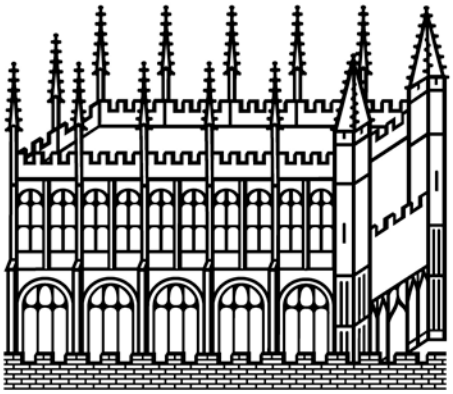

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FLEETWOOD:

OR, THE

NEW MAN OF FEELING.

BY WILLIAM GODWIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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FLEETWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER having resided at Matlock somewhat more than a month, we set out for Merionethshire. Mary had never before entered my paternal mansion; she had never been in Wales; and she expressed herself extremely pleased with all she saw. The vast and uncouth forms of the neighbouring mountains were exceedingly striking. The mansion itself was built in a style of antique magnificence; it had been erected by one of the leaders in the commonwealth of Cromwel; and, to an admirer of what-

ever is venerable for age, the shining and polished floors, the huge and misshapen tapestry-figures in some of the apartments, and the dark-coloured wainscot with its diminutive pannels which adorned the rest, were infinitely more gratifying, than all the sumptuousness of modern prodigality. The windows, as well as the halls and galleries, were large, and almost collegiate.

The day on which we entered the house in Merionethshire may be considered in some sense as the first of our marriage. Here we were to make our establishment, and set up our tabernacle; at Matlock and other places we shifted as we could. Here then was a rock upon which we were in danger to be destroyed. They were no trifling and fugitive discussions we had to adjust; I on my part had formed habits, of which it would be difficult for me to divest myself.

We arrived in the evening, and were in want of repose. We sat down to the fire-side where I had sat with my father a thousand times; we ate a delicious meal, while Mary listened with attention to many little anecdotes I related of the deceased, and stories of my boyish exploits and sorrows.

The next morning we walked round the apartments. There was a handsome, retired closet, opening into the principal drawing-room and at a short distance from my bed-chamber, the window of which commanded the most admirable prospect we had. The steeple and roofs of a beautiful village were distinctly visible; the river, beset with willows, meandered below; a venerable wood of everlasting oaks grew on one side, beyond which was discovered the silver main; while the other side was skirted by the crags of the gigantic mountain, that from my infancy I al-

most adored. This closet was my favourite retreat. Here I had been permitted to con my lessons while I was yet of school-boy age; and here it had ever since been my custom to retire with some favourite author, when I wished to feel my mind in its most happy state. In this closet I meditated, I composed, I wrote. If I wanted an ampler space to move in, I had but to open the door, and the largest drawing-room in the house offered itself for my promenade. By the side of the closet was a private staircase, which led me by a short cut to the river, the wood, and the mountain. I preferred this sequestered nook to all the rest of the mansion taken together. I entered it now, after a twelvemonth's absence, with a full recollection of all the castles which I had sat there and builded in the air, the odes, the tragedies and heroic poems which, in the days of visionary childhood, upon that spot I

had sketched and imagined. I turned to Mary, with the purpose of telling her the many ravishing associations which this closet presented to my mind.

This is an enchanting closet! said she.

It is.—My heart knocked at my bosom, my very soul was full of its little history, as I spoke.

Do you know, Fleetwood, I shall take this closet for mine? I will have all my drawings brought here, and arrange my favourite flowers in the window. Will you give it me?

Surely, my love! I am glad it pleases you so much.

My sensations at this moment were of a singular and complicated nature. I had been on the point of employing all my eloquence to describe to Mary how I loved this closet, how unalterably it had fixed its hold upon me as my favourite retreat. For this purpose I had recollected

lected in rapid succession all the endearments that made it mine, all the delights which, almost from prattling infancy, it had afforded me. In an unlucky moment my wife pronounced the decree, It shall never be yours again! The decision was unexpected, and my animal spirits were suddenly driven back upon my heart.

Yet I call heaven to witness, it was only the suddenness of the blow, and not any intimation of selfishness, that produced this effect. On the contrary, the moment I had had time to recover myself, my sentiment was, Mary, it is for ever yours! Dear, angelic sweetness, I shall be too happy, to witness your gratification! Shall I think this too great a sacrifice, who would offer up my life for you? It is no sacrifice! I have more joy in considering the things I love as yours, than in regarding them as my own.

Presently

Presently the bell was rung; and the flower-stage, the port-folios, and the drawings, one after another made their appearance. In the midst of the confusion, I withdrew to have some necessary consultations with my steward.

After an absence of three hours, I returned, and visited Mary in her retreat. By this time all her little sources of occupation and amusement were in order. I observed with delight the arrangements she had made. I gazed on the features of her charming face; she never looked more beautiful, than thus surrounded with the emblems of the innocence of her mind and the elegance of her taste. My heart exulted in beholding these human graces, associated and set off with a back-ground of my favourite steeple, mountain and prospect to the neighbouring main. I fed my eyes with the pleasing scene. I sat down by her side, viewed her drawings, and admired

the

the delicate forms and brilliant colouring of the flowers she loved. I turned to the prospect from the window, with the purpose of pointing out to her in detail the objects of which it consisted.

What a fool is man! My own folly, however much I may feel ashamed of it, I have sat down with the purpose to relate. The next morning, and the morning after, I missed my favourite, my old, myl ong-accustomed retreat, and sought in vain for a substitute for it. My library was in the other wing of the house, and answered to the drawing-room I have mentioned. It had a closet in it, built in the fashion of that which had caught Mary's fancy, with no other difference than that the prospect from the window, though for the most part the same, was in two or three points essentially inferior. I repaired to this closet; I took two or three books from the library, one after another; I tried to com-

compose myself. It would not do. This, in the days of my boyhood, had been my father's privacy; and, when by his death the use of the whole mansion devolved to me, I felt the closet which Mary had chosen as already mine, the scene of a thousand remembered pleasures, the object of my love.

Discontented here, I resolved to seek the garden. Immediately I missed my private stair-case. I had no resource, but in the public stair-case of the whole house. I could not get to that part of the garden which led to the river and the mountain, but by a formidable circuit. If I might not resort to my favourite haunts at perfect liberty, if I could not reach them unseen by any human eye, they were nothing to me. My domestics knew my customary seasons of taking the air; they watched the variations of my temper; and, when I was pensive and melancholy, were careful that the

shadow of no one of them should obtrude in my path.

I will go, and tell Mary what she has done. I will confess to her all my weakness. Nothing could be further from her thought than to occasion me this disturbance, and it will afford her the purest pleasure to repair it.

May I perish, if ever I breathe a syllable on the subject! What, shall I paint me thus pitiful and despicable in her eyes? Shall I tell her, that I love nobody but myself, and regard her gratifications with indifference? I will not tell her so! I will act so, that, if any one else should affirm it, he shall affirm the most impudent falshood.

She will never know that I have made this sacrifice at the shrine of love. So much the better. I shall know it. It shall be to my own heart a testimony of my affection. I do love her: heaven only knows how much. I love her for her

her misfortunes and her desolate condition; I love her for the charms of her person, and her unrivalled virtues. The smallest indulgence to her, is dearer to me than ten thousand gratifications to myself.

The generous exultation with which I surrendered my own accommodation in silence was temporary; the want of that accommodation which I had so long enjoyed, daily and hourly recurred. There is something wonderfully subtle in the operations of the human mind. Do I differ with another, in project for the future, or judgment on our past conduct? I immediately begin to find a hundred arguments to prove, how absurd and unreasonable he is, how just am I. No man can completely put himself in the place of another, and conceive how he would feel, were the circumstances of that other his own: few can do it even in a superficial degree. We are so familiar

miliar with our own trains of thinking; we revolve them with such complacency: it appears to us, that there is so astonishing a perverseness in not seeing things as we see them! The step is short and inevitable from complacency in our own views, to disapprobation and distaste toward the views of him by whom we are thwarted.

Mary, Mary, said I sometimes to myself as I recurred to the circumstance, I am afraid you are selfish! and what character can be less promising in social life, than hers who thinks of no one's gratification but her own? It was true, I could not tell her, This, which you so inconsiderately desire me to give up, is my favourite apartment. But she should have enquired of my servants. The housekeeper or the steward could have informed her. She should have considered, that a man, at my time of life, must have fallen upon many methods of proceed-

proceeding from which he cannot easily be weaned.

The thing of which I could reasonably accuse her, was, at worst, a rapidity of decision incident to her early years. Could she suspect that my practice was, to leave the closet adjoining to the library, and carry my books to the other end of the house?—I was incapable however of passing a just judgment in the case, and the transaction had an unfavourable effect upon my mind.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

Such was the incident of the first morning of our arrival in Merionethshire. Another question arose. Mary had heard of several respectable families in our neighbourhood, particularly the Philipses and the Morgans, the female members of which she understood to be agreeable and entertaining; and she was desirous to have intercourse with them. For this purpose it was necessary to go in form to our village-church, and to have it given out that there were certain days, on which mrs. Fleetwood would sit to receive company. In the evening of our first day in Merionethshire my wife entered on the subject.

To a person of habits different from mine this circumstance would have been trivial.

trivial. To me the idea came with many a painful twinge. I had all my life shrunk from this mummery, this unmeaning intercourse. I had travelled from one side of Europe to the other, in search of persons whose conversation should be tolerable to me. Mary saw with how ill a grace I received the proposition.

My love, said she, act in this matter as you please. Whatever shall be your determination, I promise to be satisfied. I will just mention what occurs to me concerning it, and will then be silent for ever. We are sitting down in Merionethshire, perhaps for life. Whatever we decide, cannot be reversed; we cannot repel our neighbours in the present instance, and call them about us again hereafter. Recollect then, my dear Fleetwood, the disadvantages under which I have hitherto laboured. My dear mother, the best of mothers, and most admirable

mirable of women—And at this recollection she burst into an agony of tears.

My dearest creature, interposed I, do not distress yourself with the melancholy recollection! Mary, I love you. There is no honest gratification, no gratification which you can desire, that I will not be zealous to procure you.

Hear me, Fleetwood! said she. Consult the merits of the case, and not the ardour of your kindness.—We had no lady-visitors. I have had no female acquaintance. Shall it be always thus? The manners of my sex are different from yours; what is graceful in a man would be shocking in a woman, and what would be becoming in a woman, is effeminate and reproachful in the stronger sex. I am afraid I can never learn, and improve myself in, the genuine female character, without the observation of my own sex. "The eye sees not itself, but by reflection from some

some other thing." Let me say too, that the society of her own sex is one of the natural consolations of a woman. I can feel a strong and entire affection for a man; I acknowledge it for you. But there is a certain repose and unbending in the occasional familiarity of woman with woman, of the softer and more fragile nature with its like, that powerfully conduces to the healthful and contented condition of the mind.—Fleetwood, I have the greatest reluctance to thwart you in any thing. Choose for me. Determine as you will, I swear you shall never find in me, either by word or look, the hint of a reproach.

Our discussion terminated in the formal churching, and the commencement of a tremendous series of wedding-visits. Artful hussy! in the way she put it to me could I refuse? Could I refuse a thing upon which, in this mild and specious temper of mind, her heart appeared

peared to be set?——I wrong her. There was no art in what she did; it was all the most adorable ingenuousness and sincerity. Or, if I may venture, by a bold allowance of speech, to call it art, it was that art, with which nature adorns her lovely sex more richly than with all the mines of Golconda, the art of persuasion, compelling us to feel the impossibility of resisting their honourable desires, and cheerfully to resign the compass of domestic affairs into their hands, to set us to what point they please.

On the two first mornings of our residence in Wales, I made a pleasant excursion, by way of exhibiting to Mary the beauties of the country. In the former I showed my wife the precipice from which, at the age of fourteen, I had fallen into the bason, then swelled by continual rains into a lake, which forms the source of the Desunny. She would climb

climb the acclivity along with me. She made me point out to her the inequalities of the almost perpendicular rock along which the lamb had frisked, while William pursued. She particularly noted the place from which the peasant and the lamb had been precipitated together. We fancied, as we viewed it, that we could see the mark among the tufts of grass, where my foot had slipped thirty years before. After having remained a long time on the spot, we took occasion, by Mary's desire, to make our way home by the cottage of William and the heroic girl, who had come in her boat to save him. The father had long since been dead: William and his wife had the appearance, by means of perpetual labour and frequent exposition to the air in all weathers, of an old man and woman. They had had a large family of children; but these were all grown up, the girls gone to service, and

the

the boys to sea; only their youngest child, a robust lad of fifteen, was at home with them.

In our mountainous country the use of a carriage is exceedingly limited, and three-fourths of the most exquisite points of view in my neighbourhood would have been lost to my wife, if she had not been an excellent walker. It was with pleasure that I perceived, I could take her a walk of ten or twelve miles in extent, or invite her to climb the highest precipices, without her sustaining the smallest injury. When a woman is so unfortunately delicate, or has been so injudicious brought up, as to be unable to walk more than a mile at a time, this effects a sort of divorce, deciding at once that, in many of the pleasures most gratifying to her husband's feelings and taste, she can be no partaker.

Our excursion of the second day was less adventurous than that of the first, and

and we were able to make more use of the carriage. After dinner I proposed reading with Mary a play of my favourite Fletcher. The piece was that admirable one of a Wife for a Month. Mary seemed to enter strongly into the feelings of the poet; we admired equally the high and generous sentiments of the tragedy, and the glorious imagery with which those sentiments are adorned. The character of Valerio particularly riveted her attention. She agreed with me that no poet of ancient or modern times, as far as her acquaintance with them extended, was able, like the writer before us, to paint with all that body and retinue of circumstances which give life to a picture, a free, heroic and gallant spirit. We especially commended his style, and coincided in opinion with Dryden, who confesses himself "apt to believe, that the English language in this

author

author arrived to its highest perfection; what words have since been taken in being rather superfluous than ornamental." Mary was roused in an extraordinary degree with the exhortations addressed by the queen to the heroine in the second act, stimulating her to the contempt of tyranny and death, and persuading her that by such contempt, she will even subdue the tyrant, and compel him to repent his ungenerous purpose. I read the sentiments of the royal speaker as they occurred, in the animated eye and glowing cheek of the charmer who sat beside me. She could scarcely help starting from her chair.

I was delighted with the effect of my experiment. How exquisite a pleasure may thus be derived from reading with a woman of refined understanding so noble a composition as that which engaged

gaged us! It is a pleasure that should be husbanded. I have demonstrated to me, at once the acuteness of her taste, and her aptness to conceive and participate the most virtuous sentiments. I almost adore her for these high and excellent qualities. At the same time we are like instruments tuned to a correspondent pitch, and the accord that is produced is of the most delightful nature! We communicate with instantaneous flashes, in one glance of the eye, and have no need of words. When we have recourse to their aid, I instruct at once and am instructed. I see how my companion feels the passages as they succeed; I learn new decrees of taste, and am confirmed in the old. Male and female taste are in some respects of different natures; and no decision upon a work of art can be consummate, till it has been pronounced on by both. Besides, that in such discus-

cussions we intermix

Grateful

Grateful digressions, and solve high dispute
With conjugal caresses : from my lips
Not words alone please her.

We proceeded, and came to the scene so wonderfully imagined, in which Valerio is seen dressing on the morning for church, and scorning with inimitable grandeur and ease the sentence of the tyrant, who had pronounced, that, at the expiration of the first month of his married life, he should lose his head. I had just read those words of his,

Thou, that hast been a soldier, Menalo,
A noble soldier, and defied all danger—
Wouldst *thou* live so long, till thy strength
forsook thee ;
Till thou grew'st only a long, tedious story
Of what thou hadst been ; till thy sword hung
up,
And lazy spiders fill'd the hilt with cobwebs ?

when the door opened, and the servant announced a visitor to my wife. It was the boy of fifteen, the son of William

the

the peasant, whom we had seen in the cottage of his father the day before. I asked the servant somewhat angrily, why he entered, disturbing our afternoon's tranquillity, to announce a visitor of this class?

The boy had come down, he replied, by the appointment of his lady, who had fixed that hour for his attendance.

Bless me! replied Mary, and so I did: I had entirely forgotten it. Do you know, my dear, in our stroll along the side of Idris yesterday, I observed two or three plants of a very rare species, and I thought I would return to them to-day, and take this boy for my guide? I would not trouble you yesterday to collect them, for I know you do not like such interruptions. It was true, I had received with pleasure the early lessons of Mary in botany, aided by the beautiful drawings with which she had illustrated them, and relieved with all the piquancy

of courtship; but, by some fatality, I could never shape my mind to the office of herborisation: it appeared too pinched and minute an object for the tastes I had formed.

I must go: I cannot send the boy away: we will finish with your beloved Fletcher after supper.—And away she tripped.

Good bye! *Au revoir*, Fleetwood! you shall see me again by dusk.

All this passed in a minute. Valerio and Evanthe, their perilous situation, and the deep interest my wife seemed to take in their adventures, were instantaneously banished, as if by the touch of a magic wand. I was too proud to struggle with this unsteadiness, even if there had been a probability that my struggle would have been successful, that is, that my wife would have sat down again to our reading with an unconstrained and genuine preference.

Before

Before I had time for recollection I found myself alone, with no object to remind me of what had passed, except the volume of Fletcher which lay open upon the table. The reader must recollect my character, as an old bachelor, as a man endowed with the most irritable structure of nerves, and who from infancy had always felt contradiction with inexpressible bitterness, to conceive how much I was disturbed with this pelting and pitiful incident.

Is this the woman, said I, whom I have taken as the partner of my life, who is more interested in two or three blades of grass, or a wretched specimen of mosses, than in the most pathetic tale or the noblest sentiments? If she has no respect for the illustrious dead, who cannot feel her contempt, methinks she might have had some for me, whose heart still beats, and whose blood continues to flow. Oh, it is plain she cares

only for herself, and is prepared to tread, as on an insect, upon every one who stands in the way of her present caprice! A curse on all mosses and botanical specimens!

This was the first sentiment I conceived. Presently however, love, almighty love, returned, and I said, God bless you, dear empress of my bosom! Can any taste be more pure than that which delights in the beauties of nature? How have I sat by her a thousand times, and admired, even in picture, the flowing and graceful forms, the soft and delicate surfaces, and the brilliant tints, of the vegetable tribe! What an honest and sincere mind is hers, that soars to admire the tremendous precipice and the gathering tempest, and can then descend to the frailest and minutest herb which clothes the face of our mother-earth! They are all alike the productions of that mysterious power, which is every where

where at work, and every where engenders the patterns of grandeur, of majesty, and of grace. Would I destroy in Mary this noble relish, this generous affection, that embraces all the creatures of God? ——God bless her, even in her caprices! They prove the youth and elasticity of her mind; they mark the morning of life; they are symbols of that truly feminine character, which so delightfully contrasts with my own sex, and constitutes the crown and essence of the life of man. I will turn botanist myself!

While these reflections passed in my mind, I was almost tempted to pursue Mary, and join her in her herborising excursion.—I know the place to which they are gone; I shall easily find them. How beautiful will the carnation of her cheeks, and the lilies of her soft fingers, the fairest blossoms creation ever saw, appear amidst the parterre of wild flowers that skirts the ridge of mount Idris! I think,

think, I see her now, as she stoops to cull them. I will tell her that I will never have a taste, a pursuit, a gratification, but what is hers.—Saying this, I put on my hat, I walked out at the hall-door, and hurried along the avenue.

No, I will not go to her! She has used me ill. She has wounded me in a point, where I am most alive. Fletcher, my old friend, friend of my boyish days, whose flights I have taught the echoes of the mountains to repeat, whose pages I have meditated in my favourite closet,

——she has affronted me in thee, Fletcher, and for thee, if not for myself, I will resent it.

No, this will not do. I will not be an uxorious, tame, wife-ridden husband. Has she shown any disposition to comply with me?

If I begin, I can never continue to sustain this part. In all my life I have been

been unused to brook control. The sensitiveness of my temper, will never allow me to bear to be thwarted, crossed, the chain of my sensations snapped and crumbled to pieces at every moment, with impunity. There is no reciprocity in this commerce. I could be content to yield much to her.——Aye, again I say, God bless her in her caprices!——But I cannot be content to be reduced to nothing. I must have an existence, a pursuit, a system of my own; and not be a mere puppy, dangling at her heels, and taught to fetch and carry, as she gives the word.

As time glided on, these meditations became less pleasant: they burned at my heart, and were bitter in my mouth. Tediously and heavily dragged along the two hours of her absence: I could fix on no plan, I could form no conjecture for the future. I could sit down to no occupation or pursuit. I paced the hall

and

and the avenue with impatient strides. Tired with this exertion, I threw myself indolently in a chair, and reclined my head on my hands upon the table.

At the end of two hours, Mary tripped with light and elastic step into the parlour.

I have had a delightful walk, cried she.

Have you? answered I, with a drooping and heavy voice, my powers blunted by the exhausting effects of all I had done and thought.

Bless me, Fleetwood! you are not ill? —And, saying this, she kissed my hand, drew a chair by my side, and soothed me with irresistible blandishments.

What a state was mine! If she had not been thus consummately lovely, if she had not mollified me with so divine a grace, I should have known how to have determined.

The reader who has had experience of

of the married life, will easily feel how many vexations a man stored up for himself, who felt so acutely these trivial thwartings and disappointments. Human beings, who enter into the engagements of domestic life, should remember that, however man and wife may in interests and affections be one, yet no interests and affections can prevent them from being in many respects distinct. No creature that lives can be always the same. Accidents of body or mind will frequently subvert the equilibrium of the system. Domestic avocations and cares will often call away the mind; and my wife will be thinking of the family linen or plate, when I want her to be thinking of the caverns of Pandemonium, or the retreats of the blessed. Even those observances of ceremonious life, which induce us to listen to the story of a stranger with appearances of interest greater than the reality, or

which stimulate us to actual attention, cannot always be preserved between persons who live together in a style of equality. He who flies from all contradiction, must dwell alone, or dwell with those to whom he never opens his soul. He who would reap the unspeakable joys of a social existence, must set his account with a life of accommodation, in which both parties will have many things to sacrifice, many things to forgive, many things that will be sure to keep their equanimity and good temper in exercise.—I can reason well upon these things now; but I bought my power of doing so at a very high price.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

At the close of a visiting-day, when we had had a full circle of the neighbouring gentry, Mary informed me, that she had been invited by the miss Philipses to join them to a dance, which was to take place at Barmouth the day after to-morrow.

And you have accepted the invitation?

Lætitia offered me tickets, and I have taken two. You will go with me, will not you?

What time do you suppose you shall return home?

About three or four in the morning. The moon will serve, and it will be a pleasant ride.

Mary, did I never tell you my age?

And

And what of that? You are not too old, I hope, for amusement, or for happiness?

My dear love, I have formed inveterate habits, and outlived the age of experiments. I can neither figure in a country assembly, nor sit up with impunity till four in the morning.

Then, Fleetwood, if you will not go, neither will I. I desire no pleasures of which you are not a partaker. I will send John to-morrow morning, to carry back the tickets.

Oh, Mary, cried I, I see more and more that our tastes are different. It is very natural; you are young; you ought to have married a man nearer your own age. Do not let me stand in the way of your amusements!

I had suffered much during the visit which was just concluded. My patience has been played upon beyond the extent of

of my bearing. I was impressed with a sentiment approaching to despair.—Mary did not at this moment comprehend the feelings which agitated me.

If it will be more pleasing to you, resumed she, I will go by myself.

And who do you expect will be your partner in the dance?

Lætitia has promised to get me a partner. There is the handsome mr. Matthews. As a new-comer, she told me, she dared say I might have him.

Very well! very well!

My dear love, what is it you would have?

I wish you were married to mr. Matthews!

Good God, Fleetwood, what have I done to deserve this unkindness?—And she burst into tears.

I took her hand.—Do not weep, Mary! I beg your pardon. I am to blame.

I try every way to please you, but in vain. I ask you for your company; you refuse it. I offer to stay at home; you reproach me with my youth. In the innocence of my heart I name to you a gentleman as my partner, and you insult me. My dear parents! Is my happiness for ever sunk with you in the caverns of the ocean?

As she spoke thus, I felt the bitterest self-reproach for what I had done. Yet she had touched me in a very tender point. Loving her as I did, I felt that she must be every thing, or nothing, to me. I could not bear that my wife should have amusements for which I felt no partiality, least of all, amusements of dissipation. I particularly felt an antipathy to this of dancing. I had not joined in recreation of that kind since my juvenile residence in France. And there, at least in the instances of which I had been a sharer, it seemed to me incom-

incompatible with decorum or modesty. The eyes sparkled, the performers handled each other in a way that fired the blood, the wholsome restraints of sobriety were banished, a species of electricity flowed from the joining fingers and meeting frames, and every thing seemed to beat an alarm to the ruder passions.

I found in Mary a considerable degree of resentment, or, to speak more properly, a strong impression of sadness, ensuing on this little conversation. The next morning at breakfast she rung the bell, and ordered that John should get ready to go with a message to mr. Philips's. The moment the servant had left the room, I went up to her, and said,

My love, I cannot bear to see you sad. Pray, oblige me, and go with the ladies to their assembly.

Fleetwood, said she, do you think I regret the assembly? What have you ever seen

seen in me so frivolous, as to justify the imputation? No; it is not the trip to Barmouth, it is the unkind way in which you expressed yourself to me, that I regret. I chose you from all the world. If you prove austere and unkind, what will become of me? You said, you wished me married to another: how many harsh and unfriendly thoughts are implied in that wish!

I am hasty; I am irritable: you know my foibles. My dear girl will have many things to forgive in me; but I hope my errors, thus acknowledged, will only draw us together the closer.

Then do not, Fleetwood, let many of them be of this kind! Have pity on the poor orphan, who has no shelter but in you!

I will be careful. But do not, Mary, lay any stress on such speeches as that of which you complain! The thought of not being yours never seriously entered

my

my mind. You are every thing to me. For your sake I am reconciled to the world. In you for the first time I feel that I belong to the great family of man, and experience those delicious sensations which grow out of the charities we form for ourselves.

Thank you, Fleetwood! And now who shall say, we are not happy?

But, Mary,—but—there is one favour you must grant me.

Name it! What can I refuse you?

You must go to the assembly.

Never. I see you have a strong objection to it, and that is enough. I wonder what possessed me, to think of it. It well suits a poor orphan as I am, to make one in a dance.

Fie, Mary! I shall never think you regard me as your whole family in one, if you always refuse to be gay. I am very angry with what I said to you about it last night. It was harsh; it was cruel; it

it was wicked. I shall not believe that you have forgiven me, unless you execute your original intention.

We argued the point for some time; but at length I triumphed. In a high spirit of romance I determined to go with her, and even insisted that she should dance with the young and handsome mr. Matthews, as miss Philips had proposed.

Yet my objection to the recreation of dancing remained as strong in my breast as before. I thought that no modest single woman should dance with any partner but her brother, or matron but with her husband. To witness this petty prostitution of my wife, was a penance I enjoined myself, for having so undeservedly mortified and insulted her.

One thought which occurred to my mind between the arrangement of this plan and its execution, I will mention,

to

to show how unreasonable and unjust I was prepared to be.—How came it, said I to myself, that Mary rung the bell in the breakfasting-room, to give her orders for John to carry back the tickets? Might she not have done this in some way when I was not present? Does it not look, as if she designed that the giving these orders should produce a scene? If there was art in this, how deep and odious must be her art; and how egregiously am I her dupe!

We went to Barmouth. It was impossible for man to entertain a greater detestation for the mummeries of a country-assembly than I did. How much had I already suffered from the youthful and heedless disposition of my wife! I had lost the use of my own house, in the way I liked. I had attempted to call her attention to the noblest objects of literature and refinement, and the attempt had only ended in my mortification. I

was involved in an endless series of visits with fox-hunting squires, and fat justices of the peace, their wives and daughters. Though I abhorred this sort of company, I had not equanimity to retire to some obscure corner of the house, and pursue my own occupations, while they acted over their etiquettes and decorums; nor indeed was this compatible with the complaisance I wished to show for my beloved.—But the worst was to come.

I soon distinguished among the beaux of Merionethshire the handsome mr. Matthews. He was a man of family, had been well educated, and possessed an advantageous air. He displayed, like some young noblemen I have seen, an easy assurance, which seems designed to put every one, less eminent in rank, or less captivating than themselves, out of countenance. He was soon introduced to my wife, according to the arrange-

ment

ment which had been settled. I stood at a little distance, and observed his *debut*. Mary was the most beautiful woman in the assembly, and accordingly mr. Matthews appeared highly satisfied with his fortune. As they passed me, my wife slightly named me to her partner, who bowed; but I thought I could discover a smothered contempt in his air. When they had gone a little way, he looked back at me; I persuaded myself that he was saying to her, Is it possible such an old fellow as that, should be husband to so fine a young creature as you are?

I could not avoid watching Mary and her partner during the dance. I observed that he was infinitely gallant and attentive to her. To my thought his countenance proved that he was exceedingly struck with her figure and beauty. He omitted no exertion to appear amiable in her eyes. They were the most

most graceful dancers, as well as the handsomest couple, in the room; and both entered with no little spirit into the amusement. I never saw Mary so conspicuously alive; Matthews's demeanour, I believe, never absolutely overstepped the bounds of propriety; he was certainly exceedingly well-bred; yet many of his actions were strikingly free. They escaped being vulgar or offensive, by the airy and flying manner in which they were performed; so that, if a woman, situated as Mary was, might in some instances have been startled, and felt prompted to complain, she would probably have been convinced by the little stress which was laid on such advances, that all was meant in innocence. Matthews talked to her incessantly in every interval of the dance, and Mary seemed sufficiently ready to sustain her part in the conversation.

I was consummately miserable. Whenever

ever they talked with more than usual earnestness, I could not help believing that Matthews was exciting her to lament her condition, in being married to a man of more than twice her own age. Every free and familiar action, every attention that this coxcomb paid to my wife, was a dagger to my heart. How beautiful, exclaimed I to myself, were the manners, in this particular, of the ancient Greeks and Romans! How charming does Lucretia appear, spinning at midnight in the midst of her maids, and Cornelia, surrounded with her children! Surely no wife ought to endeavour to make herself amiable and engaging in the eyes of any other man than her husband! When a marriageable girl allows herself, without fixed purpose, in sportive intercourse with a youth of her own age, we call her a coquette; what epithet does the mistress of a family deserve, who acts in a similar manner?

I felt

I felt all the torments of jealousy. How new to me were the sensations I experienced! I was in this sense a happy fellow, when I had no one's conduct to attend to but my own, and, being a bachelor, was not called upon to be minutely scrupulous in that. Now my reputation—no, that was not the first object of my care; reputation was not the bread of my life,—my peace of mind—depended on the conduct of another. How wretched is the state of that man who is deceived in so material a point, who presses to his heart the wanton partner of his bed, and believes her innocent; nay, who perhaps is habitually engaged in acts of civility to the coxcomb-serpent that stings him in the tenderest point! But, short of this, I could not bear that Mary should be weaned from me in any respect, or find amusement in the conversation of any man but myself. Perhaps this might lead her by

by no slow progress to regret that we were ever united. I depended now for all that was dear to me upon the disposition of one who was young, gay, versatile, and a woman. I watched over her, with the same sleepless anxiety with which a miser watches over his treasure: less happy in this, that his vigilance may be expected to be effectual to his purposes, while the vigilance of a suspicious husband is essentially powerless, and often contributes to give existence to the evil, alienation of mind or perpetrated infidelity, which he fears.

I had prided myself in the generosity of my conduct, in having insisted, that Mary should go to the assembly, that she should dance, that I would myself be her escort, and that Matthews should be her partner. If I had yielded one of these points, it was by no means necessary that I should concede them all. There was heroism in my determina-

tion; but it was a heroism beyond the mettle of my spirit, and I ought not to have attempted it.

At length this eternal evening drew to a conclusion. From the day of my birth to the present moment, I had never suffered so many hours of slavery. When we got into the carriage to return, I felt irresistibly prompted to avenge my sorrows by inveighing against the neighbourhood, the evening, and the gay and elegant dancer who had almost uninterruptedly engaged the attention of my wife. Poor Mary was in high spirits, and pleaded the cause adverse to mine in each of these points. I must confess that I to a certain degree inveigled her into this hostility. I asked her opinion of every thing that had passed, and was tardy in giving my own. She therefore frankly declared, that she was enchanted with our neighbours, who she thought were most amiable people, that Barmouth-

mouth-assembly was a ravishing scene, and that she had never met a more agreeable and well-behaved young man than mr. Matthews.

When she had finished her panegyric, I echoed it with a deep groan. Mary started. My spirits had too long been pent up, and I now gave a loose to my speech. I cursed the neighbourhood, and declared that country-assemblies were a device of the devil. I said that such young men as mr. Matthews, answered no mortal purpose but to disturb the peace of families. The conversation they held was seduction, their attentions were lime-twigs to entrap the unwary, and their touch was contamination.

Oh, Mary, cried I, in a tone of heart-felt anguish, did I ever think it would come to this? Ought you not well to have reflected, before you accepted the hand of Fleetwood, whether your taste led you, in preference to the sobriety of

a domestic fire-side, to dances and assemblies, the society of giggling girls, and the gallantries of a coxcomb? What prospect can we have of peace and felicity, when you have now declared your partiality for those things, which are equally abhorrent to my personal habits, and irreconcileable to my period of life?

Mary burst into tears.

My dear love, said she, you in this instance, and not mr. Matthews, are my seducer. Did not I at the first word give up my engagement; and did not you insist that I should adhere to it at all points? When you obliged me to go to this assembly, and to dance with the young gentleman who has been my partner, you, in all reason, engaged that you would not put yourself in ill humour with that which your own decree imposed upon me.

This is evasion, Mary. When I insisted that you should go, I did not include

clude in my demand, that your partner should be so insidious and persevering in his siege, that you should encourage him to still greater boldness, or that you should afterward become his advocate and eulogist. If your sentiments had been pure, instead of the delight you take in the bare recollection of Matthews, you would not endure so much as to hear him named.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

Conversation like this occupied us during a part of our ride home, which afterward subsided into a somewhat sullen silence. The next morning at breakfast, I revived the subject.

Mary, said I, have you thought of the incidents of yester-evening? My heart bleeds, while I recollect it. It has been the incessant occupation of my thoughts.

Fleetwood, we might be happy, if you were consistent. Tell me the habits of life you wish me to pursue, and I will exert my utmost efforts to conform to your will.

Mary, we might be happy, if you were consistent. I do not desire you to conform to any system of my prescribing.

scribing. I want the heart, and not an exterior pliableness.

Alas! my love, let me assure you that you do not know what you want. I am young. Fleetwood, you might have married an old woman, if you had pleased. I have somewhat, yet I think no inordinate share, of the gaiety and spirits incident to youth. Yet I am very sure that my sallies are perfectly innocent.

Oh, yes, madam; exceedingly innocent, to encourage such an enterprising young fellow as Matthews, and to find an extacy of delight in that scene which was tearing your poor husband's heart into a thousand pieces!

Fleetwood, you oblige me to tell you that I have very little encouragement to become a dutiful and attentive wife, when, with the unreserved conformity I use, I find it impossible to please you.

Very well, madam! very well!—And I left the room.

My

My character by this time is sufficiently manifest; I was to the last degree impatient of contradiction. Mary had shown herself an exemplary wife; if there was any sharpness in what she said, it was no more than is inseparable from the clear and open temper of an honourable mind. She was conscious of the entireness of her duty, and the disinterested sentiment which animated her; and it is no wonder, that she felt some indignation at the ungracious way in which all this was received. There is not a word that she uttered, which now, as I write it down, I do not approve. She might have courted me more, and have abstained from every thing that could increase the exacerbation of my spirit. But, if she had, she would not have been more successful.

Every thing I saw and felt at this time was so new to me! I had scarcely ever been

been checked by my tutor or by my father. Since I grew up to man's estate, the system of my domestic life had been with servants only, where every thing was done in uncontending obedience. The acuteness of my feelings had prevented me from being tyrannical and severe to my dependents; but, if my government was mild, it was not the less absolute. Now I lived for the first time familiarly, every day, and all day long, with a person claiming to have a will of her own; with one, who in every thing she was expected to do, had a right to have her feelings consulted, and was surrounded with privileges of a very different stamp from those of a servant; and, which is perhaps of more importance, with one, whose feelings made the principal part of the question, and respecting whom it was of less moment what she did, than with what tem-

per every thing she did or suffered, was sustained.

Unused, as I have said, to encounter the smallest obstacle to my will, or to have any of my decisions replied to, I felt the utmost impatience at those gentle manifestations of independence, which, to a man inured to better habits, would have made the person in whom they appeared a thousand times more lovely. The irritation I expressed was softness and conciliation to what I felt. The words I uttered were nerveless, compared with the tone in which they were spoken, and the gestures that accompanied them. My eyes flashed fire; my teeth ground against each other. When I burst out of the room thus abruptly, chains of steel and rocks of adamant could scarcely have withheld me.

The scene I have related was hardly over, when mr. Matthews rode up to my door,

door, to pay his respects to his partner of the preceding evening. This circumstance had not been expected; and, in the remote situation in which we lived, strict regulations are not inforced, as in the metropolis, respecting what visitors are to be let in, and what to be excluded. Mr. Matthews was shown into a parlour; the servant went to seek my wife. It so happened that Mary, who had been in the garden to visit the favourites of her care, entered the parlour by another door, before she was informed that mr. Matthews was there: otherwise, after what had just passed between us, she would most assuredly have excused herself from seeing him. She was going to retire, but she felt that that was impossible; and therefore, with much uneasiness and perplexity, entered into conversation with him.

When I had left my wife, I strayed into a well-known path, which led toward

ward the sea-side. At first I felt in the highest degree irritated against her behaviour. What chance, said I, have we for happiness, if, supposing me to be in the wrong,—it is impossible I should be wrong!—she, instead of soothing my weakness, thus answers me with taunting and retort?

Soon however I came to see the subject in a different light. Fleetwood! Fleetwood! said I, striking my forehead with my hand, what is it you are doing? I have entered upon a serious and weighty task, the guardianship of the felicity of a young woman, who, without reserve, or defence, or refuge against me, has thrown herself into my power. What engagements did I form to her father; with how solemn protestations did I undertake to remove all uncertainty from his mind! Macneil! death has given to these engagements an added sacredness: thy ghost shall be appeased!

appeased!—Look upon this young creature! Soft, and tender, and winning as she is, shall I be her destroyer? Do I doubt her innocence? Truth and honour are written in her front, in characters which folly itself cannot mistake. Was ever conduct more exemplary? Was ever temper more generous and obliging? What a brute then am I, to misuse, and give uneasiness to so much excellence! I will throw myself at her feet, and with tears of anguish confess to her my fault.

Full of these sentiments of remorse, I hastened back by the way I came, and entered the house. As I approached the parlour, and had my hand on the lock of the door, suddenly my ears were saluted from within with a burst of idle and obstreperous laughter. I was in the highest degree astonished. I instantly turned back, and enquired of the servants into the cause of this phenomenon. I no sooner heard from whom it

proceeded, than all my good resolutions vanished in a moment. In the disturbed state of my thoughts, it seemed to me that the visit of Matthews was an express declaration of war against me; and, unacquainted as I was with the circumstances which had betrayed Mary into the admission of his visit, I regarded the scene now going on, after what had just passed, as the most atrocious of crimes. I wished that my wife had embarked with the rest of her family, and were sunk in the caverns of the ocean. I wished that her name might never again be pronounced in my ears. I ordered my horse to be instantly prepared.

Whither was I going? I could not tell. For how long a time did I purpose to be absent? I knew not. I only knew that all places were paradise compared with that in which I was, and all modes of thinking heaven compared with the reflection that Matthews

was

was at this moment alone with my wife.

Before my horse was brought to the door, I began however to ask myself, whether it became me thus to go away, and leave my wife in undisturbed conversation with her paramour. Incensed with this idea, I suddenly altered my plan, and burst into the parlour. Both my step and my countenance were extremely discomposed.

My wife, conscious how strange an appearance this visit would have, was greatly embarrassed. Matthews remarked the fierceness of my demeanour, and distinctly read what was passing in my mind; but, like a man who knew the world, he assumed a more courtly and ingenuous air, in proportion as he saw I was enraged against him. He was aware that, if he gave the least encouragement to my passions, they would produce a scene. But this neither suited

him,

him, as a gentleman, nor as a man of the world. His character for insinuation and good-breeding was at stake, that he should appease the vehemence of my feelings, without seeming to notice them. He played his part in a masterly manner. At first my answers were short, and sullen, and in a style approaching to defiance. He was upon the alert to avoid every topic, which could, by any chance-direction, strike a spark into the train that was ready laid in my bosom. He praised my house, and the prospect it commanded. He observed, that he had heard I was a great traveller: he had himself lately returned from Paris; and he described the barriers which had been erected, with some other alterations which had recently been made there. By degrees I recovered my self-possession. Mr. Matthews delivered about a dozen remarks of nearly the same degree of importance, but uttered with sprite-

spriteliness and grace, and then took his leave.

As soon as he was gone, Mary informed me in the simplest and most ingenuous terms, how she had been betrayed into the receiving his visit. The story was so natural; her countenance, as she spoke, was so sweet and engaging; she was evidently so much distressed at the effect she feared this *mal-encontre* would produce upon me! I could not altogether resist the force of these demonstrations. I said little; but I withdrew, that I might seriously take myself to task for the weakness, into which I saw I was falling.

Fleetwood, said I, is it possible thou shouldst commit such egregious folly? What ground hast thou for this outrageous and frantic jealousy? What has passed, what can have passed, between Matthews and thy wife? Is she not the most innocent and affectionate of her sex?

sex?—I am myself the most fortunate of men. After having trifled away the flower of my age, and conceived so strong an antipathy to the sex, have I not met with the best of wives, a creature who, for beauty, for accomplishments, for gentleness and tenderness, has not her equal on the face of the earth? I am old: what matters that? She does not see it; she does not impute to me an imperfection. Flower of creation, most angelic, noblest of mortals, thou shalt be rewarded! Yes, if it is in my power, thou shalt be rewarded!

Would to God, I had always continued in this temper! But I was subject to perpetual relapses. Every thing that thwarted and crossed me, still produced in me new displeasure against this charming woman. She was like the angel, appointed by heaven to defend my steps; and, whatever circumstance of a painful nature occurred to me, still

seemed

seemed to be chargeable upon some neglect of hers. I suffered from visits and visitors; I felt myself restrained in going out and coming in; the liveliness of Mary's temper, and the quickness of her perceptions, made her, in spite of her gentleness, unfit for the curb; a thousand times, when I wished to fix her attention to a particular point, and when I had worked up my whole soul with the imagination of it, she was drawn aside by some new fantasy, and left abruptly the pursuit, the lecture, and the professor: all these evils came to me from my wife.

It is human nature, that a man should retain some resentment against the instrument that has often wounded him, however valuable the instrument may be, and however innocent of any purpose to harm. The man, who has repeatedly crossed me in my desires, and has constantly stepped before me in the objects

of life, it is morally impossible I should not come to consider as a bad man. It was thus with Mary. Every time she did any thing that jarred with my propensities, and by some accident or other no day passed without something, greater or smaller, of this kind, my favourite theory about the female sex revived; I recurred to the bitter experience of my youth; and swore that, however it might in certain instances be glossed over, all women were in the main alike, selfish, frivolous, inconstant and deceitful.

It was a strange war that was continually going on in my bosom. I doted on my wife to distraction; I felt that I could not exist without her; I saw that she was every thing that was lovely; her tones penetrated my soul; her smiles drew me from my most stedfast purposes, and made me as ductile as wax to the aims she proposed. Yet I taught myself

myself gradually to curse this as weakness, and to regard it as a slavery which some devilish witchcraft had fastened on my heart. I murmured at my way of life; I roared like a lion in the toils. My whole existence was tempestuous. At certain moments, when Mary directed against me all her powers of fascination, I felt the joys of heaven; at other times, and these were of longer duration, I suffered the torments of the damned.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

The month of September came, and with September that variable weather, which ordinarily marks the period of the equinox. At this time a sensible change discovered itself in the health of my wife. Her appetite left her; her nights were sleepless; she became languid, and meagre. I was deeply affected with the alteration I perceived; I was beset with the fear that my unkindness was the occasion of what I saw.

Alas, Mary, said I, you wanted a very different treatment from that which you have received from me! All tender and gentle you are in your own nature; all tenderness and gentleness ought to have been the behaviour that was addressed to you. With mildness and benignity

were

were you brought up by the best of fathers and of mothers; I myself have witnessed their affection; often have I heard you describe it. It was not fit you should fall from the hands of these kind guardians, into those of a husband, harsh, severe and capricious as I have been. She has suffered the most terrible of all losses; she thought to find a refuge from calamity and a compensation for her sufferings in me; was it right that I should have been the person to aggravate her woes? She cheerfully resigned the prerogative and the preference of her sex and age, the marrying a young man in the bloom of life, with the wholsome hue of youth in his cheeks, with a smooth and unfurrowed brow, not yet enslaved to peculiar and unaccommodating habits, with a warm imagination, and a fresh and unsated relish of the various pleasures of existence. Ought I not to have done every thing

that

that my mature period of life would admit, to lessen to her the sacrifice she had made?

Mary saw the anxiety and remorse under which I laboured. She exerted herself, to the utmost of her power, to relieve them. She dressed her pallid countenance in smiles; they were the smiles of a winter's day, when the sun sends forth a sickly beam amidst watery and congregated clouds. She protested, she was happy; she solemnly assured me that she thought my conduct toward her immaculate. I caught her repeatedly in tears. I endeavoured to tempt her with parties of pleasure. With very different feelings from those I have formerly described, I called the Philipses and the Morgans around me. She refused these avocations as often as she could. When compelled to accept them, she sat passive and joyless amidst the youthful circle, except at moments when she

she perceived my eye turned inquisitively upon her, and then she forced an artificial animation, which quickly again subsided into cureless dejection. I enquired after another country-assembly; I wished for Mr. Matthews again to waken her into enjoyment. When I proposed tickets to her, she smiled significantly in my face; but added, that it would not do.

What a life is this? said I. What a life for me, who have ever led my days free from dependence or restraint? Am I converted into a *garde-malade*, having for my constant occupation to watch the symptoms of another? Are my sensations, to which I have so long been a slave, to pass unheeded and as nothing? Is all my happiness, my peace of mind through every successive moment, to depend, not merely on the good pleasure and complacence of another, but on the state of that persons pulse, or the clouds

which may accidentally hover over her diseased fancy?

Yet I call heaven to witness that, however I occasionally murmured under a system of life so opposite to that to which I had been accustomed, my love for my wife was no wise diminished. The more she wanted my aid, the more eager I was to afford it. The more she fell away from the healthful sleekness of a beautiful woman, the more she appeared to me like an angel. If it was but seldom that she could rouse herself to an entire interchange of affectionate thoughts, these intervals became as transporting as they were rare. I could patiently watch through a month of eclipse, to be rewarded at last with a sight of the God of my idolatry. The mother who rears a sickly and perishing child, is always found to love that child better than her robust and comely one; her own labour

labour has become kneaded up in the little being before her; he seems the creation of her hands, continually dependent for his existence on her breath. It was thus I felt toward Mary. She in return became more affectionate than ever; she was sensible of my cares, and eager to acknowledge them.

I firmly believe that I am the most capricious and wayward being that ever existed. I never remained permanently in one state of mind. After fits of fondness, anxiety and disinterestedness inexpressible, my mind, exhausted with cares, would sometimes recoil on itself; and I pretended, in the bitterness of my heart, to cast up my gains. It is true, said I, I love Mary; I cannot help it; this love is the star of my ascendant for the rest of my days. But what am I the better for it? What are her merits? What have I ever experienced from her but thwarting and disappointment? I feel

that I have lost the freedom which was once my portion; and without freedom what is life?

Mary, as I have said, was exceedingly anxious to conceal from me the uneasiness under which she laboured. Symptoms occasionally appeared in her which alarmed me, and which seemed to partake of an alienation of the understanding. Though generally comfortless and sad, she would now and then break into an opposite tone of mind, and be seized with fits of merriment and laughter. I can conceive nothing more horrible than this laughter; it expressed misery more strikingly, than all the sighs and tears and groans in the world could have done.

My wife slept little; and her short and unfrequent slumbers were exceedingly disturbed. She talked in her sleep; her words were murmuring, indistinct and incoherent; but they re-

ferred to her family; particularly to her mother.

Mary, said I, you will break my heart. What can I do to comfort you? Your mother I cannot restore to you; I cannot compel the ocean to give back her dead. But all that I can, I will do. I will in all things study your inclinations; I will never thwart and oppose you, as I have done; I will bestow all my thoughts in the effort to relieve you; I will seek for still new pleasures, till I find some that shall be cordial to your bosom.

My dear Fleetwood, she replied, never mind me. Do not give yourself this uneasiness about me. All will be well. I feel a weight just here (clapping her hand to her head); but it is only a cloud, that will blow away, and the sun will shine again. I will talk to myself, and bring my temper into better order. I am ashamed, that I should thus torment you,

you, who ought to be your comfort and your helper. It shall not be thus long.

At other times I talked to her in a style, partaking of reproach.—Would to God, Mary, you loved me, as I love you! Your thoughts would not then be all upon the things you have lost and cannot regain. You would sometimes think of me, and be happy. To me you are every thing; I think of you as an angel, and think of nothing else; having you, I want nothing; friends, fortune, country, all the gratifications of life, I should never regret, if blessed with your affection. Hard is the fate of him, whose passion is unreturned by the object of his love; or who, when his bosom burns with all the ardour of attachment, obtains nothing but a moderate and glimmering kindness, insufficient to awake contentment in the mistress of his heart!

There were occasions, when I talked to her in a stronger style. I told her,

that

that the weakness she indulged was unworthy of her education and her powers. I described it as the characteristic of a feeble mind and a vacant understanding, to dwell thus obstinately upon what was now placed beyond the reach of fate. I exhorted her peremptorily to oppose the foe that had invaded her peace. I told her, that human creatures had a being and duties of their own, and that it became every one who would escape the contempt of his fellow-men, to rouse himself to the consideration of them.

One further circumstance occurred in the progress of Mary's distemper. She would steal from her bed in the middle of the night when no one perceived it, and make her escape out of the house. The first time this accident occurred, I was exceedingly alarmed. I awoke, and found that the beloved of my soul was gone. I sought her in her closet, in the parlour, and in the library. I then

called

called up the servants. The night was dark and tempestuous; the wind blew a hollow blast; and the surges roared and stormed as they buffeted against the hurricane. A sort of sleet blew sharp in our faces when we opened the door of the house. I went myself in one direction, and dispatched the servants in others, to call and search for their mistress. After two hours she was brought back by one of my people, who, having sought in vain at a distance, had discovered her on his return, not far from the house. Her hair was dishevelled; her countenance as white as death; her limbs cold; she was languid and speechless. We got her, as quickly as we could, to bed.

This happened a second time. At length I extorted her secret from her. She had been to the beach of the sea to seek the bodies of her parents. On the sea-shore she seemed to converse with their spirits. She owned, she had been

tempted

tempted to plunge herself into the waves to meet them. She heard their voices speaking to her in the hollow wind, and saw their faces riding on the top of the waves, by the light of the moon as it peeped precariously through the storm. They called to her, and bid her come along, and chid her for her delay. The words at first sounded softly, so that it seemed difficult to hear them, but afterward changed to the most dolorous and piercing shrieks. In the last instance a figure had approached her, and, seizing her garment, detained her, just as she was going to launch herself into the element.—The servants talked something of a gentleman, who had quitted Mary, precisely as they came up to conduct her home.

She confessed that, whenever the equinoctial wind sounded in her ears, it gave a sudden turn to her blood and spirits. As she listened alone to the

roaring of the ocean, her parents and her sisters immediately stood before her. More than once she had been awaked at midnight by the well-known sound; and, looking out of bed, she saw their bodies strewed on the floor, distended with the element that filled them, and their features distorted with death. This spectacle she could not endure; she had crept silently out of bed, and, drawing a few clothes about her, had found her way into the air. She felt nothing of the storm; and, led on by an impulse she could not resist, had turned her steps toward the sea.

This was a terrible story. I saw that some immediate and decisive remedy was indispensible. I saw that the state of mind she was in, if not effectually changed, led in direct course to one of two issues, derangement of intellect, or suicide. Poor Mary! How deep an impres-

impression the fatal catastrophe of her family had made upon her mind! I was of all men most inexcusable in having forgotten this. I had seen the whole progress of the impression, and with what difficulty she had been recalled to the world at first. If, in the warm affection she had conceived for me, in her marriage and subsequent prospects with the man of her choice, she had in some degree risen from the tomb, and come away from the recent graves of those she loved, did that form an excuse for me? On the contrary, it laid me under the highest and most indelible obligation. What a proof of love! Did ever wife give to her husband, or mistress to the most devoted of her admirers, a more incontrovertible evidence of attachment? And I, in my ingratitude and insensibility, had shut my eyes upon the true merit of this conduct, and treated with rudeness and asperity the amiable devotee!

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGE of scene was a medicine which the case obviously required. She must not be within reach of the sea. She must be, where it was impossible for the ear to catch the roaring of the waters. I further conceived that it was desirable to convey her to some place, where variety of amusement should draw off her attention, from the horrible imaginings with which she had lately been haunted. Mary was young; and there is something in the spring and first unfolding of life, which seems particularly to demand the interposition of diversified objects and vivacious entertainment. In the present case nature herself appeared to point out the remedy. Mary had shown a decisive partiality for visits and assemblies

blies and crowds. I now believed, that it was an indistinct consciousness that she could not support herself without these aids, that had directed her choice. I fixed upon a removal to Bath.

My wife derived great and evident benefit from this transplanting. Some languor remained for a few days; but it speedily disappeared.

It is impossible to conceive with what joy I hailed her return to health. I had had the most horrible prospect before me. I had seen the wife of my bosom given up to the agonies of a distracted spirit. I had felt a remorse and oppression of mind, to which till that hour I had been a stranger. I accused myself as the author of her calamity. The tenderest flower in nature's garden had been committed to my care, and I was deeply responsible for the manner in which I had treated it. If she seemed to have forgotten the premature destruction

tion of her family, I ought not to have forgotten it. I ought to have considered her as a convalescent, that required every art to defend from a relapse, and to lure away from the action of those causes which had produced her disease.

For many days I fed upon the pleasure which her recovery afforded me. I saw, with extacies of delight, the roses once more unfolding their bloom upon those cheeks, late so livid and so pale. For several weeks before we left Merionethshire, Mary had gradually become more and more dejected; and, if at any time she smiled, her smiles, as I have said, had in them something more sad and terrible to my heart, than tears in any other case would have suggested. Now I saw in them, once again, the honest expression of a mind accessible to amusement and pleasure. I saw those gathering clouds, which had been felt by me like the end of the world, dispersed

spersed and clearing away, as if they had never been. I thanked her a thousand times; I kissed the new-blown roses; I clasped her in my transported arms.

Mary, said I, you have brought me back from the very dens of despair. Oh, Mary, what alarms have I felt! It is indeed an awful thing, to be in love!—Poor creature, how much must you have suffered! Do you remember, when you sallied forth on that terrible night? Do you remember, when, as you said, some friendly, unknown hand snatched you back, just as you were going to be swallowed up by the billows?——No, I will mention the subject no more. I will be the most cautious and attentive of husbands. Brute that I was, I had not considered how much delicacy and forbearance your sweet frame demanded. You are an angel, and I treated you like a mortal. Will you forgive me?

I wish this recovery had taken place

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less rapidly. Mary passed from one extreme to the other, without almost an interval between. She made acquaintances, she resorted to all public places; she was involved in a perpetual round of engagements; she laughed, and talked, and danced, and sung, for ever; at least so it appeared to my sickly apprehension. Yet I was upon my guard, not to check, or seem to disapprove, as I had formerly done, the avocations she chose. Sometimes indeed, with ever-subtle anxiety, I was alarmed for the sanity of her intellect. Once or twice I hinted to my charmer in an obscure and distant way, that she was over-acting her part. On these occasions she looked at me with a wistful and wintry smile, that brought back to my recollection all the horrible apprehensions I had lately entertained. I kissed her, and told her, I saw she was right.

Here then I was, torn, not now from my

my closet and my private stair-case, but from my paternal mansion, and the haunts, where once my careless childhood strayed. Lately the most independent man alive, I was become a mere appendage to that tender and charming trifle, a pretty woman. I adored my wife; but I had cultivated high ideas of the prerogatives of my sex, and I did not altogether relish the being thus reduced to a cipher. My geographical situation was now the offspring of necessity, not of choice. I felt like the persons I have somewhere read of, acted upon by a magnetic influence, who wore no chains or fetters, and yet were prisoners, struggling perhaps to advance in an opposite direction, but always compelled to follow the steps of him who exerted this ascendancy over them.

Bath, of all places on earth, I detested. I had some unpleasing associations respecting it, arising from certain trivial adven-

adventures, which I have not thought it necessary to record in this history. But, independently of these, I had been, through life, with very few interruptions, a lover of nature, of her romantic and magnificent scenery, of her simple and unvitiated manners. Bath appeared to me the very focus of artificial society, of every thing that was frivolous, affected, impertinent, overreaching and licentious.

Deeply in love as I was, I could not help speculating, with no agreeable reflections, from the new lights I had derived on the character of my wife. Fickle and capricious I judged her; and, thus judging, I could not avoid sometimes viewing her under the notion of a beautiful toy, a plume of costly feathers, or a copious train of thinnest gauze, which nods gracefully, or floats in a thousand pleasing folds, but which is destitute of substance, firmness or utility.

utility. There must be something, I thought, radically defective, in so fluctuating a character. She acted (thus I construed her demeanour) inconsiderately and idly; she could be induced to no fixed spirit of attention; she was at one moment sunk in the lowest depths of misery, and at another wild with extravagant gaiety, with no interval to qualify the transition, with no self-government to give propriety or moderation to either. A being acting thus, was it entitled to be ranked in the scale of moral existences? What dependence could be placed upon the consistency of any thing so versatile? What principles could dwell in the bosom of so mere a woman?—All these reasonings brought back to my mind mrs. Comorin, the marchioness de L. and the countess of B.; and I reverted to my long established sentiment, that the sex were all alike. What a fool

a fool was I, ever to have doubted it!

Indulging this ill-humoured and inequitable estimate of my wife, it was natural that I should be displeased with the figure I made on the present occasion. Once, said I to myself, I was a man! Ambition had its dwelling-place in this bosom. How many thoughts and projects and inventions, for fame and for usefulness, have passed through my mind? In reality, it was this ardent desire to be something, to record myself on the rolls of my species for some praiseworthy deed, that had haunted me for ever, and poisoned my tranquillity in every stage. My father and my grandfather were admirable men. What matters it, that they were merely opulent English merchants? Not to introduce here many other anecdotes scarcely less honourable to their characters, the se-

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nior who took up the little vagrant Ruffigny and made him his son, and the junior who willingly yielded that this vagrant should enter into the joint possession of his inheritance, were no ordinary men. Ruffigny himself and Macneil, the two most distinguished of my friends, were of that stamp, who did nothing for fame, but every thing for utility, for venerable simplicity, and for virtue. It was not the loud blast of applause that I demanded; it was, that I might look on myself with a satisfied mind; and that those who knew me most, might love me, and who could judge me best, might say, He has not lived in vain!

And were all my projects, and was the never-resting anxiety of my bosom, reduced to this? Formerly I said, I am nothing; because no achievement I ever performed came up to my own ideas of what became me. Now I might say, I

am

am nothing; because, with regard to any such ideas, I was literally palsied. I was a lover. Alas, I was past the age, when a man can rest satisfied with this one frivolous passion, and see in the world only his Julia! Love, is a passion in which soul and body hold divided empire. The meaner half of our nature is essential to its support. It is sex, it is "a set of features and complexion, the tincture of a skin," that constitutes its origin and principle. Considered in this light, it is, all through, a selfish sentiment, the pampering of a weakness, a delicious scheme for beguiling the hours and weeks of our existence. Certainly man, particularly the man whom heaven has endowed with inventive faculties and a comprehensive intellect, was made for something better than this. I was now engrossed by a single individual; I was playing a subservient and humble part in her train; and even the character and

attributes of this individual did not at all times command my approbation. Assuredly I did not always look back upon this, with complacence, or with patience.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.

It was at Bath that I first reduced to practice the other part of the advice of my deceased Mentor, the calling about me my distant relations, young men who, from the regulations of society, had the best claim upon my assistance.

I had had a kinswoman, descended from a sister of my grandfather, with whom we had preserved little intercourse, because we had always considered her character as by no means calculated to do credit, to any one who should be connected with her. The woman was now dead; but, while living, she had run a singular career. She had been given in first marriage to a wealthy esquire of Wales, of the name of Gifford. This man she had led for several years

years a weary life. She was of exquisite beauty, tall, graceful and captivating. Her tastes were expensive, and her manners gay. Her demeanour was spirited and impressive, her passions volatile, and her temper violent. With all this, she was by no means destitute of capacity. She was eloquent, witty and sarcastic; exhibiting, when she pleased, the highest breeding, and delivering her remarks with inexpressible vivacity and grace. Thus endowed, she was surrounded, wherever she appeared, with a little army of suitors. Every youth of fashion, who had the courage to look up to her, became her professed admirer; and, among these admirers, it was pretty universally believed that all had not offered up their incense in vain. At length, impunity made her heedless; she was caught in a situation with a young officer, a Creole by birth, which admitted of no ambiguity; her husband

could no longer overlook her offence; and a divorce was the result. Her character being thus blasted, she gave full scope to her appetite for pleasure; she retreated to London, and occupied a very elegant mansion, which was for some time a favourite haunt for the most dissipated of our young nobility. While the divorce was depending, she was allowed, by the ecclesiastical court, a tolerably handsome income out of her husband's estates; and, when this ceased, the defect was understood to be supplied by the more opulent of her guests.

This prosperity however did not last for ever. Mrs. Gifford's charms, by the effect of late hours and incessant dissipation, rapidly subsided. She was no longer a novelty. She had had many fortunate lovers; but she had not been lucky enough to secure one, who, by the entanglement of habit or otherwise, should be inclined to preserve the autumn

tumn of her days from indigence. She retired, with a dejected heart, and an empty purse, into Wales, and took up her residence in a market-town, in the very next county to that where my father lived. But, though mrs. Gifford was no longer handsome enough for Rotten-Row or Pall-Mall, she made a great figure in the remote quarter of the world which now received her. Her recommendations, as I have already said, were not merely those of person; she possessed understanding, animation and taste. She had seen much of the high world, and she had eminently the talent of giving poignancy to her anecdotes and remarks.

In the town where she dwelt, lived also a mr. Kenrick, a surgeon, of great skill and ability in his profession. This man was beloved by all the country round, not only on account of his art, and the humane and liberal style in

which he dispensed its benefits, but for his manners, which were in the most striking form of artlessness and simplicity. With an uncommon fund of good sense and profound sagacity, he was, as to all the affairs of the living world, a child. He was imposed upon by every artful story, and his purse was open alike to relieve distress and gratify imposture. He could not find in his heart to be severe to any one; and the wretch who had ten times deceived him, was sure, if detected, to be dismissed at worst with nothing harder than a patriarchal rebuke. Add to this, he was subject to the strangest fits of absence, which often involved him in incredible mistakes and absurdities; though, as if by the interposition of a good genius for ever watchful over the steps of this admirable creature, his distractions had never been known to produce a pernicious effect in the exercise of his profession.

My worthy kinswoman saw at once into the value of this memorable person. She thought him as exactly fitted to become her second husband, as if he had been made for the purpose. Poor fellow, he had perhaps never in his life bestowed a single thought upon love and marriage. But mrs. Gifford knew, that the man who cannot be brought to enact the personage of a suitor, may, by a dextrous change of the character of the sexes, be an admirable subject for a clever woman, who should think proper to pay her addresses to him. The ladies of Llanvelling refused to admit the visits of this interesting Magdalene, and therefore she had no chance to meet the doctor at a third place; but that obstacle was immediately removed, when mrs. Gifford opportunely fell ill of a languishing distemper. She had great address in conducting the symptoms of her indisposition, as she had address in every

thing she seriously undertook; poor Kenrick could not tell what to make of it. One thing however he better understood, the charms of her conversation: she exerted all her talents to fix herself in his good opinion; and never perhaps in her life had she failed in an attempt of that sort. She did not chuse to have a tedious illness; for it was not to her purpose that he should regard her as a decided invalid. She was ill long enough, however, to secure poor Kenrick's partiality. He had never before experienced in any eminent degree the pleasures of female society; the Welch ladies were not calculated to afford them to a man of science. Mrs. Gifford's fire-side was a most delightful retreat to the rural surgeon, after the labours of the day; if he was not there every evening, he every evening wished to be there. The lady, on the other hand, took every precaution to remove his diffidence; she showed

him,

him, not so much by words, as by affectionate expressions, and a seeming overflowing of the soul in his company, that he could not visit her too often. Kenrick had been a total stranger to this species of flattery, not because his neighbours did not honour his merit, but because they wanted the skill to honour it in this way; and he was so much the more passive and defenceless to its operations.

All this coquetry terminated in marriage; but the man of medicine found mrs. Kenrick a very different sort of woman from what mrs. Gifford had appeared. The bent of his mind rendered him incapable of the habits of accumulation; but the income of his professional labours was far from despicable. When mrs. Gifford had come down into Wales, fifty pounds constituted the whole fortune, principal and interest, that she possessed. So circumstanced, it was impossible for any woman to have more unexpensive tastes, or a more decisive relish

relish for rural retirement. No sooner however had fortune changed, than she resumed her former propensities. She began with adding an elegant saloon to her husband's house, and decorating his little grounds in a sort of Versailles style. It was in vain for Kenrick to remonstrate; she was dashing and peremptory; he gentle, forbearing, and unqualified to contend. She soon grew tired of the delights of Montgomeryshire. One morning she read in the papers of the death of a surgeon of the first eminence at Bath; she found that this afforded an opening of the most auspicious nature for her husband, and insisted upon his removing thither. Kenrick's talents and knowledge of his profession would have made their way any where; but his wife was a clog hung about his neck, that made it impossible for him to rise. She filled his house with assemblies of demi-reps and debauchees; desperate as to the recovery of any character in the

world,

world, she resolved to make that figure by dissoluteness and effrontery, which, if she had set out right in life, she might have made by elegance, accomplishments and virtue. Kenrick lost his courage, his activity, and his employers. Death came at a convenient moment, and, by means of the disease, usually styled a broken heart, rescued him from the horrors of poverty. His wife had taken no care in the seasons of her prosperity, to provide for an evil day. She sunk into obscurity, by all neglected and by all despised; and, after several years of wretchedness, terminated her existence in a parish-workhouse.

This woman had two sons. The fate of both was singular. Born, the eldest under the roofs of magnificence, and the second in the mansion of competence and plenty, they were reduced at an early age to absolute want. The former bore the name of Gifford. After several years

of marriage without the least promise of offspring, his mother had at length presented this son to her first husband. But, in the ecclesiastical proceedings which took place soon after his birth, it was proved to the satisfaction of the court that he was illegitimate, and he was cut off by act of parliament from the large inheritance to which he seemed to have been born. Her second son was the offspring of the excellent and guileless Kenrick; and he was ruined, equally with his elder brother, by the unhappy issue of his father's professional life.

Between these two youths there had been an antipathy from the earliest period of the existence of the latter; at least it was deeply felt by Gifford for his unwelcome cadet. Gifford was a youth of a dark complexion, and elegant figure, sagacious, shrewd, supple and insinuating. He had been only seven years of age at the period of his mother's second mar-

marriage. She had never loved her son; for she beheld him as the innocent instrument of her disgrace. He harboured in his childish bosom a secret abhorrence of his mother. The extraordinary change which had taken place in his fortunes in infancy, had probably, when he came to know it, served in a wonderful degree to sharpen his faculties. His nurses and attendants did not fail to tell him, that he had, during the early months of his existence, been looked upon as the heir to twenty thousand a year. The eternal recollection that the open misconduct of his mother had been the cause of his losing this, made him look upon her with the sentiments of a demon. Extraordinary as it may seem, long before he was seven years of age, he understood all he had suffered, or at least felt it as deeply, as a man of forty might have done. This boyish impression of dislike to her on whom he solely depend-

depended, taught him early habits of hypocrisy. Two or three times, in the beginning, his feelings of antipathy had broken out; but the haughty and imperious temper of his mother had crushed them, with such terrors as no school-boy courage could withstand. From this time he learned the tones of submission, and even of reverence; and, being of a remarkably quick capacity, no Roscius or Richard could have played the character he assumed more consummately. Even the penetrating observation of mrs. Gifford was deceived, and she was persuaded that this viper doted on her to distraction. Love, in an infinite majority of cases, begets love. Perceiving how much the boy seemed attached to her, and remorseful perhaps for the great injury he had suffered from her licentiousness, she became tolerant and even kind to him. His figure was graceful and prepossessing; his capacity was

every

every where remarked with sentiments of astonishment; the mother gradually became proud of her son.

She introduced him into the family of the mild Kenrick, and caused him to be treated as the proper heir of all he saw. The age at which mrs. Gifford had arrived, rendered it somewhat improbable that she should have any child by her second marriage; the habits of her past life seemed to have increased this improbability. The boy, of course, did not exactly understand the state of his stepfather's fortune. He saw every thing in plenty about him; and meditated in his youthful heart, to give himself full scope in enjoying all at present, and to possess the same means, sole and uncontroled, when the present proprietors were gone off the stage. It was therefore with a sort of despair, that he found that his mother became pregnant in the second year of her marriage. A thousand plans

for

for removing this infant-rival, whom he regarded as destined by law the proprietor of those funds which he had so lately counted for his own, suggested themselves to his working brain. Again and again he had had thoughts of removing him by poison; Gifford was a coward; but he was also too good a calculator not to give due weight to the chances that this action might conduct him to the gallows. While these sentiments were ever uppermost in his mind, he carried every thing with an external smoothness; and often nursed, and seemed to fondle the child, whom he wished to strangle.

The mother of these youths was five summers the wife of Kenrick; when the honest surgeon died, the dreams of wealth immediately vanished, which had for years occasioned the little Gifford so many heart-burnings. He saw that his poor half-brother was no better off than himself:

himself: there was no dispute about the succession, for there was nothing to inherit. Young Kenrick however was taken home by his father's relations in the neighbourhood of Llanvelling; they were in narrow circumstances, but exceedingly honest. Gifford was owned by nobody; unhappy in the incident of his birth, he was akin to no living creature, but his profligate mother. Once, in the decline of her life, I made enquiry into her situation, and sent her a handsome present: afterward I lost sight of her. It has been seen how wandering and uncertain a life I led; add to which, she had relations by the father's side, nearer to her than myself, and fully, or nearly, equal to me in point of fortune. They neglected her; they pretended to feel paroxysms of wrath at the very mention of her name; they would extend no indulgence or assistance to the progeny of her adulterous amours.

When

When this wretched woman was taken to the parish-workhouse, it was proposed by the churchwardens, to bind her son apprentice, as it was called, to a neighbouring farmer; that is, to sell him for a term of years to perform the most oppressive and brutish offices of rural drudgery. A neighbouring clergyman, of considerable learning and a liberal mind, had seen the boy occasionally, and observed in him the tokens of a superior understanding. He took him from the situation to which he was condemned, received him into his house, and determined by his own exertions to cultivate and improve the faculties he discerned.

The mind of Gifford had been deeply affected by every successive revolution in his circumstances. He had written, with his mother's connivance, divers very supple and insinuating letters to her relations by the father's side: without her consent, and in defiance of her prohibi-

prohibition (for in her deepest distress, she still felt an ingenuous pride, which forbad her offering any supplications in this quarter), he wrote to his nominal father. In all things the boy discovered a sagacity beyond his years. As long as there was a hope of obtaining any thing from his mother's relations, he was in appearance filial and dutiful to her. When every prospect of that kind was at an end, and he seemed condemned to obscurity and misery for ever, the bitterness of his nature broke out. He reviled her in language so harsh and horrible, that it appeared wonderful where he had acquired his fecundity of invective. In cursing to her face the mother who bore him, he seemed to find ease for the disappointments and adversity he endured. A part of every day he devoted to this gratification; and the once proud and haughty mrs. Gifford, now reduced

duced by misery and hunger, had not spirits to stand up against this unnatural usage. It was universally believed by those who witnessed the scenes, that the son had thus succeeded to shorten the life of his parent.

When young Gifford was admitted under the roof of the benevolent clergyman who seemed to intend to adopt him for his own, he may be considered as already consummate in every vicious disposition. He had not however lost his talent for hypocrisy; and, as the world now began again to smile upon him, he became more smooth and insinuating than ever. During his residence in this house, his patron was seized with a dangerous fit of sickness, and with great difficulty recovered. A short time after, the clergyman discovered, by an extraordinary train of accidents, that little Gifford had entered into a plot

a plot with a knavish attorney, if he had died when it was expected he would, to rob the wife and only daughter of his patron, of all they should possess. This discovery cured mr. Parkhurst of his fondness for this extraordinary inmate. He sent him to sea, where Gifford speedily acquired the favour of his superior; and at the age of twenty-eight, at which I invited him to my house in Bath, he had passed through a series of adventures, scarcely less diversified than those of Gilblas or Gusman d'Alfarache. His evil genius meanwhile still pursued him; and, however deep were the schemes he had laid, he had not made that progress in life, which assuredly his talents would have obtained, could he have confined himself to the character of an honest man. One however of the circumstances, not the least extraordinary, that attended him, was that he was still followed by the good word of at least half

half the persons with whom he connected himself. It was not till a considerable time after, that I learned the particulars concerning him which I have here related.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VIII.

INFLUENCED, as I have said, by what I may call the testamentary advice of the generous Macneil, and desirous of calling about me my nearest existing relations, my mind immediately recurred to the two sons of my frail kinswoman. Previously to this time I had not been wholly inattentive to their interests. Gifford, whose life was wandering and unsettled, I had never seen; but the little Kenrick, who dwelt with his relatives not more than twenty miles from my residence, had often drawn from me the marks of my personal attention. He was a florid and beautiful boy, alert and nimble in his motions, and singularly open and ingenuous in his demeanour. A schoolfellow of his, a favourite companion, had been

been destined by his parents for the army; in their youthful frolics they had played at soldiers; and little Kenrick had often, in his artless prattle, and looking at me with one of his innocent looks, intreated me to let him be a general. I indulged his youthful preference, and at the proper period bought him a pair of colours. A more gallant and kind-hearted soldier the world never saw. There was a brilliancy in his eye, a modest blush in his cheek, and a sensibility in his accent, that, all together, constituted one of the most interesting objects that can be imagined.

These two young men I, at one and the same time, invited to come to me at Bath. Gifford was at present out of employment, and to be provided for. The profession in which he was most exercised, though he had left it for considerable periods and returned to it again, was that of the sea; and, if I thought

proper

proper to push him forward in the path of independence, I might in no long time be able to make him a captain in the navy. Kenrick was engaged; he was recently entered in the army; and, at my invitation, obtained a leave of absence for two months, to visit his wealthy kinsman.

Though born of the same mother, it was impossible for two human beings to exhibit a stronger contrast to each other. When Kenrick appeared before me for the first time at Bath, dressed in the uniform of his regiment, and glowing with all the bloom of eighteen, I thought I had never beheld so prepossessing a creature. His address was irresistible; his words seemed the image of his heart; and the tone of his voice, when he accosted me, implicitly told the love, gratitude and respect he entertained for me. The entrance of Gifford, whom I now saw for the first time, by no means

impressed me in the same way. His dark complexion, approaching to the mulatto, was no agreeable portent. There was a roving in his eye, which seemed to warn me to put myself upon my guard against him. His general physiognomy conveyed the idea of something obscure and problematical, which I was at a loss to expound. He was ten years older than Kenrick; and, if his understanding even in infancy had been premature, it may well be supposed that he had by this time lost all vestige of juvenile simplicity. I did not like him. I said to myself, "Gifford, you shall not stay a week under the roof of your patron."

These were first impressions. As I observed more of these young men, my feelings toward them became essentially altered. Kenrick was full of gay and volatile spirits, which, though qualified with the best heart in the world, rather shocked

shocked with the gravity of my age, and the saturnine turn of my disposition. As a boy, I felt kindly toward him; but I soon found that he was by no means fitted to be my companion. Gifford on the contrary was serious and of wide information; had read much, and thought more; his researches, especially into the human heart, were profound. He talked like an oracle; and I soon learned to place a great dependence upon his judgment. His sentiments in many respects had a striking similarity to my own. But what was most material, he flattered me in my notions and weaknesses, with the greatest imaginable address. It had so happened, that I hitherto had little experience of this sort of flattery. I had been too singular and solitary in my habits, and too frequent in my changes of abode, to have been exposed to this kind of attack so much as men of my fortune usually are. Before many days had

elapsed, my two kinsmen fell naturally into their places. Kenrick, who had no secret ends in pursuit, desired nothing on his part but to preserve a complying and respectful carriage toward me. Gifford purposed, from the moment he entered my house, to possess me entirely to himself, and proceeded accordingly. That insinuating voice and dextrous artifice I have before described in him, he now employed with unwearied diligence. It is surprising how soon I lost sight of those prepossessions against him, which his first appearance had inspired. I no longer perceived the portentous roving of his eye, or the mysterious significations of his brow: and the graces of his figure, and the admirable subtlety of his understanding, pleaded strongly with me in his favour.

He no sooner crossed my threshold, than, agreeably to the uniform tenour of his life, he looked round upon all the indi-

viduals who dwelt there, for the purpose of discovering where, and toward whom, the craftiness of his nature might be directed to the greatest advantage. A visit paid to a man so rich as I was, and who had no nearer relation than himself, except so far as depended upon my recent marriage, was an epoch in his life. The first question he asked himself, as he set his foot beneath my roof, was, How can I make myself, by succession or otherwise, the possessor of the estate of my kinsman?

The persons principally entitled to his attention, when he sat down to the solution of this question, were myself, my wife, and the thoughtless, but amiable, Kenrick. The latter he scarcely deigned to think of as a rival, but rather as an instrument by which his plots might be forwarded. He felt his genius soar above the opposition of such a minor. Mary was at this time with child. She

was little advanced in her pregnancy; and I can scarcely think that Gifford, when he first entered my house, was aware of her condition. As soon as he was so, his machinations became principally directed against his unborn adversary. He felt, I believe, an unreal and anticipated resemblance between the circumstances of this creature beginning to exist, and those under which he had himself been born: and he resolved that, as he, in the early months of his infancy, had been cut off from an inheritance of twenty thousand a year, so should this child be disinherited and abandoned to the world, before it became acquainted with the first elements of speech or of reason.

One of the main artifices of Gifford through life was, if he felt animosity toward any one, to personate a more than usual affection and kindness to that individual. By this method he gained

possession of that person's secrets, and insinuated himself into his confidence; while at the same time this ostentatious show of regard gave treble weight to the tales, which the hypocrite seemed reluctantly to utter against his ally. I have already said, that Gifford nourished an inextinguishable antipathy to Kenrick. For this very reason, he assumed the appearance, from the hour they met, of attaching himself to his interests; and the demonstrations of that attachment were constantly accompanied with notoriety and eclat. Kenrick had a certain air of levity and giddiness about him, though the goodness of his heart prevented him from falling into the excesses to which such dispositions too frequently lead; and Gifford, who was ten years his senior, voluntarily undertook to be his monitor. The ingenuous and upright character of Kenrick made him receive these offices with the utmost gratitude;

titude; while I myself could not help being edified with this disinterested conduct in the elder brother, where an ungenerous mind would rather have felt envy and a sentiment of competition.

Gifford early remarked the grave turn of my disposition, as well as the volatility of that of his brother; and he resolved to improve and heighten these hints of contrast. He accordingly insinuated such remarks as the following into the ear of Kenrick. "Do not think, because you observe our cousin to be of a serious temper, that it is necessary you should suppress before him the gay impulses of your own mind. If you do, instead of gaining, you will ruin yourself in his esteem. He told me the other day, as we were walking together, that he had always been accustomed to prognosticate ill, of a solemn, sober-sided boy. Youth, said he, is the season of cheerfulness; and it is in this way that

the

the faculties and force of the mind, if any exist, display themselves in early life. Besides, mr. Fleetwood has the most ungovernable dislike to what he calls hypocrisy; and he carries this principle so far, that whoever in his sight puts any constraint upon his natural bent; he sets down for a hypocrite. Remember too, that a grave man is a man devoured with *ennui*, and however contrary to his temper it may seem, that he feels toward no person so sincere a gratitude, as toward him who convulses him with laughter, and distracts his melancholy with sallies of extravagance. I know, my dear Kenrick, that you are too high-souled a lad, to do any thing for the express purpose of insinuating yourself into an old man's testament. But that same temper of yours ought to prevent you, from mortifying yourself, and giving pain to your protector, to no manner of purpose. Show yourself to him

nakedly

nakedly as you are: he will honour you the more, and like you the better for it. Kenrick, you are a spirited fellow; but you have not the heedlessness and obstinacy, which makes many young men of your stamp disdain advice. Yours is the season to lay hold of fortune's plough, and turn up her treasures; it would not be amiss, as graver years advance, to find that you had a comfortable annuity on mr. Fleetwood's estate. He must be an ass, and not a man of spirit, who never thinks before-hand of a rainy day. For my part, I should have no enjoyment of any legacy our cousin bequeathed to me, if my dear brother, my brother, whom I received in these arms almost on the day of his birth, whom I have dandled on my knees, and toward whom my affection has grown with added years, were not at least equally a gainer with myself." The consequence of all this sage and generous advice was, that

I was

I was perpetually tormented with the buffooneries, the boy's tricks, and the unlucky scrapes, of the handsome young soldier. To many men no doubt they would have been exquisitely delightful; the cheerful and light-hearted tone of voice with which they were accompanied, often spoke to the soul; and the honest hilarity of countenance that adorned them, a painter would gladly have stolen, when he was delineating the figure of a youthful Apollo. Still they were too much for the habits of my mind, and the restless anxieties that haunted me. Mary, all lovely and bewitching as she was, frequently vexed me with her over-much liveliness and gaiety; and I could ill brook to have this stimulated and doubled upon me, by the presence of a young man of her own temper and age.

Gifford speedily discerned the feelings I nourished toward my wife, and planned

his operations accordingly. "Allow me," said he to the young ensign, "to explain to you another feature of our patron's character. He has passed all the better days of his life a bachelor. Just at the period of existence, when the most uxorious man alive begins to detach himself from the vehemence of passion, he married. You may easily conceive what a ridiculous blunder he committed. He was not long before he detected his folly. This is the very reason that has led him to call his relations about him, and endeavour to relieve his domestic scene by the presence of strangers. He wishes to lead a creditable life with his wife; but he finds himself disqualified to become her esquire and associate. He is desirous of resuming as far as possible the independence of a single state, and of having as little familiarity with his wife as decorum will allow of. It is in your power to amuse him; it is in mine

to

to beguile his hours with serious discourse; these benefits he expects from us. But the man who would do him the most precious service, is he who would relieve him from the duty of constant attendance upon the skittish, capricious, kind-hearted, excellent creature, to whom he finds himself unfortunately linked."

It is no wonder that Kenrick became the dupe of these representations. I was the furthest in the world from a hypocrite; and it was easy to see, ten times a day, how much I vexed myself at the sight of the *étourderies* of Mary. Thus all the weaknesses of the ensign's character were carefully fed and expanded by his treacherous adviser. He was lively, restless and turbulent; Gifford stimulated him to become more so. At his age, and in the very dawn of puberty, his eye was prompt to the notice of female attraction; there was nothing to which he was more prone, than to those little frolics

frolics and sports in which the young of either sex indulge themselves reciprocally with the utmost innocence of thought and intention: Gifford prompted him to turn this foible upon my wife, and to ascribe to himself a merit while he obeyed the impulses of his nature.

I have already said, that I had no sooner removed my wife to Bath, than she emerged from the melancholy and dejection which had overwhelmed her at the equinox, and rose to an extravagant degree of vivacity and spirits. She made acquaintances; she resorted to public places; she laughed, and talked, and danced, and sung, for ever. It will easily be imagined how this disorder was heightened, now that I had an inmate under my roof, no less wild, remiss and rambling than herself. I did not know my own house. A hurricane would have been a mansion of peace to that in which I lived. Consider then the

the grave cast of my spirits, the trembling sensibility of my nerves; and imagine what I must have suffered in a scene so new, where my nerves were not only shaken, but my ears sometimes deafened, by the obstreperous mirth of Mary, Kenrick, and their train of visitors. Yet I saw occasionally in the countenance of my beloved wife some of those wild and terrible expressions which had driven us from Merionethshire; and I dared not remonstrate. Frequently I took refuge from the tumult in the separate society and conversation of Gifford: this was what the villain intended; he was secure that he should gain more perfect possession of me, in proportion as our conferences became more repeated. Sometimes I desired him to speak to Kenrick about the excess of his riots: he did speak to him; and the style in which he spoke has already been detailed.

Thus

Thus becoming daily more confidential with the elder of my two kinsmen, I could not refrain from sometimes opening my soul to him, on the most sacred of all subjects, my sentiments respecting my wife. This I did without premeditation or design: it was the genuine overflow of a mind, sometimes irritated, sometimes stung, sometimes swelled almost to bursting. Gifford was the only person on the face of the earth, with whom I now discoursed familiarly: who, in my place, could have been uniformly silent upon the subjects always uppermost in his thoughts? No man: at least no man subject to be so deeply impressed and agitated as I was. None but the worst of villains could have made an ill use of such disclosures. He saw how my bosom was wrung, how my heart was torn in a thousand pieces. Was I a husband, indifferent to the affections of his wife? Was I a man, to whom *the kindest ser-*

vice

vice would be to relieve him from the uniformity of attendance upon the partner of his bosom? Did I desire, to have *as little familiarity of intercourse with her, as the laws of decorum would allow?*—No, no, no! Tortured as I was with her instability, I loved her beyond all names of love: to see her happy, was the utmost aim of my ambition: to be gratified with her compliances, the indirect silent evidences of her regard, elevated me to an enjoyment that kings might envy.—But I complained—fool that I was, I complained, and dreamed that I received the retribution of sympathy!—this was enough for Gifford; this he accepted as the fulcrum of his engines.

Enamoured of Mary, I also affected, with a love equally sincere, though not equally ardent, the engaging Kenrick. His countenance was so honest; his manners so affectionate! Though occasionally boisterous in his demeanour, he would

would not intentionally have hurt a fly. Like the elephant, he might have trod down armies in his mood; but, if a blind puppy lay in his path, and he was aware of it, he would carefully have removed it from harm. His manly heart was subdued, and his eyes suffused with the precious drops of pity, if he heard a tale of woe. He was unwearied and unconquerable in his efforts to relieve distress: nor merely that; but every opportunity, however trivial in name, to do an act of kindness, and give vent to the goodness of heart with which his bosom laboured, was sure to be embraced by him. The accents of generosity which this temper supplied to him, thrilled through the frame of every hearer. He was active, impetuous and ungovernable; but how unlike was the impetuosity of his character, to that of Morrison, Frewen, and the other untamed barbarians, with whom it had been my unhappy lot to be associated

at

at the university! —One strange thought I could not sometimes defend myself from, when Kenrick and Mary chanced to sit next each other, at the breakfast-table, or on other occasions: they were the loveliest couple that Europe perhaps could have supplied; both so animated and so accomplished; both having that uncommon class of countenance, in which, as it appears, the thoughts may be read. A painter, who wished to represent Romeo and Juliet, as they offered themselves before Friar Lawrence to be joined in bands of holy wedlock, would have been too happy if he could have obtained Kenrick and Mary for his models.

CHAPTER IX.

The young ensign, governed, as I have said, by the admonitions of his elder brother, was eager in his attentions and services to my wife. His honest heart, that witnessed the rectitude of his views, prevented him from suspecting that any one could put a wrong construction on his conduct. One evening, as I returned home at about eleven o'clock from a party in which I had been engaged by the importunities of Gifford, who seemed always anxious to invent means for diverting my melancholy, I was accosted by a woman, well dressed, and, as far as I could distinguish, of a noble air, in the streets. The night was exceedingly dark; but the air was balmy and refreshing. The incident occurred near the

the door of the Upper Rooms, and took place just at the time the assembly was breaking up. Gifford had left me for an instant, to speak to an acquaintance who passed us. Several of the ladies went home in chairs; others, invited perhaps by the softness of the air, and considering the small distance they had to go, preferred walking. The woman I have mentioned was arm in arm with another lady; but she let go her hold as I approached, and addressed me. Her face was covered with a veil; so that, particularly in the glimmer and obscurity of the night, I could make no judgment of her features.

Your name, I believe, sir, is Fleetwood.

It is.

Excuse my speaking to you in this strange manner. I cannot stay a moment. Perhaps I ought not to say a word. But meeting you thus in the instant,

stant, my feelings will not be suppressed. Do not make yourself uneasy; I dare say, there is no cause; I only wish to warn you.

For God's sake, what do you mean? What is it has happened?

Only, sir, I do not like the behaviour of mrs. Fleetwood and the young ensign, her kinsman, to each other. They were at the Rooms to-night. Really, sir, their manner of proceeding is quite shocking. I cannot tell you the particulars, I know that the ensign is wholly dependent on your bounty. Upon my word, their indecorums will become the talk of every mouth. I cannot bear to see so good a man as, I am told, you are, so grossly abused. Look to yourself!

And with these words the unknown broke from me, joined her companion, and in a moment was lost in the train of persons that poured out of the Rooms. I was too much taken by surprise, to have

the

the thought of following her. Besides, of what use was it that I should know my informer? She was acquainted with nothing but circumstances that might furnish ground for suspicion, not that afforded foundation for certainty.

I might have asked of other persons who were present the same evening. I had no familiar acquaintance there. I could not endure to address such a question to any living creature. What husband, not lost to feeling as well as decency, could frame his lips to ask, Did you observe any undue levity in the carriage of my wife? Did you see any thing that might lead you to suppose she was unfaithful, dishonest to my bed?

I ought to have despised the tale of this anonymous informer. I could not drive it from my mind. Kenrick and my wife, thought I, must have gone far indeed, if they no longer scruple to expose their familiarities before the whole city.

city. I recollected the scene at Barmouth, and how much I had been tortured by the gallantries of the fluttering Matthews. The idea pursued me to my pillow: all night in my slumbers I imagined myself in the Rooms, and saw the indecorums and guilty intelligence of Kenrick and Mary. The pulses of my head beat violently; my whole frame was in the paroxysm of a fever. I exclaimed, Shall all Bath see these things, and I alone be ignorant and secure?

As the dawn advanced, my disorder in a great degree subsided. At breakfast I saw the parties against whom these suspicions had been insinuated. I searched for guilt in their faces. I never saw a more charming and heart-felt serenity. The brightness of heaven was in their features. I looked round the room. I involuntarily said to myself [it was the contrast only that struck me; I was far from entertaining a suspicion against my con-

confidential friend], Under the olive-tinctured skin of Gifford, beneath his scowling brow, and among the lines which time and climate have indented there, hypocrisy might hide herself; but, in the other two, there is no opacity or discoloration to intercept the passage of a thought, there is not a furrow in their cheeks for treachery to lurk in. Mary, heaven has moulded its own image in thy features: if thou art false, oh, then heaven mocks itself!

To the mind already indisposed to a liberal construction every indifferent circumstance is food for jealousy.——Had Mary left any thing behind, in removing from one room to another? Kenrick was sure to be on the alert to present it to her. Did Mary prepare for a walk in the Circus, or the adjoining fields? Kenrick's gloves and hat were immediately forth-coming. Kenrick had a fine voice and an admirable taste in singing;

Mary

Mary had never, till now, discovered any vehement propensity that way; but now she was for ever requesting him to teach her his songs, and practising them with him without end. They danced together at every interval of leisure; or rather rehearsed particular movements, in which one or the other did not think they had arrived at sufficient ease or grace; while either, as chance directed, hummed the tune to the other's steps. In this system of conduct Gifford was for ever urging them to persevere. If at any time they observed the deep melancholy that seemed to come over me, he assured them that nothing could operate upon me as a restorative, more than the appearance of gaiety and good spirits in my wife. If I left the apartment in displeasure, he warned them against taking the least notice, or suffering the smallest change in what they did. On the other hand, he was so frequently alone with me,

me, that they placed the most implicit confidence in his information as to the state of my thoughts and my wishes. In short he appeared to each party the good genius of the houshold, so benevolent, so attentive, so perpetually on the watch to prevent mistakes, and to provide for the tranquillity and advantage of all.

I had already, previously to the horrible idea which had now been intruded upon me, and which perpetually disturbed my mind, been incautious and wicked enough to complain to Gifford of the fickle temper of my wife. It is the first word, in cases of this sort, that rends in pieces the veil, as sacred as that which modesty draws over the female form, by the intervention of which slight misapprehensions are enabled to digest and disperse themselves in silence. Having proceeded thus far, I could not help naming to him the thoughts that beset

me about Kenrick. Gifford appeared to be astonished at the bare suggestion.

He would stake his life upon the integrity of the ensign. Honesty flowed in the very blood of the Kenricks. Could I be so inattentive as not to see, how a self-acquitting conscience brightened in the countenance of his brother, and gave liberty to all his motions? He must be free enough to put me upon my guard against the vice of my disposition, and to warn me not, by ill construction, to poison what in itself was as guileless as infancy. Poor Kenrick! was he to be the victim of my groundless guesses? He was glad I had named the matter to him, as it was of infinite consequence to check a habit of this sort in the beginning. I had married a beautiful and excellent wife, through whose means he doubted not I should be blessed with a numerous progeny. What infinite gratifications were in store for me!

me! But all these would be forfeited, if I did not repose in her the confidence she so justly demanded. The plagues that haunted a suspicious husband, were not less numerous than the joys which waited upon a generous one; he saw in his wife the instrument of his dishonour, his bosom-serpent. He could not toy with, and open the flood-gates of affection to, his children, without fearing that a bystander who saw what passed behind the curtain, should deride him as the most miserable of gulls.

I named to him the woman, who had given me the mysterious hint at the door of the Upper Rooms. On this intelligence he appeared to ruminate.

Did I know her?

No.

Had I the smallest guess who she could be?

None upon earth.

It was strange! very strange! It was

not easy to imagine what end she could have in view. An unknown could not have planned to begin with a step of this sort, to alienate my affections from my wife, that she might afterward fix them upon herself? What enemies could mrs. Fleetwood, or could Kenrick have at Bath, where nobody knew them, and where in every respect their appearance was such as to engage all hearts in their favour?

Be silent, Gifford! interposed I. I cannot bear this methodical and cold-blooded reasoning! I am sure my wife is innocent! Are you going to turn the enemy of her good name, and of my peace, at once?

You are right, sir, quite right, in the confidence you thus generously repose. It does my heart good to see you take the thing so wisely!

Who was this woman? Her warning voice pursues me for ever.

Never

Never mind who she was. There are people in the world, whose grand pleasure is malignity, whose delight it is to disturb the peace of families, who never witness a scene of happiness, without a wish to crush it. This anonymous accuser is one of them. Let not your noble mind be disturbed by such hateful trash!

Oh, Gifford, what a life is mine! Why did I marry? I know—I think, I ought to mistrust nothing between your brother and mrs. Fleetwood. Yet my sick imagination is for ever busy, shaping the attitudes and gestures which this monitor of mine saw, or pretends to have seen. Was it with hands, with eyes, or with lips, that they communicated their souls? Was the fire of lust in their glances, or did their smiles betray a conscious guilt? Did he thrust his arm about her waist, or with sacrilegious fingers invade the trans-

transparency of her bosom?—Pity me, Gifford! pity me! It is not enough that the act of lewdness has not been perpetrated; if Mary has for one instant wished, that the tie which makes her mine had never been, the warrant of our divorce is gone forth in the tribunal of souls. Why are she and the ensign so continually together, why so familiar, so mutually pleased with each other?

It is the proof of their innocence! Guilt is ever on the alarm!

Is there no such thing as brazen, unfeeling guilt?

Be tranquil, sir! I will speak to my brother. You shall not hereafter be offended in the same way.

What will you say to him? Will you bid him pursue a guilty purpose with more prudence and caution? No; let me at least see their proceedings genuine and unforced! Otherwise I shall never be

be able to form a just conclusion, and shall be secretly more tormented than ever.

What Gifford did in the affair I know not; but the evil grew worse, as I now perceive was always the case, when this pernicious confident undertook for the cure. I must however be ingenuous enough to confess, that it would not have been easy for the young people so to have acted, as to have given me tranquillity. If they were familiar and sportive, I was distracted. Did they at any time appear more grave and less confidential? It was still worse. I believed, they discerned the state of my mind, and were only playing a more treacherous game.

About a week after, the question again arose of their going to the Rooms. As soon as I was aware of this, my mind was distracted by a variety of plans. Should

Should I forbid the scheme? Should I go myself, and watch their behaviour? How should I act? I had recourse to my oracle.

Gifford said, By all means give way to their purpose. If you interpose, you will occasion much disturbance, and a discovery of your jealous thoughts. If you cannot yet dismiss these thoughts, go yourself, and watch their actions. If on the other hand you can adopt the generous confidence you so lately professed, this is the favourable moment to resume yourself, and discard such pernicious cares.

I will go myself!

There is however a difficulty in that. How can you be sure that their conduct will not be quite different, when they see that your eye is upon them?

Gifford, you are my friend. Undertake this office for me. You may even witness

witness their behaviour, at the same time that they shall not be aware of your presence.

I, sir! I be a spy upon them! I play the eaves-dropper, and watch for intelligence from eyes! I enter into a plot against my brother! Where did you ever perceive in me the qualifications, fitting me for so base a part?

I thank you, Gifford! You have now told me all. I perceive plain enough that you know a great deal more than you have confessed.—It is very well! I have no friend! I am the veriest wretch on earth!——If you did not believe them guilty, would you not eagerly embrace this opportunity for their vindication, which would afford you a prospect, if your opinion corresponded with your professions, of becoming the ambassador of peace to all?

By my soul, I believe them innocent! —I never will harbour a thought to the

contrary.—And, to convince you of my sincerity, I will undertake the office you propose!

The party took place in the manner which was thus previously settled. I waited with impatience for the breaking up of the assembly. When they came home, I hurried Gifford to my private apartment. This was a thing that happened so frequently, as to have no tendency to excite notice.

We drew near to the table, and I looked in his face. I never saw dejection so powerfully expressed. His visage was colourless; his eyes averted with a mournful air; his hands hung down, as languid and incapable of motion.

What have you seen? What have you observed?

He spoke not.

I need not ask you; I read it all in your countenance.

No,

No, nothing. Let us talk of it to-morrow morning.

This hour! this instant! This is the moment of my fate. Gifford, by your eternal salvation I adjure you do not trifle with me!

He then proceeded to relate a most artful tale. It contained most of those particulars, which my diseased imagination had before presented to my thoughts. It contained every thing of impropriety that could be supposed to pass before a public assembly. When Kenrick and Mary caught his eye, and perceived for the first time that he was in the Rooms, he owned that their faces were immediately overspread with the deepest crimson. Yet every circumstance seemed to come from the relater with unwillingness, and to be softened and qualified by the guardedness of his manner. From time to time he interposed, that this was nothing, that it was mere giddiness and

want

want of reflection, that all was meant in innocence. He concluded in a more earnest and impassioned tone:

And now I have discharged the most painful office of my life. Your character, my dear sir, engages all my partialities; I feel the warmest gratitude to you as my benefactor. But never, never will I be put upon such a task again. What had I to do, to turn spy and accuser upon my brother? For God's sake, sir, let my name never be mentioned in this business! I shall never forgive myself for this act of undue complaisance.

By all these expressions he contrived to fix upon my mind the serious nature of the discoveries he had made. He proceeded:

Forget for ever the conversation of this evening! It ought never to have existed. You have obliged me to repeat trifles the most frivolous and contemptible. I have sacrificed every thing

to the faithful performance of my task. Yet, in spite of all the pains I have taken to bring these trifles down to their true level, I can see that you misconstrue every thing. Things make so different a figure, when brought regularly together in a narrative, from what they made as they actually passed. If you had yourself been present, you would have thought nothing of them.—You are greatly moved. Do nothing rashly! Give the whole a dispassionate examination! If you make any conclusions to the disadvantage of my brother or mrs. Fleetwood, it is your own fault! Such conclusions have no support from me! I will stake my soul on their innocence!

Ten times during the narrative of Gifford, I felt impelled to seek the criminals, believing that such impudent neglect of all decorum, could lead to nothing less than the immediate perpetration

tion of guilt. Once he withheld me by force, and succeeded in soothing my tumultuous passions. A second time, when I had almost reached the parlour-door, I was called back by my own reflections, and said to myself, Whatever is done in a case of this sort, must be done with deliberation and solemnity. Afterward, I met mrs. Fleetwood's woman in the gallery, who appeased my passions, by informing me, in answer to my enquiries, that her lady was gone up to her chamber, and that the ensign was alone in the supper-room.

I saw Mary no more that night. When I came to the chamber in which we rested, she was already asleep. I went softly, and drew back her curtains. There was a sweet tranquillity in her countenance; her head reposed gracefully upon her snow-white arm. She looked, as one might conceive the archetype of her sex to have looked, before guilt

guilt or fear found entrance into the world.

I threw myself into an easy chair, and sat for some time in horrible musings. My mind vibrated between discordant and opposite judgments. Sometimes I said, No, Mary, thou canst not be guilty! Guilt cannot incorporate with a demeanour like thine. Was ever any thing so artless, so simple, so heart-felt, as all thy accents? The very playfulness of thy temper is the pledge of thy integrity. Can guilt be so sweetly frolic? Can guilt smile so like an angel?

Again, my ideas took an opposite bent. Yes, said I, this is the very character of the world in which I live. Storms, and tempests, and volcanoes are all beautiful or majestic. Destruction smiles on us from every side. Nature herself is the great parent-hypocrite, deluding us onward from the cradle to the grave. Her daughters do but inherit the

the same treacherous smiles, and tempt us to damnation!—Furious with these imaginations, I burst away from the bed-chamber, and returned to the apartment where I had listened to the conversation of Gifford.

I will not injure, thought I, the ill-starred daughter of Macneil, unless I had proofs that rose to demonstration.—Why do I inherit the guardianship of this desolate orphan?—Yes, Mary, I feel that my fate is for ever involved with thine! The sacred rite that joined us at the altar, was a decree upon my life. Without thee, without thy affection, I must cease to be.—Then I am dead already!

One thing however I can do. I can separate thee, and this youth, the disturber of my peace. It is madness to keep him here. As long as he remains, his most innocent actions—God grant they indeed be innocent!—will fill my brain

brain with images of frenzy. Would he were removed to the furthest island of the Indian sea! Would he were merged in the caverns of the ocean!— When he is gone, my respiration will no longer be choaked. My judgment will be sound and free; and I will make a true estimate of the past.

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.

I INVENTED an errand for the ensign to the estate of Macneil in Westmorland. I had received proposals for the purchase of it; and, not being myself inclined to the journey, I requested Kenrick to take the business on himself. I further stated it as my pleasure, that he should set out by one or two o'clock of this very day.

I communicated my plan to the ensign, as soon as he rose. He listened to it with that deference and desire to oblige, which characterised all his actions; but I could see that he was not delighted with the expedition.

And shall I return to Bath, my dear sir, when I have finished the business in Westmorland?

No: after that, I have some employment

ment for you in Merionethshire. By that time your leave of absence will have expired.

I watched the countenances of Mary and Kenrick at the breakfast-table. I could see that he had informed her of my plan. All parties were unusually blank.

And so, my love, said she, after some minutes' general silence, we are going to lose my cousin?

It is necessary, my dear. A business has occurred in which he can be of great use to me.

I am sorry, methinks, resumed Mary, that it is so sudden. I had counted upon a visit of two months. Edward, (that was his name) I hope you will not forget us!

Never will I forget the pleasure I have experienced at Bath, or this dear fireside, while I have life!

In conversation like this, frankly demonstrating

monstrating the sincere regard they entertained for each other, passed the time of breakfast. I withdrew early, and desired Kenrick to hold himself in readiness. When I called him in, and had given him the necessary directions, I held out my hand to him (though with an ill grace) because nothing had passed between us that entitled me to part with him in anger. He took it with both his.

My dear uncle,—thus he delighted to call me: in his playful and familiar moments he gave my wife the appellation of aunt; a circumstance, trifling in itself, yet strongly indicative of the innocence of his thoughts,——

My dear uncle, it breaks my heart to leave you thus. I can see I have offended you; all your motions prove it. What a foolish, hair-brained fellow am I! I wonder when I shall grow discreet and sober like my brother. I have done some-

something heedless and disrespectful, or I have said something that I ought to cut out my tongue for. I am always getting into scrapes, and displeasing my best friends. If you could see my heart, I am sure you would not be angry with me. That has always acknowledged you for the best of men; nothing disobedient or unfaithful has ever harboured there.—Dear uncle, forgive me! Now I am going away, I cannot offend you. I only wish to carry your love with me. I only wish you to say one word, to enable me to forgive myself.

My heart melted over the boy. My bosom swelled, as if it could no longer contain its fraught. I looked at him with eyes of affection. I sobbed out, God bless you! God bless you! God bless you!—and burst out of the room.

The moment I was alone, I cried, This is the triumph of innocence! No; it

it is impossible such expressions, such accents, could be forced from a guilty bosom!—I was beside myself with joy. —Happy, happy Fleetwood! said I: I will make ample amends to both these injured angels, for my misconstruction! —I wished to revoke the orders I had given for the journey of the ensign. But, no; part of the amends I owed, was to bury for ever so dishonourable a suspicion in my own breast. I returned to Kenrick. I poured out to him the torrent of my feelings.

Go, my sweet lad, said I, object of my dearest love! Wherever you are, my heart goes with you. You are the honestest fellow that ever wore the human form. There is no resisting the eloquence of your emotions. Depend upon it, from me you never shall experience any thing but kindness!

Thank you, thank you, uncle! You have

have taken a thousand weight from my breast.—But, uncle, you were angry with me?

Do not talk of it! It is all a mistake. God bless you! Farewel!—We parted.

Kenrick took a most affectionate leave of his brother. This is the first time, said he, we have ever been together, since I was quite a child. Do not think however I have forgotten your kindness to me then! You have borne me in your arms a thousand times. You brought me apples and dainties; and defended me against playmates who wished to injure me. But now, Gifford, we know each other. I do not now like you, because you have procured me pleasure, but because I read your brotherly heart. I shall never, I am afraid, be so sagacious and clear-sighted as you are; but I shall always remember, how anxious you have been to employ those talents for my benefit. Let us now exchange

the

the engagements of an everlasting friendship! I can never be of the use to you, that you always have been, and ever will be, to me. Never mind that! My heart will beat as warmly to you, as heart of brother ever did; and I know your good-nature will accept that as frankly, as if it brought the Indies along with it. My interests will be safe in your protection; and you will never allow me to lose ground in the affections of my kind uncle in absence.

Gifford was not behind his brother in protestations of attachment; and solemnly prayed that he might so prosper in the journey of life, as he should prove, on every momentous occasion, the vindicator and advocate of his friend. Tears embellished the instant of their separation.

Kenrick had but one spare hour. That hour Mary and he spent in a sociable walk. I felt no displeasure that they did

so.

so. No; I had sworn that suspicion should never again pollute my bosom. I however thought it somewhat remarkable; and with an unspotted curiosity determined to watch their steps. They went toward the Abbey-churchyard. There a plain slab was affixed against the wall, to mark the place where the ashes of the elder Kenrick reposed. They approached it together. Satisfied as I was, that there could be nothing very private in such a conference, I made a small circuit, and joined them as if by accident.

Uncle, said Kenrick, I am glad you are come. Many a pilgrimage have I made to this unornamented spot; and my aunt insisted that, before I left Bath, I should lead her to my father's grave. Look at that stone! The name and surname inscribed there, and the register of birth and death, are to me the most eloquent epicedium that ever was penned.

I do not know whether I at all remember my father; the images I have of him are mixed up with the descriptions I have heard from his kindred; I was only three years old when he died. Nobody speaks of him in Montgomeryshire without enthusiasm; the moment they mention his name, the guardian genius of the departed seems to descend upon them, and to utter the words of saint-like praise by their humble organs. They never speak of him, but their eyes emit sparkles of fire. Never man, according to them, was so consummate in a knowledge and skill, almost supernatural. His flesh was macerated, and his complexion blanched, with indefatigable research; and he never came forth from his retreat, but to dispense health and scatter benefits all around him. But what they speak of with most admiration, is his temper, so innocent, so sweet, so affectionate; his mild eye, beaming with good-

goodness to the whole world. The tongue of my father never held acquaintance with a falshood; duplicity and artifice never coloured an action of his life. You cannot think, aunt, you cannot think, uncle, what good it does me to remember my father! I never hear the honest people talk about him, but I feel his blood stirring in my veins. Yes; I may do a thousand imprudent and foolish deeds; but the son of Kenrick can never commit an act of lying or treachery.

The honest eulogium of the poor ensign drew tears from both his auditors. I was astonished at myself that I could have distrusted so gallant and single-minded a youth. I resolved that this should be a lesson to me, how I ever again admitted suspicion into my bosom. Yet there lay, in apparent repose, the embers of jealousy, the communications of my unknown informer, and the re-

marks of Gifford upon what he had seen at the Rooms; liable to be called up into a blaze, whenever new fuel should be brought to the spark within me. The whole family attended Kenrick as he mounted his horse: in going through the passage, he pressed the hand of Mary to his lips, and said, Remember! He was out of sight in a moment.

The temper by which I was actuated, and which had made me all my life no less eager and exemplary to repair wrong, than I was sometimes rash to commit it, directed me on this occasion. I could not bear to think that I had misconstrued the guileless and generous heart of my military cousin. I could not sleep in my bed, till I had atoned to the extent of my power for the injury I had done him. I procured for him an exchange of his colours for a lieutenancy, and added to it the lucrative appointment of pay-master to his regiment. I inclosed this

double

double commission in the following letter.

"DEAR EDWARD,

"You thought I parted from you in anger. You must not think so. Perhaps you are too flighty and full of spirits for such a grave fellow as I am. But, if I ever felt that, it was my infirmity, and not yours, that I accused of unreasonableness. I know your heart, and I would trust my life and all that is dear to me, to its integrity. Go on as you have done: you cannot alter, but for the worse. Your light and lively carriage adorns the rectitude of your sentiments, often makes you amusing, and never leads you to any thing vicious. I inclose you a little Christmas remembrance. Be assured of the unalterable affection of your faithful friend,

"CASIMIR FLEETWOOD."

To this letter I received an answer, full

full of gratitude and the ingenuous phrases of regard.

The same turn of thought which rendered me thus friendly to Kenrick, inspired me with a more than usual degree of kindness to my wife. Though she was unacquainted with the wrong I had done her, it did not the less haunt my remembrance: and, as is perhaps always the case with a generous spirit, the innocent person whom I had injuriously treated, appeared more lovely, and worthy of esteem in my eyes, than ever. The departure of Kenrick gave a little more sedateness to our domestic economy. Mary seemed to have got the better, both of the alarming depression she had suffered at the equinox, and the hardly less alarming levity which had succeeded. She appeared to me scarcely to have a fault. We had never been so happy. I was all solicitude for the gratification

tification of her desires and inclinations. I anticipated her wishes; I attended her, wherever she went. But, what was most pleasing to her, I sympathised in all her feelings, and was cheerful or serious, as her countenance gave me the signal to be one or the other. While I procured the advancement of Kenrick, I was also employed in negotiating an appointment for Gifford. At no time of my life had I been so perfectly in good humour with my own thoughts. I could at least congratulate myself on being instrumental to the advantage and happiness of every member of my family. I said, Macneil, you were in the right; you are no less infallible than the oracles of antiquity were fabled to be; your advices deserve to be written in letters of gold, and placed on the front of the Pantheon of the human race!

Gifford congratulated me upon the satisfaction

satisfaction I had obtained to all my doubts. He reminded me, how consistently he had been on the side which I had now happily embraced, how, under every unfavourable appearance, he had pledged himself for the innocence of both the suspected parties.

In reality, he witnessed the triumph of truth on this occasion, with the sentiments of a demon. Deep as he thought himself in plotting, and consummate in the arts of hypocrisy, he saw all his webs swept away in a moment, merely through the frank and ingenuous carriage of his destined prey. The innuendoes and subornation of a whole month were destroyed. His own practices were turned against him. Kenrick stood higher in my favour than ever; my wife was restored to my confidence; and, for aught that appeared, my unborn heir might make his entrance into the world, without having the circumstances of his birth

tarnished

tarnished with the blasts of suspicion and calumny.

Shortly after the time when the honest ensign took his leave of us, I hired for myself a convenient residence, near the town of Newbury in Berkshire. I have already mentioned that I had a particular antipathy to the city of Bath. I thought myself fortunate, in being able to impute the uneasiness and ill-humour I had sometimes betrayed while I suffered under the practices of Gifford, to this antipathy. Mary was now become the pattern of reason and accommodation; our harmony was unmingled and entire; she cheerfully concurred in, and even promoted, my removal, though it was yet the depth of winter; being desirous, as she said, to make some compensation for the repeated causes of uneasiness she had administered to me. One other circumstance made this change of scene not ungratifying to her. Mr. Scarborough,

the father of a young lady for whom my wife had conceived a strong affection at Bath, had a seat within two short miles of the house I had fixed upon; and he, about this time, summoned his daughter to quit Bath, and return home. Mr. Scarborough himself was disliked by his neighbours, and many calumnious stories were propagated to his disadvantage; but his daughter was every where regarded with affection.

Poets have been most ambitious to describe the beauties of nature, as they are seen in the freshness of spring, or the luxuriance of autumn. I know not whether it was any depravity of taste in me, that I viewed her with almost equal pleasure in the desolation of winter. Strange sensations of grandeur are always produced in my heart, when I behold the leafless trees, and hear the blustering of the north-wind. At times when the whole world, both land and water,

is bound up in iron, and every branch and shoot are fringed with the congealed moisture which the frost expels from them, I am filled with admiration at the extraordinary scene, so unlike that universal pregnancy and growth which form our most familiar idea of the globe we inhabit. What can be more magnificent than a snow-storm, when ten thousand flakes are whirled in circling eddies, and drifts are formed, that might almost bury an army in their capacious bosom? The sad-moving cattle, which just serve to spot the unbounded scene, make me feel that the world is not yet robbed of all living inhabitants, and remind me that there is still a power which cares for the creatures it has made. When the whole heavens are blackened with congregated clouds, I have the sublime sensations of a friendless and deserted adventurer

cast

cast alone upon an unknown shore, without the terrible anticipations which fill his heart with anguish: and if at any time, in the midst of this ungenial season, the sun bursts forth with ten-fold glory, and seems to diffuse a more resplendent beam than autumn ever knew, I feel that the human species has one friend left, a friend that may gladden the heart, and animate the countenance, of all sadness but despair.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XI.

We had not been long in Berkshire, before Gifford set his machinations fresh at work. Ignorant as I was of my true interest, of who loved and who hated me, I could not easily command the resolution to part with his society. I carried on certain negociations for obtaining him an advantageous situation in the navy. In this pursuit repeated difficulties startedup, that procrastinated our success. To say truth, Gifford himself did not appear anxious about the prosperity of my application. He had projects, in the event of which his guileful heart was more interested, that required his presence at home.

It was on the day preceding the festival of Christmas, that I happened to

pass through my wife's dressing-room, about half an hour after she had set out in the carriage upon a morning-visit to the friend and neighbour I have mentioned. By seeming accident, the corner of a letter caught my eye, which jetted out from one of the toilet-boxes that formed a portion of the furniture of this apartment. The first undesigning glance I caught of it, suggested to me the idea, It is the hand-writing of Kenrick. I could not refrain from examining the superscription. Beyond a doubt it was the pen of the ensign that had written it. It was directed to my wife. I started at the circumstance.

This is not well, cried I. I am satisfied of the innocence of your sentiments: yet why correspond? why carry on a clandestine correspondence, of which I have never received the least intimation?

Most assuredly this discovery would not have made the smallest unfavourable impression

impression upon me, but for the incidents and insinuations which had been thrust on my notice at Bath. What if my wife corresponded with my kinsman? What harm was there in that? What if these letters had never been communicated to me? Did I demand that Mary should give me an account of all her steps? There was no true generosity in such a demand. There can be no genuine love, love that derives its nurture from the plenteous storehouse of esteem, where a large reliance is not placed on the discretion of the person loved. A thousand actions, not modelled by the laws of hoary-headed vigilance, here are graceful. "Where virtue is, these are most virtuous."

How was I to conduct myself? Was I to pass on, and not deign to notice what I saw? Was I to say, I will give an attentive heed to events as they arise, but I never will be indebted for knowledge,

ledge, either of a gratifying or distressing nature, to any indirect proceeding? This mode of acting was most agreeable to what was moral and decorous; but I had not fortitude enough for this.

Should I determine to gratify my curiosity by the most generous means? Should I avow to Mary the fact, that I had met with the superscription of the letter by accident, and request her to acquaint me with its contents, and the circumstances that had given birth to it? Neither was my fortitude equal to this. By applying to Mary in person, I put myself in the power of the offender. I should be exciting, almost compelling her, if guilty, to invent a plausible story, by which my understanding might be duped.

All these views of the subject passed through my mind with the utmost perturbation, and I snatched up the letter, resolved not to defer a moment longer

the

the satisfaction of my doubts. I tore it open. I glanced my eyes over the contents. The first words that presented themselves were those of love, "impatience of absence," and amorous complaints that the writer's "ardour had not obtained a like return." The paper dropped from my hand.

It is all over, I said; and I am a wretch for ever!

This was indeed a thunder-stroke to me. The reports of what passed at the rooms at Bath depended for their meaning upon the fidelity of the reporter, and at worst were ambiguous, admitting of a variety of interpretations. Here was the hand-writing of one of the parties, witnessing to the offences of both.

Was it the hand-writing of Kenrick? It would be idiotism to doubt it! The conviction that it was, did not rest upon my infirmity of temper. I had perceived it at once, when I was far from being

aware

aware of the guilty contents of the writing within.

No, no; never again will I confide in the integrity of a human creature! Kenrick, did your countenance and tones cure me of all my doubts? That countenance was the steadiness of a villain; those tones were the glossiness of a hypocrite. How unheard-of a wretch! I threw myself into his arms; that did not move him. I wrote him a letter burning with words of affection; I told him, I would trust my life in his hands. He returned me an answer, echoing and mimicking back to me the emotions of my heart. That did not disturb him; he did not suspend for a moment his traitor-machinations. He put the certificate containing my liberal benefactions into his writing-box; he took out at the same instant the sheet of paper which he has scrabbled over with stimulants of lust and adultery to my wife!

I took

I took it up to examine it more minutely. Such a paper, I said, may be conclusive against the writer; does it with the same certainty involve the condemnation of the receiver? Kenrick, thou art a villain! Thou hast subscribed thyself such! Half my confidence in the human species is subverted for ever. But what mean thy complaints? What means the expression, of an "ardour that is not returned with a correspondent ardour?"

Miserable wretch! what straws are these at which I catch to preserve myself from despair! The natural sense of the phrase is, You love me little; you burn for me with a fervour not altogether equal to that which pervades my bosom. Would he have written of love, would he have avowed a lover's impatience of absence, to one who had never heard and acquiesced in a similar language from his lips? Where is the profligate so

hardened,

hardened, that would dare to insult a matron's purity with such an address? And what did she, when she received the villainous billet? Did she communicate to me the insult which had been put upon her, and expose the unnatural viper in the manner he deserved? Did she at least send back the envenomed scrowl to him from whom it came, and by her noble indignation convince him how much she disdained his criminal suggestions? No, no; none of these. She receives it in all tranquillity, as a matter of course, as a matter well corresponding with the temper of her mind, and at which she conceives neither surprise nor resentment. She thrusts it carelessly into an open casket, so little does her heart regard it as the horrible thing which it is.

Gracious God, to what a height of impudence and remorseless crime must this woman have attained! It is the concluding

cluding stage of guilt, that takes no precautions against discovery. She who offends for the first time against the laws of chastity and God, with how confused and fearful a mind does she do it! How does she dread the encounter of every eye! In what tenfold mystery does she envelop this deed of darkness! And Mary scatters about her at random, and without advertence, the evidences of her guilt!

In this terrible state of my thoughts, I sought relief in the conversation of Gifford. I put into his hands the letter I had found. I fixed my eyes upon his countenance as he read it. He betrayed successive tokens of the deepest consternation. He folded it up, with a slow and dejected motion. It is all over! said he.

She shall not sleep another night under my roof! I cried, with a voice frantic with rage and despair.

Gifford

Gifford started.——What do you mean?

Mean? said I. Do you think I will bear the presence of an adultress? Do you think I will not make them both an example for terror to all future offenders?

Take care, sir, take care! This is evidence only against one of the parties.

One! Did she not receive it? Did she not receive it in silence? Has she not kept it in her possession, instead of returning it to the accursed writer?

It is too true! I can no longer attempt to vindicate either. How much has your worthy and noble nature been abused! Wretched brother! No, no longer my brother!—Yet still, sir, this is not evidence, either for a court of justice, or for an unmoved and cold-blooded bystander. If you proceed against mrs. Fleetwood on no stronger grounds, the world will condemn you.

What

What care I for the world?

Dear sir, in so solemn a transaction, let me intreat you to go on the surest proofs. You may wish you had done so, when it is too late. I would have evidences, that none could refute or question, that should shut up the mouths of the transgressors themselves, that should entitle you, if you think proper, to strip her of the name she has dishonoured, by due process of law. A letter! a mere love-letter, written at random, that may have been a pure experiment, that may be pretended to have been designed for another, that was never answered so far as we can tell, that was never acted upon! Fie, sir, fie! These are not things, to annihilate the peace of families, and to dissolve the most sacred ties religion itself can frame!

What would you have me do?

Return

Return the letter to the very place in which you found it.

Well!

Hold yourself upon the alert! A short time will no doubt produce further proofs.

A short time! Perhaps not! Time may weaken, instead of corroborate, the proof in my hand. And what shall I do with this short time? Unhappily, alas! Mary and I have been for some weeks on better and more affectionate terms than ever. Barbarous, remorseless crocodile! —Shall I for this short time personate the fond lover, the confident, secure, transported husband? Yes; and, if no new proofs arise, I suppose I am to set all my fears at rest, and confess that this is exemplarily virtuous!

This letter is probably not the only one that has passed between them. There may be others in her possession, which

which speak of the sort of answers she has returned to her correspondent.

That shall be known! I will break open, and search every repository she has!

And suppose you find nothing? May there not be a quieter and less violent way of proceeding?

I will steal her keys from her to-night, as she sleeps.

Thus we concerted every thing with a view to the completely confounding the guilty parties: I resolved not to see Mary again, till I had completed the search I designed. I took horse, and rode over into Hampshire, leaving word at home, that I should not return till late. This was unusual; the days were short; Mary was alarmed. She and Gifford dined together. The remarks of this conspirator did not tend to calm her spirits. He told her I had gone out, apparently in much distur-

bance. She enquired of the servants: no letter or message had been brought me, to account for this. All this struck her as of evil augury. She recollected the impatience and unreasonableness of my temper, and was appalled. Gifford artfully turned the conversation upon the dark imaginations of jealous husbands, and the sufferings of the innocent victims of their suspicion. He left her early, and left her in tears.

Gifford took his leave of my wife, under pretence of retiring to his chamber to look over some accounts which I had desired him to inspect; but in reality to meet me according to appointment, at a small inn in the neighbourhood. I had passed a joyless and oppressive day. Winter no longer conveyed to me, as it did on my first arrival in Berkshire, sensations of delight. The weather was flagging, sombrous and melancholy. It mutually gave colour to, and received

it from, what passed within me. I dismissed my servant, after a few miles riding, and bade him return home. I could not bear to be subjected to the observation of a human creature. I did not flatter myself with the hope that my wife was innocent. I have before this called myself a misanthrope; but I never felt the bitterness of misanthropy invade, and lord it triumphant over my breast, till now. I saw Kenrick, as he stood at the tomb of his father, and in his parting embrace; I recollected his letter of thanks on his late promotion, the devotedness of heart that breathed in every line of it. No; I defy the whole world to draw a picture of hypocrisy, to be compared with that which my recent discovery had brought home to my mind!

When I thought of my wife, the case was still worse. Till this hour, I never knew how much I had loved her. The

passion I had felt for the ladies of quality who had been my mistresses in France, young as I then was, and full of the ardour and enthusiasm of beginning life, was nothing. I had entertained for her so perfect an esteem! My passion beginning in the instinct of the sexes, had been consecrated by sentiments so generous, so elevated, so spiritual! We had lived together. He that has never experienced, can form no idea of the effects of sitting together continually at the same hearth on terms of entire equality and cordiality. It had made the partner of my roof flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone. Recent as our union had been, I could no more form a distinct idea of living without her, than without any of those vital parts, which were born with me, and which together made me man. The very infirmities of her delicate frame had rendered her dearer to me; I was her shelter, her bed-side watch,

watch, the physician of her soul. I wanted such an object to engage my care; she stood in need of such a guardian.

My last Parisian mistress had driven me out among the wilds of mount Jura, more a maniac than a man. What was I now? I had pistols with me! As I strayed without a path on one of the heaths of Hampshire, I grasped them in my hand. I applied one of them to my head. I dashed it upon the ground. I whirled the other with the whole force of my arm to a distance from me. Vengeance! vengeance! I cried. I will not die like a dog; I will have vengeance! I dismounted from my horse; the bridle dropped from my hand. The beast stood pensive and faithful beside me. I threw myself on the ground. I wallowed and roared aloud, as I measured my length on the earth. Let my fellow-being look upon me in this abject condition,

tion, and despise me! He that despises me, is no man!

How ridiculous are all other stories of adultery compared to mine! The adulterer is no Kenrick! The accursed minion is not the surviving daughter of Macneil! They are not two persons, selected out of all countries and ages of the earth, to laugh at future professions of sincerity, to make it impossible that the word Honesty should ever again be pronounced among the children of men. One sees how they came together. One sees their despicable politics and manœuvres, with what shallow gestures they pretended to be sober, with what flimsy outsides they veiled their pollution. One of the parties is practised in guilt; the other is of so idiot and imbecile a character, as to seem to have waited only for the occurrence of temptation. They are not, like my betrayers, in the full bloom of innocence, with every virtuous sentiment,

sentiment, and every just principle, beaming from their eyes! If ever angels fell from the majestic purity of heaven, this at least was the first time that such a scene had been realised on earth.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.

I RETURNED toward my own house in a delightful mood for the investigation of matron innocence. I met Gifford. He told me how my wife had conducted herself, that, on the mere intelligence of my absence, she had been greatly alarmed, that she had passed the evening in tears, and that, fatigued with the anxiety of her thoughts, she had retired early to bed.

I grasped his hand.—I cannot bear her tears!

Are they not the witnesses of her guilt? Who told her you suspected her? What is it that has thus whispered her to anticipate accusation?

Gifford, you are my friend! You do not

not attempt to excuse her. I may pity her; my friend cannot.

We entered the house with cautious and wary steps. We stole along softly to my apartment. I felt that we trod the galleries carefully, like conspirators going to commit a murder.

We had come home late. I said, I can have patience no longer. No doubt mrs. Fleetwood is asleep. Sit you here, while I go and fetch the keys, and make the search I have resolved on.

I entered the bed-chamber. I hastily drew back one of the curtains. She was in a sweet sleep; I saw no mark of the grief and uneasiness she had endured. There she lay, all unsuspecting of the mischief that impended over her! In my agitation I threw down a candlestick. She moved. She murmured something indistinctly with her lips. I stooped down that I might catch the words. Fleetwood, my love! she said.

Good God! is her hypocrisy perfect even while she sleeps? She thinks I hear her!—No, it is impossible! For one moment, perhaps for the last moment so long as we both shall live, I will believe her innocent!

I stole a balmy kiss from the ripest lips that nature ever formed. She stretched out her arms toward me. I kissed her again. I felt one flash of the joys of heaven, on the verge of the abyss. I drank in madness as I stood.

I drew back precipitately; I found the keys, and hastened to my wife's dressing-room.

A variety of drawers and boxes engaged my attention. I found no letter from Kenrick, no fresh evidence of their familiarity, in any one of them. At first, this circumstance, which ought to have given me pleasure, was felt by me like a calamity. I said, they are eluding my search; their wary guilt will come

come off with impunity!——By degrees my ideas took another turn. I forgot the letter which had first inflamed me. I said, Here is nothing! There is no guilt! If there were, they must have written. If there were letters, they could not escape me.——I turned to the toilet; I looked at the toilet-box, which had contained the first evidence of their perfidy, and to which by the advice of Gifford I had carefully restored it; the letter was no longer there!

Nothing remained to be examined, but a small casket, in which Mary kept her most valuable trinkets. I no sooner opened this, than the first thing which met my eye was the miniature of Kenrick. I looked stedfastly at it: I burst into an idiot laugh. I examined it again. What lovely features; what an air of integrity! said I.——No, it is not so! Do not you see those lines of dissimulation and craft? Now I consider it more attentively,

attentively, I mark the devil peeping out from behind the beauteous mask, and laughing in my face!

I carried the picture to Gifford. I threw it upon the table before him, and then rushed to a sopha on the further side of the room. I buried my face in darkness.

Ha! ha! said Gifford. Where did you find this?

I answered him with a groan.

Where are the letters?

There are no letters.

I am sorry for that!—What will you do with the picture?

I was silent.

Strike it! said Gifford.

Strike it! What do you mean?

Break the glass!

What then?

Break the glass, and return it to the place in which you found it! This will be a means to ascertain the guilt or innocence

nocence of the possessor. If she is innocent, she will enquire how it came by this accident; she will express her anger against the carelessness of her maid. If she is guilty, and retains this portrait to foster her guilt, she will not utter a word.

This picture, pursued my adviser, is a circumstance that may well prove distressing to your mind. But it does not carry you forward in the design in which you were engaged. It is no evidence. A married woman may possess the portrait of her young kinsman, may even in such a place as Bath, have caused it to be painted unknown to her husband, in perfect innocence.

What shall I do? Advise me to no delay! Do not bid me wait the progress of events! I cannot bear it.

Dispose of the picture as I told you. If mrs. Fleetwood says not a word on the subject, that will be something.

But,

But, if you are impatient to bring the affair to an immediate conclusion, I could advise a measure——I do not like the office. What have I to do, to destroy mrs. Fleetwood and my brother?

Gifford, when you see me in this terrible situation, if you refuse me your aid, you are not my friend!

I am conquered!——Let Kenrick be invited here into Berkshire. When I was a school-boy, I had a particular facility in the imitation of hands. I am sure I could imitate mrs. Fleetwood's with the utmost nicety. If you approve of it, I will write a letter in her name to my brother. It shall speak unequivocally the language of a mistress to a favoured lover; it shall intreat him for private reasons, to come down *incognito* into Berkshire, and grant her an interview. If he comes, this will be to you the most incontestible evidence of their mutual crime; and the interview, of the very day

day and hour of which you will be apprised, and can provide yourself witnesses of it accordingly, will probably produce something, that will at once place the criminals under the lash of the law.

I consented to this perfidious measure. My mind was in a state of too violent ferment, to perceive all the marks of a degraded and dangerous character, which this proposal betrayed.

Gifford artfully led to another part of the subject.——Mary was with child. From what time did she date the commencement of her pregnancy?

From October.

Full three months after your marriage! It was before you removed to Bath?

It was.

I do not know whether you recollect, ——I am not sure indeed that you observed,—when mrs. Fleetwood and Kenrick met at Bath, that they did not meet,

meet, like persons who saw each other for the first time?

I did observe it. I saw it with surprise, and, to confess the truth, not without perturbation.

Well! Did they ever account to you for this?

My wife told me she had seen him in Merionethshire. She reminded me of the person, whom she had spoken of as rescuing her from the waves, when she laboured under that terrible alienation of mind at the period of the equinox.

From that period their intercourse commenced. It was kept a secret from you, till you invited Kenrick to come and reside under your roof. Perhaps indeed you were never told how frequently they met.

Thus did this damnable calumniator lead me on, with half-words, with broken sentences, and "ambiguous givings-out," to the most horrible conclusions.

clusions. All the while, he interspersed his innuendoes, with the remark, that this was nothing, that these were particulars which had no necessary connection, and adjured me to draw no inferences which might disturb my future peace, or urge me to any unjust proceeding. These cautions of Gifford persuaded me, that he was a conscientious and scrupulous observer, that I might trust all my interests to his hands, and that he "saw and knew more, much more, than he unfolded."

Only this aggravation could have been added to my calamity. With what feelings had I gazed on my wife in a state of pregnancy? I had anticipated a successor to the Macneils and the Fleetwoods with emotions of extacy. If I looked upon my individual existence with little complacency, and regarded myself as a degenerate shoot, I was determined that my child should not be so.

He

He should be a genuine representative of the benefactors of the citizen of Uri. The lowest wretch that lives, the offender who is just going to expiate his crimes at the gallows, yet loves his offspring, and rejoices that he shall thus survive himself in an innocent infant. To be cheated here, was the cruellest of all impostures. To strain to one's bosom the thing that we hold as our own flesh and blood, while that thing is in reality the impure brood of unhallowed lust, the enduring monument of the worst of crimes! Already I had begun to conceive that, if Mary proved unworthy, and were cast out, I might find some small refuge from despair in this child, who, in spite of her degeneracy, I judged was truly mine. This I believed would be an unadulterate Macneil, the substance in which the innocent Mary, the wife I had so fervently loved, would survive her fall. That last consolation Gifford

tore

tore from me. I could never again return to serenity and fearless confidence. I who had been so wretchedly deceived in one point nearest my heart, had a right to believe all the rest: it was the proper and legitimate second part to the imposition that had been acted.

All was done as Gifford had projected. The picture, with its glass broken, was restored to Mary's casket. The letter to invite Kenrick to a secret interview, was written. I never saw so exquisite a forgery. You might have taken a letter of Mary's, and placed it by the side of the counterfeit, without discovering a single character that, by the imperfectness of imitation, could have led to a suspicion. This letter was never sent.

Our consultations and proceedings took up the greater part of the night. Toward morning I threw myself upon my bed. To sleep I had not the smallest

est inclination. My eyelids were weighed down with the anguish of my tortured heart; but they shut out, instead of receiving within their folds, the balm of repose. Every articulation of my frame seemed to beat with a separate pulse; I was in a high fever. I tossed and turned from side to side; my eagerness to make an end of the scene which engaged my thoughts was inexpressible.

Mary rose with the dawn of the morning. She was invigorated with repose; she had an animation and alacrity, the symbols of conscious innocence. She approached my bed; in the gentlest and sweetest voice that ever came from a human organ, she pronounced my name. I feigned sleep. She stole out of the room, and shut the door softly after her.

No sooner was she gone, than I started from my bed. I paced the room with strides

strides of rage and despair. The breakfast-parlour, to which my wife had bent her steps, was in a distant part of the house.

In about an hour Mary came to me again. I could no longer persuade myself to play the farce of sleep. I looked at her with eyes that glared. She spoke in the most soothing and affectionate accents. She enquired for my health, whither I had gone yester-evening, and at what hour I had returned. She tried by smiles and little sallies of cheerfulness to excite me. I muttered between my teeth, Hypocrite! monster! devil! woman! but I retained sufficient command of my passions not to break out into open extravagance. I answered with coldness and indifference. I regarded what she did as a perfect scene. The manner was like that which had subdued me, on the evening of the day when we read Fletcher's Wife for a Month. But the present case was out

of the reach of such remedies. It was thus that Cleopatra inveigled Mark Antony to his ruin, when she had determined to play him false with his confident Dolabella. As my wife left the room, I saw her apply her handkerchief to her eyes, for anguish that she could not please me, and conscious that it was some unjust displeasure against her that was at the bottom of my conduct. I steeled my heart against her sorrow; I said, she must perceive that I am animated with some resentment, and were she not cowed with guilt, she would certainly demand an explanation.

The next time she approached me, she said, My love, I am sure all this disturbance proceeds from some groundless resentment you have conceived against me. Acquaint me with the cause, and I have no doubt I shall be able to satisfy you.—This I found I could bear least of all. It seemed to me the most incredible

credible degree of effrontery, to challenge a discussion. The proofs of her crime were too certain. The very child that existed in her womb witnessed that she was unfaithful. In spite however of the tortures I suffered, I constrained myself, and played the dissembler. I told her, No, it was nothing; I was perfectly satisfied; I had no complaint to make. I then kissed her. Oh, such a kiss was transport, was frenzy! My lips seemed to feel again the Mary that I had adored. I then recollected, that Kenrick had planted a thousand miscreant kisses upon that very spot. I wished that my lips could have made a brand upon her check, as broad, as deep, as horrid and distempered, as her guilt. I added with a sepulchral voice, that she should be informed what it was that had weighed upon my mind.

I waited all the morning for the event of Gifford's stratagem of the picture.

Mary

Mary spent a full hour in her dressing-room. This apartment had a glass-door with a curtain. Gifford assured me, that, passing accidentally by this door, and the curtain being displaced about a quarter of an inch at the bottom, he had seen Mary open the casket with some caution, examine the glass of the picture with marks of surprise, and then return it to its place. Certain it is, she made no enquiries or remarks upon the subject of the accident.

We made a silent dinner; and, soon after it was over, I walked into the garden. The weather was bleak and severe; but I felt it not. A sharp north-wind blew in my face; it only seemed to increase the heat within me. By and by I saw Mary come down the avenue. The day was so exceedingly disagreeable, that there could be no question her sole errand was to seek me; I turned into another walk to avoid her. I thought she

she was gone in. Presently, having taken a small circuit, she was close upon me before I was aware.

My dear Fleetwood, she said, you are not well. Why do you expose yourself to the weather on such a day?

Mary, take care of yourself. You are tender and open to impression. It will do me no harm.

She took hold of my hand.—Bless me, how cold you are! Come in, my love!

Mary, I cannot go in. Leave me.

You do not love me!

Love you!—Why do you talk thus? ——By God, I love you to madness. Those eyes, those lips, these arms, why were they formed so beautiful? I feel you through my soul; and your idea lives in every fibre of my heart.

If you loved me, you would not make me a stranger to your thoughts.

I have told you, you shall know them. You will know them too soon.

And in the mean time I see you pale, indisposed, and uneasy in mind! Fleetwood, I am your wife. What did you mean when you made me so? I have a right to know your thoughts, and share your sorrows. Think how we stand toward each other, if you deny me this!

You claim then justice and your rights? Have a care!

I will claim nothing. I will accept every thing as favour and indulgence. Fleetwood, my life, do not distract me with uncertainty and fears! If you have any compassion for me, tell me what it is that distresses you! Open your bosom to your faithful wife, and let me soothe your sorrows! I will smooth your pillow, and cover you with my arms; I will take care, by my assiduities, to deserve your confidence.

I turned upon her, enraged at her duplicity.—Be gone! How dare you torment me thus! I intended to have been gentle and forbearing with you; but you compel me to be severe. Learn not to intrude upon my privacy, when I chuse to be alone! By the eternal God, you shall repent your officiousness!

Mary heard me with astonishment, and burst into tears.—Fleetwood—is it come to this?—This is too much—too much! I listened to her with an unmoved heart. I said to myself, These tears are Kenrick's!

She took hold of my arm.—If ever you had compassion on the wife of your bosom——!

I shook her from me. I said, Will you not leave me? She trembled, and fell with one knee and one hand upon the ground. I hurried to another part of the garden. When I was got to

a distance, I could not help looking back after her. I saw her return with staggering steps to the house. I said to myself, I did not wish for this. No, though I will be severely just, I would not be a brute!—I recollected she was with child.

Demons of hell! why was I reserved to this? What an insupportable, what a damnable situation!—Why was she formed so beautiful? Why are innocence and truth written on her front? How like a saint, how like the purest of all mortal creatures, she talked!——With child!—the child is Kenrick's!—Grant, all-merciful heaven, that it may never see the light! Would God, it could be intercepted in its entrance into existence! —Why did I marry? I, that had already passed the middle stage of life? I, that knew the sex so well, that had gained my knowledge by such bitter experience? —What shall I do? How shall I signa-

lise the terribleness of my justice? And in what dungeon shall I afterward hide myself?

Mary did not yet suspect any connection between the disorder in which she saw me, and the accident of the picture. Her innocent heart failed to suggest to her that I could be jealous of my kinsman.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XIII.

I SPENT this night from home, at an obscure inn, where I was entirely unknown, and returned in the morning. About two o'clock I walked out with Gifford. He was my confident; and I consulted him a little respecting the past, and talked somewhat by broken sentences in gloomy anticipations of the future. But my heart was too heavy to allow me to say much. My steps were those of despair; my frame was worn out with watching and perturbation. Gifford led me unawares toward a little remote public-house.

Come in here, he said. It may be worth your while.

I followed mechanically. I paid no heed to what he said; I scarcely heard it.

it. I was totally indifferent whither he led me.

He conducted me to a room on the first floor. Beneath the window there was a double row of elms with a smooth and regular turf between them. The afternoon was fine. It was a clear, frosty day; and the sun, as it now approached to the west, painted the clouds with brilliant colours. These things I scarcely perceived at the time; but I have recollected them since.

After a time I heard the sound of voices at a little distance from the window. It was not natural that in my state of mind I should have paid attention to this; but, though the voices were low, there was something in the accents, that arrested my soul. After a minute's earnest and impatient listening, I rushed to the window. I saw the speakers. They were Kenrick and my wife! Astonishing,

ing, soul-blasting sight! They appeared to be in the act of parting.

I rushed down stairs in a state of frenzy. Before I could get round to the spot, they were at some distance from each other. I pursued the villain. I called to him to stop. He stood still, but did not advance toward me. As I came up to him, he seemed to be in great confusion.

My uncle!

Kenrick, how came you here?

I beg your pardon, sir. You shall know all. Indeed you shall.

Know all?—Am I of so little consequence to you? Have not you received the commissions I sent you? Did not you protest that your life would be too little to show your devotedness? Ungrateful villain!

I am afraid I have been wrong. Do not be angry with me!

Be

Be gone, sir!—I shall find a time for you!

Only one word, uncle. Do not betray me! Do not tell any one that you saw me! It may do me the greatest injury in the world.

Scornful boy! insolent wretch! I command you to leave me. I only wanted to be sure it was you. Go; I will be obeyed!

Kenrick was aghast at the vehemence of my manner. He would have expostulated. But I would not hear him. I even raved at so shameless a persistence, till at length he became convinced that this was no time for conference, and departed.

I was alone. Gifford presently came and joined me.—Oh, God! oh, God! I cried; could I have believed it? It was but yesterday that I discovered the last proof of her falshood! It was but yesterday that I confounded her with the

bitterness of my reproaches upon her guilt! And to-day she meets him here! How came he here? What is the meaning——? Gifford, leave me! For a moment, leave me!

I dare not. In the state of mind in which I see you, I am afraid lest you should do some act of desperation upon yourself!

Upon myself!—Ha! ha, ha! I value them not a straw. I have no love for my wife; I never did love her! I hold myself at a price greater than ten thousand such strumpets and profligates! They have no power to ruffle my thoughts. I am calm! perfectly calm! They thought to sting me! I never possessed my soul in more entire tranquillity than at this moment!——Go into the house; I will join you instantly.——Gifford left me.

Shall I go to my wife, and confront her with this new evidence of her guilt? —No,

—No, I will never speak with her, never see her more. It is a condescension unworthy of an injured husband, ever to admit his prostituted consort into his presence! It is as if God should go down and visit Satan in his polluted, sulphureous abodes!----How from my inmost soul I abhor her! How I will hold her up to the abhorrence of the world! How I should like to see her torn with red-hot pincers!——To what a height I have loved her! No, no, no, no, no——never!

Presently the words which Kenrick had uttered came back to my ears. What did he mean, by asking me not to betray him, not to let any one know I had seen him? Was he mad? Are these the words of a dependent, who has wronged his patron in his bed?

If they were but innocent!—if they were!—I will go this moment to my wife!

I left

I left Gifford waiting for me in the public-house: I entirely forgot him.

As I passed along, I endeavoured to collect my thoughts. I determined to exercise the utmost degree of subtlety and craft in exploring the truth. I found Mary in her dressing-room.

I said to her, Have you seen my shirt-pin?—I have lost one of my tan-coloured gloves.—I think it is a long time since we heard from Kenrick.

The words seemed to stick in my throat, as I endeavoured to speak them. When I uttered the name of my kinsman, I fixed my eyes upon her countenance. I saw she was much disordered.

It is a long while.

How long?

It must be almost a month.

You have not heard from him?

Her lips formed themselves to say the word No.

You have not seen him to-day?

To-day?

To-day?—How should I?—Is not he at his quarters at Beverley?

I grasped her by the arm.—Did not you see him to-day, in the elm-walk, behind the alehouse of the Spotted Dog?

Unhand me, sir!—Mr. Fleetwood, this is not the tone in which I am to be interrogated!

Cunning witch! artful hypocrite!—What matters it whether the questions are asked in polished words and a gallant tone? They must be answered!—How came Kenrick in Berkshire?

That is a question I am not at liberty to resolve. And, whatever may be the consequence to myself, I will not reply to it!

Not at liberty to answer! And all the confusion you betrayed at the mention of his name, your prevarication, your circumlocution, the guilty stops in your voice, these you disdain to account for!

Fleetwood, you will repent this violence!

lence! Yesterday in the garden, for no cause whatever, you used me like a brute.

Pooh, pooh!—Answer to the purpose, and leave these subterfuges!—When were you first acquainted with this wretch? How frequent were your interviews in Merionethshire?—You are with child! Mary, fall upon your knees, and answer me, by the great God, who made heaven and earth, whose child is that in your womb?

Almighty God! and is it I, of whom such a question is asked?—Lightnings blast me! God, in thy mercy strike me dead!—Fleetwood, if I were to live to the ages of eternity, never from this hour would I hold intercourse with you!

I was moved at the earnestness, the dignity, that appeared in her rage.—Mary, I intreat you; by every thing sacred, by all the endearments that have passed between us, answer my questions,

and

and resolve my doubts! Oh, if you could but take away the horror that overwhelms my soul, worlds could not buy the happiness!

I thought she hesitated for a moment.—Fleetwood, it is too late! I have been an exemplary wife to you; from the hour of our marriage, I have studied your happiness in every thing; my tenderness and forbearance have only served to render you more unjust. I am an altered woman since yesterday. And the man who has uttered against me such brutal reproaches as you have now done, is no husband of mine!

Very well, madam, very well! I was a fool to ask you a single question. I had evidences enough before. But the despicable subterfuges to which you have now resorted, one after another, are equal to a thousand witnesses.

She cast up her eyes with wildness, yet with a concentred spirit.—My dear father!

father! my angel-mother! you are my only refuge! Come, and let your spirits rest upon my bosom! Come, and console your brutally-treated, unsheltered daughter!

This was the tenderest argument upon which she could have touched. It ought to have won my protection and forgiveness, even to an adultress. It struck upon a wrong string. Bursting as I was with rage and agony, I could not bear any thing that was calculated to excite an opposite passion. It created confusion in my mind; it made me half fear I was doing wrong: and to conquer this fear, I became ten times more furious and peremptory than ever.

Be gone from my presence. For the last time, be gone!—Horrible wretch, do you think to disarm my justice by naming your parents! How dare you take their pure and sacred name into your lips!

She

She proceeded a few steps; she moved with all the pride of innocence.—She recollected herself, and turned again.—Hear me, miserable, deluded Fleetwood, a word!

One expiring sentiment of nature stirred in my breast. In a dead, and scarcely audible voice I said, Speak!

I have no wishes for myself. I scorn to defend my actions. You are nothing to me.—But Kenrick, poor Kenrick,—it is my last request—do not let him suffer for any misconstruction on my conduct!——You will soon be undecei——.

At the name of Kenrick thus falling from her lips, my heart swelled as if it would have leaped from my bosom.—Impudent harlot! Do you come back for this?——Yes, I will fondle and caress him!—I wish I had him now writhing at my feet!——Kenrick!——Ha, ha, ha!

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIV.

I BURST out of the room. As I went, I met Gifford. I caught hold of his arm.—Lead me, lead me any whither from this hated house!—We passed along. We came near the great road. A chaise (how it came there I knew not; I did not once think of so unimportant a question; I scarcely considered any thing I did) was standing near a stile. We got into it. It proceeded toward Newbury.

I will set out for the continent this night!

Gifford expostulated with me on this sudden resolution. His objections were for the most part trivial and insignificant, when weighed with the terrible situation in which I stood. Slight opposition, as he

he well foresaw, only served to make me more determined. If he suggested any difficulty which seemed of more serious import, he took care himself to supply me with the arguments that might invalidate it.

We went across the country to Brighthelmstone, whence I immediately took passage for Dieppe. From the former of these places, I dispatched a letter to my principal *homme d'affaires*, acquainting him with my intention of instantly proceeding for the continent, where I might perhaps remain for years, and directing him how to conduct himself with regard to the remittances to be forwarded to me. But the main purport of my letter was concerning my wife. I gave the most peremptory orders, that she should not remain another night under my roof, that she should be suffered to take away with her nothing but what strictly belonged to her person,

and

and that she should, on no pretext whatever, receive a farthing out of the produce of my estate.—I delighted myself with the hope, that she would perish in abject misery.—This letter was in the hand-writing of Gifford, and I annexed to it my signature.—From Dieppe I and my fellow-traveller proceeded to Paris.

It is impossible for words to express any thing so wretched, as the state of my mind during the whole of this journey. Sometimes I was turbulent and ungovernable; I was little less than raving mad. At other times I was silent, and seemed wholly bereft of sensation. For days I did not utter a single word; I could scarcely be prevailed on to take an atom of sustenance. Sleep was wholly a stranger to my eyes; for fourteen days and nights neither I nor my companion was aware that I slept for a moment. Nothing could be more exemplary than the attention I received from

from Gifford during the whole of this period. He never left me; he never ceased from studying the means of restoring me; the meanest offices were not repulsive to his kindness and zeal. I am certain that, in this extremity, I owed the preservation of my life to his care.

Yet I did not thank him for all his assiduities. Life was the object of my hatred. Often did I meditate the means of self-destruction. Ten times did he prevent the accomplishment of my purpose, by the indefatigable way in which he watched the turn of my eye, and the movements of my limbs, and by constantly removing from me the instruments of death I had fixed upon. He talked to me in tones of the sweetest humanity. He contrived a thousand ingenious methods of diverting me from the griefs that absorbed my mind. Frequently I fell into paroxysms of rage

against

against him. I loaded him with every opprobrious term that frenzy could invent. I would not suffer him to sit down at table with me. I obliged him to squeeze himself into the remotest corner of our travelling carriage, and raved with resentment and fury, if he happened to touch me. He bore all with unconquerable patience.—At times I became sensible of his merit in this. I thanked him for his distasteful attentions, and begged his pardon for all my violence and unreasonableness. I owned (and then a burst of tears gushed into my eyes) that I had no friend in the world but him, and intreated that he would never desert me. He readily promised that he would stick to me for life.

In the bitterness of my soul I imprecated the most horrible curses that imagination could devise, upon the memory of the excellent Macneil. But for him I should have exhausted the miserable

rable dregs of my existence in quiet. I had fallen into a sort of lethargy compared with what I now felt, in which, if I was wretched and forlorn, habit had taught me not to writhe under my misery. Every one of his advices had fallen out unhappily to me. He had recommended to me a wife, the society of my kindred, and that I should cherish the fond anticipation of offspring. Each of these pretended sources of happiness had proved a scorpion, stinging my before palsied senses into a capacity of the acutest torments.—Had Mary and Kenrick been really as guilty as I believed them to be, if they had seen the condition to which I was reduced, they would have pitied me; and guilt itself would have generously wished to impart its privileges to my insupportable innocence. There was but one man, who, whatever fair appearances he might put on, never pitied me for a moment.

Every

Every time a packet of letters reached me from England, strange as it may seem, I tore them open with furious impatience, in hope o ffinding one line from Kenrick or Mary. I had built my conclusions upon such strong circumstances, that scarcely a husband in existence would have resisted their evidence. Yet a sentiment still lingered in the corner of my heart, that whispered me at times the possibility of their innocence. I therefore suffered a continually renewed anguish in the still repeated disappointments I experienced. In my frenzy I had written letters both to Mary and the adulterer, full of the sharpest reproaches, curses, expostulations, stained with blots, and in every other respect expressive of the disorder of my mind. These Gifford, with apparent propriety, confessed he had intercepted. When I had outlived the most terrible distemper of my mind, I

wrote

wrote to my wife a sedate, heart-breaking letter, in which I rebuked her conduct, described with what vehemence I had loved her, and informed her that I had ordered my steward to supply to her one thousand pounds *per annum* in quarterly payments. Could any thing but self-convicted guilt have persisted in so ill-boding a silence?

Gifford hurried me from place to place, through France, Germany, and the north of Italy. He had acquired an ascendancy over me during my frenzy, which afterward I could not easily shake off. I did not fully understand the reason of these frequent removals, but I regarded them with an eye of passiveness and indifference. Gifford's general pretence was the benefit which my health would derive from travelling and change of air.

At length the time came, when it was necessary that I should think of the law-proceedings, if they were to be

entered upon, for a divorce and the illegitimating my unborn child. Gifford often reminded me of these things, yet contrived to present the subject under such faces, as could least suggest the idea of his being animated by any views of personal interest. I on my part willingly entertained the project. It well suited the gloomy conceptions in my mind, of the justice I was bound to execute upon my guilty wife; nor could I endure to think that the child of her polluted embraces should inherit any part of my estate. I had also for some time cherished the plan of making my faithful and entire friend heir to the gross of my fortunes, and this I could not do without thus cutting off the descent of my land. When every thing was ready, I requested Gifford to proceed to England for the management of my cause. My presence was judged not to be indispensible, and I gladly excused myself

myself from the journey. We parted at Marseilles. There I met with an English lawyer of some eminence, with whom I advised on the subject; for I was peremptory that I would not separate myself from this only friend I possessed, till I had executed an instrument, by which I should make him, to the utmost of my power, in the event of my decease the successor to all my estates. Among other provisions of this my last will and testament, I stated that it was my intention, in case, which I had every reason to expect, the proceedings now depending should terminate in rendering my marriage null, and declaring the child with which my wife was great a bastard, that my kinsman and fellow-traveller should be deemed to be as fully and entirely the successor to my property, as if he had been my only son. Gifford seemed earnestly to oppose the execution of this testament. He represented such

a measure, particularly under the present uncertainty of my affairs, as in a high degree indecorous and premature. The more he resisted my pleasure in this article, the more obstinately I became bent upon it. The will was drawn out in complete form; I delivered it into his hands, and insisted upon it, as he valued my future favour or peace, that he should never suffer it to go out of his possession.

The proceedings upon my complaint were complicated and tedious. I know not whether my mode of existence during this suspense and desertion, does not deserve to be styled more deplorable, than under all the agony and delirium of the first detection. My mind was then hurried with never-ceasing vehemence from thought to thought. Even when I appeared, to the eye of the by-stander, bereft of all sensation, and was wholly without motion or notice to in-

dicat

dicate that there was a soul shut up within my corporal bulk, my brain was for ever busy, and I might fitly be compared to an immense pile of mechanism, the furniture of a dead and windowless structure, on surveying the walls of which you perceive no signs of activity, though a thousand cogs and ten thousand wheels are for ever working within. The distempered activity under which I then suffered, was now gone. I became jaundiced, body and soul. My blood loiteringly crept through palsied veins. I was like one of the metamorphoses of the Grecian fables, rooted to a spot, and cursed with the ineffective wish to move. How slowly did the never-ending days and nights revolve over my head! How deep was the despair that embraced and struck its fangs into my soul! Hope, under no one of the varied forms in which she ever showed herself to mortal eye, came near me! My great constant

sensation

sensation was a sickness of heart, nauseating existence, and all that existence brings along with it. With vacant eye I observed every thing that moved around me, and said, Would to God it were all still! What a relief would death, or the resolution to die, have been from this insupportable burthen!

CHAP.

CHAPTER XV.

JULY came, and brought along with it the anniversary of my marriage. It was July too, that was to give birth to the child, to whom I had once looked forward with raptures, on whom I now thought with sensations little less than infernal. I resolved to solemnise a strange and frantic festival on my wedding-day. I wrote to Gifford to procure me by some means a complete suit of my wife's clothes, together with a lieutenant's uniform, made to pattern, according to the mode of the regiment to which Kenrick belonged. I assured him that my life depended upon the fulfilling my present demand. Ever faithful to gratify my slightest request, he punctually sent me the articles I desired. I had in my possession

possession a miniature of my wife. I went to a celebrated modeller in wax, in the city of Florence where I now was, and caused him to make a likeness, as exact as he could, of the size of life. I was myself not without some skill in modelling, and I directed and assisted him. For the wearer of the regimentals, I fixed upon a terrible and monstrous figure of a fiend, which I found in the magazine of my artist. I ordered a barrel-organ to be made for the same occasion. I recollected the tunes which Mary and Kenrick had sung together when at Bath, and I caused my instrument to be made to play those tunes. I bought a cradle, and a chest of child-bed linen. It is inconceivable what a tormenting pleasure I took in all these preparations. They employed me day after day, and week after week.

When at length the fifteenth of July came, I caused a supper of cold meats

to be prepared, and spread in an apartment of my hotel. All the materials which I had procured with so much care and expence, were shut up in the closets of this apartment. I locked myself in, and drew them forth one after another. At each interval of the ceremony, I seated myself in a chair, my arms folded, my eyes fixed, and gazed on the object before me in all the luxury of despair. When the whole was arranged, I returned to my seat, and continued there a long time. I then had recourse to my organ, and played the different tunes it was formed to repeat. Never had madness in any age or country so voluptuous a banquet.

I have a very imperfect recollection of the conclusion of this scene. For a long time I was slow and deliberate in my operations. Suddenly my temper changed. While I was playing on my organ one of the tunes of Kenrick and Mary—

it was a duet of love, the mistress, in a languishing and tender style, charged her lover with indifference, the lover threw himself at her feet, and poured out his soul in terms of adoration—my mind underwent a strange revolution. I no longer distinctly knew where I was, or could distinguish fiction from reality. I looked wildly and with glassy eyes all round the room; I gazed at the figure of Mary; I thought, it was, and it was not, Mary. With mad and idle action I put some provisions on her plate; I bowed to her in mockery, and invited her to eat. Then again I grew serious and vehement, I addressed her with inward and convulsive accents in the language of reproach; I declaimed with uncommon flow of words upon her abandoned and infernal deceit; all the tropes that imagination ever supplied to the tongue of man seemed to be at my command. I know not whether this

speech

speech was to be considered as earnest, or as the Sardonic and bitter jest of a maniac. But, while I was still speaking, I saw her move—if I live, I saw it. She turned her eyes this way and that; she grinned and chattered at me. I looked from her to the other figure; that grinned and chattered too. Instantly a full and proper madness seized me; I grinned and chattered in turn to the figures before me. It was not words that I heard or uttered; it was murmurs and hissings and lowings and howls. I became furious. I dashed the organ into a thousand fragments. I rent the child-bed linen, and tore it with my teeth. I dragged the clothes which Mary had worn, from off the figure that represented her, and rent them into long strips and shreds. I struck the figures vehemently with the chairs and other furniture of the room, till they were broken to pieces. I threw at them in despite, the plates and

other

other brittle implements of the supper-table. I raved and roared with all the power of my voice. I must have made a noise like hell broke loose; but I had given my valet a charge that I should not be intruded upon, and he, who was one of the tallest and strongest of men, and who ever executed his orders literally, obstinately defended the door of my chamber against all inquisitiveness. At the time this behaviour of his I regarded as fidelity; it will be accounted for hereafter. He was the tool of Gifford; he had orders that I should not be disturbed; it was hoped that this scene would be the conclusion of my existence. I am firmly persuaded that, in the last hour or two, I suffered tortures, not inferior to those which the North American savages inflict on their victims; and, like those victims, when the apparatus of torture was suspended, I sunk into immediate insensibility. In this state I

was

was found, with all the lights of the apartment extinguished, when at last the seemingly stupid exactness of my valet gave way to the impatience of others, and they broke open the door.

The ceremonies of this evening had a terrible effect upon me. For fifteen days I never left my bed. For the most part of the time I was really insane, but I was too weak to break out into the paroxysms of insanity, and those about me were scarcely aware of the degree of my derangement. From the moment the physicians were called in, they pronounced that it was impossible I should recover. I gradually wasted away, till I seemed to be arrived at the last gasp. They were mistaken however; I was reserved for more sufferings, and for stranger adventures. A favourable crisis took place in my disease, and I became slowly and tediously convalescent.

Gifford wrote to me regularly during the whole period of his absence. I

always opened his letters with vehement emotion; a strange expectation still lingered about me that I should find the accused parties innocent. Nothing in Gifford's communications encouraged this idea; the delays that the cause suffered appeared to be no more than is always incident to such prosecutions. He wrote me word that he had procured witnesses of the criminal conversation of my wife and her paramour in Merionethshire; he had even been so fortunate as to meet with an evidence, to whom Mary had expressly confessed, that the child with which she was great, was the child of Kenrick. The lieutenant had quitted England; heavy damages were awarded against him in the court of King's Bench. A decree of divorce was obtained from the ecclesiastical judges. At length my correspondent informed me, that an act of parliament, completing my objects, had gone through nearly all the forms, but the last; and he desired me to meet

him

him on a certain day at Paris, where he assured me he should arrive, bringing over with him the full and consummate fruit of his labours. I had already crossed the Alps, and come as far as Montpelier for that purpose.

Gifford had received but an imperfect information of the state of my health during the latter part of July. As soon as I became capable of reflection, I was alarmed lest the accounts he received from my valet should have the effect of making him desert the business in which he was engaged, and come over instantly to Florence to attend me. Gifford was in no danger to be misled by any such sentiments as I imputed to him. All the world could not have induced him to such an act. He had my testament in his possession; and the cause was by this time in such forwardness, that the news of my death could not arrive in time to suspend the conclusion. Besides,

he had given the necessary directions for making my death, if it took place, a secret, till he should give the signal for its publication. I went at Florence by a false name. Previously to his departure for England, he had watched over me with more anxiety, with more demonstrations of affection and concern, than a mother over her first-born son. Now he did not care, if I died. He had punctually supplied me with all the particulars I required for the solemnity of the fifteenth of July, in the hope of such a consequence as resulted, and that that consequence would have led to a more perfect termination.

How perverse was the constitution of my mind! The act of parliament, dissolving my union with my wife, and disinheriting my only child, was an object I had sought for with the greatest ardour. When Gifford and I parted at Marseilles, I thought the only chance I had

had for ever enjoying a peaceful moment, rested in the success of his expedition. What could be more natural? Who would not wish, to be disjoined for ever from a perfidious and abandoned consort, and to prevent all possibility that the offspring of her guilty amours should succeed to the inheritance of his ancestors? Yet, as I have said before, it was Gifford that kept alive this object in my mind. When he had left me, my contemplation took a different turn. If I thought of Mary as guilty, still I remembered how I had loved her, I regarded her as a consecrated piece of earth, never to be violated by any irreverence or levity of mine; if I beheld her covered with the deformities and leprosy of her fall, I did not fail also to recollect how white, and smooth, and rich in lustre, that figure had once appeared to me. I never repeated her name in soliloquy, in my sober moments, without

that

that awe, and suspension of voice, with which a pious man speaks of his God. But I did not always think of her as guilty: I had visions of her restoration to character and honour. These sentiments, and the feelings with which I was accustomed to open his letters, sometimes obtruded into my replies to Gifford, and made him comprehend that I was not a man to be depended upon. In my earliest letters after the event of July, I spoke of my determination to see Mary once again, and to extort from her own lips an explanation of her perfidy.

It was the end of August. I was no longer subject to the transports of passion from which I had already suffered so much. My frame was feeble and languid. I was wasted almost to a skeleton. My face was thin, and wan, and colourless. I seemed to be overtaken with a premature old age. My hair

was

was almost changed to grey. Yet, as I have said, I was convalescent. My eyes were brighter than they had been, and my countenance, though exceedingly pale, was of a less leaden and death-like hue. It seemed probable that I was reserved for years more of existence. My constitution had been originally robust; I had been all my life accustomed to travelling and exercise; and these favourable circumstances now began to show on which side the victory would be, for life, or death.

CHAPTER XVI.

I APPROACHED Paris. The day and hour had been fixed between Gifford and me, at which I should arrive. About six miles from the capital we had to pass through a wood, celebrated for the robberies and murders that had been committed in it. I thought not of this, and paid little attention to any of the objects in the road. As we entered the wood, my mind was absent and dreaming; I was like a man asleep, but my eyes were open. I was in my travelling chariot, with my valet sitting beside me. Suddenly I heard a voice, which called to the carriage to stop. It stopped. Three men in masks came up to the door, opened it, and laid violent hands upon me.

me. Mechanically I had had recourse to my pocket, and drawn out my purse, which I proffered to the assailants. They took no notice of this action, but proceeded to endeavour to force me from the chariot. Alarmed at this, I struggled with the ruffians, and called out to my valet, and to my servants who were in sight, to assist me. No one assisted me; and, as I was dragged from my seat, I felt my valet give me a push from behind. In all the confusion and violence of the scene, this action forcibly struck me. It gave a sort of convulsive shock to my mind, and made me view all that was passing in a very different light. Is it one of the effects of wealth, that with it we enlist men into our service, to murder us? The feeling of my situation made me desperate, and I struggled more violently than my feeble condition could have given reason to expect. I wished for

my

my pistols; it was too late; they were left in the carriage. I saw that it was impossible to escape, and that I had but a few minutes to live.

Two men who had hold of me, dragged me a considerable way from the chariot; a third staid with the carriage; my own servants remained behind. At the fatal moment, four horsemen advanced at full speed in the opposite direction. As they came near, the assassin who had hold of me on the right side, presented his pistol at my head. It missed fire. Goaded with desperation, he struck me a furious blow with the butt end of it just above the ear, which brought me senseless to the ground. Instantly the ruffians left me, and ran as fast as they could. One of the horsemen remained with me; the other three pursued the fugitives. The assassins endeavoured to make their way into the thickets: one of them was shot dead

by

by the pursuers; the other two escaped.

The horseman who had remained to take care of me, had endeavoured to raise me from the ground; the others now assisted him, and conveyed me to my chariot. I was stunned with the blow I had received, and continued speechless. My conductors therefore did not convey me to the hotel in Paris where I was to have met Gifford, but to another of their own choosing. They put me to bed, and sent for an eminent surgeon, who took from me a considerable quantity of blood, and then left me, with directions that I should be kept as quiet as possible.

In the course of the night I perfectly recovered my recollection. I saw myself in a strange chamber, with a taper glimmering in the chimney, and an old woman sitting at some distance from the bed, to watch by me. I said, Where is

my

my friend, my only friend,—where is he?

Who, sir?

Mr. Gifford.

I never heard of him.

Where is my valet?

I do not know. You are a stranger to me.

In what place am I? Whose are these apartments?

I am ordered not to answer questions. You are in very good hands. Keep yourself quiet. Suspend your curiosity till the morning.

Here our dialogue ended. After a minute's silence, I heard the door of my chamber softly open; the nurse went toward it, and she and the man who opened it, spoke two or three times alternately. What was said was uttered in a whisper; yet I thought the voice of the unseen was like some voice with which my ear was acquainted. I could not

not solve the mystery. The door was then shut again with equal caution. I obeyed the injunction of the nurse, and was silent.

The woman who had watched in my chamber during the night, was French. In the morning, when the surgeons attended me, a second female of menial rank entered the apartment. There was something about her, that caught my attention, and made me inquisitive. I was sure I had seen her before, and that feelings of warmth and interest had been connected with her person in my mind. This was my first impression. After a few minutes of doubt and perplexity, I perceived who it was. It was Martha, the wife of William, the Merionethshire peasant, whose life I had contributed to save, while yet a boy with my father. Bless me, Martha, said I, is it you? When the surgeons had finished their visit, she was going out

of the room with them. I said softly, I want to speak with you. She promised to return, and was not long in keeping her word.

My dear master, said she, the doctors say you are better, and have given me leave to speak to you, so it be only for five minutes. I did not understand their jabber, but my master's gentleman told me that was the meaning of it.

Who is your master? How came you in France?

Ah, sir! that is a long story. You shall know all by and by.

Whose apartments are these? They are not the same I tenanted before.

They are mr. Scarborough's.

Of Berkshire?

Yes, sir.

How came I here? Where is mr. Gifford?

Martha shook her head.—You will not see him, I believe, of one while.

What

What misfortune has happened to my friend? Is he not in Paris?

That he is!

Why is he not with me? Why am I separated from the only man that for a long time, I have dared to trust? I insist upon his being sent for immediately. Go, Martha, and tell mr. Scarborough I am dying to see him.

Mr. Gifford is in prison; the Bastille, or the *Con—concier*——, I do not know what name they call it.

In prison? my friend in prison? I will rise this moment, and procure his freedom! What is he in prison for?

Why, sir, it is a queer kind of a story. I do not exactly understand it. It is something about your valet, that ran away from you yesterday. They are both in prison. Captain—— Lord bless me, I had like to have let it all out!—the gentleman, you know, sir, that de-

livered you from the robbers yesterday,——

That gentleman was not mr. Scarborough?

No, sir, no, but I am bid not tell his name. Well, sir, he went to a place they call the Police. Those people of the Police are as quick as lightning. The first inkling we had of the matter was from the valet's running away. Captain—— the gentleman, I mean—told them no more than that; and what did they do, but caught Gifford last night, and this morning early they sent word they had caught the valet too.

Saying this, she left me; and in about an hour returned.—Well, sir, said she, it is all out. Gifford is the great rascal of the whole gang, and he will be hanged.

Martha, be silent. I always had a respect for your qualities, and I cannot bear

bear to hear from your mouth, whatever I might from others, these scurrilities against the only honourable man I have lately found in the world.—Where is mr. Gifford? what has happened to him?

We all saw from the first, sir, that it could be no common robbery. Why did your valet take to his heels, and leave you?

Martha, I am thoroughly convinced in that point. He was an accomplice with the villains who attacked me.

Ah, sir, but that is not all. If he had been only their accomplice, he would have been only a robber. What have you lost? You must have been some time in the hands of the rogues, and yet your watch, your purse, your rings, your pocket-book, every thing is safe. They meant to murder you, sir,—to murder you, not for what you had about you, but for your estate!

Martha,

Martha, leave me! I shall for ever abhor the sight of you, if you talk thus. It has been my fault to be too mistrustful,——

That it has, sir!

I cling to mr. Gifford as my last hold upon human nature. If I could think him base, I would fly the face of man, and herd with wolves and tigers. Thank God, there is no danger of that! He has done me such services, as scarcely ever one man did for another. He unmasked all my treacherous friends.——

He *put on* a mask yesterday.

When their perfidy had reduced me to the brink of the grave, when it had unseated my reason, and made me a maniac, he only comforted me; he watched by me day and night; his services and attention were inexhaustible; he has saved my life over and over. He conspire my death!—Pooh, pooh, Martha, if you would deceive me, let it be

with

with things possible, and not with such absurd romances as children would laugh at.

What signifies talking, sir?—They have given the valet the boots, they call it—a contrivance the French have to squeeze the truth out of a man—and he has confessed that Gifford was at the bottom of all.

I am more grieved than I can express, at what you tell me, Martha. But that accounts for all. Diabolical contrivance!—Oh, England! beloved country, that gave me birth! nurse of liberty, virtue, and good sense! never shall thy gallant name be deformed with this sabbath of demons!—Now, Martha, learn from me, and blush for what you have said! Can you, a Briton, believe, that torture makes a man speak the truth? that, when he writhes with agony, and feels himself debased below a brute, his words are to be regarded as oracles? Would

Would not a man then say any thing, to put an end to what he suffers? I would not hang a dog on such evidence! What sort of creature should I be, if I could give up my friend, my tried friend, a man unequalled in fidelity of spirit and honourable sentiment, for the random accusations of a thief on the rack?

There may be something in that, sir. But *we* knew mr. Gifford before. The valet can tell nothing of him too bad for what he has done already.—However they will give *him* the boots, and we shall then hear what *he* will say!

God of Heaven!—Gifford!—God, that we were escaped from this den of barbarians! — Call mr. Scarborough! Say, I must speak to him immediately!

I will, sir. All, I see plain, will soon come out.

I understand you, Martha. You have been cheated with the story of those domestic

domestic pests of mine, whom Gifford's generous exertions have succeeded to rid me of for ever. Every unhappy transgressor against virtue and integrity has a plausible story of his own to tell, and does not fail to boil with indignation against some one of those by whom he is detected and punished. I did intend to give a fresh hearing to the cause of my unhappy, pernicious wife,——

God bless you! I am very glad of that!

But I have no leisure for this now. Gifford is to me father, brother, wife and children, all in one!

Mr. Scarborough came in. I had seen him casually in Berkshire, but I had never carefully observed his figure till now. There was something almost awful in it, and that even to me who could have no extrinsic occasion to stand in awe of my country-neighbour. He was tall,

and of a carriage bold and graceful. His hairs were of a pure brown, uncontaminated with art. There was good sense and penetration, mixed with an uncommon air of severity, in his countenance. He seemed born to command. When he spoke, there was no spark of self-diffidence or embarrassment. He appeared always to see the right method of proceeding, to confide in his own judgment, and to be firm. Had I beheld such a figure placed on a bench of justice, I should have said, There sits one of the judges of the patriarchal world, invested with native rank and conscious discernment, not one of the modern race, who place their hopes to awe us in accoutrements of velvet and ermine!

Mr. Scarborough, said I, I know not exactly how I came here, but I have first to thank you for your hospitality.

He bowed.

Having

Having acknowledged this favour, I have another still greater to demand. My friend and kinsman, mr. Gifford, is in prison. Martha, your servant, tells me he is in a very distressing situation. I am not in a fit condition to go and solicit his liberation myself.——

Mr. Gifford is a villain!

For God's sake, mr. Scarborough!— This is no time to discuss his merits.— You are, I am sure, too generous and too just to defame the absent.

I wish mr. Gifford had been so. My friend, lieutenant Kenrick,——

Kenrick! Is he in Paris?

He is under this roof.

Oh! then I see how it is! You are deceived, mr. Scarborough. You are the dupe of unfortunate criminals, that hope, by means of your character and authority, to destroy the honest man whose integrity they fear.

You

You are deceived, mr. Fleetwood. *You* are the dupe of a criminal, a wretch whom I will not condescend to grace with the term unfortunate.—*I* am not used to be deluded, sir, nor does this case admit of ambiguity.—Mr. Kenrick, the best man on earth, and who loves you the most devotedly,—(It was he who rescued you last night from the assassins who were on the point to murder you,—

Kenrick!

— Went instantly, when he had conducted you hither, to the police. He had no information to give, but that of the disappearance of your valet, and that he saw a figure among the ruffians greatly resembling that of Gifford.

Accursed calumniator!

On these grounds monsieur the *lieutenant criminel* proceeded. He caused both the persons informed against to be apprehended. Though the valet had taken

taken refuge in a remote part of the city, he easily succeeded to discover his retreat. Gifford appeared boldly at his own lodgings. When told however that the valet was in custody, he dropt something of his assurance. The wretched hireling, being put to the torture, laid open a long train of villainy, and pointed out his accomplices; they are all now in custody.

Mr. Scarborough, I will not stay a moment longer in this house. Procure me a litter, a *fiacre*, any thing! I fly to the vindication of my friend.

Of the man who way-laid you yesterday? Who with his own hand presented a pistol to your head?

It is waste of words for us to talk longer. You lend your ear to the wretched, the unnatural Kenrick, the Cain who is at this moment pursuing the destruction of his virtuous brother.

Do

Do you, as you please! I, for my part, listened to and believed him too long.

If you wish to see the *lieutenant criminel*, he will in two hours transport himself hither to complete his examinations. I cannot consent to your removal, which in your present situation might be fatal. If you wish to serve Gifford, you cannot do it more speedily, than by waiting the arrival of the magistrate. In the mean time suffer me to instruct you in some particulars. It will bring the matter to a more ready conclusion. I wish to satisfy you of the innocence of Kenrick and your wife.

Mr. Scarborough, it is absurd for us to talk on that head. I did not proceed but upon the most demonstrative evidence. The case has been tried by the criminal courts of my country; the wariness of justice has been satisfied; Kenrick has been declared guilty, my

wife

wife an adultress, and her child illegitimate. Why should you open afresh wounds in my soul, to which the blow I received yesterday is the stroke of a feather, and which will assuredly bring me to the grave?

Mr. Fleetwood, ask yourself! Would it afford you no pleasure to find, that your wife is the most innocent of mortals, that Kenrick's heart is as honest and generous as his countenance, and that the lovely boy which mrs. Fleetwood has brought into the world, is your true and proper offspring?

No pleasure! It would make me young again! It would translate me to Elysium! I should feel as the founder of the human race felt, before guilt and treachery got footing in the world!

And is not the chance of this worth one hour's enquiry?

The very thought transports me! Go on!

Be patient then, and strict, and impartially severe! What evidence had you of mrs. Fleetwood's guilt?

A love-letter of Kenrick, which I took on her dressing-table.

That letter was not written to her.

For whom was it intended?

For my daughter.—What else?

The miniature of Kenrick, which I found locked up in her casket.

That too was for my daughter.—Proceed!

An interview which I witnessed between her and her paramour in the elm-walk, on the right bank of the Kennet. My perfidious kinsman came from Beverley to Berkshire for the express purpose of this interview.

That also had relation to my daughter.

My wife, when challenged by me respecting this interview, prevaricated, pretended to know nothing of the matter,

ter, and asked whether Kenrick was not at his quarters in Yorkshire?

That I can explain.

These were the circumstances on which I acted personally. But the whole has since been cleared up by the laws of my country. Witnesses have proved the criminal conversation in Merionethshire, as well as Mary's confession that the child was the child of Kenrick.

These witnesses were suborned. They are now under prosecution for perjury.

Why did my wife refuse to justify herself, when for the last time before I left England, I reproached her with her guilt, and called upon her to answer?

Fleetwood, you then said to her,—you adjured her by the great God, who made heaven and earth, to tell you, Whose child was that she bore in her womb?—Could a woman, shocked with such a question, a woman who knew the integrity of all her actions, the purity of

all

all her thoughts, the devotion with which she had ever watched and served her lord, answer the deluded insolent that proposed such an interrogatory? Then may virtue stoop to vice, then may heaven and hell mix in eternal confusion, and honour and nobleness of soul no longer have a name in the universe!

As you put it, it was an insufferable question, and such as conscious rectitude might well disdain to answer. Yet surely, after the first shock had subsided, the interests of herself and her unborn child, the happiness and reputation of all the parties, which were so intimately concerned, might have induced the most innocent and proudest woman on earth to descend to explanation!

It was exactly thus that mrs. Fleetwood conducted herself. She transmitted you three days after, when, to my knowledge, you were still at Brighthelmstone, a detailed explanation of the whole

whole affair. Why did you take no notice of that letter?

I received no such letter.

Received —? I am not surprised. The master-villain, whose task it has been to paint every thing in false colours, and to obstruct all the glimpses of truth and virtue, has then intercepted it. Other letters were written by your kinsman, and by me, did you receive none of these?

None. You express your surprise, mr. Scarborough, at my not answering letters. I was not less surprised at Mary's returning no answer to the letter, in which I informed her that, notwithstanding all I had suffered from her perfidy, I had spontaneously settled upon her an annuity of one thousand pounds. Guilt itself, I thought, would have expressed some gratitude for my generosity. Innocence,—it was impossible that innocence

cence should at such a moment have sat down in silence!

Seeing the case as you saw it, this was a generous determination, mr. Fleetwood, and proves to me that you are the good and honourable man I ever believed you to be.—No such letter as you describe, no letter of any kind, was ever received from you by mrs. Fleetwood. I see plainly that, from the moment you left Berkshire, you have been a close prisoner in the keeping of the villain, who was proceeding with rapid, yet deliberate steps, to thrust you out from the scene of the world, and to reap the inheritance of your estates. But it is time, my dear sir, that you should be somewhat acquainted with the affairs of myself and my daughter, which have so intimate a relation to mrs. Fleetwood's unfortunate story.

Proceed, sir! You have created in me a desire,

a desire, at least to hear what can be suggested, in behalf of my wife, and of the man you call your friend. You have made bold assertions; I do not see how they can be supported. If they can, I have been the most unfortunate,—the most unjust of mankind.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XVII.

I HAVE been many years a widower, resumed mr. Scarborough. When my wife died, she left to me the care of two infants, a son and a daughter. The birth of my daughter, my Louisa, who is now with me, preceded by only two years the death of her mother. The charge which thus devolved upon me, weighed heavy upon my mind, and it is with unintermitted anxiety that I have sought to perform it.

I brought into the world with me the seeds of a stern and severe disposition; this has been the source of all my misfortunes. My temper is firm; my judgment perhaps is clear; and I have ever been somewhat too peremptory in inforcing it. My ordinary speech—whatever (added

he,

he, smiling) you may have found it on the present occasion—is pithy and sententious. I have been prone to lay down the law, and too impatient of the perverseness, real or imaginary, that demurred to my dictates. I have always seen these faults of my character, though never so clearly as now, and have endeavoured to correct them. But either they were so twisted with my nature, that they could not be separated and discarded, or I have found myself weak, and insufficient to the office.

I wished to inspire attachment and confidence into my wife; but I could never succeed. She was a gentle and amiable creature, beautiful as the day, and of manners inexpressibly enchanting. She confessed, that she feared, as much as she loved me; I thought that the former was the predominant passion. The perception of this, instead of correcting me, rendered me more gloomy,

and

and increased my original defects. I saw that I was poisoning the existence of her I loved. I believe that, when she came to die, she was the more reconciled to her fate, because, while living, she was a stranger to the enjoyments of life. Oh, mr. Fleetwood, you called yourself the most unfortunate of mankind! You have never known, like me, the misery of not being able to excite love in any of the persons most dear to you! Men style me honest, and honourable, and worthy; I am alone in the world, surrounded with a magic circle, that no man oversteps, and no man is daring enough to touch me! This is called Respect—its genuine name is Misery!

As mr. Scarborough spoke thus, I saw his lips quivering, and he wiped the moisture from his eyes, and from his brow. After a pause he resumed:

My son was the loveliest boy that ever was beheld. His temper was gentle, his heart

heart was affectionate, his understanding was clear, and his views were noble. I was the father of this boy—it was I that killed him! You will not suppose that I did not love him; I loved him to the utmost excess of paternal attachment. But this very excess rendered me restless, impatient and exacting. I was never satisfied with any thing short of perfection. I crossed him in all his humours; I never allowed him a moment of freedom. Task still succeeded to task, and in none of them could he obtain my applause. He was often very earnest in his exertions; but earnestness gradually gave place to despair. With what severity I have rebuked him; with what contumely and contempt I have treated him! It is one of the infirmities of our nature, that the very sound of the voice of him who reproves warms the speaker into higher passion and more terrifying fury. The very

dissatisfaction that we feel with ourselves, the consciousness that all is not right in this mode of proceeding, increases our ill-humour, and impels us to plunge into greater excess, in the hope that so we may drown our remorse. The spirit of my son was broken. Finding himself habitually treated with contempt, he began also to despise himself. He became negligent of his person and his health; and, bereft of hope, he was incapable of exertion. As he grew taller, he felt more deeply the misery of his situation, and at the age of thirteen literally fell a victim to my ill-placed severity.

He sunk into a deep decline. Too late I became sensible of my injustice. How many bitter tears I have shed over him! They were almost as plentiful, as those which my cruelty so often caused to trickle down his innocent, beautiful cheeks. He told me that he pardoned me with all his heart, that he was

conscious

conscious that all I did had been designed for his advantage. I sought to recover him to cheerfulness and health; I promised that I would never again utter a harsh word, or entertain a harsh thought toward him. It was too late. With his dying lips he kissed the lips that had so often reviled, and the hand that had smitten him.

You would think, mr. Fleetwood, that two such terrible events as the deaths of my wife and son, would have been sufficient to correct in me this odious propensity. It did for a while. I made a thousand good resolutions. It was impossible to feel with more horror than I did, that I was the murderer of my only son, and deserved the gallows more than all the highwaymen and housebreakers that are brought thither. But the habit was rooted within me, and, though repeatedly pared away to the quick, it shot up again with as vigorous and rank a ve-

getation as ever. You only, by the entanglement of your affairs with mine, have led me to reflect decisively on the enormity of my crime, and inspired me with the resolution to banish it for ever.

You have seen my daughter. I need not tell you that she is beautiful, or that she is the most gay and animated creature in the world. These last advantages she has owed to my happy providence, in taking care that she should be seldom, and only for short intervals, at home. If she had resided with me, I should have rendered her as gloomy as myself; I should have sown in her infant constitution the seeds of destruction. But I determined, that a man, living alone, was by no means the proper person to form the mind and manners of a daughter. I resigned the care of her to her mother's relations. They were of the same soft and gentle mould with my deceased wife. If I may presume to judge, in a point where I have

have myself so greatly erred, they rather exceeded on the side of indulgence.

She was at Bath with one of her aunts, when she first formed an acquaintance with mrs. Fleetwood and lieutenant Kenrick. With the former she exchanged the vows of an eternal friendship. She was delighted with both; and it was perhaps the circumstance of seeing her chosen female friend and the amiable young soldier continually together, that made her with girlish heedlessness conceive a passion for the latter. The sentiment was mutual; and Kenrick, infinitely superior to all interested views, became enamoured unawares of the opulent heiress. From the moment they were lovers, they grew sensible of the necessity of secrecy. I cultivated with great assiduity ambitious projects for my daughter, and resolved not to marry her below the peerage. I also pre-

scribed

scribed it as an indispensible condition, that her husband should lay aside the name of his own family, and assume that of mine. With both these resolutions Louisa was acquainted; but, alas! she did not love me. She lived much with her mother's relations, and little with me; the austerity of my manners, though I endeavoured to tame and assuage it, repelled her, and she was influenced by what had been told her of the unhappy fate of her mother and brother. She felt therefore in a very small degree the inclination to oblige me; and perhaps you will think they were no trivial compliances that I required of her.

This situation was the first cause of the equivocal appearances you observed at Bath. Kenrick and Louisa contrived to be as much together as possible; but my daughter prescribed it as an indispensible condition to this, that they should

should avoid all public manifestations of the understanding which subsisted between them. Mrs. Fleetwood was attached to both; the kindness of her nature rendered the idea of thwarting their desires alien to her thoughts; she lent herself willingly to the prosecution of their plans. It was concerted that, whenever they walked together, Kenrick should give his hand to your wife, while my daughter should accept the civilities of any chance-comer. They seldom or ever sat together; they scarcely spoke. Mrs. Fleetwood was the interpreter of their mutual passion. She received and conveyed from one to the other the protestations of eternal love; she stood the proxy of each, listening to the effusions of sincere affection, till a by-stander might have imagined, that Louisa mistook her for a lover, and that Kenrick was employing every detestable art to seduce her from

her

her wedded faith. This situation undoubtedly led to extreme familiarity between mrs. Fleetwood and your kinsman; but, if Kenrick had not been secured against a guilty flame by his admirable principles and the integrity of his nature, he would at this time have been triply armed by his passion for my daughter, which, the more it was restrained, the more it grew. Louisa, perpetually terrified with visions of a haughty and inexorable father, was unintermitted in her injunctions of secrecy, and above all insisted that you should on no condition be admitted to a knowledge of the affair.

At length I completed the preliminaries of the business I had most at heart, the splendid marriage of my daughter. I negociated a union for her with the eldest son of lord Lindsey, whose estate was in a ruinous situation, and who therefore willingly agreed to all my conditions.

ditions. The affair was already in great forwardness, when I summoned my daughter from Bath, without informing her of the purpose I had in view. She came to me with a presentiment of evil, and certainly not with a mind prepared for compliance. I presented the young gentleman. I will now confess, that his most striking characteristics are ugliness, imbecility and effeminacy. But, infatuated with the grandeur of his alliance, I did not at that time notice these disadvantages. The proposition of marriage had been agitated between me and lord Lindsey, before I saw the young gentleman; and, when he was introduced, I turned my attention to the father, who was handsome, sagacious and accomplished, and, in the pleasure of his conversation, found reason to approve my choice.

Louisa, if she had not been already prepossessed in favour of another, would

most likely have shrunk from the match I presented to her. Her character on this occasion exhibited a singular mixture of *naïveté*, rashness and fear. I could discern a wanton air of contempt and ridicule in her glance, whenever she looked at her noble admirer; it sometimes expressed itself in little sarcastic sallies, and smothered bursts of laughter. When she caught the flash of my eye, her countenance instantly fell. She would often, if I were absent, or if she thought I did not observe her, amuse herself with leading him a fool's dance, and humorously praising his wit, his accomplishments, or his beauty, till the poor gentleman was completely in a labyrinth, and looked with a whimsical perplexity, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. Whenever I remarked these things, I sternly discountenanced them. I endeavoured to convince her of the advantages of the proposed mar-

riage.

riage. I talked much of parental authority and the duty of a child. I even condescended to intreat her to yield to a plan upon which my heart was entirely bent. She tried at first to rally me out of my purpose. She painted her suitor in ludicrous colours. She repeated his foolish sayings, and mimicked his gestures. But she soon found that this was a style in which her father would not endure to be treated. She then in the most pathetic manner besought me, that I would not sacrifice the whole happiness of her life, and solemnly protested that she should never know a tranquil moment, if united to the son of lord Lindsey. But neither of these modes of attack succeeded with me. I was unalterably fixed upon my project. Thus situated, my native character came over me. I exclaimed that I was the most abused of fathers. I burst into paroxysms of rage. Often in her absence, sometimes in her presence, I cursed her

her for her unnatural obstinacy, and swore that I would rather follow her to her grave, than not see her united to the husband I had chosen.

The only confident my daughter and Kenrick had in the whole of this business, except mrs. Fleetwood, was Gifford. He was his brother's friend, as your wife was the friend of Louisa. Various advantages seemed to spring to the enamoured pair from this arrangement. Gifford and mrs. Fleetwood consulted together for their benefit; and, though nothing could exceed the zeal of your wife, she was by no means a match for Gifford in policy and expedients. Beside this, I looked upon the friendship Louisa had formed with a jealous eye; I naturally judged that woman would be apt to be the abettor of woman in rebellion against the stronger sex. But I had met with, and conceived an immediate kindness for, Gifford. His serious and contemplative nature seemed easily to

assort with the sternness of mine. I had an entire confidence in his prudence. I laid before him all the arrangements I had made for the marriage of my daughter, and described its various recommendations.

As I saw Louisa paid him a particular attention, I requested him to endeavour to subdue her repugnance, which he readily promised to do.

To the young lovers he appeared as anxious for the accomplishment of their views, as in conversation with me he showed himself favourable to mine. At first indeed, when Kenrick communicated to him at Bath the secret of his passion, he set himself in opposition to it, and urged to his brother the many misfortunes and adversities he saw likely to grow upon it. But, as he perceived his remonstrances were fruitless, he changed his tone, yielding rather to the vehemence of Kenrick's importunity, than to the propriety of the pursuit. He swore he would move hea-

ven and earth, rather than not conquer every obstacle to his brother's wishes. He encouraged him to go on, and often told him that all difficulties yielded to perseverance. He however recommended, as earnestly as my daughter had done, that you should be kept in entire ignorance of the affair. He said, that your prudence would make you insist that Kenrick should renounce the pursuit, and that you would consider yourself as for ever disgraced at your unportioned kinsman's clandestinely aspiring to the hand of an heiress. He was consulted in every thing. Not a letter was written on either side that did not pass through his hands. In short, he appeared so actively engaged in the interests of the lovers, that the further interference of mrs. Fleetwood would have been unnecessary, were it not that she had been originally in the affair, that her attachment for the parties was vehement, and that Louisa, though she felt always respectful and

 grateful

grateful to mr. Gifford, did not love him.

If you found a letter of Kenrick thrown carelessly into one of the toilet-boxes in mrs. Fleetwood's dressing-room, I now entertain no doubt that it was placed there by Gifford. Mrs. Fleetwood was too careful of the secret of her friend, ever to have been guilty of such negligence. As to the letter itself, the address was the address of your wife, which for the sake of precaution it was agreed should always be used; but the person to whose acceptance every line of the contents referred, was my daughter. Gifford knew of the miniature, which had the same destination, and could have referred you at once to the very spot where it was found.

Thus, mr. Fleetwood, were you, and I, and indeed all the parties in this unhappy business, made the dupes and puppets of a single villain. Louisa, who till now had seen but little of me, though she had al-

ways heard my name with a certain degree of dread, had by no means at first that terror of my anger and inflexibility which she afterward conceived. She believed that I could not be inexorable to the tears of my only child; and in this vain hope had indulged with less apprehension the passion of her virgin heart. She longed to tell me that her affections were engaged, and that, if the son of lord Lindsey had not been in all respects so repulsive as he was, she could never without a certain kind of prostitution have become his wife. But the more carefully she watched for an opportunity, the more clearly did she perceive that an opportunity, attended with the smallest degree of auspicious appearance, would never arrive. I in the mean time continued to act the part of a despotic father, and pursued my schemes unintermittingly, in the opinion that the caprices of Louisa would at length yield to my enlightened firmness. Driven to extremity,

she

she came into the plan of an elopement to the North.

Gifford was a party to every thing that was settled, but he secretly resolved that the marriage should never take place. It was a part of his project, that Kenrick should be reduced to beggary. Gifford really stood in awe of his honest and single-hearted brother, and never thought he should be entirely safe, till Kenrick was brought to a state of impotence and desolation. The first great mortification he suffered from the hour that he became an inmate of your family, was on the day that Kenrick set out for Westmorland from Bath. That day, to his astonishment, a reconciliation took place between you and your younger kinsman. The consequence was, your procuring for Kenrick a lieutenancy and adjutantship, and thus raising him at once into the receipt of a plentiful income. Gifford's measures, for months after,

after, were directed to the repairing this miscarriage, and his inward animosity to his brother was heightened, by the recollection that, while he was pursuing his ruin, he had unwittingly rendered him an important service. His present plan was, by infusions of jealousy to ruin Kenrick for ever in your esteem, at the same time that he should give me timely notice of the projected elopement, and, by the representations he should induce me to make to the lieutenant's superiors, deprive him at once of his military appointments.

Gifford was acquainted with the day and hour of Kenrick's arrival from Yorkshire, and himself contrived the interview between him and Mrs. Fleetwood in the elm-walk on the right bank of the Kennet. He took care to prepare you with proper views of the affair, and to induce you to believe that the lieutenant came, by mrs. Fleetwood's invitation, for the basest and

most

most unnatural purposes. The rest you know.

An anonymous letter was brought to me at this time, informing me that my daughter was on the point of eloping to Scotland with lieutenant Kenrick, a kinsman and dependent of my nearest neighbour. This letter was the contrivance of Gifford; it could come from no other quarter. I never felt so terrible an access of rage as at that moment. I sought Louisa, my child, in the spirit of a murderer. It was perhaps happy for us both that she had already disappeared. The letter by some accident had been brought too late. I ordered post-horses without a moment's delay, and set off in pursuit of the fugitives. I took the noble youth, my intended son-in-law, in the chaise with me. My daughter being no where to be found, left no doubt on my mind as to the authenticity of the intelligence I had received;

ceived; and, though I could gain no intelligence of her at Newbury, I easily conceived that the ravisher might have procured the means of her flight from some other quarter.

I pursued the route of Scotland for upward of one hundred miles. But, though I was incessant in my enquiries, I could learn no tidings of the persons I sought, at any one of the stages. I then began to believe that it was to no purpose to go in this direction any further. With a heavy heart I turned my face toward home. By this time we happened to be near one of lord Lindsey's country-seats, and I gladly dropped my travelling companion. I was too disturbed in mind for society. Now, for the first time, I felt toward my daughter like a father. If I had overtaken her on the road, nothing would have exceeded my fury. It would then have been a question of rebellion to have been quelled,

and

and guilt to have been prevented. I now felt as if I had lost her for ever, and anger died away in my breast. To be thus left totally alone, wife, son and daughter to be successively lost, and all by my own fault,—it was too much!

CHAP.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN I returned to my own house, I enquired eagerly from every one of Louisa; they had no intelligence to give. I had not been at home half an hour, when lieutenant Kenrick was announced. At the mention of that name all my blood boiled up at once; my rage returned in full force; the paternal feelings, which had begun to sway me, instantly vanished. He entered. His looks were expressive only of the deepest distress and anguish.

Villain, I cried, what have you done with my daughter?

I appear before you, answered the graceful youth, a criminal. But I repent of my fault; I will restore to you your daughter, pure and uncontaminated as she came into my hands. But, sir, I also

come

come as a supplicant. You, and you only, can repair a thousand mischiefs, which I have undesigningly perpetrated.

He then told me all that had passed at your house, that by equivocal appearances you had been induced to believe the existence of a criminal familiarity between him and your wife, that you had insulted her in the most opprobrious terms, that even in such a moment she had heroically refused to betray the secret of her friend, that you had quitted your house with a determination not to return for years and gone nobody knew whither, and that you had since written to your steward, ordering that mrs. Fleetwood should instantly be expelled from your home.

Do you think, sir, added my visitor, that on such an occasion, when I have been the cause of so vast a series of calamities, I can aim at any gratification to myself? Do you think, that while my patron and his amiable wife are plunged

in the depths of distress, I can engage in the festivities of marriage? No; take back your daughter! I love her with an imperishable affection. But I have no heart, even for Louisa, while I witness this desolation of all that ought to be most dear to me. I never till in this instance engaged in a plan of dissimulation; and see to what it has led me! Do you believe I will ever repeat it? No; I will never wed your daughter, unless it pleases heaven that I shall wed her in the face of day.

My soul yearned toward the boy. There is a contagion in virtue and ingenuousness, that not the hardest heart in nature, not even my heart, can resist. The paternal feelings, which had so auspiciously begun to influence me in my journey home, revived as he spoke. I said to myself, This is the husband for my daughter!—I was never mercenary. I had always been an admirer of virtue, though, alas! from a distance.

distance. My stubborn nature bowed before the integrity of Kenrick. I locked his hand in mine. I said, You are an honest fellow! I forgive you the past; I will find a time to settle accounts with you. I will be the protector of mrs. Fleetwood; I will not rest, till I have cleared the misunderstanding between her and her husband.

Let us then, said Kenrick, set out hand in hand on this pious expedition! I have no fears for our success, if I am supported by a man of mr. Scarborough's fortune and consequence.

I took mrs. Fleetwood into my own house.——

I interrupted my neighbour in his narration.—Into your own house! Oh, if I had known that single circumstance, how much anguish should I have been saved! I should instantly have commenced a new and temperate investigation of the whole affair.

Mr. Scarborough resumed.—That and every other particular were solicitously concealed from you by the villain who held you his prisoner. It is his characteristic, wherever he goes, to scatter darkness around him, and every man who comes within his circle, is smitten with blindness.

I left mrs. Fleetwood and Louisa together, and proceeded with Kenrick to Brighthelmstone. You were gone. We crossed to Dieppe, and went on to Paris. You were not to be found. I employed my agents in England to discover the place of your abode; but to no purpose. Sometimes I imagined I had gained a clue; I pursued it; always without success. I have now no doubt that these false intimations were supplied to my people by Gifford. At length I learned, by letters from home, that a prosecution for adultery and divorce was commenced on your part against your wife. When

we received this information, we were already in Poland, lured on by the false intelligence that had been supplied to us. We instantly set out for England; we met with some unavoidable delays; and, when arrived, we found that the trial had been pushed on with extraordinary exertions, that a solemn adjudication had been pronounced at midnight, just seven hours before we reached London, and a verdict, with ten thousand pounds damages, had been given against your kinsman.

For our regale at our first breakfast in the metropolis, the newspaper was brought to us, seven columns of which were filled with the trial for criminal conversation, Fleetwood *versus* Kenrick.

It is impossible to conceive the astonishment with which we perused it. First came the speech of an eloquent counsellor, who detailed the case with all its aggravations before the court. He said, that so strong and complicated a charge

had never been submitted to that bench. That the defendant, a mere pauper, a very distant relation, had been taken up by the plaintiff out of charity. That, while he had been receiving hourly benefits from your hands, he had gone on for months polluting the wife of your bosom under the roof of his benefactor. He mentioned the evidences he had of the criminal conversation in Merionethshire, who would state such particulars, as would leave no doubt in the minds of any of his hearers. He added, that he could further establish the charge, by a witness, a discarded servant, who had heard the confession of the illegitimacy of the child just born, from the mouth of the adultress.

The counsellor is mad! said I. What does he mean?

These allegations, he proceeded, are all in my instructions.

I looked on to the report of the evidence: they stated and swore specifically

to

to every thing the pleader had described. The paper dropped from my hand.

Kenrick!

The lieutenant fell upon his knees.—By the great God that made me, he said, all this is utterly false!

For a moment, prepared as I was with a knowledge of the truth, I believed the examinations on the trial. Kenrick at length succeeded——What is impossible to ingenuousness like his!——in restoring himself to my good opinion. If you had witnessed his earnestness, his agitation, his vehemence, his broken exclamations of surprise, and his tears, you would have been convinced, as rapidly as I was.

I sent instantly for the lawyers whom I had retained for the defence, and we settled measures for the prosecution of the perjurers. Kenrick knew them all, and was able to supply such a clue for their detection, as bore with it every promise of success. If we had arrived in London a week

week sooner, my lawyers assured me the cause would have taken a very different turn.

Having occasion to go out about some business in the evening, I saw from the window of my coach the figure of Gifford gliding along by the light of the lamps. I had now no doubt that he was the secret spring of all these machinations. I stopped the carriage. I was in the street in a moment. I no longer saw him. I glanced a figure that seemed to be his. At the corner of a street I lost it. Of two directions I did not know which the person had taken. I suppose I took the wrong first; but I saw him no more.

The next morning, as Kenrick and I sat at breakfast, to our exceeding surprise mr. Gifford was announced. We consulted for a moment. I said, Kenrick, he is come with a warrant to arrest you for the damages awarded; you had better with-

withdraw.—This seemed infinitely improbable; Kenrick could not resist the desire he felt to face his brother; he was admitted.

This accomplished hypocrite succeeded in convincing us that he had no concern in the plot, which had advanced thus far triumphantly against us. He owned that he had almost constantly attended upon you; but he protested that his motive had been the desire to mitigate your resentment against mrs. Fleetwood and his brother. He said, that after encountering much resistance and obstinacy, he had in a great degree subdued you, and had come over for the express purpose of postponing the trial. But unfortunately he had come too late; the diligence of the lawyers had outstripped his. He called Kenrick aside; he enquired particularly into the situation of mrs. Fleetwood, and gave him a draft of two hundred pounds for her use. He

He furnished us with the address of the place where he said you at present were, and advised Kemick by all means to repair to you, and to improve upon the measures of reconciliation which he had so happily begun.

At the city in Italy which Gifford pointed out to us, we learned, that you had lately been there, but were gone, and had left no clue by which we could pursue you. We made an appointment on our return, to meet mrs. Fleetwood and Louisa at Paris, whither a relation of mrs. Fleetwood's mother, whom I had waited upon when, a few months before, I came to that metropolis, and to whom I had explained the unhappy situation of her kinswoman, invited her, to come and lie in. This seems to be the only circumstance that escaped the vigilance of Gifford. He had improved the period of our absence, to complete the ecclesiastical proceedings,

ceedings, and the act of divorce. He contrived at the same time to put off the trials for perjury. Reviewing the whole affair, I have now no doubt that he succeeded in corrupting our lawyers, the solicitors, if not the pleaders, as well as made use of extraordinary applications to accelerate his own.

At Paris we received an account of the conclusion of the whole proceedings, and certainly now saw the conduct of Gifford in a very different light, from that in which he had persuaded us to view it in London. It would have been madness any longer to doubt. The veil which hid from us the truth was demolished, even beyond the skill of that arch-deceiver to repair it. Not the generous confidence and fraternal sentiments of Kenrick himself could delude him. Gifford in the mean time came over to Paris, pursuant to his appointment with you.

We were once more within the walls of the same city.

Two days since, Kenrick and Gifford met each other in the *Palais Royal*. They were mutually surprised, neither having the least idea that the other was in Paris. The behaviour of Gifford on this occasion, was very different from what it had been a few months before in London. Kenrick went up to him with a fixed brow, and said,

Whence do you come, sir? Who is it that has been so diligent in procuring the decree of the ecclesiastical court, and the act of parliament, against my aunt? Appearances are grievously against you!

Have a care, my friend! retorted Gifford. I will not be suspected for nothing!

Gifford, Gifford, if in reality you have been playing a traitor's part, it is time you should drop the mask!

You

You discredit then the professions I have made you? Every thing that I have done to save you from ruin you regard with a malignant eye? Another time you shall know whether I am your friend! The next service I render you, be sure of it, shall have your thanks!

Where is my uncle? Is he in Paris?

Your uncle, and your aunt! Lay aside these fopperies, which so ill become you! Talk, if you can, like a man!—If mr. Fleetwood persists in believing you perfidious, am I to blame? If he is able to prove it to the satisfaction of the whole world, whose fault, pray, is that?

Where is mr. Fleetwood?

He is not in Paris.—I will answer no more questions.—Kenrick, I do not understand the tone you assume. I have stuck by you too long. Henceforth be no brother of mine!

Then as enemies!

Then

Then as enemies!

In that character I shall find a time, and shall call you to account!

When you please. I am to be found.

Gifford, it appears, was now so near the accomplishment of all his objects, that he thought it unnecessary to practise disguise any further. The devil himself sometimes grows tired of the character of a deceiver, and appears in his true colours. In imagination already the possessor of all your estates, Gifford was in haste to shake off his brother as a useless incumbrance.

He had in reality no time to lose. You had expressed repeatedly a desire to elucidate the truth in person, and by a temperate discussion with the parties themselves. Gifford found that we were in Paris, and perhaps suspected that mrs. Fleetwood might be so too. One unlucky hour might overturn the fabric which he

had erected at the expence of such a world of guilt. He touched the goal.

Kenrick had the next day, yesterday, an engagement with a young French nobleman to proceed to Fontainebleau. They were attended each with a servant. They met you on the road. You know the rest.

CHAPTER XIX.

I LISTENED to the narrative of mr. Scarborough, with emotions of shame and horror against myself. It was a wonderful story; but I was perfectly convinced.

I had scarcely had time to utter a few incoherent exclamations it drew from me, when Kenrick burst into the room. It was he I had heard in the night conferring with my nurse. He had constantly kept watch at my chamber-door; but he had not ventured to intrude, till mr. Scarborough had prepared the way by a full explanation.

He flew to my knees! Uncle, uncle, said he, will you forgive? It was all my fault. How could I dare to deceive, to have a secret from, a benefactor I so loved?

This

This is too much! I exclaimed; and fell back upon my pillow. I thought that, if Mary and Kenrick were proved innocent, it would be all joy. It is the reverse. It is a feeling without a name. It is worse than remorse; it is hell. Kenrick, I dare not look upon you. Kill me, my friends, in pity kill me! I am unworthy to live.

Kenrick exerted himself to soothe me; and never did male of the human species enjoy so great powers for the purpose. Martha understood what was going on, and would come in. She had a child in her arms.

Oh, sir, you asked me whose servant I was, and I would not tell you. I am my mistress's, your lady's, servant. She brought me over to France. She would have me to be with her in her lying in. And there is her child, the dear boy, that so much harm has been brewed about. Look at him! He has exactly your mouth;

mouth; nothing can be more like than his brow; I will take my death, that he is as like you, as if you had spit him out of your mouth. Oh, my dear master, my benefactor, will you acknowledge him? Kiss him! I die to see you kiss him.

I took the child in my arms. I willingly believed all that Martha said of him; my eyes were too much dimmed with tears to see any thing distinctly. I pressed him to my bosom. I felt that he was the pledge of the most injured of women. I experienced a hundred times the joy that the tenderest-hearted man in the world ever felt, when his first-born son was presented to him; because I had believed—what had not infernal villainy induced me to believe?

Mary, my wife, the mother of my child, only was absent. I enquired for her with a faltering tongue.

Ah, sir! she lives—said Martha.

Do

Do not think I enquire for her, as wishing to see her! Dear, injured saint! I could not look at her. What had I to do to marry? to choose the most accomplished and admirable of her sex? I, that had done wrong, and miscarried, in every station and stage of my life! Would God my eyes were closed for ever! that recollection were at an end in my mind! that mountains pressed down in peace this hand that has acted, and these lips that have spoken, so much evil!—Yet tell me, I intreat you, Martha, how your mistress is?

It will do you little good, sir, to hear of that!

Dear uncle, interrupted Kenrick, compose yourself! You appear scarcely glad to have all your suspicions removed. That which should elevate you with the highest pleasure, seems only to torment you.

True, true, Kenrick! Can I do otherwise than

than lament, that the woman I have lost for ever, is so excellent,——would have made me inexpressibly happy, had I not been the wickedest of men? She can never approach me, never condescend to speak to me, more. Have not you heard her say so?

They were silent.

The period at which I quitted her, had been to Mary a terrible crisis. What I did appeared to my own mind sufficiently justified, for I regarded her as guilty of the most enormous of all social crimes, a complicated, a studious, a shameless delusion put upon the husband of her bosom, an elaborate pretence to the purest faith, when all was false and hollow. But as it appeared to her,—let me speak plainly,—as it was in itself, as it appeared in the eyes of heaven and earth,—my conduct was the most cruel and atrocious that ever was perpetrated.

Poor Mary! her heart, that heart which had "grown with her growth, and strengthened

strengthened with her strength," was buried in the caverns of the ocean. Fifteen months before the period at which I deserted her, she no longer held to the great mass of living existences but by a single thread. For my sake, with great difficulty and anguish, she had formed to herself a new scheme of being, and had come back into the world from which she was broken off. And now I, the man for whom she had done this, left her without a home, without reputation, without bread. I had "delighted myself with the hope that she would perish in misery."

How had all this happened? Mary had never, till within a few minutes of our final parting, heard her name coupled disreputably with that of Kenrick. Kenrick, half an hour before, when I flew toward him, bursting with abhorrence and revenge, did not understand me, was unable to conceive the slightest idea of what it was that had roused me to this tumult. However

strong

strong were the grounds that I thought I had for condemning my kinsman and my wife, she could discern none; to her it must appear the most infamous caprice that the heart of man ever harboured.

Mary was turned out, like Lear in the old chronicles, to the fury of the elements. Had not mr. Scarborough taken the generous resolution to shelter her, she must have died. At the time when she found herself treated with this inconceivable barbarity, was that a moment when she could devise schemes to support existence? She would not have had the spirits to ask one human creature for a morsel of bread. Speechless she would have sunk into the arms of death. And she was several months gone with child!

Louisa did every thing in her power to support her languishing friend. Alas, poor Mary abhorred the light of heaven! She detested the idea of taking nutriment within her lips. Her state of pregnancy

co-operated

co-operated with the disorder of her mind. For the first two days she was almost continually in fainting fits. Her life was not expected. It seemed scarcely less than a miracle, that her condition did not at least produce a miscarriage.

Indignation, I believe, in this situation served her for her daily bread. Though her nature was gentle, and her manners bland and unassuming, she had pride at the bottom of her heart, a pride that perhaps towered the higher, in proportion as it was slow to be awaked. She remembered the scene in the garden when I had so brutally insulted her; she remembered the dialogue in which I had interrogated her, Who was the father of the child she bore in her womb? She sat down under this treatment without any manifestations of violence and rage. But she said to herself, The daughter of Macneil shall never forgive this! She reflected, as was but natural, upon the desolate condition in which her family misfortunes

misfortunes had left her, and she regarded these as so many aggravations of the cruelty she had experienced.—Fleetwood, if I had had patrons and protectors still living, if I had not come dowerless to your bed, you could not have used me thus ungenerously. No; I could live at a distance from the abodes of my species on the fruits of the earth; I could labour among peasants for my bread; this I should not feel as humiliation; but I cannot stoop ever again to hold intercourse with the husband that has wronged me.

If Mary recollected these aggravations of my offence, they did not present themselves with less bitterness to my mind. I dwelt upon her innocence, her merits, her defenceless situation, her extinguished race, her embezzled fortune. It seemed as if, now that what the vulgar mind would call the obstacles to our reunion were removed, we were more certainly divided than ever. While charges, and accusations, and

historical

historical details, were the mountains that separated us, the case was not altogether hopeless. These might be cleared away and refuted. Now we were separated by sentiments, that must for ever twine themselves with the vitals of every honourable individual, and that can only be exterminated by the blow which lays the head that has conceived them in the dust.

Once, as we have seen, Mary so far mastered her feelings as to write me a letter. The purport of that letter was to reinstate the injured Kenrick in my good opinion, and to claim my justice for the child, my own child, which was shortly to be born: even in that letter she recited the decree that she had herself pronounced between us, that we were never to see, that we were mutually to be dead to each other. When she saw that letter producing no effect, the horror she had conceived against me changed, from a passion, into a habit

a habit of her soul. She never thought of me, but as a man resolutely unjust, to whom the most earnest appeals of eternal truth might be addressed with as much hope as to the Great Wall of China.

Kenrick and Scarborough were indefatigable in their endeavours to restore me to her good opinion and favour. They assured her that the letter upon which she laid so much stress had never reached me: they described to her the complicated machinations of the villain Gifford, which might have succeeded with the most clear-sighted and cold-blooded husband in the world. She listened to all this with an unattending ear. Very well! said she. Do not you perceive, that one dispassionate question, one five minutes of tranquil investigation, would have brushed away in a moment the cobweb intrenchments of Gifford? Did I deserve no more than this?

Kenrick

Kenrick was now become my confident. I related to him all that had happened from the evening that I burst away from him on the banks of the Kennet. These things he faithfully repeated to my wife. He described to her my sufferings, my insanity, my despair. He spoke of the supper I had celebrated on the fifteenth of July. On this she seemed to ponder. Poor Fleetwood! she said.

My wife and I had now been four weeks in Paris with only the length of a street between us. I thought of her continually; but I knew the integrity and elevation of her sentiments, and I felt as if I should die, if I met her even by chance.

One evening I sat alone in my hotel. I had had a long and affecting conversation with Kenrick. I had settled the arrangements of my future existence, and had been acquainting him with the particulars. I was resolved to retire to a strange, wild, despairing situation, which had formerly

left a deep impression upon me, in the midst of the Pyrenees. I found that this little estate was to be sold. I reserved to myself an annuity of four hundred pounds a year upon my property in England. The rest of my possessions I made over in full to my wife and child, except one agreeable manor, worth about eighteen thousand pounds, which I settled on Kenrick; a testimony that, of all the men living on the face of the earth, he was the one that most deserved my love. I demanded of him that he should visit me in my retreat once in two years, bringing my child with him, and should remain each time a few weeks under my roof.

It was dusk. Miss Scarborough and another lady entered the room where I sat. The apartment was large; they withdrew to a distant corner of it; and, upon the terms on which we lived, it was not necessary for me to derange myself. If it were a Frenchwoman of fashion and high

spirits, she would be told, It was only the melancholy Englishman; and that would be deemed a sufficient apology. I was buried in my own thoughts. They seated themselves, and continued in a dead silence. I know not how it was, but this silence disturbed me. It was so unlike what I had been accustomed to expect. I looked toward them. Just at this moment lights were brought in, and placed silently upon the table. The strange lady was clad in black, and a veil covered her face. It struck me that her figure was the most beautiful that was ever seen. Her attitude was expressive of dejection and melancholy. She seemed, so far as I could judge, again and again to steal a glance at me, and then turn away. I felt my heart thump at my bosom, and my sight grow dizzy. She wrung her hands, and put them to her head. She rose as if to go, and leaned on miss Scarborough. Her legs tottered, and she sat down again upon another chair.

Fleetwood! said she.—Oh, that voice! Contending emotions, hope, fear, transport and shame, held me motionless.

She threw back her veil, and I saw the godlike irradiations of innocence: pale she was, and emaciated with all she had suffered. She looked the less like an inhabitant of this terrestrial globe.

Take my hand! she said; and stretched it out. Take my heart. She fell into my arms. You shall not make your next wedding supper like the last!

It is impossible for any one to imagine what I felt at that moment. Whenever I recollect it, I am astonished that I did not expire on the spot. Remorse, while the party against whom we have offended, still retains its resentment, and regards us with disdain, scarcely raises the outermost cuticle of the heart. It is from the hour in which we are forgiven, that the true remorse commences. That I could ever have acted thus toward the angelic creature who condescends to pardon me for what I

acted,

acted, this is the sensation that is sharper than all the pains of hell!

Another feeling succeeded. Mary never looked half so beautiful, half so radiant, as now. Innocence is nothing, if it is merely innocence. It is a guileless nature, when impleaded at a stern and inhuman bar, when dragged out to contumely and punishment, when lifting up its head in conscious honour, when heaven itself seems to interpose to confound the malice of men, and declares, This is the virtue that I approve! there, there is presented to us the most ravishing spectacle that earth can boast. I never till now was sensible of half the merits of my wife.

Gifford died by the hands of the public executioner. The ministers of law who pronounced upon him, knew little of the series of his crimes; but it was proved that he had assailed me on the highway, and purposed to assassinate me that he might possess my estate; and he was adjudged to die.

I shed no tear upon the bier of Gifford.

I re-

I reviewed the whole series of his life from the cradle to the scaffold. I have always regarded with horror those sanguinary laws which, under the name of justice, strike at the life of man. For his sake I was willing to admit of one exception. His whole existence had been a series of the most monstrous and unnatural crimes. For what society, or plantation of men, in the remotest corner of the globe, was he fitted? What discipline, or penitentiary confinement, could rationally be expected to inspire him with one touch of human nature? Die then, poor wretch, and let the earth, which labours with thy depravity, be relieved!

On the seventh day from that in which Mary and I met in the manner I have described, Kenrick and his Louisa were united: and mr. Scarborough, who had shown himself so harsh and austere as a parent, became the most indulgent of grandsires.

THE END.

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