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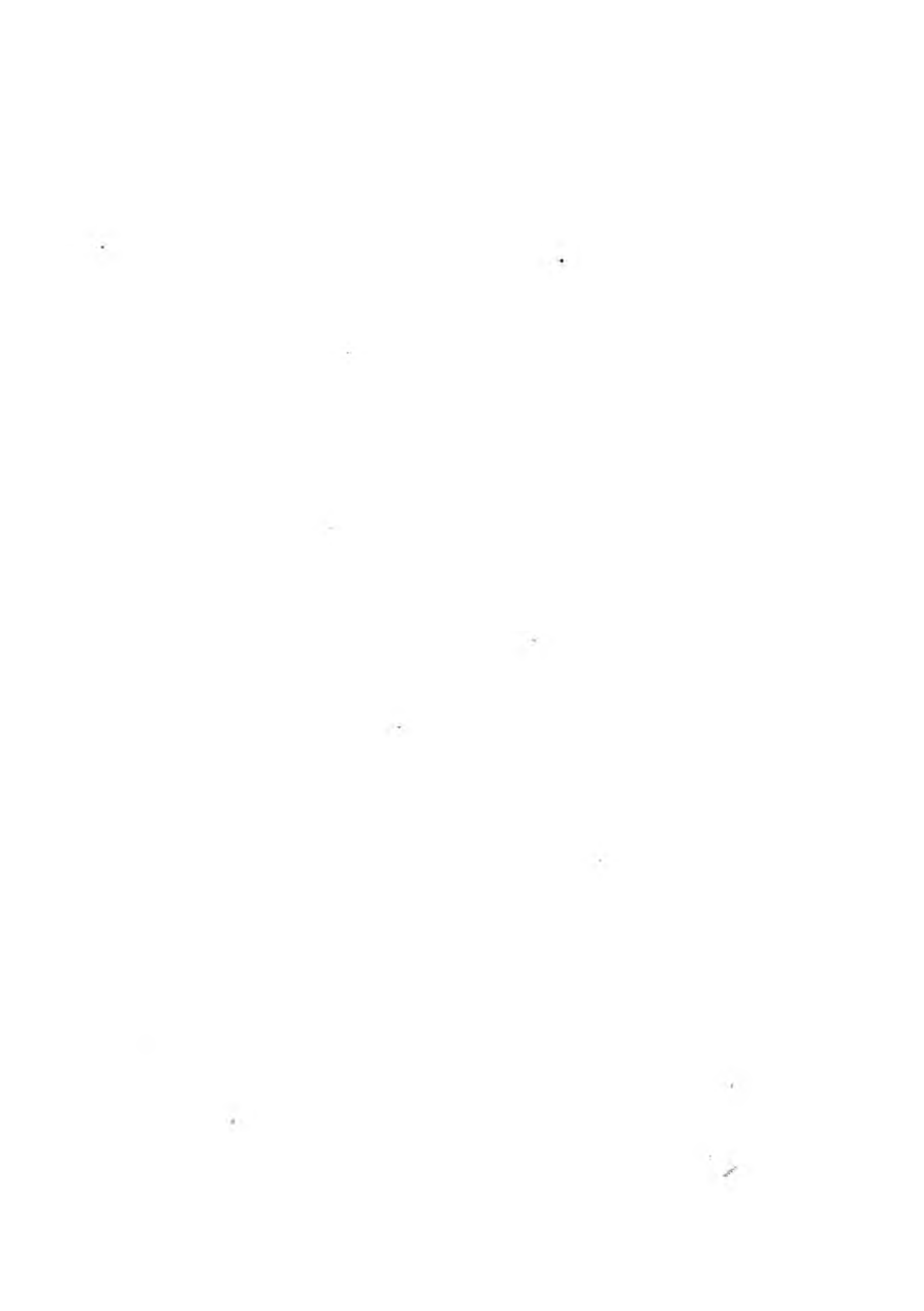
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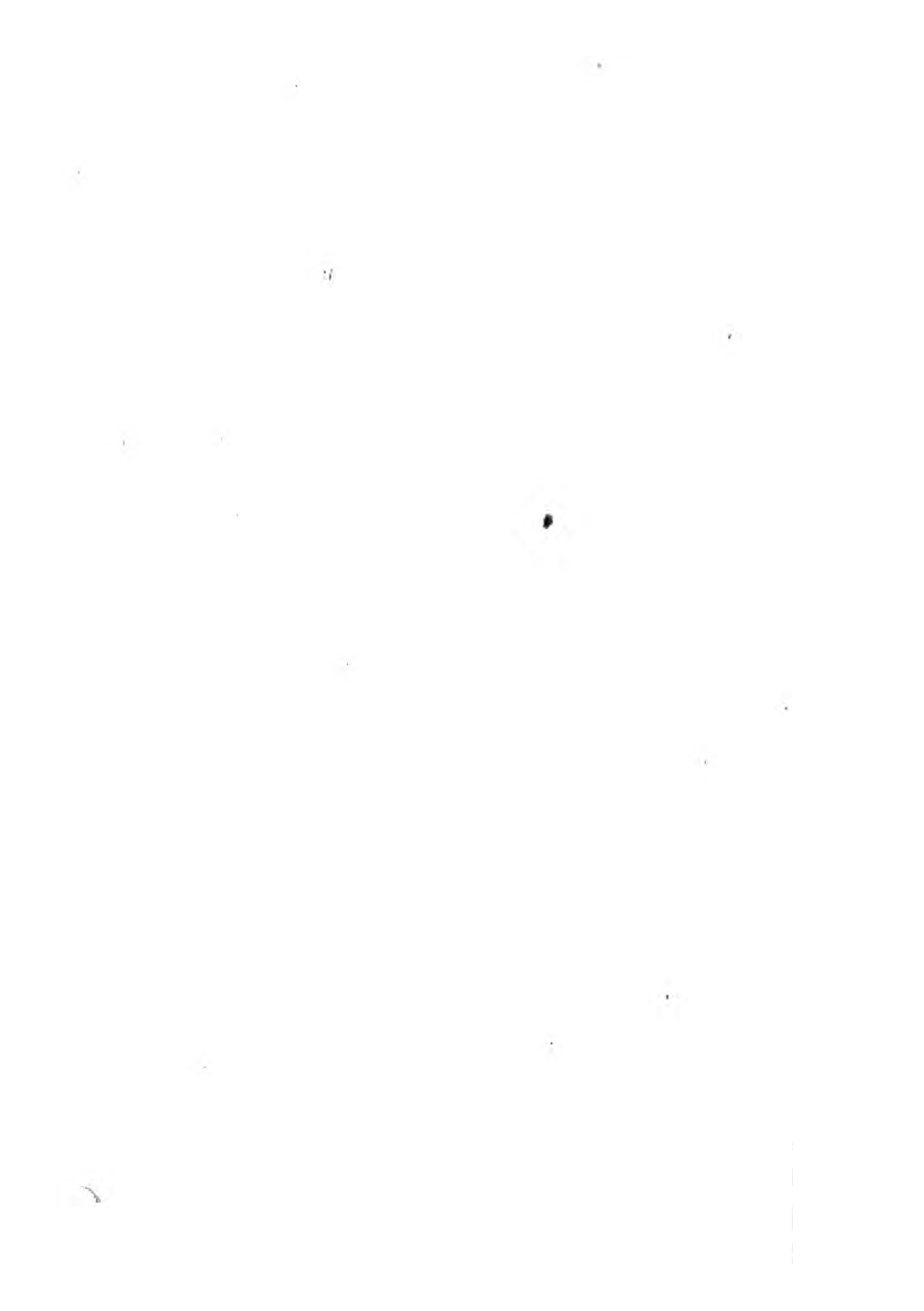






MEREDITH.

VOL. I.



MEREDITH.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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M E R E D I T H.

CHAPTER I.

WHY should I write my memoirs? is a question that has often suggested itself to me, as the notion of diverting my leisure hours by such an occupation has occurred to me. "Your experience may serve as a guide to others," whispered Vanity; but the next moment Reason observed, "No one will profit by it, and few, perhaps, will be amused by the recital; for people like to pay for the acquisition of experience, rather than to accept it as a gift from another, and truth, though sometimes stranger, is not

often so entertaining as fiction." "But although it may neither warn nor interest others," said Selfishness, "the recurring to the days of youth may bring back some portion of its gay illusions to cheer the dreary hours of age." The suggestion of the last speaker decided the undertaking; for seldom are the dictates of Selfishness slighted; and thus the book was commenced.

That my readers should become acquainted with the individual in whose company they are to pass some hours, it will be necessary for me to tell them who I am.

Born in Yorkshire, of an old and wealthy family, it was my fate to be left an orphan before I had reached my eighteenth year. I was just old enough to feel the value of a mother's love, and a more tender and affectionate one than mine could not, I believe, be found.

Of my father, I have much less agreeable recollections. He was, as I since learned,

an unfaithful husband, happier anywhere than at home, and more disposed to attribute my poor mother's patience and forbearance under the many slights she experienced from him, to an apathetic nature, or to want of love towards him, than to the real motives which dictated her conduct — namely, a perfect freedom from selfishness, joined to a sensibility which led her to prefer suffering rather than to inflict it on him, and a sweetness of temper that enabled her to conceal, if she could not vanquish, the chagrin that preyed on her heart.

It was not until his long and fatal illness that my father was able to comprehend the true character of her whose life he had ever since the first few months of their marriage embittered.

Fascinated by her beauty and softness, he was, or fancied himself, desperately in love with her. The obstacles opposed by her father, who more than suspected the selfish-

ness and libertine propensities of her admirer, increased his ardour; and wiser heads than ^{*}that of an innocent and inexperienced girl of eighteen might have been deceived into a belief of the reality of his passion, so unceasing were his attentions, and so fervent were his demonstrations of attachment. On one occasion he was known to have gone three hundred miles to a ball, in order that he might dance with the lady of his love; and on another, he absolutely swam across a river when the flood was so high as not only to terrify all those who witnessed the daring exploit, but certainly to endanger his life, in order to arrive in time to secure a seat by her at dinner at a neighbouring mansion.

What young and romantic girl could resist rewarding a love that betrayed itself by such devotion?

Gentle and timid as my poor mother was, she yet ventured to plead, in answer to the

often reiterated objections of her father, the force of her lover's passion.

“ It is precisely because I believe it to be only a passion that I am anxious for you to reject him,” was the answer. “ You know not, Edith, and I pray that you never may, the wide distance that separates passion from affection. One is like the simoon, spreading ruin and devastation where it passes, and leaving ineffaceable traces of desolation where it has been, while the other sinks into the heart as the genial showers of spring do into the earth, awakening into life and gladness all that it pervades. Mr. Spencer Meredith is capable of entertaining a violent passion, but it would be of brief duration, and not, if I am right in my opinion of him, likely to be followed by that sober, but solid affection which replaces the delirium of love, and consoles for its departure. The woman who weds with him will be his idol during the honeymoon,

but soon after that period, will become, if not the object of his indifference, at least that of his caprices; treated with attention only when the admiration of other men reminds him of her attractions, and with comparative coldness when, as generally soon happens with such husbands, he grows oblivious of them."

My mother, who would have received the opinion of her father as the decree of an oracle on any other subject, refused to lend conviction to its wisdom on this one, the most important of her life.

Hers was not a nature to contest the point with him, or to brave his displeasure by any act of disobedience; but her pale cheek and deep dejection soon indicated to her fond and watchful parent how much her submission to his will cost her; and when, on consulting the family physician on her altered looks and want of appetite, he advised her being removed to a warmer cli-

mate, the alarmed father determined no longer to withhold his consent to a union on which, perhaps, not only the peace of his only child, but her very existence depended.

Mr. Spencer Meredith no sooner heard that the object of his affection was in delicate health, and ordered abroad, (for his visits had been lately discountenanced by my grandfather,) than he wrote to him to request to be allowed to see Miss Moyston again before she left England. The result may be easily guessed. His renewed proposal was no longer refused, his permitted addresses restored the roses of health to the cheeks of his *fiancée*, and after a few weeks he became the husband of my poor mother, who believed herself, for three months, the happiest of her sex.

Her father lived not to witness the fulfilment of his prophecy relative to mine, for he died suddenly, within four months after the marriage of his daughter, rejoicing that

he left her in the protection of the husband of her, though not of his, choice, and praying for the continuance of her happiness.

The affliction into which this unexpected event plunged my mother accelerated the change in her husband which her parent had but too well foretold would take place.

The poignant sorrow which she experienced soon exhausted the slight stock of sympathy he possessed; and when her tears still continued to flow, in spite of his caresses and common-place consolations, instead of lightening, by sharing her regret, he became impatient and offended at every demonstration of it; and observing how much her grief impaired her beauty, he angrily reproached her for its indulgence, and ended by seeking that gaiety in the houses of others no longer to be found in his own.

My mother soon discovered that she had not only lost a father, but had also to mourn for the estranged affection of a husband,

“loved not wisely, but too well.” In vain did she endeavour to repress, or at least to conceal her sorrow, and assume a cheerfulness, while her heart was wrung with anguish, in the hope of winning back those attentions ever so precious to her. My father had resumed his former habits, and with them entered into new and reprehensible *liaisons*, which rendered him insensible to all his meek wife’s efforts to conciliate anew his affection, and which ended by weaning him for weeks and months from his home.

Now was it that, left nearly to total solitude, and often passing many days without receiving a single line from her husband, she recalled, with bitter feelings of sorrow, the unheeded opinion and advice of her lamented father. But, alas! retrospection was as unavailing to soothe her sorrow as were her efforts to win back the truant to her love! Every womanly device of studying his taste, in the adornment of her person,

and wearing only what he had formerly admired, was resorted to, but in vain. He appeared wholly unconscious of this innocent coquetry to please him, and treated my mother with an indifference that left her, after many trials of its inefficacy, hopeless of the result of her attempts to attract him. "But God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;" for while the nearly deserted wife, though only six months wedded, deplored the estrangement of her husband, she found herself "as ladies wish to be who love their lords." And this event not only filled her gentle heart with new and unutterable emotions of tenderness, but awakened a hope that it would, when made known to my father, revive the love he had formerly felt for her.

"He cannot be insensible to the birth of his child—our child!" would she say to herself, in the long, but now not unhappy, hours that she was left in solitude. "Oh, no! he will rejoice, as I do, and he will love

me once more for giving him this blessing! He cannot look at our child without remembering that it is a new and indissoluble bond of affection between us. Oh yes! he will love me again, and I shall be happy!"

It was with dreams and hopes like this that my poor mother cheated the hours of absence from him she loved, while he, thinking only of his pleasures, and pursuing a heartless course of intrigue, seldom bestowed a thought on her, or when he did, mentally accused her of coldness of heart and want of spirit, for submitting so patiently to his open neglect.

"I will not write this blessed news to him," would she say; "no, I will keep it for our meeting, and he will press me to his heart when I have whispered it to him."

She forgot, at the moment, that to write to her husband would be impossible, as she was left in total ignorance of his "whereabouts," and consequently knew not where

to address a letter to him; but this fact, as well as many other painful and humiliating ones, she ceased to remember in the overwhelming joy of the certainty of becoming a mother.

When at length my father did return to his long deserted home, my mother was within a few days of her accouchement. Her joyful emotions at again beholding him were quickly damped by his exclamation of surprise at the alteration in her shape, and of dissatisfaction at the cause.

The anticipations that had cheered months of solitude, and enabled her to bear up against neglect, were dashed to the earth in a moment; and tears, bitter tears of disappointment, filled those eyes so lately sparkling with joy and hope.

“Why do you weep?” asked her husband. “I am not angry at your being *enceinte*, I am only sorry; for I had hoped that we should not have a family for at

least some years. Children are both expensive and troublesome, and having a son to push one from one's place in society, or, at best, to elbow one in it, is a consummation I have never devoutly wished for. But it can't be helped; and, after all, you may give me a daughter instead of a son, which would be much less objectionable; so do not cry, for I have a horror of seeing tears!"

It was long before my poor mother could obey the injunction of her lord and master, for her tears continued to flow for some hours; but she sought the privacy of her chamber to conceal them, and met him at dinner with a calm demeanour, though the paleness of her cheek would have revealed, to any one interested in the discovery, the mental suffering of the last few hours.

How often during that day did she remember the warning given by her fond father, and wish that she had been guided by his advice; for no longer could she conceal

from herself that her husband was wholly and incurably selfish. The consciousness of having, by our own self-will and obstinacy, incurred a heavy punishment, which might, by a deference to the wisdom of those near and dear to us, have been avoided, is a severe aggravation to it; and this she felt while writhing under the penalty of hers. But she uttered no reproach, and endeavoured to find consolation in the resolution to atone to her unborn babe for the coldness and indifference of its father, by devoting to it all that overflowing love which was so unfeelingly and rudely repulsed by him on whom it had been bestowed. And yet, in defiance of every effort to subdue it, the memory of her baffled hopes, so lately and fondly nursed, would return, and with it the bitter consciousness of their destruction, and she would feel like one who awakens from a delightful dream to discover it was but an illusion.

But though she could no more look forward to finding any sympathy in her maternal delight in the breast of him whom she had hoped would share it, and clearly saw that she had nothing to expect of revived love from the event, yet her impatience to behold the little creature that would be all and everything to her, who would console her for neglect, and people her solitude, was rather increased than diminished; and she impatiently counted the days that must intervene before the hour of trial that gave it to her longing arms.

Often, during the first days that she discovered the alienation of her husband's affection, had she, in the impatient spirit of youthful disappointment, prayed that she might be released from a life that had then been, for her, robbed of all its charms.

"*He, too,*" she would say to herself, "could not be otherwise than glad of being freed from the chains of marriage, now that

he no longer values the flowers that prevented him from feeling their pressure. Yes, if I were dead, he might remember me with some portion of the tenderness he once entertained; and as I never have vexed, and never will annoy him by complaint or reproach, he will think of me with kindness, perhaps with pity. This would be better than to live for months and years unloved, uncared for, and drop at last into the grave unmourned, unwept by him, to wed whom I had wrung my father's reluctant consent."

The young, when disappointment, which waits on all, has first taught them that happiness has no resting-place on earth, turn, with a sentiment more nearly allied to impatience than resignation, to a desire for death. An early grave, in some quiet, secluded spot, has been often looked to as the oasis in the desert of life, where only rest can be found; but as we grow older, although

our cares multiply, and our hopes of earthly happiness fade, this desire for death subsides, and we smile—it is true, the smile is a pensive one—at the recollection of our youthful aspirations for an early grave. We become satisfied with much less felicity than we had in the days of youth thought necessary to render life even endurable, and learn to support privations and trials that would have then been deemed beyond our strength to bear.

CHAPTER II.

AT length the prayers of the neglected wife were granted, and she became a mother; but her life nearly paid the forfeit, for, during many hours, the skilful *accoucheur* who attended despaired of saving her. The indifference of my father was evident even to him, and engendered a dislike he could neither subdue nor conceal.

The joy of seeing her child, of hearing its faint wail, and of pressing it to her heart, repaid my poor mother for all her sufferings; and if some sorrow at knowing that her joy

was unshared mingled with her maternal transports, it was counterbalanced by the delight she experienced when covering with kisses the soft cheek of her infant, as it slumbered on her bosom.

“I am glad you are doing well, Edith,” said my father, as he pressed his lips on her brow, the day after my birth. Even this common-place speech was gratefully received by her who had lately been so unaccustomed to meet kindness from him, and she held up her child, that he might see it.

“Is he not a lovely babe?” said the young mother, timidly.

“All infants appear to me to be precisely similar,” was the ungracious reply, which sent a pang to her gentle heart.

“This is a remarkably fine and healthy child,” observed the doctor, who happened to enter the room as my father’s heartless remark was uttered.

“Very likely,” said my father; “but I

am no judge of infants; and they are all such red, puling little animals, during the first ten months of their existence, that the sight of them affords me no pleasure."

The doctor noticed the blush that rushed to the previously pale cheek of the fond young mother, and looked sternly at the unnatural father who had occasioned it. When both had retired from the apartment of the invalid, he told my father, that as his patient was not only a very delicate and nervous woman, but one who possessed great sensibility, he must request him to shew more regard to her feelings during the present crisis, for everything that produced the least excitement in her mind must be carefully avoided.

"I am not aware," answered my father, angrily, "that I require this advice."

"Young mothers, Sir, are naturally proud of their children, and expect the fathers to sympathize in their feelings. Mrs. Spencer

Meredith was evidently wounded that you did not participate in her delight and admiration of the infant, which is really so fine a one, that any father might well be proud of him."

"As I happen not to delight in babies, I really cannot express raptures that I do not feel," was the answer; and the doctor left the house with a sentiment of deep interest and pity for his patient, and a positive dislike to her unfeeling husband.

"And so you are determined to nurse the child yourself," said my father, two or three days after this, when he saw me placed at the maternal breast.

"Ask me not to resign this delightful task to another," was the meek reply. "Oh, you know not, you cannot even imagine, the bliss of feeling the dear lips of our boy, drawing his sustenance from my bosom!"

"Perhaps not, but I can well imagine

the bore of hearing the little animal screaming half the night, and seeing you lose all your good looks, which will be the inevitable result of such an occupation."

"What are all the good looks in the world in comparison with the health of this treasure?" said my mother.

"I should have imagined that my will and pleasure might have been thought of some importance by you, and that, consequently, you would hardly have risked the loss of those personal attractions that won me."

"I believed that you no longer val——" valued them, she would have said, but becoming conscious that this observation might be received as a reproach, although she did not mean it to be one, she suddenly stopped speaking, and her cheeks became crimson.

"You have yet to learn, Edith, that husbands cannot continue to be the lovers of their wives, as many women are silly enough to imagine; nevertheless, no hus-

band likes to see his wife sacrifice her good looks, which are in society considered to be a proof of his taste, for the gratification of a romantic fancy to nurse her child, a task that can be so much better performed by some healthy and robust peasant, who has neither weak nerves nor undue sensibility to interfere with the fulfilment of her duty."

"But my child thrives so well, and it is such a happiness to me to nurse him, that you will not, I trust, deprive me of it," said my mother, and her eyes filled with tears. At this moment her physician entered the room, and observing her emotion, as well as the lowering brow of my father, instantly concluded that the latter had caused her agitation. He took an opportunity, before he quitted the house, to warn my father of the danger of any anxiety in his patient's present delicate state, and did this in a manner that clearly indicated his suspicions

that there was cause for reproof; a freedom which he at whom it was aimed never forgot nor forgave.

A ceremonious visit to the chamber of the invalid for a few minutes every day marked the extent of the husband's attention to the newly-made mother during the time he remained beneath the same roof with her, but if she still felt hurt at this coldness on his part, she was consoled by the delight afforded her by her occupation of nurse. This was indeed a labour of love to her, and not only did I thrive apace, but her own health became much improved. My father soon left home, having taken a cold and formal farewell of my mother, and for months a few hurried lines, written at long intervals, alone reminded her that she was a wife. But what to her was the neglect she experienced now that she could devote all her time and thoughts to her boy; for whom her love was so engrossing as to leave her no room

for regret. She did not forget her husband, for what woman ever does forget an object once fondly, passionately beloved; neither did she indulge in any angry feelings towards him for the neglect experienced at his hands; but when she looked at her child, and saw him daily growing into health and intelligence, she would sigh at remembering that no fond father's eye remarked his progress, and no affectionate husband shared her delight in beholding it.

The few neighbours within visiting reach of Meredith Hall took a lively interest in the fate of my mother, and evinced it in the usual way chosen by the generality of self-nominated friends; namely, by continually reminding her of that which she would fain forget—the neglect and unkindness of her husband, and by giving her their advice to shew more spirit and resentment.

“ I have no patience with Mr. Spencer Meredith,” would Lady Ravenshaw, one of

the warmest partisans of the deserted wife, exclaim, "to leave a young and beautiful woman alone and unprotected, for months and months, while he is plunged in all the gaiety and dissipations of London. You really should, my dear Mrs. Spencer Meredith, assert your own rights and dignity, and bring him to reason."

"For my part," said Mrs. Compton Davenport, the wife of the Member for the County, "I have no idea of my amiable friend submitting to such treatment. Here is she living alone and secluded in this solitary place, when she ought, and might too, be living in a fine mansion in one of the most fashionable squares in London, and going to, or giving, fêtes, balls, concerts, and soirées, every evening during the week."

"And she would be so much admired, too!" joined in Lady Emily Mordaunt; "and with a little innocent coquetry, might excite the jealousy of her negligent husband,

punish him by its pangs for all his misdoings, and render him as much in love with her as when they were married."

Lady Emily Mordaunt had been a beauty in her youth, and was more than suspected of having frequently had recourse to the innocent remedy she so warmly recommended to her friend.

"Do," would one and all of these ladies say, "pluck up a little spirit, and shew your tyrant that you will no longer submit to his conduct. Insist on having a house in town, and living as all persons of your fortune and station do."

"Could you only hear what the world says!" added Mrs. Compton Davenport. "I, as wife of the County Member, am obliged to go everywhere, and visit every one, and you cannot imagine how people talk, and blame you, my dear friend, for your want of pride. One person calls you a poor, mean-spirited creature, to submit to such treat-

ment, and another declares that were you not conscious of being in the wrong, you would not bear it as you do."

"But, my dear friends, you mistake my position," would my mother on these occasions say: "Mr. Meredith is no tyrant; on the contrary, he allows me to indulge my preference for the country and privacy, while he, who likes the metropolis and its pleasures, remains there. I certainly could have wished," and she suppressed the deep sigh that rose from her heart, "that our tastes and pursuits were more congenial, that he liked the country as much as I do; but while he permits me to remain undisturbed here, to the full enjoyment of my favourite solitude, have I any right to question or interrupt the mode in which he chooses to spend his time?"

"You would soon think differently were you to pass one season in London!" would one of the before-mentioned female friends exclaim.

“ You would be admired, and your society sought in the most distinguished circles!” added another.

“ And you might excite your husband’s jealousy, and awaken his slumbering affection!” said a third.

“ No hour would hang heavily on your hands,” resumed one.

“ You would not, in fact, have a moment to yourself,” rejoined Lady Ravenshaw. “ What with paying and receiving visits, shopping, and driving in the Park, dressing and going to fêtes, every moment would be filled.”

“ Such a mode of existence would be insupportable to me,” would my mother answer. “ I am never so happy as with my boy, and in pursuing my usual routine of avocations. Between nursing and playing with him, drawing, music, working, and reading, the days pass away so pleasantly and rapidly, that I would rather arrest than

expedite their flight; and as Mr. Spencer Meredith and I have never had an angry word, no unkind feeling can exist between us; though an incompatibility, not of temper but of taste, prevents our being as much together as the generality of husbands and wives are."

But although these judicious and kind female friends were unsuccessful in their endeavours to convince my mother of the wisdom of their counsel, or the prudence of adopting it, their visits never failed to awaken painful feelings, and to leave her depressed and sad for many hours after.

Few things can be more mortifying to a woman of delicacy than to find herself and her domestic concerns made the topic of her neighbourhood; or for a proud woman—and every delicate-minded one is proud—to discover that the neglect and slights of a husband, always so difficult to be borne with equanimity, or even with the show of it,

furnish matter for the gossiping of the county. When these visits—(happily for her to whom they were paid, like angel ones, only in this particular, that they were “few and far between”)—were over, my mother would hurry to my nursery, clasp me in her arms, embrace me over and over again; and though her eyes gave token that she had been weeping, and sighs agitated her bosom, my caresses and innocent wiles never failed to restore her to her wonted calmness. Having no hireling nurse to lure my infant affections by artful blandishments and weak indulgence, my whole stock of love was bestowed on my mother, whose absence, even for a few hours, I felt as a calamity, and whose presence always filled me with joy. I learned to know whether she was more than usually pensive, by her countenance and the tones of her voice, long before other children, older than I was, could observe the difference; and, as she

afterwards told me, would redouble my caresses and playful gambols in order to amuse her, desisting not until I had chased away the sadness I had remarked, from her brow. Often would she wander in the pleasure-grounds, carrying me in her arms until fatigued by my weight, when she would place her shawl on the grass as a carpet for me, and laying me on it, would half cover me with flowers, which I would in turn seize and endeavour to throw at her, laughing and crowing all the time. Every development of my physical or mental powers was hailed with a delight which mothers only can sympathize with or understand; and so wholly did my young and beautiful mamma identify her existence with mine, that when I had reached the age of two years, she had become a cheerful, if not a happy woman, in spite of the many efforts of her kind female neighbours to render her

conscious of all the incontrovertible reasons she had for being a wretched one.

It is true, that when assembled after dinner in some drawing-room of one of their respective mansions, awaiting the presence of the gentlemen from the dining-room, to whom the maitre d'hôtel had already, by the command of his mistress, twice announced that coffee was served, these amiable ladies would revert to the melancholy lot of poor Mrs. Spencer Meredith.

“How strange, that she will not accept invitations!” would one observe.

“It must be confessed she is somewhat eccentric!” said another.

“And extremely deficient in spirit!” added a third.

“I have no patience with her for taking things so quietly, after having said and done all in our power to make her feel the extent of her husband's ill usage, and to urge her

into a resentment of it," observed Lady Ravenshaw.

" Her example is a very dangerous one," added Mrs. Compton Davenport. " She is now quoted as a model by all the men. You heard Lord Beltonbrook's extravagant praises of her admirable conduct, as he was pleased to term it?"

" Yes, and Mr. Davenport's remark on the sweet feminine decorum which leads her to avoid general society during the absence of her husband," said Lady Emily Mor-daunt.

" Much good it will do her," resumed Lady Ravenshaw. " I know Mr. Spencer Meredith better than she does!"—and here the other ladies exchanged significant looks, for the scandalous chronicles had, some years before, commented very freely on her Ladyship's more than ordinary friendship with this gentleman;—" and I am persuaded that, had she evinced a proper spi-

rit, she would have brought him to his senses."

"She must have very little feeling," rejoined Mrs. Compton Davenport; "for no woman possessed of much could bear her injuries so patiently."

"I have given up all hope of rousing her into resentment," said Lady Emily Mor-daunt, "and therefore visit her as seldom as I possibly can, without leaving her off altogether."

CHAPTER III.

AND now, when I had completed my sixth year, the solitude of my mother was doomed to be permanently interrupted, for hitherto the visits of my father had been few, and of brief duration. On these occasions, he treated his wife with marked coldness, and scarcely condescended to notice me; yet no word of reproach ever passed my mother's lips, and no sullen or angry look betrayed her sense of his unnatural conduct.

He wrote to say he was coming with a large party for the shooting season, and

sent down a French cook and various other servants to make preparations for their reception. "The wives of two of his friends would accompany them," he added, "and he expected that my mother would exert herself to render their *séjour* at Meredith Park less dull than he had always found it." This phrase brought a blush of wounded pride to her cheek, but it quickly subsided; for she had schooled her mind to bear with dignified calmness the annoyances she could not avert.

And now, with all a mother's love, did she prepare new dresses for me, while careless of commanding any for herself. Vain of my infantile attractions, she wished to aid them by every means within her power; and when trying on my new garments, she would contemplate me with a delight known only to a doting mother, and exclaim, "Yes, he must admire his boy, and admiration may beget love."

“ Will you not have some fashionable dresses down from London, madam?” asked Mrs. Lockly, the attached and faithful waiting woman.

“ Oh, no! You forget, Lockly, that many of the beautiful dresses in my *trousseau* have not yet been worn, and consequently, I have no occasion to order any others.”

“ But the fashion, ma’am, is so changed and so very different to what it was, that really, ma’am, I fear you would not appear to advantage in dresses so long made up, and especially, ma’am, before ladies coming down from London. If the visitors were to be only gentlemen it would not so much matter, but ladies are so particular about the latest fashions; and I have heard some of them pass such ill-natured remarks on their acquaintances who did not attend to this point, that really, ma’am, I think (asking your pardon for the liberty I am taking) it would be very advisable to have

a couple of new-fashioned dresses sent down from London, or, at least, to have some of those in your *trousseau* altered to the present mode."

My mother shook her head in token of dissent, and the good Lockly said no more on the subject, although she sighed, not at the utter carelessness about her toilette evinced by a young and beautiful woman, as her mistress really was, but at the neglect which rendered her so indifferent to that which in general occupies so much of the attention of her sex.

"Never was there such an angel!" said Lockly to herself. "I wish, however, she had a little more of the woman in her; for if she had, my master would never have the courage to neglect her as he does; but her gentleness and angelic goodness encourages him to act in the extraordinary manner which sets all our neighbours a gossiping."

At length the day announced for the

coming of my father and his guests arrived. My mother had so well attended to the preparations for their reception that the state-rooms, although so long uninhabited, assumed an air of blended elegance and comfort that would have surprised any one who knew that for the last six years they had not been used.

Three carriages and four drove up to the door at about half-past five o'clock in the evening, and my father, with a fashionable but bold-looking woman leaning on his arm, and followed by another lady and four gentlemen, entered the library, where my mother was waiting to receive them. He coldly touched her cheek, and then presented his companions. "Lady Selina Mellingcourt, Mrs. Spencer Meredith, Mrs. Audley, Lord Algernon Montagu, Lord Henry Buttevant, Mr. Mellingcourt, and Mr. Audley."

The two ladies looked at their hostess with

evident surprise, and the gentlemen glanced at her with as evident admiration. Lady Selina Mellingcourt turned from her scrutiny of my mother, with an expression of dissatisfaction and reproach on her face, towards my father, and then gave a significant regard to Mrs. Audley, who gazed at my mother's dress with ill-suppressed mirth depicted on her arch countenance.

The gentlemen hovered around my mother, who, feeling embarrassed by their somewhat too open and unceremonious marks of admiration, involuntarily adopted a reserve in her manner towards them, which drew forth sundry malicious smiles from Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley.

"Let us see your son," said Lady Selina, addressing herself to Mr. Spencer Meredith.

"By the bye, I quite forgot that young gentleman," replied the unnatural father, ringing the bell, and ordering the servant

who answered the summons, to have me sent to the library.

“ He is very shy,” observed my mother, timidly; “ and perhaps it may be as well if I go to conduct him here.”

“ I feared that he was a spoiled child,” said my father; “ but I had no idea that he was so bad as all this;” and he cast an angry glance at my mother, who, blushing deeply, and feeling tears start to her eyes, ventured to say that her boy’s shyness proceeded from not being accustomed to see strangers.

“ And why has he been kept mewed up in this sort of way?” demanded my father. “ It might do no harm to have a girl kept in total seclusion, but for a boy it is perfectly absurd.”

Ere my poor mother could offer any reply to this unfeeling remark, if indeed, which I doubt, she was disposed to do so, the door of the library was thrown open, and in I rushed, buoyant with health and

gaiety. No sooner, however, had I observed the strange faces, with the eyes of all fixed on me, than I ran to my mother, and hiding my face in her lap, clung to her in fear.

“Come here, sir!” said my father, in a tone that indicated much less of affection than severity, and which quite completed my previous alarm.

“Go to papa, my love,” whispered my mother, her voice tremulous from the fear that my *sauvagerie* would make an unfavourable impression on my father.

“Let me stay with you, let me stay with you, my own dear mamma,” whispered I, but, unfortunately, in accents loud enough to be heard by the whole party.

“Then, if you will not come to me, you shall leave the room, like a naughty, spoiled boy as you are,” said my father, “and not come into it again until you have been taught how to behave yourself.”

“Naughty boy” were words so new to my

ears, that I attached even a more grave signification to them than most children of my age do, and they produced the effect of making me cling still more closely to my mother, while I burst into a paroxysm of tears.

“Send the troublesome little animal away, I entreat you,” said my father; “and let me see as little as possible of him while I stay.”

My mother rose, and taking me by the hand, led me gently from the library, I weeping bitterly all the time, and my father expressing his disapprobation at her not dismissing, instead of herself conducting me to the nursery. “No wonder the urchin is intractable,” said he; “but I must dispatch him to school, where he will not be spoiled, and where I will leave him until he is old enough to go to Eton.”

My poor mother heard this speech before the library door closed after her, and it sent

the tears to her eyes in showers, that excited mine afresh. She pressed me to her throbbing breast as we ascended to the nursery, and whispered that I must love papa, and not make him angry.

“But I can’t love him!” sobbed I; “for he is cross, and does not love me, nor love you, my own mamma!”—an observation that made my mother weep still more.

Having consigned me to my nurse, she returned to the library, the door of which she had no sooner reached, than peals of laughter struck on her ear, nor when she entered did this uncongenial mirth cease, although her pale cheek and heavy eyelids bore the traces of sorrow.

“You are so droll, Mr. Meredith,” lisped Mrs. Audley, “that you make me laugh *bon gré, mal gré moi*; you really have the most comical mode of representing things that in themselves are by no means amusing.”

“Do you not find this place very dull?”

asked Lady Selina Mellingcourt, addressing my mother.

“ I can fancy a large country house pleasant enough, for a few weeks, when filled with people accustomed to see a great deal of each other in London,” interrupted Mrs. Audley; “ but to remain here without society must be a dreadful trial of patience, and is one which, I confess, would soon vanquish the small stock of that valuable household commodity which Providence has assigned to me.”

“ O! you are the most unfit person in the world, Fanny, to try the experiment of a few months in a country house,” said Mr. Audley. “ I remember how miserable you thought yourself if a single day intervened between the arrival of the coming and departure of the parting guests. By Jove, you hardly allowed the housemaids time to perform their functions, after the departed visitors, before the arrival of the new ones.

Audley Abbey was like an inn on some great thoroughfare, so constant and so rapid was the succession of guests."

"How can you be so *naïve*," observed Lady Selina Mellingcourt, "as thus to expose what Mrs. Audley, like a well-bred wife, so scrupulously wished to conceal?"

"What is that?" asked Mr. Audley.

"Your want of power to amuse her, *tête-à-tête*, for even a single day!" answered Lady Selina, with a most provoking smile.

This sally excited the mirth of all, but particularly of my father, who looked at Lady Selina with even more than ordinary complacency; while my mother felt a sentiment of pity for Mr. Audley, thus rendered an object of ridicule to the whole circle; and the general laugh, too, shared by her who ought to have shielded him from it.

CHAPTER IV.

ALTHOUGH the whole party had not been more than half an hour in the house, their hostess, with that quickness of perception peculiar to women, had already formed a just appreciation of the character of each, and had imbibed an instinctive dislike to the Lady Selina Mellingcourt. Mrs. Audley, a pretty little woman, very coquettish, and with a lively countenance, into which she threw an expression of as much archness as it could assume, said little, but made ample use of a pair of fine hazel eyes, which all the

male portion of her acquaintance considered to be infinitely more eloquent than her tongue. She had delicate hands, and well shaped taper fingers, which were incessantly employed in arranging the long corkscrew ringlets that shaded her cheeks—an occupation which displayed not only their beauty, but also that of the brilliant rings which encircled them. The feet were in perfect harmony with the hands—*mignons*—and *chaussés* by a Parisian *cordonnier*; Mrs. Audley was not only conscious of their symmetry, but anxious that all with whom she came in contact should have a similar conviction. To accomplish this desired end, she ingeniously managed, whether sitting, reclining, or walking, that these said pretty little feet should always be visible. If, however, any person in her circle appeared unmindful of them, Mrs. Audley was rich in resources for forcing attention to these marks of aristocratic birth. She would place them

on her *tabouret*, and move them about, with a gentle motion, as if wholly unconscious that in so doing, not only the pretty little feet, but the round and delicate instep and ankles to which they appertained were fully exposed to view; or she would let them extend far beyond the drapery that ought to have concealed them, when reclined on her sofa. Nay, sometimes she would draw them from their silken slippers, and letting the latter drop on the carpet, would assume an air of embarrassment, while exclaiming, that “it was very strange her *cordonnier* was so stupid that he never could make her shoes small enough to fit her!”

Naïveté and archness were the attractions, in conjunction with her pretty hands and feet, on which Mrs. Audley peculiarly piqued herself, and they were kept in constant practice. To be admired was the sole aim and object of her life, and she achieved this end with a facility not to be wondered

at when the character of her numerous admirers was taken into consideration. She was always ready to administer to the vanity of those who sacrificed to hers. She would admire the small wit, and inane attempts to display it, of the herd of idle coxcombs who hovered around her, provided they were ready to offer homage to her small feet and hands, arch smiles, and *naïve* observations, and declare that she was the most artless and fascinating creature in the world.

Lady Selina Mellingcourt being anxious to secure a female companion, well born and well bred, to make a *vis-à-vis* in her opera box, to defray half its cost, and to be always ready to keep her in countenance in those unceremonious expeditions and parties in which from time to time she engaged, affected a great friendship for Mrs. Audley. She was willing (O! rare proof of female friendship) to admit the delicacy and beauty of the hands and feet of her friend—nay, to

direct attention to them, but consoled herself for this sacrifice of her own vanity by hinting that poor dear Mrs. Audley's arch smiles were not often *à propos*; and that it was not the wit of her admirers, but the desire of shewing her own-teeth, that occasioned them. These remarks only served to convey the impression to these gentlemen that Lady Selina was jealous of the success of her friend; for what man ever doubted the talent of the woman who appears to give him credit for being clever and amusing?

Mr. Audley was a stupid, plain-looking person, who, possessing a good fortune, had been captivated by the flattery of the portionless, but admired daughter of the Dowager Baroness of Beltinglass, and who, in return for the admiration she displayed for him in a thousand *naïve* modes, had, in a luckless hour, offered her his hand, which was quickly and gladly accepted. He discovered in a brief period after his ill-assorted nuptials,

that the flattery previously administered to him, and so agreeable to his ears, was now transferred to the young coxcombs who delighted in flocking around his wife; and he avenged his sense of this slight on her part by a system of querulous contradiction to all her assertions that betrayed his wounded feelings. Yet whenever Mrs. Audley had any point to carry with her husband, she would fool him to the top of his bent by a recurrence to the same flatteries that had originally won him to sue for her hand; and so skilfully would she administer them, that he, while yielding to her wishes, would exclaim, "Why can't you be always as amiable and fascinating as now?" She would answer, "Why are you not as anxious to anticipate my wants and wishes, and as delighted to fulfil them, as when I accorded you this hand?" putting the said little hand to his lips with an arch smile, that for the time being vanquished his ill humour.

The personal extravagance of his wife, and the expensive habits which she insisted that he should maintain, had somewhat embarrassed the finances of Mr. Audley, and he found it convenient to break up his large establishment at Audley Abbey, which its lady, as has been previously stated, would only consent to inhabit when it was filled by a succession of gay visitors, whom she assembled around her whenever her lord, but not master, took up his abode there.

Mrs. Audley's pretension was to pass for a wit in society; and never was a pretension based on a less solid foundation. Had she set up for a beauty, her claims, like those of many a *belle* of her acquaintance with no stronger ones, might have been undisputed; but her attempts at wit had drawn on her such frequent and severe animadversions from those capable of discriminating the true from the false, that she wisely determined to rely henceforth more

on the arch smile and the display of the very white and even teeth that always followed her playful sallies, than on the words she uttered. Yet men were not wanting who gave her credit for the possession of the rare gift to which she pretended. They, it must be confessed, were confined to the very old and to the very young of her acquaintance. Some men, of what are called a certain age,—though, except in cases where the accuracy of Messrs. Debrett or Lodge decide the point, nothing is more uncertain,—being content to be more pleased with nonsense from rosy lips and white teeth than wit or good sense from less tempting ones, declared Mrs. Audley to be a delightful person. Young men, too, who had but lately made their *début* on the London stage of fashionable life, and who, having no very clearly defined notions of wit, or at least of female wit, mistook animal spirits and arch smiles for that which they pre-

tended to be, applauded the sayings of Mrs. Audley, until a second, or at most a third season in London, rendered them *au fait* of their error; when they unceremoniously deserted her *coterie* for that of some *bel esprit* with pretensions better founded.

Lady Selina Mellingcourt, with no desire for passing for a wit, possessed enough to have enabled her to support the reputation of one unquestioned. Her object was to be a *beauty*, or at least to be so reckoned; and no one who has not observed how frequently women with no one attribute for enacting the *rôle* acquire the reputation, can imagine how easily it may be accomplished. Little more is wanting than for a lady in distinguished society to impress *herself*, and a few individuals of her own *clique*, with a firm belief in her attractions, to insure their unquestioned establishment in public estimation; until some new pretender, possessed most probably of no better claims, usurps

her place, and drives her from being “the cynosure of curious eyes” to be the unobserved of all observers.

The tact and talent of Lady Selina Mellicourt, soon after her introduction to fashionable life, rendered her aware of the necessity of distinguishing herself from the crowd that eclipsed her, in order to secure that most desirable of all objects to a young and portionless girl—a good marriage. Conscious of her own ability, she for some time entertained the project of setting up for a *bel esprit*; but disgusted by observing the clumsy attempts of some *bas bleus* of her acquaintance to enact the *rôle*, she abandoned the notion; and looking around at the many plain women who passed for beauties, she determined—not to become one, for that she felt would be impossible, but to set up for being considered one.

She immediately adopted a *coëffure* wholly different from the fashionable one of the day,

and moreover, so trying to the looks of even a pretty woman, that few would have had the courage to exhibit themselves in it. This she followed up by a style of dress that had nothing but novelty to recommend it; and having thus rendered herself very conspicuous, as well as different from those with whom she associated, she appeared at a splendid ball given by her brother, the Marquis of Altringham, expressly (as the newspapers announced, a week before it took place) for the purpose of introducing his lordship's young and lovely sister, who was allowed by all who had seen her to be the most beautiful *débutante* of the season.

Lady Selina had no prudent mother nor fastidious *chaperon* to inspect her toilette, and prevent her indulging in any of the freaks of fancy, always considered by those who are the best judges as proofs of bad taste, when glaring enough to attract notice. The Marquis of Altringham had only a few

months before repaired the shattered fortunes of his noble house by an alliance with the wealthy heiress of a city banker, who was content to barter thousands for a coronet, and who was looked on by her husband and his sister as a person to be borne with for the sake of the vast fortune she brought into the family, but whose opinions both of them would have thought it wholly unnecessary, if not derogatory to them, to consult. And yet the Marchioness of Altringham was a person whose opinions might well have been consulted by those with whom she had so recently become connected; for she was not only well educated, but possessed a refined taste and good sense not often to be met with in so youthful a bride.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN, a short time previous to the ball at which Lady Selina Altringham was to make her second appearance in public, both the bride and her sister-in-law had been presented at Court, the Marchioness had attracted great and deserved admiration from all beholders, while the Lady Selina passed unnoticed. This fact, which escaped the notice of the bride, had been remarked by Lady Selina, who, seeing that her sister-in-law had no desire for admiration, determined to set herself up as a beauty; and in accord-

ance with this intention, adopted the style of dress most calculated to draw attention. The surprise which the novelty of her appearance excited she affected to receive as proof of admiration; and she assumed all the airs of a conscious and acknowledged beauty, while people were yet undecided whether they should ridicule or applaud this innovation on fashion. But while exhibiting all the airs of a beauty, Lady Selina carefully avoided the insolence which but too many of these privileged persons have the folly to display. She had smiles and pleasant words for all who approached her, did the honours of her brother's house as if *she*, and not his wife, were its mistress; and yet treated the Marchioness with a sisterly protection and show of fondness that deceived many into the belief that Lady Selina was as amiable as she was clever, and that it was *she* to whom court was to be paid.

The perfect *aplomb* with which Lady

Selina enacted her *rôle*, achieved its object. Nearly the greater portion of those who were at first sight disposed to question, if not deny, her claims, began to think there must be some charm about her, and beholding her own firm conviction of her attractions, yielded, after a little delay, their full credence to the irresistibility of her beauty. In short, they who came to doubt, remained to admire; and in a week, Lady Selina found herself the acknowledged *belle* of the season. The newspapers assisted not a little in extending the fame of her asserted loveliness. "The charming Lady Selina Altringham" was quoted in many a flaming paragraph, as having figured at ball, opera, or concert, the previous evening; her *whereabouts* were noted; her dress cited as a model for imitation, and the *on dits* of various proposals for her hand were copied from journal into journal. Her female contemporaries of similar age, with the tact peculiar to women,

yielded assent to the loud and often repeated praises of her beauty; for they surmised, and with reason, that were they to express their real opinion on the subject, they would only expose themselves to the suspicion of jealousy—a suspicion which women are most anxious to avoid incurring. Matrons were less cautious, and not unfrequently smiled at the usurped reputation of Lady Selina, drawing the attention of her admirers to obvious defects in her face, but which the said admirers declared only served to render her countenance more piquant.

Painters and sculptors, however dissatisfied they may be with the productions of their own pencils or chisels, when some fair ideal has been wrought into all but life by their skilful hands, never indulge such extravagant admiration for it as do those weak and unreflecting men who form the crowd in fashionable life, when they have praised into a spurious fame some mere pre-

tender, without one real claim to beauty. The idol of their own creation is valued solely because *it is* their own creation; and many a lovely creature, with, to unprejudiced eyes, pre-eminent charms, is allowed to pass unnoticed, or, even worse, is cavilled at by those who bow down and worship at the shrine of the golden calf—Fashion. Lady Selina Altringham's picture, as a Muse, a Grace, a Sybil, or in some other fantastic guise, might soon be seen stuck in every printseller's window in the most frequented streets in the metropolis. Artists, hearing the fame of her charms, petitioned for permission to portray them; and the Lady Selina acknowledged, with a well-assumed air of modesty, that she was really tormented by the unceasing applications of those who aspired to descend to posterity by fixing her face on their canvas.

But although the reputation for beauty drew a crowd around the Lady Selina where-

ever she appeared, the season had drawn nearly to its close before a single offer of marriage had been made to her. In vain did she smile and say civil things, in the most insinuating manner, to her admirers; no one among them sought to possess the hand of her whom they all professed to think so irresistible.

CHAPTER VI.

ALREADY did Lady Selina begin to indulge in melancholy anticipations of the *tristesse* of an autumnal and winter *séjour* at Altringham Castle; when, at the last ball of the season,—that eventful ball, on which so many girls feel their hopes to depend, and which, alas! are so often doomed to be disappointed, — Mr. Mellingcourt, a young man of good fortune but of obscure family and of weak intellects, made his appearance. He had but a day or two previously returned from the Continent, where he had

resided for three or four years; and having fallen in with some of his old associates, who spoke of this ball, wished to be invited to it. He dined at his club with some five or six of Lady Selina's most enthusiastic admirers, the day previous to the night on which the ball was to take place; and the conversation turning on her ladyship, after no inconsiderable number of bottles of champagne had been emptied, he became so excited by the extravagant praises lavished on her, that he quite longed to behold this paragon of perfection, as she was represented to be.

“There is nothing like her!” said Lord William Mortimer. “She has refused half the men about town,”—a statement his lordship knew to be wholly incorrect,—“and happy may he consider himself to be who can gain her hand.”

Half the men present were on the point of denying the assertion of the number of

refusals given by Lady Selina, each fearing that *he* might be suspected of being among the discarded, but a signal from Lord William Mortimer, seen by all save Mr. Mellingcourt, arrested their tongues, and he again resumed the subject, saying—

“ Never was there a young girl so much *à-la-mode* as Lady Selina Altringham; and he will be indeed an enviable man who becomes her husband! Then her connexions are so thoroughly good, all people of high rank, that whoever marries her will at once find himself in the very best, ay, even in the most exclusive society,” continued Lord William Mortimer,—“ a serious consideration to any man of fortune who happens not to belong to the aristocracy, who now, owing to the vast number of *parvenus* who endeavour to enter their circles, draw the *cordons sanitaires* as strictly as they can, in order to exclude intruders.”

This conversation was not lost on Mr.

Mellingcourt. Every word of it made a deep impression on his mind, for he was precisely in the category of *parvenus* anxious to force an entrance with a golden key into a sphere which his birth or habits by no means entitled him to have a place in.

CHAPTER VII.

THE orphan son of a French settler in the Havannahs, he had been confided to the guardianship of a London banker of respectability, with whom his father had in early youth been intimately acquainted; sent to Eton, and thence to Oxford, young Mellingcourt had formed friendships with many young scions of the nobility, and conceived the puerile ambition of continuing in manhood the companionship formed in youth. It was not that he considered his patrician associates more amiable or more agreeable

than the young men of his own class with whom he came in contact, but his frivolous mind was dazzled by the high-sounding titles of the young noblemen who condescended, for the sake of partaking his *recherché* suppers, and not unfrequently borrowing his money, to live on habits of close intimacy with him. He fully calculated on continuing in the same society whenever he took up his abode in London; but to his infinite mortification found, that although many of his *ci-devant* friends were not unwilling to dine with him at a fashionable hotel, where he gave, if not the best, at least the most extravagant dinners that could be ordered, and to take their seats in the boxes of the theatres, for which he paid, no one of them ever offered to introduce him into those circles which he pined to enter, notwithstanding the various hints he gave them on the subject, and although he saw by the newspapers that the near relatives of those

his *soi-disant* friends were the givers of the balls and *fêtes* at which he was so anxious to be present.

Disappointed and disgusted, Mr. Mellingcourt, at the close of his first season in London, during which his only occupation had been to give dinners to men who never invited him in turn, to pay for boxes at the opera and play, nominally called his, but the best seats in which were unceremoniously taken by his self-invited companions, and to lend horses and carriages to those who either wanted money or inclination to defray the expense of keeping those luxuries for themselves, he determined on leaving England, and making a tour on the continent. His companions so loudly and vehemently disapproved of this step — a step which would deprive them of so many comforts, that it is more than probable they might have dissuaded him from the measure, but for the machinations of one of them, who had re-

cently found his longer residence in London a service of danger, owing to the anxiety which certain individuals, comprising the class of coach-makers, jewellers, perfumers, tailors, boot-makers, horse-dealers, &c., evinced to retain him there. This anxiety was, moreover, displayed by employing sundry individuals to secure his person—a proceeding that greatly disgusted him with England. This gentleman, anticipating the probable result of these measures, and not possessing funds to enable him to travel on the continent in the style or comfort which he considered indispensable to a person of his birth and habits, thought that it would be no bad speculation to induce Mellingcourt to go abroad, and to occupy one half of his luxurious travelling carriage, while he placed his valet on the box by the side of the servant of his friend. All this he determined on doing, without incurring a shilling of expense on his own part, and so well did he

lay his plans that Mellingcourt not only invited, but pressed him to do that which he himself had previously decided on doing,—namely, to get franked, thus sparing his own light purse, and dipping heavily into the well-stocked one of his friend.

Tired of the Continent, or, in other words, tired of himself and his companion, Mr. Mellingcourt, after two years' absence, *malgré* all the persuasions of the said *compagnon de voyage*, determined on returning to England, but did not commence his journey until that gentleman had extracted from him a loan of a sufficient sum to enable him to continue his *séjour* on the Continent for another year, which perfectly consoled him for the departure of Mellingcourt.

Lord William Mortimer, like too many other younger branches of the aristocracy, was cursed with a taste for expense, which his scanty provision as a *cadet de famille* was not calculated to support. Few are

those who commiserate this ill-judged and ill-used class of society. Its members, born in feudal dwellings, adorned with all the ensigns of grandeur, and nursed in the very lap of luxury, with eyes accustomed to behold on every side the gauds of hereditary splendour, and with palates habituated only to the choicest viands and exotic delicacies of a princely table, are little fitted for the hardships they must undergo. Behold them while yet in their minorities, ere reason has assumed her empire over their minds, cast on the world either as soldiers, sailors, *attachés d'ambassades*, or embryo parsons, with barely the means of supporting a frugal existence—to defray even the cost of which demands a system of rigid economy seldom appertaining to youth, and least of all to youth nurtured in the hotbed of luxury. Fancy a Lord Augustus, or a Lord William Henry, with a high-sounding, historical, and aristocratic name attached to it, compelled,

after having quitted the magnificent paternal mansion, to lodge in some small and miserable house, in a narrow street, and—O degradation!—perhaps over a mean shop! Instead of being waited on, as hitherto, by half a score of pampered menials, arrayed in laced liveries, and with powdered heads, exhaling the fragrance of a perfumer's shop, look on him, attended by a single servant of uncouth aspect, and smelling of the stable. See him eating off delf, or ironstone crockery, covered with “chimeras dire,” or monstrous representations of trees or flowers unknown in nature, instead of feasting off silver, on which is emblazoned the family arms, surmounted by a coronet, or off old *porcelaine de Sèvres*, of greater rarity, and of equal cost. Think, and let your breast heave with pity, of the tough mutton chop, or tougher beefsteak, not only smelling of, but tasting of, coal smoke and burnt fat, served up on the said delf, or ironstone

manufacture, instead of the delicious soups, delicate fish, *recherchés entrées epurée* of all the grosser particles of their component ingredients, and the high-flavoured venison that had cropped its daily food in the parks of their patrician forefathers. But, above all, O gentle reader! think of the muddy port and fiery sherry with which the before-named tough mutton chop or beefsteak is to be washed down, and your heart must be of adamant if you can refuse your pity to the young scions of nobility whose sad lots I have narrated. For me, I cannot dwell on their hapless destinies without the deepest sympathy; and how they can appear in the world with smiling faces, while enduring such privations, has ever been to me a matter of the most extreme surprise. But “God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;” “and shorn indeed to the quick” are those high-born and much-enduring youths.

Lord William Mortimer appertained to

the unhappy class I have described. The travelling companion of Mr. Mellingcourt was his friend, and had, during the two years of his *séjour* on the Continent, corresponded with Lord William, and kept him *au fait* of the peculiarities, desires, and wishes of Mellingcourt, as an amusing topic for his letters.

When he found that he could no longer detain his companion, from whom he felt convinced he had little more to expect, believing in the old adage that applies to all weak and selfish people — “out of sight, out of mind,” he determined to hand Mellingcourt over to the tender mercies of Lord William, to whom he wrote by post, apprising him of the good fortune he had thrown in his way. “Never forget,” wrote he, “that our golden calf is but a calf after all; being not only a man of no family, but innately vulgar, and that you, the son, although but a younger one, of a marquis,

confer a great honour on him by condescending to teach him how to spend his money like a gentleman, and in assisting him in the operation. Make him bleed freely; never allow him to think for himself; and, above all, let him understand that to you he will owe, should he obtain it, his introduction to our society."

Prepared to receive Mellingcourt, and to turn him to account, Lord William Mortimer welcomed him to London with affected warmth, and offered to be of use to him in forming his establishment and furnishing his stables. Mellingcourt, however, stupid as he naturally was, had profited by past experience, which, if it had not given him wisdom, had at least taught him suspicion, that vice, invariably the attribute of narrow minds. He muttered something about not having yet decided on forming any establishment, or on not having more than two or three horses; adding, that to keep open

house or supply horses to men who never did anything for him in the way of introducing him into fashionable society, was a bore as well as a folly. Lord William took the hint, and answered that Mellingcourt was quite right, but now that he had let him know that he wished to enter the exclusive circles, he would be delighted to present him. Mellingcourt was gratified, and when, in a few hours after, Lord William sent him three cards for balls and routs for the next three nights, extorted from women of high rank, either near relatives or intimate friends of his lordship, to whom he had represented his *soi-disant* friend as a *millionaire*, and an excellent person, Mellingcourt believed that he had at length succeeded in gaining admittance into the best society.

“To get him on,” said Lord William Mortimer to himself, “I must positively

marry him to some portionless girl of high family, for he is such a bore and vulgarian that people will never let him establish a footing in our set, and when he finds this out, as he soon must, instead of attributing it to the true cause, he will blame me, and I shall lose all influence over him. Yes, to secure him a position, though at best it will be but a false one, I must get him married. The next question is, who shall the lady be? There is Lady Alice Vernon; she is portionless, but so proud that she would not have him with all his thousands and tens of thousands. No match will suit her but a Lucifer one. Then there is Lady Agnes Digby, without a *sous*. She would jump at him, or rather at the golden bait I could hold out to her; but Lady Agnes is a clever, sharp-witted person, who will let no one manage her husband, or his fortune, but herself. Let me see. Yes, I have it! Lady

Selina Altringham is the very woman! I can manage her; for her vanity and determination to pass herself off for a beauty render her an easy agent in my scheme."

CHAPTER VIII.

To the Lady Selina, Lord William Mortimer immediately went, requested an invitation for Mr. Mellingcourt, the modern Cræsus, as he termed him, hinted that he wished to share his vast fortune with some person of high birth, but that he was so fastidious in his taste, that nothing short of a perfect beauty could satisfy it. He looked at the lady while uttering this speech, and she, nothing loth to appropriate the implied compliment, took the hint, and determined to leave nothing undone in order to share

the boasted wealth of Mr. Mellingcourt. The next night Lord William presented his friend, as he styled him, to Lady Selina, who received him graciously, accorded him her hand for the next dance, and rendered herself so agreeable, that Mellingcourt, although much disappointed in his expectations of her appearance, which had been so much raised by the injudicious and exaggerated eulogiums of his companions the previous night, became fascinated by her gaiety and ease of manner. Lord William could not forbear smiling when, returning from the ball, Mellingcourt declared that Lady Selina was the most agreeable woman of rank he had ever conversed with—an assertion not to be controverted, as she happened to be the *only* one. But the smile was not seen by Mellingcourt, who, engrossed by his self-complacency, observed not the countenance of his companion.

“ I did not at the first glance think her

as beautiful as you represented her to be," said Mellingcourt.

"Strange!" observed Lord William Mortimer, for even the most fastidious judges have pronounced her to be faultless. The Prince Hoenholoran, whose fiat is considered as law on the subject of female loveliness, has accorded her the palm over all our beauties; the Duke of Derbyshire has named her *la plus belle des belles*; and the Marquis of Waldershaw, who is scarcely ever satisfied with even our most admired women, has declared Lady Selina to be perfection."

"There is no denying the opinions of such competent judges," said Mellingcourt. "Nevertheless, on first seeing the Marchioness of Altringham and Lady Selina, I took the former to be the lady so praised last night, because she struck me to be so much handsomer than the latter."

"Tell it not in Gath—name it not in Ascalon, my dear fellow; for were such a

thing whispered, you would positively be set down as a man of very bad taste; for any doubt of the loveliness of Lady Selina would be received in the fashionable world as a heresy never to be pardoned. Ah!" and Lord William sighed deeply, "had I a fortune to cope with the train who have sought her hand, how soon would I lay it at her feet! Had you but observed the envy and jealousy you excited this evening, my dear Mellingcourt, you would have been indeed proud."

"Why, I must admit I *was* gratified—ay, exceedingly so, indeed, to have engrossed so much of her attention; for, as I before observed, I never conversed with so agreeable a woman of rank before, and I should not be sorry to have just such a wife as Lady Selina; but that, I suppose, would be totally out of the question, as she has refused so many men of high rank and greater fortune than mine."

“Lady Selina’s own rank is so elevated, and her connexions so high, that she might well condescend to marry a commoner, knowing that whoever she weds she will raise to her own station in society,” said Lord William, without moving a muscle or changing colour, while uttering what he knew to be a falsehood.

- The bait held out to Mellingcourt was greedily seized; for to have the *entrée* into the most fashionable society, and not on sufferance, but on terms of equality, was precisely the object he most desired to attain. Lord William saw that what he had said had produced the desired effect, and followed it up by adding—“I am engaged to go down to Richmond to-morrow with a party; the Altringhams will be there, and, if you wish it, I will manage to get you invited.”

“I should like it above all things,” replied Mellingcourt, eagerly, “and feel really obliged to you.”

“Not at all, my dear fellow—not at all. I mean to get you into the best society; and as I have never yet taken any trouble to introduce any other man of my acquaintance, although often pressed to do so, into my own set, I have no doubt of succeeding. I only hope I shall not be compelled to leave London in two or three days, which I should regret, still more on your account than on my own; for there are a number of fellows belonging to my set who make a point of keeping others out of it. I fear, therefore, were I absent, you might not be able to make your way into the circles you are formed to live in.”

“What compels you to leave town?” demanded Mellingcourt.

“The absolute want of a few thousands to quiet my troublesome creditors, who are tormenting me, and whose patience I have nearly exhausted.”

Mellingcourt paused a moment, and de-

bated with himself, whether or not he would lend some of his spare thousands to Lord William. He felt no particular friendship for him, for, truth to say, Mellingcourt was incapable of entertaining that sentiment for any one; neither was his a nature that had pleasure in generosity, *malgré* that he had squandered large sums on his *soi-disant* friends. Ostentation and avarice were his ruling foibles; and many were the internal struggles they occasioned; the first urging him to an expenditure that the second severely reproached him for indulging. Incapable of friendship himself, he was incredulous of its existence in others, and conscious, perhaps, of his own want of merit to excite it, (for only those who are unworthy of the blessing deny its beneficent power,) he was content to profit by any kindness shewn to him, without better liking the person who evinced it. Thus would he occasionally expend his beloved money, to

attain a reputation for generosity which he was sensible of not deserving; or to accomplish some point in which his selfishness was interested. The result may easily be divined. Those who conferred kindness on him, mortified by having their motives suspected, and their acts depreciated, conceived a dislike to him, which avenged their humiliated feelings; and those on whom he had bestowed large gifts, forgot them, and became ungrateful, as they discovered that to ostentation and not to good will they owed the favours they had received. If the purse-strings of Mellingcourt sometimes opened, his heart never did, and as he never forgot a benefit conferred, and never remembered one received, he made no friends.

“ How much would extricate you for the present?” demanded Mellingcourt, after serious consideration, and mature deliberation, whether it would be worth while to pay a few thousands in order to retain Lord

William on the spot, for the purpose of getting him into society; or whether it would not be as well to let him depart, and trust to some other chance for entering the charmed circle he was so desirous to penetrate, and so save his thousands. "It will be whispered in all societies, bruited in all the clubs, that I have saved a scion of nobility from ruin!" whispered Ostentation. "But it will cost you some thousands to do this!" murmured Avarice. "Without him you will never get where you want to be," said Selfishness. "And by assisting him, you will be counted noble, generous, and good!" added Ostentation. The two latter pleaders silenced Avarice. Nevertheless, when Lord William answered the question of "How much would extricate you?" by saying "Ten thousand pounds!" Mellingcourt positively started.

"Ten thousand pounds!" repeated he. "That is indeed a large sum." And again

Avarice whispered—"Don't give it to him;" while Ostentation said, "Were you to give him only a small sum it would excite no sensation in the great world; and would convey no impression of the magnitude of your fortune. Give it; you will be lauded to the skies!"

"If you are quite sure that ten thousand pounds will really extricate you, and leave you at liberty to remain in town as long as I do, I will lend them to you," said Mellingcourt, with that considerable extension of visage termed a long face, and a severity of tone that would have led a person to believe that he was committing an act of retributive justice, instead of conferring a favour.

"Thank you, my dear fellow!" said Lord William, extending his hand to clasp that of Mellingcourt, who held out the tips of his fingers to receive the intended cordial

pressure, and thus chilled the warmth kindled in the breast of one, who, albeit unused to kindly emotions, for the nonce experienced something like gratitude towards the man who evinced an intention to serve him.

It was long since Lord William Mortimer slept so soundly as on the night on which Mellingscourt promised to pay down ten thousand pounds for him; for, of late, his slumbers had been much disturbed by the menaces of his creditors—menaces which he felt they were fully determined on putting into execution, unless some unexpected piece of good fortune enabled him to pay them a portion of their claims. His fears were now at rest, for at least some months to come; and he indulged in visions of city heiresses to be found, or rich dupes to be met with, to extricate him on that future day so vaguely defined in the perspective of

the thoughtless spendthrift, yet so inevitably ruinous in its consequences, however postponed.

Mellingcourt's pillow was an uneasy one that night. Seldom has the consciousness of a bad action occasioned more pain to the perpetrator, than did the recollection of this unusual liberality inflict on this *riche avare*. He groaned while he cursed his own weakness and folly for having sacrificed so large a sum to extricate a man for whom he cared nothing; forgetting that it was only to forward his own scheme of entering the magic circle from which he had hitherto been excluded, that led him to make a pecuniary sacrifice of such vast magnitude. In vain did he reflect that he had still thousands and tens of thousands at his disposal; and that, large as was the sum he had pledged himself to give Lord William Mortimer, it could not occasion him the slightest inconvenience. He could not

recover his temper as the thought occurred, that the facility with which he had accorded so heavy a loan, would inevitably lead to false expectations, if it did not entail similar demands from the same quarter. "Pshaw!" muttered he, as the word *loan* passed through his thoughts, "he will never have either the means or the inclination to repay me. No, my ten thousand pounds are gone for ever! Fool that I was, to sacrifice them to attain so puerile an object!"

How strange and incomprehensible is man! Ever exaggerating the value of any object he wishes to achieve, and to depreciate it as soon as acquired. Mellingcourt, as he tossed in his sleepless bed, wondered how he ever could have dreamed of paying so immense a sum as ten thousand pounds of the lawful coin of Great Britain, for an introduction into scenes like the one he had figured in that night, though the previous day he would willingly have devoted double

that sum to accomplish the point Lord William Mortimer had obtained.

“ I had formed an erroneous notion of these so much vaunted aristocratic circles,” thought he to himself. “ What are they, after all? The rooms in which they congregate, it is true, are larger and loftier than those into which I had previously been admitted; the furniture less gaudy, yet the *tout ensemble* is more brilliant,—for old family diamonds help wonderfully to light up a room, nay more, they enhance the charms of the wearers by the associations of feudal power and grandeur they call up. But the cold looks, and colder manners of these aristocrats, whose countenances appear as if they could never beam with joy, or melt in sorrow; and the *hauteur* with which they tolerate (instead of cordially receiving) the advances of a stranger, whatever his fortune may be, is very unlike the good-humoured reception given by the less elevated persons

with whom I have hitherto associated. They seem to me to take no pleasure in the amusements they seek; and even when dancing, the gravity of their countenances is more suitable to the mourners at a funeral than to the votaries of Terpsichore. The only exception was Lady Selina Altringham. She is a very superior person, though by no means a beauty, notwithstanding people assert her to be so. Well, well,—the reputation is perhaps as advantageous as the possession of good looks; and as Lady Selina *is* the fashion, ‘the observed of all observers,’ as Lord William Mortimer says, (hang that fellow, I wish I could get him out of my head!) *I* should not be sorry—nor would she, I think, regret it—were she my wife. I should then have no occasion to pay for admission into the best society; for, as her husband, I should naturally take my place in it. I wish I had not promised Mortimer the ten thousand pounds. Why,

that very sum would have gone a great way in paying for her diamonds, if I should marry her! I might have got off by paying less than half that sum to Mortimer for introducing me to her, but I was such a fool as not to take time for reflection. Is there no way of getting off paying the whole sum? I must try what can be done."

With this resolution, Mellingcourt resigned himself to sleep at a late hour in the morning, and dreamed that he was ruined by Lord William Mortimer, who, in the shape of a conjuror, by a dexterous *tour* of sleight of hand, possessed himself of all his fortune. He awoke in terror, rubbed his eyes, and recalling to mind the promised loan of the previous night, swore that never again would he commit the folly of lending money.

CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE Mellingcourt had left his dressing-room the next day, Lord William Mortimer was with him. There was a coldness and constraint in the manner in which he was received that might have wounded a more delicate mind than that of Lord William; for it plainly denoted that Mellingcourt felt anything but satisfaction at seeing him, or in fulfilling the engagement into which he had entered. A few years spent in London, and, above all, in fashionable society, is so well calculated to destroy the pride and

sensitiveness of men, that the generality of those who have entered its giddy vortex retain no trace of these qualities; although were any one openly to impugn their possession of them, a duel would inevitably be the result. Lord William Mortimer felt the ungraciousness of Mellingcourt's reception of him; but the extreme embarrassment of his finances, and the urgent demands and menaces of his creditors, compelled him not only to submit to this offensive behaviour on the part of the rich *parvenu*, but also to the humiliation of reminding him of that which he seemed now to have totally forgotten—namely, the promised loan of the ten thousand pounds.

“I find,” said Mellingcourt, looking exceedingly out of humour, “on consulting my banker's book, that it will not be convenient for me to advance you so large a sum at present; but if three thousand pounds will do, I will give you a cheque.”

“It would not answer the purpose for which I consented to be your debtor,” replied Lord William, the last blush of wounded pride rising to his cheek. “I wish you had not offered me the ten thousand,” resumed he, “for on the faith of it I have been this morning making terms with my harpies, who will now be so enraged at being disappointed, that I dare not remain in London a day longer. I am sorry for this, on your account as well as on my own; for I have got you an invitation to the water-party to-day, where I was to have presented you.”

“But now that I know Lady Selina Altringham, she can perform that ceremony for me,” said Mellingcourt, coolly.

“Impossible!” replied Lord William. “You forget that for a young and unmarried lady to present any man, save a brother, to a whole circle of strangers, and, permit me to add, more especially a man whose

very name is not known in that circle, would be a solecism in etiquette and *l'usage du monde*, which Lady Selina Altringham, with her knowledge *du bienséance*, would be the very last person in the world to commit. I will not trespass on your time any longer."

Lord William, with an air of hauteur, that reminded Mellingcourt more forcibly than he wished of the difference of their birth, took up his hat, and moved towards the door; but within the last few minutes, all Mellingcourt's desire to enter high life had revived with additional force, owing to the chance of being defeated in his wishes.

"Don't go yet," said he; "perhaps we may devise some means of getting you out of this scrape. I think I could manage to give you six thousand pounds, if that would extricate you."

"I have already told you that no less a sum than ten thousand would do," answered

Lord William, coldly; "for, as I previously informed you, my faith in your *voluntary offer* has led me to propose terms, which having been accepted, I cannot recede from; consequently I have nothing left but to quit London at once."

"But if I make so large an advance," said Mellingcourt, "can you not find some friend or relation to lend the other four? Your brother, for instance, he has a large fortune."

"Yes; and like all noblemen with large fortunes, has many claims on him," answered Lord William, bitterly. "Various extensive hereditary seats to be kept up; a style of living suitable to high rank to be supported; innumerable dependents to be maintained; and charities, public and private, to be subscribed to; from all of which costly liabilities and necessities a wealthy commoner, with an unknown name and funded property, is utterly exempt."

Mellingcourt's cheek grew red at this observation, and he hesitated what to do, when Lord William again walking towards the door with an air of increased *hauteur*, he exclaimed, " Stop a moment! I will go to my bankers, and arrange with them to give you the ten thousand pounds, for which I will now write a cheque; but don't present it until I shall have been there."

The cheque was written, and Lord William Mortimer left the room with it, his gratitude for the loan considerably, if not wholly, decreased by the mode in which it had been granted, for he was by no means imposed on by the pretended plea of temporary poverty urged by Mellingcourt, or the affected necessity of that gentleman's seeing his bankers before the cheque was presented. So convinced was he of the fallacy of this assertion on the part of his *soi-disant* friend, that he lost not a moment in going straight to Mellingcourt's banker, where, as

he fully anticipated, the sum was counted out to him the moment he presented the cheque, as would have been triple its amount, had the drawer given a cheque for it. Lord William smiled contemptuously at the *ruse* of Mellingcourt as he consigned the bank-notes to his pocket, forgetful that he had never previously possessed one quarter of the sum that he now owed to the man, to whose weakness, and not generosity, he justly attributed the action; and that if that man had evinced a want of delicacy and good feeling in the manner of giving it, *he* had exhibited no less in stooping to receive it, after he had so clearly seen the unwillingness with which it was bestowed. But thus it often is: people are prone to accuse others of a want of delicacy when they themselves are violating it to an equal degree.

To the water-party Lord William and Mellingcourt went. He presented the

latter to all to whom he thought the acquaintance would be acceptable, consisting of titled persons of both sexes, not overburthened with wealth or fastidiousness of taste, and whom the good dinners and boxes at the theatres, which he intended to make Mellingcourt provide, would reconcile to the measure. He whispered to each of these individuals, previous to the introduction, "Pray let me present my friend Mellingcourt to you; he is as rich as Cræsus; is going to set up the most splendid establishment; will give dinners, balls, and concerts, all through the season, and will have double boxes at every theatre. He does not care much about these things himself, but likes to offer them to his acquaintance. A marrying man, too!"

These hints procured Mellingcourt a very polite reception from those who, had they not been given, would have, in all probability, declined the introduction, or received it so

coldly as to have checked further advances. Such is the advantage of wealth.

Lady Selina Altringham quickly observing the gracious smiles, civil manner, and polite speeches directed towards Mellingcourt, became somewhat alarmed lest some one of the unmarried ladies present should secure the golden prize she wished to call her own. She glanced anxiously at the group, where he was awkwardly bowing from one person to another, when Lord William Mortimer, who shrewdly guessed what was passing in her mind, advanced to her side, and speaking in a low tone, remarked, "How very popular with the women Mellingcourt is becoming! He will soon be snatched up," continued he, "for he is too great a prize not to be sought after." Then observing her look of increased alarm, he added, "Mellingcourt, however, has such perfect confidence in my judgment that he will not make any selection without consulting me.

She may, indeed, consider herself fortunate who weds him, for his enormous fortune and taste for splendour will place her in a very enviable position. I am partial, very partial, to Mellingcourt, and it would give me pain to behold him forgetting, in the charm of a new tie, the friendship that has so long subsisted between us. Yet such is in general the invariable consequence of marriage, for no sooner does a man enter that holy state than his wife makes him abandon his old friends and associates, and he becomes as wholly lost to them as if he had departed this life instead of having married."

"But this surely could not occur where the wife was a sensible person," replied Lady Selina Altringham. "Such a woman would be glad to profit by the knowledge an intimate friend must have acquired of the disposition and habits of her husband, in order to accommodate herself to those peculiarities from which no man is exempt."

This reply convinced both the interlocutors that they perfectly understood each other, and encouraged them to be more explicit.

“Then I am to understand,” resumed Lord William, “that were you, *par exemple*, Lady Selina, to become the wife of my friend, you would be content to share instead of attempting to destroy my empire over him?”

“I never thought of myself,” said the lady; “but if so unlikely an event were to take place, I should be the last person in the world to even dream of shaking your influence; *au contraire*, I should decidedly do all in my power to strengthen it, from the conviction that a man like Mr. Mellingcourt, who has not lived in the great world—that is, *our* world—would stand greatly in need of a male friend as well versed in all the usages and habits of it as Lord William Mortimer is.”

“Is it then quite understood between us

that in case you wed Mellingcourt, I am to remain, as now, his confidential friend and adviser?" asked Lord William.

"Perfectly!" answered the lady; "although the case is so hypothetical a one, that it makes me smile for us to enter into such grave preliminaries on the subject."

Lord William smiled too, and then said, "Your marrying my friend, Lady Selina, will now depend solely on yourself; for such is my power over him, that ere many days can elapse he will lay his hand and fortune at your feet."

The prediction of Lord William was fulfilled; and Lady Selina, nothing loth, was led to the altar by Mellingcourt, with whose weakness of intellect and selfishness, short as had been their courtship, she had become well acquainted. Most women with this knowledge would have shrank back affrighted from a union with so unworthy a man; but Lady Selina, conscious of her own firmness

of purpose, and perseverance in accomplishing all she willed, was undaunted at the prospect before her; and, determined to live for the world alone, she felt regardless of the inferiority of the partner for life she had selected. Was he not rich, and fond of splendour? What more could she desire? Even the difference of their birth and station she considered rather as an advantage than otherwise, for she thought it would enable her to assert her superiority over him whenever his selfishness led him to rebel. No stronger example could be given of the evil effect of the faulty system of education at present but too often practised, than in thus seeing a young and highly born woman accepting with willingness the hand of a man for whom she entertained not a single sentiment of affection or esteem. Like other girls, Lady Selina had been taught to consider that all the pains bestowed in giving her the various showy

accomplishments in which she excelled, had but one aim and end—namely, the rendering her attractive, and so leading to the securing for her a splendid marriage. This lesson had been more strongly impressed on her mind, by her having witnessed, on more than one occasion, the unhappy condition reserved for women of high birth, with only a miserable pittance of some five thousand pounds, and who, having failed in their matrimonial hopes, had been left dependents on elder brothers, not always disposed to extend to them the kindness they required; or to reside with married sisters, whose husbands not unfrequently betrayed their distaste to what they were prone to consider more as an addition than an acquisition in their establishments.

CHAPTER X.

ERE this ill-assorted union took place, Mel-
lingcourt had let the unamiable points of his
character—and they were many—be so
plainly seen, that any woman less deter-
mined on marrying him than was Lady Se-
lina, must have inevitably broken off the
engagement. The Marquis of Altringham,
thoroughly disgusted with his intended bro-
ther-in-law, although well disposed to see
his sister wedded to a wealthy man, advised
her to decline the marriage, urging, as a
motive for this advice, the undisguised and

unblushing selfishness and meanness exhibited by the lover—if lover he might be called. In relation to the settlement, these offensive qualities were pre-eminently displayed; for while he evinced no inclination to give up the portion of Lady Selina, consisting only of five thousand, he wanted to assign her so limited a jointure and pin-money, that had the family lawyer of the Marquis of Altringham not interfered, and brusquely, too, the reasonable allowance ultimately extorted from him would never have received his assent. The truth was, Mellingcourt felt not one particle of admiration or affection for his future bride. He saw in her only a person of high birth, noble connexions, and great fashion; by an alliance with whom he could enter that society in which he longed to find himself established, without the necessity of having recourse to those expedients to which he had hitherto been compelled to resort. Calculating on

never being paid the loan extended so unwillingly to Lord William Mortimer, he determined on subtracting that sum from the dowry of his bride ; and no angry reasoning on the part of the family lawyer, nor advice from his own, could induce him to name a larger settlement than five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and three hundred a-year pin-money. The jewels presented to her, and which he took care should be bought second hand, (pretending that they had appertained to his deceased mother,) he strictly entailed on his son and heir ; and in case of his dying without male issue, they were to revert to whomever he might bequeath them, leaving Lady Selina but a life-interest in them, and even this to cease in case she married a second time, or that she was ever to separate from him.

In despite of all these mean and unusual proceedings, so well calculated to disgust any woman of delicacy, Lady Selina became

the wife of Mellingcourt; and a less attached bride and bridegroom never left St. George's church than the "happy pair," as the newspapers termed them, "who, in a travelling carriage and four, set off to spend the honeymoon at Altringham Castle, the seat of the noble and beautiful bride's brother." Prepared to gain an ascendancy over her narrow-minded and selfish husband, Lady Selina sedulously set about the task she had assigned to herself. She studied to conciliate, if not to charm him; but ere they reached Altringham Castle, she discovered that he was so impracticable that the task would be a hopeless one. He had neither the attentions of a tender bridegroom nor the gallantry of a polite one. He allowed her to fatigue herself by keeping up a continual effort to amuse him by her conversational powers, and they were considerable, without ever acknowledging the success of her attempts by a smile, or a civil speech.

It was only when they reached Altringham Castle, that, awed by the feudal grandeur of this fine baronial residence, he vouchsafed to betray any symptom of pleasure. The grand entrance hall, hung with burnished armour, and the magnificent gallery, from the walls of which frowned many a noble knight, and glanced many a stately dame, surprised as well as pleased him. This was the first princely abode he had ever entered as a bidden guest; for hitherto, at the few show-houses he had seen,—and none of them were to be compared to the splendid one he was now in,—he experienced a sensation akin to awe, as, escorted by a garrulous old housekeeper, proud of the ancestry and grandeur of her aristocratic employers, she strutted along, proclaiming the titles and degrees of those whose portraits covered the walls. But at present—and the recollection pleased him—he came to a stately castle, one of the strong-holds of ancient

nobility, not as a curious intruder, protected by the paid civility of a menial cicerone, but as a member of that high family, a scion of whom leaned on his arm, and moved along through the vast suite of rooms filled with the finest works of art, and most costly furniture, with an indifference that proved she was too much accustomed to such scenes to derive either surprise or gratification from them. He glanced at the walls, and saw innumerable fine portraits, with the name of Selina, in gilt letters, inscribed on the massive frames, followed by various titles, from that of duchess, marchioness, countess, and viscountess, down to baroness, with the most ancient names. *She*, too, whose fine form and elevated head resembled these stately ancestral dames, from whose proud lineage she had sprung, *she* was now his bride—the link that united him, a man of mean origin, to that long race of nobility whose progenitors still frowned or smiled

from the walls of the lofty castle, where they had once moved in feudal grandeur and princely state. He was awed into a new feeling of respect for Lady Selina, and was proud that his name was now allied to that of one of the most illustrious families of the English aristocracy.

The Marquis of Altringham had sent a number of his servants down to the castle, where during his absence only a few had been left, in order to do honour to the bride; and as these in their gorgeous liveries lined the halls, and a portly dame, attired in the richest brown satin, and wearing a profusion of fine lace, curtsied lowly to the "happy couple," Mellingcourt drew himself up to the utmost height his stature would admit, half fancying himself a noble too, and ready to exclaim—"I now have a right to take my place here among all this goodly show!" He had seen these same gorgeous liveries that at present dazzled him, in the

Marquis's mansion in London, but there they produced much less effect than here, where everything testified the grandeur and antiquity of the family with which he had allied himself. He wondered how he had courage enough to treat the scions of such a lofty race so unceremoniously as he had ventured to do during the last few days, while the marriage-settlements were preparing; and thought that had the brief courtship that led to his nuptials taken place at Altringham Castle instead of in a modern mansion in Grosvenor Square, he would have been more respectful, as well as more generous. The Marquis of Altringham in London, seemed little more than any other of the numerous lords to be seen every day there, or even than the rich commoners, many of them *parvenus*, who vied with them in the splendour of their establishments; but in the feudal castle of a long race of noble ancestors, there was no possi-

bility of forgetting the high station of its owner, and Mellingcourt thought that were *he* in the brilliant position of his brother-in-law, he would always reside at Altringham Castle, instead of confounding himself with the crowd of less distinguished aristocracy in the capital.

Lady Selina was not slow to observe what was passing in the mind of her husband, nor displeased at marking the involuntary effect produced in his manner towards her; for she was glad to discover that there was even one point by which he could be rendered more civilized—a fact of which, during her journey from London, she had learned to doubt. Yet though the wife, anxious only to govern, was pleased at the prospect afforded of acquiring an influence over her ill-bred husband, the woman and the bride owned, with bitterness to herself, that in both characters, *she* had failed to awaken any one of the sentiments usually

excited in the breast of a man under such circumstances; and, her *amour propre* deeply humiliated, she began to entertain a stronger feeling than the indifference she had hitherto experienced towards Mellingcourt—a feeling of positive dislike. She reflected not that the undignified facility with which she had, on a brief acquaintance, accorded her hand to a man so much her inferior, was ill calculated to render him either a warm, or a respectful bridegroom. She forgot everything but that he had profoundly wounded her womanly vanity, by letting her observe that the little deference shewn to her originated alone in the view of the pageants that reminded him of her high birth, and not in any affection to herself.

The next day, Lady Selina went over the princely castle of her brother with Mellingcourt; and now aware of his *parvenu*-like respect for high rank and ancient lineage, omitted not to increase it, by dwelling on

the heroic deeds of her ancestors, as she pointed out their portraits on the walls of the picture-gallery and gilded *salons*. She assumed on this occasion an air of *hauteur* by no means natural to her, for, like all persons of high family, she was not prone to attach any inordinate value to the adventitious gifts of birth and station to which from infancy she had been accustomed. This assumption of *fierté*, which would have disgusted any man of good sense and delicacy, had a very contrary effect on Mellingcourt; and Lady Selina was more than once tempted to smile at the change in his manner, as, when pointing out certain beautiful lustres of rock crystal, splendid vases of porcelain, costly mirrors in silver frames, and other rare objects of *vertu*, she intimated that they had been the gifts of sovereigns, in commemoration of their visits to her ancestors.

Unhappily, use blunted Mellingcourt's

feelings of respect towards the feudal grandeur that now surrounded him, for ere a week had elapsed, he had ceased to wonder at and admire all that which had on his first arrival astonished and awed him. Lady Selina was, after all, his wife—no longer Lady Selina Altringham, but Lady Selina Mellingcourt—no bad sounding name, thought he, and he would no longer treat her as if she were superior in any way to himself. “What if she *has* high birth and rank on her side,” soliloquized Mellingcourt, “have I not wealth on mine? and what is the value of rank and high birth without fortune to sustain them? To keep up this princely place, her brother, the most noble Marquis of Altringham married the heiress of a city banker, of obscure origin, and the Lady Selina, who has lately shewn herself so proud of her ancestry, has wedded with me—yes, with me, of whose birth she knows nothing, merely because I am rich; for I have never deceived myself

into a belief that personal liking had anything to do in the affair on her side any more than on mine. I have seen enough of England to know that fortune can enable those who possess it to get on very well without high birth or title; while the possessors of these two last advantages, if poor, are infinitely worse off than if they were untitled. Yes, wealth is much better than rank; and as I have it, I will carefully guard this precious talisman of power, and frustrate the projects which I can clearly see Lady Selina has formed, of freely disbursing the fortune for which she bartered her hand."

Mellingcourt was not slow in disclosing to his wife the opinions he entertained, nor the firm decision he had made of acting up to them. In vain did she endeavour to lead him to adopt more generous feelings, and a more liberal course. He was impracticable; and even before a month had

elapsed, and that month the honeymoon, when husbands have not yet thrown off the smiles of lovers to assume the frowns of masters, she learned to know that hers promised to be no happy lot in life, and that she had drawn no prize in the lottery of wedlock. Vainly did she essay to enact *la grande dame*, the lineal descendant of the courtly lords and ladies, whose faces glowed on the walls around her; some rude pleasantry, or common-place remark on the poverty of nobility, which he vulgarly instanced by reminding her of the *més-alliance* formed by her brother, and her own marriage with himself, silenced her tirades, and disgusted her from further attempts to civilize the low-minded husband, who was impenetrable alike to her flatteries or reproaches. He told her he would *not* purchase a house in London, or a seat in the country. He had no idea, he said, of incurring any such unnecessary expenses.

He would reside in a fashionable hotel, in London, during the season, a measure which would exempt him from the necessity of keeping a number of servants, or of giving entertainments; and during the autumn and winter, he would either go to the Continent, or pass the time in paying visits to the seats of those relations of hers, who, he added, would of course invite them. Lady Selina was not a woman to sit down and mourn over the death of the hopes that had induced her to wed Mr. Mellingcourt. The same want of sensibility and refined feelings that led to her marriage with him enabled her to bear up against the severe disappointment that step had entailed on her, and she determined that while submitting to what was now inevitable, she would do all in her power to enjoy whatever pleasure might still be within her reach.

CHAPTER XI.

NEVER passed honeymoon so gloomily and slowly as that of this ill-assorted couple. Mellingcourt, as if to avenge the awe experienced during the first three days of his *séjour* at Altringham Castle, treated Lady Selina with an insolent familiarity worthy of the example given by the profligate Lauzun to "*la grande demoiselle*," whose *fierté* he gloried in humiliating; but the lady, feeling none of the affection for her husband entertained by the French princess for him to whom she had so longed to be

united, was by no means disposed to support it, although policy prompted her to conceal the deep dislike and contempt it engendered.

Glad was she to leave Altringham Castle, and the insupportable, unbroken *tête-à-tête* with her vulgar husband; while he consoled himself with the reflection that a month's expenditure at an hotel had been saved by the princely hospitality exercised by his wife's brother. Yet this liberality on the part of the Marquis had so little effect on his mind, that when Lady Selina reminded him of the necessity of bestowing a parting gift of money on the domestics of the castle, he positively refused to do so, on the plea that he made it a point never to pay the servants of others; and she found herself compelled to leave with them the residue of her maiden purse, which had not yet been replenished by her husband, to demand money from whom her pride revolted.

Among the first visitors on their arrival

in town, was Lord William Mortimer. Mellingcourt's reception of him was as ungracious as he could venture to make it, without giving Lord William a right to resent it and demand an explanation. Lady Selina, uninfluenced by the example of her husband, behaved with the cordiality due to an old acquaintance; for ill as her marriage promised to turn out, she felt that it was herself, and not Lord William, she had to blame for having contracted it. When he was leaving the room, evidently hurt by Mellingcourt's treatment of him, the latter accompanied him to the antechamber, and Lady Selina overheard the sound of their voices raised as if in angry altercation. When Mellingcourt re-entered the apartment, his face was flushed, and he broke out into a contemptuous attack on the aristocracy.

“A pretty set,” said he; “truly, they deserve to be respected. There goes a lord-

ling, to whom I lent ten thousand pounds, which I have never since ceased regretting, and, forsooth, he acts the grand, and is surprised that I did not rush into his arms, as friends do on the stage, but nowhere else."

"Persons of a certain station, when they have accepted obligations, and above all, pecuniary ones, are peculiarly alive to any want of kindness of manner in those who have conferred them," said Lady Selina; "and I confess I did observe, although ignorant of your loan to Lord William Mortimer, that your reception of him was not friendly."

"Nor did I intend it to be so. I well knew that if I appeared cordial, he would have in all probability demanded an additional loan from me, and so I not only behaved coldly, but followed him out, and asked him when I could count on his repaying me the money, or at least a portion of it, as I have great occasion for it at present.

He looked as much astonished as if I had *given* instead of lent him the sum; said he did not expect to be called on so soon, and could not state when he could repay me. This does not surprise me, for it is no more than I expected; but I have by my politic conduct precluded him from ever again soliciting a loan of me, and this is something gained."

Shocked and disgusted, Lady Selina forbore making any reply, and Mellingcourt, concluding that his reasoning was unanswerable, indulged in more than his ordinary self-complacency. The waiter of the hotel presented the *menu*, the length of which evidently alarmed the parsimony of him to whom it was, with a low bow, handed; for he hastily returned it, saying, "It is very probable that we shall not dine at home, and should we do so, some mutton cutlets and a roast chicken will suffice, but I will let you know in time."

When the grave and solemn man had withdrawn, Lady Selina ventured to say, that as her brother was absent from town, it was not probable that they should receive any invitation for the day of so short a notice.

“ Well, let the worst come to the worst,” answered Mellingcourt, “ for so slight a dinner as we shall require, a half hour’s notice to prepare it will be sufficient; for my opinion is, that of all the modes of throwing away money, the most absurd is having expensive dinners at hotels, or indeed at one’s own house, when there is no company.”

“ Yet you did not object to the *recherché* and expensive dinners at Altringham Castle, where we were only *tête-à-tête*,” observed Lady Selina, disgusted at his parsimony.

“ They cost me nothing,” replied Mellingcourt; “ and I like good dinners, when I am not to pay for them.”

Two days subsequent to this conversation, Mellingcourt, while looking over a newspaper, after breakfast, exclaimed, "This is indeed lucky! Lord William Mortimer's brother has died without a son, and he is now Marquis of Bayswater. I shall therefore have my money back again; for he never can be so bad as not to pay me, although these young men of the aristocracy are capable of anything. I now begin to wish that I had not asked him to pay me, but who could have expected that his brother would have died so soon?"

It would be tedious to recount the scenes that followed during the first two or three years of Mellingcourt's marriage. Neither of the parties found in it the advantages on which they had calculated; and mutually disappointed in their expectations, they avenged themselves by exhibiting a dislike towards each other, which neither good breeding nor good sense operated to control, even

in society. The consequence of this impolitic conduct was, that no one thought of inviting them together to country houses, lest their presence and continual disagreements should mar the harmony of such reunions; and Mellingcourt would neither give consent nor furnish the means to allow of Lady Selina's accepting invitations not extended to him. His meanness and love of money increased every day. He withheld the scanty pin-money settled, on her marriage, on Lady Selina, or only paid her such small portions of it that she was compelled to contract debts in order to make an appearance suitable to her station. When any of the bills thus contracted were presented to him, his anger knew no bounds, and he poured such a torrent of abuse on her head, that, albeit, not being naturally timid, she felt positively afraid to encounter him on such occasions. Time, instead of softening the asperities of his temper, only served to

increase them; and in place of reconciling her to the lot now inevitable, and so unwisely chosen, rendered her hatred of her husband still more virulent. The Marquis of Bayswater repaid the ten thousand pounds lent to him, but, disgusted with the conduct of the lender, omitted no opportunity of proclaiming his meanness and vulgarity; and as the Marquis was rich, and possessed considerable influence in fashionable society, his opinion of Mellingcourt, openly avowed, induced many persons to avoid him, while the relatives of Lady Selina were loud in their censures of his behaviour to her, and pertinacious in refusing to receive him in their society. Lady Selina was now considered a victim to her domestic tyrant, and though not a beauty, the reputation acquired as one previous to her marriage was still remembered, and men were not found wanting who were disposed to console her for the unhappiness of her wedded life.

Such consolation, if the Scandalous Chronicle may be believed, she was not loth to accept; and from the period of her doing so, fewer quarrels arose between her husband and her on the subject of her personal expenses, although his liberality had by no means increased. He marvelled not at seeing her wear dresses of the richest materials, and valuable trinkets, for which he was never asked to pay, contenting himself with frequently declaring, that if *his* wife, like many of those of his acquaintances, were to contract heavy bills, he would render her home too hot to hold her. Disliking the society of Lady Selina, he avoided it as much as he could, taking especial care that no expense was incurred at the hotel in which they every season resided, by extending invitations to any of her frequent visitors; and if she transgressed this established rule, no item in his weekly account betrayed the fact. It was, perhaps, owing

to the penurious habits of Mellingcourt,—habits which Lady Selina took no pains to conceal from her compassionate male friends,—that their attentions, invariably demonstrated by costly gifts, and a profuse supply of bank-notes, to preserve the dear creature from being exposed to the brutality of such a husband, were but of brief duration. Season after season saw some young man, new to the world, and with more money than prudence, attached to the triumphal car of Lady Selina Mellingcourt; who, notwithstanding her reiterated complaints of the shameful conduct of her husband, in withholding her pin-money and refusing to pay her bills, managed to be always the best-dressed woman wherever she appeared,—a mystery which all her acquaintance in particular and the public in general declared it was not difficult to solve.

My father at length became the consoler of this lady; and he who had a young and

lovely wife, fondly devoted to him, pining in solitude in the country, while he, free as air, amused himself as if he had neither wife nor child, evinced a pity for this heartless and ill-conducted woman of the world, which it never occurred to him the position of his own wife was much more entitled to awaken. This unhallowed *liaison* had now existed for two years, and Lady Selina, grown artful as well as unprincipled, had acquired a considerable influence over him, by exciting his jealousy and piquing his vanity. Prodigal to excess, his generosity to her knew no bounds, and this induced her to spare no pains to keep alive an attachment she found to be so profitable. One instance of my father's folly will serve to shew to what extent both wife and husband were capable of taking advantage of it.

“ I saw, to-day,” said Lady Selina to him, “ such a *parure* of turquoises and diamonds! It was the most beautiful I ever

beheld, and *so* cheap! I might have bought it, if Mr. Mellingcourt would only pay me one half the pin-money he owes me; but, mean as he is, he never will. I never previously longed so much for anything!" —a strong assertion, as her ladyship's longings were neither few nor unfrequent.

"Where did you see it?" inquired my father.

"At ——'s," replied she; "but do not let us talk any more about it, for it only makes me long for what I cannot possess."

The next day, the *parure* was brought to her by my father, and, after some well-enacted scruples about accepting so expensive a gift, was received.

"But if Mr. Mellingcourt should notice it?" said the lady.

"I do not think he is peculiarly observant!" answered my father, with a smile that might have alarmed the delicacy of most other women.

“Nevertheless, this is so very splendid a *parure*, that, unobservant as he is with regard to other things, I fear he would inevitably notice it, and it might lead to mischief.”

“What, then, is to be done?” asked the gentleman.

“A thought occurs to me,” said the lady. “It is now so long a time since I have asked him for money, that he cannot decently refuse me some. He knows nothing of the value of precious stones,”—(an assertion which she was by no means justified in making,)—“I will shew him this fine *parure*—tell him it is the property of a lady in distress, who, owing to the exigency of the case, is willing to dispose of it for less than a quarter of its value, and ask him to pay me three hundred pounds of the pin-money he owes me, to enable me to purchase so great a bargain. This is so reasonable, and it must be so obvious, even to his eyes, that this *parure* is worth infinitely

more, that he cannot well refuse; so I can then wear your beautiful gift without fear."

"As you will," said my father, somewhat disgusted at this proof of cunning in the lady of his love.

The next day he found her in tears, and to his anxious inquiries as to the cause, she told him that, on displaying the turquoises and diamonds to her husband, he had, after minutely examining them, immediately retained the *parure*, and in spite of her exertions to prevent him, had taken it to a jeweller's, who having estimated it at three thousand pounds, he had sold it to him for that sum, (being one thousand less than my father had the previous day paid for it to the same jeweller,) and had given her three hundred pounds to pay "the lady in distress," lodging two thousand seven hundred, as he told her, in the funds, with his savings.

"Whenever you can purchase such ex-

cellent bargains," said he spitefully to me, "you may always come to me, for I like buying with hundreds what I can sell for thousands."

Lady Selina's tears flowed afresh as she recounted this trait of her husband, and my father experienced no increase of respect for either husband or wife while he listened to it. Nevertheless, he the next day repurchased the jewels, and restored them to Lady Selina, assuring her that Mr. Mellingcourt was not so accurate an observer as to notice them on her in a crowded assembly, or if he even did, she might impose on him by asserting that they were false ones, made in imitation of the real *parure* he had sold. "But," added my father, "I earnestly advise you never to let them into his hands, lest he might take it into his head to have them examined by a jeweller, and dispose of them again, and never more offer him any bargains."

CHAPTER XII.

ALTHOUGH heartily despising Mellingcourt, the admirer of his wife was compelled to conciliate him by every means in his power, and none were found so effective as those that saved the purse of this mean-spirited and parsimonious man, who was so vile as not to hesitate taking advantage of civilities or hospitalities procured, as he shrewdly suspected, solely on account of his wife. He professed to be fond of shooting, but disliked the trouble of hiring a manor; hence the *ami de la maison* for the time being was

sure to offer one, and, moreover, to keep open house during the shooting season, Mellingcourt, of course, Lady Selina, and a few friends of congenial tastes and habits, being invited to meet them. This despicable conduct, which in a poor man would have drawn down the most ignominious censures on his head, was much less harshly viewed in Mellingcourt, who was universally believed to be a *millionaire*, and consequently was treated, as the rich always are, much more leniently than the poor.

The *liaison* of my father and Lady Selina was much talked of at first, but after a time people got used to it; and as her husband found no fault with her conduct, and always appeared with her in public, she continued to be received in society by those scrupulous people who would have closed their doors against women who happened either to have less accommodating husbands, or who were less adroit in duping them.

The last two seasons my father had hired manors, that Mellingcourt might have his shooting, while he enjoyed the society of Lady Selina, but that lady becoming fearful that some prudish women of her acquaintance, with whom she wished to be on good terms, were taking alarm, not at her conduct, but at this open display of it, she expressed her desire that the next shooting season should be passed at my father's own seat, where the presence of his irreproachable and injured wife would give an air of respectability to the party. It was not without considerable reluctance that he consented to this proposal, for a consciousness of his own bad treatment towards my gentle mother haunted and embarrassed him in her presence, and rendered him unwilling to bring his associates in contact with her. Lady Selina, however, carried her point, and having got my father to engage Mr. and Mrs. Audley, with some young men,

who lived much in their society, to accompany her, the whole party, as already shewn, arrived at Meredith Park.

When questioned about the looks of his wife by Lady Selina, as had been more than once the case, my father had spoken of her as a person who possessed little personal attractions—at least, as he said, to his taste—and who was cold in feeling, but gentle and ladylike in manner. The first glance convinced Lady Selina of the falsehood of the former statement, and she resented it nearly as much as she would have done had her admirer really rendered justice to the beauty of his neglected wife, for it convinced her he was insincere. Of the correctness of the second statement, as to the coldness of my mother, she was also incredulous, for the changing colour and expressive countenance that met her gaze told a different tale. She glanced reproachfully at her admirer, while these thoughts passed through

her mind, and the looks of surprise and admiration lavished on my mother by all the men of the party, save my father alone, increased her dissatisfaction. When the party adjourned to dress for dinner, Mrs. Audley entered the dressing-room of Lady Selina Mellingcourt, and, affecting an air of perfect innocence, said, "Had you any idea, my dear friend, that Mrs. Spencer Meredith was so very beautiful? I had always fancied that she was rather plain than otherwise, and was really surprised when I saw how mistaken I had been. Not even her dowdy and old-fashioned dress could conceal or disfigure her charms, and I saw all the men gazing at her with astonishment and admiration."

Every word of this speech made the impression desired by the speaker on her *dear friend*; nevertheless, Lady Selina was too much a woman of the world to let her feelings be exposed. She summoned, therefore, all the *sang froid* she could assume to her

aid, and calmly answered, "Yes, I too was surprised, agreeably so, indeed, by the beauty of our fair hostess, and when we have persuaded her, as I hope we soon shall, to adopt a fashionable dress, she will be charming. I observed that the men were struck with admiration when they saw her; so much so, as to listen with less than their usual delight to your lively and piquant remarks, my dear friend."

"Oh! that is quite natural, *ma belle amie*," replied Mrs. Audley, "and I forgive them; but I really felt disposed to resent their immediate transfer of admiration from your handsome self to this new beauty, for whom alone they seem to have eyes. Mr. Audley just told me that he heard them say, and the saucy man admitted that *he* was of the same opinion, that when she appeared in London, and they each and all declared they would urge her to go to town next season, she would eclipse every woman there."

“ She is not only very lovely, but I should think, very clever too,” said Lady Selina. “ There is a peculiar archness in her smile, and a sort of epigrammatic point in her remarks, that bid fair to rival many, if not all our would-be female wits and *bas bleus* in London. But bless me! it is seven o’clock, and we shall hardly have time to dress for dinner!” And the two *dear friends* separated, satisfied in the conviction that they had given each other mutual pain in their brief *tête-à-tête*.

My father sought the dressing-room of his wife, not to press her to his heart, as most husbands, after so long a separation, might have done, but to reproach her on the subject of her dress.

“ For Heaven’s sake, Edith,” said he, “ why have you not conformed to the present fashion? Your dress is positively ridiculous; and I am sure my friends must have had some difficulty in not betraying

their sense of its absurdity in your presence. If you are indifferent to the ridicule you must excite, you ought, for my sake, at least, to dress a little more like other people."

"I am sorry——"

"Pray don't begin the old story, Edith, nor assume the tragic air. Endeavour, as quickly as possible, to have your dresses altered; and Lady Selina Mellingcourt, who is reckoned the best-dressed woman in London, will, I am sure, if you ask her, allow her *femme de chambre* to give yours the patterns of her attire, that you may be enabled to appear a little more like other women, and not draw ridicule on me, as well as on yourself, by appearing in the fashion of three or four seasons ago."

And this was the first meeting alone between my father and mother after so long an absence; and thus it was that he rewarded the patience with which his coldness

and neglect had been borne, and the gentleness with which his wishes, however contrary to her own, had ever been met and complied with by his mild and amiable wife.

My mother suppressed a deep sigh as she told her faithful servant that it was necessary that some of her apparel should be modernized as speedily as possible, as Mr. Meredith was displeased at her not having attended to the present fashion. "I will ask Lady Selina Mellingcourt to permit her maid to shew you some of her dresses," continued my mother, "that mine may be altered to a similar form." At that moment she caught the countenance of Mrs. Lockly reflected in the mirror, before which she was arranging her hair, and its expression of dissatisfaction surprised her. "I wish I had adopted your advice, Lockly," said my mother, kindly, "and had had some new dresses sent down from London, Mr. Meredith would have then been satisfied."

A sigh was the only notice taken of this remark; and my mother, looking again in the glass, saw that her attendant's eyes were filled with tears, which she was brushing away with the back of her hand, as if anxious to conceal them.

When the party assembled in the library before dinner, the extreme elegance of the toilette of Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley struck my mother with admiration. Free from a particle of envy, she gazed with pleasure at the becoming and well-fitting robes of both ladies; and then glancing at her own, admitted that her husband had reason to find fault with it. The males of the party had eyes only for the beauty of my mother, which no dress could obscure; but the women could scarcely restrain their smiles when they noticed her toilette, which now, in the full glare of a well-lighted apartment, offered a striking and not favourable contrast to

their own. Lady Selina Mellingcourt glanced from my mother to my father, with an expression of irony on her countenance, that revealed what was passing in her mind; and he looked at his wife with such sternness and dislike, that she, who happened at the moment to catch his glance, became as pale as marble. Seated between both his lady-guests at dinner, my father endeavoured to manifest an equal attention to each; but even a total stranger might have observed that the looks often interchanged between him and Lady Selina denoted an intelligence and intimacy of no common order. Lords Algernon, Montagu, and Henry Buttevant, devoted themselves exclusively to their fair hostess; and their lively conversation and piquant anecdotes, often, during the repast, withdrew her from the painful reflections which, in spite of her endeavours to chase them away, would intrude themselves, as she marked the total indifference

of her husband's manner towards herself, and compared it with the desire to please evinced by him to the ladies on each side of him. Nor did the more than ordinary attention paid by my father to Mr. Mellingcourt escape my mother's notice. The most dainty dishes and choicest wines were pressed on that gentleman.

“ Let me recommend these *filets de volaille* to you, the truffles are excellent;” or, “ Pray give me your opinion of this claret, I think you will like it,” would the host say to Mellingcourt, while he allowed his other guests to take care of themselves, an attention which was hardly noticed by him to whom it was directed, but who continued to eat voraciously the good things set before him, and to wash them down with frequent bumpers of wine. Not unseldom did Lady Selina glance at her husband, as, with eyes intently fixed on his plate, he devoured its contents; but he was

too busily engaged to notice her. And then she would look at my father, and turn up her eyes in horror at the gluttony of her *caro-sposo*. These appeals for sympathy never failed to be met with the kindest looks by her admirer, and were noticed by every species of ridicule consistent with *bienséance* by Mrs. Audley, who expressed her regret that poor Mr. Mellingcourt had lost his appetite, or else was dissatisfied with Mr. Spencer Meredith's cook.

The conversation having turned on the recent death of a man of very large fortune, Mellingcourt inquired what was the supposed extent of his wealth. Some one having named it, he said, "I think nothing of that—why, the income of my funded property amounts to double that sum." And he looked around, that he might note the effect produced by this declaration on others. Alas for poor human nature! nearly every

person at the table, except the hostess, assumed an air of greater respect towards him, the very servants glancing at him with a kind of awe. My mother, surprised and disgusted at this vulgar boasting, felt less than ever disposed to like the woman who could have married such a man, and whose presence imposed so little restraint on his behaviour.

When the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room, Lady Selina, with one of her most insinuating smiles, offered my mother the patterns of her dresses, and added, that her *femme de chambre* would readily assist in altering those of Mrs. Spencer Meredith. As this favour had not been solicited, nor even hinted at by my mother, she felt a painful emotion at Lady Selina thus inadvertently exposing the terms of familiarity on which she must be with my father, when he could speak to her of the dress of his wife, and solicit her interference on the

subject. She nevertheless thanked Lady Selina, and accepted the offer, saying, that leading so retired a life in the country, she had neglected to pay as much attention to the fashion of her *toilette* as she ought to have done, and gracefully acknowledged that her obsolete dress required the indulgence of those who, unlike herself, had spent the last season in London.

“But do you never see any of your female neighbours who could have enlightened you on a subject so important to all women as the fashions must ever be?” said Mrs. Audley.

“Occasionally,” replied my mother. “Lady Ravenshaw, Lady Emily Mordaunt, and Mrs. Compton Davenport, are the only neighbours within a visiting distance. They are very kind, but know that I care so little about the mode, that they let me adhere to that which was universal some five or six years ago, when I was dis-

posed to take a greater interest in the subject."

"So that disagreeable woman, Lady Ravenshaw, visits here!" said Lady Selina Mellingcourt, who having heard of the influence that personage had formerly exercised over my father, indulged in no peculiar good-will towards her.

"I do not think her nearly so disagreeable as Lady Emily Mordaunt," observed Mrs. Audley, "for she is so *pretentieuse*, and gives herself such airs, that she is my favourite aversion."

"Does not Lady Ravenshaw bore you to death, when she comes here?" asked Lady Selina, addressing my mother.

"I have received so much kindness from her," was the reply, "that it would be ungrateful in me to dislike her."

"I thought it was Mr. Spencer Meredith who had been so much indebted to her for kindness," observed Mrs. Audley, with a

malicious smile, which brought a blush to the cheek of Lady Selina, who felt that this innuendo revealed the cause of *her* peculiar distaste for Lady Ravenshaw, while my mother's purity of mind rendered her wholly impervious to the shaft aimed by Mrs. Audley.

“ I trust that I may not meet Lady Ravenshaw,” said Lady Selina; “ for, never on friendly terms, we have latterly left off bowing, and a rencounter would consequently be anything but agreeable under such circumstances.”

“ And Lady Emily Mordaunt, who looks like a flower that faded from want of watering,—is she as coquettish in the country as in London?” asked Mrs. Audley.

“ I never knew that she was coquettish anywhere,” replied my mother; “ and have ever found her very goodnatured and unaffected.”

“ It is you, my dear madam,” said Lady

Selina, "who are so goodnatured yourself, that you judge too favourably of others;" and, suppressing a yawn, she looked at Mrs. Audley with such *ennui* and weariness pictured in her face, that my mother, who caught a view of it, became more than ever sensible how ineffectual would be her efforts to amuse two women with whom she had not a thought or feeling in common, and who were only lively in the society of men.

She felt as much relieved as the other two ladies when the gentlemen came to coffee. The champagne had evidently exhilarated their spirits, and Lord Henry Buttevant, having taken a seat beside Mrs. Audley, commenced a flirtation with her that surprised no one in the circle except the hostess, while my father devoted his attention wholly to Lady Selina Mellingcourt. Cards were introduced; a whist-table was established; those who did not play betted; and the stakes were so high,

that my mother no longer wondered at the all-absorbing interest which the whist-players devoted to the game. Mr. Mellingcourt bore not his reverses at the card-table with that equanimity generally exhibited by well-bred men, at least in the presence of women, nor concealed his exultation when fortune favoured him. The rudeness of his recriminations whenever his partner committed an error in playing, shocked his hostess, and his unchecked ill-breeding towards his wife disgusted her.

“ You are surprised, I see,” said Lord Algernon Montagu to my mother, whose expressive countenance he had been watching for a considerable time. “ What a man that Mellingcourt is, or rather, what an animal. And yet he is tolerated in society ! Can a stronger proof be given of the power of wealth ? Naturally underbred and ill-tempered, I really believe he takes a pleasure in displaying defects that the generality

of persons carefully conceal; and he imagines that his fortune privileges him to be rude."

"I suppose that a generous expenditure, and more than an ordinarily profuse hospitality, has acquired him the indulgence he meets with," said my mother.

"By no means!" answered Lord Algernon. "His parsimonious habits extend to positive meanness. He never gives a dinner, although he accepts with avidity all those he is invited to partake; and openly laughs at what he calls the folly of his Amphytrions, in lavishing large sums of money in entertaining their acquaintances. The possession of wealth is, in his opinion, the best claim to distinction; and those deficient in it, whatever may be their merit, he looks upon as not being entitled to respect. In short, he is an odious person; but you will, I fear, set me down as a *mauvaise langue*, for thus revealing what all London is *au fait* of, so I must redeem my character by not telling

you all the evil that might be told of Mr. Mellingcourt. Of his good qualities, only one has been as yet discovered—namely, his perfect freedom from jealousy; for though Lady Selina has frequently put it to the proof, he has never evinced a single symptom of having even the slightest acquaintance with ‘the green-eyed monster.’”

My mother having looked grave at this implied censure of a woman who was a guest at her house, Lord Algernon Montagu deprecated her displeasure by given her amusing sketches of London society; which, having tact enough to see that she disliked scandal and sarcasm, he rendered inoffensive, though entertaining.

While this conversation was going on, my mother occasionally found the eyes of Lady Selina directed towards her, and then turned to my father, as if to call his attention to her. He looked displeased, while Lady Selina smiled, and again, from time to time,

renewed her glances towards my mother. At length, the *pendule* struck twelve, and seeing that the whist-players were cutting for partners for another rubber, my mother walked to the table, and ventured to remind my father, in a low voice, that the Sabbath had commenced.

“ The what ? ” asked he.

“ The Sabbath ! ” repeated his wife, meekly.

“ And what has that to do with our amusing ourselves ? ” demanded he, rudely.

“ I thought, ” replied my mother, “ that you had forgotten the hour. ”

“ There are some people who never allow one to forget the flight of time, ” said he, bitterly ; “ but I can’t see any harm in our continuing our whist. ”

“ You will much oblige me by giving it over, ” urged my mother, mildly ; and the sandwich-tray and refreshments being at that moment brought in, the party rose

from the table, exchanging significant looks at each other; while my father muttered something about his dislike to Methodists.

“*Apropos* of the Sabbath,” said Lady Selina Mellingcourt. “At what hour do you go to church, Mrs. Meredith?”

“At ten, precisely,” was the answer; and my mother caught her husband making a sign to Lady Selina indicative of his disapproval of her going to church. A pang shot through her breast as she observed it, for many a time, during the courting-days of my father and herself, had he directed similar signs to her whenever he wished her to decline any proposed excursion or project of her father’s; and now, that fond parent in his grave, and she neglected by him so loved, these looks were directed to another, and that other—a wife!

“You surely do not mean to act the pious, and go to church to-morrow?” said Mrs. Audley to Lady Selina.

“Certainly, I mean to go,” replied Lady Selina.

“Well, I am not so good,” observed Mrs. Audley, “for early rising always disagrees so much with me, that I should be ill for the day were I to get up at such an hour; so you must pray for me, ladies.”

“As they will pray for all sinners, *you* will be included, *ma chère amie*,” said Mr. Audley, laughing at what he considered to be his own wit.

“I understand we are to have a charity sermon to-morrow,” observed Lord Algernon Montagu, “and of course Mellingcourt will attend, in order to make his offering.”

“No, I leave you to do that,” replied Mellingcourt, “as younger brothers are always generous, having more money than they require for their own wants.”

A few minutes after my mother had entered her dressing-room, my father presented himself there, and having desired

her attendant Lockly to withdraw, he no sooner found himself *tête-à-tête* with his wife, than he expressed to her, with no little acerbity, his surprise and disapprobation at her interrupting his whist-party, and in *his* house attempting to dictate.

“ You are at perfect liberty,” said he, “ to follow your own illiberal and contracted notions relative to religious practices, but I desire that you will not attempt to interfere with those of my friends, nor render my house disagreeable to them.”

So saying, he quitted the room, leaving my mother to weep in uncontrollable anguish at this new proof of his unkindness—an unkindness which neither her submission nor gentleness could subdue.

And this was the man to wed with whom she had wrung the reluctantly given consent of her fond father—a consent only accorded when he believed that her health, if not her life, depended on the measure; and she had

abandoned that fond father, had allowed him to pass his latter days in solitude, and to die alone. How truly, bitterly, had the judgment pronounced by him on the object on whom she had placed her affections been verified! With what a gushing tenderness did the recollection of that lost parent's indulgent and never-failing kindness now recur to her mind, when smarting under the painful sense of the more than indifference of *him* for whom she had quitted the happy home of her childhood and the fond arms of her father! How short-lived had been the happiness for which she had sacrificed so much! And now, save her child, what comfort was left to her? Never does the heart of woman turn with such tenderness to the loved and lost—those dear ones, from whom she had experienced only indulgence and affection, as when disappointed in the *living*, those in whom she had garnered up her heart; she looks in vain for consolation

on earth. Then does the sigh heave her agonized heart, and fast-falling tears dim her weary eyes, until, overpowered by the depth and bitterness of her emotions, she feels that to Heaven alone must she address herself for aid to support her trials, and she sinks on her knees to offer up her prayers to that throne of mercy where the wretched ever find relief.

Long and fervently did my mother supplicate the Almighty that night; and when she laid her head on her pillow, her spirit was calmed, and her tears dried.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next morning, Lockly informed her that breakfast was ordered to be served at twelve o'clock, but that Lord Algernon Montagu wished to have his in time to attend the church service.

“And Lady Selina Mellingcourt will also breakfast with me,” said my mother, “for she will accompany me to church; so order breakfast for three.”

When my mother descended to the eating-room, she found Lord Algernon alone there; and in a few minutes after, a message was

delivered to her, stating that Lady Selina Mellingcourt had slept so ill, and had so bad a head-ache, that she could not have the pleasure of accompanying Mrs. Spencer Meredith to church.

“I could have sworn that this would happen,” said Lord Algernon Montagu. “Lady Selina has the most accommodating head-aches in the world, for they come and go at her command.”

My mother felt the awkwardness of a *tête-à-tête* breakfast with a person she had never seen before the previous day; and the freedom with which he was disposed to comment on Lady Selina Mellingcourt increased her embarrassment. The repast over, the carriage was announced to be at the door; and my mother retired to put on her cloak and bonnet. When she descended, she found Lord Algernon Montagu waiting in the vestibule, to hand her into her carriage.

“I must beg permission to take a seat,”

said he; and suiting the action to the word, he entered the carriage, which was driven from the door, he appearing perfectly at his ease, while my mother felt painfully embarrassed at the new and uncomfortable position of being thus familiarized with a stranger, and at having to enter a crowded church with him.

“ I fear that I am an unwelcome intruder,” said Lord Algernon Montagu, half offended at the coldness and reserve of my mother’s manner.

“ I could have wished,” replied she, “ that Mr. Spencer Meredith had accompanied us, for it pains me that he should neglect attending divine worship.”

“ It would, at all events, have the merit of novelty, and that is something,” observed Lord Algernon; “ for I never knew him to enter a church during the last two shooting seasons that we have passed together, although the parish church was only a quarter

of a mile from the house he rented in Norfolk."

A deep sigh was the only notice taken by my mother of this insidious speech, and again her companion renewed his comments.

"I was very much amused last evening," said he, "when I heard Lady Selina Mellicourt propose to accompany you to church, and still more so when I saw Meredith making signals to convey to her his disapproval of such a measure, when I dare be sworn she had not the slightest intention of going. Mrs. Audley, and Buttevant, are more frank, for they openly profess their dislike to going to church."

"I hope they will not do so to me," said my mother, "for I consider such frankness, as you are pleased to term it, extremely offensive."

The carriage having at that moment reached the porch of the church, further remarks were prevented; and as my mother

entered it, all eyes being directed to her, she felt her cheeks glow at being seen *tête-à-tête* with a stranger, instead of being accompanied by her husband, with whose return home the whole of the neighbourhood was acquainted. She thought—but perhaps it might be only fancy—that some of the congregation examined her and Lord Algernon Montagu with a curiosity in which no small portion of impertinence was mingled; but a sense of what was due to the sacred temple in which she found herself, checked these wandering thoughts, and restored her to that deep and heartfelt devotion that never failed to animate her breast when in the house of God.

The eyeglass of Lord Algernon Montagu was frequently raised during the service, to which he appeared to shew very little attention. He looked around as if in a theatre, instead of a place of divine worship; and having noticed two or three pretty girls in

the adjacent pews, regarded them more frequently than the prayer-book which the pew-opener had placed on the desk before him. The sermon referred so particularly to the sinfulness of those who neglect attendance at divine worship, and who think only of the pleasures and vain enjoyments of the world, that my mother could not help thinking that it had been selected by Mr. Aubrey, the good rector, with the intention of producing some effect on the mind of her husband. The discourse was an eloquent one, and appealed powerfully to the feelings, for the preacher was deeply impressed with the importance of his subject. He drew a forcible picture of the state of that man who, passing his time in sinful pleasures, saw the approach of death with terror and dismay, and dared not trust in the efficacy of a deathbed repentance. Many persons looked towards the pew in which my mother was seated during the sermon, and the con-

sciousness that they considered several portions of it applicable to her husband, pained and mortified her. The irreverent conduct of her companion, too, was very annoying, and she heartily wished him away, being convinced that no salutary change would be effected by his attendance at divine worship, while he conducted himself so improperly as he was then doing.

The service over, Lady Ravenshaw, Lady Emily Mordaunt, and Mrs. Compton Davenport, drew up in the porch of the church, to await my mother's approach. The first salutations over, Lord Algernon Montagu, who was an old acquaintance of both the first-mentioned ladies, was greeted with expressions of mingled surprise and pleasure by them.

“Who could have dreamed of seeing you here?” said Lady Ravenshaw.

“I could not believe my eyes when I saw

you enter the church," observed Lady Emily Mordaunt.

"Were you ever before at church, since you left college?" asked Lady Ravenshaw.

"No, I'll answer for him," replied Lady Emily. "He has a fair excuse, however, for coming here," continued she, "for even an infidel would be delighted to accompany Mrs. Spencer Meredith!"

"And so, I hear, you have a large party," said Lady Ravenshaw, "and that Lady Selina Mellingcourt and her husband are among the number. Well, I confess *that did* surprise me. And how do *you* like this lady, my dear Mrs. Spencer Meredith?"

"I have seen so little of her, that it would be difficult to pronounce any opinion on so short an acquaintance," replied my mother. "She only arrived yesterday evening."

"How long does she intend to remain?" demanded Lady Ravenshaw.

“ I have not the least notion,” was the answer.

“ Really, my dear friend, it is quite preposterous that you should permit yourself to be treated in such a manner. Two women, of whom you know nothing, are brought down to your house without any invitation *from* you, and yet are domiciled *with* you, *sans ceremonie*. Had these ladies possessed one spark of delicacy or good breeding, they would not, under any circumstances, and particularly under *existing* ones”—and Lady Ravenshaw laid a peculiar stress on the word—“ have intruded themselves on you. The world will make very severe animadversions on *your* countenancing them, I can assure you; and it will be in vain that your friends, Lady Emily Mordaunt, Mrs. Compton Davenport, and myself, shall assert your ignorance of the reputations of your female visitors, and of the *circumstance* that renders one of

them, at least, a *peculiarly* unfit guest for you."

"Yes," interrupted Lady Emily Mordaunt, "you really ought not to submit to this insult on the part of your husband; I know it will injure you in the eyes of the world, and so thinks Mrs. Compton Davenport."

"I must acknowledge," said that lady, "that my opinion perfectly coincides with that of Lady Ravenshaw and Lady Emily Mordaunt; but at the same time I must entreat you not to name *me* in any remonstrance you may be disposed to make to Mr. Spencer Meredith, for it might embroil my husband with him, which would be very disagreeable indeed, on account of the support he has always given Mr. Compton Davenport in his elections."

"*We* can't visit you while Lady Selina Mellingcourt is your guest," said Lady Ravenshaw. "You know how prudish Lord Ravenshaw is."

“And Mr. Mordaunt, too,” added Lady Emily.

“*I* may, through motives of policy, be compelled to make acquaintance with these ladies,” observed the wife of the M.P. for the county; “for Mr. Spencer Meredith would very probably resent any slight offered to them while in his house; and my husband would never forgive me if I offended his most powerful supporter in the county. Nevertheless, it is very disagreeable, my dear madam, to act against one’s conscience, as I shall certainly do, in making the acquaintance of Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley.”

“I am really at a loss to understand what all this means,” said my mother. “Are not Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley universally received in the best society?”

“I do not deny that they are,” replied Mrs. Compton Davenport; “but really, after what Lady Ravenshaw and Lady Emily

Mordaunt have told me of their conduct, I think they do not merit this toleration."

"And so *you* also would think," added Lady Ravenshaw, "if you knew what the world proclaims with regard to the friendship of Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mr. Spencer Meredith."

My mother's cheeks became suffused with blushes. Shame and indignation struggled for mastery in her breast, but the latter triumphing, she proudly informed her *soi-disant* friends, that she was sure Mr. Spencer Meredith would introduce no ladies to her that were not fit and proper acquaintances; and she requested that in future she might be spared from similar communications.

No sooner had she entered her carriage than Lord Algernon Montagu remarked how very amusing it was to hear two women, whose adventures had furnished such frequent topics to the Scandalous Chronicle as Lady Ravenshaw and Lady Emily Mordaunt

had done, betray so much severity towards persons accused of no deeper errors than their own. "But so it ever is," continued he; "those who are the most erring are always the first to attack others. People never can have said more about the *friendship* of Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Meredith than was said about his friendship with this same Lady Ravenshaw, whose prudery sits very awkwardly on her in the eyes of those who, like myself, are acquainted with her past proceedings. It is absurd that *she* should betray a jealousy towards Meredith, that you, his wife, have too much *savoir vivre* to exhibit. The young and beautiful, however, are seldom addicted to jealousy, and for an obvious reason—the facility afforded them by the possession of these attractions to make reprisals. And well do husbands who neglect youthful and handsome wives, to devote themselves to women in no way worthy to be compared with

them, deserve retaliation; and fortunate is he to whom devolves the happiness of assisting in perpetrating so just an act of vengeance. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Spencer Meredith?"

"The subject is one so unfit to meet the ears of a right-minded woman, that I am as much surprised that you should enter on it with me, Lord Algernon Montagu, as that you should ask my opinion."

The gravity with which my mother uttered this well-merited reproof silenced her companion for a few minutes; and when he was about to utter an apology, the carriage stopped at her door, and she was relieved from his presence. Shouts of laughter met her ears as she approached the breakfast-room, and when the servant had thrown open the door, she beheld Lady Selina Mellicourt and Mr. Audley engaged in playing battledore and shuttlecock, while the gentlemen of the party were betting largely on

the game, and vociferating their encouragement to the players. The entrance of my mother evidently produced a disagreeable effect on all present, but more especially on my father, who did not attempt to disguise his ill-humour at the interruption to the game.

“What!” said he, “returned already? Old Aubrey must have given you a much shorter sermon than he usually favours his congregation with, to enable you to be back so soon. And you too, I find, are turned religious,” continued he, addressing himself to Lord Algernon Montagu, with a satirical smile, shared by Lady Selina Mellingcourt, who assured my mother, that to *her* must be attributed the merit of Lord Algernon’s conversion.

“Yet knowing Montagu as we do,” said Lord Henry Buttevant, “*church* is the last place to which I should expect him to lead, or be led by, a lady.”

This stupid remark caused a laugh from the group, and Lord Algernon begged them to remember that it was only *single* ladies that he objected to conduct to church, but that he had great pleasure in accompanying married ones.

“ I have been forming a friendship with your son this morning,” said Lady Selina Mellingcourt, addressing my mother. “ He is a charming boy, and I have been making him better acquainted with his father.”

“ It will require all your amiability to tame down the little savage!” observed my father, “ for I never saw so spoiled a child.”

At this moment, I rushed into the room, and throwing my arms around my mother’s neck, nearly stifled her with my kisses.

“ You see he can be very loving when he likes to be so,” said Mr. Mellingcourt. “ This morning Lady Selina coaxed him with sugarplums for half-an-hour before he would consent to kiss her.”

“An irrefragable proof of his bad taste!” remarked my father.

“Why did you dislike kissing this pretty lady?” asked Lord Algernon.

“She is *not* a pretty lady,” answered I; “it is mamma who is pretty.”

Some of the party laughed aloud at my *naïveté*, but my father bit his lip in anger; and though Lady Selina smiled, the increased colour in her cheeks announced that she did not much relish my frankness.

“You are a stupid dolt!” said my father, “for every one thinks this lady”—pointing to Lady Selina—“pretty, and every one would be glad to have the good fortune offered to you.”

“*You* may kiss her,” answered I, “as much as you please, and she wont be angry.”

The lady’s cheek grew crimson, her friend Mrs. Audley tittered, and the men, with the exception of Mr. Mellingcourt and my father, laughed outright.

“Leave the room, you stupid boy!” said the latter, “and do not come among us again unless you are sent for.”

I ran to my mother and clung to her side, while I exclaimed—“Indeed, mamma, I have not been naughty! but I did not want to kiss that lady whom papa kissed.”

“Send him away, the troublesome little story-teller!” said my father, his face flushed with anger, and that of Lady Selina scarcely less crimsoned.

My mother rose, and taking me by the hand, led me from the room; but ere she could reach the door, I again assured her “I did not tell a story, and that papa kissed the lady.” I felt my mother’s hand tremble as she held mine, and I remarked that she grew very pale.

“Don’t be vexed, dear mamma!” said I, “and I will be so good; but I don’t know what I have done to make papa angry. Is it naughty to refuse kissing ladies? or is it wicked to tell when papa kisses them?”

My mother seemed at a loss what to say ; but, after a moment's hesitation, she pressed me to her heart, and told me never to repeat what I saw unless papa or mamma asked me.

Lady Selina Mellingcourt evinced considerable embarrassment during the remainder of the day ; her husband appeared sullen ; and my father displayed a more than ordinary degree of sternness, as if to awe and deter my mother from recurring to my awkward disclosure. The rest of the Sabbath was passed as none had hitherto been beneath that roof. The whole party played at billiards before they rode out, and returned not until an hour after the one named for dinner. When the ladies left the dining-room, Mrs. Audley sat down to the pianoforte and sang *barcaroles*, while Lady Selina Mellingcourt kept up, with evident effort, a desultory conversation with my mother, often interrupted by half-suppressed yawns and other symptoms of *ennui*.

On the Sabbath evening my mother had been, during the absence of my father, accustomed to assemble her small household in the dining-room, and to read the evening service and a short sermon to them. To continue this custom would, she now felt, be the cause of an angry discussion with my father, and she consequently did not attempt it; but when making this sacrifice in order to avoid his sarcastic reproofs, she was not prepared to see him, when tea had been removed, order cards. She cast an imploring look at him, but he met it only by a stern frown. She then approached him, and, in a low tone of voice, entreated that he would not play on the Sabbath; but this appeal only served to excite his wrath, and petulantly telling her that he would do as he pleased in his own house, he invited his guests to cut for partners.

Lord Algernon Montagu drew a chair near his hostess, and in his most insinuating

tone, told her that as *she* disapproved cards he had declined playing. "You see I am not incorrigible," said he; "and if *you* would but encourage my religious aspirations, you might bring back a lost sheep to the fold."

My mother maintained an air of reserve and coldness in the hope of checking the tone of familiarity this flippant young man assumed towards her; and turning away from him, beheld significant smiles exchanged between Lady Selina Mellingcourt and my father. She was half tempted to leave the room, that her presence might no longer sanction the desecration of the Sabbath; but a fear of exciting still more the anger of her husband, and by so doing rendering him more reckless than ever, deterred her. Although sitting at a distance from the card-table, she was made aware that large stakes were won and lost; angry exclamations and recriminations were ut-

tered by the losers; and she trembled to hear oaths pronounced, which, if no sense of religion or propriety checked, the presence of women ought to have prevented. This breach of decency convinced her more than all the assertions of her female neighbours in the morning; and the insinuations of Lord Algernon Montagu, that Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley had lost all right to the respect or consideration of the men with whom they were engaged at play, and the perfect *sang froid* with which they heard the curses, loud and deep, left no doubt, if, indeed, a doubt could have existed in her mind, that they were habituated to them. That her husband could thus insult her by bringing beneath the roof where she was content to live in seclusion with her child, women so lost to all sense of delicacy and propriety as to sanction such language—nay, not only to sanction, but to encourage by laughing at what

should have shocked them, inflicted a deep pang on her heart. While thus absorbed in painful reflections, she was unconscious that the eyes of Lord Algernon Montagu were fixed on her face with an expression of such undisguised admiration as to have drawn the attention of both the ladies, who, though engaged at the card-table, occasionally found time to watch the movements of her companion and herself.

“What would I not give to know the subject that has so deeply occupied your thoughts during the last half hour, that you have neither heard when spoken to, nor opened your lips,” said Lord Algernon Montagu. “Judging by the gravity of your looks, I should pronounce that your reflections were of a sombre nature; and yet so young, so fair, and gifted with that great essential to happiness, wealth, I cannot divine what cause of chagrin you can have.”

“Gravity does not always indicate cha-

grin," replied my mother. "But pray oblige me, Lord Algernon Montagu, by selecting any other subject of conversation save myself; for there is none you could choose that would not be more agreeable to me."

"But if *you* happen to be the only one I *can* think of, or speak of, what is to be done?" asked Lord Algernon, endeavouring to throw into his countenance as much tenderness as it could assume.

"Then I must decline conversing with you," replied my mother, coldly, and rising from her chair, she moved towards the card-table.

"Are you disposed to risk a few pounds on the rubber?" asked Mrs. Audley.

"I never bet, or play at cards," answered my mother.

"Then you have a great loss," observed Lady Selina Mellinccourt, "for cards offer the most delightful excitement to break the tiresome monotony of life."

"I am sure," added Mrs. Audley, "that more than half the women I know could not support existence without cards; but this you will discover when you have lived a few seasons in London."

"You have revoked, Meredith," said Lord Henry Buttevant, "which gives me the game. Look over the tricks, and you will see I am right."

"Yes," said my father, after having turned over the cards, "you are right, Buttevant, I have certainly revoked, but that was wholly owing to Mrs. Meredith's talking and confusing my memory. Before *you* came near the table," said my father, looking angrily at his wife, "I was winning every thing; but no sooner did you interrupt me, than I forgot my game, and committed this egregious error, by which I lose two hundred to you, Buttevant."

"Why, Mrs. Meredith hardly opened her lips," said Mr. Mellingcourt. "It was Mrs.

Audley and Lady Selina that kept talking.”

“It’s confoundedly annoying,” resumed my father, not noticing Mr. Mellingcourt’s exculpation of my mother, “when we were game and game, and that I had four by honours, and the odd trick, that I should lose all by Mrs. Meredith’s coming here and interrupting our play. I wish she had stayed at the other end of the room, and then this could not have happened.”

My mother grew pale, and her lips trembled as she attempted to speak. She keenly felt this open exhibition of dislike on the part of her husband—for to dislike alone could she attribute his unjust accusation of her interrupting his play,—as she felt certain that he was aware that it was not she, but the other two ladies, who had diverted his attention from his game. She felt displeased at observing Lord Algernon Montagu’s eyes fixed on her with an ex-

pression of deep interest and pity, and saw Lady Selina Mellingcourt exchange glances with my father, as if directing his attention to this exhibition of Lord Algernon's sympathy.

The whist-party did not break up until a late hour. Mr. Mellingcourt congratulated himself on having won a considerable sum; and my father displayed an irritability that denoted he had no reason for self-gratulation. It was a relief to my mother that he did not, as on the previous night, enter her dressing-room, for she dreaded, fatigued and nervous as she felt, being exposed to another lecture, in the ill-humour in which he then was.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE dressing for breakfast next morning, her faithful attendant, Lockly, betrayed various symptoms of agitation, and more than once cleared her throat as if to prepare for speaking.

“What is the matter, my good Lockly?” asked her gentle mistress. “You look discomposed.”

“I really feel so, madam; and yet I do not know whether or not I ought to trouble you on the subject.”

“If I can be of use to you, Lockly, do

not hesitate to reveal the cause of your uneasiness."

"I now wish, madam, that I had not touched on it, for, on reflection, I fear you cannot remedy what I have to complain of; and it is wrong of me to annoy you by repeating it."

"As you will, Lockly; but you know I have too great a regard for you not to take a lively interest in all that concerns you."

"I *do* know it, madam, and most grateful do I feel for your great kindness. The truth is, madam, that short as the period has been since my master and his company have arrived here, the house has been turned topsy-turvy by the ladies' maids and valets, and the new servants, playing cards, singing, and speaking evil on the Sabbath. Their impudence, too, is beyond all belief and bearing. Why, would you credit it, madam? these two French women had the

audacity to criticise your dress—nay, more, (pardon me for the repetition,) *to ridicule* it. They said, their ladies had told them that your dress was that worn years and years ago; and that you looked like a heroine in an old novel, just rescued from some dungeon where you had been long shut up by a cruel husband.”

“ Oh! if that be all, my good Lockly, pray don't let it vex you. My dresses *have* grown dreadfully old-fashioned, it is true; and you were quite right when you wished me to have some new ones.”

“ But they did not confine themselves to remarks on your dress alone, madam,” resumed Lockly, positively sobbing with mingled feelings of tenderness for her gentle mistress and anger for her detractors; “ they said it was no wonder my master stayed away so long and seemed ashamed——”

“ Tell me no more, my good Lockly,” said my mother, kindly, but firmly; “ it is

not right that I should hear the conversation of the steward's room."

"Ah! madam, it is not right that you should be forced to keep company with ladies who, if only half what their servants say of them be true, are no fit companions for any lady of virtue and good conduct; and to think that *you*, madam, who are an—yes," sobbed Lockly, "a *real*, perfect angel, if there ever was one on earth, should be——"

"Pray be calm, my poor Lockly," said my mother, pouring out a glass of water, and making her attendant, who was now grown hysterical, drink a portion of it.

"You must not, indeed you must not, repeat, nor, if possible, think of, the conversation of these people."

"But to be obliged to listen to their wickedness, and to see them romping in the most improper way with the valets, oh! madam, it is more than I can stand."

“ Then you must take shelter in your own room, Lockly, where, with a good book, you can pass your time more profitably.”

“ And so I will, madam ; and I beg your pardon for troubling you. I ought not—I now feel that I ought not—to have pestered you with all this ; but it sha’nt happen again, that it sha’nt,” said Lockly, wiping her eyes, and loving her mistress better than ever, as she noticed the paleness of her face, and rightly judged that it proceeded from the pain inflicted on her by her own ill-judged complaint. “ Yes,” thought Lockly to herself, “ my good and gentle lady knows more than I thought, and *she* can bear it with patience ; while I, like an unfeeling fool, must go to add to her affliction by repeating their bad conduct, which she, poor lady, has no power of preventing.”

The late breakfast was hardly over, when the carriage of Mrs. Compton Davenport

drove to the door. My father looked pleased when that lady was announced, although, under different circumstances, he would have considered her visit a disagreeable interruption. He asked Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley to accompany my mother to the reception-room, and attended them himself, that he might mark the manner of Mrs. Compton Davenport towards them, inwardly determining that unless it was as polite and attentive as could be desired, her husband should not have his support at the next election. He had, however, no reason to be dissatisfied with his fair neighbour, for no sooner had she poured forth a profusion of civil speeches to my mother, and expressions of pleasure at his return, than she requested to have the honour of being presented to Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley, whose acquaintance she professed to have long desired an opportunity of forming.

When the ceremony of introduction was gone through, she addressed both ladies in a strain of adulation, which, notwithstanding that my mother was aware of the selfish motive for it, surprised and disgusted her. The whole party were warmly pressed to name a day to dine at Compton Park. "And now, my dear Mrs. Meredith," added its mistress, "I trust that as Mr. Spencer Meredith is returned, you will no longer be such a recluse, and that we shall have the happiness of seeing you frequently among us. You will hardly believe," continued she, addressing herself to my father, "that Mrs. Meredith has resisted the often-tried entreaties of all her neighbours to accept their hospitalities during your absence, and that she has not once dined with any of us."

"She has deprived herself of much gratification," said my father, bowing to Mrs. Compton Davenport, "and evinced any-

thing but good taste in avoiding such agreeable society."

Seeing that the wife of the county member was neither young nor good-looking, and was, moreover, disposed to be very civil to them, both Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley received her advances very graciously, and when she had departed, joined with their host in praising her apparent good nature and good humour. Lord Algernon Montagu could not repress a smile, which resembled a sneer, as he listened to these unmerited commendations.

"May I inquire your opinion of this good-natured lady?" said he to my mother. "She did not," continued he, "impress *me* with a very favourable notion of her good nature when we met her at church, on Sunday last, nor of her sincerity to-day."

Lady Selina Mellingcourt looked suspiciously towards my mother, and my father, somewhat angrily, observed, that *he*, who

had known Mrs. Compton Davenport for many years, had never the least cause to call in question either her good nature or sincerity.

The party proposed riding out to see an interesting ruin in the neighbourhood; and my mother, glad to be released from the presence of two ladies whose society afforded her no pleasure, saw them retire to prepare for their ride with satisfaction.

They had been gone above an hour, when, as she sate in the library, engaged in the perusal of a favourite author, Lord Algernon Montagu entered the room. The expression of my mother's face denoted that she felt more surprise than pleasure at seeing him, and he, unmindful of the coldness of her reception of him, congratulated himself on the good fortune of being furnished with an excuse, by the lameness of his horse, for leaving his party, and returning to the house. My mother, desirous of avoiding a

tête-à-tête, rang the bell, and ordered that I might be sent to her; but, unfortunately, I had been taken out to walk half an hour previously, and, consequently, she found herself condemned to submit to the *gêne* of Lord Algernon Montagu's company.

"How delighted I am to find you!" said he, looking at her with affected sentiment. "What a relief to exchange the society of two such women as Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley for yours!"

"I beg that you will choose some other subject," replied my mother; "for I dislike compliments, and especially such as are paid at the expense of other women."

"You are so superior to *all* women, that it would be absurd to institute comparisons. Yes, loveliest of women, who can see without admiring, who can know without loving you?"

My mother arose, with the intention of leaving the room, but Lord Algernon, placing

himself between her and the door, attempted to seize her hand, and declared she should not go until she had heard him. My mother's pride and delicacy was deeply wounded by this insolence; her countenance betrayed an indignation for which he was not prepared; and, somewhat awed, he fell on his knees, and intreated pardon for revealing a passion the violence of which had hurried him into its avowal. He again snatched her hand, which she was struggling to release from his grasp, when the servant threw open the door, and I bounded into the room, rushing eagerly to embrace her. Lord Algernon Montagu hastily, and in much embarrassment, arose from his kneeling posture; while I asked whether he had been naughty, and had been demanding pardon. My mother took my hand, and left the room, greatly agitated by the unexpected scene that had taken place, and deeply mortified that a servant had been a witness

to it. Close to the door, she encountered the footman, who had caught Lord Algernon on his knees before her, and her cheeks became flushed as she marked the expression of curiosity so visible in his face, and conjectured the unworthy suspicions to which the conduct of Lord Algernon was so well calculated to give rise. Tears filled her eyes as she reflected on the position in which she found herself placed; and my caresses and innocent assurances that Lord Algernon was very sorry for being naughty, and would not be so any more, did not soothe her feelings.

She remained a prisoner in her own room until the party returned at a late hour; when my father, having entered her dressing-room, told her, with no little asperity of manner, that on future occasions it would be more prudent, as well as correct, for her to accompany the ladies in their rides or drives, than to remain at home alone, to

encourage Lord Algernon Montagu to return for the purpose of enjoying her society *tête-à-tête*."

"His attentions to you have already been so marked as to excite observation," continued he; "and though no one can accuse me of being addicted to jealousy, I confess that I have remarked with surprise the matter-of-course sort of air with which you receive them. What, for example, could be more extraordinary than your taking him to church alone in your carriage? Had this occurred in London, you would have furnished a topic of scandal for all the clubs and Sunday chronicles of slander."

"The fault was not mine," replied my mother. "I had no idea that I should be left in the awkward position of a *tête-à-tête* with a stranger on the Sabbath morning, or I should have breakfasted in my own room. Lady Selina Mellingcourt had offered to breakfast with me, and accompany me to

church; and it was not until I descended to the *salle à manger*, where I found Lord Algernon Montagu, that she sent her excuses for not fulfilling her promise. I knew not, without risking to incur the censure of rudeness, how to prevent Lord Algernon Montagu from accompanying me to church, although his presence was anything but agreeable to me."

"Then you should have remained at home, and if you must pray, have prayed in your own chamber."

"I have never, unless prevented by severe illness, omitted attending divine worship on the Sabbath-day."

"Spare me a homily on your religious notions," said my father, with a sneer; "learn, for it is high time you should, a little of *l'usage du monde*, of which you stand dreadfully in need, and which will enable you, without rudeness, to repel attentions too marked to be tacitly permitted

by any married woman who respects herself."

Thus saying, he quitted the room, leaving my poor mother to weep over this new proof of his injustice and unkindness.

CHAPTER XV.

THE next day, returning with my *gouvernante* from a walk, when the party were at luncheon, I escaped from her, and tapping at the window of the dining-room, shewed my face, rosy from exercise, and my curls agitated by the wind. The animation of my countenance attracted my father; he arose from the table, opened the window, and bade me enter. I presented the bunch of wild flowers, which I had gathered in my ramble, to my mother, as had always been my wont, and, grown less timid, ventured to

look around. My eye fixed on Lord Algernon Montagu, and I asked him whether he was still as naughty as he had been the day before. He looked embarrassed, and my mother blushed deeply as she endeavoured to direct my attention from him, by asking me some question about my walk; but Lady Selina Mellingcourt maliciously demanded of what naughtiness Lord Algernon had been guilty?

“ I don't know what he did,” answered I; “ but he knelt down and asked mamma's pardon on his knees, as I always do when I have been naughty; and mamma was very angry, and would not stay in the room with him.”

Lady Selina Mellingcourt looked slyly in my father's face; and he glanced angrily at my mother; while Lord Algernon Montagu, in much confusion, which he vainly strove to conceal, stammered something about his

having acted the naughty boy, and begged pardon for it, in play with me.

“No, no, you did not play with me,” said I; “for when I came into the room, you were on your knees before mamma.”

Some of the party laughed, others looked grave; but the expression of Lady Selina Mellingcourt's face, as she again regarded my father, was most malicious. My mother was so agitated, that I felt something was wrong, although I could not guess what it was. Thinking to soothe her, I asked her to forgive Lord Algernon, and promised that he would not be naughty any more. Then turning very gravely to the supposed delinquent, I informed him that he never must tell stories any more, for mamma did not like people who told untruths. This sage advice produced a laugh, in which it was evident that my father's attempt to join was not natural; but which Mr. Mellingcourt

greatly enjoyed, for he renewed it more than once, and beckoned me to his side, in order to elicit more particulars of what he considered to be so good a joke. He even ventured to make some ill-timed comments, well calculated to add to my father's ill humour, relative to the *espionage* of children, before the conclusion of which, I was dismissed from the room, conscious that I had said or done something that had displeased, but not aware of what it could be.

Afraid again to incur the reproof of her husband by staying at home, my mother determined to accompany the party on horseback, and retired to put on her riding-habit. She had only entered her dressing-room, when my father followed her, and angrily insisted on her explaining what I meant by saying that Lord Algernon Montagu had been on his knees to ask her pardon.

“ That gentleman,” answered she, “ for-

getful of what was due to your hospitality, and to my honour, had the bad taste and folly to make me an avowal of attachment, as insolent as it was unwelcome."

"Why did you not instantly inform me of this?" demanded he.

"Because," replied my mother, "I treated his impertinence in a way that will, I believe, prevent a repetition, and I thought my informing you of it might lead to something disagreeable."

"You expected, no doubt, that I should either blow out his brains, or give him a chance of performing the same pleasant operation upon me," observed my father, with a sneer. "All ladies, and particularly romantic ones, indulge in such fancies; *mais nous avons changés tout cela*. If a husband were to challenge every individual that makes a declaration of love to his wife, all those who have good-looking ones would have nothing else to do. A sensible man

leaves the care of his honour to his wife; and if she be not silly or stupid, she will know how to prevent avowals that prove little for her tact or address. Montagu's declaration to you convinces me that you are miserably deficient in dignity and knowledge of the world; and that his discovery of these facts encouraged the step he has taken. It is fortunate, indeed, that I did not take you to London, for your *gaucherie* and ignorance of what is due to yourself and me, would have exposed us both to general animadversion and ridicule. What! tears again? Why, there is no speaking to you without your weeping. You are a perfect Niobe; and above all things, I dislike women who are ready to shed tears on every occasion. Red eyes and noses spoil any face; and unless you wish to become as hideous as the parson's wife, you should guard against them."

My poor mother passed some time before

she could check her tears, notwithstanding the counsel of her husband, and the risk of red eyes and nose.

The painfulness of her position increased daily, and the consciousness that she had entirely lost the affection of him to whom her heart would still fain cling, became yet more deeply impressed on her mind. "So fondly, too, as he once loved me!" murmured she. "What have I done to destroy a passion so warm?" Many an unhappy woman has asked herself the same question, when doomed to experience indifference or unkindness from him who for a brief period had made her the idol of his worship; and many more will continue to suffer in bitterness of heart, while they bestow their affections on men of libertine pursuits and selfish dispositions, who, ever incapable of pure or lasting attachments, only find interest in the chase of beauty, and satiety in the possession.

Although my mother had tried every

application to remove the trace of tears, her eyes still bore evidence to their recent presence: and far from having the delicacy to avoid noticing, or at least of betraying their notice of this circumstance, Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley exchanged significant glances of intelligence when they had remarked the alteration in the face of her whose youth and beauty so much excited their envy and dislike. Never had my mother appeared to such disadvantage as on that occasion. Her *amazone*, the fashion of five years gone by, was as unlike those of the two London ladies as possible; and her hat, totally dissimilar from theirs, exceedingly disfigured the fair face it shaded. There is something inexplicable in the power of fashion; and the homage offered to it is not confined solely to the gentler sex. Fickle as Fortune herself is acknowledged to be, Fashion, equally so, is nearly as blind, and so despotic as to compel the adoption

of her arbitrary laws without reference to their fitness, to her slaves, commanding the tall and short, the fat and thin, to follow the same mode, however unsuitable it may be to their appearance; nay, so universally are the decrees of this despot submitted to, that the few who dare assert their independence of her dictates are looked upon as being absurd and eccentric; and however fair and beautiful they may happen to be, attract ridicule instead of admiration.

Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley could not suppress the laughter which my mother's *outré* appearance called forth, although they made successful efforts to explain it by attributing it to some other source; my father's vanity was wounded at seeing his wife an object of ridicule, but instead of letting his displeasure fall on those who displayed such ill breeding, he reserved it all for her, and vented it in angry looks and whispered reproaches. The gentlemen

of the equestrian party were well disposed to overlook the obsolescence of the *toilette* of my mother in the admiration excited by the lovely face and graceful figure which no dress could conceal nor unbecoming mode disfigure. Lord Algernon Montagu in particular fixed his eyes on her with such an expression of intense admiration as to embarrass and distress her when she became sensible that she entirely engrossed his attention. The worst horse in the stables of her husband was assigned to her; and, always a timid rider, she became still more alarmed in the course of a few minutes, when she discovered that her steed was not only addicted to stumbling, but was prone to start from one side of the road to the other on the least instigation. Each of the men, with the exception only of him who ought to have been the first, offered to exchange horses with my mother, while he expressed aloud, and in no courteous phrase,

his surprise at her alarm, which he insisted there was nothing to justify, as her horse was rather disposed to be sluggish than frisky.

A woman, however nervous, becomes less sensitive to fear when she observes that her safety is cared for, and, above all, by him she loves. His anxiety for her gives her courage by proving his tenderness; and with all the fond *abandon* peculiar to one beloved, she reposes her confidence in that tender watchfulness. But when the painful consciousness of neglect and unkindness is forced upon her, mental chagrin operates to increase personal apprehension; and she who finds herself uncared for by him on whom she counted, becomes a moral as well as a physical coward.

Such was the case with my mother. Every start or stumble of the animal she rode terrified her; and in proportion to her pusillanimity became the intrepidity of Lady Selina Mellingcourt and Mrs. Audley, and

consequently the ill humour of my father, who repeatedly and sarcastically demanded why she did not take example from those ladies, and not render herself ridiculous by her absurd fear. Lord Algernon Montagu kept close to her horse, requested to lead it, or to change her saddle to his own, and by gentleness and attention offered a striking contrast to the rudeness of her husband; but my mother, observing the glances of intelligence exchanged between the ladies, and the occasional sneer of my father, received Lord Algernon's assiduities so coldly as to discourage their continuance, although he still rode by her side. How forcibly and painfully did this ride remind her of those taken *tête-à-tête* with her husband during the brief days of happiness that followed their union; when, wholly engrossed by her, *he* was more easily alarmed for her safety than she, was. The very road they were now traversing had formerly been a favourite ride. Every turn of it recalled past ex-

pressions of tenderness—a tenderness then believed to be indestructible; but of which not a trace now remained, except in her memory, where it lived as if to render her sense of his present coldness and unkindness still more poignant.

Desirous to display her courage and horsemanship, Lady Selina Mellingcourt, *malgré* the counsel of my father, pushed her high-spirited steed into a gallop, when he, excited into ardour by the other horses, ran away, and was quickly out of sight. The rest of the party reined up their horses, lest a pursuit should only urge the speed of Lady Selina's; but my father boldly leaped his over a very high fence, and crossing a field as rapidly as possible, endeavoured to encounter Lady Selina, and arrest the flight of her horse.

“What a tremendous jump!” said Mr. Mellingcourt. “By Jove! I would not have taken it for a cool thousand!”

“ You certainly would not, or, at least, did not, to save your wife!” observed Lord Henry Buttevant.

“ Do not be alarmed, I entreat you!” said Lord Algernon Montagu, remarking the exceeding paleness of my mother’s face, as she anxiously followed with her eyes the fast receding figure of her husband, who, urging his horse to his utmost speed, in the next moment disappeared in the direction which that of Lady Selina Mellingcourt had taken. A fearful presentiment of evil oppressed her, and the agitation it occasioned, far from being attributed to the true cause—anxiety for the safety of her husband, and alarm for Lady Selina Mellingcourt,—was imagined by the heartless people who surrounded her to proceed solely from feelings of jealousy, excited by the evident *dévouement* of my father to that lady.

Lord Henry Buttevant, who had ridden to a hill at a little distance, which com-

manded a view of the route taken by Lady Selina, was now seen galloping off in that direction. Lord Algernon Montagu proposed that Mr. Mellingcourt and Mr. Audley should proceed after him, to render any assistance that might be required, while he remained with the two ladies; but my mother insisted on accompanying them, and though so agitated as to be hardly able to retain her seat, she advanced rapidly towards the desired point, and soon saw a group on the road, among which she quickly discerned my father in safety. The revulsion in her feelings occasioned a burst of tears, which not all her efforts could subdue, and their traces were visible on her pale cheeks, as she approached the group, consisting of Lady Selina Mellingcourt, Lord Henry Buttevant, and my father. Lady Selina had not yet recovered from the effect of her recent alarm; and my father, reckless of what the observers might be dis-

posed to think of his conduct, was lavishing on her every attention that tenderness could dictate. He had neither eyes nor ears for his wife, who, shocked by this open display of his affection for her rival, felt a sickness at heart that occasioned a sudden faintness. Lord Algernon Montagu observed it in time to prevent her falling from her horse, and while he supported her in his arms, sent off Mr. Audley to a neighbouring cottage in search of a glass of water for her.

“ In the name of wonder, what is the matter?” demanded my father, as his wife returned to consciousness.

“ Mrs. Meredith was so alarmed for your safety,” replied Lord Algernon Montagu, “ that she was nearly falling from her horse.”

“ She alarmed herself very needlessly,” was the answer. “ But some women think it necessary never to miss an opportunity of making a scene.”

“ Talking of scenes,” observed Mr. Mellingcourt, “ Lady Selina is famous for them. Why, she has destroyed all the pleasure of our ride by her *escapade*. Not that *I* was the least alarmed, for I knew well enough there was nothing likely to happen to her. Nevertheless, it is a bore to see other people frightened.”

“ If Lady Selina had not the most perfect seat imaginable, and the finest hand in the world, she would inevitably have been thrown,” said her admirer; “ for, although I pushed my horse to his utmost speed, I only just reached the turn of the road in time to stop hers; and had he proceeded further, the velocity of his pace must have exhausted her !”

“ Mr. Mellingcourt has so much presence of mind when others (and particularly his wife) are in danger, that he knows no fear !” remarked Lady Selina, with a sneer.

“ It were to be wished that others were

equally free from nervousness," observed my father, looking angrily towards my mother; "for nothing is, in my opinion, so tiresome as the exhibition of groundless alarm."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE party returned slowly from their ride, and found a new guest added to their circle in the person of Lord Thomas Mellicent, the son of an Irish marquis. The presence of this personage appeared to afford anything but satisfaction to the owner of the mansion, whose countenance assumed an expression of gloom the moment he beheld him. But not such was the effect produced on Lady Selina Mellingcourt, whose eyes sparkled with pleasure when she saw him.

“ You are doubtlessly surprised at my

visit," said Lord Thomas, addressing my father; "but happening to hear that you were here, and passing within twenty miles, I determined to cross over, and accept your old invitation, in case I ever passed within reach of your house. *Ainsi me voilà.*"

His host did not appear to remember ever having given this asserted invitation, nor did he receive Lord Thomas with any degree of cordiality; but that gentleman was not disposed to notice the coldness of his reception. Determined to establish himself as a guest,—for a few hours, at all events, and for a few days, or weeks, if he could accomplish the point of obtaining an invitation for a protracted stay,—he was not scrupulous as to the measure of politeness accorded to him. Putting on, therefore, a certain free-and-easy air peculiar to him, he made himself perfectly at home for the time being. At dinner, he managed to secure a place next Lady Selina Melling-

court; and although their host was placed at the other side of that lady, Lord Thomas contrived to occupy so much of her attention, that she could hardly find time to answer the *petits soins* of him, to whom, during the previous days, all her amiability had been directed. The gallantries of Lord Thomas were as undisguised as they were particular, and implied that he felt pretty sure of their being acceptable to her to whom they were paid. And, truth to say, although Lady Selina Mellingcourt would have wished that they were less engrossing on the present occasion,—for she dreaded exciting the jealousy of her host,—she nevertheless was not sorry to find Lord Thomas Mellicent as gallant and devoted as when, a few months before, his attention had aroused the *amour propre*, if not the tenderness, of her other admirer.

Lord Thomas seemed to be on very friendly terms with Mr. Mellingcourt, who,

evidently gratified by witnessing the uneasiness which his presence occasioned to their host, was more than usually communicative towards him.

“ I had a sort of presentiment that we should soon meet you, Mellicent,” said he; “ for when I saw a note directed to you the other day from Lady Selina, I guessed you would come.”

Lady Selina blushed, and looked greatly embarrassed; while my father darted a glance of anger at her, that denoted no less surprise than indignation.

“ What can you be thinking of, Mr. Mellingcourt,” said Lady Selina, recovering a little from her embarrassment; “ I certainly did not write to Lord Thomas Mellicent.”

“ What your motive for denying this fact can be I have yet to learn,” replied Mr. Mellingcourt; “ but that you *did* write admits not of a doubt; for perceiving a cover of yours addressed to your footman

in London, and having a little commission to give him, I opened the envelope to save postage, and saw a letter in your writing directed to Lord Thomas."

My father looked furious, Lady Selina deeply mortified, and Lord Thomas, triumphant, at this proof of the lady's preference, while Mr. Mellingcourt smiled maliciously as he remarked the evident discomfiture of his wife and his host. It was not unusual with this mean and unworthy man to avenge himself on his wife for any sarcasm or imagined slight on her part by discovering her secrets, and revealing them to the person she most wished should remain in ignorance of them; thus leaving the lover to punish the infidelities the husband had neither sufficient sense of morality nor honour to prevent or to avenge.

The whole party laboured under a visible constraint during the remainder of the evening. Lady Selina, fearful of arousing

to a still greater degree the but too evident displeasure of her host, refrained from giving the encouragement to the attentions of Lord Thomas Mellicent which it was plain he expected. Nevertheless, he took a seat by her, and so precluded her from having any explanation with her deeply-mortified and offended admirer, who, with frowning brows and compressed lips, sat watching her movements, while her contemptible husband remained in a corner, affecting to look over some prints, but really occupied in observing the annoyance of his wife and her admirers.

Cards were, as usual, introduced, but, contrary to the general custom, every one declined playing, under the plea of fatigue from their ride, and soon after twelve o'clock the party broke up and retired for the night.

In two hours afterwards, loud voices in the corridor awoke those who had sunk into

repose, and my mother, among the rest; having hastily enveloped herself in her *robe de chambre* and a shawl, she rushed towards the spot whence the sounds proceeded. There she found all the guests of the house assembled *en deshabelle*, while her husband, Lord Thomas Mellicent, and Mr. Mellingcourt, were engaged in a violent altercation, which Lady Selina Mellingcourt was vainly endeavouring to subdue by uttering declarations of her perfect innocence in the whole affair.

“Innocent or not innocent,” said her husband, “I require all present to testify that both these gentlemen,” pointing to his host and to Lord Thomas Mellicent, “have been detected in Lady Selina’s chamber; and ere long I shall have to summon you as witnesses to this fact before a court of justice.”

No sooner did Lady Selina’s *soi-disant* friend, Mrs. Audley, hear this sentence,

than she rapidly retreated, saying, "*O ciel, quelle idée!* To be brought before a court of justice; cross-examined by an odious man with a large wig! Really, Lady Selina Mellingcourt ought to have been more guarded in her conduct! *Fi donc!* To allow herself to be exposed in such a manner! It is too bad."

My mother retreated to her chamber, overpowered by the contending emotions of grief, shame, and terror, that filled her mind. Little prone as she was to judge harshly, however appearances might justify harsh judgment, the fact of two men meeting in the night in the chamber of Lady Selina, left no doubt that the conduct of that lady had been highly culpable; and that her own husband should have brought such a woman beneath the same roof with her was an outrage that shocked as much as it humiliated her. It was now, alas! but too evident to her that not only had she

lost his affection, but that he no longer entertained the least respect for her; or otherwise he never would have made her the associate of such a woman as Lady Selina Mellingcourt was now proved to be.

While she wept in bitterness of spirit, Lockly entered the room, exclaiming, " Ah! madam, all that I have heard during the last few days is but too true. Oh! what a wicked, wicked woman! I could hardly believe what her maid and the valets more than insinuated with regard to her conduct; but now there is no room to doubt. Mr. Mellingcourt has ordered his carriage to be got ready, and will not hear of her going with him, although, as her maid says, Lady Selina has been down on her knees to ask him. Ah! if he had taken more care to prevent his wife from doing wrong he need not now shew this severity! But it is always so; those who make no effort to protect the honour of their wives are the most

resentful when an exposure of their guilt occurs."

A knock at her dressing-room door, startled my mother, and Lockly having opened it, received a message from Mrs. Audley, requesting to see her mistress.

Soon afterwards Mrs. Audley made her appearance, and short as the time had been since she had been seen *en bonnet de nuit* and *robe de chambre*, she was now in a travelling dress, her shawl and bonnet already on.

"I could not depart, my dear Mrs. Meredith," said she, "without wishing you good bye, and thanking you for your kind hospitality." Observing the traces of tears and the agitation of her hostess, she resumed, "I cannot wonder that you feel this sad business severely. I, too, am profoundly touched, for I really liked this unhappy woman; and never imagined she was capable of the conduct that is now but too clearly proved.

I fear, however, that she is a very hardened person; for, would you believe it, she has had the impudence to ask me to let her go to London with me, as her husband has positively refused to allow her to travel with him, or to grant her the use of his carriage. After such an *exposé* as has just taken place, I could not on any account permit her to come with me; nay, I have thought it best to end all acquaintance with her at once, and so have declined any intercourse, directly or indirectly, with her for the future. Really one must not allow oneself to be mixed up in such disgraceful affairs; and, if I might take the liberty of offering you my advice, I would suggest the propriety of your sending her word that you require her to leave your house with as little delay as possible; for it will be very injurious to your reputation to have it known that after such a detection Lady

Selina Mellingcourt and you remained under the same roof an hour."

While Mrs. Audley was still speaking, the sound of carriage wheels driving up to the door of the mansion was heard, and a servant announced that Mr. Audley was ready to set out, and only waited for her.

"Adieu! my dear Mrs. Meredith," said she; "I hope we shall meet again somewhere or other. Do not let this sad affair grieve you too much. Remember the old song, '*On en revient toujours a ses premiers amours*;' and as Mr. Spencer Meredith was, I have heard, once extremely in love with you, he may yet return to his duty. Adieu!—adieu!" and seizing the cold and trembling hand of her hostess, she shook it, and quitted the room, leaving the latter confounded at her *nonchalance* and heartlessness.

CHAPTER XVII.

My mother remained for some time in deep thought. What was she, what ought she, to do? To order Lady Selina Mellingcourt to depart immediately, as Mrs. Audley advised, was a measure that she shrunk from; for though her feelings as a wife had been outraged, those of a woman, and a tender, pitying one, forbade this stern, though, probably, just proceeding. Nevertheless, for herself to leave the house, and thus forsake her erring husband, when her presence might be of use to him, would be acting

contrary to her sense of duty. And yet to see Lady Selina Mellingcourt, after what had occurred, would be most painful to her.

Lockly, who had quitted the chamber when Mrs. Audley entered it, now returned, and announced that Mr. Mellingcourt had departed.

“Would you credit it, madam,” added she, “that wicked maid of Lady Selina’s refused to dress her mistress, or to stay with her, now that her guilt has been made known; although there can be no doubt she was well acquainted with it for a long time—ay, and profited by it, too, for many and extravagant were the presents she received from Lady Selina, on whose conduct she, nevertheless, often passed many an indelicate joke in the steward’s room. Well, bad as she is, I must say I pity her; a lady highly born and bred, to be insulted by her own servant, not because she has acted ill, for that she knew before, but

merely because the unhappy lady is exposed."

"And has Lady Selina no one to assist her?" asked my mother, her woman's heart prompting pity even for her unworthy rival. "Go to her, my good Lockly, and see that her comfort be attended to, until, as must soon be the case, she thinks fit to leave this house."

"Certainly, madam; as you desire it, I will go to Lady Selina Mellingcourt, although, if the truth must be told, I would rather——"

"Pray make no objections, my good Lockly, but oblige me by going at once."

Hardly had her *femme de chambre* departed, when the report of pistol-shots, one following quickly on the other, struck on my mother's terrified ear. She was seized with a violent fit of trembling, and a fearful presentiment of evil took possession of her mind. She attempted to move, with the intention of leaving the room, but she found

herself incapable of rising, until having poured out a little cold water, and swallowed it, she regained sufficient force to walk into the corridor. The first object that struck her was Lord Thomas Mellicent, hurrying along with rapid strides, and his countenance greatly agitated. He started when he saw my mother, and endeavoured to avoid her; but she in her terror seized his coat, and urged him to explain the cause of his apparent agitation, and whence had proceeded the shots she had heard.

“I must go this instant!” said Lord Thomas, gently disengaging himself from my mother’s grasp. “My carriage waits. I have not a moment to lose.”

Ere my mother could utter another word, Lady Selina Mellingcourt rushed from her chamber, and approaching Lord Thomas, said, “I guess all that has occurred. You are about to fly. For pity sake, take me with you!”

“It is impossible—quite impossible!” re-

plied Lord Thomas Mellicent. "Remember the consequences, the inevitable consequences, of such a step."

"You are thinking of their effect on *you*, not on *me*," said Lady Selina, reproachfully; "and had you the least portion of the love you have so often and so lately avowed for me—nay, had you a spark of compassion in your breast, you would not—you could not—abandon me, under present circumstances."

"You shall hear from me, indeed you shall, the moment I reach a place of safety," answered Lord Thomas Mellicent, and rushing from the presence of both ladies, he rapidly descended the stairs, leaving Lady Selina uttering angry reproaches, while my mother, trembling with emotion, stood leaning for support against a marble column. After a moment's pause, she addressed Lady Selina—"If you wish to quit this house," said she, "my carriage is at your service; and if you require money, my purse is at your command."

“But where, where am I to go?” demanded Lady Selina, bursting into a paroxysm of tears. “I have no home, no friend! My husband will not receive me: he has sworn that he will not, and I know his cold nature and unfeeling heart too well to doubt that he will adhere to his resolution. He who has just left us refused to let me be the partner of his flight, and deserts me at a crisis when I most stand in need of that affection he led me to believe he possessed for me.”

“Go to your brother,—he will not cast you from him. Whatever may have been your errors, the tie of blood will plead for you in *his* heart. Go to him, and endeavour by your conduct for the future to atone for the past.”

At this instant there was a noise in the hall, steps were heard ascending the stairs, voices urged the necessity of sending for a surgeon immediately, and a group approached, bearing my father, to all appear-

ance dead, with the breast of his shirt and his waistcoat stained by the ensanguined stream that was flowing from a wound in his chest. Lady Selina Mellingcourt rushed from the appalling sight, which had no sooner met his poor wife's eyes than she sunk, fainting, to the ground.

Scarcely need I mention that Lord Thomas Mellicent and my father had fought a duel, in which the latter was severely wounded.

When my mother was restored to a state of consciousness, she hurried to the chamber of her husband, in spite of the entreaties of those around her, and left not his side until the arrival of the surgeon. With her own hands she applied linen to stanch the wound, and bathed his burning brow with *eau d'Hongrie*. All her presence of mind and activity were restored to her in this trying moment; and when, in an hour after, she saw her husband open his languid eyes, and fix them on her with an expression of

kindness, to which she had long been a stranger, she pressed her lips on his brow, and a faint smile indicated that he was sensible of, and pleased at, this mark of affection.

The surgeon insisted on her leaving the room while he probed the wound, and endeavoured to extract the ball; but she remained at the door, breathless with terror, and her heart overflowing with pity, as she heard the groans occasionally wrung from her husband, by the torture he was undergoing. He fainted under the operation, and she believing, from the exclamation of his valet, that he was dead, rushed into the chamber, and would have thrown herself on the bed; but the surgeon having assured her that the insensibility of my father was but temporary, and that on resuming consciousness the sight of her alarm would be injurious to him, she mastered her feelings.

When he again opened his eyes, he found

her bending over his pillow with an expression of such pity and affection on her countenance, that he was evidently gratified and touched by it. It was found impossible to extract the ball, which was lodged in the chest, but the surgeon declared it had certainly not touched any vital part, and that if fever could be kept off, he hoped for the recovery of his patient. An express was sent to London to bring down one of the most eminent of the faculty there, and in the meanwhile my mother installed herself as nurse in the sick room, leaving it neither day nor night. But in all her alarm and agitation, she was not neglectful of Lady Selina Meltingcourt; for while my father slept, she ordered a carriage to be prepared for her, sent an upper housemaid and footman to attend her on the road, and inclosed bank-notes to defray the expenses of the journey, adding a message, by Lockly, that sanguine

hopes were entertained by the surgeon of the recovery of Mr. Spencer Meredith.

Unfeeling as Lady Selina had hitherto proved herself to be, the forbearance and womanly pity which marked my mother's conduct towards her at this trying period, made a transitory impression on her mind, though it failed to open her eyes to the enormity of her past conduct. She did not adopt the advice given to her to place herself under the protection of her brother. Subsequently, however, her worthless husband, having discovered from the lawyer he consulted that his own culpable negligence in permitting her to receive the marked attention of my father and others, precluded him from legal redress, and that any attempt to obtain it would only draw odium on himself, he desisted from instituting proceedings, and was compelled to pay her a suitable allowance.

The skill of his surgeons, and the unceasing care and attention of my mother, were repaid, after some weeks, by the slow but gradual convalescence of my father; but Sir Antony Roper prepared both the patient and my mother not to expect that he would ever again be restored to the same robust health he had enjoyed previously to his wound. This admirable surgeon had discovered that the lungs of his patient had been injured by the bullet, which was lodged near them. My father was conscious of his own precarious state, and became from the date of this knowledge in every respect an altered man. Sensible of the value of the treasure he possessed in his wife, deeply did he deplore the folly and heartlessness of his past conduct towards her; and anxiously did he seek to expiate it, by the exercise of a patience in the endurance of pain, and a resignation to the probable result of his wound, little to be expected from his former

habits. He could hardly bear my mother to quit his sight; and lavished on her a thousand proofs of the tenderness that for years he had denied her. The love his indifference, and even unkindness, had failed to impair in her breast, was permitted, now that every exhibition of it afforded him the utmost gratification, to betray itself with all the warmth and devotion imaginable; and not even during the first halcyon days of happiness that followed their union, had his affection for her been so fervent as now, when, like a ministering angel, she bent over his pillow, watching every look, and anticipating every want. Who that could have beheld them in the seclusion of the sick chamber, their looks beaming with tenderness, and their words expressive of the deepest attachment, could have believed that, a few days before, the fond husband experienced only indifference for his wife, and lavished his affection on another. Nor

was it his danger alone that produced this revulsion in his feelings. No, it was the devotion, the unchanged love, of my mother, which in the hour of trial, when the companions of his pleasures and the partner of his guilt left him, clung to him, while, with all her woman's fondness, she breathed not a word that could remind him of the errors which he was now so cruelly expiating. He seemed to awake from a dream, and when looking on the beautiful face that bent over him with such an expression of unutterable love and pity, he wondered how he ever could have been insensible to its charms, and was ready to execrate his own blindness and folly for having preferred the worthless object that had alienated him from his admirable wife. I, too, became dear to him; and, seeing the tenderness he evinced towards my mother, soon grew familiar and affectionate with him. She was even more gratified with his caresses to me than with

the expressions of gratitude and unalterable love he was continually pouring out to her.

For a length of time, my father lingered in a state of great weakness, unable to bear the movement of a carriage, in order to try the efficacy of a change of air, recommended by his physician. Hope would sometimes whisper that years were yet in store for him, and he would believe the charmer; but, alas! the fiat had gone forth, and in four years after the fatal duel with Lord Thomas Mellicent, he breathed his last, in the arms of his wife.

Sincere and heartfelt had been his repentance during the time that had been allowed him to prepare for death; and humbly and thankfully had he accepted the promises held out by the religion that cheered him to the last by the hopes it inspired. He died uttering blessings on his heart-broken wife, and urging her to live for my sake. Thus,

if his life had been marked by errors, his death-bed offered an example edifying to all who witnessed his resignation and devotion during the last years.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOR a long time the physicians entertained but little hope of my mother's ever recovering from the injury her health had sustained by her grief for my father. Her constitution, never a strong one, was so much weakened by the fatigue and anxiety occasioned by his long illness, that it was unable to bear up against the grief that oppressed her; and during the remainder of her life she continued to be a valetudinarian, generally confined to her sofa, and obliged to be lifted in and out of the carriage to

take the air. She could not bear me from her sight, consequently I was not permitted to be sent to a public school. A preceptor was found for me, and under his tuition I made a progress that fully satisfied the expectations of my doting mother. My father, whose fortune was not entailed, bequeathed the whole of it to his widow for her life, with reversion to me at her death.

This great wealth had perhaps some influence, although her singular personal beauty alone might have accomplished it, in attracting suitors to my mother, many of whom, and Lord Algernon Montagu among the number, had, after her year of mourning had expired, addressed proposals of marriage to her. Her acquaintance with these interested admirers had been much too slight to warrant the step they had taken; but as she lived in a state of total seclusion, refusing to receive visitors, they had recourse to this measure, of the success of

which, no one who knew her could have entertained a hope.

At fifteen years old, my preceptor was changed for one calculated to forward my studies, and, encouraged by my mother's commendations, I applied myself diligently to work with him. Unbroken in upon by the fellowship of other youths, and uncontaminated by their example, my mind remained as pure as that of a girl, at an age when, by evil communication, most boys have lost their innocence. Those were happy days! And now that many years have since elapsed, I look back to them as the green oasis in the desert of a troubled life, and grieve that I valued them not sufficiently. The first interruption to my happiness was occasioned by the illness of my mother. So gradual had been its slow and insidious progress, that the growing paleness of her cheek, and increasing languor of her frame, alarmed me not, until

I one day remarked the grave aspect of her physician as he left her chamber, and saw the portentous shake of the head he gave when questioned by my preceptor relative to his patient. I hurried to her dressing-room, and clasping her in my arms, could not repress the tears that rushed to my eyes, as the apprehension of her danger first made my heart thrill with agony. She also wept, as she but too well divined the cause of my tears; and the fond mother overcame, for a brief time, the resigned Christian in her heart.

“ Yes. I must soon leave you, my dear son!” said she, as soon as the rising sobs, which for some minutes impeded speech, allowed her utterance.

“ Oh! do not say so, mother—dearest, dearest mother! I will not, cannot, lose you!” sobbed I.

“ You, like me, my own Henry, must learn resignation to the Divine will; and

this hard lesson will be best acquired by laying a foundation for indulging the blessed hope that our separation, though bitter, will not be eternal. Without *this* hope, I could not contemplate our parting as a Christian woman ought; and you, my son, will strengthen it by promising me so to live, that in another, a better world, we shall be re-united!"

I think I see her now, with that pale, yet still beautiful face, shaded by the delicate lace borders of her cap, her shadowy form enveloped in the folds of a white wrapping-dress, and her transparent hands fondly pressing mine, as her dark and lustrous eyes beamed on me with unutterable fondness. Convinced that her days were numbered,—and oh! what bitter sorrow did that conviction inflict on my heart! —I could not for a moment banish the fearful thought from my mind. I would gaze on her for hours, as if to imprint every

lineament of that fair and, still beauteous countenance on my memory; listen to every sound of that low, musical voice, until tears would spring to my eyes at the thought that it would soon be stilled in the silence of the grave; and then rush from her chamber, to indulge in those bursts of passionate grief that her presence checked. Every reference to the future—that future she was not to share—excited my feelings to agony, and I resented such from others with anger. When the gardener, in my presence, proposed the erection of a new green-house, to increase the stock of plants and flowers for the next year, I angrily turned from him, and concealed myself in the thickest shades of the shrubbery, to think of *where* she, who so loved plants and flowers, would be sleeping when his plan was carried into execution; and I breathed a wish that I, and all around, might finish with her existence!

One day, when the housekeeper waited on my mother for orders, and asked whether she should increase the usual stock of preserves then about to be made, especially a peculiar one, to which her mistress had been partial, I noticed my mother's cheek grow paler as she faintly answered, "No, my good Atkinson, you need not prepare that, but let there be a large provision of raspberry jam and apricots, for my son likes them."

These things may seem trivial, and not worth the trouble of noting; but they had a deep effect on me. The consciousness of her own approaching end, and the forethought for even my epicurean fancies, when she should be no longer on earth, made a sickness of heart steal over me, the cause of which, I believe, she guessed, for I found her eyes fixed on me with such an expression of unutterable tenderness, that tears started to mine. I could hardly bear to

leave her presence, even to take the air and exercise which she insisted on my daily doing. In my dreams I would start up, fearful that she might pass away whilst I slept; and I would steal to her chamber to satisfy myself that she still lived.

Summer passed away, and autumn had now far advanced, when the increasing debility of my mother warned us that all must soon be over. She was perfectly conscious of her approaching dissolution, and so resigned to it, that I, selfish and thoughtless as I was, felt almost jealous that *she* could contemplate our separation with such calmness, while my heart was torn with anguish at the thought. Seated by her bedside, anxiously watching every change of her pale face, she beckoned me to draw still nearer to her.

“This may be the last time I can speak to you, my son!” said she, “for I am about to leave you. Remember that my deathbed

was cheered by that religion which supported me through the trials of my youth, and which has enabled me to bear the ill health with which it has pleased the Almighty to afflict me. I am sustained by the blessed hope of being united to my husband, and of welcoming you, my dear son, when it shall please God to summon you from this world to that better, brighter scene, where there are no more partings. Bless you, bless you, my son. Let me be laid by the side of your father. I can no longer see you; let me hear your voice once more. Bless—bless!”

Her eyes closed—she gave a faint moan, and all was over.

I could not believe that she was indeed gone for ever. I pressed my lips to her cold ones; I held her in a convulsive grasp to my heart, but the rigidity of her attenuated frame soon forced on me the conviction that life was indeed extinct. In a violent burst of passionate sorrow, I threw my-

self by her side, and seizing her hand—that hand which had so often and fondly grasped mine, I wept in uncontrollable anguish, until, exhausted, I fell into a state of insensibility.

CHAPTER XIX.

“HE must be removed from the body,” were the first words I heard, when, with returning consciousness, I became sensible of what was passing around me. “*The body!*” how those two words shocked me! And it was thus they named that which, but a few minutes before, had contained the ethereal spark—had been instinct with life, with thought, and with affection. The pale lips, now closed in the rigidity of death, had but lately spoken words of love to me; the eyes, now shut for ever, had beamed with tender-

ness on me; the accents, still fresh in my ear, I should never more hear on earth; and the hands that had so often clasped mine lay white, and cold as marble to my touch! Yes, it was plain that which was before me was but a body—a lifeless, inanimate body—insensible alike to my anguish or to my love. Nevertheless, I could not bear to hear it so called; and affection so vanquished the natural horror with which death inspires the young, that I could hardly be persuaded to leave all that now remained of that dear mother on whom I had so fondly doted, nor that other eyes than mine should behold her pale corse.

Her faithful attendant Lockly promised me that no other hand than hers should perform the last offices for her departed mistress, and that when they were fulfilled, I should again be admitted to her chamber. Pacified by this promise, I retired to my own room; and having thrown myself on my

bed, I wept, until, in a deep slumber, I lost the consciousness of the dreary, cheerless present. In dreams, the past was restored to me; my mother was again by my side, not as I had for many weeks been accustomed to see her, but as in former times I remembered her—blooming and beautiful. Her eyes beamed on me with affection, her red lips opened to speak words of love, and her accents sounded musically as ever in my ears. She gently chided me for believing that she could leave me, and I in a transport of joy threw my arms around her neck; when my preceptor awoke me by taking off my clothes, and administering a calming medicine which the family physician had thought it advisable should be taken.

How fearful is the first awaking after some heavy affliction! The sense of it coming afresh to the mind, and with renewed bitterness, while the frame, recruited by slumber, renders the feelings more acutely

sensible of their tortures than when, exhausted by the first shock, the mind and body had sunk beneath its weight! I took the offered opiate, allowed myself to be undressed, and fell into a heavy slumber, from which I did not awake until a late hour the next day. A bright sun was shining through my windows, and a blue and cloudless sky was mirrored in the calm lake in front of them. Myriads of birds were sending forth their joyous notes from the umbrageous trees and shrubberies in the vicinity of the house, and all nature looked bright and beautiful. I turned from the sight in disgust and anger; for so deep was the gloom within my breast, that I could not support the external gaiety that reigned around, while she who so loved to contemplate all that I now turned from was sleeping in death, and could never more behold the beautiful scenery before me. I should have liked to have seen the sun clouded, the land-

scape shaded in gloom, and nature as sad and cold as my own breast; but this contrast revolted me, and I hastily pulled down the blinds, that I might not behold it. I experienced a sense of shame when the pangs of hunger made themselves felt, after nearly twenty-four hours of abstinence from food. What! in grief such as mine could I wish to eat, and could the wants of the body thus triumph over the agony of the mind? I almost hated myself as I partook of the food placed before me at the repast that had always hitherto been partaken with my mother; and when it was concluded, I repaired to her chamber.

The worthy Lockly had performed the last sad duties of her office to the dear departed. The pale, but still beautiful face, with the dark silken tresses, *à la Madonna*, was shaded by a nightcap, the delicate lace borders of which were less white than that cold still face, on the cheeks of which the

jetty eyelashes rested. The features, so finely chiselled, looked like those of some exquisite marble statue, and the mouth seemed still to wear the sweet smile which had so often delighted me.

“Oh! could I but retain for ever that lovely image, even as it now is,” said I, “I should not feel so lone and desolate,” and a plenteous flood of tears poured from my eyes. I motioned to Lockly to leave the room, which she, after a few unavailing efforts at consolation, consented to do, and I, having bolted the door to preclude interruption, threw myself on my knees, and pressed my lips to the cold ones of my mother. I addressed her by the most endearing epithets, implored her not to forget, in the pure regions she was called to, the son she left alone on earth to deplore her loss, and to live on her memory. I watched that calm, still face, and was almost disappointed that it relaxed not its rigid expres-

sion; while I, my voice half-choked by deep emotion, poured forth the anguish of my heart. It is terrible to be alone with the loved and lately dead, when so much of the semblance of life remains as to half cheat one into the hope that the intensity of grief experienced may be known by its object, and that we are not yet wholly and for ever sundered. But when the voice, once so fondly listened to, makes no impression on the cold still ear of death—when tears, burning tears, fall unheeded on the marble cheeks, and the icy lips return no pressure—then is it that we feel the bitterness of grief renewed, in the crushing consciousness of the total separation between the living and the dead—then is it that the pale image of the object so fondly loved in life, so like, yet so unlike, but increases the poignancy of sorrow; and one turns from it with agony to weep, yet soon returns to gaze again, jealous of losing one of the few

hours still left, ere the envious grave shall hide it for ever from our sight.

Moments passed under such circumstances add the gravity of years of experience to life, and I left the chamber of death as if ten had been added to my age. I thought that I now had experienced all the bitterness of grief, but the succeeding day, when that face, so lately pure, and fair as Parian marble, assumed an ashy hue, and the features began to lose something of their symmetrical beauty, a feeling of dread and horror became mingled with my sorrow. Every hour rapidly changed the countenance, until, unable any longer to contemplate it without terror, I made no further objection to the lid of the coffin being fastened down, although every blow of the hammer seemed to strike at my heart; and, in order to restrain myself from interfering to prevent their continuance, I was obliged to remember that *she* who was inclosed in that coffin

was wholly insensible to the sounds that produced such torture to my feelings. And now, when she was hidden for ever from my view, and that black box was all that remained; how did I accuse myself for having consented to its being closed, when I might for another day have contemplated the face which, however changed, was still dearer to my heart than all on earth beside. How many bitter burning tears fell on the coffin, as, seated by it, my aching head reposed on its edge. All around the chamber was still and silent as the grave. The servants moved with stealthy steps in the house, as if afraid to break the death-sleep of the mistress they had so fondly loved; or perhaps actuated by a sentiment of respectful pity for the grief of the orphan. Nought save the carolling of birds was to be heard, and their music sounded sadly to my ears, while the bitter consciousness that *hers* who used to enjoy

the melody were sealed in death, filled my heart with anguish.

How many times, during the nights that intervened before the funeral, did I awake from troubled dreams, and start from my couch, when, remembering that the corpse of my mother still rested beneath the same roof with me, I used to hurry to her chamber, and press my lips again and again on the coffin that contained all that remained of that beautiful and gentle being. But too soon did the hour arrive, when even this melancholy consolation was to be denied me. The day of interment was come, and I was not only to witness the removal of my dead mother from the home which her love and care for me had rendered so happy a one, but I was to follow her remains to the tomb. Well do I remember the agony of that hour, and the efforts I made to bear up against the overpowering anguish of my feelings

Lockly say, "in relating to you the bad conduct of your father; but the person I loved the most on earth—and such a person, too—suffered so severely from it, that the relation may prove a warning to you, sir, and prevent your being, as he was, the cause of misery to some worthy lady."

There were moments during the narrative when my anger and indignation were so much excited against my father, that my cheeks burned and my eyes sparkled, and I was obliged to recall to memory the last years of his life, when his penitence and tenderness for my mother and myself were so marked, ere I could think of him with that sentiment of respect which a son ought to entertain for a dead parent. The particulars narrated to me by the garrulous Lockly became so amalgamated in my mind with those remembered in my childhood, that it seemed to me as if I had witnessed all, and even now, so vivid is the

recollection, that it appears as if only months instead of long long years had elapsed since they occurred.

My health had suffered so severely from the effect of grief at my poor mother's death, that the physicians consulted on the occasion deemed it expedient that I should be removed to a milder climate. My guardian, Lord Lymington, the only male relative of my mother, and to whom she had written when all hope of recovery had been given up, to entreat his acceptance of the trust she meant to confide to him, came down a few months after her decease, indisposition being his alleged excuse for not having sooner taken any interest in his orphan ward.

Lord Lymington was then about fifty years old, still remarkably good-looking, being *bien conservé*, and with pretensions to appear still a young man. Possessed of great wealth, he had unfortunately devoted this advantage solely to his own personal

gratification, and seldom bestowed a thought on aught that did not directly interfere with the cherished idol of his worship—self. Although often tempted to put on the chains of wedlock, he had never assumed them, being, as it was said, in his youth, always prevented by the dread that as man and wife are considered to become one, his identity might be confounded with that of what a wife is styled—*his better half*, and that his comfort, or even a single portion of it, might be compromised. He had therefore, although fond of female society, continued a bachelor, and applauded his own sagacity in forming and in hitherto adhering to a resolution that precluded him from many of the annoyances to which his contemporaries who had become Benedicts were exposed. The whole stock of affection generally implanted in the human heart to be called into action by its fellow-beings, was entirely bestowed by Lord Lymington

on self, and it may be doubted whether all the ties of nature formed by man in the relative positions of son, husband, father, brother, and friend, ever exceeded, if they equalled, the sum expended by this individual on himself. This undue expenditure brought with it its own punishment, for the whole powers of his mind being directed to but one focus—the study to avoid suffering any of the bodily or mental ills to which all of poor human kind are subject, not unfrequently occasioned even greater annoyances than those he sought to evade. Lord Lynton had read that “the proper study of mankind is man,” and mistaking the true sense of the philosophic poet who wrote the line, applied that which was meant for mankind generally to his own individual case. So bland were his manners, and so ever seemed his temper, that he was, on a first acquaintance, sure to captivate the good will of those with whom he came in contact.

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Nor did they discover how much too favourably they had judged him, until, on a greater intimacy, encouraged by his urbanity, they ventured to appeal to his sympathy when labouring under some of the trials from which none are exempt. Too quickly then they found that he listened to the relation of their afflictions with an indifference which not even his habitual good breeding could conceal; and that he ever after carefully avoided their society.

He had lately been suffering from a slight indisposition, which his egotistical fears had magnified into a serious one; and when he arrived at Meredith Park, was accompanied by his physician, who had lately advised his lordship to pass the ensuing winter in a warm climate. My pallid face alarmed my guardian, not for me but for himself, as he dreaded the trouble my bad health might impose on him, or the danger to which a contact with me might expose him.

“ Good God! Porson, his hand is burning hot!” said Lord Lymington, as he quickly withdrew his own from the friendly pressure with which he had seized mine. “ Feel his pulse, Porson!” resumed his lordship; and he looked so anxiously in my face that I felt disposed to like him, believing, with all the credulity peculiar to youth, that a warm interest for me occasioned the anxiety I witnessed.

“ A winter in a mild climate would be very advantageous to this young gentleman, my lord,” said Doctor Porson, “ and it happens very opportunely that your lordship is about to try the same remedy.”

“ I see what you mean, Porson, but it is not to be thought of—quite out of the question, Porson;” and he glanced significantly at the doctor, to prevent him saying anything more on the subject.

After looking out on the pleasure grounds and park for a few minutes, he suddenly

remarked that he feared Meredith Park was a very unhealthy place.

The vivid green of the lawn, he said, indicated damp, and my pale face spoke little, as he was pleased to say, in favour of the air. "The father and mother, too, died here!" continued Lord Lymington, in a voice meant to be a whisper, but which was perfectly intelligible to me; nevertheless, I still attributed his evident uneasiness to anxiety for me. "I don't feel quite well, Porson," said Lord Lymington, after a few minutes.

"Indeed! my lord; what, pray, are your lordship's symptoms?"

"A sort of languor, a sense of fatigue and exhaustion. How is my pulse?"

Doctor Porson's large gold repeater, with its massive chain and seals, was now drawn forth; the sleeve of Lord Lymington's coat was carefully turned up; and, after counting the beats of the pulse for a few seconds, the sapient doctor pronounced that a

luncheon and glass of old sherry were all that was required to restore his lordship to his usual state. The luncheon was ordered, and many injunctions given that "the *côtelettes à la minute* should be particularly tender;" "and suppose," added Lord Lymington, "that while they are being prepared, you mix a camphor julep for me." The doctor assured his lordship that his digestion would be impaired by his taking any medicine before eating, but the *malade imaginaire* declared the necessity of his having something to invigorate his stomach previously to essaying its powers on the mutton *côtelettes*, so the Doctor went in search of the medicine chest, without which Lord Lymington never took even the shortest journey. "Be sure to bring down the thermometer," added the peer, "in order that there may be no mistake about the temperature of the room I am to sit in. You had better also prepare a digestive

pill, lest I may suffer from the tough meat one is always sure to encounter in the country."

My preceptor now waited on my guardian, who received him very graciously. He examined his countenance attentively, and it was evident that the result was satisfactory. When Mr. Rivers was expecting to be questioned respecting the progress of his pupil, he looked somewhat surprised to be asked whether he thought it likely that tender mutton-cutlets could be had for luncheon.

"I have not the least doubt, my lord," was the pleasing answer, "for I am very particular with regard to tender meat."

"Indeed!" said Lord Lymington; "I am very glad to hear it."

"The mutton here is of a peculiarly fine flavour, as is also the beef, as we have an excellent breed of small Scots bullocks, and I venture to pronounce that your lordship

will be pleased with both," continued my tutor.

"Is this a healthy place, Mr. Rivers?"

"Remarkably so, my lord; the soil is gravelly, the air pure and mild, and the temperature equal."

"Yet the recent deaths in the family, and the delicate appearance of your pupil, might induce me to draw a different conclusion, Mr. Rivers."

"The air of Meredith Park had nothing to do in the affliction to which your lordship refers; and the delicate appearance of my pupil arises from his only recent recovery from a very serious illness, occasioned by the severe trial to which he has been exposed."

"Nothing grave, nothing hereditary—eh?"

"Nothing, my lord."

"But do you not think, Mr. Rivers, that the undue sensibility that must have existed

to account for the illness occasioned by the trial to which you referred is indicative of a weak constitution? Sensibility is destructive to health; no constitution can resist the inroads it makes. It is in itself a malady, and one of the worst, and people should be taught to conquer it as early as possible. I should not now be alive, had I not vanquished mine, which I did at a very early age, a precocious firmness of mind and an unusual clear-sightedness having enabled me to discover how injurious such weakness might prove to my own happiness."

Mr. Rivers bowed, and remained silent, and Dr. Porson administered his camphor julep to Lord Lymington.

"So you think," resumed his lordship, "that your pupil is not consumptive!"

"I am persuaded he is not, my lord."

"Is he naturally of a lively, cheerful temper?"

"I considered him peculiarly so, my lord, before the recent afflictions."

“ Well, if I could be quite sure that he would soon recover his health and spirits, I should be disposed to take him with me to the Continent.”

“ Nothing would, I am of opinion, be so conducive to the recovery of his spirits as change of scene, for here, my lord, where everything reminds him of his mother, his grief is kept fresh in his mind.”

“ Do not mention my plan, Mr. Rivers, until I have finally decided on the measure. It requires mature consideration, for should his recovery be slow, *I* should be subjected to the annoyance—and a very serious one it would be—of seeing before me a pale face and dejected countenance, of hearing sighs, or of having bodily suffering forced on my attention. Charity, the old proverb says, begins at home; and I assure you, it would be aught but charitable towards myself to entail any such annoyances on me.”

Here a servant announced that luncheon was served; and Lord Lymington proceeded to the dining-room, inviting Mr. Rivers to partake of it.

“Sensible man, Porson, very sensible man,” whispered the Peer to his physician.

“Does your lordship think so?” was the only remark made by the Doctor, who, fearful of seeing a rival for his patron’s favour start up in every person thrown in his way, was cautious of encouraging any partiality towards Mr. Rivers.

“Capital *côtelettes*, Mr. Rivers; tender and juicy.”

“I am glad your lordship likes them; and I think I can assure your getting some excellent sherry, or claret, if you prefer it.”

“Famous sherry!” said the Peer, smacking his lips, “and, by Jove! just what I could have wished—another hot *côtelette*.”

“I thought, my lord, that sent up hot and hot, the *côtelettes* might tempt your lordship.”

“ And you thought like a sensible man, Mr. Rivers. But you do not eat; you are not abstemious, I hope,—eh?”

“ I am afraid of spoiling my appetite for dinner, my lord, and had partaken of some roast chicken with my pupil only just before your lordship arrived.”

“ Right, Mr. Rivers; never spoil your appetite for dinner. Nothing denotes such a want of taste, as well as a want of good breeding, as people sitting down to dinner with spoiled appetites. I make it a point never to invite people a second time, who are so unmindful of the comfort of others, unless, indeed, they happen to be retailers, or better still, makers of *bon mots*, in which case I approve their *prévoyance* in having taken off the keen edge of their appetites, in order not to interrupt the telling their good stories.”

“ Perhaps your lordship had better not venture on another glass of that sherry,”

said Dr. Porson, with a deprecatory look, as he saw the Peer in the act of pouring out a second glass of sherry.

“Phoo, stuff and nonsense!” replied the Peer, raising the glass to his lips, and imbibing its contents with evident satisfaction.

“Why, you have drank *three* glasses of wine, Porson, yet you object to my having two, and I see you have eaten four *côtelettes* to my two.”

“My constitution, my lord, requires more stimulants than your lordship’s.”

“So you always say; and if the stimulants made you any merrier or more amusing, I should not object to your habits of self-indulgence.”

The Doctor’s face grew red with anger, but his prudence checked the exhibition of any symptom of displeasure; as he civilly observed, that his profession was too grave to admit of its followers giving way to the levity calculated to amuse their patients.

“ Suppose we take a walk, Mr. Rivers,” said Lord Lymington. “ It will assist my digestion. Ring for Dunington, Doctor, that he may bring my clogs and great coat.”

“ I hope your lordship will not forget to tie your Cashmere scarf around your throat, for the air is somewhat damp, and let me recommend you not to walk fast, lest it might impede the process of digestion, and disturb the action of the gastric juices; let me also suggest the propriety of postponing the dinner-hour until eight, instead of seven o'clock, that your appetite may have time to recover.”

CHAPTER XXI.

“AND so the poultry and mutton are remarkably good here, Mr. Rivers, eh?”

“Excellent, my lord.”

“And the air?” said Lord Lymington.

“As I before had the honour of observing to your lordship, is peculiarly mild and equal,” replied Mr. Rivers.

“Then, by Jove! I shall make up my mind to remain here a few days, get better acquainted with my ward, and by so doing, be able to form a judgment whether or not his accompanying me to the Continent would

be conducive to my comfort. You have travelled, I presume, Mr. Rivers?"

"Yes, my lord, I made the tour of France, Spain, and Italy, with Lord Medlicott."

"Indeed! He is a very sensible young man. A monstrous good judge of eating. Keeps the best cook, and gives the most *recherchés* dinners in London. Medlicott has acquired no little consideration, I assure you, Mr. Rivers, by his good taste in eating. Did you direct that as well as his education?"

"I endeavoured to do so, my lord. When I first became acquainted with his lordship, I found his education had been sadly neglected, and his taste in the pleasures of the table wholly uncultivated. I considered it to be my duty to instruct Lord Medlicott to the utmost of my power; and during our extended tour, I sought, while pointing out the objects connected with classical or historical lore most worthy of attention, to draw his notice also to the delicacies peculiar

to each country. If I did not find his lordship so apt a scholar as could be wished in the attainment of learning, I had no reason to complain of his progress in gastronomy. Ere we had completed our tour, his palate was so exercised in the dainties and culinary art of the countries we travelled through, that he could detect the least failure in the qualities or modes of preparing the dishes ordered; hence his knowledge on these points gave him a superiority over those with whom his want of intellectual cultivation would have reduced him to an equality, while with persons of superior intelligence and attainments (for all such like good eating) it redeemed him from contempt."

"You could not have done better, Mr. Rivers. You reasoned like a sensible man, and the proof of the success of your system is, that nothing short of a command from royalty would induce any of Medlicott's *convives* to break a dinner engagement;

with him, so highly appreciated is his *savoir vivre* and skill in gastronomy. You would not, perhaps, object to accompany my ward to Italy?" said Lord Lymington, after a few minutes' pause.

"Certainly not, my lord; more especially if my pupil was to have the honour of travelling in the suite of his noble guardian."

"Then, by Jove! it shall be so, Mr. Rivers, and I will install you in the office of caterer for my table during our travels. You shall be the Amphytrion in all save the expense of our dinners; and should you be as extravagant as Lucullus himself, I shall not object to it."

Thus encouraged, my preceptor launched forth into an animated monologue on *plats recherchés*, and an elaborate description of the qualities of the various viands to be used in their concoction, the erudition of which would not have disgraced Apicius himself. During his dissertation, he dis-

dinners to bad ones, I expect that when I sacrifice so much to your system of *régime*, I ought at least to have the benefit of it."

"But, my lord, is there a day that your lordship does not transgress the bounds of prudence by indulging your appetite?"

"If I did not, Doctor Porson, I should have no occasion for your services. I thought your skill might enable me to feast with impunity, by providing antidotes for the bane of good dishes; but if I am only to be cured by starvation, I see no use in a physician."

"There is surely a great difference, my lord, in the avoidance of the most exciting cookery, and starvation! I have always allowed sufficient food, and only prohibited that which is improper."

"But if I can only eat that which you call improper——"

"Your lordship must excuse me if I say,

that I have seen no deficiency in your lordship's appetite."

"So *you* say; but what is it in comparison to your own, Doctor? Why, you eat more at one repast than I do at four. You preach abstinence, it is true, but you are far from practising it."

"The quantity and quality of food which a person in perfect health may partake of with impunity, would be extremely dangerous for an invalid, my lord."

"You are, I suppose, the person in perfect health, and I am the invalid, Doctor?—a proof that your treatment of self succeeds better than your theoretical management of your unfortunate patients."

"Allow me, my lord——"

"I *will not* allow you to continue this tiresome discussion, Doctor. I hate arguments, and am sure they do not tend to aid the process of digestion."

“ Many persons, my lord, are of a contrary opinion; for the effect produced on the gastric juices by——”

“ Spare me, spare me, for mercy sake, Doctor ! For if you once get on the gastric juices, mine will inevitably turn to bile—so tired am I of hearing of them.”

The doctor looked and felt sulky, and from that moment indulged a dislike towards my preceptor, for having been the cause, although an innocent one, of his discussion with his patient. To prevent my accompanying my guardian to the Continent, and consequently to separate Lord Lymington from his new favourite, Mr. Rivers, now became the object of his thoughts. The first scheme to accomplish this which suggested itself to the Doctor, was to persuade my guardian that he had discovered certain symptoms in me which would render a sojourn on the Continent injurious to my health. In thinking that this reason would

have any influence on one so wholly selfish as Lord Lymington, except inasmuch as the presence of an unhealthy young man might impede his own personal comfort, proved that the Doctor was not as well acquainted with the sentiments and feelings of his patient as might be expected, from the length of time which he had been domiciled with him. The first attempt to convince Lord Lymington that my safety would be endangered by going to Italy, only drew from him a declaration that, however that might be, he could not abandon his project of securing the attendance of Mr. Rivers, whose knowledge in gastronomy, and pleasing manners, rendered his society so peculiarly agreeable to him.

“I don’t want to take the young man with me,” said Lord Lymington; “but, by Jove! I will, rather than lose such a travelling companion as Rivers, offer him a much larger salary than he gets for being pre-

ceptor to my ward, and which doubtless he will accept!"

When Doctor Porson discovered that his scheme for separating Lord Lymington from his new favourite would be as much defeated by my being left behind as if I went, and still more so, as in the present *engouement* of the Peer for Mr. Rivers, he would be very likely to make a permanent engagement with him, he determined to change his tactics, and encourage my being taken to the Continent.

With so capricious a man as Lord Lymington is, thought Porson, the chances are that he will soon grow as tired of the society of Rivers as he has done of mine; for I, too, in the commencement, was a favourite. And then, being merely the preceptor of his ward, the Peer will not be saddled with him, and can without embarrassment bow him out when it suits his lordship's fancy, as he has done other favourites before. If, how-

ever, he engages Rivers as a travelling companion for himself, there would be an awkwardness, as well as some difficulty, in getting rid of him—so it is better to have the young man of the party.”

Thus reasoned the sapient Doctor Porson; and in accordance with this reasoning he said all in his power to promote his recent plan of my accompanying my guardian, in defiance of the sneering remarks made by the Peer on his sudden change of opinion on this point. Among the many failings of Lord Lymington, suspicion was one of the most prominent. This mean sentiment led him to analyze the motives that actuated every one about him, and incapable of appreciating goodness or disinterestedness,—for he had no sympathy with either,—he was prone—drawing his knowledge from self—to attribute the most interested and vulgar motives, when not unfrequently kind ones only existed. With regard to those of

Doctor Porson, however, he was not far wrong; and he gloried in his own sagacity in detecting them—a sagacity for which he was solely indebted to the similarity in selfishness which existed between that person and himself.

“Hah! hah!” said the Peer to himself, as he marked the tergiversation in the Doctor’s opinions. “My worthy physician is alarmed at the growing favour of Mr. Rivers with me, and dreads a rival near the throne!—Good. This led him to advise my ward’s being left in England; and now that he finds that would avail him nothing, as I was determined to have Rivers as a travelling companion, he urges me to take my ward too. Ah! *Monsieur le Docteur! Monsieur le Docteur!* you are no match for me! I read your thoughts and schemes much more easily than I can this newspaper!”—and he threw aside the one he had been endeavouring to decipher—a

task which he found impracticable without the aid of spectacles, to the use of which he had a peculiar objection, because it reminded him of the infirmities of age, which he was most unwilling to remember. "Yet Porson thinks himself a monstrous clever fellow, and imagines I am by no means *au fait* of his plans. It is pleasant to detect the motives of my dependents!"—and he chuckled as he soliloquized. "There is my steward, Stevens, *par exemple*; he positively toadies Dunington, because he fancies that my valet has some influence over me; and Dunington abhors Doctor Porson lest he should acquire any. I can scarcely conceal my risibility when Dunington, of a morning, with a long face and melancholy whine assumed for the occasion, assures me that he is afraid my lordship is not near so well now as when my lordship was under the care of Doctor Malcolm.

"This is a sly blow aimed at Doctor Por-

son, who has neglected to conciliate his good will; and Dunington, short-sighted fool as he is, thinks I do not detect his jealousy. I encourage all these people in their selfish projects, while they believe I am such a simpleton as not to suspect them; and I play them off one against the other, for my amusement."

Thus did Lord Lymington dwell with self-complacency on his own discrimination, vain of this mean failing—suspicion, the result of which had been, to leave him without a single friend in the world, and destitute of the slightest sympathy with any good or noble emotion.

When the fine-flavoured mutton and delicate poultry of Meredith Park had ceased to excite his palled appetite, my guardian proposed to set out for the Continent. He settled, to the no slight annoyance of Doctor Porson, and in a tone that left no hope of altering his decision, that Mr. Rivers, and not the Doctor, should accompany him in his coach.

“ I shall be pleased and honoured, my lord, provided a seat in the same vehicle is assigned to my pupil, whom I should be very loth to be separated from on the route,” said Mr. Rivers.

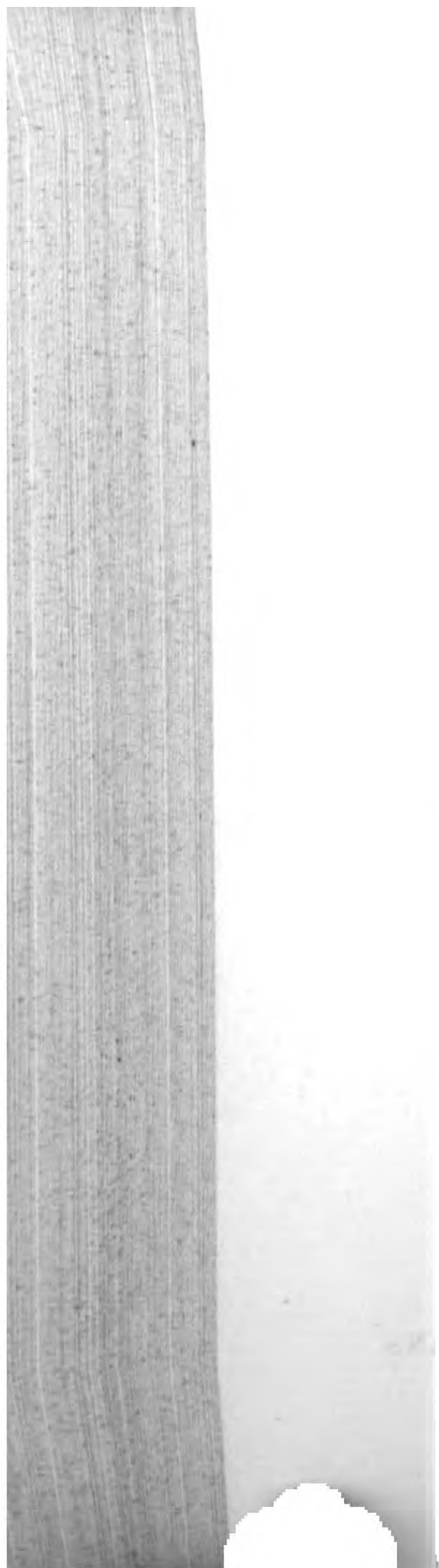
“ Could he not travel with Porson and my valet, Dunington ?” asked Lord Lymington, with an expression of countenance that denoted he considered this a much preferable arrangement. But, to the Peer’s surprise and annoyance, my preceptor remained firm in requiring that I should travel in the same carriage with himself ; and Lord Lymington for the first time yielded to the desire of another, and that other in a dependent situation.

END OF VOL. I.



M E R E D I T H .

VOL. II.



M E R E D I T H.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

**LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMANS.**

1843.



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MEREDITH.

CHAPTER I.

THE evening previous to our departure from Meredith Park, I went to take leave of the grave of my mother. How many melancholy reflections stole over my mind as I bent over her narrow bed, and recalled a thousand proofs and instances of her goodness and fondness for me! How calm and tranquil was that spot, hallowed to me as her resting-place, and designed to be mine own, whenever Death should claim me. The silence was only broken by the plaintive notes of the thrush and blackbird, which sounded

sweetly to me, and harmonized with the tender melancholy which pervaded my mind as I reflected that this was the last time for months—nay, perhaps for years, that I should again visit this sacred spot. Willingly would I have given up all the enjoyment held out to me in this projected sojourn in foreign lands to have remained in the solitude of Meredith Park, endeared to me by so many fond associations with the memory of my beloved mother, and to have the power of daily visiting her tomb. I knelt, and prayed that I might never forget her, and that her memory might ever influence my future conduct. Above all, I prayed that, let Death claim me when or where it might, my remains should be laid by the side of hers. When I arose from her grave, I determined on not sleeping before I addressed a letter to my guardian, requesting that if I died on the Continent, my corpse should be brought back to Meredith Park for inter-

ment. I could not tear myself away from the spot without again kneeling to implore, with the superstitious feeling of youth, the blessing of my sainted mother. Shedding many tears, I stole to my chamber, anxious to avoid observation, as my swollen eyes would have betrayed the grief I had been indulging. Lockly, the good and faithful Lockly, was not to be defrauded of the *tête-à-tête* with me which she had promised herself. I found her in my room, weeping bitterly; for the approaching separation from me had revived her sorrow for her lost mistress. Long did she stay, by turns advising, soothing, and warning me against all the dangers which her imagination could raise up as likely to assail me in a foreign land. Emphatic prohibitions against putting on linen or stockings unaired were mingled with solemn warnings against papist idolatry; and recommendations never to overheat myself, or to drink cold beverages when warm,

were interrupted by fervent prayers that I might not be taken in by any of the foreign ladies, who, from all that she ever could learn, were no better than they should be. "O think, dear Mr. Meredith, what an awful thing it would be to bring home a mistress to Meredith Park that could not speak English nor read the Bible—that could not go to church with you on the Sabbath day, nor understand a word I had to say to her. It would break my heart, that it would. And mind not to eat too much fruit, for the sun spoils them in those hot countries; while with us the hot-houses half cook them, and prevents them doing us harm."

When at length she left me, I found my hand wet with her tears, and could hear her sobs as she slowly retreated to her chamber. Poor Lockly! she had not forgotten her departed mistress, although she had transferred so large a portion of the love she bore her to her son.

At an early hour next morning I found myself seated *vis-à-vis* to Lord Lymington in his roomy and luxurious travelling coach.

“Sit by me, Mr. Rivers,” said his lordship.

“Let me not incommode you, my lord; I shall do perfectly well on the front seat with Mr. Meredith.”

“No, no, sit by me; for if you are opposite to me, you will not leave me sufficient room to stretch my legs.”

“Had not Mr. Meredith best sit by your lordship while I take the seat *vis-à-vis* to him?”

“No; for then I should be obliged to lean forward in order to hear what you say, or to make myself heard.”

When we halted for the night, having only gone about fifty miles, an excellent dinner, ordered by Lord Lymington’s courier, awaited us, the merits and demerits of which furnished a fruitful topic of discussion to the Peer and Mr. Rivers.

“ I had no idea that so good a repast could be found in an English inn,” observed the latter, “ where tough mutton chops and tougher beefsteaks, with hectic chickens and fishy ducks, form the staple commodity of dinners.”

“ I am too experienced a traveller to trust to the tender mercies of innkeepers in any country, but above all in England,” replied Lord Lymington.

“ My own cook, with his *batterie de cuisine*, and a good supply of *comestibles*, occupy the portion of my *fourgon* that is not devoted to my portable bed, sofa, easy chair, carpets, and other *meubles* necessary to my personal comfort. The *fourgon* always precedes me by four or five hours, so that on arriving I find my apartments tolerably well arranged, my dinner prepared, my wine iced, and am thus rendered independent of the *désagrémens* of inns; the very best of which are, in my opinion, insupportable.”

Lord Lymington and Mr. Rivers did ample justice to the dinner, notwithstanding that Dr. Porson repeatedly warned his patient against his inordinate indulgence in truffles and *champignons* with which many of the *plats* were prepared. The *gourmand*, for he was a *gourmand* as well as an epicure, angered by the remonstrances of his physician, asserted that the only use of a medical man was to furnish correctives to prevent bad effects from *gourmandise*, and that *he* was determined not to deny himself any of the pleasures which alone rendered existence supportable. It was really pitiable to witness the unreasonableness and utter want of feeling of this spoiled child of Fortune, and the annoyance he inflicted on his really attentive and skilful physician, who, aware of the inevitable result of his patient's intemperance, endeavoured, but in vain, to warn him. Two hours after dinner, an enlargement in the epigastric region occasioning much pain and

uneasiness to Lord Lymington, produced a remarkable alteration in his manner towards the Doctor.

“ My dear Porson !” said he, with a lengthened face and a pallid countenance, “ I feel very ill. You must prepare something for me to take, and with as little delay as possible, for I can hardly breathe.”

“ You see, my lord, the consequences of your indulging in truffles and mushrooms.”

“ You were right, my dear Porson, in proscribing them. Yes; quite right, and I shall certainly not eat them any more, but—oh! oh! Be quick! Give me something. I have such horrid pains! Never was there such a—there again! Ah! ah!”

The medicine administered by Doctor Porson soon produced a salutary effect. The pains in the epigastric region ceased, the swelling of the stomach gradually abated, and with the cessation of pain departed the

affectionate words of the Peer for his physician. No longer did his lordship address him as his "dear Porson," or look up in his face with a piteous expression of suffering, but having declared that his illness, though sharp, had been of so brief a duration as to convince him that it was not of a serious nature, he told Doctor Porson he should retire to bed, and only coldly nodded in acknowledgment of the Doctor's kindly expressed hope that his lordship might enjoy a comfortable night's repose.

"What a bore it is to be obliged to have a travelling physician," said Lord Lymington to Mr. Rivers, as soon as Porson had left the room.

"But if the necessity for one exists, it is fortunate to find so skilful a one," replied my preceptor. "Yours, my lord, relieved you in a very short time, I must say, which gives me a very favourable opinion of his abilities."

"O, hang the fellow! I have no cause

to complain of his want of ability; but what I blame him for is, that his treatment cannot enable me to indulge in my favourite dishes with impunity. I can no more eat truffles, *champignons*, and a hundred other good things, than before I engaged him; and the only difference I find is, that his treatment abridges the suffering induced by a surfeit of them. Now, if you happen to know any physician who could so manage as to enable me to indulge my appetite without paying the heavy penalty I at present incur, I would immediately engage him; for although I acknowledge Porson's skill in quickly procuring me relief, I am heartily tired of the constant remonstrances, which destroy the pleasure of my dinners."

Mr. Rivers looked surprised at the Peer's *naïve* avowal of selfishness and ingratitude, but Lord Lymington was so wholly self-engrossed that he was regardless of the impression he had given.

It happened that the chamber assigned to me was only separated from that of my guardian by a slight wooden partition, so that I was an unwilling listener to all the conversation that passed between him and his *valet-de-chambre* while he was undressing.

“I have really been very unwell this evening, Dunington,” observed Lord Lymington; “and I must acknowledge that Doctor Porson’s prescription very soon relieved me.”

“It would be much better, my lord, if he could *prevent* the frequent recurrence of such disagreeable attacks; and if he was so skilful a physician as he sets up to be, he *could* do so; but it seems to me that he lets these frequent attacks come on just to prove to your lordship how quickly he can relieve you, and how impossible it would be for your lordship to do without him.”

“Well, Dunington, there may be something in what you say.”

“ Ay, my lord; there is, indeed, and I am not the only person who thinks so.”

“ Other persons, then, have remarked that although Doctor Porson can relieve me, he cannot, or, at least, does not, prevent the frequency of these attacks?”

“ Yes, they have, indeed, my lord. Why, there was the Duke of Boltonmill’s valet, Mr. Masters, a very sensible, clever man, my lord, I assure you, said, ‘ Well, Dunnington,’ says he to me, ‘ so my Lord Lymington still suffers from those plaguy attacks in the stomach. Well, if I was his lordship,’ says he, ‘ I would make a bargain with my doctor that I’d pay him for preventing them, and not for merely relieving them.’ And there was the Marquis of Wilderton’s valet, Mr. Tomkins, quite a superior man, I can assure your lordship, and he says to me, ‘ I am sorry to hear that Lord Lymington is so continually suffering from attacks in the stomach. This ought not to be, for his

lordship is still a young man, quite in the prime of life, as a person may say ; and his doctor should prevent such attacks. Why, there's the Marquis,' said he, ' who is at least ten years older than Lord Lymington, and he never has any of them."

" Did he say the Marquis was ten years older than me?" asked my guardian.

" Yes, my lord, and I answered, ten years, indeed! Why, Mr. Tomkins, I'd venture to bet a guinea that the Marquis is at least fifteen years older than my lord."

" Then you would lose, Dunington," said Lord Lymington ; " for the Marquis of Wilderton and I are of the same standing. We were at Eton and Christ Church together."

" Is it possible, my lord? Well, no one ever could suppose it ; for certainly the Marquis looks old enough to be your lordship's father."

" Wilderton, it is true, *does* look much older than he is, but not so much so as you think."

“ I assure you, my lord, that every one takes your lordship to be quite a young man—that is, a young nobleman ; and people are quite surprised that you have a doctor travelling about with you, as it is supposed in general that only elderly gentlemen have them. I am sure I often wonder at your lordship’s patience with Doctor Porson, and say to myself, well, if I was his lordship, I’d have a doctor that would not be tormenting me with—‘ Pray, don’t eat this,’ and ‘ don’t touch that,’ just for all the world as if your lordship was one of those old gouty gentlemen that are wheeled about in chairs from place to place.

“ ‘ I suppose,’ said the mistress of this inn to me, ‘ it is for the pale-looking young gentleman that the doctor, as I heard one of the footmen call him, is travelling with the earl?’ ”

“ ‘ Yes,’ answered I.

“ ‘ I thought so,’ said she ; ‘ for his lordship

looks a fine healthy nobleman—ay, and as handsome a one as ever I set my eyes upon.'

" 'You're not the only lady as says the same thing,' says I.

" 'I'll be sworn not,' says she; 'for we women, whether of high or low degree, know when we see a handsome man. Is his lordship married?'

" 'Not yet, ma'am.'

" 'More's the pity, for I'm sure he'd make any fine young lady happy.'

" 'His lordship is mighty particular in his choice,' says I.

" 'And no wonder, when he is such a handsome nobleman,' says she. 'I am sure that you who are his *valet de sham* know that there are many beautiful ladies in love with his lordship,' says she.

'Mum,' says I, putting my finger to my lips, 'I never tells my lord's secrets to no one.'

“So then she laughed, and walked away, saying, ‘Oh, I see you’re a cunning chap.’”

“Ah!” said Lord Lymington, with something between an exclamation and a sigh, “perhaps it would have been as well if I had married. Miss Elmsly was a very fine girl, and I do believe very much attached to me.”

“No young lady could help being in love with your lordship, for the matter of that,” observed Dunington; “but Miss Elmsly having no fortune, people were spiteful enough to say that your lordship’s great wealth had something to say in influencing her affections; and for my part, I could not bear the notion that people should think such a handsome nobleman as your lordship was only married for your fortune.”

“I don’t care a *sous* for what people may say,” observed my guardian, and I am now sorry that I did not marry Miss Elmsly. Her beauty and accomplishments rendered

her in every way worthy the honour I designed her; and I was wrong not to have availed myself of the preference which she decidedly entertained for me."

"There's plenty of time yet for your lordship to marry, and there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught, my lord."

"Ay, so you always say, Dunington; but time does not stand still with me any more than it does with others; and if I put off marrying much longer, it will be too late to wed at all, or at least to marry the only sort of person I would have. Youth and beauty are indispensable requisites in the lady who is to be Countess of Lymington; and the want of good family I could not look over in the mother of the future earl."

"Your lordship is quite right; and you surely are entitled to have a beautiful young bride of high family; but I don't see why your lordship should not look for a large fortune too; for although you have great

estates and plenty of ready money, still it is pleasant to get more. Besides, when a nobleman marries a lady with a large fortune, no one can suspect that he was chosen for his money."

"Well, Dunington, if I had married the rich heiress, Miss Middleton, I should have had youth, beauty, good family, and fortune too; yet I remember you never liked the prospect of my marriage with her."

"Because I could not bear, my lord, to hear people saying at every side that Miss Middleton would only wed your lordship for sake of being a countess, and that hurt my feelings, knowing as I do that the richest and noblest young beauties would have been proud and delighted to marry such a handsome nobleman as you, my lord."

Here, overpowered by sleep, I heard no more; but inexperienced as I was, what I had heard fully developed to me the weakness and imbecility of Lord Lymington, and

the low cunning of the artful valet, who, it was plain, governed by means of the grossest flattery him who was suspicious of every one else around him.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVED at Dover the next day. On ascending the stairs of the inn, we encountered an elderly lady and gentleman, attended by a fine-looking young man and two very lovely girls. The elderly lady, who, it was evident, was the mother of the youthful group, still retained the traces of considerable beauty, although of an excessive *embonpoint*, which rendered the ascent of the stairs, even though assisted by her son, a very fatiguing operation. The elderly gentleman, a tall, thin, *distingué* looking man, bowed coldly

to Lord Lymington, while the lady coloured, as she acknowledged, by a formal bend of the head, the embarrassed salutation of my guardian.

“Strange that we should meet!” muttered he, when seated in his room, after a silence of some minutes. “Six and twenty years have now passed since last I saw her! What a change! She who used to look like a sylph, ay, and bound like one amid the parterre at her mother’s villa, now grown into that most abominable of all things—a stout lady. Faugh! The very term has something disgusting in it. And *he*, too, who was inclined to be fat, has grown into ‘the lean and slippered pantaloon.’ How she panted as her unwieldy figure toiled up stairs. Strange! strange! Had I married her, which I was so near doing, *I* might have been the father of that fine-looking young man and those beautiful girls! By-the bye, one of them greatly resembles what

she was. Well, I had a good escape ; for it would have been a horrid bore to find myself, while still a comparatively young man,—and he looked in the mirror complacently,—jostled out of gay life by a son arrived at manhood, and considering himself, as all grown-up sons do in these degenerate days, extremely ill used by his father continuing to keep him out of the estates of which he is longing to take possession.”

This soliloquy, uttered aloud, produced a smile from Mr. Rivers, which being noticed by Lord Lymington, he observed, “ I have been speaking aloud, have I not? I have a habit of doing so when anything excites me. You noticed that fat lady we met on the stairs, Mr. Rivers?”

“ Yes, my lord ; and a finer countenance I never beheld.”

“ If you had known her twenty-six years ago, you would have said a more lovely face could not be seen ! I was so entirely of this

opinion, that, after a courtship of some months' duration, I proposed, and was accepted by that lady. She was the only child of the Dowager Countess of Mellebrooke; had but a small portion, the estates of her deceased father having been entailed on a distant relative. She, however, was so universally admired and sought that she had refused no less than three very advantageous offers of marriage before I had made mine. Indeed, she acknowledged to me, after all the preliminaries for our marriage had been arranged, that a preference for me had led to their rejection. Yes; she was, I do believe, fondly attached to me. Poor thing! Did you observe how embarrassed she looked when I bowed to her? I dare say the poor woman, if the truth was known, still retains her early preference for me. Women, I believe, Mr. Rivers, never wholly conquer what is called their first love; but it is very different with men, as

I know by experience—the *last* love being that which we most appreciate.”

“ Not always, my lord. I have known instances where men continued through life to retain a lively interest in the object of their first attachment.”

“ I can't say that this has been the case with me. Thinking of one's early loves makes one feel so horridly old, while each new attachment gives the illusion of youth by exciting some of its emotions. The worst is, that after a certain age one's attachments are of such brief duration. In the person who seemed charming at first, we soon discover defects, and, disappointed, seek in a new object those perfections we expected to have found in the former.”

“ But may not the fault be in ourselves, my lord, in our blunted feelings, which, like the appetite of a sated epicure, require novelty to excite them?”

“ I am not given to search into *causes*,”

said Lord Lymington, " I am more prone to notice *effects*; and though there may be some truth in your remark, it is enough for me to know that a face, even though the loveliest in the world, no longer delights me, to make me seek another in order to renew the emotion at first caused by the former."

" But this system, if acted upon, would create great unhappiness in the world, my lord. What would be the feelings of a young and pure-minded girl if, after a man had won her affections, he was, when no longer captivated by attractions that had lost their novelty, to turn to some other object in search of it?"

" There may be something in that, Mr. Rivers; but, by Jove! I never viewed the business in so grave a light before. And, after all, a man must think of his own comfort before he considers that of the woman who may happen to love him. If, out of pity, he continues to shew her, after his

passion has ceased, the same kindness and attention she experienced when he loved her, *he* will be bored to extinction, and if he does not, *she* will, as you say, be, unhappy. If *one* is to suffer, surely you could not expect that a man would sacrifice his own happiness? I certainly would not mine. But to resume, and to prove to you the little faith I have in early attachments: I once loved the lady we met on the stairs; yes, positively loved her to folly, until she consented to marry me; yet I have not bestowed a thought on her for the last six and twenty years! Nevertheless now that we met so accidentally, all the events connected with our engagement come back as fresh to my memory as if they had occurred only yesterday; and, I dare say, that she also, poor woman! is at this moment thinking of the happy time when she looked forward to being my wife. You saw how she changed colour, did you not?"

“ I did not observe it,” my lord.

“ I did, poor soul! Heigh ho! By Jove! it nearly killed her.”

“ If not an indiscreet question, my lord, I should like to know how your marriage was broken off. The lady was not likely to prove faithless; and your lordship, I presume, was then as little disposed to inconstancy?”

“ *She* certainly did not; indeed, few women could have been inconstant to me, for I was considered to be the best-looking young fellow about town. Nor was I, according to my own opinion, faithless; although many people, and especially her family and friends, accused me of fickleness. Within two days of the one named for our nuptials, I forced her to a water-party, for which I had made such expensive preparations, that although the weather threatened rain, I was not willing to postpone it. Her mother, and indeed herself, objected to go, but I over-

ruled their objections, and carried the point. The day turned out to be wretched; she took a severe cold, and on the morrow was pronounced to be dangerously ill. Our marriage was consequently postponed; and when, after three or four weeks' confinement to her chamber, my intended bride was allowed to receive a visit from me, I found her totally altered in appearance, pale and thin, and with a cough which sounded like a death-knell in my ear. I consequently determined to await the result before I took any further step relative to our marriage. Not so her lady mother, who suggested to me, that as my betrothed was still delicate, and that a mild climate was recommended for her, she thought it very advisable that our nuptials should at once take place, and that we should depart for the South of Italy, where a winter's residence could not fail to restore the health of her daughter. I could not conceal the surprise and disapprobation

I felt at so preposterous a project, and advised, in preference to its adoption, that she should take her daughter to Italy, where I could join them whenever, if ever, her health was restored; but that to marry her at present, and so become a nurse instead of a bridegroom, was totally out of the question. Lady Mellebrooke chose to take this proposal ill, and be offended. She accused me of want of affection for her daughter, and I honestly stated, that when I offered my hand, the object of my affection was in good health, and in high beauty, while now she appeared to me to be in a consumption, and her beauty was certainly much impaired. Would you credit it, the mother became angry—said I could have no feeling to act in such a manner, regretted that her poor child, as she called her, had ever known me, laid the blame of her illness on the cold she had caught, owing to my obstinacy in forcing her to go on the water

on a bad day; and, in short, said a thousand unreasonable and absurd things. I grew angry, and declared I would never marry her daughter. She burst into tears, and asked me—nay, prayed me not to endanger the life of her child, by letting it be known, in her present weak state, that I had refused to fulfil my engagement to her, and I, good naturedly, consented to keep on the mask until her strength was a little restored, though secretly determined never to marry a woman of delicate health—a step which might not only interrupt the enjoyment of my life, by making my house an hospital, but might seriously endanger my own health and that of my posterity. To say the truth, my passion had greatly abated from the day I felt sure of her becoming mine. *Que voulez vous ?* I had been kept so long in suspense, she had so many suitors, and her mother was so scrupulous about the character of him who was to be the successful

one, that my feelings were wound up to the utmost pitch of excitement. Once accepted, and sure of her, the love daily, hourly, decreased, and all her other suitors being dismissed, I no longer experienced any of those fears which are as necessary to keep alive love as thorns are to guard the rose. But to resume my story: the invalid was persuaded by her mother that the marriage was prohibited for a year, by her physicians, and so she remained in perfect ignorance of my refusal to wed her. Lady Mellebrooke, the proudest and most stately dame that I ever happened to meet, but also the most dotting mother, was now obliged, while hating me for what she was pleased to consider my selfish conduct, to conciliate me, in order that my visits should not cease. My position was rather an awkward one, for her daughter, believing that she was to be my wife as soon as her health was restored, nay more, thinking that my

consent to the postponement of a year was a new proof of my affection, lavished on me all those nameless and indescribable attentions which the most pure-minded and modest young creatures can evince towards a betrothed husband, without losing the least portion of that delicacy and dignity which form so great an attraction in them. There was something positively touching in her manner towards me; so much so, that at times I was almost tempted to break through the resolution formed by my prudence, and by marrying her, acquire the right of accompanying her abroad, and watching over her health. At such moments, I used to catch her mother's scornful eye fixed on my face with an expression of contempt and dislike, that only subsided when they melted into pity for her deceived daughter, and large tears coursed each other down her pale face. My prudence, however, vanquished my temporary irresolu-

tion; and as I reflected on the anxiety and personal inconvenience to which I should be exposed by travelling with an invalid, I congratulated myself on my firmness; although when her mother demanded her portrait from me, it cost me a pang to resign it. The moment of parting was a very painful trial to her poor gentle soul, and a very awkward one to me. She wept on my shoulder as she whispered me not to be uneasy about her, and urged me to join her soon, while her stately mother looked daggers at me, and almost tore her daughter from my arms. She went abroad, and after some months, recovered. When her mother thought her strong enough to bear the shock, she broke to her my refusal to wed her, and her opinion of what she considered to be my unfeeling conduct. Women, even the oldest of them, Mr. Rivers, have such crochety notions about love. They fancy that everything else is to be sacri-

ficed for it, and when they can no longer excite the passion themselves, they take up arms for their female relatives and friends. A prudent man is, by them, sure to be accused of selfishness and want of feeling, &c., consequently, I conclude that I was not spared by Lady Mellebrooke when she told her daughter what had occurred between us. However that may be, although prepared for a letter of reproach, I heard no more of the fair girl to whom I really had been attached, until I received, through my bankers, a parcel containing my portrait, and all the *gages d'amours* which I had presented to Lady Mary when our marriage had been arranged. Not a line accompanied them, which, I own, rather surprised and somewhat mortified me. I heard by chance, from a person who had met them in Italy, that Lady Mary had a severe relapse, and was reduced nearly to the grave, and by comparing dates ascertained that this

must have been immediately after the disclosure made by her mother, and the return of my portrait and gifts. I expected no less, for the poor girl really loved me passionately, and so did I her at first, but her illness alarmed me for my future comfort. Well, the fair invalid was taken to place after place in Italy for change of air. People who met her told me that she was a complete wreck, with spirits broken, and little chance of living ; and then I congratulated myself that I had not married her. In three years after I went to Baden, and the first person I saw there was my old flame, looking more blooming than ever, which shews you that women don't die of love, whatever people may pretend. In a few hours afterwards, I learned that, even while in the delicate state of health I have described, she had won the affection of the Marquis of Leominster, who followed her, like her

shadow, whenever she moved, and became joint nurse with her mother. After two years unceasing assiduities, he was rewarded by her perfect recovery to health, and her fair hand; which was only accorded to him a few days before they left Italy for Baden, whither they had been recommended to repair for the benefit of her mother. I quitted the place next day, not wishing to encounter the stern gaze of the cold and stately Dowager Countess of Mellebrooke, or to awaken painful feelings in the breast of her daughter, who, I was fully convinced, still entertained for me a sentiment incompatible with her new duties. I have only occasionally heard of the Marchioness of Leominster since, and out of delicacy to her feelings have carefully avoided all intercourse, and now that she retains not even a trace of that elegant figure and lovely face which justified my youthful preference for her, I rejoice that the moving

mass of flesh so disagreeable to contemplate, is designated by any title rather than that of Lymington. Fancy me, who have so perfectly retained my figure—and he stood up to exhibit it—supporting on my arm such a woman as Lady Leominster now is. The very notion shocks me! And then the horror of having a young man, six feet high, with whiskers, calling me father, spending my money, and wishing me dead, that he might step into my shoes. Fancy *me* travelling about with an immensely fat wife, and two full-grown daughters, for whom husbands are to be found. The very thought appals me. I have been saved all this by my prudence, and have reason to be thankful for the escape.”

Lord Lymington looked disappointed at Mr. Rivers not paying him any compliment on his boasted prudence, while my preceptor, having walked to the window, made some remark on the weather. Inexperienced as I was,

the gross selfishness of my guardian shocked and disgusted me, and I felt surprised at the *naïveté* and self-complacency with which he related to an acquaintance of such short standing, a tale so little creditable to himself. It appeared, however, that far from being ashamed of his conduct, he was proud of it, and positively thought that instead of condemnation it was calculated to excite praise.

CHAPTER III.

PREVIOUS to embarking for our short voyage to Calais, Dr. Porson was directed by Lord Lymington to prepare whatever medicine or mixture he thought most likely to prevent sea-sickness; but although the Doctor explained the necessity of a slight and simple breakfast, in order to second the effect of the preventive he administered, his patient's habits of self-indulgence and epicureanism were too deeply rooted to yield to his representations. As luxurious a repast as could be prepared by Lord Lymington's cook, to

which the Peer did ample justice, defeated the effect of the Doctor's prescription. Before we had left the pier ten minutes, my guardian, with jaundiced face and rueful looks, muttered curses, not loud, but deep, at the inefficacy of the powders and draught he had swallowed; while Dunington shook his head, and said, "It was always the case with his lordship, who, although condemned to take the most nauseous medicine, and to submit to a system of starvation enough to endanger the health of a person of even the strongest constitution, escaped none of the annoyances which such a treatment was intended to preclude."

"Can you give me nothing to check this terrible sickness?" demanded Lord Lymington.

"I do not think, under the present irritation of the stomach, it would be safe to administer anything, my lord," answered the Doctor.

“ I must have something, for I cannot stand this suffering. Dunington, Dunington—Oh! oh!” A violent paroxysm of sickness prevented further speech; but the groans of the Peer were really piteous.

“ A drop of white brandy, my lord; it will really do your lordship good; do, my lord, taste it,” said Dunington, raising the glass to his master’s lips.

“ I cannot sanction this, my lord,” observed Doctor Porson. “ Unaccustomed as your lordship is to spirituous liquors, I foresee great danger in your having recourse to such a measure.”

“ So you will neither give me anything to relieve me yourself, nor allow me to take what is advised by another,” muttered Lord Lymington. “ Dunington—Oh! oh!” and another paroxysm more violent than the former followed.

“ Take it, my lord,” said the valet, looking triumphantly at the Doctor, and again

raising the glass of brandy to his lord's lips. It was drank with an avidity that produced so violent a fit of coughing, that a vessel in the chest gave way, and a sanguine stream flowed copiously from the mouth of the unfortunate Peer, who, before the vessel reached Calais, was in a state of insensibility, and expired shortly after. Nothing had been left undone by Doctor Porson in order to prolong the life of his patient; but his efforts, aided by those of another medical man who happened to be a passenger in the packet, were fruitless. Pale, and stupified by the blow, he remained sitting by the corpse, wholly absorbed by painful reflections; while Dunington, with clamorous grief, bewailed the loss of his dear lord, yet diligently occupied himself in opening writing-cases, dressing-boxes, and plate-chests; the contents of which he not only carefully noted, but partially abstracted

during the first hour of hurry and confusion that followed the sudden catastrophe.

The innkeepers of Calais, who were ranged on the pier, to solicit the custom of the passengers for their respective hotels, looked blank when told that the only passenger of distinction on board was a dead, instead of a living lord. They objected to receive the corpse, being of opinion that a lord who cannot eat or drink is not a profitable guest; and these same persons, who two hours, or even one hour previously, would have disputed for the honour of his presence at their hotels, now declined to allow his body a chamber. The captain of the packet waited on the public authorities, in order that a place might be assigned for the remains of the Earl to rest in, until a messenger was dispatched to England to his solicitor for instructions as to the interment.

Mr. Rivers seemed to be the only person

capable of acting in this dilemma; for Doctor Porson, stunned by the unexpected event that had taken place, had lost all presence of mind; and Dunington was so busily occupied by what he called "arranging his poor dear lost lord's effects," that he forgot to shew any respect to his corpse; which, still in the elegant habiliments in which the defunct had been clothed but a few hours before, was extended on the berth where he had been placed when the fatal rupture of the blood-vessel occurred. This was indeed a fearful death-bed scene! There lay the remains of the selfish voluptuary, who during life had thought only of self, and whose sole study had been to administer to the gratification of that now senseless body, which all shrank from with disgust. No fond and faithful wife, tried partner of youth, no affectionate son, or tender daughter, wept over the dead. No friend looked on the pale, marble-like face, and stark form, with mournful interest,

and no attached domestic watched the corse, and kept away the gaze of idle curiosity. Meet death for such a life as Lord Lymington's had been—a life in which friendship had been repelled lest it might entail trouble; love slighted, lest it might occasion pain; and gratitude never incurred, because on none did the departed confer those benefits which are calculated to awaken it.

Mr. Rivers ordered a coffin to be instantly prepared; and so short was the time allowed for its completion, that it was one of so very plain and simple a description, that had the deceased during life beheld such a bed assigned for the last resting-place of even the humblest of his menials, he would have turned from it with disgust. Yes, rude and unadorned was the narrow bed on which was to repose the pampered form of the Sybaritic voluptuary, whose slumbers in life a crumpled rose-leaf on his couch would have broken. Yet now "he slept well," in-

sensible that rough and strange hands placed him in his last bed; that loud and harsh voices talked of him as of common clay; that careless eyes looked on his marble face, scrutinized the *recherchés* habiliments, of which in donning them on the morning he had felt vain, and laughed unfeelingly as they noticed the artistically-made *toupet*, which when he was in life had passed for being the growth of his head, but in his agony had become twisted awry! How many brilliant projects for the future had he planned the preceding evening! What schemes for winters to come, to be passed in warm climates, to renovate his frame, and summers in cool ones to reinvigorate it; and now this man of immense wealth and high rank, who had never hitherto denied himself a gratification, however dearly it might be purchased at the expense of others, lay dead and unwept—his remains denied a lodging even in any of the hotels which

when living he would have deemed unworthy of his presence. This, then, was the end of the selfish man! How unlike that of my sainted mother—loved and mourned by all who approached her! The lesson made a deep and lasting impression on my feelings, and I prayed that my end might not be like his.

After much exertion, Mr. Rivers succeeded in obtaining permission that the body of Lord Lymington might be lodged in the church until instructions should arrive from England for its removal to the family vault; but previously to its being removed to the church, the civil authorities at Calais, owing to the suddenness of the death, insisted on an autopsy taking place, *malgré* the representations of Mr. Rivers and Doctor Porson, who in vain explained the natural causes that led to the event. Then again arose the difficulty of where this operation was to be performed, all the innkeepers

declining to suffer the body to be conveyed into any one of their houses. At length, the dissecting-room in the hospital was selected; and to it the rough wooden shell, dignified by the name of *cercueil*, with its contents, was taken, followed only by Mr. Rivers, Doctor Porson, and myself; the faithful Dunington seizing the opportunity afforded by our absence of removing sundry boxes, with his name legibly inscribed on the tops, and addressed to his private residence in London. The other domestics could nowhere be found, they having accompanied the cook to a wine-shop, where he had promised to act as their interpreter, and procure some of the wine of his country, the privation of which, during many months in England, he had so often deplored.

Poor Lord Lymington! how would he have shrank with horror and disgust, could he have seen the place into which his re-

mains were conveyed, and the bearers, six dirty porters, who hurried on with it, passing jokes, and laughing all the way. Mr. Rivers, when the body was taken into the dissecting-room, attended by Doctor Porson, who, out of respect to the deceased, would not leave it until the *autopsy* was over, and the coffin finally fastened down, accompanied me to an hotel, where, having partaken of some refreshment, of which I stood much in need, I retired to a chamber, and sought repose.

CHAPTER IV.

I HAD slept some hours, for the late events had greatly agitated and fatigued me, when I was awoke by voices in the next room, from which mine was only divided by a thin wooden partition.

“Have another bottle of wine, my friend,” said a voice that I instantly recognised to be Dunington’s.

“No, no; not no more. I have had mooch, vera mooch, *mon cher ami*. You Engenglish heads bear mooch wine, but we French cannot derink like you.”

“Psha’! another bottle will do you good; and I am so happy, I could drink half-a-dozen.”

“You Engalish are so drole. You derink ven you are unappy, to make you forget it; and ven you are appy, you derink also; always derink, *n’est-ce pas!*”

“Well, there is some truth in that, Monseer Vatlin, I must confess; but it is only natural that I should feel happy, for I am relieved from a service that I was heartily sick of; and egad, now it is over, I am surprised that I was able to stand it so long.”

“Vy, *mon ami*, I always did tink you had a most capitalest place. De old lord vera rich—not look too close at de bills, nor forbid de per centage, eh?”

“Why, with regard to that, he was a strange mixture of extravagance and stinginess.”

“Vat is steinginees? I know de extravagance vera vell, but not de oder.”

“Stinginess means meanness.”

“Means meanness. Vat is dat? Two vords just de same. Your langage is vera poor, *mon cher*—vera poor, indeed.”

“As rich as yours, mounseer, any day in the week; and if it is not, what is the matter of that? We English are ten times as rich as you French—ay, that we are.”

“But your reeches, of which you always do talk so mooch, cannot make de amende for de poverté of your langage.”

“Nor the riches of *your* language make amends for the poverty of your purses, mounseer.”

“Vell, let us not quarille, *mon cher*, about de trifles, *mais revenons a nos moutons*.”

“We were not talking of mutton, my good friend;—we were talking of one, however, who is, thanks to my stars, as dead as mutton, as we say in England—the Right Hon. George Frederick Augustus Netherby,

Earl of Lymington; Viscount Highcastle, and Baron Valleyford, of Lymington Abbey, in the county of Salop; Highcastle in Warwickshire, and Valleyford Park, in the county of Notts; Custus Rotulorum; K.G., and G.C.B., as the peerage has it."

"Vy, *ma parole*, I never did hear so many names and so many places belonging to von man. He vera great personage ven alive, but now noting,—not even so good as you or me, for, as de book say, 'dead lion not so good as living dog.'"

"He was no more of a lion, I can tell you, Mounseer Vatlin, than I am a dog, as you civilly were pleased to call me."

"No, I not call you dog. You not understand vot I say. I vont to tell dat de great man vonce he is dead, is not so good as de poor man who is alive; and I dare say your lord, wid so many names and so many places, vould be vera glad to give em all to be alive, as we are."

“ I don't know about that; but I do know that he was always saying he was tired of his life, and did not know what to do to amuse himself. He expected other people to amuse him whether he was in the humour or not, though he soon threw a damp on their gaiety by his gloominess and ill temper. He was a precious old fool, to be sure, that he was! He expected his doctor to keep him well when he would overload his stomach in a manner enough to destroy the effect of all his prescriptions; and expected me to dress him up to look young, when he was spoiling his shape by injuring his worn-out constitution by over eating. He expected, too, that every handsome young creature he saw ought to fall in love with him; and, what was still as difficult, was to inspire a passion in his breast, in which no love, except for himself, ever entered. He cared for no living creature, yet was offended if he thought people did

not like him; and when those who did not really know what a heartless creature he was, were inclined to pity his lonely state and low spirits, he would laugh in his sleeve, accuse them of having some design on him, and say all manner of spiteful things about them. He was as stupid as a goose, as cunning as a fox, as ostentatious as a spendthrift, and as mean as a miser. By flattering his vanity, which was so craving that he would swallow any compliment however gross, I could make him believe any tale I chose to invent against any of his acquaintances—for friends he had none! In short, there was nothing I could not make him do, except what was good—and against that he had a natural objection. As all his mornings were spent in getting himself up to pass for a young man,—a labour that no one possessed of a single idea or feeling would have submitted to,—he could not, or at least would not, receive

visitors, lest the mysteries of his toilette should be exposed. Hence the whole of his day was spent with me, and as he never read a page, or had any rational occupation, he depended solely on me for getting through the long and, to me, weary hours while he was making up. Ah! Vatlin, if you knew what a tiresome task it is to try to amuse a person that can hardly be made to understand a joke, and yet expects to be amused! When tired of flattering him, and inventing all manner of stuff to tell him, I used to be obliged to collect all the gossip in the neighbourhood from the other servants."

"*Mais* he paid you well for your services, Monsieur Dunnington, eh?"

"I took care of that, Mounseer, but if it had depended on him I should have got little, he was so stingy and sordid. Such, too, were his suspicions, that the most honest person could not have escaped his

mean surmises; and so weak and silly, that the most clumsy trickster could have cheated him. He would dispute for sixpence, while he lavished thousands of pounds on follies, and grudged every shilling that was not spent on his own person, or for his own indulgence. He was always falling in love, or rather fancying that he was; and while the fit lasted, which was never long, he was for marrying the object of his fancy; but as it would by no means suit my purpose that he should have a wife to share, or perhaps to dispute, my influence over him, I took especial care to discover or invent some reason why he should not wed the person he had chosen, so marriage after marriage was broken off. He was frequently on the point of being brought into court for breach of promise, or of meeting manual chastisement from the male relatives of the jilted ladies, solely because *I*, John Dunnington, Valet, did not choose that the Right

Honourable George Frederick Augustus Netherby, Earl of Lymington, Viscount Highcastle, and Baron Vallyford, should have a wife."

"Dis is strange, vera strange! Vat a fool dat lord, vid all dese fine names, moost be! You not find such a fool in all France, I can tell you, *mon cher!*"

"And not many in England, I do believe, Mounseer,—certainly not among noblemen or gentlemen of the right sort; but Lord Lymington was *not* of the right sort, which I soon discovered, and therefore took advantage of his weakness and badness."

"But you have saved moche money in his service, and those tings vat I helped you to send off dis day, make a fortune for you, *mon ami.*"

"Yes, not amiss—not amiss. And I have a round sum in the funds, and a good supply of plate laid by safe."

“ He has, I suppose, left you an ample provision in his testament; *n'est-ce pas?*”

“ Ay, there's the rub. Why, would you believe it, Vatlin, he was such a rogue and deceiver, that even in his will he has cheated those he pretended most to like?”

“ I not onderstand, *mon ami*. How can a man *triche* in his *testament*?”

“ He, however, found it easy enough, as you shall hear. He would say to whomever he intended to cheat, ‘ You will find, my good friend, that I have not forgotten you in my will.’ He would even shew the person the passage in which a handsome sum was bequeathed to him, and thus win the regard and gratitude of the legatee. He would then add a codicil annulling the legacy, and giving as a reason for so doing some libel on the unfortunate person. By these pretended legacies, and by shewing them, he secured a number of complaisant friends and toad-eaters, who submitted to his ca-

prices and vices for sake of the expected legacies. Even ladies were the dupes of this treachery; the worthy and unworthy alike. Those whose virtue he could not corrupt, will find their reputations stained by his will; for having named in it large bequests, expressly to imply a more than ordinary attachment to have subsisted between them, he adds a codicil, assigning some insulting cause for cutting off the bequest. Consequently, those who had no claim on his generosity, and never dreamed of its being extended to them, will with horror find themselves brought before the public as legatees, and, in a codicil, cut off for some alleged or implied crime. I have seen him laughing like a fiend, when he was noting down these legacies, and then adding codicils to destroy them. Now, as I never thought that making a will was a laughing matter, I was rather curious to know what occasioned my hopeful lord and master to be

so merry with regard to his. I took, therefore the liberty of opening his *escrutoire* one night while he slept; and there, sure enough, I saw that, not satisfied with deceiving people while he lived, he determined that even after his death they should experience his power. You can't imagine, Vatlin, what I felt when I read the codicils. The handsome sum left me in the will was annulled, with some spiteful remark against me that would for ever prevent me getting another place, if I wanted one. I was so angry, that for a moment I was tempted to knock him on the head while he slept; but, on second thoughts, I determined to defeat his treachery—and I have succeeded!"

"*Bien fait, bien fait, mon ami. Mais, how did you manage it?*"

"Why, the very next day I told him that I was very sorry, but that I must leave his service. Now, as I knew that he would rather make any sacrifice than let me go, I

being in all the secrets of his making up, and, in fact, the person who made him up for the day, I was sure he would never consent to part with me. He appeared thunderstruck, and asked why I thought of such a thing. I said that an opportunity of making my fortune presented itself; for that a handsome and permanent independence had been offered to me, if I would enter the service of a Nabob, who being bent on marrying a young English wife, wished to be made to look as youthful as possible; and having heard of my talents, selected me to effect this change."

"But I have left you an ample provision in my will, Dunington," said he.

"Yes, my lord, I know it; but your lordship is still a young man, and may, and I hope will, live for many years, but the Nabob, to whom I told your lordship's bequest in your will, has offered to give me the same sum, in ready money, and to pay

me two hundred pounds a-year more than your lordship allows me, and your lordship cannot expect me to miss such a chance of bettering myself. To be sure, I would rather stay with your lordship, for it was a pleasure to me to make your lordship look as youthful as any young nobleman in England, seeing that your lordship is naturally such a handsome nobleman, whereas the old Nabob is not at all good-looking, and is much older than your lordship, so that it will cost me a deal of time and trouble to make him up to look like a handsome young gentleman. Nevertheless, I'll do it; and I'll be bound, before I have been with him a fortnight I'll turn him out in elegant style. The only thing that vexes me is, that this Nabob has seen your lordship, and admired you, as every one does when you are dressed for the day; and he fancies that he resembles your lordship, and would much more so, if dressed exactly like you. Now he

knows that I am the only person that can manage this, so that no money will keep him from engaging my services.

“ This last hint settled the business. He immediately came into my terms, gave me a check for a larger sum than he would have paid to redeem all the friends he ever had in his life from ruin; and thus I defeated his roguish scheme for cheating me in his will. Not only did I do this, but ever since he has been in such dread of losing me, that he has been afraid to inspect my accounts as strictly as formerly, which has given me the power of laying on pretty large additions to the bills, and making guineas where I previously only made shillings. So you see, Mounseer Vatlin, that we English are not such fools, after all, notwithstanding that you foreigners imagine that you have got all the cleverness to yourselves. Hah! hah! hah! There is one thing I forgot to tell you, and which is the best joke of all—

hah! hah! hah!—I can't keep from laughing when I think of it. My respectable lord and master had a mistress, a poor young woman, who being in poverty, was tempted to sell herself to age and infirmity for bread. Well, the fancy, like all his fancies, once gratified, was soon over, and this poor girl, and she is really a pretty woman, was left, unpitied and neglected, by this unfeeling old reprobate. We took a fancy to each other, and she became so fond of me that I had great difficulty in persuading her to remain with my lord. She has two fine children, as nice boys, and as like your humble servant as it is possible to be, and the old fool—hah! hah! hah!—imagines they are his, and has provided for them and their mother, whom I intend to marry as soon as I go back to England.”

“ Vell, never, no never, I heard such tings. Dis dead lord vera bad man, vera

bad indeed; not one such a *sans cœur* in all France."

"O, for the matter of that, Mounseer, I dare say that there's bad and good in all countries; so don't be for trying to persuade me that the old chap who has just kicked the bucket was any worse than many others of the same stamp in France."

CHAPTER V.

IN due course of time arrived one of the executors of the deceased lord, attended by a London undertaker and his assistant, in deep sables, and well supplied with all that was deemed necessary to do honour to the mortal remains of the late earl. A cedar shell lined with rich white satin, and having a mattress and pillow of the same material, a leaden coffin, and a mahogany one, covered with crimson velvet, splendidly decorated with silver gilt ornaments, were borne in solemn state by the mutes in sables,

amidst the wondering and smiling crowd who flocked to the pier, and who jabbered that the *milor Anglois*, not satisfied with luxury in life, seemed desirous to transport it to the grave.

“The worms,” said they, “will pay no more respect to lords than to the poor; so *vive la gaieté!* The grave makes all equal. *Vive l’égalité!*”

Enough costly velvet, gilt nails, coronets, escutcheons, cushions with gold tassels, and all the other insignia peculiar to the funeral ceremonies of departed nobility, were landed, and consigned to the custom-house, as might have served to decorate the interment of some mighty sovereign; and the sum paid for duty for the entry of these gewgaws, destined to recross the same channel in three days after, might have maintained hundreds of the poor.

The executor, Mr. Sablethorpe, a proud and shy man, seemed by no means pleased

with the confidence reposed in him by the deceased earl, and left the entire arrangement of the ceremonials to the gentleman in sables and his satellites, who soon established themselves at the inn, under the auspices of the faithful Dunington, who already appeared to be on terms of the most familiar and friendly intercourse with them, and partook largely of the good things provided for their use. French wines were found too light and washy, as they termed it, for their palates; and, in lieu of them, sherry and port, *ad infinitum*, were put in requisition. The copious use of these beverages produced so exhilarating an effect on the gentlemen in sables, that their voices were heard loudly singing bacchanalian songs—their turbulent gaiety forming a striking contrast to the sombre hue of their garments.

Permission had been obtained by Mr. Rivers to have the mortal remains of Lord Lymington, after they were placed in the

aristocratic receptacles brought from London for the purpose, lodged within a church, which was soon draped with black by the undertaker and his assistants, when crowds flocked to behold the ostentatious exhibition.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sablethorpe, the executor, appointed two o'clock next day for the reading of the will; at which ceremony the presence of Dr. Porson, Mr. Rivers, and myself, was requested. The Doctor's countenance betrayed the hopes he indulged of having his services generously, if not munificently, rewarded by his late patient in the document about to be made known, and he indulged this hope the more sanguinely from the very limited yearly remuneration allowed him by the late lord. But I marked a smile of derision on the face of Dunington, as he noticed the Doctor's flushed cheeks when he received the summons to hear the will perused, which even had I not

heard him acknowledge to his crony, Vatin, that he had secretly read it, would have led me to conclude that he was not ignorant of its contents, and that he knew a severe disappointment awaited the Doctor.

Mr. Sablethorpe received us with a dignified formality, pointed to us to be seated, drew forth a cambric handkerchief, sat down, blew his nose, cleared his throat, and having unfolded the will, which had been previously opened in London, proceeded to read it with due emphasis.

“ I, George Frederick Augustus Netherby, Earl of Lymington, Viscount Highcastle, and Baron Valleyford, of Lymington Abbey, in the county of Salop; Highcastle, in the county of Warwickshire; and Valleyford Park, in the county of Notts; and Grosvenor-square, in London, being in sound mind, though in weakly health, do hereby will and devise the whole of my estates, funded property, jewels, plate, books, furniture, &c.,

&c., to the persons to be named in this my last will and testament; and I hereby acknowledge this to be my last will, and revoke all other wills or codicils I may have made, or caused to be made. I bequeath my estate of Lymington Abbey to the Honourable John Witherington, commonly called Lord John Witherington, as a memorial of the long friendship that has subsisted between us, and to descend to the heirs male, lawfully begotten of the said John Witherington, commonly called Lord John Witherington. But in case of the said Lord John Witherington dying without male heirs lawfully begotten, then I bequeath the said estate of Lymington Abbey, after the decease of the said John Witherington, commonly called Lord John, to Thomas Cecil, Marquis of Mountaincourt, and to revert to the male heir or heirs lawfully begotten of his body. I bequeath to my most esteemed and beloved friend, John Waldershaw, Esq., of Walder-

shaw Town, in the county of Bucks, and of Morlington, in the county of Durham, in proof of my affection for him, my estate of Highcastle, in the county of Salop; and my messuages, lands, and tenements in the said county, with all rents and arrears of rents that may be due at my decease, to have and to hold the same in trust for Mrs. Dorothy Tomkins, *alias* Moffat, for her sole and separate use, during the life of the said Dorothy Tomkins, *alias* Moffat, to revert at her death to George Fitzheny, Earl of St. Amand, and the heirs lawfully begotten of his body. And I bequeath to my esteemed friend, John Waldershaw, Esq., as a memorial of our long and uninterrupted friendship, the sum of fifty pounds, to buy a mourning ring. I bequeath to William Henry, Baron Stuteville, my estate of Valleyford Park, and in reversion to his heirs lawfully begotten of his body; but in case the said William Henry, Baron Stuteville

shall die without issue, I desire that the said estate of Valleyford Park revert to Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbleton, for her sole and separate use, independent of her present or any future husband she may have. I desire that the portrait of the said Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbleton, which will be found in my escrutoire, may be sent to the husband of the said Viscountess Wimbleton; and I desire that at her decease the said estate revert to her fourth son, George Frederick Augustus Acton. And I desire that at my death my executors deliver to the said Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbleton, should she be then living, a box they will find directed to her; and should the said Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbleton, be dead, I desire that the said box and its contents may be destroyed by my executors, without any examination of the contents of the same. I leave also unto the said Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbleton, the sum of

five hundred pounds, to buy a mourning ring; and to her fourth son, George Frederick Augustus Acton, the half-length portrait of me, painted by the late Sir Joshua Reynolds. I bequeath to the Lady Mary Verener ten thousand pounds, for her sole and separate use, independent of her present or any future husband; and I desire that a red box, marked letters "M. V." may be sent to her. I bequeath to my friends Lord Grumblestone and Sir Edward Hawthornden, Bart., the sum of fifty thousand pounds, to be held in trust for Mrs. Anne Bloxham, otherwise Mullenger; to whom I also bequeath my star of the Order of St. Michael. I bequeath to my cousin, Gustavus Adolphus Netherby, the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, and two of the pictures of my collection, to be selected by him. I bequeath to Miss Amelia Higginbotham the sum of thirty thousand pounds, and the small diamond necklace that be-

longed to my mother. To my faithful servant, John Dunington, I bequeath twenty thousand pounds, and the plainest of my tea-services in silver. I bequeath to Mrs. Olivia Cotsmere, fifty thousand pounds; and to each of her daughters, ten thousand pounds each, and the whole of my mother's diamonds (save and except the small necklace bequeathed to Miss Amelia Higginbotham), to be equally divided between the said Mrs. Olivia Cotsmere and her said daughters. To Dr. Porson I bequeath ten thousand pounds; and to each of my servants a year's wages. All the wines in my cellars I bequeath to Lord Bromptonville; and my plate and full-length portrait, by Romney, I bequeath to the Marchioness of Leominster, on condition that my arms are not to be effaced from the same. To Lord Grumblestone, Sir Edward Hawthornden, Bart., and Thomas Sablethorpe, Esq., my executors, I bequeath the sum of ten thousand pounds.

each. Witness my hand and seal this tenth day of October, 1811.

LYMINGTON.

Witnessed by { ROBERT HEARNDALE,
HENRY PINCOTT.

Codicil.—I bequeath to Mrs. Olivia Cotsmere ten thousand pounds, exclusive of the fifty thousand pounds previously bequeathed to her.

LYMINGTON.

January 9th, 1813.

Codicil.—I bequeath to Amelia Higginbotham the sum of seven thousand pounds, exclusive of the thirty thousand pounds formerly bequeathed to her.

LYMINGTON.

Sept. 4th, 1813.

Codicil.—I revoke the bequest of twenty-five thousand pounds to my cousin, Gus-

tavus Adolphus Netherby, for his refusal to associate with my friend Mrs. Olivia Cotsmere and her amiable daughters.

LYMINGTON.

April 7th, 1814.

Codicil.—I annul the bequests made to my servant, John Dunington, I having already liberally remunerated his services.

LYMINGTON.

June 13th, 1814.

Codicil.—Having had reason to be dissatisfied with the persons named in my will, and entertaining a bad opinion of them, I revoke all bequests made to them both in my will or the codicils since made, and bequeath my whole fortune in landed estates, funded property, jewels, plate, wines, books, pictures, marbles, and furniture, to Mrs. Anne Bloxham, otherwise Mullinger, and her two infant sons, baptized, the elder,

George Frederick Netherby, and the second, Augustus Henry Netherby, each of whom, on reaching his majority, is to receive an allowance of ten thousand a year, and at their mother's death, the reversion of the property bequeathed to her, which is to be equally divided between them.

LYMINGTON.

March 4th, 1815.

Witnessed by { THOMAS WINNINGTON.
CHARLES COTTENHAM."}

Never shall I forget the countenance of poor Doctor Porson, as he listened to the reading of the will, in the monotonous tone of Mr. Sablethorpe. When the bequest of ten thousand pounds to himself was read, his face brightened up, his chest seemed to expand, and his whole aspect changed, and continued to bear the impression of happiness. But when the revocation of all the bequests in the will was pronounced in the

last of the codicils, he became deadly pale, and his whole appearance underwent a total revolution, gloom and dismay clouding his countenance, while his hands were involuntarily clasped convulsively together. A malicious smile played around the lips of Dunington, but at the reading of the last codicil, bequeathing the whole of Lord Lymington's fortune to Mrs. Anne Bloxham, otherwise Mullinger, his eyes sparkled, his cheeks flushed, and his lips distended, with a joy too powerful to be concealed, although it was evident he wished to repress its exhibition.

“ This is a curious will,” said Mr. Sablethorpe, wiping his face with his cambric handkerchief, and folding up the parchment. “ I was not aware that the deceased Earl had any attachment, or any family. This said Mrs. Anne Bloxham, otherwise Mullinger, is now about the most wealthy

woman—lady, I meant to say—in England, if not in Europe.”

Dunington rubbed his hands, and seemed longing to say, “and this wealthy lady will be my wife, and her sons are mine!”

Two days after the reading of the will, the body of Lord Lymington was removed to England for interment, attended by Mr. Sablethorpe, Dr. Porson, Dunington, the cook, footmen, undertaker, and his sable assistants, followed to the pier at Calais by an immense crowd of idlers, attracted by the ostentatious display of the funeral procession.

Mr. Rivers decided on our remaining at Calais until he had consulted Lord Warminster, my only surviving guardian, as to his wishes relative to my future movements; and now left to ourselves, my preceptor failed not to draw my attention to the effects of self-indulgence and egotism, as ex-

emplified in the case of Lord Lymington, whose life was spent in sensuality, and whose noble fortune, instead of doing good, had only ministered to his evil passions, and would now only enrich the unworthy.

CHAPTER VI.

IN due time came a letter from Lord Warminster, authorizing Mr. Rivers to conduct me to any part of the Continent he thought fit, and to remain abroad as long as he deemed it necessary for my bodily or mental improvement. His letter concluded by hinting that "the delicacy of his health precluded him from taking any personal part with regard to his ward, and that he hoped Mr. Rivers would give him as little trouble as possible on the subject."

Lucky was it for me that my preceptor

was worthy the confidence reposed in him by my sole surviving guardian—a confidence not founded on any knowledge of Mr. Rivers's character or conduct, of which he was totally ignorant, but proceeding wholly from his perfect indifference towards the ward forced on his notice, and in whose fate and fortunes he was determined to take as little interest or trouble as possible. He referred Mr. Rivers to his solicitors, Messrs. Newcull and Bracebridge, of Lincoln's Inn, to whom he had assigned the management of his guardianship, and with whom Mr. Rivers was to communicate whenever occasion required.

We remained at Paris some weeks, and made the tour of the South of France, the climate of which soon re-established my health. We visited Nismes, and examined its precious antiquities—the Maison Carrée, Amphitheatre, Gate of Augustus, Temple of Diana, and La Tour Maine; the history of

each and all my preceptor explained to me with an erudition worthy of ears more capable of appreciating it than mine then were; for Mr. Rivers was not more deeply versed in the science *de bouche* than in that of architecture and antiquity, both of which he had studied *con amore*. From Nismes we proceeded to Arles, saw its Amphitheatre and Museum, and then went to St. Remy; near to which stand the Triumphal Arch and Mausoleum, so justly celebrated. We then pursued our route to Italy, where three years passed happily and fleetly, engaged in classical pursuits and researches; in which we were assisted by some of the learned friends of Mr. Rivers, with whom he had formed acquaintance during his previous *séjour* there. Accustomed to the society of persons so much older than myself, I then imbibed that taste for sober and rational conversation, which has never since left me; and that love for reading which still forms

the greatest pleasure of my life, and renders me, though not averse from, independent of society. Mr. Rivers had wished me to enter college, but to this step I entertained so insuperable an objection that he ceased to urge its adoption, and contented himself with devoting his whole time and thoughts to the development of my mind, and the storing it with information and instruction. The hours spent in our rides and walks were never wasted in idle talk, or common-place observations. He would direct our rambles to some spot rendered remarkable by historical association, and drawing forth from his pocket the book that related the event, he would read it aloud to me, while my eyes dwelt on the objects around—objects, particularly those of nature, little changed from the period in which the incidents he perused had occurred. We read the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire at Rome, and

often visited the sites referred to by the historian. But while making me appreciate the vast learning, laborious research, and patient investigation of Gibbon, he taught me to disapprove the sneering scepticism of the free-thinker, and the sarcasms aimed by him at revealed religion. Mr. Rivers possessed that most inestimable blessing, a happy temperament, which, while it made him satisfied with himself, disposed him to be so towards others, and rendered him a cheerful and entertaining companion. We lived on the most cordial terms; for no pedantic air of superiority ever marked his manner when correcting an erroneous opinion, or laying open the vast stores of information he had acquired. Those were happy days, and I felt that they were so, even while enjoying them; but their calm and sober happiness was not long to last. The gusts of passion were now about to

ruffle the even tenour of that life which had, during the last three years, rolled on smoothly if not happily.

Anxious to see the celebrated temples at Pæstum, Mr. Rivers and I left Naples, and devoted the first day of our journey to viewing Nocera, the Nuceria of the ancients, and its church of Santa Maria Maggiore. The knowledge of Mr. Rivers in antiquarian lore not only relieved me from the prosy and illiterate explanations of the ignorant cicerone, but enabled me to judge of the different hypotheses relative to the original use of this building, now dedicated to Divine worship. I leaned to that which supposes it to have been a temple, although the octagon basin in the centre, surrounded by eight small marble columns, has led some antiquarians to imagine it to have been a bath. The columns of oriental alabaster and *verd antique* that decorate the church are of rare beauty, and vouch for the grandeur of Nu-

ceria when they were erected. We saw the ruins of the castle from which the proud and vindictive Urban VI. fulminated his excommunications against the besieging Neapolitan army, commanded by Otho of Brunswick, fourth husband of Jane of Naples, the first queen of that name.

We proceeded, the next day, to La Cava, the situation of which is truly romantic, and the town itself, with its arcaded street, is at once neat and picturesque. The environs at every turn of the road reminded us of the pictures of Salvator Rosa, many of which are faithful copies of the wild and beautiful scenery around us, among which he is said to have loved to wander.

As we paused before a rude cliff overhanging the sea, above which rose a huge and distorted trunk of a tree, whose leafless branches were widely extended, Mr. Rivers observed that it only wanted a brigand or two to render this picture a complete Sal-

vator Rosa one. "I'll be sworn I've seen this identical spot on his canvas," continued he.

Scarcely had he ceased speaking, when female cries were heard, and in another moment a boat, hitherto unseen, was rowed from out a cavern in the rocks beneath us, in which a youthful and slight girl was forcibly held down by a man; while two others plied their oars, and impelled the boat rapidly along. The cries of the girl became fainter every moment, as the bark receded from the shore; but not so those of a woman, whose piercing shrieks seemed to come from the cavern which the boat had quitted.

"There is some foul play here, I am persuaded," said Mr. Rivers; "let us endeavour to reach the cavern."

We soon discovered some rude steps cut in the rock, and descending them as quickly as we could, and not without considerable

personal risk, we reached the cavern, to which we were guided by the cries of a woman, whom we found extended on the sandy floor of a large natural grotto, her hands and feet tied by ropes. To release her was the work of a few minutes, and while doing so, we gathered from her wild and incoherent ravings, that while she and a young lady she named as Mademoiselle Selina, were seated in the grotto, the latter engaged in drawing, a boat approached the entrance, out of which three men jumped, one of whom seized her *chère demoiselle*, while the other two had, in spite of all her resistance, thrown her on the earth, and tied her in the savage manner we had found her, of the cruelty of which her arms bore evidence.

“ *O, ma chère demoiselle, ma chère et belle demoiselle!*” exclaimed she, while tears flowed abundantly down her flushed cheeks. “ Look, here is her *esquisse*, her vat you call drawing. See how beautiful it

is. *O, mon Dieu, ayez pitié, de moi et rendez moi ce cher ange !*"

We now learned that this poor woman was the governess of "Mademoiselle Selina," that they had been residing for some weeks at La Cava, and had occasionally, by the desire of her "*pauvre cher ange,*" explored the picturesque sites and natural grottos in the neighbourhood; Mademoiselle making drawings of those which most pleased her. The one before us was an admirable sketch, and proved, not only the talent of the young lady, but the excellence of the master who had cultivated it. To Mr. Rivers's questions as to who the man was who had carried off the young lady, or what his motive could be, the Frenchwoman replied, that she had occasionally seen him, within the last four days, loitering about, but had no idea who he could be. She stated that he was a man of about

forty-eight or fifty, of very dark complexion, and with a peculiarly bad countenance.

“ Was he at all known to Mademoiselle ? ” asked Mr. Rivers.

“ Not von bit in de vorld, ” answered the weeping Frenchwoman.

“ Has Mademoiselle no parents, no brother ? ” inquired Mr. Rivers.

“ *Helas!* she have von fader, who is not like von fader. He not lof her moch. *malgré* she is von *ange de beauté et de bonté!* ”

“ You surely are not without some protector at La Cava, or, at least, a male servant ? ” demanded Mr. Rivers.

“ Ve have von *femme de chambre et valet*; but, *malheureusement*, ve did send him to Naples dis morning to de *banquier* for money, which is de raison ve come here alone; every oder day he follow our steps.”

We advised the Frenchwoman to return

with us as rapidly as she could to her lodging; and proposed that we should dispatch a man on horseback to Salerno, another to Amalfi, a third to Castellamare, a fourth to Sorrento, and a fifth to Naples, to convey information of the abduction to the civil authorities, and to have the police sent in pursuit of the fugitives. Mr. Rivers wrote to the English minister at Naples to report the fact, a step he thought it right to take, when informed by the old Frenchwoman that her *chère demoiselle*, though brought up in France, was English.

“What is the young lady’s name?” inquired Mr. Rivers.

“Somers—Miss Selina Somers,” replied the *gouvernante*.

Before leaving the grotto, I found an opportunity, when unobserved, of seizing a glove that had been left near the drawing of Miss Somers; and furtively concealing it in my breast, I felt as if I had possessed

myself of a treasure. The drawing I would also gladly have appropriated to myself, but Madame de Stourville — for so was the Frenchwoman named — took it, and, pressing it to her lips, again renewed her tears. See her litteel foot, vat litteel mark it make in de sand," said she, pointing to the impression of foot-marks, which, as she justly observed, must have been made by little feet; for the fabled slipper of Cinderella was larger then the small shoes that left the marks before us. How I longed to examine the glove in secret, and see if the hand accorded with the delicacy of the feet, as indicated by the impressions in the sand! Oh! youth, ever prone to love, how quickly is the imagination enlisted to form idols for the heart to worship! Already did mine throb more rapidly; and for one whose face was unknown to me, whose very name I had only learned a few minutes before, and of whose person I knew nothing,

except that her foot-marks and glove were the smallest I had ever seen, and that her *gouvernante* pronounced her to be “*un ange*.” But then, how many *gouvernantes* had I not, during my stay in Florence and Rome, in the presence of their *élèves*, or the parents of their *élèves*, heard call their young ladies beautiful, charming, &c., when the said young ladies possessed not a single claim to merit such commendations. Yet there was something that whispered to me that *this gouvernante* spoke the truth; for nothing less than extreme amiability, joined to beauty, could have rendered Madame de Stourville so fondly attached to Miss Somers, as her deep grief at her loss proved her to be. It might have been, perhaps, the romantic incident of the young lady being forcibly carried off, that excited this sudden passion in my youthful breast—the first that had ever yet ruffled its happy calm; for, unlike the generality of persons of my age, I had

never experienced any of the boyish flames lighted by pretty *femmes de chambres*, *piquantes grisettes*, or smiling retailers of gloves and watch-ribbons, who make such havoc on the hearts of school-boys and young collegians. No, the refinement and exquisite charm of my poor dear lost mother's manners and sentiments had created such an indelible impression on my mind, that I shrank from coarse associations; and a pretty face, or well-turned figure, if accompanied by vulgarity, had no attraction for me. This first idol, therefore, found the temple in which I was ready to enshrine her unprofaned. No incense had ever burned there before; no pæans had ever echoed there for another. And she was borne from me by rude hands—was exposed to insult, to violence,—and I was powerless to save her,—might never see her more! I tried to stretch my imagination into the belief that her form and face had been re-

vealed to me, as struggling with the dark stranger I saw her white drapery agitated, and heard her vain shrieks for help during the brief interval before the boat had disappeared. But still I had no distinct notion of her, and therefore was compelled to accept as fact Madame de Stourville's vague assertion that she was an angel. A woman's shriek I had never previously thought could be harmonious; but hers seemed still to ring in my ears, and to possess a peculiar charm. Nevertheless, on reflection, I could not precisely remember whether it had made this impression on me when I had actually heard it, or whether I fancied that it was replete with music, when I listened to the *gouvernante's* declaration of her perfections, and beheld the fairy-like footsteps imprinted on the sand.

Madame de Stourville, supported by Mr. Rivers and me, and still weeping and trembling with emotion, at length reached

her abode. It was a simple but neat dwelling, scrupulously clean. Books, a guitar, drawings, and an abundance of flowers, were its chief ornaments, and seemed to constitute the occupations of its late inmate. A fresh gush of tears fell from the eyes of Madame de Stourville as she entered the little sitting-room, only left three hours before with her *chère demoiselle*, and which so forcibly reminded her of that young lady. She sobbed aloud, as her eyes turned to the drawings scattered on a table near the window; the guitar with a sheet of music laid by it, and some delicate needle-work half finished.

There is something peculiarly attractive to men of refinement in the sight of the chamber of a young and pure-minded woman—that chamber in which her innocent avocations are pursued, her gentle thoughts indulged, her half-formed hopes cherished, and her prayers to the Deity offered up. The one in which we now stood seemed invested at

least with sanctity; and Mr. Rivers, as he glanced on the Bible, placed apart on a small table, with its neatly-stitched velvet case, whispered to me, "The presence of this sacred book assures me that the young person who has so strongly excited our interest is worthy of it."

I could have embraced him for having said this, as I fancied it was a tacit permission to love the unknown who had already made so deep an impression on my imagination, if not on my heart. Madame de Stourville observing Mr. Rivers regarding the holy volume, said, "Yes, that book she read every day; and while she did so, I loved to look on her beautiful face, which resembled a Madonna of Raffaele, so angelic was its character and expression. *Ah! mabelle et bonne Mademoiselle Selina!*—who could have believed that she would have thus been torn from me!"

The English minister at Naples imme-

diately took up the case of Miss Somers, and instituted the strictest search for her; but several days passed without bringing any tidings; and the alarm and anxiety of Madame de Stourville increased to such a degree, that her health evidently began to suffer. Mr. Rivers had so much compassion for the poor woman, that he postponed our departure until she should become better; and her entreaties to us not to desert her were so urgent, that his humanity and good nature disposed him to comply with her reiterated request. Madame de Stourville sometimes thought of proceeding to Naples, there to await the result of the search making in every direction for her fair *eleve*; but then came the reflection, that should a possibility exist of Miss Somers escaping, she would assuredly direct her flight to La Cava, and not finding her *gouvernante* there, would be at a loss to know whither to proceed—a reflection that decided her to

remain where she was. My anxiety about the fair unknown knew no bounds. I would wander by the sea-shore, watching every boat that approached, in the vain hope that it might contain her, or at least bring some tidings of her fate. What that fate might be, I trembled to think; for the most fearful presentiments filled my mind by day, and haunted my dreams by night, banishing every other thought. Yet a feeling, scarcely definable even to myself, prevented me from acknowledging the powerful interest excited by Miss Somers; and so great was my reserve on this point, that Mr. Rivers more than once accused me of indifference to the subject which occupied all my thoughts, and imagined that the gloom which weighed me down proceeded from my dissatisfaction at being detained so long at such a dull place as La Cava.

CHAPTER VII.

WE had almost ceased to hope for intelligence, the efforts of the English minister and the Neapolitan police having failed to procure any, when I observed, as I sat on a rock by the sea-shore, a small boat approaching, rowed by two fishermen, in which a figure, wrapped in a dark cloak, was seated. As the boat neared the shore, I advanced, as I had frequently done on previous occasions, and stood on the spot where it was evident the men intended to land. I felt unusually agitated, and could with difficulty

restrain myself from hailing them; but when, having pushed the boat on shore, one of them assisted the person wrapped in the cloak to land, and I saw the delicate feet of a woman, although the rest of the person was concealed, I could no longer resist exclaiming, "Do I indeed behold Miss Somers!"

"Yes, that is my name," was pronounced in the most dulcet accents that had ever before blessed my ears; "and as you know me, can you tell me where is Madame de Stourville?"

"Let me conduct you to her," said I, offering my arm, which she seemed inclined to accept; but the two boatmen, civilly, but firmly, declared that they would be her escort until they had safely lodged her with the signora to whom she belonged. They did not, however, object to my walking by the side of one of them, Miss Somers walking between the two.

"You must not feel offended," said she,

“at the determination of my humble but worthy protectors to resign me only to my friend, Madame de Stourville. They have rescued me from the cruel man who forced me from my *gouvernante*, and have treated me with a kindness and humanity for which I must ever be grateful.”

The peasant-cloak in which Miss Somers was enveloped allowed little of her form to be seen, and concealed nearly the whole of her face; but her beautiful eyes sparkled beneath the hood that shrouded her countenance, and would have rendered any face lovely. When we approached near the cottage inhabited by Madame de Stourville, Miss Somers, with a thoughtfulness not often to be found in persons so young, suggested the propriety of my going on to announce her return to Madame de Stourville, lest that kind friend might suffer from the agitation likely to be produced by the sudden apparition of her *élève*. I hurried on to

the house, and notwithstanding that I endeavoured to assume a calm and collected air, Madame de Stourville, on looking at me, exclaimed, "*Ah, mon Dieu!* he has heard something of *ma chère mademoiselle!* *Oui, oui,* he has, I am *convaincue*, heard news of joy!"

"You are right, madam, in your suppositions," said I. "I have good news to communicate. Miss Somers is safe!"

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! je vous remercie!*" exclaimed the *gouvernante*, falling on her knees, with her eyes filled with tears of joy and gratitude, while she fervently prayed for a few minutes. She arose, tremulous with emotion, and asked whether she could not go to her *chère demoiselle*.

"There is no occasion," answered I, "for Miss Somers will soon be here."

"*Est-il possible? O quel bonheur, quel bonheur, mais quand sera-t-elle ici!*" exclaimed she.

“ In a few minutes you will see her,” said I.

The good-hearted Frenchwoman ran and embraced me, then repeated the same ceremony to Mr. Rivers, and flew to the door, at which Miss Somers and her two self-constituted guardians at that moment presented themselves. It would be a difficult task to describe the exuberant joy of Madame de Stourville, exhibited by alternately embracing her charming *élève*, bursting into tears, expressing the most fervent ejaculations of thanks to Providence, and to the two boatmen who, under its divine instigation, had rescued her.

Mr. Rivers and I were presented to the young lady by her *gouvernante*, with flattering eulogiums on the kindness we had exercised towards her when overwhelmed with alarm and grief at the *enlèvement* of her *cher ange*; she would, she declared, without our pity and good nature, have gone mad.

Vainly would my pen essay to paint the rare beauty of Miss Somers. Never had I beheld so lovely a face, or so faultless a figure. Even Mr. Rivers, the cold and reasonable Mr. Rivers, was astonished at the pre-eminent loveliness of this charming young creature. Her face was of a perfect oval, the features exquisitely chiselled, her complexion delicately fair, and her small, but full lips, of a rich crimson tint, made it look still fairer. Her eyes were of a deep blue, and the dark fringe that shaded their snowy lids, as well as the beautifully defined brows, of a silky texture almost approaching to black, rendered her countenance peculiarly striking. Her hair, of a golden brown, and parted, *à la Madonna*, on her finely sculptured forehead, was bound round the back of her small and exquisitely formed head. Her throat was white as milk, this simple simile offering the only image that at once gives a notion of its softness and purity.

Her bust and waist were of admirable proportions, slight, yet rounded, and possessing that flexibility and grace so rarely found united; and her hands and feet might have served as models to the finest sculptor. Her smile was irresistible, and betrayed teeth, small, even, and white as pearls; for however hacknied the comparison may be, I can find no other that would be applicable to them. If before I had seen Miss Somers I had allowed my imagination, if not my heart, to be so touched by her fancied charms, what must have been my feelings when I now beheld her, far, oh! how infinitely superior to the fairest dream I had ever indulged about her! I could have knelt and worshipped her, as I drank in large draughts of love from her wondrous beauty, and listened to the dulcet sounds of her matchless voice. I was confused—bewildered—speechless!

“Vy, you say noting, noting at all in

all dis joy; you not velcome *ma chère demoiselle, Monsieur?*" said Madame de Stourville, having noticed with surprise my stupidity.

Miss Somers looked towards me, and whether she guessed that my embarrassment proceeded from any cause rather than indifference, or that the natural modesty and reserve of her nature led to it, I could not pretend to say, but a bright blush rose to her delicate cheeks as she met my gaze, and in an instant her long dark eye-lashes were cast down, as if to conceal the beauteous suffusion.

It was some time before the exuberant joy of Madame de Stourville permitted Mr. Rivers to question either Miss Somers or her rescuers relative to her escape. When at length the good lady became more calm, Miss Somers told us that she was conveyed to the Island of Ischia, before landing at which, the person who had forcibly carried

her from La Cava, declared to her that if she attempted to denounce him, or claim protection from any one they might chance to meet, he would inflict the heaviest punishment on her, as she was now wholly in his power. This person she described as being rather good-looking than otherwise. He had mustachios, a long beard, and large whiskers. He was tall and athletic, spoke Italian fluently, but with a foreign accent, and seemed of a brutal nature, for he aggravated her terrors by the unmanly threats he had made use of to her. It was clear that he had represented her to the two boatmen whom he had employed as his wife, who had eloped from him with an admirer; for he frequently addressed them with remarks on the sinfulness of so young a creature having broken her marriage vows, and having left so good and indulgent a husband as he professed himself to have been. He prepared them for her denial of this state-

ment, by saying that, although so youthful, she was so hardened a sinner, that she would deny being his wife, and that he feared she was irreclaimable. When she, shocked at this falsehood, declared her innocence, and asserted that she had never previously seen him, he turned up his eyes, and said to the men, " You see, my friends, it is as I told you, she is utterly callous and hardened." On landing, she was hurried through vineyards and by-paths, the three men guarding her, and avoiding the hamlets that lay in their route, until they reached a lone house, inhabited by a very deaf old man, with whom, it appeared, the individual who had carried off Miss Somers had been lodging some weeks.

" You see I have brought away my wife," bellowed he; but it was not until he had three times repeated them that his host could hear them. Miss Somers was led up stairs to an humble, but clean, room,

the windows of which were secured by iron bars, and the door by strong bolts on the exterior. In it she found a change of clothes, of a plain and homely kind, such as are worn by the female peasants in the environs of Naples, and which her persecutor told her she was to put on next day. He then placed some bread, grapes, and water, in the room, left her, carefully securing the fastenings of the door, the key of which he took with him, and having remained some time in an adjoining chamber, she heard him descend the stairs, and soon after leave the house. As the heavy door clapped after him, she ran to the window, and saw, to her surprise, that his appearance was totally changed. No longer did he wear the mustachios, huge whiskers, long beard, and elfin locks, which she had seen so short a time before, and which it was now evident he had used as a disguise. So great an alteration did their absence produce on

his appearance, that it was only by a peculiarity in his gait that she was able to recognise him. His dress too was wholly different, for now it was that of a gentleman; but his face she could not see, as his back was turned towards her, although she watched him until his figure was lost in the distance. The house remained perfectly quiet for the rest of the evening. She heard the old man fasten the windows and doors, and then all was silent, and she addressed herself to the Almighty to pray for protection under the trials to which she had been so unexpectedly exposed.

“ I prayed for you too, dear Madame de Stourville,” said the charming girl; “ a stranger, and left alone, your poor Selina snatched away from you! and Heaven be praised, my prayers were not heard in vain; for I find God has raised up for you kind friends to console and aid you in my absence. Two days passed before I again saw that

dreaded man. When he entered my chamber, he had resumed the mustachios, whiskers, beard, and elfin locks, and his countenance was even more ferocious than before. I ventured to expostulate with him, and to implore to be restored to my *gouvernante*. But he only mocked my supplications, laid down a fresh supply of bread, grapes, and water, left the room, securing the door as before; and soon after I heard him leave the house, and, as on the former occasion, shorn of his locks, moustachios, whiskers, and beard."

A week rolled away in this manner. O! what long dull days were those! Every second day this hateful man returned to supply me with fresh provisions, and at each visit he observed the same precautions as before; but seemed still more moody and savage in his humour. The day after his last visit, I, for the first time since my arrival, heard strange voices in the house.

I became dreadfully alarmed, concluding that my persecutor had returned with some of his creatures to take me away to some new and worse prison, when a pebble was thrown against my window; and on approaching it, judge of my surprise and joy when I beheld the two boatmen who had several times rowed you and me, my dear Madame de Stourville, in our little excursions here. They instantly recognised me, and immediately set about forcing open the door of my prison—a task they found more difficult than they expected. O! how I trembled lest that fearful man should arrive before they had accomplished it; but, fortunately, this did not occur, and in a quarter of an hour I saw the door fall to pieces before the vigorous blows of my deliverers. I then learnt that they were two brothers, nephews to the deaf old man, who had been imposed on by the falsehoods of my enemy. Having taken a holiday to visit their uncle, they found that he had a lodger, and by

inquiries ascertained that a young woman was a prisoner in the chamber above. Coupling this information with the fact of my having been forcibly carried off from La Cava, it instantly occurred to them that the prisoner might be no other than me; and having ascertained this fact, they determined to rescue me, and restore me to my dear Madame de Stourville. The old man, fearful of the vengeance of my persecutor, accompanied his nephews and me to the priest's house, in the next hamlet, where we left him; and my rescuers, having placed me in their boat, wrapped me in a cloak borrowed from a servant of the priest, brought me safe to you, dear, dear friend!" and thus saying, she again embraced Madame de Stourville.

The worthy boatmen were liberally rewarded, but the money bestowed seemed to give them much less pleasure than the happiness they saw they had conferred on us all. Mr. Rivers sent off letters to the

English minister at Naples, and to the head of the police there, acquainting them with what had occurred, and urging the necessity of discovering and arresting the monster who had planned and carried this vile plot into execution. In the meanwhile, Mr. Rivers proposed—and I could have embraced him for it—that we should both sit up in the house, with three or four trustworthy peasants, to be selected by our friendly boatmen, and that the next day we should escort the ladies to Naples, where he wished to place them under the especial protection of the English minister.

“ We will then return,” said he, addressing me, “ and pursue our original project of visiting the celebrated Temples of Pæstum.”

“ And must we, dear Madame de Stourville, abandon our plan of visiting these famous temples, which I have so long desired to see?” said Miss Somers.

“ Not if dem kind gentlemen who vere so good to me will permit us to accompany dem dere,” replied the *gouvernante*.

“ The country around Pæstum is lonely, and not the safest in the world for ladies,” observed Mr. Rivers; “ and moreover, should the ruffian who has already occasioned so much alarm to this young lady, discover that you were gone there, who knows but that he might be tempted to take advantage of so wild a region, and again endeavour to get Miss Somers into his power?”

“ But we will have pistols,” said I. “ We can send off our servant to Naples at day-break, and he can bring us additional fire-arms, and an additional servant or two, which, with that of the ladies, will form an escort that will deter any attempt on the part of the wretch in question.”

I felt my cheeks glow and my stature expand at the thought of yielding protection to the lovely girl before me. She seemed

pleased with my eagerness to secure her the pleasure she anticipated in joining our party to Pæstum, and repaid me with a smile that I should have deemed a sufficient reward for any service. My proposal was accepted; our servant received orders to set off to Naples at daybreak, and we were to leave La Cava for Salerno as soon as he returned. The ladies retired to their bedrooms at an early hour, and we bivouacked on sofas in the sitting-room, having our pistols loaded, ready at hand, in case of attack.

“There is something incomprehensible to me in all this affair,” said Mr. Rivers, as we sat conversing after the departure of the ladies. “That a young person of such remarkable beauty, and apparently so very amiable, should be allowed to travel about in Italy without any male protector is most extraordinary; and that a father should be so careless of such a treasure is not less sin-

gular and suspicious. The *gouvernante* seems to be a kind-hearted, worthy woman, devoted to her *élève*, but is evidently unfit to be her sole protectress in so lawless a country as this. The forcible abduction, too, and by a person totally unknown to them, is strange. Nothing like professions of love have been made to Miss Somers, in extenuation of the violence offered to her; consequently, I am wholly at a loss to account for the motive that actuated a deed, which the great beauty of the young lady might cause, though it would not justify."

The night passed without any alarm; and when morning came, we retired to the little inn where we had taken up our abode on arriving at La Cava. Having refreshed ourselves by a bath, dressed, and finished our simple breakfast, we returned to the lodgings of Madame de Stourville and Miss Somers, whom we found seated at theirs. There is no light more trying to female

beauty than that of early morn, when a clear and bright atmosphere betrays every defect of complexion, and every imperfection of feature. Miss Somers, however, might well bid defiance to the broadest glare of sunshine in which beauty ever basked, and looked transcendently lovely when we entered; her frame refreshed by a night of calm and uninterrupted repose, and her mind restored to its wonted equanimity by finding herself again with her affectionate *gouvernante*. I thought—but it might only be fancy—that her cheek assumed a brighter hue as we entered; but what will not a youth in love for the first time fancy when hope aids vanity? Her dress, too, although simple, was exceedingly elegant, and testified that some pains had been taken in its arrangement. How completely does her attire reveal the character as well as taste and refinement of a woman. A meretricious style may sometimes be becoming to

those more remarkable for a certain showy, flaunting kind of good looks, owing their *éclat* more to a high colour, large dark eyes, and a tolerably white skin, than to delicacy of feature or purity of expression; but such women are to real beauties what dahlias are to moss-roses, only looked at with pleasure when the latter cannot be seen. Every moment brought to view some new charm in Miss Somers, owing to the varying expression of her countenance and the exquisite gracefulness of her movements; and as I looked at her, I was reminded of the verses of the old poet—"It might be said her body thought," so sentient did hers appear in all its slight but rounded symmetry. Her soft and glossy hair was braided round the back of her small and finely-turned head, and the shining tresses that were divided on her snowy temples, heightened by their contrast the transparent fairness of her complexion. Her eyes, now restored to their

pristine lustre, were by far more beautiful than on the previous day, and sparkled with animation or languished beneath their fringed lids with a dove-like softness. Her waist, round and symmetrical, was confined by a pale blue ribbon, and a knot of a similar hue fastened the lace collar that encircled her milk-white throat. Her hands were delicate, plump, and fair as those of a child; and oh! how I longed to press them within mine, and to kiss those small taper fingers, with their pink-coloured nails, which resembled those roseate little shells found on the sea-shore. But if I was fascinated by the rare beauty of Miss Somers, how was the fascination enhanced by the charms of her conversation and the graces of her manner! Her voice too, low, sweet, and harmonious, was in itself an irresistible attraction, and lent increased interest to every sentiment she uttered.

The day was whiled away in rambling

around the romantic environs of La Cava, Miss Somers leading us to her favourite haunts. She shuddered when we passed near the grotto whence she had been carried off; and Madame de Stourville absolutely trembled with alarm, while declaring that her *chère et belle Mademoiselle* must not enter it again.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next day we left La Cava for Salerno, Madame de Stourville and her lovely *élève* travelling in their post chariot, attended by a *femme de chambre* and man servant; Mr. Rivers and myself in a travelling carriage, and two men servants on the box, keeping close to the chaise of the ladies. Never before had I found the society of Mr. Rivers irksome; but now my mind was so wholly engrossed by one object that I was scarcely sensible of his presence, and little profited by his instructive conversation.

The scenery from La Cava to Salerno is beautiful, and the day was just such a one as is most suited to similar expeditions. Innumerable flights of pigeons were winging their way from those tall and slender towers erected for their dwellings along the hills to the left of our route, and as their snowy wings wafted them through the clear air, the bright blue sky forming a background, they added to the beauty of the scene.

O Love! in what trifles canst thou find delight, and how slight a favour from a pure and refined woman can confer happiness on a lover! A glance, a smile, a word, or a blush, can transport him, and these favours are the more prized from the reserve and delicacy of her who accords them. I felt this when Miss Somers accepted the wild flowers I gathered for her on the wayside, and repaid the simple offering with a smile full of sweetness.

Arrived at Salerno, and lodged in its best *locando*, fronting the beautiful bay, which nearly equals that of Naples, after dinner we sauntered forth to explore the objects most worthy of attention in the environs. Placed at the foot of the lofty Gragnano, and bathed by the blue waters of the Mediterranean, Salerno presents a charming picture. The romantic ruins of a fortress crown the summit of a steep and rocky mountain that overhangs the town; and three ancient castles, standing on separate, but less elevated mountains, complete the landscape. This scene, under any circumstances, could not have failed to please me; but when beheld with her whose cultivated taste led to a warm appreciation of all that is beautiful in art or nature, how much was my pleasure enhanced! Nor was it alone the taste of Miss Somers that was so highly cultivated. Every site recalled to her

memory the historical events with which it was connected, with an accuracy that astonished while it delighted me.

We visited the cathedral, and in examining the antiquities which abound in its court, Miss Somers evinced no less interest than good taste. She listened attentively to the observations that dropped from Mr. Rivers; and he, flattered by her earnestness, took more than ordinary pains to invest the subject with all the interest which his vast erudition and retentive memory so well enabled him to do. A reference having been made to the founder of the cathedral, Robert Guiscard, son of Tancred, so celebrated by Tasso, the poetry of the great Italian became the topic of conversation; and this young and lovely girl evinced a discrimination in pointing out some of the finest passages, which delighted Mr. Rivers almost as much as it did me. But when, reverting

to the works of Danté, he found that she was not less versed in them, his admiration knew no bounds.

We sauntered from the cathedral to the beach, where, being tempted by the fineness of the evening, we entered a boat, and were soon floating on the calm sea. Twilight, so brief in its duration in Italy, was quickly followed by the rising of the moon, whose silver beams soon tinged the placid water over which we glided, and the boatmen, encouraged by our silence—a silence produced by the calm loveliness of the scene around, joined in a barcarole of a plaintive nature, that harmonized well with our feelings. The words, rude as they were, expressed the regret of parting lovers, about to be divided by the sea, and all the hopes and fears incidental to such a separation were described. Encouraged by our approbation, the boatmen continued to sing, and the airs they

selected being always of a soft and melancholy character, and the words either full of wild passion, or of deep tenderness, sunk into my very soul as music had never previously done.

“ Sing to dese gentlemen, *ma chère*,” said Madame de Stourville. “ Dey vill like your singing better dan dat of de boatmen, I am sure.”

Selina, after a moment's hesitation, sang an Italian song on the love of home, and so exquisite was her voice, so admirable her method, and so pure and touching her intonation, that even the boatmen betrayed an emotion while listening to her dulcet tones. What, then, must have been my feelings? My very soul was moved, and as my ears drank in the enchanting sounds, while my eyes dwelt with delight on the beautiful countenance of her who breathed them, I felt that henceforth my destiny depended on

her, and that if I could not obtain her affection, life would be indeed a cheerless waste, a gloomy, dreary pilgrimage to me. Few were the commendations bestowed on the lovely songstress, when she had finished; but a silence more eloquent than words told how her auditors were moved.

When we landed, Mr. Rivers having offered his arm to Madame de Stourville, I ventured to present mine to her lovely *élève*, and when I felt her round and exquisitely formed arm gently folded within mine, its touch almost made me tremble. The moonbeams were reflected on her face, which looked fair as Parian marble, and so calm was the expression of that beauteous countenance, that it seemed as if no earthly passion could ever cloud its mild lustre.

“ You have no nights like this in England, I fear,” said Selina, after a silence of some minutes.

“None,” answered I; “but do you not remember our climate?”

“Not at all; I left it when I was so young that I have no recollection of it.”

“Yet you speak English with as much purity as if you had been brought up in England!”

“Thanks to an English governess, who took charge of me, until death deprived me of her care. Mrs. Selwyn was indeed a mother to me, and by her unremitting kindness and affection prevented me from knowing the loss of that tender tie.”

The beautiful Selina’s eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

“Then Madame de Stourville has not long been your companion?” said I.

“Not above two years,” answered Selina. “I consider myself fortunate in having so kind and affectionate a friend, although, in intellectual cultivation and accomplishments,

she cannot supply the place of my dear and lamented Mrs. Selwyn."

"You have still one parent left?" observed I.

"Yes, my father still lives; but I never knew a mother's love. I have often pictured to myself what a blessing a mother must be. I frequently dream that I see a mild, lovely, and loving face beam on me, and hear a low, sweet voice call me by the most tender epithets. Yes, a mother must be a blessed tie, a guide to protect and warn youth from error, and to reward obedience and affection."

"Your imagination has created just such a being as my mother was," said I. "Beautiful and good, an angel on earth! Ah! had she known you!"

Our arrival at the door of the hotel stopped a conversation in which both felt an equal interest, and each experienced an increase of confidence, that under different

circumstances an acquaintance of long standing could alone have achieved. Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers had also become more friendly and familiar during their walk, and he observed to me, ere we sought our chambers for the night, that he thought her a most kind-hearted and worthy woman.

“A mystery, however, is attached to the father of Miss Somers,” said Mr. Rivers, “and by what Madame de Stourville let drop in conversation, he must be a repulsive and disagreeable man. He treated his charming daughter with a coldness, if not a sternness, that hurt the poor girl very much, and which has given the good-natured Frenchwoman a bad opinion of him. He was particularly strict in demanding references about Madame de Stourville, previously to his engaging her as a companion for his daughter; but when she in turn begged leave to inquire something about

him, he very *brusquely* told her that his banker would satisfy her that she ran no risk of bad treatment in engaging to become the companion of his daughter. 'I felt so little disposed to like him,' said Madame de Stourville, 'that I would not have undertaken the task, were it not that I had conceived such an interest in this charming girl that I could not bear to leave her with so stern a guardian. I had but a few months before lost my only child, a girl that any mother might have been proud of, and I saw, or fancied I saw, a likeness between her and Miss Somers, though I must confess my poor lost child was not near so beautiful as Mademoiselle Somers; and this, as well as the desire of perfecting myself in English, increased my wish to remain with her. As soon as our engagement was concluded, Mr. Somers told me that he wished his daughter to visit Italy, and to remain there for a considerable time. 'I desire that she should

not enter into society,' said he, 'or become known to any persons except the masters it may be necessary to employ for her. All communication with me is to be carried on through the medium of my banker at Paris, who will forward the letters to me. I will place funds in his hands to meet the expenses you will contract, which I limit to eight hundred a-year—a sum amply sufficient for the moderate scale of living I wish to be pursued.' 'But will you not accompany your daughter, sir?' asked Madame de Stourville, surprised and somewhat alarmed at the responsibility she expected to incur. 'I have never been out of France, sir,' continued she, 'have little experience of the world, have not been accustomed to travel, and dread being exposed to the imposition and annoyance to which women are subjected, more especially in a foreign country.'—'You will have the protection of a sober and steady man-servant, who speaks Italian, a

comfortable carriage to travel in, and, by avoiding *tables d'hôtes*, those certain places for being brought in contact with adventurers and improper acquaintances, you will escape annoyance. I have neither the power nor the inclination to accompany my daughter to Italy, but, satisfied with the recommendations I have received in your favour, I confide her to your care.' 'He took leave of *ma chère demoiselle*,' continued Madame de Stourville, 'without betraying the slightest emotion, and when she, *pauvre bel ange*, shocked at his coldness, changed colour, and had her eyes filled with tears, he harshly told her not to make a fool of herself; and merely shook hands with her as we entered the travelling carriage. The dear girl wept nearly the whole of the first stage from Paris, and I was so touched by her grief and the painful cause that led to it, that the words of consolation I wished to speak expired on my lips. Ah! Monsieur

Rivière, it is a sad thing to see an amiable young creature, with a heart filled with kind affection, repulsed by a cold-hearted, unnatural father! I do not wish to have any concealments from Mr. Somers, yet I am certain that he will blame me very much, when he learns the *enlèvement* at La Cava.'"

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day we proceeded to Pæstum, passing by Eboli and Persano, a hunting seat belonging to the King of Naples.

The first view of the temples is indeed most imposing ; standing on a plain bounded on one side by a chain of mountains, and open on the other to the Gulf of Salerno. Nevertheless, the sight of these noble ruins impressed me only with melancholy reflections, and chilled the soft and delicious emotions to which my heart had, for the first time, so lately become sensible, by re-

minding me of the brevity, the nothingness of life; and such reflections but ill accorded with the new feelings that had taken possession of my breast. There stood these sublime wrecks of antiquity,—no longer, as formerly, surrounded by all the luxuriant cultivation peculiar to a fine climate. The roses of Pæstum, once so famed, live now only in the pages of the classic poets of the Augustan age, and desolation and solitude reign around.

My fair companion was also impressed by the solemnity of the scene; and when I noticed it, confessed that the sight of fine ruins always sobered, if it did not sadden, her mind.

“Of the thousands who, like us, have resorted to this spot,” said she, “even since these temples have been in ruin, no trace remains; while they still lift their proud heads towards the blue sky, as if defying the efforts of that ruthless tyrant—Time,

who has scathed but not yet destroyed them. How brief, how transitory, seems the life of man compared with these enduring monuments of distant ages! Near them, we are but as shadows fleeting away to eternity; and our cares and trials previously considered as not only important enough to occupy all our own thoughts, but to create an interest in the breasts of others, sink into insignificancy!"

The discovery of this sympathy with my own feelings touched me to the heart; nor could the common-place reflections uttered by Madame de Stourville dispel the thoughts it awakened.

"It is a pity the King of Naples does not repair dese temples," observed that lady. "They would look moche better if set to right and whitewashed, I am sure; and if one of them was appropriated to the use of a *restaurateur* and *café*, fitted up with mirrors, it would be a great improvement.

There is something in the dreariness and air of the place dat makes one feel very hungry, at least such is the effect on me."

The fair Selina could not repress a smile, which Madame de Stourville having observed, she with great simplicity remarked, " Ah! you smile, *ma chère*, for you tink dat because *you* never give de thoughts to de eating, oders are like you. Ven I vas young, too, I did not tink so much of my dinner as I do now; for youth gives de good spirits—*de gaieté de cœur*. But ven de age come, one likes to have de good dinner; and ven one do see all old tings—like dese temples, *par exemple*,—tumbling into decay, it do remind one dat de old people, like dem, are also falling to ruin, and dis tought do make one *mélancholique*, and den one vants de *goûter*, de vat you English call de luncheon."

Luckily for Madame de Stourville, Mr. Rivers had anticipated her wants, and a cold chicken or two, with some other eat-

and agitated voice, the strange lady remained motionless, intently gazing on Miss Somers; but after a moment's pause, she approached the latter, and said, "You seem alarmed, young lady; can I be of any use?" The manner and voice of the stranger denoted that she appertained to no common class of society; and her air, too, was dignified and ladylike. Her face was shaded by a black veil, so much less transparent than those generally worn, that it struck me that it was used more with a view to concealment, than to shield her from the effects of the sun.

"Let me recommend you to use this *flacon*," said she, gently, offering a smelling-bottle to Miss Somers. "You were alarmed, probably by a snake," resumed the stranger; "I have noticed several among the rank herbage around the temples, but they are not mischievous unless trod on."

Miss Somers was still too much agitated to reply; so I, somewhat suspicious that the man who had fled had been in attendance on this lady,—for I could not imagine that she had visited this remote region alone and unprotected,—observed, “that the alarm of Miss Somers had been caused by the view of a person whom she and her friends were very desirous to bring to justice.”

“Indeed,” said the stranger; “but may not this young lady have made a mistake? I have been here some time, and have seen no one, save the peasant who lives in yonder miserable hovel.”

“No, I did not, could not mistake,” replied Selina; “that man’s air and gestures have made too terrible an impression on me ever to be forgotten.”

I thought that the stranger appeared embarrassed, but at this moment Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers joined us, and having, in a few words, related to the latter

what had occurred, and placed Miss Somers's arm within his, I rapidly pursued the track pointed out by her as the one her dreaded persecutor had taken. In vain did I search the temples, and explore every place likely to offer a refuge to the object of my pursuit. No trace of him could I find, so I was returning to my party, dissatisfied and annoyed at the ill success of my search, when it occurred to me to proceed to the hovel, and question the peasant, who earns a scanty and uncertain subsistence by supplying a resting-place for the horses and postillions of the visitors to Pæstum. It struck me that he evinced some confusion, when asserting that the strange lady, whose *calèche* was placed in the rear of his house, had arrived alone, the postillion who drove being the only person who had accompanied her. Vexed and disappointed, I returned to my party, and found that the strange lady still continued with them, although the coldness

with which her advances towards establishing a conversation were met, ought to have discouraged her.

“ I have been unfortunate in my search,” said I, in answer to Mr. Rivers’s question; “ nevertheless, I do not yet despair of discovering the vile miscreant, and bringing him to the punishment which he so justly merits.”

Madame de Stourville, drawing one of the arms of Selina through her own, while Mr. Rivers retained the other, whispered Miss Somers to move away, and having coldly bowed to the stranger, we were turning from her, when she advanced, and begged permission to join our party, alleging as an excuse for this intrusion, that being alone she felt nervous, more especially since she had heard that some dangerous character of whom we were in search, had been lately seen hovering about the temples.

“ If you will permit my *calèche* to follow in the wake of yours,” said she to Madame

de Stourville, "you will much oblige me."

"We have no right to prevent you," replied Mr. Rivers; "but pardon me if I say, that a nervous lady would hardly come to such a place as this without a protector, and that it seems rather unaccountable that the intrepidity which led to your venturing here alone, should so suddenly have forsaken you."

"Let her not come wid us, I pray," whispered Madame de Stourville.

The stranger seemed embarrassed, as our repugnance to her joining our party became manifest; nevertheless, she still kept near us."

"Order the horses to be got ready," said Madame de Stourville, "and let us set out for Salerno as soon as possible, that we may arrive there before dark."

Mr. Rivers, consigning the arm of Selina to me, walked to the house where the ser-

trunks and carriages had been left, and beside them to make ready for our departure. Emboldened by the absence of the oldest and gravest of our party, the stranger walked close to the side of Madame de Stourville, and observed that it gave her pleasure to recognise in the young lady a compatriot.

"Dat may be, madame," replied the *gouvernante*, "but dis young lady never makes any acquaintance wid strangers, so you will please not to speak to her."

"There surely can be no crime in one lady addressing a few words, *en passant*, to another," said the stranger, evidently discomposed by the pertinacity with which Madame de Stourville rejected her advances.

"De ladies who are *bien élevé*, dat is well bred, do not force dier words on young ladies ven dier *chaperons* do not approve it," re-

marked the *gouvernante*; after which reproof the stranger continued to walk silently on.

“ Only fancy,” said Mr. Rivers, returning at the moment, “ our servants, as well as the postillions, are in a state of complete intoxication. This looks very odd, for our domestic has hitherto been a very sober man, and I have understood that yours, Madame de Stourville, was peculiarly steady.”

“ And my postillion, sir,” interrupted the lady, is he, too, intoxicated !”

“ He either is, or affects to be so,” replied Mr. Rivers, looking suspiciously at the stranger.

“ I never knew our servant to drink— never saw the least symptoms of it,” said Madame de Stourville.

“ What is to be done ?” demanded Mr. Rivers. “ We cannot stay all night in

yonder wretched hovel, yet to trust these ladies in a carriage driven by a drunken postillion is not to be thought of."

"I will drive their *calèche*," said I, eagerly; and you will accompany them in it, taking the precaution of having our arms with you, except a pair of pistols, which I will keep with me."

We walked towards the house, which I again entered, and there I beheld the servants and postillions stretched on the floor, sleeping off the effects of their libations, to the vast extent of which, several empty bottles bore ample testimony. I threw a plentiful supply of cold water on the faces of our servants, in the hope of bringing them to their senses; but sundry groans and half-intelligible words were the only effects I produced. The owner of the hovel appeared nearly equally stupified as the servants and postillion; and though I repeatedly shook

him, he either could not, or would not, speak. I harnessed the horses, and having tied a scarf around my waist, I stuck my pistols into it, and mounted, while Mr. Rivers handed Miss Somers and Madame de Stourville into the *calèche*. The strange lady seized the arm of Mr. Rivers, and entreated him to permit her to occupy the fourth seat in the carriage.

“ You surely cannot be so cruel, so uncharitable!” exclaimed she, “ as to leave a helpless woman in such a wild place, and among a set of intoxicated menials! In pity, let me accompany you to Salerno.”

“ O, let her, pray do let her come,” said Selina; “ it would be too dreadful to leave her here.”

“ I suppose we must give her de seat, do I not like it at all;” observed Madame de Stourville, *sans ceremonie*.

Mr. Rivers, though evidently with re-

luctance, handed the stranger into the carriage; and I drove off, deeply impressed with a sense of the responsibility I incurred in my new task. Anxious to advance as rapidly as was consistent with the safety of my precious charge, we had made a considerable progress in our route, when suddenly eight men rushed from behind a hedge, and a shot from one of the foremost of them penetrated my left arm, which fell powerless to my side. The carriage was soon surrounded by the whole party, one of whom was masked. Mr. Rivers was dragged from it, his arms pinioned behind his back, and while in this defenceless condition, the miscreants repeatedly struck him with the but-ends of their carabines, until, nearly senseless, he fell to the earth. Maddened at beholding the man who was masked, and who it was evident was the leader of the party, seize Miss Somers, and, in spite of her frantic

cries, bear her from the *caleche*, I rushed towards him, when one of his followers aimed a blow at my head with his pistol, which felled me to the ground, and for a time deprived me of all consciousness.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN restored to a sense of what had occurred, I found Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers anxiously watching over me; the former weeping bitterly, and the latter filled with alarm about me.

I now learned that the bandits who had assailed us, had, after tying the arms of Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers, unharnessed the horses, and given them their liberty.

They then forcibly carried off Miss Somers to a boat lying at a short distance from the shore, which made directly for a vessel at

anchor about a league off — the strange lady having voluntarily accompanied the party. Two peasants passing the spot where we lay, had liberated Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers, and assisted them in their endeavours to stanch my wounds and restore me to consciousness.

“It is quite evident,” said Mr. Rivers, “that the strange woman who forced herself on us is an accomplice, if not a principal, in the abduction of Miss Somers, as her not being ill treated, and her voluntarily accompanying these brigands, testifies.”

The peasants, who lived at no great distance, offered to assist in transporting me to the cottage of one of them, a task of some difficulty, from the extreme weakness caused by loss of blood. Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers had also suffered severely from the brutality of those who had wounded me. But though the pain of my wounds and the weakness occasioned by loss

of blood rendered me nearly helpless, I forgot my bodily ills in the shock and grief my mind experienced in the loss of my adored Selina, and in the terror excited for her fate. To be thus powerless to protect or rescue her maddened me, and I groaned in torture, as I pictured her to myself surrounded by the miscreants who had carried her off.

Having reached the humble cottage of the peasant, and being placed on the coarse but clean pallet filled with the straw of Indian corn, it was proposed to send one of the men to Salerno for post-horses and a surgeon. Luckily, one of the horses that had been liberated from the *calèche* had strayed from the road across some fields that lay in the direction of the house to which I had been brought, and was quietly feeding on the scanty herbage. The peasant soon secured and mounted him, and in a short time was on his road to Salerno, while I, exhausted, dropped into a deep slumber, from

which I awoke not until the arrival of the surgeon and post-horses. With these came an escort of six men, soldiers, from the limited garrison of Salerno, sent by the commanding officer, on hearing of our disaster. Having ascertained from the peasants that our assailants had embarked, and were out of reach, their bravery knew no bounds. They waved their swords, uttered various threats of vengeance against the brigands who had dared to molest their *excellencies*,—the brave and noble *Forestierii*,—and assured us that while *they* were near us we were safe. The surgeon looked very grave while examining my wounds, talked of concussion of the brain following heavy blows on the head, hinted of the probable necessity of trepanning, and amputation of the arm; but held out hopes, that if there was a chance of being spared such desperate operations, *he*, and he alone, could effect it. He told me that I ought to consider myself

indeed fortunate in falling into his hands, for that his skill was well known, and that his practice in gun-shot wounds had been very extensive in the Neapolitan army, when opposed to the Austrian forces, over which, as he maintained, they had achieved repeated victories. If I did not entertain the most perfect confidence in the skill and judgment of *il Signor Carabosca*, it was not for want of receiving innumerable declarations of both from himself. The legs and arms he had, as he asserted, taken off, could not be counted; and the bullets he had extracted might supply an army. The peasant's wife turned up her eyes and crossed herself, as she listened to Signor Carabosca's boastings, while Mr. Rivers shrugged his shoulders, and evinced other symptoms of incredulity and dissatisfaction. The motion of the carriage greatly increased the pain in my arm; but so wholly occupied were my thoughts by the fate of Selina,

that I was regardless of the torture I endured. With what bitter feelings did I contemplate the route, which together, basking in her smiles and listening in rapture to the tones of her silvery voice, we had traversed the previous day, rich in hope and health, while now—powerless to rescue her—she was snatched away, and exposed to dangers, the bare notion of which filled me with horror! Every turn of the road recalled some look, some observation, of hers. Her accents seemed still to dwell in my ears, while she was far, far away, and possibly I might never more behold her.

Madame de Stourville wept and talked, and talked and wept by turns, appealing frequently to Heaven and to me, whether her *chère et belle demoiselle* was not the most perfect creature in existence?—a fact I was ready to maintain at the point of my sword,—and whether she herself was not the person in all the world the most to be

pitied?—a statement to which I was by no means disposed to assent.

Arrived at Salerno, the sight of that calm and beautiful bay, over which we had glided so shortly before, and of the spots where, with her arm in mine, we had walked, recalled the conversation that had occurred with a vividness that made the recent scene of her abduction appear like some frightful dream. Bitterly did Madame de Stourville now reproach herself for not having directly returned to Naples when Miss Somers had been restored to her, as in a populous city she would have been safe from the daring violence that had a second time been so successfully employed against her, and in this regret Mr. Rivers and I truly sympathized.

Various and fruitless were the conjectures in which we all three indulged as to the probable motives of those who had planned and executed this crime; but the perfect ignorance in which Madame de Stourville

was relative to the family history and connexions of Miss Somers, precluded her from furnishing any clue to them. Mr. Rivers again sent information of the event to the English minister at Naples, and authorized him to offer a reward for the discovery of Miss Somers and the detection of the delinquents. The civil authorities at Salerno proposed to send persons around the country in search of the young lady; but as we knew she had been taken to sea, we declined their services.

A violent fever was the result of my wounds, and Mr. Rivers was compelled to have recourse, not only to peremptory orders, but to personal superintendence, to prevent *il Signor Carabosca* from essaying his skill, of which he entertained considerable doubt, in extracting the ball which he alleged was lodged in my arm. But Mr. Rivers was determined to entrust the operation only to an English surgeon of eminence

established at Naples, for whom he had sent an express; a measure which greatly irritated the Signor, who repeatedly declared that *his* military experience peculiarly fitted him for the treatment of wounds. Madame de Stourville ventured to suggest the expediency of calling in a French surgeon and physician, they being, as she asserted, far superior to English practitioners, of whom, with the prejudice peculiar to her nation, she entertained a great dread.

“ De English doctors kill more patients than disease does,” said she. “ And as to surgeons, none are so good as de French, for no oders have de same opportunities of seeing wounds, as no people fight like de French.”

“ *Cospetto!* Signora, you are in error!” said Carabosca. “ The Italians, and, above all, the Neapolitans, are the most desperate people in the whole world for fighting; and that is the reason why we understand gun-

shot and sabre wounds better than the surgeons of all other nations. Why, this hand"—and he held up his right arm—"has lopped off more limbs than I can count, and no one was ever able to say that Giacomo Carabosca bungled in his operations! Yes, I am the man to whip off an arm or a leg in a trice! And it will not be my fault, Signor Rivers, if the Signor dies from having the amputation too long deferred."

Dr. Luther and Mr. Saunders arrived at Salerno even sooner than was expected; and the first having administered some cooling potions to abate the fever, the latter examined my wounds, and announced, to the great satisfaction of Mr. Rivers, that the one in my arm was not of a dangerous nature, and that the bullet had not lodged in it. The servants left at Pæstum now arrived. They had been rendered incapable of performing their duty by having had a narcotic mixed in their wine, of which they

had not drunk a sufficient quantity to have otherwise produced so violent an effect. They had remained nearly in a state of insensibility from a short time after they had drunk the wine until a late hour the following day, and had noticed a man, the description of whom corresponded precisely with the person seen by Miss Somers, leaving the house at Pæstum as they entered it, after removing our collation. Little doubt could be entertained that the *enlèvement* had been planned for some hours, and that the planners had been aware of our movements. The postillion who had driven the strange lady to Pæstum had informed ours that the lady was accompanied by a man who appeared to be of an inferior grade in society, and wholly subservient to her commands. They had arrived at Pæstum at an early hour in the morning, and the man had exchanged signals with a vessel at anchor a short distance from the shore, on

which a boat was soon after launched with three men, who drew it up beneath a shelving bank near the water's edge. This was all the information they could give us, for the owner of the wretched house at Pæstum either was, or affected to be, in total ignorance relative to the strange lady; but from his denying her being accompanied by the man whom our servants saw, it appeared that he knew more than he would tell.

Under the care of Dr. Luther and Mr. Saunders, I soon began to recover, and in the course of a week was able to bear the journey to Naples, whither Madame de Stourville accompanied Mr. Rivers and myself. I was most impatient to arrive there, in the hope that on the spot some intelligence could be obtained of Selina; but, alas! nothing relative to her had been discovered, although the English minister had used every exertion in his power for the purpose, and had been assisted by the civil au-

thorities of Naples. Madame de Stourville wrote to the father of Selina to acquaint him with what had occurred; and now, in a state of nervous excitation that it was painful to witness, awaited the result of the active search set on foot for the discovery of that dear and lovely girl.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER a month's *séjour* at Naples, impatiently borne, but rendered inevitable by my weakness, I proposed visiting Sicily, urged to this step by a latent, though feeble hope of there gaining some trace of the fugitives. Madame de Stourville shed many tears at our parting, which seemed to renew afresh the poignancy of her grief for Miss Somers, and I truly sympathized in her feelings.

We embarked for Palermo with a fair wind; but had not been long at sea, before a dull calm left our vessel like a log on the

water, and irritated my nerves not a little, so anxious was I to reach our destination. Under other circumstances, I might have enjoyed the contemplation of the blue sky above, and the as blue sea which mirrored it, unbroken by a single wave, while the balmy air re-invigorated my languid frame. But my thoughts were so wholly occupied by Selina, that I was insensible to everything around me; and I would have preferred a storm that impelled our bark to the shore where I hoped to learn tidings of her, to the soft and delicious weather that prevailed.

Having refused to descend to the cabin, or partake the evening meal, I remained on deck, and watched the shades of twilight stealing over the vessel. Bright purple clouds, fringed with roseate and golden tints, spread themselves over the heavens, and were reflected on the sea, until they every moment lost some portion of their

splendour. At length, they subsided into sombre hues, which cast a dim and shadowy veil over the water, the rippling of which against the sides of the vessel produced a monotonous and drowsy sound, that increased the pensiveness that stole over me. There is no situation more calculated to awaken melancholy reflections, even in those not naturally prone to them, than the fall of evening at sea. How, then, must it effect those who have any subject for regret? The mind becomes softened; the loved, the absent, the dead, are remembered with fond sadness, and voices, silent for ever, and perchance forgotten during the busy hours of day, are now once more recalled to memory. I thought of my dear mother in her distant grave, until the past rose up before me as vividly as if I had only lost that sainted parent a few days before. I reproached myself for having of late neglected her memory, and accused myself of ingratitude in having

so soon found consolation for her loss. But even while thus reproaching myself, the thought of the lovely Selina would return to banish that of my mother, and the low tones of her musical voice, and the beautiful expression of her soul-beaming face, would haunt me. Oh! how discordant at such moments sounded the mirth and laughter, the clatter of plates, and the calls for attendance from the noisy occupants of the cabin.

It was while I was thus indulging in pensive reveries, that the sailor at the helm commenced singing the very air that the boatmen at Salerno had selected the evening previous to our fatal visit to Pæstum. Every note, every word, brought the scene of that happy evening back, and as I listened, tears started to my eyes. How powerful is the effect of music in awaking associations! Mine were of a very melancholy nature, yet I would not have changed

them for all that pleasure could offer; and when the sailor ceased to sing, I slipped some money into his hand, and asked him to repeat the song.

Mr. Rivers, and one of the passengers, a burly-looking, red-faced man, came on deck while the sailor was still singing; and I now discovered that individual was an Englishman. He addressed the sailor in bad Italian, told him his song was a most dull and stupid one, and advised him to change it for something of a more gay and lively character. The sailor said that the Signor Forestieri had commanded the song.

“ Well, there is no accounting for taste,” observed my rubicund compatriot; “ and if the gentleman is satisfied, why, it is no business of mine.”

“ I have heard that air before, somewhere or other,” said Mr. Rivers.

“ O, for the matter of that, sir, the Italian songs are all so like each other, that there

is no distinguishing one from another," remarked the stranger. "I have now been thirty-five years, off and on, a resident in Sicily, but I could never take to Italian music. It seems to me to be all the same, and very unlike our English. Give me 'Nancy Dawson,' and 'Molly put the Kettle on,' and half-a-hundred other merry songs of the same description, and I'll give up the operas, and other Italian music, with all my heart."

"Then you are no admirer of it, I observe," said Mr. Rivers.

"No, sir, certainly not. I think Italian music very like Italian wine, poor, weak, washy stuff!"

"But surely the Marsala we have been drinking was neither weak nor washy?"

"Agreed; but why? simply because that wine was manufactured by me."

"Indeed."

"Yes, I assure you. I had not been long

in Sicily before I determined to make a wine that should rival Sherry, and I think I have succeeded. The heat of the climate ripens the grapes in Sicily capitally, and, with plenty of brandy, I give the wine they produce as much body, ay, and more too, than any Sherry that ever left Spain. The whole secret of making good wine consists in putting plenty of brandy into it. Look at me, sir, where will you find a healthier or a heartier man of sixty years of age? I attribute it all to my never drinking anything but Marsala, made after my own plan. I never am ill, except now and then having a sharp twinge of the gout, which I don't mind a fig, and an occasional head-ache not worth minding, so I think I have a right to speak well of Marsala."

"You like Sicily, I suppose."

"*Cosi, cosi*, as the Italians say. I liked it better when Lord—let me see, what was his name, commanded them; I always forget

his name. Lord—Lord— ; I can't remember it; but it's no matter. He commanded at Palermo, was a general in the army, and had two or three English regiments there at the same time. Let me see, what were the regiments. The — ; bless me, how odd that I can't remember the names; but it's no consequence; and there were a great many English people came there at the same time, and they could not bear the weak, washy, Italian wine, and so I took it into my head to manufacture some that I thought would please them, and it did; and from that time I have gone on, and my business has prospered. There was Colonel — ; what was his name? Well, it is very vexatious to have forgotten it, for he was one of my best customers. Colonel— Colonel Thompson, was it? No, not Thompson; Thomas, I think it was, or Sampson; but it's no great matter; he recommended my Marsala to the mess, and to

all his friends, and, above all, to Major ——; how strange I can't recollect his name! Major—Major—; I think it begins with an N—; but it's no consequence. And there was King Ferdinand from Naples, and the Queen, and the royal family, all living at Palermo, because the Neapolitans thought the change of air would do them good; and there was a French Duke, I forget his name, who married a daughter of King Ferdinand's, a most worthy and excellent lady she was; I wish I could remember her name; but it's no matter. Palermo was then a very gay place, and the bands of the English regiments used to play every evening, such beautiful tunes, 'Nancy Dawson,' 'Molly put the Kettle on,' 'Money Musk,' 'Rule Britannia,' and 'God save the King.' It used to make me feel so queer like, to hear these tunes so far away from home. Ay, talk of Italian music, what is it compared with any of the tunes

I have mentioned! When King—; I forget his name, but it's no great matter, he was a Frenchman, and a fine soldier, too, I have heard say; left Naples, King Ferdinand and his family (all but the old queen, who went to somewhere in Germany; I don't remember the name; and died there) returned to Naples, and found everything so improved and clean, they could hardly recognise the place. And the French duke, who married King Ferdinand's daughter, went to France, and the English Lord, who commanded at Palermo, and the regiments stationed there, all left, and the town was quite deserted like, and never was the same since, and I have never, except during two or three visits I have paid to England, heard 'Rule Britannia,' 'God save the King,' 'Nancy Dawson,' or 'Molly put the Kettle on,' played or sung. I am sorry to say England is very much fallen off in this respect of late. You no longer hear

the nice old tunes played about the streets in London as in the old times, on the hand-organs, and hurdy-gurdies. No, a plague on them, they are always playing Italian tunes, which much vexed me."

In this manner did Mr. Medlicut, for thus was he called, continue to chatter, forgetting the name of every person of whom he spoke; until, no longer able to support his incessant *babillage*, I rose and sought my cabin—an example which he quickly followed. When he and Mr. Rivers had entered their berths, and proved by certain nasal sounds that they were asleep, I again ascended to the deck, and once more reclined in my former station, delighted to be released from the presence of my stupid fellow countryman. How an individual of cultivated mind, and refined habits like Mr. Rivers, could hold companionship with such a person as Mr. Medlicut, surprised and displeased me; and I rather piqued myself

on my own fastidiousness of taste, which precluded a patient endurance of such an infliction.

The moon had now silvered the sea with its bright beams ; a gentle, but favourable breeze filled our sails ; and we glided smoothly on our course, the silence unbroken save by the murmur of the water as the prow of our vessel broke its glassy surface, leaving far behind in its wake a line of silvery radiance, still more brilliant than the rest of the sea. Soothed by the tranquillity of the scene, I dropped into a calm and deep sleep, from which I awoke not, until, at an early hour next morning, Mr. Rivers stood by my side, carefully placing a warm cloak to preserve me from cold—an act of kindness that broke my slumber.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. MEDLICUT soon after came on deck, and declared that—thanks to the additional bumpers of Marsala he had drunk the previous night—he had slept perfectly well, a precaution he had been advised to adopt by a colonel, whose name and regiment he vainly tried to remember, and which, as usual, he said was of no consequence.

“Have you many English residents at Palermo?” inquired Mr. Rivers.

“No, sir; few except some merchants and their families. Some of these are worthy

and respectable people. Mr. —; bless me, how stupid it is to forget his name. He came from some place I cannot call to mind, married the daughter of an old friend of mine, whose name I can't remember, which is very strange, as we were very intimate in former years. We have also Mr. Johnson, no, Tonson, or Jobson, if I don't mistake, a very pleasant, clever fellow, swears by my Marsala, and recommends it to all his friends and correspondents. His wife, a very pretty woman, a Sicilian; her name was, let me see, Casanilla; no, Chiesa Natala; no, it was not either of these names, but something like them; but it's of no consequence. We have also a Mr. —; there again, hang me if I haven't forgotten his name, although I know him as well as any man in Palermo. He has a pretty wife, but a confounded shrew, quarrels with all the other merchants' wives, and makes her husband take her part, however in the

wrong she may be, so that he, although naturally a peaceable fellow, is always at war with his neighbours on her account. O! the English women, I must say, are ever much addicted to prying into the affairs of any strangers, particularly females, who come to Palermo, and are never over charitable in the conclusions they draw from their real or fancied discoveries. Why, it was only two months ago that they were all set agog by the arrival of a lady whom they declared to be a most mysterious person, though what they could see in her to lead them to think so, I cannot make out. She brought a respectable letter of credit, which, in my opinion, is a sufficient proof of being all right, alleged herself to be a widow, is neither young nor handsome, although she bears the remains of having been in her youth what is called a showy woman. But because, notwithstanding they made her overtures of civility, she keeps aloof from

mixing in their society, they indulge in various conjectures about her. The occasional visits of a strange, and somewhat ferocious looking man, something between a pirate and a courier, who comes from Naples, and stays but a short time with her, has awakened the curiosity and suspicion of the English ladies at Palermo. This man has a small vessel, in which he sails about. It is manned by five or six Genoese sailors, dare-devil sort of fellows, who, when in port, if questioned about their master, as they often are, either menace or ridicule those who speak to them. The lady's establishment consists of a female servant and four Frenchmen, who seem devoted to her, and are, strange to say for Frenchmen, as reserved and silent about their mistress and her affairs as she herself is."

"And what is the name of this lady?" inquired Mr. Rivers. "Her name is Mrs. ——, Mrs. ——; now is it not too bad of me

to have forgotten it? but it is of no consequence after all."

"And in what part of Palermo does this lady reside?" inquired I, struck by a sudden notion that she might be the very person who had intruded herself on us the memorable day at Pæstum.

"She resides in a house near the seashore, with a high-walled garden in the rear."

The vessel, the description of the man, and his habit of cruising about, agreed with the suspicions I had formed; and it occurred to me that through our loquacious fellow passenger we might obtain a clue to the discovery of the lovely Selina. No sooner had this idea entered my head, than I instantly became as polite and chatty with Mr. Medlicut as I had previously been cold and reserved. I encouraged his propensity to gossip, and was soon furnished with innumerable anecdotes and tales rela-

tive to all his acquaintances in Sicily. Many of them were not over creditable to the persons of whom they were related; but fortunately, the utter defectiveness of his memory in retaining names rendered his scandalous *historiettes* harmless; and the *piquants* anecdotes of "Mrs. ——; hang me if I can remember her name," or "Mrs. Johnson, Tomson, or Sampson," proved, indeed, of "no consequence."

When he had left us to go down to the cabin, to indulge in a glass of his favourite Marsala, which he pronounced to be the universal panacea for all maladies, being, as he asserted, a preventive, as well as a cure, Mr. Rivers observed to me that he thought we had obtained a clue to Miss Somers.

"It struck me from the first," said he, "that this garrulous man, from knowing Sicily so well, might be of use to us. It was this belief that induced me to cultivate his acquaintance; although I saw that you took

little pains to conceal the distaste with which his loquacity had inspired you. Had I, like you, avoided him, we should never have found this clue.”

At length our voyage drew to a close, and as we neared the Sicilian shore, its beauty made a deep impression on us. There is something very exciting in the first view of a strange country. Whatever notions of it we may have previously formed, are found to be so unlike the reality, that a sentiment of disappointment is mingled even with the admiration it calls forth. The scene so new to our eyes has existed for centuries as we now beheld it, and in the land before us, no familiar face comes forth to smile a welcome to us; no friendly hand is held out to meet our own; the very language is new and strange to us; and we experience that feeling of loneliness always peculiar to the first landing on a foreign shore—a feeling that reminds us of our own

insignificance in life. Is there a human being in this new land that would care if the ocean swallowed us? is a thought that suggests itself, as we gaze around. This mental question hope answered in my breast, by whispering, "Yes, if Selina dwells in Sicily, she would care!" and this idea cheered in a moment the sense of loneliness that was stealing over me.

"Here we are, Mr. ——; hang me if I haven't forgotten your name; but it's of no consequence. Is not that a beautiful, a glorious view? There," continued Mr. Medlicut, "stands Monte Catalfano on one side, and Monte Pellegrino on the other. The port and its mole are beneath Monte Pellegrino. Yes, Palermo, though somewhat dilapidated, is still a fine place, and so I think you will admit when you have seen it and its environs. Command me in all that can be of use to you; for it will give me real pleasure to serve or oblige my

countrymen. I can offer you rooms in my house, and a hearty welcome. It was only last year that I had Sir Thomas ——; dear me, I have forgotten his name; staying with me. He is a baronet, and has a fine place in some county—let me see if I can't remember the name. Norfolk—no, Suffolk, I think it is, but it's of no consequence. I have his name, and the name of his place written down at home. I made him write it, for I never trust to my memory."

We declined availing ourselves of his hospitable offer, and he then good-naturedly volunteered to conduct us to the best inn, and arrange with its owner for our lodging &c. during our stay. "You must let me send you some of my own choice Marsala; you will find nothing like it in any other house than mine."

Mr. Medlicut was really very useful to us, for he consigned our luggage to some of the porters on the mole, all of whom seemed

to know him very well; gave them directions whither they were to be conveyed; and left the vessel with us. "Here," said he, "is the Porta Felice; see what a fine view of the city it commands. Is it not a charming prospect?" And charming it truly was, so much so, that we paused to behold it. "Ay, I thought you would admire Palermo; every stranger does; and if you like antiquities, I have a friend, an Irishman, settled here many years, as a teacher of the English language, who can tell you all about the Carthaginians, and other ancient people connected with this place. He says the real name of this city was Panormas, from which, I tell him, panorama is derived; but this he will not admit. Lord bless you, he will go on for whole hours, and days, if any one will listen to him, repeating such hard words as are enough to break one's jaws to pronounce, and how he can keep them in his head seems a miracle to me. I

told him this once, and he answered, that the places he looked on reminded him of the events and names of those connected with them, which had occurred in the olden time. But I remarked, 'Why, I see the places as well as you do, but that does not make me a whit wiser about the events or the names.' He could say nothing to this, for it was a poser; so he turned up his eyes and shrugged his shoulders."

Mr. Medlicut pointed out to us two fine streets, each a mile long, which cross the city at right angles; and the Piazza Vigliena, whence we had a beautiful view of the north of the Porta Felice, through which the blue sea was seen; and to the south, the Porta Nuova, the fine mountains, and a castle, which crowns Monreale. At length we reached the *locando*, where our new acquaintance soon installed us in very spacious, if not comfortable apartments, after bargaining, as hard with the landlord as if he

believed a rigid economy in our expenditure was highly desirable, if not essentially necessary. Again offering his services to us, with a warmth of manner that proved his desire of their being accepted, he took his leave, promising an early visit.

CHAPTER XIII.

HAVING dined, Mr. Rivers and I, declining the attendance of the cicerone, who presented himself at the door of the hotel as soon as we appeared at it, strolled forth to explore Palermo. We stopped to admire the Cassaro, the general effect of which is good; and the footways on each side, a comfort so uncommon in foreign streets, greatly pleased my companion. The Palazzo Geraci is an imposing edifice; and the majority of the houses in this part of Palermo are lofty and well built. I felt a tre-

pidation as I cast my eyes on every side in search of some face or figure that might furnish a clue to the object of all my thoughts, forgetful that there was little probability that those who had carried off the lovely Selina would permit her to appear in public. I longed to visit the spot described by Mr. Medlicut as the one where the mysterious lady had taken up her abode; but the evening was now too far advanced to seek it, even if I had been acquainted with the direction. We sauntered through the square of the Palazzo, and examined the building itself, which is a motley structure, partly Saracenic and partly modern, neither offering good specimens of architecture.

And now the shades of night descended, and soon after, the rising moon came forth from her shadowy curtain, flooding the sky with light, and tinging every object around with her silvery beams. The sounds of

music were heard issuing from open lattices and balconies; soft airs with dulcet words lisped forth as Italian lips only can breathe them; or sprightly notes were struck from guitars, accompanied by songs, given in the true comic style, in which Italians are said to excel. Every turn presented happy groups hurrying to some scene of amusement, or else enjoying the evening air, which, after the sultry days peculiar to this country, is felt to be a positive pleasure. Yes, at Palermo, even more than at Naples, we were continually reminded that we were in a southern climate; and ill at ease as was my mind, I felt its painful thoughts soothed by the influence of the delicious atmosphere. Even Mr. Rivers, whose age and character rendered him so much less liable to be affected by it, observed, that those who had resided some time in Italy, and above all, in Sicily, could well understand how great an influence the enervating balminess of the

air, the sweet music, and the bright moonlit scenery, must have on an impressionable nature. "The very atmosphere is infectious," said he, "and is calculated to dispose him only to pleasurable emotions who in our northern clime might have remained a grave and reflecting character."

We strolled to the Pian odella Marina, and paused before the picturesque fountain near the Senate-house; on the showers of crystal-like water thrown up from which, the moonbeams cast the most dazzling radiance. We returned to our hotel, and, having refreshed ourselves with some iced *sorbetto*, retired to our beds, with the sounds of tinkling music still ringing in our ears from wandering musicians, who seemed loth to give up the enjoyment of the cool and delicious hours of night.

I arose early next morning, impatient to begin my search for the fair Selina. Mr. Rivers, less anxious on this point, still

slept; so, leaving a message with our servant that I would return to breakfast, I sallied forth, and took the direction towards the sea, remembering that Mr. Medlicut had stated that the house occupied by the mysterious lady lay near the shore.

How bright and balmy was the morning, and how did my heart throb with renovated hope as, with agile step, I hurried along, passing nearly unnoticed many a building, fountain, or point of view, that, under other circumstances, I should have long loitered to admire! But now, every thought, every feeling, was centered in the engrossing one—a longing, impatient desire to discover and free the adorable Selina from her thralldom. So rapid was my pace that many a sauntering Sicilian stopped to look at me, muttering some remark on the *forestieri Inglese*, who neither walked nor did anything else like other people. At length I reached the shore, and noticed no less than three

houses in its immediate vicinity, each at a considerable distance from the other, but any one of which might have answered the notion conveyed by Mr. Medlicut. A vessel lying at anchor nearly in front of one of the houses, reminded me of the statement relative to the supposed friend of the mysterious lady, and induced me to reconnoitre this dwelling more closely. It had a garden attached to it, surrounded by a high wall; and some of the windows facing the sea had iron bars, which, with the general dreary aspect, gave very much the appearance of a prison to this solitary abode. While I stood looking at it, a man in a sailor's dress opened the door, and, observing me, approached, and inquired in Italian what I wanted? I answered, that I was in search of an English lady, who, I was informed, resided in one of the houses near the beach.

“ There is no such person here,” said he, in a very dogged tone; “ and as the owner

of this house dislikes having strangers prowling around his dwelling, you will do well to withdraw."

"The owner has no right to dictate to me, while I do not enter his house or garden," replied I. "All persons may pass where I now stand, and pause to look around them, if they please."

"We shall soon see," observed he; and applying a whistle to his lips, three men in sailors' attire came forth instantly from the house, and he having spoken to them in a low tone of voice, they drew close to me, and with threatening gestures and angry voices desired me to go away. Indignant at their insolence, I felt little disposed to obey the mandate; but conscious that against four men, and in a solitary situation, removed from any hope of assistance from passers by, resistance would be unavailing, I moved away, the men remaining in front of the house as if watching me.

When I was at some distance from the dwelling, which I now became convinced was the identical one of which I was in search, I encountered a tall man of a most forbidding aspect, and with a very peculiar mode of walking. He eyed me narrowly, and, having passed on, turned his head again to look at me; but observing that I did the same by him, he resumed his route. Had I entertained any doubt, the presence of this man would have convinced me that my suspicions were well founded; for his appearance perfectly coincided with the description given by the fair Selina of the person who had carried her off from La Cava. I instantly determined to go to Mr. Rivers, and with him seek a magistrate, to demand an authority to examine the premises; and, fearful that suspicions of my intention might lead to the removal of the object of my search, I was hurrying rapidly

towards the town, when I heard the sound of horses' feet advancing in a gallop behind me, and in another instant the man I had seen but a few minutes before, followed by three others, came up to me.

“ I wish to know,” cried he, in Italian, but with an accent that proved it was not his native tongue, “ why you came prowling around my house like a spy, and resisted the orders of my servants to leave the place?”

I was about to reply, when he jumped from his horse, made a sign to his followers also to dismount, and advancing to me, while one of the men held the horses of the others, he violently seized me. Two of the sailors assisted him to secure my arms behind my back, when they placed me on one of the horses, and, guarded by the party, I was led back to the sea-shore. There I perceived a boat, with two men resting on

their oars, into which, in spite of all resistance, I was soon placed; while two more men entered it, and quickly rowed off towards the vessel lying at anchor, into which I was forcibly removed, and shut up in a small cabin.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL this had been the work of a few minutes; and as I heard from the small port-hole of the cabin the sound of the oars as the boat was rowed back to shore, the whole thing seemed to me more like a dream than a reality. And here I was, a prisoner, powerless to rescue her to whose place of captivity I had but so lately discovered a clue! To the lot which might be reserved for me by the lawless wretch who had thus made me a prisoner, I gave not a thought; so wholly was I engrossed by my anxiety for

the lovely Selina, about whose fate all that I had seen of the reckless man in whose power I felt convinced she was, occasioned me to be more than ever alarmed. What would, what could Mr. Rivers think of my sudden disappearance? How great would be his terror and anxiety! My mind was in a tumult; a thousand thoughts fraught with bitterness passed through it, all uniting with the maddening consciousness that I was a prisoner, and guarded by a force sufficient to defeat any efforts I could make to escape. Yet, strange to say, notwithstanding the agitation of my mind, after some hours I began to experience the pangs of hunger; but though I repeatedly knocked at the door of the cabin — outside which I heard a man continually moving—and called aloud, no notice was taken of me. Not until long after the clouds of night had shrouded my little prison in total darkness, was the door opened, a loaf of bread and a

flask of wine placed before me; and I was told that I might retire to rest in the rude berth in the cabin whenever I felt disposed. I asked for a light, which was rudely denied me; and my gaolers having withdrawn, I was again locked in, and left to my own painful reflections. I ate some of the coarse bread, and drank a little of the wine, which restored me, and then scrambled into the berth, when I soon fell into a deep slumber, from which I was awaked by a noise in the cabin. The total darkness precluded me from seeing; but I put forth my hand, and, to my horror and disgust, it came in contact with a living, moving substance, that rushed nimbly over the covering of my wretched berth, and scampering up my pillow, whisked its unclean tail against my face. Another and another in quick succession followed; and, to my utter dismay, I discovered that the cabin and the berth were infested by rats—animals,

above all others, the most hateful to me. I called aloud for a light; but my cries excited only the rude merriment of the brutal sailors, whose derisive laughter I could hear, as they mimicked my demand.

I covered my head with the bed-clothes as a protection from these odious animals; but judge of my disgust when I found that two or three of them had penetrated beneath the scanty covering, and were assailing me with their teeth. I jumped from the berth, dashed my horrible assailants to the floor, and searched in every corner for some weapon to defend myself from their attacks, but nothing could I find. My only resource from their invasion was to stand in the middle of the cabin, away from the sides,—up which they kept continually clambering,—to kick all those that ran over my feet, and to strike at the more hardy which attempted to climb up my legs. Never had I passed, or even conceived a notion of a

night so horrible,—and never did I so welcome the first break of day. I could now see these odious animals clamber up the table and devour the bread, of which I had partaken only a small portion the previous night; but when the daylight became more broad, they eyed me askance, and scampered away to their different hiding-places, leaving me in a state more easily to be imagined than described.

And now my prison door was opened, and two of the sailors entered. They looked at me with derision, and mockingly demanded why I cried out so much in the night. “You, a brave *Inglese*, could surely not be afraid of such harmless things as rats, though, *Cospetto*, they do sometimes, as I dare say you have discovered, bite very sharply. Look there, signor” — and the speaker held up his hand, and shewed more than one mark from the teeth of the rats. “But after all,” continued he, “they do no

great damage, and their presence proves that ours is a good vessel, for these animals, more sensible than men, always know when to forsake a falling house, or a sinking ship."

"How long am I to be thus illegally detained?" demanded I.

"As long as it pleases our Capitano to keep you," was the answer.

"He has committed an act that he may yet have reason to repent," said I.

"I would not advise you to tell him so, for he cares little for law, and still less for the opinions of those who are in his power," replied the former speaker. "He has a peculiar dislike to inquisitive people, and you proved yourself to be of this class, by prowling about his habitation, so he has taken care that you shall trouble him no more on shore."

"Yes, yes, our Capitano is not a man to

permit any one to meddle with him," said another of the sailors. "He makes short work of it when he wishes to get rid of troublesome people."

"He may one day meet with those who are as revengeful and determined as himself," muttered the third sailor, a dark, dogged-looking man, with a scowling brow, and a powerful sinewy frame, who had entered the cabin while the other was speaking.

"What! because he gave you a blow yesterday?" said one of the crew.

"*Sono Romano,*" replied the scowling-looking fellow; "and a Roman forgets not a blow."

"You will learn to do so, when you are as long with our Capitano as we have been," observed the other, "for he likes to keep his hands in exercise, I can tell you."

"Talk of the evil one and he will appear,

for here comes our Capitano. All hands on deck quickly, for he will not approve of our being here, confabbing with the prisoner," said the first speaker; and all three rapidly retreated, taking care to lock the cabin door. I expected every moment that he would descend, and enter my odious prison; but though he remained on deck some time, he did not; and when I heard his boat leave the vessel, I shrank with disgust, and, to say the truth, with terror, at the notion of being another night exposed to the invasion of the abominable animals who had assailed me. A coarse meal, consisting of ship beef and biscuit, was presented to me soon after the departure of the Capitano, as he was styled, and, hunger conquering the repugnance and disgust excited by its appearance, I partook of this bad fare with an appetite often found wanting when luxurious repasts were served to me. As the

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shades of evening were descending, I heard the plashing of oars alongside our boat; and through the port-hole could distinguish the voices of the sailors as they shipped the provisions, brought from the shore, on board our vessel."

"You are well laden," observed a sailor from the deck. "We are going to have a long voyage, I suppose, if I may judge from the quantity of sea stock."

"Yes, il Capitano said, we are to hold ourselves in readiness to sail the moment he comes on board, and he will be here before it is dark."

"And where are we bound for?"

"You'll know that when he tells us. I fancy he wants to take the prisoner out of the way."

"The sky looks black and threatening, and the wind is getting up; I don't half like the appearance of the weather; but we al-

ways have the luck of it when we go to sea. If he wants to get the prisoner out of the way, there is a much shorter and less troublesome mode of doing it."

"How so?"

"Knock him on the head and throw him overboard; with enough shot to keep his body from floating."

"Just like you, always for murder."

"Better to kill one man, than to run the risk of having five or six drowned, say I, especially when I am one of the number."

"I don't think there will be much of a storm, after all."

"You'll learn, before many hours are over. Look at the mares' tails, how quick they float over the sky, and see the sea-gulls how they seem to ride the foaming crests of the waves! It was just such an evening as this that the heavy gale came on when we were taking the two ladies from near Pæstum, and what a night it turned out!"

I had listened with breathless attention to this discourse, and the last portion of it brought the conviction that the vessel I was now in was the identical one in which the lovely Selina had been taken away; as also, that the house near the shore was her present abode, and that, to prevent the discovery of which I had the clue, I was thus forcibly removed from Palermo. How did I now execrate my own rash impatience in having, alone and unarmed, attempted to trace her, by which I had placed myself in the power of the wretch who commanded this vessel, and thus lost the chance of rescuing her from his clutches. Had I been furnished with a judicial authority to search for her, and a sufficient force to carry it into effect, she might now have been in safety under the protection of Mr. Rivers and myself, while, by my rashness, the chance of delivering her was more remote than before. My life had never previously

appeared to me so valuable as now, when reflecting that it was necessary to her safety. With the knowledge I had so lately attained of him who had spirited her away, and of the place of her confinement, were I but free I could soon rescue her; but should a violent death overtake me,—and in the hands of the lawless men around me, such an event seemed by no means improbable,—who was to follow up the pursuit with that zeal and vigilance which love alone can give?

The boat having deposited its sea-stock on board, pushed off again to shore in order to convey *il Capitano* to his vessel. I heard the busy note of preparation going on at every side, and felt my breast filled with rage at the anticipation of being soon carried far away from Palermo, which I was now convinced held all that was dearest to me on earth. The consciousness of my own utter helplessness in the position in which I

was placed, nearly maddened me; and so wholly engrossed my thoughts, that I was only aroused from my reverie by finding the odious animals which had tormented me during the previous night again returning to the attack.

CHAPTER XV.

THERE is something humiliating in having the sense of our corporal infirmities forced on our attention, while our minds are occupied by one absorbing thought. I experienced this, and felt more than half ashamed at the consciousness that while my heart owned the most intense passion for an object so every way worthy to excite it, I could even for a moment forget her, in the sensations of horror and disgust excited by those odious animals, the rats. I used my utmost efforts to repel their contact, and heard many a squeak as I kicked at them.

The Capitano now arrived, and ere he left the boat, loudly demanded whether Geronimo had returned? Being assured that he had not — “Then he has fled, and with no good intention,” observed he. “He is a traitor, I am sure, and has gone to betray us. Let us immediately set sail, and so foil the villain’s plans.”

The boat was instantly hoisted and secured, the anchor weighed, the sails unfurled, and I felt the vessel heave and stagger, as, impelled by the wind, which had now greatly increased, she reeled along, the spray already dashing against her sides with a loud sound, and falling in showers over her bulwarks.

“We are going to have a heavy gale, Capitano,” said one of the sailors.

“And what if we are?” replied the captain. “Would you have us remain tossing in the bay all night, you stupid brute? And do you not know that the vessel is

much safer away from the land, and with plenty of sea room? But all you Italians are cowards, and if you had your own way would never go out of sight of land."

I heard the sailor mutter a curse between his teeth, while the captain, who had taken the helm, issued his orders with a sternness, mingling them with oaths, that proved he did not seek to conciliate the good will of his myrmidons. The vessel had cleared the port; the wind getting every moment stronger, and the waves lashed into fury by it, when a ship was seen following in our wake, every sail crowded; and she gained on us so fast, that the captain cried out that he believed we were pursued.

"Put on every rag of canvas we have," exclaimed he; "for I would rather sink the vessel than allow her to be boarded."

"Steady the helm," cried the second in command, "and mind her head."

"How many knots are we making?"

“Nine, or thereabouts.”

“Then, by Jove, we shall be caught!” and curses loud and deep followed this speech.

The wind was now blowing a perfect hurricane, and the waves dashed over the weather side of the vessel, and penetrated into the cabin and hold.

“Reef the mainsail,” screamed il Capitano; and scarcely had the order been complied with, when “Haul in the mainsail” followed. The vessel was driven before the wind, at one moment mounting the mighty waves that threatened to overwhelm her, and the next sinking, as if stunned and powerless, into the deep trough of waters, whence it appeared impossible she should ever rise again. Every plank creaked as if in agony, while the sounds of the fitful gusts of wind that flapped and rent the sails, mingled with the roaring of the white crested waves that struck the vessel until it

reeled, and staggered like a helpless thing tormented by demons. The sounds of a voice issuing from a speaking-trumpet were now heard, as the pursuing vessel approached nearer to us; but the wind and waves drowned the words. My heart beat rapidly, for the notion that the ship, the appearance of which so much discomposed il Capitano, might bring freedom to me, darted through my brain. But quickly did the sense of my danger chase all hope. Shut up as I was, without the power of rushing on deck, the vessel might be sunk if borne down on by the pursuing one, without a chance being afforded me of making a struggle to escape. The rats, with the prescience of danger often attributed to them, now became more bold than ever, and ran towards every corner to seek an egress from the cabin; their squeaks rising in proportion to the increased external noise. Madened by the contact of these loathsome

animals, which not even a sense of the danger of my position could make me forget, I rushed towards the door, and dashed myself furiously against it, in the hope of bursting it open, when the vessel lurched violently, and that which my weight failed to effect, was now achieved by the shock the ship had experienced. The door flew open, and I fell headlong on the companion, the rats rushing over my body in their eagerness to get on deck. When I ascended, all was confusion, and *il Capitano* and his crew were so occupied at their different posts, that my presence was unnoticed. I saw the pursuing ship gaining rapidly on us, and expected that in a very short time she would be alongside our vessel, in which case I determined to jump overboard, and trust to Providence for my preservation.

“Go below instantly,” said *il Capitano* to a sailor, whose ferocious countenance I had formerly marked, “and bring the pri-

soner on deck. Fly! there is not a moment to be lost. He must be thrown overboard before yonder ship is close enough to save him, for should he be found in our vessel, the worst consequences will ensue." I cast one rapid glance towards the fast approaching ship, and mentally recommending myself to the protection of Heaven, jumped overboard, before the sailor sent to execute his brutal captain's orders had time to seize me. I felt the white and hissing foam open as a grave to me, penetrated the dark green abyss beneath it, and in an instant, as if impelled by some irresistible force, I was raised and flung forward by a mighty wave, and again sank, as I thought, to rise no more. An eternity of thought was crowded into this brief span. The past and the present flashed through my brain with the velocity of lightning, and the love of life, inherent in every heart, led me to make a desperate effort for the preservation of mine.

To swim amid such waves I felt would be impossible; but when I once more rose to the surface of the sea, I endeavoured to float, and was borne on the waves, now mounting and then descending as they rushed rapidly on, but no more sinking beneath them. I heard two pistol shots following quickly on each other, fired from the vessel I had left, but neither of them touched me, though it was clear from the nearness that I was the object aimed at. The waves fortunately bore me in the direction of the pursuing ship, close to which I was now approaching, when the dread of being carried beneath it by the impetuosity of the current, led me to cry out as loudly as I could for succour. In a moment a rope was thrown out to me from the deck, which after a few efforts I seized, and clinging to it with all my strength, was drawn to the side of the vessel, two or three men having been let down in the mean time, and

secured to the ship's side, in order to assist me, exhausted as I now was, to enter the ship. I lost all consciousness in the arms of my deliverers, and for many hours remained nearly in a death-like state.

When I again became sensible, I learned that the vessel I had escaped from had gone to pieces two hours after I had left it, owing to having ran against another ship, and that not a soul on board had been saved. The sailor, who, irritated by the brutality of *il Capitano*, had ran away at Palermo, had given information to the civil authority at that place, that an Englishman had been kidnapped, and carried off ; and Mr. Rivers, assisted by Mr. Medlicut, had instituted a search for me in all directions, and offered a large reward for my rescue, which induced the worthy magistrates and police of Palermo to make more than usual efforts to accomplish this point. An armed vessel, on board of which was the man who had

betrayed il Capitano, had been despatched to give chase to that in which I was a captive; and would, on coming near it, have instantly fired on and brought it to, had the commander not feared to risk my safety. The sailor, who knew the reckless brutality of il Capitano and his crew, expected that I should be poniarded and thrown overboard, whenever his late master saw that escape was impossible; so he kept a close look out on the vessel, saw me jump overboard, beheld the Capitano aim two shots at me, while I was buffeting with the waves, and threw out the rope, by the aid of which, under Divine Providence, my life was saved.

My first question on recovering the use of my faculties was whether this man had also given information to the magistrate relative to the present abode of the young lady forcibly carried off from the neighbourhood of Pæstum.

“Signor, no!” replied he, “there was no reward offered for her, so I did not touch on the subject.”

I turned from this mercenary brute with disgust, and he noticing my emotion said, “Now that the Signor is free, and will be at Palermo so soon, he knows where to find the Signorina without any assistance from me, but I hope he will think me entitled to some additional reward for having saved his life.”

“Reveal to me what you think was the motive that led il Capitano to take off the young lady,” asked I. “Be frank, and above all things, speak the truth!”

“*Si Signor, si, sono Romano*, and I always speak the truth, except when it is my interest not so to do. I believe il Capitano was employed by the elderly Signora to get possession of the young Signorina, whom she wished to keep in her custody. *He*, I verily believe, would have

preferred getting rid of the Signorina by foul play, for somehow or other he seemed to dislike her greatly, had he not been in dread of the elderly Signora, who supplied him with money, and who attached great importance to having the Signorina in her power. We had been cruising about a few days in the Bay of Naples, where il Capitano left us for a time; and when he returned, he was disguised in a whimsical manner, and we sailed for Salerno, in the bay of which we anchored, — keeping always a scout or two on shore, who had emissaries, to bring information from the neighbouring towns and villages. When the elderly Signora had been two or three days at Salerno, one evening our scout learned that the person il Capitano was in search of had arrived there, and was to go on to Pæstum next day. It was instantly arranged that the Signora should proceed to that place, and our vessel sail there;

anchor as near shore as was safe, and send a boat to lie under the rocks until il Capitano joined it. The rest, you know—your presence and that of the elderly Signora, and servants with you, embarrassed il Capitano very much; and I heard him swear that if an opportunity offered, he would get rid for ever of meddling fools, who crossed his schemes, and rendered their execution so difficult.

“You have doubtlessly learned that soporific drugs were administered to your servants, and to the postillions in the house at Pæstum, by il Capitano, who mixed them in their wine, with the connivance of the owner of that wretched abode, who also concealed him under the straw when you searched for him. The rest you already know—the ladies were taken on board the vessel you lately escaped from, the young Signorina, weeping and lamenting her fate nearly all the voyage, in spite of the con-

solation offered by the Signora, who endeavoured to reconcile her to her lot, and who lavished many marks of affection on her.

“We had a very severe gale on our voyage, but weathered it well, and reached Palermo safely, whence the Signorina was conveyed to the house near the sea shore, wandering around which you were detected, and on your retreat were encountered, and taken prisoner, by il Capitano. I vowed that I would have my revenge on him; and I have kept my oath. *Sono Romano*, Signor, and Romans always keep their promises. When the ship went to pieces, he boldly stemmed the waves, and made for this vessel. Some of the crew saw him, one moment borne on the crest of a high wave, and the next disappearing as it descended. They were for throwing out a rope to him, as in your case, and did, in spite of my advice to the contrary. He grasped it as only drowning men do any object that

offers a chance of safety, and was drawn close to the vessel's side. I stood there, our eyes met, though the waves between whiles beat over his face—he touched the ladder, and in another moment would have been saved, when I, remembering his brutality and insults to me—a Roman, struck him a violent blow on the head, with an oar I held in my hand, which caused him instantly to let go his grasp of the rope. He sank, but rose again, for a second; and in that brief interval gave me a glance, in which hate, bitter, burning hate, and despair, were depicted, then disappeared to rise no more! I shall remember that look to my dying hour. It froze my blood, and made me wish I had not struck the blow that caused his death: but *sono Romano*, he had wronged and insulted me, and my heart panted for vengeance. I have had it, but it is less sweet than I had imagined it to be, for somehow or other, that last glance

of his is continually recurring to my mind, and I cannot look at the sea without expecting to see his ghastly face, and rolling eyeballs, in the last agony of despair and death, scowling at me."

CHAPTER XVI.

AND now I once more stood on the shore of Palermo! O! the joy of that moment; my heart beating high at the prospect of soon beholding the lovely Selina, and of restoring her again to the worthy Madame de Stourville. Mr. Rivers, accompanied by Mr. Medlicut, met me before I had walked many paces, and never had I previously seen him so much moved, as he again and again clasped me in his arms, and anxiously examined my countenance.

“ You look fatigued, and must feel so,

my dear friend," said Mr. Rivers. "Let us go to the inn, that you may seek the repose of which you seem to stand so much in need."

In a few words I told Mr. Rivers, that having now discovered where Miss Somers was concealed, I could have no repose until I had released her from her prison. Attended by Mr. Medlicut, we instantly walked off to the house near the sea-shore; and as we approached it, my heart throbbing with emotion, Mr. Medlicut observed, "Why, there's the house of Mrs.—, what is her name? It is really too bad of me always to be forgetting names! Mrs.—; Mrs.—; no I can't remember; but I mean the mysterious English lady, who has excited so much curiosity at Palermo!"

We knocked several times at the door before it was opened; but at length a woman appeared, and informed us that *la Signora* and *Signorina* had left the house

two days before, and she knew not where they were gone, nor if they meant to return. I refused to believe a statement that filled me with alarm and anger, and chilled in an instant the hopes that a few minutes before were glowing so warmly in my heart. She, however, offered to let us see the house at once; and so convince ourselves that her statement was correct. I hurried through all the rooms, until I reached that which bore indications of having been inhabited by the fair Selina. The windows of this chamber had iron bars, and the door strong bolts on the exterior. A few Italian books were scattered on the table, and some pencil sketches lay near them. I looked on the drawings, and all doubt of their being Selina's vanished, when I saw that each of them represented the scenes which we had visited together. Some views of la Cava, a spirited sketch of Salerno, and another of the Temples at

Pæstum, struck me at once, by their perfect verisimilitude; but when, on examining them more closely, I saw a male figure, evidently meant for myself, introduced in each of the drawings, how did my heart beat!

The woman, in answer to our inquiries, informed us that la Signora and her daughter had set off so unexpectedly, that they had hardly had time to pack up some clothes for the journey. An hour before il Capitano had got into his boat to go on board his ship, he had been busy destroying papers. "*La Madre* could not console la Signorina," added the woman, "for she was never seen to smile since she had been brought from Italy. It was hard to be kept a prisoner as la Signorina was; but *la Madre* spent most of the day with, and appeared fond of her."

"Did il Capitano see la Signorina?" inquired Mr. Medlicut—a question I longed,

but had not courage to ask, so unwilling was I that those present should notice my emotion.

“No, Signor! he never approached the chamber of *la Signorina*, nor partook of the repasts prepared for her and *la Madre*. He lived in an apartment in a remote part of the house, and was separately served with all that he required.”

This piece of intelligence removed a weight from my mind; for it was a great consolation to know that she had not been subjected to the annoyance of an association with the odious Capitano. Who could this mysterious woman, who called herself the mother of Selina, be? That lovely girl had herself told me that she had never known a mother's care; and now, in a foreign land, a total stranger starts up, gains possession of her person by unfair means, and keeps her a prisoner! All this

was so strange and incomprehensible, that the more I reflected on it, the less could I develope the mystery.

“You will now, I hope, return with me to our hotel,” said Mr. Rivers, disturbing the reverie into which I had fallen; “for you have need of rest and refreshment.”

“You would much oblige us, Mr. Medicut,” said Mr. Rivers, “by gaining all the information possible relative to the English lady who lately inhabited this house. Her name, connexions, in short, all that is known of her, for we are much interested in the subject.”

“Her name—nothing is more simple! I have it at my fingers’ ends—have heard it often—have seen it in her letter of credit. Her name is Mrs.—; Mrs.—; how stupid of me to forget it! Never was there such a bad memory for names as mine is. Let me see, it begins with an L. Yes; I am

sure L is the first letter! Lester, is it? No; Lindsell. Yes—yes—now I have it; her name is Lindsell!”

Mr. Rivers instantly made a note of it in his pocket-book.

“Did you know the man who commanded the vessel in which Mr. Meredith was a prisoner; and who, it appears, acted as the agent of Mrs. Lindsell?” inquired Mr. Rivers.

“I have seen him occasionally in the streets; but had no personal acquaintance with him. His name, too, I have heard. I think it was Moranville. Yes; it was Moranville. He was not an Englishman, although he spoke English very well. It was said he came from Cuba; yes, Cuba was the place. I remember it, because some one told me that he had some famous cigars that he brought with him from the Havannah, and that he spoke often of Cuba.”

Mr. Rivers made another note.

“As that man has been drowned, it will, I think, be requisite to have his property and papers secured,” said Mr. Rivers. “The latter may throw some light on the recent illegal transactions in which he has taken so active a part. This investigation must be executed by, or in the presence of, a magistrate; and you will much oblige me, Mr. Medicut, by having it done.”

The woman in the house being questioned, pointed out the apartment of *il Capitano*; but declared that he always took the key with him wherever he went. So anxious was I to obtain some information that might furnish a clue to the motives that led to his mysterious conduct with regard to Selina, and disclose the cause of the part taken in it by Mrs. Lindsell, that I induced Mr. Rivers to remain in the house until the civil authority sent a proper person to have the room of the late *Capitano* forced open.

Mr. Medlicut obligingly went himself to the magistrate, and in a short time, two persons authorized by him arrived, and with the assistance of a locksmith, opened the door. To our great disappointment, however, not a single document was found. The hearth was covered with fragments of burnt papers, not one of which contained a legible word; in the drawer of a desk three or four pair of false whiskers, mustachios, and wigs of various colours, were found, which had evidently been intended as disguises. Some boots and shoes were also discovered, with one heel of each pair much higher than the other; a disparity evidently meant either to conceal a lameness, or to give the effect of being lame. The stratagem reminded me of Selina's description of the peculiarity of the walk of the man who had carried her off from la Cava; but who could never more molest her. He was called away to his last account, with

no time to repent or atone for his sins; and though the suddenness and manner of his death shocked me, it nevertheless was a consolation, that henceforth the object dearest to me on earth was freed from his desperate snares and reckless schemes against her liberty.

I possessed myself of the drawings of Selina, unseen by any one, placed them in my breast, and then left the house, determined to have persons dispatched in every direction in search of Mrs. Lindsell and the treasure of which she had so unfairly possessed herself.

Mr. Medlicut lent us every assistance with the magistrates, by whom it was evident he was much esteemed. Of course he made strange blunders about the names of those connected with the affair in question; either totally forgetting, or wholly changing them, much to the amusement of all present in the office of the magistrate, to

whom his defective memory seemed to be well known. Nevertheless, he so far succeeded in carrying our wishes into effect, that before night several men were sent off in different quarters to search for Mrs. Lindsell; and hopes were held out to us that in a few days we might calculate on receiving intelligence of the success of their exertions, if that lady was still in Sicily.

Mr. Rivers and I had so many questions to ask each other, that we were glad to find ourselves again *tête-à-tête*. I could have embraced him, as he declared that he considered it a duty positively incumbent on us, to leave no means untried, to discover the place of Miss Somers's concealment, and to restore her once more to the protection of Madame de Stourville; whose helplessness and want of knowledge of the world, however much to be deplored as incapacitating her for the task she had undertaken, were in some degree compensated by

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her excellent principles, and extreme attachment to her *élève*. The justly merited commendations he bestowed on the lovely Selina, found a ready echo in my breast; and I was never more convinced of the excellence of his judgment, and refinement of his taste, than when he had uttered them.

When I found myself that night in a clean and airy chamber, and reposing on a comfortable bed, I could not forbear congratulating myself on the contrast both afforded to my wretched prison and berth on board the vessel of il Capitano. Yet this very same chamber and bed had only a few nights previously struck me as being far inferior to the accommodation that might be expected in so large a city as Palermo, and at all events much inferior to the apartment I occupied at Naples. How pleasant it was to feel assured that my slumbers would not be broken by the odious and dis-

gusting animals that had assailed me in my prison; and that the next morning I should awake to liberty and sunshine, free to renew my search for her whose lovely image was the last that floated in my mind, as my eyes closed in sleep, and mingled in my dreams when I had sunk into the repose which my fatigue, and previous nights of watching, had rendered so requisite to recruit my nearly exhausted frame.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN I awoke next morning, my servant informed me that a rude and ill-looking man, in a sailor's dress, desired to see me. "If I might be so bold, sir," cried he; "I would take the liberty of advising you not to see this man; he seems to be a desperate fellow; and when I told him you were asleep and could not be disturbed, he got into a passion, said he must, and would see you, that he was a Roman, and would not be trifled with. He drew himself up, sir, when he said he was a Roman, just for all

the world as if he said he was a king; which—only I did not like to provoke him, he looked so fierce—would have made me laugh, for I remembered the half-naked set of fellows I used to see when we were at Rome, and thought that surely there was nothing to be proud of in being a Roman.”

“Send up this man directly,” said I.

“Had I not better call Mr. Rivers’s servant, sir, and have him to stay outside the door with me while this ill-looking sailor is in your room?”

“No, there is no occasion; send up the man immediately.”

My orders were obeyed, but the alarm visible in my servant’s face, when he left my chamber, proved either a strong attachment to my person, or a great dread of compromising the safety of his own.

“I am here, Signor, to offer my services to you,” said the sailor. “I have heard that a reward has been offered to any one

who will discover the abode of la Signorina, whom I assisted il Capitano in capturing near Pæstum, and I am willing to earn it. *Sono Romano*, signor, and if I say I will discover her place of concealment, you may trust me I will do it. Am I, for this said reward, expected to do aught more than discover where she is? I am thus particular, for if it be required that I should bring the Signorina to you, be assured that, dead or alive, she shall be brought. *Sono Romano*, signor; and a Roman never breaks an engagement."

I shuddered as I heard these last words, and the ferocious and determined look of this hardened man rendered their sense still more alarming. "Should any injury befall the young lady, you will forfeit the reward," answered I.

"But if the elderly Signora, who lacks not money or servitors, should make a vigorous resistance to my efforts to rescue

la Signorina from their hands, would you prefer my leaving her to them, and incurring the disgrace of a defeat, to risking her life, and in all probability losing it? *Sono Romano*, Signor, and defeat to me would be terrible."

"You are to employ some men on whom you can depend, in searching on every side to discover where the Signorina is kept confined; when you have effected this object, guard the house so that she cannot be removed from it; and despatch a person to me forthwith, and I will come with a regular and legal force to deliver her."

"It is well, Signor, you shall be faithfully obeyed, and I hope soon to send you good tidings;" and away he strode, with the air of a man determined to accomplish what he had undertaken.

Mr. Rivers and I having determined on remaining at Palermo until the place of concealment of Miss Somers was discovered,

Mr. Medlicut proposed our employing an acquaintance of his as a cicerone; and though I would have preferred being left to the indulgence of my own reflections, instead of going a round of sight-seeing, when my thoughts were wholly occupied by one object, I consented to the proposition in order to amuse Mr. Rivers. We commenced with the cathedral, erected by an Englishman, Archbishop Walter; it was invested with greater interest to us on that account. The beautiful tracery exhibited on the exterior, and the gates with their archivolt mouldings and sculptured spandrels pleased us, but the general effect of the building is much deteriorated by the cupolas that crown its turrets. We next proceeded to the Royal Palace, which contains some good rooms and fine pictures. In the armory we were shewn the sword of the celebrated Count Roger, the dimensions

of which reminded one of the lines descriptive of that of William Wallace,—

“ The sword that seem'd fit for an archangel to wield
Was light in his terrible hand,”

and proves the strength of the Norman's arm. The small church of St. Peter, with its subterranean chapel, and exquisite mosaics, offers some fine specimens of Saracenic splendour; but each and all of the objects I beheld, however worthy of attention, failed to divert my mind from the one point which wholly engrossed it.

On the fourth day a messenger arrived from the Roman who had been dispatched to obtain intelligence of the lovely Selina. Too illiterate to write, he had employed one of his friends to convey to me the tidings that he had at length discovered the retreat of la Signora and la Signorina, who were concealed in a villa in the neighbourhood of Catania, with one female and

six male attendants. He pledged himself not to leave the spot until my arrival, which he urged should be as speedy as possible, and advised my being accompanied by an armed force to meet the resistance that would in all probability be offered by the servants of la Signora, who were well armed, and men of desperate characters.

We immediately applied to the magistrate, who furnished us with a legal authority to obtain possession of the person of Miss Somers, and an escort of police to enforce it, and having provided ourselves with a *lettiga* for her accommodation, we set out. Though we travelled as expeditiously as we could, it was not until the evening of the second day that we reached Catania. The messenger dispatched to Palermo by my emissary served as a guide to the villa, which was seven or eight miles distant from the town. The route to it was almost impassable for any but the horses of the

country, and totally so for carriages, but it presented some views of wild and picturesque scenery, which under other circumstances I should have had pleasure in beholding. It wound sometimes through woods, interspersed with huge rocks half overgrown by moss, and at others through fertile vineyards; the wild aloe and prickly pear-trees, so abundant in Sicily, raising their picturesque heads high above the trees and plants that surrounded them. Large chasms, half hid by the parasitical plants that spread over them, proclaimed the volcanic nature of the soil; and the huge rocks scattered at a distance, bore evidence that their expulsion had left these voids which we remarked in the sultry earth.

A rude hamlet, consisting of some half dozen cottages and a wretched looking *osteria*, terminated the route; and adjoining it, but separated by a high wall, stood the villa in the midst of its own grounds.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE master of the *osteria*, as well as the other uncouth looking inhabitants of the hamlet, betrayed considerable symptoms of alarm at the appearance of the police. They shrunk away as if fearful for themselves, and were only reassured when my emissary, the Roman, greeted our arrival by rushing from the house, and proclaimed us to be the friends he had been expecting.

“They are safe, Signor,” said he, “in yonder villa. I only promised to discover, not to deliver them up. I have watched

them day and night lest they should escape; and whatever may be the sum you think proper to give me, over and above the stipulated reward, and I doubt not but that a Signor Inglese—so generous as all of your nation are said to be—will reward me well, I may say with truth that I have merited it. You know not, Signor, what I have had to undergo. Living at night concealed beneath the trees on the damp ground until my bones ached, and scorched by the burning sun in the days, my eyes fixed on the villa. Then the wine in this wretched *osteria* is abominable, and resembles nothing but vinegar. Yes, yes, Signor, *sono Romano*; what I engage to do, that I do; and no one can impeach the honour of Giovanni Bartiluzi.”

We left our horses at the *osteria*, and, led by Giovanni, proceeded to the villa. Having knocked at the gate, the porter drew back a sliding board, through which he was en-

abled to reconnoitre us, and demanded our business. The police officer told him that he must instantly give us admittance, or take the consequence of disobeying the law, at the same time shewing him the warrant. After reflecting for a short time, he opened a door by the side of the gate, and we entered what had once been a pleasure-ground, but which was now a wild mass of shrubs and trees intermingled with flowering plants, the gravel walk which led through it being overgrown with rank grass and briars. The porter left his lodge, which was close to the gate, and accompanied us to the house, through a path of tangled shrubs, long grass, flowers, and weeds. The moon shone bright on the vestibule and marble colonnade, which formed the entrance of the villa, the chaste and beautiful architecture of which, seen through the lofty stone pines and cedars, had a beautiful effect. A white marble terrace extended along the front,

with large sculptured vases of the same costly material, placed at intervals on pedestals, and a fountain in the centre threw up its silvery showers towards the dark blue sky, gemming the odorous orange trees around it with its widely-spread pearls.

And this was the dwelling of the lovely Selina; — meet temple for such a divinity! How my heart throbbed as I ascended the steps, and anticipated that in a few minutes I should behold her. We rang the bell repeatedly before any one appeared to answer the summons. At length a window above the door was opened, and a person demanded our business. The police officer displayed his warrant, and required instant admittance in the name of the law; declaring that, if it was denied, he would by force obtain it. After some hesitation, the door was opened by two servants, four more standing near; who, in answer to our desire to see the Signora, led us through a suite of

rooms, in the most remote of which we found the lady seated. Although she endeavoured to maintain a calm and unconcerned demeanour, it was evident that she was under the influence of fear and anxiety, for there was a considerable degree of trepidation in her manner. She was tall and slight, and her age seemed to be about forty-five or fifty.

“How am I to account for this intrusion?” said she, in Italian, addressing herself to the officer of the police; and had I previously entertained any doubt of her identity, her voice would have convinced me that the lady who had forced herself on us at Pæstum was now before me. The thick veil and large cloak, worn by her on that occasion, so effectually concealed her features and figure, that I might have been unable to recognise her; but her voice removed all doubt. The officer having shewn her his authority, she demanded, with an

air of proud and stern defiance, how long it was that the Sicilian laws interfered between a mother and her child?"

"But we deny that the young lady, of whose person you have surreptitiously obtained possession, is your child," replied the officer.

"I can, however, prove that she is; and consequently I have a right to retain her."

"That right you must establish before our court of law at Palermo; and my duty is, to conduct you and the young lady you allege to be your daughter, to that place."

"But if I refuse to obey this mandate?"—and the speaker drew herself up to her utmost height, and looked disdainfully around her.

"Why then I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of using force to convey you there."

"And will two English gentlemen see a countrywoman thus insulted?" said Mrs.

Lindsell, giving an appealing glance to Mr. Rivers and me.

“No Englishman can abet or advise resistance to the law of any country in which he may happen to be,” replied Mr. Rivers; “and as we stand here as the friends of Miss Somers, and are authorized by the lady under whose protection her father placed her to assist in her restoration to her, we are much more disposed to forward the proceedings instituted to effect that purpose, than to do anything to retard them.”

“I must remind the Signora that we are losing time,” said the officer of police, “and must request her to prepare immediately to accompany us to Palermo. The young lady, also, must appear, that these gentlemen may identify her previous to our setting out.”

Mrs. Lindsell looked vexed and mortified, and, after a moment's pause, said, “You surely will not think of compelling ladies to

travel at night. My daughter is indisposed, and a journey on horseback, exposed to the night air, might have a very injurious effect on her."

"Let the Signorina immediately appear!" said the officer. A command uttered in so peremptory a manner, that Mrs. Lindsell thought it most prudent to comply with it, and instantly sent a servant to summon the young lady. How my heart throbbed when the door of the apartment again opened, and Selina, the lovely Selina, entered! On beholding me she uttered a faint cry, and with extended arms advanced to meet me; but recollecting herself, she paused for a moment, and, covered with blushes, offered me her hand, saying, "Oh! Mr. Meredith, is it indeed you—and dear Mr. Rivers!" extending a hand to him. A passionate burst of tears impeded her utterance. Never had she appeared so lovely in my eyes as at that moment. Her beautiful face bathed

in tears, that expressed more eloquently than words her satisfaction at seeing us; and though not disposed to be vain, how much of the cause of that satisfaction did I appropriate to my own share. Mr. Rivers continued to hold her hand in his, as he whispered assurances that her safety should now be secured; while Mrs. Lindsell bit her lip, and betrayed various other symptoms of impatience and displeasure at this apparent good understanding between Selina and Mr. Rivers. "This, then, is the young lady of whom you have been in search, gentlemen?" inquired the officer; and on our answering in the affirmative, he asked if we could identify the Signora as the lady who had abetted in forcibly seizing the Signorina on the road near Pæstum? To which question we also replied in the affirmative. Selina having now become more calm, and her blushes having subsided, I observed that she had grown thinner and much more pale

than she had been wont to be. Her eyes, too, looked languid and heavy, and her whole appearance—now that the first emotion of joyful surprise at seeing her friends had passed away—indicated a delicate state of health.

“Is this lady your mother, Signorina?” demanded the officer.

Selina paused a moment before she replied; Mrs. Lindsell, with a countenance full of anxiety, looking at her earnestly.

“She says so,” answered the lovely girl, glancing timidly at us.

“But have I not convinced you that I am!”—demanded Mrs. Lindsell. “Recollect yourself, Selina; you will hereafter regret having thrown the least doubt on the near and dear relationship in which we stand to each other.”

“I know not what to believe, or what to say,” murmured the innocent girl, turning to Mr. Rivers. “If this lady be indeed my

mother, as she asserts, it would greatly grieve me to appear undutiful, or to give her pain, but as, until I saw her, I never heard that my mother lived, and that my father never named her to me, I cannot, without other proofs, be satisfied that she is my parent."

"Cruel girl," said Mrs. Lindsell, "thus to torture a mother's heart," and she applied her cambric handkerchief to her eyes. Selina immediately went to her, and taking her hand, said with the utmost gentleness, "Forgive me for having pained you, indeed it is most unwillingly; but all appears so new, so strange to me, that I cannot yet believe that I have found a mother. When all that is now so mysterious shall be explained, and that it is proved that you indeed stand in that relation to me, you shall find all the duty, all the affection, a daughter ought to feel for a mother." The paleness and general air

of indisposition which hung around Selina, induced Mr. Rivers and me to request the officer not to insist on the ladies' removal that night, and after some difficulty he consented to our wishes; specifying at the same time that although the Signora and Signorina might enjoy the uninterrupted privacy of their chambers, he must apprise them, that the doors must be guarded, to prevent the possibility of escape."

"Were my friend here I should not be exposed to insult," said Mrs. Lindsell, looking daggers at the officer.

"If you refer to il Capitano," replied he, somewhat spitefully, "*he* can no more be the accomplice in your schemes, for he has gone to render an account of his transgressions, in another world, instead of suffering, as he inevitably would have done, for them in this."

"What mean you?" demanded Mrs. Lindsell, starting to her feet.

“He is no more, Signora; he perished in the wicked enterprise in which he had embarked, for the purpose of removing this gentleman,” pointing to me, “from Palermo; when he knew his interference and protection might have shielded the Signorina from the machinations of her enemies.”

“I will not believe that he is dead!” exclaimed Mrs. Lindsell, looking incredulously at the officer.

“You will do just as you please, Signora,” answered he, “but if you doubt my assertion, you will perhaps be more disposed to credit these gentlemen,” bowing to Mr. Rivers and myself, “who can confirm what I have stated.”

Selina involuntarily clasped her hands, as if in thankfulness; then, turning still paler than before, she shuddered, and murmured, “So sudden! so unprepared to die! Oh! it is dreadful!” I noticed the expression of Mrs. Lindsell’s countenance at this moment,

and it bore so little appearance of sympathy with the feelings of the lovely and gentle Selina, that I turned from the contemplation to dwell on the beautiful face of the former; which, like a crystal vase filled with sparkling water, permitted the pure element within to be revealed.

“Is that terrible man indeed dead?” asked Selina, turning to me.

“Yes, positively, certainly. You have nothing more to dread from him.”

“And you, you also have suffered from his wicked plots, and for me too!” And oh! what a look of gratitude beamed in her beautiful eyes! Mrs. Lindsell evinced strong symptoms of impatience as she observed the confidential terms on which we were conversing; and, evidently for the purpose of interrupting it, told Selina that “it was time to retire for the night, and prepare for the journey of the morrow. These gentlemen,” said she, “must need refreshment; and

if I may still give orders in my own house, I shall instruct my people to serve some in the *salle à manger*."

So saying, she bowed coldly and haughtily to Mr. Rivers and me, while Selina shook hands cordially with us both, and then returning to Mrs. Lindsell's side, left the chamber with her, followed by the officer of police, and three of his assistants, who, having satisfied themselves that there were no other means of ingress to or egress from the chambers of the ladies, established sentinels at the doors, there to remain during the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN left alone with Mr. Rivers, his first exclamation to me was, "Never did I behold mother and daughter who bore so little resemblance to each other as Mrs. Lindsell and Miss Somers. They are so totally dissimilar, that I cannot bring myself to believe that so near a relationship, if any, exists between them. Be assured, there is some mystery in this, which we must, if possible, fathom; for the fact that, through any motives, Mrs. Lindsell should be induced to act in concert with such a man as il

Capitano, proves that she is very unfit to be the companion or guardian of our charming young friend. And yet, when I recall the disclosures made by Madame de Stourville, of the charge given her by Mr. Somers, not to let his daughter form acquaintance or mix with any persons whatsoever during their residence in Italy, it appears to me that he must have dreaded some discovery or attempt to obtain either an influence over the young lady or to get possession of her person. Why should he dread this, if he knew his own right to be indisputable? and why trust so precious a charge to so incompetent a person to guard it as our good, but helpless Madame de Stourville?"

The justice of these reflections alarmed and disturbed me; and it appeared doubtful whether Mr. Somers or Mrs. Lindsell had the best founded claim to the lovely being, whose relationship to either could only,

from what we knew of them, be a source of annoyance and discomfort to herself. How many painful thoughts passed through my mind during that long and sleepless night, all pregnant with melancholy forebodings for the future destiny of the fair creature dearest to me on earth. Of what avail was the possession of a large fortune, and the power of selecting a wife for myself, if I could not share that fortune with Selina, and free her from all control, save that of an adoring husband. Mr. Somers might have other views, and so refuse to grant my suit for her. He was, from what Madame de Stourville had stated, a man of mystery; and we had no clue to discover more of him than he wished to be known. Should he, indeed, establish his right to Selina, what reason had we to hope that her happiness would be his object? and as to Mrs. Lindsell, all that we knew of her was little calculated to give us confidence

that the fate of the fair young girl would be a fortunate one in her hands.

At an early hour the next morning we were on our route to Palermo. Miss Somers in the *lettiga* we had had the precaution to bring for her use, and Mrs. Lindsell in one that appertained to herself; the police force attending, and Mr. Rivers and myself, riding one at each side of the vehicle that contained Miss Somers.

After a tedious journey we reached Palermo in safety, and immediately presented ourselves, with our charge, before the magistrate. Mrs. Lindsell, when questioned, declared that Selina was her child; and added, that, separated soon after the birth of her daughter from her husband, he had taken her infant from her, and detained her ever since; that, actuated by a mother's fondness, she had continually kept a person to watch over the movements of her child, and, if possible, to snatch her from a

father who loved her not, to restore her to her arms; but that so cautiously had she been guarded, that no opportunity had ever been afforded for carrying her off during the seventeen years that had elapsed; but that ascertaining that she had been consigned to the care of a French lady to travel in Italy, all the mother's tenderness and longing desire to regain her daughter had revived in her heart, and she considered herself justified in the means she had employed to effect this purpose.

“But have you any proofs to establish your assertion that this young lady is your daughter?” demanded the magistrate.

“The certificate of her baptism is, with other important documents, in a casket in the desk of the house I lately occupied in the environs of this city.”

“Let the desk or the casket be brought here immediately!” said the magistrate;

and two officers of the police were instantly dispatched in search of it.

Although Mrs. Lindsell still struggled to retain her self-possession, it was evident that she was ill at ease, and felt wounded at the reserve evinced towards her by Selina—a reserve that was well calculated to impress all present with a doubt of her being really the mother of the young and lovely being, whose presence had excited so lively an interest for her in the hearts of the spectators.

In due time the two officers of the police returned, and stated that they had found the desk referred to broken open, with no casket or papers to be found in it.

“Then I have been plundered, treacherously plundered!” exclaimed Mrs. Lindsell, her countenance betraying the strongest symptoms of anger and alarm.

“The person left in charge of the house

declares, that after the Signora and Signorina had departed from it, il Capitano went to the chamber of la Signora, and having secured the door of it, remained some time there. When he quitted it, the woman went in, and discovered that the desk had been forced, and its contents taken away; and she further declares that il Capitano was the person who did it."

"The wretch! the monster!" murmured Mrs. Lindsell, turning very pale.

"That wretch and monster, Signora, as you call him, is now no more. The report of his death has been well authenticated; but it is unfortunate, to say no worse of it, that a lady should have employed so unworthy an agent in concerns of such a delicate nature, and should permit a man to be domiciled beneath her roof who could take so base an advantage of her confidence."

Mrs. Lindsell's cheeks glowed with the blushes of wounded pride, and her eyes

sought the ground as she listened to this well-merited reproof. Selina's fair countenance eloquently expressed the shame and disgust awakened in her mind by this public exposure of the woman who asserted herself to be her mother, as well as at the denouncement of the vile man who was thus proved to have been her associate. The magistrate next examined Selina, who, with a modest self-possession, related to him all the circumstances of both the *enlèvements*, and the fact that in the Captain, as he was called, she recognised the person who had forcibly carried her off from la Cava. While she spoke, Mrs. Lindsell cast appealing looks at her, but they were disregarded; and although she said nothing to criminate that lady, her fear and disgust of il Capitano were so strongly manifested in her countenance and manner, that the magistrate betrayed much sympathy for her.

“ You are now, young lady,” said he,

“ for ever released from all alarm from that vile person, who, whether actuated by some hidden motive of his own, or merely acting in compliance with the instructions of another,”—and here he looked sternly at Mrs. Lindsell,—“ has been the cause of so much terror and anxiety to you. With regard to you, Signora, the circumstances of this case are such, that in the absence of all proof to substantiate the assertions you have made that this young lady is your daughter, I find it my duty to detain you a prisoner, until the father of the Signorina comes forward.”

“ Me a prisoner !” exclaimed Mrs. Lindsell. “ You do not, cannot mean to perpetrate such an act of injustice !”

“ You stand here, Signora, as the acknowledged accomplice of a man whom you yourself have charged with felony. The abduction of la Signorina is a crime of deep dye, and until you have given proof that

she is your daughter, your freedom cannot be granted you. The Signorina I deliver to the safe custody of this respectable gentleman, whose age renders him a fit person for the charge, until the father, or the person empowered by him to receive her, shall arrive."

Oh! what a sweet smile played over the lips of Selina, when she heard this sentence pronounced; and how great was my rapture as I listened to it!

"You surely will not separate me from my daughter," said Mrs. Lindsell, "I am her proper, her natural protectress; suffer her to remain with me at least until her father arrives?"

"It would be unjust, Signora, to consign the innocent to a prison."

"But you put her into the hands of strangers, of whom you know nothing! Is it right, is it decent, that a young girl should be confided to a man, who stands in

no degree of relationship to her? It is monstrous, it is unheard of!"

"I will do that, madam, which I conceive to be my duty in this very peculiar case. For you, Signora, if the horrors of a prison affright you, I will relax the severity of justice, and permit you to reside a prisoner in a neighbouring convent, where you will be as strictly guarded, but more kindly dealt by, than in the prison. And now, Signor, (turning to Mr. Rivers,) I consign this young lady to your guardianship. You are not to leave Palermo until this mysterious affair is explained. Instructions were forwarded to Naples the day you set off to rescue la Signorina, that the lady to whom her father had given her in charge should immediately despatch intelligence to him of what has occurred, and come here herself by the next packet. She will, in all probability, arrive this evening, as the return packet is expected; and in the

meanwhile, my sister, an elderly and well reputed lady, will be the companion of la Signorina until her female friend arrives. She will reach your *albergo* in a few minutes, so you had better take this young lady there at once. And you, Messieurs," turning to two police officers, "conduct the prisoner to the Convent of Santa Rosalie, to the abbess of which, this note," and he wrote a few lines, "will explain my wishes."

"Selina, my child! my child!" exclaimed Mrs. Lindsell, "can you, will you leave your distracted mother? Oh! it is cruel, it is barbarous, thus to tear my daughter from me!"

Miss Somers approached her, and with a dignified gentleness, that touched all present, reminded her that she must now, as well as she had hitherto done, confine herself within the bounds of simple politeness, withholding all demonstrations of the affection and duty a child owed a parent, until

it was proved that she indeed stood in that relation to her."

"Cold-hearted, obdurate girl, how ill do you requite the foolish fondness that urged a dotting mother to have recourse to desperate means to gain possession of you," and covering her face with her handkerchief; she left the office escorted by the police, while we conducted the lovely Selina to our inn, tears rolling down her cheeks at the reproaches of Mrs. Lindsell.

CHAPTER XX.

“ I MUST appear a cold and heartless being to you,” said Selina, “ in parting thus with my mo——, but no, I do not, cannot believe she is my mother! My heart prompts me to disavow the affinity, and my lips cannot pronounce what my feelings deny.”

Mr. Rivers and I soothed her to the utmost of our power, but it was evident that her feelings were deeply wounded by the extraordinary position in which she found herself, for she often interrupted us, saying, “ Oh! if after all she should prove to

be my mother, how shall I reproach myself, how even pardon myself, for the indifference, the more than indifference, I feel towards her! Oh! it is dreadful.”

The sister of the magistrate soon joined us at the *albergo*; she seemed a kind-hearted, sensible woman, and evinced a great deal of sympathy towards Selina, whom the presence of one of her own sex comforted and re-assured.

“ I have endeavoured to recall to memory all the incidents and events of my childhood,” said Selina, in reply to some observation of Mr. Rivers, “ in order to know if there can be the least foundation for her statement of being my mother. I have a faint recollection of England, and of a kind nurse, and her tears and my grief at being taken from her by a gentleman who I was told was my papa: and I remember his conveying me to London, and when I wept in the carriage, his saying I was a naughty trouble-

some child, and shaking me roughly by the arm, and my being from that moment very much afraid of him. I remember also my having an English governess, who accompanied papa and me to Paris, and his conducting us to a house at St. Germain, in a very retired situation, with a garden, in which I used to play. My governess was very kind; and after some years I had masters who came from Paris to give me lessons. Papa very seldom visited me, and when he did, never shewed me any affection. When I grew up, I began to think it very strange that he did not like me, as I tried all I could to please him; but it was of no use; the more I endeavoured to please, the less he liked me, so I grew more and more shy, and afraid of him, and my good governess observing it, became, if possible, more kind and affectionate to me. Oh! the wretchedness of having a parent who does not love one! whom one

cannot win by docility and dutiful attention. Often did I then think, that if I had a mother, how tenderly I should love her. How I pictured to myself the support, the consolation, the blessing, she would be, until tears have rolled down my cheeks. Nay, the very name of mother sounded so sweetly, so softly, in my ears, that I associated with that dear and tender tie all that is most soothing and sweet in life. And now that one is found who asserts that title to my affections, and who professes to love me, my heart refuses to acknowledge her as a mother; and I find myself involuntarily shrinking from her caresses, and doubting her professions, as if some strong and secret instinct told me that she has no right to the affection and duty she claims. Alas! how sad is my fate. I turn with little less coldness and mistrust from him who calls himself my father, but from whom I have never yet received a parental caress or

blessing, as I do from her, who declares herself to be my mother, but whose caresses chill and revolt me!"

Selina ceased to speak, for tears impeded her utterance; and Mr. Rivers tenderly taking her hand, told her, that while he lived, she should ever find in him all the care and kindness of a father.

How was my attachment to Mr. Rivers enhanced by the deep interest and regard which he evidently entertained for this dear and artless girl!

"I continued to live in perfect seclusion at St. Germain's," resumed Selina, "never visiting Paris, and seldom seeing my father, until a year ago, when my dear, good governess was seized with a malady, which, alas! soon terminated fatally. When she became conscious of her danger, she sent for my father, and in a solemn manner consigned me to his care; invoking him to love and cherish me, and assuring him that

I was not unworthy of his affection. He heard her with evident impatience; and would fain have taken me with him to Paris, leaving my good, my tender governess, who had so often nursed me in illness, solely to the care of servants. But I so wept, and prayed not to be separated from her to the last, that he at length permitted me to remain, saying, 'that if I chose to make myself ill by watching over a dying bed, where I could be of no possible use, as nothing could save her, I might take the consequences of my own folly.' His hardness of heart, on this occasion, wounded me to the quick; and when, the next day, my dear and excellent friend expired, calling down blessings on my head, I almost wished to die too; for I felt I no longer had any one on earth who loved me. I pass over the sad, sad scene that preceded and followed her death. Even now, I cannot revert to it without grief;" and here

her tears flowed afresh. "My father came for me the next day; took me to Paris, to a house in the Faubourg de Roule, where good Madame de Stourville was installed as my *gouvernante*; and in a short time afterwards, we were on our route through the south of France and Italy. That he should entrust an only child to a person, who, though highly recommended, was a total stranger to him, as well as to me, was such a proof of indifference, that it renewed my grief for the death of that dear and attached friend who had so carefully and tenderly studied my happiness. Fortunately for me, Madame de Stourville proved to be all good-nature and kindness; though her inexperience in travelling, and her want of knowledge of the world, unfit her for being much more than an affectionate companion."

Although the sister of the magistrate understood not a word of Selina's narra-

tive, which had been spoken in her native tongue, the beautiful countenance, and tears of the fair speaker, produced such an effect on the warm-hearted Sicilian, that she more than once arose, and in an effusion of pity, kissed the forehead of the dear girl, exclaiming, “ *Poveretta, cara figlia mia cara!*”

Our evening repast had only just been served, when the packet from Naples arrived, and I hurried to the pier to meet and escort Madame de Stourville to the *albergo*, Selina, as I left the room, thanking me with a look and a smile that might richly have repaid the greatest service.

Madame de Stourville had but just left the ship, and was animatedly reasoning with the custom-house officer on her right to have all her packages and bandboxes taken at once to the inn without any delay, while he, who understood not a word of French, was loudly vociferating, in Italian, that no

boxes or packages should be removed until a strict examination of their contents had taken place. When she saw me piercing the crowd of idlers who had gathered round to listen to the angry discussion, which was rendered amusing to the bystanders, owing to neither of the interlocutors understanding the language of the other, she exclaimed, with delight, "*Oh, mon Dieu! quel plaisir, Monsieur Meredis, vous arrivez très heureusement, pour me sauver de ce terrible homme. He is a barbare, not know one word of de French language. N'est ce pas, c'est choquant de rencontrer une ignorance pareille!*"

By a *douceur* conveyed into the hand of the custom-house officer, I quickly obtained permission to have the boxes of Madame de Stourville merely opened for appearance sake, and then sent to our hotel, to which I conducted that lady herself.

Madame de Stourville's joy at again em-

bracing Selina was really touching. She wept and smiled by turns, asked a thousand questions, never giving time to have any of them answered, and by her volubility and exaggeration of manner excited the wonder of the quiet sister of the magistrate, who now took her leave, affectionately embracing her "*cara poveretta*,"—as she called Selina,—and offering her services in any or every way in which they could be made available.

Madame de Stourville told us, that previously to her leaving Naples she had written to Mr. Somers, and informed him of all that had occurred; and that, therefore, his presence might in due time be looked for at Palermo. When acquainted that Mrs. Lindsell claimed Selina for her daughter, the anger and indignation of the old lady knew no bounds.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next day Madame de Stourville saw the magistrate, and gave her deposition of having had the charge of Miss Somers consigned to her by the father of that young lady. It was signified to us, that nothing further could be done in the affair until the arrival of Mr. Somers—an event anticipated with little pleasure by any one of the party, but to which we all resigned ourselves as well as we could.

Happy were the hours that intervened between the coming of Madame de Stour-

ville and that of Mr. Somers. During one of our daily walks, when the *gouvernante* and Mr. Rivers were listening to Mr. O'Denessy's details of some interesting antiquities lately discovered in the neighbourhood, I seized the opportunity of revealing my passion to the lovely object who had inspired it. I felt her arm tremble within mine; I saw her head gently turned, as if to conceal her blushes, as I passionately conjured her to tell me if I might hope that I was not wholly indifferent to her. I said that if she would give me hope, I would pledge myself to conciliate her father by every means in my power; and that as neither my family nor fortune were objectionable, I trusted that he might be induced to bestow her hand on me.

“ I am deeply sensible of the generosity of your conduct,” replied Selina. “ The offer you have made me, and at a moment when my position is so painful a one, that

even my birth seems shrouded in mystery, proves the sincerity of your attachment, and the delicacy and generosity of your sentiments, but——”

“ Oh! Selina—dear, lovely Selina!” interrupted I, “ only say that I am not to despair—only tell me that you do not forbid me to solicit your father, and I will ask no more!”

“ But ought I, Mr. Meredith, to accord this sanction until it is known to whom I really belong?”—and her voice became still more tremulous from emotion.

“ Yes, lovely Selina, you ought—you will—nay, you must grant me this permission, unless you wish to make me the most wretched of men. Give me that dear little hand in token of assent, and I will bless you!”

The little hand, trembling like a frightened bird, was held out to me; and as I pressed it within mine, I would not have

changed the hope of its future entire possession for an empire! I bent forward to steal a glance at her beautiful face, and never before had I seen it so transcendently lovely. Covered with blushes, the down-cast lids of her darkly-fringed eyes were begemmed with tears; yet a sweet smile parted her rosy lips, and told that those precious drops were not tears of sorrow.

There was something unspeakably touching in the whole air and manner of Selina during the rest of that day. A timidity and sweet consciousness of our engagement, mingled with an effort to appear unembarrassed as usual, rendered her still more captivating than ever in my eyes. Wishing to spare her feelings in the presence of our friends, I forbore, as much as my passion would permit, from any of those demonstrations of attentions which my heart prompted; and she more than once during

the evening thanked me with her eyes for my forbearance.

A week, a blissful week, rolled away; during which every day, every hour, brought to light some new quality in Selina, and rendered her dearer to me. When walking by her side, I would describe my home, and dwell with delight on future plans of happiness when she should be its adored mistress. She would listen with pleasure, and approve my schemes for adorning it; would even suggest some little plans of her own, and at length scrupled not to avow that her heart would be as desolate as my own, should the bright prospect now held out be doomed to disappointment.

Mr. Rivers was not unobservant of our attachment; and deeming it to be his duty, he spoke to me seriously on the subject, pointing out all that wisdom could dictate on the imprudence of entering into an en-

gagement with a person whose parentage seemed so doubtful, and whose father might never consent to our union. He admitted that the superiority of Selina, both in mind and person, were such as to justify my attachment, but thought it unfair, even towards her, to engage her affections before I could count on my addresses being sanctioned by her father.

The counsel came too late, and I avowed that it had, for I entertained such confidence in the friendship of Mr. Rivers that I could not now be disingenuous with him. He shook his head, wished that I had been less precipitate, and hoped that Mr. Somers might be more considerate to the happiness of his amiable daughter than he had hitherto, from all we had heard, proved himself to be.

“Your family and fortune might entitle you to form any alliance,” observed Mr. Rivers, “and should render you a very

desirable husband in the eyes of Mr. Somers, whatever his own wealth may be; but with a man so eccentric as he seems to be, there is little confidence to be placed on the motives that may influence him in giving or withholding his consent to his fair daughter's union with you."

Two days after this conversation, Mr. Somers arrived at Palermo. The announcement of this event blanched the cheek of Selina with a deadly paleness, and produced such a tremor in her frame, that it was piteous to behold her. Madame de Stourville also betrayed evident symptoms of alarm when summoned to his presence, and asked Mr. Rivers to accompany her, that he might assist in the explanation she had to give, and shield her from the first outbreak of Mr. Somers's anger. When the three left the room—for Selina had gone with her *gouvernante* and Mr. Rivers—I felt a presentiment of evil that filled my breast with

inquietude and gloom. The alarm evinced by Selina and Madame de Stourville at this approaching interview with Mr. Somers, proclaimed how harsh and stern that gentleman must be, and quelled the hope that for days I had been nourishing in my heart. I paced the chamber rapidly, pausing every five minutes to listen whether any sound might be heard. I went into the passage, almost tempted to become an eavesdropper, so great was my anxiety and impatience to learn what was going on; and again I returned to the deserted *salon*, and endeavoured to occupy my thoughts by writing to Selina, and painting to her the state of my feelings. But even this task I could not accomplish, so great was the agitation I experienced; so, casting away the pen, and tearing into fragments the paper I had written on, I again paced the room. On one of the tables assigned for Selina's use lay the book I had been reading aloud

to her that morning. An unfinished sketch from her pencil was beside it, and a glass containing a bouquet of flowers I had presented to her stood in the centre. These little marks of domesticity appealed to my feelings with irresistible force; they recalled the happy hours I had lately been passing in this now deserted room, and I fancied I had never previously valued them as I now did, when in all probability I should enjoy them no more.

At length Mr. Rivers returned alone. His countenance announced that the interview with Mr. Somers had not been an agreeable one; and I felt my fears confirmed before he had time to speak.

“ He is a strange man, and a harsh and unreasonable one too,” said he. “ He seems to forget the good fortune of his daughter having been rescued, and restored to him, in the anger in which he indulges against poor, helpless Madame de Stourville, whom

he blames for the *enlèvement* having occurred. He used little ceremony or courtesy in commenting on her impropriety in permitting you and myself to accompany them to Pæstum, and to reside at the same hotel with them here, adding, in reply to her asseverations of our kindness, and the protection we had afforded to her young lady and herself, the zeal we had evinced, and the assistance we had afforded, in rescuing Miss Somers, 'that this offered no justification for her having disobeyed his orders to permit his daughter to form no acquaintance while under her care.' His reception of Selina had been most cold and heartless. He did not embrace or even shake hands with her, and when she could not repress the tears this unkindness called forth, he told her that he supposed, now that she fancied herself a heroine of romance, tears were indispensable on every occasion. The only circumstance that seemed to make an impression on him,

was when I informed him that a lady had now claimed Miss Somers as her daughter. He started, and his face became flushed with anger. 'And where is this person?' demanded he. I informed him that she was in safe custody; when he, with a most malignant expression of countenance, declared that if he could accomplish it, she should never again be restored to liberty. I asked permission to present you; and I noticed that when I mentioned your name, he started, and inquired, 'whether you were not the son of Mr. Spencer Meredith, of Meredith Park?' I answered in the affirmative; and he, after pausing for a moment, replied, that being now fatigued by his long journey from Paris, and recent voyage, he must decline the introduction until tomorrow, and having bowed me out, I withdrew, leaving poor Miss Somers and her *gouvernante* with him."

We saw no more of Selina or Madame de

Stourville that night; but one of the waiters came to remove all the various little articles that belonged to both. When questioned by Mr. Rivers, why he did so, he informed us that *il signor padre de la signorina* had ordered that everything appertaining to the ladies should be conveyed to the *salon* at the other side of the hotel, which he had engaged, and in which their repasts were to be served. This statement seemed to be a confirmation of my worst fears; for it clearly indicated a determination of excluding us from that intercourse which had lately formed the happiness of my life, and I sought my pillow that night in a state of mind very different to any of the last few preceding ones, when the certainty of meeting the object of my heart's dearest affections was the last thought ere sleeping, and the first that presented itself on awaking.

After a painfully restless night, I arose early, and, having hurried through the duties

of my *matinal* toilette, descended to the *salon*. Mr. Rivers had not yet made his appearance, but soon after I entered the room, the door opened, and the head of Madame de Stourville exhibited itself. Seeing me alone, she quickly came in, carefully closed the door, and burst into tears. "Oh, my young friend!" exclaimed she, "you know not—you cannot know what *ce cher ange* and I have had to undergo since we saw you last. Oh, dat cruel man, he is a *barbare* and *tyran*, and I would give him my demission dis very day, and return to *ma belle France*, only I cannot bear to leave *ce pauvre cher ange* alone, in the power of such a vicked *tyran*. He blames me for all, and is *furieux*, and did call me '*vieille folle—moi! Marie Antoinette de Stourville, vieille folle*, dat has not yet forty years. *O! c'est trop mal, beaucoup trop mal!* but I will write to Paris, and get de certificate of my baptism, and shew it to him, for I vill not be called

vieille, dat I vill not. *Ce cher pauvre ange*," resumed Madame de Stourville, "is forbidden to see you or Monsieur Rivère any more, except in the presence of Monsieur Somers, and he does not vish to see either of you if he can help it. She be very unhappy, and cry, cry, enough to make any one *misérable* to see her. But I must go to *ce cher pauvre ange*, and if *notre mechant tyran* know I did come here, he would send me away from her for ever. *Mon Dieu ! quel horrible homme*, to call me *vieille folle*, *n'est-ce pas c'est une infamie ?*"

I asked Madame de Stourville whether she would take charge of a few lines from me to Selina; but she positively refused. "No, no, *mon ami*; it would not be right, not honourable, and Marie Antoinette de Stourville could not do vat is not honourable."

"Will you, then, dear, good Madame de

Stourville, tell her how much I grieve, how much I suffer by this cruel separation."

"I will tell her you are always her good friend, and very sorry not to see her, but I must not tell more, it would be wrong; so adieu, *mon cher Monsieur Meredis, dites mille choses aimables de ma part a Monsieur Rivère*, but do not tell to him that Monsieur Somers did call me *vieille folle*, for he might demand *raison* of dat *tyran* for such a calumny against me, and I would not be de cause of a duel between dese gentlemen for all de world."

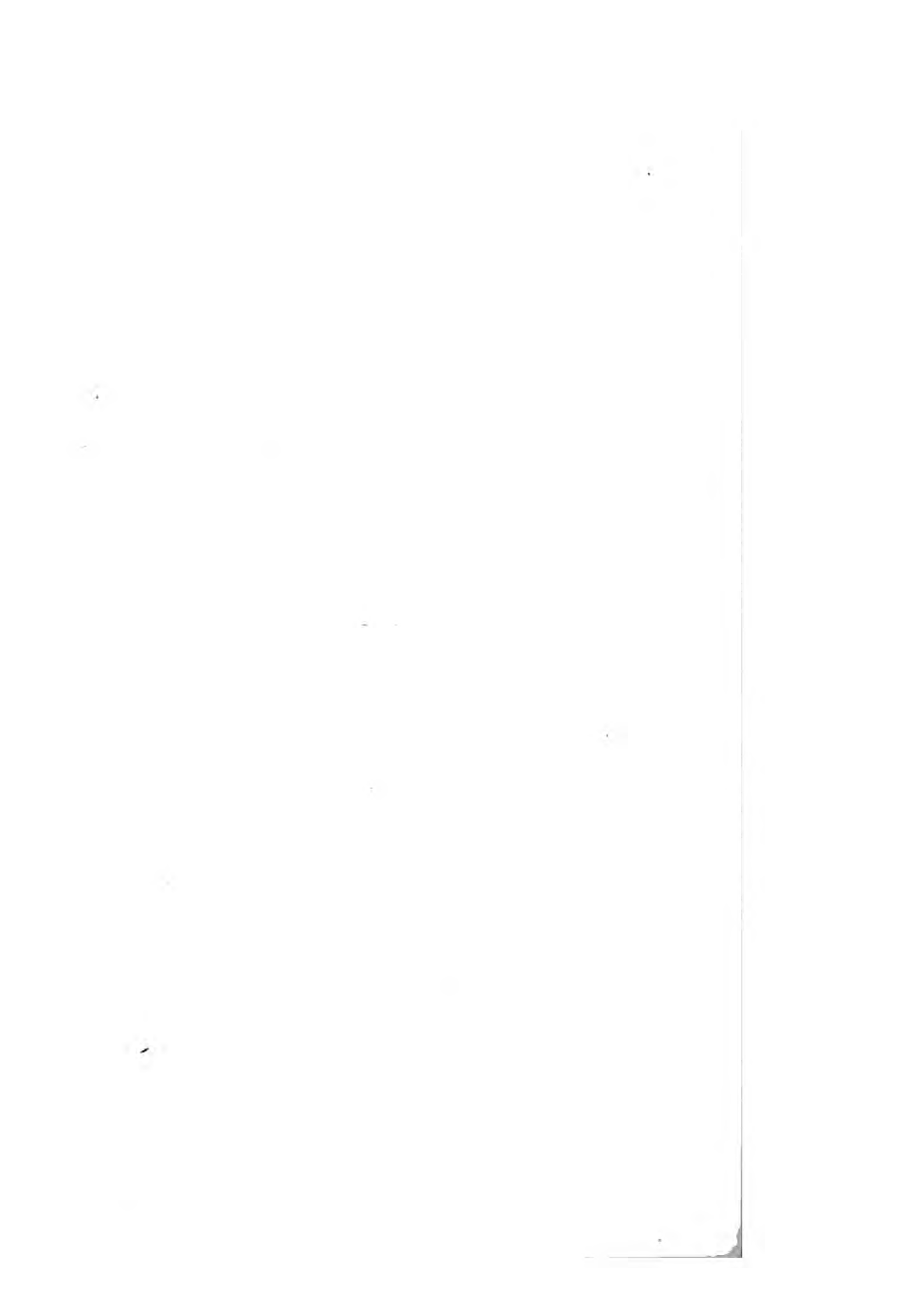
At any other moment, I should have been amused at the ludicrous anger of poor Madame de Stourville at being called old, and at her anxiety not to have this charge repeated to Mr. Rivers, whom, it was now plain, she took for granted entertained a more than ordinary interest for her, as she proved by the supposition that he would

resent—nay, fight a duel with the person who made such an assertion. But my whole soul was occupied by one single thought, and that was, my dread of being separated from Selina; and consequently, the weakness and folly of the good-natured old Frenchwoman passed without comment when Mr. Rivers joined me.

END OF VOL. II.

M E R E D I T H .

VOL. III.



MEREDITH.

BY

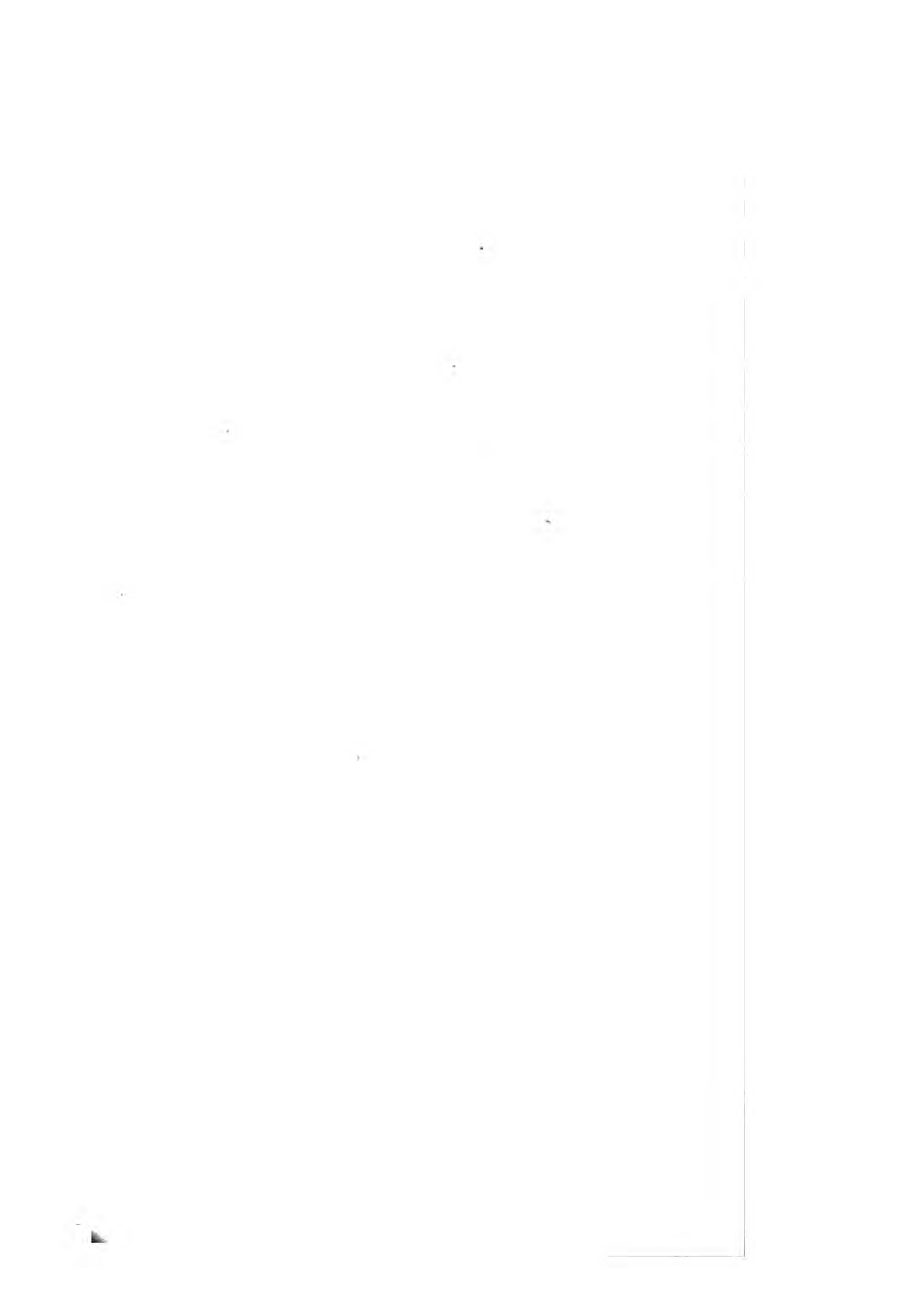
THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

**LONDON:
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1843.



M E R E D I T H.

CHAPTER I.

How gloomy and unsocial appeared our breakfast table now, after having been for some days accustomed to see the beautiful Selina seated at it, and to hear the curious and amusing admixture of French and English in which the garrulous Madame de Stourville conversed all the time. To men who have had the happiness of being used to female society, the absence of women must ever be sensibly felt at every repast; but at none so much as at breakfast, the least ceremonious and most friendly of all,

and the one which most conveys the feeling of domesticity and comfort. Never did a cup of tea or coffee taste well to me, unless poured out by a woman's hand, and sweetened by her smiles; and if there be an hour in the day in which a widower or bachelor must more particularly regret his state of single *un*-blessedness, it surely must be that devoted to his matinal repast. We hurried over our breakfast, and awaited a summons either from Mr. Somers or the magistrate, which soon after came.

When we entered his office, Mr. Somers, Selina, and Madame de Stourville, were already there. Selina's fair cheeks became for a moment suffused with a rosy red, as we entered; but quickly after changed to a paleness that touched my very soul to see. Her eyes, too, bore evident symptoms of having wept; and yet they never before appeared more beautiful in mine. She bowed to us, and attempted a faint smile,

but the expression of her countenance was so sad that it falsified the vain attempt. Madame de Stourville went through precisely the same ceremony, addressing her melancholy smile wholly to Mr. Rivers, who was so engrossed by his sympathy for Selina, as to be unconscious of the favour designed him by her *gouvernante*, who "ever and anon," cast her glances at him after the most approved fashion of sentimental heroines under the influence of the tender passion.

Mr. Somers, with a scowling brow, stood beside his daughter, and merely noticed our entrance by a cold nod to Mr. Rivers and a keen look of scrutiny bestowed on me, the result of which seemed to afford him little satisfaction, if I might judge from the increased sternness of his countenance. He was a man of a peculiarly unprepossessing appearance. Above the middle height, his figure was clumsy and ungrace-

ful, his features ordinary, and his manner *brusque* and vulgar. Mr. Rivers approached him, requesting me to follow, and introduced us to each other. A stiff bow alone marked Mr. Somers's recognition of the ceremony, but not a single word of thanks did he express for the service we had rendered to his daughter, or regret at the personal inconvenience to which I had been subjected on account of having interested myself in her behalf. My spirit was roused at his behaviour; I determined that his presence should not prevent my offering the usual civilities to Selina and her companion, consequently I held out a hand to each, and inquired after their health. The scowl on his brow increased, and Selina, who noted it, became very pale; in pity, therefore, to her feelings, I moved away, and took my station at some distance. A bustle near the door now excited our attention, and in another moment, Mrs. Lindsell, closely

veiled, and guarded by the police, entered. Mr. Somers gazed earnestly at her, and Selina's emotion was visible.

“ You are here, Signora, to be confronted with the alleged father of the Signorina, whom you claim as your daughter, and of whose person you obtained possession by force,” said the magistrate; “ and to enable the Signor to identify you, your veil must be removed.”

Mrs. Lindsell slowly raised the thick black veil, and Mr. Somers having advanced a few paces in front of her, at once betrayed that her face was not unknown to him. His countenance became livid with rage as he met her glance, and hers bore an expression of triumphant malice that she made no effort to suppress.

“ Mrs. Lindsell !” repeated he, in a tone of bitter irony.

“ Mr. Somers !” said the lady, with a sneer.

“Do you acknowledge this Signora to be the mother of your daughter, Signor?” demanded the magistrate.

A breathless silence reigned in the court, and all eyes were turned towards Mr. Somers, whose face assumed an ashy paleness, and whose eyes gleamed with a fearful expression of mingled hatred and vengeance. I looked at Selina, who was so agitated that she was compelled to lean on Madame de Stourville for support, and she trembled like an aspen leaf. Mrs. Lindsell all this time kept her eye fixed on Mr. Somers, till the magistrate again demanded whether he admitted the Signora to be the mother of his daughter?

Never did I behold such fierce and malignant hatred as sparkled in the eyes of this pair as they gazed at each other.

“You have not answered my question, Signor; and I call on you once more, to say

whether or not this lady is the mother of your daughter?"

" I admit that fact!" replied Mr. Somers; and at that moment a cry from Madame de Stourville drawing attention to her, I saw that my adored Selina had fainted. I rushed to support her, and bore my precious burthen to an open window. Her unnatural father only interfered to request that Mrs. Lindsell might not be permitted to approach her, that lady having made an attempt to do so. On seeing Selina recovering, I beckoned Mr. Rivers to come to me, and asked him to request Mr. Somers to allow his daughter to be spared from any longer witnessing the painful scene before her. The answer of this heartless man was, " As she has heard me acknowledge that vile woman yonder to be her mother, it is necessary that she should now be acquainted with the entire truth."

“ But is it not wholly indecorous that so young, so innocent, so pure-minded a being as Miss Somers should hear the impropriety of her mother thus publicly exposed?” observed Mr. Rivers.

“ *I* must be the best judge in a case which solely concerns my own affairs,” replied the unfeeling and indelicate man; “ and I do not wish for the advice or interference of strangers.”

How full of sorrow and shame was the look that Selina fixed on me, when restored to consciousness! “ Oh! Mr. Meredith,” said she, in a low and tremulous tone, that touched my very heart, “ I am then, after all, the daughter of Mrs. Lindsell. How has my heart deceived me! For never, never did it whisper that she could be my mother! How much, how infinitely worse it is to have such parents than to be an orphan! But I am wrong, very wrong to speak of them thus. I must learn

to behave at least dutifully, if I cannot be affectionate!"

I whispered a fond renewal of my engagement, and declared that nought on earth should induce me to resign the hope of our union. I added, that no disclosures, however painful, no discovery, however discreditable to her parents, should ever change my sentiments or devotion to her. And though she shook her head, and with a melancholy face whispered that she must now abandon all hope, I could see in that lovely countenance, that the reiteration of my vows had soothed, if not reassured her.

"As you admit this Signora to be the mother of your child," resumed the magistrate, "she must excuse me if I ask a question that implies a doubt of her honour, but which the case compels me to put. Is the Signora your wife?"

Mr. Somers's face became crimson, and for a moment his utterance seemed to be

impeded by angry emotion; but at last he spoke, and looking at Mrs. Lindsell, with rage and contempt struggling for mastery in his countenance, he said, "Yes, for the curse and bane of my life, I acknowledge her to have a legitimate claim to my name; and I execrate the hour when I committed the folly, the madness, of wedding her."

A smile of the bitterest contempt was the only notice taken by Mrs. Lindsell of this avowal.

"Having discovered her to have dishonoured me," continued Mr. Somers, "I separated from her; but, out of respect to her brother, I did not, as I might have done,—fool, dolt, and idiot as I was,—establish her guilt in a court of law, and obtain a divorce from her."

Here Mrs. Lindsell shrugged her shoulders, and said, "You know you could not." And Selina covered her face with her handkerchief, overcome with shame and grief.

“ I gave her an allowance,” continued Mr. Somers, “ on condition that we were to meet no more, and I hoped never even to hear of her again. But judge of my surprise and annoyance when, five months after our separation, she formally announced to me by letter that she had the prospect of becoming a mother in three months more. She expected that this intelligence would have softened my anger, and induced me again to receive her under my roof; but she was mistaken; nor could all the solicitations of her family induce me to relent. I signified to her, that though the law would compel me to recognise the child, I felt so certain of its not being mine, that I should never entertain for it the slightest interest or affection—and I have kept my word.”

Every eye turned to my poor Selina, the convulsive movement of whose head betrayed the agony of her feelings, her face being still concealed by her handkerchief.

Mrs. Lindsell, during this scene, remained perfectly unabashed; nor did the anguish of her daughter appear to touch her callous heart, any more than it did that of her brutal husband.

“ I also signified to her,” resumed Mr. Somers, “ that the only terms on which I could consent to acknowledge the child, was, that it should be surrendered to me when it became a year old. I stipulated for a year, because I intended to be absent from England for that period, and that she should never demand nor expect to see it more. I also hoped that in the course of a year she might form an attachment to her child, and so charge herself altogether with its future destiny. All the efforts made—and they were many—to change my determination were unavailing. I was deemed cruel, barbarous, and vindictive by this lady and her friends; but I adhered to my resolution, and when the child was a year

old she was delivered to me, and I placed her with a proper nurse, with whom she remained until it was time to give her a governess. I took effectual means to keep the place of her residence concealed from her mother; and she lived in privacy and peace until the death of her preceptress. Her health appearing to decline some weeks previous to that event, I deemed it my duty to try the effect of a warm climate for its re-establishment, consequently sent her to Italy under the charge of the person who, I now find, was so little capable of fulfilling my instructions with regard to the perfect seclusion in which I wished her to live. How the unworthy woman, whom I had the misfortune to make my wife, acquired the knowledge of her daughter's being in Italy, I cannot surmise. I thought I had taken every precaution to conceal her movements, but I was mistaken; and the lawless mode by which she had the girl twice en-

trapped, proves that she stops at no crime to carry her nefarious schemes into execution, and cares not what vile ruffian she employs for the purpose. The laws of my country confide to me the sole charge of the girl said to be my daughter; and her mother never shall have any communication with her. If when the child was a year old I deemed it incumbent on me to separate her for ever from her mother, judge how much more necessary I now find it, when, after a career of reckless extravagance, folly, and vice, that drove her from her native land, she is now proved to have associated with some lawless profligate, surrounded by his myrmidons, with whom she concerted the plot of carrying off her daughter. Can it be believed that a mother, however bad her own conduct may have been, would have been so lost to every sense of decency, as to entrust a young girl into the hands of such

a wretch as the scoundrel she employed to carry her off!"

There was a murmur of disapprobation all through the court, and every individual in it, save poor Selina, who still kept her face covered, looked with countenances expressive of disgust at Mrs. Lindsell, who, somewhat abashed at the marks of general odium she had incurred, turned disdainfully towards her husband, and said, "The person whom you have denounced as a ruffian and lawless profligate, was no other than your own brother, who, denied by you the means of subsistence, was indebted to me for his support. As the uncle of your daughter, there was consequently no impropriety in entrusting her to his care;" and here she smiled deridingly, and with an air of triumph appealed to the persons around her.

"My brother! It is false! I have no brother!"

“Do you mean to deny Mungo Me——?” demanded Mrs. Lindsell.

“Hold! do not pronounce that name; you have already sufficiently disgraced it,” interrupted Mr. Somers. “Mungo was not my legitimate brother,” resumed he; “and I am not, I suppose, expected to acknowledge and provide for all the illegitimate offspring who may claim to have belonged to my father?”

“You *know*,” said Mrs. Lindsell, “that Mungo was your *own* brother, born of the same father and mother, but previous to the marriage that united your father to the Creole slave that had been his mistress, and rendered you legitimate!”

The face of Mr. Somers was fearful to behold, as his wife, in a loud and clear voice, uttered this statement. His wrath seemed to be only the more deadly, that it was not suffered to explode; and the alternate crimson hue and ashy paleness of his

face betrayed the internal struggle to suppress the outpouring of his demoniacal rage.

“ I have long listened to this painful scene of mutual recrimination,” observed the magistrate, “ and am of opinion that its continuance can do no good. The Signora being acknowledged by you (turning to Mr. Somers) to be your wife, and the mother of the Signorina, is not amenable to our laws for having possessed herself, even though by violent means, of the person of her child.”

“ The laws of England would severely punish her in such a case,” interrupted Mr. Somers, pale with anger.

“ The laws of England were probably made to meet and provide for the cases to which the habits and tempers of the inhabitants may give rise. In Sicily, we have no provisions in our laws for punishing a mother for carrying off her own child, because we have no fathers who debar mothers

from beholding their offspring, or from knowing where they live, or how they are cared for. Your English laws, Signor," continued the magistrate, "are adapted to English people; but as here we are governed by those of Sicily, this Signora must be discharged, while to you is confided the person of your daughter."

"And is there no punishment for this woman?" asked Mr. Somers, angrily.

"It is surely punishment enough to be deprived of her daughter, and such a daughter, too!" replied the magistrate.

"Am I not to be allowed to see my child?" demanded Mrs. Lindsell. "Oh! no, you cannot be so cruel as to prevent my seeing her, if only at stated times. I will submit to anything, go anywhere, if you will only let me sometimes press her to my heart!" and here she applied her handkerchief to her face. Selina, too, became much agitated at hearing her mother thus imploring her

father, and arose to approach her, but Mr. Somers seized her by the arm, and commanded her, "on her peril, to hold no communication with her disgraceful mother."

How my heart bled for the poor girl, thus torn by contending emotions, and how I longed to make her my wife, and take her from parents who were in every way so wholly unworthy of her. Mr. Somers, drawing the arm of his daughter within his, and followed by Madame de Stourville, left the court; and Mrs. Lindsell, too, glancing after him with eyes from which shot forth gleams of hatred and malice, also retired.

CHAPTER II.

MR. RIVERS and I then held a consultation as to what was best to be done. We felt assured that Mr. Somers would, as soon as possible, take his daughter from Palermo; and I determined, previously to his departure, to write and formally demand her hand. It was in vain that Mr. Rivers reminded me of my youth, and recommended the propriety and prudence of trying the effect of absence on my passion, before I took this final step. He spoke, too, of the disadvantages of the connexions I should

form by such a marriage. A mother-in-law, branded with dishonour, the companion of a lawless adventurer, who, even if he were, as she asserted, the brother of her husband, nevertheless was an unsuitable associate for any woman not lost to every sense of decency. The father, too, was little less objectionable than the wife he so indelicately denounced before the whole court, and in the presence of his daughter. Such a man could have no feeling or principle; and how pregnant with humiliation and annoyance must so near an alliance with two such persons prove to the man who united himself to their daughter.

All this, and much more, did Mr. Rivers urge to induce me not to propose for Selina to her father; but he urged in vain; for the disgraceful conduct of her parents, to which I was as keenly alive as he could be, only served to render me more desirous to withdraw her from their power, and to bestow

on her that affection and protection of which so young, so lovely, and so amiable a creature stood so much in need. Pity for her unhappy position was now added to the passionate love I had previously entertained for her; and there was no sacrifice that I would not have willingly made to rescue her from it. Mr. Rivers, finding that my decision was irrevocable, ceased to remonstrate, and I, as soon as we entered the *albergo*, addressed a letter to Mr. Somers, requesting his sanction to lay myself and fortune at the feet of his lovely daughter.

Having despatched this letter, I paced the room in a state of agitation known only to persons as much in love as I was, and under similar circumstances. I felt that on the answer of this harsh and callous man depended my happiness; and that, although my birth and fortune entitled me to count on being an acceptable husband to the daughter of any reasonable father, I had a presentiment

that he would blight his child's prospects and my own by a refusal. His answer was soon brought, and realized my fears. It coldly—nay, uncivilly declined my proposal, and desired, henceforth, that I should never attempt any renewal of acquaintance with Miss Somers, to whom, it added, he had given orders to avoid all interchange of civilities with me. How great was my anger and indignation as I perused this insulting epistle; yet both became subdued as I reflected on the position of my beloved Selina, with so harsh, so brutal a companion.

We learned in the evening that the packet for Naples was to sail the next morning, and the waiter added the intelligence that Mr. Somers had secured a cabin for himself and his daughter. My first impulse was for us also to take our passage in the same vessel; but Mr. Rivers suggested that our doing so would only tend to expose Selina to greater suspicion and unkindness from her father.

At length, it occurred to me that the cicerone so strongly recommended by Mr. Medlicut, and whom we had found to be a very well-informed and intelligent man, would be a good person to send to Naples in the same vessel with Mr. Somers, and by not losing sight of that gentleman, keep us *au fait* of his movements until we could join him. Mr. Vincent was a kind-hearted and simple-minded man, devoted to study, and so erudite that he possessed a fund of literary knowledge seldom equalled, which with his unobtrusive modesty and obliging disposition had won him our good will.

Mr. Rivers approved the plan, and we forthwith sent for Mr. Vincent, who willingly assented to it, and retired to his own abode to prepare for his unexpected voyage.

While we sat conversing on the painfulness of being under the same roof, yet debarred from seeing Selina, Madame de Stourville entered the room. She bent her

head, looked on the ground, and exhibited all the marks of embarrassment and timidity commonly betrayed by very youthful damsels when they desire to appear more than usually interesting. Mr. Rivers being next her, placed a chair, and both of us evinced the good will we really entertained for her.

“ You see before you, gentlemen,” said she, applying a cambric handkerchief, redolent of the perfume of *eau de Portugal* to her eyes, “ *la plus malheureuse des femmes*. Monsieur Somers has, in de most barbarous *manière*, given me my *cong *, and has refused to defray my expenses to Paris, as, on our first engagement, he had agreed to do. Nay, more, he has reproached me, in de most insulting terms, vid having been bribed by you, Messieurs, to allow Monsieur Meredis to travel vid *ce pauvre cher ange*, and, I blush to add,” and here she concealed her face with her handkerchief, “ that he said he knew there was an *attachement*

entre moi, and—but no—really I can hardly bring myself to name it—Monsieur Rivère.”

Never were astonishment and annoyance more plainly depicted on a face than on that of Mr. Rivers, as she finished this speech.

“What! me, madame?” uttered he; “such an insinuation is quite preposterous! I hope you at once convinced him of its falsehood.”

“*Helàs ! non. Que voulez vous ?* I was taken by surprise. My agitation, my blushes, but too well betrayed *le secret de mon cœur*. Dese proofs of de candour and purity of my sentiments were received by dis harsh man as indubitable ones of de truth of his assertion; and de consequence is, dat I now find myself *au désespoir*, a stranger in a foreign land, a helpless and unprotected voman.”

“You shall not need protection or kindness, Madame,” said Mr. Rivers, good-naturedly.

“ *Est-il possible!—est-il possible!— Oh, mon Dieu!* den Monsieur Somers vas not wrong; you lofe me, *cher Monsieur Rivère, vous m’aimez donc !*” and Madame de Stourville arose from her chair, and advancing towards her supposed admirer, would have thrown herself on his breast, had he not repulsed her, and with terror painted on his countenance, retreated to the far side of the chamber.

“ Vat you mean, vat you mean, Monsieur Rivère?” demanded she. “ You say, von minute ago, I never shall need de protection nor de kindness. Does not dat mean dat you vill give dem both, vich you cannot do, if you are not to be mine husband.”

“ I meant, Madame, that from Mr. Meredith and myself you may count on all the protection and kindness in our power to shew to a lady in your peculiar position. Your attention and attachment to Miss Somers have won our esteem, and we

desire to prove it by every means in our power.”

“Vat, den you do not lofe me, after all. *Oh, homme cruel et ingrat!* to have von my affections, and now——” And she burst into a paroxysm of tears that for some time impeded her utterance.

Although little, Heaven knows, disposed to smile, it was difficult to resist, when looking from the weeping Frenchwoman to Mr. Rivers, whose countenance was so expressive of alarm and embarrassment as to be truly comic.

“*Homme barbare!* to have thus trifled vid my feelings, and ruined my peace of mind,” resumed the lady. “Oh! I shall never put fait in man no more!—*jamais, jamais!*”

“Really, Madame, you surprise and mortify me. What can have led you to such an erroneous conclusion with regard to my sentiments, I am utterly at a loss to imagine;

but I must request you will dismiss such foolish thoughts from your mind, and if you wish me to continue your friend, refer to them no more."

" *Homme, faux et cruel!* You say you not know vat made me tink you lofe me. Vy did you look so often, and O, so tenderly at me? Vy like all de same dishes dat I like? Vy speak to me always ven Monsieur Meredis vas speaking to *ce cher et bel ange*, vich made me tink, and so every voman would tink too, dat vile he make de lofe to Mademoiselle, you make de lofe to me."

" I make love to you, Madame! really it is quite ridiculous! At your age and mine!"

" Do not insult me, Monsieur Rivère. It is very *méchant*, very vicked indeed, to talk of my age. *Le cœur qui peut aimer n'est jamais vieux*. I vish I vas old, very old, for den I would not be so unhappy as I

now am, for I could not lose. Oh—oh—oh!" And again her tears began to flow plentifully.

"You really distress me, Madame de Stourville," said Mr. Rivers. "It appears that you have mistaken the common courtesies due to every lady from a gentleman, for the marks of an attachment which candour compels me explicitly to declare I have never felt."

"Vy, den, did you always look at me so much? Have I not noticed dat even ven Monsieur Meredis, or *ce cher et bel ange* speak to you, you look always at me, and vat could I tink but dat it was because you lofed me?"

"The infirmity of obliquity of vision under which I have suffered for many years, has led to your mistake, Madame. I regret it very much, but having now entered into this explanation, I must request that the subject be referred to no more."

“ *O mon Dieu! quel coup pour mon pauvre cœur! Que je suis malheureuse! que je suis à plaindre!* No, never, never no more will I believe in de eyes of any man, if dey look ever so lofing at me.”

“ You will do wisely, Madame, for at your age——”

“ Do not talk of age. It is very *mal-honnête* and very *grossier* to do so. No man ever do talk of de age of a voman, except to affront her, unless at de office *d'assurance*, and I never would go dere on dat account, *malgré* I vished to insure my life for de benefice of a poor *cousine*.”

“ Let us dismiss this disagreeable subject, and revert to your future plans, Madame,” said Mr. Rivers.

“ *O mon Dieu!* de future is no longer *couleur de rose* for me. I did build de beautiful *châteaux en Espagne*; and you vere de object principal in dem all, Monsieur Rivère. I did tink how happy ve should

be, ven Monsieur Meredis and *ma chère demoiselle* vere married, and you and I vere married also; and you would give me one *charmant* lectle dog, and ve should valk togeder every day in de fine veader, and take de lectle dog vid us, and ve should go to de *spectacle* in de evening, and be so happy; but you——”

“ Really, Madame de Stourville, you exhaust my patience, and I did expect more good sense from a person of your age.”

“ Dere, again, always mine age! Can you not forget mine age?”

“ Madame de Stourville, this silly affair must end at once, and for ever. Any future reference to it will prevent me from serving you as I wish to do. If you will explain your wishes, Mr. Meredith and I will aid you to carry them into effect.”

“ My vishes! *Helàs!* vat vishes are now left to me?”

Here a gesture of impatience on the part

of Mr. Rivers stopped her further recapitulation of her chagrin; and she added, that it was her desire to return to Paris.

“The means of doing so shall be provided,” said Mr. Rivers; “and you may freely command any other service that Mr. Meredith and I can render you.”

Our cicerone now entered to bid us farewell, previously to going on board the packet; and Madame de Stourville, having learned that he was to proceed to Naples, was desirous of embarking at the same time, in order to have his protection; “a lady,” as she said, “being always exposed to many annoyances when alone, as she had experienced when crossing from Naples to Palermo, when no less than two men had been so marked in their admiration of and attention to her as really to alarm her!”

“One would have thought, Madame, that at your age,” observed Mr. Rivers——

“Pray have done, Monsieur!” inter-

rupted Madame de Stourville. "You are de only gentleman, except dat *barbare*, Monsieur Somers, who ever talked of my age."

"I must leave dis place," resumed Madame de Stourville. *Oui, c'est nécessaire.* If I do not sail in de same ship vid Mr. Somers, dat vicked man vill say I stay vid Mr. Rivère, and mine honour will be suspect."

"Mr. Vincent is going to Naples in the same packet, Madame," said Mr. Rivers, "and will afford you protection on your voyage."

"*Comment, est-il possible? Je suis charmée!*" exclaimed Madame de Stourville.

"It will, however, be prudent," observed Mr. Rivers, "that you and Mr. Vincent appear as strangers to each other, to avoid incurring the suspicions of Mr. Somers."

"*O ciel!* dat vill be so *romanesque*,

n'est ce pas ? Just like a *roman*, vat you call a novel,"—and the lady bestowed one of her most winning smiles on Mr. Vincent, as he left the room to prepare for embarking.

Mr. Rivers, by my desire, placed in an envelope a sum not only sufficient to defray Madame de Stourville's expenses to Paris, but to maintain her there for a year to come; and having placed it in her hand when she returned to wish us good bye, which she did with streaming eyes, she left the hotel, escorted by its master, who offered to see her on board.

CHAPTER III.

How long and tedious seemed the days that intervened before the sailing of the next packet, in which we embarked for Naples, and how interminable appeared the voyage, which, owing to our being becalmed, was of four days' duration. Our *cicerone* was on the mole, waiting our arrival, and assured us that Mr. Somers and his lovely daughter were still at Naples, and lodged at the Grande Bretagne, on the Chiaja, where they were detained by his serious indisposition, which had commenced the day after their arrival.

“ The old gentleman is confined to his bed, from the side of which he rarely permits Miss Somers to go,” continued Mr. Vincent; “ so that knowing he could not be aware of your vicinity, I have secured apartments for you in the same hotel, thinking that it might possibly sometimes enable you to seize a few moments’ interview with the young lady; and, at all events, that you would be glad to be near her in case of the old gentleman’s dying, which his physician pronounces is most probable.

Madame de Stourville, Mr. Vincent told us, was also lodged at the Bretagne, and rendered herself very useful to Miss Somers, by attending, in the next chamber, to every thing required for the sick man, although she dared not present herself before him, nor did he know she was in the house.

I was delighted to find myself again beneath the same roof with my adored Selina; and having written a few lines to tell her of

my arrival, I sought an interview with Madame de Stourville, who, believing Mr. Somers to be dying, no longer refused to convey a billet which I consigned to her, to be delivered to Miss Somers.

“*O mon cher Monsieur Meredis, comme je suis contente de vous voir—quel bonheur! Et ce cher ange, elle est si bonne, si aimable!* She nurse dat *barbare*, night and day, as if he vas de best fader in all de world; but she make me angry ven she weeps at de fear he will die. *Quel tresor ce bon Monsieur Vincent!* He take such good care of me. Vat a man! *Si poli, si prevenant envers les dames.* Never talk of de age. *Mais les hommes Irlandais* are like de French men, always *aimable* to de vomen. Not like Monsieur Rivère, who affront me very much, and talk always of de age.”

I could hardly break away from Madame de Stourville, so loquacious was she grown;

but I at length persuaded her to take my note, and wait in the adjoining chamber to Mr. Somers' until she had an opportunity of delivering it to my beloved Selina. While partaking of some refreshment, Mr. Vincent entered, and informed us that the physician, who had just left Mr. Somers, had told that gentleman, that if he had any affairs to be attended to, there was no time to be lost. Consequently the English Consul had been sent for by the desire of the sick man, and was now with him; as also an English solicitor who happened to be at Naples, and who, in compliance with the Consul's request, made by desire of Mr. Somers, had come to draw up his will. Shortly after, Madame de Stourville entered, and informed me that my note had been delivered, and that its perusal had evidently given satisfaction. "Monsieur Somers has made his *disposition testamentaire*," continued the garrulous French-

woman; “and an English clergyman is vid him; and *ce cher ange* is on de knees praying to God for him, vid de tears running down her poor pretty face!”

That night Mr. Somers breathed his last; and his lovely daughter, worn out with the fatigue of her incessant anxiety, and watching by his bed-side, was carried almost in a state of insensibility to her bed, where, having a gentle opiate administered to her by the physician who had attended her father, she sunk into repose,—Madame de Stourville installing herself as *garde malade* in the chamber.

Mr. Rivers, who was known to the Consul, had an interview with him the next day; when that gentleman informed him that the will was deposited in his hands to be forwarded to England. He was also charged with the management of the funeral, which was to occur within four-and-twenty hours from the death; and that he had placed

seals on all the effects of the deceased. "I should have proposed removing the young lady to my house, continued the Consul, "where my wife would have paid her every attention in her power; but as the lady under whose protection her father had formerly placed her is on the spot, she will perhaps be more comfortable during the first days of her affliction by being left wholly with her;" an opinion in which Mr. Rivers perfectly coincided.

Both he and I attended the funeral of Mr. Somers, as we wished to shew this mark of respect to the feelings of his charming daughter; and I was glad to learn from Madame de Stourville, that it had given her satisfaction.

When Mr. Rivers and I were conversing on the position in which my beloved Selina was now placed, he observed, that he greatly feared that her unworthy mother, when informed of her husband's death, would come

forward to claim the guardianship of her daughter, unless, as he hoped might be the case, the deceased had in his will named other guardians for her, and prohibited the interference of that lady. This notion of his created a strong feeling of alarm in my mind; for, harsh and brutal as had been the conduct of Mr. Somers, I considered his daughter to be much more safe in his charge than she would be in that of her mother.

A week after the death of Mr. Somers, Mr. Rivers and I were admitted to the presence of my adored Selina. Thin, pale, and languid, she appeared like the shadow of her former self; yet, as a delicate blush mantled on her cheeks when I approached her, I thought she had never previously looked more beautiful. The soothing kindness of Mr. Rivers, and my tender attentions, evidently cheered and comforted her;

and she expressed great satisfaction at having Madame de Stourville with her.

“ My poor father,” said Selina, sighing deeply, “ had grown very kind to me since his illness. Ah ! would to Heaven he had lived long enough to know me better, but he was snatched away just as he had begun to judge more favourably of me ; and the gratitude he evinced for the care and attention which it was only my duty to shew him so melted my heart, that I felt I could have forgotten all his past unkindness, and have learned to love him as a daughter should. He told me that he wished me to proceed to England under the care of some lady, to be chosen for the purpose by the Consul, and who would be liberally remunerated for the trouble ; and he wished two steady men-servants to be engaged to attend me on the journey. He said that he had appointed me a ward in the Court of Chancery, and

commanded me never to hold intercourse with my mother. Oh! how shall I tell the rest? Yet it must be told. He said that he had reason to believe that I was not his child, and that it was this conviction that led him to treat me with such indifference and unkindness; that he now repented having so done, for though I was not his child, the fault was not mine, and from my affectionate attention to him during his illness, he felt sure I might have been a comfort to him had he sooner learned how to value me. Oh! you know not how kindly, how gently he spoke to me at last!"—and the dear and amiable girl wept in deep emotion. "I have bequeathed you the whole of my fortune, Selina," said he. "You will be rich—you will be sought after!"

"Did he name me?" asked I, greatly agitated.

"Yes," replied Selina, blushing, and

casting down her eyes, "he did refer to you. He said that he was now sorry that he had not cultivated your acquaintance; but that, in refusing, he was actuated by a motive that was not unkind, however it might appear; for it originated in a dread that your family would not (from painful circumstances known to him, but to which he would not then refer) approve any ties of friendship to be formed between you and him, or sanction any nearer alliance."

"How strange and unaccountable!" exclaimed I, quite forgetting, in the warmth of my affection for Selina, that there was nothing either strange or unaccountable that any family should disapprove of an attachment of its heir to a girl, however amiable and excellent, whose mother stood charged as hers did, and whose father was capable of making the gross and public exposure of his wife, and outraging the feelings of his daughter, as he had done at Palermo. Nevertheless, no

sins of the parents could shake my affection for Selina, and no sacrifice appeared too great for me to make to secure her hand. I whispered that I was wholly independent of family ties, had no near relations to offer a useless opposition to my wishes, and that all my happiness rested on the hope of calling her mine. How beautiful was the soft blush that tinged her pale face, and the faint smile that for a moment played over her delicate lips, as she murmured,

“ Hush! hush! speak not of happiness now; it looks like a sacrilege towards the dead!”

The Consul called on Selina the next day, and finding her much better, advised her proceeding to England as soon as her health would admit of her undertaking the journey. He had an interview with Mr. Rivers, and consulted him on the subject; and Mr. Rivers, who feared nothing so much as that Selina's mother might, on

hearing of the death of her husband, come and claim possession of her daughter, strenuously advised the same measure to be adopted as that which the Consul had previously recommended.

“ I hardly like to trust so fair, and, as I hear, so rich a young heiress, to the sole charge of the old French lady and two male attendants for so long a journey,” said the Consul. “ I wish that any English family were returning home, or any gentleman, whose age and character would render him eligible for such a trust, was going back to England, to whom I might confide the care of this interesting and charming young lady.”

“ I am on the point of returning home with Mr. Meredith, and purpose leaving Naples in a day or two,” observed Mr. Rivers; “ and if you deem me worthy of the trust, it will give me pleasure to undertake it. Our carriage can closely follow that of

the young lady and her *dame de compagnie*, and I will not lose sight of them until they have safely arrived in London."

"I look on this chance as a very fortunate one for this unprotected young creature," replied the Consul, "and accept your obliging offer with unfeigned satisfaction, as there is no one, Mr. Rivers, to whom I would more readily consign such a charge than to you."

I could have hugged Mr. Rivers when he informed me of this arrangement, which removed a load of anxiety from my mind; nor did the lovely Selina oppose it, nor attempt to conceal the satisfaction it afforded her. Madame de Stourville was positively wild with joy when she first learned it; for the disagreeable occurrences that had taken place at La Cava and Pæstum had rendered her timid, and doubtful of the safety of travelling without other protection than that of servants. After a few minutes,

however, her countenance assumed an air of dissatisfaction, and heaving a deep sigh, she exclaimed, “ *Mais ce pauvre Monsieur Vincent!* vat is to become of him? *Oh! mon Dieu!* how *triste* it will be for him to go back alone to dat Palermo, vere he so seldom have any pupils, and can earn so leetle money!”

Mr. Rivers looked archly at me, and said, “ Yes, Madame, it will be very *triste* indeed for him, more especially after having lately enjoyed the happiness of your society!”

“ He is vera *aimable!*” resumed Madame de Stourville. “ *Si poli envers les dames,* and never talks of anybody’s age. *Vraiment,* it is a pity, ven ve are all so happy” —but here a glance at Selina’s pale face and deep mourning dress reminded her of the impropriety of the phrase, and she attempted to correct it by adding—“ so *unhappy,* I meant to say.”

“ Then you, Madame, are of the opinion

expressed in the old song?" said Mr. Rivers, ironically.

"Vat old song?" demanded Madame de Stourville.

"That which says, 'Let us all be unhappy together,'" replied Mr. Rivers, keeping as grave a face as he could assume.

"*Oui, oui, vous avez raison, Monsieur Rivère; for if it is vell for friends to be togeder ven dey be happy, it is certainement a consolation to be so ven dey are unhappy. And ce pauvre cher Monsieur Vincent, si aimable et si malheureux, et surtout, si poli envers les dames!* It vas only dis morning, ven I ask him if I not look very ill in de black dress, he did say, a lady could never look ill in anyting. Vas not dat *aimable?*"

"I partake Madame de Stourville's good opinion and sympathy for Mr. Vincent," said I, "and think, Mr. Rivers, that he

would be an admirable librarian at Meredith Park. What is your opinion? Shall I make him the offer?"

"*Oh! mon cher Monsieur Meredis,* how good, how *aimable* you are!" exclaimed Madame de Stourville, her face becoming lighted up with pleasure.

"I think very well of the project," replied Mr. Rivers; "for from what I have seen, as well as heard, of this simple and warm-hearted Hibernian, I have formed a very high opinion of him, and agree with Madame de Stourville, that it would be a pity to leave him in exile in a country where neither his erudition nor good character can enable him to acquire the means of subsistence, and where, if his patron, Mr. Medlicut, were to die, he would be left without a friend."

My proposal was joyfully and gratefully accepted by poor Vincent, and it was ar-

ranged that he should occupy the front box of Selina's carriage,—much to the satisfaction of Madame de Stourville.

Our brief preparations being completed, we left Naples on our route for England; and I soon after observed with delight, that the change of air and scene produced the happiest effect on Selina's health. We rested a day at the romantically situated inn at Mola di Gaeta, embosomed in groves of lemon and orange trees, the beautiful flowers of which last perfumed the air, while the golden fruit shone amid the dark, clustering leaves, and the tall and picturesque aloe towered above them. The blue and placid Mediterranean sparkled 'neath the beams of the bright sun; and many a white sail floated over its broad expanse. As we sat in the balcony which commands the enchanting prospect, and I heard the sweet accents of my adored Selina pronounce her delight at the scene, how were

its charms enhanced to me! Beautiful as I had acknowledged it to be when I had formerly rested here *en route* to Naples, with what different feelings did I now contemplate it! My heart had then never owned the power of love,—that power which wields its influence so despotically over mankind; and my mind dwelt more on the fate of that spirit-stirring orator, whose name still adds such classical associations to this place, than on self. Now, however, Mola di Gaeta became to me a region of romance, and the fair creature by my side was the enchantress who had wrought the change.

Ours was a happy journey, and I could have wished it prolonged for months instead of days. Nor was I, as it soon became evident, the only enamoured person of the party. Madame de Stourville, it was plain, had transferred her affection from Mr. Rivers to Mr. Vincent; of which she exhibited

many proofs, greatly to the annoyance of the good-natured Irishman, who endeavoured, as much as possible, to discourage her attachment, although his natural politeness to the fair sex rendered him loth to appear ungrateful.

CHAPTER IV.

ARRIVED at Geneva, we took up our abode at Secheron, and determined to repose there two or three days. The evening of our arrival, Mr. Vincent entered our apartment in a state of excitement in which I had never previously observed him, and in answer to my inquiries as to the cause, told me that the oldest and best friend he had ever known had half an hour before driven up to the door of the inn. "I instantly recognised and made myself known to him," said he; "and as he is going to Italy for the

recovery of his health, he has requested me to return with him there. I therefore hope you will not think me ungrateful for declining to accompany you to England; for, believe me, I am most sensible of all your kindness."

"But you seem depressed rather than exhilarated by encountering your friend," observed I.

"Alas! sir, the sight of him has reopened wounds that I had believed healed, and he has communicated to me events that have deeply pained me!"—and poor Vincent's lips trembled with emotion.

"But will not the constant presence of this friend keep alive the regret which now agitates you?" demanded I.

"Even if it should, sir, I consider it my duty to remain with Sir Thomas Netterville as long as he may think my society can cheer or be of use to him. I was his tutor for some years, and received the utmost

kindness from his worthy parents. He had a sister—but why should I intrude my sad story on you?”

I begged him to continue his narrative; and he resumed it, evidently gratified by the interest I evinced.

“ Sir Thomas had a sister, beautiful as the fair ideal of which youthful poets dream, and good as beautiful. She became the object of my love, of my idolatry; but never, even in my wildest moments of passion, did I breathe a word that could betray what was passing in my soul. Unsuspicious of my feelings, her condescension to me as the friend, as well as the tutor, of her only brother, fanned the flame that burned in my breast. I trembled lest my secret should be discovered, and imposed the utmost restraint on myself to conceal it, when proposals were made by a gentleman of large fortune in the neighbourhood for the hand of Miss Netterville; and her acceptance of

his suit, suddenly announced to me by her brother, produced so violent a revulsion in my frame, that my long-cherished secret was in a moment revealed. The pity, the kindness of that brother I never have forgotten. Instead of spurning the humble and obscure hireling who had presumed to raise his eyes to the high-born and lovely creature, whom the noblest might be proud to wed, he tried to comfort and console me. Finding that I could not bring myself to remain, to be present at the marriage, he obtained me permission to absent myself for some time; and having forced on me his purse and this watch,"—drawing out a gold one,—“ I left the mansion where the happiest hours of my life had been spent, and where still dwelt the idol of my heart. I never returned to it. I felt that to see her the wife of another was more than I could bear; and having reached Dublin, I engaged as a travelling tutor with a young

Irish nobleman, who unfortunately died in Italy a year after, when I went to Palermo, where I have ever since remained. The object of my first, my only love,—as her brother has told me,—was for some years a neglected and an unhappy wife, and died of a broken heart. Oh! that there could be found on earth a man capable of neglecting such a treasure! My friend has long since succeeded to the fortune of his father, and is a childless widower in broken health. His reception of me was such as to touch me to the very soul, and I could not refuse his request to return with him to Italy.”

While Vincent was still speaking, Madame de Stourville entered, and observing his altered looks, exclaimed, “*O ciel! Monsieur Vincent, you are ill! Vat is de matter? Prenez quelque chose!*”

The undisguised and warm interest evinced by the good-natured but weak-minded old lady towards Mr. Vincent

escaped not the observation of Mr. Rivers, who looked significantly at me as he noted it. The object of her sympathy, however, seemed wholly unconscious of it, so entirely engrossed was he by the painful reflections to which his unexpected rencontre with Sir Thomas Netterville had given birth. When he left the room, overcome by his feelings, Madame de Stourville demanded an explanation.

“Vat is all dis *mystère*? Vy is ce *pauvre cher Monsieur Vincent si agité, si pâle?*”

“What but the tender passion, all-mighty love, could reduce any one to such a state?” said Mr. Rivers, maliciously.

“Lofe!” reiterated the lady. “But vat makes him despair? He not know but dat de lady he lofes, lofes him too.”

“But if there is an insurmountable obstacle to his union with her?” observed Mr. Rivers.

“ *I* not know of any,” replied Madame de Stourville, with the utmost *naïveté*.

“ It is really a pity,” resumed Mr. Rivers, “ that so fine-looking a fellow, and so good a one too, should be a victim to the tender passion, more especially at his age.”

“ *Toujours parlant de l'âge*, vat for you always speak of de age?” exclaimed the old lady, angrily. “ Have I not before told you dat de person who is capable to be in lofe cannot be affirmed to be too old.”

“ Poor fellow! I pity him,” said Mr. Rivers, musingly.

“ But I not see vy you need pity him. If his lofe is de cause, vy perhaps de lady lofe him too. Vy not inform her at vonce, and have no *mystère*? I hate de *mystère*.”

“ I told you before, Madame, that there is an insurmountable obstacle to their marriage.”

“ I do not believe it, but vat you mean?”

“ The only lady he ever loved——”

“Vat, *est il possible* he never lofed before?
tant mieux! I am glad.”

“The only lady he ever loved, a young,
a lovely girl——”

“*Comment!* O, de vicked man! But
dey are all de same. I have not de patience
vid dem. And vat business has de old man
of his age to fall in lofe vid a young girl, I
should like to know? *Fi donc!*”

“Why, Madame, it is only a few minutes
ago that you declared you did not consider
him old,” observed Mr. Rivers, sily.

“Vell, I mean by dat not too old to fall
in lofe vid a lady of a certain age, dat is, of
a *raisonnable* age.”

“Alas! Madame, I fear that men, how-
ever old themselves may be, never do fall in
love with women of what you call a reason-
able age. It is doubtless a great folly on
their part; nevertheless, thus it is.”

“It is a grand folly, a very grand folly,
Monsieur Rivére, and dey ought to be

ashamed of it. *Mais revenons.* How long has Monsieur Vincent loved de young lady?"

"Thirty-five years."

"Tirty-five years! *Mon Dieu!* Den she is no longer young!"

"She is dead, Madame."

"Vat you say, dead? *Vraiment morte?*"

"Yes, Madame."

"*Tant mieux!* den, if she lived until now, she would have been vat you gentlemen call old voman, and you not mean to say dat he would not still have continued to love her? Now, if Monsieur Vincent have de good fortune to encounter a lady of de same age dat his first love would be, had she lived, do you not tink he might be consoled, and love de new lady?"

"Knowing mankind as well as I do, Madame, I fear I must pronounce that in such a case a man would be much more likely to be consoled by a lady of the age of his first love, when she died, than of the age

she would have been, had she lived thirty-five years longer."

"*Est-il possible! O! quel manque de cœur, quel manque de sentiment! Dat proves de men to be barbare. Den I suppose no man do lofe his vife ven she grows old?"*

"Yes, Madame, many do."

"Den surely von voman who is not young (I hate dat vord old) may be as agreeable in a man's eyes as anoder, and besides, de novelty of de new face is better dan de face he has looked at for tirty-five years."

"Few men would think so, I believe, Madame, for in the wreck of the faded face they had looked on for thirty-five years, they would trace some remnants of the fair and blooming one that had captivated their youthful hearts. It would recall the memory of days of happiness, of trials, passed together, of reciprocal tenderness and sym-

pathy, of mutual forbearance and of tested affection; so that the faded face, endeared by thirty-five years' contemplation, would be infinitely more agreeable than a new face of similar age that had outlived its bloom, and lost it, too, as well as the freshness of the heart, before we beheld it."

"I not agree vid you at all, Monsieur Rivère, in your opinion. Men, at least Frenchmen, and I suppose dey do not differ much in dis particular from oder men, are very apt to get tired of de face dey may have looked at even half de number of years dat you have named. Den dey can make comparison between de face dey saw ven it vas young and beautiful, and de face dat is no longer so; and dis is very unfavourable to de old one. Anoder ting is, de two persons who have lived very many years togeder, know all de stories and anecdotes of each oder; and can no more amuse demselves in de long evenings by recounting dem.

But old people who have not passed deir youth togeder, have so many tings to tell, dat dey can amuse each oder very well. Dey have not learnt to get tired of each oder's long stories, often-repeated anecdotes, afflictions, and infirmities, de symptoms of which last, dey have learned to look on vid alarm, if not vid disgust. No, believe me, Monsieur Rivère, you are wrong in your opinion, and I tink *ce cher* Monsieur Vincent will agree in opinion vid me. *Après tout quel bel et bon homme est Monsieur Vincent,*" resumed Madame de Stourville. "*Si aimable, si poli.* He took such good care of me on de sea—no, I never can forget it. And ven Monsieur Vincent did ask for *eau de vie* and varm vater for me, and *de bête de garçon* of de ship did call aloud, 'Is it for de young lady, or de old?' *quel imbécille n'est ce pas?* Monsieur Vincent vas very angry, and said, 'Here be no old ladies; vat you mean, *garçon*, by saying

such a ting?' *Oui, oui, Monsieur Vincent so very angry, I tought he would b at de stupid boy, and pour dire vrai, il l'avait bien merit . Oui, certainement, Monsieur Vincent est un homme charmant.*"

Mr. Rivers gave me a significant look, and appeared highly amused at Madame de Stourville's evident *penchant* for our *ci-devant* cicerone.

Soon after Selina and Madame de Stourville had retired for the night, Mr. Vincent joined Mr. Rivers and me, to bid us farewell. His gratitude for the kindness we had shewn him, was really touching, and impressed us with a very favourable opinion of his heart.

When Madame de Stourville, next morning, discovered that Mr. Vincent was gone, her surprise was only to be equalled by her indignation.

"Vat he mean by not vaiting to say adieu? But de men are all de same. No hearts, no feelings. He is like de rest."

And here she cast an angry glance at Mr. Rivers. “ Dey make de poor vomen believe dey lofes dem, and give de fond looks, and speak de mild, honey vords, and ven ve tink dey are *sur le point de faire la proposition de mariage*, dey eider say dey never did lofe de person, or dey go avay vidout so much as saying adieu.”

It was impossible not to smile at the *naïveté* of the poor disappointed French woman; and even the beautiful lips of Selina relaxed into a movement more resembling a smile than they had worn since the death of Mr. Somers.

Often, during that journey, did I feel, that now, for the first time, I tasted happiness. To awake with the blissful certainty of seeing her, of conversing with her, on whom my soul doted, was in itself happiness; and as my eyes followed the carriage that contained her, and watched for each post where horses were changed, that I might

alight, to enjoy a few minutes of her society, the days glided away with a rapidity not to be described. Then, the repasts partaken together, the evenings passed seated by her side! Oh! that was indeed a happy journey!

While staying at Geneva, we went to the Magazine there, so celebrated for its *bijouterie*, and looking over the different *parures* displayed for our inspection, I opened one morocco case, believing it to contain some ornament, when my eye fell on a miniature, richly set, and I was instantly struck with the extraordinary likeness it bore to Miss Somers.

So strong was the resemblance, that were it not for the difference of dress, it might have passed for a portrait; and when I shewed it to Mr. Rivers and Madame de Stourville, they were equally struck with it. We questioned the jeweller as to whom the miniature belonged, and he informed us that it was the property of the Duc de Valen-

tinois, and had been consigned to him to be reset. This was all he knew, the miniature having been brought to him by a friend of the Duc's, with instructions to have it sent to Paris when set, where the Duc was now staying. Even the jeweller noticed the resemblance the portrait bore to Miss Somers, who herself acknowledged that she saw the likeness. What would I not have given to possess this miniature, or even a copy of it! When we escorted the ladies back to the hotel, I made an excuse to leave them, and returned to the jeweller's shop, in the hope of persuading him to let me have a copy taken of the portrait; but all my persuasions and offered bribes were vain; he positively refused, and I left his house much disappointed, while compelled to respect his integrity.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW days after our arrival at Paris, while walking one day in the *Jardin des Plantes*, with Selina and Madame de Stourville, our attention was excited by the extraordinary conduct of a gentleman, who passed and re-passed us several times, peering in the face of Miss Somers, in a most remarkable manner. He was about fifty years of age, and so dignified and gentleman-like in his appearance, that his conduct seemed the more inexplicable. He examined Selina's face with an intensesness that amounted to positive

rudeness, and distressed her so much that I was on the point of requesting him to desist, when, taking off his hat and bowing to us, he begged to be pardoned for his apparent ill-breeding, but urged, as an excuse for it, that the very remarkable likeness the young lady bore to a dear friend of his, had made such a forcible impression on him, that he could not refrain from looking at her, and requested to be informed of her name and country.

We acquainted him with both, when he sighed deeply, and again apologized. I ventured to ask, in turn, his name; and when he said "Valentinois," we no longer felt surprised at his being struck by a resemblance that we had all remarked at Geneva. I mentioned the circumstance to him, and it seemed to give him pleasure.

"The portrait," said he, "is that of my wife, to whom this young lady bears so wonderful a likeness, that I could believe

that twenty years had flown away, and that my wife now stood before me, as she looked when I led her a bride to the altar. She blessed me with an only child, a girl, whom we lost, under circumstances so suspicious, that though her death was formally announced to us, we have never been able to abandon the hope that she may still be in existence. You may imagine, therefore, the effect and interest produced on my mind by beholding a young lady about the same age that my daughter would now have been, and above all, with so remarkable a likeness to my wife. I leave Paris, in a few days, for Milan, where the duchesse now is, but as it is our intention to visit England in a short time, perhaps I may be permitted to have the pleasure—a melancholy one, though, it must be—of presenting this young lady to her?”

I gave my address to the Duc de Valentino, adding that, through me, he might

always become acquainted with the residence of Miss Somers; and he took his leave, casting many a "longing, lingering look behind," on the fair young face that had so much attracted his attention.

"What a fine, intelligent countenance he has," said Selina; "and what a pleasing-toned voice, and dignified manner! It may seem strange, and somewhat romantic, too, nevertheless, I confess that the Duc de Valentinois has greatly interested me; and if the duchess is as amiable as he is, I am sure I should like her."

"He is very vell, very vell," observed Madame de Stourville. "De Italian *noblesse* are, however, far inferior to de French. A French, and, above all, a Parisian nobleman, would have paid a compliment to each of us, and turned it vid dat elegance and grace dat only Frenchmen possess. But dis Italian *duc* was so rude as not to seem to notice dat I vas present;

and ven he spoke of de likeness of Mademoiselle to his wife, he had not de *politesse* to say dat de resemblance vas very flattering for Madame la Duchesse. No, no, dere is no *noblesse* to be compared vid de French; and no men to be found who have, in an equal degree, *de politesse pour les dames.*"

Every hour passed in the society of Selina served to rivet still more closely the bonds of affection that united me to her. Nor did she—now that she felt convinced that the knowledge of the alleged unworthiness of her mother, and the reprehensible conduct of her father, had only rendered me more anxious to call her mine, and thus withdraw her wholly from the power of her sole surviving parent—attempt to conceal that my fervent attachment and devotion had won her affection. Her manner towards me was as free from the prudery so often assumed by some young ladies under similar

circumstances, as from the freedom that characterizes others. Her delicacy and modesty were a part of herself, and invested her with an irresistible charm in my eyes; while they lent to every little favour she accorded me, a value appreciated only by those who know how to prize even the merest trifles connected with a pure-minded and innocent creature, who loves for the first time. I could have wished that our travelling might continue for months; and a gloom pervaded my mind as we approached the period of its termination. Once arrived in London, she must be given up to the guardianship of the Court of Chancery; and an undefined dread of some obstacle being opposed to our union, would, in spite of all my efforts to check it, depress my spirits. I was to be of age in a week, and was determined to lay my proposals in due form before the proper authorities; but I feared that the youth of Selina, who was now

only in her eighteenth year, might be made an objection to the fulfilment of my hopes; and this foreboding haunted me. It was therefore with a feeling of sadness that I greeted the white cliffs of Dover, and conducted my beloved Selina to the best inn that town boasts. My sadness was infectious, for she too became grave and pensive; and this, the first evening that we had passed together in our native land, was the most melancholy we had known since we had left Naples.

The following day we proceeded to London, and took up our abode in an hotel well known to Mr. Rivers, who the next morning sent for the solicitor of my family, to consult on the steps to be taken for fulfilling the instructions of Mr. Somers. The will of that gentleman was delivered to the proper authorities, and Mr. Rivers attended Selina and Madame de Stourville to Mr. Herbert, the Master in the Court of Chan-

cery before whom they were to appear. The youth, beauty, and peculiar position of Selina greatly interested that gentleman. He inquired of Mr. Rivers whether she had any relations to whose care the Court of Chancery might entrust her; adding, that the will of the deceased prohibited her being allowed to reside with her mother. When told that Mr. Rivers or the young lady knew of none, the Master deemed it expedient that, for the present, she should remain under the protection of the female companion to whose care she had been entrusted by her father, and advised a private residence being taken for her.

“The young lady is heiress to a very large fortune,” said he, “and a suitable allowance will be immediately granted by the Court for her maintenance while she is a minor. Mr. Mellingcourt was an eccentric man, and since his separation from

the Lady Selina his wife, his habits have been still more so."

"I was not aware until this moment," observed Mr. Rivers, "that the gentleman with whose will I was entrusted by the English Consul at Naples, and with whom I had some personal intercourse in Palermo, had any other name than Somers, which was that he was known by there, as well as in France."

"Yes, sir, that was only an assumed name, and Mellingcourt was the real one. He married Lady Selina, the sister of the Marquis of Altringham, lately dead."

When Mr. Rivers, Selina, and Madame de Stourville returned from their interview with the Master in Chancery, I felt as overjoyed to see my beloved as if we had been days instead of a few hours asunder.

"You must make up your mind to resign Miss Somers," said Mr. Rivers, endeavouring to look grave.

“ Yes, you will see Mademoiselle Somers no more !” observed Madame de Stourville.

“ Good heavens ! What does all this mean ?” demanded I, really alarmed, which Mr. Rivers observing, he kindly said,

“ Not to keep you in suspense, this young lady,” turning to Selina, “ is no longer Miss Somers, but Miss Mellingcourt, daughter of Mr. and Lady Selina Mellingcourt, niece to the late Marquis of Altringham, and first cousin to the present.”

I felt a shock at this intelligence, the symptoms of which I could not, despite my utmost efforts, conceal. And how were my sufferings increased, by observing that Selina had noticed the sudden revulsion produced by her new cognomen. She turned alternately from pale to red ; and notwithstanding that I immediately took her hand, and declared that by any name she would be equally dear to me, I marked with pain that her feelings were wounded. So many

disagreeable associations were revived in my mind by the name of Mellingcourt,—that name, borne by one who had caused so much sorrow to my dear, sainted mother, that it never could have been heard by me without painful emotions. But to learn that the person now dearest to me on earth bore it, and, above all, that she was the daughter of a woman whom I heartily contemned and despised, was indeed a severe trial. True, I was already aware that the mother of Selina was a most objectionable character. I had heard her husband denounce her to be such, even in the presence of her innocent child; and I had marked with disgust the effrontery, and absence of all contrition or shame, which she had evinced on that memorable occasion. Lady Selina Mellingcourt could certainly be no worse than I believed the mother of Selina to be; nevertheless, I now experienced a stronger sentiment of distaste and repug-

nance to her whose arts had embittered the life of my dear mother, and whose *liaison* with my father had led to the event which caused his death, than I had previously entertained towards the supposed Mrs. Lindsell. And it was to the daughter of this bad woman that I had irrevocably linked my destiny; and that daughter was to sit in my sainted mother's place at my home—that home which had been defiled by the guilt and open exposure of her mother. All these reflections rushed through my mind, and I involuntarily shuddered; but recalled to the actual present by hearing Mr. Rivers ask Selina whether she was not ill, I turned, and saw her pale as marble, her lovely face bearing such an expression of sorrow and mild resignation, that I forgot everything but that she was suffering,—and from no fault of hers; and I addressed her with the utmost tenderness.

There was a purity, an innocence, and, I

might say, a holiness—for surely purity and innocence constitute some of the attributes of holiness—about this charming girl, that no one could look on her without feeling their blessed influence; and as I gazed on that pale but sweet face, that polished and lofty brow, where virtue seemed to have set its seal, and those lips, that bore the impress of truth, I felt abashed that I could for a moment have wished that our destinies had not been irrevocably linked together. Was she to be blamed or shunned for the sins of her mother? Was she not, on the contrary, more an object of interest and commiseration on that account? and had she not virtues that might redeem and atone for all her mother's faults? These were the questions I asked myself as I contemplated that beautiful face; and Love answered—Yes, and hushed every doubt to rest.

But though in the presence of Selina I

could forget all that was painful, and think only of the happiness of calling such a creature mine,—when absent from her, when removed from the magical influence which her beauty and innocence exercised over me, a thousand painful doubts and fears would return to haunt my pillow, and to poison my repose. I dared not to whisper, even to myself, the fearful thoughts that suggested themselves to me,—thoughts too horrible to be for a moment entertained without shuddering. Yet they would again present themselves to me when away from her, again to be chased when I beheld her face, as the dark mists of night are cleared away by the bright beams of the rising sun.

The Master in Chancery, a kind-hearted man, feeling for the isolation of the rich heiress, and desirous to lessen it, brought his wife and daughters to visit her. She

was invited to their house, and treated with a cordiality that greatly increased as they learned to form a due appreciation of her character.

CHAPTER VI.

AND now I attained my majority, Lord Warminster, my guardian, came up to London for the occasion—an exertion of which he left nothing unsaid that could enhance the value of such a sacrifice on his part, or increase my sense of it. With the possession of my ancestral estates, as well as a very large sum, the savings of my minority, I found myself one of the richest commoners in England. I had long intended that the anniversary of my twenty-first birthday should be spent at Meredith

Park, and that my betrothed bride and Madame de Stourville should be present. I had often talked this little plan over with Selina on our route from Italy, and she had entered into it with all the delight with which its anticipation filled me. I had told her that we should together visit the rooms sacred to my mother's use, and afterwards kneel by her tomb to implore a blessing on our intended union. This proof of affection and sentiment had greatly touched her; and she loved to question me about my mother, listening with deep attention to every little particular I related, and by her sweet and tender sympathy identifying herself in my heart with the memory of my lost mother. Ever since the discovery of her real name, an instinctive feeling that I could not conquer made me avoid recurring to this subject, which had previously been a frequent one, and when she referred to it, I quickly changed the topic.

As the day that completed my majority had gone by, Selina reminded me of it, and expressed her satisfaction at the thoughts of soon seeing the house in which I had first beheld the light. I felt embarrassed, and my countenance and manner betrayed my uneasiness. "I have abandoned the project," replied I; "for the house is not in order, and I would rather you did not visit it until you enter as its mistress." I could perceive that she was surprised and disappointed; but such was the sweetness of her temper and gentleness of her manner, that a stranger could not have discerned it. I was pained to have thwarted her; but how could I take her to Meredith Park while she bore the hateful name of Mellingcourt—a name but too well remembered, by all the gossips in the neighbourhood, as identified with the painful *esclandre* in which her mother enacted so prominent a part? How kneel with her beside the tomb of that beloved

mother, who, could she behold us from her grave, would exhort me not to wed the daughter of the woman who had ruined her peace, dishonoured her roof, and led to the death of her husband! There was sacrilege in the thought. No, I would as soon as possible marry her, and sink the name so odious to me in my own; and then, and not till then, could I take her to Meredith Park; for then, as my wife, I might hope for the forbearance of my neighbours, if not for their oblivion of the notoriety attached to her mother in the very abode where the daughter was now to preside.

Two days after that which completed my majority, that epoch which was to have been one of rejoicing, opened gloomily, and brought me the intelligence of the death of my poor mother's old and faithful attendant, Lockly. She had been ill for some weeks, and, as the steward wrote, had prayed to be spared to see her dear master once more; but two

days previous to the date of his letter she breathed her last, imploring blessings on my head, and requesting that her remains should be interred at the foot of the tomb of her honoured lady. When the first natural regret at this event had subsided,—and it took some hours before I could subdue the sadness it occasioned me,—I could not help reverting to what would have been the horror and dismay of poor Lockly had she lived to behold the daughter of the woman she had most hated on earth, arrive to fill her dear lady's place at Meredith Park. It was almost a relief to me to know that she was spared this grief, and that I was saved the annoyance of seeing her avert her eye from the face of my fair bride, and glance reproaches at me, for what she would have called insulting my mother's memory.

When I went to call on Selina, I found her pale and dispirited, and although she endeavoured to banish her sadness when

congratulating me on my birthday, the effort was too much for her, and she burst into tears. Madame de Stourville, who was always present at our interviews, and who was aware of our engagement, had the discretion to look out of one of the windows while I tried to soothe and speak comfort to my poor Selina. I entreated, I implored her to tell me the cause of her tears; but they fell so plenteously, that for some time she could not speak. How my heart reproached me as I saw those pearly drops chase each other down her pale cheeks, and marked her beautiful breast rise and fall with each long-drawn sob, that seemed to come from her heart. I felt, with self-reproach, that some alteration in my manner, of which, however I might be unconscious, had been noticed by her, and had caused the sorrow I now witnessed. It was not until I had repeatedly implored her, that she revealed to me that she had observed that ever since the day I had learnt her

real name, my manner towards her had changed. That she had tried to think this might only be a fancy of hers, but that every interview with me convinced her more fully of the fact. My silence, my abstraction, the start I had given when I heard the name, had all been noted down by this sensitive and lovely creature; and I, fool that I was, could imagine that in a love like ours there could be so great a want of sympathy as that she should not have remarked—nay, more, have *felt* what was passing in my mind.

“When assured, by your undiminished attention and often-reiterated proposal for my hand,” said Selina, “that the terrible scene of recrimination at Palermo, which must have greatly pained your feelings, while it so deeply lacerated mine, had not created any change in your sentiments for me, I believed that the worst having been

revealed by my father, nothing remained to be discovered that could effect any alteration in your sentiments. Nevertheless, I had many scruples respecting the propriety of accepting your hand since I became aware of the—the——” and the lovely girl’s hitherto pale face was in a moment covered with blushes, as she added, “the stain on my unhappy mother’s fame.”

“Say no more, dearest, most beloved Selina!” interrupted I; “my affection, my devotion for you are unchanged, and unchangeable. Never were you more loved—nay, more, so ineffably dear to my heart, or so necessary to my existence as at this moment, and never did I so fondly long to call you mine. Circumstances too tedious, and now unnecessary to relate, had affected my spirits on the day when your present name was made known to me. Let us refer to this subject no more, and be assured, my beloved,

my adored Selina, that my every dream, my every hope, of happiness depends on your sweet self!"

The tenderness and earnestness of my manner re-assured her, that fair and exquisitely formed little hand was yielded to mine, and as I pressed it fondly to my lips, I forgot every care, and abandoned my heart to the fond illusions of hope. The rest of that day was unclouded by a single shade of doubt or gloom. Selina's paleness and sadness were replaced by a delicate tint of rose, and a chastened cheerfulness, that delighted me by proving the depth of her attachment to me, as exemplified in the change so quickly wrought in her appearance and spirits, by my assurances of unimpaired affection.

Mr. Herbert and his family were constant in their attention to Selina. Scarcely a day passed in which the Ladies did not visit her, or in which she was not invited

to their house. Mr. Rivers and I were frequent guests at this worthy man's table, where a cordial yet refined hospitality prevailed, too often found wanting in statelier dwellings. And now, with Selina's permission, I disclosed my attachment to this, her legal guardian; laid before him the state of my fortune, and solicited his sanction to my addresses. He represented the youthfulness of both parties as an objection, and urged the propriety of our waiting until Selina became of age.

“Wait three years!” exclaimed I. “Impossible!”

“And what is there so impossible in it?” demanded he, smiling. “Three years, interminable as such a period may seem to a young gentleman desperately in love, and who has but just completed his majority, is, after all, no very distant period, and with the power of seeing the object of his affection, it appears to me that such a probationary

trial of love and constancy may, with the exertion of a little philosophy, be patiently borne."

"So you may now think," answered I, somewhat petulantly; "but did you think so when you wished to marry your amiable and excellent lady?"

He again smiled, shook his head, and said, "No, I confess I then felt as you do at present. Nevertheless, I was compelled to wait not merely three, but five years, before her father would accord me her hand. 'When you have acquired distinction in your profession, and have by your practice an income adequate to support a wife, and provide for a family in a style of comfort such as that to which my daughter has been hitherto accustomed,' said the prudent father; 'you shall have her. If she be not worth the pain of waiting so long for her, your heart will not suffer much for the trial; but if she be, your affection will only serve

as a spur to exertion in your profession, and your success will be the more gratifying to you both, because achieved through such a motive.' We had no alternative but to submit, and we did it with the best grace we could. I worked hard, for the object in view cheered my labours, and precluded that weariness and lassitude into which, during the first years of a young, and for some time briefless barrister, he is but too apt to sink. I was permitted to be a frequent guest at my future father-in-law's. My love of literature and taste for the fine arts was kept alive and fostered by the happy evenings spent in a family where both were cultivated. Mary was indefatigable at her pencil and embroidery, in order to decorate with the result of her labours our future home, and I never passed a book-stall without picking up some good volumes towards the formation of a library for it. This future home terminated the fairest vista of our view. To it

we continually referred, with increasing pleasure, and when at length my perseverance and arduous labour enabled me to claim their reward, the extended period during which it had been longed for, enhanced, rather than decreased our sense of the inestimable value of the blessing. When witnessing our happiness at the first dinner given by us to my wife's family, her father observed, ' Well, Robert, do you now forgive me for making you wait five years for Mary? Look around you, and behold the comfort and elegances of life which this wise postponement of your marriage has enabled you to secure for her; and the tasteful decorations which it gave her time and leisure to complete for your home. Had I consented to yield to your impatience, how different might you now find your dwelling. Young and improvident, you would have had to struggle with a scanty income, and all the privations it entails. The cares attending a *ménage* with

narrow means to support it would have disheartened and damped your exertions, and the sight of Mary deprived of those comforts to which from infancy she had been accustomed, would have pained and distressed you. Some three or four little ones (for they always come in troops to those who can the least afford to maintain them) would have multiplied your cares, and Mary, the now healthy, blooming bride, would, in all human probability, have degenerated into a sickly mother, the result of being a nurse and a household drudge.' Such, my young friend, was the reasoning of my good father-in-law; and I have never had the least cause to impugn its wisdom."

CHAPTER VII.

I HAD impatiently listened to the long exordium of the excellent Master-in-Chancery, who loved to hear himself talk, and who was somewhat tedious in delivering his practical essays on prudence. No sooner had he ended, than I observed, that the example he had quoted did not apply to me. "I have no profession to follow, have a fortune to satisfy even the most expensive tastes," said I; "so that the prudence of waiting three years, as far as regards pecuniary considerations, I cannot see."

“ In that point, certainly,” replied he, “ I admit that there is no occasion. But are there not others quite as important? Look around you, and contemplate the general result of early marriages. Young men spoilt by self-indulgence, who never having denied themselves aught that wealth can produce, and totally ignorant of the duties and grave responsibility of the married state, encounter some fair and youthful creature, but a few months emancipated from the dull school-room in papa’s mansion, and under the influence of the first enchantment of being well-dressed, seen, and admired. He fancies himself desperately in love, and this often from a mere ball-room-acquaintance with the object of his passion. She, like all young creatures on first entering society, is grateful to him who first distinguishes her from the crowd of female competitors around her; and the complacency of manner originating in satisfied vanity,

her admirer immediately attributes to affection for himself. He proposes, is at once accepted, because papas and mammas too well know the difficulty of procuring good *partis*, for their daughters to risk a refusal. The boy and girl are wedded; are foolishly fond during the first three months; and become somewhat indifferent the next three. At the end of the year, he has grown to think the jealous wife who reproaches him for not loving her as much as he did eleven months before, as unlike the blooming sylph crowned by a garland of roses less beautiful than her cheeks, and whom it was rapture to gaze on, as it is possible for two women to be; and she begins to acknowledge that the neglectful husband who scarcely conceals his indifference, is a much less charming man than the enamoured youth who had sworn that she surpassed all women, and that his love would end but with life."

"This may be very true, but is not at all

applicable to Miss Mellingcourt (the name always stuck in my throat) and me," observed I, not a little piqued by the implied comparison. "I have had the advantages of a rational education, and, though young, have seen more of the world than most men of my age. I believe I may without vanity say, that I have not been spoilt by the self-indulgence ordinarily practised by my contemporaries, for I have had the advantage of living with Mr. Rivers, whose example and precepts have not, I trust, been lost on me. Opportunity has been afforded me to become acquainted with the rare mental qualities of Miss Mellingcourt, and you will, I am sure, readily admit that she bears no resemblance to the begarlanded sylph of the ball-room to whom you referred."

"Nay, I see you are piqued, my young friend; forgive me if I have offended. I readily acknowledge that you and Miss Mellingcourt are indeed very different to

the examples I have cited; nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that, however great the superiority, it would be infinitely more prudent to postpone the marriage until Miss Mellingcourt becomes of age."

"You have yourself, my dear sir, lamented to Mr. Rivers the peculiar and isolated position of this young lady," said I. "Heiress to a large fortune, and almost an orphan, — her father having, as you are aware, by his will prohibited her from holding any intercourse with her mother, — with no relations on her father's side, and wholly unknown to those with whom she might claim kindred on her mother's, the sooner she finds a legal protector of suitable station and fortune to her own, the better. To prevent the possibility of any suspicion of my being influenced by mercenary motives, — although her great personal and mental attractions, as well as my own large estates, might preclude any such charge, it is my

desire that the whole of Miss Mellingcourt's fortune should be settled on herself, free from any control of mine."

" Nothing can be more disinterested, my dear Mr. Meredith; and all I can say is, that no effort of mine shall be wanting to obtain the sanction of the Lord Chancellor to the marriage. Nor do I anticipate any great difficulty, your station, character, and opulence, rendering you, in every point of view, so eligible a match. Of course, you do not mean to urge that the marriage should take place before six months have elapsed since the demise of her father? It would be indecorous, and would prejudice your suit with the Lord Chancellor."

I assented to the propriety of this observation; and the worthy Master in Chancery and I were from that day forth, not merely acquaintances, but cordial friends. I was constantly invited to meet my beloved Selina at his house; and she became so

much attached to his amiable wife and daughter, that much of her time, and consequently mine, was spent in their society.

The Lord Chancellor, owing to the representations of the worthy Master, sanctioned my addresses, and consented that at the expiration of the six months we should be united. Those were happy days! I rose in the morning with the blissful certainty of meeting in a few hours the dear object who occupied all my thoughts; and when I parted from her in the evening, I longed for the hour when I should again behold her. No one who has not passionately loved can imagine the delight of being permitted to administer to the happiness of such a creature as Selina. To know that my presence never failed to bring the roses to her delicate cheeks, and a smile to her beautiful lips; to have the bouquets of flowers, I daily brought her, treasured as if they were her most precious possessions; to

study my taste, and mine only, in the selection of her dress, and to take an interest even in trifles when she saw that they were not indifferent to me. Such was the happiness that was mine for months, with the prospect of a still greater happiness in perspective—that of calling this lovely and beloved creature my own. No wonder, then, that each day bringing to light some new charm in the disposition and mind of Selina, I should feel my attachment to her increasing, until I doated on her to a degree that never man before had experienced! And she, far from being spoiled by my idolatry, was so free from the spirit of coquetry and caprice by which so many youthful beauties are actuated, that the more my devotion to her became apparent, the less did she presume upon it, her whole study being to prove her desire of contributing to my happiness, and assimilating herself to my tastes and habits. While employed at her

pencil or embroidering frame, I would for hours read aloud to her, admiring from time to time the bright creations of those delicate and taper fingers; or I would hang delighted over her, as she drew from her piano-forte the most dulcet sounds, and accompanied them by a voice whose melody and expression were unrivalled.

The worthy Mr. Herbert and his family would sometimes accept my invitations to spend a day at Windsor or Richmond, and my Selina took great pleasure in those excursions, being passionately fond of the country. Mr. Rivers was much esteemed by the whole circle; and although the national prejudices, and the weakness of character of Madame de Stourville, sometimes drew on her a smile in which there was perhaps more of ridicule than approbation, her goodness of heart and simplicity, as well as her devotion to Selina, endeared her to us all.

“ And all you English tink Richmont such very *charmant* place!”—would she say, when we were contemplating with delight the enchanting view from Richmond Hill. “ *Eh bien!* for my part, I see noting in it so very fine. De environs of Paris have fifty places much finer. De Bois de Boulogne, *par exemple*. Tell me, what would Richmont be vidout de hills, de trees, de verdure, and de vater? Vy, noting at all. *Oui, oui*, take away de leetle hills, de trees, de verdure, and de vater, and de place vill be noting at all” — an assertion, the truth of which none of us could contest, and our admission of which rendered Madame de Stourville perfectly triumphant.

So necessary was the daily presence of Selina to my happiness, that it was with difficulty I could tear myself from London, even for two or three days, to superintend

the improvements carrying into execution at Meredith Park, in order to render it worthy for her reception.

My first visit to that

“ Seat of my youth, when every sport could please,”

was attended with melancholy feelings. Every object there vividly recalled my beloved mother to my memory; and as I stood gazing on her portrait, I could almost have fancied that the soft, pensive eyes looked reproachingly at me; and that could those dear lips, that in life had ever a smile for me, have opened, they would have asked me why I had selected the daughter of her most cruel enemy for my wife. When I bent over her tomb, too, my feelings were no longer those of pure, unalloyed regret. A consciousness that I was about to do that which, had she lived, would have pained and wounded her, haunted me; and instead of, as formerly, finding resignation from re-

flecting that I had never offended or grieved her, I left the sacred spot as sad as when I had approached it.

I sought relief from such thoughts by devoting my attention to the decoration of the rooms to be appropriated to my bride. Those that had been occupied by my dear mother, I determined should be left as when she lived; for in them every object spoke to me of her, and I should have thought it little less than sacrilege to have changed them. All that wealth could command and taste dictate was lavished on Selina's apartments. The state rooms and library were also newly furnished; and as I wandered from chamber to chamber I invoked the presence of the beautiful being to please whom the decorations were designed, and longed for the hour that was to see her established at Meredith Park as its mistress.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH what eagerness did I return to London after a three days' absence, and hurry to the abode of my betrothed! And oh! the joy of seeing her eyes sparkle with pleasure, and her cheeks glow with blushes, when I entered. We felt as if, instead of three days, we had been as many months asunder; we had so many questions to ask, and so many details to give relative to our pursuits and thoughts during our brief separation.

And now the day approached that was to bless me with the hand of my lovely Selina.

Every preparation was completed, and the bridal gifts suitable to the idol at whose shrine they were to be offered up covered the tables in the rooms of my hotel. The finest diamonds, the rarest rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and pearls, set in every imaginable shape and ornament, appeared to me scarcely worthy of her for whom they were intended, and while she blamed me for their quantity and costliness, I was dissatisfied that they were not still more splendid.

It was arranged that Mr. Herbert and his family, with Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers, should be the only persons present at the nuptial ceremony. The two last named were to remain in London for ten days, and at the expiration of that time were to join us at Meredith Park, accompanied by Mr. Herbert, his wife, and daughter, who had promised to stay with us for a fortnight.

The jewellers, coachmaker, and milliners employed for the marriage, had, according to the usual custom on similar occasions, exhibited their different productions to many of their customers. Hence the approaching event became a topic of conversation; and two days previous to that fixed for its celebration, more than one paragraph, headed "Marriage in High Life," announced that Harry Meredith, Esq., of Meredith Park, who had succeeded to, and lately taken possession of, the large estates of his father, was on Wednesday to lead to the hymeneal altar the lovely and accomplished Miss Mellingcourt, sole daughter and heiress to the immense wealth of the late Marmaduke Mellingcourt, Esq.

I felt displeased as I read this and similar paragraphs in the papers on my breakfast table; for I shrank with distaste from the publicity thus afforded to a ceremony at which it could not fail to congregate a

gaping crowd of idlers, from whose gaze I knew my blushing bride would fain escape. But I was glad, that in the announcement no mention of Lady Selina Mellingcourt was made; and I hurried off to the abode of Selina, my carriage literally laden with cases of jewels, Cashmeres, and foreign laces,—in the selection of which last I had been assisted by the knowledge and taste of Madame de Stourville, who was a professed judge in such matters. I found my Selina cheerful; but a maidenly reserve and timidity, never absent from her, and now increased by the proximity of that event which was to consign her for ever to my care, rendered her more lovely in my eyes than ever. I opened jewel-case after jewel-case, and as their bright contents flashed with a thousand varied dyes, I was like a delighted schoolboy who exhibits the presents brought for the object of his first juvenile love. But while Madame de Stour-

ville was loud and lavish in exclamations of *beau, superbe, magnifique*, divine, and incomparable, my beautiful Selina's equanimity was unchanged. She admired the costly presents before her more as being *my* gifts than for their own intrinsic lustre, and while I placed wreaths of rubies and diadems of pearls and diamonds one after another on her exquisitely shaped head, and clasped strings of large Oriental pearls and diamond necklaces in succession around her snowy throat, she turned not to the mirror to see their dazzling effect, as most other fair creatures of her age would have done, but raised her beautiful eyes to mine as if to ask how I could be occupied with such trifles, when she thought only of the solemn ceremony that was to unite us indissolubly the next day. There was something so calm, so holy about her, that I laid aside the jewels to contemplate that pure and lovely countenance to which no extraneous ornament could add new

charms; and as I gazed on her, and met her mild and thoughtful eyes, mine became moist, while tears rushed into hers, and she held out her beautiful little hand to me, and whispered, "They are tears of happiness."

I lingered near her long after the usual hour for returning to my hotel, to dress for dinner. I felt as unwilling to leave her presence as if I were on the point of setting out on a long journey away from her; and Madame de Stourville had more than thrice chidden and reminded me that dinner (a serious affair in her estimation) would be spoilt, before I could tear myself away. When, at length, I seized my hat and reached the door of the *salon*, I looked back to have one more glance of my adored Selina, I caught a glance of such deep tenderness from her, that I again returned to snatch her dear hand, and cover it with kisses. Was it some prophetic feeling that rendered

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me thus unwilling to quit her presence on that eventful day? Often and often did I recall that parting to my mind, and acknowledge that a presentiment of evil must have haunted us both, to have rendered it so solemn, when we believed that in an hour we should again meet.

On ascending the stairs at my hotel, my servant told me that for the last hour a lady had been waiting in the drawing-room, to see me; and that she said her business was of so urgent a nature that she wished me to be sent for. I felt discomposed and annoyed at this interruption, when I had barely time to dress and hurry back to my Selina.

“ Say that I cannot be seen, that I am particularly occupied,” replied I.

“ The lady stated, sir, that her business was of such importance to *you*, that it could not be postponed; and then, sir, there is something about her appearance and

manner that checked me from refusing to let her wait."

A vague and undefined dread of something unpleasant crossed my mind, as my servant ceased speaking, but this very presentiment of evil nerved me with courage to encounter it at once, so I advanced hurriedly, and entered the *salon*. Never shall I forget the horror of that moment, when my eyes fell on the face of her whom I now knew to be Lady Selina Mellingcourt, the mother of Selina. One glance at her prepared me for evil tidings; and my countenance revealed my feelings. She arose, and approaching me, said, "My presence here must, I well know, be anything but agreeable to you, Mr. Meredith: and I will not attempt to deny that our meeting is so fraught with pain to myself that nothing short of dire necessity and the emergency of the crisis in which we stand could have

compelled me to seek it. It was only recently that I learned the death of my late husband. The intelligence found me so ill, that although most anxious to seek my daughter, of whom I had become the only natural protectress, I was unable to leave my bed. I set out long before my physician considered me in a fit state to undertake such a voyage and journey. I have traced her from Naples, through France, to England. At Dover, I read in a newspaper, that to-morrow you were to become her husband, and I instantly set out, though nearly exhausted by fatigue, in order to stop this unhallowed, this unnatural union."

Here she hid her face in her handkerchief, and sank into a chair, seemingly overcome by her emotions.

"And why unhallowed—why unnatural, Madam?" demanded I, sternly, though I trembled while I spoke. "My birth, fortune, and station, render me in every way

an eligible husband for Miss Mellingcourt. She is a ward of chancery, and those competent to decide on the point have sanctioned our union."

"Never, never can it take place!" said she, nearly convulsed with emotion. "Oh! Mr. Meredith, how can I, how dare I, confess what it humiliates, what it tortures me to reveal; but which, to prevent sin and guilt, I must avow. The parent to whom you owe existence was—— was also the father of Selina!"

She hid her face in her hands; and I, overcome by the dreadful shock, my limbs trembling, and my brain almost maddened, dropped into a chair, and groaned aloud. We were both speechless for some minutes, for I was so stunned by the death-blow to all my happiness, that the power of utterance was denied me, and she appeared unable to speak. A thought flashed through my mind. What if this terrible assertion of

hers was a falsehood, invented to break off my marriage with Selina, in the hope of, in some way or other, getting her into her own power, and so enabling her to extort money from her. This thought gave me a momentary courage, and endeavouring to assume a composure I was far from feeling, I observed to her, that it was strange that it was only now this confession had been made. I added, too, that I disbelieved it altogether.

“ Why should it have been sooner made? Would you have had me denounce my dishonour and his own, to Mr. Mellingcourt?” demanded Lady Selina, angrily. “ There was, however, but little necessity for my avowal, for he always disbelieved that the child was his, and refused to see me after its birth. Why you should doubt the truth of the confession it has cost me such pain and shame to make, I know not; but your father, had he lived, could not have denied it, and unhappily for my honour, the attach-

ment which so long subsisted between us, was but too well, and too generally known, to leave much doubt of the fact I have stated. Would that I were not compelled to dash the cup of happiness from your lips, and those of my daughter! You do not, you cannot conjecture what the step I have taken has cost me; but it was inevitable; and however much of humiliation it has entailed on me, I have the consolation of having fulfilled my duty."

"Truly has it been said," exclaimed I, with bitterness, "that the sins of the parents are visited on the children! You have for ever destroyed the peace of two innocent beings, who, had it not been for your guilt, might have enjoyed the purest happiness."

"Is it manly, is it Christian-like in you, Mr. Meredith, to reproach me with the sins of my youth? and at such a moment, too, when overpowered by my feelings! I—I," and here she covered her face with her

handkerchief, and wept. I attempted not to soothe her, for so great was the horror and dislike with which she inspired me, that such an effort would have been impracticable.

CHAPTER IX.

I LEFT the room in a state of mind impossible to describe, and sought my own chamber, but there every object on which my eyes glanced tended to increase my grief and despair. The tables, and even the chairs, were covered with boxes and cases designed for Selina, and which had been sent home since I had left the hotel in the morning. Everything bore the appearance of preparation for the morrow's ceremony and journey, and now—oh! how changed—how wretched was all. What was I to do—

where was I to go? To see Selina again was impossible! to write to her I felt to be equally so. And yet, could I leave her ignorant of the fearful, the impassable barrier that had sprung up to divide us for ever? Could I allow her to believe that on the very eve of our nuptials I had basely deserted her, without a word to account for such a step? To think was madness! Whichever way my mind turned, despair met me at every side; and yet, even in that terrible hour, fondly—madly as I loved her, I would better have borne my own wretchedness, could I have diminished hers. The thought of her sorrow—that sorrow I must not soothe—unmanned me; and tears—burning tears—flowed from my eyes.

Mr. Rivers knocked at my door, being ready dressed to accompany me to Selina. His astonishment at beholding my state, and his warm sympathy when acquainted with its cause, I shall never forget.

“ You are at this moment, my poor friend, incapable of thinking or acting for yourself,” said he. “ Let me implore you to go to bed. Your hand burns, and your temples throb! I know I shall be most likely to meet your wishes by attending to *one* whose feelings everything must be done to spare.”

I grasped his hand, but I could not speak.

“ I will go to her and break this terrible event by stating that you are taken suddenly ill, and unable to leave your bed. Thence I shall proceed to our worthy Master in Chancery, to whom I will relate the truth. To guard against this bad woman’s forcing herself into the presence of her daughter, I will advise the Master to engage Miss Mellingcourt to remove to his house for the present. Then you, my dear friend, and I, will decide whither we shall repair; for I conclude that you will be

anxious to leave London as soon as possible."

"Yes, go, go to her at once," said I. "Oh! Mr. Rivers, shall I ever, in the course of years, acquire sufficient calmness to see her again—to look on her in the new light in which I must henceforth regard her? Oh! my father, how have your sins been visited on your unhappy son! The same unworthy woman whose conduct led to your premature death, and destroyed the life of my poor mother, has now for ever ruined my peace!"

Before Mr. Rivers left my chamber, he administered an opiate to me, but it failed to procure me a moment's repose. I desired my servant to request Mr. Rivers to come to me as soon as he returned to the hotel, and I impatiently counted the moments until he arrived. When he entered he looked pale and harassed.

"Is my——is she well?" exclaimed I.

“ She was greatly alarmed and agitated about your illness. But why should I speak to you on this subject? All recurrence to it must be avoided, until you can think of her as a sister.”

“ Yes, you are right. I will question you no more. But is it not dreadful to have the whole current of one’s thoughts and feelings thus violently checked? Oh! Mr. Rivers, bear with my weakness! But I think I should have better endured to have had her snatched from me by death, with the power of dwelling, with all the love I have entertained for her, on the recollection of our mutual tenderness, than to be thus debarred from even this sad relief, and to know that it is a sin, a crime, to indulge such feelings. But let me at least hear that she will be safe from the intrusion of that woman!”

“ You may be assured that she will. The Master in Chancery, after a long consulta-

tion, advised me, as knowing Miss Mellingcourt longer and better than he did, to break to her that her mother was in London, and would, in all probability, endeavour to obtain admission into the house; and that it would be much better to avoid all intercourse with her. The alarm she evinced at the bare mention of her name, or the possibility of falling into her power, enabled me to suggest to her the eligibility of placing herself at once under the protection of the Master in Chancery. She assented to my proposition; and to his residence will, with Madame de Stourville, go early to-morrow. ‘Oh! Mr. Rivers,’ said the poor young lady, ‘do not think me cruel and unnatural for thus entertaining such a dread, such an unconquerable repugnance to my—mother. But, indeed I cannot help it; although I often reproach myself for the culpable aversion I experience.’”

To know that Selina would be safe from the power and intrusion of her unworthy mother was indeed a consolation to my feelings; and I allowed Mr. Rivers to retire, promising him that I would seek repose. But the promise was easier made than kept; and, as hour after hour was tolled by a neighbouring clock, I lay awake, with throbbing temples and quick-beating pulse, ruminating on the misery of the present, and dreading to anticipate the dreary, hopeless future.

The morning broke,—that morning so impatiently desired, and which was to have made me the happiest of men,—and it found me in a violent brain fever.

For many days did I linger on the verge of death, totally unconscious of all that was passing around me. But even this state brought no oblivion to the one terrible thought that had tortured my heart, and driven reason from my brain; for I raved incessantly of Selina, until, exhausted by

the violence of my emotions, I sank into a death-like stupor, in which I remained for several hours. During many weeks, my life was despaired of; and when at length youth and a strong constitution enabled me to struggle through my disease, such was the state of debility it left behind, that it was long ere my physicians could assure Mr. Rivers, who scarcely left my bedside during my illness, that I should eventually recover. Physical sufferings, particularly those of a protracted nature, which weaken the frame, have a great influence in calming the passions, although they cannot vanquish affection. Mine for Selina was so interwoven with my very being, that death only could conquer it, yet the violence, though not the bitterness, of my feelings had subsided. When able to converse with Mr. Rivers, I learned that Lady Selina Mellicourt had made many attempts to see her daughter, and finding them unavail-

ing, had written the most artful letters, endeavouring to justify herself, and to win on her pity. Selina, finding that pecuniary aid was required, had requested the worthy Master in Chancery to apply a portion of her allowance to her mother, which he very unwillingly had consented to do, on the condition that Lady Selina was not again to seek admission, or to write to Miss Mellingcourt.

Mr. Rivers had seen Selina, and revealed to her, that circumstances, over which I had no control, had broken off for ever our contemplated union—that those circumstances could not for many years, if ever, be explained; and he had revealed to her, while my life was yet despaired of, that it was the grief occasioned to me by the discovery of this insurmountable obstacle, that had occasioned my illness.

“ Oh! let his life be but spared!” exclaimed she. “ Let me but have the bless-

ing of knowing that he lives, and I will not murmur at our separation on earth, trusting that we may hereafter be re-united in heaven!"

How my heart melted as I listened to Mr. Rivers, and how I prayed for the happiness of her, to whom henceforth I must be as dead.

A few days after my convalescence permitted me to be moved from my bed-room to the sitting-room, a letter was brought to me from the Duc de Valentinois, stating that he and his Duchesse had arrived in London, and were anxious to renew their acquaintance with me. I deputed Mr. Rivers to call on the Duc, and explain my present incapability of visiting him, as well as to offer him, as a stranger, any service in my power. When Mr. Rivers returned, he told me that he had not seen the Duchesse de Valentinois, who was confined by indisposition to her chamber, but that

the Duc had said he would call on me the following day.

“Almost the first question he asked,” said Mr. Rivers, “was, how the young lady he had seen with us at the Jardin des Plantes was; and he expressed a hope that we would allow the Duchesse, as soon as she was able to leave her chamber, to become acquainted with her.”

The following day the Duc paid me his offered visit, and after conversing with Mr. Rivers and me for some time, requested that we would give him our advice in a matter of great importance to him, and also recommend him a lawyer in whom he could place confidence.

“Mine is an eventful life,” said the Duc; “and if I were not afraid of taking up too much of your time, or of fatiguing Mr. Meredith, who is still an invalid, I would relate it as briefly as I could; for in order to understand the affair which has

led me to visit England, and which involves not only the future happiness of my life but that of the Duchesse—which is infinitely more precious to me, it is necessary that I should make you acquainted with the subject of our anxiety.”

We entreated him to believe that we should be gratified by his fulfilment of his wish; and he related to us the following narrative.

CHAPTER X.

“ BORN of one of the most ancient and illustrious houses in Italy, I was the second son of the Duc de Valentinois, whose sole offspring consisted of my brother and myself. I pass over the days of my boyhood, marked only by the happiness peculiar to that age, when blessed with kind and indulgent parents, which ours were. When in my twentieth year, the daughter of my mother’s sister, just then having lost her mother, and the father having died some years before, became an inmate of our house, being be-

queathed to the care of my mother. Never did nature form a more lovely creature than Francesca de Belmonte, then in her fifteenth year. With a form and face that——But why describe her? The young lady I saw with you at Paris is the living image of what my Francesca was. To behold was to love her; and soon did my heart yield up its every wish, its every hope, to her. My parents, unsuspecting of the passion with which she inspired me, were never tired of uttering commendations of Francesca, and thus fed the flame that was glowing in my breast. Never having had a daughter, the gentleness and winning sweetness of their niece delighted them; and they lavished on her every care and attention that it was in their power to bestow. My brother, too, loved Francesca; but oh! with what a different passion to mine! He felt towards her as a fond brother to a dear and only sister; for his heart had been dis-

posed of before he had seen her, to the beautiful Bianca Montéleone, to whom he was affianced.

“ It was not until a suitor, in the person of the Prince di Casa Nuova, had demanded the hand of Francesca, that I became fully conscious of the extent and violence of my passion for her. You are doubtless aware, that in Italy proposals of marriage are often made when the parties have only a slight acquaintance; and the Prince di Casa Nuova had been but a short time presented to Francesca when he formally sought to be united to her. My father, finding him in every way an unexceptionable *parti*, and, moreover, taking into consideration that Francesca had no fortune, accepted them without hesitation, never doubting that his niece, like most other young ladies of the same rank and station in life, would be willing to ratify the engagement he had entered into. The tears of Francesca re-

vealed her disinclination to the marriage; but they were attributed to the shyness and maidenly reserve peculiar to one so young, and consequently were little heeded, or, if noticed, only led to my mother advising her not to decline so advantageous a marriage; while my father never admitted that she could commit such a folly. In vain did she entreat to be permitted to remain for ever under their protection, and declare that she could not be happy away from them. Her objections were treated as childish and absurd; and preparations were commenced as if she, the person most interested in the affair, had no voice in it. It was then, when seeing her beautiful eyes filled with tears, and her cheeks pale with grief, that I wrote and opened my whole soul to Francesca; for, though in the same house, I had little chance of obtaining a private interview with her, such is the system of reserve maintained in Italy between young people,

however near their relationship. I put the letter into her hand as she retired to her chamber at night, and passed the hours in a state of suspense and agitation not to be described. What if she loved me not—if her tears at the projected union originated not in preference for me? Oh! there was a torture in the thought! But as I dwelt on the recollection of the blushes that rose to her cheek when our eyes encountered, and the pleasure that sparkled in hers when I approached, I could not doubt but that my affection was shared.

“When Francesca entered our family, she was accompanied by the nurse of her mother, who had always been retained as a confidential servant in the establishment; and had never been a day absent from her young lady. The attachment of the faithful Giuditta to the orphan amounted almost to idolatry. She had no will but hers; and a smile or a tear from the Signorina would

have made her brave the displeasure of the whole world, so utterly engrossed was she by this concentrated and devoted affection. To her faithful breast did Francesca entrust the secret of our love, and although Giuditta devoutly crossed herself as she listened to the tale, and raised her eyes and hands at the notion of the dreadful sin of such near relatives loving each other, save as brother and sister, yet, when Francesca declared that she could not live if torn from me, and that her marriage with another would be her death-warrant, the simple-hearted old woman mingled her tears with those of her young lady, and no longer ventured to oppose her wishes.

“ ‘ But the church, Holy Mother—the church!’ said Giuditta, after a pause. ‘ Without a dispensation from the Pope, never can you be the wife of your cousin; and how is that to be obtained? Think you that the Duca or Duchessa would ever apply

for it, or ever sanction a marriage which must thwart all their views for you both? They have ambitious projects for their son. Already have they determined on his wedding the rich heiress of the house of Fiorentino; a marriage to which few second sons could pretend. Old Jacopo, the intendant, told me so two months ago, and although the Signor Conte as yet knows nothing of it, the parents have arranged all.'

“ ‘What! wed with that ugly and disagreeable girl!’ exclaimed Francesca. ‘They never can be so cruel as that, and never would my Enrico consent to such a sacrifice.’

“ ‘Ay, my poor child, you little know how riches can blind the eyes of parents to those who possess them; and what can your cousin do?’

“ ‘He can fly with me,’ said Francesca, passionately, ‘to some place where we can be united, and thus avoid marriages hateful to us both.’

“ ‘ But the dispensation—ah, Poverina! the dispensation!’

“ ‘ You will drive me mad, Giuditta, that you will!’ said Francesca, bursting into a flood of tears, which so melted the good old woman that she consented to be the bearer of a letter to me, which her young lady hastily penned. Judge of my transport when I read that precious and *naïve* avowal of affection! and detected, in the indignation expressed by Francesca at the notion of my being the intended husband of the Princessa Fiorentino, those symptoms of that jealousy which are ever inseparable from true love. I pressed the billet repeatedly to my lips, and could have kissed the brown and withered hand that presented it to me, so great was the joy I experienced.

“ ‘ How can you be so happy, Signor Conte?’ said Giuditta, shaking her head, and looking reproachfully at me. ‘ See you not that this love will bring sorrow and

ruin on you both? Ah, woe is me! Never will your parents consent to your union; and the dispensation, Signor Conte, without their consent, will never be obtained.'

" 'We will fly to England, Giuditta. Francesca's uncle and mine dwells there. He will receive us as his children, and there will we be wedded.'

" 'Blessed Madonna!' and Giuditta crossed herself. " Surely you would not take my young lady to a land of heretics? O, Signor Conte, no good can come of all this. Your uncle only went to England to avoid a prison—perhaps death, for having displeased the king; but you, too, my precious child, to go among heretics! Do not, I implore you, think of it.'

" Every day did Francesca and I exchange letters through the medium of the faithful Giuditta, who, while counselling and imploring us not to be disobedient to my parents, and,

above all, not to go to the land of heretics, as she called England, enabled us, though against her will, to keep up our secret correspondence, and at length, to carry our wishes into effect.

CHAPTER X.

“ THE preparations for Francesca’s marriage with the Prince di Casa Nuova were now nearly completed, and we determined to fly. The nurse consented to accompany us, saying that she dared not trust her poor child among heretics, without being with her to guard her against their machinations. I had husbanded my pecuniary resources, and sold my two horses; and Francesca had, through the assistance of Giuditta, disposed of some of her trinkets, so that we possessed a sum adequate to defray our voyage to England; and

once there, we counted on our uncle for the rest, until a reconciliation, through his mediation, could be accomplished with my parents. I discovered that an English merchant ship was on the eve of sailing from Naples, and secured passages in it for three; silencing the scruples of the Captain by making him believe that I was a political victim, flying from a tyrannical government, to which I had rendered myself offensive by my love of freedom, and admiration for England and its laws. Francesca was to pass as my wife, Giuditta as her grandmother, and our rank in life was to be represented as not above that of the middle class—an assertion which the limited state of our finances, and the mediocrity of the accommodation agreed for, might well bear out.

“ The day previous to that fixed on for our departure, my brother, having by chance discovered that I had sold my horses, asked me the cause. To prevent suspicion, I was

compelled to utter a falsehood, and told him that having some debts, I had parted with my horses to pay them. ‘Why not have recourse to my purse, *caro fratello?*’ said he; ‘you ought to know that all I possess is at your disposal. Here is enough to buy two new horses, and to defray the expense of your *menu plaisirs* for six months to come;’ and he placed in my hand a sum larger than I had ever previously possessed. I longed to confess all to him, for his brotherly kindness melted me; but the reflection that were I so to do, he might incur blame from my parents for not having informed them of my rash intention, prevented me; therefore I only wrung his hand and thanked him.

“The next night, when all were buried in sleep, we stole from the house of my father, and found a boat waiting at the mole, which soon bore us to the merchantman. We were all three greatly agitated, and the meanness

of the accommodation prepared for us greatly shocked Giuditta.

“ ‘ Holy Mother ! ’ ” exclaimed she, ‘ who would have thought that my young lady, or you, Signor Conte, the descendant of princes, would ever be condemned to enter such a place as this. Oh ! what a terrible odour, why the very cords that fasten the sails are infected with it ! ’

“ We were obliged to beseech the good old woman to be silent, lest she should by her murmurs betray that we were not what we had represented ourselves to the Captain to be ; and soon finding that Francesca bore the privations of her narrow prison so well, Giuditta became ashamed to complain. The vessel set sail in a few minutes after we embarked, and we seated ourselves on the deck, to gaze, with tear-dimmed eyes, on the fast receding shores of our beautiful Naples.

“ I had left a letter for my brother, breathing an affectionate farewell, and entreating his

good offices with our father and mother, to mitigate their anger at the step we had taken. I did not disclose the place we were going to, but promised to inform him of it as soon as the church had joined us. I pleaded love—all-powerful love, as the excuse for Francesca and myself; and prayed for the pardon of our parents for this our first fault. I took the precaution, by dropping the letter in the post, that it should only reach its destination after we should have left the shores of Naples. When we could behold that fair city no more, I prevailed on Francesca, and her faithful nurse, who never moved from her side, to retire to their narrow and hard berths, and seek the repose of which they stood so much in need. With what feelings of joy and rapture did I welcome the next morning, conscious that Francesca was now free from the hateful marriage to which, had she remained, she would have been compelled! And when,

attended by Giuditta, she joined me on deck, attired in the plain and simple dress purchased for the voyage, I remarked with pleasure the profound admiration her beauty excited, and I felt as vain of it as if kings and princes, instead of humble English sailors, had accorded it. Nothing could exceed the attention and good nature of the Captain, and, indeed, of the whole crew. Even Giuditta was forced to admit that, for heretics, they were astonishingly good, and though she crossed herself more frequently than ever, and sometimes murmured at the unpalatable fare set before us, she was, on the whole, more reasonable than could have been expected for one so prejudiced and superstitious.

The weather continued fair during the whole passage. The days, and a great portion of the nights, were passed on deck, where the Captain had arranged some mat-

tresses, with an awning of sail-cloth, for our accommodation. How blissful was it to float over the calm and unruffled sea, blue as the sky it reflected, and seated by the object dearest to me on earth, whose dulcet accents, uttering words of love, sounded sweeter than music to my ear! What a picture did she present, as, half-reclining on the shoulder of Giuditta, her beautiful and youthful face, contrasted by the brown and wrinkled one of the aged woman, she would listen as I read the divine *Commedia* of Dante, now melting into pity over the loves of Francesca de Rimini and Paolo, or shuddering at the terrible fate of Ugolino. That poor ship, with all its discomforts and unsavoury odours, was rendered a happy place to me, by the presence of my adored Francesca, and by the unchanging sweetness of temper with which she bore the inevitable hardships to which we were exposed. Having

formerly been taught English, we now devoted two or three hours a-day to the study of that language, in which the Captain was of great use to us; and though Giuditta would turn up her eyes and hands when she heard her lady speak English, and would pronounce it to be a barbarous language, I thought it sounded sweetly when uttered by Francesca. By the time we reached Portsmouth, we were able to make ourselves intelligible in it, and to understand much of what was said.

“ At length we landed on *terra firma*, and having remained a day to refresh ourselves at Portsmouth, we set out for London, with a letter of recommendation from the Captain to a quiet hotel, where he said we might remain, at a moderate expense, until we had suited ourselves with lodgings. Having established ourselves in it, Francesca, smiling at the smallness of the rooms and the plain-

ness of the furniture, both of which Giuditta declared were abominable, and only fit for those heretics the English, I despatched a letter to our uncle, entreating him to come to us as soon as possible. Although we both fully expected to be severely reprov'd by him for the step we had taken, we nevertheless longed impatiently to embrace him; for the sense of loneliness experienced in a vast and crowded city, where we knew not a single person beside him, rendered us somewhat *triste*. Imagine, then, our disappointment, when the messenger who took my letter brought it back, with the intelligence that the *marchese* had quitted London for Paris, a week before, and was not expected to return. Francesca's spirits drooped, for the first time since we left home, at this news; and Giuditta declared that it was a judgment on us for our sin, in flying in the face of my parents. I soon soothed my be-

loved into her usual sweet and winning cheerfulness, and the next morning, accompanied by the master of the hotel, who offered to conduct me, I went to the Neapolitan embassy, to demand counsel and assistance for immediately having the nuptial ceremony performed.

CHAPTER XI.

“THE Minister had been absent from Naples some years, having filled a mission at Vienna previously; consequently there was little risk of his recognising me, and I determined to sink my title, lest, being known, he might oppose some scruple to forwarding my marriage. In the whole embassy there was not a single person to whom Francesca or I were known, and this gave me courage as I entered its portals. The Secretary whom I saw inquired, if the young Signora or I had no parents to act for us on

this occasion, and looked somewhat suspicious when I told him that we had only a grandmother of the lady's. He was disposed to postpone the marriage for some days, but at length yielded to my entreaties, and named the day after the following one for its celebration. During our brief interview, he examined me with evident curiosity, but I affected such a rustic bearing and manner, that his suspicions, if he really entertained any, subsided, and I left the embassy reassured.

“ I found Francesca blooming and gay, and highly pleased with a bouquet of flowers which I had brought her. They were the first we had seen since we had left the Palazzo Valentinois; and although far less odorous than our Neapolitan ones, were nevertheless welcome. Giuditta glanced contemptuously at them, and said, ‘ What poor, chilly-looking things! They seem as if stunted in their growth, and as if the sun had never shone

on them. Oh! Signora, what a cheerless land this is! No wonder its inhabitants are heretics, for there is no sunshine to warm them into devotion, and no images of the blessed Madonna or saints to remind them of heaven. Even the moon here, as I observed last night, is wholly different from our bright and silvery moon at Naples. Here it seems ashamed to shew its face, and looks like lead instead of silver. *Anima mia!* and she burst into tears as she embraced Francesca, ‘when shall we return to our own land? We shall pine and die here without the sun, and without even an image of the Madonna to kiss before we draw our last breath.’

“How I counted the hours, until that arrived which was to bless me with the hand of Francesca! We entered a large, rumbling, and not over-clean coach, which drew forth many comparisons and animadversions on the part of Giuditta.

“ ‘ What a country !’ exclaimed she, elevating her nether lip and chin contemptuously. ‘ Not a bit of gilding to be seen; not a morsel of macaroni to be had that is eatable; not a drop of wine, except that fiery stuff that burns the throat. *Oh! Madonna mia!* Let me but once more find myself in sunny *Napoli*, and never more will I leave its happy shore !’

“ We had to warn Giuditta repeatedly not to betray that she was not the grandmother of the bride.

“ ‘ Such an invention may pass with the foolish heretics,’ said she, ‘ but think you our countrymen can be imposed upon? As well may you pretend that kites breed doves, as that I should be the grandmother of the Signora; but I will not deny it, although I shall despise our countrymen if they believe it.’

“ I dreaded, up to the last moment, that some obstacle to our union would arise.

The noble air of Francesca, which her humble attire could not conceal, made me tremble lest it should create a doubt of our station in life; but her timidity and bashfulness on the occasion assisted more than her disguise in imposing on our countrymen. Our names drew attention, and the Secretaries looked at us more narrowly; but we appeared, although we did not feel, unembarrassed. The ceremony was performed at the Embassy; and an Italian priest, in our own beautiful language, pronounced the nuptial benediction,—much to the satisfaction of Giuditta, who declared that she could not consider us as really wedded were the rites uttered in any other.

“ We returned to our hotel, after taking especial care to be furnished with certificates of our marriage. That was a blissful day, although passed in a dark and dingy chamber, destitute not only of all the splendour to which from infancy we had both

been habituated, but even of the elegancies and comforts to which foreigners in a much more humble station than ours are accustomed. We felt not their absence. All in all to each other, we only were alive to the joy of being indissolubly united, and the happy consciousness that henceforth no one could divide us. Even on Giuditta, some portion of our happiness was reflected; although she more than once reproached us that we could be so happy in such a sunless land, and in such a wretched abode. But now that, in the sight of God and man, we were husband and wife, the one great point of her anxiety having been removed, she was less fretful.

“ I pass over the first blissful days of our union; for what description could paint our happiness? Our thoughts and feelings wholly concentrated in each other, the absence of all interruption from friends or acquaintances we considered an additional

blessing. When able to think of sublunary affairs,—for during a week we had lived in a bright world created by our passionate love,—we wrote a joint letter to our parents, apprising them of our marriage, and imploring their blessing on it, and pardon for the means we had adopted to carry it into effect. This letter I put into the post myself, and anxiously did we calculate the days it would take to arrive, and those which must elapse before we could receive the wished for answer. Knowing the affection of our parents, we entertained but little doubt of their forgiveness, now that the step we had taken was irrevocable; consequently, until a week after the time at which a letter from them could have arrived, our happiness was unbroken by any care for the future.

“ In the full confidence of being speedily recalled to Naples, we had not thought of leaving the hotel in which we had at first

taken up our abode, for private lodgings. The discomfort and confined scale of the house, so wholly different to all that we had been hitherto accustomed, had led us to form a conclusion that the expenses would be in proportion to the mediocrity of the accommodation; and, unskilled in such affairs, we had omitted to ask for our bill. My ignorance also led me to command only such food and wine as we were habituated to in our own country. But our supplies were so moderate, as frequently to draw from Giuditta the remark, that any of the servants in my father's palace would be very much dissatisfied with the quantity and quality of the ill-cooked viands served at our table; and the sour wines resembling in nothing but the names the product of Italy. Consequently I started in dismay, when the account of seven weeks (uncalled for) was laid on my table, with a pressing request for immediate payment.

This circumstance ten days before would have caused me but comparatively little uneasiness; for, aware of the wealth of our parents, and undoubting their liberality, I counted on receiving funds sufficient to defray every expense in England, and to provide for our return home in a style befitting our station. But now, when ten days over the time calculated for the arrival of their letter had elapsed without any tidings from them, I remembered with terror that the whole of the funds in our possession would be barely sufficient to pay the long and extravagant bill before me, leaving us penniless in a strange land.

CHAPTER XII.

“ How painful, how humiliating, is the first rude pressure of pecuniary embarrassment! I felt its grasp crushing my energies and chilling my life’s blood, as I recollected that I was far, far away from my home and those who could succour me; and that in the vast and densely crowded city, of which I was now an inhabitant, I possessed not a single friend or acquaintance to whom I could apply for even a temporary assistance. Eight short and fleeting weeks before, I had rejoiced in the freedom from in-

terruption to our bridal days, originating in our not having an acquaintance in London; and now, gladly would I have hailed the presence of one,—ay, or of many,—to inspire me with confidence, that, in an extremity like that which I trembled in the anticipation of, I could count on some friend to reach out a hand to save the object dearer to me than life, from the stings of poverty.

“ I paid the bill, and ventured some expostulations on the exorbitance of the charges it contained, when the master of the hotel, with an unblushing face, assured me that nothing could be more moderate; adding, that the foreign dishes and wines which I commanded, were, in consequence of freight and heavy duties, so expensive, that even at the prices he had charged he should be a very heavy loser by having furnished them. To reason with him I saw would be perfectly useless; for as well might one

attempt to snatch from a hungry lion its prey, as to induce this rapacious man to abate one of the extortionate charges he had made. What was to be done? To remain where we were, was to expose ourselves to fresh imposition; yet to seek a lodging now that our money was all gone, was not to be thought of. Having paid so large a sum to the master of the hotel would insure us a credit for some weeks more; and *hope*, all that was now left, whispered—though, alas! but in a feeble voice—that in three weeks, succour from Naples would, nay must, arrive. Our parents, my brother, too, could not, however great their displeasure might be, leave us to suffer all the ignominious outrages to which poverty exposes its victims. No, they would relent; and we should soon receive funds to meet our wants. Nevertheless, I experienced a sense of degradation as, while conscious that my purse was empty, I continued to incur

expenses, which, though limited almost to parsimony, were inevitable, being only for the strict necessities of life. I never saw my landlord without trembling lest he should present his bill; and as our orders for our repasts became more economical, his civility decreased in a proportionate ratio. I was afraid to complain of the badness of the fare served to us, or the extreme negligence of the attendants, lest it might lead to his urging us for payment, or requesting us to leave his apartments free for those whose expenditure might allow a wider field for the extortion he loved to practice. Oh! the horror and deep loathing to a generous spirit and upright mind, to find oneself in the power of some sordid and ignoble being, and of trembling lest those most loved, most honoured, should be made to feel the effects of such a state of thralldom!

“ Francesca bore the privations to which my sense of probity and prudence induced

me, though most unwillingly, to expose her, without a single murmur; although I had not, I could not, have brought myself to explain to her that they were the consequences of hard necessity. To Giuditta I was less reserved, and it was necessary that I should be; for she, attributing the scantiness and inferior quality of our repasts to the wilful imposition of our landlord, of whom she entertained the worst opinion, was so desirous to reproach him, and to insist on our having what she called our rights for our money, that nothing short of her being made acquainted with my exact position could restrain her from an angry contest with him.

“ When she had heard my statement, she groaned aloud, and exclaimed, ‘*Oh! Madonna mia!* and is it come to this? Are the descendants of the purest and best blood in Italy to owe to a base-born rogue and heretic the bread to sustain life? This

comes of disobedience and the terrible sin of cousins marrying without a dispensation from the Pope. Woe is me! I always thought some terrible evil would befall us, and now it has arrived. And the Contessina, she that has been nurtured with such care,—the most dainty *beccafichi* and most delicate chickens furnishing her dinner,—to be now condemned to partake of stale macaroni dressed with bad milk or rancid broth, washed down with sour stuff, falsely called wine, mixed with uniced water, that not one of our poor *lazaroni* at Naples would condescend to moisten his lip with!

“How did the words of the poor old woman wound me! Their truth I could not deny; and although I had often and often made the same reflections that she had just uttered, they never struck me so forcibly as when coming from her lips. It was no wonder that my adored Francesca was changed; and I shuddered as I recol-

lected how frequently of late I had noticed the languor of her eyes, and the paleness of her cheek. Yes, it was plain the badness of the food, joined to the ungenial climate, were undermining her constitution, and I, I, was the cause of all this; for I had brought her from affluence and Italy to starvation and murky England! And was our dream of love thus to end? Was the gaunt monster, Want, to crush hearts glowing with such fondness as ours, and to waste frames still unscathed by Time, ere yet the torch of Hymen burned one shade less brilliantly than on the happy day that our hands were joined?

“ While these sad reflections were passing through my mind, Giuditta, who had left the chamber, returned. She approached me, after having carefully closed the door, and drawing forth a purse, said, ‘ Here, Signor, here is the fruit of many years labour. Take it, I beseech you; nay, (seeing that I put it

aside,) you must not refuse me. I had always intended to bequeath it to my young mistress at my death; then why not accept it for her use now? Pay the bad man of this house, and let us retire to a lodging where you will be less cheated, and cannot be more uncomfortable than here. I can cook many little dainties that the Contessina likes. I offered the extortionate host here to do so often and often, when I saw the wretched attempts made in his kitchen to dress some of our Neapolitan dishes. But he would not consent to it, and had the impudence to laugh in my face when I told him that at Naples we never dressed macaroni with blue milk, tainted butter, and cheese that one could smell at half a mile distance. He is an impudent fellow; and wanted me to tell him what fortune you had. Yes, your poor Giuditta can turn her hand to many things, and we shall all be the happier for leaving the house of this base

fellow, who, wicked sinner as he is, mocked me when he saw me kiss this image of my blessed Madonna!—and she drew it from her breast, and pressed it devoutly to her lips. ‘Yes, I repeat it, Signor Conte, we shall be safer when we are out of the house of this heretic.’

“I took the purse from Giuditta, and found its contents to be more than I had anticipated. This, thought I, will keep the wolf from the door much longer than I had dared to anticipate, and I will adopt the advice of its simple but worthy lender.

“I was entering the little *salon* where I had left Francesca, when I encountered at its door the master of the hotel, with a stern aspect, and a long roll of paper in his hand, so exactly resembling the one he had presented to me eight weeks before, that I instantly guessed what it was.

“‘I hope, sir,’ said he, ‘that you will not find it inconvenient to pay me the

amount of my bill to-day. I have allowed it to run on for eight weeks—a very unusual thing, sir, with hotel-keepers, who always expect to be paid every week, or at least every month. But thinking it might be an accommodation to you, sir, I have not hitherto pressed for the money, but being this day compelled to make up a large sum to meet a bill that falls due, I must request immediate payment. And I must also beg, sir, that you will seek apartments elsewhere; for I have let them to a gentleman and lady of fortune, who require immediate possession of them.'

“ I made no reply, for the insolence of the tone and manner of this base man so much irritated me that I did not dare to trust myself to express my sense of them, lest I should be provoked beyond my powers of forbearance, and so lead to a scene that must distress my poor Francesca. I looked at the total amount of the last

page, and noticed with surprise and disgust that the diminution in our repasts during the last eight weeks, submitted to from motives of economy, had not led to the least decrease in his charges. The amount was the same as that of the former bill. Knowing it was unavailing to remonstrate, I asked him to accompany me to a banker's, where I changed the Italian gold of Giuditta for English coin, — much to the dissatisfaction of mine host, who had on the former payment grossly imposed on my ignorance of the rate of exchange between the two countries, and profited considerably at my expense. When he received the full amount of his bill, his tone altered considerably. He told me, that if at all inconvenient to me, there was no necessity for our leaving his house. Nay, he went so far as to say, that he would give us the preference over the gentleman and lady of fortune, whom he had asserted had taken the

rooms we occupied, or indeed over any other person; a statement I could easily believe, as no others would be satisfied to pay one half so much for the wretched rooms and fare provided for us as we had done. But I coldly declined his offers, and immediately went in search of lodgings. Many were those which I entered before I could discover any to suit me. Those that pleased me were beyond the reach of my finances; and those that accorded with my means were so confined and dingy, that I turned from them with a disgust I found it difficult to conceal. But what struck me with surprise was, that each of the owners of these wretched abodes proclaimed her own to be all that could be desired in a residence, and was disposed to treat me with incivility when I declined engaging her rooms. I often heard the phrase of, 'Trumpery foreigner!' and 'Beggarly Frenchman!' muttered as I retreated, and the doors were

slammed after me with a violence that denoted the angry feelings I had excited. At length I left the confined streets through which I had wandered, and sought a more airy situation, in an outlet at the end of Oxford-street, one of the great lungs of the west end of the town, through which a little pure air is inhaled. Bayswater is the name of the place to which I refer. It runs parallel with the north side of Hyde Park, of which the houses command an extensive view. I saw bills in the windows of several of the houses, and having selected that which looked the cleanest, I knocked, and was admitted by the owner, a young woman attired in a widow's dress. The apartments, though small and poorly furnished, were clean; and the woman, unlike the others, abstained from uttering any commendations of her house. What she did say, however, impressed me highly in its favour; for it consisted of one self-evident

fact, that the house was very airy and quiet, she being the only inmate. I at once engaged the rooms, and when asked for a reference,—an awkward request to a person who had not a single friend or acquaintance in England,—I answered, that being a stranger, I proposed paying a month's rent in advance, a proposition that was perfectly satisfactory to the widow, and I returned to the hotel to prepare for moving into our new abode. Francesca was pleased with my arrangement, and Giuditta delighted to leave our heretic landlord. I conveyed them in a coach to Bayswater, and installed them in our humble but clean abode; where, with the assistance of the mistress of it, Giuditta prepared a light repast, of which we partook with more cheerfulness than had marked our late ones at the hotel.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ ON rising next morning, Francesca called me to admire the fine prospect from our window. Immured as she had been for nearly four months in our dark and gloomy chambers in the hotel, the sight of green trees and grass was welcome to her, and she was as delighted as a child at looking forth on them. Soon after breakfast, much more comfortably served by our good Giuditta than we had lately been, Francesca, turning pale as marble, uttered a faint ejaculation, and swooned away. For a few minutes I believed her to be dead, and my frantic

agony was indescribable, but when a heavy sigh heaved her breast, and a pale tinge of red coloured her cheeks, my joy was as wild as my despair had previously been. Never shall I forget the first glance she turned on me, as her eyes opened, or the smile which played over her beautiful lips, as she hid her face in my bosom. ‘ Enrico, bless your Francesca,’ whispered she, ‘ for she has now the hope that she will soon render you a father! I have long believed that this would be,’ continued she, ‘ for I have of late been ill, very ill, but now no doubt remains, and O, my Enrico, think of the blessing of having a dear infant to love and cherish!’ That day was one of happiness. Yes, even in a mean lodging, and exiles in a foreign land, without the means of supporting existence for more than a few weeks, and without a friend or acquaintance in England, we enjoyed, such is the power of affection, a happiness in the thought of having a

little being to perpetuate our love, often denied to those on whom wealth and splendour have poured all their treasures. Giuditta, too, partook the happiness we enjoyed, and was never tired of talking of the coming stranger, and though she sometimes referred to the misfortune, as she called it, of its being born in a land of heretics, and of our not being able to make those preparations for its arrival, which, had we been at Naples, would not be stinted, she nevertheless looked on the coming event as a very desirable one, and redoubled her care and attention to Francesca. At an early hour in the morning, Giuditta, accompanied by our landlady, would go to market for the wants of the day, and such was her economy and skill in arranging our repasts, that we soon found, that with one-half the sum we had expended at the wretched hotel, enduring all the privations its rapacious host imposed on us, we might have lived in our

present lodgings for a year, with infinitely more comfort.

“ Day after day, and week after week. passed away, and still no letter from Naples reached us. Had our parents, then, wholly renounced us? And my brother, too, that good, kind brother, surely he would not abandon us; but yet, how account for his silence? The spring passed away, and summer had now made its presence felt, less by the genial heat peculiar to that season, at least in other climates, than by the dusty trees, and parched grass, on which it was no longer a pleasure to look, and still we remained without tidings from our family. Oh! the heart-sickening misery of hope deferred!—of awaking in the morning with a sentiment too weak, it is true, to be called expectation, yet, without which, under the pressure of impending evil, despair must ensue; and of seeing night close in, bringing with it only disappointment, the bitterness

of which proved that we had still been cheated by hope.

“ And now, notwithstanding we had exercised the utmost economy, the fund provided by the poor Giuditta drew to a close. How did my heart shrink as I watched its diminution! Never did miser so eye his gold as I did when coin after coin vanished, and when I saw the lovely face of my Francesca become daily more pale and attenuated. The dread of her requiring those delicacies and that medical aid I no longer possessed the means of providing for her, tortured my feelings almost beyond my power of endurance. And this fair creature, about to become a mother, without any of the comforts—nay, more, without many of the necessaries requisite for a delicate woman in her position, might now have been surrounded with all that wealth could bestow, and splendour furnish, had I not madly, selfishly encouraged her affection for me, and fled with her

to a foreign land, far away from the friends who would have cherished her. When brilliant equipages, filled with gaily-dressed ladies, were whirled through the Park, enjoying the fresh air, for which Francesca, now unable to walk, languished, I would turn from them with angry emotions, uttering imprecations on my own head for having entailed poverty, with all its harassing privations, on her. Nurtured in luxury, and never having a wish ungratified, her angelic patience under our misfortunes only served to render me more wretched on her account. When passing through the Park, I encountered nurses, bearing in their arms beautiful children, whose fair and dimpled faces peeped forth from the delicate lace borders that half shrouded them, and whose snowy, embroidered robes, and rich cloaks, denoted the wealth, no less than the taste, of their fond mothers, my heart used to ache as I reflected how stunted and ordinary were the habili-

ments provided for our coming babe, who was to open its eyes in a scene of poverty, wherein its father trembled at the approach of even still greater want than any already sustained—of positive starvation! Giuditta and I had carefully concealed the extent of my poverty from my wife, and when, day by day, we diminished some portion of our already scanty fare, we led her to believe that prudence, and not necessity, instigated the measure, as I wished to husband my resources until we could hear from home. Her inexperience in all pecuniary matters, rendered her credulous on this point, and she submitted to the privations imposed on her without a murmur. And now I had parted with my last piece of gold, and only a few shillings remained of it. Francesca possessed some few trinkets; but these were of trifling value, those which had descended to her from her mother being left in the custody of mine, until she was to marry. To dis-

pose of these ornaments, would be to let her into the secret of our extreme poverty, hitherto so well guarded, so that was a measure not to be thought of. To sell my gold repeater was the next project that occurred to me, but then came the reflection, that Francesca, from having no *pendule* in her room, frequently inquired the hour, and would consequently soon remark the absence of the watch. While I was deliberating by what means money could be raised, Giuditta beckoned to me, and when we had reached the small chamber appropriated to her use, of which, to prevent interruption, she carefully locked the door; she drew from her pocket five guineas, and placed them in my hand.

“ ‘ Take them, Signor Conte,’ said she, observing that I hesitated; ‘ take them.’ ”

“ ‘ How—where have you obtained them, Giuditta?’ ”

“ ‘ Is it not enough, Signor Conte, that

they will keep the wolf from the door for some days, without your troubling yourself any further about them?’

“ ‘No, Giuditta, I insist on knowing. You have not, surely, revealed our poverty at the Neapolitan embassy?’

“ ‘*Madonna mia!* how could you suspect me of doing such a thing? No, Signor Conte, Giuditta would not ask charity for herself, humble as she is; judge, then, if she could demean her noble master and mistress, by soliciting it for them. If you must know, then, how I acquired this gold, and I hoped you would not inquire, I sold for it my earrings, chain, cross, and medallion, with the effigy of the Santissima Madre.’

“ ‘What! those gifts of my deceased mother-in-law, so much prized by you! That cross and medallion with which you offered up your prayers?’

“ ‘Si, Signor Conte, and though it cost me a pang to leave them in the hands of a

heretic, Heaven pardon me if I have, by so doing, committed a sin; right glad was I to be able to procure a little money against the hour of trial of the Signora Contessa, who, as well as the *bambino*, will stand in need of many little things.'

“ ‘ And did your heavy ornaments produce no more than this paltry sum, my good Giuditta?’ demanded I, being well aware that they were worth at least six times that amount.

“ ‘ *Tutti, tutti*, Signor Conte,’ replied the worthy nurse, ‘and would you believe it, the hard-hearted man made a favour of giving me so much. He declared Italian gold was much less pure than English—the *birbone*, as if anything in this sunless land could be as good as in our bright one. But what vexed me more than all, he scoffed at our Neapolitan workmanship, and tossed the sacred cross and the effigy of Nostra Santissima Madonna into his unclean scales,

with no more reverence than if they were mere common coin. But let us not think of these vexatious things, Signor Conte, we have the gold, and small as the sum is, it will enable us to make a little better preparation for *nostro carissimo bambino* and *la cara Contessa.*'

" Deeply touched by the devoted attachment of this faithful creature, I attempted to express my sense of it, but she instantly interrupted me, and endeavoured to make light of the service she had rendered. ' And poor Giuditta,' thought I, ' could part from her ornaments, and the symbols of her religion too, so dear and sacred in her eyes, while I have hesitated to dispose of objects of little use. I will instantly go and sell a diamond pin and an emerald ring.' Both these gifts of my mother were of considerable value, so I calculated on receiving a sum for them that might enable me to increase the comforts of my dear Francesca, in her

approaching trial, which was now daily expected. I walked out, and looked into several jewellers' shops, before I could summon resolution enough to enter any of them. Hitherto, I had never sought such shops, except to buy, when glittering jewels were exposed to tempt me, and the sellers exhibited that respectful deference to the high-born, peculiar to all of their trade in every country. Now I was conscious of entering a jeweller's, under altered circumstances, and for a different purpose, and this consciousness gave to my manner an embarrassment and shyness I could not shake off. The shopkeeper, I suppose, observed this, for as I entered, he eyed me narrowly, and my foreign accent and broken English only seemed to increase his suspicious scrutiny of me. For a few minutes I had not courage to make known the real purpose of my visit, but affected to examine some trifling articles. At length, I drew forth the ring,

and asked the jeweller if he was disposed to purchase it.

“ ‘ I must first be sure it is a real stone,’ said he, ‘ for you foreigners make such good imitations, that one must be careful before buying from you.’

“ I felt my blood boil at this insinuation, and all the *fiercé* of the Valentinois was aroused in me. Nevertheless, I controlled all demonstrations of it, and merely replied, ‘ The emerald is a genuine and a fine one.’

“ ‘ Yes, I now see it is real,’ answered the jeweller; ‘ but the stone is by no means a remarkable one. The green is not so bright as it should be, and towards the edge of the stone it is less deep in colour. There is also a flaw in it.’

“ ‘ Where?’ demanded I, certain that his assertion was incorrect.

“ ‘ Towards the left side.’

“ I took the magnifying glass through which he had examined it, but even with

its aid I could discover no flaw, which I told him.

“ ‘Your eye is perhaps not so exercised as mine,’ observed he, coolly; ‘but buyers are always quicker at discovering flaws than are sellers.’

“ ‘I maintain that the emerald has no flaw,’ said I, somewhat haughtily. ‘What are you disposed to give for it?’

“ ‘Why, not much,’ answered he. ‘If it had been a diamond, a ruby, or a sapphire, I could have made you a good offer; but emeralds are out of fashion, there is no demand for them, so I can’t bid you more than fifteen pounds.’

“ ‘Fifteen pounds!’ repeated I. ‘Surely you must have made a mistake. The stone is worth at least eighty guineas!’

“ ‘So the man who sold it to you, may have asserted,’ observed he, ‘because, seeing you are a young man, he thought you knew no better, but I would not give fifteen

pounds ten shillings for it, I can tell you, so if you are not disposed to take my offer, there is an end of it.'

" I walked out of the shop, angrily, and entered another, determined this time to inquire the value of the ring, before I again offered it for sale, imagining that there might be some unaccountable difference in the price of emeralds in England and Naples. Having entered the next jeweller's, I drew forth my ring, and asked the man its worth.

" 'Do you want to sell it?' demanded he, while examining it.

" 'No,' replied I.

" 'It is a fine stone,' said he, 'and worth about seventy-five or eighty pounds, but you will not get near that sum for it, I can tell you.'

" It would be endless to recount the numerous shops at which I tried to sell my emerald, and the affronts to which I was exposed from each of the persons to whom

I offered it for sale. All decried it, discovering flaws where none existed, and some insinuated their suspicions of its not having been honestly come by, my being a foreigner evidently furnishing them with ground for believing that it might be stolen. How hard did I find it to submit to such insults! and how did I now learn to feel for the poverty which lays the unfortunate open to them.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ PREVIOUS to leaving my country, I had seen only the bright side of life. Every object I beheld was decked in the prismatic hues with which youth, fortune, and station, invested them; but now, each assumed the sombre cast which the stern monitor, poverty, throws over all it touches. And, perhaps, the most difficult to be borne of all the bitter trials to which it condemns its victims, is the contumely of that class to the respect of which they had hitherto been accustomed.

“ The sale of the emerald ring and diamond pin, though parted with for a quarter of their value, enabled me to provide many comforts for my poor Francesca ; and when she gave birth to a female infant, our humble lodging had assumed an air of neatness if not of elegance, and everything necessary for her and the dear baby was ready. The joy of the young mother when she beheld her child is not to be described. Every trial, every care, was forgotten ; and as she pressed it to her heart, bending her beautiful face over its tiny one, I was reminded of a half-blown rose reclining over one of the delicate buds on the same stem. Never shall I forget her look of love and delight as she held her babe up to me, and appealed to my judgment whether so beautiful a child had ever been seen? Nay, so proud was she of the little creature, that she was disposed to resent the assertion of the good old Giuditta, that it exactly re-

sembled its mother at the same age, Francesca maintaining that *she* never could have been half so lovely as her child. The infant was a small and delicate one, requiring more than usual care. Its mother attempted to nurse it herself, but after some days it became evident that her own health was not equal to the effort, as well as that the child suffered from the delicacy of its nurse. A substitute was therefore to be sought, and was soon found; but all the trials to which my poor Francesca had hitherto been exposed were light in comparison to that which awaited her, when she beheld her infant for the first time drawing its sustenance from a strange source. It required all my reasoning to reconcile her to the renunciation of this the sweetest of her maternal duties; and it was only the conviction that the well-being of the child depended on it, that induced her to acquiesce. 'Ah! Signor Conte,' would Giuditta exclaim,

as she looked on the infant greedily imbibing the milk of its nurse, 'what a painful sight it is to see our *bambina* indebted to a heretic for its sustenance. *Madre mia!* it is to be hoped that with the milk, *nostra carissima* will not imbibe the heresy of her nurse.' From the first, my wife disliked the woman engaged to nurse our child; but this I attributed to the natural jealousy she felt towards the person who had taken her place. Giuditta, too, entertained a strong antipathy against the nurse, but as, with the ignorance and prejudice peculiar to her class and country, she disliked all who professed not the same religion as herself, I refused to adopt her hatred, and often tried to vindicate the object of it. The nurse, having discovered that she was no favourite either with the mistress or Giuditta, often evinced symptoms of ill-temper and waywardness that increased the dislike of her lady, and drew down on her the anger of

Giuditta, who made her sensible of her displeasure by animated gestures, expressive of the anger which her ignorance of the English language precluded her from otherwise demonstrating. The nurse was in the habit, on fine days,—and they, Heaven knows! in England, are but few and far between,—of taking out the child into the Park to enjoy the air. On such occasions my wife would charge her to walk only in that part of it which fronted our dwelling, and would sit in the window with her eyes rivetted on the baby all the time the nurse paraded her up and down. Giuditta observed that the nurse was greatly displeased at what she considered a want of confidence in her, and at my request Francesca became less watchful. The truth is, I feared that, by giving any pretext for ill-humour to the nurse, our child might suffer in its health; the physician who had recommended her having told me such was often the case

with nurses. One day our treasure was, as usual, carried forth into the Park. When the time at which she was in the habit of being brought home arrived, my wife became uneasy. She looked from her window, but in vain—no nurse was to be seen; and I, observing her alarm, seized my hat and went in search of her. I flew rather than ran in the direction in which we had last seen the nurse and child. I inquired of every individual I met, whether he or she had encountered them, and was assured that so many nurses and children answering the description I had given had been met, that it would be impossible to decide which was the precise one of which I was in search. I felt that I dared not return home, or present myself before Francesca without tidings of her child, so, half distracted, I continued to run in the direction which I imagined the nurse might have taken, until nearly overpowered with fatigue,

when I saw a man rush across my path, pursued by a crowd, who uttered cries the sense of which I did not understand; and this individual having for a minute or two ran by my side, soon left me, exhausted and panting, far behind, scarcely able to move along. The pursuing crowd now came up with me; some of them rudely seized me by the arms, and while they held me, assailed me with every epithet that could most insult; among which, 'Pickpocket' and 'Thief' were the most often repeated. 'Throw him into the Serpentine!' cried one; 'He is an old offender!' exclaimed another; 'I have had my eye a long time on him!' said a third; and 'I have noticed him prowling about day after day, looking into gentlemen's pockets!' asserted a fourth. I now began to comprehend my position. It was clear that I was mistaken for the man whom I had seen running away, and who had perpetrated the theft of which

I stood accused. I attempted to explain this; but the moment my foreign accent had revealed that I was a stranger, hisses and groans assailed me. 'Beggarly Frenchman!' 'Rascally pickpocket!' were the words echoed around, and three or four of the police, who now arrived, had some difficulty in rescuing me from the hands of the violent men who had seized me, and of preventing them from taking summary justice on the imagined thief. I was marched off to the police office, where, when questioned, my tale was received as an aggravation of my crime, the questioner declaring that I must be the most impudent fellow in the world to invent such a fable, and to suppose that any one would be fool enough to believe it. My pockets were searched, my watch and purse were taken from me, and being considered as presumptive proofs of guilt, I was incarcerated. In vain did I entreat permission to send a letter to my wife, whose

state of mind I but too well could picture to myself; for even should the nurse have returned home with our child,—and I dare not trust myself to doubt it,—what would be my Francesca's agony and terror at my unaccountable disappearance!

“ That was a dreadful evening and night; and even now I cannot revert to it without horror! I heard nothing but blasphemy and obscene ribaldry around me, as prisoner after prisoner was brought into that den of crime. I was mocked and insulted by the wicked wretches who shared my prison, for not all the reprimands and menaces of the constables could compel them to be silent. At length morning dawned, and again commenced the disgusting and terrible language of the malefactors, who, accustomed to a prison, had slept profoundly in it. At ten o'clock, I was taken before a magistrate, having to walk side by side with the thieves who had shared my prison.

Oh! the degradation of such companionship! I drew my hat over my eyes for concealment, forgetful that I was known to so few that I stood little chance of being recognised. The charge against me was read over, and so totally different was it from the real state of the affair, that I was stupefied when I heard it.

“ ‘ What defence have you to make, prisoner? and what cause have you to shew why you should not be committed to take your trial?’ demanded the magistrate.

“ I was about to reply, and to state the facts as plainly as I could, when he, to my utter surprise, warned me not to say any thing that could militate against me on my trial. I had always previously believed that the duty of magistrates was to elicit the truth and dispense justice. But now it was him who was there to judge of my innocence or guilt who counselled me to silence.

“ ‘ I will, I must speak the truth ! ’ said I.

“ ‘ Take care that you say nothing to criminate yourself, ’ replied the sapient magistrate.

“ I was, however, not to be deterred by his advice from stating the case ; and when I had so done, I was asked whether I could call on any one for a character.

“ When I answered that I was a stranger in London, and had no friends or acquaintances, the magistrate shook his head, as if to signify that such an avowal was alone tantamount to an admission of guilt.

“ ‘ A foreigner in London, with no friend or acquaintance ! That, I must confess, looks suspicious, ’ said he. ‘ Remember, prisoner, I warned you not to criminate yourself. And what brought you to England, pray ? ’

“ ‘ I came to see an uncle. ’

“ ‘ And where is this said uncle ? ’

“ ‘ When I arrived, I had the misfortune to find that he had left England. ’

“ ‘Humph!’ said the magistrate, drawing a long breath; ‘this looks very suspicious. And finding your uncle, whom you came to see, absent, why did you, without friends or acquaintances to tempt a prolongation of your stay, remain in England?’

“ ‘I had written to my friends in Italy, and waited to receive answers to my letters.’

“ ‘Why not write to France? You are a Frenchman, are you not?’

“ ‘No, I am an Italian.’

“ ‘Are you sure that you are not a Frenchman? Mind what you say. Don’t criminate yourself!’

“ I repeated the asseveration.

“ ‘Why, you reported the prisoner to be a Frenchman,’ said the magistrate to a constable.

“ ‘Vy, your vorship, I took him to be a Frenchman; and so I now think as how he is, for all he denies it. But all them there

foreigners are just the same as this here chap; they'll swear to hanything, your vorship!

“ ‘ And you know no one in London to whom you can refer for a character?’ once more demanded the magistrate.

“ Before I could repeat my former statement, another constable came up, and told the magistrate that Mr. Hemingsworth, who was in the office waiting for the examination of another prisoner, against whom he was to appear, had identified me, and was ready to give evidence against me. My utter astonishment at this statement may easily be imagined; nor when in Mr. Hemingsworth I recognised the jeweller to whom I had sold my diamond pin and emerald ring, did it abate; for what evidence he could offer to my prejudice I could not divine.

“ ‘ You know the prisoner, Mr. Hemingsworth?’ demanded the magistrate. ”

“ ‘ Yes, your worship. Some time ago,

he came to my shop to dispose of a diamond pin and an emerald ring, both of which appeared to me too good to have belonged to this person; that is to say, to have been honestly acquired.'

“ ‘ So you did not buy them,’ said the magistrate.

“ ‘ Why, your worship, he took me unawares, and before I had time for reflection, so I bought them; but when he had left my shop, I began to think that they had not been honestly come by, and I regretted having bought them.’

“ ‘ Of course, then, you have not disposed of them?’ said the magistrate.

“ ‘ I am sorry to say I have, sir; for the examination I came here to attend is precisely about the diamond pin I bought from this person.’

“ ‘ You were wrong, in the first instance, in buying articles that you suspected to be stolen; and having bought them, you were

wrong in disposing of them, when you entertained such a suspicion.'

" 'Your worship is quite right, it was indeed a great oversight on my part. I don't know how I came to commit such an error.'

" 'Then you know nothing more of this prisoner than that he sold you the articles, too valuable, in your belief, to have come honestly into his possession?'

" 'That is all, your worship; except that on the back of the ring a coronet was engraved.'

" 'His having sold valuable trinkets, and one with a coronet too, certainly adds to the suspicions against him. I must now,' said the magistrate, 'commit you to take your trial, prisoner; a measure to which I should not have had recourse, if you had any respectable person who would give security for your appearance.'

CHAPTER XV.

“ THE notion of being kept from my poor Francesca at a crisis when she most needed my presence, and of being unable to search for our dear child, operated much more on me than all the terrors of a prison, notwithstanding that the specimen I had had of one the night before had disgusted and revolted me. I therefore instantly resolved to have recourse to a measure in this emergency which no other would have induced me to adopt. I entreated the magistrate to permit me to write a few

lines to the Neapolitan Embassy; some one of the *attachés*, if not the Minister himself, would, I felt persuaded, on the receipt of it, immediately come and answer for me.'

“ ‘ Young man,’ said the magistrate, gravely, ‘ let me caution you against trifling with justice. It was only a few minutes ago that you declared that you had no friend or acquaintance in London, nay, in England; yet now you propose to address yourself to the Neapolitan Embassy, and with apparent confidence allege that some one of the *attachés*,—which I suppose means secretaries, or even the Minister himself, will come to you. This looks suspicious, and you must explain the inconsistency before I dispatch a messenger with your letter, or even permit you to write one.’ ”

“ ‘ When I told you, sir, that I knew no one in London, I only repeated the truth; but the Minister and his *attachés* will soon

recognise me from the statements I can give them, and will be able to satisfy you that I am incapable of meriting the suspicion on which I have been arrested.'

“ ‘ Then why not have immediately referred to the Minister?’

“ ‘ Because, sir, there is so much humiliation in exposing adversity to those who know my family and position, that my delicacy—my pride, if you will,—revolted from it.’

“ ‘ Then your pride is a very false and foolish one, to lead you to prefer remaining an hour under an ignominious charge, to calling on a person from your own country, and a person, too, filling so high a situation that his testimony will at once be satisfactory. There is pen and ink; write; and you, constable, have a man in readiness to take the letter with all speed to the Neapolitan Minister.’

“ My letter was soon written and dis-

patched, and the magistrate's suspicions became considerably softened towards me. I was permitted to remain in the office, and allowed to take a seat—a condescension on his part which seemed greatly to excite the wonder of all those in the office. 'Send in Mr. Hemingsworth, and the prisoner charged with swindling him,' said the magistrate; and in marched the jeweller and a well-dressed young man of gentlemanly appearance, whose embarrassed manner denoted that his present position was a novel one to him. 'Let the charge be read,' said the magistrate. And it was. It set forth that the prisoner had purchased a diamond pin of Mr. Hemingsworth, for which he paid down, in bank-notes, fifty pounds—all the money he said he had about him—and promised to return the next day and bring the remainder of the purchase-money—twenty-five pounds. That two days having elapsed without his having so done, Mr. Hemingsworth, becoming

alarmed, had gone in search of him; and having seen him in the street had called a constable, and had him arrested as a swindler. 'What have you to answer, prisoner?' asked the magistrate. 'But be cautious; do not say anything to criminate yourself.'

“ ‘When I left this person's shop, my banker's office was closed. I intended to return the next day, and pay him the twenty-five pounds, but I was taken ill with so severe a sore throat, that my physician insisted on my keeping my room for two days, and not thinking it very important whether I paid him two days later, I had, on the third day, when able to go out, drawn a check for a larger sum than the amount, intending to call and pay him, and was on my way to my banker's, to change it, when I was arrested. To avoid publicity, I consented to come with the constable, although I told the jeweller I would pay him if he would only let me

walk to my banker's, kept in view, but not guarded by the constable, but this he refused to do. This is the whole fact.'

" 'And how much, Mr. Hemingsworth, did you pay for the pin?'

" 'I don't exactly remember, your worship;' and the jeweller looked embarrassed as his eye met mine.

" 'Perhaps your memory can be refreshed by the person who sold it to you,' observed the magistrate, 'and who, by an extraordinary coincidence, happens to be present.'

" 'What sum did you receive for the diamond pin?' demanded he, addressing himself to me.

" 'Twenty pounds.'

" 'And so, Mr. Hemingsworth, you think it fair and honest to charge seventy-five pounds for a pin for which you gave twenty, and to arrest a gentleman who pays you fifty pounds in hand, and is to pay twenty-five more, merely because

he has allowed two days to elapse before he did so.'

“ ‘Why, your worship, we in trade are obliged to be very particular, very much so, indeed, and as I did not happen to know who the gentleman is, I——’

“ ‘You civilly judged him to be a swindler,’ interrupted the magistrate, ‘and had him arrested in the public street. This is not the conduct which I should have expected from a respectable trader, and, joined to the circumstance of your having given so small a price for the pin, tells much against your mode of transacting business. Will you favour me with your name, sir?’ continued the magistrate, addressing the gentleman who had been arrested.

“ ‘If you will permit me to do so privately, I have no objection.’

“ The magistrate retired with the stranger for a few minutes, and when both again entered the office, I noticed a certain air of

respectful deference towards the late prisoner, in the manner of the magistrate, while that of the stranger was in no way changed from the simple and unaffected bearing I had previously remarked in him.

“ ‘ Here, Mr. Hemingsworth, is the twenty-five pounds due to you by this gentleman,’ said the magistrate. ‘ Your humblest apologies are due to him for the improper, very improper conduct you have thought it necessary to adopt towards him, and this gentleman will shew great condescension and kindness in overlooking it, and in not punishing you very severely for arresting him under your unfounded and stupid suspicion.’

The jeweller looked abashed and confounded, and attempted to extenuate his offence, but ere he completed his first phrase, the sound of carriage-wheels rattling up to the door, and a bustle in the waiting-room

announced some new arrival, and judge of my joyful surprise, when, in a moment after, I saw my dear uncle, the Marchese de Bonaventura, enter, and in the next, felt myself clasped in his arms. The Minister and he were just entering the carriage of the former, to pay a visit to a royal prince from Vienna, lately arrived, when my note was handed to the Minister, who having perused it, placed it in the hands of my uncle, and they instantly came off to my rescue. My kind uncle presented me to the Minister, who, being an old friend of my father's, evinced great satisfaction at seeing me, and was highly indignant at the insult to which I had been exposed.

“ ‘ How, my dear lord and fellow traveller, do I indeed see you here!’ exclaimed my uncle, affectionately shaking hands with the gentleman who had been arrested as a swindler. An entreaty uttered in Italian,

not to mention his name, were the first words spoken in reply, while the warm shake hands was as warmly returned.

“ ‘I have not been a voluntary visitor here, I assure you, my dear Marchese,’ continued he; ‘for this, my first appearance here, has been on a charge of swindling.’

“ ‘Is it possible! An English peer accused of swindling, and an Italian nobleman taken up as a pickpocket! And this, too, in your land of liberty, as you call it! *Ma foi*, I think this is too much of the liberty. As you have been fellow-sufferers, I must make you acquainted with my nephew, that dear nephew, of whom you have heard us so frequently speak at the Palazza de Valentinois.’

“ The English lord shook hands with me, and said many civil things of the kindness he had received from my family at Naples.

“ ‘Pray, gentlemen, let us retire to my

private room,' said the magistrate. 'This way, your Excellency; this way, Marquis; this way, my lord; and you, sir;' bowing lowly to each, as he addressed them, and then to me—'I am truly grieved at your having been subjected to such annoyance.'

“ Before, however, we had entered the next room, a new prisoner was brought into the office, and was announced to be the man who had picked a gentleman's pocket in the Park, the previous day. The articles stolen had been found on him, and he had been identified by no less than half-a-dozen witnesses, who came to give their evidence against him. This turned out, as I dare say you have already guessed, to be the person for whom I had been mistaken, merely because I had been seen running in the same direction. The magistrate said all that could be said on the occasion, of his regret at what had occurred, yet did not forget, while addressing me, on observing

the new prisoner about to speak, to remind him 'not to say anything to criminate himself.'

"Never did I behold more shame in countenances than was visible in those of Mr. Hemingsworth and the witnesses who had mistaken me for the pickpocket. The jeweller felt that he had lost the chance of good customers, and exposed his cupidity, and the witnesses saw that they had incurred the anger of the magistrate. I entered the coach of the Minister, with its owner and my uncle, and entreated the latter that it should at once take me to my humble abode at Bayswater.

"*' Ah, mia poveretta Francesca !'* said my uncle. 'I long to see her. You know not the pain, the wretchedness you have caused us all by so obstinately concealing yourself from us. Your father discovered that you had sailed in an English

merchantman, and guessed that you had fled to England, to be married, counting on the fondness of your old uncle to procure your pardon for your stolen nuptials; but why did you not write home?

“ While he spoke, I observed, for the first time, that he was in mourning, and a presentiment of evil tidings instantly oppressed me.

“ ‘ Why this sable dress?’ exclaimed I. ‘ My father—my mother?’

“ ‘ They are well,’ answered he, his countenance becoming very sombre.

“ ‘ My brother, my dear brother?’ uttered I.

“ He replied not for a moment, but held out his arms to me, and tears filled his eyes.

“ ‘ Alas! you have no longer a brother, my dear nephew,’ said he. ‘ A fall from his horse, the very day you sailed from

Naples, caused his death.—It was this sad event,' said my uncle, after a pause, to allow my first burst of grief to have its course, announced to me by a special courier, that induced me to depart so suddenly from London, our good king permitting me to return to Naples, to console my poor brother. I naturally concluded that you would have immediately presented yourself at the Embassy, where I had left instructions with my friend the Minister to furnish you with funds to provide for your return to Naples, whither I concluded you would instantly return, on learning the death of your poor brother. The Minister was unfortunately absent for a few days, and the secretary, to whom he had confided his wishes with respect to you, was taken ill, so that when your marriage took place at the Embassy, no one there was aware that the untitled young pair who presented themselves, were

my nephew and niece, and as you did not leave your address, the Minister, when he returned, had no clue for finding you out. Arrived at Naples, I discovered that the only consolation calculated to heal the deep grief of your parents, was to have you and your wife quickly restored to them. I wrote instantly to the Minister to have you sought after in every direction, and rewards offered to any one who could give information of your residence. This measure proving unavailing, and the anxiety of your parents increasing, I left Naples in the belief that my long residence in London and knowledge of it, could enable me to be more successful in my search for you. I have been here some time, have devoted every thought, every hour, to the pursuit; and behold, how inscrutable are the ways of Providence! It is only by your having been arrested, by mistake, in the place of a criminal, that

you address yourself to the Embassy, where, for many months your presence, or the knowledge of your abode, would have given such satisfaction to all there, but above all, to your fond old uncle.' And my worthy relative again embraced me.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ WE had now reached my humble home, and I waited not until the loud knock of the Minister’s footman had been answered, ere I leaped from the carriage, and rushing past the person who opened the door, ran up to the sitting room. It was empty, and with a foreboding heart I proceeded to the bedroom. I gently opened the door, and beheld my poor Francesca, pale as marble, reposing on her pillow, while Giuditta watched beside her. The good old woman made me a sign not to awake her mistress, and then,

on tip-toe, stole to me, and accompanied me into the next chamber. ‘ My child, Giuditta, —has my child been found?’

“ ‘ *Ohimé!* Signor Conte, you no longer have a child. A letter has been received from that terrible nurse, which says, that having been knocked down by a horse, in some street, when returning home, the *bambina* was flung from her arms, driven over, and killed on the spot. That she dared not present herself before you and la Signora Contessa, with this terrible news, and that she should never again return. Your disappearance, added to this fatal news, was too much for la Contessa. She spent the whole of last night in a state of delirium, and only half an hour ago dropped into sleep, caused by a narcotic administered to her by a doctor whom the mistress of the house had the charity to send for. *O, Dio mio*, Signor Conte; see the evils

brought on us by our flight from *cara Napoli!* *Ohimé!* *Nostra Santissima Madonna* seems to have abandoned us ever since we came into this land of heretics, who deny her power. The *cattivo occhio* has been on us ever since we came here. What but its influence could have snatched you away from us, Signor Conte, yesterday, when la Signora Contessa most required your presence, and have left her all the live-long night, maddened by terror and grief, wanting to rush into the streets, in search of her *bambina* and *marito*, one minute calling in frenzied accents on the one, and the next on the other. But Heaven be praised, you are restored to us, and she will now take patience under the heavy loss of her *bambina.*'

“ Giuditta returned to her mistress, and I went to my uncle, who was seated in the little sitting-room, and had already learned

from the mistress of the house, the calamity that had befallen me, and the consequent illness of my poor Francesca.

“ ‘ Alas! my dear nephew,’ said he, as he again embraced me, ‘ I find you have severely expiated your imprudent flight from Naples. To what humiliation and grief have you not been exposed? And my dear niece, too! Yet I am not without hope that your child still lives, and has only been carried off, to answer some object unknown to us. This good person,’ turning to the mistress of the house, ‘ informed me that although she has had inquiries made all through the street in which the letter of the nurse stated the dreadful accident to have occurred, she has heard of nothing of the kind, yet such a catastrophe must have been known, had it really taken place. She has also had inquiries made at the different offices of police in the neighbourhood, where such events are notified, but all profess ignorance on the

subject. We are consequently not wholly hopeless; nevertheless, I think it wisest not to communicate our grounds for hope to our poor Francesca, lest they be doomed to disappointment. Let her be removed to my hotel as soon as her health admits, where she will find herself lodged more suitably to her station and fortune than in this confined abode, where every object around her will serve to keep alive the sense of her bereavement. I will instantly have advertisements inserted in all the papers, and placards, offering rewards for the discovery of the nurse and child, posted up, and sent round the town. An accurate description of both is now being written out by the mistress of this house, at my request, and I trust my efforts will be crowned with success. My faithful Luigi will immediately come here, to be of use to his old friend Giuditta; and remember, my dear nephew, that not only is your old uncle rich, but

that your good father has sent you ample funds to uphold your station.'

" My uncle left me, and I returned to watch, with Giuditta, by the bed-side of my poor Francesca. She slept long, but her slumber was often broken by starts and exclamations, in which my name and that of our infant were uttered in accents of such deep tenderness and mental agony, as brought tears into my eyes. How did I regret, as I marked the traces of care and sorrow already indented on that fair and youthful brow, that I had taken her from our paternal home to encounter the rude vicissitudes which had assailed her, and left such proofs of the injury they had inflicted on her. How, also, did I reproach myself, that in pursuance of the gratification of my own selfish schemes, I had been absent at the moment when my dear parents most required my presence to console them for the loss of my dear and ever-to-be-lamented

brother. Had I remained at home, how much sorrow would have been spared my parents and my wife. And my dear, my excellent brother, from whom I had parted, little dreaming it was for ever, without a word of farewell, without a parting embrace! A thousand fond and tender recollections of his invariable affection and unbounded generosity to me, rushed through my memory until my tears flowed plenteously. And *he*, in all the bloom of youth and health, so loved, so loving, was in a moment snatched away from life, and was for months mouldering in the tomb, while I dreamt not that I had no longer a brother, and mourned not his death. When the sad news of such bereavements reach us from afar, how do we look back to the days of their occurrence, in order to remember how we had been occupied on that eventful time, and whether some presentiment of evil had not haunted us, or some vague dream had not alarmed.

It seems so strange, so unnatural, that those dear to us as life itself should cease to be—should pass from the earth like shadows, leaving no trace behind, save in our memories, while we can remain in utter ignorance of such a calamity, eating, drinking, and sleeping — perchance smiling — when they were breathing their last sigh. But if we find that on such fatal days we had been engaged in light amusements, or scenes of festivity, with what a sentiment of remorse do we reflect on that want of prescience, which is nevertheless a blessing, by keeping us for some time ignorant of the evils impending over our devoted heads. These reflections occupied my mind as I watched over the couch of my poor Francesca, and when I heard her demand her child, that dear infant I had learned to love so fondly, a thousand fears for its safety pressed on my brain, and I longed to be able in person to assist in an active search for it. After

some hours, my beloved awoke. I had concealed myself behind the curtain, lest the surprise of seeing me too suddenly might prove too much for her weakened nerves. Her first question to Giuditta was, ‘Has my husband returned?’

“ ‘I have good tidings of him, carissima Contessa; he will be here anon.’

“ ‘You trifle with me, you deceive me, Giuditta.’

“ ‘No; I call *nostra Santissima Madre* to witness I speak the truth. Il Signor Conte will be here soon.’

“ ‘But why comes he not at once—why is he absent when his Francesca is bowed to the earth by sorrow?’ and she burst into tears.

“ I could no longer bear to remain concealed; I pressed her to my heart, imprinted kisses on her poor pale face, and mingled my tears with hers, and, like a meek child, she laid her head on my breast, and mur-

mured a prayer of thanks for my restoration to her. And now, by degrees, I broke to her my meeting with my uncle, and the death of my dear brother, who was scarcely less dear to her than to me. Her sympathy alleviated my grief, and amid our tears for our babe, many dropped for that dear, kind brother, we should never more see.

“ I removed her to the hotel where my uncle resided, and where I found a most comfortable suite of rooms ready for our reception. The fatherly affection of that worthy relative was a balm to the lacerated heart of my poor Francesca. He was the bearer to her of the full pardon of my parents, joined to innumerable fond messages; and crowned all by assuring her that they had obtained the Pope’s dispensation for our marriage, as well as his eminence’s benediction for us. This news took a weight off the mind of poor Giuditta, while it greatly soothed that of her mistress, whose gentle-

ness and mildness under the bereavement of our child endeared her still more to the heart of our uncle. It was now ascertained beyond a doubt that no child had been killed in the street, or in any of the neighbouring ones to that named in the letter of the nurse. This was a ray of hope, and, cheered by it, we left nothing undone to discover the child and the nurse. We offered large rewards for intelligence of them, and larger still for their apprehension, always concealing from Francesca that we had any reason for doubting the truth of the statement conveyed in the letter from the nurse, lest the anxiety of hope deferred, and perhaps eventually to be blighted, might prove too much for her delicate health. Day after day, and week after week, rolled away, yet brought us no intelligence of my child. The Neapolitan Minister, scarcely less anxious than my good uncle, employed every means in his power, while our ex-

cellent relative was indefatigable in his searches. But, alas! all were in vain; and as every letter from our parents breathed their impatience for our return, we at length took our departure for Italy. Doomed to disappointment as my hopes had hitherto been, I nevertheless could not leave England without inexpressible reluctance, having the conviction that in it my dear child was somewhere concealed. Francesca, ignorant of my thoughts on this point, only lamented that we knew not where the mortal remains of her firstborn had been deposited, that we might have had them removed to the vault of our ancestors, and gave many a tear to the reflection that its dust should not mingle with ours. Had she known my hope of its existence, never would she have left the country that she believed contained it. But though we departed, every precaution was taken to keep the search as actively carried on

as while I was on the spot. The Neapolitan Minister was charged with this task, and I was to be kept informed of its results. Mrs. Fector, the person at Bayswater at whose house we had lodged, was also employed to look out for the nurse, whose person she could identify, and a large reward was assured her could she but discover her. We ascertained, that owing to our ignorance in not paying the postage, my letters to Naples had never gone; so this had explained the silence of my family.

“ We arrived safely at Naples, were received with doting affection by our parents, and devoted ourselves wholly to consoling them for the loss of my dear brother. Years rolled on, yet no tidings had ever been received of our lost child, and Francesca’s delicacy of health left me little hope of her blessing me with another. This was the only drop wanting in our cup of happiness, and bitterly did we feel it. Never could

the bereaved mother see a female child, whose age was that which our lost one would have been, that she did not gaze on it with eyes filled with tears; and remind me that our treasure, had Heaven spared her to us, would have been as tall as the child she was looking on. She would have drawings made of girls of similar age, and instruct the artist to paint them with features resembling mine; and, gazing on these ideal pictures, she would say, 'Just such would our Francesca have been!' and she would melt into tears at the contemplation. My father and mother dropped gently into the grave,—their last years soothed by our love and care, and blessing us for our dutiful affection! And now I became the representative of the ancient title, and possessor of the large fortune, of my ancestors. The desire to return to England, in the vague hope of hearing tidings of my child, haunted me; yet I feared to propose it to my wife, lest it

should awaken anew her regret, and to leave her would be difficult, as we had never been separated. We had gone to Milan to visit some friends there, when the lady at whose house we were staying received an account that her only son was dangerously ill at Paris. Unable, from her advanced age, to undertake the journey herself, though most anxious to do so, I offered to go; and my wife consented to remain, to comfort our aged hostess, while I proceeded to Paris. It was then and there I met you, my young friend; and the sight of the youthful beauty you escorted,—so wonderfully like my wife,—produced such an effect on my feelings, that hopes once again sprang up in my heart, which reason has not been able to vanquish. These hopes, pent up in my own breast, have so excited my nerves, that my health has suffered; and the physicians consulted, by my desire advised me to try the effect of travelling in a cooler climate

than our own. The Duchessa instantly consented to visit England, where we lately arrived; and, strange to say, after so many years of baffled hope, something like reasonable grounds for it has now presented itself. But before I communicate it to you, pray tell me something of the young lady whose striking resemblance to my wife is so surprising. Is her parentage so well known as to admit of no doubt that my child might have been, by some means, substituted in the family for their own. That likeness is too strong, the features and the expression too remarkably similar, to be accidental."

"Alas! I can give you no hope. That young lady is the daughter of Lady Selina Mellingcourt, whose husband died only seven months ago. She is the heiress to a large fortune, inherited from Mr. Mellingcourt, and is a ward of the Court of Chancery."

"But the likeness, the wonderful likeness! You yourself were struck with the

resemblance to the portrait of my wife; and I never beheld mother and daughter so like!"

"I acknowledge the resemblance to be striking; yet one sometimes sees such remarkable likenesses between persons in no way connected, that no faith can be attached."

"Not such likenesses as the one in question!" interrupted the Duca de Valentinois, with a warmth of manner that led me to think he indulged an infatuation on this point that indicated, indeed, no ordinary excitement of nerves. "Nay more," resumed the Duca; "although perhaps you will smile at such an assertion, I felt, when I beheld that young lady, a sentiment of interest that I could neither account for nor subdue. It was with the utmost reluctance that I could tear myself from her presence; and when I had done so, I blamed myself for not having, however extraordinary such

a proceeding might have appeared to her friends, inquired into her parentage, so convinced was I that such a resemblance could not be, as you imagine it, accidental. But, to return to the communication which has reached me since my arrival in London, I omitted to tell you that, previously to my leaving England, I purchased the lease of the house at Bayswater in which my child had been born, and permitted Mrs. Fector, the woman we had lodged with in it, to reside there rent free, on condition that she would not leave it; hoping that some time or other remorse might induce the nurse to come forward and confess the truth, in which case she might be tempted to seek the house in which she had left us. The day after my arrival, I went to that humble dwelling, so fraught with melancholy recollections; and judge of my emotion on learning from its inmate, that only the previous evening she had seen the nurse

of my child at St. George's Hospital, where she had been to visit a sick friend. The nurse was a patient in that hospital, and was to suffer amputation the next day for some fracture in her leg. She did not recognise Mrs. Fector, who, however, remembered her immediately, and would have at once questioned her, but that the surgeon in attendance would not allow her to be spoken to. I instantly went to the hospital, ascertained that the operation had taken place, and having seen the surgeon, was assured by him that I should see the patient as soon as with safety to her the interview could take place, or that in case of danger I should be sent for, and allowed to speak to her. Every hour has appeared to me an age since then. The happiness of my future life depends on the communication this wretched woman has to make to me. Oh! if my child still lives, and that she can be restored to me, what joy can

equal mine! Every hope on this point paints my daughter in the image of that never-to-be-forgotten young lady I beheld with you; and should my restored child not resemble her, I shall scarcely think I have indeed found the daughter of my Francesca. But you must come and be made known to the Duchessa, and then—although, alas! time and ill-health have robbed her cheeks of their roses and her eyes of their brightness,—you will still be struck with the likeness that has brought such conviction to my mind.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE next day Mr. Rivers and I waited on the Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois, and, though prepared to find a strong resemblance between her and Selina, I confess I was startled when I beheld her. Her smiles, no less than her features, were wonderfully similar, and the soft tones of her voice possessed the same flexibility and sweetness. The Duchessa was indeed a most charming person. Now in her thirty-sixth year, she still retained so much of her pristine beauty that she might have passed for being

some years younger. The sight of this lovely and gentle being reminded me so forcibly of Selina when recovering from the fatigue of attending on her father, and subdued into sadness by his death, that I was greatly agitated when I beheld the Duchessa and her husband, who noticed my emotion, and was so highly gratified at this proof of the force of the resemblance, that he was compelled to control himself to prevent exhibiting the marks of his satisfaction before his wife, to whom he dared not explain the cause.

I now became a daily visitor at their hotel, and acted as their cicerone, in shewing them the environs of London. My intimacy with them soon ripened into the most cordial friendship; and as the character of the Duchessa unfolded itself to me, how was I reminded of Selina's! The same deep feeling, the same faultless temper, and total freedom from aught approaching to

selfishness. The Duca de Valentinois also was a most estimable person; full of warm sympathies with all that is good or elevated in our nature, with a chivalrous sense of honour, and a tenderness of heart that soon endeared him to all who became acquainted with him. How Selina would love and reverence this pair! was a reflection that occurred to me every day that I passed with them; and I found that if I could ever hope to school my heart into the indifference necessary for the recovery of my peace of mind, it could never be while daily beholding one who so powerfully reminded me of her. Selina and Madame de Stourville had been some weeks absent from London, on a visit to the country-seat of the worthy Master in Chancery; so that the repeated desire expressed by the Duca de Valentinois to behold her again, and to make her acquainted with the Duchessa, had hitherto been met by the simple state-

ment of the fact of her being absent from London. When she returned, and that the presentation was to take place through the medium of Mr. Rivers, it would be necessary for me to leave London; for I dare not trust even to the chance of encountering her in her carriage in the street, much less to meeting her in a room. Yet I felt that I should resign the daily intercourse now established between the Duca and Duchessa Valentinois and myself with great pain. Nevertheless, ought I, from selfishness, to preclude Selina—who had so few friends, and, above all, female friends—from forming one in every way so eligible as the Duchessa? No; when she returned I would depart for Meredith Park, and leave her free to form an intercourse that must prove delightful to all parties. The Duca and Duchessa expressed so much regret when I spoke of the necessity of my leaving town, that I ventured to invite them to pay me a

visit in the country ; and this offered a consolation for my resolution of resigning their society for a time.

Although I made it a point to question Mr. Rivers as seldom as possible relative to her who occupied all my thoughts, I had learned various particulars connected with her. The old, having outlived those feelings peculiar to youth, and their passions—as far as regards the affections—being under the influence of reason, they are ever prone to believe that the empire of love is much less despotic, and of a much more brief duration, than it really is. Hence Mr. Rivers imagined, that as all hope of my ever being united to Selina was destroyed, nay, that as to love her otherwise than as a sister was now a sin, my affection would at once subside into the calm one consonant to our newly-discovered relationship, and that other feelings, with other ties, would spring up in our hearts to replace the pas-

sionate ones that had lately existed. And so I prayed it might be. Yet I was still far from having made any progress towards that desirable change.

While my life was supposed to be in danger, Selina imagined, and led those around her to entertain the same belief, that, could I be restored to health, she would submit without murmuring to the separation which Mr. Rivers had told her must henceforth divide our destinies. Her alarm and anxiety during my illness betrayed to her friends the depth and devotion of that attachment, the extent of which her reserve and female dignity had hitherto prevented them from judging. But so pure, and so wholly free from all selfish alloy, was her affection, that the artless demonstrations of it, revealed when my recovery was deemed all but hopeless, increased the respect and esteem entertained towards her by all who witnessed them, and excited the liveliest

sympathy in their breasts for her. Even Madame de Stourville, albeit unused to the indulgence of melancholy emotions which had no source in self, took a warm part on this occasion in the anxiety of her *chère et bonne demoiselle*; and declared, that “*la grave maladie de ce pauvre Monsieur Meredis* was von proof of love dat greatly raised him in her opinion, and made her tink he was not like Monsieur Rivère or Monsieur Vincent — *volage et infidel!*”

While I was cultivating the friendship of the Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois, and becoming every day more attached to them, Selina was vainly endeavouring to reconcile herself to her altered position, and to submit to a separation pronounced to be inevitable, from the person whom, for so many months, she had learned to look on as the future partner of her life. The efforts made to effect this revolution in her feelings

seriously injured her health; and although she sedulously sought to conceal the symptoms of her indisposition, her altered looks and low spirits revealed that her mind was ill at ease. Nothing was left undone by the worthy Herberts to amuse and cheer her. Little excursions to see the neighbouring seats were frequently made; but though grateful for their kindness, it failed to have the desired effect, and the barbed arrow of blighted affection and disappointed hopes still rankled at her heart. What could be the mysterious cause of breaking off her nuptials, only the evening previous to their celebration? and why was she no more to see him to whom her vows had been pledged? were questions that presented themselves to her continually. But while these thoughts occupied and agitated her, she forbore—such was her maidenly reserve and pride—making a single inquiry on the subject to those around her. Not so Ma-

dame de Stourville. That garrulous lady had a thousand guesses to make, each and all remote from the real cause; and as many questions to ask of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert, who were not willing, if able, to gratify her curiosity. Nor had she sufficient delicacy to forbear commenting on the subject to Selina, who, as may easily be conceived, shrank from all reference to it with dismay. When the dear girl looked more than usually pale, or that her eyes shewed the traces of tears, Madame de Stourville would exclaim—

“*Helàs ! mon cher et bel ange*, de men are all de same. Monsieur Meredis is just like Monsieur Rivère; he make de lofe until he vin de poor heart, and den he go away. It vas in dis manner dat Monsieur Vincent did also act to me. He say *des jolies choses* enough to make any voman vain, and ven I tink he lof me vid passion, he go off, and not so much as say, Adieu. *Mais c'est*

fini pour ma part. Jamais—non jamais vill I lofe any man no more! Dey are all de same; and I have been so often deceived, dat I vill believe no man no more. Take de courage, *ma chère*, and do not despair. Look at me, Marie Antoinette de Stourville; you see I have de good healt, de good spirits,—*ah! ma foi*, and de bon appetite *aussi*, yet I have had de heart broke ever so many times! De first time it is terrible, and very hard to bear, and von does weep and fret very much; but every time after dat, it becomes less painful, until at last it is almost noting at all. So take courage, *ma chère*, by my example.”

“You will oblige me by referring no more to this subject,” would Selina say; and Madame de Stourville, observing that she had inflicted pain, would promise to name it no more. But in a short time after she would forget her promise, and again revert to it; always instituting compari-

sons between the conduct Selina had experienced, and that to which, by her own telling, she had been so frequently subjected.

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert, observing that Selina's delicacy of health and dejection of spirits, increased instead of diminishing, returned to London with her for the purpose of consulting a physician. Air and exercise were recommended, and Kensington Gardens were pointed out as affording a desirable place for the enjoyment of both. To this spot, then, did the carriage of Mr. Herbert convey Selina, his daughter, and Madame de Stourville, every fine day; and while the latter, too cumbrous for pedestrian exercise, sat in an alcoved seat, amusing herself by the perusal of a French novel, the young ladies paced up and down the long walk in front of it, conversing. Often did they find Madame de Stourville in tears, and she would say, " Ah! I had ar-

rived at such an interesting part of de book! Oh! it did make me weep. Dere is noting —no, noting in all de world like de French novel. It make von laugh, it make von cry, all in von minute; and ven von has no chagrin of von's own, it is so pleasant to read of the chagrin of oders. De hero of de book is von *scélérat*. He deceive de poor heroine, who is so good, so *aimable*; *mais, malgré*, he is *infidel* and vicked, he is *si joli garçon* and *si spirituel*, dat no voman could help lofing him."

"Surely, if the heroine knew that he was unworthy," would Miss Herbert say, "she could no longer like him."

"But if she could not help lofing him? *ma chère Mademoiselle Herbert.*"

"I do not admit the possibility of continuing to love an object that one has discovered to be unworthy, Madame."

"O! you English have de heart so cold, and de reason so strong, you know not de

power of de tender passion. 'Tis de French dat understand dat. Dey are always in lofe—*toujours, toujours*. Dey lofe ven dey are young, dey lofe ven dey are of a certain age, and dey lofe ven dey are vat you call old."

A faint smile would steal over the lips of Selina as she listened to the false sentiment of the silly old French woman; while Miss Herbert could scarcely restrain the mirth it excited in her within bounds.

The surgeon having pledged himself that the woman should not be allowed to leave the hospital without the Duca de Valentinois being apprised of it, and his health really being affected by the excitement in which his mind was kept by his anxiety to see the nurse, I persuaded him and the Duchessa to fulfil their promise of paying me a visit, and to accompany me for a few days to Meredith Park, to which place the surgeon was to write to him the moment his

patient was in a fit state to have the desired interview. How the sight of that home, to which I had hoped to have brought *one*, whom even to think of, was now to me forbidden, affected me. The rooms fitted up to receive her, the different objects of taste and *vertu*, arranged as I fancied she would have liked them, only reminded me that henceforth life would be to me a joyless waste, in which happiness could no more be hoped for, and resignation must be the vista to which my expectations were to point. The Duca and Duchessa were delighted with Meredith Park. Its velvet lawns and blooming parterres, but above all, its fresh verdure, was most agreeable to them, after having been for some weeks shut up in a London hotel. When I heard the Duchessa point out what most pleased her in the grounds, and decorations of the apartments, and which were precisely those I had planned to meet the anticipated views of Selina, I

could not help being struck by the similarity of their tastes, and a train of melancholy reflections was awakened in my mind, the symptoms of which not all my efforts could conceal from my valued guests. Women have a peculiar talent of extracting the secrets of the heart, even from those not generally disposed to betray them. They are so quick-sighted in all that concerns the affections, and so prone to sympathize with the unhappy, that he who is suffering from the pangs of disappointed love must be made of sterner stuff than I was, could he have resisted to reveal his grief to such a woman as the one then an inmate in my house. Before a week had passed at Meredith Park, the Duchessa de Valentinois was mistress of the secret cause of the depression of spirits she had remarked in me, and her pity alleviated, though it could not remove, my chagrin. She loved to talk of Selina, would ask various questions

about her, and evinced an interest towards that admirable girl, that attached me still more to my amiable guest. As the Duchessa had no secrets from her husband, he was soon made acquainted with mine, and his warm and affectionate nature made him enter with a lively sympathy into the cruel disappointment, under the effects of which I was still smarting. Friendship, a boon so precious at all times, becomes an inestimable blessing when care and sorrow press heavily on the heart; and I never was so sensible of this as when daily, hourly experiencing the soothing influence of the society of two persons whose quick sensibility and refined sentiments I had so truly learned to appreciate.

“Ah! Mr. Meredith,” would the Duchessa de Valentinois say, “had my daughter lived, she would have been about the age of the charming Selina. How I long to see her; yet, as whenever I am to have that pleasure

I must resign your society for the time, and that I think our presence comforts you, I ought hardly to wish for her acquaintance. Is it not strange what an interest I feel in this stranger? Even before I knew you, I quite longed to see her, and to discover if indeed she bears so strong a resemblance to me as my husband says. Have you noticed the likeness? or does it merely exist in his imagination?"

When I had acknowledged that I also was struck with the resemblance, the Duchessa would sigh, and again express her desire to see the fair counterpart of herself; and the Duca would shake his head, and say—

"*Cara mia*, the sight of her will have the same effect on you that it had on me; it will only awaken fruitless regrets and unavailing wishes."

"I fear," would the Duca say to me, when we were alone, "that if my poor

Francesca sees Miss Mellingcourt, the same wild hopes may spring up in her heart (occasioned by the wonderful likeness) that has taken possession of mine, even though she knows not that I have had any reason to doubt the reported death of our daughter. How painful is this harassing state of uncertainty! Oh! when will it terminate!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE impatience of the Duca de Valentinois to see the nurse of his daughter increased every day, and at length became so ungovernable that he determined, although he had received no communication from the surgeon, to return to London. The Duchessa, who liked the country, and felt happy at Meredith Park, wished to remain there a few days longer, and when her husband refused to stay, observed that he had become so whimsical and capricious of late, that she hardly could believe him to be the same

complaisant person he had always hitherto been, and accused him of having the English malady, the spleen, which she had heard was the cause that Englishmen were always moving from place to place. The Duca gave me a melancholy look, while admitting to his wife that he supposed our climate had produced this effect, and the next day we left Meredith Park for London. The Duca became a daily inquirer at St. George's Hospital, but was still prevented from having an interview with the person he so impatiently longed to see, the surgeon asserting that any excitement might be attended with dangerous consequences to his patient, until her leg was healed.

At length, however, he was permitted to see her, and her alarm on recognising him, which she soon did, almost overpowered her. She covered her face with her hands, and trembled like an aspen leaf.

“ Oh, sir, I have wronged—I have injured

you!" said she; "and bitterly have I paid for it, for ever since I have not had a happy hour."

"Only tell me that my child lives, that she can be restored to my arms, and I will pardon you—nay, I will give you gold enough to make you comfortable, if not rich, for the rest of your days."

"Woe is me, sir, that I cannot satisfy you about your child. Ah! could I do so, I should not require gold; for, to ease my troubled conscience, I would, were it in my power, say and do everything that could restore her to you."

"Then the statement of the child being killed was a fabrication?"

"Yes, sir, it was. I thought that if you believed her to be dead, you would cease all search, and be less unhappy than if you imagined her to be alive, and probably in bad hands. Have patience with me, sir, and I will tell you the truth—yes, sir, the

whole truth, as some atonement for my guilt. I was a chambermaid, sir, at an hotel in London, when I had the misfortune to become a victim to a gentleman from the Havannah, who lodged there. I will not attempt to extenuate my sin, though I might do so without falsehood, for it was not by affection that I fell, but by nefarious arts—yes, sir, indeed it was. So great was the terror with which he inspired me, that I dared not reveal the truth, and from that hour I became his slave, and trembled at his nod.

“When the consequences of my shame obliged me to leave the hotel, he took for me an obscure lodging, in which he often visited me. He sometimes came at night, and was occasionally in such violent rages that I often feared he would kill me. Oh, sir! he was a terrible person, dreaded neither man nor God, and gave free course to his evil passions. He was a gamester, too;

and when he lost, his anger knew no bounds. He would utter curses on his bad luck; but, above all, on a rich brother he had, who grudged him, as he used to say, the necessaries of life. He formed an intimacy with the maid of this brother's wife, to get at, as he said, the secrets of her mistress; and nothing passed in the house of that lady that he was not soon made acquainted with. He came to me, the day after I was confined of a little boy, and said, that in a few days I must give up the infant, for that he had discovered that his sister-in-law pretended to be with child, in order to impose on her husband; and that she intended to have a new-born infant brought secretly by her maid, who was looking out for one, which was to be passed for her own. 'Now this child will be heir to a great fortune,' said he, 'and so ours shall have it. And when my brother dies, I will let our boy know, that, being illegi-

timate, he has no right to the fortune, and that if he does not share it half and half with me, I will denounce him, and so have him turned adrift. I will, besides, tell him he is no relation to his pretended mother, whom I see sometimes, and who thinks she imposes on me by her pillow worn to counterfeit being in the family way. Her maid is my creature, and has told me everything.'

"That night, as if it were a punishment for his guilty schemes, my poor baby died. His rage was terrible when he heard of it,—not that he cared for the poor infant, but that its death crossed his plans. 'You must immediately go out as a wet-nurse,' said he, 'and steal the child confided to you, that I may substitute it for ours. I shall, whenever it grows up and inherits, persuade it that it is mine; by which means, and by menaces of denouncing its

birth, I shall keep the rich person wholly in my power.'

" I had, by becoming a mother, learned to know the feelings of one; and though a fallen woman, I shrank from robbing a mother of her child; and as I looked on my poor dead infant, this repugnance to wound another mother's heart grew stronger on me. I ventured to say something of this, but he only jeered and mocked me, and, in a day or two after, compelled me to leave my bed, and crawl out to a doctor's, to inquire for the place of a wet-nurse. Fearing that my paleness might prevent my being engaged, he put some red powder from his pocket-book on my cheeks, made me drink porter, and accompanied me to the doctor's door. I was examined, and recommended to your lady. She had been confined that day, and I went to take charge of the baby in the evening. When I wrote to him, as he told

me to be sure to do, that the child was a girl, he was very angry ; but said, that the first opportunity that offered I must steal the infant. When I saw how the mother loved the child, it went to my heart to rob her of it ; but he wrote me such threatening letters, that I dared not disobey him, and on that day when I disappeared from your house, he had been waiting for me some time, and had a hackney-coach in readiness, into which he made me enter, and carried me off to a lodging he had engaged in an obscure lane. That night he took the child to the maid of the lady, for whose it was to be made pass, and I wrote a few lines to you, sir, to say your child was no more. I had his orders to go the next day to offer myself as wet-nurse at the same house to which the child had been taken. I was instructed by him not to acknowledge that he was known to me, or that I ever saw the baby before, but merely to say, that I had heard

that a wet-nurse was wanting, and that I offered myself for the place. I had grown fond of your child, sir, and I was anxious to nurse and take care of it, which made me more readily fall into his plans. Before he took the child away, he marked the sole of one of its little feet with gunpowder and a needle, that, as he said, in case it might ever be changed, he might have the means of recognising it.

“ I went to the house as desired, saw the lady’s maid, was engaged, and had the dear baby once more put into my arms. I could hardly conceal my satisfaction when I felt its dear little lips again draw its sustenance from my bosom, the maid telling me all the time, that the baby had been sucking her finger all the night and morning,—it was such a healthy, ravenous little thing. She said that her lady had intended to nurse it herself, which was the reason a wet-nurse had not been provided; but that she

was so weakly, she found she could not undertake it. I now saw the lady daily. She pretended to be very fond of the child; but whenever it cried, it was easy to see *she* was not its mother, by her impatience and ill-humour; and even if I did not know the imposition, I think I should have guessed that there was something wrong. My persecutor came often, and generally to the lady's maid's room, where I always sat,—she scarcely letting me out of her sight, or permitting me to speak to any of the other servants. He affected not to notice me, but seemed rather to like the child. It was plain that the lady's maid was wholly under his command, and fondly attached to him; for even prudence could not prevent her from letting it be seen. I was well treated, and liberally paid; nevertheless I was far from happy, for my conscience continually reproached me, and I could not look on your child without thinking of the

pain I had inflicted on its mother's and your heart. The husband of the lady never came near the house; and on my asking one day whether or not she was a widow, I was told that she was separated from him. My tyrant—for I still trembled at his nod—sometimes came to visit the lady. She would on such occasions send for me to shew him the child, and ask him if he did not think it very like his brother, she believing all the time that she had imposed upon him, while it was *she* that was successfully imposed upon by him and her deceitful maid, on whom she lavished costly presents, in the faith that her secrets were safe in her keeping. Oh, sir! the wicked and deceiving are in turn cheated by those they most trust, and I never saw such treachery and deception as was practised in that house; the lady thinking she imposed on her brother-in-law, and *he* cheating and laughing at both mistress and maid.

“ When the child was ten months old she was weaned, and in two months after, her supposed father claimed and took her. I saw her carried away with a sad heart and streaming eyes, and never beheld her since. The lady herself knew not where she was taken to, nor did my persecutor, for he was ill in a fever when she was carried off. When he recovered, he came to see the lady, who pretended to cry very much at her child, as she said, having been taken from her. While she held her handkerchief to her eyes, to conceal that there were no tears in them, he gave such a smile and wink to the lady’s maid, that she was obliged to turn her head lest her smiles should be seen; and then he gave me a glance like lightning, and pointed to the maid, whom he equally duped as the mistress by having introduced me, who knew all, into the house. Having no further employment for me, I was discharged, but received so good a character from the

lady, that I procured a situation as nursemaid in a family going to Ireland. Previously to my entering their service, the wicked man who had exercised such an influence over me, compelled me to take an oath never to reveal his name, or that of the lady, to any human being, until he called on me to prove the facts I have related to you, sir, or that his death released me from my oath.

“ ‘ If I die before you,’ said he, ‘ you may reveal the whole story, for then secrecy can no longer be of any service to me, and your confession may bring some reward to yourself; but recollect, that *if* you break your oath, no distance, no place of concealment, shall screen you from my vengeance, which shall be as terrible as it will be sure, and rapid in overtaking you.’ Night and day, that threat has hung over me, and though I have never seen that terrible man since, my terror of him has in no way abated. I

remained in Ireland seven years, and when I returned to London, I went to the house in which the lady had resided while I nursed your child as hers. She was not known there, nor have I seen or heard of her, until some weeks ago, when crossing a street with a basket of clothes on my head, for I have been a laundress for some years, I was knocked down, and driven over by a post-chaise, and my leg so severely injured, that amputation was afterwards found necessary. The chaise was stopped by the police, when a lady in it gave me five pounds, and her address. In that lady, though greatly changed by time, I recognised her to whom your child had been taken; and in her female attendant, the woman who then acted as her maid, and was the creature of her terrible brother-in-law. They, too, I think recognised me, for they exchanged looks, and when I afterwards sent to the address

they gave me, I found no such persons were known there."

"Unhappy woman," said the Duca de Valentinois, who had listened with breathless anxiety to her narrative, "how can you suppose that an oath unlawfully extorted to conceal guilt, and to defraud parents of their child, ought to prevent you from atoning for the great crime which you committed in stealing that child, by furnishing them with the names of those through whom it may yet be discovered. Think of the grief we have for years undergone for the loss of our daughter; think of the years of happiness of which you have aided to rob us; and now, I pray you, make a late amends, by declaring to me the guilty persons connected in this wicked plot."

"Oh, sir, consider the sacredness of an oath! And that terrible man's vengeance!"

"I will protect you from it. The laws

of your country will protect you, and the ministers of your religion will tell you, that no oath extorted from you for the concealment of crime and guilt, can be binding, or ought to be kept."

Vain would it be to recapitulate the arguments used by the Duca de Valentinois, to persuade this weak-minded and ignorant woman to reveal the names he so ardently longed to know, or the promises of golden rewards held out to her. Such, however, was the terror she entertained from the threats of him whom she termed her persecutor, and to whom she attributed all the ills of her life, that no reasoning or persuasions could induce her to break faith with him, although she felt disposed to atone to the Duca for the injury she had been the means of inflicting on him. It was now found necessary to have recourse to legal measures. The testimony of the woman in St. George's Hospital was taken down by a

solicitor, and witnessed by respectable persons; and she being now able to leave the hospital, was placed in a lodging in the identical house at Bayswater from which she had stolen the child, with strict injunctions to the owner of it, and a steady man placed purposely in the house to assist her, not to let the woman leave the house without one of them accompanying her wherever she went, lest she should escape. This she, however, was by no means disposed to do, being well content to enjoy not only the necessaries, but the comforts of life, amply provided her by the generosity of the Duca; and moreover, being now incapacitated by the loss of her leg, and the weakness resulting from her long illness and confinement, from earning her own subsistence.

This woman had not been above a week in her new abode, when, seated at the window, she saw a coach stop at the door, and two females descend from it, who having paused

to read a bill stating that lodgings were to be let, pasted on the next window, knocked at the door, and entered the room next to the one in which she was, and the door of which was open. The voices instantly struck her as being familiar to her ear, and she soon recognised them to be those of the lady and her maid, whose names she was sworn not to reveal. She heard them demand the terms of the house, and then, accompanied by the mistress, ascend to view the apartments, she trembling all the while with agitation, lest they should not agree for the lodgings. A vague notion of the hand of Providence directing them to the very house she was in, the very dwelling, too, whence she had stolen the child passed off for being that of the lady now beneath its roof, greatly excited her. Surely this working of Providence was, must be, to lead to the discovery of the stolen child, and to restore her, if alive, now a woman grown,

to that good Duca who had shewn her, who had wronged him so fearfully, such generosity and pity. And this lady and her maid, whose carriage had occasioned her the loss of her leg, and who had given her a false address, and never shewn the least pity for her fate, were now in the same house with her—were in her power—and by giving them up to the Duca, he might wring from them a disclosure of the truth, without her having broken her oath to the terrible man, at the bare notion of whom she still trembled. She was in an agony, lest they should leave the house without taking the lodgings. She could not move to ring the bell, in order to desire the man placed in the house by the Duca to follow, and ascertain their abode, and she was afraid to call out, lest they should recognise her voice, and so take alarm. Great was her joy when she heard them descend, and tell the woman of the house that they

would come and take possession of the apartments that evening. When asked for a reference, the lady paid down a month's rent in advance, and said she thought that a more simple arrangement than giving the trouble of making inquiries of her friends. Still the nurse trembled, lest they might, after all, not return; so when they left the house, she begged to have the man sent to watch them, and remained in a state of indescribable excitement for the rest of the day. They did keep their engagement, and took possession of their lodgings late that evening; and as the nurse heard in that small house the voice of the maid demanding the different objects she required for the use of her mistress, and the tone of impertinent familiarity she presumed to adopt towards that mistress, she acknowledged that there is no such leveller of distinctions as guilt, save the grave.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE next morning, she despatched a messenger to request the presence of the Duca, but word was brought her back that the Duca had left town for the day, and was not expected back until late in the evening. She trembled, lest something might occur before the Duca came, and when, towards the evening, the lady and the maid together left the house, her fears were excited, lest they might not return. Again she employed the man to follow them, and again she counted, with breathless impatience and anxiety, the

hour for their return. When they came back, the man, who had not lost sight of them, informed her, that the whole time of their absence had been passed in perambulating Kensington Gardens, where they seemed to be engaged in watching some person, or persons, who were there. That they had frequently advanced towards two young ladies who were walking together, but that they seemed to want courage to approach them, and that at length, on seeing the young ladies joined by a lady and gentleman, they had retired, and returned to the house.

Mr. Rivers and I were engaged to dine with the Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois on that day, at their hotel; and having learned from Mr. Rivers that Selina had arrived in London some days before, I had determined to take my leave of them that evening, and set out next morning for Meredith Park. I felt more than usually de-

pressed as I drove to their hotel, and came to the resolution of leaving England for some months, if not years; so convinced did I feel, that while I remained in the same country with Selina, I should never recover that peace of mind which was now all I dared hope for.

Great was my surprise when I entered, to find the Duchessa de Valentinois, hitherto always so calm and placid, in a state of extreme excitement.

“ Oh, Mr. Meredith!” exclaimed she, “ I have seen her! I have seen her! Yes, my husband was right; she is as like my portrait, painted when I was young, as it is possible to be, and I wonder not he was struck with the resemblance. Never did any creature produce such an effect on my feelings. I was drawn to her by an irresistible and uncontrollable impulse, and longed, yes, passionately longed, to press her to my heart! You must think me

weak, foolish, mad, but I cannot help it. I am no longer mistress of myself; this dear girl has fascinated, has bewitched me. Oh how many tender, yet bitter, reflections has the sight of her called up in my mind! I now mourn afresh the loss of my daughter, when I think that such as this charming creature is, she might have been," and the Duchessa wept, and betrayed the deepest emotion.

"When did this meeting occur?" asked I of the Duca.

"Returning from Richmond, where I had taken my wife for a little fresh air, we were tempted to enter Kensington Gardens. While walking there, we encountered two young ladies, one of whom the Duchessa had no sooner looked at than she pressed my arm, and exclaimed, 'Look there! that young person must surely be Miss Mellingcourt, for she certainly has a most extraordinary resemblance to my picture!'

I instantly recognised her to be the young lady I had seen at the Jardin des Plantes, and taking off my hat, I approached and addressed her. She, too, remembered me; and I presented her to my wife, who trembled with emotion as she examined her countenance. The dear girl evinced something more than mere politeness towards us; and when I told her that the agitation of the Duchessa, on beholding her, proceeded from her being so struck with her likeness to herself, and the thought that had our only child lived she would now have been her age, and if she resembled her, our pride and happiness; she extended her hand to my wife, and, with a sweetness of manner that melted us both, addressed her in Italian. Her voice and accent, so wonderfully similar to Francesca's, heightened the impression made on us both. We conversed with her for some time, each moment increasing the magnetic

influence she has acquired over us, and we parted not from her until we had obtained her permission to visit her to-morrow."

"Oh, my friend! could I but behold this dear girl daily," said the Duchessa, "how happy should I be! I would give up my own bright land, and become a resident in England, merely to be near her."

"Be calm, my own Francesca!" whispered the Duca; "you must not allow your happiness—our happiness, I would say—to be the sport of an accidental resemblance. Miss Mellingcourt has friends, relations, perhaps, who might not approve her forming what they would call a romantic friendship with foreigners. We must respect our own position as well as hers, and not expose ourselves to any slight from those to whom the charge of this charming girl has been confided."

The spirits of the Duchessa drooped so much at the notion of her not being per-

mitted to cultivate the friendship of Selina, that I reassured her by dwelling on the good-nature of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert, who I was sure would oppose no obstacle to it, and Mr. Rivers offered to introduce the Duca and Duchessa to them, which would take away the awkwardness of their first acquaintance. Soon after dinner, a packet was brought to the Duca de Valentinois, from the Neapolitan Embassy. He opened it, and retired to his own chamber to peruse it. On his return to the *salon*, after an absence of about an hour, I was struck with a visible alteration in his countenance. The Duchessa also observed it, and, becoming alarmed, inquired whether he had received any bad news from home?

“No,” replied he, his voice tremulous with emotion; “the intelligence I have received is good, is joyful! Prepare yourself, Francesca, for wonderful news. But you must be calm; you must not give way

to your feelings." But while giving this good counsel, he pressed his wife in his arms, and burst into tears. "We are not childless, my own Francesca, our daughter lives!"

"O God! is it possible!" exclaimed the Duchessa, becoming as pale as marble, and, sinking on her knees, she prayed with fervour. "Enrico! my husband!" said she, "and has this great blessing been indeed reserved for us? Oh! heavenly Mother of God, to thee will I build a chapel for this thy great mercy!" and she held up her hands while she again uttered a fervent prayer. "But tell me, oh! tell me, how all this blessed change has come to pass?" demanded she, after she had ceased her prayer.

"Our child had been stolen, and not killed, as we had been led to believe. Even when she was taken from us, I had reason

to suspect this; but I dared not, my Francesca, in your delicate health, communicate my hopes to you."

"Oh, cruel!" interrupted the Duchessa. "How could you keep this secret from me?"

"Since I came to England, I have discovered the nurse who robbed us of our daughter; but she has not been able to furnish me with any clue where to find her."

"My child!—my child!" sobbed the Duchessa, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Now, however," resumed the Duca, "the clue is given to me. The man who compelled the nurse to steal our child, in order that, for purposes of his own, it might be imposed as the daughter of his brother, has confessed the whole truth. His statement perfectly coincides with that given me by the nurse, and no doubt any

longer remains. This man confided the papers I have now received to a banker in Sicily, to be forwarded to me in case of his death. They have been unaccountably delayed by the Sicilian banker, but they have — Heaven be praised! — at length reached me.”

“ And our daughter, where is she? Oh! when can I press her to my heart?”

“ You must be calm, my Francesca; you must learn to bear this joy for my sake—for our daughter’s.”

“ And have I indeed a daughter—a creature to love and cherish? Oh! if she but resembles that dear girl I saw this day! But no, that would be too much happiness. Let me but have my child restored to me, and though she may be formed in Nature’s least favourable mould, I will love her as though she were the fairest creature on earth. But read me

the confession of the man who for so many long years has kept our daughter from us. May Heaven pardon him, as I do!"

The Duca de Valentinois opened the packet, and read as follows.

CHAPTER XX.

“ You have long mourned a daughter as dead,—but know that she lives, and has been well cared for. Stolen, in consequence of my desire, by the nurse to whom you confided her, she was imposed on my brother as his offspring and will be his heiress. It was not I who planned this scheme, though I profited by it; for discovering that his wife, whom he hated, and from whom he was separated, had determined to procure an infant to be passed as his, she in the meanwhile pretending to

be with child, I, for motives of my own, decided on providing, unknown to her, a child of my selection; that when the girl hereafter inherited the large fortune of my brother, I might compel her to buy my silence relative to her spurious claims, and so gain possession of a portion of that wealth, of which my brother's dislike to me, and the circumstance of my being illegitimate, would deprive me. My scheme succeeded. My sister-in-law believed me to be her dupe, and passed off the child I had made the nurse steal from you as her own. My brother took it from her when it was a year old, and concealed it so effectually for above sixteen years that she never could discover it. I, however, succeeded in doing so; and finding that the supposed mother longed to gain possession of the girl for the sole purpose of acquiring an influence over her, in order to share her fortune whenever she inherited it, I, for a large pecuniary remun-

neration, offered my services to steal the girl. Twice I did so, and once was she rescued from my grasp. I have incurred considerable risk by the forcible abduction of this girl, and the myrmidons of the law are actively employed in pursuit of her. Two meddling Englishmen have enlisted themselves in her cause, and I have this day discovered that one of them has found out the place where she and her pretended mother are concealed. This meddling fool I have seized, and he is now a prisoner on board my yacht, of which in an hour I will take the command, and remove him out of the reach of future interference. I am somewhat superstitious. An old slave in the Havannahs, said to be gifted with the knowledge of futurity, foretold that I should come by a violent death at sea. Last night I dreamt that the prediction was about to be fulfilled; and the desire of making some atonement to you, who never

injured me, has tempted me to make this confession. The nurse whom I made steal your child pointed you out to me, in the Park, in London, and told me your name; and this year, at Naples, I recognised you, and heard that you had inherited great wealth. I had thoughts of telling my secret to you, but was deterred by the dread of your having recourse to the laws to punish me. I leave this avowal of the truth in the hands of my banker, at Palermo. Should my presentiment, and the prediction of the sorceress at Cuba, be realized, he is, when the account of my death is authenticated, to forward this to you. Your daughter is known by the name of Miss Somers."

"Gracious heavens! Do I hear aright?" exclaimed I, starting from my seat almost wild with joy. Ever since I had heard Palermo, the yacht, and the forcible abduction cited, my heart had beat quicker; yet I dreaded to indulge hopes that might

be for ever dashed to the ground. But now, however, there was no longer room to doubt. Yes, it was plain that my Selina was *not* the child of Lady Selina Mellingcourt, the offspring of guilt, but the daughter of the Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois; and it was no longer a sin, a crime, to love—to wed her.

“What means this emotion, dear friend?” demanded the Duca.

“Speak—speak, I conjure you!” exclaimed the Duchessa.

“Oh! my dear friends,” answered I, “Selina, the lovely Selina, whom you saw to-day, — her whom your hearts proclaimed their rights to,—is no other than your long-lost daughter!”

Vain would be the attempt to paint the joy, the rapture, of the father, mother, and lover. Even Mr. Rivers forgot his usual calmness, and more than once applied his handkerchief to his eyes. When we be-

came a little more composed, I entreated the Duca to finish the perusal of the confession.

“Your daughter,” resumed he, “is known by the name of Miss Somers; her pretended mother, Lady Selina Mellingcourt, calls herself Mrs. Lindsell. They depart to-day for a villa near Catania, where they will be more secure from discovery than in the house on the beach. Lady Selina Mellingcourt knows not to whom the stolen child belongs. She supposes it to be that of some poor woman, who sold it to her maid. The girl herself believes that she is the daughter of Mr. Somers, the name my brother has assumed.

“MUNGO MELLINGCOURT.”

I now related every incident that had occurred since the first day I had seen Selina borne off from La Cava to the one previous to our intended marriage. Various

and powerful were the emotions of the Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois, as with breathless interest they listened to the narration.

“ How inscrutable are the ways of Providence !” exclaimed the Duca. “ Our child was at Naples, perhaps lodged within a short distance of the palace of her parents, while her mother guessed not that she was in existence, and I had but faint hope that she lived. It is to you, dear Meredith, that, under Heaven, we owe the recovery of our child; and to you—who would have wedded her when you believed her the daughter of the odious and unworthy parents who claimed her, and who outraged every sentiment of delicacy by their mutual recriminations in that terrible scene at Palermo—that we will confide her happiness. Yes, we will bestow on you her hand; but we must annex one condition to the gift,—which is, that you will

not separate our child from us. Promise this, and she shall be yours!"

Gladly, joyfully, did I give the pledge required; and I was affectionately embraced by my future father and mother-in-law. While we were consulting whether or not the Duca and Duchessa should that night, late as was the hour, proceed to the abode of Mr. Herbert, to claim their daughter, Mrs. Fector, from Bayswater, arrived at the hotel and sent up her name, with a request to see the Duca forthwith.

"Admit her, by all means," said the Duchessa. "Poor woman! I well remember how obliging she was to us in our days of poverty."

The condescension and kindness of the Duchessa quite touched the worthy Mrs. Fector, who now explained the object of her mission. She related the restless impatience of the nurse to see the Duca, that she might inform him that the lady who

had passed for the mother of his child was now, with the attendant, who had assisted in the deception, beneath the same roof with her; and that as her oath hindered her from revealing the name of this lady, she wished to swear to her person—which she safely could do—before the lady left the lodging, as she might at any time depart on a short notice.

“Tell her,” said the Duca, “that the death of Mr. Mungo Mellingcourt has absolved her from her oath, that I am already furnished with ample proofs of the identity of my daughter, and that to-morrow Lady Selina Mellingcourt shall become convinced that the deception she has practised is now fully revealed, and that any attempt at denial will be perfectly unavailing.”

When Mrs. Fector retired, the Duchessa said, “What a wicked, heartless woman this Lady Selina must be! Think of all the unhappiness she occasioned our precious

daughter, and the misery she inflicted on our dear Meredith, by her atrocious falsehood. She merits the severest punishment; but we are too happy, too grateful to Heaven, to waste a thought on her."

Before we parted for the night, it was arranged that the Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois should the next day, accompanied by Mr. Rivers, go to Mr. Herbert's, reveal the happy discovery they had made, and claim their daughter. I was, after allowing time for all explanations, to join them at Mr. Herbert's, and that gentleman was to be apprised of the intended visit, and its object, by Mr. Rivers. So great was my joy and agitation, that I closed not my eyes during the whole night. I struck my repeater every half hour, and never previously felt time pass so slowly. I tried in vain to read, but though my eyes rested on the page, I could not keep my thoughts confined to the subject. They wandered to

her on whom my soul doted; and reverted with delight to the fact, that now I could make her the mistress of that home where my blessed mother had presided, without being wounded by a single fear, that had that beloved mother lived, she would have disapproved my choice of the successor who was to fill her place.

I was rejoiced when I heard the chambermaids commence their matinal duties, for every token of the business of the day having began, seemed to bring me nearer to the impatiently longed-for hour of going to Mr. Herbert's. I arose from my sleepless couch, and surprised my valet, by ringing for his attendance at a very unusual hour to that when I daily required his services, and when dressed, I could not restrain myself from going to the hotel where the Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois were lodged. Early as the hour was, I found them seated at the breakfast table, although neither were

able to partake of that repast. They, too, had passed a sleepless night, and confessed that joy was quite as great an enemy to sleep as grief is.

“ I have been forming a thousand delightful plans for the future,” said the Duchessa, “ and you will not, I hope, my dear friend, frustrate a single one of them. I have settled that you and our dear daughter are to spend the winters with us at the Palazza Valentinois at Naples, and we will pass the summers with you at Meredith Park. The apartments fitted up for our reception on our marriage, shall be newly furnished for you, and not a single English comfort shall be omitted in their arrangement. Oh! the delight of preparing rooms for one’s children! and the happiness of finding *two* at once. Was it not very considerate of my dear husband, to conceal his hopes of our yet having a daughter, until they turned to a blessed certainty?”

And the still beautiful woman smiled in her husband's face with an expression of such tenderness and sweetness, that both he and I exclaimed that never was there such a likeness as between her and Selina.

“ But do you know, that our precious girl must no longer be called Selina,” said the Duchessa. “ She was baptized Francesca, after my dear mother, who also gave me her name.”

“ I dare say our dear Meredith will love her equally well by whatever name she may be known,” observed the Duca; “ and I confess,” continued he, “ it would always remind me of that hateful woman, Lady Selina, to have our daughter called by that name.”

“ Oh! the joy, the happiness of hearing him say *our* daughter!” exclaimed the Duchessa. “ How have I borne life so long without this blessing! To find in our

child precisely the creature most formed to be loved, is it not indeed a source for never-ending gratitude to Heaven.! And yet, of how many years of happiness have we been defrauded! What delight would it have been to have watched her from infancy to childhood, from childhood to womanhood; to have heard her first lisp our names, and seen her first efforts to walk, while we held out our loving arms as an incitement to the dear, tottering little creature to rush into them! And we have been robbed of all these pleasures!"

"You must not murmur, my own Francesca," said the Duca de Valentinois. "Remember, that if you have missed the enjoyment of witnessing our daughter's childhood, you have been spared the care and anxiety inseparable from a mother's heart during the illnesses from which even the healthiest children are not exempted. You

find our daughter an accomplished and delightful companion, endowed with every gift to excite affection, and to insure respect. Yes, one look on that pure and lofty brow, on that soul-beaming face, would impress conviction on every one who can appreciate goodness, that our daughter is all that the most fastidious could desire."

"Ah! when you have lived in her society, and witnessed, as I have done, the qualities which adorn her, how will you love—nay, adore her!" said I, borne away by my passionate affection.

"It is time to go," said the Duchessa, whose eyes had continually turned to the *pendule* on the chimney-piece.

"May I not accompany you?" asked I. "I will remain in your carriage until summoned to enter her presence; do let me go with you?"

"Yes, dear friend, you shall accompany

us," said the Duchessa; "but you must not enter the house until we send for you; I want to have no interruption to the first moment of joy of clasping our child in our arms. Ah! I see you think me very selfish, but I cannot help it."

CHAPTER XXI.

WE set out for Mr. Herbert's, and although the carriage was driven at as rapid a pace as was consistent with safety, the Duca and Duchessa complained of the length of time we took in going, and kept continually asking, "Are we near?—is this the street? O! shew me the house?"

The Duchessa trembled violently when the carriage stopped, nor was the Duca less agitated. Mr. Rivers was in the hall, ready to receive them, and to present Mr. and Mrs. Herbert. The hall-door closed after them, and

I threw myself into a corner of the carriage, my heart throbbing violently with joyful emotions. I kept my watch out and counted the minutes, starting every time I heard the least noise near the door. Oh! how interminably long seemed the hour that elapsed before I was summoned! At length, Mr. Rivers appeared at the door, and beckoned me. I leaped from the carriage, before the footman could let down the steps, and rushing through the hall, flew, rather than ran, up the stairs into the drawing-room. Never shall the joy of that moment be forgotten! On the sofa, seated between her father and mother, whose joint arms encircled her waist, sate my adored Selina. A radiant blush spread itself over her beautiful face as I approached and knelt before her. Her parents took her hand, and placing it within mine, said, "We bestow this blessing on you, and doubt not you will ever prove most worthy of it."

I pressed that dear hand to my lips, and my eyes met the dove-like ones of her I adored. Never were words so eloquent as that glance! It repaid every care and sorrow our separation had caused me.

“Now,” said Selina, “I have no wish unsatisfied! You know,” continued she, turning those beautiful eyes on me, “how I longed, how I languished, to have a father, a mother, that I could love. What an aching void was left in my heart even when about to be united to you, from my craving desire to have parents. Judge, then, of my happiness at present, when no longer bowed down by the consciousness of having a mother whom I could neither love nor respect. I have such a mother!” and she flung her arms around the neck of the Duchessa, while tears of joy chased each other down her delicate cheeks. “And my father, too, my dear father!” said she, looking at the Duca, with eyes beaming with affection.

“ Oh! the bliss of having a father to love, and be loved by, whom I can respect and venerate!”

An hour flew by, ere we had thought that half that time had elapsed, and the Duchessa, ever thoughtful of others, proposed that Mr. and Mrs. Herbert, with their daughter, should be sent for. Warm and fervent were the thanks offered to them by the Duca and Duchessa, for all their kindness to Selina; and great was the pleasure felt by this worthy family at finding that the amiable young creature in whose destiny they felt so sincere an interest, was no longer an isolated being, but the cherished daughter of the noble pair whom, even on so short an acquaintance, they saw were worthy to possess such a treasure. Nor was Madame de Stourville forgotten in the thanks, and she was all smiles and tears. It was now arranged that Mr. Herbert and Mr. Rivers should accompany the Duca de Valentinois

to the house at Bayswater, to explain to Lady Selina Mellingcourt that the deception she had practised was fully exposed, and to confront her, if necessary, with the nurse; while I was to escort the Duchessa and her lovely daughter to the hotel, where the Herbert family promised to join them at dinner, and to bring the *gouvernante*.

“Does not all this appear like a blissful dream?” said the beautiful Francesca, as, pressed fondly to the side of her dotting mother, she looked radiant with happiness. “And to think how near I was to my dear father and mother, without suspecting that such a blessing was in store for me. Oh! my heart should have whispered their vicinity.”

“How thankful your dear father and I ought to be,” said the Duchessa, “that those for whose daughter you passed did not usurp that place in your affections which happily it was reserved for us to fill. Oh!

I should have been jealous even of the dead, had you, my own Francesca, loved others as we wish to be loved. And yet this is a selfish feeling; for to have felt a child's affection for them, you must have been treated with indulgent fondness, and such treatment would have rendered your past life more happy than I fear it has been."

"The trials I have endured, dearest mother, have only served to teach me more fully to appreciate my present happiness," replied the dear girl.

It was a touching and beautiful sight to behold the mother and daughter, their arms interwoven around each other's slender waist; the one in all the perfection of matronly beauty, the other in the bloom of youthful loveliness, and so like each other, that the half-open rose resembles not more the full-blown one than Francesca did her mother. When the Duca de Valentinois returned to the hotel, and saw his newly-found daughter

seated between the Duchessa and me, with happiness beaming in her countenance, and that air of feeling as perfectly at home as if she had never been separated from her mother, tears of joy filled his eyes, and when Francesca ran to embrace him, and to take his hat and gloves, he pressed her in his arms and fondly blessed her.

“ I have so long been defrauded of the pleasure of performing the little services which are so soothing to a daughter’s heart to fulfil, that I shall jealously exact my right henceforth,” said Francesca, “ and you both,” looking at her parents with ineffable love, “ must submit to my officiousness.”

“ Do tell me all the particulars of your interview with that wicked Lady Selina Mellingcourt?” said the Duchessa.

“ Wicked and heartless she may well be called,” observed the Duca. “ When we entered her presence, Mr. Herbert explained

to her the object of our visit. She boldly denied the charge, and asserted that our child was hers; but when the nurse was brought into the room, and stated the truth, she was confounded. I then communicated to her the confession of her confederate, Mungo Mellingcourt, when, finding that further denial was unavailing, she acknowledged that she had imposed a spurious child on her husband, but declared that she had believed that child to have been the offspring of a poor woman, who had resigned all interest in it, on receipt of a certain sum of money. 'I am willing to attest this statement,' said Lady Selina Mellingcourt; 'in fact, it will now be necessary, for my own interests, that it should be proved, for the young person being neither my daughter nor that of my late husband, she cannot inherit the large fortune which he bequeathed to her, and which will now naturally revert to me, as the wife and only heir of Mr. Mel-

lingcourt.' 'You are in error, madam,' replied Mr. Herbert. 'The will of your late husband is so worded, that the young lady in question, whosoever she may have been proved to be, is the sole inheritor of his fortune. Mr. Mellingcourt doubted her having any claim on him, but her dutiful attendance and watchful kindness during his illness so won on his feelings, that he secured to her the indisputable possession of his property.' She confessed that she had taken her present lodging to be near Kensington Gardens, having learned that her pretended daughter frequently walked there, as she wished to have an interview with her unknown to Mr. Herbert. We left her in a state of anger painful to witness, at being baffled in her hopes of profiting by the change in our daughter's position, and though I assured her that a suitable allowance would be continued to her, I did not perceive that her anger was abated. The disclosures of the nurse having revealed the imposition prac-

tised on her by her *femme de chambre*, she as angrily reproached that person, as if her own conduct had been free from blame, and drew on herself, in return, a scene of coarse and vulgar recrimination, most humiliating to any one possessed of the least delicacy or feeling."

When the Herberts and Madame de Stourville arrived to dinner, the latter, always anxious to put herself forward, addressed the Duchessa de Valentinois, saying she hoped "that *Madame la Duchesse et Monsieur le Duc* would have no reason to be dissatisfied with the education bestowed on, and the principles implanted in, their charming daughter."

I could scarcely restrain a smile while I listened to the old Frenchwoman arrogating to herself the merit due to the governess who had brought up my beloved Francesca, and who had, while giving her every accomplishment, instilled into her mind every virtue.

“ But it was not her mind alone that I attended to, Madame la Duchesse,” continued Madame de Stourville, “ for during our tour in France and Italy, Mademoiselle had no *femme de chambre*, and so fondly was I devoted to her, that I performed all the functions of one; *à propos* of which, I often noticed a small, black mark, like a cipher, on the sole of her right foot, which I never could efface.”

“ Thanks, Madame, for having named it,” replied the Duca. “ It had wholly escaped my memory, but it confirms a statement made by the nurse, of my daughter’s foot having been marked by gunpowder by Mr. Mungo Mellingcourt.”

“ *Oh! que je suis contente dat ma chère et belle Mademoiselle* is not de daughter of dat abominable man dat did call me *vieille folle*. *Oui, Monsieur le Duc*, you may well look *incredule*, but so he did call me.”

The Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois

were too happy to take otherwise than in good part, the *bavardage* of the good-natured old woman, whose failings they forgot in consideration of the affection she had always evinced towards their daughter.

In a week after the *dénouement* above related, I had the supreme happiness of leading my adored Francesca to the altar, and, on the same day, I conducted her and my new father and mother to Meredith Park, where our honeymoon was passed.

“What strange rumours the newspapers circulate!” observed Mrs. Davenport to me, on making us her first visit. “It was stated, that you, my dear Mr. Meredith, were to be married to a Miss Mellingcourt. I knew it could not be true, and so I told Mr. Davenport, but he, who has grown so deaf that I can hardly make him hear, answered me, when I gave my reasons why such a marriage was improbable, ‘Ah! I find you have not forgotten the old scandalous chronicles of the neighbourhood.’”

I should only excite the envy of my readers, were I to attempt to paint the happiness of my wedded life. It still continues, though time has streaked with silver the tresses of my Francesca, and stolen away mine.

A handsome provision was made for Lady Selina Mellingcourt, who, however, lived not long to enjoy it. Madame de Stourville retired to her *belle France*, with a stipend adequate, not only to her wants, but to her wishes. Mr. Rivers has continued to reside with me, and is now the preceptor of my sons; and Mrs. Fector and the nurse have had no reason to complain of our liberality. The Duca and Duchessa de Valentinois, though now an aged couple, enjoy good health, and retain a freshness of feeling seldom to be found in persons so far advanced in years. They assert that this exemption from the ills attendant on old age is to be attributed to the happiness conferred on them by their children and grand-

children. The good Giuditta lived to see our first-born—which she declared was a much finer *bambina* than its mother—and died, beloved and regretted by us all.

And now, courteous reader, fare you well. Should you winter at Naples, we may chance to meet; or, in summer, should you pass the gate of Meredith Park, its porter will not refuse you entrance to view the magnificent oaks and cedars, for which it is so famed, and the splendid gallery of pictures, by the choicest old Italian masters, the gift of my excellent father-in-law.

THE END.

