as if he thought the plan an admirable one, though he feebly uttered something about regretting the loss of my society; and Lady Walsingham, though really loth to be separated from me, acceded to a project that seemed to afford me so much satisfaction.

The nuptials took place a few days after. The same number of white favours, and the same quantity of bride-cake were distributed, as is customary on such occasions; the same splendid *déjeûner* was partaken of, and the quantum of tears shed. When this established portion of the performance had been exhibited, the whole was orthodoxly concluded by a new and tasteful equipage, with postillions and outriders decked with wedding favours, whirling the bride and bridegroom from the door.

I could not see her, who had been my kind and attached companion for so many years, depart without deep regret. It brought back to me the recollection of the days of my youth, and of that fond father who was in the grave. But Mrs. Temple Clarendon, who was

present, soon cheered me by her attentions; and by the time we had reached her dwelling, my spirits were restored to their wonted tone.

The next day, we dined at a neighbouring nobleman's, and there we met Lord Wyndermere, and, to my no slight annoyance, Sir Augustus Fauconberg, the friend of Lord Clydesdale; he whose disclosure of the motive of his friend's absence, on the anniversary of the death of his first love, had led to our separation. He was associated in my mind with one of the most painful events of my life, an event which he, in a great measure, caused; and, therefore, I disliked him. To this objection to meeting him again was added the fear that he might disclose my former engagement to Lord Clydesdale; every reference to which I detested ever since he had become the husband of another. I soon found that Mrs. Temple Clarendon was an old acquaintance of his; Lord Wyndermere also had met him on the continent; and I felt anything but gratified when I heard her engage both gentlemen to meet a party at her house the ensuing day.

During the evening I accompanied the Ladies Percival, the daughters of our host, into a conservatory that communicated with the suite of drawing-rooms, and into which the windows of several of them opened. While admiring some rare plants on the pyramidal stand, which completely concealed me from those in the drawing-room, I heard Sir Augustus Fauconberg observe to Lord Wyndermere, that I seemed to have quite surmounted my attachment for Lord Clydesdale. Curiosity riveted me to the spot; and, luckily, my companions were too far distant to hear what was passing.

"Is it possible that Lady Arabella Walsingham ever could have loved in vain?" exclaimed Lord Wyndermere.

"Why, not exactly that," replied Fauconberg, and I hated him from that moment, "Clydesdale was very much in love with her, and they were on the point of being married; that is, they were affianced, and all that sort of thing. But she took it into her imperious little head, (and I can assure you a devilish proud head it is),



that because he had once loved before, and still retained a mournful recollection of her he had loved, she, forsooth, was ill-used; and so (can you believe such folly?) she wrote a haughty letter to poor Clydesdale, commanding him to see her no more. You have no idea how long and severely he suffered from this capricious conduct of hers; for he was really attached to her, and she too, I fancy, liked him extremely."

What were my feelings at hearing this!

"How any man that Lady Arabella had once honoured with her preference could think of, much less bestow his hand on another, appears to me almost incredible; for she is a woman that once seen, can never be forgotten," said Lord Wyndermere.

"Hang me, if you are not a little smitten yourself," replied Fauconberg. "Why not endeavour to render the sentiment reciprocal? With her vast fortune, and your encumbered one, it would be the very wisest plan in the world."

I was all ear, and listened with intense anxiety to this discourse.

"It is precisely because she *has* a vast fortune, and I an encumbered one, that I must never think of her. I am too proud to become a suitor to the *heiress*, though I could worship the *woman*, and—"

Here the Ladies Percival approached; and, fearful that they might discover that I had been an eaves-dropper, I quietly joined them, and sauntered towards another part of the conservatory.

This overheard conversation made a deep impression on me. Now was the reserve of Lord Wyndermere explained, and explained in a manner most flattering to my vanity, and creditable to his feelings. What pride and delicacy did his sentiments evince! Handsome and agreeable as I had hitherto considered him, he was now invested with fresh attractions in my mind; and I felt elated at the conquest I had achieved. Yes, *his* was indeed a heart worth captivating; *he* could not even *imagine* that *I* could love in vain, nor believe that a person once preferred by me could ever think of another.

These two concise and simple sentences contained a compliment more gratifying to my *amour propre* than all the eulogiums that ever had been poured into my ear; and what woman forgets, or remains indifferent to the man, who considers her irresistible?

Anxious to disprove the assertion of my former attachment to Lord Clydesdale, I now assumed a more than ordinary gaiety. I referred with an air of perfect indifference to past scenes in Italy; had even resolution enough to name Lord Clydesdale, and spoke of his marriage, as if he had never stood in any other relation to me than a mere common acquaintance. I stole a glance at Lord Wyndermere, to observe what effect this seeming indifference had on him; and was gratified by remarking that his countenance betrayed a more than usual expression of satisfaction.

From this evening, I found myself continually in the society of my new admirer. Invited to the same houses, we were drawn together without either of us having the air of seeking any intercourse. By degrees, his reserve wore away, and his looks and manner assumed more of softness and tenderness towards me. Still, no word of love was breathed; and I, to say the truth, began to fear his objections to an heiress were indeed insurmountable. It was not that I loved, or even fancied than I loved him; for the depth and force of my former unhappy attachment had been such as to convince me I should never love again. But the peculiarity of my position, and my dislike to finding myself *en tiers* with Lord and Lady Westonville, led me to think with complacency of avoiding such a dilemma by rewarding the romantic and disinterested affection of Lord Wyndermere with my hand and fortune.

Affairs stood in this position, when the absence of the new married couple, which, from the arranged four weeks of its duration, had grown into twice that length of time, was drawing to a close: and I was thinking with no pleasurable feelings, of enacting the part of witness to their connubial felicity, when Mrs. Temple Clarendon asked me whether I had observed how much smitten with

me poor Lord Wyndermere was. I affected to doubt the truth of the statement; and remarked that a man in love was not likely to be so reserved and distant with the object of it.

This led to an animated declaration, on her part, that *she* had been aware of his violent and hopeless passion from its commencement, which dated from the day he beheld me for the first time. She eloquently painted his despair at feeling an attachment which, from the difference in our fortunes, must be a hopeless one; but which, nevertheless, would terminate but with his existence. His pride and delicacy opposed obstacles to his avowal of his feelings, which a belief that they were not repugnant to me could alone overcome; and she entreated, nay, implored, that I would authorise her, who was the sincere and disinterested friend of both Lord Wyndermere and myself, to give him to understand that he was not disagreeable to me. The warmth and earnestness of her pleading won on me; and, aided by the insidious foe within my breast, vanity, led me to believe all that she asserted. She particularly dwelt on the circumstance of Lord Wyndermere's having hitherto never felt the influence of the tender passion, a circumstance, above all others, the most calculated to gratify my fastidious and jealously-disposed mind; and, as memory reverted to the pangs I had formerly endured from the knowledge of my former suitor's prior attachment, I reflected with complacency that in the present instance no such painful reminiscences could ever wound me. I should be the only idol ever worshipped in the shrine of his heart,—that heart which proved its delicacy and refinement by having so long resisted all the blandishments of female attractions, reserving itself for me,—and me alone!

The consequence of these reflections was, that I suffered Mrs. Temple Clarendon to whisper hope to her friend; and, in a few minutes after he was at my feet. But, though he breathed vows, whose fervour were well calculated to establish in my mind the conviction of his love, he left me in doubt whether his pride did not still oppose an insuperable barrier to our union. He described

the humiliating position of a man dependent on a wife, and always subject to the mortifying, the degrading suspicion, of having been influenced to marry her by mercenary motives. So eloquently and feelingly did he speak on this subject, that it required no inconsiderable encouragement on my part to reconcile him to the idea; for, won by the passionate ardour of his manner, I was, or fancied myself, touched by something approaching to a sympathy with his sentiments.

In short, when Mrs. Temple Clarendon joined the conference, and urged that, although an heiress, my attractions were too prominent to admit a doubt of *their* being the whole and sole charm in a lover's eyes, Lord Wyndermere's scruples were vanquished; and I consented to receive him as my accepted suitor. *He* was all gratitude and rapture; and *I* indulged in that self-complacency peculiar to vain people, when their *amour propre* has been gratified, and their pride flattered by conferring an obligation.

I returned to Walsingham Castle in time to receive Lord and Lady Westonville; who, all smiles and happiness, offered a perfect picture of conjugal felicity. Never had two months produced a more complete metamorphosis on any human being, than in *ma belle mere*. The object of unceasing attention and doting love, her presence conferring delight on her husband, and her slightest wish a law, she had acquired a cheerfulness and self-confidence that lent her new charms, without having lost any of that winning gentleness which had always characterised her.

When, during the very first evening of our meeting, I observed the all-engrossing attention she excited, and the evident *gêne* and constraint my presence imposed on her husband, I inwardly rejoiced that in a short time her *chaperonage* would no longer be required. She also, sincerely as she was attached to me, had, during our separation, learned too well to appreciate the comforts of a home where she alone was worshipped, not to experience a restraint at the prospect of becoming a permanent guest in mine.

This state of their feelings, though both of them endea-



voured to conceal it, was thoroughly visible to my keen perception; and I anticipated the satisfaction with which they would hail their freedom from the wearying thralldom of *chaperonage*. I was not disappointed. They listened to my avowal of my engagement with evident pleasure, approved my choice; and we all three appeared to become more attached to each other, in the anticipation of our mutual release.

The next day brought Mrs. Temple Clarendon, intent on the momentous business of marriage settlements. She had many suggestions to offer, all based on the absolute necessity of taking measures to avoid wounding the pride and delicacy of Lord Wyndermere's sentiments. His poverty, she said, rendered him so susceptible, that I must place him in a state of perfect independence; and that, without consultation or reference to him. I was as ready to act on this suggestion as she was to offer it; but I had only a life interest in my estates, they being strictly entailed on any children I might have. The personal property I was at liberty to bequeath; and I determined on placing it at his disposal. My guardians offered many objections to this scheme, but I was resolute; and the more so, from observing the perfect disinterestedness of my future husband. To be sure, had he even been disposed to study his own interest, he never could have more effectually taken care of it than by trusting to our mutual friend, Mrs. Temple Clarendon; who was indefatigable in her exertions and counsel on this subject.

In due time, the law's delays having been abridged of half their tediousness, by the persevering endeavours of Mrs. Temple Clarendon, I was led to the hymeneal altar, nothing loth; but with no warmer sentiment towards him on whom I bestowed my hand and fortune, than an admiration of his personal attractions and a sense of gratitude for his devoted attachment.

Months rolled on, his attention to me unremitting, and my affection to him daily increasing, awakened into life by the constant and impassioned demonstration of his. I was now in that state in which ladies are said to "wish to be who love their lords;" and I looked

forward with feelings of new delight to the prospect of becoming a mother: when, one day, Lord Wyndermere, in returning from his accustomed ride, was thrown from his horse, brought home senseless, and expired in a few hours.

I will not dwell on the affliction into which this sad event plunged me. For many weeks my life was in imminent danger: and the hope of maternity deserted me, now when such a blessing alone could have consoled me for the bereavement I had sustained.

Those who have lost a husband, ere he had ceased to be a lover, ere a frown had ever curved his brow, or a harsh word escaped his lips, can alone imagine the grief and desolation of my heart at this calamity. The very circumstance of my belief in the passionate fervour of his love, and the consciousness that mine was of a much less warm character, being in fact only an affectionate friendship founded on a grateful sense of his devotion to me, added to the poignancy of my regret. I reproached myself for having, previously to my acquaintance with him, exhausted the energies of my heart in an attachment to another, while he had reserved all the warmth of his for me. The soothing attentions of Lady Westonville, who, with her lord, had flown to me the moment that intelligence of my bereavement had reached her, were ineffectually used to console me. I encouraged rather than attempted to subdue my grief; for an oblivion of it appeared to me nothing short of an insult to the memory of the dead. How I wished to have Mrs. Temple Clarendon with me; she, who so highly esteemed the dear departed, could better sympathize with my regret than Lady Westonville, who had seen too little of him to be aware of his merits. But unfortunately, Mrs. Temple Clarendon was absent from England; having made an excursion to the south of France two months before for the benefit of her health, which had lately been in a declining state.

I used to take a melancholy pleasure, when again able to leave my chamber, in sitting for hours in the dressing-room of my lost husband, in which I had

ordered everything appertaining to his toilet and wardrobe to be left as when he inhabited it. The books he had preserved and marked, the unfinished letters on his table, were now become dear and precious mementos of him in his eyes. Why was I so unfortunate as to be deprived of this consolation, melancholy though it was? and why did my evil stars conduct me to a discovery that banished all soft regrets, and rendered me for the rest of my existence, cold, suspicious, and unloving?

In an unlucky hour, my heart still filled with fond remembrances of my husband, it occurred to me to open his *escrutoir*, the key of which hung to the chain of his watch, which now always rested on my table as a sacred relic. Its drawers contained only a few letters of little interest from friends; and the billets I had written to him during the epoch that intervened from my acceptance of him to our marriage. I bedewed them with my tears, as I marked how carefully he had arranged and treasured them; and my regret was renewed by this little proof of affection. In replacing them, a burst of weeping led me to incline my head on both arms on the desk part of the *escritoire*; and in the action, I involuntarily pressed a secret spring, which flew open, and discovered a cavity in which were many letters and a large gold medallion.

An indescribable presentiment of evil seized me at the sight; and I almost determined on closing the *escritoire*, and never to examine the contents of the secret cavity. Would that I had persevered in this resolution! but curiosity, or a stronger motive prevailed, and I opened the medallion.

Never shall I forget the feeling of that moment, when the portrait of Mrs. Temple Clarendon, a most striking resemblance, met my astonished gaze. No doubt of the relation in which the original of the picture stood to him, to whom such a gift was made, could exist; for a long lock of hair, and an Italian inscription of the warmest nature, but too clearly explained it.

The medallion fell from my trembling hands, and my eyes involuntarily closed, as if to shut out the sight that had thrust daggers to my heart. I shook with the vio-

lence of my emotions, as my tortured brain recalled a thousand circumstances, received by me as proofs of an honourable friendship between my husband and Mrs. Temple Clarendon, but to which the portrait and its indelicate inscription now lent a totally different colouring.

So then, I was their dupe! their weak and credulous dupe! and all my fond dreams of love and friendship were destroyed for ever! Anger, violent and powerless anger, arose like a whirlwind in my breast, blighting and searing every soft and womanly feeling, and replacing the tender sorrow that so lately usurped my thought, by a jealous and impotent rage, that would have fain called up the dead from his everlasting sleep, to wreak on him some mighty vengeance.

Burning tears of passion chased the soft ones of grief from my eyes. I vowed to punish the false and vicious woman whose dupe I had been, by a public exposure of her shame; and I was almost tempted to imprecate curses on the memory of him, whose death I had so lately mourned with anguish. The perusal of the letters nearly maddened me, for the whole nefarious plot was revealed in them. Lord Wyndermere had long been the lover of Mrs. Temple Clarendon; but as the unhallowed *liaison* had taken place on the continent, and appearances were strictly guarded between them, it had never been talked of in *England*. When it first occurred, it was his intention to have married her, and with her large fortune repair his decayed one; but on discovering the clause by which, in case of her forming a second matrimonial alliance, she was to forfeit her wealth, he abandoned all thought of adopting this course; especially as she was as little desirous as himself to forge chains that would reduce her from splendour to comparative indigence. She knew my wealth, had heard of the weakness and vanity of my character, and as their passion was no longer in its first wild hey-day, they agreed to return to England and concoct a plan to catch the heiress. How well they had succeeded, my marriage, and the lavish generosity I displayed towards my *disinterested* husband,



has proved. Oh! how I loathed them, and despised myself, as with burning cheeks, throbbing temples, and tortured heart, I perused the details of their artifice and guilt. — “I give you great credit,” wrote this shameless woman, “for your ready tact in taking advantage of Lady Arabella’s approach in the conservatory, when you were conversing with Mr. Fauconberg. The few sentences you uttered on that occasion, will lay the foundation of the superstructure I mean to erect. Such are her vanity and folly, that it only requires a tenth part of the address we possess to secure her and her fortune. You must enact the silent, despairing, but adoring lover, for a short time, and success will inevitably crown our efforts. After all she is handsome, and not a greater fool than nine-tenths of the girls of her age; therefore, you are not so much to be pitied as you would fain have me believe. With regard to pecuniary matters, leave the arrangement of all them to me; *I* can suggest what it would appear mercenary and indelicate in *you* to propose. Your *rôle* is, to affect a most romantic love, and a *fierté* with regard to fortune, that will, aided by my advice, compel her to display a lavish generosity.”

Each, and all, of the letters, contained similar proofs of dissimulation and wickedness. The correspondence, subsequently to my ill-fated marriage, was carried on between the guilty pair with even an increased warmth, leaving no doubt of their continued criminality; for the last letter received from this atrocious hypocrite, stated, that he was wrong to blame her for going abroad, as, had she longer remained in England, her increasing shape must have excited suspicions destructive to that reputation which she had hitherto so successfully preserved free from taint.

For many months, the rage and indignation to which I was a constant prey, sensibly impaired my health; and change of air and scene having been prescribed for me, I left England, attended by a numerous suite, and passed many years in visiting Germany, Italy, and Sicily. My invincible dislike to encountering Mrs. Temple Clarendon, prevented me from returning to Walsingham Castle;

for, although I had long abandoned all thoughts of making her conduct known, I felt that I could not meet her without betraying my contempt and dislike.

I kept up a constant correspondence with Lady Westonsville, who became the mother of a large family, all of whom she lived long enough to see happily established: and when, after twenty years' absence from my native land, I returned to its shores, I experienced from her the same affectionate friendship that had ever characterised her conduct to me.

The death of Mrs. Temple Clarendon removed my principal objection to returning to Walsingham Castle. She died, as she had lived, maintaining, until the last, a hypocritical decorum, that served to conceal her vices. She bequeathed a considerable fortune to a young French lady, whom she had, some twenty years before, adopted, and whom she represented as the orphan daughter of a dear friend in the south of France; but whose remarkable resemblance to Lord Wyndermere and herself, left no doubt, on my mind at least, of the relation in which she had stood to her.

Never shall I forget the feelings I experienced when, after an absence of above twenty years, I returned to Walsingham Castle; no longer the young and blooming creature that had left it, but the staid, sober, and faded woman of forty-five; retaining, alas! many of the faults of my youth, but none of its elasticity of spirits or hopes.

I had not passed so many years of my life without receiving several matrimonial overtures, but they had all been imperiously rejected; for the deceptive conduct of Lord Wyndermere had rendered me too suspicious, ever again to expose myself to the chance of similar treatment.

And yet my heart still yearned for something to love; some object to lean upon in my descent to old age, that period in which woman most needs the support of affection. But if, in the bloom of youth and beauty, I had been sought only for my fortune, how could I hope, as these advantages were fast disappearing, that I could ever inspire the sentiment so essential to happiness? Each year, as its flight stole away some personal attrac-

tion, rendered me still more suspicious of the professions of regard made to me; hence, I closed my heart to any new attachment, though that heart pined for the blessing of sympathy and affection.

It was a lovely summer's evening when I arrived at Walsingham Castle. A crowd of aged domestics and retainers pressed forward to welcome me; and the whole scene so exactly resembled that which was presented to me when, nearly a quarter of a century before, I first visited the lovely spot, that I could almost fancy not more than a year had elapsed since I last beheld it. The beauty of the scene, and the joy of those who welcomed me, encouraged the illusion. My heart felt lighter than for long years it had been wont to do; my step became more elastic, as I again paced the halls of my paternal mansion, and as I gazed on the well-known objects around, now tinged by the glowing and golden beams of the setting sun, some portion of my youth and its hopes seemed restored to me.

I ascended to my chamber with nimbler feet than I had long known; and threw myself into a *bergère*, delighted to find myself again in my ancestral home. The hangings, the tasteful and elegant furniture, and ornaments of my luxurious suite of apartments, had been kept carefully covered, and now looked as well as in their pristine freshness. All appeared so exactly as I had left it, that I was tempted to doubt the possibility that four-and-twenty years had indeed elapsed since I had last beheld it.

I removed my bonnet and cloak, and approached the mirror to arrange my cap, *that* mirror in which I had so often, with pride and pleasure, contemplated my own image,—an image which was still vividly fresh in my recollection. But when my eyes fell on the one it now reflected, I drew back affrighted, and all the consciousness of my altered face for the first time seemed suddenly to burst upon me. Tears fell from my eyes—yes, weak and foolish as it now appears to me, I wept for my departed youth; and for the beauty of which the faithful mirror too plainly assured me no remnant existed.

Accustomed to see my face daily, the ravages that time had made on it had never before struck me as now. My feelings had grown cold, as my visage assumed the wrinkles of age; and hitherto I had scarcely marked the melancholy change in my aspect; or if I had remarked, it occasioned me little regret. But *now*, when all around me looking fresh and unchanged, as when first beheld, brought back the past vividly before me, renewing for a few brief moments the joyfulness of youth, I had been insensibly beguiled into expecting to see in the mirror the same bright face it had formerly reflected. These were the feelings that made the sad alteration in my personal aspect appal me; and I wondered how it had hitherto caused me so little regret.

It was long ere I could conquer my repugnance to look in that glass again; but vanity, which had driven me in disgust away, again led me to consult it. It whispered that the greater the change in my face, the greater was the necessity for concealing or ameliorating its defects by a studious attention to dress. Consequently I now devoted a more than ordinary time to the duties of the toilet; and in the course of a few months learned to think, that with the aid of a little art judiciously applied, I was still what might be called a fine woman.

A short time afterwards Lady Percival came to see me: and pressed me to dine at her house.

“You will meet an old acquaintance,” said she, “for Lord Clydesdale is staying with us.”

“Is he alone?” asked I, in trepidation, my foolish heart beating with a quicker pulsation.

“Yes,” replied Lady Percival, “quite alone; ever since he lost poor dear Lady Clydesdale, he comes to us every year to spend a week or two.”

“What, is Lady Clydesdale dead?” demanded I, in an agitation that I thought I should never again experience.

“Is it possible that you did not know it?” answered she calmly. “Why, she has been dead these five years; and his only child, a daughter, has been married above a year to the Duke of Warrenborough. Poor dear Lady Clydesdale was a charming person; do you know, my



dear friend, that many people considered her to bear a striking likeness to you? It is very sad and solitary for him to be compelled to live alone; for though no longer young, he is still a very agreeable person."

How many thoughts and hopes did this communication awaken! He, the only man I had ever really loved, was again free; and a thousand tender recollections of our former attachment floated through my mind, as I reflected on his solitary life, so resembling my own. Yes, we might meet, might again feel some portion of that affection which once filled our hearts; and though in youth we had been separated, we might now form a union that would enable us to pass our old age together, released from the loneless, cheerless solitude in which we both were placed.

Lady Percival, observing that I had not accepted her invitation, renewed it, adding, "Do pray come, dear Lady Wyndermere! Lord Clydesdale will be so disappointed if you do not; I told him I intended to ask you, and he said he should be very glad indeed to see you again."

This sentence decided my acceptance of her invitation, for it encouraged the fond hopes that were awakened in my breast; and a thousand visions of happy days, past and to come, floated in my imagination.

From the moment that Lady Percival left me, until the hour, three days after, that saw me drive up to her door, I thought of nothing, dreamt of nothing, but my interview with Lord Clydesdale. How would he look, how address me, would he betray any agitation? were questions continually occurring to me.

Never had I taken more pains with my dress than on that momentous day. One robe was found to be too grave, and another was thrown aside as not suiting my complexion; half-a-dozen caps and as many turbans were tried, before the one deemed the most becoming was determined on; and I experienced no little portion of embarrassment, when I observed the astonishment of my *femme de chambre*, at this my unusual fastidiousness with regard to my toilet. At length it was completed; and

casting many a lingering glance at my mirror, I flattered myself that few, if any, women of my age could have looked better. If mine was no longer a figure or face to captivate the young and unthinking, it might satisfy the less scrupulous taste of the elderly and reflecting. But above all, *he* who had seen the temple in its pristine beauty, would not despise it now, though desecrated and ravaged by the hand of time.

As I reflected on the change wrought on my person by time, that foe to beauty, the thought of how the destroyer's touch might have operated on *his* occurred to me. Was *he* very much altered? But no! age might have taken from the graceful elasticity of his step, added some of her furrows to his brow, and tinged his dark locks with its silvery hue, but it could not have destroyed the noble and distinguished character of his manly beauty.

How my heart throbbed as I entered the library of Lord Percival! I positively felt as if not more than twenty summers had flown over my head; and dreaded, yet wished to see Lord Clydesdale. After the usual salutations had passed, Lady Percival led me to a large easy chair; reclined in which, with one foot enveloped in a fleecy stocking, and a velvet shoe that looked large enough for an inhabitant of Brobdignag, was an old man with a rubicund face, a head, the summit of which was bald and shining, graced by a few straggling locks of snowy white.

"This, dear Lady Wyndermere, is your old acquaintance, Lord Clydesdale," whispered Lady Percival.

I positively shrank back astonished and incredulous.

"Ah! I see you do not recognise me," and the venerable-looking old gentleman before me, holding forth a hand, on each of the fingers of which were unseemly protuberances, ycleped chalk-stones. "I am such a martyr to the gout, that I am unable to rise to receive you, but it affords me great pleasure to see your ladyship in such good health."

I could scarcely collect myself sufficiently to make a suitable reply. All the air-built visions my fancy had formed for the last few days were dashed to the earth,

as I contemplated the infirm septagenarian before me, and remembered that he was only some ten or twelve years my senior; a circumstance which never occurred to me as disadvantageous before. Not a trace of his former personal attractions remained; nay, it would be difficult to believe, judging from his present appearance, that any had ever existed. It gave me, however, some satisfaction to observe, that he seemed surprised at my having preserved so much of my former comeliness; and I will own, that I was malicious enough, as Lord Percival led me to the dining-room, to which Lord Clydesdale was slowly limping, supported by his *valet de chambre* and a crutch, to affect a much more than ordinary quickness of pace and agility.

“And this,” thought I, “is the man who has caused me so many sighs, who has inflicted on me days of care, and nights without sleep.”

The thing seemed really preposterous, and I could have smiled at my own illusions; illusions that might have been indulged even to my last hour, had not one glance at their object dispelled them for ever.

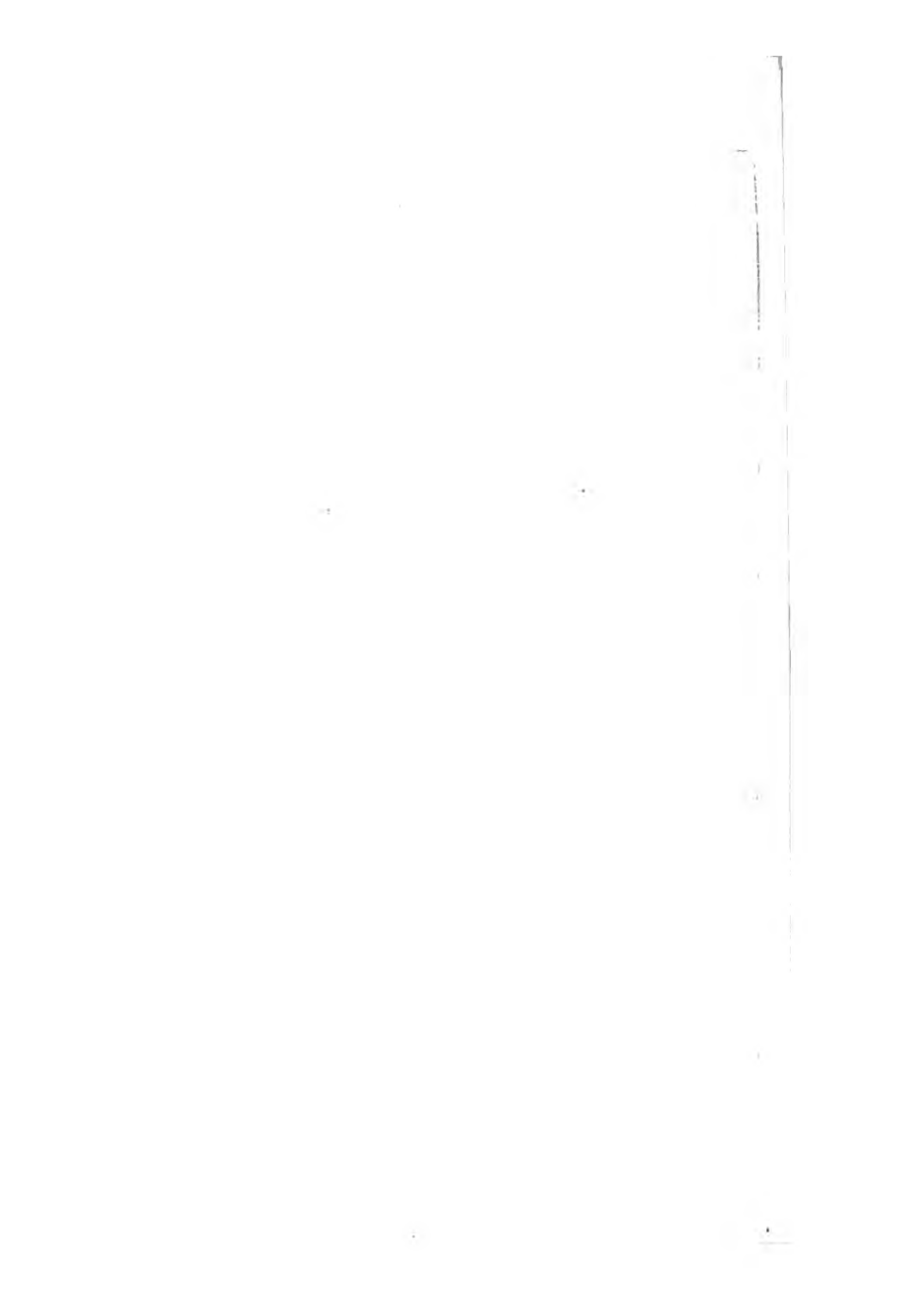
I took a spiteful pleasure in recounting, during dinner, the long walks I affected to be in the daily habit of taking; and attempted to avenge myself on the unconscious object of my resentment, for all the pain he had ever inflicted, by now making him feel the disparity between us. I caught his eye more than once fixed on my face; and fancied that its expression indicated more of surprise or envy, than of tender reminiscences. Perhaps it was to punish me that he talked with evident pleasure of the delights of being a grandpapa; the new interest it excited when all others had nearly ceased, and the refuge it afforded against that dreary and loveless solitude to which childless old age was exposed.

This was the last day of my illusions; or of my being enabled to enact the youthful.

To diminish the ungraceful expansion of my figure, I had discarded two under draperies, in the shape of quilted silk petticoats. This imprudent piece of coquetry exposed me to a severe cold; from the effects of which I never

entirely recovered: and I now suffer from a weakness of the limbs, that nearly precludes my moving without assistance. The "childless, loveless" solitude to which, alas! I find myself condemned, frequently reminds me of Lord Clydesdale's remarks on such a fate: and I am forced to admit that time would pass more happily in caressing a race of dear chubby grandchildren, than in the vain task of correcting the disagreeable personal habits of my poor *dame de compagnie*. Ay, or than even in committing these Confessions to paper, in the as vain hope of being amused, or of amusing; in which last disappointment I fear that my readers will only have too much reason to sympathize with me.





THE CONFESSIONS  
OF AN  
ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.

BY THE  
COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

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LONDON:  
SIMMS AND M'INTYRE,  
PATERNOSTER ROW, AND DONEGALL STREET, BELFAST.

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1848.



## THE CONFESSIONS

OF AN

## ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.

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“WHO cares, or thinks, about Elderly Gentlemen?” methinks I hear a young lady exclaim, as throwing down this book with a disdainful air, she demands of the shopman at the library, “If there is nothing new?”

You mistake, fair lady, many are they who think of little else than of Elderly Gentlemen; but, alas! these are young *wives* impatient to enact the part of young *widows*; heirs in a hurry to come into possession; holders of post-obits; expectant legatees; and *faithful* servants anxious to render the last duties to their dear masters, and to receive the meed of their *disinterested* services. This is an autobiographical-loving age: why, then, should *I* not amuse myself, if not my readers, by revealing the experience I have acquired, if it were only for the purpose of establishing two facts, which many young men seem to doubt; namely, that *vanity* is not solely confined to *women*; and that all old gentlemen, however improbable it may appear, were once young. Perhaps I have also another, and less disinterested object in view—the discomfiture of time, that ruthless enemy, which has lately begun to press heavily on me. I endeavoured to kill *it* in my youth, but now it has laid me by the heels; for, in sober sadness, I am a victim to



gout, unable to move from my easy chair, and, consequently, more than ever sensible of the power of my antagonist. *A propos* of gout: I wish the erudite ‘Doctor,’ who has helped me to beguile many a tedious hour, by his recondite and ‘right merie’ lucubrations, would favour the world, in his next volume, with an etymological chapter on that malady; proving, for instance, as he might easily do, that it derives its cognomen from the French word *gôût*, which we translate by taste; for who, *without* taste, ever had the gout? and how few *with*, have ever escaped it!

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I have been many years absent from England, wandering in search of that yet undiscovered good, “a fine climate;” which, like happiness, for ever eludes the pursuer, though constantly holding out delusive prospects of its attainment. The searchers of *one*, like those of the other, are, in general, confined to the class who, possessed of more wealth than wisdom, make unto themselves an imaginary good; and then set out in a weary chase of it.

*Blasé* with that most fatiguing of all lives, a life of pleasure, and suffering under its never-failing consequences, a mind teeming with *ennui*, and a frame weakened by luxurious indulgence, I determined to visit the continent; and traversed France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, in the vain belief, that a “mind diseased,” and worn-out constitution, were to be renovated by the magical air of the south. What its effect might have been, I have yet to learn; for, I have been nearly frozen by the *bise* in the south of France; enervated almost to annihilation by the sirocco in Italy; reduced nearly to a state of fusion in Sicily; and scorched into a cinder in Spain and Portugal, without having yet discovered the object of my search, a fine climate.

I returned to England after many long and weary years of absence, rather worse in health than when I left it; as the incursions made on my already debilitated constitution, by undue heat, unlooked-for winds, and unwholesome diet, instead of retarding, tended to advance,

the effects of that cruel enemy, Time. Wine too sour to admit of its copious use, food too insipid to induce even a gourmand, much less an epicure, to commit an excess, enforce the adoption of *temperance* on those who are the most opposed to it; and *this virtue*, so seldom practised at home, is the whole, the sole, advantage to be derived from a continental residence. Tired of feeding on flour tortured into all the varied forms ycleped macaroni, vermicelli, lasague, tortellini, parpadella, patta di puglia, ravioli, and half a hundred other insipid dishes; and of devouring beccaficos, thrushes, and blackbirds, washed down by ungenerous liquids, misnamed wines, I left the continent; my stomach weakened by unsubstantial sustenance, and my skin seamed by the repeated and vigorous attacks of those murderers of sleep, mosquitoes and sand-flies, that so often destroyed mine, in spite of all the futile aids of Russia-leather pillows, and gauze curtains, entitled mosquito-nets; which last more frequently serve to imprison your tormentor with you, than to exclude him.

Returned, thank Heaven! to my native land, I resigned myself a willing victim to all the luxuries it can boast. I offered up whole hecatombs of turtle and venison to appease the wrath of my long restricted and much injured appetite; and felt most sensibly that patriotic sentiment so much lauded by poets and orators, denominated *love of country*; which is only another term for the love of its table and fireside. With what a gusto, as the Italians say, did I indulge in old sherry, madeira that had twice crossed the line, and claret such as one never finds out of Great Britain! the thin and acid beverage of the continent, known by the name of Bordeaux, bearing as little affinity to that excellent wine, as *lachryma christi* does to champagne. With how much more pleasure did I contemplate an orchard in Herefordshire, and the hop-grounds in Kent, than I had ever experienced in viewing the orange groves and vineyards of southern climes; and a coal fire was hailed as an old familiar friend is welcomed after a long absence. So much was my *amor patriæ* increased by a return to its

comforts, that not even the opaque fog which presented itself, like a dense curtain of pea soup, to my startled sight, one morning in the November after my return, could disgust or alarm me. I ordered lights, shut out the day, and commanded an extra luxurious dinner. In a few months I was hardly to be recognised, so great was the change produced in my outward man. My white face had become of a rich rubicund hue, making the "erst pale, one red;" my lank person, which, on arriving from the continent, resembled the portraits of "the lean and slippered pantaloon," assumed a portly protuberance; and my feet, those barometers of health, gave indications that good living had produced its certain effects, a severe fit of gout, which soon confined me to the sofa, a resting-place whereunto I am now generally condemned more than half the year.

Change of air having been prescribed for me, I lately proceeded to this country seat of mine, which I have not visited for twenty-five years; and, *pour passer le temps*, as the French say, I have had the drawers of my old *escritoire* brought to my easy chair, and have sought amusement in examining their contents. What piles of letters, in delicate handwriting, tied up with ribands of as delicate die, met my pensive gaze; gentle ghosts of departed pleasures and forgotten pains! What miniatures of languishing blue-eyed blondes, and sparkling piquantes brunettes! What long ringlets of hair of every colour, from the lightest shade of auburne (maliciously called red) to the darkest hue of the raven's wing! What rings, pins, and lockets, were scattered around, with mottoes of eternal love and everlasting fidelity! which eternal love and everlasting fidelity had rarely withstood the ordeal of six months' intimacy. What countless pairs of small white gloves! What heaps of purses, the work of delicate fingers! What piles of fans, the half-authorized thefts of ball-rooms, thefts so gently rebuked and so languidly reclaimed! What knots of riband grasped in the mazy dance! What girdles, yielded with blushing, coy delay! with bouquets of faded flowers enough to stock the *hortus siccus* of half the

botanists in England! and a profusion of seals, with devices each more tender than the other!

The past, with all its long forgotten pleasures and pains, rose up to my imagination; recalled into life by these *gages d'amour*, which had survived the passions they were meant to foster; but which now so far fulfilled their original destination, as to make their donors suddenly and vividly present to my memory, as though they had been summoned into a brief existence by the magical wand of a necromancer. The loved—the changed—the dead—stood before me in their pristine charms; and I felt towards each, and all, some portion of long vanished tenderness revive in my breast.—Beautiful sex! soothers in our affliction, and best enliveners in our hours of happiness, all that I have known of joy on earth, I owe to your smiles, to your partiality!

This miniature represents my first love—not the object of my crude, puerile fancy; for what stripling has ever passed from fifteen to twenty, without having fancied himself, at least half a dozen times, smitten with the tender passion? What youth has ever been philosopher enough to have resisted the charms of an attractive nursery governess? or the younger sister, or daughter, of the preceptor, under whose roof he studied lessons of love and erudition at the same time?

No—this picture has nothing to do with such *minor* phantasies. It represents her who engendered in me the first rational sentiment of attachment I ever experienced, the first woman that led me to anticipate with pleasurable feelings the holy state of wedlock, as a *near*, and not as a *perspective* good, as a happiness to be attained as speedily as possible, and not as a change of life to be endured, as best it might be, at some remote period. How vast is the difference, by the way, between a passion and a sentiment! The first may be excited for an unworthy object, and in an unworthy mind; by a silly girl for a sillier boy; but the second can only be inspired by a pure woman, and entertained by an honourable man. One of the many distinctions between the two sexes is, that women feel love as a sentiment;



while with men it is a passion: hence, it takes deeper root, and is of longer duration, with them, than with us. But, in proportion to our intellectual cultivation, this peculiarity becomes less frequent; for imagination and refinement once enlisted beneath the banners of love, *that* becomes sentiment, which otherwise would have been solely passion.

But, to return from this digression (and I warn my readers, if I should be so fortunate as to find any, that I am given to digress), I now begin the narrative of my first love, verifying the words of the old French song—

“ On en revient toujours,  
A ses premiers amours.”

Louisa Sydney, the original of the miniature now before me, was one of the fairest specimens of her sex that nature ever formed. There are the eyes, blue as heaven's own cerulean hue, and the cheek with its delicate tint, resembling the leaf of a newly blown rose. There are the long and silken tresses of lightest brown, that wantoned over her finely rounded shoulders, descending to a waist whose exquisite symmetry was unequalled. Well do I remember, when one of those silken glossy ringlets was severed from her beautiful head, to fill the locket now before me! Poor, dear Louisa! how she loved me! There is something soothing and delightful in the recollection of a pure-minded woman's affection; it is the oasis in the desert of a worldly man's life, to which his feelings turn for refreshment, when wearied with the unhallowed passions of this work-o'day world. I would not voluntarily relinquish the memory of Louisa's love for all—all—what shall I say?—Alas! *my* all of enjoyment is now so limited, that I have to resign; but that, and much, much more, would I surrender, sooner than part from the conviction that she loved me.

Louisa Sydney was not only beautiful, but she was mild and gentle beyond description; yet her gentleness, and amazing docility, had nothing of insipidity in them, for they originated in a perfect freedom from selfishness, that led her to yield her own wishes to those of the person

she loved, a concession, not of *reason* but of *volition*. She absolutely lived for those dear to her; and had more pleasure in obeying their desires, than in gratifying her own.

There was a sweet pensiveness in her nature, that harmonized perfectly with the peculiar character of her beauty.—Hers was not a mind prone to gloom, but of that subdued and tender order, which, like a summer twilight, in itself beautiful, disposes all to feel its mild and soothing influence. One could not have told *her*, with the slightest prospect of success, a ludicrous story, a whimsical quibble, or any one of the various bad jokes, with which the conversation of the generality of persons is assisted in society. But she was one, to whom the fairest flowers, the most imaginative poem, or the most elevated work on practical holiness, would be felt to be an appropriate offering. Strongly tinged with romance, the romance of youthful refinement, which is a natural attribute of the best and purest of her sex, ere experience has driven the illusions of early youth away, Louisa shrank from the busy world, affrighted and stunned with its turmoil; and opened her innocent heart to the contemplation of the charms of nature, and the adoration of the God who created them.

What pictures we draw of the future!—love, not in a cottage, because she knew my lot had rendered my home a stately one, but *she* would have preferred a more humble abode.

“A cottage,” has she often said, “overgrown with woodbine, jessamine, and roses, sheltered by a wood, with a clear stream gliding in front of a garden, redolent with flowers; *this*, dearest Harry, would be my choice.”

“And our food, dearest,” would I reply, in bantering mood, “should be milk, honey, and curds, with new-laid eggs, and simple fruits.”

“Well, such food would amply content *me*,” would Louisa say, “but you men are always thinking of a good dinner. Yet, would you all be better and happier, because more healthy, if your diet was more simple; but you ‘yearn for the flesh-pots,’ the green fat of turtle, or the

white muscle of venison, the racy juice of Spain's vines, and the iced vintage of France. Ah, Harry, Harry—

“These little things, disguise it how you can,  
These little things are dear to little man!”

Ye gods, what a twinge that was! it seemed as if a red-hot knitting-needle was shot through my foot; and the exclamation it occasioned brought my blockhead of a servant in, with—“If you please, sir, did you call?”—Did I call? if I had, he would not have been so prompt in his attendance; for, during the last twenty years, I have remarked, that servants rarely come when one *does* require them, and always when one does *not*. Oh! this plaguy gout! how dependent it makes a man feel! for not only does it “fill all his bones with aches, make him roar,” but it impresses him with the agreeable conviction, that if a spark from the fire should by chance be attracted towards his garments, he might be consumed at leisure, unless some servant should arrive to his rescue. Ah! why did I *not* marry? why not have secured to myself a legitimate, a licensed nurse, whose duty, if not pleasure, it would have been, to have watched the paroxysms of this fearful malady, and to have noted the want of philosophy with which they were endured? People are always so philosophically stoical to the sufferings of their *near* and *dear* relatives, and so ready to accuse them of not bearing the ills to which flesh is heir with becoming equanimity.—Another twinge!—Oh! ye gods, what martyrdom!

Psha, psha, at this rate my confession will never be made. “*Tant mieux*,” says my tired, if not tiresome reader. Let me see, where was I? Poor, dear Louisa! we thought not of gout in her day; no, no, nor of the necessity of *easy* chairs, in which persons are most *uneasily* placed; nor of sofas, reclined on which, a wretch suffers more than on the bed of Procrustes. In her day, I only remembered that I had feet for dancing.—*Now*, Lord help me, when I look on my swollen and bandaged foot, which resembles a bloated Esquimaux child, I can hardly believe that I ever could have sported “on the light

fantastic toe," or "brushed the dew-drops from the grass, at early morn." In Louisa's time, I as *little* contemplated my present state of purgatory, as I then abandoned myself to the indulgence which has entailed on me these sufferings. The indulgences of the *heart*, then occupied me more than those of the stomach: would that the former had always constituted my enjoyment!

But to resume.—Let me open this paquet of letters, written with a crow-quill. How delicate is the writing, and the riband that holds them together, *couleur de rose*, like the cheek of the fair writer when they were penned—that cheek—what is it now? Poor, dear Louisa!

Here is the first letter she ever wrote me, for I see I numbered them.

"I fear you will think me too lightly won, and blame my imprudence in answering the note you placed in my hand on leaving the hall. That note has told me all that I longed to know, which I hoped, yet doubted. And yet a feeling of remorse poisoned my enjoyment while reading it; for, conscience whispered that I ought not to have received it, and that in perusing it I violated the duty I owe dear mamma. Every word of kindness from her (and never does she speak to me save in kindness) seems to reproach me for this duplicity. Do let me tell her; or, better still, confess to her yourself, that you love me; for there is something that looks like guilt in mystery, which renders it abhorrent to me."

Poor dear Louisa!

Here is No. 2.

"What a delightful picture you have drawn of our future life! But can you, dearest Harry, give up the gay and brilliant world, which you have enjoyed with such a zest, to retire to some sequestered home with me? I rejoice that you like green fields, trees, flowers, and birds, almost as much as I do." (Poor dear soul! I had persuaded her, and myself too, that I was a perfect Corydon). "From my infancy I had felt delight in them,



and this sympathy in our tastes is a new link in the chain of affection that binds us. I thought, but perhaps it was only fancy, that you looked pale last night, and this thought haunted my pillow." Poor Louisa, if she saw me now, with this rubicund face! "I hope you are not ill, dear Harry; or if ill, that you will not make light of your indisposition. *Now* that you know the happiness of another depends on you, you must be careful of your health. It is by suggesting to me a similar reflection, that dear good mamma makes me submit to a thousand disagreeable remedies for colds caught, and antidotes against catching them.

"Is it not even more culpable of me to write to you clandestinely, than to receive your letters?" (I had postponed declaring in form to her mother, purposely that I might enjoy the selfish gratification of triumphing over Louisa's repugnance to the maintenance of our secret correspondence). "Indeed, Harry, I must write to you no more until mamma knows all; for she is too confiding and indulgent to be deceived by her child, on whom she has lavished such unremitting care and affection. I know not how I shall acquire courage to place this note in your hand; there is something so unfeminine, so indelicate in acting thus, and in the presence, too, of the dear parent I am deceiving, that I blush for myself. Do not, dearest Harry, think ill of me, that my attachment to you has conquered the maidenly reserve of your

"LOUISA."

Dear, gentle soul! I think I see her now, with that deep, earnest look of tenderness with which I so often caught her beautiful eyes fixed on my face;—Why, hang me, if I am not playing the woman, and weeping for a poor, dear girl that has been in her grave these forty years! Well, I did not think I had so much softness left in my rugged nature; but if ever a girl merited to be loved and lamented, it was Louisa Sydney.

I complied with her desire, and told her mother of our attachment a week sooner than I had intended. The

good lady seemed nearly as much hurt as surprised, that her daughter should have avowed a preference for any man without having first consulted her; but a tear and a kiss from Louisa, and a few civil speeches from me, made our peace, and all was soon *couleur de rose* again.

“Mr. Lyster,” said Lady Sydney, “in confiding my child to you, I give you that which is dearer to me than life itself. Louisa’s feelings are as *delicate* as is, alas! her frame; neither are formed to resist even the breath of unkindness. Watch over her happiness, be careful of exposing her fragile health to any sudden changes of temperature, and forget not that you have a precious, but tender plant: she requires a never-ceasing care, but will amply reward you for it, if it please the Almighty to spare her to you.”

There was a solemnity in the fond mother’s appeal that threw a damp over my joy; but, when I saw the bright rose blooming on the cheek of my betrothed, and marked the lustre of her beautiful eyes, I attributed Lady Sydney’s warning to the anxiety of maternal affection, and almost smiled at her thinking Louisa a sickly plant. The natural docility of this lovely girl, operated upon by her strong affection for my unworthy self, gave me a most despotic empire over her; and I had the weakness of being proud of displaying it even to her mother. How often have I seen the cheek flush, and a tear start into the eye of Lady Sydney, when, to gratify some caprice of mine, her too gentle daughter has neglected some wise precaution relative to her health, which I deemed superfluous, though it was urged with anxiety by the alarmed parent.

Louisa has reproached me for this conduct, saying, “How can you, Harry, make me act, even in trifles, contrary to mamma’s advice? I cannot bear to see her look distressed or apprehensive; though I believe there is no cause, for I feel well, quite well, and so happy!”

How her soft lustrous eyes beamed on me with increased tenderness, as she referred to her happiness, implying that I was its source.

“It is my dear mother’s excessive love for me that makes her see danger where none exists; yet it is cruel, it is ungrateful of me, not to avoid exciting her apprehensions. I imagine myself in her place—and well can I fancy how I should feel at seeing a stranger come and usurp the authority, the love, all that had previously been exclusively mine. To resign this empire over the heart and conduct of an only child, must be a bitter feeling until time has softened it. Why, then, take this ungenerous pleasure, dear Harry, in putting your wishes in competition with hers; knowing, as you too well do, that I cannot resist following *yours*, though I am not ungrateful enough not to suffer a painful sense of remorse while disobeying hers.”

When Louisa has thus spoken to me, I have tried to laugh her out of her scruples, calling her mother’s precautions absurd, and her remedies the quackeries of an old woman. Many were the stupid pleasantries, and bad jokes, which I lavished on the subject; and derived an idle and a guilty gratification from continually proposing plans of amusement, in *opposition* to the watchful care of Lady Sydney. It appeared to me that Louisa’s affection for me was most strongly displayed, when it led her to thwart the counsel of one, whose slightest wish she had hitherto joyfully obeyed; consequently my vanity and selfishness (and I had, Heaven knows, an undue portion of both), led me to indulge in this puerile, this unworthy gratification, even at the expense of the feelings of the creature dearest to me on earth.

Lady Sydney, however, bore all my guilty perversity with exemplary patience. It was plain, that seeing the extent of her daughter’s attachment to me, she stifled her own sentiments, rather than risk becoming a subject of contention between us; and frequently yielded her better, wiser judgment, in preference to wounding Louisa’s feelings, by disputing mine.

Yet, notwithstanding little altercations, or rather a forced submission to my will, how happy was the period that followed the acceptance of my proffered hand! Though we met every day, and passed nearly the whole

of it together, still I insisted on Louisa's writing to me; and now that our engagement was ratified by her mother, she poured forth, with the artless warmth of youthful innocence, the expression of her sentiments. Ay, those *were* happy days, yet I thought not so then, for I was anticipating the still happier period when I should call this angelic creature mine.—How often have I since reproached myself for not having sufficiently prized them! How often have I recalled each word and look of her, whose every word and look gave me rapture. But such is man, never content with the present, always looking to the future, that mysterious future, whose secrets, could he but divine them, would make the present appear blissful.

I had no father to consult, a large fortune at my own disposal, and, as parsimony was not then among my faults, I gave Lady Sydney *carte blanche* for the marriage settlements. Title-deeds were placed in the hands of the lawyers, those gentlemen, so blamed by impatient lovers, and commended by prudent parents, whose disagreeable duty apparently consists, not only in seeing that *no* error be committed by contracting parties, but in discovering that some oversight has taken place in the lives of their defunct progenitors.

Jewels and carriages were ordered, our portraits were exchanged, by which I became possessed of the beautiful miniature now before me; all (except the long ringlet of fair hair, and her letters) that remains to remind me of as lovely and pure a creature as ever returned to that heaven, from which, while on earth, she seemed an exile. The days of courtship are proverbial for their brevity and sweetness; mine passed with a velocity, that now appears like the quick fleeting visions of sleep, though I then often murmured at their slowness. “The *twelfth* of next month,” have I often exclaimed, “oh! would to heaven it were arrived (it was the period fixed on for our marriage); how intolerably slow appears the progress of time!” When I thus vented my impatience, Louisa would rebuke me, and say it was wicked, it was ungrateful to Providence, as every hour seemed marked with



happiness. Even now, I seem to see her angel face, and to hear the low sweet voice, whose notes were music to my ear, though forty long and dreary years have passed over my head since she was laid in the grave.

We had agreed one evening to go on the water the following day, and to dine at Richmond. Louisa looked forward with almost childish pleasure to this excursion, as she longed to be in the country again, even for a few hours. I dispatched my groom with a letter to order dinner to be prepared for us, and we talked over our party with anticipations of delight.

The next morning, the weather was sultry and oppressive, quick shifting and opaque clouds threatened rain, and Lady Sydney proposed the postponement of our excursion to a more favourable day. I fancied I saw disappointment in Louisa's sweet face, and this—but why try to evade the avowal?—with the wilfulness that had so frequently led me to oppose the prudent precautions of Lady Sydney, I was now induced to overrule her objections, and to insist on our going. Louisa joined her entreaties, seeing the obstinacy with which I urged my wishes; and we embarked at Whitehall stairs, in high spirits, notwithstanding the alarmed glances with which, from time to time, Lady Sydney regarded the overcast sky.

We passed a delightful day, rambling in the beautiful environs of Richmond; Louisa leaning on my arm, and her dove-like eyes seeking sympathy in mine, at every new feature of the enchanting landscape.

Who that has ever enjoyed the pure happiness of a walk, in a beautiful country, with the woman he loves, can forget it in after years? Every word she uttered, every change of her lovely face is remembered by me, more freshly, oh! how much more freshly, than any circumstance of my later life. How often have they been recalled, and dwelt on, as only the words and looks of her we have *first* loved ever are.

“When I feel as now, dear Harry,” said Louisa, laying her small white hand on my arm, “the vast goodness of Providence in not leaving me a single wish unsatisfied, I

have a sort of superstitious dread, a shrinking presentiment, that such happiness is too exquisite for this world, and that it cannot endure. My very soul seems to imbibe rapture from the glories of the sky and earth, and to expand in love to the Creator, for endowing me with this ecstatic feeling for his works. My eyes are gladdened with the all-enchanting scene around us; and you, dearest, are near me to share this happiness! Oh! who can regard that blue sky, and the soft, yet vivid tints, of the many coloured foliage, the verdant lawns, whence spring a thousand odorous flowers, and that limpid river, whose glassy water seems formed to mirror the lovely scenes on its margin, without feeling an adoration for the Power that created them? Yet, in the midst of the tender, overflowing sense of gratitude with which such objects inspire me, is mingled a sadness, as I reflect on the uncertainty of life; and that, at a few hours' notice, we may be summoned to quit this beauteous, joyous earth, the blue and smiling skies, and those dearer to us—oh! how much dearer! than earth or sky. Before I knew *you*, my Harry, I often contemplated death, and never with dread; but, *now*, I shrink from it with dismay; for to leave *you* would be worse than death.”

I chided her for these gloomy forebodings, but she returned to them.

“I have frequently thought,” continued she, “that we do not talk of death sufficiently often. What would be said of the unkind friend, who knowing that a long and inevitable journey must part him for years from some dear, dear object, should neglect to speak of it to her; or to leave her the memory that they had *together* made preparations for it? It is thus, Harry, that I would wish for us, to think of that *longer* journey, that fearful and bitter separation, death, that the survivor may have the consolation, and a blessed one it is, of knowing that the departed went not forth, without having often thought of, mourned, and prepared for, the inevitable parting. Yet, though I have dreaded death since I have known you, I still think, that blessed are they who die young, ere yet life has lost any of its charms, or that the eye has learned

to look on nature without delight, or the heart to kindle at its beauties without gratitude. I met these lines the other day—

“ ‘Who dies in youth ’scapes many wretched hours,  
 And goes unschooled in truths long life must learn;  
 Truths that once known, each fair illusion flies,  
 Never again to cheat us into joy.  
 The early dead know not that love can die,  
 And yet the hearts, that cherished it, survive:  
 They think not smiling friendship can deceive,  
 Nor that the ties of blood by nature wrought,  
 Are weak as cords made of the ocean’s foam,  
 Which e’en the first rude fitful blast can break;  
 Or like snow-wreaths that melt before the sun,  
 Dissolving till no trace is left behind.  
 No, to die early is to ’scape much pain,  
 And pass away, with all youth’s gifts still with us,  
 Leaving a sweet though mournful memory  
 Of our young lives, to be for ever kept  
 In hearts that loved us while we tarried here.’

And, as I perused them, I felt that to die young is better than to survive happiness.”

There was something so sweet, though mournful, in the tones of her voice, that thought I attempted to chide her for thus dwelling on so painful a subject, I could not banter her, as was my wonted custom whenever she was more than usually pensive. Lady Sydney interrupted us, by entreaties to return home; she saw storms and rain menacing in every cloud that floated over our heads, yet I lingered, in spite of her anxiety to embark, smiling at her fears. The unusual exercise had heated, as well as fatigued my gentle love; her mother, soon after we had entered the boat, remarked that she appeared flushed; a term I was inclined to cavil with, as I thought I had never seen Louisa look so lovely before, the heightened tint of her cheeks imparting an increased brilliancy to her eyes.

We had only proceeded half way to London, when the threatening clouds poured a deluge; and, in a few minutes, Louisa was drenched by its torrents. How did I now reproach myself for my obstinacy, in having forced her mother to consent to this party! The alarmed

glances with which she examined her daughter's face, seemed prophetic of some impending evil. I caught the infectious fear, which not all the smiles of the fair object of it could pacify; and with a bitter feeling of self-reproach, I mentally promised that never again would I expose her to a similar danger, by my wilfulness.

All the remedies used by the doting mother to avert the consequences of this disastrous day, proved unavailing. The next found Louisa in a fever, and her mother almost distracted. I hardly dared to meet Lady Sydney, and yet I could not bear to absent myself from her house. I felt that to my perverseness all the misery now impending over this late happy home was to be attributed; and, as each day increased the danger, I prayed, with my very soul humbled to the dust, and in a bitterness of spirit rarely felt, and never to be described, that Louisa might be spared. Her reason never left her for a moment; and she soon became fully aware that her hours were numbered. She entreated to be allowed to see me: and I was summoned to her chamber.

I found her reclined on a sofa; the hectic blush of fever on her cheek, and her beautiful eyes sparkling with an unearthly lustre. A tear dimmed their radiance as she gazed on me; and her lip trembled with emotion, as she placed her burning and already nearly transparent hand within mine. Seeing that I was almost overwhelmed by the agony of my feelings, she tried to regain composure, and whispered to me—

“Remember, dearest, that our separation is not to be eternal; for, though *I* cannot stay with you on earth, you will, through the Divine mercy, come to me, where no more partings are.—I die young, sin or sorrow have not blighted me; I die beloved too, and is not this to die happy? You will remember me, Harry, going down to the grave in my youth, leaving behind me no one to blame my life, and some dear, oh! how dear, objects to mourn its brevity. Comfort my poor mother when I am gone, and prove, dearest Harry, that you truly loved me, by so regulating your life on earth, that we may be united in heaven.”



Exhausted by the exertion of speaking, she fainted. The physicians drove me from the chamber: and I never saw my angelic Louisa again, until death had clasped her in his cold embrace.

On *the twelfth* of July, —93, she breathed her last, that day, which was to have seen our hands joined at the altar; that day, whose tardy approach I had so often impatiently longed for, and impiously blamed for its delay, saw her a corse. Oh! Louisa, sainted love of my youth, the unwonted tears that fill these aged eyes prove that years, long years, have not banished your cherished image from my heart.

I have been recalled from the mournful past to the dreary present, by the indiscreet entrance of my stupid servant, who had to repeat his usual phrase of “Did you call, sir?” twice, before I was aware of his presence. The blockhead found me weeping passionately; and it was one of the exclamations wrung from me by grief, that he mistook for a *call*. His look of surprise and pity angered me. “Go away, go away, and be——to you!” was the uncourteous exclamation which drove him and his pity away; and left me looking very foolish, and feeling not a little ashamed at having been caught weeping like a blubbering schoolboy. Hang the fellow! what will he, what can he think, has occasioned my grief? He’ll be sure to imagine that my tears and exclamations were wrung from me by pain. This is too vexatious; I would not have even such a lout suppose that physical suffering could wring a tear from me. And yet, if he knew that his old gouty master has been weeping for a maiden who has been more than forty years in her grave, it would make the rascal laugh. Faith, there is something ludicrous in my weakness, I must confess; yet, such was the vividness with which memory brought back old thoughts and feelings, that I forget I am an old man.

Nevertheless, there is a pleasure, though it is a very melancholy one, in remembering the days of our youth, those days when we could feel—*mentally*, I mean; for, most assuredly, senility is not devoid of its physical sensations, however its intellectual ones may be blunted.

My regrets remind me of the old French woman, who said, "*Ah! que je regrette ces bons vieux temps lorsque j'étois si malheureuse.*" Let me, then, prolong this luxury of woe, by recurring again to my poor lost Louisa. I could not bear that she should be consigned to "the narrow house" without my once more looking at that angel face. I watched an opportunity when her heart-broken mother had been removed, in a state of exhaustion, from the chamber of death, for I dared not meet her there. I entered it with a heart bowed down by sorrow, and trembling limbs that almost refused to bear their wretched master.

It was early morn, a soft balmy summer's morn, when all nature seemed to awaken with renovated charms, while she, the fairest of nature's works, was faded for ever. Though in London, the little garden into which the windows of the room opened, seemed as vernal and retired as if it belonged to the country. This garden had been the favourite retreat of Louisa; it was filled with plants and rare flowers, the greater part of which had been raised by her own fair hands. They were now in all their bloom, and redolent with fragrance, the dew-drops sparkling on their leaves, while she—oh, God! how fearful was the contrast! I drew near the bier, and looked on that still lovely face. How cold, how marble-like, was its repose; yet so exquisitely soft was the character of her beauty, that it more resembled sleep than death. While I gazed on that countenance which the cold, dark grave was so soon to hide from me for ever, the birds which she had been accustomed to feed came gaily chirping to the window; and even ventured to pass the sill, chirping still more loudly, as if to claim their wonted repast. The gaiety of their notes almost maddened me; and I rose, like a maniac, to chase them, and close the windows, which had been opened when Lady Sydney had withdrawn. Again I turned to gaze on that cold, pale face, which seemed to exert a magical power over my senses.

"No, she cannot be gone from me for ever," said I. "How could I bear existence without her? How think

that hours, days, weeks, months, years, are to pass away, and I never more to see *her*, who was the light of my eyes, the joy of my heart! Oh! speak to me, angel of my life! give me some sign that *I* am not all, all forgotten!"

While I apostrophized the beautiful statue before me, whose Promethean spark was extinguished for ever, a musical clock on the chimney-piece commenced playing her favourite air, an air to which we had both often listened in happy hours. I almost expected it would awake her, so powerfully did its sound bring back the past; and for the moment drive away the fearful reality of the present. As I gazed on her face, a fly, a large blue fly, fixed on her pale lip, and this awoke me to the dreadful truth.

"What! is she already, even in my presence, to become the prey of such as thou?" cried I, approaching to drive away the odious insect. But it retained its place until my hand came almost in contact with it; and only fled when that hand fell on the lip it would have saved from profanation. Its icy, rigid touch seemed to freeze my blood; and she I loved—yes, loved to adoration, became—oh, God! that I should have felt it—an object of fear.

I rushed from the room in a state of distraction; and a violent brain fever released me, for some weeks, from the consciousness of suffering.

I never again saw Lady Sydney, for she left England in a short time after her daughter's death: and died at Nice, within six months of the period that consigned Louisa to the grave. Before she quitted London she addressed to me a mournful, but a kind letter, in which she inclosed the following stanzas, which was found in the desk of my lost and sainted love, and were the last she ever wrote.

THE DYING GIRL TO HER MOTHER.

Oh! lay me not in the dark vault,  
But let me rest my weary head,  
In some sequestered verdant spot,  
Where the pale moon her beams can shed.

I love to think 'twill shine upon  
 The turf that soon will hide this breast,  
 When I, within the silent grave,  
 Have found forgetfulness and rest.

And let the flowers I loved so much  
 Be placed around my humble grave,  
 For, ah! in quitting this fair earth,  
 What pleased in life I still would crave.

And yet one other boon I'd ask,  
 Dear mother; when *He* comes, oh! tell  
 I dying bless'd him—now is past  
 The bitterness of death—farewell!

Heigh-ho! how melancholy I am—I did not think I had so much feeling left in my heart; I thought it had all centered in my toe, which has lately been the most sensitive part about me. Bless me! what a rueful figure the too faithful mirror opposite to me reflects! the eyes nearly as red as the cheeks, and the nose redder than either. And *this* is the face that poor dear Louisa delighted to look on! She was right; it is better to die young than to outlive *all* one loved, and *all* that rendered one loveable. She went down to her grave in the bloom of youth and beauty, a ready made angel, wanting only the wings; and she yet exists in my fond memory as she was, young, and oh, how lovely!—while *I* have survived every vestige of good looks, and am almost disposed to rejoice that *she* cannot behold the hideous old man yonder mirror shows me.

How absurd it is to see a red-faced, fat, paunched sexagenarian weeping! Faith, I'm ashamed of myself; so, one glance more at that sweet, mild countenance, and back that and her hair and letters go to their drawer, in the old escritoire; there to remain until my jackanapes of an heir consigns them to the flames, with, probably, sundry laughs at his old uncle, whom he cannot fancy ever having been other than such as he knew him, and unmindful that a day will come when he too will be an old man.



MY SECOND LOVE.

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WELL, I think I may venture to recount the story of my second love, without the fear of becoming lachrymose. No, no! Arabella Wilton, who was its object, never brought a serious thought into my head, unless it was on the folly of mankind in general, and mine in particular, for being so easily made the dupes of such women.

In justice to my fidelity and sensibility, I ought to state, that I sincerely mourned for my poor lost Louisa during two long dreary years; and I was romantic enough to believe that I never could love again; a belief that most persons similarly situated are apt to indulge, until experience proves its fallacy.

Here is the portrait of Arabella: the artist has caught the half-imperious, yet winning expression of her sparkling black eyes, which seemed to say, as plain as ever such orbs could speak, "Resist me if you can." What a profusion of raven tresses fall round that oval face!—how rich is the sunny tint of her cheek, and the ripe crimson of her lips; lips that never opened except to smile or give utterance to some sprightly *badinage*, whose *malice*, as the French call it, was forgiven in consideration of the beautiful mouth that originated it. Arabella was the very opposite of the gentle Louisa; she commanded, rather than won, her admirers into love, and seemed so certain of their hearts, and gave so little security of yielding hers in exchange, that she kept them (and she had not a little battalion) in a perpetual state of *qui vive*.

The sentiment, if such it might be called, that Arabella inspired, was a much more common *one* than real affection. Her admirers commenced with love for *her*, but ended in love for *themselves*; as she was eminently skilled

in wielding that powerful weapon, *l'amour propre*, and by its judicious treatment rarely failed to gain an empire over those she wished to influence. The equal encouragement she administered to all whom she desired to enchain, rendered the chase of her heart as exciting as—what shall I say—I have it—a fox-chase; if so homely a simile may be allowed to be addressed to so dignified a theme; and like that exciting amusement, vanity creating the desire of surpassing all competitors, furnished the chief charm of the pursuit. Scarcely a day, nay, an hour, elapsed, that each candidate for her favour did not imagine himself the preferred; and did not inwardly smile at the vanity of his slighted rivals, while *she* was secretly laughing at them all, having predetermined to wed the richest, whoever he might be. If I called and found her with only her aunt, she never failed to amuse me with piquant anecdotes illustrative of the *betise* of Lord Henry, or pungent *satire* against Sir John; though her attention to each of these worthies had excited my jealousy the day before. Nay, so adroitly did she point out all the ridiculous defects in their characters, manners, and appearance, that she not only quieted my jealous fears, but actually created in me a degree of commiseration for these unhappy wights; though, truth to say, I was never more amused, or more inclined to admire Arabella, than when she was using every weapon in the armoury of her wit in attacking my rivals.

It never for one moment occurred to me, that her hypocrisy, in thus ridiculing those whom she openly encouraged, was reprehensible; or that, probably, she was equally severe in her animadversions on me during my absence. No: vanity, gratified vanity, prevented my discovery of aught, except that *she* was charming, and that *I* must be the preferred, or she would never have thus selected me as the confidant of her real opinion of her admirers. Nay, I am persuaded, that had my best friend informed me that Arabella made *me* the object of her ridicule, I should have disbelieved the assertion, and attributed it to some little feeling of envy or jealousy on the part of the narrator. Such is the confidence vanity

gives a man, *not* in the sincerity of his mistress, but in the irresistible power of his own attractions. Lord Henry and Sir John were, nevertheless, the only formidable rivals among the train of her dangles; not that they were superior in either mental or personal attractions to the rest, but simply because they were richer. Lord Henry had lately inherited a very large fortune from an old bachelor uncle, and was consequently considered an excellent *parti*; and Sir John was in possession of a clear twenty thousand a-year, a possession which in those days, no less than in *these*, rendered the possessor very popular with all ladies who had to give, or were to be given in marriage. Neither of these admirers had as yet asked for Arabella's hand, save for a *contre* dance; and she was skilfully playing them off against each other and me, in order to elicit a demand for her hand for life. Yet this manœuvre *I*, in my infinite wisdom, never once suspected; but vain men (and I confess I was one) ever were, and will be, fools to the end of the chapter.

At this epoch, Lord Henry was called away by the illness of his father, and Sir John had taken his departure to attend the Newmarket meeting. The field was consequently left open to me, and I determined on making the best use of my time to bring Arabella to a decision in my favour before the return of my rivals. How delightful, thought I, to witness their mortification and disappointment at my success; and with this laudable motive—and I verily believe it was the predominant, if not the sole one—I looked forward to proposing to enter a state in which the whole happiness or misery of life depends on the selection of the object with whom it is to be shared, and the respect as well as affection entertained for her. Yet, if all about to assume the holy tie of matrimony were to analyse their motives for seeking it, how few would find them stand the test of reason; or how few dare to conjecture the probable duration of the sentiment—if sentiment such fancies may be denominated that led to it.

But a truce to moralizing, and back to my story. On my next visit to Arabella, after the departure of Lord

Henry and Sir John, she received me with even more than her usual kindness; congratulated me that I could exist without attending Newmarket, protesting that she held in horror the votaries of the turf, who, she said, seldom possessed as much intelligence as the quadrupeds on whom they betted thousands, and possessed infinitely less sagacity than the bipeds in the shape of grooms, who outwitted them. Severe animadversions on her absent admirers, and implied compliments on my superiority, encouraged me to make her the proposal of my hand. I said all that it is customary to say on such occasions, when a man is, or fancies that he is, enamoured; but, while uttering these platitudes, I could not help thinking how different had been my sensations when making a similar declaration to my first love, my gentle, lost Louisa. Nor could I avoid observing, how differently the proposal was received. Here was no tremulous sensibility, no bashful timidity, no tears starting from the downcast lid, and like a pearly dewdrop, stealing over a cheek of rose. No, her grandmother, had she been alive, could not have been more perfectly unembarrassed; though, after the pause of a few moments, she affected (and even I, infatuated as I was, yet saw it was affectation) to look down, and murmur something about "the unexpectedness of my proposal."

"Then, am I to understand that it is disagreeable to you?" said I, piqued by her want of feeling.

"Disagreeable?" repeated the syren, "what a word!" and she placed her small white hand in mine, as she turned away her head, to conceal, *not* her blushes, but her *want* of them. I was fool enough to throw myself on my knees before her; by Jove, at this moment, the very thought of such an attitude gives me a twinge in my foot. There again—what a horrible shooting pain—and that blockhead, John, has let the time elapse for bringing me my colchicum.—Here he comes at last—so, that will do, sirrah!

Well, let me remember, where was I when that twinge put it all out of my head?—oh! I have it—I was on my knees, kissing the little hand she abandoned to



me, and her head averted, probably to hide a smile of either triumph or ridicule, when a loud voice in the ante-room (loud voices in anterooms are often convenient) gave me notice that we were about to be interrupted. I had only time to start on my legs, and look nearly as unconcerned as—my lady-love, ere her bustling aunt entered the apartment, to announce that a letter had just reached her, requiring their immediate presence at Clifton, where a near relative was dangerously ill. She had sent to order post-horses, and desired her niece to commence preparations for her journey. While *Madame la tante* retired to the anteroom to give orders to her *femme de charge*, Arabella whispered me to write to her aunt, to make my proposal in form.

“Why not make it now, and in person,” said I, “and declare our mutual affection and engagement?”

“Oh! no, on no account,” replied the deceiver, “you know not how precise and prudish my aunt is,” (and that I was utterly ignorant of these features of her character, was very true, for I had never seen even the most remote symptom of them in the old lady). “She would never forgive us,” pursued Arabella, “if she knew that you had proposed to *me* before you had asked her permission; so pray don’t commit me. Write *her* a formal proposal, and name the settlements you intend to make; for, though *I*, dear Henry, do not regard such matters, *she*, I blush to say, regards little else (avarice being the besetting sin of the old), and we must conciliate her.”

There was something repugnant to my feelings in all this cold, calculating policy: and yet, fool as I was, I attributed the confidence reposed in me by the niece, relative to her aunt’s mercenary disposition, to her affection for me. Thus are we ever ready to be misled by our vanity!

I left the house with reluctance; and no sooner reached home than I obeyed Arabella’s dictates, and wrote the formal proposal; in which, after expressing, with all the exaggeration of sentiment usual to the occasion, my attachment to her niece, I offered settlements so liberal, that not even the most mercenary aunt could have

objected to them. I waited impatiently for an answer; for, though sure of Arabella's consent, I wished to have it confirmed by the sanction of one who stood in the light of a parent and guardian to her. But *no* answer came; and when I dispatched my servant a second time to demand one, he was informed that the ladies had left town.

Day after day elapsed without bringing me the desired reply from the aunt, whose silence seemed most unaccountable. Various and painful were the reflections it occasioned me, the prominent one being regret for having made the offer; for I now began to feel that, when no longer present to dazzle me by her beauty, or to amuse me by her satirical sallies, Arabella's fascinations were forgotten, and little or no semblance of passion in my breast, reminded me that I had once fancied she was dear to me. I almost wished that the aunt would refuse her consent; though some little feeling of humiliation as to what Lord Henry would say, or Sir John think of me, as a rejected suitor, crossed my mind each time I indulged the vain hope.

At length, after many days of suspense, a letter was brought me from Mrs. Spencer, apologizing for not having sooner replied to me; but stating, that the imminent danger of her relative had driven every thought, not connected with him, out of her head; that as he was now convalescent, she turned with pleasure to my proposal, admitted the liberality of the settlement offered, and would be in London in a day or two, when every preliminary for the marriage could be finally arranged.

My feelings on reading this characteristic epistle were anything but of a joyous nature. It was unaccompanied by a single line, or even message from Arabella; indeed her name did not even once occur in the letter, an omission that both offended and disgusted me.

They arrived in two days, and I almost got rid of my doubts and fears when I saw Arabella, in increased beauty and animation, meet my greetings with unrepressed symptoms of complacency. The arrangements for our marriage were put *en train*; but, with what different

feelings did I enter into them, to those which influenced me on the former occasion. Though I still admired Arabella's beauty, and felt her fascination, yet the passion she excited, if passion it might be called, was of a nature that reflected little honour on the inspired or inspirer. It was unrefined by the tenderness that ever accompanies real love, and unredeemed by the respect which hallows that sentiment, and robs it of all *grossièreté*. All thoughts connected with my gentle Louisa, even in the heyday of our love, were characterized by a purity that led me to imagine her an angel, sent by mistake into this terrestrial sphere, through whose guidance I might become worthy of Heaven; but Arabella, I looked on as a woman fitted only to chain a man to earth, by her blandishments and personal charms. The two Cupids, Anteros and Eros, described by the ancients as governing the pure and impure passions of love, had presided over my two very different attachments, and their effects on my mind had been obvious. Louisa's influence would have purified my heart where she might have reigned; whereas Arabella's would but have sullied it.

It was at this period that the miniature, now before me, became mine. I had expressed a desire to have a portrait of my intended wife; but, observing that her aunt seemed unaccountably disposed to postpone its being painted until after our marriage, I, with the usual pertinacity of my character, determined on having it finished forthwith; and took her to one of the most celebrated of our artists of that epoch, to whom I paid what was then considered an extravagant price. My vanity was not a little mortified by observing that my future bride seemed much more occupied by the preparations for her *trousseau* than by the donor of it; and evinced a taste, or rather let me say a passion, for jewels and Cashmeres, which indicated that the organ of acquisitiveness was, as phrenologists would say, very largely developed in her. I was continually told by Mrs. Spencer of the magnificence of the diamonds, and rare beauty of the emeralds presented by all the men similarly situated with myself to their future brides; Arabella observing that, for her part, she envied

not the diamonds of one, or the emeralds of another, but she owned to the soft impeachment of liking rubies and sapphires excessively, and almost looked with envy at those presented by Sir Frederick Vandeleur to her friend, Miss Meadows.

In short, I received many hints of what *I was expected* to give, with as many disparaging observations on *what I had* given; and I was weak enough to incur considerable expense to gratify the implied wishes of my future wife.

Mrs. Spencer had removed to a villa at Richmond, to which I daily bent my course. I was in the habit of arriving there generally about three o'clock, and had constantly met on my route an extremely good-looking young man, whose fashionable air and dress formed a striking contrast with the wretched looking hack on which he was mounted. I had so repeatedly encountered this equestrian, that his face became familiar to me; and I set it down in my mind, that he was some spoilt son, returning from a daily visit to an exigent mother, or else a lover, returning from a stolen interview with the sultana of some Croesus in the city, during the absence of the said rich, if not wise, men of the East. He seemed to regard me with a certain air of *fierté* and ill-humour that was unaccountable in a total stranger, except by imagining that he had surmised my suspicions of his erratic visits, and dreaded my being some busybody, who might betray them.

I had been to Rundle and Bridges' one day, selecting jewels, and had far exceeded the sum I intended to expend there; incited to this extravagance, I frankly own, much more by the broad hints of the aunt, and implied, rather than expressed desires of her niece, than by any spontaneous generosity. Lured by the beauty of the trinkets, and their "appropriateness to each other," as the bowing shopman observed, I was rash enough to conclude my purchases by a necklace of rubies, set in diamonds, requiring ear-rings, brooches, head ornaments, and bracelets, *en suite*.

Thus, instead of the few hundreds I had intended to



disburse, I found, on a hasty and reluctant retrospect of my expenditure, that I must have dissipated some thousands; and I consequently returned from Ludgate-hill, feeling that species of self-dissatisfaction and ill-humour which a man, who is not quite a fool, never fails to experience when he has consciously committed a folly. In this state of mind I entered my club to dine; when, not wishing to encounter any of my acquaintances, I ensconced myself in a corner of the large room, and had an Indian screen, of vast dimensions, so placed, that I was isolated from the general mass, and could not be seen by any new-comers.

While I was discussing my solitary repast, I heard voices, familiar to my ear, command dinner to be brought to them at the table next to mine, and only divided from me by the screen. When I recognised the tones of Lord Henry and Sir John, for whose vicinity at that period I felt no peculiar desire, I congratulated myself on the precaution which had induced me to use this barrier.

“When did you come to town?” asked Lord Henry.

“I only arrived an hour ago,” was the reply.

“I came late last night, and am on my way to Avonmore’s.”

“Have you heard that our pretty friend, Arabella Wilton, is going to be married? and to Lyster too?”

“*Est-il possible?*”

“Yes, positively to Lyster, whom we have heard her abuse and ridicule a thousand times.”

I felt my ears begin to tingle, and verified the truth of the old proverb, “Listeners never hear good of themselves.”

“By-the-bye, *you* were a little smitten there, and at one time I began to think you had serious intentions, as they call it—Eh! Sir John?”

“Why, so Arabella took it into her wise head to fancy too; but I was not quite so young as all that. No, no, Arabella is a devilish nice girl to flirt with, but the last, the very last, I would think of as a wife.”

“Now, there I differ from you; for she is precisely the sort of person I should think of *as a wife*.”

“You don’t say so?”

“Yes, I do; but then it must be as the wife of another; and, when she is so, I intend to be—one of her most assiduous admirers.”

I felt my blood boil with indignation; and was on the point of discovering my proximity to the speakers, when Sir John resumed.

“What a flat Lyster must be, to be gulled into marrying her. I never thought they could have succeeded in deceiving him to such an extent, though I saw they were playing us off against the poor devil.”

“Oh! by Jove, so did I too, and if our *supposed* matrimonial projects led to this *real* one, I don’t regret it, for poor Arabella’s sake; for she was most impatient to change her name.”

“Only think of the aunt’s sending me Lyster’s letter of proposal.”

“Capital, capital, the plot thickens; for she also sent it to me.”

“You don’t say so?”

“I swear she did; and what is more, I can give you chapter and verse; for Lyster was so matter-of-fact in detailing his readiness to make liberal settlements, and liberal they certainly were, that I remember nearly the words of his letter to *Madame la tante*.”

“And what reason did the old she-fox assign for consulting you on the subject?”

“The old one, to be sure; of considering me as a friend to the family.”

“Exactly the same reason she gave for consulting me.”

“She stated to me that Arabella had a positive dislike to Mr. Lyster, and she feared (mark the cunning of the old woman) that this dislike to so unexceptionable a *parti* originated in her having a preference elsewhere; and, therefore, *she* had determined to ask my opinion whether she ought to influence her niece to accept Lyster.”

“In short, a round-about way of soliciting you to propose for Arabella yourself. The exact sense of her letter to me.”

“I dare be sworn they were fac-similes. *Madame la*



*tante* added, that her niece was by no means committed with Mr. Lyster; for, that she had been so guarded when he asked her (on observing her coldness) if his proposal was disagreeable to her, as merely to repeat, with a shudder, the word he had uttered—disagreeable.”

Well did I recollect this circumstance, trifling as it was; and overpowering were the sensations of anger and mortified vanity that oppressed me on recalling it to memory!

“Well,” resumed Lord Henry, “so you wrote, as did I, to advise by all means that Mr. Lyster should be accepted?”

“Yes, precisely; for I thought it the most prudent advice from ‘a friend of the family’—ha! ha! ha!—for the soul of me I can’t help laughing!”

“Ha! ha! ha! nor I neither. *Both* of us consulted, and from the same motive.”

“It’s capital and worthy of the old lady, who has as much cunning, and as little heart, as any dowager in the purlieus of St. James’s.”

“I’ll lay an even wager that we twain were not the only single men consulted on the occasion.”

“For my part, I should not wonder if the letters had been circular: ha! ha!”

“And how simple Lyster must be; for while the aunt was sending round his proposal to all the admirers of her niece, *he* must have been impatiently waiting for her answer.”

“Luckless devil! how I pity him;” (Oh! how I writhed!) “he has been atrociously taken in: yet I am glad that poor Arabella has at last secured a good establishment; for, I confess, I have a *faiblesse* for her. Indeed, to say the truth, I should have been ungrateful if I had not; for I believe—in fact, I have reason to know, that the preference to which the old aunt alluded, had more truth in it than *she* imagined.”

“So *I* suspect, too; for, without vanity, I may own, that I believe the poor girl had a *penchant* for your humble servant.”

“For you?”

“Yes, for me. Is there anything so *very* extraordinary in her liking me, that you look so surprised and incredulous?”

“Why, yes, there is something devilishly extraordinary; for if I might credit Arabella’s *own* assertion, her *penchant* was quite in a different quarter.”

“You don’t mean to say it was for *you*?”

“And what if I did? Is there anything more astonishing in her feeling a preference for *me*, than for *you*?”

“*I* merely suppose that she could not have a *penchant* for us both at the same time; and I have had reason, and very satisfactory reason too, to be satisfied that she liked me.”

“And *I* can swear that I have heard her ridicule you, in your absence, until I have been compelled to take your part; though she often made me laugh, the dear creature did it so cleverly. Ha! ha! ha! the recollection makes me laugh even now.”

“And *I* have heard her attack you with such acrimony that even an enemy must have allowed that her portrait of you was caricatured; and yet, there was so much drollery in her manner of showing you up, that it was impossible to resist laughing. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Lord Henry, I beg to inform you that I allow no man to laugh at my expense.”

“Permit me to tell you, Sir John, that I ask no man’s permission to laugh when I am so disposed.”

“Am I to consider that you mean to be personal?”

“You are perfectly at liberty to consider what you please.”

“My friend shall call on you to-morrow morning, to name a place for our meeting.”

“I shall be quite ready to receive him.”

And *exit* Lord Henry, followed, in a few minutes, by Sir John.

“And so,” thought I, “here are two vain fools about to try to blow each other’s brains out for a heartless coquette; and a third, perhaps the greatest fool of the three, was on the point of making her his wife. What an escape have I had! No, no, never will I marry her.”



She may bring an action against me for breach of promise—and she and her aunt are quite capable of such a proceeding—but be united to her I never will. Ridicule and abuse *me*, indeed! Oh, the hypocrite! And to think of all the tender speeches and loving insinuations she has lavished on me; the delicate flattery and implied deference to my opinions! Oh! woman! woman! all that has ever been said, written, or imagined against you, is not half severe enough. You are all alike, worthless and designing.”

As I finished this wise and temperate soliloquy, writhing under the wounds inflicted on my *amour propre*, the gentle image of my lost Louisa seemed to reproach me for this unmanly satire against her sex. A thousand proofs of her angelic purity and sweet simplicity of character, arose to my memory; and I felt ashamed of my injustice in thus heaping obloquy on a whole sex merely because *I* had possessed so little discrimination as to have chosen one of the most unworthy of it.

I passed a sleepless night, yet I was relieved by thinking I was now saved from becoming the husband of Arabella. I felt rebuked when I recollected how frequently the artful syren had excited my merriment by her ridicule and abuse of her other admirers. *We* had all been, as it now appeared, laughing at each other, while *she* had been mocking us *en masse*; but, like vain blockheads as we were, we never suspected that we were each in turn alike the object of her ridicule: she having had the perception to discover, that her most certain mode of acquiring an influence over the minds of her admirers, was to gratify their vanity by abusing their competitors.

I set out, at an unusually early hour, for Richmond, determined to come to an explanation with both aunt and niece; and, shall I own it, anticipating, with a childish pleasure, their rage and disappointment at my breaking off the marriage. On arriving at the villa, I was informed that Mrs. Spencer had not yet left her chamber, and that Miss Wilton was in the garden. To the garden then I hied me, anxious to overwhelm her

with the sarcastic reproaches I had conned over in my mind.

While advancing along a gravel walk, divided by a hedge from a sequestered lane, I heard the neighing and tramping of a horse; and, on looking over the hedge, discovered the lean steed on which I had so frequently encountered the good-looking Unknown on the road to Richmond. The poor animal was voraciously devouring the leaves of the hedge, his bridle being fastened to the stem of an old tree. A vague notion that the owner, who could not be far off, was now holding a parley with my deceitful mistress, instantly occurred to me, and seemed to account for his frequent visits to Richmond. I moved on, with stealthy steps, towards a small pavilion at the far end of the garden, where I correctly concluded Arabella to be; and whence I soon heard the sound of voices, as I concealed myself beneath the spreading branches of a large laurestinas, close to the window. I will not attempt to defend my listening, because I admit the action to be on all occasions indefensible; but the impulse to it was irresistible.

"Is it not enough," exclaimed Arabella, "that I am compelled to marry a man who is hateful to me, while my whole soul is devoted to you, but that you thus torment me with your ill-founded jealousy?"

"How can I refrain from being jealous," was the rejoinder, "when I know that you will soon be another's? Oh, Arabella! if I were indeed convinced that you hated him, I should be less wretched."

"How amiable and unselfish!" thought I. "He wishes the woman he professes to love, to be that most miserable of human beings, the wife of a man who is hateful to her, that *he*, forsooth, may be less unhappy; and he has the unblushing effrontery to avow the detestable sentiment."

"How can you doubt my hating him?" asked my syren, in a wheedling tone, "Can you *look* at *him*, and then regard *yourself* in a mirror, without being convinced, that no one who has eyes to see, or a heart to feel, could

ever behold the one without disgust, or the other without admiration?"

"Oh, the cockatrice!" thought I; "and *this* after all the flatteries she poured into my too credulous ear."

Listeners, beware, for ye are doomed never to hear good of yourselves. So certain is the crime of listening to carry its own punishment, that there is no positive prohibition against it: we are commanded not to commit other sins, but this one draws down its own correction, and wo be to him that infringes it.

The speech of Arabella, which, I acknowledge, enraged me exceedingly, had a most soothing effect on my rival; for I heard sundry kisses bestowed, as I hope, for propriety's sake, on the hand of the fair flatterer.

"Yes," resumed she, "Lyster is a perfect fright, and so *gauche*, that positively he can neither sit, stand, nor walk like anybody else."

Oh! the traitress! how often had she commended my air *degagé*, and the manly grace, as she styled it, of my movements. After this, who ought ever to believe in the honied adulation of a woman?

"Now, I must disagree with you, Arabella," replied my rival (and I felt a sudden liking to him as I listened), "Lyster is a devilish good-looking fellow (I thought as much); one whom any woman whose affections were not previously engaged, might fancy."

"Let us not talk or think of him, I entreat you," said Arabella; "it is quite punishment enough for me to be obliged to *see* and *hear him* half the day, without your occupying the short time we are together in a conversation respecting a person so wholly uninteresting. Have I not refused Lord Henry and Sir John, to please you? yet you will not be content, do what I will."

"Oh, Arabella! how can you expect me to be otherwise than discontented, than wretched, when I reflect that your destiny depends not on me, and that another will be the master of your fate. *He* may be harsh, unkind; and *I*, who love, who adore you, cannot shield you from many hours of recrimination, when he discovers,

and discover he must, that in wedding him you gave not your heart with your hand."

"Oh! leave all that to me to manage," said the crafty creature. "*He* is so vain and so *bête*, that it requires no artifice on my part to make him believe that I married him from motives of pure preference. He is persuaded of it: for what will not vanity like his believe?"

"By flattery; yes, by deception and flattery—I see it all, Arabella—you have acquired an empire over Lyster by that well-known road to a man's heart, the making him believe that you love him. Had you loved *me* you would not, you could not, have been guilty of this deception; and in thus deceiving him you have" (and the poor young man's voice trembled with emotion) "wounded me to the soul."

"You really are the most wrong-headed person in the world," said his deceitful companion. "Here am I, ready to sacrifice myself to a rich marriage, to save *you*, Edward, from a poor one; for, to marry a portionless girl like me would be your ruin, and I love you too well, ungrateful as you are, to bring this misery upon you. When you come as a visitor to my house, and see me in the possession of comforts and luxuries *you* could not give me, you will rejoice in the prudence, ay, and generosity too, that gave me courage to save you from a poor and wretched home, for wretched all poverty-stricken homes must be."

"And could you think my affection so light, Arabella," replied her lover, impatiently, "as to believe that I could go to *his* house and see *him* in possession of the only woman I ever loved? No! I am neither heartless nor *philosophical* enough to bear this. Such a position would drive me mad."

"Then, what am I to think, what am I to make of you?"

"Not a villain! a mean, base villain, who betrays hospitality, and consents that the woman he loves shall pursue a conduct at once the most vile, deceitful, and dishonourable!" and he positively wept. His passionate grief seemed to touch even the marble heart of his callous



mistress; for she gently asked him why he had ever appeared to agree to her wedding another.

“Can you ask me?” replied he. “I knew you to be fond of luxury and display, which, alas! my limited fortune could never bestow. I feared, trembled at the idea of beholding you pining for the enjoyments *I* could not afford; and it seemed to me less wretched to know you in the full possession of them with another, than lamenting their privation with me. It was for *you*, Arabella, conscious as you are how fondly, how madly I dote on you, to offer to share my poverty, and not for me to compel you to it. Had you really loved me, this course you would have pursued.”

“But, I tell you, I do love you; and will prove my truth by following your wishes, if you will but express them,” said Arabella, melted by his grief and tenderness.

“If you really *do* love me, why may not a modest competence content you? I would have you break off this hateful marriage, and accept love in a cottage with me. My grandmother would soon forgive our stolen union, for she likes me so well that she would quickly learn to like *her* who made my happiness. But, alas! even she, good and indulgent as she is, has often told me that *you* were as little disposed to marry a poor man, as your aunt could be to give you to such a husband.”

“It was very uncivil of your grandmother to say so, and still more so of you to repeat it. But, bless me (touching a repeater I had given her a few days before), how late it is! Lyster will be here almost immediately; and if he should find you—”

“Your marriage with him would be broken off. Yes, I will leave you, Arabella; and meet this unhappy man whose wealth has won you from me. Oh! how I have loathed his face of contentment, as I have passed him on the road and thought that *he* was privileged to approach you, while *I* must seek you by stealth, and leave you to make room for him. I can bear this no longer, Arabella; you see me now for the last time, unless you accept me for your husband.”

And, so saying, he rushed from her presence, mounted

his lean steed, and was heard galloping along with a speed that indicated the troubled state of his mind.

“Poor Edward!” exclaimed Arabella, “heigh-ho! I wish he were rich, for I *do* like him better than I ever liked any one else. And *he*, too, is the only one of all my admirers who loves me for myself; the *rest* but love me for my flattery. Lord Henry, Sir John, ay, even this dolt who is about to wed me, all have been fascinated, not by my beauty (and for this I loathed them), but by my flattery. By *this* I have charmed, by *this* I have won a husband. Poor Edward, it was not so with him; but love in a cottage—I hate cottages—and then (in a few years) to see it filled with a set of little troublesome brats, and hear them screaming for bread and butter! No, no, these hands (looking at them) were never formed to cut bread and butter, like Werter’s *Lolotte*; or to make pinafores, like good Mrs. Herbert, the wife of the half-pay captain, in the little cottage down the lane.”

“And yet they might be worse employed, fair lady,” exclaimed I, vaulting into the room.

Arabella uttered a faint shriek, turned to a deathlike paleness, and then became suffused with the crimson blushes of shame.

“I have witnessed your stolen interview with my favoured rival; rival no longer, for here I resign all pretensions to your hand.”

She attempted to utter some defence, but I was not in a humour to listen to what lengths her duplicity and desire for a rich husband might lead her; so, *sans ceremonie*, I interrupted her by saying, that what I had witnessed and heard, had produced no change in my previously formed resolution of breaking off the marriage. She sank into a chair; and even I pitied her confusion and chagrin, until I recollected her comments on my “*gaucherie*,” and the polite epithet of “a perfect fright,” with which she had only a few minutes before honoured me. I can *now* smile at the mortification my vanity *then* suffered; but, at the time, it was no laughing matter with me.

I left Arabella to her meditations, which, I dare be

sworn, were none of the most agreeable; and returned to the house to seek an interview with her aunt. That sapient lady met me, as was her wont, with smiles on her lips, and soft words falling from them.

“Look here, *dear* Mr. Lyster,” said she, holding out an *ecrin* towards me, “did you ever see anything so beautiful as these rubies set in diamonds? Are they not the very things for our beloved Arabella? How well they would show in her dark hair; and how perfectly they would suit the rich, warm tint of her cheeks and lips. None but brilliant brunettes should ever wear rubies. Are you not of my opinion? and do you not think that this *parure* seems made for our sweet Arabella?”

I mastered myself sufficiently to assent with calmness to her observations, when she immediately resumed:—  
“Oh, I *knew* you would agree with me, our tastes are so exactly alike. I was sure, my *dear* Mr. Lyster, you would at once select this in preference to emeralds or sapphires, which suit *fade*, blonde beauties better; but for our sparkling Arabella, rubies and diamonds are the thing. Yet, how grave you look;—bless me! what *is* the matter? Perhaps, after all, *you* do *not* like rubies and diamonds; and in that case, though (*entre nous*) I *know* that our darling Arabella dotes on them, I am sure she would prefer having only the ornaments which *you* like, for she is the most tractable creature in the world, as you must have observed. So, confess the truth, you do *not* admire this *parure*?”

“Why, the truth is,” said I, taking a spiteful pleasure in raising her expectations, that her disappointment might be the greater, “I yesterday bought at Rundle and Brydges’, a *parure* of rubies and diamonds more than twice the size of the one before me, and set in the best taste”—alluding to the very purchase for which I had been blaming myself, when I overheard the dialogue between Lord Henry and Sir John.

“Oh! you dear, kind, generous creature, how good of you! How delighted our sweet Arabella will be. Have you brought it with you? I am positively dying with impatience to see it.”

“Then, I fear, madam,” replied I, with sternness, “that your curiosity will never be gratified.”

“Why, what a strange humour *you* are in, my *dear* Mr. Lyster—nephew, I was going to call you; but I shan’t give you that affectionate appellation while you are so odd and so cross. And why am I not to see them, pray? Surely you do not intend to prevent my associating with my sweet child, when she becomes your wife? No, you never could be so cruel.” And the old hypocrite laid her hand on my arm in her most fawning manner.

“I have no intention, madam, of separating two persons who seem so peculiarly formed for each other.”

“Good creature! How kind of you, *dear* Mr. Lyster; how happy you have made me; I felt so wretched at the thoughts of our sweet Arabella’s being taken from me, for I have ever looked on her as if she were my own child. How considerate of you not to separate us. I am sure *she* will be delighted; and *I* shall be the happiest person in the world to give up the cares and trouble of an establishment of my own, which, at my advanced age, and deprived of Arabella, would be insupportable. Believe me, most cheerfully, nay, gladly, shall I avail myself of your kind offer, and fix myself with you and my affectionate child.”

The old lady was so delighted at the thought of this plan, that she made more than one attempt to embrace her dear nephew, as she now called me, and it was some minutes before I could silence her joyful loquacity; during which time, I will candidly own, I had a malicious pleasure in anticipating the bitter disappointment that awaited her. When, at length, she had exhausted her ejaculations of delight, I thus sternly addressed her:—

“When I declared my intention, madam, of not separating you and your niece, I did not mean to ask *you* to become a member of my family. I simply meant to state, that I did not intend depriving you of the advantage of *her* society, as I have determined on not marrying her.”

“Good heavens! what do I hear?” exclaimed Mrs.



Spencer. "What *do* you, what *can* you mean, Mr. Lyster? It is cruel thus to try my feelings; you have quite shocked me; I—I—am far from well."

And her changeful hue denoted the truth of the assertion.

"Let it suffice to say, madam, that I last evening heard Lord Henry and Sir John declare the extraordinary confidence you had reposed in them; that you had not only sent to each my letter of proposal to your niece, but betrayed to them her more than indifference towards me, and the very words in which she expressed herself, when I made her the offer of my hand."

"How base, how unworthy of Lord Henry and Sir John!" said Mrs. Spencer, forgetting all her usual craft, in the surprise and irritation caused by this information. "Never was there such shameful conduct."

"You are right, madam," replied I, "the conduct practised on this occasion has been indeed shameful; luckily for *me*, the discovery of it has not been too late."

"If you are so dishonourable as not to fulfil your engagement," said the old lady, her cheeks glowing with anger, and her eyes flashing fury, "be assured that I will instruct my lawyer to commence proceedings against you, for a breach of promise of marriage; for I have no notion of letting my injured niece sit quietly down, a victim to such monstrous conduct."

"I leave you, madam," replied I, "to pursue whatever plan you deem most fitting, to redress *her* grievances, and blazon forth to the world your own *delicate* part in the Comedy of Errors; the *denouement* of which is not precisely what you could have wished. However, as comedies should always end in a marriage, let me advise you to seek a substitute for your humble servant."

Then, bowing low to my intended aunt, I left her presence for ever: and returned to London with a sense of redeemed freedom that gave a lightness to my spirits, to which they had been a stranger, ever since the ill-omened hour of my proposal to Arabella.

Of all the presents that had found their way to the villa, and they were not, "like angel visits, few and far

between," but many and costly, not one, except my portrait, was ever returned. I retained that of Arabella; not out of love, heaven knows, but because I wished to preserve a memento of the folly of being caught by mere beauty; and as it had cost me a considerable sum, I thought myself privileged to keep it, as a specimen of *art*.

Lord Henry and Sir John fought a duel, the day after their altercation at the Club, in which the first was mortally wounded, and the latter consequently compelled to fly to the continent.

In a week from the period of my last interview with Arabella and her aunt, the newspapers were filled with accounts of the elopement of the beautiful and fashionable Miss Wilton with Lieutenant Rodney of the Guards. It was stated that the young lady had been on the eve of marriage with the rich Mr. L. of L. Park, but that Cupid had triumphed over Plutus; and the disinterested beauty had preferred love in a cottage with Lieut. Rodney, to sharing the immense wealth of her rejected suitor, who was said to wear the willow with all due sorrow.

The grandmother of the new Benedick showed to half-a-dozen of her most intimate friends, the letter written by him to announce to her, that his "adored Arabella had broken through all her engagements with Mr. Lyster, the *rich* Mr. Lyster, for him." The half-dozen intimate friends repeated it, as in duty bound, to half a hundred of their intimate friends, who sent it forth to the world with all the additions that the imagination of each could suggest. Arabella was pitied, praised, or blamed, by turns; and I was represented as a heartless brute, who, knowing that her affections were engaged to another, had, aided by her mercenary aunt, tried to force this model of disinterested love and constancy into a marriage.

Two years after her union, Arabella eloped with a young nobleman remarkable for weak intellect and large fortune; leaving her betrayed husband deeply embarrassed by her extravagance, and with an infant daughter, to bear through life the stigma entailed on her by a mother's guilt. Subsequently to the event, I had it in my power to render a signal service to Mr. Rodney; and it gratified

me to do so, as I had never forgotten his good-natured defence of my person against the attack of his hypocritical wife. This unprincipled woman was soon deserted by her lover for some fairer face; and having dragged on a miserable existence of sin and shame for a few years, died unmourned, in poverty and disgrace.

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### MY THIRD LOVE.

THE treatment I had experienced from the faithless Arabella influenced my conduct long after I had ceased to remember her, and its effects were baleful. Disgusted with the thoughts of marriage, I turned my attention to flirtations with married women, that most demoralizing of all fashionable follies, if what so frequently leads to crimes of a deep die may be so lightly named; and, strange to say, rarely were my attentions repulsed, even by those who would have shuddered at vice, could they have beheld it devoid of the blandishments with which sophistry, false sentiment, and meretricious refinement delight to adorn it. No, women, whose principles might successfully combat the assaults of vicious passion, too frequently, by the levity with which they permit, if not encourage flirtations, lead the world to form the most injurious conclusions; and while their reputations are the sport of scandal, console themselves with the futile reasoning, that, as they have not incurred actual guilt, they have nought with which they need to reproach themselves.

This species of folly is unknown on the continent, where, though the women are much less virtuous than our own, a greater degree of external decorum, and respect for appearances, exists. They, while too frequently violating virtue, pay it the homage of assuming its outward decencies; a species of artifice which the great majority of our females, satisfied with not outraging the reality, totally disregard.

I know this assertion, as to the superior appearance of outward decorum in continental ladies, will be cavilled

at; but the cavillers will be confined to those who have not had personal opportunities of judging, and I beg it may be remembered, I am referring to the semblance, and not to the reality of virtue.

Will my readers forgive this digression? I warned them, at the commencement of my confessions, that I was given to digress; and, alas! age does not diminish this failing. The truth is, I have much to say of all I saw and experienced during the interval of my breaking off with Arabella, and forming another attachment. Yet, as the confession might compromise others, never shall the veil, that covers the errors of those who smiled on me, be removed by *my* hand: and never *shall* the granddaughters of the present generation, have the blush of shame brought to their cheeks by my recital of the failings of their fair but frail grandmothers, many of whom resembled the spear of Achilles, which if it made wounds, was ready to heal them.

Let my readers then imagine, that two years were passed in the vortex of fashion; that I was, by turns, a victim or a dupe to the passions that mislead men in that maze of folly; and that, such were its debasing effects, I learned to view vice without disgust, and to consider virtue a phantom.

It was at this period, that I first encountered the beautiful Lady Mary Vernon. Ay, there is her portrait; yet, exquisitely lovely as it is, how far short does it fall of the original, when I first beheld her. There are her soft, melancholy eyes, that seemed as if they were only made to look at the heavens, so sublime, yet chastened, is their expression. There is her lofty and expansive forehead—never had intellect a fairer throne—and those gently curved raven brows, that lent such a character of pensiveness to her face. How beautiful was the almost transparent paleness of her cheek, the paleness of high thought, not disease. Yes, Lady Mary's was a countenance, once seen never to be forgotten: it was the face we picture to ourselves of a saint, rather than that of an angel, for it denoted that she had known suffering and sorrow; though purity shone so conspicuously in its every lineament, that no one could



behold her without a conviction that hers was a spotless mind.

It was at the Duchess of D——'s that I first met her; and, though accustomed to see beauty in all its forms, hers made such an impression on me, that I could scarcely withdraw my eyes from her face. Lady C. asked and obtained permission to present me; and I approached her, internally hoping, with my accustomed vanity, that I might soon discover the art of thawing the frozen coldness of her looks. Her voice was low, yet distinct and harmonious beyond any voice I had ever heard; and who is insensible to this powerful attraction in a female? an attraction that frequently atones for the want of all others. She looked full in the face of the person she addressed, with an expression of such calmness and purity, that the most reckless libertine could not have hazarded a light word, or indulged a gross thought in her presence. The men approached her with an air of reverential deference; and even the women, the most remarkable for their levity, assumed a decorous reserve, as if rebuked by the dignified modesty of her demeanour. Such was the respect with which she soon inspired me, that I felt discomposed at seeing some of my female acquaintances, whose purity I had reason to doubt, address her; it seemed to me as if the very atmosphere she breathed, ought not to have been profaned by their presence.

I should have judged her manner to me as being cold and reserved, beyond even the general reserve adopted towards a stranger, had I not observed that it was equally so to all the other men who addressed her, except a certain old white-haired admiral, whose visage resembled a frosted saffron-cake, to whom she extended her hand, with a cordiality that formed a striking contrast to her coldness towards all the others of his sex. My female acquaintances were not slow at discovering the profound admiration with which Lady Mary inspired me; and many and bitter were the sarcasms with which they commented on it. One said, that she was a tiresome rude, who threw a constraint over every circle into which she came; another observed, that it was no wonder

her husband avoided her, for she was too good to be agreeable; and a third remarked, that, notwithstanding her extreme prudery and frigidity, she did not dislike admiration. My respect for the ladies, who thus censured Lady Mary, had long vanished, but now I positively detested them.

Anxious to discover something of the history of my idol, for, even already, she was enshrined as such in my heart, I asked a dowager of my acquaintance, not more esteemed for her frankness, though it sometimes degenerated into *brusquerie*, than beloved for her goodness of heart, who was Lady Mary; adding, that it was strange I had never heard of her before.

“It would have been more strange if you had,” replied she; “for Lady Mary Vernon is not a woman who is talked about. Nothing can be said of her, except that her mind and life are as faultless as her beauty; and such women are seldom much discussed in society. She is the daughter of the Duke of A. and the wife of Mr. Vernon, one of the richest commoners in England.”

“He may well be considered an object of envy in possessing such a wife,” said I.

“So thinks not *he*,” resumed the dowager; “at least, if we may judge by his conduct; for he totally neglects this lovely creature, and bestows all his time, and, scandalous people say, most of his money too, on a certain lady, whose bad conduct is no longer apocryphal, though she is still tolerated in society. But Mr. Vernon,” continued the old lady, “resembles most of you men, who are more prone to admire a meretricious beauty, with whom you are perfectly at your ease, than a woman of refinement and dignified manners; who neither flatters your vanity by her *words*, nor permits you to mislead the world into false conclusions by her *actions*. Half your sex run after a woman, *not* because you individually admire her, but because it gratifies your inordinate *amour propre*, to appear preferred by one, who has a train of adorers; though this very circumstance ought to create any sentiment but admiration, as it clearly implies an unpardonable levity, if no worse, on the part of the lady.

See Mrs. Mortimer, the woman Mr. Vernon prefers to his wife,—for the fact is so well known, and the lady takes so little pains to disguise it, that I may name her without being considered censorious,—well, see this woman enter a ball-room, or a rout, and she will excite what is called a sensation. Men will crowd round and follow her, the herd will believe that this public homage is a proof of her charms, a belief in which the poor, weak, vain woman will also indulge; while Lady Mary Vernon, whose beauty admits not of a doubt, is neither tumultuously surrounded nor ostentatiously followed by your sex, for the best reason, no one dare presume to affect familiarity with her. Yet many of you, and probably her foolish husband amongst the number, conclude that the followed lady must be the more captivating, and urged by vanity, increase the crowd of her admirers.”

I endeavoured to deprecate the severity of the dowager against my sex; and then asked, how long Lady Mary had been married, and if hers had been what is called a love-match.

“Yes, quite a love-match on both sides; and it is said that, though her husband’s attachment survived not the first year of their union, hers still exists in all its pristine force.”

“How strange,” replied I, “that he could cease to love a woman, whose personal attractions are, as your ladyship affirms, nearly equalled by her mental ones.”

“Not at all strange,” she rejoined, “if one reflects on the selfishness, the frivolity, and the imbecility of the generality of our men of fashion. Attracted by the beauty of a woman, as they are by that of a horse, a picture, a statue, or any other object, the possession of which is likely to excite the envy of their acquaintances, they eagerly seek to attain it. The novelty worn off, what remains? Incapable of appreciating the mental qualifications of their wives, or of feeling the thousand nameless charms that exist in the sacred union of congenial sentiments, and the endearing ties of habit, which in well regulated minds and warm hearts, ‘render the wife dearer than the bride;’ the heartless voluptuary of

modern days turns from the beauty he has won, to seek, *not* a fairer, but a newer, face; leaving the disappointed, and often wretched wife, to weep over his neglect, or to resent it to her own undoing. His club, the gaming-table, Newmarket, and field-sports, occupy his time so much, as to leave little, if any of it, to bestow on her he had chosen, 'for better and for worse, in sickness and in health:' and she has reason to be thankful if, in addition to neglect, he does not give her the mortification of *seeing* or *hearing* of his preference for another, that other, too frequently, one of the most worthless of her sex."

"Is Lady Mary Vernon aware of her husband's *liaison* with Mrs. Mortimer?" asked I.

"How could she remain ignorant of it;" replied the *brusque* dowager, "with half a hundred *kind* friends to irritate her lacerated heart by their insulting pity; or to pique her pride by unavailing attempts to comfort her? In all the trials of life, but more especially in trials of the heart, be assured that there nothing like a friend for envenoming the wounds. I am an old woman, Mr. Lyster, have seen much, perhaps too much, of the world, and its knowledge has convinced me, that no persons so closely resemble *enemies* as friends; the only difference between them is, that the *first* injure without any attempt to impose on you by an assumption of good will; while the *second* inflict a deeper injury, professing, like the surgeon who probes his patient's wound, that it is for his good.

"No, poor Lady Mary has too many *friends*, to be left in blissful ignorance of the evil doings of her husband. — Anonymous letters, 'prating of his whereabouts,' were poured in on her; she was advised by one friend to separate from him; by another, to divorce him; *and* by *all*, to adopt some decided line of conduct that would make him ashamed of himself. This last advice she has, *I* think, judiciously followed; while *they*, partly in disgust at her forbearance, and still more at her rejection of their interference, rail at her want of spirits, shrug their shoulders, shake their heads, and now suffer her to pursue her own course without further opposition, saying, that for so tame-spirited a woman there is nothing to be done."



“What then is the course that she has adopted?” inquired I.

“The only course a sensible woman, who loves, and wishes to reclaim her husband, can adopt,” answered the dowager. “She treats him with invariable gentleness; makes him no reproaches, hides her tears, and welcomes him to his home, whenever he returns to it.”

How well did this account of her conduct accord with the mild and beautiful countenance of Lady Mary! I almost loved my loquacious dowager for being able to appreciate her, and listened with a breathless interest to every word that fell from her lips.

“There, there, just entering the room, is Mr. Vernon,” resumed Lady Glanmire; “speak of the evil one, and he appears.—How self-satisfied he looks; it positively makes me angry to see him!”

My eyes followed the direction pointed out by Lady G., and encountered a singularly handsome man. I turned to observe Lady Mary, whose cheeks assumed as deep a blush on seeing him, as probably his first declaration of love to her had elicited. He either did not, or would not observe her; at least he betrayed no symptom of recognition, but seemed sedulously searching for some more attractive object. In a few minutes his countenance brightened, and he approached the celebrated Mrs. Mortimer. I looked again at Lady Mary, and never shall I forget the expression of her face. It had become of a marble paleness; her brows were contracted, as if some violent, but subdued pang, tortured her; and her lips were compressed, as if to restrain the utterance of her anguish. I expected to see her faint; but I knew not then what woman *can* bear; I knew not that fine union of exquisite sensibility and modesty, which calls up fortitude to guard both from exposure to the crowd. Lady Mary looked the very personification of a martyr, about to suffer in support of her faith, as she slowly retired from the room, to avoid seeing her husband lavish on another, those attentions which he had long ceased to bestow on her. How I hated him at the moment! and how I despised the worthless woman, who seemed to

occupy all his thoughts. Heavens! what a contrast did her meretricious beauty, and the coarse gaiety of her manner, present to the classical loveliness, and dignified demeanour of Lady Mary!

I sauntered up towards the sofa, on which Mrs. Mortimer and her lover had seated themselves, evidently as little restrained in their flirtation, by the presence of the crowd around them, as if they had been alone. For a flirtation, however, there is certainly no place like a crowded rout. Oh! the things I have seen and heard therein, without any one appearing either surprised or shocked! Mrs. Mortimer was considered the Calypso of her day; but her charms being now considerably on the wane, she tried to repair them, much on the same principle, and with the same effect, that experienced dealers adopt in the restoration of old pictures. Still she was, and particularly by candle-light, a fine, or what artists call, a picturesque woman; and, from the peculiar character of her beauty, might have served as a good model for a painter, wishing to portray the unchaste wife of Potiphar. Her large, bold eyes met those of her lover, for such it was plain he was, with an expression from which I turned with loathing, and her ungloved hand was suffered to rest in his, beneath the folds of her India shawl, which was conveniently draped to conceal this violation of decency. I felt my anger and indignation excited by their undisguised and disgusting freedom of manner, in presence of one of the most fashionable circles in London; a circle in which their relative position seemed to be as perfectly understood, as, I regret to add, perfectly tolerated; and I left the apartment, sick at heart, and out of humour with the world.

In the anteroom I found Lady Mary Vernon waiting for her carriage, and, as the groom of the chambers at that moment announced it, I offered my arm to conduct her to it. For my soul I could not force my lips to utter a single one of the commonplace phrases men address to women on similar occasions; but, feeling her arm tremble within mine, I ventured to observe, that I feared she was ill.

“Very slightly so,” was the answer. “The sudden transition from a heated room to the cold air, often produces a nervous trembling of my frame that quickly subsides.”

I handed her to her carriage, and saw it drive off, scarcely aware that I was standing uncovered at the bottom of the steps at —— House, and only remembering that her arm had rested within mine, that my hands had touched hers;—and never had the touch of mortal produced such a sensation on man! No, none but a pure-minded and chaste woman could excite such sensations. There was awe mingled with the passionate love, the exquisite pleasure, that sent the blood tingling through my veins; and I mentally vowed that no man should ever have the arm of my wife within his, if wife I ever had. I longed to press my lips on the sleeve on which her beautiful hand had rested. I thought of her as some bright vision; and the melting tones of her voice still sounded in my ear. I felt something soft under my foot; and, on looking, perceived that it was her bouquet, which had fallen as she entered her carriage. I snatched it up and placed it in my breast, as if I had found the most precious treasure, and was retreating to seek for my servant, when I overheard a link-boy observe to another:—

“I say, Bill, that there fine gemman seems tarnation fond of poseys. Did you see how he cotched up that nosegay as the pale-faced lady let fall?”

“Yes, I seed it fast enough,” replied Bill; “I suppose as how he’s her sweetheart; for them there quality folks be mighty fond of love-making, bekase as how they have nothing else in the world to do.”

At this moment, the carriage of Mrs. Mortimer was called, and I saw Mr. Vernon conduct her to it, and enter it as if he were its master. Then, one of the two tall footmen behind it, uttered an energetic “Home!” and I observed the knowing winks and smiles, and heard the ribald jests exchanged by the liveried gentry around, as the profligate pair were whirled off to the mansion of the husband she had betrayed and dishonoured.

I entered my house a changed man; every feeling,

every thought, having Lady Mary for its object. When my eyes fell on different articles of *virtù* in my chamber, given to me by other women, I turned from them with disgust, to kiss, again and again, the bouquet of withered flowers that she had touched; and I valued it, oh! how much the more, when I recollected that *she* would not have *given* it to any man on earth, save to her unworthy husband.

Were women but conscious of the estimation in which even the slightest favour is held, when she who accords it is known to be pure and virtuous, how cautious would they be in granting a thousand little frivolous *cadeaux* to which, though *they* attach no importance, others prefix ideas that lead to very injurious conclusions. Could they, too, but hear the conversations of their favourite beaux, at the clubs they frequent, how would they blush and tremble at the false, the often odious interpretations, given to actions to which, if fairly judged, youthful imprudence or levity could alone be attributed.

But, to return to the antipodes of levity, Lady Mary and her faded bouquet. Perhaps some of my readers will smile when I assert, that from that night I have never met the mingled odours of the rose, jasmine, and verbena, without their bringing the image of that lovely woman to my memory, as vividly as though I had seen her but a few hours before. How I loathed her husband for slighting her! and yet, perhaps, I should have hated him still more had he evinced for her, at least in my presence, any marks of that passionate love which was now consuming my heart.

A few days after my memorable interview with Lady Mary, having sauntered into the fashionable jeweller's of that day, to make a purchase, I saw some very splendid diamonds, which one of the shopmen was placing in a case. Observing that they had caught my eye, he civilly laid the *etui* before me, and called my attention to a very large sapphire, which formed the centre of one of the bracelets belonging to the *parure*, and which, he said, he considered to be the most perfect stone that had ever passed through his hands. He added, that it had been sold at a very high price; and, in order to show me the



stone in its transparent setting, he touched a secret spring, when the gold plate at the back flying open, discovered a small enamel miniature of Mr. Vernon; the resemblance being so striking as to leave no doubt of its identity. The man had only closed the *etui* when the original of the portrait entered, ordered the case to be placed in his curricule, and drove off. I could not resist the impulse that induced me to follow the route he had taken; and I was only confirmed in the surmise I had formed as to the destination of the jewels, when I saw him stop at the door of Mrs. Mortimer, and send his curricule to the next street, to wait his return.

The diamonds and sapphire of vast price, it was plain then, were for his unworthy mistress, who, probably, only valued the miniature on account of its setting, and only tolerated the donor for the sake of his gifts. How strange appears to us the passion for jewels inherent in women in all countries and times. The extent to which it was indulged in Rome, is proved by Julius Cæsar having passed a law forbidding unmarried women to wear them. One would suppose that a similar prohibition existed in England, inferring from the impatience the generality of our young ladies evince to be married, and the pleasure they take, when this perilous desideratum has been attained, in displaying a profusion of jewels on their persons. Nor are our matrons less addicted to this expensive passion; for were the Athenian ordination, by which an unfaithful wife was prevented from wearing jewels, carried into effect in our days, it would, I believe, be the ruin of jewellers, but might be the saving of many a man's purse, if not his honour. And yet, who knows how far such a punishment might deter women from a breach of virtue; vanity, their besetting sin, being thus instigated to preserve what hitherto it had assisted to overthrow; for, there is much more of *vanity* than *passion*, in nine-tenths of the *liaisons* that lead to a breach of conjugal fidelity.

Three nights after the occurrence at the jeweller's shop, I encountered Mrs. Mortimer at a ball, at Lady Baskerville's; sparkling in the very *parure* I had seen,

and the well-known sapphire on her arm. Mr. Vernon, too, was there; and the lady seemed to treat him with more marked attention; the reward, as I thought, of the costly present he had made her. Lady Mary Vernon was also present, and looked, if possible, more beautiful than before. She was attired in a robe of white satin open in front, and falling in ample folds to her feet. The rich blonde lace that trimmed the dress, was clasped by black enamel ornaments, *à la Sevigné*, in the centre of each of which sparkled a large diamond. The pointed stomacher, which beautifully defined her delicate waist, was confined by similar ornaments; and a necklace and ear-rings to match, displayed the exquisite fairness of her skin. She was with an elderly lady, of a very dignified mien, who seemed wholly engrossed in a conversation with her; apparently urging her to do something, which Lady Mary declined, as I could see her wave her head, and make a motion that indicated repugnance.

I passed behind the spot where they stood, and heard the elderly lady say, in Italian, "Indeed, you are wrong thus to shrink from *their* presence, when *yours* would probably awaken them to the impropriety of their conduct, by drawing on them the censure of the spectators of it."

"What, draw censure on *my husband*? no, not for worlds!" replied Lady Mary; "I cannot, indeed I cannot, bear to encounter them."

And as she spoke, an increased paleness, and involuntary shudder, betrayed how much even the idea of adopting such a course affected her.

I approached, and made my bow; was received with a less distant politeness than I had anticipated, though still enough reserve and gravity remained, to check a much more presuming man than I had ever been. It was evident, that the respectful deference of my manner had influenced the old lady in my favour, for she whispered Lady Mary to present me to her. No sooner was my name pronounced than she eagerly demanded if I was the son of Lady Olivia Lyster? and on my replying in the affirmative, she told me that my mother had been one of her oldest and dearest friends, and that she felt highly

gratified at making my acquaintance. I was elated at this lucky chance, which seemed to hold forth a hope of meeting Lady Mary more frequently; for I speedily discovered that Lady Delafield (my mother's friend) was her aunt, and that they frequently saw each other.

Lady D. became quite cordial in her manner towards me; asked a thousand questions about Lyster Park, where she had often been during my infancy; and treated me, not as a new acquaintance, but as the son of an old and dear friend. While replying to her interrogations, I thought only of her charming niece, who seemed totally abstracted, her beautiful eyes fixed on the door of the room where she knew her husband to be. Mr. Mortimer came up, and accosted Lady Mary with an air and manner, so totally devoid of any suspicion that his presence was not agreeable to her, that I felt for him, when I observed the haughty coldness with which Lady Delafield returned his salutation.

"Where is Mrs. Mortimer?" asked the unconscious husband, "I expected to find her with you."

The colour rose to the cheeks of Lady Mary at the question, and there was an evident embarrassment in her manner, as she answered that she had not seen her.

"Not seen her!" repeated Mr. Mortimer; "how very odd; for she told me that she only came because she promised to meet you."

"Very odd, indeed," said Lady Delafield, drily; "for, I venture to say that my niece was wholly ignorant of Mrs. Mortimer's intention of being here."

Lady Mary pressed the arm of her aunt, and gave her an imploring look; while Mr. Mortimer betrayed such evident symptoms of mingled surprise and displeasure, as checked Lady Delafield's further observations. He looked from the aunt to the niece; and his face flushed as he observed the agitation and distress too clearly portrayed in the countenance of the latter, to admit of his doubting that some painful feelings were associated in her mind, with the mention of his wife. He muttered something, almost unintelligible, of his intention of seeking Mrs. Mortimer, and hurried into the next room. I saw terror

impressed on the pallid face of Lady Mary; she whispered a few words to her aunt, who turned to me, and requested that I would immediately seek Mr. Vernon, and tell him that she required his presence. I was about to say that I did not know Mr. Vernon, but Lady Mary interrupted me by saying, "Do, pray go, and quickly—I entreat you to go;" forgetting, in her alarm and agitation the self-control and dignity of manner, for which she was so remarkable.

On entering the next room, I discovered Mrs. Mortimer dancing with Mr. Vernon; a circle was formed round the dancers to observe her. Her movements were such as I should never have tolerated in a wife, though they elicited general applause; and as I saw her floating through the mazy dance, I was reminded of the opinion of Sallust, who, speaking of Sempronia, the mistress of Catiline, says, "She dances with more skill than becomes a virtuous woman."

Mr. Vernon led his partner from the dance, to a sofa elevated at the end of the room, and so placed, that the persons seated on it could be seen from all sides of the apartment. His assiduity was unremitting; he assisted to place her India shawl over her shoulders to preserve her from being chilled, and displayed all *les petits soins* that a lover employs for the object of his affections, attentions which were repaid by languishing looks of tenderness and sweet smiles. I marked the glances exchanged by the persons around them, in which were plainly expressed the malicious pleasure that a detected intrigue seldom fails to awaken.

While I endeavoured to make my way through the crowd to the place where they were seated, I caught a view of Mr. Mortimer; and never did I behold so fearful an expression as that which his countenance presented. Rage and jealousy strove for mastery, in the fiery glances which he bent on them; and which convinced me that never before had he suspected either the fidelity of his wife or the perfidy of his friend. From a state of happy security, he awoke at once to a conviction of their guilt; and terrible were the pangs which that conviction brought



him, if we might judge by its effects on his countenance. While he stood eyeing the guilty pair, they, totally unconscious of his presence, were exchanging looks of love and whispers of tenderness; thus, adding fuel to the fire that raged in the breast of the wronged and duped husband.

Fearful of some public *esclandre*, that could not fail to wring the already tortured heart of Lady Mary, I conquered my repugnance to address Mr. Vernon; and, approaching him, stated that Lady Delafield requested to see him immediately. The message seemed to annoy him and his companion; they whispered, looked confused, and after a few minutes' consultation he left her, promising to return immediately.

I mingled in the crowd, still remaining near enough to observe Mrs. Mortimer, and shortly after saw her husband walk up to her. She perceived him not until he was at her side; and, on recognising him, started as if she had seen a spectre, changed colour, and immediately attempted to envelope her person in the India shawl. But it resisted all her efforts to pass it over her stiffened sleeves; and her exertions only exposed still more the brilliant diamonds that encircled her arms. She was evidently struggling to acquire some portion of self-possession; and, after the pause of a moment, turned to her husband and observed, "Who ever should have thought of seeing you here?"

"Not *you*, I am persuaded," replied he, his lips trembling with suppressed emotion. "It is fortunate, however, that I *have* come, as my unexpected presence gives me an opportunity of admiring the rare and costly jewels you wear, and which I now see for the first time."

She became as pale as death, and then blushed a deep red.

"Oh! the fact is," said she, "I hired them for this night, as I was tired of always appearing in the same ornaments."

I could observe that her husband believed the assertion, for his features relaxed some portion of their rigid expression. She, too, perceived that he was the dupe of her falsehood, and, taking courage, she added, "I am so glad you are come, for I was wishing to go home; I feel tired and chilly."

As she thus spoke, her evil stars led her to endeavour again to wrap the shawl around her; when, in the effort to do so, one of the bracelets became unclasped and fell to the ground. In the fall, the secret spring flew open, discovering to the horrified gaze of her husband, who had stooped to take it up, the miniature of Mr. Vernon.

“And this portrait, too, was doubtlessly hired for the night,” said he, fixing his petrifying glance on her face. —“Come, leave this scene directly, madam; *you* and *I* have a fearful reckoning to settle, and this is no place for it.”

She seemed overcome by terror and confusion, and hesitated to obey his commands. He turned fiercely towards her, seized her arm, drew it within his, and dragged, rather than led her, through the long suite of rooms; I following to observe their movements. When they reached the drawing-room, where I had left Lady Mary and her aunt, a bustle and confusion among the company impeded the progress of Mr. Mortimer. Lady Mary Vernon had fainted; and, as is usual on such occasions, a circle had formed round her, increasing the heat and pressure, and consequently the illness for which they affected to feel such sympathy. Lady Delafield loudly entreated them to disperse, and on their doing so, I beheld Lady Mary, as she reclined on an ottoman, supported by the Duchess of B., Lady Delafield holding to her nostrils one of the many *flacons* offered by the surrounding groups of ladies. Lady Mary presented the appearance of death; her eyes were closed, their long dark lashes throwing a more ghastly shade over the pale cheeks beneath them: yet still, though bearing the semblance of death, her matchless beauty shone conspicuous, being not obliterated, but wearing a new character; a character that might have justified its being called the holiness of beauty, so calm, so unearthly was its loveliness.

My heart sank within me while I gazed on that marble face; and its striking resemblance to Louisa Sydney, as I last saw her, made me shudder. At this moment, Lady Delafield caught a view of Mrs. Mortimer, and gave

her a look that must have spoken daggers to her, so plainly did it say, "See what you have done."

The look was not lost on Mr. Mortimer; it seemed to increase his rage, for he pulled his terrified wife along, and descended the stairs, down which her trembling limbs could hardly support her. They had only driven off a moment, when Mr. Vernon returned from searching for his servant in the crowd. I narrowly examined his countenance, as he approached Lady Mary, who was still in a state of insensibility; and never did I behold contrition and sorrow more clearly delineated, than in the look he fixed on her pale but beautiful face.

"This man is not hardened in guilt, nor insensible to its fearful effects on others," thought I, as I saw him stoop to raise her tenderly from the sofa. The movement recalled her to consciousness; her lips moved, she opened her languid eyes, and fixed them on the face of her husband, with an expression of such deep, such unutterable tenderness, which, whatever might be its effect on him, sank into my very soul; and made me feel that I would sacrifice all I possessed, to have such a look fixed on me by those melting eyes.

His affectionate assiduity seemed to restore her, and she repaid it by faint smiles.

"Are you quite sure, dear aunt, that nothing dreadful has occurred?" asked Lady Mary, when Mr. Vernon had again left her, to see if the carriage was ready.

"Quite sure, my dear," replied Lady Delafield.

"Oh, what a relief! I was so alarmed by the terrible expression of Mr. Mortimer's face, that the most fearful presentiment rushed on my mind, and I felt as though I had been dying."

"Hush, hush, my dear," said Lady Delafield, "you were needlessly frightened. I am sorry that I suffered him to know the truth, as it has made you ill; but *he* must be well accustomed to the subterfuges of his worthless wife, if, indeed, she thinks it necessary to use any with him."

Mr. Vernon returned to support his wife to her carriage; and I beheld them drive off, with feelings little in

harmony with the scene of splendid festivity around me, and more than ever in love with Lady Mary.

How strange is the human heart! The very tenderness I had seen her display towards another seemed to increase mine towards her. The freedom from all harshness or reproach, with which she received his attentions, elevated her character in my estimation; and made me view her more as an angelic being, than as a woman.

The next day, at an early hour, business having called me into the city, I was passing through Fleet Street, when I heard my name pronounced by a female voice, with an entreaty that I should enter the shop whence it proceeded. I hesitated as to whether I should comply with the request or not, when the shopman presented himself at the door, and repeated it. On entering the shop, I beheld a very respectable looking female, in a state of great agitation, who immediately appealed to me, to satisfy the owner of the shop as to her respectability. In this person I recognised a Mrs. Tisdeal, who had lived several years, as a sort of humble companion or upper *femme de chambre* with my poor mother, and had been a great favourite of hers, but of whom I had lost sight for a long time.

"Oh, sir!" sobbed she, "you find me here charged with theft. I have been employed to dispose of some jewels of value: the owner wishes that her name should not be divulged; and unless I disclose it, that she may certify it was by her desire I offered her diamonds for sale, the owner of this shop threatens to commit me to prison, on suspicion that I have obtained them dishonestly. You, Mr. Lyster, who have known me for so many years, will, I am sure, answer for my character; but let me not be forced to reveal the name I so much wish to conceal."

"Look here, sir," said the jeweller, opening the case, and displaying its glittering contents: "these jewels are of too great value to be entrusted to a servant."

I started with amazement, on recognising the magnificent *parure* worn by Lady Mary Vernon the night before, which, being the first I had ever seen set in black enamel, had made an impression on my memory.



“Yes, sir,” resumed the jeweller, “these diamonds are of extraordinary beauty, and appearances are very much against this person. When I required a reference, and asked the ordinary questions which a cautious and reputable buyer, under such circumstances, ought to ask, this woman betrayed evident symptoms of confusion, and declined stating to whom the jewels belong, or her own place of residence.”

I assured the scrupulous shopkeeper, that I knew the female present perfectly well, and could answer for her honesty.

“Why, that’s all very well, sir,” said he; “but you’ll excuse me if I state, that I know no more of you than of this woman. The affair is altogether very suspicious—very suspicious, indeed. You happen, *most opportunely*, to be passing my door, at the very moment I was going to send for the police, to take this person into custody on suspicion of robbery. She sees you, calls out to you directly, you come in, and without asking her a single question, as to how she came by the diamonds, offer to be answerable for her honesty. You’ll excuse me, sir; but all this has a very odd appearance—a very odd appearance, indeed. There, John,” turning to one of his shopmen; “go and call a couple of the police, for it’s my opinion we shall have *two* persons to commit, instead of one.”

“Why, what the devil!” said I, getting angry; “you surely cannot mean to suspect or commit *me*?”

“You’ll excuse me, sir,” replied the imperturbable jeweller, “but I mean to do both, unless you can forthwith satisfy me of your own respectability. This affair looks very like a conspiracy, sir, very like indeed; and your popping by so opportunely leads me to think that you are nothing more or less than a confederate of this person.”

“What! suspect Mr. Lyster, of Lyster Park, one of the richest gentlemen in the county of Nottinghamshire!” exclaimed Mrs. Tisdeal, in mingled amazement and indignation.

“And you, ma’am,” said the jeweller, sneeringly, “are probably one of the richest ladies in some other

county. No, no, I am an old bird, and not to be caught with chaff, as the saying goes; and so I won't take your character for this gentleman, nor his for you."

"Let me speak to you alone, for a few minutes," said Mrs. Tisdeal.

"Ay, ay," said the jeweller, "lay your heads together, and make up a good story between you. See to the door, Thomas."

"You will regret this conduct," said I, much excited by his insulting suspicions, and the gross vulgarity with which they were expressed.

Having retired to the far corner of the shop with the agitated Mrs. Tisdeal, I told her in a low voice that I recognised the jewels, having seen them the night before, but that her secret was safe with me.

"Oh! sir," said she, "my lady has the most pressing occasion for a large sum of money—not for herself, dear angel lady—but for her husband. *He* is to know nothing of the sale of the diamonds, for he would never consent to it, and is to be led to believe that the money comes from my lady's aunt. Oh, sir, if this jeweller was to discover whence I come, he would go to Mr. Vernon's, and all would be known; and the mortification would be so great to her ladyship, that, rather than expose her to it, I would suffer any indignity to myself."

"Well, I say, have you concocted your story?" asked the jeweller, with an insolent sneer, suspicion having rapidly grown into certainty.

"What is the value of these diamonds?" demanded I.

"The value?" replied he; "why, more than you'll ever come honestly by, I'm thinking."

"I ask you what is their value?" resumed I, making an effort (and it required one) to master my rapidly increasing wrath.

"Well, then, their value is five thousand pounds, though at the present time, with the scarcity of money that exists, I doubt if they would fetch more than four thousand five hundred."

"Give me pen, ink, and paper," asked I; a demand he more than half reluctantly complied with.

While I was writing a few lines to my bankers, Messrs. Child and Co. John, his shopman, returned with two policemen. They eyed me with looks filled with suspicion; and I overheard the sapient John remark that "he was sure that I was an old offender, for rogue was written in my face."

I wrote to request my bankers to send any one of the clerks who knew me, with bank-notes to the amount of five thousand pounds, to the shop of Mr. Thompson, No. 6, Fleet street, with as little delay as possible; and having promised Thomas, the less suspicious shopman, a reward for his trouble, I despatched him, with my note, to the bank.

During his absence, the jeweller seemed puzzled what to think; poor Mrs. Tisdeal still trembled from the alarm she had undergone; and the two policemen maintained a demeanour of official gravity.

Thomas soon came back, out of breath from the speed he had made, and announced that Mr. Smith, the head clerk of the house, would soon wait on me.

This intelligence seemed to occasion the jeweller a considerable diminution of his self-complacency, and caused him to assume a somewhat less disrespectful bearing towards me. Yet, he appeared disappointed at the probability that, after all, I should turn out to be neither a thief nor the confederate of a thief: and, vexed and annoyed as I felt at the moment, I could not help observing then, as subsequently I have frequently remarked, that the generality of suspicious persons are more irritated than gratified, at discovering innocence in the individual whom they had prejudged to have been guilty.

His countenance became perfectly ludicrous when, *not* the head clerk of the bank, but Mr. Child himself, entered the shop; and, shaking me cordially by the hand, told me that *he* was the bearer of the five thousand pounds, because he was induced to infer, from the manner of the bearer of my letter as well as its contents, that something extraordinary had occurred.

While I explained to him the awkward predicament

in which the suspicions of Mr. Thompson had placed me, it was comical to observe the countenance of that varlet. He kept bowing to the ground, repeating—

“Indeed, sir, I’m sure, I would not for fifty pounds that such a mistake had taken place. I hope, sir, you’ll excuse me; I am quite confounded, indeed, sir; I know not what to say. Pray, Mr. Child, speak a word for me; indeed I meant no offence; but we jewellers are obliged to be so strict, so very particular, sir.”

“Yes,” interrupted I, “and I happened so *opportunistly* to be passing your door,’ and ‘looked so like an old offender’”—glancing at the now crestfallen John the shopman; who, as he had emulated his master in suspicion half an hour before, now emulated him in humility, and hung his head most sheepishly, at my thus repeating his recent observations.

Mr. Child was really angry, and reprimanded the knave of diamonds, for such he actually was, as he had been in more than one scrape for having bought stolen jewels, knowing, or at least having had cause to suspect, that they were dishonestly obtained. He wished to re-establish his injured reputation in the present instance, by displaying a more than ordinary degree of precaution; so, poor Mrs. Tisdeal and I were the victims to his new-born scruples.

Mr. Child, finding that I had no carriage with me, pressed me to let him send me his; but I refused, and and having procured a hackney-coach, placed Mrs. Tisdeal in it, and seating myself by her side, ordered the coachman to drive to the corner of Grosvenor Square. I gave her the five thousand pounds, making her believe that I was glad of an opportunity of purchasing so fine a set of diamonds, and that I considered them a bargain.

During our drive, she told me that she had now been three years with Lady Mary Vernon; Lady Delafield, having known her when with my mother, had recommended her to her niece, on the marriage of that lady. She added, that during the first two years her situation had been a happy one; but that now—and here she paused.



I told her that it was not a frivolous curiosity which led me to inquire why she no longer was happy in Lady Mary's establishment.

"Alas! sir, how can I feel happy, when I see my lady, who is an angel, if ever an angel appeared on earth, wretched? she, that used to be so buoyant and cheerful, whose dear, sweet laugh used to gladden my ears, and whose bright joyous looks were like sunshine to me. All is now changed; my lady's voice is never heard, except in accents so low and mournful that they make me sad; her bright looks are faded, and when she tries to smile, indeed, sir, it causes my heart to ache, her deep, melancholy eyes, and pale cheeks, seem in such marked contrast with the smile. She will sit for whole hours, sir, with her head leaning on her hand; and though a book lies open before her, she never turns over a page. But, when she hears Mr. Vernon's step approaching, she starts up, and strives to assume a cheerful face to welcome him; and he—oh! sir, it angers me to see that he does not, or will not, notice the sad change that has come over her, she that used to be as fresh as a rose, and as blithe as a lark."

"And what, my good Mrs. Tisdeal, do you think is the cause of all this?"

"Indeed, sir, I fear that there is but too much cause; for Mr. Vernon, who used to be the most attentive, nay, the most dotting husband in the world, has now become careless, cold, and silent; absenting himself continually from home, and when there, evidently impatient to quit it. My lady receives anonymous letters continually, sir; I know they are anonymous, because, when she opens them, she colours, and throws them in the fire. I shall never forget the first that came: she was in her dressing-room, and I delivered it to her. While she was reading it, I by chance looked in the large mirror near to which she was standing, and her appearance terrified me; she was as pale as death, sir; her eyes seemed to grow larger, and her brow contracted as if she was suffering an intense agony. Her lips were compressed, and her hand trembled so violently that she could scarcely hold

the letter. Oh! how I execrated the heartless, the wicked person that could thus rudely tear the bandage from her eyes, and plant a dagger in her heart! Surely, sir, there are few actions so vile or so wicked as the writing anonymous letters. I longed to throw myself at her feet, but I dared not interfere; and though my heart ached for her, I stole out of the room as if I had not observed her agitation, and remained in the antechamber, fearful of withdrawing further, lest she might require my assistance.

“ She did not ring for hours, but when I entered, was quite calm, sir; though I could discover, by her blanched cheek and heavy eyes, what was passing within her mind. She has never been herself from that time; and each day has seen her grow paler and more melancholy. Last night, my lady returned from a ball to which Lady Delafield had forced her to go. She came home attended by her aunt; and Mr. Vernon, who seemed most anxious and alarmed, watching over her, and holding her hand, just as he used formerly to do. Oh! sir, it made me so happy! But my lady’s aunt kept hinting, and more than hinting, that all her illness was *his* doing; and this vexed him, and my lady too. Lady Delafield is an excellent lady, but she does not understand how much mischief may be done by reminding a husband of the consequences of conduct he wishes to forget. One sweet smile and kind word from the wife he has injured, would have a better effect than all the lectures in the world; for men, sir, are always proud and wilful when they have done wrong, and must be allowed to have the triumph of having come round to the right path themselves, without having been schooled into it. I heartily wished Lady Delafield away; and so, I am sure, did my lady and Mr. Vernon. When she had gone, Mr. Vernon scarcely waited for the door to close after her, when he ran up and embraced my lady; and, indeed, sir, I saw the tears stream from both their eyes, though I left the chamber as quickly as I could.

“ In an hour after, a letter was brought by Mrs. Mortimer’s footman, with directions that it should be

delivered immediately, as it was of great consequence. My heart misgave me when Mr. Vernon's valet asked me to tell his master that he wanted to speak to him immediately—I refused; and, would you believe it, sir, the jackanapes became quite pert and saucy, said it was as much as his place was worth to keep a note from Mrs. Mortimer waiting, and that if *I* would not deliver his message to his master, he should take it to the door of my lady's room himself. Could gentlemen but know, sir, how they debase themselves, even in the eyes of their own servants, when they allow them to discover their vices, how careful would they be, if not to amend, at least to conceal them; for their menials must become either the censors or assistants of them, and that they should be either, is most degrading to a master. I trembled when I took the message, though I tried to look as unconcerned as possible. The fact is, sir, all our servants had been for some time passing their jokes and remarks on Mr. Vernon's constant visits and letters to that lady; and when her footman brought a note, he brought scandal and evil reports also; consequently, I feared the letter he now bore, might break up the good understanding that I hoped was about to be re-established between my lady and her husband. When I delivered the message, Mr. Vernon grew as red as fire in the face, and my lady turned as pale as marble. He went outside the door, took the note from his servant, and without breaking the seal, gave it into my lady's hands. She looked up in his face—oh! such a look of love and confidence—and said, 'No, dearest, *you* must read it, *I cannot*, ought not, it would be indelicate, unwomanly.'

"I left the room, but before the door closed, I heard him exclaim, 'How like you, my own Mary, and how unlike—' I heard no more. Early this morning, my lady came to me, and placing the jewels, you have brought, sir, in my hands, desired me to dispose of them to the highest bidder, as she had immediate occasion for the money. She told me to tell her (in case Mr Vernon was present) that Lady Delafield had sent a letter and parcel for her, that is, if I had disposed of the diamonds:

I know it cannot be for herself that my lady requires the money, for she is more prudent than any lady I ever knew, and never incurs a debt; so it must be for Mr. Vernon."

Various and contending were the emotions with which I listened to Mrs. Tisdeal's prolix detail; jealousy was, however, the predominant: and—shall I confess my unworthiness?—I was more than once tempted to return the jewels and get back my money, sooner than it should serve as a new bond of kindness between Lady Mary and her weak-minded husband. But my better nature triumphed. There were moments in which I felt vexed at her so readily yielding him her pardon, and accused her of weakness; however, a little reflection showed her to me in all the purity and gentleness of a pitying angel *rejoicing* over a repentant sinner, rather than as an injured wife pardoning the errors of a reclaimed husband. Thus, the nobleness of her disposition made me more deeply enamoured of her, while it forbade every hope of my passion ever meeting the least return.

"I left home, sir," resumed Mrs. Tisdeal, "at nine o'clock, and called at three jewellers' before I entered the shop where you rescued me. Oh, dear! how late it is!" casting her eyes up at a watchmaker's door, over which a dial marked the hour of four. "How long my lady will have thought my absence!"

I had been so engrossed by the communications Mrs. Tisdeal had been making, that I had not reflected on the impropriety of my being seen to drive up with her to Lady Mary's residence; to which we were now rapidly approaching, having entered Grosnevor Square. I had just resolved that I would endeavour to conceal myself while Mrs. Tisdeal descended, when a hackney-coach, that preceded us, stopped at the very door to which we were proceeding. The blinds were up, but the step was in an instant let down, and Lord Percy, a friend of mine, jumped out, evidently in a state of agitation, and hastily entered the house, leaving the coach still waiting. Mrs. Tisdeal called our coachman to let her descend; and he was in the act of assisting her from the vehicle when



Lord Percy returned from the hall, accompanied by half a dozen servants, opened the coach-door, and, after two or three minutes' delay, I beheld them bearing Mr. Vernon, apparently dead, or dying, in their arms.

Horrorstruck at the sight, I jumped from my coach, and followed them into the hall; when Percy recognising me, whispered—

“This is a fearful business. Mortimer challenged poor Vernon, who is, I fear, mortally wounded. Good God! who is to break it to Lady Mary?”

They bore him into the library. Servants were dispatched at every side for surgeons, and Mrs. Tisdeal promised to keep Lady Mary in her dressing-room, in ignorance of the fatal event, while I ran for Lady Delafield. I met her carriage entering the Square, stopped it, and with all possible precaution told her what had occurred. She made me get into the chariot and accompany her to Lady Mary's, saying, that I might be useful to her in her affliction; and I was too glad to be near the object of my idolatry not to embrace eagerly the offer. It was now that I felt for the first time the holy, the purifying effects of real love. I would have given a limb, nay, my life, to have saved that of Mr. Vernon: ay, more, I would have supported the sight of her I so passionately, so madly loved, lavishing her caresses on him, sooner than know she was wretched. His existence became to me, from this moment, of vital importance, because on it I felt her happiness, her very being depended; and every selfish sentiment faded away before the thought of her sorrow and despair.

Lady Delafield hurried up stairs as quick as her aged and trembling limbs could bear her, begging me to remain in the house until she saw me again. The servants showed me into a small anteroom that communicated with the library; and there I could hear the stifled groans of the wounded sufferer, as the surgeons endeavoured to extract the ball from his side.

“I feel I am dying,” uttered Mr. Vernon, “let me see my wife.”

There seemed to be some hesitation on the part of the

surgeons; but he again demanded her presence, adding, in a faint voice—

“It is useless to torture me; life is ebbing fast, and all will soon be over.”

In a few minutes, I heard Lady Mary enter the room from a private staircase; when the ejaculation of “Oh! my poor Mary!” from Mr. Vernon, told how deep must have been that expression of anguish on her countenance which thus caused him to lose, in his pity for *her*, all sense of his own sufferings.

“Pray, madam, be composed,” said one of the surgeons.

“Think not of me,” replied she, in accents that made me tremble; so profound, though subdued was the despair they denoted.

“Leave us, leave us,” said Mr. Vernon. “I have much to say ere yet my strength totally fails me.”

The surgeons left the library for an inner room; and I then could hear the stifled sobs of the husband, mingled with the low, sweet voice of the wife.

“You will be spared to me, my own love; the Almighty is merciful,” murmured Lady Mary.

“No: Mary, my blessed Mary, I feel that my wound is mortal. I have deserved this punishment; yes, I own that I have deserved it. How could I be so infatuated, so madly infatuated, as to yield to her seductions, and forget for a moment you, who have ever been an angel to me?”

“Think not of this fatal subject now, dearest,” replied Lady Mary, “think only of our cordial, our happy reconciliation of last night; when you abjured the only error of which you had to accuse yourself.”

“Yes, Mary, God be thanked! I waited not for a death-bed to repent; for I then fully determined never to see *that* woman again; and had life been spared me, this resolution would have been faithfully sustained. My folly, my guilt, have led to this fatal result; and I shall be torn from you, my own Mary, just when I had re-awakened to a sense of all I owe you, without the power of atoning for the ills I have inflicted. How precious

appear now the days I have wasted! Oh, Mary! what would I not give for a few months, a few weeks even, of life to be spent with you! *Her* husband challenged me; to refuse to meet him was impossible; and fondly as I would now cling to existence, I would rather die by *his* hand, than that he should have fallen by mine. I was determined not to return his fire; for, I repeat, I would not for worlds have his blood on my head. Will you forgive me, my precious Mary, for talking of *her*? But too well do I know your generous, your pitying heart, to doubt that you will pardon me. She is driven from her home, dishonoured and an outcast; I am the cause of all the evil that has befallen her, and it weighs heavily on my mind. Promise me, that when I am gone, you will bestow on her the means of existence."

"Doubt it not, dearest, all, everything shall be done; but *you* will be spared to my prayers. Oh! do not say, do not think otherwise."

"Alas! my Mary, how can I deceive you? I feel that my hours are numbered; but let me conclude for ever the painful subject on which we were speaking. Even now, Mary, this wretched woman may be in want; send to her, I entreat you, sufficient amply to screen her from pecuniary difficulties. My friend Spencer will lend me a few hundreds; for, as I told you last night, I have squandered away such immense sums of late, that I have scarcely any money left at my banker's."

"My aunt has placed a large sum at my disposal, dearest love, and I shall send it to this unhappy woman immediately."

"Bless you, bless you, Mary! I knew you would cheerfully act as you are now doing."

The surgeons now returned to the library, and, after a short consultation, they had their patient moved to his chamber, where an opiate was administered to him. Soon after taking this medicine he fell into a slumber; and then, and not till then, did his wretched wife betray the first symptom of the dreadful effect produced on her frame by the terrible shock she had received, for she dropped from the chair into which she had sunk, in a deep

swoon. I heard the whispered ejaculations of the surgeons as they assisted to bear her from the chamber, and my heart died within me as I caught their observations indicating her danger, while I, within a few paces of her, dared not approach her. Never was the humanizing power of sympathy more truly felt than by me at this moment; I would have faced death, I do believe, in its most fearful shape, to have seen her relieved from the weight of misery that oppressed her; and her sufferings engrossed every thought, every feeling.

Hours seemed comprised in the minutes that elapsed during her insensibility; and never did a doting mother watch over an only child with more intense, more agonizing anxiety, than I experienced while listening for some sound to announce her return to consciousness. When she recovered, Lady Delafield came to me; and, though rarely overpowered by her feelings, she was so struck with the expression of sorrow in my countenance, that she took my hand kindly, and thanked me for the interest I evinced in the affliction of her family. The compliments she paid to my goodness of heart and *disinterested* kindness, were so unmerited, that I became confused. But even my evident embarrassment was considered by the excellent old lady as an additional proof of my goodness; and she remarked how much I resembled my dear mother at this moment, and how truly she prized my sympathy.

I hardly dared trust myself to inquire for Lady Mary; but Lady Delafield informed me that her niece was now much better, and was on her knees praying for strength *whence only* it can be derived, to bear up against the trial that awaited her. On recovering from her swoon, she had insisted on the surgeons informing her of the real state of her unfortunate husband. They wished to temporise with her; but she was inflexible; and they at length admitted, that though he might live a few days, nay, a few weeks, his death was inevitable, as the ball had entered a vital part, and could not be extracted.

“Poor, dear soul, she bore this fatal information with wonderful fortitude,” continued Lady Delafield. “After a few minutes’ conversation with her attendant, Mrs.



Tisdeal, she seemed inspired with new energy, and imposed a task on me that I cannot, ought not, to perform; and yet, she declared, that unless it be executed she can know no rest. Perhaps you, my dear Mr. Lyster, would be my substitute on this disagreeable errand?"

I instantly offered to do anything she wished; and she intrusted me with a small sealed packet to convey to Mrs. Mortimer, who was staying incognita at a villa near Fulham, and to deliver it into her own hands. I asked, and obtained a ready consent to return to Grosvenor Square as soon as I should have fulfilled my mission; and again the old lady complimented me on my good nature.

I proceeded to Fulham, and, after some difficulty, succeeded in gaining admission to Mrs. Mortimer, who received me with a mingled air of pride and shame.

"I have waited on you, madam," said I, "by the desire of Lady Delafield, to deliver this parcel."

Her cheeks became suffused with a deep crimson; and with much agitation she tore open the envelope, from which dropped the five thousand pounds I had given to Mrs. Tisdeal, not three hours before.

"What does this mean, sir?" asked she, haughtily: "there is not a line here," she continued, pointing to the envelope, "to explain why, or from whom, this money was sent."

"The parcel, madam, was confided by Lady Mary Vernon to her aunt, to deliver to you; but that lady feeling unequal to the task, intrusted it to me."

"Oh, then, I am to conclude, sir," said she, imperiously, "that this money is sent me by the wife, as a bribe to induce me to forego my claims on the husband. But she little knows me, if she supposes that, disgraced as I am, driven with ignominy from my home, owing to my ill-starred attachment to Mr. Vernon, I will now resign him for whom I have sacrificed so much. No, sir! take back this money to Lady Mary. Mr. Vernon is too much a man of honour to abandon the woman he has ruined; and I" (here she burst into tears) "have paid too dearly for

his affection, to relinquish my claim to it now, when I have nought left beside."

"Madam, you must make up your mind to this sacrifice," replied I.

"Never, never, sir," interrupted she.

"Alas, madam, it no longer depends on *your* will. The separation is inevitable."

"You do not mean to say that *he* is so weak, so vacillating, as to consent to it?" demanded she, with anger flashing from her eyes. "If so, his conduct is shameful, and merits my contempt."

"Mr. Vernon is at present, madam," resumed I, "entitled to the pity of all; for he is on the bed of death, to which his errors have untimely conducted him."

"On the bed of death!" shrieked Mrs. Mortimer; "*he* who last night was in perfect health? No, you deceive me: it is not—it cannot be so."

"He was mortally wounded in a duel this morning," said I.

"And by my husband's hand," interrupted she. "Ay, reveal it all; leave nothing of the dreadful tale untold." As she frantically uttered these words, she fell from her chair in violent hysterics.

I rang for her attendant, and, from feelings of humanity, waited until the first violence of her emotions had subsided. While she continued sobbing and shrieking, her *femme de chambre* displayed the most extraordinary nonchalance: performing the services that the position of her mistress required, with a *brusquerie*, and an evident want of good feeling, that shocked me. Something in the countenance and whole air of this woman impressed me with a most unfavourable opinion of her, which her conduct towards Mrs. Mortimer served to confirm; and I determined therefore not to leave that unhappy person until she had recovered some degree of consciousness, not wishing to trust either her or the bank-notes, which I had picked up from the carpet, to the tender mercy of her servant.

When Mrs. Mortimer had regained some portion of composure, she dismissed her *femme de chambre* from the room; who left it, with such undisguised impertinence of

manner, that I pitied the fallen and unhappy woman, who was helplessly exposed to this insolence.

“Are you sure, quite sure, that Mr. Vernon cannot recover?” asked Mrs. Mortimer.

“The surgeons have so pronounced,” replied I.

“And did Lady Mary know this fact, when she sent the money?”

“Yes; she had been informed that there was no hope.”

“Oh, God! oh, God! forgive me!” exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer, bursting into a paroxysm of tears; “and this—this is the woman I have so wronged, I have so tortured!”

I felt myself relent towards her, as I witnessed the deep and salutary impression made on her by Lady Mary’s goodness. I spoke kindly to her, and succeeded, though not without much difficulty, in inducing her to retain the bank-notes; then, in the hope of affording an additional mitigation to her sorrow, promised to inform her daily of the state of Mr. Vernon.

“Oh, I am wretched and disgraced,” sobbed she, while I used my fruitless endeavours to sooth her. “It seems strange and puerile to think of such a contemptible annoyance at this moment, weighed down as I am, by afflictions so appalling; but my maid—she on whom I have literally lavished money and presents—has so grossly insulted me last night and this morning, that I shrink from encountering, and have not courage to dismiss her.”

I promised immediately to take this office on myself, and to get my housekeeper to send her a *femme de chambre*, in a few hours. Her gratitude was extreme, and proved that she had still some good feeling left.

Never did I witness such concentrated rage and malice as in Madame Claudine, for so she was named, when I informed her, in an outer room, that her lady had no longer occasion for her services.

“Not no occasion for my services,” replied she in broken English. “I should be very sorry to continue dem to her *now*, dat she is *exposée*, and vat you call turn out, from de house of Mons. Mortimer. It was all vary

well as long as Monsieur did please to *shut* his eyes, and *open* his purse.—But *now* it is *tout autre chose*, all one oder ting; and so I did tell her, last night, when we was turn out, *chassées de la maison*, before I have de time to finish my rober de whisk, in the steward's room, or eat one morsel of supper *malgré* Mons. Pergault de cook have prepare von *salade d'Homer exprès* for me. And den ve comes to dis dismal, damp, leetle hole, vidout never no *maitre d'hotel*, nor *domestique* for to speak to, except de livery servant, vid whom a *femme de chambre de bonne maison*, like to me, cannot change de vords. I would not be surprise, if Mons. Henri, de valet de Mons. Mortimer, vas to break his vord of honour, and refuse to marry me, for coming off vid von who vill be the cause of having all de establishment sent away; von vicked voman who never care for de *domestiques*, and only tink of herself! She never have told me her secrets, more be de shame for her, to try to deceive her *femme de chambre*; but she tink to blind my eyes, because she blind Mons. Mortimer's eyes long time. But I am not so fool; for ve *femmes de chambre* see de lof affair at von grand distance, before de oder persons tink der be any lof at all; and den, ve vatch, and vatch, till ve do find out all, and I am glad, because she tink to deceive me. Ve *femmes de chambre* have as much right to de secrets of *notres dames* as to deir clothes, and ven de do keep von, or de oder from us, ve expose dem."

I was so disgusted with the unblushing vice and effrontery of this vile woman, that I told her to be silent, in a tone so peremptory as to check her loquacity; and from compassion to her guilty and unfortunate mistress, I remained in the house until she had left it, insuring her departure by a ready compliance with the extravagant, and probably dishonest claims for wages, and sundry articles, alleged to have been purchased for Mrs. Mortimer's use.

I returned immediately to Grosvenor Square; and found that Mr. Vernon seemed so much refreshed by the few hours' repose he had enjoyed, that his physicians thought it probable he might linger for some time. Lady



Mary attended him unremittingly; and Lady Delafield told me, with tears in her eyes, that she had never witnessed anything so affecting as the efforts made by both husband and wife, to conceal from each other the anguish they were enduring. All the passionate tenderness which Mr. Vernon had felt for Lady Mary, during the first months of their union, seemed to revive in its pristine force, now that that union was on the verge of being dissolved by death. His eyes seldom left her face; and hers dwelt on his with an expression of unutterable love. The thoughts of both were of that fearful separation, which a few days, nay, a few hours, might see accomplished, when the grave would eternally divide them; yet neither trusted themselves to speak of what ceaselessly occupied the reflections of both. Grief, the truest, the deepest, alone filled the heart of the wife; for, *she* had perpetrated no crime against affection, either of omission or commission. But *he* was tortured by remorse, and writhed in agony at the anticipation of that fearful separation, to which his own guilty passions were conducting him. Now that the film had fallen from his eyes, his career during the last few months appeared before him in all its enormity; and the levity of character which had led to his derelictions, having given place to sober reflection, he seemed to awake as if from a frightful dream, only to find himself, while trembling on the verge of eternity, again in view of that happiness he had so ruthlessly cast from his grasp.

It was edifying, it was beautiful, to see Lady Mary watching, with untired and untiring love, through the tedious hours that rolled their course, by the couch of her husband; touchingly reading, with a voice tremulous from suppressed emotion, the sacred volume, to which we turn in affliction, and never in vain. She lifted his sinking heart from the abyss of despair to the prospect of a future state; he listened as to the admonitions of an angel, and as this life faded from his view, he would talk to her of the life to come, of which, alas! he had hitherto thought so seldom, when they would be once more united, never to part again.

Grief and anxiety now began to make their ravages felt on the already weakened constitution of Lady Mary. Each revolving day saw her become more pale and attenuated; her fine form lost all its roundness, and a bright red spot on her cheek told that fever was spreading through her veins. Her aunt, whom I saw daily, made me the confidant of all her fears, and they were of the most sombre cast.

“I see it plainly, my dear Mr. Lyster,” would she say, “my poor Mary is fading away every hour, and *he*, would you believe it? seems to regard her altered looks with complacency. Oh! the selfishness of some people! When in health, he slighted, nay, almost deserted her, for another; and now, I believe, he would literally rejoice were she to die with him. Why, he is as bad as the savage despots, who, when expiring, ordain the deaths of all their wives, favourite slaves, and animals, in order that they may meet their masters in their imaginary future world. It is too bad, much too bad; and me, Mr. Lyster, what is to become of *me*, if I lose her? Who is to watch by *my* sick couch, or to close *my* dying eyes; and *he* the cause of all. Indeed, I can hardly command enough Christian charity to forgive him, even though I know he is on his death-bed.”

“His conduct has been most culpable, I admit,” replied I, “but I believe he has only been weak, and not wicked.”

“Don’t try to palliate guilt with such subterfuges, Mr. Lyster,” said Lady Delafield. “The difference between weakness and wickedness is much less than people suppose; and the consequences are nearly always the same. Weak men only want the temptation to become wicked; they can resist no seduction, refuse no enjoyment. They shrink from opposition, as children do from punishment; and guilt ever finds them ready to yield to its *first* assaults. A strong-minded man may stoop to temptation, and recover from it; becoming strengthened by the experience he has acquired, as iron gains hardness by the fire that heats it. But a weak man is only rendered weaker by each fall, and, like melted

lead, takes any form that any one chooses to give him. Lady Mary," continued the prolix old lady, "has sat up with Mr. Vernon every night; not all my entreaties can induce her to leave him, and it is only during the day that she will consent to repose for an hour or two in the chamber that joins his. While she sleeps, he writes, and writes such gloomy things. Why, it was only this morning that I found her almost suffocated with tears, perusing these lines, which I took away, when she left the room for a moment, seeing how they agitated her. Read, Mr. Lyster, and you will agree with me, that he must be indeed intensely selfish, thus to harrow up her feelings, already too much wounded. He should not have suffered her to see his gloomy production; such conduct, I repeat, is wickedly selfish, and I hate selfish people. *I* never was selfish, Mr. Lyster, never; and yet the reward for my freedom from this besetting sin, will be, to be left to bear up against the infirmities of age *alone*, and to have *my* eyes closed by hireling hands. Oh! it is too bad! much too bad! and I cannot bear selfish people."

Poor old lady! and this energetic profession of disinterestedness to me, while she was in the very act of lamenting the probability of *her* privations in case of the loss of her niece, and only apprehending the miserable catastrophe in reference to *her* personal share in its consequences.

#### THE DYING HUSBAND TO HIS WIFE.

Dearest! I am going  
 To the dreary grave,  
 Not thy love, though mighty,  
 Can avail to save;  
 Ruthless Death has mark'd me  
 Soon to be his prey;  
 All my hours are number'd,  
 Brief must be my stay.  
 Yet, beloved! oh, weep not,  
 Every tear of thine  
 Turns my soul from heaven,  
 Making earth its shrine.

Soon, this heart, now beating  
 Warm with love for thee,  
 All its throbbings ceasing,  
 Food for worms shall be:  
 Soon, this breast that pillow'd  
 Thy loved head in sleep,  
 Shall forget its sighing—  
 Thou wilt live and weep:  
 And these eyes fast fading,  
 Soon shall look their last;  
 Wilt thou gaze upon me  
 When their light hath past?

Ah! these lips so faltering,  
 Silent soon shall be,  
 Speak no accents tender,  
 Smile no more on thee:  
 The ear that loved the music  
 Of thy voice's tones,  
 Soon shall be insensate  
 To thy sighs and moans.  
 Thou wilt call me vainly,  
 In loud bitter, grief,  
 And its sad outpouring  
 Yield thee no relief.

Yet, thou'lt stay beside me  
 When life's spark has fled;  
 Thy fond heart will shrink not  
 From my dreary bed.  
 Words of love thou'lt falter,  
 Ne'er to meet reply,  
 Nor from corse so pallid  
 Wilt thou turn thine eye.  
 One dear kiss but give me,  
 Ere I pass away,  
 'Tis the last sad token  
 Love from thee would pray.

Oh! yet grant *one* other:  
 Let this ring of thine,  
 Pledged before the altar  
 In exchange for mine,  
 Rest with me, the darkness  
 Of my grave to share,  
 Though the worm around it  
 Kiss thy shining hair.  
 Hush! a cloud comes o'er me,  
 Thee no more I see;  
 'Tis, oh God! our parting—  
 Blessings rest with thee!



Various were the wishes and hopes that passed through my mind during the lingering illness of Mr. Vernon. There were days when I longed, absolutely longed for his death; because I considered that each hour added to his suffering existence, abridged one from that of Lady Mary. I pictured to myself that the first vehemence of her grief at his decease being subdued, resignation would follow, and lead to the recovery of her shattered health. *Time*, the healer of even the deepest wounds of grief, would, I fondly imagined, cicatrize, if not totally efface, hers. Fool that I was! I knew not how a woman can love or mourn; and it was reserved for this pure and lovely creature to instruct me. At other times, when Lady Delafield has recounted to me the despair and anguish of her niece, as her husband's approaching dissolution seemed to draw nearer, I have prayed, fervently prayed, that this life might be prolonged, even though it offered an impassable barrier between her I doted on and my hopes.

I had now become an *habitué* at Grosvenor Square, where Lady Delafield had taken up her residence. She saw, however, but little of her niece, who never left her husband's chamber but when she sought her couch for an hour's slumber. I felt an indescribable, though a melancholy pleasure, in being thus almost an inmate in the house of her I loved. Lady Delafield clung to me with all the helplessness of age. I was the person to be consulted on all emergencies, and in whose patient ear all her griefs were to be poured. Frequently did she acknowledge her obligations to me, and say, that I was necessary to her very existence; that, without me, she could not have borne up against the troubles present and prospective, that menaced her; and that she considered me as one of her family. How has my foolish heart beat with vague hopes, at hearing such words! They engendered the delusive idea, that, at some remote period, when informed by her aunt of my unceasing attentions, I might be permitted, as a friend, to console Lady Mary; and from friendship to love I fancied the distance not insuperable.

Thus, unworthy as I was, my kindness to her aged relative, the friend of my dear mother, had its source only in selfishness. It was true, that I hardly dared imagine that I could ever become more than a friend to Lady Mary; but to be even this, would be to be blessed beyond all that I had ever yet experienced, and, as the verse says,

“None without Hope e'er loved the brightest fair,  
For Love will hope, when Reason would despair.”

So hope presented me indistinct, but delicious, visions, never, never to be realized. I loved to sit on the chairs, or recline on the sofa, which had been pressed by her; all the objects in the rooms on which her eyes had ever rested, possessed a charm for me: the very atmosphere of the apartment seemed impregnated with a fragrance that breathed of her; and I was only tranquil when beneath her roof. I have felt abashed and humiliated when Lady Delafield heaped commendations on my domestic habits and sedentary tastes; and, above all, on the disinterested devotion of my time and comfort to *her*.

The good old lady little imagined that I was the slave to an ungovernable and unhallowed passion, and that all my attentions to her proceeded from selfish motives. She talked incessantly of her niece; a subject on which I could have listened for ever. She related a thousand incidents connected with her infancy and girlhood, all calculated to rivet still more closely the chain that bound me to her. How have I writhed in the pangs of jealousy, when she has dwelt, with prolixity, on the passionate attachment of Lady Mary to her husband; and how have I endeavoured to lead her to revert to the period antecedent to her niece's knowledge of him. On one occasion—I shall never forget it—she observed to me, that she often thought I seemed formed for Lady Mary. “We possessed,” she said, “the same love of home and quiet.” I felt the blood rush to my very temples. “And yet,” continued she, “perhaps you might not have liked each other; for similarity of tastes does not always

beget affection. I remember, that when I asked Mary, the day after you were presented to me, if she did not think you good looking," (how my heart throbbed), "She replied that she had not observed you sufficiently to judge."

How did this speech wound me! Never did vanity receive a more severe check. Lady Delafield probably observed my mortification, for she resumed:—

"The second time we met you, Mary assented to my remark, that yours was a good countenance."

Then, she *had* remarked me; and my appearance had not displeased her! Here was subject for joy; and Hope once more spread its wings, and soared into the future.

Mr. Vernon had now lingered on for six weeks, six *blessed* weeks, as his admirable wife called them; for, during that period, she had taught him to look to *another world*, for that happiness promised to the repentant sinner. But the mandate had gone forth; death was not to be cheated of his prey; and Mr. Vernon expired in the arms of his wife, blessing her with his latest breath.

Prepared, as we considered Lady Mary to be, for this calamity, she soon sank under it; and a few weeks saw her borne to the grave, that so lately received the mortal remains of him she loved so well.

Though years, long years, have elapsed since I saw her deposited in the tomb, my recollection of the appalling spectacle, is at this moment as vivid as though it had occurred but yesterday. What *I* suffered, those only can know, who, having centred all feelings, all hopes, in one passion, behold the object of it snatched for ever from their view. I mourned her long and deeply;—but why dwell on this painful theme? She died, unknowing that she left on earth a heart that would long bleed for her loss; and I had not even the consolation of thinking that she would have pitied the attachment she had inspired.

Shortly after death, her aunt give me the following verses, written by Lady Mary, a few days subsequent to the interment of her husband.

## THE MOURNER.

I saw thee when Death hover'd nigh,  
 And set his seal upon thy brow;  
 I heard thy struggling groan and sigh,  
 Which e'en in mem'ry haunts me now.

I saw the lips, all pale and chill,  
 Where words of love were wont to dwell,  
 And felt a pang my bosom thrill,  
 That words can never, never tell.

And when the fearful strife was o'er,  
 When life had fled, and hope was gone,  
 I gazed on thy dear face once more—  
 That face which still I gaze upon.

I thought how soon the cold, dark grave  
 Would hide thee from my tearful eye,  
 And, frightened, shrank from life, to crave,  
 In that chill tomb with thee to lie.

I call'd thee by fond names of love,  
 Names that were wont to charm thine ear;  
 But nought the ear of Death could move,  
 And heedless fell each burning tear.

Tears fell in streams upon thy brow,  
 As my pale lips to thine were press'd;  
 But, ah! those lava showers had now  
 No power to break thy marble rest.

Within the coffin's narrow bound  
 Thy cold remains too soon were laid:  
 Ah! worse than death, was the harsh sound  
 The closing of that coffin made.

Why did I live beyond that hour  
 When "all the life of life is fled?"  
 Existence, fearful is thy power,  
 Who lingerest still, when Hope is dead!

When I had perused them, I could not refrain from feeling, that it was better she had not been left to drag on an existence which the loss of him she had so fondly loved, must have for ever embittered: and I ceased to delude myself any longer with the hope, that a heart



so devoted as hers had been, could ever have found consolation in a second attachment.

Pity induced me to continue to poor Lady Delafield, the attentions that a selfish motive first led me to pay her. She survived her niece but a year; and, dying, bequeathed to me the portrait now before me, which I have preserved with a religious care. When I have since heard some heartless coxcomb, or witless worldling, pronounce women to be incapable of a lasting attachment, I have turned from them with scorn, to think of Lady Mary Vernon; whose love neither neglect, unkindness, nor even death itself could change, and who followed the object of her attachment to the grave from which she could not save him.

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#### MY FOURTH LOVE.

WHAT! (I fancy I hear some indignant fair one say), can he again have loved? and has the pure flame, kindled by the beautiful and sainted Mary, been profaned by some unworthy successor to her place, in his heart?

Alas! it was even so: the grief I thought indestructible, passed away, like all other things in this sublunary world, fading day by day, until nothing of it was left but a tender melancholy, like the softened feeling that a summer's twilight produces on the mind, or like the memory of our youth, when that joyous season of life has long departed. Lady Mary was not forgotten. Oh! no; but she was regarded by me as a vision, beautiful, evanescent, and indistinct, something to be recurred to in solitude and in prayer, but too pure, too sacred for this work-o'-day world. In a few months, I blush to say *how few*, I again mingled with the busy crowd; the time-killers, who tremble at death, yet find that the frail and uncertain tenure by which existence is held, passes not rapidly enough, and therefore try to accelerate its speed by all the means in their power. I again frequented my old haunts, the clubs; was a regular equestrian in Hyde Park, and looked in at most of the fashionable routs and balls of the season.

Mothers, aunts, and married sisters, honoured me with no small portion of their attention. My fortune was magnified into more than double its actual amount, and I was looked on as that most coveted of all bipeds, a marrying man, a good *parti*, or prize, in the lottery of wedlock, which it behoved all prudent spinsters to endeavour to secure. The lesson I had received from Arabella Wilton, had made a forcible impression on my mind. I was now prone to suspect that it was my *fortune*, and *not myself*, that attracted the attentions I received; and I turned with disgust from every *unmarried* woman who said a civil thing, or extended a gracious smile to me, viewing her as a designing speculatress, who was thinking only of pin-money, jewels, and all the *et ceteras* that my wealth could furnish. I hardly know which is the most objectionable character of the two, the man whose vanity misleads him into fancying that every woman who bestows upon him a kind word or smile is smitten with him; or he, who suspects that his fortune gives him irresistible claims on the attention of her sex. Vanity is a primitive weakness; but suspicion is a failing acquired by that worldly wisdom, which few ever attained, except at the price of this mean vice.

Having an intuitive fear of the interested motives of *unmarried* women, I sought the society of those, who, if less interested, were not less interesting—I mean the married. And here, “I could a tale unfold.”—But no, let me forbear, and leave my *bonnes fortunes* to the imagination of my readers.

At this period I was presented to Lady Elmscourt, one of the reigning belles of the day, though as the French would say, *un peu passée*. The time which had elapsed since her diploma of beauty had been conferred upon her seemed to have set upon it the stamp of universal concurrence. Nobody could question the authenticity of charms, acknowledged during twenty years; hence, her reputation for loveliness passed current, long after the attractions that had acquired it, had lost their lustre.

My attention was drawn towards her, at the period to which I am now recurring, not merely by her beauty,

though that might have excused the thralldom of wiser heads than mine, but by a certain air of sentiment that pervaded her countenance; and which, if it amounted not quite to melancholy, possessed all the softness and charm, which a gentle pensiveness never fails to lend a handsome woman in the eyes of a man who has known a disappointment of the heart. Lady Elmscourt, however, was even then arrived at that age, when to guess the precise number of lustres she had numbered, becomes a difficult task; admirers always diminishing one, if not two, and the world in general, and friends in particular, adding an equal number.

She insinuated, or implied—for what well-bred woman ever does more on such subjects?—that she was thirty-three. This acknowledgment was made by references to epochs, when she was, as she said, quite a child; or to others, when she first came out. Her cheek had lost none of its bloom, perhaps it had increased, rather than diminished the brightness of its hue; for it wore a certain fixed, though still a fine red, that never appears before maturity has for some years replaced the delicate and evanescent tints which belong only to youth.

Her eyes were as brilliant, but less pellucid than formerly; her hair as glossy, but much less profuse in its wavy tresses; and her rounded charms approached that dreaded degree of *embonpoint*, which indicates the *motherly* as well as the matronly character. Certain slight lines, so slight as to be almost imperceptible, *around* the eyes, and a protuberance of the skin *beneath* them, furnished the envious with proofs that, as they coarsely remarked, though she had *la chair de poule*, she yet was no chicken. But imposing as was all this evidence, it failed to convince me that she was other than a very beautiful and captivating woman, more especially in a well lighted ball-room, or in the softened shade of her own boudoir. It is only rendering justice to her taste to add, that she seldom allowed the garish sun to shine on her charms, or submitted herself, unveiled, to the dangerous ordeal of broad daylight.

Blessed with an indulgent husband, a large fortune,

and uninterrupted good health, what could be the cause of the apparent melancholy of Lady Elmscourt? This question I asked myself more than once; and its solution not only piqued my curiosity, but excited my interest. A little more discrimination on my part, might have easily led to a discovery of the source of her chagrin. But I was never remarkable for being quick-sighted to the defects of a handsome woman; and in this precise case was willing to invest with the enobling halo of sentiment, a peculiarity which originated but in weakness of mind. Lady Elmscourt was mourning over her departed youth, and departing beauty; the gradual desertion of which, few women are philosophical enough to behold with resignation or equanimity. Nor can we blame this regret, when we consider how much *we* foster their vanity; and encourage the culpable notion, that youth and the charm of person are their surest, if not best claims on our attachment.

My acquaintance with Lady Elmscourt had ripened into intimacy; each interview rendering me still more the slave to her waning charms. I looked on them with the same feelings with which we regard the setting sun—a deep admiration for the brilliant, but fading beauty, mingling with melancholy at the recollection, that its loveliness is fleeting away, and will soon be irrevocably lost.

We talked sentiment, that railroad to the heart; agreed on the insufficiency of the pleasures of a frivolous, or to use what might be called its synonyme, a fashionable life, to fill up “the void left aching in the heart.” In all these conversations we were, of course, as incomprehensible and diffuse as sentimentalists usually are; retaining only the impression, that *we* were superior to the herd around us, and that it was this superiority which rendered us unhappy, by unfitting us for a contact with them.

Lady Elmscourt talked, as I thought, eloquently, of the misery of uncongenial minds, misunderstood feelings, and crushed sympathies. No definite accusation against her liege lord was ever uttered, unless it were in the



avowal, and it was made in bitterness of feeling, that he had no taste for amatory poetry; laughed, yes, positively laughed, at Shenstone's charming pastorals; preferred Dryden and Pope to the exquisite translations of the Persian Hafiz; and had a detestation for French romances. I confess that in my heart I felt a warmer sympathy with the literary taste of the husband, than with that of the wife. But this dissimilarity of sentiment I carefully concealed from her; leaving her, with the usual hypocrisy of my sex, to imagine, that I considered all who could differ with her in opinion as mere senseless clods of earth, and herself a portion of its fine porcelain, fit only to pass into delicate hands.

She talked of the misfortune of marrying while yet a child; such, she more than insinuated, had been her fate; and now (and here she looked unutterable things), while *her* heart retained all its freshness, the *lover* of her youth had degenerated into the *husband*. Life had lost all its illusions; and she was—not happy.

When a woman acknowledges to an admirer that she is not happy, there is but one course left for him to pursue, which is to swear that *he* is miserable, and that he loves madly, hopelessly; taking most artful care that she shall infer from his looks and tones, as well as from his speech, that *she* is the object of this hopeless passion.

Women like to inspire *hopeless* passions; for even the most mundane of the sweet sex, always retain some portion of the pristine romance of their characters; just as flowers, though withered and faded, still retain some faint remnant of their native perfume.

I had made some progress in a declaration of this kind; exaggerating the admiration I felt for her into a passion, worthy the hero of a French melodrame. During this rhapsody she looked half pleased, half ashamed; just as a woman, who is weak but not vicious, may be supposed to look, when she has by her own folly drawn on herself the insult I was now offering; an insult which every woman authorizes, when she is so unthinking and indelicate, as to repose a questionable confidence in the breast of a stranger. And here let me warn my female

readers, that such confidences are invariably considered as direct advances on their parts.

I was in the midst of my passionate avowal of tenderness, when the door was suddenly opened, and in walked a very good-looking, gentlemanly, middle-aged man, with a most prepossessing countenance. By-the-bye, I have often been struck by the extraordinary disparity of appearance between men of a certain age, and their better halves, who generally look like the elder daughters or younger sisters of their liege lords, though they are nearly of the same age. The husband presents his bald front, from which the locks that once adorned it have long receded, growing "fine by degrees, and beautifully less," until only a few lingering locks, of mingled hue, remain; while the wife presents her head, shaded by glossy ringlets, or silken braids, as profuse, nay more so, than when she was indebted for such ornaments to nature, and not to her *coiffeur*.

But to quit this digression, and resume my narrative. Lady Elmscourt seemed for a moment embarrassed; and no wonder, for there is something peculiarly annoying to a well-bred woman, in being interrupted in the midst of a love-scene. Quickly, however, recovering her presence of mind, she presented me to the unconscious intruder on her privacy, who *was* no other than her husband. After the usual civilities, he turned to her, and said:—

"I am come, my love, to ask a favour of you. The Duke of Ancaster has lent me his box at Covent Garden for this evening, and I wish to take Emily to the play. I know you dislike going; but will you let me be her *chaperon*?"

"Why, really," replied Lady Elmscourt, "I do not approve of her frequenting theatres—I think the practice of permitting young people to appear at such places, highly reprehensible."

"But, my dear," said her lord, deprecatingly, "Emily is not *quite* so young as all that. Why, let me see, she will be—"

"Oh! pray, say no more," interrupted Lady Elmscourt;

“if you have set your heart on taking her, and she desires to go, I cannot refuse my consent; for I hate disappointing young people.”

“Why, my dear,” rejoined her lord, “to hear you speak, one would imagine Emily to be a child. You forget how old she is; and that, in a short time, she will be—”

“Well, well,” again interrupted Lady Elmscourt, preventing him from finishing the sentence, “if you really intend her to go, you had better ring the bell, and have her told to hold herself in readiness.”

I took my leave, fancying, as I gave a parting glance to Lady Elmscourt, and marked the expression of discontent which clouded her brow, that she looked at least ten years older than when I entered her boudoir. Vanity whispered that this discontent arose from her mortification at my hearing that she had a daughter who was, as Lord Elmscourt emphatically expressed it, no longer a child. Still, however flattering might be the cause, its effects on her countenance served to disenchant me exceedingly: we men being so egregiously selfish, that we are more disposed to find fault with, than to pity, the evils to which we ourselves give rise. I once heard an acquaintance of mine lament that his wife looked extremely ugly, when jealous; never reflecting that *his* conduct exposed her to the passion, and its unembellishing transformation.

When I met Lady Elmscourt at a *soirée*, the evening of the day alluded to, looking as blooming as ever, her dark eyes sparkling with vivacity, and her rich red lips opening with continual smiles, I forgot that I had thought her *un peu passée* in the morning, and became more assiduous than ever. The general admiration she excited among the men, enhanced the power of her attractions in my eyes, and perhaps really increased them; for a coquettish woman, and *she* certainly was of that genus, always looks more captivating when she sees that she is admired. Never had Lady Elmscourt been more *fascinating* and *encouraging*—perhaps the words might pass for synonymes—at least in the vocabulary of a vain man. She smiled on *me*, as I fancied, with peculiar

sweetness; but, I dare be sworn, that half a dozen of my contemporary coxcombs entertained the same impression of the smile which she bestowed on *them*.

She asked me where I intended to pass the autumn; a question which, with my usual fatuity, I considered to denote a more than common interest in my movements; consequently, my reply was the expression of a wish, that wherever I might be, I trusted it would be at some place which would admit of my sometimes enjoying the happiness of her society. She looked rather embarrassed at this speech, but *not* displeased; and I began to flatter myself on the easy conquest I had achieved.

“Where do *you* pass the autumn?” asked I, determined to pursue the course our conversation had taken.

“We go to Elmscourt Park in July, and shall be stationary there for some time,” replied Lady Elmscourt.

“Is not Elmscourt Park near Alnwick?” demanded I.

“Yes, within a few miles,” was the answer.

“Then I shall certainly accept an invitation in your neighbourhood, often pressed on me,” said I, “and trust I may hope to see you.”

I threw into my looks and manner as much meaning as I could, while making this speech; and she appeared, if not pleased, at least not offended, by its freedom. She wore a bouquet of flowers, which furnished me with an opportunity of addressing to her one of the countless silly compliments for which flowers supply the theme; and which are as *fade* as are generally the objects that suggest them. I declared my envy of the position of hers, and my desire to possess them.

“You are really too bad, Mr. Lyster,” said she, “and I must not listen to you.”

Now, when a lady tells a gentleman that, “he is too bad,” he is apt to construe her assertion into a sort of avowal, that he is not bad enough; and, consequently, I was preparing to repeat some of the numberless *platitudes* which fashionable men utter to frivolous women, when she broke from me, in affected alarm, and joined a group who were conversing at a little distance. I followed her, and caught her eyes, which avoided not the encounter of



mine; but met and sustained it with an earnest softness which I should be sorry to see my wife, if I had one, exhibit to any man.

When the *soirée* was over, I conducted her to her carriage; her small hand shrank not from the pressure of mine; nay, I thought, but it might be only fancy, that hers returned it, as she placed in it the coveted bouquet. How slight a circumstance can change the whole current of our thoughts and feelings! As her carriage drove away, I raised the flowers to my lips; their odour brought back to memory the dropped bouquet of the lost, the lovely Lady Mary, and all the sensations which I that evening experienced.

“She,” thought I, “would not have *given* me her bouquet. Never could I have presumed to breath an unhallowed vow in *her* chaste ear. *Her* eye would never have met the gaze of mine with answering tenderness. No! no! Mary was a pure, a spotless, as well as a lovely woman!”

And, as these thoughts rushed through my mind, I threw the bouquet from me with disdain; for its late owner had lost so much by a comparison with the sainted Lady Mary, that her power over my imagination was at an end; and I scorned myself for having yielded to her witchery. If women knew how much of their empire they lose by weak or guilty concessions, policy would supply the place of modesty; and men would not so frequently be furnished with food for the encouragement of dishonourable hopes, and the gratification of inordinate vanity.

A gay supper party at my club, in the society of some six or eight young *roués*, of fashionable notoriety, dispelled the melancholy which my reminiscences of Lady Mary had excited; and the frequent bumpers of champagne, aided by the libertine compliments lavished by my companions on the personal attractions of Lady Elmscourt, revived my admiration for her. Men are so weak as to be always influenced by the admiration of other men for a woman: and many an embryo passion that might never have been blown into a flame, and many a nearly extinct one, have

been rekindled by an accidental commendation of her of whom we have hitherto either thought but slightly, or have ceased to think with pleasure. A sure proof, this, that vanity is, in most cases, the principal fascination in the love affairs of men. Had my passion for Lady Elmscourt been a sincere one, I could not have borne to have listened to the free, the libertine compliments, paid to her person; but, as it was, they gratified my *amour propre*, and piqued me to persevere in my attentions to her.

I commenced my route to her house on the next day, with an unoccupied heart; but with a head filled with the flattering eulogiums which my gay companions had bestowed upon her beauty. *They* thought her a conquest worthy of contesting, and that she evidently encouraged my attentions; consequently, every word or glance of hers was now remembered "as proof as strong as holy writ," of her *tendresse* for me; and, therefore, *pour passer le temps*, I was willing to devote to her the idle hours that had latterly hung heavy on my hands. To get rid of them, and excite the envy and jealousy of my companions, were desirable objects; objects which generally furnish the chief motives in the *liaisons* which men of fashion form. So, *reflexion faite*, as I have said, I bent my course towards Lady Elmscourt's, the next day, at the usual hour.

This interview, after the flirtation of the previous night, must, I felt, lead to a definite understanding between us. I had gone too far to recede; and her encouragement of my advances had been too decided, to leave her an excuse for repelling me. All this I thought over, without a pulse beating quicker, or one illusion of love warming my heart. I reflected on my position, and its probable results, as calmly as if a *liaison* with a married woman was not a crime, involving the parties in danger, sin, and shame, and laying up sorrow and remorse for the future.

This indifference, perhaps, partially arose from having witnessed the frequency of similar delinquencies in the society in which I lived; and the feeling, or rather the utter want of all feelings, which the man of fashion always habitually exhibits in his *liaisons*.

In passing through Grosvenor Square, my attention was excited by a shriek, if the most harmonious sound of alarm, that ever met my ears, might be called by so unmusical an appellation. I turned, and observed a young female endeavouring to disengage herself from a large Newfoundland dog, that jumped on her with more animation than violence, he evidently being in play. A matronly looking lady was using her efforts to force the dog away; but he pertinaciously continued to jump on the young lady, to the discomfiture of her robe, as well as of her person. To run to her rescue, and drive her canine admirer away, was the work of a moment; but her large bonnet became untied in the struggle, and fell from her head, leaving exposed to my ardent gaze one of the loveliest faces I ever beheld. She might have served as a model for a Hebe; youth and health lending all their charms to a countenance, marked by a perfect regularity of features, joined to a matchless complexion. Eyes blue, and, by her alarm, suffused with tears, convinced me, for the first time, of the truth of the old poetical simile, which compared such eyes to "violets bathed in dew;" lips like divided cherries, and cheeks that shamed the rose, with hair of chestnut brown, emulating the tendrils of the vine, in its wavy spiral curls, and the softness and gloss of the finest silk in its texture, with gently curved brows, and long eye-lashes of the darkest hue, completed the picture of the lovely creature who stood before me.

I could have gazed on her for ever, but I was recalled to a sense of propriety by the stern look of the elderly lady; who having coldly thanked me, and arranged the discomposed robe of the young beauty, led her off in another direction.

I stood as if transfixed to the spot, gazing after them, half, ay, more than half, tempted to follow the route they had taken, but checked by the repelling looks of the matron. Who could they be? I would have given hundreds to have discovered; but, as I had left my groom and horses at the top of Brook Street, I had no means of tracing their abode, unless I chose to follow them

myself. I was, however, so near the house of Lady Elmscourt, that I decided on entering, determined to ascertain if she knew any of her youthful neighbours, who answered to the description of my beautiful incognita.

She received me with her most winning smiles, yet showing just as much feminine embarrassment, as was requisite to remind me that she had not forgotten my advances of the previous night, and, as I thought, to induce a repetition of them. Nothing forces a man to commit himself so much, as a woman's betraying that she expects him so to do. I entered her house with every thought fixed on another, and totally oblivious of the love speeches I had so recently addressed to her; but her ostentatious consciousness of her recollection of them, brought them all vividly before me; and, like a fool, I now resumed the same tone of tenderness. 'Twere idle to repeat my *fade* compliments, and protestations of attachment; and her sentimental temporizing, which found expression in some such original and incoherent phrases as the following;—"It was wrong, yes, she knew it was very wrong to listen to me;" an opinion in which I perfectly coincided. "*Friends* we might be, and she hoped we always should be; honour and virtue did not prohibit this; but more than friends we never could be to each other. She had duties to perform, duties of a wife and a mother; and though she *esteemed* me" (ladies always esteem their admirers), "I must talk to her no more of love."

Her repulses, if such they might be called, were so gentle as to encourage rather than rebuke me; all that she said being only what every woman, similarly situated, thinks it *convenable* to say on these occasion; occasions that had never occurred, had not their own levity and coquetry induced them; for, no man, who is not a fool, will ever hazard a declaration of love to a married woman, who has not previously given him encouragement. She, however, who has listened to an avowal of illicit passion, even though she rejects it, has sullied the pristine purity of her mind; and never was there more truth than in the line—

"He comes too near, who comes to be denied."

I was pouring forth my asseverations of passion when



the door flew suddenly open, and my beautiful incognita stood before me, uttering—

“Oh! dear mother, pardon this abruptness, but I was so frightened, and I feared some one might alarm you by telling you of my panic.”

At this moment, her eyes fell on my face; and a beautiful blush proved her recognition of me.

“But this gentleman has doubtless informed you of all,” continued she, “for *he* it was who rescued me from the dog.”

I would willingly have laid down my life for the kind look that accompanied this hurried speech, and the sweet blush that preceded it; for I was already in love, yes, positively in love with this charming creature, to whose mother, five minutes before, I had been offering my vows. At this moment, Lord Elmscourt entered the *salon*, and having met in the anteroom the *dame de compagnie*, who had witnessed the attack of the dog, she related the circumstance to him, attaching more importance to it than it deserved. He embraced his daughter, who having pointed me out to him as her deliverer, he was vehement in his expressions of thanks.

Lady Elmscourt seemed embarrassed, and not unconscious of my evident admiration of her daughter, near to whose youthful charms hers sank into shade so completely, as to be wholly eclipsed. That she loved her was evident; but that she was anxious to keep her in the background, was quite as apparent; and, to an unconcerned spectator, which *I*, however, was not, it would have been an amusing study to have observed, how much of the *mother* was forgotten in the pretensions of the handsome woman, jealous of a rival to her charms, even though that rival was found in her own child.

“You had better retire to your room, my dear Emily,” said Lady Elmscourt, “and repose yourself. You are still agitated from your recent alarm.”

“She must not, however, depart without thanking her champion,” said her father. “Go, my love, and shake hands with Mr. Lyster,” and he led her towards me, covered with blushes.

She held out a hand—oh! what a hand! small, plump, dimpled, and fair, as ever met the light. Not the dull, dead white, produced by the constant use of almond-paste, cold cream, and half a hundred other cosmetics; not that opaque white which marks the generality of fine ladies' hands, and indicates the want of circulation, arising from—idleness. No, hers was so beautifully and delicately tinted with a pale pink, that it looked like the interior of a maiden blush-rose. This exquisite little hand fluttered in mine, like a frightened bird in the grasp of a rude school-boy; yet it lingered a moment there too, while she bestowed on me one eloquent glance of gratitude that spoke more than words; though *they* were not wanting, as resuming some portion of her native dignity, she gracefully and graciously uttered her thanks. Her father then led her to the door, and I seized my hat, and retreated; dreading to find myself, even for a moment, alone with the mother, while every pulse of my heart was beating for the daughter.

“I hope, Mr. Lyster,” said Lord Elmscourt, “that you have no engagement for to-morrow, and that you will give us the pleasure of seeing you at dinner.”

Though I *had* an engagement, I hesitated not to accept his invitation, that I might again behold Lady Emily. I left the house as much in love as if I had never experienced the passion before; and, vain fool that I was, ready as ever to believe, that the object of my passion was already disposed to share it.

Love is, I think, like fever—one severe attack leaves the patient subject to relapses through youth; and each succeeding one renders him more weakened, and consequently, more exposed to future assaults.

I thought of Emily every hour through the rest of the day, and naturally enough dreamt of her at night. I counted the time with impatience until I could present myself at Grosvenor Square; and at last ascended the stairs of her father's mansion, agitated by hope and fear, as each of these passions alternately suggested the chances for or against my seeing her. I found Lord Elmscourt

in the drawing-room alone, and received a most cordial welcome from him.

“I have been endeavouring,” said he, “to prevail on Lady Elmscourt to permit Emily to dine with us to-day, as we have only yourself and two of our country neighbours, who have known her since her birth; but my efforts have been unavailing. She will, however, join us at dessert, which she always does when we are *en petite committée*,” and he rubbed his hands joyfully, as if in anticipation of the pleasure of seeing her.

He seemed to have an instinctive feeling that I had taken a lively interest in her; and that her presence would have been as agreeable to me as to him. Lady Elmscourt entered the room, attired with even more than usual care; but, in spite of the elegance and studied effort of her toilet, it struck me that she looked more *fanée* than I had ever observed her to look before. I remarked the strong resemblance between her and her lovely daughter; a resemblance so disadvantageous to her ladyship, that it at once reminded the beholder of that, which she evidently took much pains to make them forget, namely, her age.

The two country neighbours were very similar to the generality of that genus. They ate considerably, and talked eternally of country affairs; of commons to be inclosed, packs of hounds to be given up, and other, to me, equally interesting topics. At last, one of them remarked how exceedingly well her ladyship was looking, “quite as well, indeed, as if she had not a grown daughter to bring out.”

This observation occasioned an increase of colour in the cheek of Lady Elmscourt; but, I scarcely need add, the blush contained more of anger than of pleasure. They were continually referring to circumstances that had formerly occurred; reminding Lady Elmscourt, that such, or such an event, took place about seventeen years ago, just after the period of Lady Emily’s birth. Then, one of them perfectly remembered the illumination in the village of Elmscourt at that epoch; while the other quite as

vividly recollected, that, at the county ball the year before, he had had the honour of opening the ball with her ladyship.

She was evidently discomposed at their *mal-à-propos* reminiscences; and suffered under the infliction to which her vanity and assumption of juvenility exposed her. But her tormentors seemed totally unconscious that she did not derive as much satisfaction as themselves, from their diverting recollections of the past.

Dinner over, and the dessert placed on the table, Lord Elmscourt desired the groom of the chambers to inform Lady Emily that she was expected in the *salle à manger*. I felt my heart beat quicker at this message, and was conscious that I was exhibiting my discomposure, as I caught the eye of Lady Elmscourt fixed on me, with, as I thought, a scrutinizing glance.

The servant quickly returned, saying that Lady Emily was not quite well, and had retired to bed. I fancied that I perceived a smile of malicious triumph on Lady Elmscourt's face, as she regarded me, noting, as I dare be sworn she did, an expression of deep disappointment on my countenance. Already a romance was composed in my imagination: Emily, the beauteous Emily, was its heroine, and my unworthy self its hero. The mother in love with me, and suspicious of her daughter, complicated, and gave interest to, the plot; my beloved and I were to be exposed to all the machinations of jealousy; and this prevention of Lady Emily's presence at the dessert, was the first active step of the drama.

"Did you know that Emily was ill, my dear?" asked the alarmed father. "It is very strange; for I saw her a short time before I descended to the drawing-room, and she appeared in perfect health. I must really go and see what is the matter with her;" and apologizing to us for his absence, he left the room.

The country neighbours seized that opportunity of discussing the probability of an approaching dissolution of parliament, a probability in *those* days as often anticipated by the persons who desired it, as in *these*.

Lady Elmscourt, in a *sotto voce*, asked me if I did not admire Lady Emily?



The question embarrassed me, for I dared not say *how much* I admired her; and a cold assent would have appeared hypocritical. I was sure that Lady Elmscourt was narrowly examining my countenance during the interrogation; for, though I did not *see* that her eyes were on me, yet I *felt* that they were; and this consciousness added to my confusion.

I was relieved by the entrance of Lord Elmscourt, leading in triumph his lovely daughter, her eyes sparkling with animation, and her cheeks blooming with the roses of health; and the glad smile that played round her lips, I took to be an unequivocal symptom of her pleasure at seeing me. I could not forbear stealing a look at her mother; and though it was but the glance of a moment, I discovered dissatisfaction, nay, more than that merely negative feeling, portrayed on her countenance; at least, such was my uncharitable conclusion.

“Well, for once I have defeated the manœuvres of Mrs. Villiers,” said our host, rubbing his hands with an air of great satisfaction. “I was sure Emily was not ill; and equally sure that she was longing to be with us.”

Lady Elmscourt positively blushed, an irrefragable proof, as my vanity whispered, that the manœuvre of keeping Lady Emily from us, was hers, and not Mrs. Villiers’.

“Emily, here are your old friends, Sir John Belton and Mr. Thorold; and your new friend, Mr. Lyster. They are each and all glad to see you, I can answer for it: Mr. Lyster especially, if, as I believe, it be true, that we always like those whom we have served. I am not casuist enough to know whether the *obliged* entertain the same feeling, but I think too well of my Emily to suspect *her* of ingratitude. So, I take for granted, that she is as glad to see Mr. Lyster as he evidently is to see her.”

I could not resist stealing a look at Lady Emily at this observation, and was vain enough to be delighted at perceiving her cheeks suffused with blushes. Her eyes, too, were cast down with a pretty embarrassment, that lent her new charms, and called forth a remark from the obtuse Mr. Thorold,—“That *he* would lay a wager, there

was no ingratitude in Lady Emily's heart towards Mr. Lyster." Having made this acute observation, he chuckled with that peculiar laugh, to which country gentlemen of a certain age, and who rarely quit their own county, are prone.

I pitied the increased embarrassment of the beautiful girl, which this silly speech had occasioned; and her mother, too, seemed to dislike the tone the conversation had taken; for her lynx eye had detected its effect on me.

"We all expected that Lady Emily would have been presented at court this season," said Sir John Belton; "and Lady Belton and my daughters looked through all the papers to see her name, and the description of her dress."

"I thought young ladies were always presented when they had completed their seventeenth year," interrupted Mr. Thorold, "and Lady Emily entered her eighteenth in April.

"Ah! Lady Elmscourt, how old our children make us appear; but, 'weeds of grace grow apace,' as the old verse says. Why, there is my eldest daughter, who is two months younger than Lady Emily, and *she* has been a *wife* these seven months; nay more, will soon be a *mother*. Fancy *that*, my lady; every dog has his day, as the old saying is. I shall soon be a grandfather; and you, my lady, how will *you* like being a grandmother, eh? And yet all this must happen very soon; for Lady Emily is not one who will be left long on your hands. Will she, Mr. Lyster? *Apropos*," (she did not say of what), "Lord Belmont is expected home from Italy in August, is he not?"

The lovely Emily was covered with blushes, but, whether at the mention of marriage in general, or Lord Belmont in particular, I could not discover. Her mother, however, relieved her by rising from table and leaving the room; Lord Elmscourt making no effort to detain them, as he also was embarrassed by the blunt coarseness of his stupid, but well meaning neighbour. I had a presentiment that Emily would not escape some unkindness from her mother; and this fear, mingled with a

vague dread of Lord Belmont and the *apropos*, haunted me during the long hour and a half that elapsed before we were summoned to coffee in the drawing-room, where Emily was—not.

Lady Elmscourt assumed an air of dignified coldness towards me; for which I respected, and would have thanked her, had I not been persuaded that jealousy and dislike had usurped the softer, but more reprehensible feeling, she appeared to have entertained for me the previous day. How did I execrate the folly that urged me to *feign* a passion I never felt. All the enormity of my conduct stood exposed to my view. The immorality of seeking to form a *liaison* with a married woman, now, for the first time, appeared to me in its true colours, ineffably wicked and sinful; and I became shocked at my past conduct. All this renovation of my slumbering morality, and for which I was so ready to give myself credit, arose not from sober conviction of wrong, but from selfishness alone. It had sprung into life in a few hours, engendered by the captivation of Lady Emily; and I at present, consequently, considered her mother's former encouragement of my attentions highly culpable. How severely I judged *her now*, who, only two days before, I professed to love, and really did admire!

Such is man; ever selfish, ever solely regardful of his own gratification; glossing over the crimes that administer to his pleasures, and condemning them with unmitigated severity when they have ceased to be desirable.

I had such a conviction of Lady Elmscourt's lingering *tendresse* for me, that to continue my accustomed visits to her would be impossible; for they must have led to an explanation of my altered sentiments, painful to me, and humiliating to her. To have assumed the manner of a mere acquaintance, after the impassioned vows I had made her, must have excited her anger; and to have persevered in even the semblance of attachment to her, I felt to be literally impracticable. Nothing remained for me, therefore, but to absent myself from her house; only calling occasionally, when I knew she was not at

home, in order that the sudden cessation of my visits might not give room for observations.

I sauntered through Grosvenor Square frequently, in the hope of meeting Lady Emily; but, alas! in vain:—she never appeared. At length I began to despair of seeing her again, when, one fine morning, wishing to try a horse I was about to purchase, I rode into Hyde Park, at, for me, an unusually early hour; and while galloping up Constitution Hill, encountered Lady Emily and her father, on horseback. The good Earl made me many friendly reproaches for having absented myself from Grosvenor Square; and Emily looked down and blushed, while answering my inquiries about her health.

How exquisitely lovely she appeared! her riding-habit displaying the perfect symmetry of her form, and the breeze agitating the beautiful ringlets, which at one moment shaded her delicate cheeks, and the next floated on the air. Though a timid rider, she looked most gracefully on horseback; and I gazed on her with a delight, the demonstrations of which I felt it difficult to repress.

“Emily only commenced riding the day before yesterday,” said her father, in answer to some remark of mine —“I thought she looked pale of late, for want of exercise.”

My heart beat quicker at this intelligence. Yes, it must be so; her paleness was connected with my absence; and, vain blockhead that I was! I set this down in my mind as a certain proof that I had already made a deep impression on her youthful heart.

“Ever since the day you rescued her from her canine admirer,” resumed Lord Elmscourt, “my wife has not permitted her to walk in the square, lest a similar accident might occur. There is nothing, after all, Mr. Lyster, like a mother’s love; and Emily’s mother is always uneasy when she is out of her sight.”

Poor, good-natured man, thought I; little does he imagine the *real* motive of this anxiety, which I penetrated at once, and, with my usual sagacity, set down to Lady Elmscourt’s jealousy. Such quick perception does vanity bestow on its slaves! One of the almost number-



less advantages of goodness is, that it blinds its possessor to many of those faults in others which could not fail to be detected by the morally defective. A consciousness of unworthiness renders people extremely quick-sighted in discerning the vices of their neighbours; as persons can easily discover in others the symptoms of those diseases beneath which they themselves have suffered. This freedom from suspicion, which is one of the attributes of virtue, "is its own exceeding great reward;" and constituted in Lord Elmscourt a source of perpetual content, which the knowledge that grows of the tree of evil might have for ever destroyed.

"Lady Elmscourt," continued he, "will only permit Emily to ride before breakfast, as she dreads her being exposed to the encounter of all the bold equestrians who frequent the Park at a more fashionable hour; consequently, we finish our ride ere you fine gentlemen are thinking of commencing your day."

An elderly acquaintance now joined Lord Elmscourt; and this accession to our party gave me an opportunity of conversing with his beautiful daughter. To the bashful timidity of a child, arising from the seclusion in which she had been immured, she joined the good sense and refinement of a highly cultivated young woman; and this rare mixture of infantine bashfulness and maidenly dignity, added new lustre to her charms. If I loved her before hearing the justness of her remarks, or being acquainted with the propriety and delicacy of her sentiments, of which every word she uttered gave proof, how was my passion increased on discovering the superiority of her mind, and the fascination of her manners.

But even these feelings, highly wrought as they were, were enhanced by the belief that she entertained for me a more than common interest; a belief that can render a woman, of even *mediocre* pretensions, attractive in the eyes of all men.

I rode with them until we arrived at the door of her father's mansion, and joyfully accepted an invitation to dine with them at an early hour on the following day, and afterwards accompany them to the theatre.

“Can you make up your mind to sit out play and farce?” asked Lord Elmscourt; “for Emily likes to see all the performances. We shall only be three in the box, for Lady Elmscourt rarely enters a theatre; so, unless you are a regular play-going person, you will probably be bored by our long evening there.”

The next morning found me galloping round the Park, true as a needle to the pole; but the magnet that attracted me was not there; and, again, I immediately accounted for her absence, by attributing it to the jealousy of her mother.

Punctual as lovers used to be forty years ago, I was at Grosvenor Square at the appointed hour. Lady Elmscourt received me with cold politeness, her lord with friendly warmth, and Lady Emily with blushing kindness. I ventured to ask whether the latter had pursued her equestrian exercise in the morning; and detected, in the opposite mirror, a smile, which seemed to me pregnant with malice, on the features of Lady Elmscourt; while her lord replied—

“Oh! no, there is an end to our rides while we stay in London; for Lady Elmscourt has taken to early rising, and drives out into the country with Emily, in an open carriage, before breakfast.”

“So, here,” thought I, “is convincing proof of the justice of my suspicions!” And a feeling of anger was kindled in my breast at finding that the jealousy of the coquettish mother would preclude me from any opportunity of seeing her charming daughter. At the theatre, at least, however, I shall certainly have the pleasure of conversing with her, untrammelled by the presence of this female Argus, whispered Hope. Judge, then, of my annoyance, gentle reader, when it was announced that this object of all my apprehensions, this destroyer of all my fondest desires and plans, intended to form one of the party. I am sure my countenance betrayed my feelings to the wily mother. I wished her—I will not say where—anywhere, however, rather than in our presence, an ever vigilant and malicious spy on every word and look of mine.

At the theatre, Lady Elmscourt manœuvred so skilfully, that she placed herself between her daughter and me, so that I could neither look at nor speak to her, without exposing myself to the observation of mamma. I sat in perfect purgatory; longing, yet not daring, to interchange a word with the lovely girl, who evidently seemed to observe the alteration in my manner from what it had been the day before. How I hated, yes, positively hated, Lady Elmscourt, for thus thwarting my wishes; and yet, this was the very woman in whose ear, only a few days before, I had breathed vows of love! Such was my selfishness, that, though believing her still to entertain more than a strong predilection for me, I pitied not the mortification which my conduct was so calculated to inflict on her. I thought not of *her* feelings, I thought only of my own; nor blushed at my all-engrossing egotism.

Having heard Lord Elmscourt make an allusion to the portraits of his wife and daughter, just finishing by a celebrated artist of that day, I called, on the following morning, at the studio of the painter, and saw two of the most faultless resemblances I ever beheld. Having praised them highly as works of art, I with much difficulty persuaded the artist to make me copies of both. Heaven knows, I now felt little desire to possess that of Lady Elmscourt! though ten days before, I should have considered it a most desirable acquisition; but to prevent the suspicions of the artist, I professed an equal desire to acquire both. Thus it was that the miniatures now before me became mine.

Lord Elmscourt had taken quite a fancy to me. We never met in the street—for I dared not do more than occasionally leave my card at his door—that he did not reproach me for the unfrequency of my visits, and invite me to dine with him. His invitations I had not self-command enough to decline, as I was sure of seeing Lady Emily at the dessert; who, as I have before stated, invariably made her appearance with the fruit and flowers, whose freshness she rivalled. The ceremonious civility, but marked coldness of Lady Elmscourt, rendered, however, a seat at her table peculiarly disagreeable; parti-

cularly to a person who felt that he deserved her bad opinion. But what would I not have endured to have the happiness of seeing her lovely daughter! on whom I doted with a passion, such as youth and beauty like hers alone could have inspired. Nor was I without hope that *she* felt a decided preference for me; for when did the vanity of man fail to whisper hope on such occasions? All the blushing timidity arising from youthful inexperience, and the utter seclusion in which she had been brought up, I considered as incontestable proof of an incipient passion for me, which it only required time and opportunity to cultivate into a strong attachment. If, therefore, I ever experienced a dread of not winning this charming creature, it arose in no doubt of *her* willingness to be mine, but in a fear that her mother would never consent to our union.

My hopes of happiness were raised almost to certainty, when Lord Elmscourt gave me a pressing invitation to visit them in the autumn, in the country. This I looked on as a decided proof of encouragement of my attentions to his daughter. I accepted it with joyful anticipations, and longed for the moment that was to see me domiciled beneath the same roof with Lady Emily. I had now become accustomed to the cold ceremoniousness of the mistress of the mansion; and could hardly be said to enjoy existence out of the presence of her lovely daughter.

As the season drew to its close, Lord Elmscourt and his family departed for their seat in Northumberland. I found it difficult to support this short separation from my soul's idol, and counted the hours until I was to rejoin her. The day before that fixed for my departure for Elmscourt Park, my horse in cantering over the pavement placed his foot on a loose stone, and came to the ground with such force as to cause me to sprain an ankle, and dislocate my wrist. Never did accident occur so inopportunately, and never was one borne with so little patience!

My anxiety and ill-humour, I am persuaded, considerably retarded my recovery; but, at the end of five intolerably tedious weeks, I set out for Northumberland.



On arriving at Elmscourt Park, my joy at the prospect of again beholding Lady Emily was indescribable. I fancied myself not only a lover, but almost an accepted one; for the kind letter written to me by Lord Elmscourt to renew his invitation, contained a passage that confirmed my vain hopes.

“Pray come to us as soon as you are able,” wrote the good-natured earl; “we are to have some very dear friends here soon, with whom I am anxious to make you acquainted.”

What could this mean but that I was to be presented to those dear friends as the suitor of his daughter? Yes, it must be so; and my spirits rose in proportion to the expectations this paragraph excited.

The family had retired to dress for dinner when I arrived, so that my first meeting with them was in the library; where I found half a dozen guests assembled, and Lady Emily looking more lovely than ever. Dolt and idiot that I was, I fancied that in the evident pleasure she evinced in welcoming me to her natal home, there was mingled an embarrassment in her manner, that could only arise from a conscious preference for me.

I was presented to the Marquis of Ambleside, and his son the Earl of Belmont, the most strikingly handsome young man I had ever seen; and had I not been assured by my vanity, that Lady Emily's reception of me forbade my entertaining a doubt of her partiality, I should have been alarmed by the presence of one who might have proved so dangerous a rival.

Lady Elmscourt seemed to have quite recovered her former amiability of manner; and was looking so young and handsome, that even near her daughter she must have been admired by the most fastidious connoisseur in beauty.

When dinner was announced, the Marquis of Ambleside conducted our hostess to the *salle à manger*. I waited, expecting to see Lord Belmont offer his arm to Lady Emily; but, to my surprise, as well as delight, her father seized my hand, and desired *me* to lead her to dinner. *This* I considered as an open acknowledgment

of my position as an accredited suitor; and I looked with something of triumph towards Lord Belmont, expecting to see him overwhelmed with mortification. But no symptom of any such feeling appeared; and I wondered at his insensibility, where such a prize as Lady Emily was in question.

Seated next to this lovely creature, and now considering myself in the light of an acknowledged lover, I devoted the whole of my attentions to her during dinner. I was in the highest possible spirits, and my gaiety seemed contagious, as all the party partook in it. I saw, or fancied I saw, a malicious smile on the countenance of Lady Elmscourt, as she observed the animation and self-complacency of my manner; and, what a little piqued me, occasionally detected looks of intelligence interchanged by Lady Emily and Lord Belmont, indicative of the existence of a more familiar intercourse between them, than I wished my future bride to have with any man save me.

While I was meditating on the decorum, if not prudery, which I should exact from my fair neighbour when I should have a *right* to dictate to her, I was thunderstruck by hearing the Marquis of Ambleside, in a voice too clear and distinct to admit of a doubt of its correctness, ask Lady Belmont to drink wine with him. I gazed around to discover whether there was not some mistake, or to ascertain to whom this civility was addressed; but, to my utter horror and dismay, saw his lordship's cold formal eyes fixed on Lady Emily, who quietly assented to his proposal, totally unconscious of my state of mind!

I felt the blood recede from my heart, and mount to my temples. I feared I should fall from my chair, so sudden and overpowering was the shock I had received. But a glass of water revived me, and prevented any exhibition of what was passing in my breast.

“Mr. Lyster, permit me to have the pleasure of drinking wine with you,” said Lord Belmont; “I know I am your debtor, for having rescued Lady Belmont from the boisterous attentions of a dog. Emily wrote me a full account of the affair; and did ample justice, I assure you, to the prowess of her *preux chevalier*, on the occasion.”

How like a fool I felt at this moment! nor did the arch glance, shot from the bright eyes of Lady Elmscourt, assist to re-assure me.

When the ladies had left the room, and we had drawn our chairs socially together, Lord Elmscourt asked me if I was not surprised when I received his letter, announcing the marriage of his daughter, which had been celebrated a week before. This letter I missed, by having left London the day it must have arrived there.

“The marriage was arranged two years ago,” said Lord Elmscourt, “when the young people fell in love. We old folk thought them too young to be married; an opinion to which Belmont was by no means disposed to assent. As, however, we were obstinate, he was obliged to submit; and took the opportunity of his probation to make a long tour on the continent. He exacted a promise that Emily should not be presented at court, or go into society, until his return; a promise that her mother, as you may remember, rigidly enforced. Belmont only returned to claim his bride three weeks ago; and a happier pair it would be impossible to find.”

Never did a man feel more wretched, or look more like a fool than I did, through this interminable evening! A thousand nameless little acts of tenderness were mutually exhibited by the bride and bridegroom; and on such occasions Lady Elmscourt looked at me with a smile, which seemed to say, “Behold, vain fool, the proof of the error into which your egregious vanity has led you.”

The next day Sir John Belton arrived to spend a short time at Elmscourt Park, when he renewed his acquaintance with me, with that cordiality common to the now nearly extinct race of country squires. Talking of our host and the family, he observed—

“They are capital people; I know few such, and *now*, that my lady is nearly cured of the only fault she ever had—”

“And what may that be?” interrupted I, expecting to hear something not creditable to her reputation.

“Why, Lord bless you, have you not found it out? I thought you Londoners had been sharper. Well, then,

if the truth must be told, my lady's only fault was a desire to remain, or at least to be *considered*, young, and to be admired. This led her to be rather too civil to every coxcomb who fancied himself her admirer, and obtained the reputation of a coquette for a woman who, in fact, never had an evil intention. A more affectionate wife or mother does not exist; though she was addicted to sentimentality, and to a love of exciting admiration."

I felt the blush of shame rise to my brow, at finding how totally duped I had been by my vanity.

All the romance I had created in my imagination, of a jealous mother and a persecuted daughter, enamoured of *me*, fell to the ground. Neither of them had ever possessed one particle of affection for me; the *first* only encouraging my attentions out of love for admiration; and the second only blushing and smiling, because blushes and smiles were as natural to her as perfume is to the rose.

Thus ended my fifth passion; and I left Elmscourt Park, a disappointed, a humiliated, but whether or not a corrected man, the future will disclose.



## MY SIXTH LOVE.

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THE lesson my vanity received at Elmscourt Park, rendered me cautious of again exposing myself to similar punishment. Well and wisely has it been said, that love soon dies when deprived of the nourishment of hope; but no writer has touched on the velocity with which the winged archer-boy sickens, when vanity has been wounded, nor how rapidly he ceases to remember a flame connected with associations mortifying to his *amour propre*. I hated to think that Lady Elmscourt was merely a weak, vain coquette, encouraging my admiration for the gratification of her vanity; repulsing my attentions more gently than they deserved to be repulsed, when they became too explicit for even her lax notions of propriety; and not caring two straws about me individually.

Yes, I hated to think her merely a vain coquette, instead of a wicked woman, attached to me by an unholy passion, jealous of her own daughter, and manœuvring to prevent my winning that daughter. To remember her was mortifying, and therefore I soon banished her from my mind. The Lady Emily quickly shared the same exile from my memory; for, how could I bear to recollect that the downcast looks, rosy blushes, and sweet embarrassment, I had so often marked with such self-complacency, were constitutional accessories to her beauty, and had not the slightest reference to me; nay, that while I dreamt my presence caused them, she was thinking only of another, and that other her betrothed husband.

I plunged into every gaiety which presented itself, to endeavour to mitigate the sense of humiliation which rankled in my mind. From this period I became more suspicious than ever of female attentions; turned with

distaste from any approach to the sentimental in conversation; grew almost angry if a young lady cast down her eyes, or blushed, in my presence; though, fortunately for my equanimity of temper, blushes were, even then, as seldom seen in good company as now.

Chance took me to Cheltenham, which was, at that period, a very different place to the luxurious town it is to-day. While sauntering through the street, I there met an old gentleman whom I had occasionally encountered at the houses of several of our mutual friends; and we renewed our acquaintance with somewhat of that cordiality which Englishmen rarely experience; or, at least, rarely demonstrate, except when they come into contact in places with which they are not familiar.

He asked me to dine with him the next day, and I discovered we were inmates in the same caravanserai. On returning to mine inn, having left Sir Thomas Villiers, my old acquaintance, in the news-room, I encountered on the stairs two *ladies*, who were descending. I drew aside to make room for them, taking off my hat at the same time; a politeness which they acknowledged by slight curtsies, though they passed me instantly. I saw that one of them was extremely handsome, and the other tolerably good looking.

I retired to my chamber early that night, and, while undressing, heard female voices in the next room; which being divided from mine by a slight moveable panned partition only, allowed me to hear every word of the following dialogue:—

“No, you may say what you will, Eliza, but you cannot persuade me that it can be agreeable to marry a man old enough to be my father, who wears creaking boots and a horrible wig. The very thought of it makes me ill.”

“But, really, Miss Villiers—”

“Pray, don’t Miss Villiers me. Dear Eliza, call me Caroline, Cary, as papa does; anything but Miss, it is so formal.”

“Well, then, dear Caroline, surely Sir Henry Moreton is not so *very* old; and he really is *still* a handsome man.”

“Why, the very words you use, Eliza, prove he is no

fit husband for me. Not so *very* old—humph! and *still* a handsome man. Why may not I, a passable looking girl, (though I say it myself, who ought not to say it), with, heaven knows how many thousands to my fortune, find a husband (and I am in no such hurry, either) who is only half a dozen years older than myself? a disparity of years which would make him of the mature age of twenty-four, and neither too *young* to look after a wife, nor too *old* to have a sympathy in her pleasures.”

“But, perhaps he might not possess the large fortune of Sir Henry—his fine seat in the country, his grand mansion in town.”

“Pooh, pooh! a fig for each, and all. How provoking it is of you, Eliza, not to remember that, having these *agreméns* of my own already, by marrying Sir Henry, I only acquire *duplicates* of them; and who values duplicates?—incumbrances of which people always wish to get rid. If I dislike my husband, shall I be less miserable in a fine house than in a poor one? Will his large fortune buy happiness? No, no; the creaking shoes and the odious wig would be as unbearable, nay, perhaps more so, encompassed by luxuries, than if I were compelled to pore upon them in some humble abode, where poverty might blunt fastidiousness.”

“But as your papa has set his heart on the match—”

“And as my papa’s daughter has set her heart *against* the match, what is to be done? I know papa only marries me to Sir Henry, to secure some one to play chess with him every night. Oh! you may laugh, but it is true nevertheless.”

“Why, how can you, dear Caroline, suspect so good a father as yours, of being so selfish as to sacrifice his only child for his own gratification?”

“But *he* does not see any sacrifice in the affair. My father has outlived even the memory of youthful feelings; and therefore has no sympathy with them. He thinks that riches and chess form the happiness of life, because they form his; and, consequently, that he is securing mine, in giving my hand to Sir Henry. When I have spoken to him on this subject, he has only shaken his

head and exclaimed, 'Ah! Cary, you are a little fool, you know not what is for your good; when you are as old as I am, you will think as I do.' 'But, sir,' I have replied, 'before that period arrives, a great many years must elapse, and before the love of riches and chess comes, one has occasion for some other'—'Love, you would say,' he has rejoined, filling up the pause in my sentence; 'No, no, Cary, love is all moonshine and stuff—never stands a year's wear and tear. But money and chess are the *summa bona* of life; one never gets tired of *them*.' And thus, probably, ends the conversation, of which this is a specimen. How, therefore, reason with papa, when he is sure to repeat over and over again the same argument? Besides, whenever I have said something peculiarly incontrovertible, he grows angry, tells me not to be undutiful, and again very politely assures me that I am a little fool."

"I am certain, dear Caroline, that he loves you too well, to persist in forcing you into this marriage, as soon as he shall have discovered how exceedingly averse to it you are."

"And I am certain, Eliza, that he loves his own enjoyments too well, *not* to persist; convinced as he is, that this marriage will secure them. He loves me just enough to desire to retain me always near him; and loves chess so inordinately, as to desire to retain Sir Henry Moreton (who affords him a victory every night) perpetually with him. This hopeful marriage accomplishes both these desirable ends; and, consequently, be assured, he will never consent to its being broken off. Heigh ho! what a wretched prospect! Now, if Sir Henry was like that handsome, gentlemanly man we met on the stairs to-day—I wonder who he can be? Did you observe what beautiful hair he displayed when he took off his hat? *He* wore no wig, I can answer for it; and *his* boots did *not* creak."

I had been hitherto amused, rather than interested, by the dialogue, to which I could not avoid being a listener. But at the mention of the "handsome, gentlemanly man," my attention became riveted; and I instantly



began to take a lively interest in the speaker, who had so denominated me; for *me* I was positive it must be. I immediately set down in my own mind that Caroline must be the lovely girl I had seen on the stairs, and Eliza, her companion; and, for once, I was not wrong in my conjectures.

“What a pretty name is Caroline,” thought I; “and how I should like to be privileged to abridge it into Cary. She who bears it is vivacious and clever. How *naïve* were her observations on her father, and how just on other points. She is a charming person!”

And here, reader, for the *sixth* time, my heart became touched, ay, sensibly touched; and the wily god, Love, for the nonce, found an entrance to it by the ears. Man! man! wilt thou never be wise? Only two minutes before the mention of “the handsome, gentlemanly man,” I had set down Caroline as a pert, flippant, self-conceited girl; but *now* she appeared a prodigy of talent and vivacity, and I longed, ardently longed, to make her acquaintance.

The voices in the next room died away by degrees, into monosyllables, ending in a kind good-night. Then I, too, sought my pillow; my self-complacency increased, to dream of the charming Caroline, who had administered this soothing opiate.

I passed up and down stairs next day much more frequently than my *sorties* from the house required; but I met not her who occupied all my thoughts. The day appeared unusually long, and I looked forward with dread to a dull, drowsy *tête-à-tête* dinner with Sir Thomas Villiers. But, imagine my surprise, my joyful surprise, when, on entering his apartment, I discovered the two ladies I had seen the day before on the stairs, who were introduced to me as Miss Villiers, his daughter, and her friend, Miss Percy. Not a single blush, or the slightest symptom of embarrassment, marked Miss Villiers’ recognition of me, as she gracefully curtsied in return to my respectful salutation.

“How strange,” thought I, “that the introduction to ‘the handsome, gentlemanly looking man,’ produces so little effect on her. But, she is too clever, I suppose, to

be always blushing, like Lady Emily; and yet I should have liked to have seen a little consciousness in her manner."

Nothing could be more agreeable than the dinner, thanks to the animation and *naïve* remarks of Miss Villiers; for her friend was a well-bred, but rather taciturn, person, more given to enact a listener than a talker; and Sir Thomas's conversation had no merit save that of serving as a foil to the wit of his lovely daughter. Miss Villiers was singularly beautiful; a beauty that consisted even more in expression than in features, though hers were nearly faultless. Her eyes were of dark blue; and might have been considered too dazzling, from their constant flashing (no other word can I find to convey their beaming vivacity), had they not been shaded by lashes whose length and jetty hue softened their lustre. Her nose was neither Roman nor Grecian, but, according to my taste, much prettier than either of those classical models; it was what the French call *mignon*, and *un peu retroussé*. Her mouth was small, with full red lips, as like Suckling's description of those of his mistress, as if it had been written for them; and her teeth, those indispensable requisites to beauty, were matchless.

The only fault a hypercritical connoisseur in loveliness could have detected in this charming face, was, that the cheek-bones were rather too high and prominent, hinting that their owner had either Irish or Scots blood in her veins. But even this peculiarity added to the piquancy of her countenance. Her hair was of the darkest shade of brown, and her complexion of the most brilliant and healthful tint. Never did I behold a face so captivating, nor so lavishly endowed with an endless variety of expression! Now sparkling with archness, and in the following moment softly beaming with all the touching innocence and amiability of a gentle child. But, if a fault might have been discovered in her face, the most fastidious critic would have vainly looked for one in her figure, which was symmetry itself. Slight, yet beautifully round, every movement betrayed some new grace! and her hands and feet (those infallible indications of high

birth), were of such exquisite proportions that they would have redeemed almost any personal defect, had such existed.

I know not whether my female readers are aware of the high place we men accord to delicately formed hands and feet, among the indispensable requisites to beauty; but few, if any men, can be found who will not admit, that no other charms can compensate for the want of them.

To return, however, to the brilliant, the beautiful Caroline, whose fairy feet and hands led to this digression; there she sat, wielding, like an enchantress, her power over us all. Her father tried to oppose the shield of his dull commonplaces to the shafts of her playful wit, but, as I need scarcely add, was foiled in the effort; while Miss Percy and I yielded without a struggle to her fascination.

“Do you play chess, Mr. Lyster?” asked Sir Thomas. I replied in the negative, which drew forth a heavy sigh from him, and an ejaculation expressive of his impatience for the arrival of Sir Henry Moreton. Miss Villiers pouted her beautiful lips, and exchanged significant glances with Miss Percy.

“I am quite at your service, sir,” said the latter, moving towards the table on which the chess-board stood; while the poor girl’s face wore an expression of resignation worthy of a martyr.

“Well, well, Eliza, you are better than not having a partner at all,” growled the baronet; “though you do play so confoundedly ill, that there is no pleasure in conquering you. Now, Sir Henry Moreton is a first-rate player, ay, a very first-rate player; and it requires the exertion of all my skill and science to gain a victory over him, night after night, as I do.”

“How very odd it is,” said Caroline, saucily, “that Lord Montagu, who is considered so good a chess-player, declared that *he* thought Sir Henry a very *mediocre* performer.”

“I should like to have heard his lordship assert this,” retorted the angry father; “for I should soon have proved

to him the contrary. A very *mediocre* player, indeed! Why, how can that be, when *I*, who have been playing chess these forty years, and practice makes perfect, they say, must play my best, ay, my very best, to conquer him? Never repeat such nonsense to me, Cary. I thought Lord Montagu had been a sensible man; but, *now*, I have a very poor opinion of him. Go to the pianoforte, and sing me one of my favourite songs to compose me; for you have really ruffled my temper by repeating to me Lord Montagu's silly, superficial judgment."

Never did a voice more perfectly harmonize with a face, than did that of Caroline with hers. She sang admirably, and, what few women do, lost no portion of her beauty while singing. No ungraceful distortion of the features; no affected turnings-up of the eyes, marred her fair countenance; whose varied, but natural expression, eloquently evinced her sympathy with the sentiments of her song. When she had finished, Sir Thomas appealed to me, if Cary did not sing very well? a question, in replying to which, I committed no outrage to the most scrupulous veracity in giving an unqualified affirmative.

"Ay, ay, she owes that to me, entirely to me; I prevented her screaming, like a pea-hen, and opening her mouth to the extremity of her ears, as the ladies Mellicent do; or turning up her eyes in imitation of a duck in thunder, like the Misses Weston, whose singing is so much admired. 'Cary,' said I, 'I won't have *my* eyes offended, while my ears are pleased.'—Didn't I, Cary?—And so, you see, if she sings well, she owes it all to me.—Why, bless me, Miss Percy, what *can* you be thinking of? Dear me, dear me, you are enough to make a parson swear. Oh! how I wish Sir Henry Moreton were come! I never shall have a comfortable game until he does."

The evening passed away delightfully, notwithstanding the occasional grumbles and regrets of the baronet; and I left him at eleven o'clock (the hour at which parties *now* assemble, being *then* that which was fixed for their



termination), more in love than I thought it possible I ever should be again, and, perhaps, as much so as I had ever been before; though the present passion partook not of the elevated character which marked and dignified my attachment to Lady Mary Vernon.

I anticipated with impatience the hearing myself again talked over, in her chamber, by the lovely Caroline. What would she say? "had the handsome gentlemanly man, with the beautiful hair," improved on acquaintance in her opinion? I longed to know; and again forgot the impropriety of seeking to become a listener, in my anxiety to learn her sentiments. As I was approaching the door of the sleeping-room I had occupied the night before, I was met by the curtsyng chamber-maid, who told me that some company having departed, she had prepared a much better room for me at the other end of the house, to which all my things had been removed.

"And why did you do so without my orders?" said I, with much more acerbity, than gallantry ought to have permitted me to have used to one of the softer sex.

"I beg your pardon, sir; I'm sure, I'm very sorry, sir, but mistress said you objected to that room, the day as you comed; and that she promised you this here the minute it was empty; so now, sir, all your things are there."

"Have them removed back again directly," said I, angrily; though I perfectly remembered having found fault with the apartment the day of my arrival, and the landlady's having promised me another.

"I'm sure, sir, I'm very sorry, but Miss Villiers' maid has got the room now, on purpose to be near her young missus; and all the handboxes and himperials belonging to the ladies are now *there*; so, sir, it's impossible to move your things back."

I assented to the truth of this representation with a very bad grace, and took possession of my new and comfortable chamber; deeply mortified with the change, which deprived me of hearing what the beautiful Caroline thought of me now that we were acquainted.

I saw her every day, and each day became more

fascinated. Whether, however, her father perceived that I was smitten, or dreaded I should become so, I know not; but he soon took an opportunity of informing me, that he was in daily expectation of the arrival of Sir Henry Moreton, who was shortly to be married to his daughter.

Though I was prepared for this intelligence, the confirmation of it from his own lips gave me pain; for I had indulged hopes that the marriage was not irrevocably fixed. To leave the lovely Caroline a victim to a man she disliked, a man old enough to be her father, and with creaking boots and a wig? "No! forbid it gallantry, forbid it, love!" exclaimed I to myself, as I mentally determined to make her the offer of my heart and hand, and prove that "the handsome gentlemanly man" was not ungrateful.

But, alas! the tide of true love never did run smooth; while I was anticipating her bashful hearing of my suit, which was to be pleaded the very first opportunity, and her approval yielded with coy yet sweet delay, Sir Henry Moreton arrived; a week at least before he was expected, and to see her alone now became impossible. Sir Thomas Villiers prevented my usual evening visit, the day that his future son-in-law arrived, by telling me they had business to arrange, marriage settlements to look over, &c. &c.; but the next day he hoped that I would dine with him.

I spent a solitary evening, miserable at the thought of what the charming Caroline was undergoing; for, independent of her original girlish dislike to the creaking shoes and wig, I was morally certain she had now to contend with an affection for "the handsome, gentlemanly man;" whose attentions must have completed the conquest which his appearance had awakened. Yes, if she wished, and I had heard the soft wish flow from her rosy lips, that Sir Henry Moreton resembled me, then surely my attentions, which had been unremitting ever since the hour I was presented to her, must have won her affections. I was miserable, and I felt *she* must be miserable also; for, never would *her* young and sensitive heart lose the

impression I had made on it. Of the enduring character of my *own* attachment I felt not quite so certain; for I had more experience in love. But no man doubts the depth or the durability of a passion *he* inspires; though all men are sceptical as to the extent or the sincerity of the attachments inspired by others of his own sex.

I presented myself at the usual dinner hour next day, and was introduced in due form to Sir Henry Moreton. He was a tall good-looking man, of about fifty: and I was not in his company five minutes before the creaking shoes and wig proved the accuracy of Caroline's description; though the latter was one of the most skilful imitations of what the newspaper puff advertisements style "the greatest ornament, a fine head of hair." I have remarked that people who wear creaking shoes or boots, are precisely those who are the most addicted to locomotion. Sir Henry walked up and down the room perpetually; to lower the blind, to open a door, to close one, or to place a chair. In short, he was ever in a state of ceaseless restlessness, except when at table or at chess.

Caroline's beautiful eyes were red and swollen with weeping; and my passion for her was more than ever increased by this proof of her sensibility. When the ladies had withdrawn (and ardently did I long to accompany them), Sir Thomas announced to me, that the marriage of his daughter was to take place early in the ensuing week.

"We shall all proceed to Moreton Hall," continued he, "where we shall remain some time."

"And where," said Sir Henry, "I shall be glad to have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Lyster, whenever he can make it convenient to pay us a visit."

They talked over their plans, scarcely making any reference to the future Lady Moreton, who was included in the *we* (how I detested the word!) with all the *sang froid* imaginable. Sir Henry Moreton was a formal, dull sort of man, answering precisely to the term, prig. He seemed perfectly satisfied with himself on all points, and next to himself, evidently estimated Sir Thomas

Villiers, whom he treated with that profound respect, which middle-aged people affect towards those who are their seniors; a line of conduct which they imagine, gives them an air of juvenility. His conversation was a tissue of truisms and commonplace remarks, delivered with an air and an emphasis, clearly indicating that he himself considered them well worthy of attention.

“And this,” thought I, “is the companion with whom the lovely Caroline is to pass her life! Why, his looks alone are sufficient to dullify the liveliest mind; and his conversation to set asleep the most wakeful, such are its soporific qualities.”

When we joined the ladies, the two baronets immediately sat down to chess, a proceeding which seemed a great relief to Caroline.

“Now, Mr. Lyster, if you wish to see a game scientifically contested,” said Sir Thomas, “you have a good opportunity; for, notwithstanding what a certain person, who shall be nameless, has been pleased to assert, relative to Sir Henry Moreton’s being a *mediocre* player, I think you will admit that, on the contrary, he is a first-rate one.”

“I should be glad to know,” replied Sir Henry, his dark cheek reddening, “who the individual is, who has so far betrayed his own ignorance of the game, as to pronounce so erroneous an opinion?”

“That must be a secret,” said Sir Thomas; “but the person, as you justly state, only betrayed his own want of knowledge of the game.”

“One who can for hours contest a game with Sir Thomas Villiers, can be no *mediocre* player, let me tell the person, whoever he may be,” resumed Sir Henry.

“That’s precisely what I said, Sir Henry. You remember, Mr. Lyster, these were nearly my words: and surely Sir Harry, who has now been a chess player these thirty years, must understand the game.”

“I beg your pardon, Sir Thomas,” replied the offended baronet, “you are under a mistake as to the number of years; for, at the period to which you refer, I was but a child, and consequently could not have been a chess-player.”



Caroline could not resist a smile, in which I joined, at this defence of his youth; but Sir Thomas, totally unmindful of the juvenile pretensions of his son-in-law elect, and only anxious to defend what he had once advanced, quaintly repeated—

“Child, indeed! why, surely, Sir Harry, a *man* is no *child* at twenty? and as you are now fifty, there was nothing *very* wrong on my part, in stating that you had been thirty years a chess-player. I have had ten years the start of you, which accounts for my superiority, but, I will lay a wager that you will beat any player of your own age in England, though you cannot beat me.”

Never was there a man more vexed at this plain statement of his age, and in presence, too, of his future wife, who numbered barely eighteen summers, than Sir Henry. He grew red in the face, and made some false moves in the game, while his bride elect could not repress the smiles that played round her beautiful mouth.

“Sing us something, Cary, my love,” said Sir Thomas; “I never can play well unless I hear your voice. And you, Miss Percy, while Cary is singing, had you not better come and look over our game? It will be a good lesson, and enable you to fill Sir Henry’s place, in case of absence or illness, better than you have lately done.—Cary, sing me ‘Old Robin Grey;’ that’s my favourite song. Don’t you like ‘Robin Grey,’ Sir Henry?”

“I must always like whatever Miss Villiers may sing,” replied Sir Henry; “but I confess ‘Robin Grey’ is not a particular favourite of mine.”

“And why not, pray?” asked the obtuse Sir Thomas. “I should like to know what fault you can find with either the music or words? the first is melody itself, and the second contains a whole code of morals; yes, Sir Henry, and of the best morals. Why, what can be more dutiful, than a youthful creature who marries a rich old man to please her parents; and conquers her love for a young man, because she remembers the old husband was good and kind to her? Now I like a moral in a song as well as in a story, and I maintain that this song has one.”

Even the quiet and silent Miss Percy seemed to feel the awkward parallel that might be drawn between the old husband of the song and the present candidate for the matrimonial state. Caroline sighed, and I echoed the sigh; while Sir Henry looked redder than ever, and played, as Sir Thomas observed aloud, unusually ill.

“Come, Cary, give us the song,” said her father, a command quickly obeyed, and never was song more admirably sung; though her voice occasionally trembled, and its plaintive tones drew an expression of pensive sympathy to the usually placid countenance of Miss Percy.

I sought, but sought in vain, an opportunity during the evening, of revealing my passion to the fair object of it. She continued seated at the pianoforte, which was so near the chess-table, that I durst not hazard a word; and I left the room more in love than ever, and with less hope of the successful issue of my attachment. The next day, and the next, found Caroline with Sir Henry Moreton always at her side, or hovering so near her, that all private conversation with her was impossible. I therefore determined to pour out my whole soul in a letter to her, which I indited with all a lover’s eloquence, and, as I *now* think, but did not *then*, exaggeration. Yet, how have it delivered to her? whom could I trust? Sir Thomas was one of those old-fashioned masters of a family, now nearly extinct, and even at the remote period of which I write, beginning to be very scarce, who ruled his house, his child, his servants, and all that were his, with a despotic hand; allowing them little freedom of thought, at least little freedom in the expression of it, and still less freedom of action, and even refusing his daughter the permission to peruse a letter until it had been previously passed through the ordeal of his inspection.

All this rigid discipline I had casually discovered during my short acquaintance with the family; so how was I to evade this mental *cordón sanataire*, established by the old baronet? I had recourse to Miss Percy; her placidity and gentleness led me to hope that she would befriend an unhappy lover, and in a confidential note to her, explaining my passion for her friend, I

entreated her to deliver the letter that contained an avowal on which my happiness depended.

Miss Percy kept me not long in suspense; for, in half an hour from the period of its being despatched, the letter addressed to her friend was returned to me in an envelope, containing a note, stating that she "regretted I should have formed so erroneous an opinion of her character and principles, as to suppose that she would be the medium of a clandestine correspondence with the daughter of her benefactor, and the affianced wife of his friend."

I had scarcely finished the perusal of her billet, when Sir Thomas Villiers entered my room. I concluded that Miss Percy had betrayed me to him, and that he came to accuse me. His first sentence confirmed my suspicion.

"So, so! you are a pretty fellow," said he.

"Ay, it is all known," thought I; "but I must put the best face on it;" and accordingly drew up with what I meant should be a dignified attitude.

"I say you are a pretty fellow," repeated Sir Thomas, "here," pointing to a large envelope on the table, "is the paquet unopened, containing the London papers, which I received this morning, and which I scarcely gave myself time to glance over, before I sent them to you, with a note, stating that I had not quite perused them, and requesting you to return them as soon as possible. Ay, here they are, note and all, unopened. Why, what the devil can you be at? what have you been thinking of?"

I made some blundering excuse, much relieved by finding my secret was still one to him; and he told me he wanted my assistance in a little matter. "I have had my daughter's portrait painted here," continued he, "by a very clever artist, who came to drink the waters. I intend it as a gift to her future husband, an agreeable surprise for the anniversary of his birth-day, which takes place next month. I wish it to be set in a snuff-box, and not being learned or skilled in the taste of those sort of gim-cracks, I want you to select the pattern for me, and superintend the execution. Will you undertake

the commission, and don't mention a word about it to any one here?"

So saying, he handed me the portrait, which was so admirable a likeness of the fair original, that the sight of it occasioned me an emotion, I found it difficult to conceal.

"Well, you'll have it done, won't you? there's a good fellow," continued he; "so now, good-bye, I must be off, for I have a thousand things to settle. *Apropos* of settling, we have arranged that Caroline is to be married the day after to-morrow, three days sooner than we intended; but Sir Henry has got a letter from home, saying that a county meeting is to take place, at which he wishes to be present, and so we advance the ceremony, that we may all set off together to Moreton Hall."

I know not *how* I *looked*, but I know how I *felt*, at this intelligence; and I wonder that he observed not my agitation. He did *not* remark it, however, for he left the room, repeating his "good-bye, my dear fellow, I must be gone, I have a thousand things to do, so good-bye, good-bye."

I eagerly seized the portrait, pressed it to my lips again and again, and internally vowed that never should it leave my possession.

"What!" thought I, "shall the unfeeling clod for whom it was destined, he who expedites his marriage with the loveliest and most fascinating of her sex, merely that he may attend a county meeting, shall he become the possessor of this treasure? No! forbid it, love! happy, happy man, the beautiful original will be his! oh! how unworthy is he of such a creature; but this portrait *never* shall be his! I will have a copy made of it; a dull father, and duller husband's eyes will not detect the cheat; and this, this shall be mine, when she is lost to me for ever!"

I tore myself from Cheltenham next day; I dared not trust myself to see Caroline again, nor remain in the place when she was to approach the altar, to vow to another that affection which I still believed to be all my own. I fled, therefore, from my abode like a madman,



passed through London, where I only remained long enough to have a copy of the beautiful miniature made, and confided to a jeweller for setting. But ere I departed from the metropolis, I read in the papers, a pompous account of the marriage of Miss Villiers, "only daughter and sole heiress of Sir Thomas Villiers, Bart. of Conway Castle, in Wales, to Sir Henry Moreton, Bart. of Moreton Hall, in Gloucestershire, and Willesden Park, in Berks." The papers added, in the usual newspaper phraseology, "that the *happy* couple set out immediately after the ceremony for Moreton Hall, where they were to spend the honeymoon."

The conclusion of the paragraph maddened me. "*Happy* couple," I repeated, in a rage, throwing the paper from me, as I figured to myself the weeping, shrinking bride, wishing that the handsome, gentlemanly-looking man had been the substitute of *him* of the creaking boots and wig!

Never have I since read a similar newspaper announcement, and they occur nearly every day, without a bitter smile and doubt as to the reality of the happiness of the "*happy* couple;" and, could all the motives and feelings that influence the greater number of these individuals be analyzed, how few would be considered entitled to the appellation! But this dark conviction, by the young and sanguine—and when was youth otherwise than sanguine?—will, I know, be regarded as the jaundiced picture of an old bachelor. Well, be it so; yet a day will arrive when the young will become old, and see objects through a less brilliant glass than they now employ; and *then*, they will not consider the old bachelor's opinion to be very cynical.

I pass over a lapse of ten years, employed in travelling through Italy, Germany, Russia, and Sweden. Time, the best friend the unhappy know, though the one they most frequently accuse, had done for me that which he does for all, had healed the wounds of disappointed love; though a fond recollection of the beautiful Caroline still lived in the heart where she had reigned. I thought of her often; fondly loved to gaze upon her portrait, and still figured her to "my mind's eye," as fair, blooming,

and sylph-like, as when I had left her ten years before. I never thought of her as a wife or a mother: the idea would have been too painful; and we all have a wonderful facility in banishing disagreeable ideas. No, Caroline, the *spirituelle*, playful Caroline, could not be the mother of boys and girls, to *him* of the squeaking boots and wig. There was something monstrous and disgusting in the notion, and so I never permitted myself to entertain it.

Taking up an old English newspaper one day, at an inn in Russia, I looked over the list of births, marriages, and deaths. The name of Sir Henry Moreton caught my eye; and while my heart beat quickly, and my hand trembled, I read a detailed statement of the death of the chess-loving baronet. I looked anxiously at the date, and found the paper was above a year old. And so, Caroline, the lovely Caroline (*my* Caroline she might *now* be), was free! There was joy, there was intoxication in the thought; and in a few hours, I was in my travelling carriage, on my route to England.

I paused not, rested not, even for a day, until I reached London. Some one else might forestall my happiness. Beauty and talents like hers could not fail to command admirers; and I trembled lest I should be too late in the proposal I intended to make her.

I ascertained that she was in town, and immediately called at her house, a stately mansion in Hanover Square. On being shown to the library, I found my old acquaintance, Miss Percy, wearing the same demure aspect, but not placid countenance, that I remembered at Cheltenham. Alas! time had rudely dealt with her complexion, and taken away all the roundness of her figure, which now presented angles little in harmony with feminine grace. Encircling her eyes were certain marks, known by the vulgar appellation of crow's feet; and, descending from her nostrils to her thin lips, were two muscles in such *alto rilievo*, as to display the anatomy of the movements of her mouth. I was startled at beholding this change.

"What!" thought I, "if Caroline should be as wofully altered as is her friend: if she, who was disposed to be rather too sylph-like, should, from the unhappiness of an



ill-assorted union, have faded to a shadow, like the creature before me! But no; I will not allow myself to think such a cruel metamorphosis possible. She cannot have lost her beauty, and must be still the lovely, the fascinating Caroline."

All this passed in my mind while Miss Percy was relating to me, that not only Sir Henry Moreton, but Sir Thomas Villiers, had "sought that bourne whence no traveller returns," having preceded his friend and son-in-law by a year. Miss Percy put on what the French call a *figure d'occasion*, a most lugubrious countenance, while announcing these sad events.

"Lady Moreton had suffered severely," continued she; "for never was there a happier wife."

I could have beaten her for saying so, though I wholly doubted the fact; for how could such a girl as Caroline be happy with the elderly gentleman with creaking boots and a wig?

"Her ladyship is only now beginning to receive her friends," added Miss Percy, "and is at this moment engaged with her lawyer; but she will be here in a short time."

Almost while she uttered these words, a *large* good-looking woman entered the room, with a high colour, and cheeks whose plumpness encroaching considerably on the precincts of her eyes, caused them to appear much smaller than suited the proportion accorded to the lines of beauty. Her figure harmonized perfectly with her face; and was one of those to whom the epithet "*a stout lady*," is always applied. She approached me, while I stood in silent wonder, and in accents never forgotten, exclaimed, "Ah! I see, Mr. Lyster, you do not recognise me."

Ye gods! it was Caroline that now stood before me, the once beautiful Caroline! But never had such a transformation taken place in mortal. I was almost petrified by the sight, and could scarcely command sufficient presence of mind to go through the common forms of politeness, by maintaining a conversation.

"Come, Mr. Lyster," said Lady Moreton, (again to

call the *stout lady* before me, 'Caroline,' would be mockery), "come with me, that I may show you what you, I am sure, as an old friend, will have pleasure in seeing."

"What can she mean?" thought I, as I followed her through the anteroom; "but, after seeing *herself*, nothing can shock or surprise me."

She opened the door of a large room, in the middle of which stood two rocking-horses, mounted by a boy and girl, two chubby, rosy-faced children, bearing a strong resemblance to her ladyship; *not* as she formerly looked, but as she at present appeared. Two other, and younger children were toddling about the room with their nurses, making no little noise; and at a table in the recess of the window, sat the two elder scions of the family stock, engaged at chess.

"There, Mr. Lyster, are my two eldest sons," said Lady Moreton. "This is Sir Henry Moreton, and the other is Sir Thomas Villiers, to whom my poor father's baronetcy devolved. Are they not strikingly like their father and grandfather, Mr. Lyster?"

Never were seen two more extraordinary resemblances! and the gravity of their countenances, and the strict attention they paid their game, completed all the features of this wonderful similarity.

"They will play for whole hours together," continued Lady Moreton, pensively; "and are never so happy as when thus employed. Nothing affords me a greater gratification than to watch them at such moments, Mr. Lyster; for their occupation brings back to me the memory of those dear, and lost to me for ever—" and she wiped a tear, yes, positively, a real tear, from her eye.

"Come, Henry, my dear, come and speak to this gentleman," resumed his mother with a tremulous voice.

The boy approached me with measured steps, and a formal air; and his shoes creaked so exactly as those of his father used to do, that for a moment I looked at his hair, expecting to see that he also wore a wig, so precisely did he appear a miniature copy of the defunct baronet.



“It is strange,” said Lady Moreton, “to what a degree he has all the little personal peculiarities of his poor dear father. I do not know, Mr. Lyster, whether you ever observed that my dear Sir Henry’s shoes always creaked? At first I had a distaste to the sound; for I was, as you may remember, a giddy, and perhaps an over fastidious girl, about trifles. But one soon learns to approve all the peculiarities of the father of one’s children; and I now have a pleasure, though it is not devoid of melancholy, in hearing my boy’s shoes creak like those of his father.”

The good-natured mother was so perfectly in earnest, that, hang me, if I could smile at the pathos of this sentimentality; though, I confess, I lamented that the young Sir Henry did not wear a wig, which would have perfected the almost irresistibly ludicrous resemblance.

The mother kissed each and all of her progeny, with true maternal tenderness; and I left her, perfectly cured of my old flame, and smiling at the illusion I had for ten years nourished, at the cost of sundry sighs and regrets.

In ten days after my first visit, I called again at Hanover Square, in order that I might not appear uncivil to Lady Moreton; for, I confess, all desire of beholding her had quite subsided; nay, the sight of her was disagreeable to me. Again, I found Miss Percy alone, who, with her demure face looking still more demure, and her formal manner looking still more formal, “hoped I had forgiven her for returning my letter at Cheltenham; but, her principles would not permit her to be a medium of a clandestine correspondence.”

“Oh, I quite forgive you, Miss Percy,” said I, “though at the time it caused me much unhappiness, for I—(you will pardon me for saying it, as, after so great a lapse of time, it may be said without impropriety) I rather thought I was not disagreeable to Miss Villiers.”

“You certainly were *not* disagreeable to her,” replied Miss Percy, “for I have frequently heard her say she thought you were very good-natured.”

“But did she never say more than this, Miss Percy?” I retorted, quickly driven off my guard; “did she not once avow, ay, and to *you*, Miss Percy, when you were

urging her to gratify her father by marrying Sir Henry, and she was objecting to his age, creaking shoes, and wig—did she not then, I ask, confess that she wished *I* was the substitute for Sir Henry?”

“Never, by my sacred word of honour!” rejoined Miss Percy.

“She might not have precisely named me, but she most clearly and distinctly meant me,” I insisted.

“I do remember, Mr. Lyster, her objecting to the age, the creaking shoes, and wig, yet never, never, making any allusion to you. But how *you* can have imagined this misconception, and, more strange still, how you can have known our private conversation, astonishes me.”

“Who, then, was meant by the ‘gentlemanly looking man’ (I was ashamed to say handsome) you met on the stairs, who took off his hat, and whose hair called forth some flattering remark from your friend? *I*, Miss Percy, met Miss Villiers and you on the stairs that day; *I* took off my hat, and therefore it was not preposterous to believe that *I* was the person meant.”

“Oh! *now* you remind me of the circumstances (though how *you* came to know them is a mystery to me), I *do* remember her alluding to a gentleman we met on the stairs, the same day we met you; *he* was peculiarly good looking, and Miss Villiers often reverted to his appearance. *We* met this same gentleman in London the subsequent season, in society. Lady Moreton recognised him; and I well recollect her saying to me, ‘Eliza, marriage makes a strange difference in people’s feelings. Do you remember my wishing that gentleman had been the person chosen for my husband instead of Sir Henry; ay, and my admiration of his hair? *Now*, Eliza, I would not change *my* husband for the handsomest man that nature ever formed; and the *wig* of the father of my boy is more attractive to me than the finest head of hair in the world.’ The gentleman was Lord Tyrconnell, Mr. Lyster; I may tell you so now, as he is dead.”

Well did I recollect seeing Lord Tyrconnell pass through Cheltenham the very day to which she alluded. He was the handsomest man of his time, and his hair

was remarkable for its luxuriance and beauty; yet, I never suspected that the praises that sounded so sweet to my ears, from the lips of the fair Caroline, could apply to other than myself. Thus ended another illusion; the destruction of which cost me perhaps as much mortification, as the change which, in defacing Lady Moreton's charms, had terminated my attachment to her.

And now, gentle and courteous reader, having, by the recital of my youthful flames, beguiled some hours that might have been tedious to me, and, peradventure, transferred the infliction to you, I cannot close without offering my thanks for the patience that has conducted you to my last love. *Vale*, then, and take with you the good wishes of

AN ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.



THE END.





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