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ANY THING BUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

BY JANE HARVEY,

AUTHOR OF MONTEITH—ETHELIA—MEMOIRS OF AN
AUTHOR—RECORDS OF A NOBLE FAMILY, ETC. ETC. ETC.

In Three Volumes.

VOLUME I.

“Alle day
“It is both writ and sayde,
“That woman’s faith is, as who sayth;
“Alle utterly decayed.
“But nevertheless right good witness
“T’ this case might be layde,
“That they love trewe, and contynewe.—”
Nut Browne Mayde.

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ANY THING
BUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

CHAPTER I.

IT was one of those soft and shadowy evenings, in the early part of spring, which awaken in the soul those emotions of tenderness which have been chilled by the rigour of winter, and dispose it to receive new and similar impressions, when a hired chaise drove rapidly up to one of the principal inns at St. Albans. The party it brought consisted only of two ladies, attended by a female servant; the elder lady, who appeared to be about thirty-six, was eminently distinguished by that dignified yet easy behaviour, and that sweet expression of countenance approaching to seraphic, which are the striking and genuine characteristics of an English lady, whose mind is regulated by the gentle precepts of feminine duty, and whose manners have been formed in the circles of elegant and polished society: her companion was a lovely girl of seventeen, her form was light and graceful; her hair a fine auburn; the rose of health bloomed on her lovely cheek; and every emotion of her soul spoke in her sweet blue eyes; in one word, her beauty was of that exalted description, which the longer it is known and studied pleases the more. They were shown to an apartment, where the senior lady ordered tea, and having discharged the chaise which had brought them the last stage, requested that another might be prepared to take them to Holleyfield, the seat of Sir Charles Walpole, in the adjoining county of Bucks; to her great surprise she found that a delay of some hours would take place before this order could be executed, every post carriage being in actual service from various temporary causes, one of which was the approaching Lent circuit, and another a great anniversary dinner in town. Mrs. Emerson (so the lady was called) not having anticipated such a contingency, and being very anxious for the termination of her journey, was both surprised and disappointed, while the expressive face of her lovely young friend spake more than participation in those feelings; the most liberal offers could not induce the post-boy who had driven them to St. Albans to proceed to Holleyfield, as he alleged that it would be such a deviation from his road as he dared not to make: "Can no other mode of conveyance be obtained?" questioned the young lady with earnest anxiety, "could not a person be found to go on horseback to Holleyfield, and request them to send a carriage from thence? perhaps it would be more certain than waiting here the return of one of the chaises." She subjoined an inquiry concerning the distance, which the landlord informed her was about eight miles; "My dear," said Mrs. Emerson, "it is not to be thought of; the evening is now closing, and it would be quite dark before a horse could reach your father's; I fear we must make up our minds to wait here till the morning." "I am sorry for the necessity," said Miss Walpole; "So am I," rejoined her friend, and she added in a low voice, and with a repressed sigh, yet with emphasis of manner, "such a necessity ought not to have existed; your father's carriage should have met you *here*, if not before." What could be distinguished of these words, aided perhaps by some previous knowledge of the Walpole family memoirs, induced the innkeeper to regard both ladies very attentively as he was quitting the room; but in somewhat less than

a quarter of an hour he returned to it, the bearer of a polite message to Miss Walpole and her friend, importing that Lord Lochcarron being in the house, and informed of the circumstance which detained the ladies on their journey, requested permission to solicit the honour of being their escort to Holleyfield, which (the landlord added as his own information) was quite in his lordship's road, and within three miles of Ravenpark, whither he was going.

"Lohcarron!" repeated Mrs. Emerson, "that is one of the baronies of the earldom of Dunotter, is his lordship the son of the earl?" An expression of surprise passed over the features of the host; "I understood, madam," he observed, "from what you said, that this young lady is the daughter of Sir Charles Walpole." "And does that," questioned Mrs. Emerson, with a smile, "include the necessity of my being acquainted with Lord Lochcarron?" "No, certainly not, ma'am, but as Holleyfield is so near Ravenpark"—"But it may happen," the lady replied, "that I have never been at Holleyfield, consequently cannot boast any perfect knowledge of its environs." "Oh, to be sure, ma'am, I beg pardon for not explaining at first—my Lord Lochcarron is the only son of the Earl of Dunotter." Much he added in the personal praise of his lordship, more of that in the noble fortune he was heir to, though he admitted, in the same breath, that the expenses of the present earl had impaired it as much as could be without touching the entail; Mrs. Emerson seemed abstracted a few moments, then as if recollecting that a more prompt return was due to Lord Lochcarron's politeness, she hastily said to Miss Walpole, "I perceive, my dear, you are too anxious to see your father to have any hesitation about accepting the escort his lordship so very kindly offers." Cordelia expressed her ready acquiescence in whatever Mrs. Emerson thought right, and sincerely glad of such a termination to her present difficulties, made arrangements to pursue her journey; a suitable message was then sent, and in a few minutes the young nobleman entered to escort his fair charge to his carriage; he was above the middle height, and combined all the captivations of graceful form, elegant features, and refined manners; beyond which, he was introduced to the ladies under circumstances the most advantageous and propitious for conciliating regard, that of rendering them a service; as they proceeded on their journey Lord Lochcarron and Mrs. Emerson kept up that animated conversation which an established intercourse with society on the part of his lordship, dignified good sense and experience on that of the lady, and highly polished manners on both, at once dictated and rendered easy; but Miss Walpole felt the pensive influence of the hour, and spoke little, listening however with interest to the remarks which her companions made on the comparative advantages and disadvantages of travelling on the continent and in England. The shades of evening deepened, and the general aspect of the weather became more chilling and wintry; Mrs. Emerson mentally wished for the termination of their little journey, upwards of one half of which they had passed when a man on horseback, hitherto neither seen nor heard, rode up to that side of the carriage where Lord Lochcarron sat; Miss Walpole mechanically raised her eyes, but it was to behold a pistol levelled at the head of the young nobleman, while his money was imperiously demanded, with imprecations which, as they accord only with wicked actions, may be supposed their usual accompaniment, whether uttered aloud or not; his lordship, with at once prompt alacrity and collected fortitude, replied by drawing a pistol from the pocket of the carriage; but before he could use it, his groom, who attended on horseback, fired another

at the robber; he made an attempt to ride off, but in the next moment groaned and fell to the ground; the danger of Lord Lochcarron, the blasphemies of the villain, the report and effect of the weapon of death, all seemed to pass with the rapidity of lightning: Miss Walpole felt a sensation of alarm and of horror beyond the power of description to paint; for, new to life and its varied circumstances, educated in retirement, and inured only to scenes and sounds of tranquillity and peace, her every faculty, attribute, and operation of nerve and of soul were vivid, elastic, and unblunted in the most extreme degree. Mrs. Emerson, on the other hand, viewed the passing transaction with calm unshrinking courage: this was a *trait* of character which Cordelia had ever admired in her friend, and believed that her own inability to copy it proceeded from greater imbecility of mind; but she had yet to learn that this apathetic rigidity of feeling has not always its source in reason, however exerted, or in philosophy, however cultivated and studied; alas! no, it is the sad growth of years and sorrows; and as the chill dews of autumn, and the keen blasts of winter, take from plants and flowers their exquisite odours, so do the storms of life, aided by the benumbing hand of time, correct and allay that exuberance of feeling which vibrates with such easy pliancy to hope and to fear—to pleasure and to pain. Lord Lochcarron ordered his servants to take care of the wounded ruffian; “If he recovers,” said his lordship, “he must answer for his violation of the law, but do not treat him with inhumanity;” he then directed his attention to his fair fellow-travellers, saying and doing all that a polished mind could suggest to cheer their spirits after the alarm they had sustained; Mrs. Emerson fervently congratulated him on his escape, and Miss Walpole, though too much agitated to express herself in words, felt a joy more ardent, and a degree of gratitude to Providence more strong and powerful, than she ever remembered to have experienced on any former occasion; the two ladies were certainly not insensible to the danger themselves had escaped; while the goodness Lord Lochcarron displayed towards the wretch who had the moment before threatened his life, combined the highest respect and admiration with the flattering advantages under which he had so recently been introduced to their acquaintance; the course of attention was, however, soon diverted from the late occurrence; for the carriage entering a gate, the noble mansion of Sir Charles Walpole broke at once upon the view, though now seen imperfectly through the deepening shades of evening, which the lights from the windows conspired to render more obscure. “I presume we are now at Holleyfield, my lord,” said Mrs. Emerson; to which Lord Lochcarron replied in the affirmative; Cordelia felt a chill tremor creep over her frame; her spirits were oppressed almost to fainting, and tears, which would not be checked, dimmed her beautiful eyes; she was now approaching the house of her father, beneath whose roof she had never yet been sheltered; summoned to attend that parent whom she had not seen half a dozen times in her whole life, under the certainty that he was dying; and about to meet a mother-in-law hitherto scarcely known, yet so much so as to have made an unfavourable impression;—she shuddered, and clung to the side of Mrs. Emerson, as to the only stay and support she had in life. The carriage drew up, and Lord Lochcarron, with sweet and graceful politeness, descended to assist the ladies in alighting. The hall-door was thronged with obsequious domestics, whose submissive attentions scarcely veiled the ardent curiosity with which they regarded Miss Walpole, who, unwelcomed by the glance of tenderness, or the voice of affection, felt her agitation redouble, and involuntarily she clasped the supporting arm of Lord Lochcarron as he led her up the steps; here he paused; Cordelia struggled to subdue emotion; there was no one

else present to do the honours of her father's house, and her high sense of propriety urging that the office rested with her, she sweetly invited his lordship to walk in; this he declined, with much politeness indeed, but upon a plea which, however ostensible, seemed trifling and inadequate—the lateness of the hour; for it could not be supposed that his detention would be long, and the remainder of the journey was less than three miles. Mrs. Emerson, a quick observer of all the rapid and varied turns of the human countenance, saw with deep surprise, that while Lochcarron made his apology he wore an expression of features which, though she could clearly perceive, she could not define; true, it might be that he made this apparent departure from the laws of good-breeding from disrespect, or at least inattention, to the ladies, who were total strangers to him; or from fear of remaining out later in consequence of the recent occurrence. But a rigid scrutiny of his expressive face conveyed a conviction that to neither motive could his refusal be with justness ascribed; in short, to sum up the matter at once, Mrs. Emerson could not help thinking that he looked as if slightly surprised that the invitation had been given, and steadfastly determined to decline it; he received the thanks of both ladies, and disclaimed all merit to them, in the style of genuine and unaffected politeness, and having, with every possible expression of respect, given and received the parting ceremonies, he returned to his carriage, which instantly drove off. To add to Mrs. Emerson's astonishment, she saw that the surrounding domestics regarded Lord Lochcarron with what seemed to be the gaze of vacant wonder: Miss Walpole, it may be, felt more of pique than of any thing else when his lordship refused her first request; but she made none of those observations which presented themselves to the more experienced mind of her friend; and while she was occupied with them, Cordelia was anxiously inquiring concerning her father; Sir Charles, she was told, was rather worse, though not considered to be in immediate danger; she had no reason to expect more consolatory intelligence; but the light spirits of youth are seldom prepared to meet such with fortitude, and with augmented dejection she followed Lady Walpole's maid into a highly-decorated drawing-room, where a cheerful fire, brilliant lights, and every inanimate organ of welcome awaited her; but of animated ones—the pressure, the kiss, and the voice of affection, alas! there were none to greet her arrival.

Mrs. Dobinson having seen the travellers seated in this apartment, went to inform her lady that they were come; Lady Walpole, she added in answer to Cordelia's inquiries, was much indisposed; she never quitted Sir Charles's room, nor suffered his food or medicines to be administered by any other hands, of course she sustained incredible fatigue; had Cordelia been unaided by any experience greater than her own, this marked attention to her father, this exalted display of virtue and of duty, would easily have gained on her susceptible heart; but Mrs. Emerson, though she had never been much in the society of Lady Walpole, had easily penetrated her character, and knew that self-interest was at all times her only end—the *suaviter in modo* her favourite means; persons of this description need only to be thoroughly known to meet the contempt they merit; but it requires a vigilance unwearied, and a prudence rare in the extreme, to guard entirely against their arts.

The term of Mrs. Dobinson's absence, was filled up by the entrance of the butler, who brought refreshments suited to the hour and recent fatigue of the ladies; in a quarter

of an hour the waiting-woman returned, the bearer of a note to Miss Walpole, couched in the following terms:

“Too certainly, my sweet, my excellent Cordelia, I need not seek an apology for denying myself the happiness of embracing you and our respected Mrs. Emerson to-night—alas! an incumbent one too fatally presents itself in the increasing illness of your dear, inestimable, suffering father;—my beloved girl! I cannot conceal from you the distressing truth that he is materially worse; with a reluctance which needs no aid of description from me—your own sympathy will paint it—I have (pursuant to the advice of Dr Heslop, his attendant physician, grounded on apprehension that the surprise might prove of melancholy consequence) deferred informing him of your arrival until to-morrow morning, when I hope—oh! how fervently—to find him able to support a communication which will give him so much pleasure.—Of myself I say nothing—our sacrifices to duty, however severe, ought not to be reckoned in the class of sufferings. Adieu, my beloved Cordelia; for my sake take care of your precious health; say every thing for me to your highly-estimated friend, who I anxiously hope will consider herself as much at home in the house as she ever is in the heart of your most affectionate mother,

Harriet Walpole.”

Cordelia having read this epistle, silently presented it to her friend, and during the perusal contemplated her countenance, to glean from its well-known expression her sentiments upon it; Mrs. Emerson’s only comment was, “My love, I feel obliged to Lady Walpole for the consideration she expresses, but I cannot help being of opinion that her ladyship’s tenderness for your father, and her regard for yourself, would both have been better displayed by not suffering a moment to elapse before he was informed of your arrival; putting your feelings out of the question, your interest is most materially concerned;—it is too late this evening to take any further steps—we will retire to rest, and, if Providence permits, act more promptly in the morning.”

CHAPTER II.

SIR Charles Walpole, baronet, was the descendent and last male representative of an ancient and respectable family in the county of Kent; their landed inheritance, though extensive, had not been managed with any great degree of agricultural skill, and of course was found to belong to that description which is more capable of future improvement than productive of present profit; a considerable part of the estates were unentailed; and the grandfather of the present Sir Charles was exactly a character to alienate them from his rising family, and reduce it to that most comfortless of all situations, degraded gentility; yet was he a man "More sinned against than sinning;" censured, yet respected; beloved, though condemned; his failings approximated with his better qualities, as the colours of the rainbow blend with each other; and his virtues were all of that wavering class which are ever overflowing their hallowed bounds, and verging into vice; he was eminently gifted with good-nature; but, unsupported by any firmness of mind, it was only a pliant tool for designing persons to work with; he was called generous and hospitable; but when the unlimited expense with which he supported his claim to those attributes of goodness was taken into calculation, they might rather have been termed prodigality and profusion; he was charitable without discrimination, magnificent without taste, and, beyond all, he was the slave of a party, and carried on a contested election at what might, even in those days, be deemed an enormous expense; practised in such modes of lavishing money, it will not be thought surprising that by the time his eldest son was of an age to enter on a regular course of education, his affairs were so much embarrassed that it was found necessary to sell the chief part of the family estate; he did so, and by satisfying his creditors to the utmost of their demands, maintained the same character for probity he had hitherto enjoyed. He now found himself reduced to a situation replete with straits and difficulties, deprived not only of all the elegancies, but many of the absolute comforts of life; such a state of circumstances, with its attendant prospects, roused Mr. Walpole as if from a dream; but he glanced only on the wrong side of the picture, and, forgetful that the foundation of his ruin might be traced in his own improvident mismanagement, he attached the whole blame to what he termed the narrowness of his fortune; and never admitting, even to himself, that his expenditure ought to have been proportioned to his income, he only regretted that his resources had not been more adequate to the claims he made upon them; his mind, by dwelling constantly on this subject, became ardently desirous of wealth, but neither his time of life, his established habits, nor the still more formidable barrier of his having been educated to no profession, would now allow him to seek its acquirement; could he have reversed all these impediments, he would most sedulously have devoted himself to the pursuit of riches; but what he could not effect, his son might; he was now of age to begin the career of life in any line he might think eligible; but what should that be? the church, the bar, the navy, and the army were, no doubt, the direct roads to honour—that they were also those to fortune appeared to Mr. Walpole to depend on a thousand contingences; but in the mercantile walk he could trace more instances of rapid, uninterrupted, easy accumulation of wealth, than in all others combined; these considerations decided the fate of the young gentleman; he was placed with an eminent merchant in London, and, eventually, though his father did not live to see it, realized his most sanguine hopes; he united talent with industry, and integrity with

application; these qualities may not, in all cases, insure success, but certain it is that being unfortunate in a man is frequently but another term for being indiscreet; to be brief, the age of fifty saw him a widower, with one only son, and possessed of eighty thousand pounds, as a stockholder and in mortgages, beyond a large capital embarked in lucrative and increasing commerce; there is frequently found in men a fatality—or perhaps that is not an appropriate term—which leads them to despise the means by which they have attained wealth, however highly they may value the attainment itself; thus it was with Mr. Walpole; he was in most respects a very sensible man, but his chief pride and boast was the antiquity of his family; he was the first merchant that had represented it, and resolved to be the last; he determined that his son should enter into life with all those requisites of a gentleman which are included in being of no profession, possessing a title and a very large fortune; he employed part of his wealth in the purchase of a baronetcy, and became the first Sir Charles Walpole.

Thus armed at every point with claims to consequence, his heir prepared to set out on the tour of Europe; but Sir Charles deeming it a glaring folly to send young men to learn the state of foreign countries in civil and political matters, while profoundly ignorant of the actual position of their own on these subjects, he arranged his plans so that his son should visit the principal places in Great-Britain before he passed over to the continent: whether the reverend gentleman who attended Mr. Walpole in the capacity of tutor, wanted energy to restrain all the exuberant and eccentric pursuits of youth; whether he deemed his own interest so far concerned in bowing to the rising sun, that he made no attempt at such restriction; or whether the pupil himself was too self-willed to obey control, or too artful for vigilance to restrain, does not appear upon record, neither is it material to inquire; but thus much is certain, that the gaities of Bath and Bristol were more subjects of Mr. Walpole's research, than the natural or civil histories of those places; and that he found the races of York more attractive than its antiquities. In the north he deviated from his road to Scotland to visit the beautiful lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland; and in the last-named county found a gem buried, as many a treasure, both animate and inanimate, may be supposed to be, in mountain solitude; to drop metaphor, he fell deeply in love with the beautiful and amiable daughter of a worthy clergyman; at least he imbibed for her that romantic sentiment which, amongst young people, passes current by that name, though its transient existence too frequently proves that it never had a more solid base than the effervescence of imagination. The lady, though an only child, would only inherit a very small fortune, exclusive of considerable expectancy from a very rich maternal aunt; of course the consent of Sir Charles Walpole to their union was not to be hoped for, and without it, Miss Lancaster well knew that her father would never permit her to enter his family; but too much attached to her lover to support the idea of being separated from him for ever, she listened to his persuasions, placed duty and decorum in the back-ground, and was prevailed upon to pass the border, and exchange vows with him at Gretna Green. Mrs. Emerson, the cousin-german of Miss Lancaster, and at that period as young and romantic as the lovers themselves, was the companion of their flight. The first act of Mr. Walpole after his marriage, was to acquaint his father with the step he had taken; Sir Charles thus at once, and without preparation, disappointed in the hope he had cherished, that his heir would form a splendid alliance, was pained and irritated beyond the power of description to paint; yet were his paternal

feelings too tender to throw his child entirely from his heart; for the present he refused to see him, settled on him a small annuity, cancelled the will which he had made almost solely in his favour, and stopping the measures which were taking for settling his recent purchase of Holleyfield and its domains on his direct posterity, he resolved to be guided by time and circumstances in his future conduct as it respected his son.

Mr. Lancaster, less dazzled by his daughter's elevation in society, than grieved by her departure from what he deemed the line of female rectitude, yet loved her too tenderly not to extend the olive branch; he cemented her union with the husband of her choice, and gave them a home in his house and in his heart. Wedded love, in a mere every-day character like that of Mr. Walpole, is soon shorn of its blossoms; its thorns often appear, but in his case they never did so, for twelve months, which was all of life that remained to Mrs. Walpole after her marriage. His behaviour to her, though never harsh or unpolite, was little marked by ardour of attachment or strength of esteem; the sports of the field engaged the husband, and the wife returned to those domestic and feminine occupations which had been the habits of her youth; but the close of the period just named, produced eventful changes; a rapid decline following the birth of Cordelia, opened an early grave for Mrs. Walpole; and the same month which terminated her existence, closed that of her father-in-law, who expired suddenly, without any previous indisposition; as he died intestate, his vast property descended unquestioned to his son, who thus found himself at once emancipated from his matrimonial ties, and in uncontrolled possession of a large fortune; it is not to be supposed that the claims of a yet unconscious infant could restrain Sir Charles from seeking the world and its allurements; he held himself as amply fulfilling every duty of a parent by settling on his daughter a sum, certainly not suitable to his rank in society, but adequate to her every want in that early stage of existence, and in that remote situation; and leaving her in the protection of Mr. Lancaster and Mrs. Emerson, then the wife of a very worthy physician at Penrith, he arranged his affairs in England, and took his departure for the continent, in visiting different parts of which he passed upwards of seven years, and had been returned about two, when, in a summer excursion to Wales, he met with his present lady, the younger daughter of a gentleman in the vicinity of Caermarthen, who, tracing his illustrious descent through a long line of ancestors, was richer in genealogy than in more substantial wealth.

The face and person of Miss Harriet Lewis formed a combination which, possessing neither the commanding force of one description of beauty, nor the attractive softness of another, was yet such as could not be ranged in the ordinary class; such persons have frequently been styled *showy*, and in her case the term was extremely appropriate; she was gifted with great powers of understanding, but it is often seen that enlargement of mind is joined to contraction of heart, and with Miss Lewis it was eminently so; her every wish, hope, aim, and purpose centred in self; and for her own aggrandisement, interest, and advantage, her every faculty was perpetually at work, and each action of her life had those for its objects; she was an everlasting schemer, and though, like most artists of that description, her schemes frequently failed, that did not deter her from framing new ones, which were usually laid with as much art, and through as many intricacies, as a train of gunpowder to blow up a citadel; a prodigal in promise,

but a niggard in performance, she could flatter to deceive, and smile to betray; and holding in the deep recesses of her heart, though never admitting in her conversation, the jesuitical maxim that all means are lawful where the end is desirable, she had masks of all sorts, of deep austere piety, of high, polished courtly breeding, of universal benevolence and philanthropy, which were worn for a season, and then thrown aside as it suited her purpose. At the time her acquaintance with Sir Charles commenced, she was under an absolute promise of marriage to a young officer who was quartered in the neighbourhood; he possessed little besides his pay, but being respectably—rather highly—connected, he had a prospect of rising rapidly in his profession; of course Miss Lewis thought him a conquest worth securing; but when the baronet appeared, the son of Mars vanished as a star before the sun; many ladies would have felt troublesome scruples of honour, of conscience, of delicacy, about breaking an engagement so solemn, she had none of them; she soon managed so as to make her lover jealous of the preference she showed Sir Charles, and when he remonstrated with her on the subject, disowned the charge with asseverations so positive, and a countenance of such fascinating candour, that scepticism might have been won to belief; but when the young gentleman sought oblivion and reconciliation, she barred all approach to the latter by declaring, whilst reason appeared to be struggling with love, and fortitude with tenderness, that she could not now, in justice to herself, ratify her promise: with deep reluctance she must say, that Captain —— by doubting her faith and affection, had himself weakened her esteem, consequently she could no longer think so highly of him as she had done, and to marry him, with such sentiments, would be doing an injury to both; he was at liberty to pay his addresses to any other lady, and she must teach her heart the severe but unavoidable task of forgetting how fondly it had cherished his image. Two months after this she gave her hand to Sir Charles Walpole, over whom she soon gained such absolute ascendancy that his every act, nay, his every intention, was under her control; yet she did not appear to exercise any such dominion, but managed with such consummate art, that even those who were in daily habits of intercourse with the family did not easily perceive it, still less did Sir Charles himself feel such sway; for being a man of an indolent turn, he habituated himself more and more to rely on her in the management of all his affairs, until every step she took seemed his own. She made him the father of two sons, one of whom died in early infancy, and the other in his fourth year, to the great grief of Sir Charles, who had ever been ardently desirous of male offspring; neither had his lady any occasion to feign affliction for the loss of her children; yet let it not be supposed that her tears flowed from the tide of maternal anguish, mourning the death of its bosom treasures, far from it; her philosophic mind would no more have deplored the destruction of her whole kindred, than that of Priam's race in the sacking of Troy; but her sons would have been the undisputed heirs to the greatest part of their father's wealth, and of course by their deaths the prospect of much future greatness, and many embryo advantages which she had pencilled out in imagination, passed away from her for ever.

Since the return of Sir Charles to England, more especially since his second marriage, all the notice he had taken of Cordelia, was little more than sufficient to mark his remembrance that he had a daughter; her maternal grandfather died before she completed her third year; and when she was about twelve, Dr and Mrs. Emerson removed to Leeds in Yorkshire, where Dr Emerson soon after paid the debt of nature, leaving his

widow without any family, in easy, though not very affluent, circumstances; Sir Charles Walpole so far augmented the allowance of his daughter, as to enable Mrs. Emerson to obtain for her the first masters in every branch of education; but during the long interval of full nine years, he had only visited them twice, once soon after his marriage with his present lady, who he carried on an excursion to the lakes, taking the residence of Mrs. Emerson in their way to present Cordelia to her new parent, and once since they were settled at Leeds. Sir Charles certainly never proposed to his lady the taking Cordelia home to live with them; he left that point to be decided by her ladyship, but she was the last woman in the world with whom such a proposal would have originated; yet she was much too politic to pass it over in silence, and leave it in the power of others to say she did not desire the society of her daughter-in-law—she steered another course, and to appearance, taking it for granted that Cordelia could not be removed from the protection of Mrs. Emerson, feelingly deplored the deprivation which Sir Charles and herself must suffer in such an estrangement from their beloved amiable child; if Sir Charles gave the matter a second thought, he was too studiously acquiescent in all her decisions to breathe even a hostile hint; with regard to the world at large, some, it is probable, gave her ladyship credit for no great degree of sincerity on the subject; whilst others were imposed upon by specious cant; but Mrs. Emerson clearly saw through and despised such selfish policy.

Lady Walpole, both when personally conversing with Mrs. Emerson, and in her letters, used many a flourishing harangue to impress her with a belief that in suffering her daughter to remain under her protection, she was at once actuated by a benevolent apprehension of wounding her feelings, should she take from her a charge so dear, and an anxious solicitude for Miss Walpole's real interest, who would find in her the best and brightest example of all female excellence; but the mind of Mrs. Emerson was not formed to be won upon by such compliments as these; alas, she knew human nature better, and was aware that instances of abstract virtue are phenomena to be ranked with black swans and white ravens: Miss Walpole might, indeed, continue to reside with her, but what should have hindered them both from passing a part of each year beneath the roof of Sir Charles; such a plan was never once proposed, or even hinted at; no, she saw that it was to estrange the parent from his child, to retain her uncontrolled sway over his property, and to secure to herself that probable reversion of the whole, or the greatest part of it, that Lady Walpole acted thus. The health of Sir Charles had always been delicate, and a few months prior to the events recorded at the commencement of these disorders, which baffled the powers of medicine, warned him that his life would not be of long duration. Lady Walpole perceived his decay before his own feelings had whispered the awful truth to himself; it was not in her nature to grieve for the event which she anticipated, but true to her leading principles she redoubled her every attention and assiduity; in the hours of pain and languor, the image of that lovely and amiable female who, in early life, had been the partner of his bosom, frequently revisited the memory of Sir Charles, and with it came the associated idea of her daughter, now entering upon the world, a stranger to the house, and too nearly so the heart of her father; he felt, or fancied, that the presence and endearments of Cordelia would sooth his sufferings, and hinted a wish to Lady Walpole that she should be sent for; it was not in her ladyship's nature to comply, but it was to procrastinate; "No, my dear Sir Charles," she replied, "we will not shade the first visit our

charming Cordelia pays us by sending for her at so inauspicious a period as when you are ill; strive to get better, my love, and the moment you are able to travel, we will go down to Yorkshire and bring our sweet girl home with us." This plan changed the course of Sir Charles's intentions; or, to speak more properly, diverted him from the subject for some weeks; in the interim he was visited by a young gentleman, nearly related to him in the female line, a captain in the navy, who had been absent from England on a three years' station in the Mediterranean. Captain Thornton, when a boy of fifteen, had once seen Miss Walpole, then a little girl of eight or nine years old, and still retaining a pleasing and partial remembrance of so lovely a relative, was much disappointed, on his arrival in Holleyfield, to find that she was not an inmate of that mansion; Lady Walpole he had known very imperfectly previous to his leaving England; but a few days' residence beneath her roof enabled him to penetrate the atmosphere of flattery and compliments which enveloped her ladyship's manner, and to discern her character in its true light; he perceived all her designs, and, with that open kindness of heart so characteristic of his profession, resolved to give his friend a hint which should, if acted upon, at once promote the father's comfort and the daughter's interest; "My dear Sir Charles," he said, in his frank way, "why is it that my fair cousin is always secluded in Yorkshire; do, dear Sir, prevail on Lady Walpole to introduce her to life." The baronet replied by stating the plan which had been resolved upon; Thornton had a belief, amounting to a conviction, that his friend would never recover; but his was not a heart which could embitter the waning hours of existence, by breathing such an opinion: "Oh, we will all take a journey together when your health permits it," he responded, "but do not in the interim deprive yourself of Miss Walpole's society, nor her of the advantage of your protection." This advice was consonant to his own wishes, and the concluding hint spoke home to paternal feelings, awakened by illness, and its consequent reflections, to a sense of duty; he renewed the subject to his lady with more earnestness than before; and she, aware that the former mode of evasion would not do again, urged a new one with great plausibility: "My beloved Sir Charles," she said, "you are well aware that your every wish is my law; I will, if you please, write the next post, but there is one circumstance which renders our Cordelia's residence here exactly at this time ineligible; I will just hint it to you," she added, smiling, and laying her hand on his, "Captain Thornton is an elegant, graceful, well-informed young man, but he is poor, and our child is too dear a treasure to be hazarded so rashly."

The baronet paused upon this intimation; the recollection of what Thornton had said to him seemed to establish her ladyship's fear as a well-grounded one, and accustomed to bow down before all her suggestions, the sending for Miss Walpole was again delayed; the lady, it may be supposed, felicitated herself on having achieved her purpose, but she was not long left to such enjoyment. Thornton received a sudden order to leave England, and quitted Holleyfield, with little prospect of revisiting it, for some time; he departed in the full conviction that he should never again see Sir Charles; but before he went, he took an opportunity, when Lady Walpole was from the room, to express an energetic but respectfully conveyed wish, that his friend would consult his own happiness as a parent, and Miss Walpole's interest as a daughter.

The very next day Sir Charles became materially worse; no subterfuge now remained, and Lady Walpole was compelled to write the invitation which brought Mrs. Emerson and Cordelia to Holleyfield, as has already been related; but by no means choosing to make her daughter-in-law an object of so much consequence as to send a carriage, either to Yorkshire or to meet the two ladies at any part of the road, she left them to travel in a hired one.

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CHAPTER III

THE unhappy and afflicted are never so sensible of their own misery as when first awaking from sleep; the faculties are refreshed, and the spirits tranquilized by rest, and, for the few moments that intervene before fatal remembrance rushes in, the soul may be said to enjoy a portion of bliss; it may, perhaps, be inferred, that if the bitterness of grief be thus increased in the suffering mind, that which is placed in more fortunate circumstances will feel its joys redoubled; but the fact is not so: the one is only an augmentation of the same feeling—the other is an exchange for one which possesses all the power and force of contrast. Miss Walpole, who had hitherto known only the calm and uniform tenor of a life unmarked by incident, awoke in her wonted frame of mind; but short was the period which intervened until the situation of her father, the conduct of Lady Walpole the preceding evening, and all those transactions in which Lord Lochcarron claimed a share, presented themselves with a force proportioned to their novelty, and to the ardent and vivid feelings of the heart they had taken possession of. New scenes are yet more powerfully attractive to the youthful mind than new circumstances; Holleyfield, and indeed the whole of the south of England, was an unknown region to Cordelia; the fineness of the morning drew her to the garden, where the richness of prospect, the variety of cultivation, and the number and excellence of the trees, shrubs, plants, and flowers, both exotics and English, and the skill with which they were disposed and contrasted, as well in the greenhouse and conservatory as in the open air, proved so many exhaustless sources of wonder and delight.

Holleyfield was a most noble mansion, beautifully situate on a hill, surrounded by a park of vast extent, planted with valuable timber, and possessing many advantages of both nature and art. To this was added every charm of season and of weather, the time of the year and the hour of the morning; the fresh breeze of opening day waved the woods, stirred the waters of the spacious basin, on the margin of which Cordelia stood, and breathed around her an atmosphere fraught with ten thousand sweets; but herself was the loveliest of nature's surrounding objects: when or where does she present one equal to female grace and beauty, combined with feminine gentleness and goodness?

At the hour of Mrs. Emerson's rising, Cordelia attended her to breakfast, after which they were honoured with a visit from Lady Walpole; the wide-spread arms, and the fervent embrace, were so much in the routine of her ladyship's habits, that they only who had gleaned experience in the heart-parching school of the world, could read in them the internal evidence of insincerity. The filial bosom of Miss Walpole grieved to be told that her father was materially worse; her ladyship added that she had prepared him to see their dear Cordelia, and would herself conduct her to his apartment, when the physicians, then in attendance there, should have withdrawn.

While waiting for their departure, conversation turned on various topics; Lady Walpole, conscious no doubt that her daughter-in-law ought to have travelled in a different style, and with a better escort than she had done, did not once inquire into the circumstances of their journey; but Mrs. Emerson, profiting by a pause, entered on them

herself; detailing the events of the preceding evening—their meeting with Lord Lochcarron—the obligation his politeness had conferred on them—and the danger they had all been exposed to from the attack of the robber. Her ladyship listened with visible interest, blended with emotion; “My beloved Cordelia,” she exclaimed, “this is very unfortunate, as I am certain your father would rather you were obliged to any person breathing than Lord Dunotter or his son.” Miss Walpole, with surprise amounting to dismay, her heart beating with quick vibrations, and the eloquent blood mantling on her cheeks, looked the inquiry her lips could not utter; while Mrs. Emerson, more collected, but not wondering less, asked the question in words, “Why the Dunotter family were objects of such particular dislike to Sir Charles?” “My dear Mrs. Emerson,” returned her ladyship, “can you possibly have been so long connected with the Walpole family, and yet not know that a bitter hereditary enmity subsists between them and the Dunotters?”

The friend of Cordelia, with equal energy and truth, declared her ignorance of it; and Lady Walpole subjoined the information, that the breach originated in a political dispute between the respective grandsires of the present earl and baronet, and was widened in the succeeding generation by a lawsuit concerning some contiguous land. “Those,” replied Mrs. Emerson, “are very inadequate causes for dislike so deeply rooted, and of such long continuance; I am truly sorry to hear that at this advanced period of society, and in a country possessing such advantages, animosities are cherished at once so repugnant to the precepts of religion, and destructive of polished manners.” “Aye,” replied Lady Walpole, “people of sense make it a point to conceal those little piques and jealousies, for if discovered, they are sure to stand in the way of their interest—and indeed the one in question has been dormant several years; Lord Dunotter having, for the last six, been on the continent in an official capacity, as you perhaps know, he returned a few months since, and soon after came down to Ravenpark; as he did not notify his arrival in the neighbourhood to us, Sir Charles of course inferred that the old feud was remembered, and felt himself highly, I must say justly offended.” “Perhaps where no offence was meant,” said Mrs. Emerson, with a faint smile; “I think had I been in Sir Charles’s place, I should have had a pleasure in showing myself above resenting the affront, had it indeed been a studied one, and should have called on Lord Dunotter to welcome him to England and to Ravenpark.” Lady Walpole smiled, but did not express either assent or dissent in any other way.

Cordelia felt a shuddering sensation: her sense of rectitude could neither extenuate the unforgiving temper of her father in this instance, nor the courtly duplicity of Lady Walpole, which would teach to conceal that unforgiveness from motives of interest, not to correct and abjure it according to the dictates of duty, and she determined that on her side at least the quarrel should no longer be hereditary; but the expression of Lord Lochcarron’s looks the preceding evening was now accounted for, and the escort and protection he had afforded to herself and Mrs. Emerson seemed doubly kind. The last named lady, it appeared, thought so too, and she again mentioned the young nobleman to Lady Walpole in those terms of guarded panegyric which, with her, constituted high praise, adding, “I fear I must relinquish the pleasure I had promised myself of half an hour’s conversation with him this morning; for after what your ladyship has told me I can scarcely hope that he will think of calling to inquire after Cordelia and myself.” “I

imagine not," said Lady Walpole, adding, "he is, I understand, a highly-gifted, accomplished, well educated young man; but it requires all the vigilance and authority of my Lord Dunotter to curb those eccentricities and propensities which, sanctioned by fashion, are perhaps, too generally adopted." What this implied could not easily be defined, but Mrs. Emerson answered with a sigh, "It is a pity; a youth of dissipation gives but a bad promise for the exercise, in after life, of those patriotic virtues which men of rank ought to consider as the first earthly duties they are called to fulfil; he whose examples has helped to destroy public morals is ill qualified to act as their guardian; and where the extravagance of a landholder has made money his most desirable good, his tenants will too probably be the sufferers."

Lady Walpole was beginning to express acquiescence as a matter of course, when she was interrupted by a summons to Sir Charles's apartment. When they entered the room he was sitting in an easy chair; his form was wasted, and his features so changed, that Cordelia could scarcely recognize the slightest trace connected with the remembrance of her father; the evidence of approaching dissolution was visibly written on his countenance; his eyes were closed, but at their approach he opened them, and they rested on the form of his daughter, who, with spontaneous emotion, threw herself into his arms, and burst into tears; thus anticipating the cold and studied introduction of Lady Walpole, who was beginning, "My dear Sir Charles, I present our beloved child to you!"

The baronet, weakened by illness, and, it may be, having his feelings blunted by the soporific and narcotic remedies he had taken of late, did not reciprocate the sensibility of his daughter; he returned her embrace, indeed, but in a way which seemed rather a mechanical bodily impulse than any mental emanation; yet he drew a deep and heavy sigh as he gazed on her face, and said, feebly, "My sweet Cordelia, I rejoice to see thee;" he then held out his emaciated hand to Mrs. Emerson, and saluted her with a faint welcome; she gave a glance of retrospection to former years, and as she mentally compared the figure and the face of Sir Charles Walpole, as they then were, with the appearance he now exhibited, sighed involuntarily at the contrast.

The party was hardly seated, when Lady Walpole, addressing her husband, told him that his daughter had accepted the escort of Lord Lochcarron the preceding evening; narrating also their escape from the attack of the highwayman, and several particulars connected with the event. It is difficult to say, whether Cordelia felt most surprise, or Mrs. Emerson most indignation at this conduct; the former attributed it to an inexcusable thoughtlessness and want of caution in her mother-in-law, at once to acquaint Sir Charles, in his present state, with the danger she had been threatened with; and to mention a man who, as she herself had just said, was his decided aversion; but the latter, in proportion as she acquitted Lady Walpole of inconsideration, condemned her on a much worse score; that of deliberately and designedly bruising the broken reed, agonizing a dying heart with vain terrors, and calling up passions which ought to be banished for ever from a soul just entering the verge of eternity.

But still more was Cordelia surprised, yet more deeply was she affected, on witnessing the effect which these communications had on her almost-expiring parent; it

was not her narrow escape from a peril which threatened death—*that* had not the power to rouse him from the apathy into which he was rapidly sinking; no, it was hatred—hatred of Lord Lochcarron—in its darkest, deadliest form; those lips which ought only to have been opened in prayers of meekness, and ejaculations of piety, breathed an imprecation on his name; those eyes so lately closed in the languor of departing life, seemed starting from their sockets with wild and blasting fury; and that cheek, so lately wearing the pale hue of the grave, was alternately inflamed, yellow, and livid; the rage which possessed him gave strength to his voice, while, turning to his daughter, he inquired in tones which indicated the deepest displeasure, why she had accepted the protection of the son of Dunotter? malignant triumph was visibly portrayed on Lady Walpole's features; she made no effort to sooth an agitation so every way unfitting, but tried to veil her observance of it by busying herself in preparing a medicine which Sir Charles took every two hours.

Cordelia, who had never before beheld such fury in any one; who was sensible that it ought never to have been exhibited by such an object, at such a time, and on such an occasion, and who from the appearance of her father but a few minutes before could never have anticipated the scene which had taken place, was absolutely incapable of replying to his question. Mrs. Emerson, not less astonished, and scarcely less distressed, but more collected, urged their defence on the broad ground that both her young friend and herself had, till the preceding evening, been ignorant of all that related to Lords Dunotter and Lochcarron, beyond the bare existence of their titles, of course could not surmise that any cause existed for declining a civility so seasonably and so kindly offered.

Lady Walpole had by this time returned to her chair, but she did not speak—only listened with an aspect of calm curiosity as a mere spectator would have done. Sir Charles's anger appeared to subside, not as if from conviction, but because his exhausted state could no longer furnish spirit enough to keep it alive; he was, however, beginning to charge Cordelia as she valued his affection, and her own duty, never to have any future intercourse with Lord Lochcarron, when a faintness, the effect no doubt of his own violence, came over him, and claiming the joint assistance of his lady, and the servants who attended him, Mrs. Emerson and Miss Walpole retired; the latter labouring under a perturbation of spirits, an oppression, a grief, an anguish such as, till then, she had not even formed an idea of. Much they said, and more they thought on the subject of what had just passed, and were still commenting on this painful interview, when a note was put into the hands of Mrs. Emerson signed Lochcarron, inquiring in terms of friendly and polite attention after her own health and that of Miss Walpole; but offering no apology for not making his bow in person, thus evidently leaving such to be traced in that family feud, to the history of which they had just been listening.

Cordelia, it may be, would have felt shocked at this conviction that all intercourse with Lord Lochcarron must be at an end, had not the idea of her father's danger absorbed every other feeling; Sir Charles very probably had hurt himself by his violence on the subject of Lord Dunotter and their hereditary discord; at all events he altered materially for the worse, and continued so ill through the day as to preclude all possibility of Mrs.

Emerson's having any private conversation with him, to which she had been prompted by a desire of seeing Cordelia's interests effectually secured before her father's death, which every day seemed inevitable; but six wore away without producing any material change.

During this period Lady Walpole passed the chief part of her time in the apartment of her husband, rarely seeing either Mrs. Emerson or Cordelia, and even then but in a way of constrained ceremony; the domestics appointed to wait on the ladies were (with the exception of one) such as they could place no confidence in; Miss Walpole's female attendant was the niece of Lady Walpole's woman, and was, as Mrs. Emerson clearly perceived, commissioned to be a spy on their conduct, and a reporter of their conversation; their footman was a simple rustic; but old Sherwin, the butler, who usually waited at table, and who had been many years in the service of Sir Charles, was a truly worthy character; they had been about five days at Holleyfield when this man told them, in a modest and feeling tone, as if aware the communication would prove distressing, and yet afraid they should be told it with less caution by any one else, that the robber who had attacked them on the evening of their journey to Holleyfield, was dead of his wounds; and that the servant by whose pistol he had fallen was of course acquitted, on the joint testimony of Lord Lochcarron and the postillion. Mrs. Emerson was shocked, but accustomed to look forward to consequences, and to analyze her own feelings, she received the information with calmness and collection; but with Cordelia it was far otherwise; as usual, when any thing new and striking occurred, her whole soul rose in arms, like a tempest which scatters and dissipates lighter bodies at the mercy of the winds and waves, but throws the more massy parts of the wreck on shore; so when the tumult of her mind subsided, the ideas of the animated courage of Lord Lochcarron, of danger providentially ward off, and of the awful and unprepared termination of a life of guilt, remained fixed and indelible, the root and foundation on which to rear future principles, affections, and rules of conduct.

In consequence of some inquiries from Mrs. Emerson, which Sherwin seemed well qualified to answer, the ladies gathered, that Lord Lochcarron really possessed all those talents and acquirements which Lady Walpole appeared willing to concede to him; but those eccentricities and propensities which her ladyship seemed disposed to charge upon the young nobleman, and which, according to the spirit of her speech, might be supposed censurable at least, if not positively criminal, were, according to the glossary of Sherwin, the propensities of benevolence, and the eccentricities of an independent mind; the last, he said, had kept him out of parliament, much against the will of his father; for as the earl was a decided partisan and supporter of ministers, he wished to make an implicit support of their measures, one condition of his son's having a seat in the house of Commons; and as Lord Lochcarron would not pledge himself to any such constant and undeviating support, his country was deprived of the benefit of very promising talents.

Sherwin, having talked himself into a communicative mood, proceeded to say, with a smile, half-diffident and half-assured, "And it seems as if the young lord would be equally obstinate in having a wife of his own choosing; for, though it cannot be supposed his father likes it, they say he has taken a great fancy to ——" Here the narrator was suddenly called to assist in lifting Sir Charles into bed, while Cordelia, thus left without

hearing the sequel of his information, experienced a sensation she could not define; the moment Sherwin began to hint that Lord Lochcarron had an attachment, she dreaded to hear further; but now that the door of intelligence was closed, she felt a restless wish to know the name of its object; this, however, she found she might wish in vain. Mrs. Emerson did not notice what Sherwin had been saying about Lord Lochcarron, any further than to express her satisfaction that he was not of the number of worthless young men who disgrace the present day; but as to the addition which the old man was making to his intelligence, she either had not noticed it, or passed it over in silence; and when Sherwin again attended, he had either forgotten that he left his discourse unfinished, or deemed it presumptuous to renew it.

Cordelia revolved what had been said over and over, dwelt upon it, and considered it in every possible point of view; it might be that in such an exercise of her mind she felt some relief from the anxiety she was in on her father's account; but be that as it will, whoever feels inclined thus to ferment themselves into an artificial interest in what does not in reality concern them, will do well to check the rising propensity, more especially if it be connected with an object or a subject which may hereafter make war on their peace; if the adder which ought to have been strangled in infancy, be nourished in the bosom, its sting will be certain, and may be fatal.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR Charles Walpole expired, rather suddenly at last, about a week after the arrival of his daughter at Holleyfield, worn-out nature exhibited few struggles, and as he had never been distinguished by that piety which irradiates the bed of death, there was nothing in his departure either peculiarly shocking to sense, or edifying to mind. Cordelia could not be greatly grieved, having been little with her father, and never having experienced from him that affectionate tenderness which winds about the soul. Lady Walpole was represented as so much afflicted, that for the first few days she could not see either her daughter or Mrs. Emerson; but it being deemed requisite to open the will before measures were taken for the interment of the deceased, it was read in the presence of the three ladies: a more extraordinary testament could scarcely be devised; and if, as was generally supposed, the new-made widow was indeed governed by the triple passions of ambition, avarice, and love of sway, it seemed to promise them transcending gratification: the entire of Sir Charles's landed property, as well the splendid domain of Holleyfield as several smaller estates, were bequeathed unconditionally to Lady Walpole during life; at her decease to go to Cordelia or her heirs; to her, he only left the inconsiderable sum of two hundred per ann. during her minority; ten thousand pounds on the day of her becoming of age, and ten thousand more if, before that period, she married with the consent of her mother-in-law.

Mrs. Emerson and Capt. Thornton were named in the will for one thousand pounds each, together with several legacies of five hundred and less; ten thousand for charitable purposes, and the sole residue of his monies, as also his personal property of every description, to be at the absolute and uncontrolled disposal of his widow, with proviso, that the plate was to remain in full value an heir-loom of the estate for Cordelia.

The guardianship of the young lady was vested in Lady Walpole; true, Mr. Crompton, Sir Charles's man of law, was joined in the trust, but he was known to be at all times enough the slave of his own interest to become that of Lady Walpole, or of whoever else possessed power and money.

Mrs. Emerson made no attempt to either check or conceal her indignation at this strange testament; but inveighed, with a severity that added poignancy to truth, against the absurdity and injustice of Sir Charles's will, so far as it respected his daughter; this, as may be supposed, was by no means agreeable to Lady Walpole, whose grief for the loss she had sustained was not quite heavy enough to prevent her from retorting with more than correspondent acrimony. Much was said on both sides; and every reply tended to widen the breach which all Miss Walpole's efforts could not heal; not to enlarge needlessly, Mrs. Emerson made arrangements for quitting Holleyfield the day after the baronet's interment; nor could the entreaties, the tears, the endearments of Cordelia, change her purpose; the poor heart-rent girl, new to the world, ignorant of life, surrounded by strangers, left solely in the power of a mother-in-law whom she certainly had little reason to love, and having never known a friend but Mrs. Emerson, could not support the idea of a separation, and wept in all the bitterness of anguish: she was, it is

true, very much attached to Miss Walpole, and could not see her grief without correspondent emotion; but strong in intellect, firm in principle, undeviating in purpose, she could no longer, consistently with what she owed to herself, remain the guest of Lady Walpole; "Oh! then take me with you," exclaimed her distressed young friend; "take me back to Leeds—let me live with you always." "With pleasure would I do so, my beloved girl; but I am too well aware that your newly-constituted guardian would put a decided negative on such a step," was the reply, "Oh! ask them," exclaimed Cordelia, her fine countenance irradiating with joy, "I will implore Lady Walpole to let me go home with you."

Mrs. Emerson shook her head; already she was enabled to penetrate in part her ladyship's designs, and saw she was determined to retain her daughter-in-law with her; but unwilling to augment her distress, she permitted her to urge the petition as at once their mutual wish and request; as Mrs. Emerson had foreseen, it was decidedly rejected; "No, my love," said Lady Walpole, embracing her with tears, at least her eyes were wiped more than once during the interview, "I cannot cede my right in you to any one; bereft of my own children; delegated by your dear father to the sacred trust of watching over your inexperienced youth; and acquainted with all the plans and wishes he formed as they respected you, can it be supposed I shall be at once so regardless of his memory and injunctions, and so negligent, so culpably negligent of my own duty, as voluntarily to resign such a charge to any one, or so blind to my own happiness and comfort as to deprive myself of your sweet society? beyond that, my best love," continued her ladyship, in the most tenderly fascinating accents, "your education has been sadly neglected—neglected, no, that is not an appropriate term; I will do Mrs. Emerson every justice—she has made you beyond accomplished—good, amiable, kind, gentle, affectionate; but it is not to be expected that a remote provincial town could afford such professors in languages, arts, and sciences, as are requisite to polish the acquirements of a young person of fashion; and not only must what has been already taught you receive a much higher finish, but much is yet to be learned, without which, in the present age of elegance and refinement, you cannot be presented to the world."

Had Miss Walpole been a year to two older, had she seen more of life, been better entrenched in self-opinion, and less the victim of grief than she was at present, it is probable that in all or any of these cases she might have resented the implied contempt and degrading strictures of her mother-in-law; but young, diffident, and dejected, she in part believed herself deficient in many of those graces with which a fashionable female ought to be endowed, and in part bowed to the more matured and experienced judgment of Lady Walpole; however she made one more effort to carry her petition, and that one also proving unsuccessful, she returned in tears to her friend; Mrs. Emerson, prepared for such a result, was more pained than surprised; but unwilling to say or do any thing which might tend to sadden her lot, and make it less supportable, she soothed her with attentive kindness, exhorted her to bow to circumstances, and since she was thus, by the will of her father, sanctioned by law, thrown upon the protection of Lady Walpole, counseled her to cultivate her regard by every mode of conciliation which did not interfere with higher duties, on the subject of which she continued to speak as follows: "You are now, my beloved Miss Walpole, about to enter on a scene of life totally different from the quiet

domestic circle you moved in while with me; I think I can in part develop the designs of your mother-in-law; uncontrolled mistress of an immense fortune, and sole directress of yourself, she wishes at once to veil the odium of thus usurping your rights, by an ostentatious display of engaging and captivating qualities in those points which concern you: by retaining you under her own roof she evinces her regard for the memory of your father, and her superiority to that narrow jealousy which might lead many ladies in her situation to dread, and remove to a distance, such a rival; oh! how I tremble for you, Delia, exposed, as you will be, to so many temptations, gifted with great attractions, led by fashion and example, spurred by ridicule, and perhaps by reproof, to a compliance with modes and follies which duty, reason, and even inclination, grounded on early habit, may unite to condemn; I see you are indignant, my love; I see you think yourself secure from ever falling into those fashionable levities which you and I have sat in retirement and censured; but bear with me, my sweet Cordelia, while I remind you that my acquaintance with the human heart, and my experience of its instability in youth, are of rather longer date than yours; on your own strength you cannot rely; it must be a power superior to that which will keep your heart and your mind; but you can only hope for that holy assistance by continuing, as you do now, earnestly to pray for it; if you once grow languid and remiss in the duties of public or private devotion, if you perform them either carelessly or not at all, from that moment you become the slave of the world; and however you may flatter yourself with a false security, because you are surrounded by thousands who do not act better—it may be in some respects worse—than yourself, be assured you are no longer in the path of duty. I know, my dear girl, that your partial affection pays such deference to my opinions that you will seriously consider yourself as bound to any obligation which I shall think it for your good to impose; resolve then, solemnly, to observe this three-fold injunction—never comply with any modes or fashions, however enforced by the command, the example, or the persuasions of other people, which either in their own nature, or in the excess with which they are pursued come under the denunciation of religion, reason, delicacy, or true taste;—never neglect, or suffer to languish that homage of the Deity, both outward and mental, which is the first and best criterion that distinguishes the human species from the brutes; and lastly, if you are indeed drawn into the vortex of unbounded dissipation—if you feel that dereliction of your sacred and social duties which will follow, and in some degree precede, such a warping of your ingenuous mind, write to me freely, candidly, and without reserve; place before me the state of your feelings, and the habits of life you are pursuing, and leave it to me to develop the motives by which you have been biassed, nothing fearing that my partiality will extenuate your errors, and my experience lead you gently back to the right path.”

Cordelia readily accorded the promise required; but she did it in a way which clearly indicated that she deemed such an aberration from the strict line of rectitude, such a departure from the principles in which she had been educated amongst the impossible things which could never take place; her friend was evidently more sceptical; however she professed herself satisfied with the solemn assurance she had received, and the conference ended; but when the hour of parting arrived, Cordelia’s tears were renewed in the extreme of bitterness.

The adieus of Lady Walpole and Mrs. Emerson had much of formal ceremony on both sides; but such was the dexterous management of the former, that any one ignorant of the reality of matters, would have concluded this abrupt departure from her hospitable roof to be the sole act of Mrs. Emerson, without cause or provocation on her part, and indeed against her wish; one circumstance might, however, be observed, though her ladyship evinced this reluctance to parting with Mrs. Emerson, she never once asked her to repeat her visit, but left her without the power of saying, with Shenstone,

“So sweetly she bade me adieu,
I thought that she bade me return.”

Lady Walpole and Cordelia, left to the seclusion of Holleyfield during the early period of her ladyship's widowhood, and seeing no company, but two or three neighbouring families, of course passed much of their time together; and that with more harmony and cordiality than, all circumstances considered, might have been expected. Lady Walpole, in addition to all those motives which Mrs. Emerson had truly stated as influencing her, considered that when she should emerge from the first gloom of her sables, and consequent seclusion, the blooming Cordelia would prove a patent magnet of attraction, to draw the young and gay into her circles; while the heart of Cordelia, gentle, artless, and affectionate, sought her mother-in-law at once as an object to love, and a guide and monitor to lead and advise her; beyond which she was obeying the injunction of Mrs. Emerson to court assiduously the good graces of Lady Walpole. The last named lady, so well supported the character of dignified sorrow, excepting once at church, not even to air in a carriage; of course Miss Walpole, so young, and a total stranger in the neighbourhood, could make very short excursions alone; but accustomed to a great deal of exercise, and at once a graceful and excellent horsewoman, she sometimes took short rides in the park, but oftener long walks in different parts of the beautiful grounds; nor had she any one to make a companion of in those excursions, but the servant appointed by Lady Walpole to attend her, who did not rank very high in her estimation; for besides that Mrs. Emerson disliked her at first, Cordelia on a further knowledge found that she combined some of the worst attributes of low birth, pride, servility, cunning, loquacity, and adulation; and inexperienced as Cordelia was, she could easily perceive that she sought, by flattering her, to promote her own ends of self-interest, and that she often artfully tried to draw forth her sentiments and opinions of every one, even Lady Walpole herself, while she not unfrequently assumed the privilege of telling her, unasked, all, or at least a great deal, of what was going forward both in the mansion of Holleyfield and its vicinity. It was a lovely evening, the sun was setting in splendor, and air, earth, and water displayed all those captivations of beauty and of sweetness which, in the season of early summer, are so congenial to the mind, when Miss Walpole, attended by the young woman just described, set out on a long ramble by the banks of a rivulet, which traced a diversity of course through great part of the extensive domain of Holleyfield park; the last rays of day, beaming through broken clouds which presented every richness and variety of form and colouring, shone on the lofty woods, displaying their varied and elegant hues in beautiful contrast; the soft warbling of the brook responded to every rural sound in the animal and feathered tribes; and the scent-fraught zephyr, now dying away amongst the trees, and now rising as it were in playfulness, kissed the fair cheek of Miss Walpole,

who thus surrounded by all that is lovely in creation, thrilled with every emotion that the season and the scene, so finely in unison with feeling and with taste, were calculated to inspire; her loquacious companion chatted with high volubility, bolting forth her common-place remarks in the weather and prospects, interspersed with adulatory compliments, to all of which Cordelia, entirely given up to her own contemplations, replied, and scarcely replied, in monosyllables, secretly wishing her endless clack a thousand miles off; and had it not been that she deemed it not quite safe to wander alone so remote from the house, at that time of the evening, she would indubitably have dismissed her; but Lucy, neither awed by silence, nor intimidated by reserve, chattered on, until their ramble was interrupted by reaching the utmost boundary of the park in the direction they had traced, it being the point where the high road alone separated the domain of Holleyfield from that of Ravenpark; to the right, lay that ground before-mentioned as having, by the litigation which took place concerning it, in part produced the animosity which subsisted between the families of Dunotter and Walpole; the law had adjudged it to the former, but part of it, a narrow winding vale, watered by a rivulet, with a foot-path leading along its banks, had been by prescription for time immemorial a common way to a neighbouring village; this was a pleasant rural walk, and Lucy undertook by it to conduct Miss Walpole a nearer way home; they crossed the bridge, and had proceeded about a hundred yards up the vale, when two figures were seen imperfectly through the combined gloom of evening and of foliage advancing on their path; while female habiliments soon became visible, and not all the surrounding and increasing shade could conceal from Miss Walpole that the light form which wore them was graceful and attractive beyond any she had hitherto seen; neither would the force and strength with which circumstances had impressed on her memory the stature and air of Lord Lochcarron, allow her to remain for a moment in doubt, that the arm which supported this lovely being belonged to him; a simple, trivial, casual occurrence is found often to be the pivot on which the axis of life turns for ever after; this was the case with Cordelia; it was the first time she had seen Lord Lochcarron since the affair of the robber; but she had never been able to hear his name mentioned without a vibrating emotion, which now betrayed itself to her companion, on whom she leaned as they traced the winding and uneven road: the young nobleman paid the passing compliments to Miss Walpole with a grace of manner peculiarly his own; neither the hurry of reply nor the dusk of evening would allow of Cordelia's clearly distinguishing the features of the lady; but as far as she could form a judgment of her countenance, it was delicate, beautiful, and in unison with her form. Lucy, sly, and observing, marked well the emotions of her lady, and walked prepared to answer the inquiries she expected to be made; but finding Miss Walpole remained silent, she began with, "Good gracious, ma'am, what a beautiful spencer, I never saw such a rich, *lustresome*, charming satin in my life;" as the article had quite escaped Cordelia's observation, she could neither assent nor dissent, confirm nor deny on the point; when the pause of a moment had elapsed, Lucy finding her say unnoticed, resumed, "but that hat is not fit to wear with it; a close cottage is not suitable for evening dress; a pink lining makes the complexion look fine, to be sure, and a handsome face seems any thing, to be sure; not that she is so extraordinary beautiful, to be sure—I have seen ladies far charmering than she, whatever she may think, or Lord Lochcarron may think, or any body else may think."

Either Miss Walpole was abstracted, and did not much mind what reply she made, or it might be she chose to ask the question; whichever was the case, she said in a hurried tone, "Pray, who is that young lady?" Lucy, like many people when applied to for information, bridled up on the strength of her own consequence; "She is a young lady, to be sure, ma'am," she returned, "but no such great personage of a lady, for all that, though to be sure my Lord Lochcarron does *idle-ize* her to such a degree, that most people think he will marry her if any thing should happen my Lord Dunotter soon, or else——" but what else was effectually suspended by the sudden appearance of Mr Crompton, who came to inform Miss Walpole that the dowager Lady Hootside, the earl, her son, and the two young ladies, her daughters, were arrived at Holleyfield; and that one of the gardeners having accidentally seen which road she took in her ramble, Lady Walpole had sent the carriage to the end of the bridge, and deputed him as an escort, being all anxiety to present her daughter to her noble guests; Cordelia was a good deal surprised by this intelligence; she knew Lady Hootside to be the intimate friend of her mother-in-law, and knew also that they were shortly expected to make a visit at Holleyfield, but not, she had supposed, so recently after Sir Charles's death; however, she made no open comment, but accepted the offered arm of Mr. Crompton; and as to her valuable attendant, Lord Hootside's valet, Lady Hootside's woman, and the important question of whether peach-blossom or pomona would be the most becoming colour for the evening dance in the servant's hall, took instant possession of her brains, and drove Lord Lochcarron and his fair companion at least a hundred toises from them. Arrived in the drawing-room at Holleyfield, Cordelia beheld such a group as no combination of ideas derived from her previous intercourse with society could have assisted her to frame an idea of: Lady Hootside, to whom, of course, she was first presented, was then about fifty, with a person which would have been called fine had not its effect, so far as pleasing was concerned, been totally destroyed by a self-importance, a self-opinion, a self-adulation, for they are all adequate terms, though none of them singly is sufficiently expressive; and when combined, their operation was such that a form and features which with graceful condescension, suavity of manners, and feminine gentleness, would have been termed elegant, and dignified, were never spoken of but as large and robust; her eyes were black, and still retained considerable fire, which was augmented by the rouge on her cheeks, the contrasting shade of her dark curled wig, and the mingled plumes and roses which crowned it; her teeth were regular and brilliantly white, and she smiled much to show them, but that smile had nothing in it of benevolence, of courtesy, or of good-nature. Lady Hootside had practised it so often, and studied it so long, that it was become the mere action of feature without one emanation of mind: as to her moral qualities, she was charitable sometimes, but ostentatiously so, for the fame of her good deeds of that sort generally spread abroad; and added to all this, she was much accused of being proud, vain, avaricious, and sarcastic, with some truth and some exaggeration.

The attention of Miss Walpole was next directed from the countess to Lady Melissa Mannark, her eldest daughter, who sat on the corner of a sofa, in such a costume that it was difficult to ascertain whether or no it concealed a human form; she had superadded to her Merino travelling habit and furred cap, a mantle calculated for the meridian of a Russian winter, open indeed before, but closely enveloping her shoulders; her right hand rested in her bosom, as if to seek warmth from her heart, and her left was

immersed in a muff as large as a young bear of Nova Zembla; when Lady Walpole led her daughter to this seeming native of Tobolski, she half rose, half bowed, half yawned, but no beam of her eye rested on either the presenter or the presented; the gentle sympathies of Cordelia's nature were awakened; she believed her very ill, and looked with all the commiseration which such a belief inspired; when in consequence of Mr. Crompton's moving his massy frame, a stronger light fell on the young lady's face, and disclosed a pretty blooming countenance; but the shut eyes barring all expression, the next conclusion was that either insanity or idiotism prompted an appearance so unsuited to the season and the weather; pity now became Cordelia's predominant feeling, and she would perhaps have betrayed a degree of surprise and curiosity rather beyond what good-breeding allows, had she not been recalled by an introduction to Lady Caroline Mannark, the younger daughter of Lady Hootside; astonishment now changed its object, and all the power of contrast aided its force; she beheld a form so thin, so fragile, so attenuated, that it could hardly be supposed that of an inhabitant of earth; a complexion dazzlingly fair, yet so pale that scarcely any ray of life seemed to animate it; dark blue eyes of the most languishing softness; a small mouth, with lips of coral; teeth of the most brilliant whiteness; and a countenance modelled by affectation to the most studied, delicate, die-away sort of expression; over her luxuriant flaxen hair was thrown a veil of the finest lace, which, together with her thin white robe and azure scarf, waved with every breath of air, and gave her—at least it might be inferred, she hoped it gave her—the appearance of being beyond mortality; she had, by study and practice, modulated her voice to great softness of expression, which, combined with her youth, and with a certain elegance of address, rendered her, at first sight, very pleasing and attractive; Cordelia, however, thought her amiable; and, far from feeling that envy and rivalry which too frequently torture young ladies when first introduced to contemporary beauty, contemplated in idea a delightful companion, and looked forwards with pleasure to the time they should pass together. “Though last not least,” of this delectable assemblage, was the earl himself, a little smart looking youth in his twentieth year; at the moment of Miss Walpole's entrance he was kneeling on one knee—not in homage to a lady, but before a large spaniel dog, who was reared on his hind legs, his fore-paws resting on the shoulders of his noble patron, their faces in close contact, and Leo bestowing on his master those rough but honest caresses which his nature prompted.

When Lady Walpole presented her daughter, Lord Hootside quitted the paw of his shaggy favourite with a cordial shake, and took the fair hand of Cordelia, without seeming at all sensible of any incongruity in the proceeding, or that the familiar pressure, and unceremonious “How d'ye do?” were freedoms not quite sanctioned by a first introduction.

CHAPTER V.

AS the travellers had taken an early dinner at the last stage, they declined having any other refreshment than tea, and while it was preparing, the ladies retired to adjust their dress; "My dear creature," said Lady Melissa to Cordelia, as she rose from her snug corner, "they tell me you have been taking a long ramble, how could you possibly endure such a freezing thing as an evening walk at this time of year?" "What time of year is it, sister?" asked Lord Hootside, stifling a giggle. "February, is it not?" she gravely returned; the earl broke at once into a loud laugh, and Lady Hootside said, "My dear girl, you positively grow so very abstracted, why it is June;" "June!" re-iterated the young lady, viewing her own habiliments with well-counterfeited surprise; "and you have all been cruel enough to see me distil myself to a tincture with heat, and never told me it was summer;" as she spoke, she threw off her mantle, unbuttoned her habit, and snatching the cap from her head converted it into a fan, and used it with such vehemence, that her luxuriant hair waved about in all directions as she flew away to her dressing-room.

"Dear mamma," exclaimed Cordelia, when the door closed upon their guests, "is that poor young lady deranged?" "My love, how can you ask such a question?" returned Lady Walpole.

Cordelia, under the impression that it was the obviousness of the young lady's malady which induced her mother to wonder she should think such an inquiry necessary, proceeded to express the pity she really felt, but was interrupted with "Go, child, can you seriously suppose Lady Melissa mad?—why, you egregious goosecap, her ladyship is one of the most elegant, highly-accomplished young women in the whole circle of fashion—her absence of mind, I allow, sometimes leads her into little eccentricities, but they only render her the more charming." "O dear, mamma, can it be a charm not to know June from February?" exclaimed Cordelia, laughing; Lady Walpole gravely said, "Yes," and proceeded to explain the principles on which a defect becomes tantamount to a beauty, by saying, "We are all sensible of the value of admiration, and all wish to gain it, but that admiration which is the meed of manifest, decided superiority, not being voluntary homage, is paid unwillingly, and detracted from whenever that can be done; now inferiority of any kind (by which, however, you are not to understand common every-day deficiencies, but studied, acquired, becoming ones) if *judiciously* managed, always claims indulgence; if *gracefully*, it has, as I said before, the force of a charm; I have seen the occasional lameness of a beautiful woman exhibit a handsome foot to as much advantage as the most perfect dancing could have done, without exciting the envy which would have attended the display of that accomplishment; as to people pretending to be deaf and blind, who can recover their sight, if a beau appears at twenty yards' distance, or their hearing, if a tale of scandal be told, their folly is an antidote to itself; but many deficiencies—ignorance for example—if becomingly expressed, and evidently the result of youth and inexperience, is very fascinating; for by appealing to others for information, we tacitly pay a homage to their vanity which finds its way to the heart."

Lady Walpole was proceeding to panegyryze her other guests, when she was interrupted by their return to the drawing-room: Cordelia remained not quite convinced that there is either beauty or propriety in not knowing summer from winter; neither did she become a convert to Lady Walpole's general reasoning; but her ingenuous mind felt an impression equally new and dangerous; she saw that the genuine unadulterated modes of simple nature in which she had been educated, and to which she had hitherto adhered, were not only little practised, but neither valued nor admired where they were.

Lady Melissa was now completely metamorphosed; her thick travelling vestments were exchanged for the most light and elegant drapery; her hair was arranged with care and taste, and her hands and arms, released from their furry incumbrances, displayed every suitable ornament of fashion, very well assorted, excepting that the fair wearer, not to be quite out of character, had placed a valuable ring on the thumb instead of a finger of her left hand.

Lady Caroline was even more *bizarre* than at first; her airy sylph-like garments were disposed in the first fantastic forms; her eyes, as if unable to support the glare of vulgar objects, were shaded by preservers; her ears, annoyed, no doubt, by the sounds of a strange habitation, were carefully stuffed with the softest wool; and her sense of smelling was guarded by a case of the most curious India fillagree workmanship which she carried in her hand, and which held sal volatile, otto of roses, and various other articles of olfactory celebrity, contained in bottles suited to the strength and organs of a fairy; Lady Hootside was habited like all juvenile ladies of half a century, and her son like a fashionable nondescript, half beau, half groom.

Though the whole party consisted only of seven persons, six of them created more bustle than is usually occasioned by twenty; Lady Walpole talked a great deal, and alternately dispensed her attentions to all, in her wonted style of flattering florid compliment: Lady Hootside chatted, laughed, exhibited her teeth, and encouraged her daughters in the display of their assumed characters: with the manners of her son she was evidently not so well satisfied, and however ignorant Cordelia had hitherto been of the artificial modes of life, she could easily perceive that her ladyship wished him to gloss over his roughness with a studied behaviour, like that of his sisters; but he was completely emancipated from her control; her commands he disregarded, and her remonstrances he laughed at, though conveyed in the gentle terms of, "Now, Hooty, my dear creature, don't be absurd;" but all that the genius of mischief himself could have invented, seemed to have a home in the brain of his lordship; his sisters were the chief objects on which his wicked wit displayed itself; and now as they sat sipping their tea, Lady Melissa taking sugar when she meant cream, and committing a hundred other well contrived blunders; and Lady Caroline so celestialized that she could hardly eat as much bread as might have been contained in a nut shell, availing himself of the absence of mind of the one, and the refined sensations of the other, he handed to each a beautiful nosegay, composed of the choicest flowers, and arranged with great taste; he paid a similar mark of attention to Miss Walpole, who was smelling to and admiring the collection of sweets, when the two ladies Mannark were seized at the same moment with such fits of sneezing, that their features were convulsed, their dress disordered, and every

thing about them thrown into the greatest confusion; the cause easily discovered itself by the loud laughter of the young nobleman, who had perfumed the two bouquets intended for his sisters so plentifully with snuff, that his mischievous purpose was fully answered; nor did the consequences end here; the agitation of the ladies roused a favourite dog of Lady Caroline's, which couched in her ladyship's lap, and the terrified animal in shaking his shaggy ears, contrived to plunge one of them into a cup of hot tea; dire now was the scene which ensued; Lady Hootside scolded; her fair daughters alternately screamed and sneezed; the lap-dog howled; the china rattled; the tea trickled in a stream on the beautiful carpet; Lady Walpole was red with apprehension that it would be spoiled; Cordelia strove to sooth and console all the sufferers in turn; the author of all the mischief measured his length on a sofa, and laughed himself into complete exhaustion; and Mr. Crompton quietly seconded the efforts of the servants who were endeavouring to cleanse the carpet; wisely considering it as the object which Lady Walpole was most interested about.

Lord Hootside's frolic effectually destroyed the comfort and harmony of the evening, and the party separated at an early hour. It was long before Miss Walpole could abstract her mind, or even feel as if her senses were clear from the annoyance of the rattling party she had left; but though every incident of the past day wore the stamp of novelty, neither the incidents themselves, nor those who had been actors in them, possessed interest enough to arrest attention, except the meeting with Lord Lochcarron—on that she dwelt long and earnestly, and contemplated its positions in every possible point of view; she of course inferred that the young lady who accompanied him was the same whom, as Sherwin had hinted, he seemed resolved to unite himself to; and as it appeared from the hints of both Lucy and Sherwin, that Lord Dunotter disapproved of the connexion, it remained to draw the conclusion that she was deficient in the qualifications of rank, fortune, or character: so far as appearances might be admitted as a criterion to judge by, she fell short in none of them, for her dress was expensive, and her air noble and graceful, though modest; yet money might purchase the former, and education and art combined bestow the latter; and as Cordelia, restricted as her knowledge of life had hitherto been, had seen elegant and beautiful, yet unworthy women, she was compelled to admit the fear that she might be one of that class already living under the protection of Lord Lochcarron: such a thought was too painful to be contemplated, and turning away, she endeavoured to lose it in a thousand vague conjectures; it was, however, a subject on which she was not long fated to remain in uncertainty.

The next day passed with the Hootside party in a repetition of follies similar to those of the preceding one: after rambling over the beautiful grounds, Lord Hootside asked Cordelia to ride with him in the park; she cheerfully complied to the evident pleasure of both mammas; Lady Walpole was offering her horse to Lady Melissa, and her ladyship was graciously signifying her acceptance, when her unceremonious brother exclaimed, "No, indeed, you sha'n't be of our party, you would be over all the hedges and into all the ditches in the place, and in your stupid fits would gallop over corn, meadow, and pasture, without being conscious that you were off the road."

Lady Melissa pouted, and muttered much about her brother's rudeness, but was forced to submit withal; and Lady Walpole, in her insinuating way, transferred the offer to her sister; but Lord Hootside barred her accompanying them by a negative, "No, no;" "Why," he exclaimed, "you would faint if the mare happened to hit her foot against a pebble, and scream your senses away if a swallow flew across the path, or a deer bounded by; no, no, nobody shall ride with me but Miss Walpole."

The decrees of Lord Hootside were as immutable as those of the Medes and Persians; none of the family dared to demur; but had Miss Walpole heard all this sooner, she certainly would not have rode, nor have outraged the feelings of the young ladies by seeming to be a party in their disappointment; as it were she felt herself compelled to keep her promise without interfering between them and their brother; for aware that his lordship was perfectly acquainted with the foibles of his sisters, she had no inclination to have her horse frightened, and perhaps her life endangered by their flights. Their excursion was very pleasant; Lord Hootside, freed from the self-imposed task of annoying his relatives, displayed himself to an advantage which Cordelia had not conceived possible: true, he was not gifted with any great portion of either parts or acquirements, but he had much good-nature and some wit, and though too proud to *seem* making an effort to please, he was in reality doing so unknown to himself.

The environs of Holleyfield presented nothing new to the young earl, for he had frequently visited them before; but Miss Walpole was totally unacquainted with the scenery of the neighbourhood; Lord Hootside pointed out every object and every view, and time flew delightfully, till in passing beneath some trees which grew by the side of the brook, Cordelia observed her companion looking steadfastly down on the grass; suddenly he dismounted, and telling Miss Walpole that his stirrup had got wrong, begged her to ride forwards and he would follow when his groom had replaced it; she complied, and had proceeded but a very little way when she caught a glimpse—unperceived, but a perfect one as to certainty—of Lord Lochcarron and the lady she had seen with him the preceding evening, walking in a wood on the left, which belonged to the domain of Ravenpark.

"Surely," Cordelia thought, "the society of that young lady possesses a powerful charm;" but little time was allowed for either conjecture or reflection; Lord Hootside galloped up, and they soon reached Holleyfield.

The ladies had not been unemployed in their absence; Lady Hootside's good genius had suggested to her, that as every thing connected with the dominions of Spain in America was becoming popular, her daughters could not devote themselves to any study so likely to attract and bear away the palm of fashion as the languages of that immense continent; the dances of the Mexicans, as they have been transmitted to us in description, the manners, the customs, the dresses, and the arts of the once-extensive empires of Peru and Mexico; with the addition of whatever in more recent times has become known in Europe concerning that country; the young ladies were charmed with such a field for variety, novelty, and display; Lady Melissa reflected how admirably her characteristic absence of mind would veil the blunders which her ignorance of a part of the world so

remote would perhaps betray her into; and Lady Caroline was already practising the attitudes and studying the dress of a virgin of the sun; Lord Hootside slyly watched her, and easily penetrating her thoughts, exclaimed, "Caroline, did you ever see a representation of the dress of a native of Chili?" "O, no;" she replied, "I should like to see it of all things." "Lend me a pencil that I may sketch it for you."

She caught up her reticule to seek one there, but the moment she opened it, out leaped an enormously large frog; the ladies screamed and skipped as if vying with the unsightly animal, who should leap highest; Lady Hootside frowned and remonstrated; the strange young nobleman broke into a boisterous horse-laugh, and Cordelia readily conjectured that he had picked the frog from the grass by the brook-side, when he pretended his stirrup wanted adjusting; Lady Melissa, as the trick was aimed at her sister, chose to be diverted; and the mischievous earl said with mock gravity, "Dear Caroline, this may prove a very fortunate incident for your plans; present this nondescript to the British Museum, by the title of the Montocuzco frog from the banks of the river Orellana, and your fame is up at once."

A small party had been invited for the evening, and Cordelia, short as had been her intercourse with society, was already become sufficiently one of the world to be more than amused with the scene of gaiety, and to be at least pleased with the attentions of Lord Hootside, who, boisterous and annoying as he was to every one else, was to her gallant, polite, and even tender, evidently to the great pleasure of the two dowager ladies; but as to the fair absentee and the elegant sylph, Miss Walpole was too interesting, too attractively lovely not to be an object of their envy, dread, and dislike. In the course of the evening Miss Walpole's curiosity was so powerfully awakened by some words which a Mrs. Delmore was addressing to Lady Walpole, that she involuntarily, at least almost unconsciously, listened to their conversation; and as listeners seldom hear what is agreeable to themselves, she heard that Lord Lochcarron had lately become very much attached to a Miss Borham, the orphan unportioned daughter of a clergyman, niece to the deceased wife of Lord Dunotter's steward; she was, Mrs. Delmore added, transcendently beautiful, and highly accomplished, but, of course, nobody in the points of rank and fortune; and as to the qualities of her mind and heart, opinion was equally divided; some ascribing to her every possible female virtue, and others the deepest and most consummate art: Lord Dunotter, however, was, as might be expected, bitterly averse to the idea of his son's forming so degrading a connexion, and had threatened him with his severest displeasure, if he did not immediately decline all acquaintance with Miss Borham; report, Mrs. Delmore added, said that the earl's displeasure against his steward was still deeper; and it seemed reasonable to conclude that his lordship would take speedy and effectual measures to remove his heir from so dangerous an acquaintance. Thus far Cordelia heard without once recollecting the impropriety of listening to a private conversation; it then struck her, and with a blush of conscious shame she raised her eyes, and met those of Lady Walpole regarding her with deep and searching attention, yet not so absorbed but that she was manifestly and powerfully interested by Mrs. Delmore's communications; while Miss Walpole, too much oppressed by the idea of having been caught in an act of meanness to follow up her mental remarks on the expression of her mother-in-law's countenance, shrunk away to a card-table, where Lady Caroline was so

deeply intent on her game, that she did not even feel the gentle breath of a pair of little pocket bellows, with which her brother was contriving to agitate her waving drapery, and giving it that airy and sylph-like appearance which it was so much a point with her to assume; indeed he was rendering her no trifling service, for the rest of the party, diverted beyond all power of attending to their cards, were yielding up every post to her ladyship, and leaving her triumphant mistress of the game.

Weeks wore over at Holleyfield, and every individual of the party pursued with ardour and ceaseless attention their separate designs; Ladies Melissa and Caroline studied the languages, sketched the scenery, practised the dances, and sung the songs of South America: their brother became the devoted lover of Miss Walpole, and being neither by nature nor habit formed for disguise, took no pains to conceal his passion from either its object or any one else; but whether it were an attachment founded on such a basis as would insure its durability, or merely a transient liking, which would fade with time and yield to circumstances, it remained for the future to show. Cordelia—painful is the task to the biographical pen to trace the errors of its subject, but the duty which truth imposes must be performed—Cordelia was already become sufficiently a disciple of the world, and a votary of fashion, to be pleased with his attentions, to encourage them—or at least to give him no negative by either word or look; yet in acting thus, she had no motive that might be avowed, and certainly no aim that could be defined; for had she been asked if her heart had made its election of Lord Hootside, or even felt a bias in his favour, she would unhesitatingly have answered no, and perhaps have manifested some degree of resentment at the supposal; however, her behaviour gave Lady Hootside evident pleasure, and even an indifferent spectator might see that she regarded Miss Walpole as the future bride of her son. It was much more difficult to trace Lady Walpole's plans on the present occasion; Cordelia had now been so much in her society, that although not always capable of penetrating her motives of action, she yet could often see the operation and effect of those motives on her manners, and even her countenance; and though she overwhelmed the Hootside party with a profusion of attentions; though they had been the selected guests of her own inviting; and though she had at first taken all possible pains to cultivate for Lord Hootside an interest in the good graces of her daughter-in-law, she now gave the latter frequent, though private hints, not to entangle herself too far with the earl, but to keep at liberty to break with him entirely, should circumstances demand such a line of conduct; yet she was to all-seeming the decided friend of Lady Hootside, ready to promote her plans, and assist her wishes; so much so, that when the last-named lady proposed to pass the autumn at Brighton, Lady Walpole declared herself ready, and even eager, to be of the party, and made the requisite preparations, though Cordelia could not help thinking that

“She practis'd falsehood under saintly show.”

From Lucy's prating loquacity, Miss Walpole learned that Lord Lochcarron was absent on a tour in Scotland, where Lord Dunotter had extensive possessions; and that Miss Borham was shortly going with a friend to pass a few weeks at Tunbridge. Occupied with the prospect of her own excursion, Cordelia paid little regard to all this; but yielding her mind to the fascination which renders novelty and pleasure so attractive

to youth, she was all cheerfulness and gaiety, anticipating, with mingled delight and impatience, the day which should whirl her to Brighton, and show her, what she had never yet seen, the spirit, splendor, and variety of exalted and fashionable life.

About a week before the appointed time, Lady Melissa, Miss Walpole, and Lord Hootside, set off one morning to take an excursion on horseback; the air was sultry, and the little party had not been long out, when heavy clouds began to rise in a direction opposite the wind; the breeze died away, and the blackness increasing, threatened a storm; Lady Melissa, to be characteristic, said it looked like snow; her brother laughed at her folly, and willing to see whether the thunder, which was evidently approaching, would bring her to recollection, he so far indulged his proneness to mischief, as to neglect Cordelia's gentle request to take the nearest circuit to the house, and took a very pleasant one, but considerably further about; they had still nearly two miles to ride, when the war of the elements began at a distance, and each succeeding peal, sounding louder and louder, indicated a rapid progress; a vivid flash of lightning startled Lady Melissa's horse, and so far assisted her ladyship's languid perceptions, that she exclaimed, "Bless me, I declare it is lightning, do let us get home as fast as we can." Lord Hootside levelled much pointed ridicule at her absurdity; had only themselves been concerned, he would have kept her out on purpose; but it was beginning to rain fast, and fearing lest Miss Walpole should take cold, he urged his horse forwards, and struck into an avenue which led to a small but very pleasant house at the distance of two hundred yards to the right, saying at the same time to Cordelia, "I don't know who lives there, but we'll make our quarters good for the present."

Cordelia had a vague guess who did live there; and felt no repugnance to such a place of shelter; the exterior wore striking evidences of recent and expensive improvement; the style was rural, but it was the style of fashion; of studied taste, measured elegance, and a kind of simplicity where the artist's hand was prominent in every object; Lord Hootside's steed was the fleetest of his party; his sonorous knock was answered by a servant in livery, and he had just requested permission to wait until the storm should subside, and was leading Miss Walpole into the house, when a gentleman advanced from an apartment on the right of the entrance hall, and with much courtesy invited the fugitives to walk in; he was about the middle period of life, with nothing of dignity in his person or address, to attract regard or inspire respect; his features were harsh and unpleasing, but his manners ever ceremonious in the extreme; his bows were profound, his smile so marked that it lengthened into a grin, and every response was a monosyllable of studied acquiescence; in one sense he might be termed the prototype of his habitation, for the ravages time had made on his hair and teeth, were remedied with the same costly and fashionable pains; while his efforts to appear the easy man of the world, through the trammels of modish clothing, made him look as stiffened as Billy Button, in the old play of the Maid of Bath; and, to finish his portrait, he had that remarkable winking averted eye which, shunning contact with that of the person its possessor is conversing with, is too frequently a harbinger that all is not right within.

The apartment to which Mr. Pringle (so he was called) ushered his visitors, was both tastefully and splendidly decorated; the windows, which descended to the floor,

were shaded by curtains of the most beautiful chintz; and in the balconies a profusion of plants, both native and exotic, exhaled their sweets; the carpet was Persian, the furniture after the Turkish model, and the paintings, imitations (probably purchased for originals) of the second class of Italian artists; two, however, were exceptions—the portraits of the master and mistress of the mansion, in very gorgeous frames; the former has just been described, and in the latter

“Commission’d by the name of niece,”

Cordelia, with some emotion, but no surprise, because she believed her to be resident here, recognised the beautiful form of Miss Borham; she rose, on their entrance, from a splendid piano, on which lay open, “The Harp that once thro’ Tora’s halls;” and bending over its fascinating page was a gentleman of a graceful figure; as they approached, he looked up, and the perfect resemblance of his features to those of Lord Lochcarron, except that they were marked by a longer acquaintance with time, told Miss Walpole that she then for the first time beheld his parent, the Earl of Dunotter.

The dress of Miss Borham combined all that taste could invent or fashion authorize in morning costume; but like every thing else about these people, it seemed too studied; all ornamental dress, all that is beyond the mere purposes of decorum and neatness, is intended to display and set off the person of the wearer to the greatest advantages; but excess in this, as in every thing else, destroys every good effect; and by drawing the attention of the beholder from the *adorned* to the *adornment*, leaves her person without that admiration to which it is, perhaps, truly entitled, and exposes her dress to wonder in the first instance, and, very probably, to censure in the second: if ladies of rank chuse to “O’erstep the modesty of nature,” and to depart from that simplicity at all times so becoming and alluring, the error they commit is only in the example they set; in those whose only distinction is riches, it is at best a vulgar mode of exhibiting their wealth; but when they whose claim to consequence are neither to be found in honours nor fortune, seek to create such claims by dressing in a style too expensive for their means, and too fantastical for their station in life, they give much room to question not only their good sense, but even their prudence and honesty.

Miss Borham received the two ladies with every attention and politeness that the occasion demanded; Lord Dunotter (in all respects the travelled man of the world, and already personally, though slightly, known to Lord Hootside and Lady Melissa, their equal in rank, and their superior in age, and the near neighbour of Miss Walpole, though hitherto estranged from all intercourse with her family) was at once with them all as if their acquaintance had been sealed and sanctioned by the lapse of years; to Cordelia his manner was soft and insinuating; not that half stately half courteous notice which men at his lordship’s time of life usually deem sufficient for a girl; nor yet that way of turning all she says to jest, and treating her like a baby, which is still less bearable to a young woman of sense and education; no, to an uninterested and even discerning spectator, it must have appeared that he was anxious to conciliate her good opinion, because he was sensible of her value in society from her situation in life, and her personal and mental accomplishments; but Cordelia, new to the world, and, like every ingenuous young

person, willing to form the most favourable opinion of those she conversed with, knowing how peculiarly they were circumstanced, hereditary enemies for so long past, imagined that, now her father was dead, Lord Dunotter, regarding her as the head of the family, was willing to bury all animosity in oblivion; and that such was her own earnest wish, she strove by her manner to convince him; yet even in the moment when their looks and words were the most friendly and conciliating, the sad scene when Sir Charles Walpole was dying, when the last energies that his emaciated countenance and expiring voice could muster, sunk under his own efforts to adjure her never to have any intercourse with the family of Dunotter, rose to memory, and a sad feeling, a feeling so complicated that she could not define it, filled her heart.

Lord Dunotter's plans none but himself could know; but if it was any part of them to impress his own idea favourably on the gentle mind of Miss Walpole, he certainly succeeded; he asked of Lady Walpole's health with much seeming respect; and Cordelia, in answering, subjoined an inquiry after Lord Lochcarron; the earl replied that he was well, and then travelling in the highlands; and as he spoke, Miss Walpole observed him steal a glance at Miss Borham, which that young lady did not seem to perceive; and if she felt any thrill of the heart, at least no discomposure of countenance was visible.

Lord Dunotter's behaviour to Miss Borham was marked by at once so much respectful tenderness and distinguishing politeness, that Cordelia felt convinced in her own mind either that what she had heard from Mrs. Delmore, old Sherwin the butler, and Lucy, concerning his lordship's high disapproval of his son's attachment was incorrect; or that, convinced of the young lady's merit, his objections existed no longer. Though Miss Borham was well-bred, according to the forms which at present pass current in the world for that quality, there was yet a something in her manner rather repellent than attractive, which seemed to have its origin—as such behaviour generally has—in a too high rate of self-estimation, which, like what has been said of a *vigour beyond the law*, would claim more than its due, and be jealous of that scrutiny which should examine its pretensions, and perhaps expose their futility; to have done with metaphor, Miss Borham was one of that numerous class of persons who, having frequent opportunities of intercourse with the great, and forgetting the wide disparity of their situations, wish to be thought on a level with them; but not having sense or judgment enough to profit by the example of condescension which they set, imagine that to be affable will lower their consequence, and that to support it they must be formal to their superiors, frigid to those of equal rank, and haughty in their carriage towards those whom Providence has placed in a humbler sphere: as to station and fortune, thus in addressing Lady Melissa Mannark and Miss Walpole, both so greatly above her, Miss Borham lost sight of that winning sweetness which in so lovely a woman would have been most attractive; and though she was perfectly polite, it seemed rather the result of study, force, and affectation, than the genuine unsophisticated good-breeding which is the emanation of real and habitual elevation of mind, and suavity of disposition.

Mr. Pringle, however, made ample amends for his niece's want of urbanity; he took the tone from his patron, who it was his present purpose to please; and seeing, by his lordship's manner towards Miss Walpole, that all family animosity was at an end, he on

his part overwhelmed her with civilities. Refreshments were brought in, all excellent in their kinds, served with parade at least, if not splendour, and pressed on the visitors with cordial hospitality; Miss Borham, in doing the honours of the house on this occasion, was particularly and evidently attentive to Lord Dunotter, consulting his taste as if previously well acquainted with it, and ratifying whatever he approved by her own approbation; the party soon became very social; Lord Hootside and Mr. Pringle chatted in one part of the room about game and field sports, and Lord Dunotter, Miss Walpole, and Miss Borham, formed a cheerful group in another; the thunder had ceased, at least its sound was so remote as to be no longer perceptible, and Cordelia was uttering a remark on the warmth and beauty of the day, when Lady Melissa, chagrined that the prevailing grace of her character had not yet been noticed, started from one of her fits of *attentive absence* and complained of cold; Miss Borham begged permission to attend her to a room where there was a fire, and as Miss Walpole of course accompanied them, it broke up the party, and the gentlemen were left by themselves; Lady Melissa was not more social in female than she had been in mixed society; she sat retired within herself, and either made no reply, or one quite foreign to the purpose, to the observations which her companions addressed to her. Cordelia was now so much habituated to her absurdity, that she had ceased to wonder at it; but she saw with surprise, that a mode of behaviour which had at first so greatly astonished herself, had no such effect on Miss Borham, who seemed to regard it as a matter of course; and though a thousand times more lovely both in form and face, was evidently charmed into imitation of Lady Melissa's lounging vapid air, though certainly not of her forgetfulness, for she talked to Cordelia on various topics; she tried very artfully to draw forth her sentiments of Lady Walpole; but Cordelia, though she had many reasons for not being pleased with her ladyship's conduct as it respected herself, particularly in the instance of her having secured to herself the greatest part of Sir Charles Walpole's fortune, had too much good sense and refinement to pour her wounded feelings into the bosom of a stranger; she spoke of her mother-in-law in terms of guarded praise, panegyricizing her accomplishments, and though she was silent concerning the qualities of the heart, doing ample justice to those of the head.

Miss Borham knew better than to press the subject further; she changed the discourse, and talked of new music, dances, novels, and plays, parading, though with great affectation of modesty, what she thought her own fine taste and critical skill, till Lady Melissa, determined to display her newly-acquired South American knowledge, which she would have done to Lord Dunotter, had she not been restrained by the dread of her brother's pointed satire, started up, and inquired if they were not talking of Paraguay. Miss Borham, with laboured politeness, corrected her mistake, and stated what was the subject of conversation; her ladyship found easy means to make a translation to her favourite theme; Miss Borham either listened with interest, or was complaisant enough to wear the appearance of something like it; and Cordelia sat in dread lest her ladyship, thus gratified in an auditor, would do as she had more than once seen her under similar circumstances, affect to forget that she was in the house of a stranger, and lengthen her visit beyond all proportion, for who, after such an infringement of the laws of good-breeding, could doubt her absence of mind to be real. The rules of ceremony seemed to demand that the proposal to go should originate with Lady Melissa; but Miss Walpole, aware that in her ladyship's present frame of mind, it would be vain to expect that such

should be made, at length ventured to notice the time of day; Miss Borham observed that the distance was short, and the road safe, and it seemed as if she introduced this remark solely for the purpose of mentioning Lord Lochcarron, and the now almost forgotten circumstance of the attempted robbery; for she immediately subjoined, "Perhaps you do not know, Miss Walpole, that something had occurred lately which induces Lord Lochcarron to suspect that the postillion who drove his carriage, was an accomplice of the robber; I am but very imperfectly acquainted with the circumstances; Lords Dunotter and Lochcarron have interrogated him, but he of course denies any knowledge of the transaction; the latter seems, I think, to have little doubt of his guilt, but the earl inclines to believe him innocent, and says, that appearances unsupported by any shadow of proof, will not warrant him in discharging a valuable servant; it is very strange, is it not?" Cordelia replied in the affirmative, and thought it not only strange, but truly astonishing, that any person should retain in his service, even for a single hour, a person who there was the smallest atom of reason to suspect had been accessory to an attempt on the life of his only son; more might have been said, but Lady Melissa, as herself had ceased to be the sole object of attention, grew weary of her party, and rose to go; they found Lord Hootside, whose patience was by this time somewhat exhausted, ready to depart; after taking a very polite leave of Miss Borham and Lord Dunotter (the former of whom Miss Walpole could not avoid inviting to visit Holleyfield, when herself should return thither) they resumed their saddles; and as for Mr. Pringle, he was so busied in assisting the ladies that he capered as if he were dancing a hornpipe.

CHAPTER VI.

NOT the least disagreeable consequence of Cordelia's forced dependence on Lady Walpole, was the constant necessity she was under of accounting to her, for not only every particle of her time that was passed out of doors, but also of mentioning whoever she happened to be in company with, whether by choice or accident; indeed the events of this morning were of a nature which no one would have thought of concealing; neither, had Miss Walpole been so inclined, would it have availed, for though Lady Melissa would very probably imagine that she had been at Ravenpark instead of the house of Mr. Pringle, Lord Hootside would not be so forgetful, but would both say where they had been, and describe the party they met there; what Cordelia felt embarrassed about was the light in which Lady Walpole would regard her interview with Lord Dunotter; she well remembered the marked manner of her ladyship, when she first listened to the communication of Mrs. Emerson, that Lord Lochcarron had been their escort to Holleyfield; the malignant, revengeful cruelty—for it seemed to deserve no better epithet—with which she detailed that communication to Sir Charles Walpole on one of the last days of his life, but for which Cordelia would never have heard that bitter half-finished interdict of all communication with the Dunotter family, which was ever sounding its dread response on her mental ear; and she also remembered the scrutinizing look with which her ladyship regarded her, when Mrs. Delmore was talking about the two noblemen, which she had never been able to ascribe to any other cause than the family quarrel: true it is, few girls in Miss Walpole's situation would have troubled their heads with the thoughts and feelings of a mother-in-law, under such circumstances; or if they saw her annoyed by their acquaintance with the Dunotters, or any other people, they would have cultivated it the more sedulously; but Cordelia was gentle, nor had she an atom of spite, revenge, or contradiction in her character; and what was most to be regretted, whatever she might become hereafter, she had not yet acquired any of that firmness and decision which, aware that the intention and not the issue, the means, but not what they bring about, are in our power, is satisfied with the consciousness of acting from the best motives, and candidly, heroically, avows them.

Swayed by these refined feelings, she revolved in her mind, as she rode home, how she should disclose the events of the morning to Lady Walpole; but she soon found, that she might have spared herself all this racking stretch of thought. Lady Walpole was in the drawing-room, dressed for dinner, surrounded by the rest of her guests, and under much seeming apprehension for the absentees; Lord Hootside told where they had taken shelter, and who they had seen, humorously describing Pringle's eccentricities, and extolling the good cheer of his house; Lady Melissa peevishly pronounced him a disagreeable animal, his niece a fright, and Lord Dunotter one of the strangest beings she had ever met with; her brother flatly contradicted her in both the latter instances; spoke of Miss Borham as an angel, and the earl, as the finest old fellow in England; "Lord Dunotter cannot be an old man," said Lady Hootside, unwilling to think him so, because he had blazed at court, a cotemporary meteor with herself; but Lord Hootside, finding he annoyed his mamma, was more peremptory in his assertion; and indeed with people of the young nobleman's age all who have attained to thirty, are classed with Methuselah.

During this conversation, Cordelia watched the looks of Lady Walpole, and read, or thought she read, there a very powerful degree of interest, but no trace of displeasure; still she felt reluctant to any explanation taking place before company on the subject of Lord Dunotter's behaviour to herself; and when she saw Lord Hootside, in the vehemence of his dispute with his sister, about to appeal to her decision, she affected not to perceive his intention, and rose to retire to dress; Lady Melissa did the same, and when they returned, the party, which was that day rather a large one, they went to dinner; new subjects were discussed, and no further reference made to the events of the morning.

Cordelia had been some time retired to her chamber for the night, had taken off the ornamental parts of her dress, dismissed her maid, and was seated with a book of evening devotion, a mode of closing the day to which she had been early habituated by her excellent friend Mrs. Emerson, but which, immersed as she now was in gaiety, she rather continued from habit than inclination, when a gentle rap at the door was succeeded by the entrance of Lady Walpole. Cordelia, with much surprise and some trepidation, having never before been visited by her ladyship at so late an hour, closed the book, and started from her chair; "I apologize for alarming you, my love, but not for interrupting your studies, because it is too late to read," said Lady Walpole, with a gracious smile, advancing to the table, on which she placed her light, and caught up the volume, as if in the eager hope of detecting her daughter-in-law in some improper pursuit, at least so Cordelia (who was now become an adept in translating the countenance) thought; she obeyed the impulse of the moment, and looked up in the face of Lady Walpole with conscious dignity; her ladyship replaced the book with even more quickness than she had taken it, and said with a very gracious smile, "You are an excellent girl, Cordelia, and it is the consciousness that you are so which has brought me here to-night, for I could not go to rest until I charged you to take proper care of yourself, after having been in part exposed to the storm to-day." Cordelia made proper acknowledgments for this maternal solicitude, and Lady Walpole, as she took possession of the chair which she placed for her, proceeded to say, "But tell me, my dear, how did Lord Dunotter behave to you? I would not ask you before the Hootsides and the Melvins, who all know so well what an animosity has subsisted between the two families for such an immense length of time; and standing as you now do, in the character of the future representative of the Walpole family, I have been in pain for you all day, lest his lordship should either have forgot what was due to you, or you should have made any departure from what you owed to your own dignity."

These few words amply confirmed to Cordelia what she before suspected, that this midnight visit from Lady Walpole had another motive besides that *consciousness of her excellence*, which made her an object of such importance; that motive now stood avowed to be her interview with Lord Dunotter, and all her fears of Lady Walpole's displeasure again recurred; but the reflection of a moment convinced her that she ought, in justice to herself, to banish such timid apprehensions; the energies of her mind rose with the occasion, and determined to leave nothing to chance, or the Hootsides to bring out hereafter, she candidly related all that had passed; described the urbanity and politeness of Lord Dunotter's manner, and the way in which she had felt it incumbent on her to reply to his civilities. Cordelia, in making this recital, naturally expected to trace in

the countenance of Lady Walpole the lines of displeasure, vexation, and every other uncomfortable feeling of a mortified mind; but, to her unspeakable surprise, as she proceeded in her narrative, the looks of her ladyship gradually brightened from a gleam of approbation to a cordial smile; and as she described her own manner towards Lord Dunotter, frequent ejaculations of "Right, my love;" "Oh, that was so perfectly the woman of the world," encouraged her to proceed; but when she had closed her story, by saying that the earl had made very polite and respectful inquiries after Lady Walpole, her ladyship embraced her in a transport, and said, "I cannot describe, my beloved girl, how much I am charmed by the display you have made of your good sense, good breeding, address, and knowledge of the world, so greatly superior to what might have been expected from your youth and secluded education; nothing could have been more gothic, vulgar, illiberal, and foolish, than the appearance of remembering an old rusty family quarrel; and Lord Dunotter knows life so well, that your slightest word, nay look, on such an occasion, would ground his opinion of you for ever after. I will not detain you another moment to-night, but just to ask what you think of that girl, the steward's niece." Cordelia, in reply, passed high and certainly just encomiums on Miss Borham's beauty; but yet such as few women would have had the candour to make, and related what she had observed of her attention to Lord Dunotter. Lady Walpole listened profoundly to all this, and then said, "They tell me she is in very bad health, does she appear so?" Miss Walpole replied that she certainly looked very delicate; and her ladyship, without another word of comment, kissed her cheek, pressed her hand, bade her a very cordial good night, and retired. Cordelia sought her pillow, but the great astonishment she was in, that she should so entirely have mistaken Lady Walpole's sentiments, would not permit her to sleep; all she could decide with certainty, was, that her ladyship in the former instance had humoured Sir Charles by flattering his animosities, a mode of conduct in her opinion still more criminal, and not less weak than would have been any show of resentment, she could have kept up against the Dunotters; but Cordelia, like most young people, gave herself credit for much more penetration than she possessed, and might as well have fancied that she knew what was passing in the court of the Emperor of China, as in the mind of Lady Walpole.

Nothing very remarkable occurred the next day; it was Sunday, and Lady Walpole, accompanied by her daughter and some of their guests, went to church: to Cordelia's surprise—for she seemed fated to be surprised on her ladyship's subject—she had even thus early made an alteration in her mourning; her style of dress was becoming, and though now far from young, she still looked lovely; added to which, she was in a very gracious humour, and so particularly complaisant to Lord Hootside, that Cordelia was almost tempted to think she intended to act the rival mother. Lord Dunotter was at church, and after service honoured Miss Walpole with a very graceful bow; and though Lady Walpole did not notice the circumstance in words, Cordelia thought she looked pleased by it.

The following morning as she was sitting by the window of her own apartment, she saw a servant in the Dunotter livery ride up to the house, and deliver a letter; very much surprised, and, to own the truth, tormented by a degree of curiosity, which would not suffer her to rest, until she knew who it was addressed to, she descended to the

drawing-room in the hope of gleaning something either positively from who was present, or negatively, by finding who was absent; Lady Hootside and Miss Addington, endless votaries of play, were even at that unusual hour quietly seated at backgammon; Cordelia, so far satisfied, apologized, made a quick retreat, and proceeded to the library, where she found Lady Caroline Mannark, reading the "Pilgrims of the Sun," quite lost in ecstasy and admiration. Miss Walpole having no wish to interrupt the young lady in studies so consonant to her taste, courtesied, retired, and went to the apartment of Lady Melissa; here

"Long she knock'd, but knock'd and call'd in vain;"

but whether she was absent in person, or only chose to be so in mind, Cordelia could not determine, and not choosing to resolve the question by the actual rudeness of opening the door, she was compelled to depart without knowing whether her ladyship was the receiver of the letter, which, however, did not seem very likely. She expected to have found some of the gentlemen at their usual morning recreation of billiards, but she was mistaken—none of them were there; Mr. Crompton was then at Holleyfield, and for any thing she knew to the contrary, the letter might be addressed to him; whoever it was, it certainly did not concern her, and reason, or propriety, or some such faculty, told her so; but curiosity happened to be the stronger motive, and, as is usually the case with persons who yield themselves slaves to the impulses of that dangerous guide, desire grew stronger in proportion as there seemed less chance of gratifying it.

In passing Mrs. Addington's apartment (the sister-in-law of the lady who was playing at backgammon) the door stood half open, and its inmate was seated opposite, reading a letter; she heard Miss Walpole's step, and, looking up, beckoned her to come in; she demurred on the plea of giving interruption; but Mrs. Addington said, her letter was of no consequence, folded it up, placed it in one of the toilet boxes, and introduced some trifling subject; Cordelia wondered much whether that could be the letter she was so anxious about, but could not determine, for she did not know whether the Addingtons had any acquaintance with the Dunotters; she was sorry Mrs. Addington had seen her passing the door, as politeness would not allow her to leave her immediately to go to Lady Walpole's apartment, whither she had intended next to direct her scrutiny; and the conversation of the lady she was with, made little amends for the suspension of any pursuit, for she was one of the yes and no fraternity, who can neither start an idea of their own, nor pursue those of others; after sacrificing a quarter of an hour in this way, she wished Mrs. Addington a present good morning, and was hastening to assure herself, whether Lady Walpole were indeed the recipient of the letter, when she heard her ladyship's bell ring, and in the next moment saw her pass quickly to the drawing-room; there now remained no way to ascertain who was the correspondent of Lord Dunotter; for as to questioning her own loquacious servant, it was a mode of inquiry she did not choose to take, neither, had she been so inclined, could she now have done it, for the girl was absent on an errand she had sent her, and only returned time enough to assist her in dressing for dinner.

The evening passed in the wonted way; none of the party seemed more gay or more gloomy than usual, and nothing transpired on the subject of the letter; Lady

Walpole was even more than affable—she was flattering, to not only her guests, but Cordelia: the Addingtons were to leave Holleyfield the following day, and Lady Walpole proposed a party to escort them a few miles on the road, and then to turn off and take a view of a neighbouring mansion, which, together with its furniture, library, paintings, and stud, was advertised for sale; it had been the residence of a distinguished character lately deceased, a man of great wealth and taste, and contained numerous articles of real value, and many more to which the whims and caprices of fashion attached an importance beyond their intrinsic worth; the proposal was eagerly embraced by the whole company, and Lord Hootside instantly became a candidate for the pleasure of driving Miss Walpole in his curricle; Cordelia remembering Lady Walpole's admonition not to entangle herself too far with Lord Hootside, would not promise to accept his escort till she had glanced her eye on her ladyship's face, and reading there a look of approval, signified her acquiescence. The young earl was delighted, and his mother yet more so, and after the rest of the party had arranged their respective modes of travelling, they adjourned to the music-room for the remainder of the evening.

The next morning, Miss Walpole, Lady Caroline, and Lord Hootside, formed a trio at breakfast; they were chatting with social gaiety, even Lady Caroline, descending from her altitudes, and talking like a common mortal in the prospect of much pleasure from their approaching excursion, when Lady Walpole's woman entered, and addressing Miss Walpole said, loud enough to be heard by all present, "My Lady, Madam, begs to see you immediately; her ladyship has had the misfortune to sprain her foot violently, in rising hastily to receive Mrs. Addington, who breakfasts with her."

Cordelia, in great alarm, hurried away, and found Lady Walpole with only Mrs. Addington, her foot on a stool, and wearing a countenance which at once expressed great pain and a degree of patience which was unwilling to either annoy others or betray its own weakness by complaints; Miss Walpole expressed her concern, and earnestly begged that a surgeon might be sent for; Mrs. Addington said she had already urged the propriety of having advice, but without effect; Lady Walpole professed her obligation to their affectionate tenderness, saying in her courtly style, "that such kind solicitude was worth a hundred sprains, but that she could not even bear to think herself so much hurt as to need surgical assistance, having no doubt that the application which Dobinson (her woman) had already tried, would be attended with the happiest consequences; however, my love," she added, smiling yet more graciously on Cordelia, "it has cruelly disappointed the very great pleasure I promised myself in this morning's excursion, and you must make my regrets and excuses in your own sweet and winning way to Lady Hootside and the young ladies; beg them to remember that I participate in all their amusement to-day, and whatever interests any of you at Orton-abbey, consider me as sharing it with you." Miss Walpole replied, very affectionately, that she should deliver her ladyship's message, but as to herself, she would on no account join the party to Orton-abbey; but, when they had taken their departure, would come and sit by her ladyship and read to her, aware that Mrs. Addington's kind consideration would, at such a time, release her from the promise she had made of attending her part of the way home.

Mrs. Addington of course most readily acceded to her excuse, and applauded its motive; but Lady Walpole would not suffer it to be named a second time, declaring, that if she were instrumental in depriving any one of a promised pleasure, she should feel herself the most unhappy creature breathing; Cordelia, who well understood that this seeming disinterestedness and attention to the feelings of others veiled a positive command, made no effort to disobey, and, to own the truth, though she would willingly have given up her excursion, she was glad to be excused doing so; Lady Walpole was visited and condoled with by all the other ladies, when they were informed of her accident; each tendered the sacrifice of her own pleasure to remain with the invalid, an offer which, it is probable, had in it more of politeness than sincerity, and was declined with every proper expression of gratitude, for none knew better than Lady Walpole how far to appreciate, and in what language to acknowledge civilities of that class.

Cordelia, habituated to search for motives beyond the avowed ones to the greatest part of Lady Walpole's actions, did not obey her injunction of joining the party to Orton-abbey without reflecting on what might be her probable reasons for consulting her feelings with such a parade of consideration; over their guests, she certainly had no control, and to have accepted their offer of remaining, would have seemed an unwarrantable tax upon their politeness, but Cordelia's attendance she might have commanded; and all she could conclude upon was, that it must be a desire to oblige Lady Hootside and her son, though why she wished to do it in this way, seeing she had herself cautioned Cordelia not to give the young earl too much encouragement, was one of the many unfathomables which attended Lady Walpole's actions.

The day was brilliant, and the excursion truly delightful; the rest of the party took leave of the Addingtons about five miles from Holleyfield, and proceeded to Orton-abbey; the house and grounds, both possessing every embellishment which the refined taste and travelled experience of their late owner could bestow, amply recompensed the trouble of walking over them; the plants were beautiful, well arranged, and in excellent order; the stud—so Lord Hootside, who aspired to great skill in horses and horsemanship—pronounced, was very fine; but the admirable collection of paintings was the grand object of attraction to every visitor who either possessed or pretended to taste; those were not, as is seen in many old mansions, dispersed in different apartments all over the house, but their collector, who had expended all the interest and much of the capital of a very splendid fortune, in thus decorating his dwelling, had built a superb gallery for their reception, and here the eye might riot on their varied beauties without ever being weary; might compare and comment on their separate excellence, and decide on the chief merits of not only each artist, but of each individual picture.

Such was Orton-abbey and its appurtenances, both of which merit a more particular description, if other circumstances more immediately connected with this history, did not press powerfully on attention; but the company whom Miss Walpole and her friends met there, though few in number, must not be passed by with equal brevity; just after they entered the house, they saw in one of the drawing-rooms, two ladies, who appeared to be mother and daughter; "Originals, I'll stake my life," whispered Lord Hootside to Miss Walpole, at the same time glancing his eye on the strangers; this

induced Cordelia to examine them with more attention than hitherto, and she could not but be of the earl's opinion: the elder lady was tall, extremely thin, and sallow complexioned, circumstances, which she seemed to be so far from regarding as disadvantageous, that she appeared to have taken all possible pains by her mode of dress to render them more conspicuous; she wore a gown of black sarcenet trimmed with amber colour; the ribbons of her hat were the same, and a long veil of green crape depending from it shaded one side of her face; and either influenced by a false taste, or an ostentatious passion for display, she had added as many ornaments of topaz as her neck, ears, and fingers could be loaded with; her waist, lengthened beyond the fashionable dimensions, was adorned with a clasp of the same; and her whole person was as upright and formal, as one cannot help supposing Pygmalion's ivory bride to have been. Such was the mother; her daughter bore no resemblance to her in person, for so far as the mere outline of form and feature were concerned, she was neither distinguishable for beauty nor for the want of it; her dress was composed of splendid and costly materials, but in other respects it seemed a strange and whimsical medley of the costume of all the nations that do exist, or have existed, in the civilized world; her hair was arranged in the style of some old portraits about the reign of the first Charles; her hat and plumes were decidedly Spanish, under which, as if to make the incongruity more striking, she wore a French cap; to complete her head-piece, she had attached to her hat a long veil, like that with which Penelope is sometimes delineated; this shaded one shoulder, and from the other depended a rich and elegant eastern shawl; the bosom of her gown was intended for Roman, but the effect was spoiled by a Turkish girdle; and her boots, made in imitation of the buskins with which Diana is painted, were marred by a tier of French flounces at the bottom of her dress. Cordelia, who thought she had never beheld an object so gorgeously fine, peeped and peeped again through the long lashes of her beautiful eyes. Those little interchanges of civility, which are unavoidable amongst well-bred strangers, who meet together in such a place, passed on both sides; the elder lady looked very pleasant and good-tempered, but the younger, certainly with very little attention to the party who entered, exclaimed, "Come, mamma, come, will you go back to the picture gallery, I am sure there is nothing here worth looking at." This she spoke in the tone of a spoiled, petted girl, and the lady replied, "We will go, my dear, but I very much want your father to see this beautiful china." "Humph," said the obliging daughter, and tripped away to the picture-gallery; her mother followed, and Lord Hootside, diverted as he always was with whatever seemed eccentric, would neither remain behind, nor suffer the ladies of his party to do so. Cordelia, who had enjoyed few opportunities of seeing pictures, though a passionate admirer of the beautiful art to which they owe their existence, was struck, on entering the gallery, with a mingled sensation of surprise and delight, to which hitherto she had been a stranger; she would have yielded herself entirely to the fascinating novelty, and regarded no object but the paintings, had not the voice of Lord Hootside, exclaiming in his lively way, "What, Harrington! I am glad to see you in England, when did you arrive?" attracted her attention, and turning round, she saw the hand of the earl clasped in that of a very graceful and elegant young man, whose air and dress seemed those of the clerical order; near them stood a gentleman about fifty, short, plump, and habited in an olive-brown coat and a white waistcoat, who, after the pause of a moment, Mr. Harrington mentioned as his uncle Sir Roger Cottingham, and the two ladies who had preceded Cordelia and her friends to the picture gallery, as Lady Cottingham and her

daughter. Lord Hootside introduced his mother, sisters, and the rest of their party in form, and these introductions gave Miss Walpole an opportunity of observing them all to much more advantage than she could otherwise have done; but the beauties by which they were surrounded, all of them works of great, and some of eminent merit, claimed at first too much attention to be rivalled by any other objects: the collection was not very large, but perhaps on that very account made the deeper impression, as not having too great a variety to distract the mind; Cordelia, obeying the impulse of a naturally fine taste, was attracted towards a Virgin and Child by Guido, on which she stood gazing, wrapt in mute wonder and delight; Lady Caroline Mannark, who possessed genuine taste and feeling, though they were, in many instances, obscured by affectation, was rivetted to a fine picture of our country-man, Howard, visiting a foreign prison; the almost seraphic dignity and goodness displayed in the countenance of the philanthropist himself, was contrasted with the bitter miseries of the captives, by whom he was surrounded; in the elder sufferers, that sickness of the soul which seems emphatically to say, "I dare not hope," was finely pourtrayed, and joined to that debility which time, famine, confinement, and sorrow have conspired to bring on; and in the younger, the alternatives of hope and fear, at the same time preserving the preponderance of the former, were expressed with a justness and effect which cannot be described; these, with the grim and savage features of the guards, the dismal grate through which no sun-beam can penetrate, the straw couches of the prisoners, their tattered garments, the poor remains of their scanty meal, or rather the jug and crust left to indicate what it had been, and the colouring so exquisite, that the dismal gleam of the lamp seemed to rather conceal than display all those objects of horror, formed on the whole a most exquisite picture, and wrought so powerfully on the nerves of Lady Caroline, that she could not restrain her tears, and was compelled to have recourse to her essence-box. Lady Hootside, as usual, triumphed in the display of her daughter's refined feelings, which, it must be allowed, on this occasion did her honour: Mr. Harrington, charmed with a taste so congenial to his own, quitted his station before a St. Jerome, copied from Raphael, and advancing to Lady Hootside and Lady Caroline, pointed out, with respectful timid grace, the various beauties of the prison piece; Miss Walpole joined their group, and regarding Harrington with more attention than before, discovered, or fancied she discovered, in his stature, air, and manner, a resemblance to those of Lord Lochcarron.

They were all expressing their admiration, and doing ample justice to the merits of the illusive canvass, when Miss Cottingham, glancing her eye over Miss Walpole's shoulder, and turning on her heel with quick contempt, exclaimed, "Pshaw, it is English!" "And certainly not the less to be valued on that account, dear Ellen," said Harrington. "Humph, I think nothing of English pictures," returned his fair cousin; "now here," she proceeded, running up to a landscape, copied from Salvator Rosa by an Italian artist, "see here, how true to nature; look at the design, the composition, the colouring, the expression, the grouping, the background, how finely blended the light and shade, oh! how true to nature—or rather, it is nature herself; I sadly want papa to purchase it, the price is only five hundred guineas." "Pho, blockhead," said Sir Roger. "It would be a pity it should ever bring one fourth of the money," said Harrington; "if compared with the original, oh! how inferior would it prove; the design is, to be sure, that of Rosa, but the expression is lost, the colouring is a vulgar glare, and the back-ground—believe me,

Ellen," he proceeded in a softened voice, "your own fine taste would, on comparison, instantly retract the eulogium." The compliment to Miss Cottingham's taste arrested the frown which was kindling on her brow; "Is the original of the landscape in England, Sir?" inquired Caroline; "No, madam," he replied, "it was in the gallery of the Louvre, and Miss Cottingham," he added, with a playful smile, "saw it there after the peace of Paris." "You may as well tell me of what I saw the day I was born," said the young lady, with a blush of anger, at the insinuation that she could, at the period of the peace of Paris, be supposed capable of discussing the merits of pictures. Lady Cottingham seized the ensuing pause, the first she could find to say to her husband, "I wish, Sir Roger, you would walk down stairs and look at the beautiful china; it is real old, oriental porcelain, and the most splendid and elegant I ever saw." "Eh?" said the baronet; Lady Cottingham repeated what she had been saying; Sir Roger complied, but muttered by the way, "Pho, nonsense, what signifies going to look at a parcel of old earthenware!"

Lady Hootside accompanied Lady Cottingham, and the younger part of the company followed; Lady Cottingham triumphantly exhibited her favourite curiosities; descanting most learnedly on their several beauties, pointing out in what each separate piece excelled, and classing them with all the precision of an adept in any science; Lady Hootside, either from congeniality of taste or politeness, joined in her admiration; "Pho," said Sir Roger, "I think nothing of these foreign things; our own manufacture beats them hollow; I would not give our last set of Wedgewood, which only cost me twenty pounds, for all the stuff that is here." "Oh, fie! Sir Roger," said Lady Cottingham, with a smile, "I really am ashamed of your want of taste——" "Taste!" interrupted the baronet, "what taste can there be in admiring such ugly things; you talk of pictures, but I should be glad to know what design, what expression, what grace, what perspective you can find here."

Miss Cottingham, who thought this looked rather like a relaxation of the purse strings in favour of her darling objects, eagerly rejoined, "None at all, papa; the groups are hideous, and expression and perspective quite out of the question; but Wedgewood's designs are so classical, and the figures so graceful." "But the English colours never did, and, I imagine, never will rival those of the east," said Lady Cottingham; then holding up a pair of large coloured vases, she said, "I should like to be the purchaser of these if they do not go too high." "I would not give five shillings for them," said her spouse. "Dear Sir Roger!" rejoined his lady, "don't you remember that Mr. Searcher, the antiquarian, gave ten guineas for an old saucer?" "Because he was a fool," responded the baronet; "Well, my dear," said the lady, "but I think you will allow that those have rather more utility in them than an odd saucer." "Eh!" said Sir Roger. "I say," replied Lady Cottingham, in rather a louder key, "that those vases are useful as well as beautiful." Without giving her father time to reply, Miss Cottingham took his arm and requested him to go back to the pictures; he complied, and the rest followed in procession; when there, the young lady said, "Now, papa, if you won't have this Salvator because it is a copy, promise to buy that Guido" pointing to the Virgin and Child, "and then you know you will possess one of the best originals in England." "Eh!" said Sir Roger; Miss Cottingham repeated what she had been saying, but the reply was, "Go, puppy, I shall do no such thing." "If I might venture to recommend a purchase to my uncle," said Harrington, "it should be this Summer's evening by the sea, by Mr. C——; the beautiful clearness of the sky is, I think,

little inferior to Claude Lorrain; the contrasted tints of the water and the sand are very fine; the reflection of the setting sun on the ocean, is superior to any picture I remember to have seen; and the figures on the shore are sketched with the grace of Guido, and coloured with the delicacy of Titian.”

The fine blue eyes of Miss Cottingham glanced in anger on her audacious cousin, for having ventured to praise British genius; and again she expressed her contempt of its efforts; but her father silenced her with “Pho, nonsense, how can you pretend to know; your cousin, who has seen so many pictures, must be the best judge;” then addressing his nephew, he added, “if I buy any, it shall be this, Tom.” Miss Cottingham finding there would probably be a purchase made, became in a moment a convert to English pictures, and found a thousand beauties in the piece which had before escaped her notice; Miss Walpole and Lady Caroline, with whom Cordelia was much more intimate than with Lady Melissa—were passing from picture to picture, admiring each in turn; “If Rembrandt had lived now to paint from Lord Byron’s poems,” said her ladyship, “how well, in my opinion, the picture and the text would have assimilated.” Miss Walpole acquiesced, and their conversation, which was overheard by Harrington, drew him into their party; Miss Cottingham, provoked that any lady but herself should pretend to criticise pictures, said, with rather more of pet than politeness, “Perhaps your ladyship forgets that the piece from which you draw that inference is only a copy of Rembrandt;” with more gentleness than such petulance merited, Lady Caroline replied, that “she was aware it was so, and had often contemplated the original with great pleasure when at Devonshire house.”

Miss Cottingham was blushing a glowing scarlet, on finding that her attempt to expose what she thought the ignorance of Lady Caroline had thus turned on herself—when Sir Roger, who had been some time absent exploring the premises, came bustling into the gallery, exclaiming, “I have seen something which I think is worth the whole of the pictures and china in the house; I beg you will all do me the favour to come and see it;” the pictures were deserted in an instant; Sir Roger led the van, and the rest followed out of the house by a back way, across the shrubbery, through a gate, down a very long walk, which then branched into a contrary direction with so many turnings and windings, curves and angles, that Lord Hootside pronounced they were certainly going to visit some enchanted beauty, as they had already passed a labyrinth which seemed a prototype of Fair Rosamond’s bower; the walk was terminated by tall and branching trees, and, suddenly emerging from their shade, they found themselves in a large yard, peopled by such a multitude of every species of domestic fowls, usually reared in England, that their united notes created a concert, which for loudness of tone and variety of sounds at least, could scarcely have been equalled by all the instruments in the world; and such an augmentation of clamour did the appearance of so many strangers call forth amongst hens with their chirping brood, and geese with their goslings, that all the ladies, except Lady Cottingham and Miss Walpole, flew across the yard and got out of hearing as fast as they could; the last mentioned ladies lingered a moment to admire their varied and beautiful plumage, and their instinctive tenderness for their young; Sir Roger gave his hand to Lady Hootside to assist her in mounting some steps, and they found themselves in a large kitchen-garden, very well cultivated; Lady Cottingham looked about, but seeing no

object, except the herbs and plants usual in such places, she said, "Pray, Sir Roger, where is this great curiosity?" "We are just at the spot," he replied, and led on to the bottom of the garden; here he ushered his party into a large shed stocked with spades, rakes, hoes, rolling-stones, and various other implements of horticulture, in the midst of which, like the dragon guarding the Hesperian fruit, stood a monster more dreadful than any of those which provoked the prowess of the valorous knights, whose achievements were treasured in the capacious memory of Don Quixote, only it neither was nor ever had been animated by the springs of life, but was sculptured in grey marble, and, all circumstances considered, was not ill executed, whether it was ill designed was another question, for certainly it was a complete nondescript, and not the likeness of any thing on earth; the dimensions were large to enormity; the head was that usually painted for a dragon; the jaws were extended to a terrific wideness, for the original use of this beautiful object had been to serve as a mouth-piece for a small fountain; it had besides the wings of a griffin, widely extended, the tail of a dragon, the scales of a crocodile, and feet armed with long talons; "Now," said the baronet, turning exultingly round to his friends, "this is my purchase, if I make any!" a pause of mute astonishment, but certainly not of admiration, pervaded the whole circle, and continued some seconds; it was at length broken by Lady Cottingham, who said, "Dear Sir Roger, can you possibly be in earnest?" "In earnest," reiterated her spouse, "certainly I am; who that pretends to either taste or judgment would permit any thing of such value to slip through their hands." "Dear papa, it is so ugly," said Miss Cottingham; "Ugly, blockhead," cried her father, "I—I appeal to Lady Hootside, whether there is any thing ugly in this piece of workmanship." The countess, thus called upon, though not a very rigid adherent to truth, would not so far violate it as to deny Miss Cottingham's position; she therefore only said, that "the figure was extremely well executed, and if Sir Roger intended it for its original destination, it would look much better than when viewed at its present nearness." The baronet signified that such was his intention, observing, that "he had a very fine piece of water in Cottingham park, from which, at a small expense, a fountain might be made to play in the garden." "Fountains," Miss Cottingham said, "were out of fashion, and at all events, the figure for such a purpose ought to be a mermaid, a dolphin, or something of that description." "And you ought to be a goose," said her father; "Well, my dear," said Lady Cottingham, with a smile, "when it comes to be placed in its proper situation we shall see how it looks, but I must be allowed to observe that I think the figures on the china are rather handsomer than this."

Lord Hootside and Sir Roger both begun to speak together, and both paused in compliment to each other; Lord Hootside resumed, and saying, with a smile, that he had seen a figure very like the one in question, which he would show them, quitted the shed. The baronet then said in reply to his wife, "Now, Lady Cottingham, you talk of china, I should be glad to know from what point of view you can draw a comparison between earthenware and marble statues; you will hardly contend that the exertion of labour requisite to make a teapot, can be put in competition with that which must be exerted to carve an image; then as to durability, the wear of ages will not injure this, but your china may be gone in a moment; besides, there is an air of antiquity about this figure which stamps a high value upon it." "That is exactly the reason why I prize the old china," said her ladyship; "beyond that, the beauty of the colours exceeds any thing of the kind that

art can produce; and if more labour be requisite to form this grotesque image, I think you will grant at least that there is an infinitely greater display of genius in the figures which ornament real oriental porcelain.”

While Lady Cottingham was yet speaking, Lord Hootside returned, followed by the woman whose business it was to show the house, bearing in her hand one of the china vases which her ladyship admired so much; this, when they entered the shed, the earl took from her, and holding it beside the marble monster, exhibited one of the figures portrayed on it, so like the nondescript, that any indifferent spectator would have affirmed the one to be the original, and the other the copy. All present unanimously declared that no likeness could be more striking, and even Lady Cottingham smiled an assent to the general opinion; “Well,” said Sir Roger, “as every body sees so great a resemblance they shall not be separated; we will purchase both on the day of sale, if the price is not altogether out of the way.” Lady Cottingham looked delighted, but her daughter declared “she thought nothing of either of them; the paintings were a thousand times better worth buying.”

Sir Roger at length graciously accorded his promise to bid for the “Summer’s evening by the sea,” and the day being now far advanced, they all prepared to quit Orton-abbey; the Cottinghams were going to dine at the village inn, and drive home in the evening, and Sir Roger very cordially pressed the Hootsides and Miss Walpole to pay an early visit to Cottingham park; this they readily promised to do at a future period, but excused themselves for the present, because they were to set out for Brighton in a few days; this brought on some conversation, the Cottinghams were to make a tour in the autumn, and Harrington guaranteed that Brighton should make a station in it, of course they would all meet there and enjoy each other’s society; but those who form plans would do well to consider whether the execution of them depends on their own free will or on the caprice of others.

CHAPTER. VII

WHEN the party reached Holleyfield, they found Lady Walpole in the drawing-room; to the inquiries of her friends, her ladyship replied, "Oh, I feel no mitigation of pain, but I wish I had braved its utmost terrors, and gone with you to Orton-abbey, for I have been put to ten thousand shames this morning with this ugly sprain—I have had a visit from Lord Dunotter on business; my blundering fellows admitted him, and to send down a message pleading lameness as an excuse for not seeing him, would, I thought, look like an insult, as such an unhappy animosity had so long subsisted between the families, so I was compelled to limp and totter into the room to his lordship, leaning on Dobinson, and stammering out awkward apologies."

The letter of the preceding day instantly rushed to the mind of Cordelia, and with it came a train of suspicions, certainly rather odd ones, but yet so immediately connected together that one seemed naturally to spring out of the other:—that the letter had been addressed to Lady Walpole;—that it had requested permission for the earl to make this morning call;—that Lady Walpole did not wish Cordelia or any of their guests to have a previous knowledge of his lordship's visit; that the drive to Orton-abbey, which had been proposed by herself, was only a scheme to get them all out of the way for a time;—and lastly—though Cordelia felt repugnant to admitting the idea of such gross duplicity—that the sprained foot was but a pretence for her ladyship to remain at home. All these suppositions, whether true or false passed rapidly over Cordelia's mind; but Lady Walpole allowed little time for either her or any one else to form mental conjectures; she chatted with wonderful volubility, and asked a hundred questions about their excursion, and when the Cottinghams were mentioned, gave a short abstract of their family history; for though not personally acquainted with them, she knew them well by report. Sir Roger Cottingham, her ladyship said, had succeeded to the title and estate of his brother, Sir Sedley Cottingham, previous to which he had been an eminent West-India merchant, possessing great wealth, and married to a woman of a very ample fortune, his present lady; Miss Cottingham was their only child, and what is usually termed a spoiled one; young Harrington, the son of Sir Roger's deceased sister, had been left by his parents to the guardianship of his uncle, and educated for the church; the family estate must, at Sir Roger's death, devolve upon him; but Miss Cottingham would be heiress to her father's personal property, and eventually to her mother's ample jointure; Harrington was esteemed a fine young man in every respect, and, it was generally supposed, was intended by his uncle for the husband of his cousin; "a report," added Lady Walpole, addressing Lord Hootside, with a smile, "which I warn your lordship not to be terrified by, as it very probably has no foundation but in the imaginations of its propagators."

Such was the history of the Cottinghams, and that subject dismissed, Lady Walpole did not suffer conversation to flag, but again reverting to the visit of Lord Dunotter, said, that his lordship having a desire to possess a field contiguous to, or rather surrounded by that land which had been adjudged to him by the award of the lawsuit so often mentioned as one ground of the quarrel between the families, had offered to exchange it for another field, leaving her the choice of three, all of them more valuable,

and in the near vicinity of some of her farms: Lady Hootside, Cordelia thought, seemed very attentive to these communications, both this about Lord Dunotter, and that which related to the Cottinghams. Soon after dinner Lady Walpole complained very much about her foot, and was obliged to retire early to bed; the next morning, when Cordelia visited her, she said she was much worse, and no longer opposed a surgeon being sent for; the pain, her ladyship added, was so violent that she had not been able to sleep; but when the part was examined, nothing appeared but a small degree of redness, which, however, Miss Walpole thought might as easily be caused by the tight bandage which Dobinson had wrapped about it as by any affection of the part; but when Mr. Herbert arrived, and had made proper inquiries into the case, he pronounced a very different opinion; this gentleman had a method of peculiar delicacy in the treatment of his patients which seldom failed of success; some raw matter-of-fact practitioners examine only the outward symptoms of their patient's disorders, watch for their prognostics according to the established rules of medical science, and tie the poor sufferers down to a severe and certain regimen; but he pursued a much wiser course; he felt the pulses of all who consulted him in both senses of the expression, kindly consulted their wishes, and paid a proper deference to their motives; and instead of rudely and vulgarly insisting that people shall be better when they choose to be ill, he very considerably assisted them to discover fresh signs of indisposition, and tokens of danger which had, till then, escaped their notice; when therefore he had inspected Lady Walpole's foot, and asked a few preliminary questions, and her ladyship observed that it was extremely strange she should be in such agonizing pain without any swelling, and with so little appearance of inflammation, he replied, "Not at all, my lady; the invisible symptoms are often more acute, more dangerous, more severe, and more obstinate than the visible ones; the tendon is very much injured, and I am afraid it will require time, ease, and proper treatment to restore it." Lady Walpole mused, or appeared to muse, for a few seconds, she then said, addressing Mr. Herbert, "I see, my good Sir, you are about to condemn me to a very severe martyrdom; we had arranged to set off for Brighton the day after to-morrow, is it not, Cordelia?" "Yes, mamma," she replied; her ladyship resumed, "Certainly if I thought that rest and quiet for a few days, or even—" she did not finish the sentence, but added, "would remove the ill-effects of this unfortunate wrong step, I would, however reluctantly"—again her ladyship broke off, and again resumed, "but I would rather sacrifice myself in any way than disappoint my dear Lady Hootside;—my love," (to Cordelia) "pray request her ladyship will do me the favour to step hither, that she may hear Mr. Herbert's opinion." Cordelia obeyed, and Lady Walpole, left only with the doctor and Dobinson, said, addressing the former, with a very gracious smile, laying her hand on his arm, and speaking in a tone which implied confidence, "Now, my good friend, I am sure you will give me credit for the highest desire to oblige every one, but the fact is, if I go to Brighton, I shall be wearied with company, racketed to death, and have no proper advice, for I cannot rely on the skill of a Brighton practitioner as I can on yours."

Doctor Herbert paid most grateful acknowledgements for her ladyship's favourable opinion, and took his cue like a man of sense. When the countess and Cordelia entered; "My beloved friend," exclaimed Lady Walpole, "come and advise me what to do; Doctor Herbert is of opinion that I cannot travel with safety to myself; but I think if I

am disappointed of the pleasure I had promised myself of accompanying you to Brighton, my vexation will be more likely to bring on a fever than the pain of my foot; I wish you would try your eloquence, which is always so powerful, to persuade him to take off his interdict.” Lady Hootside listened attentively, and replied, with seeming kindness and playfulness, but (so Cordelia thought) with real satire, “Now, my dearest Lady Walpole, you have indeed assigned me a cruel task, for if a gentleman of doctor Herbert’s skill has pronounced it unsafe for you to travel, should I display either my affection for you, or my deference for his judgment, by selfishly asking him to sanction what may prove so very hurtful.” Scarcely suffering her ladyship to finish the sentence, and without waiting to see whether she intended to add more, Mr. Herbert said, “Certainly, my lady, I have no hesitation in saying that it would be attended with the highest danger;—it might bring on an inflammation, or terminate in a confirmed constriction of the sinews;—I remember a case in which the patient—” “My good Sir,” interrupted Lady Hootside, “what a hecatomb of horrors are you raising up! I beg I may not be suspected of intending to dispute your skill, but I have the vanity to think, that I also possess a little in cases *like the present*, and shall therefore take upon me to prescribe that Lady Walpole remain *at home*, as the best means of preventing constriction, *restriction*, inflammation, *mortification*—and all those sorts of things.”

The tone in which the countess spoke was pointedly sarcastic; but Lady Walpole, far from even appearing to notice it, warmly thanked her ladyship for her kind prescription, which, aided by such applications as doctor Herbert should judge proper, would, she doubted not, remove the excruciating pain she laboured under, and enable her to follow her dear friends to Brighton; “and,” she added, “as I trust your ladyship will allow my daughter the honour of accompanying you, for I know she cannot be separated from Lady Caroline, I shall have *every* inducement to be with you as soon as possible.”

This well-timed turn seemed to have a very tranquillizing effect on Lady Hootside, who said every thing that could evince how sensible she was of the precious charge committed to her care. Cordelia, though like other young people, impatient for the novelty of a pleasurable excursion, mildly said, that “Though truly grateful for the flattering kindness with which Lady Hootside had promised to protect her, she could not think of leaving Lady Walpole in her present situation, but would, if she pleased, remain with her until they could travel to Brighton together.” “You are very good, my love,” said Lady Walpole, “but I can do very well with Dobinson, and I trust, when you consider a little, you will see the propriety and advantage of accepting Lady Hootside’s kind offer.” She then hastily changed the discourse to another subject; Mr. Herbert, after giving some general directions to Dobinson, took leave; Lady Hootside retired, and Cordelia sat reading by Lady Walpole; soon after a card was brought in from Lord Dunotter, which her ladyship replied to in her own hand; she made no communication of its contents, but seemed highly pleased, and said, “Lord Dunotter is an amiable, excellent man, I find him all you told me, Cordelia; you did him justice in your description of your interview with him at the steward’s, and I can assure you he is highly pleased with you;” she then noticed the striking resemblance between the earl and his son, and frankly inquired what opinion Miss Walpole had formed of the latter on the evening of their short journey from St. Alban’s to Holleyfield. Cordelia said, “that she had been so shocked that evening by

the dreadful catastrophe of the robber, that she was unable to form any opinion;" but while she spoke there was a glow on her cheek, and a tremor in her voice, which were neither of them lessened by the sly, playful, scrutinizing glance of Lady Walpole. "Now, Delia," she said with a smile, "I doubt you are inclined to fib a little; don't you remember overhearing Mrs. Delmore telling me a long nonsensical story about a supposed attachment between Lord Lochcarron and that girl, the steward's niece?" Cordelia scorned a falsehood, and though her face glowed a vivid crimson, she replied, "Yes, mamma, I do recollect hearing Mrs. Delmore tell you something to that effect." "Now you are a candid good girl," said her ladyship, taking her hand, "and I am going to prove myself your best, and your very best friend; my observation at that time enabled me to see that you had formed a favourable opinion of Lord Lochcarron;—I do not mean to insinuate that you had fallen in love with him—no well-educated young person now cherishes such vulgar gothic notions—they are only solicitous to marry above their rank and expectations—when they do otherwise, they not only lessen their own respectability, but give cause to their unfortunate offspring through life to deplore a union which has called them into an existence replete with difficulties and degradations; the chief, and indeed only care of a young lady, when she is about to settle in life, must be to rise, and not sink; all other considerations are of trifling importance; some silly romantic girls picture to themselves the three epochs of love, courtship, and marriage, as naturally following each other as morning, noon, and night; were I as new to life as I have been I should expect no such thing; but, contented with the choice which my parents, in their wisdom and care for my future aggrandizement, had made, should conform to it whatever it should be in other respects; for instance, I might be the selected bride of a man who had formed an attachment, perhaps connexion, which his friends did not approve; some ladies under such circumstances might choose to pout and wear the willow, I should do no such thing; but satisfied that I was fulfilling my purport in life, which is to perform a part with spirit and *eclat*, should glory in being made the instrument of saving the heir of a family from degrading himself, and injuring his posterity. And now, Delia," she added, speaking with more animation, yet in a lower tone of voice, "would it not be at once a most meritorious action to prevent Lord Lochcarron from degrading himself, by marrying the niece of his father's steward; and a stroke of high policy, a contingency to be selected from a thousand, to make you Lady Lochcarron, and to unite the noble estates of Ravenpark and Holleyfield."

Any attempt to convey an idea of the feelings of Miss Walpole at this moment, would only be waste of words: a thrill of pleasure so sweet, so exquisite, that no anterior feeling had ever been like it, pervaded her frame; but there was also a sensation so sadly painful, that the conflict between such opposite passions was almost too much for her gentle nature to support; to be the wife of Lord Lochcarron appeared a blessing of such magnitude, that the parade of high rank, the union of estates, and such earth-born matters, seemed in comparison but as the feeble twinkling of the smallest stars to the glorious rays of the sun; but at what a price was this inestimable happiness to be purchased, and how dreadfully hazardous was the part allotted her to act! it was to be inferred from the words of Lady Walpole, that Lord Lochcarron had positively engaged himself to Miss Borham; and Cordelia—strange as the metaphor seemed—could contemplate herself in no other light than that of a sword destined to sever this engagement, however binding and sacred

it might be; and if she felt herself that such would be her position, in what a light would Lord Lochcarron regard her? could it be supposed, that he would yield that passive obedience to paternal authority, which the words of Lady Walpole seemed to imply he would be expected to do? the train of ideas became painful, and the effect so powerful, that it was apparent in her trembling and agitated frame. "My dear girl, what is the matter," said Lady Walpole; "do get the better of this leaven of your country education; you know I am only talking of possibilities; but Lord Lochcarron is coming home soon, and—" she smiled in adding, "you don't know what may happen, when he sees you, Delia." "You know I shall be at Brighton, Madam," she replied, struggling for at least the appearance of composure. "Pooh, my dear," said her ladyship; and then added, "I hope you obeyed my injunction, and have never admitted any attention from Hootside, which might look like sanctioning his addresses?" "Certainly not," Cordelia replied. "Then what necessity exists for tacking yourself to their retinue?" resumed Lady Walpole; "frame your excuse for remaining with me from the message which I shall send down after dinner, for the earlier, and the more positively, you make your refusal, the better." Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say, that if at least one fourth of the errors which gloom the path of life were traced to the source, and laid bare to the root, they would be found to originate with those who, possessing influences over the minds and authority over the actions of others, employ that influence and authority to promote purposes and ends of their own: Lady Walpole was one of the most prominent of this class, ever ready with sophistical arguments and a winning persuasive manner; and Cordelia, it must be confessed, though too wise for a dupe, and too clear-sighted to fall into her ladyship's snares, was but too ready to precipitate herself thither headlong: in youth, the passions are strong and the judgment weak; the vanity of eighteen mustered again in full force, and was not very likely to reject the glittering and fascinating baits held out to its contemplation of an impending coronet; numerous attendants; dashing equipages; pleasure the most exquisite and alluring; all that is splendid and expensive in jewels and dress; and all that adulating homage which is so generally, nay, universally paid at the fourfold shrine of youth, beauty, rank, and wealth; nor could the susceptibility of that early period assume enough of the stoic to say, "You shall not endeavour to make me the wife of one of the most elegant, graceful, and accomplished young noblemen of the age;" ah, no; poor Cordelia had no such philosophy, no such self-denying heroism; few young people want arguments—such as they are—to persuade themselves, and endeavour to convince others, that what they like to do, comes within the lines of some duty, either personal or relative; submission to the advice, the judgment, and the direction of her mother-in-law, Miss Walpole argued, was a duty, and a duty doubly enjoined her by the will of her father, which constituted Lady Walpole her guardian, and the counsel of Mrs. Emerson, before she left Holleyfield; and in a moment Cordelia became convinced that Lord Lochcarron ought also to submit to the authority of his father, and that it would be in the highest degree laudable and meritorious to prevent him from degrading himself by a union with a proud low-born girl like Miss Borham, and direct his choice to — whom she thought was best known to herself. But Cordelia did Miss Borham injustice, at least in the latter instance, her descent being similar to that of her own mother, for Mr. Borham was a very respectable, though not richly beneficed clergyman; and whatever might be the qualities of her mind, so far as those of person and accomplishments were concerned, she would have done credit to any station. Yet though thus inclined to play

the jesuit, there were points which Cordelia could not prevent pressing strongly upon reflection; that Lady Walpole was taking all this pain, and carrying on this intercourse with Lord Dunotter, solely in the hope and with the endeavour to effect a union between her daughter-in-law and Lord Lochcarron, required a believing faculty on such subjects beyond what the daughter-in-law possessed; it remained then to look for it elsewhere, and what seemed so likely as that Lord Dunotter was full as ready to seek an alliance for himself with the widow of Sir Charles Walpole, the present possessor of his wealth, as one for his son with the daughter and heiress of it in reversion; but when such an idea had first struck his lordship, and whether Lady Walpole had received any intimation of it before the preceding day, were questions which she could not determine; those who dispassionately and uninterestedly revolved the subject, would probably have expected that a sort of sympathy, resembling animal magnetism, had, much at the same time, pervaded the earl and Lady Walpole; the rank of the former and the fortune of the latter acting as attractions; such conclusion was certainly warranted to be drawn from many points of Lady Walpole's conduct, and Cordelia did in part draw it; but her youthful mind was as yet only half opened, and as occasional flashes of sunshine illumine the sky on a cloudy day, so did casual gleams of penetration and discernment discover to her, though but partially, the plans and designs of others. Yet though she seemed now in possession of a key to the motives of Lady Walpole, for regarding her with such looks of scrutiny, when Mrs. Delmore made Lord Lochcarron the subject of conversation, and for making such pointed inquiries about Miss Borham, after Cordelia had been an hour or two in her company on the day of the thunder, there was one circumstance which no faculty of discernment or discriminating, no stretch of thought within the compass of her powers could aid her in accounting for—it was the studied assiduity, politeness, almost tenderness of manner which Lord Dunotter displayed towards Miss Borham, and the watchful solicitous attention with which on her part it was repaid; this point she revolved over and over in her own mind in vain; and when convinced of her inability to unravel what seemed so mysterious, she had recourse to Lady Walpole; much to her surprise her ladyship, far from viewing the subject in the same puzzling light which she did, only laughed and exclaimed, "My dear girl, will you never know life? would you have a man of Lord Dunotter's experience and knowledge of the world, at once assist the schemes of his adversaries and betray his own plans, to counteract them by seeming aware of their designs; no, no; trust me, my dear, the great secret of life is to foil every one with his own weapons, and to conceal your dislikes beneath a veil of kindness."

Perhaps Lady Walpole, with all her penetration and self-confiding infallibility might be somewhat mistaken; be that as it may, the very nature and inmost soul of Cordelia recoiled from such duplicity; but the words of Lady Walpole, "It is a contingency to be selected from a thousand to make you Lady Lochcarron," operated like a spell of magic, all wish of going to Brighton, all desire for the society of the Hootsides, faded and vanished away, and she resolved to obey in every point the injunctions she had received. Lady Walpole was too ill to join the dinner party, and when in the course of the evening Lady Hootside sent up a message of inquiry, the answer was, that her ladyship had retired to bed in increased pain and fever; this was the signal for Cordelia, and though her face and neck were covered with the deepest scarlet, and her voice became tremulous and faltering through consciousness of the part she was acting, she said, that

“Though her own disappointment must be proportioned to the honour and pleasure she should have enjoyed in attending Lady Hootside to Brighton, she yet could not reconcile her sense of duty to leaving Lady Walpole while she continued so ill, and begged to solicit from the countess’s goodness permission to remain at Holleyfield.”

Cordelia might very possibly felicitate herself on the adroitness with which she had performed her part; but such a novice, both in years and duplicity, could not for a moment impose on Lady Hootside; well could her ladyship translate the burning blush and tremor of voice, which are the emanations of a violated, but yet unhackneyed conscience; with a strong expression of sneering irony, in face and speech, she replied, “I commend your dutiful attention, my dear; I dare say you must be very reluctant to leave Lady Walpole, for you improve so rapidly under her tuition, that you will soon be a paragon of young ladies in the points of *candour*, *truth*, and *sincerity*. Since we cannot have the *pleasure* of Miss Walpole’s company,” she added, addressing her daughters, “the sooner we set off for Brighton the better, for our noisy vicinity can *now* only disturb Lady Walpole.”

A *vulgarly-modish* lady would, in Cordelia’s case, have retorted Lady Hootside’s bitter sarcasms—and repaid them in kind, but this her polished manners, and the native sweetness of her disposition alike forbade; neither could she, as a woman of the world would have done, affect not to understand her satire; but, taking her compliments in a literal sense, endeavour to conciliate her with flattery; Cordelia only strove to appear unembarrassed, and when Lady Hootside announced her intention of leaving Holleyfield the next morning, pressed her ladyship and the young ladies to remain, at least till the time originally fixed for their departure, but the invitation was declined with such a cold ceremonious sort of politeness, as looked more like a mock than a reality. “Bless me,” said Lady Melissa, awaking from one of her trances, “what are you all talking about? I thought Lady and Miss Walpole were to accompany us to Brighton.” It had now to be explained to her ladyship, as if she had never heard it before, that Lady Walpole was ill; and while this was doing, Lord Hootside came in; when he understood what was going forward, he told his mother in his blunt way that she *should not* leave Holleyfield for a day or two; and Cordelia, that she *must* then go with them as already fixed; but he wasted his rhetoric in vain, and though he descended from vociferation to expostulation, then urged, begged, and at last entreated, he could obtain no concession from the countess; and as to Cordelia, bound down by the magic spell contained in the words, “Lord Lochcarron is coming home, and you don’t know what may happen,” she was most dutifully determined to remain with Lady Walpole. Before she retired for the night, she went to her ladyship’s apartment, and related all that had passed; “Never mind,” she said, “let them go; Lady Hootside only wants to draw you in to marry her son; but I hope you will convince both them and the world, that your taste and sense are better qualified to discriminate between a booby who is only fit society for his own grooms, and one of the most elegant, fashionable, distinguished young noblemen in the kingdom; and between a title of yesterday, and one which for three hundred years has descended in the male line without taint, forfeiture, or blemish on its representatives.”

Lady Walpole's speech had all the good effect intended on Cordelia; but her ladyship, like a skilful lawyer, produced all the arguments *for*, and none *against* the cause she was pleading; what she said concerning their respective titles was strictly true, that of Dunotter—a Scotch peerage—was very ancient, and that of Hootside, the creation of a few years back; neither could it be controverted that Lord Lochcarron was greatly superior to the young earl in every accomplishment, both natural and acquired; but title, the sound of a name, and those attainments whose chief end is to embellish life, cannot be in their nature, and therefore ought not to be looked up to as the foundations on which the fabric of married and domestic happiness must be reared: of much more importance are the moral qualities and pecuniary circumstances of the parties, and those Lady Walpole had passed over in silence; but the fact is, nature had sown good seed in the breasts of both the young noblemen, and it remained for time and circumstances to call it into blossom, or crush it for ever in each: as to fortune, the balance was decidedly in favour of Lord Hootside; his estate was clear and unincumbered, and his funded property, in consequence of a long, though, perhaps, not very well managed, minority, pretty considerable; while the estate of Lord Dunotter (as the reader will recollect was hinted by the master of the inn, where Mrs. Emerson and Cordelia first became acquainted with Lord Lochcarron) had been injured by its present proprietor as deeply as the law would permit: as to personal fortune, very little remained; but his lordship had of late years supplied the deficiency by dedicating very splendid talents to the service of the public—at least, of the ministry—if that be always synonymous; he had been much on the continent, had seen man—human nature—society—life—in all their various modes, and had gleaned much knowledge of the world; but it is to be feared that in his application of that knowledge, he reversed the prayer of Desdemona,

“Heaven me such usage send,

“Not to pick bad from bad; but, by bad, mend!”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE bulletin of the following morning announced no change for the better in Lady Walpole; but the countess saw plainly that a very great one for the worse had taken place in her ladyship's mind, as it respected a marriage between Cordelia and Lord Hootside; this she had been very anxious for, not because any immediate advantage could be derived from it, but in the shrewd though secret hope and belief that Sir Charles Walpole's will might be litigated, and the dowager reduced to the state of the jackdaw in the fable. Lady Walpole, when she seemed to favour (and perhaps did so in reality) the addresses of Lord Hootside to Cordelia, had no suspicion that her dear friend Lady Hootside harboured any such counterplot against her; but it may serve to exemplify an observation frequently made, that there is no real friendship amongst people destitute of principle.

When the countess presented herself in Lady Walpole's apartment to pay the parting adieu, the latter, with an outstretched hand, and a countenance of the most kind and anxious solicitude, inquired the reason of this sudden removal; Lady Hootside, not to be cajoled, replied, with cold sardonic expression of voice and countenance, in nearly the same words she had used to Cordelia; while Lord Hootside, never much in the practice of concealing his feelings, and taught by his mother to regard Lady Walpole as the intriguing spirit, who had by her machinations steered the heart of her daughter against a union with him, could scarcely command himself so as to pay the compliments of departure with some degree of politeness. Lady Walpole saw all this, and was not backward to make her advantage of it; with studied kindness, and gentleness of voice, manner, and aspect, she again expressed her regret at losing their society; but forbore to give the most distant hint of joining them at Brighton, and thus the engagement was dissolved. The carriages were prepared, the baggage deposited, and at length the party drove off, to the great relief of Lady Walpole, and certainly not much to the regret of Cordelia, who with the light spirits of youth, and with renovated delight, returned to numerous little employments and amusements which had been interrupted by the long residence of the Hootsides at Holleyfield.

The course of the morning brought another note from Lord Dunotter, couched in terms of such respectful tenderness, that Cordelia, enlightened as she was, could no longer doubt that his lordship was indeed an ardent candidate for the favour of her good mother; and the various hints which her ladyship dropped in conversation with her daughter, left no room to apprehend he would prove an unsuccessful one. When Mr. Herbert made his visit, asked a few questions of his patient, and examined the affected part, he expressed himself happy to pronounce that the symptoms were greatly altered for the better, and that Lady Walpole's recovery would now be rapid; the event verified the doctor's prognostic, and established his skill and judgment beyond all controversy, for by the time dinner was ended, her ladyship was able to walk across the room; to rise to breakfast the next morning; in a few hours more to descend to the drawing-room; and in the evening to receive a visit from Lord Dunotter, who, during the hour he sat with the two ladies, biassed them both in his favour more than can be described; indeed, he

possessed every requisite and advantage for doing so; the attentions (not those of love, but such as accord with the present state of polished society) which women of sense receive from men of rank and talent are always acceptable, and the more pointed the more pleasing; but where such attentions can be supposed, those of a lover and future father, needs it be said how doubly they charm? There did not remain a country in Europe which Lord Dunotter had not visited, and that with every possible chance of improvement; to constitute a well informed and informing traveller (that is, one who is himself acquainted with his subject, and possesses the talent of making it known to others) many things are requisite, but three absolutely necessary—first, a mind prepared by habits of observation, and a due union of natural and acquired talents to select and bring home the prevailing excellencies he meets with; secondly, such introductions as may best assist his researches in whatever may be his objects, whether politics, antiquities, arts, sciences, manners, or customs; and thirdly, such an arrangement of ideas, flow of language, and grace of delivery, as may convey this knowledge to others in a pleasing and perspicuous form; in all these qualifications Lord Dunotter pre-eminently excelled; he had, if the mode of expression may be permitted, from infancy drank information of every kind at the fountain head, and on such points as he selected to amuse his present auditors—the architecture, sculpture, paintings, music, and dramatic representations of the continent, he spoke with such grace of language and force of description, that it was difficult to say from which source they derived most pleasure; but to the narrator himself, all such topics had long since failed to impart any; his eyes and ears from being so frequently gratified with all that the world contains to charm those two senses, had become so exquisitely, so fastidiously refined, that only superiority of the very first order in any of the fine arts could rouse his feelings to the slightest degree of interest. Though ambition was the only passion which he could now be said to cherish, and with him it was unbounded, he yet had many other faults which time had hardened into habits; over these, however, he wore a veil, and though Lady Walpole could not be altogether a stranger to his general character, any more than to the embarrassed state of his fortune, she regarded neither point, thinking, no doubt, that a coronet counterbalanced both.

Matters went on in this way for nearly a fortnight; Lord Dunotter was a constant visitor at Holleyfield, where he was received as the declared lover of Lady Walpole; he escorted the ladies in their drives and little excursions in the park and environs, and joined in their amusements within doors; and as few persons of rank or opulence were then at their seats in the vicinity, they were spared the task of receiving and paying many visits, a circumstance not at all regretted by Lord Dunotter, to whom joining in the dinner or evening parties of the neighbourhood, was a mode of passing time extremely irksome, disagreeable, and unpleasant: this was his first residence at Ravenpark for ten years, the whole of which time he had been a widower, and in that period his habits, both moral and physical, were greatly changed; he had lost all relish for field sports; his constitution could no longer endure the fatigue attendant on them; he could gain nothing by conversing with his neighbours; their best modes of acquiring knowledge could only be called gleaning; but he had reaped its full harvest from the first professors of each science in Europe: neither was he at all ambitious to impart this rich treasure; he had no desire to figure as a *clever man*, or a man of letters; his claims to consequence were founded on a

much more wide and glittering basis; politics, on which all were eager to hear him speak, was exactly the topic he chose to shun, aware how eagerly all would catch the slightest matter of state affairs that might fall from his lips, and in retailing it, say, with triumph, "I had my information from Lord Dunotter." He had little inclination to drone over cards or billiards for five guineas a game, accustomed as he was to parties, where the stake was hundreds—perhaps thousands; their convivial meetings were still less to his taste; he was no great votary of Bacchus, and only the exhilarating influence of champagne could tempt him to sacrifice at his shrine; indeed he had now little relish for any pursuit unless urged by a powerful stimulant, and one of the strongest that he found in the vicinity of Ravenpark, was the fortune of Lady Walpole; in her good graces the earl had made all the progress he could desire, when Lord Lochcarron arrived at Ravenpark, in consequence of a summons from his father, who received him with much seeming cordiality and affection; indeed the earl had never been a stern parent, and might be supposed much attached to this only child, whose graces of person and endowments of mind shed more lustre on his rank in life, than he had received from it.

Lord Dunotter made no immediate communication of the motive which had induced him to send for his son; they dined together in his lordship's library; when the attendants had retired, the young nobleman said, with an air half-sportive, half-embarrassed, "I had a rather singular piece of news obtruded upon me this morning at St. Alban's, my lord." "And from the word *obtruded*, I should suppose not more singular than unwelcome," returned Lord Dunotter, smiling; "pray what was it?" Lord Lochcarron replied, "I did not mean that the word *obtruded* should refer to the intelligence itself, but to the manner of the person from whom I received it; the matter," he added, smiling, "cannot be otherwise than pleasing to me, since, if true, it assures me that I shall soon be honoured with a new tie of relationship." "In consequence of my marriage with Lady Walpole, I suppose!" said the earl, with the same expression of countenance; Lord Lochcarron acknowledged that such was the tenor of his information; and his father resumed, "That is an event which may probably happen; but there is another relative connexion to which I look forwards, at least with hope—" the earl paused; his son's eye glanced inquiry, and he resumed, with a look of insinuating tenderness, "it is that which shall give to you a wife—to me a daughter!"

The cheek of the young nobleman flushed a crimson hue, and his pulses seemed to beat with renovated celerity; he was about to say something with animation, then checked himself, and with a smile, which did not appear genuine, said, "There is little probability of my marrying, my lord;" and then in a half-suppressed tone, and with averted eyes, added, "would your lordship wish it?" "Unquestionably," said Lord Dunotter; "I am an advocate for early marriages, all circumstances duly considered." Lord Lochcarron looked anxiously in the face of his parent; "Oh, my father," he said, "would you but sanction—" "I would sanction whatever could conduce to your happiness, and your interest, Alexander," said the earl, gravely; "indeed," he added, "our interest and happiness are so closely bound together in this life, that they cannot well be separated." The countenance of Lord Lochcarron fell beneath what he deemed the cold-blooded, apathetic maxim of a man of the world; but resolved that a question of words should not lead him from a point he was approaching, he said, "In marriage, perhaps, my

lord, an exception may be found to the general rule; in a union for life surely interest ought to be the last thing thought of." "My dear Lochcarron," said the earl, "endeavour to think justly and rationally; leave romance to girls and visionaries; on what point can a regard to interest be so essentially requisite as in forming a connexion, on which not only the fulfilment of our own best hopes in life, but the welfare of our descendants must so greatly depend? if affluence and its attendant respectability and comforts, contrasted with poverty and its consequent contempt and deprivations, be matters not thought of, I should be glad to know what are." Lord Lochcarron half smiled, and repeated,

"Before true passion all those views remove,
"Fame, wealth, and honour! what are you to love?"

"It was the saying of a very great politician," observed Lord Dunotter, "that he cared not who framed the laws of a nation provided he were allowed to write its ballads; I have sometimes been inclined to doubt whether the popular poetry of any country possesses the influence which the cardinal seems to have ascribed to it; but I must cease to be sceptical when I find erroneous opinions justified by theorems in rhyme." Lochcarron looked rather abashed, but, recovering himself, he said in a firm yet respectful tone, "If I placed my chief good in living for the world and posterity, I should seek an alliance with rank and fortune; but preferring as I do the shades of life, independence of conduct, and peace of mind, I only wish in the woman I marry, such qualities and endowments as may accord with my limited plans and hopes." "I have no hesitation, Alexander," said the earl, "in telling you, positively and decidedly, that you have imbibed a very erroneous way of thinking, but it is not a singular one; I have known very many men in different countries who thought as you do, form similar plans, and acted upon them, and the consequence invariably was, that at forty, they awoke from their dream of folly, asked themselves what they had been doing through life, and finding how wretchedly they had mispent their time, fretted down the remainder of existence in vain regrets after what was irretrievable: picture to yourself a nobleman droning away the best of his years at his country seat; botanizing or breeding sheep; hunting or playing with his wife's lap-dog; for it matters not which, mankind will be equally benefitted by his labours. I imagine we may address such a man as queen Elizabeth did her god-son, Sir John Harrington, when exhibiting some of his poetical effusions;" 'When creeping Time shall knock at thy gate, thou wilt have done with these fooleries.' Now contrast this with a man of rank, who has devoted his talents to politics, the only proper study for a nobleman; see him at the age I have mentioned, wise in the cabinet, irresistible in eloquence, profound in negotiation, the admiration of both his own country and of Europe, the friend and adviser of his sovereign, the dread and envy of his enemies, and possessing the certainty that his name shall descend with glory to the remotest posterity; this is what the representative of a great family ought to be, and such, and such only, do I wish to see my son."

Though there was unquestionably some sophistry in all this, there was yet so much truth that Lord Lochcarron could not attempt to controvert it; he only said, that "he thought a nobleman, though living in retirement at his country seat, might be a truly useful character both as a landlord and a magistrate." "He *may* be, but the odds are great

that ever he *will* be so," returned the earl; "a constant residence in the country rusts the soul, petrifies the mind, and unfits the whole man for any high and noble purpose; however," he added, laying his hand on his son's arm, and again looking with insinuating earnestness, "I will give your arguments their full scope; but you know, my dear Lochcarron, how heavy my expenses have been on my embassy, and how ill they have been repaid me; I cannot regret what I have done, it was to serve my country, and what has been lost in wealth is gained in honour; however we shall feel the effects of it for some time; now," and he spoke with animation, "by marrying Lady Walpole, I shall secure ample wealth, at least if her ladyship be the survivor, which in the course of nature she most probably will; and, Alexander, it only remains for you, by becoming the husband of Miss Walpole, to unite the noble estates of Holleyfield and Southwood to Ravenpark, and be the greatest landholder in the country."

The countenance of Lord Lochcarron betrayed the greatest surprise and agitation; "Marry Miss Walpole!" he repeated, "no, never!" then rising from his chair, and walking about with increased emotion, he said, "Oh, my lord, you know my heart is already attached."

The face of the earl flushed with deep anger, but he struggled for composure, while he replied, "Alexander, this is neither a moment nor a subject for trifling; you have perhaps been too little accustomed to hear the command of a parent, but you cannot have forgot that before you went to Scotland, I positively interdicted all future mention of your disgraceful attachment; Heavens! you certainly have not now to learn that one of the first obligations a nobleman is under, is to support his family dignity, and, if possible, to raise his family consequence, and I think you will scarcely assert that an alliance with your father's servants will have a tendency to do either." In a gentle voice, Lord Lochcarron ventured to say, "Mr. Pringle stands high in your lordship's opinion; and Miss Borham's beauty and accomplishments I have never seen equalled in the first circles." "She is an artful gipsey," exclaimed the earl; "I have now seen enough of her to know that; she would draw you, or any other man of rank, in to marry her if she could, and as to Pringle, he is an infernal scoundrel!"

The young nobleman looked astonished, for this was a mode of expressing himself very unusual with Lord Dunotter, who resumed, "Your childish folly, Alexander, for it deserves no better epithet, has drawn from me what I intended, for the present at least, to have concealed—Pringle has cheated me of upwards of six thousand pounds." When Lord Lochcarron heard these words, he was so overwhelmed with shame and confusion, that he was ready to sink to the ground; not for a moment could he doubt their truth, for though too well aware that his father, courtier like, would not have hesitated on some occasions to violate the strict rules of veracity, he well knew that he would not for any earthly consideration have uttered a word which should falsely impeach the honesty or integrity of any man breathing; but had any shadow of disbelief remained, it must quickly have been dissipated, for Lord Dunotter, opening his escrutoire, took out a parcel of papers, and spreading them before his son, entered into such details as established the fact of Pringle's guilt beyond all possibility of doubt.

By the time these were inspected it was nearly dark; Lord Dunotter perceived that his son was much agitated, and kindly taking his hand, said, "I am going to write letters, my dear boy; retire to your own apartment and compose your spirits, and come back to me in an hour; I have more to say on these subjects; at all events I cannot bear to think you should mar the good fortune which smiles on you; Miss Walpole is a fine girl in every sense of the expression, and—I ought not to blab—but," he added in a playful whisper, "the gallant knight who protected a fair damsel on her road from St. Albans will not need to sue in vain."

There is nothing so potent as truth—except vanity, and poor Lochcarron was thus assailed by these two powerful principles at once; that the hint his father had just given, originated in something which had fallen from Lady Walpole he could not doubt; and few young men of three-and-twenty would be stoical enough to hear they were an object of interest to a beautiful girl, without feeling some thrill of the heart; and as for truth, he felt a full conviction of its predominance in nearly the whole of what his father had been saying; when in the solitude of his own room, he revolved it over in his mind; not but that there were parts of the conversation where he could plainly see the earl's glossing, particularly when he hinted that the impaired state of his fortune was to be attributed to the expenses attendant on the distinguished situation he had held abroad, when Lochcarron knew too well that the true cause might be found in his taste for parade, and for pleasures which could not be termed innocent; though like a dutiful son, he drew a veil over the faults of a parent, and had not replied when the earl mentioned the subject. But Lord Dunotter had a yet more powerful auxiliary than any of those to plead the point which he wished to carry with his son, and that was *shame*; when he considered and reconsidered the proofs he had seen of Pringle's guilt, he blushed and shuddered at the thought of forming any connexion with the family of such a man, and in this frame of mind, he returned to his father at the appointed time; the earl, as might be expected, renewed the subject, and skilled in all the workings of the human mind, easily perceived and followed up the advantage he had gained; he painted with all the force of his commanding eloquence the various ways in which they would be benefitted by the double union he was labouring so arduously to bring about; telling his son that Cordelia, independent of all she would inherit on the death of Lady Walpole, had great expectancies from an old and rich aunt of her mother's; and working on the filial affection of Lochcarron by hinting, that should he slight Miss Walpole, her mother-in-law would very probably retract the sort of tacit consent she had already given to become Lady Dunotter; in short he made so many appeals to the duty, the reason, the pride, and the feelings of his son, that he wrung from him a promise to pay a visit at Holleyfield the following day—and yet more, to be guided in this most important step in life entirely by the advice of his parent, a promise with which the earl who knew, or at least believed he knew, the firmness of his son's principles was entirely satisfied. Lord Lochcarron had been deeply enamoured of Miss Borham from the time of their first acquaintance, which was now about eight or nine months; he took little pains to conceal his admiration from either its object or any one else; but he had early covenanted with himself never to marry without the consent of his father; he perhaps believed their attachment mutual, but we sometimes deceive ourselves.

When the young nobleman reflected next morning upon all that had passed the preceding evening, he felt dissatisfied with himself, and repentant of the promise he had given Lord Dunotter; all that was said concerning the pursuits and modes of life of men of rank and fortune ceased to make any impression; on that point he returned to his old maxims about patriotism and the corruption of courts, and became once more a Cincinnatus in idea; as to the hint his father had given, that his addresses would be acceptable to Cordelia, he could only suppose that it originated in some oblique intimation from Lady Walpole, and her character for art and finesse stood so well established in the neighbourhood, that he regarded it in no other light than as one of her manoeuvres to carry a point: he could find no sophistry with which to elude the conviction of Pringle's breach of trust, but that, he mentally thought, could not attach to the niece of his deceased wife. What Lord Dunotter had said about Miss Borham's levity and duplicity, had given him a severe pang at the time, because it accorded but too well with that secret opinion of her character which not all the mists of passion could prevent his own excellent judgment from whispering to his soul; in short, the romantic attachment which he had so long cherished, made him see every thing through a distorted medium, and in this frame of mind he was preparing to accompany his father to Holleyfield, when an express arrived from Lady Charlotte Malcolm, the sister of Lord Dunotter, who wished for the society of her beloved nephew to sooth the tedium of illness in a complaint—the least supportable of all others to a person of sedentary habits—an inflammation of the eyes. Lady Charlotte had in early life been a sentimentalist, and as romantically in love as such ladies usually are, with a young clergyman, one of the chaplains of the earl her father, who, as might be expected, frowned an anathema on such an attachment, and effectually separated the lovers by getting the young gentleman appointed to the charge of a small episcopal congregation in a remote part of Scotland, where in a few years he died of a consumption, originating, some said, in intense study, but according to others in the deprivation of Lady Charlotte's society, to whom, it was affirmed, he was privately united; be that as it may, her ladyship's heart had never owned another sovereign; and now, at the age of fifty-five, there was no earthly object so dear to her as her nephew, Lord Lochcarron; she was a woman of a polished rather than a strong understanding; more well-meaning than wise, and having all the original romance of her character less mollified than it is found to be in those persons, who possessing a much more stinted portion of the good things of the earth, and having the real evils of life to struggle with, are glad to relinquish the visions of fancy, and make the best of sober—sometimes bitter realities; many of the resources of single ladies for passing time were none to her; music and drawing she had long since relinquished, as is usually the case where no real genius aids instruction; she disliked needlework; was neither a shoe nor box-maker, straw-weaver nor bobbin-twister; cards, when long pursued, wearied her; lapdogs were too frisky, and parrots too noisy: she wrote much; sentimental epistles, and diaries of occurrences, and read more: poetical romances, tragedies, reviews, and translations from the Hindoo and Persie; disliking the continual racket of high life and bustle of London, she seldom resided there, but passing half the year at Bath, and the remainder either in Scotland, or at least a beautiful retreat which had been bequeathed to her by a relative of the family in the vicinity of Canterbury: as she had never lived up to the full extent of her income, her fortune was known to be considerable; and the earl, her

brother, no doubt with due regard to interest, and certainly not without some feelings of fraternal affection, had ever been studious to oblige her.

Such was the lady, who since the death of the countess of Dunotter—a truly excellent woman—had (at least in her own idea) had supplied her place to Lord Lochcarron, who, during his vacations when at school and college, had generally made the house of his aunt his home; she had ever treated him with boundless tenderness and indulgence, which on his part had produced a respectful and affectionate attachment: he was unquestionably one of the best informed and accomplished young noblemen of the age, but from associating so much with this romantic relative, and, in consequence of his father's long residence abroad, looking up to her on most occasions as his guide and monitress, he had not only imbibed a taste for her pursuits, but her opinions had, in some degree, biassed his mind: with his love for Miss Borham, she was well acquainted, and though she had invariably cautioned him against the indulgence of a passion so unsuitable, she had yet done it in such a way, reverting to it far too often, sometimes jesting about it, and at other times lamenting that destiny (as she called a vague idea, floating in her mind, which she could not bring to any determinate point) should so often place a bar by disparity of fortune, where equality of merit and union of hearts would otherwise have afforded so fair a chance for happiness.

When Lord Lochcarron had perused the letter of Mrs. Pemberton, the humble friend of Lady Charlotte, and read her description of the invalid's sufferings, and the anxious wish she expressed for his society, he would gladly have excused himself from attending Lord Dunotter to Holleyfield, and have started off immediately for Shellmount Lodge, certainly with real anxiety on his aunt's account, and probably with a wish to impart to her the views of his father, and a latent, though not well founded, hope that her remonstrances might induce the earl to absolve him from the promise he had given to marry Miss Walpole, and at least permit him to remain single, if he would not sanction his union with Miss Borham, which, all circumstances taken into the question, his own good sense now told him plainly was a measure too replete with disgrace and degradation to be thought of. The earl, however, would not permit him to recede in the least from what he had promised; he insisted on his going to Holleyfield, but consented that their visit should not exceed half an hour, and that he should set out the moment he returned, to which he was induced, because it accorded with his own plans and views to remove his son from Ravenpark at present.

CHAPTER IX.

THE curicle was brought to the door, but Lord Dunotter continued slowly to pace the apartment, while Lochcarron, not with the greatest expression of happiness on his countenance, stood by the window, glancing over a newspaper, and waiting his father's pleasure; the earl saw there was yet something to be done before he could trust his son at Holleyfield, and made up his mind how to act; putting on his hat, he said, "Now, Alexander, shall we go?" then, as if struck by a sudden recollection, he added, "remember, my dear boy, that in this visit you must acquit yourself as the affianced husband of Miss Walpole, for such in fact you are." "My lord!" said Lochcarron, with a start of surprise. "Certainly," pursued the earl, with the most perfect calmness; "the settlements are drawing, and every thing is concluded upon." "What, my lord!" exclaimed Lochcarron, evidently and deeply indignant at thus being trafficked with, "without once consulting me!—without my having any, the slightest knowledge of the woman I am expected to make my wife!" "This half hour will suffice for that," said the earl; "she is innocent as a child, new to the world, unhackneyed in its ways, and so good-tempered, that you may mold her to any thing you please!" "So I should suppose," said Lochcarron, somewhat sarcastically, "since she can thus suffer herself to be disposed of at the caprice of a mother-in-law." "It will become you, Alexander," said Lord Dunotter, gravely, "to speak in rather more respectful terms of a lady whom I am about to make my wife;" "My lord," said Lochcarron with dignity, "I mean no disrespect to Lady Walpole; I am sure I shall rejoice in every accession of happiness or interest to your lordship, but I really do not perceive how my making a sacrifice of my peace in the way I am required to do can promote either; I desire nothing beyond my present allowance, and time at least both to become acquainted with Miss Walpole, and to *endeavour*—" he spoke the word with emphasis and sighed in doing so—"to erase from my heart the image of the most beautiful woman I have ever seen." Whether he had finished all he was going to say is uncertain; but Lord Dunotter, with not only displeasure, but something beyond it, which cannot be defined, on his countenance, exclaimed, "Once for all, Alexander, I *command* you to mention that girl no more; attend to what I say, and I think you will not be absurd enough to urge another word of objection; you *must* marry Miss Walpole, and that immediately; Lady Hootside has for months past been at Holleyfield flattering Lady Walpole, and straining every nerve to bring about a union between her son and Cordelia, and was all the while secretly taking counsel's opinion whether Walpole's absurd will might not be set aside; there is not a doubt that it might be so; and now, Alexander, you will perceive in what way it is in your power to promote your father's interest and happiness; my marrying the mother will be of no avail, unless you also marry the daughter; delay would destroy all; I understand that hot-brained fellow, Thornton, Miss Walpole's relation, whom I told you I saw at Naples, is coming home, and may very likely take it into his head to assert his cousin's rights, perhaps become a candidate for her favour. So now, Lochcarron, say at once, for I am weary of argument, will you exert your reason, and save your father and yourself from positive ruin, for I confess we are on the verge of it; the tenants are racked beyond their ability to pay, and curse me for an unfeeling landlord, a character I detest, and should never incur did not circumstances, not the least of which is Pringle's villanous mismanagement, compel me to measures I blush

at.” What could Lochcarron oppose to such an appeal? nothing: his mind admitted the conviction that duty and reason were on Lord Dunotter’s side of the question, and, without a word of comment, he said, “I am at your disposal, my lord, do with me as you please.”

Lord Dunotter pressed his hand, and Lochcarron’s spirited bays soon conveyed them to Holleyfield. Cordelia, when she understood that Lord Lochcarron was returned, expected this formal visit as a thing of course; and though by no means aware that matters were so far concluded upon between the earl and Lady Walpole as they really were, felt her situation so awkward and embarrassing, that she made it an absolute point with her mother not to receive the two noblemen alone, who, in consequence, requested the company of Miss Addington at Holleyfield for a day or two, and the three ladies were sitting together when Lords Dunotter and Lochcarron were announced: the earl, with that travelled experience which seldom fails to confer on its possessor the franchise of the whole world, was always at home and collected in all companies, and on all occasions; with a grace quite his own, he presented his son to Lady Walpole, who gave him a reception so flattering and polite, that had he not received a very unfavourable impression of her ladyship’s general character from Lady Charlotte, Miss Borham, and other people, he could not have been otherwise than pleased; as it was, he thought it dictated rather by time-serving principles than sincerity, and repaid it in kind. This ceremony over, Lord Dunotter advanced to Cordelia, and smiling, said, “I believe, my dear Miss Walpole, it is deemed supererogatory to introduce where the parties are previously acquainted; *Lord Lochcarron* has already the honour to be known to you; but in presenting *my son*, I venture to solicit for him that friendship and regard, which a partial parent hopes he will ever merit.” With these words, he placed the hand of Cordelia, which he held, within that of Lochcarron, pressed them affectionately, and leaving him to deserve the favourable report he had given, turned to Miss Addington, with whom he was well acquainted, and drew off her attention by engaging her in conversation with himself and Lady Walpole.

If Lochcarron, in this interview with Miss Walpole, succeeded in inspiring her with any thing like a partial opinions of his merits in any respect, it was rather because she wished to realize that picture of his good qualities which was already drawn by her own imagination, and the good report of others, than by any thing which he now said or did to confirm it, for he certainly acquitted himself very ill; he expressed himself most “happy in having now an opportunity of declaring to Miss Walpole the high respect with which she had impressed him on the evening she honoured him by accepting his escort from St. Albans, and how much he wished to improve their accidental acquaintance, had he not been deterred by a fear that his presence might be deemed an intrusion.”

Cordelia could not but understand this as referring to the old family quarrel, and had her positive knowledge of his attachment to Miss Borham been out of the question, it might have passed well enough; but that knowledge rose in array, and added tenfold to all her other sources of confusion and embarrassment: while on the other hand all the arguments of Lady Walpole, which pictured it as right, and even meritorious, to snatch Lord Lochcarron from the degrading consequences of such an attachment, remained in full force, and aided the secret wishes of her own heart.

Lochcarron, conscious that he was violating truth in what he was saying, spoke with some degree of hesitation, and looked confused; and as to Cordelia, oppressed by the peculiar circumstances of her situation, too well aware that if this union should indeed take place she must be the *obtruded* and not the *solicited* wife of Lochcarron, and agitated by the feelings of the moment, she never appeared to less advantage, but bending her head to conceal her blushing face, she looked lovely; but yet it was not exactly the attitude and expression of loveliness to convey a very favourable idea of her understanding to those who could not enter fully into her mind, which none present could. Lord Dunotter introduced the subject of his sister's indisposition, and explained that his son was going immediately to Shellmount Lodge. Miss Walpole could not feel very highly gratified that Lady Charlotte's distempered eyes possessed more attraction than her own brilliant ones: either Lochcarron was seized with a sudden fit of gallantry, or else he was resolved to please his father at the expense of truth; for when the earl ceased speaking, he subjoined an expression of regret at being compelled to leave Ravenpark. At this moment a party of morning visitors were announced, and the limited time of Lords Dunotter and Lochcarron's stay soon wore over, and when they took leave, the presence of strangers precluded all conversation beyond the common forms of departure; but it must be confessed that no two well-educated young people ever acquitted themselves worse on such an occasion than Lochcarron and Cordelia.

Lord Dunotter, very well satisfied with the conduct of his son, because it was as much as he expected at first, did not stay to make either comment or inquiry, but hurried him off to Shellmount immediately; on his arrival he found his aunt sitting in a dark room, and not much better in spirits than in bodily health; she listened to his unreserved detail of the passing events at Ravenpark and Holleyfield, with less surprise than emotion; she had for some time past, and for many reasons, suspected that her brother's affairs were much deranged, and her good sense could not but admit that he was taking the best possible method to free himself and his posterity from the difficulties which threatened them; but general report had prepossessed her against Lady Walpole; and as to Cordelia, the voice of public fame having before given her to Lord Hootside, she supposed her a mere simpleton, and in that light she appeared to Lochcarron himself; he considered his projected marriage as a sacrifice at the shrine of interest, or rather of absolute necessity, and very heroically made up his mind to the duty of submission; replying to all his father's letters, and never objecting to any of his arrangements, which could not be otherwise than rapidly completed; for the ardent impatience of Lord Dunotter, the ready acquiescence of Lady Walpole, the meek submission of Cordelia, the zealous activity of Mr. Crompton, and the steady undeviating attention of the earl's lawyers, all co-operated to the same end.

Meantime Lady Charlotte's malady baffled the skill of her physicians, and threatened a total loss of sight, and as she was very desirous to retain her nephew with her, until his presence became absolutely necessary at Ravenpark—as Lord Dunotter, for more reasons than one, did not wish for him there—and as Lochcarron had no very restless anxiety to be near his destined bride—he remained at Shellmount; however, it is probable that his quick sense of propriety would have induced him to return home on

purpose to visit at Holleyfield, had he not heard from one of his domestics that Miss Borham had arrived at her uncle's from Tunbridge, in a worse state of health than when she left Buckinghamshire; and with a sort of indefinite feeling, between a supposition and a belief, that her illness had been caused, or at least augmented, by his approaching marriage, he sympathized too much in her situation to risk a meeting with her in his present frame of mind. Cordelia too heard the same intelligence, and assigning the same cause for it that Lord Lochcarron did, felt something like a pang of self-reproach, as the murderer of another's peace; but all Lady Walpole's arguments again came in aid to console her; and now too thoughtless, became too happy, to reflect on consequences, she chased away reflection, and only looked forward to joy. In the midst of her smiling prospects, her old revered friend, Mrs. Emerson, claimed some part of her attention, she wrote to her at great length, detailing all events, but varnishing them, it must be owned, as highly as they would admit, and throwing a veil over that part which would have discovered that she was "won unsought." In one respect, however, Cordelia must be done justice to: independent of what might be her own feelings and wishes, she believed that the double union was, in point of interest, rather advantageous than otherwise to both Lady Walpole and herself; for her ladyship had studiously concealed from her all that she knew of the state of Lord Dunotter's affairs.

This letter was hardly despatched when new scenes opened; the settlements were now ready for signing, and the earl, when alone with Lady Walpole, exerted all his winning persuasive arts to induce her to consent to an immediate solemnization of the nuptials: charmed with his person, dazzled by his rank, won by his eloquence, and, it may be, awed by the superiority of his mind, her ladyship at present saw but, heard but, thought but as Lord Dunotter did; and in every thing, even the settlements and disposition of property, was guided by his opinions and modes of reasoning; true, she was aware that these were by no means the methods by which she acquired such an ascendancy over Sir Charles Walpole, reigned for so many years uncontrolled mistress of his actions and fortune, and eventually secured the latter to herself; but she "laid the flattering unction to her soul," that, when perfectly acquainted with his temper, she would manage the earl with the same facility; of that as hereafter shall chance; however, at present she could refuse him nothing, and named the following Thursday for her own marriage day, and that of Cordelia; but when these arrangements were submitted for her sanction, she earnestly and vehemently protested against any such haste, and positively refused to receive Lord Lochcarron as her husband until their acquaintance had been of longer date, and more frequent opportunities of intercourse had made them better known to each other: this delay suited none of Lord Dunotter's plans; it was now Saturday, and, determined to carry his point, he sent off an express to Shellmount to summon his son immediately home, telling Lady Walpole that to him they would delegate the task of persuading Cordelia: meanwhile every arrangement was made, and every preparation got in readiness for the approaching occasion; the earl procured special licenses; the honourable and reverend Gordon Malcolm, a near relation of his lordship, came down to perform the ceremonies; Lady Walpole invited the Addingtons to Holleyfield, as the only additional company necessary. Mr. Addington being upon very intimate terms with the earl, who had hinted his wish that the double marriage might be celebrated as privately and with as little parade as possible, his wishes were, at present, laws to Lady Walpole,

who, there is not a doubt, would have preferred all the splendour and public display possible, had the choice rested with her; but at all events the choice of her dress did, and that she resolved should indeed be dazzling; on such an essential point, Mrs. and Miss Addington were most ready to contribute their taste and assistance; while Miss Walpole, though she continued to protest with real sincerity of intention that she would not be married yet, was wearied and teased by their importunities into fixing on her own dress also.

Lord Lochcarron made it late on Tuesday night before he reached Ravenpark; his father had already said every thing by letter, and had little additional explanation to make; they were to dine at Holleyfield the next day, when the settlements were to be signed. Lochcarron felt like a desperate gamester, who, having already involved himself past all means of extrication, resolutely ventures his last stake; he hazarded no opposition, attempted no remonstrance, but submitting to his father's will, and obeying his injunctions, promised to use every effort to prevail on Cordelia to give him her hand on Thursday. He retired to his apartment, but the singularity of his situation banished repose from his pillow; that sun of happiness which usually dawns on a bridegroom-elect, penetrates with its beams every avenue to his heart and mind, and gilds even the distant prospect of futurity with the rays of hope and joy, was far from Lord Lochcarron; he believed himself about to be allied to a woman of imbecile understanding, unformed principles, and trifling frivolous habits; and compelled to sacrifice, at the shrine of fatal inevitable necessity, every chance of comfort in domestic life: in this frame of mind, but wearing a mask of great outward gaiety and satisfaction, he accompanied his father and Mr. Malcolm the next day to Holleyfield, where they were received by Lady Walpole, arrayed at once with every female ornament, and with her most seducing and captivating smiles; and by Cordelia, dressed with the most graceful simplicity, and shrinking from even the appearance of any wish to attract admiration. Lochcarron taught, or rather endeavoured to teach, his eye to wear an appearance of rapture, and in the few words which he spoke, tried to convey an idea of voluntary, not forced attachment; while Miss Walpole, in whose ear his voice had been thrilling ever since she last heard it, was more inclined to self-deception, than to that degree of self-torment which might have attended a too rigid scrutiny into the truth of those appearances.

Lord Dunotter, aware of the state of his son's mind, took care that he should neither betray himself, nor be fatigued with an over-attempt to act the lover, and relieved him by addressing much of his own conversation to Miss Walpole throughout the day, the chief part of which was necessarily occupied by its great business—the reading and signing of the settlements, a ceremony conducted with unrivalled propriety by Lord Dunotter, whose intimate acquaintance with the routine of conventions, and meetings held for more important purposes, qualified him most admirably to govern every individual of the present assembly in the way best suited to his own ends.

In the evening Lochcarron, seated by Miss Walpole, breathed into her ear a host of those patent nothings which, from time immemorial, men in love have felt, and men out of love have feigned; and which all ladies, from the days of Eve to the time present, are suspected of a proneness to believe; but whatever impression it makes in reality, few

young ladies are at a loss to carry on this sort of badinage till it becomes an imitation—perhaps a humble one indeed—of Benedict and Beatrice, conducted with such different degrees of spirit, such varied display of intellect, that sometimes it assumes the character of the highest, most refined, and elegant wit; at other times of the keenest satire; and much more frequently it degenerates into a pert, flippant, or even vulgar bandying of words and phrases. It was not poor Cordelia's forte to shine in any of those ways; wit, by no means the brightest gem in her diadem—it was, at least it might hereafter be, judgment, should circumstances call forth and establish the native energies of her character; still less was she qualified to be satirical; and least of all did the mild dignity of her manners, and the secluded yet elegant mode of her education, accord with the bold unblushing garrulity of some modern fine ladies: she listened to her lover—if indeed he could be called such—nearly in silence; her downcast eyes and glowing cheek spoke the language of her soul, but her lips made scarcely any response; yet even this silence, which properly understood would have constituted one of her greatest charms, operated to her disadvantage on the prejudiced mind of Lord Lochcarron; when we are predisposed to think ill of any one, their actions and inactions, speech and silence, are all brought to the bar of judgment, and too frequently wrested to support our unfavourable opinion; there is besides, more in the male than the female sex, a keenness of observation which is oftener pointed to discover the mental than the moral qualities of those they converse with; and as this is not always accompanied with a correspondent rectitude of judgment, the consequence must be that erroneous estimates are frequently formed, in which case he who forms them is very reluctant to admit the conviction of his mistake, for the simple selfish reason that it calls into question the infallibility of his own penetration, upon which principle nine persons out of ten will admit your good qualities, but deny your good sense. At Lord Lochcarron's left hand hung a very beautiful drawing of Hope nursing Love; his lordship taking it for granted, or choosing to do so, that it was the production of Miss Walpole's pencil, gave it all due praise, and delicately complimented the supposed fair artist, who joined in the former, but disclaimed the latter, by telling him it was the performance of Lady Caroline Mannark; and finding his lordship totally unacquainted with that young lady, praised her with a warmth and energy which convinced him that if his bride-elect had no other good quality, she had at least the absolute one of candour, and the negative one of freedom from envy. No one proposed music, for Cordelia, diffident of her own powers, because too humble to appreciate their extent and value, dreaded exhibiting them before Lord Lochcarron, and had implored Lady Walpole and Mrs. Addington that it might not constitute the evening's amusement. Cards Lady Walpole had not introduced, because she knew Lord Dunotter disliked them, and the party was too small for any other mode of passing time; but Miss Addington, who hated sitting still without cards in her hand, and had besides no very great pleasure in witnessing the earl's attentions to Lady Walpole, and those of Lord Lochcarron to Cordelia, observed that it was a beautiful evening, and proposed a ramble; Lady Walpole, so lately recovered from a sprained foot, did not choose to risk a relapse by walking out of daylight; Lord Dunotter of course remained in the house; Mr. and Mrs. Addington chose to do so too, and the little party, consisting only of Miss Walpole, Miss Addington, Lord Lochcarron, and Mr. Malcolm, passed out upon the lawn: though it was now near the close of September, the weather was so mild that all the luxuriance of vegetation and freshness of verdure which belong to an earlier period of the summer were preserved; the

moon was shining, though not with quite uninterrupted brilliancy, but the light clouds, which at intervals passed its disk, threw a softness over the scene which added to its interest; after a few turns, Lochcarron and Cordelia, almost imperceptibly on the part of the latter, but certainly not without design on that of the former, got to a little distance from their companions; it was an evening of singular beauty; the air was soft and mild, no object was stirring, and no sound broke the silence except the reverberations of Miss Addington's loud-toned mirth, as she hurried Mr. Malcolm forwards from place to place, and from scene to scene. Lochcarron made a few observations on evening landscape, to which Cordelia replied, and then a pause ensued; the clock of a distant village-church sounded on the ear; Lochcarron sighed, it might be involuntarily—it might be a sigh dedicated to Miss Borham—but Cordelia chose to think otherwise: the peculiarity of her situation became so oppressive that, unable to bear silence, she determined to speak; and aware that Lord Lochcarron had been in Italy, she mentioned that country, and begged to be favoured with a description of the effect of moonlight on the shores of the Mediterranean: Lochcarron, with great force and elegance, immediately detailed the observations he had made, and described what had been his feelings when he had passed evenings like the present in the bay of Naples, or on the Adriatic. Cordelia listened delighted, too much charmed with both the subject and the narrator to venture an interruption; but when he paused, she expressed a vivid interest in the descriptions he had given, and, certainly without design, but perhaps too thoughtlessly, said how much she should like to visit Italy; "And what should prevent us, my dearest Miss Walpole, from passing the ensuing winter at Naples?" said Lochcarron, in a tone of soft insinuation, taking the hand which rested on his arm and pressing it tenderly to his heart. Cordelia, in nearly breathless agitation, was incapable of reply, and Lochcarron, resolved to make an end of the matter at once, proceeded, "Forgive me, my beloved Miss Walpole, if a diffidence inspired by you, and which till this moment I have not been able to combat, has prevented me from giving utterance to the first feeling of my heart; though truly—perfectly sensible of your merits, and of the inestimable felicity I aspire to in being permitted to call you mine, I yet have not dared personally to solicit an event on which I rest all my future hopes of happiness; Lady Walpole and my father, in their kind anxiety for that happiness, have done all that I ventured to ask of them; but they have not succeeded in gaining that dear assent which alone can relieve me from the most painful of all earthly situations—suspense; to-morrow will witness their union, and I fervently hope they will be happy; oh that it might also witness—may I, dearest Miss Walpole, say *ours*?" The moonbeams as they fell on Lochcarron's countenance, showed Cordelia

"The pleading look,
"Downcast, and low, in meek submission drest,"

which accompanied his words; she could not, and, to speak truth, she would not suppose it "full of guile;" she hoped Lochcarron loved her till she believed he did so: whether his rhetoric did in reality make any impression cannot be determined, but at all events not choosing it to appear, she said, though in a very low and hesitating voice, "Precipitate measures, my lord, are seldom justified by subsequent circumstances, and you must allow me to observe that both reason and propriety demand an acquaintance of much longer date." "In our case," returned Lochcarron, with emphasis, "both are propitiated, nor can

the most rigid votaries of either accuse us of violating their rules, when acting under the sanction, and following the example of our parents." This was so powerful an argument, that Cordelia was at a loss how to parry it; her reason was not convinced, neither were the softer attributes of her character won to recede from the determination she had made; but she felt that to defend her objection to an immediate marriage would be to indirectly censure the conduct of Lady Walpole, who was acting with still more indefensible precipitancy, having so lately lost her husband, and who had not been acquainted with Lord Dunotter longer than Cordelia had known his son; she was hesitating on what new plea to ground her persistence in refusal, when they heard the quick step of Miss Addington near them; Lochcarron thought he had gained an advantage, and tried to follow it up by saying, "Allow me, my dear Miss Walpole, to hazard one more observation; why should the event of to-morrow place us in a degree of relationship, as it respects each other, approaching to fraternal, when a far dearer tie might—" he paused, but Cordelia felt the full force of his plea; she had never before contemplated the subject in this light, but clearly saw that it would be more within the pale of delicacy at once to become his wife than to reside under the same roof with him as the son of her mother-in-law's husband; her hesitating manner, downcast eye, and blushing cheek, told Lochcarron her thoughts; "Will my dear Miss Walpole bless me with her consent?" he whispered; silence, it has always been said, gives it; and Lochcarron understood the tacit compliance; he had scarcely time to thank her with a tender pressure, when they were joined by their companions, and they all returned to the house; here Lochcarron soon found means to convey to his father a whisper of his success; this was as speedily communicated to Lady Walpole, who had already read it in the countenance of Cordelia; and before the earl and his son returned to Ravenpark, all parties so well understood each other, that every remaining arrangement requisite for the solemnization of the two marriages the following day was settled.

Miss Walpole retired to her apartment, but enjoyed little repose; her feelings were in a tumult, and shrinking alike from reflection and anticipation, she rose in the morning at her accustomed hour, and busied herself in preparations for the important event which was about to take place.

END OF VOLUME I.

Henry Mozley, Printer, Derby.

ANY THING BUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

BY JANE HARVEY,

AUTHOR OF MONTEITH—ETHELIA—MEMOIRS OF AN
AUTHOR—RECORDS OF A NOBLE FAMILY, ETC. ETC. ETC.

In Three Volumes.

VOLUME II.

“Alle day
“It is both writ and sayde,
“That woman’s faith is, as who sayth;
“Alle utterly decayed.
“But nevertheless right good witness
“I’ this case might be layde,
“That they love trewe, and contynewe.—”
Nut Browne Mayde.

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1819.

ANY THING
BUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

CHAPTER I.

THE morning was ushered in without any of those appearances of nature, which are supposed to be peculiarly propitious to bridal rites; in the elegant language of Milton,

“Not trick’d and frounc’d as she was wont
With the Attie boy to hunt,
But kerchief’d in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud.”

Though every preparation had been previously made, yet to see them all properly carried into execution gave ample employment to Lady Walpole and her coadjutors, for the five hours which succeeded the breakfast one; much remained to be done, both to adorn and embellish the grand drawing-room, and dedicate it appropriately to its present solemn purpose; the dining-room required much tasteful decoration; and in the other apartments there were so many plants to arrange, so many pictures to compose and decompose; such a number and variety of flowers and vases to place in order, and so many other items to attend to, that only two hours remained for the labours of the toilet; and there Lady Walpole improved so well, that she came forth a superb and gay, though not juvenile bride; her dress was composed of white satin, silver net, and rich fringe of the same material; while the ornaments disposed about her person, which were as numerous as fashion would sanction, were all of diamonds; no assistance that art has contrived to aid nature was omitted; and the satisfaction of her heart spread such a radiance over her countenance, that she might literally be said to beam smiles, and breathe rapture. Cordelia wore a most elegant dress of her own work; her beautiful hair needed no adornment, and a pearl necklace was all of her costume that could be termed ornamental; yet altogether her face and form looked interestingly lovely.

About five the Ravenpark party arrived; the two noblemen were dressed with characteristic grace and propriety, and the resemblance between them was so striking, that Lord Dunotter might truly have contemplated in his son a younger self. The earl was polite to all, and most attentive to Lady and Miss Walpole, but yet dignified, and rather grave.—Cordelia thought he looked as if the habitual superiority of his deportment was struggling to resume its wonted sway; Lord Lochcarron, whatever might be his inward feelings, was gentle, good-tempered, and very tender in his manner towards his bride elect. Mr. Malcolm had another reverend gentleman with him, and conducted the ceremonial of the marriages extremely well; the archbishop’s licenses were displayed with all due form; Mr. Addington had the honour to give Lady Walpole to that hand which put on her the golden fetter which constituted her a new-made countess; and then Lord Dunotter himself gave the fair hand of Cordelia to his son. Those circumstances

which in perspective appear so formidable, that the mind thinks it will never have courage to go through them, are often, when brought to the test, supported with singular fortitude: thus it was with Miss Walpole, she had always felt appalled when reflecting on the ceremony which was to unite her to lord Lochcarron; but when the moment arrived, all those fears vanished, and she supported herself with great firmness; in moments like these, when the parties who are taking an important step in life are surrounded by their friends, the hearts of all, if not absolutely callous by nature, or seared by a commerce with the world, expand with something like a thrill of pleasure as they give and receive congratulations; it may be questioned whether Lord and Lady Dunotter were capable of such expansion, but they could well assume the appearance of it; and as every one else felt it in reality in a greater or less degree, they sat down to a most magnificent dinner, a very pleasant bridal party. Harmony and hilarity seemed to increase over the dessert, which was truly sumptuous; every delicacy that art can compel our climate to produce, was brought from the hothouses at Ravenpark; the bride had ordered every foreign importation that is esteemed delicious, and the wines of Lord Dunotter could not fail to be some of the best which England contained. The bridal toast to the health and happiness of the junior pair had just gone round, when one of the attendants whispered something in the ear of Lord Lochcarron; the eye of Cordelia, in stolen glances, anxiously watched the countenance of her new-made lord, but no very particular degree of emotion was discoverable in it; he rose, however, and quitted the room without any one seeming to notice the action; conversation was carried on with unabated spirit, but his bride secretly counted the minutes, and wondered at his stay; when he had been gone about a quarter of an hour, pauses were visible in the discourse, and Cordelia could observe that her father-in-law every now and then stole a look towards the door, while the glance of Lady Dunotter mechanically, as it were, followed his; the bride of Lochcarron wished to trace on her watch the progress of time, but was restrained by the consciousness that so many eyes were observing her.

The glass to the usual toast was waiting; half an hour had now elapsed, and when all, as if by general consent, were sinking into silence, Lord Dunotter expressed some slight surprise at the absence of his son; his words seemed a directing impulse to Miss Addington, who never approved of long fits of silence, and now with her eyes turned to Lady Lochcarron, as if addressing her in particular, exclaimed, "Dear, how strange that his lordship should stay so long, where can he be?" questions are sometimes asked which the inquirer cannot expect to have answered, and this was certainly one of them; Mr. Kenyon, the clerical friend of Mr. Malcolm, promptly relieved the bride by saying, "that he could not avoid in part overhearing the message brought by the servant to Lord Lochcarron, which was respecting a letter." Lord Dunotter's look now betrayed visible inquietude, he paused a moment, and then said, "I fear it is from Shellmount, and that my sister is worse." His bride begged him not to be alarmed—expressing her conviction that Lord Lochcarron would soon return—smiled on Cordelia, as if translating her apprehensive countenance, and wishing to do away the impression—and endeavoured to rally and re-animate conversation, but all would not do; the earl, evidently distressed, remained abstracted a few minutes, and then ringing the bell, a servant opened the door, and his lordship, going into the hall, desired Lord Lochcarron's valet to be called; a shade of busy curiosity, mingled with some degree of inquietude, was visible on the

countenances of all the domestics, and the earl had to repeat his orders twice before he received the laconic information that the valet was gone with his lord. It still appeared that either every one was unwilling to speak on the subject, or no one knew what to say, for Lord Dunotter was compelled to descend to the humiliation of inquiring minutely who had been with his son; when and whither he went; and by what mode of conveyance: in answer to these questions, he was told that a man on horseback, apparently in very great haste, had brought a letter addressed to Lord Lochcarron, which he said must be delivered immediately; the messenger rode off without staying for an answer, and his lordship was summoned from the dining-room in the way already described; he read the letter alone in a breakfast parlour, and then went into the shrubbery, where he walked, by the light of the moon, about a quarter of an hour. On his return to the house, he instantly summoned his valet, to whom he gave some orders in a low voice; the man departed to execute them, and the young nobleman, *rushing hastily out of the house on foot*, was seen to take the road towards Ravenpark.

Such was the strange, alarming, mortifying intelligence with which Lord Dunotter was compelled to return to his own bride, the bride of Lochcarron, and their party; his own conjectures were best known to himself, but he softened down what he had to say as much as possible, by assuming a serene look and cheerful tone, and by totally suppressing the emphatic words used by the domestic, that Lord Lochcarron *rushed hastily out of the house*, and that he was known to have taken the road to Ravenpark; that he went on foot he was compelled to admit, and slightly saying he was surprised, though not very uneasy, expressed his intention of going to Ravenpark to see if his son was there. "Oh no, my lord," said Lady Dunotter, "you had much better dispatch a messenger." The earl, without giving either an accord or a negative to her ladyship's proposition, again hinted his fears that the letter was from Shellmount, and that Lady Charlotte was worse.

Apprehensions which have grounds are much more supportable than those which have none, a truth of which Cordelia felt the conviction; for the supposal of Lord Dunotter was so plausible a reason for her lord's strange absence, that she became comparatively easy, strove to rally her spirits, and joined in conversation with Mrs. Addington, who was kindly endeavouring to amuse her. Lord Dunotter seemed to take a part with them, but his frequent pauses of silence, and slight absences of mind, betrayed the agitation which he was endeavouring to divert and conceal; another half hour thus wore over, Lord Lochcarron had now been gone an hour and a half; Cordelia's terrors were visibly reviving, and Lord Dunotter's starting eye seeking the door on every slight motion, when Lady Dunotter rose to adjourn to the drawing-room, again reiterating her persuasion that Lord Lochcarron would soon return; but when there no longer appears a foundation for hope, saying "*I hope he will*," seems tantamount to "*I fear he will not*."

Lord Dunotter and his two clerical friends soon followed the ladies; tea was served, and for a short time uneasiness was veiled till it seemed banished, but like whatever is under forced restraint, it gathered strength, and soon broke out again with augmented violence; Lady Lochcarron's pale countenance spoke the agony of her mind; Lady Dunotter grew seriously uneasy, and expressed herself so; the earl alternately soothed them both with the most tender attention, and then losing his own self-command,

rose from his seat, traversed the apartment, and reiterated his apprehensions that his sister was dead, and that Lochcarron, reluctant to cloud the happiness of that day, was withholding intelligence so distressing, and writing from Ravenpark such instructions as were absolutely necessary: "Oh, but in that case he would surely have sent to say he was detained by business, and would return presently," said Cordelia, in mournful accents: it seemed so rational to suppose that he would indeed have done so, that every one silently admitted the painful conviction. Miss Addington now observed that his lordship had been gone upwards of two hours; when the unhappy bride, unable longer to rein in her anguished feelings, broke into a passion of tears, and sobbed with the most moving grief; Lord Dunotter flew to her, folded her affectionately to his heart, begged her to be composed, and saying he would instantly go to Ravenpark to ascertain the truth, rang the bell, and ordered his carriage.

The night was growing stormy, heavy clouds obscured the moon, and a rain was commencing which threatened to be of long continuance; Lady Dunotter looked rather averse to her lord's intention; spoke of the weather, glanced her eye on Cordelia, who sat the genuine picture of woe, and as if half inclined to censure her for its indulgence, hinted at the duty of patience; Mr. Malcolm translated her countenance, and offered to relieve Lord Dunotter from the task of going to Ravenpark; but this his lordship declined with a mild determination, which precluded any further interference on the point; Mr. Malcolm then requested permission to accompany him, Mr. Kenyon made the same offer, but the earl waived both, and departed with only his own servant in the carriage.

Seriously alarming as the affair now looked, it was yet some little relief to the anxious circle, most especially to the unhappy bride, that Lord Dunotter was himself gone to ascertain the truth; only Lady Dunotter seemed to disapprove of it, the efforts of every one else were chiefly directed to sooth Cordelia, and to support her spirits; in this Mr. Malcolm succeeded best, for he did it with a gentleness and feeling inspired by his affectionate regard for Lord Lochcarron, but he hid his fears in the recesses of his own breast; he was apprehensive that the letter Lord Lochcarron had received was in reality a trap to decoy him into some danger, of what nature he could not define, but to which he had fallen a victim.

Lady Dunotter, though she had at first been, or affected to be, the most buoyant in hope, had now nearly sunk into the opposite passion of despair, and formed a very dreadful secret surmise, that Lord Lochcarron, the prey of a violent passion for Miss Borham, and detesting the union he had been as it were, forced into, had cut the thread of existence with his own hand; nor was her ladyship single in this horrid supposition, but it was of course the last in the world which any one would have avowed. Mr. Addington's private opinion was, that the letter had contained a challenge; that the consequence had been an immediate meeting, perhaps at some inn in the neighbourhood, and the event too probably fatal. Mr. Kenyon thought, or chose to say he thought, that Lord Dunotter's fears were verified, that Lady Charlotte Malcolm was dead, and that Lord Lochcarron had gone post to Shellmount; Cordelia shook her head in mournful sadness, and said (what every principle of reason and common sense seemed to justify her in saying) that her lord would never have gone to Shellmount without sending a line to notify his

intention. "But," observed Miss Addington, "perhaps Lady Charlotte is not dead, but so dangerously ill that his lordship could not lose a moment." This supposition did not appear to illuminate the affair in the least, for if time had not allowed his lordship to write, he might at all events, and certainly would, have charged an intelligent servant with a verbal message, which should give a cautious explanation of what had occurred.

Thus the party talked, and thus they looked till the clock told the awful hour of midnight; Lord Dunotter had now been gone above an hour, and though he could not be expected back until at least twice that time had elapsed, every moment which was now added to his stay took something from hope and gave more to fear, for every one had cherished a secret wish, almost amounting to an expectation, that his lordship would have been prevented from performing his journey to its full extent by meeting either his son or a messenger upon the road.

Oh! how splendidly miserable was now the lovely bride of Lochcarron, arrayed in her nuptial dress, surrounded by all the pomp and magnificence that taste could invent, luxury suggest, or wealth command; unable to endure the anguish of her own thoughts and feelings, she moved from seat to seat, and wandered from apartment to apartment, while the glare of the lights, the bloom of the flowers, the finest odours of nature, and the most rare and expensive combinations of art, only served to write and impress wretchedness on every sense. She was returning to the drawing-room from her own boudoir, where she had gone to implore that protection and assistance which, perhaps too little thought of in health and joy, is our never-failing refuge in sickness or in sorrow, when she was met by Lucy, her loquacious attendant, who, with a face solemnized for the occasion, and with a particular expression of countenance beyond that, exclaimed, "Oh, my lady, I have just heard such a thing—" "For heaven's sake," said Cordelia, wrought up almost to frenzy with apprehension, "tell me at once what you have heard, let me know the worst, I cannot bear suspense." Again she commenced with, "Oh, my lady," when they were appalled by a violent scream from Miss Addington; Cordelia, who now expected that all her most dreadful surmises (and every dreadful surmise she had in turn harboured) were now about to be confirmed, flew to the spot, where the first object she beheld was Mr. Malcolm, pale as death, and stretched on a sofa; he was, what is rarely met with in this our day, a man of refined feelings, and possessed of an inquiring, though not always a penetrating mind; his attachment to Lord Lochcarron was very great, both personally, and as the rising sun to which his noble house looked up for the support of its family honours; and now persuaded that his strange disappearance on his bridal day was owing to none of the causes which the supposing party around him had conjured up, he was driven to the horrid alternative of adopting the belief, that either he had destroyed himself, or that the letter had been a decoy to lure him to a death only less shocking inasmuch as it was not self-inflicted.

All now became a scene of confusion, Lady Lochcarron was nearly distracted by the dreadful apprehension that Mr. Malcolm was possessed of the fatal secret concerning her lord, whatever it might be, and that his struggles to conceal it had produced this singular effect upon his frame. Proper remedies were applied, he recovered from his swoon, but felt so much disordered that he was obliged to be carried to bed. A messenger

was despatched for Mr. Herbert, to ascertain whether the patient required bleeding, or whether it would be requisite to have medical advice. Lady Dunotter, in addition to her terrors, was now ready to expire with vexation, and something like shame, for she well knew that the arrival of Herbert, and the intelligence he would gather from the domestics, would as effectually blazon the secrets of this eventful bridal day as if they had been published in the gazette.

The distressed party was scarcely settled into some degree of mournful composure, after the removal of Mr. Malcolm, when a servant entered, and placing a letter by Lady Dunotter, said it had been brought by a person on horseback who rode off the moment he had delivered it. The superscription was simply, "The Earl of Dunotter," sealed with a wafer, and without postmark or any other character by which its progress could be traced; and now as her ladyship turned it over and viewed it with eager anxiety, sometimes persuading herself that it contained the fatal secret they all so longed to know, yet dreaded to hear, and at others yielding to the belief that it was another letter sent by the same hand to lure the father to the fate which had already befallen the son, she felt almost tempted to break the seal. Cordelia, her frame sinking under the most violent apprehensions, watched her every motion, but yet in the midst of the most trying distress, her keen sense of propriety would not allow her to urge any one to open a letter addressed to another person. Miss Addington, less scrupulous, openly exclaimed, "Oh, dearest Lady Dunotter, end our terrors at once." And it is more than probable her ladyship would have complied, but for the consideration that the earl her husband might not exactly approve of such an assumption of privilege in this early period of their union. Miss Addington, thus precluded from seeing the inside, next endeavoured to ascertain whether the direction was really the writing of Lord Lochcarron, but no one present was sufficiently acquainted with his lordship's hand to place the matter beyond a doubt, though all agreed in tracing, or fancying, a resemblance between it and the little they had seen of his writing. Mr. Malcolm, the only person who could have decided in the case, was too ill to be referred to; and thus the poor distressed bride was doomed to the punishment of Tantalus, having before her eyes what might probably either have confirmed or dispelled her fears, without being able to extract from it the slightest particle of information.

Worn down by such a weight of wretchedness, that no pen can do justice to her feelings, she now begged Mr. Addington to go and examine the servants, and find out whether they had put any questions concerning Lord Lochcarron to the person who brought the letter. Mr. Addington obeyed, and the result of his inquiry was, that the bearer of the letter, who (as far as the darkness of the night would permit conjecture) appeared to be the waiter or assistant at an inn, had been asked by the servant who answered his knock, if he knew any thing of Lord Lochcarron, to which he only replied, "I cannot say any thing about him," and rode off.

The mode of expression *cannot*, is frequently used as equivalent to *will not*, and in the present instance the melancholy party feared that such was the case. The arrival of Mr. Herbert next summoned Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Addington to the apartment of the invalid to hear the medical report, and the ladies were left to the sad indulgence of silent anguish; to the repetition of conjectures a thousand times repeated before; to delusive

expressions of hope which only betrayed the reality of fear; to faint attempts at consolation, while all were conscious that they had none either to give or expect; and to reiterated examinations of the outside of the letter. The writing was certainly not good, and Lady Dunotter, after a close inspection, said she thought it an imitation of Lord Lochcarron's hand, intended, no doubt, for the worst purposes. Lady Lochcarron, perhaps reluctant to yield up the belief, and with it the faint ray of comfort it afforded that it was indeed written by her husband, expressed her opinion that it was agitation of nerve which had caused its crooked and inelegant appearance. Miss Addington observed that it looked like a hand disguised, as if the writer wished it not to be recognised; but Lady Dunotter repelled the supposition, and said somewhat indignantly, that if Lord Lochcarron were writing to his father, there would exist no possible reason why he should not wish it to be known.

As the hour of one in the morning drew on, all sunk into boding silence, and "listening fear" pervaded every face. At length the fatal stroke was heard, and poor Cordelia, as if the final knell of hope was struck on her heart, uttered what might be termed a shriek of anguish, and throwing herself into the arms of Mr. Addington, wept tears of wounded love, and grief, and despair. The two gentlemen now returned from Mr. Malcolm's apartment with intelligence that Mr. Herbert had bled his patient, ordered a composing draught, and pronounced that a night's rest would effectually restore him; all expressed themselves glad to hear it, but as for the two brides, it must be owned that in their case grief,

"The master passion of the breast,
"Like Aaron's serpent, swallowed up the rest."

Lady Dunotter had too much pride to inquire, either directly or indirectly, whether Herbert had in any way mentioned the more than strange disappearance of Lord Lochcarron; but she felt the present humiliation of their circumstances at every pore, and rising from her seat, she traversed the length of the apartment, sometimes venting her anguish in a deep groan, mentally wishing that she had done all in her power to retard the marriage of Lord Lochcarron and Cordelia to a later period; expressing the strength of her fears about her lord, and appealing to Mr. Addington whether he had not now exceeded all bounds of time for going to Ravenpark and returning? Mr. Addington said "Not yet;" but he only spoke to lull apprehension, for his lordship had certainly stayed much beyond the period at which he might reasonably have been expected back.

The night, or to speak more properly, the morning, was becoming more tempestuous, the gale blew in the direction towards the windows, and the heavy rain-drops, driven by its fury, pattered loudly against them. No language can do justice to the distress of Ladies Dunotter and Lochcarron; the former proposed and the latter eagerly seconded the sending off a messenger on horseback to Ravenpark, for both, now alike the victims of their well-grounded terrors, felt a conviction that the father and son were involved in the same fate. Miss Addington, not formed for the tameness of sitting down to wait the arrival of either joy or despair, went every two minutes to the staircase to

listen for the sound of the carriage; sometimes Cordelia accompanied her, and felt her anguish renewed by every disappointment.

Another half hour wore away; Lady Dunotter was in the extremity of distress, and her daughter exhibited such alarming symptoms of illness, that her friends united in endeavours to persuade her to retire, but in vain; she insisted on awaiting in the drawing-room the return of Lord Dunotter, and though scarcely able to support her drooping head, tried to wear some appearance of composure.

“It is just two o’clock,” said Miss Addington, returning from one of her perambulations, “I thought I heard the carriage, but I was mistaken; hush—no—I am right,” and away she flew. It was indeed the earl, but his step, his voice, his every motion, too plainly told that he brought no joyful news; to Miss Addington’s exclamation of “Oh, my lord, are you come at last!” he replied, “Yes, my dear Miss Addington, I am here;” but there was no animation of tone, nothing of that cheerfulness inspired by satisfaction, and calculated to inspire it; his voice was little like the voice of the bridegroom, and his manner the most widely different from that joyful character that can be imagined; his face was pale, and his eyes, when he entered the apartment, first sought Cordelia, next glanced on his bride, and were then directed to the floor. Lady Dunotter snatching up the letter, placed it within the folds of her gown, and flew to her lord; while Cordelia, raising her drooping head from the arm of the sofa, looked with frenzied eagerness, but, as if afraid to ask the question which should terminate her dreadful suspense, spoke not a word. The rest of the group surrounded the earl, who said in a faint and dejected tone, “So the servants tell me Lochcarron has not returned.” “And has he not been at Ravenpark, my lord?” questioned Lady Dunotter: to which the earl faintly replied “No.” In this word every worst surmise which had been harboured seemed confirmed; Lady Dunotter thought she saw him weltering in his own blood, shed by his own hand; Mr. Addington beheld him in idea stretched lifeless by the pistol of the duellist; and as to his unhappy bride, she had been pondering on one dreadful idea, till its certainty seemed written on her very brain—it was that the associates of the robber who had fallen on the evening which first introduced her to the acquaintance of Lord Lochcarron, had formed this diabolical, and it appeared too successful, plan to lure him away and deprive him of life, on the sacred and cherished day from which the date of his future happiness was to be drawn. This supposition was similar to that harboured by Mr. Malcolm, and it was near producing the same effect on Lady Lochcarron as it had done on him, when the progress of anguish was checked, and for the time suspended, by seeing her mother draw the letter from its concealment; Lord Dunotter glanced at the superscription, and exclaiming, “Ha! when did this come?” snatched it from her hand, with an eagerness not entirely according with his habitual attention to the established forms of etiquette and politeness, but which this unparalleled moment not only excused but justified. “Oh, my lord, is it indeed the hand-writing of Lochcarron?” questioned Cordelia, in the most piercing accent which could be dictated by the struggle of hope and despair. He replied in the affirmative, for a moment, suspending his attention to the letter, which he was tearing open with an impetuosity that nearly defeated its own purpose, he turned away, as if to have the advantage of a light; the Addingtons and Mr. Kenyon respected his feelings, and retired to a distance; Cordelia’s eagerly-anxious eyes followed every turn of the earl’s face, but

still her amiable retiring diffidence prevented her from drawing nearer, and only Lady Dunotter remained standing near her lord; yet he seemed jealous lest the contents of the letter should be seen even by her, and kept it as much as possible in a position to meet no eye but his own. Every look was fixed on his countenance, and all exerted their best skill in physiognomy to translate its expression; no trace of surprise or astonishment was visible, but evident inquietude, sorrow, and something nearly resembling vexation. Cordelia, while he read, appeared as if restraining by force the inquiry which was ready to burst from her lips; but when she saw his eye glance near the bottom of the page, she exclaimed, "Oh, my lord, is Lochcarron safe? in mercy tell me what has occurred?" "Nothing fatal, assure yourself, my dearest life," said the earl, hastily folding the letter, and putting it into the pocket of his waistcoat, "nothing, I trust, which will be of long duration; my son is offended with me;—it sounds strangely to say so—but a villain has misrepresented circumstances."

There is a point of suffering which a well-regulated female mind cannot brook; needs it be said that the slightest shade thrown upon character, the veriest atom which can stain reputation, constitutes that point: the keenly-susceptible mind of Cordelia instantly construed the hint of Lord Dunotter to imply that her fame had been traduced to his son; the idea checked her feelings, suspended grief, and gave her reanimation and new energies: rising from the sofa, and approaching her father-in-law, she laid her hand upon his arm, and said in a tone of composure most deeply affecting, because it was evidently the composure of despair, "I now see the extent of my misery, do not in mistaken kindness endeavour to deceive me, it is I who have been traduced and misrepresented—Lord Lochcarron believes me unworthy to be the partner of his life:" but with the last sentence her voice fell, and the bitter heart-wrung tears were forcing their way when Lord Dunotter caught her to his bosom, exclaiming with fervency, "No, my beloved girl, if it will relieve your fears on that point, I will solemnly, sacredly assure you that Alexander is truly sensible of your merit, and does you every justice; no, the reason he has for the present withdrawn himself from his family must, I am convinced, be traced in the infamous misrepresentations which have been made to him of some transactions of mine; in short I have been compelled to cause Pringle, my steward, to be arrested; his dishonesty has injured me deeply, and would have done so to a much greater extent had I not discovered it when I did; he is now in Buckingham gaol; the villain, I know well, has laid the foundation of this affair, but he shall suffer both for that and his knavery to the utmost extent that the law can punish him." As the earl spoke, a strong expression of anger kindled on his countenance, his eyes flashed, and every feature of his face seemed acted upon by the feelings of his mind; there was much ambiguity in all that he had said; he had very inadequately accounted for the absence of his son, and certainly no one present was at all satisfied with, or even any wiser for the sort of explanation he had given; but to poor Cordelia, who was most deeply interested, it seemed to convey a dreadful evidence that her cruel lord was still so passionately attached to Miss Borham, as to resent most deeply the measures which his father had taken against her uncle; and oh what a dreadful stab did she feel it to her heart, to think that he had deserted, forsaken, repudiated her; the conflict was too powerful for her worn-out feelings, and just as the earl was inquiring for Mr. Malcolm, and Mr. Addington was replying to his inquiries, she sunk down in a swoon.

CHAPTER II.

FORTUNATELY, if indeed a restoration to the most perfect misery can be termed in any degree fortunate, the remedies proper in Cordelia's case were all at hand, having been so lately used for Mr. Malcolm; and though not so rapidly successful as they had been in his instance, they were ultimately so; the unhappy bride revived, and was led to her chamber, and an express was sent off once more to summon the attendance of Mr. Herbert. Both Mr. Kenyon and the Addingtons thought it strange, that though Lady Lochcarron might be considered as dangerously indisposed, inasmuch as fainting fits which proceed from grief are of more serious consequence than when owing to many other causes, yet neither Lord nor Lady Dunotter proposed sending for a physician; but a very probable cause for this seeming inattention might be traced in the repugnance they would naturally feel to making public the strange circumstance which had occurred, which it was certain would soon be but too well known.

Lady Dunotter and Mrs. and Miss Addington attended the poor sufferer to her apartment, and had recourse to every common-place argument to sooth and console her; indeed what other could they use, or what could apply in such an unparalleled case? she made scarcely any answer, and appeared quite exhausted; Lady Dunotter said she thought her inclined to sleep, and Mrs. Addington observed that rest was more proper for her, and would be of more service than any thing they could do; the countess acquiesced, and the two ladies returned to the apartment where they had left their spouses. Miss Addington said she would not quit the invalid till she saw her asleep, and sat down by the side of the bed. The moment they were gone Lucy approached, and said in a whisper, but such a one as she took care should be loud enough to be overheard by Cordelia, "Oh, dear ma'am, what a thing this is to happen in a family, what a day has this been! what a cruel, cruel man Lord Lochcarron is to draw my dear lady in so—if he was for going off he might have done it yesterday, and who would have cared?"—"Hush, Lucy," interrupted Miss Addington, "you will disturb your lady." "No, ma'am, my lady is asleep; poor dear angel, how *inhumanously* my Lord Lochcarron has treated her!" then lowering her voice, and bending her mouth almost close to Miss Addington's ear, she subjoined, "but to be sure he has been married all along; won't he be hanged, ma'am, if he is taken? is it not death to have two husbands, or two wives, at once?" Here curiosity, of which Miss Addington possessed an ample share, got the better of discretion, with which she was not superabundantly gifted, and forgetting the caution she had just given Lucy not to talk so high, she exclaimed aloud, "Married! gracious me, who is he married to?" Poor Cordelia caught the word, and it seemed the last fatal death-blow her heart could receive; in all the conjectures, all the suppositions which had been formed concerning the strange disappearance of Lord Lochcarron, the idea of a prior marriage had never occurred to any one of the party at Holleyfield; and now that it was obtruded upon Cordelia, she stayed not to reason on the probability or improbability of the circumstance, but in a voice which seemed at once the dictate and effusion of the most bitter earthly misery, she exclaimed, grasping the arm of Lucy, "What were you going to tell me awhile ago? say it at once." Whether the girl was awed by the wild energy of Cordelia's manner, or prompted by ignorance or malice to inflict a yet deeper wound on her peace, it is not material to

inquire; but she immediately replied, "My lady, I was only going to tell you that Miss Borham is gone with my lord, she was seen in a postchaise about——" They who *have* heard the shriek of mental agony, will now hear in idea that which Cordelia uttered, and to those who *have not*, description will never make it comprehensible; but it was only a shriek, no word accompanied it, and she fell back in a state which both Miss Addington and Lucy believed to be death. As Miss Addington's feelings of every sort lay near the surface, they were quickly called into action, and quickly evaporated, and she now screamed exactly in the same way she did on Mr. Malcolm's seizure; its echo penetrated to the ear of Lady Dunotter, who, starting up, exclaimed, "Sure Cordelia has relapsed," and, accompanied by her lord and Mrs. Addington, hurried to her chamber, in which, by this time, half the female servants in the house were assembled; but on the approach of Lord Dunotter they all retreated to the anteroom. "Oh, Lady Dunotter, the dear suffering angel is dead, gone for ever!" cried Miss Addington; Lord Dunotter clasped his hands, pressed them to his forehead, and ejaculated, "Gracious heaven! what have I done!" and this exclamation, which was overheard only by his lady, sunk deep into her mind. When the whole tenor of her ladyship's character is taken into consideration, with that principle of self-interest which had ever been her governing one, it will not, perhaps, be going too far to affirm that she was not grieved when told her daughter-in-law was no more, but she instantly assumed all the visible signs of maternal grief; and while she was beginning to inquire of Miss Addington in what way her dissolution took place, Lord Dunotter approached the supposed corpse, took one of the hands, and feeling with delight that no chill of death was there, applied his hand to the heart, where the vibrations of life's warm current were too perceptible to be mistaken; "Thank heaven!" he exclaimed, in a voice of rapture, "she is not dead! run, fly instantly, send for every physician in the neighbourhood—send all my servants;" and pulling the bell with violence, he reiterated his commands to the domestics, who promptly answered its summons; while Lucy, whose want of caution, to give it no worse term, had caused all this distress and disturbance, sneaked off, under pretence of executing the earl's orders, but in reality to escape the reprimand which was her due, for she found that Miss Addington was repeating to Lady Dunotter all she had said about Lord Lochcarron.

The old housekeeper, whose lameness placed her in the rear of every one else, now entered the room, and finding that Cordelia had not in reality taken her departure from this world, applied strong aromatic vinegar to her nostrils, rubbed her hands and temples with vinegar, and used such other remedies as were at once simple and likely to prove efficacious; prudently observing that rest and quiet were most proper in her case, and that all sudden surprise and agitation were to be carefully avoided.

Meanwhile Lady Dunotter, more intent on drawing from Miss Addington every syllable of what Lucy had said, than in assisting the means used to recover the invalid, succeeded much sooner in the former instance than her lord and the housekeeper did in the latter.

However improbable the circumstances might be, they seemed corroborated by the exclamation she had just heard the earl utter; and though certainly in her situation she must have been most reluctant to credit such a supposition, it seemed a too probable one

that Lord Lochcarron had contracted some sort of a marriage, and that his father knew it, yet hope whispered it might not be so; she wished the matter cleared up at once; but not choosing to mention it in direct terms to her lord, she took the indirect method of saying to Miss Addington, loud enough for him to overhear, "No, my dear madam, I cannot believe either story; I am persuaded Lord Lochcarron is incapable of the first, and the last, I hope, is not true." "How, what is that?" questioned the earl, "what is my son accused of?" Lady Dunotter, though fearing that her son-in-law had indeed erred in the way reported, saw, or imagined she saw, the propriety of preventing the report from obtaining currency; and to do this it seemed requisite that the earl should be told what was said, as it might then receive a positive contradiction from his own lips; and supposing that her lord would of course comprehend all she thought and wished, and would act accordingly, she, in reply to his question, repeated what had been said by Lucy in the first instance, and detailed to her by Miss Addington, taking care to disclaim all belief in it herself.

Lord Dunotter very likely did understand all that his lady wished, and in that case he either was the most finished dissembler ever known, or the potency of truth needed no disguise; for when told what the girl had said, the habitual polish of his manners seemed to yield to the influence of strong passion, and in a voice of deep anger he exclaimed, "It is altogether an infernal falsehood; where is the girl, that I may question her." Lady Dunotter's woman went to summon Lucy, but at that moment Lady Lochcarron exhibited symptoms of reviving animation, and all attention became fixed on her alone; she at first showed no signs of recollection; but when it seemed returning, Lord Dunotter ordered some warm lemonade to be brought, and while himself supported her with one arm, held the glass to her lips with the other hand, and in the soft soothing tone of paternal tenderness entreated her to exert herself and swallow the contents; this appearance of gentle kindness easily gained on the susceptible heart of Cordelia, but at the same time it brought back the keen and torturing remembrance of her misery; she meekly strove to obey the earl, though, choked by grief, she could scarcely take the liquid; and then said in accents of deep distress, "Oh, my lord, in what way did I ever injure or offend your son, that he has thus wrecked my peace for ever; held me up to the scorn of the world, by mocking the most sacred institution, and—" "No," interrupted Lord Dunotter, with the deepest earnestness of look and voice, "no, my dear child, allow me to call you so—you have been imposed upon by a diabolical, infamous falsehood; I positively assure you, not only upon my honour, but in the most solemn and unequivocal manner, that my son was never married, either legally or illegally, until he was this day united to you." The poor sufferer felt as if a small part of her anguish was removed, but it was indeed a small part, and what remained soon dilated itself and pressed with double force. She was just beginning, though in a very incoherent way, to mention what had been told her of Lord Lochcarron's flight with Miss Borham, when she was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Herbert, and in the same instant the entrance of the culprit Lucy, on whom the eye of Lord Dunotter became fixed with peculiar sternness: the doctor felt the pulse of his fair patient, and, in his pompous way, began to descant on her symptoms, when the earl cut him short by saying, "My good Sir, it would not be doing you justice to suffer you to prescribe for the dear sufferer without explaining in what her indisposition originated.—A very unexpected circumstance has occurred which compels Lord Lochcarron to take a

journey, and, very probably, to pass over to the continent; this, for I will be very candid—is in consequence of some steps which I have taken, and which an artful villain has misrepresented to my son; indeed I find,” continued his lordship, glancing his eye satirically round, “that misrepresentation is quite enthroned at Holleyfield; for though they have seen Lord Lochcarron actually married to Miss Walpole, they have, within these few hours, bestowed upon him a former wife, and carried him off with her in a postchaise; certainly, if only my son and myself were concerned, I should have no objection to the amusement the good people may derive from the fabrication of such stories; but as Lady Lochcarron’s peace, and the character of a very excellent young woman are at stake, I feel it a duty I owe to both, to declare upon my honour that Miss Borham is gone down to Scotland on a visit to my sister’s seat; this, I am persuaded, Lord Lochcarron does not even know; and so far from travelling together, he has taken the route to Harwich; now,” he whispered to Cordelia, beside whom he had been leaning with her hand clasped in his while speaking, “now, my life, make yourself perfectly easy, for to you I solemnly swear that all they have been telling you about Lochcarron and Miss Borham is falsehood itself.”

Oh, how soothing to the afflicted is any thing that comes in the shape of hope! that Lochcarron had not acted in a way which must place an everlasting barrier between them, that he was neither the husband of Miss Borham, nor the companion of her flight, she was solemnly assured by Lord Dunotter himself; and partly calmed by this assurance, partly worn out by the distress and indisposition she had suffered, she took the composing draught which Mr. Herbert prescribed; and promised Lord and Lady Dunotter, who both embraced her with every appearance of tenderness, that she would endeavour to make herself easy, and to exert fortitude and patience.

It was now five in the morning, and the blackness of night was beginning to vanish before the rising dawn. Lord Dunotter, after conversing a few minutes with his lady, retired to the library to write, he said, to his son; which, his lordship observed, he ought to have done before, had not Cordelia’s illness claimed his whole attention; the rest of the party sought repose, of which, it may well be imagined, they stood in much need; only the housekeeper, and the prating Lucy (for nobody could awe the latter so well as Mrs. Greville) remained with Cordelia, whose senses soon yielded to the influence of the opiate; but her sleep could not be called repose, for she betrayed every symptom of restlessness.

Lord Dunotter soon finished his packet of writings, whatever they might be, and consigned them to the care of his confidential servant, who was waiting with his horse ready equipped to take them to their destination.

About six, two physicians arrived, and were introduced to the chamber of their patient; Mrs. Greville gave them every requisite information; that part of it which concerned the origin of her illness, she of course gave in very general terms; but on all that had been done for her in the way of prescription she was clear and explicit; the gentlemen seemed to concur in forming a very unfavourable opinion of her case, but could give no positive decision until she should awake. Lord Dunotter had a short

conversation with both of them before he retired to his chamber, and, it may be supposed, made an explanation similar to that he had already given to Herbert.

No one at Holleyfield rose until long after mid-day; Mr. Malcolm was quite recovered, and had some conversation in private with Lord Dunotter, its subject was best known to themselves; but a new idea had now taken possession of more than one of the party, which was, that embarrassment of circumstances on the part of the father had, in some way, involved the son, and that such was the fact seemed confirmed by the frank acknowledgment of the earl, that there existed a point of disagreement between them.

When Lady Lochcarron awoke from her artificial slumbers, every bad symptom of the preceding evening was increased, and every additional one had appeared which could threaten danger; her pulse, though low, was quick in its vibrations; alternate fits of heat and chillness agitated her frame; the anxiety of her mind had settled the deepest dejection upon her spirits; her hands shook with a nervous trembling, and her appetite was so entirely gone, that she recoiled from the very idea of any kind of food; her medical attendants pronounced her case very bad, and enforced the absolute necessity of rest and quiet; but even when she lay perfectly still, and those about her hoped she was deriving benefit from that circumstance, she was only indulging grief, and mentally viewing in every possible light all the circumstances of the dreadful blow which had crushed her peace. Lord Dunotter might *say*, and had *said* every thing calculated to impress her with a conviction that his son regarded her with tenderness and affection; but had he done so in reality, would it have come within the verge of possibility for him to have withdrawn himself in the way he had done, almost in the very hour of his marriage, without sending one line or word of explanation to the woman he had just solemnly vowed to love, comfort, and honour? No; the very essence and nature of the circumstances seemed to vouch that no man could have acted so; and every time the idea occurred, she felt as if a dagger was plunged afresh into her lacerated heart. Young, naturally good, and educated in such a degree of retirement as had at least preserved her from all intercourse with the worst part of her species, she could not for a moment doubt the veracity of Lord Dunotter, who had averred that no prior marriage had existed, not only by that honour held sacred by a nobleman, but with that awful and emphatic solemnity which appeals to all the best feelings of man; indeed scarcely any one, though much older in years and experience, less disposed to look for truth in human nature, and better acquainted with its duplicity and depravity, would have disbelieved the earl's asseveration; but still all this applied no balm to her sufferings, presented no point of rest, left no foundation for hope.

Another circumstance was recalled to memory, and reflected upon till it seemed to augment the aching of her harassed brain; Miss Borham, at the time Cordelia and her party took refuge in Pringle's house from an apprehended thunder-storm, had said that Lord Dunotter persisted in retaining a servant who was suspected of being an accomplice in the attempted robbery of his son—Miss Borham in saying this had added, "It is very strange, is it not?" and now Cordelia, ill as she was, pondered on this and similar matters connected with her sad situation, till her spirits were totally subdued, or rather as it were eradicated; she could obtain no sleep but what was the effect of soporific medicines, and

successive fainting fits brought her so low that no rational hope of her recovery could be entertained: when out of the fits, her intellects were very unsettled; frequent alienations of mind, and delirious ravings, which but too plainly betrayed their source, distressed her anxious friends, more especially her father-in-law, whose every hope seemed to hang on the thread of her existence: not satisfied with the medical advice the country afforded, two physicians of the first eminence were summoned from town, but they could do little, except reiterate the orders of their predecessors. In all her intervals of reason she was ever asking if Lord Lochcarron had returned; but though the surrounding circle told her many well-intended falsities, one sad fact contradicted and annulled them all—Lohcarron neither appeared himself, nor sent a single line! Oh, how frequently did she recall to mind, and how ardently did she wish that no temptation had ever induced her to disobey the half-expressed command of her father, never to have any future intercourse with Lord Lochcarron; she remembered how much she had been agitated at the time, and in the present exhausted state of her spirits believed that feeling to have been prophetic. Thus worn down, and oppressed with continual grief, anxiety, and misery; wasted with a slow but perpetual fever; exquisitely sore from the succession of blisters which had been applied, and too ill to take any thing which might support exhausted nature, except a little wine, she was unable to bear the slightest motion, and by the twelfth day of her illness was pronounced by the faculty past recovery.

Oh! what a contrast did the mansion at Holleyfield now present to what it had done a fortnight before! then, all was pleasure and gaiety; animation in every face, and all that decorates life, or gives it grace and elegance, shining in every object! now, all was dejection, gloom, and silence; almost every window-shutter closed, all the bells muffled, and scarcely a particle of the flooring and stairs was not covered with thick matting; none but the inmates of the family, and some of the medical people, were within the walls; the Addingtons had been suffered to depart without receiving any very pressing invitation to prolong their stay; for the earl, in the present state of his spirits, had no relish for society, but rather felt it a restraint; and the countess, charmed with the novelty of her lord's fascinating manners, and anxious in this early period of their union to fix her empire over his will and actions, as she had done over those of Sir Charles Walpole, desired no company but his; her ladyship, however, soon discovered that she would never succeed in this way in her second marriage, so well as she had done in the first. Lord Dunotter, though uniformly elegant and polite in his manners, and by no means harsh in his general disposition, was tenacious of his own opinion; and, at this time, it might be inferred, harassed by a variety of mental feelings, working with more bitter effect because confined to his own bosom; the points which his lady first laboured to carry were to draw from him all he knew concerning the departure of his son; to learn the place of his present abode; and to obtain a sight of that letter which the earl had acknowledged came from Lord Lochcarron, and which she had often regretted not having opened when it was first put into her hands on the eventful wedding-night; but in none of these matters could she succeed. Her lord persisted in declaring that he did not know where his son then was, and that he had seen no reason to alter his early opinion, that it was some misrepresentation of Pringle's which had caused a slight difference between them; and as to the letter, he said he had committed it to the fire, but his manner of saying it looked more like evasion than truth.

A mournful gloom seemed to pervade every countenance as they contemplated the approaching hour of Lady Lochcarron's dissolution; but with Lord Dunotter himself it seemed more than gloom, it was the comfortless expression of that despair from which hope is entirely excluded—that pale hue of a countenance to which a cheerless heart refuses to lend any colour. Lady Dunotter was scarcely visible; but when she did pass from one apartment to another, her handkerchief was held to her eyes, either to absorb her tears, or to hide the reality that none were there; she seldom went near the sick room of her daughter-in-law, observing, and certainly not without truth, that her presence there could be of no service. Lord Dunotter, on the contrary, paid frequent and anxious visits to the sufferer, conversed with the medical gentlemen, suggested many little plans of comfort for the lovely patient, and gave her with his own hand the little nourishment and medicine she could be prevailed upon to swallow; this, indeed, was in some sort a duty imposed on him; for Cordelia soon became so much attached to her father-in-law, that she would scarcely receive those articles from any one else; this attachment might, no doubt, in part be ascribed to the kind and unremitting attention Lord Dunotter showed her; but it had another and a tenderer source; he was the parent, and, in person, the prototype of Lord Lochcarron, to whom, in despite of all he had made her suffer, of the contempt, the ignominy, with which he had treated her, of every appearance which seemed to brand his name with the blackest villany, her heart turned with a feeling but too much like the fondest love. But all mortal feelings and sentiments seemed now for ever at an end with Cordelia; after continuing throughout the day in a state between life and death, she fell, between nine and ten in the evening, into a kind of stupor; this, her physicians pronounced, would terminate in either death or convalescence, but neither they nor any one present, Lord Dunotter excepted, had any hope that she would be restored; and the earl had no other ground for this confidence, than the circumstance of having once seen a young person in Germany recover under similar symptoms. His lordship watched by her till the hour of retiring, and then kissing her cheek, he feared for the last time, a tear, which he could not restrain, fell on it. He gave strict orders that if any change, either for better or worse, took place, he should immediately be called. About three in the morning her breathing, which had been scarcely perceptible, became more so, which all but Mrs. Greville believed an unfavourable symptom, and now looked forward to nothing but the immediate extinction of the vital spark. Two hours more wore over, and what little change could be perceived was rather for better than worse; she appeared to sleep, and a gentle moisture covered her hitherto parched hand; about five o'clock she suddenly started, opened her eyes, and faintly, but plainly, articulated, "Lord Dunotter, where are you, my lord?" The first care of the overjoyed Mrs. Greville was to give the poor sufferer a glass of wine, which she took more readily than she had done any thing since the commencement of her illness; she then went to an adjoining apartment, where the earl's valet was in waiting, and instructed him how with due caution to impart the joyful tidings to his lord: then, and not till then, did she summon the physicians; for so little reliance had she on their skill in the case of her beloved patient, that she feared trusting to any thing they ordered or prescribed unless Lord Dunotter were present. Great was the delight his lordship expressed, and seemed to feel, when told that Cordelia had inquired for him; he hurried to her room, pressed her hand, implored her to be composed, and for his sake to strive to get better; and as the advice of the medical men was such as

met his entire approbation, he gave strict and positive orders that it should be enforced, and that if possible more care than ever should be taken not to disturb her; the earl was rejoiced at the prospect of his daughter's recovery; whether that circumstance gave equal pleasure to Lady Dunotter was best known to herself, but she did not fail to affirm it due.

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CHAPTER III.

LADY Lochcarron's convalescence went on very slowly, every symptom of immediate danger disappeared, but the remote ones which threatened both her intellects and life increased; the weakness in which she was left by her disorder, did not yield to the bark and other restorative medicines which were thought proper in her case; the dejection of her spirits was rather augmented than lessened; and aware that the singular circumstances in which she was placed must be the talk of the country, she felt so much oppressed with shame, though innocent, and with sorrow that seemed to have no remedy, that she could not be prevailed upon, even by Lord Dunotter himself, to take that degree of exercise in the open air which was absolutely requisite for the recovery of her health. She was now left much alone; Lord and Lady Dunotter were absent, first on a visit to Lady Charlotte Malcolm, and then in town, where business both public and private, the earl said, required his presence; the countess, when with her sister-in-law, tried by every possible means to draw out of her some intelligence of Lord Lochcarron, but in vain; Lady Charlotte expressed her deep regret and disapprobation of the way in which he had acted; but defended, with glowing affection, his heart, his principles, and general conduct.

In this sad interval of sickness, grief, and solitude, it was natural that Cordelia should sigh for the presence and consolatory converse of her early respected friend and directress, Mrs. Emerson; she hinted her wishes on this point to Lord Dunotter, and though he felt rather reluctant to having the present circumstances and situation of his family displayed to the penetrating scrutiny of a lady, whose distinguished talents and cultivation of mind he had frequently heard highly extolled; he yet, in consideration of his daughter's comfort, waved these objections, and requested Lady Dunotter to write an invitation to Mrs. Emerson: her ladyship, for reasons similar to those of her lord, and for several others superadded, not the least of which was the recollection of the shyness which had taken place between herself and Mrs. Emerson at that lady's last visit, resolved that she should not become an inmate of Holleyfield if it was in her power to prevent it: she obeyed her lord's request with great apparent readiness and pleasure; wrote the invitation, but took care to word it in such a way that its acceptance was the last thing to be thought of: the absence of Lord Lochcarron she spoke of as a matter of necessity, or a point of business, and of course more regretted than wondered at by his father and herself; her daughter's illness she mentioned in as slight terms as she could, and as if no longer a subject for apprehension; and concluded by hoping that if her beloved Mrs. Emerson could make it convenient to venture so far at that period of the year, she would favour them with her company at Holleyfield, but never said how earnestly Cordelia wished for it. Mrs. Emerson, thus kept ignorant how far her presence was either requisite or desired, wrote in reply to Lady Dunotter, politely declining the invitation; and the wily countess, while she hinted to her lord how unkind it seemed in Mrs. Emerson, secretly exulted in the success of her plans. All this took place in the interval between their return from Shellmount and departure for London; and as Cordelia positively refused to have any other person invited to stay with her during their absence, she was again left to solitude, grief, and tears.

Her excellent constitution so far conquered her complaints, that appetite, and with it strength, in some degree returned; in proportion as her frame was invigorated, so were the faculties of her mind; she could now reflect with calmness, though certainly not with resignation, on late events; she again and again viewed them in every possible light, but to trace her through them would be to pass over beaten ground; the only certainty she could attain was, that Lord Lochcarron had acted towards her with the height of unfeelingness and cruelty; in a religious point of view, with daring impiety; in a moral one, with great turpitude; with disobedience and undutifulness to his father; and, to finish the black picture of his criminality, with gross violation and contempt of the laws of his country; and connected with this last point, the cup of her sufferings seemed now filled to the brim, for Mr. Crompton called one morning to see her, and, after much circumlocution, painful inasmuch as it gave her to apprehend every possible evil in turn, told her that however reluctant he felt to give her pain, it was yet a duty which he could not recede from, to inform her that Lord Lochcarron had sent instructions to his lawyer to assist any measures that might be taken to annul the ceremony of their marriage. Poor Cordelia listened to this heart-piercing communication with a strong exertion of fortitude, and with such command of countenance that very little emotion was perceptible in it. Mr. Crompton, who, as one of her nominated trustees, no doubt thought himself privileged, then proceeded to hint that Lady Dunotter, as her ladyship's guardian, was determined to contend for the legality of the marriage, and never to permit its dissolution. Cordelia, nearly wrought up to frenzy by such a discussion, was at last compelled to say that neither her health nor spirits were in a state to enter on such a topic, and begged Mr. Crompton to make every communication on the subject to Lord Dunotter, and not to her; the faintness with which she was really seized, of which the paleness of her countenance was a sufficient indication, was a good pretext for her to retire, but the moment she was alone; every passion which wounded feeling can raise in the bosom, burst with a violence which her gentle nature had never known before; that anger which was the just emanation of injured and insulted innocence, treated with a contumely as unmerited as it was unprecedented, thrilled through her frame with poignant stings; to it succeeded shame,—shame, it is true, unmixed with guilt; but yet so deep, so overwhelming, that she would willingly, gladly have buried herself in the most remote solitude, in the recesses of a forest, or even in the caverns of the earth, to shun the smile of scornful pity, the glance which should point her out to notoriety, and the half-audible whisper which should say, “That is the repudiated bride of Lord Lochcarron.” Then this tumult subsiding, love resumed his empire; memory traced back the fond and flattering visions of connubial happiness which she had pencilled out in imagination on the eve of her marriage; and that tenderly remembered moment, when the deceitful Lochcarron had planned to pass in Italy this very winter which was thus consumed by his victim in the sighs and groans of an anguish as great as human nature could support: with love came jealousy, its never-failing concomitant, creating and fancying a thousand evils; painting Lochcarron as attached to Miss Borham, and alternately swaying the heart it reigned over to love, contempt, pity, revenge, and at last to despair.

In this frame of mind she went to rest, at least she sought her couch, but slept little, and rose late the following morning, more unrefreshed, dejected, and unhappy than ever; it was Sunday, and at once too unwell and too much ashamed to go to church, she

sought by devotional exercises at home, at once to tranquillise her thoughts and to discharge what she conceived to be her duty; but that happy peaceful frame of spirit in which, when resident with Mrs. Emerson, she used to perform her devotions, was her's no longer; then, she offered thanks and adoration for every real blessing of life, and supplicated a continuance of them; but now, sad contrast! her prayers were for support and comfort in her afflictions; for divine counsel and aid to enable her to act for the best in the painful and singular circumstances she was placed in; and, if it were the will of Providence that they should not be removed, for patience and resignation under them. Alas! to exert the last sincerely, and from the bottom of her heart, seemed a task beyond mortality; for the idea of an endless separation from Lord Lochcarron was too distressing to be contemplated with any thing approaching to fortitude. In this sad way the hours wore over, rather dipping into, than reading several pious books, when a text of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, "Some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come," caught her eye. When the mind is powerfully occupied and impressed with one subject, whatever is presented to it through the medium of seeing or hearing, is sure to be examined in every point of view, to see what relation it bears to the matter which engages the attention; in this chain of association perhaps may be traced the instant conviction which seemed to say to Cordelia, "You have done evil that good might come;" "you severed, at least assisted to sever, the tie which bound the heart of Lord Lochcarron to that of Miss Borham, and you are now reaping the reward due to such an act." This thought was accompanied with feelings sadly and painfully humiliating: "Is this," she asked herself, "the only instance in which I have erred? did I, in consenting to become the wife of Lord Lochcarron, intend to make the good my high rank and station would enable me to do, my first end and aim? did I seriously consider of what influence and consequence my example would be? and did I firmly resolve, in married life, to adopt that meekness, discretion, and benevolence of character which become a christian matron?" truth and ingenuousness, in which Cordelia had never been deficient, answered to each separate article, "No, no, no." Again she urged the mental inquiries, "Or were a title and its attendant coronet; the homage paid to beauty and to rank; the pleasures which wealth can purchase, and all the pride and display of life, the objects to which I looked forward in a married state?" candour, sincerity, conscience, said, "They were." From considerations like these, she reverted to the lecture which Mrs. Emerson had given her at the time of her departure from Holleyfield, and the treble injunction she had then laid upon her: she certainly had not exactly fallen into those fashionable levities and eccentricities which Mrs. Emerson had apprehended; but this, she could not disguise from herself, was to be imputed to her not having been introduced to the world; for her native humility owned, that had Lady Walpole, instead of forming a connexion with the Dunotters, fulfilled her engagement with the Hootsides, and gone to Brighton, she might, thoughtless and giddy as she had been of late, have become the slave and votary of folly, if not of vice, and would not even have had the only comfort she could now turn to— comparative innocence of intention. With regard to her devotional duties, she felt but too well aware that the steady glow of piety in which she was educated had, since her residence at Holleyfield, languished and burned dim; and now awakened to what she had of late scarcely given a thought to, self-examination, and a sense of her defalcation in principle, she clearly saw that what Mrs. Emerson had prognosticated had indeed come to pass, and that duty, sacred and social, had ceased to be the acting spring of her character.

In a mind like that of Lady Lochcarron, firm and dignified, though meek and gentle, active, acute, and penetrating, such a state of awakened feeling was followed up by the natural inquiry of, "What shall I do to amend those faults?" she saw her error, and the source of it; repentance followed conviction, and a deep resolution of amendment was the fruit of both; yet though her mind was weakened by illness, she did not yield herself to the belief that this revolution in her mode of thinking, and consequent intended change of action, would require no exertion on her part; on the contrary, she strove with ceaseless and unremitting attention, by prayer, by watching the operations of her own mind, and by all the aids of reason, reading, and reflection, to acquire patience, fortitude, and resignation; she felt that her best resolves needed all these helps: often when one moment she had made a firm resolution to submit to the will of heaven, and await with calmness the issue of her fate; in the next, she caught her heart wandering in search of him, who had thrown the treasure from him, and half tempted to accuse an indefinite something called destiny: still she struggled, persevered, and though often defeated, returned to the charge, until her temper and habits were so far changed, or rather rectified, that she became resigned, though not apathetic under her afflictions, and regarded the pleasures of life only as secondary considerations; yet remembered that she still had duties on earth to perform. Her temper was sweet, and had always been distinguished for its meekness, but her manners now acquired a dignity and sedateness which they had hitherto wanted.

One of the first acts of her renovated mind was to begin a long letter to Mrs. Emerson, in which she detailed every event that had taken place, every circumstance of her own conduct, "nothing extenuating," and all her past and present feelings; but as the subject was too painful to be undeviatingly pursued, and the detail too long to be finished at once, she laid it by, and added to it from time to time as her strength and spirits would permit. The change in her appearance was not less real and more striking than that in her manners; she was taller and considerably thinner than before her illness; her fine auburn hair had come entirely out; the bloom of her complexion was gone; all the beauty of her features remained, but they were shaded with a pensiveness which quite changed their expression; and even the tone of her voice was so deepened and altered, that she could hardly be recognised for the same.

Such was Cordelia when Lord and Lady Dunotter, whose absence had been prolonged by various assigned causes, returned from London a little before Christmas; the earl was astonished at the striking change; but he could trace all its causes, and it drew her still nearer to his affections. Lady Dunotter, elevated as she had been ever since her brow was graced with a coronet, doubly so by her noble house, splendid equipage, and every other appendage of her high rank which she had enjoyed while in town; and, beyond all, by the contemplated pleasure of her intended presentation in January, had little of either attention or sympathy to bestow on her daughter.

Lord Lochcarron seemed consigned to oblivion, except in the memory of his injured lady; the earl never mentioned him; and lady Dunotter, in answer to the inquiry which Cordelia compelled her fluttering heart to be still while she made, told her that all

the intelligence his father had been able to obtain was, that some money had been drawn for by his order on the earl's banker through an agent at Paris; that Lord Dunotter had taken every possible pains to trace his son by this medium but in vain; the person at Paris either could or would only say, that he received the order from the hand of a friend who had since taken his departure for Spain, for what part of it he declared himself ignorant. This was all the information Lady Dunotter had to give; but Cordelia felt it, at least thought it her duty (and from duty she resolved not to shrink) to mention to the earl what Mr. Crompton had said of Lord Lochcarron's wish, to have their inauspicious union set aside by law. Lord Dunotter heard her with a sort of grieving impatience, "Never mention it again, my dearest girl," he said emphatically, "if Lochcarron values my regard or my blessing, the tie between you shall never be dissolved; I live but in the hope of seeing him implore, at your feet, the forgiveness of that excellence he has so deeply injured." He then hastily changed the conversation, and engaged Cordelia in a game at piquet; indeed he devoted every faculty and almost every hour to amuse her; he read to her; assisted her in the cultivation of her fine talents and taste; told her unnumbered continental anecdotes; and when the weather and the state of her spirits would give permission for a short winter's ramble, assisted to wrap her up warm, and supported her into the grounds; twice he prevailed on her, accompanied by Lady Dunotter and himself, to take short airings in the park; and as she seemed to derive both health and pleasure from the exertion, it would have been repeated, had not the weather suddenly changed and become stormy, with occasional heavy showers of rain and sleet.

It was now within a week of the time appointed for Lord and Lady Dunotter's return to London; the earl was tenderly and earnestly importunate with Cordelia to accompany them; but every principle of reason and delicacy seemed to rise against such a procedure, and she mildly, but positively, refused: as to the countess, she was so entirely occupied with the brilliant figure she proposed making at court, that she seldom interfered in any discussion or arrangement which went forward between her husband and daughter.

After the weather had continued as described above for some days, a sharp frost set in; the air was now too cold, and the roads too slippery, for an invalid to venture abroad; Lord Dunotter, who had many papers at Ravenpark which he had frequent occasion to consult, usually rode over thither in the mornings, and returned to dinner: on one of these excursions, his lordship had occasion to call at the house of a person about a mile from Holleyfield, which induced him to take a different road, and to cross a small brook now completely frozen over, and, as he supposed, quite hard enough to bear him; the event proved his mistake; the ice gave way, and though the shallowness of the water precluded all danger of one sort, another of a very dreadful nature awaited him; the horse he rode, a very spirited animal, when he found his fore-legs entangled in the ice, made an attempt to free himself by a retrograde movement, plunged violently, and threw the earl on the edge of the brook with such a force, that his only attendant, who was a very short distance behind him, concluded that if he was not absolutely killed by the fall, in the present state of the ground and weather several of his bones must be fractured; when he came up he found the earl already insensible; they were a quarter of a mile from any house, and no human being appeared; poor Paterson, in the dreadful agitation of the

moment, called aloud for help, galloped from the spot, then back again, tried to recall animation in his lord, and did every thing that a person in his situation could do, but in vain; no one was within hearing, and nothing could revive the earl, in whom, Paterson feared, life was extinct: time was not to be trifled with, and he at length felt himself compelled to do what he might as well have done at first—leave his lord in his present disastrous state, and ride full speed to Holleyfield for assistance. Oh! how humiliating to the pride of man are accidents like these! the earl of Dunotter, one of the first noblemen of the age in talent, accomplishments, and celebrity; high in rank, so lately married, and by that marriage enabled to redeem the splendour of his ancient possessions, graceful in person, and elegant in manners, had, in almost the evolution of a moment, become levelled with the dust, and to all appearance, if not in reality, had paid that debt to nature which every one must pay: all his advantages, those at least which were personal, were now of no more value than the ground he lay upon; the voice of fame which trumpeted forth his honours and distinctions, seemed now an empty breath, loudly proclaiming the vanity of man; and neither his exalted rank could command, or large fortune purchase, breath if it was flown, or health if it was injured by this accident of a moment.

Paterson, aware of the danger of delay, stopped at Holleyfield only to announce the sad tidings to Mrs. Greville and old Sherwin the butler; and then rode back as fast as possible, the earl's valet and some more attendants following with one of the carriages as quickly as the state of the roads would admit. The next point of consideration with Mrs. Greville was, how to break this sad intelligence to Lady Dunotter, but especially to Cordelia, whose sufferings, mental and corporeal, had already been so great; as to the countess, whether she had a higher opinion of her fortitude, or a lower one of her sensibility, cannot exactly be determined, but she felt less apprehension on her account; the two ladies were sitting together in Lady Dunotter's apartment, and Mrs. Greville, after some deliberation, sent to request the favour of speaking to Lady Lochcarron; Cordelia cheerfully obeyed the summons, but when she beheld the countenance of the housekeeper, she felt a sad presentiment that some fresh anguish was in preparation for her, and thinking only of her wandering lord she believed it connected with him; with that composure which the state of her feelings inspired, yet in that tone of anguish which betrayed she had no hope, she said, "I see you have some distressing news, Mrs. Greville, tell me the worst, for, believe me, it will be mercy;—I have endured so much from suspense, that it seems to me preferable to know the reality of evil, however great." Mrs. Greville thus sanctioned, told at once the distressing truth.

Calamities in *abeyance*, if the mode of expression may be allowed, are sometimes more overwhelming than when actually brought to pass; for then an aid, a support which is not our own, nor inherent in ourselves, is accorded us; yet sad was the stroke to the poor suffering Cordelia, and deeply did she feel it; as Lord Dunotter, who she had but too much reason to fear (from the account brought by Paterson) was hurt past recovery, she should lose her only efficient friend, endeared to her by all the circumstances already detailed; but deeply and solemnly resolved in every instance to attend only to the call of duty, she put all selfish regrets aside, struggled with the overflowings of sensibility, and with a caution and tenderness which only her feeling heart could dictate, and her elevated mind execute, she gradually made Lady Dunotter acquainted with the sad situation of her

lord, and prepared her to see him brought home; to say that her ladyship was shocked is no departure from veracity; for there is, perhaps, scarcely a person in existence who, under such circumstances, could have been otherwise; to say she was grieved is not less true, but it was almost as much the grief of disappointment, because she could not now appear at court, as of sympathy for the sufferings of her husband: she loved the earl as much as she could love any one but herself, for the last-named personage was always the one who claimed the first consideration with her ladyship; besides, she had for some time past ceased even to hope that she should ever be able to gain over Lord Dunotter that influence which Sir Charles Walpole had allowed her to acquire; and accustomed to take in at the first glance all the bearings and relations of a subject, she perhaps conceived the hope of obtaining from her lord, in the lassitude of illness, those concessions which full health would not yield.

When Paterson reached the spot where he had left his lord, he found him supported by an old peasant, who in passing accidentally had seen him; he was so far revived as to be sensible both of the cause of his fall and its consequence, which was the fracture of his left arm; not to enter into long and unnecessary details, his lordship was brought home with all the care and tenderness possible; Lady Lochcarron herself, with a strong exertion of fortitude, seeing him carried to his chamber, kissing his hand, bathing it with her tears, and receiving from the pressure of his the assurance that he was sensible of, and grateful for her attentions.

The whole phalanx of medical people, whose services had of late been so frequently required at Holleyfield, were once more summoned. Dr. Herbert, the nearest in vicinity, of course arrived first, and examined the limb, which he found in as shocking a state as it is possible to conceive; the arm was broken in two places, a simple fracture of the large bone, and a dreadful compound one of the elbow joint; the case could admit of no demur of opinion, amputation was absolutely necessary; the earl, with great fortitude, signified his readiness to undergo the operation, but Lady Dunotter positively insisted that it should not be performed until Mr. C—, one of the first surgeons in London, should arrive, and give his decision. By this time some other practitioners of the neighbourhood had arrived, who confirmed the necessity of having the limb taken off, and thought the sooner it was done the better; Mr. Herbert, ever politely acquiescent to Lady Dunotter, said that he thought the delay of a few hours could be of no consequence; but as the other gentlemen were evidently of a different way of thinking, Lady Lochcarron wished their advice, and not Herbert's, to be followed; but her wishes were in vain, and her remonstrances disregarded. Oh! how poignantly did she now feel the absence of Lord Lochcarron, and as keenly deplore his dereliction from duty; he who ought to have watched by the couch of his parent; to have soothed his sufferings with filial attention, and to have been the consoler and protector of the countess and Cordelia, was wandering from his home and his country in a way degrading to his rank and character, no one knew whither.

Dr. C— did not reach Holleyfield till the following morning; he censured visibly, though with tenderness and caution, the delay which had taken place. The season of the year was favourable, and the earl's habit not bad, but the torture he had for so many hours

endured, had produced an alarming degree of fever, yet he was composed, and sustained the operation with great firmness. Dr. C— pronounced all immediate danger over, and the best skill of the medical men was exerted to keep the fever down; but in despite of their utmost efforts it raged very high, the earl became delirious, and in that state frequently called on his son; raved about Miss Borham; and sometimes talked wildly and incoherently about political affairs. Cordelia, who passed the chief part of her time in his apartment, and whose every energy was devoted to repay to Lord Dunotter the attentions she had received from him during her own illness, heard all these wanderings, often with surprise, and sometimes with perplexity to discover their meaning; but they were so unconnected that the efforts of imagination could seldom give them plausibility, certainty was out of the question.

Lady Dunotter seemed at first greatly shocked by the situation of her husband; then as the time drew on in which she had hoped to shine in the circle, and glitter in the hemisphere of fashion, and she contrasted the splendid equipages and gay dresses she had planned in idea, with Lord Dunotter's sick event and mutilated form, she became peevish, fretful, and disposed to quarrel with fate; but new scenes and fresh schemes engaged her fertile brain, and opening plans of power and interest called forth the exuberant activity of her spirit; Lord Dunotter, stretched on a sick bed, and suspended between life and death, could neither inquire into, nor regulate any of his affairs: no one could tell where Lord Lochcarron was; and the meek and nearly exhausted Cordelia gave no attention to any thing but nursing and soothing her father-in-law: thus was her ladyship left sole paramount-directress over the stewards and servants, whose every act of consequence was submitted to her judgment and pleasure, and thus did that love of power and of money, which had always been ascribed to Lady Dunotter, receive complete gratification.

Yet though it was said above, that no one could tell where Lord Lochcarron was, let it not be understood that no one inquired; Cordelia, in this season of affliction, compelled wounded pride and delicacy to step aside while she made it her care to see the person who, since the disgrace and removal of Pringle, had the chief management of Lord Dunotter's affairs, and entreated him to use all possible means to discover the place of Lord Lochcarron's present residence, that he might be immediately informed of his father's situation: this Mr. Brewster professed his inability to do in any other way than by sending a letter to Lord Dunotter's banker, to be by him transmitted to the person at Paris by whom the money before-mentioned had been drawn for; but this was at best a very precarious and uncertain mode, as the gentleman in question had already declared his perfect ignorance of Lord Lochcarron's retreat. However as no other method could be found, this was adopted; and both Cordelia and Lord Dunotter, when his lordship was sufficiently composed to be made sensible of what had been done, flattered themselves that when such distressing intelligence of his only parent reached Lochcarron, filial duty would revive, and he would return to the bosom of his family. Lady Dunotter neither wished nor hoped any such thing; as a usurper dreads the restoration of a lawful sovereign, so did her ladyship dread the thought of Lord Lochcarron's arrival; aware that she must resign into his hands great part of her present power and sway: besides she felt angry with and jealous of Cordelia's interference in having presumed to dictate to Mr. Brewster in the matter; and Mr. Herbert had delicately and distantly hinted to the

countess, through the medium of Mrs. Dobinson, her ladyship's woman, his belief that the earl would not long survive his accident; and that Lord Lochcarron should return and be reconciled to his wife, and that they should on the demise of their parent blaze forth to the world as Earl and Countess of Dunotter, while herself should dwindle into a dowager, were matters which her ambitious spirit could not bear to think of: true, she would, even in case of those events coming to pass, retain for life the chief part of Sir Charles Walpole's immense property; for it was not to be supposed that Lord Lochcarron would litigate the will of his wife's parent with the widow of his own; but faulty natures are ever overlooking the blessings and advantages they possess, and grasping at those which Providence has in justice and mercy denied them: her brain was now occupied in forming a thousand schemes and plans, to counteract what she ought to have been the first to promote; but new and unexpected events soon occurred, which placed all parties in different positions.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD Dunotter continued very ill for about a fortnight, and though at the end of that period his fever abated, it left him in a state of extreme weakness. Cordelia was well nigh worn out, and reduced to the situation she had so lately recovered from, with watching by him; but now that his reason, and, in some degree, his spirits, had returned, she felt herself amply repaid by the gratitude his lordship expressed for her attentions, and by every little change and circumstance which gave promise of his recovery.

No news was received of Lord Lochcarron; and his much-injured lady, on whose heart that sad subject ever pressed, had now no one to whom she could pour out her grief, except in letter to Mrs. Emerson; for as to Lady Dunotter, she seemed very willing to resign to her the task of nursing her lord.

Matters were in this state, when one morning, as Cordelia, having seen Lord Dunotter fall into a fine sleep, was reading in an adjoining room, the following card was put into her hands: "Capt. Thornton begs permission to pay his respects to his beloved relation, Lady Lochcarron, if his presence will not be deemed intrusive." Great was the perturbation of Cordelia when she read this note; on inquiry she found that the writer was at the gate, alone, in a carriage and four, having declined alighting until favoured with her answer: "How am I to act?" was the question she asked herself; "As duty dictates," was her own reply. Capt. Thornton, though not a very near, was yet her nearest relative, and in her various and deep reflections on her own situation, it had often occurred to her, that on his return home he would very probably think it incumbent on him to compel Lord Lochcarron to do her justice, either by the decision of the law or the sword: the first, was humiliation, grief, and shame; but oh! the last was horror itself: true, she might, by declining to see Capt. Thornton, intimate to him that she did not desire his interference in her affairs; but regard for the memory of her father, and for her own respectability, already wounded in the eye of the world, were the points which seemed to predominate above all others; and not able, while Capt. Thornton was waiting in the way described, to give much time for reflection, she gave orders for his admission.

Those romantic days, when feeling was so exuberant that love at first sight was thought neither weak nor indecorous, are so long since gone by, that it must not be inferred Capt. Thornton fell in love with his fair cousin in this their first interview; all circumstances taken into consideration, a more interesting object, or one more worthy to inspire tenderness, cannot be imagined than was Lady Lochcarron when she presented herself in the drawing-room; one half of her short life had elapsed since herself and Thornton last saw each other; then she had exhibited the sweet engaging picture of playful innocence; now she was a graceful, dignified, lovely woman; her recent afflictions had shed a pensiveness over her fine features, and softened the expression of her mild blue eyes; but a beam of pleasure enlightened them when she beheld the only surviving relation of her father, and that sadly-painful consciousness which, whenever the eye of a stranger met her's, whispered, "You are the despised, deserted bride of an hour,"

tinged her cheek with the mock of semblance of that bloom, the reality of which had vanished before the sad circumstances of the last few months.

When she approached Capt. Thornton, she held out her hand with great sweetness; said she truly rejoiced to see him in England; and subjoined a very kind inquiry after his health: Thornton, who was frankness and cordiality itself, both by nature and profession, was charmed by a reception so much in unison with his own feelings: with that sunshine of affection which, whatever art may effect on the muscles of the other features, it can never throw into the eyes, and that elastic pressure of the hand which is the spontaneous dictate of real friendship, he expressed, as he led her to a seat, the very great pleasure which this interview gave him; but he neither inquired; for Lord nor Lady Dunotter, and Cordelia, who could not for a moment think the omission accidental, felt an impression that it was only a prelude to the censure he would pass on their conduct for having involved her in so disastrous a marriage: oh, how sadly did she feel the contrast between this silence and those congratulations which, had that marriage been auspicious, she should now have been receiving.

Unable to endure these sad reflections, she said, "Capt. Thornton, it is now, I believe, ten years since we saw each other; but trust me, I have never forgot our relationship, or that I owe you a debt of gratitude for your kind attention to my dear father during his last illness." Thornton replied, "It was then, and has been ever since, a subject of my keenest regret, that I was called away exactly at that time; your excellent father's heart and mind, weakened by illness, were too easily warped by those who suited their arts to their own designs; had I been there, you should have been done justice to, and—" he added, the native energy of his character breaking forth, "you shall be done justice to still; Lady Dunotter shall not riot in your spoils; her lord repair his broken fortunes with your ancestor's property, and his son insult you thus with impunity.—Pardon me, my dearest cousin," he pursued, seeing the pale hue of death overspread the lovely face of his auditor, "I am too abrupt, but neither my friendship for you, my respect for the memory of your father, nor the sense of what I owe to our family will suffer me to be tame: but I will at least endeavour to be more calm; will my beloved cousin honour me with her confidence, and say what is the treatment she has received from Lady Dunotter, and how a union so unfortunate was ever brought about: she must be sensible," he pursued in a kind and gentle tone, seeing a shade of deep emotion gathering on Cordelia's brow, "she must be sensible that her reputation demands a scrutiny, which shall declare her innocence to the whole world, and that as her nearest, almost only relation, it is my positive duty to make it."

While Capt. Thornton was talking, Cordelia had time to recollect herself, and her native dignity of mind and character rising above every trivial embarrassment, she, with the most charming candour, detailed every material event which had taken place from the time of her father's death, only she carefully suppressed all mention of Miss Borham; while of Lord Dunotter she spoke with filial tenderness, and of Lady Dunotter with all the respect due to her father's widow.

Thornton heard her with all the admiration which her candid mind and sweet disposition could inspire; when she paused, he said, "My dearest Lady Lochcarron, I have no hesitation in saying that you have been infamously ill-treated; I think only a madman could have acted as Lochcarron has done, when at the height of happiness; no one but the most unfeeling savage could have abandoned so much gentleness and lo—" he was evidently going to say loveliness, but suppressed the word, and proceeded, "and have left it in the power of a harshly-judging world to form such conjectures and suspicions as it may have done; and none but a ——in your presence I will not call him what he well deserves to be called, would have thus dared to defy every sacred and moral obligation." Every word that Capt. Thornton uttered stabbed Cordelia to the heart; there was but too much truth in all he said; her reputation ought to be vindicated, it was the first point a female should think of; but ah! her every earthly hope died within her when she reflected, that before that could be done, the blood of Lochcarron and Thornton would too probably be shed by the hand of each other; she raised her sweet face to her defender with a meek, pity-imploring look—"Oh, Capt. Thornton," she sighed, "I feel too sensibly the truth of what you say, but I cannot yet come to any resolution on the steps which ought to be pursued—I cannot sanction any proceedings without being allowed some little time to reflect." "No consideration is due to them," he exclaimed; "believe me, the son only merits your contempt, and the father does not deserve your confidence; pardon me, dearest Lady Lochcarron," he proceeded, seeing Cordelia much distressed by the blunt energy of his manner; he was about to continue his discourse, when they were interrupted by the opening of the drawing-room door.

While Cordelia's morning had been employed as already described, first in attending Lord Dunotter, and then in reading, Lady Dunotter had been closeted with Mr. Herbert and Mr. Crompton, who were both fraught with important intelligence; the first came, he said, to discharge a most painful, but incumbent duty;—Dr. C— had been indiscreet enough to hint an opinion, which had already gone abroad, that there was a great probability of Lord Dunotter's illness ultimately terminating in a decline, and had he suffered the countess to hear this opinion—which, *he hoped, might be erroneous*—from any one but himself, he should have felt that he was acting neither with the candour of a medical man nor the kindness of a friend. "Oh!" sighed her ladyship, with a deep and heavy respiration, holding up her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, "do not say so, my dear Mr. Herbert; in mercy revoke that sentence; are my afflictions never to cease?" Mr. Herbert replied, "My respected Lady Dunotter, do not distress yourself; probable events are not always certain ones; Dr. C—'s opinion in cases of this description is very high, to be sure; Dr. B— thinks as he does; and I confess I—but, indeed, my dear madam—" he was about to add more, when he was interrupted by Mr. Crompton with, "My dear doctor, leave these events to fate, and the consequences to the time they happen; Lady Dunotter has been distinguished for dignity and fortitude under the most trying circumstances; indeed it is a matter of astonishment to a reflecting mind, to think how well some people acquit themselves in life; and others how ill! how very absurdly Lady Hootside has acted, my lady, in making such matches for her children," he added, addressing Lady Dunotter. "What matches, my dear sir?" questioned the countess, in the surprise of the moment, dropping the mask of concern on her lord's account, which she had just assumed. "Has your ladyship not heard?" he resumed, drawing from his pocket a

newspaper, from which he read the following paragraph: "Married, yesterday at St. George's, Hanover-square, the Earl of Hootside, to Miss Cottingham, only daughter of Sir Roger Cottingham, bart. of Cottingham park, Herts. same time and place the reverend Thomas Harrington, nephew of Sir Roger, to Lady Caroline Mannark, sister of the earl." "Oh! my dear Lady Hootside, how I pity her; what a sad vulgar set her headstrong children have involved her with!" said the countess, raising her hands and eyes, and shrugging up her shoulders; thus veiling beneath affected concern for Lady Hootside, the real vexation she felt at the marriage of her son, for she had already begun to reflect, that as Lord Dunotter's approaching death seemed certain, it would be her wiser way, as the zealous guardian of Cordelia, to free her from her engagement with Lord Lochcarron, and to renew the long-projected one with the Hootsides: that was now quashed, and in a way most mortifying to her ladyship; for though she had chosen to call the Cottinghams a "vulgar set," she knew well that they were all persons of great property and moral worth; and though some of their peculiarities were laughable enough, the two last-named qualifications would so greatly outweigh them, that they would be very little regarded by people who knew life; while in the connexions of herself and daughter, impaired fortune on the part of Lord Dunotter, and violated morality on that of his son, opened a fair field not only for censure but ridicule; and she well knew that Lady Hootside's satirical talent would not fail to improve it: impatient to make Cordelia acquainted with this intelligence, she hurried to the apartment of her lord in the expectation of finding her there; Lord Dunotter was up, and in answer to the well-assumed tender inquiry of his lady, declared himself much better, but there was a shade of inquietude on his features which did not escape her penetrating eye. "Where is Delia?" she inquired; "Why, don't you know who is come?" questioned the earl, with increased emotion; "Oh, may I hope it is Lochcarron?" said the countess, seeming to wish what in reality she dreaded; her lord shook his head, "No," he replied, "I am not so fortunate; it is Thornton, Sir Charles Walpole's relation;" Lady Dunotter involuntarily started, and the earl added, "the ghost of the old family quarrel will now be raised, Alexander's behaviour will be traced to that source, and I foresee that if we do not effect an immediate reconciliation between him and Cordelia, we shall all be ruined." Lady Dunotter, whose governing principle had ever been the interest of the first person singular, saw that her present step must be to break in upon the tête-a-tête of Cordelia and Thornton; "I must go and see what they are about," she exclaimed, and abruptly quitting her lord, without even thinking of the Hootside marriages, so much was she occupied with this new and nearer concern, she repaired to the room in which Cordelia usually received morning visitors, and entered as she was nearly sinking under the pointed energetic representations of Thornton.

Lady Dunotter's approach to Capt. Thornton, was the very quintessence and perfection of art; it seemed as if a beam of lively joy, caused by the presence of a beloved friend not seen for a long time, was forcing its way through the deep dejection which her husband's situation could not fail to inspire; and even while she was saying, in the very kindest tone of esteem, "Capt. Thornton, I truly and sincerely rejoice to see you once more in your native country," a deep and heavy sigh was bursting from her bosom; and added to all this, was a visible but chastened dignity which seemed to say, "I am now Countess of Dunotter."

Whatever opinion to the prejudice of her ladyship past circumstances had given Thornton reason to form, he could not, when addressed by her in her own house, with so much kindness, do otherwise than reply with corresponding cordiality.

Lady Lochcarron had risen from her seat on her mother's entrance, and glad of the opportunity to make her escape, she begged Capt. Thornton would excuse her, pleading her recent illness, which would not, she said, allow her to converse long; and wishing him a very friendly good morning, she hurried to her own room to compose her spirits. The countess followed Cordelia with her eyes to the door, sighing as in the depth of sorrow, and ejaculating, "Dear, meek, injured angel!" then as if her full heart required a confidant to unburthen itself to, and was glad to seize the present opportunity, she exclaimed, "Oh! Capt. Thornton, what have I not suffered about this heart-rending affair! we all acted for the best, and how unfortunately has it terminated!" These few words she well knew were enough to throw the frank and impetuous Thornton off his guard; he reiterated all that he had already said to Cordelia, but with less check from delicacy and fear of wounding the feelings of his auditor, or giving offence: Lady Dunotter did not resist like the sturdy oak, but bent like the pliant willow; she had seen that when her daughter quitted the room, *her* eyes were not the only ones which attended her motions; and well could she translate, that the soft sparkle of those other eyes spoke a dawning tenderness beyond the regard of consanguinity or friendship; and the discovery was enough to determine her mode of action; she saw all the points of the precipice on which she stood; these were that she should soon lose Lord Dunotter by the hand of death; that the property of Sir Charles Walpole would be torn from her by law, and that she should be stigmatized, perhaps criminated for having, as the guardian of Cordelia, drawn her into such a connexion; she saw that interest, as well as inclination, would prompt Thornton to sever at once the tie between Cordelia and Lochcarron—to become the champion of the virgin bride, and to secure to her, if possible, the immediate reversion of the property of her father. No way seemed so well calculated to guard against the consequences of these dreaded contingencies, as ingratiating herself with Capt. Thornton; and though he was long since perfectly acquainted with her character, and aware of her arts, yet such is the influence of female subtlety over the mind of man, that she succeeded in changing his opinion of her principles, and inducing him to believe that the world had imputed to her a degree of avarice and duplicity that she never possessed: he declined her pressing invitation to stay dinner, but promised to visit Holleyfield on an early day, which he named.

Cordelia, after taking a little while to compose herself, went to Lord Dunotter's apartment; "I have been wishing to see you, my love, to tell you I am better," said the earl, holding out his hand; "And I have been most earnestly wishing to hear you say so, my lord," she replied, pressing the hand thus held out to her. Lord Dunotter smiled in gratitude for her affection; "You have had an unexpected visitor, I understand, my dear," he said; "Quite so, my lord," she answered. Lord Dunotter paused a few seconds, and then while a shade of inquietude passed over his countenance, said, "Capt. Thornton would think we have used you very ill, Delia:" "If he does," she replied, compelling herself to look cheerful, "his judgment is erroneous—your lordship has never used me ill." "Not intentionally," said the earl, and then added, in a half-articulate voice, "but my

errors have had consequences which I could not foresee.” Cordelia, who heard these words with some degree of perturbation, looked a distant inquiry into their further meaning; but the earl waived the subject by asking if Lady Dunotter joined them before Capt. Thornton went; she was replying that she left her ladyship and Capt. Thornton together, when a servant popped in with, “Lady Dunotter waits dinner of your ladyship.”

Lord Dunotter had a very expressive countenance; since his illness it had become more so, and Cordelia, who had made its emotions her study, thought she could translate it as if he felt himself hurt that his lady had not come to see him before she went to dinner; and with her wonted sweetness, she endeavoured to atone for the neglect by saying, as she went out, “I will return to your lordship the moment I have dined.”

The countess mentioned Thornton in terms of guarded but absolute panegyric; “Trust me, Delia,” she added, “you cannot have a better guide, or one more justly entitled to your confidence.” Cordelia felt extremely surprised, aware how inimical every measure which Thornton would recommend seemed to be to Lady Dunotter’s interests: she only replied, that she believed his advice would be dictated by the pure sincerity of his judgment, and then turned the discourse, resolved not to commit herself on the subject of her separation from Lord Lochcarron, until she had taken time for reflection.

When their meal was ended, Lady Dunotter said she would visit her lord; and Cordelia, that she might be no restraint on their conversation, went to her own apartment, adjusted her dress, and had recourse to her usual occupations of reading and drawing; for she did not feel sufficient composure of mind to enter on that reflection concerning her own affairs, to which she had pledged herself in her conversation with Capt. Thornton. In less than an hour, she received the following note: “Though most reluctant to impose on myself so severe a deprivation, I must, my sweet Cordelia, for this evening relinquish the best soother of my pain and antidote of my sorrows—your dear society. I have letters which must be replied to, and I think myself equal to the task. Come to me, my love, before you retire to rest, just to say good night—till then, I bespeak a very dear and inestimable privilege—no less than that the first place in your memory may be occupied by yours ever, Dunotter.” Cordelia, when she read this, was only afraid that the earl would fatigue himself by writing, and such seemed to be the case; when she made her evening visit he looked ill, and was more dejected than usual, but, as he always was, uniformly kind and attentive to her.

Several days now wore over at Holleyfield unmarked by any material event; Lord Dunotter’s health continued to fluctuate without any visible change either way; he was able to walk a little in the grounds, but could not bear the motion of a carriage, and the air was yet too cold for a garden-chair, though the severity of winter was past, and the weather gave promise of a fine and early spring; the earl’s medical counsellors advised an immediate journey to the south of France; his lordship gave neither accordance nor denial, but said he should determine in a few days. Lady Dunotter dreaded such an order of things, as a death-blow to her most cherished hopes; yet she could not hazard even the semblance of an open objection, but seeming warmly to espouse the idea, told the physicians that she would persuade her lord to undertake the journey, as soon as the

season would allow an invalid to travel. Cordelia strenuously urged Lord Dunotter to go; her first consideration was his health, but perhaps the idea of meeting her fugitive lord on the continent was not her least inducement: at all events no woman, situated as she was, could have wished to remain in England.

Such was the position of affairs the evening preceding the day on which Capt. Thornton had appointed to dine at Holleyfield, when Cordelia made her usual visit to the earl; after conversing some time on different subjects, he said, "So Capt. Thornton dines with you to-morrow, Delia." "With Lady Dunotter, my lord, but I dine here, if your lordship will allow me that pleasure." "No, my love," said Lord Dunotter, his languid eyes lighting up with a beam of delight, "I appreciate and am truly grateful for your kindness, but it must not be; as the relation of your father, you must treat Capt. Thornton with every proper respect; but you will allow me, my dear child, for you are my child, and do not let me suffer for Alexander's folly—you will allow me to hint, that though he is your nearest relation, he is not a very near one, and should he take any precipitate step, it may injure that character, which ought to be immaculate, perhaps even more than Lochcarron's shameful conduct, which, I am sure, none can execrate more than I do." The sensitive purity of Cordelia instantly took the alarm; she heard in idea the voice of public fame arraigning her of seeking the aid of Thornton to disunite her from Lochcarron; and should, what she dreaded beyond every thing, a duel ensue, could she ever be self acquitted? blushing deeply, she said, "Your experience and kindness, my lord, are ever my best and safest guides—as my father's relation, I may respect and esteem Capt. Thornton, but I cannot allow him to exercise any authority in my name which could injure me in the eyes of my friends, of the world, and, of course, in my own." "I do not wish you to pledge yourself to any thing which you may hereafter see reason to retract," hastily interposed the earl; "the treatment you have received from my criminal son—I know not what epithet to give him harsh enough—justifies any measure you can take; but should we meet him shortly on the continent, for I have heard to-day, from unquestionable authority, he is now in Paris"—Cordelia's heart beat with wild vibrations, and her colour rose to the deepest crimson, and fell to the palest white; the earl, charmed with these indubitable symptoms of tenderness for an object dear beyond expression to his own heart, threw his only arm around her, and hid her face in his bosom, while he proceeded, "I was going to observe that should we join Alexander abroad, and your transcendent goodness accord him that pardon which he can never merit, yet which your glory will be the greater in granting; and which, partial as I am myself to my child, I should never solicit, did I not feel a conviction that his conduct in after life will justify his father's partiality;—should all this take place, my sweet Cordelia, the world need never know, whatever it may suspect of the actual position of our affairs, and it will, at least may, appear that your temporary separation was the act of both, justified to each other by imposing and existing circumstances which, as I stated from the first when I owned there was a subject of disagreement between us, compelled Lochcarron to go abroad."

How ready are we all to believe what we wish, and how apt to view things in the light in which they are last exhibited to us! Cordelia's sanguine and youthful mind was willing to hope for the reality of all the fair prospects Lord Dunotter held out to her view;

though the contempt Lord Lochcarron had treated her with, certainly left no room for any such expectation; while the opinion which the representations of Capt. Thornton had, but a few days before, induced her to form, that should she tamely endure the desertion of her lord, the world would believe such desertion merited, vanished before the more recent one conjured up by Lord Dunotter's hints, that should Thornton stand forth her avowed champion, his interference would at once bar all hope of reconciliation with Lord Lochcarron, and stain her character with an imputation which, however undeserved, might never be removed. Persuading herself that she was chiefly actuated by a fear of giving pain to Lord Dunotter, and hurting his health in his present weak state, she fervently assured him, that no person whatever should influence her to take any step without his entire concurrence and approbation. The earl warmly thanked her, and added a hint of caution not to name her lord's being at Paris to any one; this, so far as it respected Thornton, was certainly needless; for ill as Lochcarron had treated her, his personal safety was too dearly prized for her to tell his adversary where he might be found; but she felt surprised when she said, "Shall I not tell Lady Dunotter, my lord?" and the earl, after the pause of a moment said, "No," in a mild but emphatic tone, as if he had reflected upon and felt the propriety of absolute silence: his lordship soon complained of fatigue, and Lady Lochcarron rose to retire; the earl took her hand, and after a short pause, said, while his face was averted from Cordelia, "You do not know, I suppose, that poor Miss Borham is dying." Cordelia replied in the negative, and while she involuntarily asked herself, "Has any act of mine done this?" a sigh stole from her bosom; it was gently reverberated by the earl: "Poor girl!" he said. Cordelia asked where she was? and Lord Dunotter replied, "At Inchclair," (the seat of Lady Charlotte Malcolm.) "Thank heaven!" he added, "she has nothing of actual guilt to reproach herself with;" then kissing Cordelia's hand, he released it, bade her good night, and entered the room where he slept. Lady Lochcarron retired to her own, where the words just recited concerning Miss Borham supplied her with matter for reflections and conjectures, but she tried in vain to solve their meaning; then she reverted in idea to the hour she had passed in Pringle's house, only about six short months before, and to the changes which in that little period had taken place in the situation of almost every person then present; the master of the mansion, then so gay, so ostentatious, and so ceremonious, was now an inmate of a gloomy prison; his lovely niece, the most perfect being in form and features Cordelia had ever seen, was stretched on the bed of death; the earl of Dunotter, then shining in all the splendour of his high rank, great political influence, and distinguished talents and accomplishments, was bereft of a limb, and sinking into a languor and debility which there was but too much reason to fear would terminate fatally; the earl of Hootside was married, and if to revel in riches and pleasures can make their possessor happy, he was undoubtedly so; and lastly, herself—but poor Cordelia finished the picture with a tear.

CHAPTER V.

THE dinner party at Holleyfield consisted but of Lady Dunotter, Lady Lochcarron, Capt. Thornton, and Mr. Crompton, and the conversation was only table-talk, undistinguished by any thing of a very interesting nature, except the behaviour of the little company to each other be thought such: the countess was so kindly and cordially polite to her three friends, that any uninterested spectator would have thought they stood in the scale of her affections in the degrees of dear, dearer, and dearest; Capt. Thornton holding the highest place, Lady Lochcarron the second, and Mr. Crompton the third: Thornton was polite and respectful to both ladies, but when he addressed or replied to Cordelia a shade of tenderness mingled with it: Crompton was a cringing and fawning candidate for the favour of all; and as to Cordelia, her dignified and elegant manners were marked towards Lady Dunotter by all that dutiful respect which she always made a point of showing her; towards Thornton, with the easy freedom due to a valued friend; and to Crompton, with that attention she thought it right to display to a person whom her father had thought worthy to be left in trust for her.

In the course of the evening Capt. Thornton said to Cordelia, with solicitous kindness of look and voice, "My dear Lady Lochcarron, may I inquire if you have come to any decision on the subject we discussed at our last interview?" he paused, but did not wait long for a reply; Cordelia had previously made up her mind both as to the manner and matter of it, and now said mildly, but with firmness, "I have, sir, come to one with which I beg, for the present, to close all reference to the subject; while Lord Dunotter continues so ill, I am determined not to sanction any proceeding in which I am concerned, which could give his lordship the slightest uneasiness; his kindness to me during my illness demands every return of gratitude, no failure of duty on the part of others should excuse our own dereliction from it." "But my dear young lady," said Crompton, "you will just allow me to observe, that our duties are both various and complicated; some of them we owe to society, and others to ourselves; and where both have been violated, as pardon me if I venture to say they have in your ladyship's case, it then becomes *our duty towards society* to take all lawful methods to repel the injury; for should we tamely submit to it, we should tacitly encourage others to commit the same fault in similar cases, in the hope of meeting the same impunity;" he seemed about to add more, but seeing Lady Dunotter going to speak, he paused: "Then judge for me, my dear friends," said her ladyship, sighing deeply, "what painful duties are mine; united as I have been to two of the most excellent men, duty with me has hitherto been only another name for pleasure; but oh! I fear—I fear—" and she seemed ready to sob with grief, "it must now be otherwise; my dear Sir Charles left me the sacred, precious charge of his only child—that child, endeared to me by her own amiable qualities as if she were my own, I thought myself fulfilling to the utmost of my power the consecrated trust I held, when I married her to Lord Lochcarron, the only son of my lord, who I believed to be at once the heir to his father's honours and virtues; you, Mr. Crompton, joined with me in that trust, thought as I did—oh, fatally have we all been deceived, and painful, agonizing to me is the alternative I shall be compelled to embrace; either I must seem to fail in tenderness to the dead or to the living, but oh! how unjust will either accusation be!" and

she raised her eyes to heaven, as if appealing there to the truth of what she said—"I have," she proceeded, sighing deeply, "divested myself of every existing partiality, and allowed myself to be governed only by the strict rules of principle; most painful it is to me, to say that I feel it my incumbent, though heart-rending, task to *seem* to fail in tenderness to my dear lord, and, as the guardian of my Cordelia, to sanction you, Mr. Crompton, to institute that suit which, as you have repeatedly told me, Lord Lochcarron is so extremely desirous of, to set aside the ceremony which was performed."

Cordelia, who could view the conduct of Lady Dunotter in no light but that of "doing evil that good might come;" or in other words, of cloaking her own selfish designs with a show of principle and regard for her, was shocked beyond expression; but determined not to recede from the resolution she had avowed, she said, "No, Lord Lochcarron has never made any communication to me on the subject, and till he does so either personally or through the medium of his father, and"—"My love," interrupted the countess, in a well-assumed tone of remonstrance, "exert your reason, call to your aid that sense of dignity and innate worth which no female mind should ever be without; would Lord Lochcarron, think you, after the treatment you have received from him, hesitate one moment to apply himself for a legal separation, if he knew what to allege as a ground for such application? No, Delia, on me, and on me alone must devolve the heavy responsibility, and a mournful task it is; all we can do is to urge your nonage, and to get you declared at liberty to marry again; that is what the guilty son of my lord expects from us; it is more than he deserves, but it is the only step we can take, at once to save your reputation from the stigma which misrepresentations might cast upon it, and to screen Lochcarron from the censure he is too likely to fall under for contempt and violation of the laws." The sudden flash from the eyes of Thornton, and the sly gleam from those of the lawyer, told Cordelia without the aid of words that all this was a preconcerted plot; and knowing Lady Dunotter as she did, she could be at no loss to develop her motives: the manner of Capt. Thornton too betrayed somewhat more interest and solicitude in her fate than was exactly warranted by their degree of relationship, and the slightness of their previous acquaintance; and she felt her heart revolt from the unfeeling selfishness of her mother-in-law, who was thus, for purposes of her own, trying to traffic with her feelings, and barter her regards; yet reason, which never spoke in vain to Cordelia, told her that all they had been saying about Lochcarron was but too true, and that the world, which could not see and appreciate the motives of Lady Dunotter so plainly as she did, would give her credit for much purer ones than she in reality held; and would at once applaud that firmness which would not suffer the daughter of her first husband to be insulted by the son of her second; and that prudence which would direct the ultimate choice of her ward to Capt. Thornton, who was certainly every way worthy of her regards; he was elegant in person, and polished in manners; his fortune was now very large, with considerable expectancies from rich relations on the paternal side; his character as an officer ranked high, and his friends, and all who knew him well, pronounced him to have one of the best hearts in the world. All these recommendations, however, and perhaps ten times more, had he possessed them, would have weighed little with Cordelia in her present frame of mind; though in her rational and reflecting hours she had scarcely any hope of ever being the acknowledged wife of Lochcarron, still she could not support the thought that any other should reign lord of her

bosom; and supposing, like all young people, that such a frame of mind would be endless, she determined at once to cut Thornton's hopes, if indeed he cherished any; rising up, she said with mild but impressive dignity, "My lady, I have already avowed my resolution: until Lord Dunotter recovers, and is able to take a decisive part in this affair, I solemnly protest against any step being taken in my name;" she then begged to change the subject, and after this firm and positive declaration no one could venture to pursue it; Lady Dunotter decided in her own mind to follow her own measures without saying any more, and Thornton secretly resolved to call Lochcarron to a personal account when he should discover the place of his retreat, which hitherto he had attempted in vain. When the party broke up, Lady Dunotter gave Capt. Thornton a general invitation.

Cordelia, who had now been several hours from Lord Dunotter, went immediately to his apartment; she tried to look composed, but the traces of emotion left there by the conversation which had just passed, were too visible to escape the earl's penetrating eye; aware that her noble mind was above all petty concealments, and that if she tried to hide any thing from him it would only be in consideration of his peace, he did not endeavour by inferences, or by those modes of circumlocution which, with a person of a less ingenuous temper, he might perhaps have used to draw out of her all that had passed; but said, with the insinuating kindness of voice and countenance, "I see, my beloved child, that something has been said to disturb you—confide in me, my dearest girl, and believe my sacred assurance that I will protect you to the last moment of my life, and advise you even though the line of action which I see it right for you to follow, should traverse the nearest and dearest wishes of my own heart." The earl knew best whether he was quite so disinterested as he professed himself; but Cordelia, grateful, affectionate, and never wishing to swerve from the first bonds her heart had formed, identified all her interests with his, and gave him her whole confidence, only softening as much as possible the evident solicitude of Lady Dunotter to ingratiate herself with Capt. Thornton; but Lord Dunotter, who was penetration itself, easily fathomed the depth of his lady's mines, and formed his own counterworks accordingly. "Thank heaven!" he said, "they do not know where Alexander is; Cordelia, my love, I am determined to set off for the continent the day after to-morrow if it is agreeable to you, and," added his lordship, taking her hand, and speaking lower, "we will not mention our design to Lady Dunotter until to-morrow, because—" The entrance of the countess broke off the conversation; her eyes, as she came in were fixed upon her lord, while every feature and muscle of her face expressed the most anxious and tender affection, and seemed to ask even before her lips moved, how his health had been during the hours of her absence. Lord Dunotter knew very well how to repay all this in kind; it grew late, and the earl, with paternal kindness, dismissed Cordelia to her rest; but painful reflections on the past, and anticipations, not unmingled with fear concerning the future, kept her awake the greatest part of the night.

All had been for some time perfectly still in the house, when she suddenly heard, or thought she heard, an unusual bustle, with a sound like the opening and shutting of distant doors: through the whole of Lord Dunotter's illness, she had always given strict orders to be called should his lordship be materially worse in the night, and in painful apprehension that such was the case, she rose and dressed herself; but after waiting nearly an hour, and going into the gallery to listen, without any one approaching her apartment,

she hoped she had been mistaken, and returned to bed; worn out with watching, she fell asleep, and did not awake till rather beyond her usual time in the morning; her first inquiry to Lucy always was if she knew how Lord Dunotter had rested; Lucy, long since known as one of that class who are never better pleased than when they can be the harbingers of ill news, threw into her face as much of the appearance of concern as her features would bear, and replied, "My lady, my lord was taken very ill in the night; his lordship was seized with a violent pain in the same side the arm was taken off, and fainted several times; Philipson says he thought his lordship—" "Why was I not called?" interrupted Cordelia, in a tone of grief and alarm. "His lordship, ill as he was, insisted you should not be disturbed, my lady," was the reply. Not to be prolix, Cordelia learned that Mr. Herbert had been summoned; that the more violent symptoms appeared to yield to the remedies he had recourse to, and that the earl had just fallen into a doze; Lady Dunotter, who had been with her lord the whole time of his extremity, exhausted by fatigue and anxiety, had, by Mr. Herbert's directions, taken a composing draught, and retired to bed.

Poor Cordelia was deeply grieved by this intelligence, and blamed herself severely for not having risen when she heard an unusual noise in the house; determined to atone for what her affectionate mind deemed a neglect, she silently took her station by the earl's bed-side, watched his agitated slumbers, and when he awoke, her sweet face was the first object his eye rested upon; no one was present but themselves and Philipson, his lordship's valet, with whom he was under no restraint; in answer to Cordelia's solicitous and tender questions, the earl assured her that his pain was quite abated; but added, with a sigh, and a languid look, "I fear, my love, we must for the present relinquish the plan we formed yesterday;" in reply, she entreated him only to think of getting well; but she saw, with unspeakable grief, that the last few hours had effected a deeper change in his fine countenance, than all his previous sufferings and illness; and when he rose, which he did in the course of the day, his weakness and low spirits were not less apparent than his altered looks.

Upwards of a week now wore over; though every art of medicine was tried, the earl visibly lost strength, and seldom smiled, except as it were by an effort to cheer Cordelia, who was his only comforter; for as to the countess, her manner was little calculated to sooth a drooping invalid; when in his presence she seemed buried in the depth of anguish; but almost the whole of her time, when she was not either in her lord's apartment, dressing, or sleeping, was passed in close consultation with Mr. Crompton.

It was the ninth evening from that on which Lord Dunotter was last taken ill, that as Cordelia was walking on the lawn, Philipson came to her with a message from his lord requesting to see her immediately, if not particularly engaged; relieved from the distressing apprehensions which seized her by Philipson's assurance, that his lord was not worse than usual, she obeyed the summons, and when she entered the earl's apartment, saw with a feeling resembling joy, that though his interesting countenance exhibited traces of evident emotion, it seemed to be of a pleasurable kind. "I believe it is our acknowledged property to encroach on goodness, my Cordelia," he said, holding out his hand; "your society is so dear a solace, and you indulge me with it so often, that I now

venture to invade your retirements.” She replied with a cheerful smile, “Few of us complain, I believe, my lord, when called from our retirements to enjoy pleasure;” the earl kissed the hand he held, and said, “My pleasures are so few that I am become quite epicurean in those I possess; I cannot increase their quantity, but their quality is greatly enhanced when shared with you; I have a letter from town this evening,” he added, with a beam of that animation which formerly distinguished him. Cordelia started, and the earl hastily subjoined, “from which I learn that Alexander is now at Poole in Dorsetshire.” Astonishment and joy succeeded each other so rapidly, that Cordelia had no power of articulation; the earl watched her emotions with guarded and silent, yet close observation, and without attempting to speak, seemed waiting to hear what she would say; “Perhaps,” she began, and was going to make out the sentence, “perhaps he is coming home;” but a bashful fear lest she should seem too ardently to wish it, checked the words before they passed her lips; still the earl was silent, and she again said, “Perhaps,” and was about to say, “Perhaps he will go to Lady Charlotte Malcolm’s;” but reflecting that this “*perhaps*” was also liable to misconception, and might be construed into a jealous fear lest he should be gone to wait there the issue of Miss Borham’s illness, she again broke off the sentence, and was mute. Lord Dunotter, though he could not exactly know what she would have uttered, read very plainly the feelings of her bosom, and said with a look and voice of peculiar earnestness, “Oh, Cordelia, had I been well enough to go to Poole myself, I would have restored my truant boy to reason and to duty; but he has acted so infamously ill by you, that I blush to think of it;” and with a pause, he gazed earnestly in her downcast face, then resumed, “could you, would it be possible that you could, if assured of his sincere contrition, exert the most amiable attribute of heaven, and forgive a repentant offender?” Cordelia was holding the hand of Lord Dunotter; she did not attempt to reply, but gently kissing it, concealed her face on his shoulder: the earl embraced her with tender affection, and with much agitation of voice proceeded to say, “When I first desired your union with my son, I own I was greatly swayed by the advantages it held forth; but now that your virtues, your excellencies—my Cordelia, I do not flatter you when I say your perfections, are so well known to me, I wish and pray to see that union cemented as the best blessing my closing life can know; do not grieve, my love,” he continued, as he heard the sigh which breathed from Cordelia’s gentle breast, “I cannot live long, it would be vain to deceive either myself or the few on earth who are interested for me; no one, I am well aware, is so much so as yourself; no child of my own could possibly have a firmer hold on my heart; and my earnest, ardent wish is to leave you in the protection of one who will be to you a still dearer Lord Dunotter—” his manly voice faltered as he spoke the last words, and poor Cordelia was incapable of breathing a syllable; the earl leaned his head on the back of the sofa, and seemed for some minutes abstracted in thought, then seeming to acquire firmness by an effort, he said, “I must give you my whole confidence—I will lay open all my errors, you shall judge me, and decide how we must act.” His lordship paused again; Cordelia trembled, but tried to listen with composure; he resumed, “You remember, I dare say, that on that evening which would have been one of the happiest of my life, and, I flattered myself of yours also, I mentioned the circumstance of Pringle, my late steward, having injured me to a very considerable amount, and of my having caused him to be arrested; for this I own I had more than one motive, I—I mean when I first returned to England, and came down to Ravenpark—” again Lord Dunotter paused, then gently disengaging the hand of Cordelia

which he held within his arm, he rose and traversed the apartment three or four times with slow steps, then resuming his seat, he said, "I am fatigued to-night, my dear, and cannot go on; there are some letters which it will be proper you should see; expect them in the morning, and do not come to me till you receive them;" he then bade her a very affectionate good night, and Cordelia retired to her chamber, and her own meditations, not the least pleasing of which was the certainty that Lochcarron was now in the same country with her; and not the least distressing, the conviction which she could no longer shut her mind to, that Lord Dunotter was indeed fast descending to the grave.

Prohibited from going to his apartment in the morning, her first inquiry was after his health and rest: Philipson, as Lucy reported, said he had passed an indifferent night, and, if not worse, was certainly no better. In great anxiety she waited till nearly three o'clock, beguiling the time with various occupations, and dreading lest the unusual circumstance of her being the whole morning from the earl, should excite Lady Dunotter's observation; but his lordship had himself barred all comment on that point, by also excluding his lady from his apartment, under the plea that he was busy with papers of importance.

At the hour before-mentioned, Lucy brought in a packet which she had just received from Philipson; it was the size of several letters, sealed, and directed in the hand-writing of Lord Dunotter, "To Lady Lochcarron;" that tremor of the nerves which the almost perpetual agitation of her spirits had of late made her subject to was coming on, augmented by a feeling, not exactly of curiosity, but anxiety respecting this packet; she felt an unaccountable repugnance to opening it; but she had been so many hours from Lord Dunotter, that a desire to return to him overcame her reluctance, and severing the seal, she found within the cover four letters, each folded in a separate paper, and numbered 1, 2, 3, 4; the envelope contained the following lines:

"My dearest Cordelia,

Could my mind have approached, even in the most distant degree, to the purity of yours, I should not have shrunk as I did last night from that unreserved confidence I had just pledged myself to; what I cannot say in person, I have attempted by letter, aided by the explanations which you will find in the others inclosed; read them, my love, in the order they are numbered; and though when you do so, I dare neither appeal to the bar of justice, nor seek the award of mercy; neither ask your forgiveness, nor try to avert your indignation, when you know me as the primary author of your late sufferings, and the intended violator of the sanctities of domestic decorum, I yet implore you to remember that the offending culprit is your truly affectionate father,

Dunotter."

The hints contained in this note seemed to Cordelia of so distressing a nature, that she felt more than ever reluctant to examine the letters; hitherto Lord Dunotter, when acknowledging that there existed a point of difference between himself and his son, had

always ascribed it to misrepresentation, now he accused himself as the aggressor; while at the other hint she shuddered, without being able to define what it meant; painful, however, as she feared her present task would prove, she must go through it, and with desperate resolution she severed the seal of No. 1; the hand-writing was totally unknown to her, but with amazement mingled with a feeling resembling horror, she proceeded to read what follows:

“To Lord Lochcarron.

My lord,

Though confined a prisoner, accused as a criminal, and suffering under a severe fit of illness, neither deprivation of liberty, shame, nor pain could have induced me to intrude my miseries on your lordship on this happy day, did not a far more severe and touching interest than any of those compel me to lay open my sorrows to one who, as I well know, is ever ready to assist the injured and oppressed; my lord, I humbly entreat pardon, I use strong language, but it is wrung from me by a grief that rends my very heart! my Caroline—my child—for such your lordship knows I have always regarded her, having none of my own, was carried off last night—oh! my lord, I scarcely know how to write it—by your noble father’s orders, to his lordship’s seat in Scotland;—oh! Lord Lochcarron, I am accused of being a defaulter in my accounts, perhaps I may be so, though, I hope, not to any great amount; I confess I made some unfortunate speculations, and I was in hopes my lord would not discover the deficiency until I had made it good, which, I protest, I intended to do, as soon as ever I could raise the money, by selling and mortgaging every thing I had, and borrowing of my friends; for, my lord, I am not without good friends; but if I had even robbed your noble father, ought he to have reimbursed himself with the honour of my niece, for too much I fear it is so: I once thought, and I know I thought too truly, that she was too aspiring, and that her heart was fixed, oh, my lord, I dare not say on whom—my heart melts when I think of her, such beauty as can hardly be equalled, and such accomplishments as cannot be excelled—and what, I fear, have they all come to? at all events what will they come to? my lord, I most humbly beg, implore, entreat you to use your influence with your noble father to restore my poor girl to me—to take all I have, and let us hide our heads in a distant land. If I am criminal in one respect, is every one else innocent in others? and can none but poor men infringe the laws? once more humbly hoping your lordship will excuse what my full heart has compelled me to write, I take the liberty to subscribe myself, with the most profound respect,

your lordship’s most obedient
humble servant,

Ralph Pringle.”

Artfully as this letter was calculated to rouse into action the romantic feelings of Lord Lochcarron, Cordelia yet read too plainly in it, both the record of his love for Miss Borham, and of the acknowledged turpitude of Lord Dunotter; it was dated from

Buckingham gaol, on that eventful day, the consequences of which seemed to be endless: without allowing herself time to indulge painful reflections, she tore open No. 2, and with deep emotion, beheld that letter which had been given to the care of Lady Dunotter, three or four hours after Lord Lochcarron's mysterious departure, and by her presented to her lord at his return from Ravenpark; well did she remember how ardently she wished at that time to inspect its contents; but now, when she held it unsealed in her hand, she gazed on the superscription, and felt as if withheld by a spell from opening its folds; she did, however, open them, and, often interrupted by her tears, read what follows:

“My lord,

Though my heart is bleeding at every pore, and my mind oppressed with a weight of anguish which I believe it will never recover from, I neither write to upbraid, to remonstrate, nor to complain, but to give my motives for a line of conduct which I am unalterably determined to pursue; my peace is wrecked by the hand of a father—he who gave me being has plunged a dagger in my bosom.—I have proved myself ready and willing to sacrifice my own feelings and sentiments to the plans and wishes of others, and how have I been rewarded? I may perhaps be told I had placed my affections unworthily; if so, bitter has been my punishment. I only have to implore you, my lord, by every tie that men usually hold sacred, that if your unhappy victim is yet innocent, you will give her an asylum with my aunt, who, for *my* sake will cherish and protect her; and if I have indeed the misery to deplore the actual guilt of those I *have* loved, I supplicate you to save *her*, and I will, I must add, *yourself*, from further—I have no word to substitute. Oh! my father, how cruelly you have treated me! could you not have respected the woman your child loved, and would have married? but I am infringing the resolution with which I begun this letter—let me hasten to finish it, and to shut out for ever all communication between my family and myself—receive then my last, solemn declaration—the tie which I have formed this day I will never ratify; on the young lady's account, I regret extremely that ever I consented to it; from the little I have now seen of her, I wished and intended to teach my heart to do her justice; but my resolution is taken; such a union in its present state, may easily be dissolved, and I shall write to my lawyer to give every facility to the suit, which it will be best the friends of the lady should institute for that purpose. For myself, I shall pass over directly to the continent, and in new scenes endeavour to lose the remembrance of home.—I have nothing to ask but the continuance of my present allowance, for which, with your lordship's permission, I shall draw on your banker. I have nothing to add, my lord;—that your lordship may enjoy very many years of health and happiness, is the earnest prayer of, my lord,

your unfortunate
and afflicted son,

L.”

To say that almost every line of this letter contained an arrow which pierced the heart of her who now read it, is not using a stronger figure than the reality justifies; for almost every line contained an avowal, either direct or indirect, of the writer's attachment

to Miss Borham; yet it also contained his assurance, that it had been his fixed determination to conquer that attachment; and though nothing could exculpate Lord Lochcarron for having violated the most sacred engagement, by abandoning his wife the moment he had made her such, yet in the partial eye of Cordelia, the conduct of Lord Dunotter, who had thus, at such a moment, outraged the feelings of his only child, justified, as far as justification was possible, all that had ensued.

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CHAPTER VI.

CORDELIA, taking the cover from No. 3, beheld with some degree of surprise, a large packet directed to Lady Charlotte Malcolm, in a most beautiful female hand: either it was that curiosity now became the governing motive, or that fear vanished before the soft influence of characters traced by one of her own sex, for no hesitation impeded the opening of this paper, though many emotions awaited the reading of the following lines:

“Dearest madam,

The innumerable instances of your ladyship’s goodness which are daily showered upon me, and the kind attention which by your orders is paid to all the wants of my weak situation, have called up in my heart the most sincere and ardent gratitude; they have done more, and have been, under Providence, a powerful means of awakening the recipient of so many favours, to a sense of her deep unworthiness; of pointing out that precipice on the edge of which she has been standing; and of illuminating her mind before the eventual close of life, with a humble sense of that Mercy which saved her from being a victim to the vanity and inconsideration so long her guides: I am too well aware, that your ladyship has received, from one of the best of human beings, impressions of me very different from my real deserts; there has been a time, when I could have worn such false honours without remorse; but now, on the verge of the grave, I no longer see things through a false medium; my habits of mind are totally altered, and truth alone, unchangeable and immutable, whether we stand acquitted or condemned by its ordeal, appears to merit the regard of a moment. Under the influence of this frame of mind, I am led, dearest madam, to hope that it is not the weakness of human nature, clinging, like some philosophers of old, to a world it affects to despise, and seeking to live in fame when dead in vitality; but a better principle—which teaches us to confess, and as far as may be, atone for error, that our memory may be cherished by the worthy—which now impels me, irresistibly impels me, to entreat your ladyship’s indulgence, while I detail those events of my life, by me ever to be deplored, as forming that chain of circumstances which has so unfortunately wounded the peace of your noble family.

“My father, as I believe your ladyship has heard, was in the church, and the fond partiality of a child is gratified in recording the testimony of all who knew him, that he was a truly worthy member of the sacred function; my mother dying a few weeks after my birth, and my father before I had completed my tenth year, I was left, with a small portion, to the care of my uncle and aunt Pringle—the latter, who was my father’s sister, survived him but a short time, so that the whole plan of my education devolved on my uncle; and only solicitous to improve my personal advantages, which he was pleased to think great, he placed me at a boarding-school in Surry, where, at the expense of all that my father left me, both principal and interest, I received what is frequently termed a first-rate female education; that is, I was taught to execute and display with facility, and in the most fashionable style, those acquirements which are usually called accomplishments; imagination was cultivated at the expense of judgment, and a spurious off-hand species of memory was so assiduously called forth and furnished, that I could easily make myself

appear well-instructed in arts and sciences which I knew very little about. Here I must pass my unqualified censure on that governess under whose care I was placed; she was for ever pouring forth encomiums on my beauty, and when any ladies came as visitants to the school, I was sure to be exhibited as a something surpassing human perfections; my shape, complexion, eyes, and teeth, were extolled in my own hearing; and frequent hints were given both on those occasions, and when my uncle came to see me, that I would certainly make my fortune by marrying highly; these ideas were so consonant to his own sentiments and views, that he did all in his power to realize them, and enabled me to dress in a style greatly beyond my station in life: thus placed on a seeming equality with, and made the companion of, the daughters of peers, and men of opulence, I imbibed a taste for high life, its luxuries, parade, and gratifications, so strong, that I dreaded any deprivation of them, any situation removed from their sphere as the very climax of earthly misery.

“At sixteen I was taken from school, and placed at the head of my uncle’s house; change of scene and novelty for some time amused me; but I was beginning to feel out of my wonted element, and to weary of the dull uniformity of the country, when my every thought and feeling were changed, or to speak more properly, pointed anew by the arrival of your ladyship’s noble brother at Ravenpark; hitherto I had seen very few gentlemen, and those few chiefly flippant trifling youths, who, having no minds of their own, cannot admit—and, indeed, are incapable of receiving—the idea that women have any, and are perpetually offending against those refinements and proprieties, so delightful to those females who have seen much of elevated life: oh! how exquisite seemed every motion, how dignified every thought and word of the earl of Dunotter!—but it is a theme in which I must not, will not indulge; I shall only say that there was in Lord Dunotter’s manner an attention, a—a—I do not err from truth if I write tenderness, which, from rank and perfections like his, had on a young giddy heart like mine the effect of magic; my uncle saw all that passed in my bosom; and, not less vain than myself, and urged on by additional motives, thought he saw all that passed in that of the earl also; he cautioned me to play my cards well, as he termed it, and congratulated me on the prospect of soon becoming Countess of Dunotter: oh! even now, when about to enter on the valley of the shadow of death, what blushes overspread my cheek as I write all this!—but, however painful, I must go on; my uncle, as your ladyship now knows but too well—was considerably in arrears with my lord; and to screen, to ingratiate himself, I fear—alas! I more than fear, for I know—tacitly, at least, encouraged hopes in his lordship respecting me, which even then had I known, or even suspected, much as I was biassed by a presumptuous partiality, I should have resented, and deemed criminal. Such, my lady, was the state of circumstances when I first saw your amiable, excellent nephew, a few weeks after I became acquainted with his dear father: humbled now to the dust, and beholding when I turn my eyes to the mirror, an awful memento of mortality in this faded form, which wears already the hue and substance of death, little of vanity, I trust, can actuate me when I was say I was loved at once by parent and child; but Lord Lochcarron’s passion—oh, it was purity itself, yet only avowed in sighs and glances, and waiting, as I could well perceive, in the hope that he would in time gain from paternal tenderness, that sanction which had he suspected (as I am well aware he never did) the sentiments of the earl, he would have ceased to look for. I will not attempt to conceal or

extenuate one of my errors; vain, ambitious, and, as I now see, more artful than my insidious heart had hitherto allowed me to think myself, even when I was listening to, and hoping to become the wife of the father, I was giving at least negative encouragement to the son; and cherishing another chance of becoming a countess: I must pause, for while I write the record of my own duplicity, the pen drops from my unnerved hand.

“Such, dearest madam, was the state of circumstances, when early symptoms of decline appearing in my constitution, alarmed my uncle, and induced him to send me to Tunbridge for my health; at my return, I heard reports from various quarters, of the double union which was projected between the families of Dunotter and Walpole; but my uncle, actuated by the base reasons (I must give them the term they merit) which I have already stated, assured me that so far as regarded Lord Dunotter, there was no truth in the talk of the neighbourhood; and when I saw the earl himself, which I did only once after I came home, he gave me no reason to suppose that he meditated such a sudden change in his situation. Too sensible that I am wearying your ladyship with my prolixity, I will now be as brief as possible: my uncle came to me one evening, and with every possible expression with which he could endeavour to call up my feelings of gratitude, and to excite my fears for his personal safety, and my own future comfort, he told me, that in his accounts with Lord Dunotter he was a defaulter to the amount of nearly seven thousand pounds; that the dreadful fact could be no longer concealed from his lordship; that his only chance of safety was an immediate flight to America; that he had provided the means; and that we were to take our passage on board a vessel then lying in the Thames, ready for sea: he concluded by advising me to pack up every thing of value in as small compass as possible, and to hold myself in readiness for travelling to town the next night but one: oh! respected, venerated Lady Charlotte, in what language shall I describe my feelings when told all this? how was my very soul torn and agitated by the conflicting passions which were now roused into action? shame, to think that my nearest relative had acted a part so mean and pitiful; fear, as I contemplated a voyage in my delicate state of health, and a cheerless, too probably an endless—exile from my country, and from every known and familiar object; disappointed ambition, which had so long pampered itself on prospects of imaginary aggrandizement, consequence, and victory over all competitors and contemporaries;—and there was yet one thought more bitter to endure than all the rest—I found, on deeply probing my own heart, that time, aided by shame, might enable me to support a separation from every object in England but one; but oh! when I connected ‘That banished, that one ‘word banished,’ with that one who I had been accustomed to contemplate as the standard of grace, elegance, fashion—of all that the female mind can admire—I believed that no effort I could make—for hitherto I had been quite unaccustomed to any exertion of self-control—could enable me to support the idea of never again seeing Lord Dunotter.

“Thus I thought, and thus I felt; the day came, and spiritless and irresolute, I half-obeyed my uncle in the preparations he ordered to make; but your ladyship’s noble brother had intelligence of all my uncle’s plans, and prevented their execution by an arrest: spare me, dearest madam, any recapitulation of the attendant circumstances of that event; it took place the very day preceding that which was fixed for the solemnization of two marriages, of which I knew nothing, as my uncle had cautiously concealed from me

his knowledge that they were to take place. He was scarcely taken from the house, when my maid placed on the table, where I leaned weeping, a letter from my lord; this I neither can copy nor inclose; duty in every shape required the sacrifice, and I destroyed it some months ago; it was short, but, to my vain and biassed heart, appeared to be written with great tenderness: his lordship defended the step he had taken with regard to my uncle, on the ground of the obligation he owed both to society and to himself, not to suffer so gross a breach of trust to escape with impunity; and enforced the necessity of my seeking an asylum for the present at Dunotter Castle, 'where,' as his lordship expressed it, 'Mrs. Grant the housekeeper, would feel herself honoured in such an opportunity of paying me every respectful attention.' Alas! this was that moment when I was 'weighed in the balance, and found wanting;' I rejected reason, which would have counselled me to reflect on the consequences to which the step I was urged to take might lead; I abandoned the great outwork of female virtue, *character*, by consenting to take refuge beneath Lord Dunotter's roof;—I did more, I stifled, 'the still small voice of conscience,' and listening only to the fear of being exiled from those indulgences of life to which I had been habituated, and of never seeing Lord Dunotter more, I wrote to his lordship, expressing my gratitude for his friendship, and signifying my acceptance of his protection; could blushes burn, or tears wash out this outrage against feminine decorum, I should not now retain even the resemblance of it; but heaven has wisely ordered that the sting of not only active, but passive guilt shall be lasting.

"I travelled to Scotland leisurely, as Lord Dunotter, in consideration for my delicate health, had cautioned my conductors, and during the journey was in a state of mind which I cannot describe; it was a weak sense of rectitude deploring strong error—in short it was what I would not willingly, if I had the power, inflict on a person who I knew to be my bitterest foe.

"I reached Aberdeenshire very much exhausted; and here a new trial, I was going to say, awaited me; but no, it was mercy, mercy of the highest order which snatched me from the guidance of my own corrupt and wayward heart, and introduced me to the protection of your ladyship. Mrs. Grant put into my hands two letters, one in the handwriting of Lord Dunotter, the other that of my uncle; the purport of the earl's letter was as follows:

"'Since your departure, my sweet friend, the painful apprehension has occurred to me, that an ill-judging malicious world may possibly attach to your residence under my roof a most unmerited censure, which may reflect not only on you, but on my son; the events of this day, which I have not now time to detail, but which you shall soon know, are such as I am sure will justify me to your dignified mind, in requesting that you will honour Lady Charlotte Malcolm, by making Inchclair, instead of Dunotter Castle, your residence.'

"This letter was dated the day of his lordship's and Lord Lochcarron's marriages, and had reached Scotland before me, as I had travelled so slowly. Mr. Pringle's letter harrowed up my soul, for it confessed all I have hinted above, of the mask he had worn on my subject to Lord Dunotter; told me what had all along been his lordship's views and

expectations concerning me; and told me too, that the earl was that day married to Lady, and Lord Lochcarron to Miss Walpole. I thought I should have expired on the spot, yet an indignant feeling supported me, and folding up my letters, I endeavoured at the appearance of composure: I would not, though urged by Mrs. Grant, remain a single night under the roof of Dunotter Castle; perhaps fatigue and agitation accelerated my malady, or perhaps it was too previously deeply rooted to yield to medicine or change of air; for since my residence in Scotland I have rapidly declined, though I acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude, the skill and tenderness which have been exerted for me, and with more than gratitude, with veneration, I beg to express my esteem for, and obligations to, your ladyship's worthy chaplain, Mr. Baxter, whose pious and inestimable instructions have cleared my understanding from the mists and errors that oppressed it, and taught me to rest on that Rock from whence my hopes of forgiveness of error, and final acceptance alone can spring.

"Mrs. Johnston has told me of the accident which has befallen your ladyship's noble brother, and of the departure of my Lord Lochcarron; on the *first* point, I will not say how deeply I feel, and how fervently I implore heaven to restore the earl to health; but the *last* has been my inducement to trouble your ladyship with this long narrative, and most solemnly to aver the truth of every syllable it contains, that no shadow of suspicion in which Lord Lochcarron is concerned, may, after I shall repose in the grave, remain on the mind of your ladyship, or any other member of your exalted family, for every one of whom my earnest prayers shall mingle with the last feelings of departing life. Once more I implore your ladyship's permission to apologize for this lengthened intrusion, and to subscribe myself with the most fervent gratitude,

your ladyship's devoted servant,

Caroline Borham."

Cordelia read and wept over this long epistle with such attention, surprise, pity, and emotion, that she was summoned to attend Lady Dunotter at dinner before she had finished her comments: "My lord and you seem very busy with papers, my dear," said the countess, with a scrutinizing look; "may I ask what so deeply engages your attention?" Cordelia, aware that she ought not to "Do evil that good might come," or in other words, tell a falsehood to promote truth, only said, that she had not seen Lord Dunotter that day; but she felt indignant at the meanness of Lady Dunotter, who it was plain had heard from her servant, that the earl had sent her a packet of papers; "That is no answer to my question, Delia," said her ladyship, with a smile, at once so pleasant that it could not be resented, and so sly, that its satirical meaning could not be mistaken; "I am sorry it is not in my power to give your ladyship a more satisfactory one," replied Cordelia, for the meekest natures are sometimes the most determined when roused into action; "I declare, upon my honour, that I do not know what papers my Lord Dunotter is busy with; and as to myself, I have been looking over some letters which belong to a friend, of course such a confidence is not my own." She saw the countess and Mr. Crompton exchange glances, and trembled lest they should have discovered that Lord Lochcarron was in England, and were urging forwards that suit of separation which she dreaded, and which Lochcarron's letter to his father had too fatally told her he was willing to promote. It seemed too as if they were determined to make a point of detaining her in the dining-room.

Lady Dunotter, she found, was resolved no longer to confine herself at home without company, on account of her lord's illness; and, since going to town that spring was now out of the question, had made up her mind to receive and visit all of the world that the environs of Holleyfield and Ravenpark contained: in this view she had been ordering patterns of new clothes, which were all to be submitted to Cordelia's inspection, and many of them recommended to her choice; she gave her opinion when asked, but positively, though mildly, refused making any purchases beyond what were consistent with the undress costume she had never departed from since her disastrous marriage, alleging that she could not on any account see company at present; the countess smiled, bantered what she termed her love for solitude, and looked as if she would say, "I will leave no means untried to change your resolution." Crompton's grin was the constant accompaniment of her ladyship's smile, and he had always a complaisant "yes" and "no" ready to chime in with her opinions. Cordelia did not like their manner towards her; they seemed to assume a positive right over her actions; to dictate where they ought only to advise, and to advise where silence, and some deference to her feelings, would have been at least decorous; she had, however, no appeal from their aggressions, for she was too tenacious of her father-in-law's peace in his present weak state, to harass him with her complaints; still she was reluctant to give wilful offence, and sacrificed an hour more than usual after dinner, to avoid the appearance of doing so; Lady Dunotter then went to her lord, and Cordelia, retiring to her room, bolted the door to guard against interruption, and opening the last of the letters, found it directed to herself in the hand-writing of the earl; these were the contents:

"Before my beloved child peruses these lines, the faults of her husband's father will be made known to her; not in the glaring colours they deserve, but shaded and softened by the generosity of one, whose own errors, rigidly as she is inclined to judge them, were but the emanations of his; and who, had she never known him, might now, perhaps, have been both well and happy: I offer no extenuation of my conduct—on Miss Borham's subject, it has been inexcusably bad; at my first return to England I was captivated by her beauty—I have seen the finest women of London, Paris, Vienna, and Naples, but never, in my estimation, beheld a form so elegant, and a face so perfect as those of Caroline Borham; I studied her character, and found its vulnerable parts in those inseparable attributes of woman, desire of distinction, and tenderness of heart; I saw the impression I made, and had I acted with honour, I should have avoided her society, and intrenched myself in my elevated rank; I did neither, but had recourse to flattery, and while Pringle thought he duped me, made him my tool, resolved to act by him at a suitable opportunity, as I have since done. Alexander's passion I considered but as a boyish fancy, the natural result of the romantic sentiments he had imbibed from his aunt, and which would vanish before that conviction of the unworthiness of its object, which must follow the success of my schemes.

"Oh, Cordelia! how is the longest and most intricate train of policy that the wit of man can invent, defeated in a moment by one unforeseen circumstance! on that day, when I received the hand of Lady Walpole, and gave yours to my son, I felicitated myself as having reached the ultimatum of human good: in addition to all those advantages and

distinctions, by which I had for some time past triumphed over all my competitors, I had, I expected, obtained a vast addition of property and influence in the county; I had secured Pringle; and managed so as to keep my son in ignorance of my plans with regard to his niece, whom I had placed under the care of a person who would, I knew, convey her safe to Dunotter Castle: I blush, Cordelia, to tell you who that person was, but I have pledged myself to conceal from you no part of the truth—it was the fellow who drove Lochcarron's carriage on the evening which introduced him to your acquaintance, and who was suspected—whether justly or not I could never determine—to have been in league with the villain who attempted to rob you, and who I retained in my service because I knew him to be a time-serving wretch, and had always intended to employ him on this very occasion, in the success of which I now exulted—Miss Borham, by accepting my protection, had entirely forfeited her character, and when the outposts are given up, the citadel is seldom known to hold out long. Pringle's letter, by causing Alexander's unprecedented departure, levelled at one stroke all the superstructure I had been rearing—may the villain perish who thus insidiously endeavoured to exasperate a son against his father! I will pursue him to the last hour of my life, and punish him with the utmost severity of law; nor shall his insolent threat at the conclusion of his letter avail him any thing; I will let him see that the law makes a material distinction between placing a young lady in a retirement by her own consent, and a steward embezzling the property of the nobleman for whom he acts. Pardon me, my Cordelia; my passion, when compelled to mention that culprit, gets the better not only of my reason, but of my respect for you, which I am sure will be one of the last principles my heart will hold. Let me return to my narrative; Lochcarron's conduct compelled me to an immediate change of plan; and I wrote to Caroline in the terms she has stated in her letter, and to my sister to apprise her of the guest I had taken the liberty to introduce at Inchclair: again I congratulated myself on my finesse—again I rested secure in the hope that my past designs respecting Miss Borham would never be clearly understood—and again I was fated to endure—I must say merited—disappointment. Lady Charlotte, in the first instance, gave me credit for all the motives I chose to ascribe to myself; but she was soon undeceived; Alexander, after he had been some little time in France, in justification of himself, transmitted Pringle's letter to lady Charlotte; and shortly after that of poor Caroline completed the business of unmasking my errors. My sister, though she remonstrated with me very seriously, and would, I am persuaded, have done so to a much greater extent but for the accident I met with and its consequences, complied with my earnest request, and sent me the two letters.

“Now, my Cordelia, you have before you the black catalogue of your father's transgressions; should I say I repent of and deplore them, they to whom I made the assertion, would quote upon me the words of an excellent writer, ‘when our vices forsake us, we flatter ourselves that we leave them;’ my every sense of justice withholds me from suing for your forgiveness, because I am conscious that in doing so I should be asking for what, were I in your place, I could not grant; and to implore pity is but to beg for guilt the meed of innocence. Relying then only on your mercy, I shall put myself entirely out of the question, except to say, that had it pleased heaven to spare to me my remnant of strength a little longer, I should have gone to Poole, and made my peace with Lochcarron, and Lochcarron's with you, through the medium of poor Caroline's letter; though to see

Alexander's eyes tracing such a record of his father's shame, would have been the last stab my dying heart could receive; but if even those sufferings could have been accepted as an atonement, it is denied me to make it—I am now too far gone for the journey, short as it is; oh, my Cordelia, I know not how to write my wish, yet write it I must, for I cannot speak it—would you, could you exert that inherent dignity and fortitude so eminently your characteristics, and, accompanied by a suitable female friend, go down to Poole, and when there, transmit to Alexander a packet which I shall write, inclosing Miss Borham's letter; he landed from France, my friend informs me, at Southampton, and is now at Poole, at the house of a Mrs. Garland. I have some reasons for believing that he came over with the intention of seeing me; but the suit which, I must now tell my Cordelia, Lady Dunotter has commissioned the lawyers to institute, in order to obtain an immediate dissolution of the marriage, must prove an effectual bar to his approaching Holleyfield. I would say much more, my Cordelia, but am now so exhausted, that I can only beg you to devote the first moment of your leisure to your affectionate, afflicted father,

Dunotter.”

“Oh! how much does a bad cause darken and bewilder the finest understanding!” was Cordelia's mental observation as she perused the earl's letter, and marked the incoherence, and the want of connexion, and of energy which pervaded it; when she came to that part which mentioned the postilion, she shuddered with chill horror; she well remembered Miss Borham speaking of this man, and noticing the singularity of Lord Dunotter's retaining him in his service; it now appeared for what purpose he had retained him; and Cordelia, partial as she was to Lochcarron, and biassed in favour of his parent, alternately wept and felt her blood run cold as she reflected on the conduct of both father and son on the marriage-day; the one deceiving the woman to whom he was sacredly vowing everlasting fidelity, and carrying off another, whom he in reality preferred in every point but those of rank and fortune; and the latter abandoning his wife the moment he had made her such, in defiance of the solemn obligation he had just contracted, in conformity to the laws of both heaven and earth: but she felt that if she pursued these contemplations too far, her inherent love of virtue might so far prevail, as to diminish that uniform tenderness of manner which she had hitherto preserved towards Lord Dunotter, and which she still wished to persevere in. Again she turned to the letter, and again laid it down with a strong feeling of disgust, at the ready duplicity which, when his own plans promised success, could rejoice in the thought that Miss Borham had forfeited her character; and when change of circumstances made it his interest to restore her to society immaculate, could so adroitly plead solicitude for her reputation and that of his son, as if the world would impute her residence at Dunotter Castle to Lochcarron alone: but oh! when she read the earl's wish that she should go to Dorsetshire, and be herself the medium of transmitting Miss Borham's letter to Lochcarron, how did her every nerve tremble with agitation, and how did she shrink from such a task! yet if some immediate measure was not had recourse to, the tie between her and Lochcarron would be annulled;—unable to decide, she felt more unhappy than ever; the night was wearing fast, and so short a time remained till the usual hour of Lord Dunotter's retiring to seek repose, that either she must go immediately to his apartment, or send an apology for not seeing

him that night; she resolved on the former, and found him anxiously expecting her; he looked, or at least she fancied he looked, worse than ever, and every thought of harsh censure for his errors vanished before the tender pity his appearance inspired; "I am just come to bid you good night, my dear father," she said, in a voice of kindness, "and will attend you as soon as you are up to-morrow." It was the first time she had ever called him father, and his quick intelligent eye spoke the delight he felt in the epithet. Philipson had retired on Cordelia's entrance; the earl held her hand, and averting his face, said, "You now know all, my Cordelia." She drew from her pocket the letters of Lord Lochcarron, Miss Borham, and Pringle, and placing them by Lord Dunotter, said, with forced composure and cheerfulness, "I will know nothing to-night, my lord, but that you are going to rest;" then kissing his hand, she was turning away, but he detained her; "Yet, my Cordelia," he said, "there is one point which cannot be delayed; have you—can you come to any determination? on no account would I urge you—act, my beloved child, as your excellent judgment shall dictate; but Lady Dunotter, Crompton, and Thornton are, I find, quite on the alert; and Caroline's letter, Alexander must see it, dearly as it costs me, he must see it, but not for worlds could I support the thought that it should meet any eye but his and yours;—there is no medium by which it can be conveyed to him—the post is not to be thought of—" here the earl paused, and Cordelia thus called to an immediate determination in a point of such importance, replied with mild, but firm collection, "My lord, it is a matter in which both my age and the circumstances I am placed in are incompetent to decide—I request to have the advantage of higher experience; with your lordship's permission, I will write to Mrs. Emerson." The earl gave a moment to reflection, and then said, "Yes, do so, my love; make Mrs. Emerson acquainted with every particular, have no reserves, but disclose the truth in every respect—your judgment is so excellent that nothing can warp it to error;" then after another short pause, he added, "I also will venture to intrude a few lines on Mrs. Emerson—you, my dear, shall give the narrative of circumstances, and I will add the reasons why I think you ought to pursue the line of conduct I am recommending." This seemed so considerate, so kind, so regardful of her feelings, that Cordelia was delighted, and gracefully thanked the earl; he advised her to write her letter as early as convenient in the morning, adding, that he would do the same, that they might go in the course of the day; he then subjoined, "I was so ill, and concluded my letter in such haste, that I did not say Alexander passes by the name of Campion; a very particular friend of mine in town, has succeeded in tracing him so far. I wish, ardently wish to see you reconciled," he added, gazing earnestly at her, "but that is not my sole motive for advising this journey—I think the exercise and change of scene will be of service to you—now, my dear, go to rest;" and saluting her cheek, he dismissed her.

There was something so conciliating in Lord Dunotter's manner, he knew human nature so well, and could so easily suit his voice, looks, and style of writing to existing circumstances and situations, that it can be no matter of surprise, if Cordelia was always won to his opinions; and the letter to Mrs. Emerson, to which he devoted the first hour of his rising the next morning, was in every point and respect calculated to win that lady to favour the plan he wished Cordelia to adopt. There were no little blandishments of flattery; no studied deference to her judgment, or artful appeals to her feelings; none of these, he was well aware, would do with a woman of her elevated mind; her only

vulnerable part, he knew, would be fear for Cordelia's peace, and there he fixed his battery; insinuating that he saw plainly she would never enjoy either happiness or comfort in a state of separation from Lochcarron, and that nothing could so well convince him that Cordelia was no party in the proceedings of Lady Dunotter and Capt. Thornton, as her paying him a visit.

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CHAPTER VII.

CORDELIA, apprehensive that if she deferred the task of writing to Mrs. Emerson till the next day, she might not be able to complete her packet in time, aware that from its nature it must be very large, devoted the rest of the evening, and great part of the night to her pen; she epitomised the four letters of Lord Dunotter, Lord Lochcarron, Miss Borham, and Pringle; added whatever else could elucidate the present state of affairs at Holleyfield, or display the real sentiments, apprehensions, and wishes of her heart and mind; requested the counsel of her friend how to act; and should she advise the journey, begged her influence with Mrs. Brooks to be her companion; this lady was the widow of a highly respectable person in Yorkshire, who, dying about five years before, left her without a family, and with but a slender income, which a large circle of kind friends did all in their power to prevent her from feeling as a serious evil; nor in doing this were they quite disinterested: she had qualities which made her assistance truly valuable on a thousand occasions in life—she had excellent moral principles, solid good sense, and useful female knowledge: she was now nearly fifty, but with an appearance of youth which might have passed her for much younger; of middle stature, very pleasing in person, and cheerful in temper: she sometimes resided for months together with Mrs. Emerson, and doted upon Cordelia, who did not entertain a doubt that she would accede to her request.

Lord Dunotter sent for Cordelia to preside at his breakfast table, but though he received her with more than wonted animation, his pallid looks would not allow her to think it the result of amendment, but merely a fictitious flow of spirits called up by the present occasion: his letter was ready, and sealing it up in the same cover with that of Cordelia, Philipson himself conveyed them to the post-office; for so apprehensive was the earl of Lady Dunotter's counteracting his plans, that he would not trust them in the hands of any other person. So ardently was Lord Dunotter bent on carrying his scheme into execution, that he would not suffer himself to glance at any part of the question where he could trace the possibility of disappointment; he had not showed Cordelia his letter, but now that it was gone, he told her many particulars of its contents; he had made it a request to Mrs. Emerson to find out a suitable companion for his daughter on her journey, and was delighted when he found that she had not only preferred the same petition, but had fixed on the person; even the very route by which they were to travel, and mode of travelling, the earl had settled, and, smiling, told Cordelia he would develope them as occasion required; he was much pleased with her account of Mrs. Brooks, who, he told her, would travel in the coach to Dunstable, where one of his lordship's carriages should attend—"not to bring her *here*, my love," he said, "but when she shall arrive there, I will go on with the detail of my plan;" he then advised Cordelia to take an immediate airing in the park, and to do so each succeeding morning: she sometimes aired with Lady Dunotter, but that was some hours later in the day; "By going *earlier*," his lordship observed, "she would strengthen her frame, and fit it to endure a longer journey; by going *alone*, she would both free herself from Lucy's troublesome impertinence, and, by being seen to drive in a morning unattended, take the edge from that officious curiosity which might otherwise be found extremely inconvenient when she

actually set out on her excursion; and by using one of my carriages, it may pass for Lochcarron's, and at least give the world to believe that no great degree of ill-will subsists between you." Cordelia could hardly suppress a smile at such a far-fetched idea; however she cheerfully obeyed the earl in all he required, and during the days which intervened before they might expect answers to their letters, kept as much as possible to her own apartment and that of Lord Dunotter.

Cordelia found her morning drives generally delightful; but on one occasion they proved themselves to have a capability of being very much otherwise; too actively benevolent to make them mere excursions of pleasure, she frequently called at the neighbouring cottages, where her bounty dispensed blessings, and her winning affability cheered the drooping spirits of poverty and affliction: it was the third morning she had been out, after having visited the family of a small farmer on the earl of Dunotter's estate, the mother of which was confined to her bed by a rheumatic fever, her carriage having to traverse a small portion of the turnpike road to regain the more private way in Holleyfield park, she saw advancing, with all the rapidity in which four-in-hand could be driven, a very dashing equipage, in which were seated a gay charioteer, and a fair belle by his side; two servants attended in very splendid liveries, which Cordelia recognized, even before she came near enough to see that it was the earl of Hootside and his bride, her Orton-abbey acquaintance; perhaps the same kind of recognition struck them, and told them to whom the postchaise belonged; eager to see who it contained, the gay young countess stretched out her neck, while her plumes waved in the wind, which was rather high; the eyes of the two ladies met, and were in the same moment instinctively, as it should seem, averted; those of Cordelia, because the painful circumstances in which she was placed made her shrink from scrutiny, and those of Lady Hootside because she knew not in what style to address such a non-descript as an unacknowledged wife; each, however, quickly repelled her separate feelings, and each looked again: Cordelia, firm in conscious innocence, mentally said, "Why should I shun the gaze or the address of any one? my misfortune has not been my fault;" and Lady Hootside, exulting that she had her noble husband seated by her side, thought to herself, "Why should I use so much ceremony with one who has made herself the public talk, and whose name is going to be bandied about in Doctor's Commons?" Cordelia had once been Lord Hootside's choice beyond all the women he had ever seen, and though she had never felt any positive preference for him, he had in the earlier part of their acquaintance flattered himself she did so, and had deeply resented her refusal to be of the Brighton party, and subsequent marriage with Lord Lochcarron; but he was naturally too good-tempered to rejoice, as the countess his mother, and Lady Melissa did, in the miseries she had since endured; he was prepared by the Addingtons, at whose seat they were now on a visit for a few days, to see her greatly altered; but still he was so little prepared for the total change which had taken place in her appearance, that if he had met her any where but in that place and equipage, she would have passed as a perfect stranger: these considerations called up a thrill of former tenderness, and though the consciousness of his own more prosperous circumstances at first disposed him to behave with insolent hauteur, resentment dissolved before the natural goodness of his disposition; and when Cordelia pulled the check-string, and with all her native elegance and sweetness, addressed Lord and Lady Hootside, asked after

their health, and congratulated them on their marriage, he replied at once with the respect due to her rank, and the kindness of an old friend.

As it was now the current talk of the neighbourhood that proceedings would shortly be instituted to dissolve the marriage, the earl cautiously avoided addressing her by the title of Lochcarron; Cordelia felt and understood the delicacy of his motive, but sighed to think, that

“That name for ever sad, for ever dear,”

was not considered as belonging to her. Lady Hootside looked as if she thought the manner of her lord too conciliating yet as she could not, in open defiance of his example, address Cordelia as Lady Lochcarron, she took care by a stammering, hesitating, “ma-’-am,” to let her see that she was at a loss for her proper pronoun personal: mutual inquiries after respective friends were made on both sides; Lady Lochcarron left no claim of politeness unanswered; but the interview was painful, and she terminated it as soon as she could do so consistently. When she got home, she found Lady Dunotter in her lord’s apartment, and related who she had seen, but without making any comments on their mode of behaviour to herself; the countess, however, asked so many questions, that she found exactly what that of Lady Hootside had been, and appeared to boil with indignation; but Cordelia, whose gentle nature was not inclined to notice every little effervescence of petulance she met with, only said, “that Lady Hootside had not distressed her feelings in any way to call up resentment,” and was glad when Philipson brought in the newspapers, which changed the conversation; but Lady Dunotter did not dismiss the subject, without saying emphatically, “I will yet triumph over them all.”

In the course of the morning, her ladyship told her daughter that she should have a small dinner party on the following Saturday: Cordelia easily guessed that Thornton would be amongst them, and she now wished more ardently than ever that Mrs. Emerson’s opinion might sanction her going down to Poole, and that she might be off before this appointed dining day; though whenever a thought recurred of what errand she was going upon, and how it might terminate, she felt her heart sink with apprehension.

The earliest possible return of the post brought Lord Dunotter and Cordelia answers to their letters; that to Cordelia was as follows:

“My beloved child,

In deep anxiety lest delay should prove detrimental to plans which may eventually be for the peace and happiness of my Cordelia, or give time to promote those which might prove destructive to her interests, I have given to reflection every moment of time since I received the letters from Holleyfield, and shall not seek rest till I have replied to them with that sincerity of heart and uprightness of intention, which must plead for acceptance, in the room of that unerring rectitude of judgment, which occasions like the present too fatally convince me I am deficient in. In the first place, my Cordelia, ever bear in mind that our sex is always in a state of dependence in every situation of life, as daughters, as

wives, and as widows; women are never free agents; obedience is one of the first duties enjoined them by both divine and human laws; while a female remains unmarried, and has parents living, she owes obedience to them in all that is consistent with sacred and moral duty; but when she marries, that obedience is transferred to her husband; you, my love, solemnly vowed it to Lord Lochcarron, and his shameful—I do not hesitate to say infamous—dereliction of his vows, does not exonerate you from the performance of yours: his lordship has no right to throw you from him without cause, as if there existed on your part a degree of criminality so great, that it compelled you to the patient endurance of silent contempt; it is therefore a debt which you owe your own reputation, before you consent to any preliminary step being taken towards instituting a suit of separation, to demand a personal interview with Lord Lochcarron, to engage him to do you justice in point of character, that it may not remain in the power of malevolence to attach any shade of obloquy to you, as being in any way unfit or unworthy to bear the title of Lady Lochcarron; but you may and ought to prefer this request with meekness, mildness, and, I will add, with submission; for ungracious as it may sound to some female ears, *submission* and *subjection* are the words of scripture, when its sacred pages inculcate the duties of a wife: this suggests to me another consideration: a wife, in espousing her husband, marries both his temporal and eternal interests; and where she sees him about to make shipwreck of his duties, his principles, or his respectability, it becomes, a sacred obligation proceeding from her marriage vow, to admonish him with mildness and gentleness, to awaken his conscience, to point out his dangers, to be to him a second, a juster, a more impartial self: Lord Lochcarron in his conduct to you, my Delia, has abandoned his duties, violated his principles, forfeited his respectability—it is harsh language, but, it grieves me to say, the language of truth:—yet though he has done all this, he is still your wedded lord: now, my love, I well know your piety, your meekness, your good sense—(I may reiterate my words, Delia, and say this is flattering language, but it is the language of truth) should you bring back Lord Lochcarron to reason, and establish him in habits of domestic regularity and goodness, the glory and the happiness will all be your own; you will have discharged your duty to heaven— “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins;” you will have fulfilled your part of your marriage vow, and you will have cleared your own character from all shade of suspicion: but to do all this you must go to Poole, or wherever else Lord Lochcarron is, and even then I think you have only a negative chance of success; but to fail when we have made every possible exertion is, you know, to fail with honour, and is, in all cases, more meritorious than a supine inactivity. I certainly think such a journey for a lady situate as you are, in many respects extremely ineligible, yet, all points considered, I advise you to take it; and now having counselled you with my best ability, both of head and heart, I have only to refer you to Lord Dunotter for every other particular, to assure you of my ardent prayers for your success, and to subscribe myself, my beloved Cordelia, your truly affectionate,
Matilda Emerson.”

Such was the letter which Cordelia perused with many fluctuating emotions, in which joy, fear, and hope, alternately had the sway; she was still meditating on its contents, when she was roused by a message from Lord Dunotter requesting to see her; she obeyed, and taking the letter with her, presented it to the earl on her entrance with a

timid blush; he thanked her for her confidence, read it attentively, folded it up, and in returning it, said, "I cannot, my dear, sufficiently admire Mrs. Emerson's strength of understanding and clearness of judgment; I regret," he added, with a sigh, and a softened expression of countenance, "that I am not personally acquainted with her, for her sentiments and writing are so like those of the mother of my Alexander." These appeals to the feelings of Cordelia did not fail to make their way to her heart, and to work there in the way the earl has wished; he resumed: "another point of excellence in your friend, is her charming candour; though she expresses herself in such strong, and, I am most ready to allow, such proper terms on the subject of Lochcarron's behaviour to you, she is yet willing to do him every justice; and from what her penetrating mind discovered in him on the evening you met at St. Alban's, is convinced that he possesses those qualities of the head and heart, on which alone the basis of an estimable character can rest, and which his partial father will venture to prophecy, he will in after-life display."

Cordelia had no sort of inclination to doubt the earl's prognosticating powers, but she was timidly and sweetly silent; his lordship next proceeded, in pursuance of his former promise, to develop as much of the plan of her journey as it was necessary to unfold at once; this was Tuesday, and Mrs. Brooks, the earl said, would be at Dunstable the following day, where she would be met by a brother of Philipson, a highly respectable man, in whom he could place every confidence; "For," pursued Lord Dunotter, "it occurred to me on reflection, that my arms and liveries, and Philipson himself, were all so well known at the inns on the different roads, that to send him to escort Mrs. Brooks in one of my carriages would excite observation, and give publicity where every thing depended on privacy, secrecy, and passing unnoticed; David Philipson," proceeded the earl, "will see Mrs. Brooks safe to Egham, and leaving her there, return to Holleyfield, and attend you, the next morning, to the same place; I am most reluctant to hurry you so, my love, but it cannot be avoided; you will reach Egham in time for the coach which passes to Poole, in which it shall be my care that places shall be secured before it leaves London, for Mrs. Brooks and Mrs. — now, my Cordelia, for your travelling name!"

Cordelia, to whom the idea of passing by a fictitious appellation had never occurred, trembled and hesitated; Lord Dunotter read her emotions in her countenance, "It must be, my love," he said, "you cannot be addressed as Lady Lochcarron." The propriety of this she could not controvert, and after a short pause, said, "Then I must be called what you please, my lord" "Then you shall be Mrs. Beaumont," he replied, smiling; and proceeded to say, "it would make me infinitely more easy if David Philipson could attend you through the journey; but he is so well known to Alexander that it would destroy all; for if he had notice of your approach, he would, perhaps, evade you." Poor Cordelia started at this picture of what she might expect to encounter, and the earl made haste to add, "every thing depends, in the first instance, on the influence of Caroline's letter; I shall write to Lochcarron, inclosing it, and when you reach Poole, Mrs. Brooks will be your ambassador, and deliver it only to himself; certain I am it will bring about all we wish—could I for a moment believe otherwise, dear as my only child is to my heart, I could throw him from it for ever." Cordelia next asked the earl what method she should pursue to elude the suspicions of Lady Dunotter, and yet account satisfactorily to her ladyship for her departure; "I will instruct you in proper time, my dear," he replied, smiling; "but leave me for the present; Lady Dunotter will suppose we are hatching a plot, we are so much together; go to your own apartment, and arrange your travelling dress; contrive it

so as to hide that sweet face as much as possible.—Yet another troublesome task remains—when will my Cordelia be exempt from trouble? such little articles of apparel, as you may think absolutely necessary during your short residence in Dorsetshire, David had better take with him to-morrow, and consign them to the care of Mrs. Brooks; dismiss your troublesome, prying attendant, until you put what you want together; Philipson himself shall come for them, and pack them in my apartment.” Cordelia, thus instructed, had nothing to do but to obey; she pinned together a few changes of linen, and a couple of morning gowns, which she gave to the charge of Philipson, and employed the rest of the evening, when not with Lady Dunotter, in arranging her papers, locking up some, burning more, and securing others in a pocket-book to take with her. Cordelia began to think she should have a narrow and fortunate escape by setting off on Thursday morning, for the preparations making seemed to indicate that the party invited to dinner on Saturday was far from a small one; and she even had reason to think that the Hootsides and the Addingtons were amongst the number, for the purpose, no doubt, of letting them see that Lady Dunotter was, and would remain, mistress of Holleyfield: as to Lord Dunotter, he seemed already to be considered as defunct; and Cordelia also thought—but the thought was painful—that Mr. Crompton was looking forwards to the time when Lady Dunotter, released from her present engagements by the death of her lord, might permit him to become a candidate for her hand.

The following day wore over unmarked by any particular event; in the evening, while Cordelia was sitting with Lord Dunotter, Philipson came in with the pleasing intelligence that his brother was returned from escorting Mrs. Brooks, who was now at Egham, reposing after the fatigue of her journey, and acquiring strength for that of the following day; she had charged him with a very affectionate letter for Lady Lochcarron; and Lord Dunotter, when he read it, felt so perfectly convinced of her suitability as a companion for his daughter on her excursion, that it removed a weight of anxiety from his bosom. Lady Dunotter soon after came in, and after the interchange of a few sentences, the earl said, “I am glad you are come, my dear, that you may influence, and, if that will not do, command, this obstinate girl of ours; she has just got a letter from her friend, Mrs. Elderson—” (purposely pronouncing the name wrong, that he might seem to know very little of their concerns) to say, that a joint friend of theirs will be, at this time, on a visit near Egham—” here the earl paused long enough for the countess to *look*, but not to *speak* an inquiry, and then resumed, “the dear little flatterer is so anxiously solicitous about me, that I cannot persuade her to take this short excursion to see her friend; I was going to send her to you, Harriet, that you might persuade her, for I really think the change of scene for a few days would do her good.” Cordelia, in much trepidation at the ready duplicity of Lord Dunotter, and fluctuating between a conviction of what was expedient, and a consciousness of what was right, had a degree of emotion on her countenance, which Lady Dunotter, mistaking its cause, attributed to an unwillingness to leave Lord Dunotter in his present state of health; her ladyship did not over well like this strength of attachment between her lord and his daughter-in-law—it did not augur very favourably for her schemes, and, of course, was one reason why she rather inclined that Cordelia should go, that they might at least be separated for a while; true, she had wished Lady Lochcarron to grace the party when Capt. Thornton was present on Saturday, as that would look like an acquiescence in their plans; but it seemed

very likely that if she remained at Holleyfield, she would persist in staying with Lord Dunotter, in which case it would be better that she were really and ostensibly absent, than cooped up in the house, and concealed by the common phrase, "Not at home:" however, her ladyship, before she exerted any power of persuasion in the way she was required to do, asked who the lady was whom Mrs. Emerson wished her to visit. Cordelia opened her lips, but her hesitation would have betrayed her, had not Lord Dunotter promptly replied to his lady, while he held out a flower which he had in his hand to draw off her attention— "A Mrs. Brooks, staying with a Mrs. Beaumont, are not those the names, Delia? some thirteenth cousins, I suppose." "I know nothing of her maternal relations," replied her ladyship, somewhat contemptuously. Cordelia felt her situation too painful; "Would you advise me to go, mamma?" she said timidly raising her eyes; artful as Lady Dunotter was, she had not, in this instance, been able to penetrate the designs of her spouse; but believing what she had been told, she, after a short hesitation, answered, "Yes, I think you had better go, but not till after Saturday." Cordelia felt she must speak, and with all the firmness of voice and manner she could assume, replied, "In that case I might as well not go, for Mrs. Brooks will probably have left Egham before Monday." "You must start in the morning, I think, my dear," said the earl, "the sooner you go, the sooner you will be back to me." "I am sure I shall earnestly desire to be back, my lord," said Cordelia, and the native eloquence of truth spoke in her look and voice, for she did desire to return, though not unaccompanied. Lord Dunotter thought it best to close the conversation, and complaining of fatigue, now his usual resource on such occasions, he pressed his daughter to take a glass of wine, and dismissed her to her rest, telling her aloud, that Philipson would arrange every thing for the journey, and see her safe to Egham; not that he intended any such thing; the brother of Philipson was to be Lady Lochcarron's attendant, but this he wished, at all events, to conceal from Lady Dunotter; in waiting upon Cordelia to the door, a remnant of fine old manners which the earl never omitted, he whispered her, "Do not let your insolent domestic know that you intend any thing beyond your usual drive in the morning, and when you take leave of Lady Dunotter, say you have taken no servant, as your friend's attendant will do for both."

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY Lochcarron rose in the morning after a nearly sleepless night, rendered so by anxious reflections on the step she was about to take, and the consequences which might attend it; her first care was to send Lucy on a plausible errand about two miles off; her next, to disguise herself as much as possible; and this, after a little study, and trying different articles of dress, she effected so well, that Lord Dunotter himself was surprised at the apparent change: she put on a dark habit, and not having worn a riding-dress since the alteration in her person which the fever effected, the contrast was more striking; her own hair was not yet sufficiently grown to dispense with a wig, and she purposely chose one considerably darker than her beautiful tresses; a very large straw bonnet nearly concealed her face from observation, and a veil of green crape was so disposed, as to shade it entirely when occasion required.

Thus equipped, and having finished every little arrangement which depended on herself, she devoutly implored a blessing on her enterprise, and then went to Lady Dunotter's apartment to bid her adieu: to the great joy of Cordelia, the room was so darkened by the curtains, that the countess could not see enough of the costume she had adopted, to animadvert upon it; she kissed her cheek, cautioned her to be careful of herself, and to return as soon as possible; Cordelia responded an affirmative to both, and turned towards the room where Lord Dunotter usually sat, and where it had been so long her self-imposed, but welcome task to preside at his morning meal, and to cheer and sooth his drooping spirits: a sad presentiment seemed to swell at her heart, and to whisper that she should return to Holleyfield no more, or return with hope extinct, and with peace completely wrecked and broken, and that before that period, the eyes of Lord Dunotter would be closed for ever on this world; her hand trembled as she placed it on the lock—she paused a moment, and heard a deep sigh within; this circumstance augmented the tremor of her frame, and she was nearly yielding to that nervous weakness which grows by indulgence, but determined to act as duty required, she put up a mental petition for fortitude, and opened the door: the earl was seated at a table, on which were placed writing materials; a long epistle, which he seemed to have just finished, lay before him; and in his hand was the letter of Caroline Borham, which was to be the medium of peace with his son. His still fine, but faded, features wore an expression of deep concern as his pensive eye followed the characters; and Cordelia doubted not that the sigh she had heard, had been wrung from his bosom, as he thought of the dying hand which had traced them: when Cordelia entered, he looked up, and that beam of joy shone on his face which ever welcomed her approach; after the wonted salutation of the morning, he said, "I have been writing to Alexander—and have now nothing to do but to fold my packet—the chaise will be here in half an hour—for all the reasons I gave you the other day, I think it best you should travel in a hack—it will not occur to Lady Dunotter to inquire how you went—Philipson will attend you the first two miles, and then consign you to the care of his brother, who, I am well aware, will discharge his precious trust with a respectful attention, that will satisfy even my anxious solicitude." He then noticed her dress, and expressed his approbation of it; Cordelia, who saw that Lord Dunotter was more than usually dejected, though he made an effort to appear otherwise, strove to seem cheerful,

and at once to dissipate the earl's pensiveness, and conceal her own;—"I have done my best at masquerading," she said, with a smile, "but I think it would have been better still to have borrowed the travelling habiliments of Lady Melissa Mannark, in which she came to Holleyfield—I dare say I have described them to your lordship more than once." Lord Dunotter made a faint attempt to return her smile; "At all events, I cannot allow my Cordelia to adopt them," he said, "lest they should impart any of their oblivious qualities, and cause my child to forget Holleyfield." "That can never be, my lord," said Cordelia, as she took her seat at the breakfast-table, and glanced her eyes round on every object which they were now leaving, perhaps never to behold them more, though again she endeavoured to reason herself into a conviction, that nothing existed to ground such an idea upon; again she looked earnestly at Lord Dunotter, and thought she had never seen him look so ill; he took scarcely any breakfast, but tried to conceal his want of appetite by busying himself in making the last arrangements for Cordelia's departure; glancing his eye on the letters, he said, "Poor Caroline is now in the last stage, Delia; my sister tells me she cannot live a fortnight." Lady Lochcarron uttered an ejaculation of pity, but thought it best to make no comment; Philipson came in to announce the carriage, and retired immediately: the eyes of Cordelia and Lord Dunotter were instinctively turned towards each other, but neither spoke; Cordelia soon repelled the feeling which induced her to hesitate, and rose from her seat; the earl rose too; he had by this time sealed the packet with a blank seal, and put it into her hands with an expressive look, but spoke not; she received it in silence, with her eyes bent downwards; the earl next presented her with a pocket-book; "Your lordship's kind attention leaves me nothing to ask," she said, "but really I do not want money—I happen to be rich at present, and have amply sufficient for my journey." Lord Dunotter faintly smiled; "You are a novice in travelling, my dear," he said, "and do not know what unavoidable, and sometimes unforeseen expenses attend it;" he continued to detain one of her hands, and regarded her with a look of speaking tenderness: Cordelia suffered that look, if the mode of expression may be allowed, until her eyes filled with tears; Lord Dunotter felt their thrilling influence, and made an effort to conclude the painful scene; with the arm which remained to him he held her to his heart, and kissed her cheek with fond affection; "Go now, my dearest child," he said, "and may every blessing attend you and prosper you;—I trust in heaven that you are destined to be the ornament and the restorer of my family; for I feel the deepest conviction that you are the best gift Providence could have bestowed on my Alexander; and that when he is once awakened to a consciousness of your inestimable worth, the whole of his future life will be devoted to express his gratitude to—" The voice of the earl began to falter, and fearing to distress Cordelia, he paused—her gentle nature was subdued, and as she hung on Lord Dunotter's shoulder, she implored him to be careful of his health, and promised to write frequently while absent; the earl breathed every assurance that could calm her fears, and, making the signal to Philipson, led her to the outer door of the anteroom, and giving her hand the parting pressure, hastily turned away; she drew her veil over her face, and, assisted by Philipson, got into the chaise; he followed, and the driver putting his horses in motion, they set off at a brisk pace.

It was a beautiful morning in March, and the clearness of the weather displayed to great advantage every charm which the country presents at that season; but not all the enchanting scenery which the environs of Windsor displays, could win Cordelia from the

thoughts of home, or make her for a moment forgetful of Lord Dunotter, and of the weak state he was in; she earnestly questioned Philipson as to his opinion, and he, with a laudable regard for her peace, pretended to think more lightly of it than he did in reality.

At the second mile stone on the road, Philipson resigned his place to his brother, and returned to Holleyfield, charged from Cordelia with every kind remembrance to Lord Dunotter, and a thousand injunctions to be careful of his health.

She found her new travelling companion very intelligent and agreeable; he had been tutor in a very worthy family, and was of genteel manners, respectful, and attentive; with her spirits thus supported, the journey seemed short, and they reached Egham about three o'clock; the meeting between Cordelia and Mrs. Brooks was truly joyful and affectionate, for the latter loved the former as her own child; but she declared that she saw so striking an alteration in her since last they parted, that she could not possibly have known her: they had much to say, and many points to settle; dinner was served, and time wore over very pleasantly: as the gloom of evening began to fall, Cordelia felt a sensation of dismay, which though she endeavoured to combat, she could not altogether repel: a visit in the neighbourhood of her residence had hitherto been the utmost extent of her travels in the dark, and she could not resist a feeling nearly allied to fear, as she contemplated in idea the prospect of passing the night in a carriage, where all but Mrs. Brooks were perfect strangers: the coach reached the inn a little before ten, and as evils and inconveniencies are often more formidable in the perspective, than the reality, she went to take her seat with more cheerfulness than she had expected to muster: she saw by the lights which surrounded her, that her fellow-travellers were two gentlemen, the elder about sixty, upright, spruce, and clean, with a drab coat, an old-fashioned hat, and a face full of intelligence; the younger, who the ladies afterwards found was nephew to the other, was about six-and-twenty, by no means remarkable for beauty, with enough of affectation to make him ungraceful, and enough of fashion to make him a fop.

In getting into the coach, Mrs. Brooks, with a sort of instinctive respect, was yielding place to Lady Lochcarron, but the latter, with ready presence of mind, stepped back, saying, "You had best be seated first, aunt;" but this trifling incident was a hint which awakened the curiosity of Mr. Jefferson, the younger gentleman; he was

"Sly, observant, still:"

and clearly saw, that the action implied deference on one side, and concealment on the other: with ready politeness he offered his hand first to Mrs. Brooks, and then to Cordelia, and giving place to Mr. Webster, the other gentleman, was himself placed opposite to Lady Lochcarron, "It is rather cold this evening, ladies," said Jefferson, as a first introduction, both assented with monosyllables; and Webster, said, "Not quite so cold as it was yesterday evening, John;"—"Yes it is," responded the nephew, a pettish mode of contradiction, which he was in the constant habit of using, especially towards his indulgent uncle. "A fine night for astrological observations," said Webster, casting his eyes upwards from the windows of the coach, "I regret that I am absent from my apparatus—the dragon's head—" "Pray, uncle," said Jefferson, "don't use technical

terms to the ladies—it is so pedantic.” “Pedantry, John, can only be associated with ignorance;—I may venture to say, that I understand a little astronomy as well as Herschel himself.” Webster took care, by his arch and humorous way of uttering these words, that they should not be mistaken for an explosion of vanity; Jefferson was about to say something, when a sudden jolt of the carriage called forth a slight exclamation from every one present, and an observation from Webster about turnpike roads, which finding a rejoinder from Mrs. Brooks, who detailed some incidents of her journey from Leeds, it led to a long dissertation, in which Mrs. Brooks talked so much about the woollen manufactories of Yorkshire; Mr. Webster such a great deal about Southdown and Cotswold sheep, fairs and markets, sheepshearing and fleeces; and Jefferson made such long harangues about monopolies, and promoting trade in one country to destroy it in another, that Lady Lochcarron supposed, if she remained quite silent, she would either be deemed by her companions, haughty and unsocial, or rustically ignorant; compelled then to join in the conversation, she did so with great sweetness, but with such decided superiority, that her male auditors were entranced in astonishment: so long the constant companion of Lord Dunotter, and imbibing from him the clearest and more perfect information on every subject, not only could she detail the essence of what had been done in this country to improve the quality of wool, by both public societies and private individuals, during the last thirty years, but could give equal elucidation to the code of sheep-laws in Spain, and the modes which, in other countries, the same end is sought to be attained: “Upon my word, young lady,” said Webster, “your knowledge of the subject would enlighten the Board of Agriculture.” While Jefferson wondered, and revolved, and screwed up his mind until he decided with himself, that Cordelia must be a spy employed by the court of Spain, to ascertain the state of matters connected with the woollen manufactures in England, and that she was now going over to the continent with a packet of facts on the subject;

“Now black and deep the night began to fall.”

Mrs. Brooks seemed to feel its power, to become more silent, and to betray symptoms of drowsiness; Cordelia, sweetly and gently attentive, ceased to converse; Mr. Webster yielded to the influence of Morpheus; and Lady Lochcarron was left to her own meditations, and Mr. Jefferson to note observations, make discoveries, and profit by them when he had done; three points on which he piqued himself highly: that there was some mystery attached to his fair fellow-traveller opposite, was a position he had assumed at their first entrance into the coach, and this was confirmed when they began to converse, by the decided superiority of her conversation and manners; but as he did not conceive it possible that a female could possess information either of the sort, or to the extent that Cordelia had this night displayed, he drew the delectable conclusion that she must, in some way or other, be concerned in a contraband wool trade; and setting it down as a maxim, that they who espouse evil of one sort as a profession, will not shrink from associating other faults with it; he inferred that neither Mrs. Brooks nor Mrs. Beaumont, as he heard each style the other, were persons in the first class of respectability: there is nothing more easy than to be mistaken, and nothing more common than to act under the influence of mistake: Mr. Jefferson resolved to know whether or not his conjectures were right, endeavoured to establish a whispering conversation with Cordelia, commencing in

a strain of common-place gallantry, too equivocal to be absolutely resented, but which, fortunately for Cordelia, the elevated sphere of life in which she had always moved, had not fitted her to comprehend; yet she had an indefinite feeling that it was not perfectly right, which, added to her own quick sense of propriety, would not, under the existing circumstances of time and place, allow her entering into discourse with a stranger, and prompted her to say briefly, yet politely, that "She begged permission to decline all conversation at that hour." Jefferson, awed by the imposing dignity of her manner, was silent, and wished impatiently for morning, that he might have a more perfect view of the face which, though seen only in the gloom of evening, he had yet seen enough to know was very beautiful.

Cordelia, alike indifferent to what he either thought or wished, employed the hours of darkness and silence in mental wanderings back to Holleyfield and Lord Dunotter, and in solicitous anticipations of her approaching meeting with her fugitive lord, to whom she believed herself drawing nearer every moment; but she felt it a prospect which it was impossible to contemplate with steadiness, and mentally praying, that when the moment of trial came, she might be endowed with fortitude to support it; she softly clasped Mrs. Brook's arm, and tried, like her companions, to lose her anxieties in the sweet forgetfulness of repose: but it was long, very long, before she could obtain that blessing, and even then it was so light that it fled before the most trifling motion; the noise of entering Winchester completely dispelled the drowsiness of all parties, and though the faint strokes of the dawn were scarcely visible, Webster could see very well to talk, and Jefferson to contradict: "This is a very ancient city," said the former; "it was the Venta Belgarum of the Romans, the Caer Gwent of the Britons, and Wintsceaster of the Saxons"—"No," interrupted his nephew, "it was the Wittanceaster." "I say it was Wintsceaster," maintained the other, stoutly; this dispute, carried on with equal pertinacity on both sides, lasted all the way to Southampton, greatly to the amusement, if not the edification of Mrs. Brooks, who enjoyed the peculiarities of her fellow-travellers: as to Cordelia, she was now so occupied with contemplating the noble prospect without, that she regarded nothing that passed within the vehicle: the sun was rising in splendour, its rays sparkling on the blue waves of the channel, and illuminating its rocky and romantic shores; the white fleeces of the innumerable flocks pastured on the downs, contrasted finely with the varied tints of green, in which the season had clothed the surrounding country; and all of hill, dale, and verdure, that could diversify and adorn the landscape was there. Mr. Webster observing how much Cordelia was charmed with the surrounding scenery, with great good-nature, pointed out its most striking beauties, and gave her much local information, in which she felt interested, and for which she was grateful: "We will put down the window, if you please, madam," said he, "and enjoy the morning air, there is nothing so salubrious, and so bracing as fresh air—I say fresh." "The wind comes on that side, and will annoy the ladies," said Jefferson; both ladies felt themselves called upon to say, "Not at all," and, with Cordelia at least, the assertion was truth, for she thought the air pleasant and reviving.

Mrs. Brooks, gifted with an active and inquiring mind, and having no object in perspective to urge her forwards, regretted that she could not spare time to examine every object worthy of notice at the different towns they passed through: at Southampton, had no obstacle intervened, she would gladly have lingered a day or two, to explore the

vestiges of Roman antiquity in the vicinity, which Webster described with great justness and precision. Cordelia certainly had some share of that curiosity inherent in the children of Eve, but, at present, had all the antiquities in Europe been open to her view, her mind was too much occupied to have attended to any of them; her every feeling, faculty, and idea were now concentrated in Lord Lochcarron; the air breathed but of him; every sound seemed his voice; and every form which her clear vision beheld through the distant perspective, if moulded with any degree of elegance, her fluttering heart sighed to hail as its lord.

Jefferson, sly and subtle, was ever in the practice of tracing by stolen glances and veiled observation, the workings of the passions on the human countenance, inferring from thence what was passing in the mind, and from such premises forming his estimate of individual character; he was too much charmed with Cordelia's lovely face; to need any other incitement to watch her motions: as they drew near Poole, he perceived that her anxious eye searched every carriage which met theirs, and that when any gentleman passed quickly on horseback, a repressed start and flushed cheek proclaimed an interest which, in so young a female, seemed either indecorous or mysterious; "And yet," thought Jefferson to himself, "it cannot be admiration which she seeks, for she evidently shrinks and hides her face from the gaze of the passing stranger; no, her contraband occupation makes her fear pursuit and detection, but I shall have my eye upon her when we get to Poole."

On reaching the inn, the two gentlemen took leave with great politeness; but Jefferson kept his resolution, and took measures to inform himself of all Cordelia's motions. Mrs. Brooks would gladly have persuaded Lady Lochcarron to retire immediately to bed, to refresh herself after the unusual fatigue of travelling all night; but she was too anxious to fulfil the task assigned her, to execute the important mission which brought her to Poole, to think of any indulgence which had only self for its object; and after taking some slight refreshment, and devoting a short time to the toilet, Cordelia, with a countenance which expressed more than language can utter, placed in Mrs. Brooks's hands that packet on which she believed the fate of her future life depended; "And, oh! my dearest, best friend," she said, with an imploring look, "if you indeed find that I—I have no hold of his affections, no hope to rest upon—in mercy shelter me from the mortification of having it known that I am here, and be yourself the ostensible bearer of the letters." Mrs. Brooks promised every thing that was calculated to quiet a sensitive mind, so delicately and peculiarly situate as was that of Cordelia, and having seen her in some degree tranquillized, set out on her embassy, attended by a little boy as a guide to show her Mrs. Garland's house; when within sight of the door, she rewarded him for his trouble, dismissed him, and then knocked; a female servant answered the summons, who, when Mrs. Brooks inquired "if Mr. Campion lodged there?" replied, eyeing the inquisitor, and as if somewhat surprised at the inquiry, "Mr. Campion! he left on Wednesday." The surprise was so sudden and unexpected, and the disappointment she anticipated for Cordelia so great, that she felt quite unwilling, and nearly unable, to believe what she heard, and asked the girl if she was certain that Mr. Campion had left Poole? but the first agitation of her spirits beginning to subside, she reflected that it would be more proper to make inquiry of the mistress of the house, than thus to question

a servant; and without attending to the girl's answer, she requested to speak with Mrs. Garland, and was shown into a little parlour, where the first object she beheld was Mr. Jefferson, seated with all the composure of a person at home, conversing with the mistress of the house, a female about thirty, with nothing peculiarly attractive or forbidding in either her person or manners: Mrs. Brooks felt extremely reluctant to making her inquiries before Jefferson, but as he and Mrs. Garland seemed to be on a quite familiar footing, she felt it would be extremely imprudent to ask a private audience, and thus make an appearance of mystery which could serve no end but to excite suspicion: having therefore taken possession of the seat which Jefferson officiously placed for her, and replied to all those inquiries after her health and that of Cordelia, which, though he had parted from them so lately, and now saw Mrs. Brooks perfectly well, he thought it would be a high breach of politeness to omit making, she came at once to the point, and begged Mrs. Garland would inform her, if she knew, what route Mr. Campion had taken: now it so happened, that this mysterious Mr. Campion had been the subject of conversation between Mrs. Garland and Mr. Jefferson, at the moment of Mrs. Brooks's entrance; during the fortnight that Mr. Campion, as he chose to call himself, had been resident at Poole, the grace of his person, the united dignity and sweetness of his manners, his wealth, which was evident in his simple yet elegant mode of living, and the very superior servant who attended him, were circumstances which altogether created around him such a halo of interest, as attracted all the gossips of the place: from Harris, Lord Lochcarron's valet, they vainly tried to extract information, he was proof against all their modes of wheedling and fishing, both direct and indirect, round-about and straight forward; all the reply they could ever obtain was a sly smile, and "Mr. Campion is a gentlemen from France." Thus foiled, they substituted suppositions for facts, and the young nobleman was alternately a Russian prince, a distinguished French exile, and a South American patriot chief; all this, and much more, was detailed by Mrs. Garland to her friend Jefferson on his arrival; while he, in his turn, gave the history of the journey home in company with the fair wool-smuggler, for such he persisted in supposing Cordelia; Jefferson's natural inquiry was, "What had become of this wonderful man? whither had he gone when he left Poole? and how did he travel?" "He went in a postchaise from Poole to Lyme," was the reply: they were still comparing notes, and commenting on the singular coincidence that each should have seen such a paragon as Mrs. Garland described Lord Lochcarron, and Jefferson Cordelia to be, when Mrs. Brooks entered, and the ceremonies already detailed took place: Mrs. Garland, though she well knew the route her late lodger had taken, did not choose to reply directly to Mrs. Brooks's question, for two reasons, one of which was, that Jefferson's absurd suppositions about Cordelia had prejudiced her mind against Mrs. Brooks—and first impressions either to the advantage or disadvantage of a party are sometimes very strong—the other reason was that Harris's pertinacious silence on his lord's—or, as she supposed—his master's subject, was so offensive to Mrs. Garland, that she did not choose to own any knowledge of their affairs; she only replied, "That she really could not say what route he had taken; he came from Southampton, and might very likely be gone back there:" such was the answer with which Mrs. Brooks was compelled to depart, for Jefferson, though he had just heard a different story from Mrs. Garland, had his reasons for not contradicting her in her own house.

Cordelia, trembling with the alternatives of hope and fear, anxiously waited the return of her friend; the deep interest she felt in the subject quickened her power of penetration, and when Mrs. Brooks entered, she read in her countenance the failure of her mission: a lesser evil is nearly unfelt by a mind which has apprehended a greater, and when Lady Lochcarron learned that her lord was no longer at Poole, the chance of yet attaining the object of her pilgrimage, made the scale still preponderate on the side of hope; yet the probability there seemed that he might have made up his mind to return to the continent, made her anxious to pursue, and, if possible, overtake him before he crossed the water: her ladyship and Mrs. Brooks, on this occasion, presented a striking contrast of the calm deliberation of age, and the ardent impatience of youth; the latter was for setting up their rest at Poole until they should write to, and hear from, Lord Dunotter; and then, if sanctioned by his approbation, going back to Southampton, and, if necessary, over to the continent. Cordelia could see no possible good in thus sauntering away time, and perhaps losing the chance of effecting what she came about; her plan was to order a postchaise and return to Southampton that evening, for she was already disgusted with travelling in mail and stage coaches; it subjected her to the chance of discovery, and to the intrusion of society not pleasant in every respect, facts which Mrs. Brooks did not attempt to controvert, but she edged in a hint about the superior safety of the coaches; her young friend, in reply, observed, that the distance was so short they might easily reach Southampton before dark, if they started immediately after an early dinner, and this by the way, though she did not say so, she remained at Poole for on Mrs. Brooks's account, not on her own; for now that she was fairly in for the stake of winning or losing Lord Lochcarron for life, she was reluctant to waste a moment which was not employed in the pursuit of that great object.

"This is a very singularly situated place," observed Mrs. Brooks, while their fowl was preparing; "it is quite a peninsula." Cordelia assented to the justness of the remark, but felt no interest about a place which her lord no longer inhabited, and was only anxious to leave it. They had finished dinner, and were chatting over their little dessert, when the waiter announced, "a gentleman;" oh! what did not Cordelia's fluttering heart anticipate! who but its lord and master could possibly inquire for her? Mrs. Brooks took on herself to order the gentleman to be shown in; it was a moment of anxiety beyond description—the door opened—and Mr. Jefferson entered; Cordelia, who had risen, mechanically reseated herself, but in the next moment her native politeness prompted her to rise again, and however disappointed, and however surprised at Jefferson's intrusion she might feel, to pay him the customary compliment due to a stranger on his entrance; he bowed ceremonially to both ladies, accepted the seat offered to him by Mrs. Brooks, and addressing himself to her, hastened to explain the cause of his coming, by saying, that he could not avoid hearing her inquire of Mrs. Garland, after a Mr. Campion, who that lady had said she thought he might be gone to Southampton; but by the merest accident in the world, he had just now seen a person who by chance mentioned having seen Mr. Campion when at Poole, and knew that when he left that place he went to Lyme, and not to Southampton, as Mrs. Garland had supposed.

This intelligence was too important to be neglected, and too welcome to Cordelia to be received without thanks; she paid them in her sweet and graceful way, and pressed

Mr. Jefferson to take some wine and fruit, an invitation which he did not need to be repeated; he further informed the ladies that they would hear of their friend at the George at Lyme, and thither Cordelia resolved, in her own mind, immediately to proceed, though marvelling much why Jefferson, quite a stranger, had taken so much trouble; the fact was, that Jefferson, prompted by curiosity, after he left Mrs. Garland, had inquired at the inn, from whence, as she told him, Mr. Campion had the chaise which took him to Lyme, and on conversing with the post-boy, heard enough to make him change his belief, that his fair fellow-travellers and their connexions were wool-smugglers; for the boy affirmed positively, that he had heard the gentleman's valet call his master "My lord;" this was enough to determine Jefferson, who was at all times a worshipper of rank, to atone by all means in his power to Cordelia, for the injustice his hastily-formed supposition had done her; for though he now only exchanged it for one equally degrading in the eye of mortality—namely, that she was the *chere amie* of this nobleman, who was passing by the name of Campion, he shrewdly considered that people of rank and their favourites have it in their power to acknowledge and return little civilities, and as he was endeavouring to walk upwards in life by the rugged path of the law, he had taken all this pains to oblige, in hope that the obligation would not go unrewarded.

While Jefferson sipped his wine, he and Mrs. Brooks entered into conversation on the slight local topics of the day; Cordelia every now and then joined in, but impatient to pursue her journey, and aware that the chaise must now be ready, she hoped at every pause that Jefferson would take his departure, but she hoped in vain; for when those subjects were exhausted, Mrs. Brooks asked "if Poole was an incorporated town?" "Bless me," thought Cordelia, "what has Mrs. Brooks to do with the corporation of Poole!" Jefferson replied in the affirmative, and entered into a dissertation statistical and historical concerning the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses of Poole; the privileges granted them by Queen Elizabeth, and all the advantages and disadvantages pertaining to them. Cordelia ceased to talk, but compelled herself to wear the appearance of listening, and hoped her suspense would be ended with this subject; but she again hoped in vain, for her curious friend next reverted to the trade of the town, its exports and imports; "How surprising that she should care about such matters, in a place which she may very probably never see again," thought Lady Lochcarron, and again she found herself doomed to listen to a long harangue, which had for its objects pickled fish, Purbeck stones, and numberless other articles. "Now," thought Cordelia, when they paused again, "they will certainly be done," but vain was the expectation; from the town they travelled round the environs, ascended every eminence, discussed every prospect, and talked about Brownsea castle and island, which Jefferson described until Mrs. Brooks seemed quite charmed, and to wish for nothing so much as to view them. Cordelia's last gleam of patience expired, and she was in the very act of rising to pull the bell with the intention of saying that the chaise would be wanted the next stage to Lyme, not Southampton, hoping it would be a hint to Jefferson to take his departure; but as it happened, he saved the credit of her politeness by looking at his watch; he seemed himself surprised at the length of his stay, and with much ceremony made his parting bow; Mrs. Brooks, delighted with the local information he had given her, took leave of him with frank cordiality; and Cordelia, delighted that he was going, bade him a very gracious adieu; and then without regarding the advanced time of day, or her own wearied frame, harassed with such

unusual exertion, she got into the chaise with her companion and took the route which she was led to believe was that of her lord; his keeping the sea-coast seemed to indicate an intention of returning to the continent, and rendered her doubly anxious to come up with him in time.

END OF VOLUME II.

ANY THING BUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

BY JANE HARVEY,

AUTHOR OF MONTEITH—ETHELIA—MEMOIRS OF AN
AUTHOR—RECORDS OF A NOBLE FAMILY, ETC. ETC. ETC.

In Three Volumes.

VOLUME III.

“Alle day
“It is both writ and sayde,
“That woman’s faith is, as who sayth;
“Alle utterly decayed.
“But nevertheless right good witness
“I’ this case might be layde,
“That they love trewe, and contynewe.—”
Nut Browne Mayde.

DERBY:

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1819.

ANY THING
BUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

CHAPTER I.

IT was quite dark when the travellers reached Lyme, exhausted by fatigue and chilled with cold, for

“As yet the trembling year was unconfirm’d.
“And winter oft at eve resum’d the breeze.”

It was the great misfortune of Cordelia’s journey that it was made amongst total strangers, and in a part of the country where neither herself nor Mrs. Brooks had ever been before. She had no male friend near to make those inquiries after Lord Lochcarron, which, so censorious is the world, and so apt to judge maliciously, a female could scarcely make without exciting evil suspicions; though wishing with an ardour which nothing can describe for news of Lord Lochcarron, she would not commission Mrs. Brooks to ask a single question about him until the morning; but ordering a slight supper, and a two-bedded room to be prepared, they partook of the former, and retired very early to the latter, where Cordelia obtained some hours of repose, and rose in the morning with a frame refreshed, and spirits renovated by hope, when the mistress of the house came in to pay her morning compliments.

Mrs. Brooks, in a way best calculated to avoid suspicion, inquired if a gentleman of the name of Campion was then, or had lately been there; she was told in answer that Mr. Campion slept there two nights, and left only that morning for Dorchester; whether himself returned to Lyme or not was uncertain; but at all events his servant would, as their baggage was still there.

Again disappointed, poor Cordelia could scarcely bear it, but fortunately her hostess was not a person of very distinguished penetration, and neither discovered the interest Cordelia took in Mr. Campion, by her emotions, nor by the efforts she made to conceal them, which, with a very acute observer, would have been the surer method of the two to betray her.

Left again by themselves they held a council of deliberation; it was Sunday, and to proceed to Dorchester on the vague uncertainty of Lord Lochcarron having gone thither, seemed a measure so replete with the risk of losing all clue by which to trace him, that it was not to be thought of; a much more prudent way was to wait at Lyme a day or two, as he must either return or send for the articles he had left there, which would, in either case, determine their future proceedings. Cordelia’s next task was to write to Lord Dunotter, to report progress, and to give a detail of all the negatives and disappointments she had encountered; but she did so with a gentleness, a sweetness, a playful patience, all

her own; yet far from being the present frame of her mind, but assumed for the purpose of inducing Lord Dunotter to think that her difficulties could not be very great since they sat so lightly on her; she had scarcely finished her letter, when Mrs. Brooks, who had visited the hostess to signify that they should remain at her house that day at least, perhaps longer, returned with the intelligence that a celebrated preacher from Weymouth was to preach at the parish church, adding a hint, that as the people of the house could accommodate them with seats, she should like, if agreeable to Lady Lochcarron, to go; Cordelia could not object; her dress, as a traveller, presented no obstacle; no one at Lyme, she thought, could possibly recognise her, and as she was never in the habit of marring her compliance with any request by a hesitating ungracious way, she signified her ready acquiescence, and, as the bells had long been ringing, they set out immediately, accompanied by a genteel well-bred young woman, a relation of the mistress of the house; they had taken their seats but a short time, the bells were ringing out, and Cordelia was endeavouring to abstract her mind from every earthly care, and to fix it on the solemn duties of the occasion, when a sort of bustle amongst the congregation, accompanied with a whispering, and the words "That is his lady," uttered by some person in the pew behind, recalled her to surrounding objects, and looking up, she beheld Sir Roger Cottingham, her Orton-Abbey acquaintance, his nephew Mr. Harrington, and the youngest daughter of Lady Hootside, now Lady Caroline Harrington, ushered up the aisle in great form to a magnificent pew, which seemed appropriated for strangers of rank; and Lady Lochcarron, in the consternation of the moment which the dread of discovery threw her into, had to felicitate herself that her rank was unknown at Lyme, and flattered herself that she might indulge the hope of escaping being seen in the obscure seat where she was placed; she knew Mr. Harrington to be in the church; she had heard him extolled as an excellent preacher; but beyond all these circumstances, she remembered him as nearly resembling Lord Lochcarron in person.

The service commenced, and Cordelia quickly found her mistake; her pew, though in rather a retired part of the church, was so situate that those in the pew where Lady Caroline sat had a full view of the persons in it; Lady Caroline had always entertained a more friendly regard for Cordelia, than any of the rest of the family; and though almost doubting the evidence of her senses, yet prepared by her brother's letters to see a striking alteration in her person, she felt convinced that she now beheld her; not contented with her own observations, she directed the eyes of both her husband and Sir Roger Cottingham to the same object, but they had neither of them ever seen Cordelia, excepting that day at Orton-Abbey, and could not determine whether this were the same lady, but Lady Caroline resolved to be satisfied before she quitted the church.

Mr. Harrington chose his text from the second Epistle to Timothy: "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men." From which words he preached a very fine discourse; replete with sound reasoning, and enriched with all the graces of oratory. Cordelia and Mrs. Brooks listened with both pleasure and edification; but the latter had not the remotest idea that the preacher was known to the former.

When service was over, Lady Caroline fixed her eye upon Cordelia in a way which left her no longer in doubt that she was recognised; and though she felt extreme

repugnance to conversing, under her present circumstances, with any one who knew her, yet she resolved not to shrink from it, as if a sense of conscious guilt directed her movements; but taking care to leave her seat at the same time with the clerical party, they encountered each other at the door, while Lady Caroline and Sir Roger lingered a few moments, until they should be joined by Mr. Harrington before they got into the carriage.

Lady Lochcarron, determined to be at once herself, met the glance of Lady Caroline as that of an old acquaintance; and, resolved not to yield the point of rank, was the first to speak, which she did with mingled kindness and politeness. Lady Caroline, who was a gentle-tempered woman, and seemed to have greatly divested herself of her affected habits, since her union with Mr. Harrington, did not seem to contest the right of precedence; but carefully avoided (as her brother and sister, Lord and Lady Hootside had done on a former occasion) giving Cordelia any name or title; they asked after the health of mutual friends; Sir Roger spoke with great complaisance, as did Mr. Harrington, who now joined them. Lady Lochcarron complimented him on the discourse she had just heard, and introducing her friend Mrs. Brooks, that lady joined in the encomium; when they were about to separate, Lady Caroline taking Cordelia's hand, with great appearance of kindness, said, "We are at Weymouth at present, my dear; if you are going to make any stay in this part of the country I hope you will favour us with a visit; Lady Hootside and Lady Cottingham will rejoice to see you." Cordelia paid due acknowledgments for this civility, but said, "that her stay in Dorsetshire, would probably not be above a day or two longer, as she only came to Lyme to visit a friend," thus leaving them to conjecture, if they pleased, that Mrs. Brooks was that friend. "I shall have the honour to see you to your carriage, madam," said Sir Roger, when Cordelia had made her last courtesy, and was turning away; with a glowing cheek she was compelled to reply that she had walked to church; the countenances of Lady Caroline and Sir Roger expressed astonishment, that of Mr. Harrington something like concern; Cordelia staid to encounter none of them, but again dropping her parting courtesy, took Mrs. Brooks' arm, and walked away with graceful dignity.

As Lady Caroline journeyed homewards, great was the surprise her ladyship expressed to her companions at meeting Cordelia in Dorsetshire, at such a place as Lyme, where neither resort of company, public amusements, nor rural retirement could possibly be the motive which has attracted her thither; "Pho!" said Sir Roger, "she has merely come down for a little change of scene on a visit to that lady who is with her, Brooks—Brooke—what did she call her? what family can she be of? there is Sir Richard Brooke, and Sir Samuel Brooke, and my very good friend Colonel Brooke, and the Brookes of Northamptonshire, and—" "Dear uncle!" interrupted Lady Caroline, laughing, "you remind me of the lines of old Dryden:

"Ill habits gather by unseen degrees:

"As *brooks* to rivers, rivers run to seas."

Mr. Harrington smiled, and the baronet, with whom Lady Caroline was a great favourite, said, "You are very satirical, Carry; perhaps my acquaintance with almost all the best English families sometimes leads me to digress too long, but when I am

introduced to any person I always wish to know their descent." Little more was said on the subject until they reached Weymouth; but when Lady Hootside and her elder daughter were told the miracle, that Cordelia was at Lyme, both joined in pronouncing that her residence there must be connected with "some dark deed she would not name."

"I ever thought her a strange girl," said the countess, "and the more I hear of her proceedings, the more deeply is my opinion confirmed; Lord Lochcarron must have had weighty reasons for leaving her in the way he did, immediately after the ceremony of their marriage;" "Eh?" questioned Sir Roger; Lady Cottingham, who best understood the avenue to the baronet's ear, took the office of interpreter, and said, "Lady Hootside thinks, Sir Roger, that Lord Lochcarron must have felt himself justified in deserting his bride, by the knowledge of some impropriety in her conduct." "Impropriety!" reiterated the baronet, "rely upon it the impropriety has been on the other side; the poor girl has had a strange set to deal with; Lady Walpole was never any great things, and Dunotter I never liked—I dare say his son is a chip of the old block." No one pushed the subject further, but each cherished what mental opinion they preferred.

Cordelia passed her hours at Lyme in a very cheerless way; after parting with Lady Caroline and her companions, seeing that Mrs. Brooks was inclined for a walk, though she did not exactly say so, she begged that she might not prevent her intention; but returning to the inn under the plea of fatigue, Mrs. Brooks and the young person walked out of town, to view the fine harbour, and whatever else it was surrounded by, worthy notice; this girl, impressed with a high idea of Cordelia's consequence, from her evident familiarity with Lady Caroline Harrington, and unable to gather from their conversation who she were, because they had never addressed her by any name, could not help taking the opportunity of being alone with Mrs. Brooks to endeavour to find it out, though she did so in a very distant and well-bred way; but Mrs. B. was never off her guard, and was deterred, by the visible curiosity of her companion, from using the occasion as she wished and intended to do in making inquiries concerning Mr. Campion, and the way in which he conducted himself while at Lyme.

During her absence, Cordelia, in the solitude of her own apartment, drew a comparison between her own situation and that of Lady Caroline Harrington; and found all the arguments drawn from hope, patience, resignation, and fortitude, inadequate to repress her tears; oh, how kindly, how gracefully attentive, how exactly the medium between neglect and uxoriousness was Mr. Harrington's behaviour to his wife! how greatly was her consequence raised in the scale of society, and how striking was the improvement effected on her manners by her union with a man of Mr. Harrington's dignified and excellent character; while she—but she could only weep over the sad and often-repeated catalogue of her own blighted prospects and drooping hopes; however as evil is seldom unaccompanied by some ray of good, or misfortune without some correspondent consolation, she had to felicitate herself on having escaped discovery, by the circumstance of her friends having studiously avoided addressing her by any appellation. Reflecting that it was of no avail to yield to despondence; that she must exert herself, and finish her singular and trying task; she compelled herself seriously to consider what was next to be done, and after due deliberation changed her late opinion,

and thought it best not to linger at Lyme, but to proceed the next day to Dorchester, where she was taught to believe her lord then was, and to trust to fortune, or a better guide, to find out his residence when there; at all events such a mode of proceeding seemed preferable to risking the constructions which might be put on her prolonged stay at an inn, and indeed had she known all that was going forward on her subject, she would have applauded the prudence which dictated the measure she was pursuing; for more than one of the gay young men of the town had already caught a glimpse of her lively face, and the spirit of curiosity was up in arms to discover all the items that belonged to her.

When Mrs. Brooks returned from her walk, Cordelia imparted the resolution she had taken, which that lady did not attempt to oppose; this seemed the longest and most comfortless Sunday Cordelia had ever known; the passing groups which she gazed at from the windows had no interest for her; every thing was insipid, books were dull and tiresome, and whatever allured for one moment ceased to please in the next; gladly did she hear the clock strike eleven, and Mrs. Brooks propose to retire; but her distance from home, anxiety of mind, and incertitude respecting the future, all conspired to banish repose; her slumbers were broken, and her wandering dreams, which had Lord Dunotter and his son for their objects, were all of a gloomy kind; glad was she when the morning-light, beaming through the shutters, called her to make preparations for quitting Lyme.

When breakfast was ended, and the bill discharged, Cordelia, in contemplating the diminished contents of her purse, felt how much she owed to the provident care of Lord Dunotter, who had enriched her with a well-stored pocket-book on the morning of her departure from Holleyfield; for so little was she aware of the heavy expenses incurred by travelling in the mode she did, or indeed in any mode, that but for so seasonable a source in reserve she must soon have been bankrupt.

People in a state of uncertainty respecting any event, are very prone to think the steps they have taken less eligible than those they have rejected; and thus it was with Lady Lochcarron; for by the time she had passed the first stage to Dorchester, she felt dissatisfied with herself for having quitted Lyme; true, she was taught to believe that her lord was at the former place, but to seek him there, was like the fable of seeking lost reputation in the wide world, for she had neither clue nor guide by which to discover him; by remaining at the last-named town, she must have seen either him or his servant, but it was uncertain when, and time she thought was too precious to be trifled with.

On arriving at Dorchester, her first care, while dinner was preparing, was to write to Lord Dunotter, to give her reasons for the new course she had taken, and to say that she should remain where she was until she heard from his lordship, unless some very pressing reason should induce her to change her resolution. Mrs. Brooks made cautious and guarded inquiries after Mr. Campion, but with less success than ever, for the people of the house where they were, had neither seen nor heard of any such person. Poor Cordelia, thus disappointed, felt herself compelled to believe what she had before feared, that Lord Lochcarron had never come to Dorchester, though, for some reason or other, he had been induced to make the people at the George suppose that such was his intention; she knew not how to proceed, and could only resolve that if in the course of a day or two

she heard no tidings of her recreant spouse, she would relinquish all pursuit, and with it all hopes of future happiness; sunk to deep dejection by these painful thoughts, she ate her meal in nearly silent sadness, yet in consideration of Mrs. Brooks she made an effort to appear composed, and even cheerful. Mrs. Brooks paid two or three visits to the mistress of the house on errands which had for their object Lady Lochcarron's accommodation and comfort; on one of them she learned that a concert was that evening to be performed in a room adjoining to the inn, by young persons belonging to the town, amateurs, the profits, after deducting the expenses, to be appropriated to the relief of a necessitous family who had suffered by a fire. Mrs. Brooks proposed to Cordelia that they should go, if agreeable to her; situated as she was at present, she had little inclination for such an amusement; but unwilling to appear morose, gloomy, or so selfish that she regarded only her own feelings and positions, she expressed her assent, submitting it however to her friend's better judgment, whether they could, with propriety, appear in their travelling dresses; Mrs. Brooks decided in the affirmative, and the little time which intervened between dinner and eight o'clock, the hour of commencing, was passed in rendering their costume as far as might be suitable to the occasion; Cordelia, secure that no one at Dorchester could know her, laid aside her hat, an incumbrance she was glad to part with; anxiety of mind had robbed her cheek of that transient bloom with which exercise and returning health were beginning to adorn it; and her constant, and now almost habitual, meditation on her misfortunes shed a soft and pensive languor over her beautiful features, softened the expression of her sweet blue eyes, and rendered her altogether so interestingly lovely, that when she entered the concert room, which was when the opening symphony was nearly concluded, the attention of the Dorsetian belles and beaux was fixed on her alone; while "It is Mrs. Beaumont," for with her travelling nominative they had already become acquainted, was whispered on all sides, and the epithets of "charming, fascinating," and every other superlative that could be made to signify admiration, were so liberally bestowed, that poor Cordelia soon wished herself anywhere but in the concert-room at Dorchester, and severely repented having entered it; however, as she could not with any propriety make an immediate retreat, she endeavoured to elude observation by not seeming to notice it, and by bending her whole attention on the performances of the evening; these were such as might be expected; no false cadence, no discordant note jarred on the ear of refinement; it was perfect science, but with all the wonted stiffness of science when native taste and genius are totally excluded from it; the first act was nearly concluded, and Cordelia was proposing in her own mind that if agreeable to Mrs. Brooks they would then retire; it was during the performance of one of Handel's beautiful overtures, her whole soul was entranced in the harmony of sweet sounds, and even the vulture Care, which so ceaselessly gnawed her bosom, was, for a while, diverted from his prey, when, by one of those impulses for which we are totally unable to account, she happened to raise her head, and beheld—oh! language can never be modelled to convey an idea of her feelings, when she beheld that form, never seen since the evening on which she received his vows at the altar—the form of Lord Lochcarron; he was leaning against one of the pillars which supported the orchestra, his arms folded on his bosom, and his eyes fixed on the floor.

Cordelia would now have given worlds for the large bonnet and veil to conceal her face; she believed the gaze of all present bent on her; trembling, agitated, and

subdued at once with surprise, joy, and a feeling nearly amounting to anguish, she was only alive to the wish of pointing him out to Mrs. Brooks, that they might not again lose sight of him; she stole another glance, and finding his attention absorbed, and his eyes fixed as before, ventured to contemplate him for some seconds; he was, at least she thought he was, greatly altered in person, and the bloom of his countenance gone; she gently touched Mrs. Brooks's arm, and making a violent effort to speak with composure and collection, softly whispered, "There he is, that is my lord in blue, leaning against the second pillar of the orchestra." Mrs. Brooks softly pressed her hand at once, in token that she understood her, and to recommend composure, and then bent her whole attention to watch Lord Lochcarron, and to obtain by some means or other information of where he resided in Dorchester.

The instruments ceased, and the company rose from their seats; one of the chief personages present, both in his own estimation, and on account of the office he held, was a Mr. Tadcroft, the president of the evening, a merchant in Dorchester; this gentleman had been some time on the watch for an opportunity to commence a conversation with Cordelia and her companion, and took advantage of the present interregnum to pay them some slight compliments, and inquire how they liked the performances; Lady Lochcarron, every faculty of her soul engrossed by the object which on earth was dearest to it, replied to his question in such a vague way, that he thought her worse than ill-bred, quite stupid, and turned the whole of his attention to Mrs. Brooks, in the hope that she might be composed of more conversable materials; Mrs. Brooks readily entered into discourse, for she doubted not that from Mr. Tadcroft she might glean the requisite information concerning Lord Lochcarron's present place of abode; when he asked what she thought of the concert, she gave it at least due praise; "Now I feel flattered, Madam," said Tadcroft with a grin, "for if you, who no doubt hear all the first performers of the metropolis, can think us tolerable, we shall do in time with a little practice." "I am not much in London, Sir," returned Mrs. Brooks, "my residence is chiefly in the country." "May I inquire, madam, what rural shade possesses attraction sufficient to induce a lady to seclude herself in it?" "A very warm and comfortable one," said Mrs. Brooks, with an affable smile, "I come from that district which manufacturers the raw materials you furnish." "Devonshire then?" said Tadcroft, with eager curiosity. "Not so," said Mrs. Brooks, gaily, "I'ze be Yorkshire." "Here on business?" said her companion, pushing his inquisitiveness beyond the verge of good-breeding; deeply indignant at his impertinence, she yet kept her own purpose in view, and veiling her resentment beneath a smile, replied, "On business of the last consequence—we are travelling for my friend's health;" then to prevent any further effusion of prying curiosity, she looked round on the company, and after a general tribute of admiration to the smart appearance of the Dorchester ladies, she inquired particularly who several of them were; Tadcroft replied to each inquiry in such a spirit of keen satire, as gave her a much clearer insight into his mind, than into the history of those he described; for as the very essence of satire is an attempt to light the lamp of the satirist's perfections at the expiring embers of his victim, the malevolence of his purpose is sure to injure him with every mind possessing sense, delicacy, and moral rectitude.

From the ladies, Mrs. Brooks proceeded to the gentlemen, and asked the names of one or two, who fared no better with Mr. Tadcroft, than the lovelier part of the creation; "And pray who is that gentleman?" was Mrs. Brooks's next query, directing Tadcroft's attention towards Lord Lochcarron. "That is Mr. Campion, madam, a gentleman lately arrived from the continent; he has been at the White Hart two or three days, and has come here to-night to ascertain, I suppose, whether our music be as good a feast for the ears, as the mutton of our downs and the beer of our town are allowed throughout England to be for the palate." Mrs. Brooks had now all the information she either expected or desired to receive from Tadcroft, but she was both too well-bred and good-tempered to neglect gratifying his vanity by a smile of applause to his home-made wit.

She now joined Cordelia, who, during this whole time had been only attentive to her lord; at first she averted her face, and endeavoured to shun his recognition, dreading that it would be but the harbinger of his contempt; but when reason suggested that it was not for this she came into Dorsetshire, she tried to obey its dictates, and rather to court than avoid his observation; for some time after the music ceased he did not appear to see her, and though he moved his position, walked about the room, and once passed very near her, he neither noticed her by word nor look; at last their eyes met, and could the expression of the most melting tenderness be reduced to rule, it would be that which now animated the sweet face of Cordelia; the gaze of Lochcarron seemed to linger on it a moment, and was then averted with the cold disregard of a perfect stranger; she felt as if the warm current of life were ebbing away, when she was joined by Mrs. Brooks, who imparted the intelligence she had gained from Tadcroft; this, by giving Cordelia time, enabled her to recover composure; she was convinced, or rather she tried to convince herself, that her lord had not recognised her, and delighted that she had at length ascertained his place of residence she once more turned her beautiful eyes upon him, beaming fond affection, but

"As one who spies a serpent in his way,
"Glistening and basking in the summer ray,"

they were quickly averted; for Lochcarron, his face arrayed in smiles, was bending gracefully to carry on a whispering conversation with a beautiful woman, who, as Cordelia and Mrs. Brooks had learned in the early part of the evening, from the conversation of some persons in their vicinity, was a widow of large fortune, generally resident at an elegant mansion near the post road between Poole and Dorchester, and very lately returned from France.

Poor Cordelia could not bear the train of ideas which rushed to her mind, and grasping Mrs. Brooks's arm, all she could whisper was, "Go, go, let us be gone;" even Mrs. Emerson's remembered counsel, "To demand a personal interview with Lord Lochcarron, to engage him to do her justice in point of character," vanished before the feelings of the moment; and only anxious to escape being made the object of sarcastic scorn or contemptuous pity, she hurried from the spot.

CHAPTER II.

TO have met Lord Lochcarron—to have passed close to him in the concert room without receiving the slightest notice—to have seen his eyes averted from her face with the chilling indifference of a stranger, while in the very next moment he could bestow on another the most marked attention and kindness, were all circumstances so distressing to Cordelia's feelings, that by the time she reached her apartment in the inn, she was ready to sink beneath her weight of anguish. Mrs. Brooks gently compelled her to take some wine, and inquired with kind affection how she did; Cordelia sighed deeply; "I have no right to complain," said she, "I have merited my fate, and must submit to it." "In what way, my dear Lady Lochcarron?" questioned Mrs. Brooks, with tender solicitude. "Because," replied Cordelia, shaking her head in mournful sadness, "I now, when too late, perceive that I have departed from the delicacy of our sex; Lord Lochcarron deserted me, and, hard as my fate seemed, I ought to have submitted to it, but by coming into Dorsetshire to seek him I have forfeited my own dignity, and"—she proceeded, tears of tenderness glistening in her beautiful eyes—"the very circumstance which, had he judged me with candour, would have pleaded for me, has excited his contempt."

Mrs. Brooks, now that she had seen Lord Lochcarron, so graceful, so elegant, so exactly suited in person and in rank to be the husband of her beloved Cordelia, was more than ever desirous of seeing them re-united; and really believing that Lochcarron (who certainly could have no thought of meeting his deserted bride at a concert in Dorchester) had beheld Cordelia as a total stranger, she said "I dare say, my love, your lord did not know you—you see he was engaged with a party of friends—" "Yes," said Cordelia, indignantly, and Mrs. Brooks plainly saw that at least a part of this ebullition of grief had for its groundwork, a jealousy excusable in every point of view under her circumstances; "I shall leave Dorchester early in the morning," resumed Cordelia, deep resentment in this instance subduing the natural mildness of her temper.

"Your spirits have been too much harassed of late, my dear," returned Mrs. Brooks; "will you on this occasion sanction me to judge and to act for you?" "Oh yes, my dearest Mrs. Brooks, on this and on every occasion I can rely on your affectionate kindness," replied Cordelia, in that tone of grateful sweetness with which she always acknowledged the kind offices of friendship, and which constituted one of her peculiar charms; "then promise to compose yourself, and I will go back immediately to the concert room, and have a few moments conversation with your lord." "What! before so many witnesses?" gasped out Cordelia, "oh no, for Heaven's sake, no!" "And can you not rely on my management?" questioned Mrs. Brooks, in a tone which appealed at once to Cordelia's knowledge of her delicacy, good sense, and refinement; "O yes, in every thing I can; but the packet of letters—you cannot give it to him to-night?" "Nor do I intend it; I do not even know that I shall mention your being at Dorchester—that as I see occasion."

Cordelia, with all her fresh indignation against her unkind lord, could yet breathe a pious wish for the success of Mrs. Brooks's embassy, who after seeing her wear at least the appearance of composure, went back to the concert room; she paused at the door, for

the performers were then in the midst of one of Corelli's most esteemed compositions, and she felt that nothing but the most absolute necessity could authorise that destruction of harmony which her entrance, however light she might contrive to make it, would cause; yet while she lingered there her eyes were not unemployed; she sought Lord Lochcarron in every direction, but without success, and became seriously alarmed lest he should have quitted the room; the instruments ceased, she entered, and found her apprehensions but too just—Lord Lochcarron was nowhere to be seen;—yet scarcely willing to believe even the evidence of her senses, she looked again and again until convinced he was no longer in the room; the party she had seen him with were gone too, and Mrs. Brooks, with deep sympathy, anticipated poor Cordelia's feelings when she should return to her with this intelligence; but to return yet was impossible, for to leave the room a second time until the performances of the evening should be nearly concluded was not to be thought of; she was compelled therefore to sit it out, and to listen to all the humdrum remarks, far-fetched jokes, and sly round-about modes of sifting, which constituted the discourse of her friend Tadcroft, who again joined her; the cost of all this was not a little, for the first required her whole stock of patience, the second of comprehension, and the third of finesse to parry, and of good-breeding to endure.

He noticed Cordelia's having left the room, but expressed no wonder at it, for Mrs. Brooks having said before that she was travelling for her health had lulled suspicion on that point; and her retiring was only attributed to the annoyance she felt from the close atmosphere of a crowded room; at length the concluding piece began to sound, and Mrs. Brooks hastened to her anxious young friend, who, during her absence, had felt what she had done under similar circumstances at Pool, the extremes of hope and fear; but as to Lord Lochcarron's having retired from the concert nearly at the same time with herself, it had never once occurred to her; and she sat in trembling expectation awaiting the return of her friend, dreading, yet endeavouring to arm herself with fortitude, to hear the fatal sentence which she doubted not Lord Lochcarron would pronounce, "I can never see or acknowledge Miss Walpole as my wife."

She thought time stood still, and that Mrs. Brooks would never return; when she at length entered, Cordelia grasped her hand with wild energy; "Tell me at once, my best friend, do not keep me in suspense—what does my lord say?" "I have not seen him." "Not seen him!" and she dropped the hand which she held; "His lordship had quitted the room in the interval between our departure and my return." "With the party who occupied so much of his attention!" said Cordelia, in a tone between grief and resentment. "That I cannot determine," said Mrs. Brooks, "you know I could not risk any inquiry." "Certainly not, but it must be some powerful attraction which induces him to remain in Dorsetshire, and traverse the country in this zigzag way, when his dear father is so very ill."

Mrs. Brooks in reply begged her to compose herself, reminding her that morning would soon return, when she should make Lord Lochcarron a personal visit, and put Lord Dunotter's packet into his hands. It was now getting late, and Cordelia was easily prevailed on to seek repose, but her spirits were too greatly agitated to obtain much of it; every time she awoke from her transient slumbers the dear idea recurred that she had seen

Lord Lochcarron; but alas! in the next moment came the appalling drawback that she had seen him as a stranger.

The weary night wore over, and the welcome beam of that day, which Cordelia felt assured must decide her fate, appeared; they rose soon after eight, and had breakfast, but neither her own efforts nor the persuasions of her friend could make it much more than a nominal meal with Cordelia.

Mrs. Brooks soon finished her toilet, and once again resumed the charge of that packet of letters which, superscribed in the hand-writing of his parent, would, Cordelia fondly flattered herself, awaken some emotions of tenderness in the heart of Lochcarron; she set out soon after ten, apprehensive that any delay might be attended with some ill consequence not to be foreseen; her plan was to inquire for Mr. Campion's valet, and in a private conference with him to desire that he would tell *Lord Lochcarron* a lady requested the honour of a few minutes conversation to deliver a letter, which must be given into his own hands; for she thought it extremely probable that in his assumed character he would receive no one, as he might, very likely, suppose that all who pretended to have business with Mr. Campion must be either beggars or swindlers; but she flattered herself that the knowledge of his title would be a guarantee for her admission.

Such was the plan of operations with which Mrs. Brooks set out, leaving Cordelia in the utmost anxiety of suspense that human nature could support; "I will endeavour to arm myself with patience," she thought mentally, "and not expect the return of my friend for an hour at least;" she laid her watch on the table, and taking up a newspaper, alternately read and consulted time, which seemed to move so slowly, that she more than once held the little machine to her ear, to ascertain whether it were in motion; half an hour had elapsed when Cordelia heard some one slowly ascending the stairs; she listened, the step approached, and she became convinced it was that of Mrs. Brooks; her heart died away, for she was certain that so rapid a return could only augur the total failure of her mission; the door opened, and poor Cordelia read in the fallen countenance of her friend that her fears had been prophetic: "I see how it is," she said in a tone of deep despondence, "my lord will not see you." "No," said Mrs. Brooks, as she slowly seated herself, and gave a sigh to her disappointment, "no, that is not the case—Lord Lochcarron has quitted Dorchester." A dread expression of despair passed over Cordelia's features, and clasping her hands she exclaimed, "Then my worst fears are verified, and all is over; he knew me at the concert, and is flying from me." Mrs. Brooks could not take upon her to say positively that such was not the case, because she did not know it; but she endeavoured to persuade Cordelia that she was alarming herself with needless fears: "I am persuaded you distress yourself without any additional reason, my love," she said, "I dare say he did not know you; there was no change of countenance when his eye rested on you; and I think no man breathing could be so finished a dissembler as to meet you thus far from home under the peculiar circumstances in which you are both placed and betray no emotion." "When did Lord Lochcarron go?" questioned Cordelia; "At nine o'clock." "How unfortunate!—but an hour before you went out; I suppose it was vain to inquire what route he has taken." "I asked," said Mrs.

Brooks, "for Mr. Campion's servant, and was answered by a waiter in the broad western dialect, 'Mr. Campion's sarvant be gone to Lyme, Missus.' I was not surprised at this, because we had reason to think he would be sent back thither; but I regretted it, because it placed me under the necessity of asking at once if I could see Mr. Campion; to which the fellow replied with a stupid stare, as if wondering I had not understood him, 'Why, Missus, Mr. Campion be gone too.' "What, back to Lyme?" said Cordelia, in a tone of united surprise and disappointment. "So I supposed from his manner of expressing himself," returned Mrs. Brooks, "but not quite satisfied with such information, I asked to see the mistress of the house, and was introduced to a very respectable looking woman, who told me very civilly that Mr. Campion left Dorchester about an hour before for Blandford;" "For Blandford indeed!" reiterated Cordelia, while something like a faint ray of pleasure illumined her charming features. "Yes," rejoined her friend, "and if I might venture to hazard an opinion, it is that his lordship is journeying towards Ravenpark, or Holleyfield." Cordelia shook her head: "I am afraid he is only journeying to shun me," she replied; "but does he travel alone? is Harris really gone to Lyme?" Mrs. Brooks answered in the affirmative, but evaded saying much on that point; the fact was, that though she could not push her questions very close to the mistress of the inn, she had yet gone far enough to ascertain that Harris left Dorchester for Lyme the preceding day in the coach; and that it seemed to be Mr. Campion's intention to remain where he was until his return; but he had, it appeared, changed his mind, for when he rose that morning he ordered a postchaise, and left instructions for his servant to follow him to Blandford; this looked so like a wish to avoid his lady, that Mrs. Brooks, as much as possible, concealed the circumstance from her; she really hoped it was his intention to go to Buckinghamshire; at all events no choice was left for them but to pursue his route; but some delay took place in procuring a chaise, and before that was obtained, their baggage packed, the bill discharged, and every other arrangement made, they found themselves upwards of three hours after Lord Lochcarron. It seemed as if a malignant genius pursued poor Cordelia with evil in every shape; the morning had been fine, but the afternoon altered, a heavy mist hung in the atmosphere, accompanied with a drizzling rain, and every thing which can make travelling uncomfortable, such as bad weather, an uneasy vehicle, and indifferent horses, conspired to harass her: Mrs. Brooks greatly regretted that the fog precluded her from viewing the landscape, but Cordelia heeded it not; a gloomy day accords with gloomy spirits.

When they reached Blandford, Mrs. Brooks, without hesitation, described Lord Lochcarron, and inquired whether a gentleman answering that description had arrived there; disappointment again hovered over them with sable wings; he had been there, remained only half an hour, and then went on to Cranbourn.

Cordelia could not imitate her lord's rapid mode of travelling; and though ardently desirous to reach home if possible before him, whatever might happen, she could not, either in consideration of her own health, or that of Mrs. Brooks, pursue her journey that night; the last-named lady was indeed a sufferer by this day's exertion, for in consequence of the wind having blown on that side of the carriage where she sat, she had caught a severe cold, and rose the next morning with a violent head-ache and sore throat; but alike fearful of alarming Lady Lochcarron, and of causing any delay which might be

repented of, she did not complain, but as soon as they had breakfasted, set off for Cranbourn with every appearance of cheerfulness.

When they drew near the town, Cordelia, as if awaking from a deep reverie, said she thought it would be best to make no further inquiry concerning Lord Lochcarron; "I am determined to return immediately home," she proceeded, "and to leave the issue of my fate to Providence; I find by sad experience that no effort of my own can make it better." "It is however your duty not to relax those efforts, my dear," said Mrs. Brooks; "at all events inquiry is my part of the business, and you must allow my continuing to make it;" this she did on reaching the inn, which was about one o'clock, and heard in answer that the gentleman she inquired for had slept there the preceding night, and started for Andover at rather an early hour that morning. Cordelia heard this with something resembling a gleam of pleasure, for it strengthened her hope that he was going to his father; as it was their previously-settled plan to pursue the same route with all expedition, they ordered another chaise, and, while it was getting ready, took some slight refreshment. Cordelia now beginning to perceive the languid looks of her friend, her difficulty of swallowing, and other symptoms of feverish cold, her tenderness took the alarm, and she strenuously urged the propriety of resting at Cranbourn that night; but to this she would by no means consent, assuring her that a night's rest, and a little care when they should reach Andover, would entirely remove them; again Cordelia urged the length of the journey, and the propriety of deferring it until the next day, and used every argument that the most considerate kindness and friendship could suggest, putting herself, her wishes, and interest entirely out of the question; but Mrs. Brooks was not to be excelled in generosity and self-denial in this friendly contest; according to her present view of circumstances, it appeared to her to be a point of the first importance that they should have an interview with Lord Lochcarron before he saw either Lord or Lady Dunotter; but this it was doubtful whether they should now be able to obtain; the only possible chance for it seemed to be in the highest degree of promptness and expedition, and these considerations determined her not to yield to the tender fears of her affectionate young friend; but putting personal hazard and feelings out of the question, to press forwards for Andover that night; but her strength of frame did not correspond to her energy of mind; and for the last ten miles of the journey she was so ill that she could hardly bear the motion of the carriage; in this state they alighted at the Star and Garter at Andover; Mrs. Brooks, scarcely able to support herself, much less to make her wonted researches after Lord Lochcarron, and Cordelia in such deep distress on her friend's account, that she would willingly, if that had been possible, have had her illness transferred to herself.

Ill as Mrs. Brooks was, her finely constituted and regulated mind was alive to every consideration of propriety, take the term in its utmost latitude; she was sensible that she was going to have a very severe illness, which would preclude her, at least for some time, from appearing in her deputed character of the guide and guardian of Lady Lochcarron; true, her own maturity of judgment, and dignified excellence in every respect, qualified her to act on almost every occasion for herself; but the world, the rigid world, required that a young female should not be left without a directress, beyond all in a house of such general resort as that they were now in; if in the course of a day or two

her illness seemed likely to continue, every consideration would demand that Lady Lochcarron should return to Holleyfield; but both in the interim and in the event of her doing so, it would be highly desirable to have private lodgings; and without alarming Cordelia by letting her see her motives in their full extent, she urged her own indisposition as a plea for wishing to be quiet; and apprehensive that if she remained at the Star all night, she might not be able to remove the next day, she requested the people of the house to procure them lodgings, which they did in a very respectable house on the opposite side of the street, inhabited by a Mrs. Fleming, who bestowed every kind attention on the invalid.

Cordelia insisted on having medical advice summoned; Mrs. Brooks made an ineffectual opposition, saying, she was certain she should recover well enough without it—her young friend was inflexible, and all she would concede was to have one doctor instead of two, which was her own wish and intention; nor would she give up even that point except to the whispered remonstrance of Mrs. Brooks, “Recollect, my dear, that to avoid suspicions of all sorts, the proceedings of Mrs. Beaumont must be very different from those of Lady Lochcarron or Miss Walpole—we are here without attendants, and must keep up a uniform appearance of mediocrity and retired habits.” Cordelia felt the full force and wisdom of her reasoning: with regard to being without an attendant, she had from her earliest years been accustomed to self-exertion; and on the present journey herself and Mrs. Brooks had given each other such mutual aid, that they had never felt the want of one; but as a female servant was now absolutely necessary, she requested Mrs. Fleming to inquire the next day for a respectable young woman, to be with her while she remained in Hampshire, which she hinted would probably not be longer than until Mrs. Brooks’s recovery.

When Dr. S arrived, Cordelia was pleased with his address and manners, and, as far as she could trust her own judgment, satisfied with his skill; he did not, like their family doctor in Buckinghamshire, Mr. Herbert, magnify the danger of his patient to enhance his own merit; but treated her case like what it really was, a very bad cold attended with fever, which might be removed by due care in a very short time; his prescriptions were judicious, and most strictly enforced by Cordelia, who insisted on passing the night in the same chamber with her friend, and nursing her with the affectionate regard of a daughter, much against Mrs. Brooks’s earnest wish and request; for she felt it the highest possible augmentation of her own sufferings, that Lady Lochcarron should thus deprive herself of rest after so long and fatiguing a journey; she had indeed less sleep than the invalid, and neither of them were refreshed with the little they enjoyed.

The next morning Mrs. Brooks was in no respect better than the preceding day, and Cordelia was beginning to feel the effects of fatigue and want of repose.

Mrs. Fleming fulfilled her promise, and introduced to Cordelia, as an attendant, a young person of pleasing appearance and manners, and satisfactory character; the course of this day brought Lady Lochcarron a letter, which had been forwarded from Dorchester, according to the instructions she left on quitting that place; it was directed for Mrs.

Beaumont in the hand-writing of Lord Dunotter. The heart of Cordelia beat with joy; she opened it, and the delight she felt on seeing Lord Lochcarron in the concert room at Dorchester, was scarcely greater than that with which she recognised the writing of the earl. It contained every expression that affection could dictate, and respect inspire; his lordship replied at length to the two letters she had written from Lyme and Dorchester; every line breathed the most unequivocal, yet delicately turned, assurances how truly he sympathized with her sufferings, how highly estimated the rectitude of her judgment, and how perfectly acquiesced in the wisdom of its decisions: so far all was pleasing and satisfactory, but much remained on which the letter was far otherwise: on the subject of his own health, his lordship was very reserved, and Cordelia too well understood that he had nothing pleasing to impart on that point; he adverted to the party at Holleyfield the preceding Saturday, but it was in a way as if the evident want of feeling and decency in Lady Dunotter, in having company at such a time, had wrung from him this notice of a subject, which he almost scorned to mention: of his son he said very little, thus leaving Cordelia to the certain conclusion that he had not heard from him by either letter or message; he exhorted his daughter to be strictly careful of her health; said every thing, to be repeated to Mrs. Brooks, that politeness and friendship could dictate, and concluded with earnestly requesting her to write at every possible opportunity. To do this was a heavy task to poor Cordelia, but it was one which she now hastened to perform, that she might save the post; all she could do was to dwell on the bright side of the prospect, and to enliven as much as possible that which was dark; that she had seen Lord Lochcarron would, she doubted not, prove a consolation to his father; and that she had seen him in vain, she extenuated on the broad ground of truth, that her agitation would not permit her to point him out to Mrs. Brooks time enough to allow of her speaking to him; and that when she afterwards returned for that purpose he was gone.

On the subject of his having passed by her as a perfect stranger, her own private opinion inclined her but too much to believe that he did not do so as not in reality knowing her; but as she was not certain that such was the fact, neither her scrupulous regard for truth, nor for the peace of Lord Dunotter, would allow her to say more than that Mrs. Brooks supposed, as he could not have the remotest idea of meeting her in the west of England, he really did not know her; she thought it right in every point of view to mention the party he was with at the concert; to subjoin, through a softened medium, all that had since occurred; to own that she knew not whither he had gone; to say that Mrs. Brooks was confined by a cold; and to add in conclusion of the whole, that she waited at Andover for Lord Dunotter's sanction to her returning home.

Such were the chief contents of the letter which Cordelia, after having finished, perused and re-perused, and scarcely able to find in it one ray of consolation for her suffering father-in-law, she mollified and softened it until compelled to write it over again.

After having despatched it to the post-office, she seated herself at the window of her sitting-room, in the lingering hope that if Lord Lochcarron had not quitted Andover, he would be staying at the principal inn, which was immediately opposite; and that she might possibly see either him or his respectable servant Harris, who was known to her;

but minute succeeded to minute, and hour rolled on after hour without any person appearing who bore the slightest resemblance to either of them.

Thus lonely and desolate, away from home, surrounded by strangers, with only one friend near her, and that friend sick, all her meditations were of the gloomy kind; and if it be indeed any part of wisdom to prepare the mind for the worst by hoping nothing, Cordelia was acting wisely; the longer she reflected on every circumstance, the more deeply she felt persuaded that her Lord fled from Dorchester purposely to avoid her; and she firmly renewed the resolution she had made with herself neither to inquire nor suffer any further inquiry to be made about him, but to return to Holleyfield the very first day that Mrs. Brooks should be able to travel. When the next morning arrived she thought this as distant as ever; little change which could be termed amendment had taken place in the invalid, and another gloomy cheerless day wore over: towards evening, however, the prospect rather brightened; Mrs. Brooks thought her symptoms much relieved, and her own feelings were sanctioned by the fiat of her physician.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. Brooks passed a tranquil night, and was much better in the morning; her physician would not, however, sanction her quitting her apartment that day, but said that if she caught no fresh cold, she might expect to find every vestige of her complaint removed by Monday.

The morning was rather gloomy, but about three o'clock the day cleared out, and the sun shone with a warmth and brilliancy beyond what might have been expected at the season of the year. Mrs. Brooks, seriously apprehensive that Lady Lochcarron's health would suffer by confinement and anxiety, earnestly requested her to take a walk until five o'clock, their hour of dining at Andover, saying she should employ herself in the meantime in writing to Mrs. Emerson: but for the last plea Cordelia would not, probably, have consented to leave her; but taking that for a hint that she wished to be alone, she put on her bonnet and shawl, and saying she should soon be back, set out on a ramble in the pleasant environs of Andover. From the garden of the house where she lodged, she passed out into the fields, and wandered a considerable way, delighted with the novel and beautiful views which the downs of Dorsetshire and the woods of Hampshire presented, now wearing their most attractive form, clothed in the green livery of spring; whatever misfortunes may assail, whatever disappointments depress a feeling and tender heart, still if that heart is not the abode of guilt, and its followers, remorse and despair, it will never be dead to the charms of nature, to

“Prospect, grove, or song,
“Dim grottos, gleaming lakes, and fountains clear.”

Even the balmy air of the spring has a softening influence on the bosom, and disposes the elastic spirits of youth to receive impressions of delight: it was market-day at Andover, and Cordelia encountered so many objects both animate and inanimate to amuse her mind, and withdraw it from the contemplation of its own inquietudes, that when she consulted her watch, she was surprised to find she had wandered nearly an hour; not that she had walked in a direct line all that time, that was a peril she would not venture upon in a strange place; she had retraced her steps twice, and now stood still a few seconds considering whether she should endeavour to find a nearer way home; but did not deem it quite safe to venture on unknown ground without a guide, for she would not bring her attendant out, lest Mrs. Brooks should want any thing in the interim; she therefore thought it most prudent to return by the road she came, and had scarcely passed ten yards of it, when a weasel, pursued by a terrier dog, darted through the hedge on the left, and flew across the road immediately before her; scarcely had time allowed her to form a distinct idea of the objects she beheld, when the owner of the dog sprung over a stile, which she had not before perceived; and where shall the language be found which shall declare her feelings—for that owner was—Lord Lochcarron. In the very same instant that his lordship appeared, the little animal, finding no egress on the other side, which was bounded by a wall, turned to seek its old quarters; the dog followed, and in the ardour of pursuit came so close to Cordelia as to brush her gown; had no other cause

existed, terriers and weasels would never have called forth a scream from the bosom of Cordelia; but that other cause, the unexpected appearance of him in whom her every hope of happiness on earth was centred, and who she loved with a tenderness which survived not only neglect, but seeming contempt, did call it forth; she screamed wildly, became pale as death, for her veil thrown back exhibited her lovely countenance, and was nearly sinking to the earth; Lord Lochcarron advanced, and with that elegance and grace which so peculiarly distinguished him, apologized for the alarm his dog had caused, to which he attributed, or seemed to attribute, her agitation; but neither by voice, look, nor gesture did he betray the slightest recognition, or appear to think it possible that he could be conversing with the woman he had made his wife; either the change in her person, which was indeed very great, and the improbability of her being at Andover, had effectually concealed her from his knowledge, or he was acting with a duplicity unparalleled; for when he saw the increasing perturbation of Cordelia, which this striking proof that what he had done at Dorchester he now persisted in, did not fail to augment, he with great politeness, but with the perfectly cool and unembarrassed air of a stranger, presented his arm, and begged her to accept it.

Had any other object been there to rest upon, it is probable that Cordelia would not, in the moment of anguish, have taken that arm which ought, while nerve or sinew remained to it, to be her prop and stay. Lochcarron felt her trembling frame as she leaned on him for that support she was unable to afford herself, and regarded her with a look of what appeared to be real surprise that so trifling a matter should have caused such emotion; more and more did the tide of grief swell at poor Cordelia's heart; was this the look she ought to receive from him who was the lord of her vows and the husband of her choice; to whom she was yet a bride, and whose duty it was to be the guide, the consoler, the protector of her youth? yet though suffering as acutely as human nature could do under such circumstances, the singularity of which rendered them doubly afflictive, every consideration of a wounded tenderness, feminine timidity, and virgin reserve, conspired to prevent her from saying what her indignant heart prompted: "Do we meet thus as strangers, my lord?" No; she felt that if Lord Lochcarron did not recognise, or would not acknowledge his wife, her own lips must not be those which forced the recognition, or the acknowledgment from him; but all these united could not restrain her from giving her ungenerous lord a glance, in which dignity, conscious innocence, meek resignation, and all of resentment that her gentle nature could feel, were so powerfully blended, and altogether produced such a strongly depicted expression of countenance, that if Lochcarron had not felt its influence, he must have been divested of all those attributes of soul and faculties of mind, which class their possessor as man.

Was it that he understood that speaking look, and determined to parry it? or that it found its way to his heart by a new and unexpected channel? or that it called up suppositions which he resolved to realise? at all events he chose to have some conversation, which he commenced in the mode prescribed in this country from time immemorial, by an observation concerning the weather.

Cordelia had now, by every aid that her pious, well-regulated, reasoning mind could suggest, argued herself into a much greater degree of composure than under such

circumstances she could have thought possible; but we are very rarely, perhaps never, acquainted with the extent of our own energies till called upon to exert them. She reflected that if Lochcarron was indeed acting with that dissimulation she too much feared, it was due to her own dignity to conceal the anguish she felt; and if he really did not know her, it must appear the very highest degree of either idiotism or affectation, to continue disturbed because a dog had chased a weasel: calmed by these considerations, she replied to what Lord Lochcarron said, with her wonted graceful sweetness; and when he subjoined some remarks on the scenery around them, accorded with his opinions, and joined in admiring it. Lochcarron next pointed out to Cordelia's notice a very handsome house on the right, observing that it was a delightful residence, and expressing some curiosity to know who it belonged to; Cordelia professed her ignorance, adding, though not without considerable emotion, "I am quite a stranger here, detained by the sudden illness of a friend who travels with me;" for she thought with herself that whether Lord Lochcarron did or did not know her, she had an unquestionable right to assume the same show of ignorance with regard to him.

There was, at least Cordelia thought there was, peculiar meaning in the glance of her lord as he replied, "Then we are here under somewhat similar circumstances, for I also am a stranger at Andover, waiting the return of my servant, who I have sent to town on particular business." "That business," said Cordelia, mentally, "is to ascertain either the state of his father's health, or, oh! dreadful thought! the progress of that suit which is to separate us for ever;" and as the idea crossed her mind, the tremor of her frame, which had nearly subsided, came on again; yet a quick instinctive feeling prompted her at the same moment to withdraw her arm from that which supported it; and, while it was only by the strongest effort that she repressed her tears, to say, with all her wonted grace, "I fear I am taking you out of your way, Sir;" but she pronounced the last word faintly, and could scarcely forbear using the title for which it was substituted.

Lord Lochcarron, who saw clearly that her composure was assumed, not genuine, said in a respectful way, that he was apprehensive she had not yet recovered from her fright, and begged permission to see her home: this was a permission which, had Cordelia been Miss Walpole, and the escort of a mere stranger been offered under such circumstances, she would not perhaps have granted; especially as she saw her attendant advancing at a distance, sent by the considerate kindness of Mrs. Brooks, who was uneasy at her staying so long; but she knew that when an explanation took place, which it must do sooner or later, no stigma could rest on any part of her conduct.

They had nearly reached the house when they met the servant; Lady Lochcarron not choosing to go in by the back way, turned the corner and came up the street to the front door. "We are quite near neighbours," observed Lord Lochcarron, as Cordelia withdrew her arm, "my lodgings are not more than three or four houses higher up;" he then respectfully asked Cordelia's permission to inquire after her health the next day; at the same time presenting a card, on which was written, "Mr. Champion." Cordelia took it with a hand which she vainly tried to render steady, and said "that she hoped her friend and mistress would then be well enough to leave her apartment, and would be happy to unite her acknowledgments to those she now begged leave to offer for Mr. Champion's

politeness." A bow and courtesy of good morning were then exchanged; Cordelia entered the door which Gardiner held open, and Lochcarron turned away; but in the same moment all her forced composure vanished. The termination of her last two meetings with her lord, the fatal evening of her marriage, and the concert at Dorchester, rushed to her mind; and, unable to repress a sad presentiment that this would be their third and last interview, her tears imperiously refused to be longer restrained. Now that Lochcarron was gone, all the arguments which had withheld her from making herself known to him appeared futile and trivial; she wished to recall time, she wished impossibilities, and when she reached the apartment where Mrs. Brooks was sitting, she had just self-command enough to say, "I have seen my lord," that she might not too much alarm her, and throwing herself upon a sofa, she drew out her handkerchief, and sobbed aloud.

Mrs. Brooks, in dreadful apprehension that all was over, and that Lord and Lady Lochcarron had parted to meet no more, hastened to sooth her, and to entreat that she would disclose what had passed; considering, perhaps justly, that to unbosom her grief was the most likely means of assuaging it; but when she heard the full particulars, she exclaimed, "Be assured, my dear, Lord Lochcarron does not know you! it is not in human nature, much less in one so young, to evince at once such deep duplicity and such entire mastery of feeling." "I cannot think as you do," said Cordelia, mournfully, "I fear he knows me but too well, and is artfully disguising his knowledge until he gets from Andover." "I shall be enabled to judge to-morrow," said Mrs. Brooks. "I doubt no to-morrow will arrive to bring him here," sighed Cordelia, in a tone of despondence; "too fatally do I know that he holds neither promise nor vow sacred;" the bitterness of her spirit breaking from all the restraints of patience, meekness, and even hope.

Dinner coming in, no more was said; but the two ladies had now theme enough for conversation during the evening.

Though Cordelia had declared her doubts, amounting to disbelief, whether Lord Lochcarron would make his morning call, yet Mrs. Brooks could not but observe, that her dress was arranged with a degree of attention much beyond what she had bestowed on it in any of the temporary residences they had occupied on their journey; that whenever the door opened, she started with emotion; that as time wore away, long fits of abstraction came over her; and that as the day advanced, a pensiveness, nearly approaching to melancholy, became the characteristic of her countenance; when the chime of the clock announced half after one, Mrs. Brooks, though her own hopes were nearly extinct, was unwilling to altogether crush those of Cordelia, but she could not prevent her looks from betraying her fears; "I told you so," said Lady Lochcarron, with that bitter smile which, igniting from despair, may be termed the lurid lightning of the soul, as gay and genuine smiles are frequently denominated its sunshine, "I told you he would not come." Mrs. Brooks, with little real expectation, now scarcely dared to maintain the appearance of it; two o'clock struck, and Cordelia, at once, as if the sound conveyed a certainty that all was over, and as resigning herself to that certainty, moved her seat nearer the window, and took up a book to lose her own reflections in those of the author; "Surely I shall hear from Holleyfield to-day," said Cordelia; at that moment a loud knocking was heard; Lady Lochcarron's heart beat with tumultuous emotion, and in the next minute her lord entered

the room; a beam of pleasure seemed to illumine his countenance when he approached Cordelia; his hopes that she had recovered the effects of her fright, were expressed with easy grace, but no word, no look betrayed the slightest reminiscence of an acquaintance bearing date prior to the preceding evening. Cordelia's every pulse beat with accelerated motion, her cheek was flushed, and her quivering lips could ill perform their office, yet she exerted herself to introduce Mrs. Brooks by name; but when she pronounced that of Campion, her faint articulation was scarcely audible; Lord Lochcarron neither seemed to notice her emotion, nor to have either flutterings or hesitation; he was respectful, polite, collected, attentive; he soon caught the name of Beaumont from Mrs. Brooks, and appropriated it to Cordelia, who could not avoid feeling a painful pang when addressed thus by him.

Mrs. Brooks was, what may with truth be termed, a highly-gifted woman: her's was the very perfection of the female character; uniting the utmost exactitude of decorum, with the playful, easy, chit-chat way which fascinates in the young, and charms in those of more advanced life; she saw that her present business was to draw the attention of Lochcarron as much as possible from Cordelia, to prevent his observing her confusion, and to crush, by the most apparent openness and frankness, those suspicions and surmises which he was very likely to form, concerning two females travelling thus unprotected and unattended; the first she effected, by leading him at once into an animated conversation on local topics; and the last, by digressing from those subjects to Yorkshire, her native county, speaking of it as her home, mentioning many of the first families there, and occasionally addressing herself to Cordelia, thus at once drawing her gradually into the conversation, and meeting with every show of candour, the well-masked, but to her obvious, endeavours of Lord Lochcarron to find out their station in life and connexions: or else, if he indeed knew who they were, to see what colour they would put upon these matters; for as yet Mrs. Brooks could not clearly ascertain whether he did or did not know Cordelia, though she was still inclined to think the latter; if such was the case, the present discourse was well calculated to remove him from all possibility of finding her out: he knew nothing of the Walpole family history, origin, and connexions but what he had heard from his father; and Lord Dunotter's former inquiries concerning the relatives of Cordelia, had stopped short, very well satisfied on ascertaining that she had a maternal great aunt immensely rich, very old, and highly capricious, to whose great property she was likely eventually to be heiress; as he knew this lady resided in Cumberland, he never doubted that Cordelia had been educated, and lived there during her early years; and though he afterwards became much better informed on all these points, it was at a period when all intercourse with his son had ceased; and, if Lochcarron did not already know it, it was not likely now to rush into his mind that Cordelia Walpole, brought up, as he supposed, in Cumberland, and Mrs. Beaumont, so well acquainted with many parts of Yorkshire and the principal families there, were one and the same person. But there remained a still more strong and powerful reason for doubting the fact of Cordelia's identity; that is, if ever such an idea occurred to Lord Lochcarron, which Mrs. Brooks could not admit it did: he had early taken up a notion that the woman he married was weak and imbecile in understanding, gifted with no great share of natural talents, and having those she possessed but imperfectly cultivated; whereas the lady he was now conversing with, not only possessed every faculty of mind in transcendent

vigour, order, and arrangement, but had so large a portion of general knowledge, and was distinguished by such brilliancy of genius, and refinement of taste, that the young nobleman readily admitted to himself the fact of his never hitherto having conversed with a female so highly gifted, and so accomplished: indeed since her constant intercourse with Lord Dunotter, the progress she had made in every solid and elegant acquirement was great almost beyond either description or belief; this (as one topic of discourse led to another, and Cordelia's agitation subsiding, left her spirits more free) Mrs. Brooks saw, and saw with delight, held Lord Lochcarron in a charm of surprise and pleasure.

They had chatted about three quarters of an hour, when an elegant equipage, drawn by six foaming horses, and preceded by two out-riders, drove up to the opposite inn.

Mrs. Brooks, who happened to be near a window, threw up the sash. Cordelia instinctively looked across the way, and almost in the same moment that she recognised on the servants, the livery of the Hootside family, beheld the young earl and his countess seated in the carriage: as it drew up, Lady Hootside looked towards the window where Cordelia sat; she knew her, and a stare of vacant wonder was succeeded by as strong a sneer of contempt as the place she was in, and Cordelia's situation in life, would allow her to express; and then slightly touching the elbow of her lord, she directed his eyes to the object of her sarcastic notice. Poor Cordelia felt the insult, and it sent the blood first to her cheek, and then back to her beating heart: in the moment when Lord Hootside, in obedience to his Lady's intimation, fixed his gaze on Cordelia, her look was turned to Lord Lochcarron, as if to supplicate that support which was her unalienable right.

Lochcarron, who had been examining a print which was hung on the other side of the room, was called to the window by the sound of the carriage; the moment his glance had informed him to whom it belonged, and that its owners were in it, he evidently shrunk back, and sought concealment; but he was seen by both Lord and Lady Hootside, of which Cordelia was well aware, and she felt her situation so singular, and the combination of feelings consequent on it so powerful, that she could scarcely preserve herself from falling from her seat: her first idea was that naturally suggested by the weakness and vanity of human nature—triumph over the Hootsides; they could not possibly know on what terms, and by what chance, Lord Lochcarron and herself were thus together in a lodging-house at Andover: their accidental meeting the preceding day was a secret to themselves, and even if it should transpire, who would believe that they were thus keeping up the formal intercourse of perfect strangers, when connected by the nearest, and what ought to be the dearest, of all ties?

The reflection of a moment, showed still more plainly the reverse of the picture; this very day she expected, and hoped, while she dreaded, would tear aside the veil, and tell Lochcarron, that her fair fame demanded a final adjustment of the affair between them.

Sad with these reflections, Cordelia, with instinctive consciousness, looked at her lord; it seemed as if a correspondent feeling directed his eyes to her; their glances met,

and were hastily averted, as if each ought to have said, and neither did say, How well the equipage over the way, and its noble owners, were known to them both.

When female dignity required exertion, Cordelia was not long wanting to herself; she rallied her drooping spirits, and said, addressing Mrs. Brooks, "That is Lord Hootside's carriage, and that is Lady Hootside in the purple pelisse; they are going down to Weymouth—you know Lady Caroline Harrington said they were expected." Mrs. Brooks said "Yes," adding with a smile, that she thought her ladyship a very ungraceful figure. "Pray who did Lord Hootside marry?" questioned Lochcarron, "I am scarcely acquainted with any change that has taken place in England, since I was on the continent." Cordelia explained: "Oh! true;" he rejoined, when she named Sir Roger Cottingham, "and his nephew, young Harrington, married Caroline Mannark." "He is an excellent preacher," said Mrs. Brooks, "we heard him last Sunday at Lyme," watching as she spoke, to see what effect the mention of that place would have on her auditor: his countenance betrayed emotion, but it was of a sort which all her penetration could not assist her to decipher, whether it were that he knew Cordelia, and thought that Mrs. Brooks was approaching a point, which would compel him to avow his intentions; or whether he was only apprehensive of his own secret being discovered, and that Mr. Campion should be known as Lord Lochcarron; but she was inclined to think the latter, and to believe that seated as he now was by the side of Cordelia, and listening to her with an interest which not even his highly polished manners could entirely prevent from assuming the tone sometimes of surprise, and sometimes of admiration, it had never once occurred to him that he was paying the homage of all these feelings to the woman he had married, contemned, and deserted.

Meanwhile he replied to what Mrs. Brooks had said, not by continuing the discourse about Harrington and his connexions, but, as perhaps was natural, by taking it up at the point which more immediately concerned his own pilgrimage in the west of England; "I only left Lyme that very day," he said; but there was a slowness, a hesitation in his manner, as if while saying he had been at Lyme, he was dubious whether he ought to make the avowal.

The famous and frequently used simile, of being placed between Scylla and Charybdis, will now do nothing at typifying the situation of poor Cordelia: if an illustration must be sought for in maritime affairs, she was literally transfixed on the trident of Neptune; she thought it the likeliest thing in the world that Lord Hootside, who always acted from the impulse of the moment, and who never stood upon points of ceremony, would take it into his head to cross the street and inquire for Lord and Lady Lochcarron, nothing doubting that they were there in *propria personæ*, confessed and avowed; and now as at every second minute she stole an anxious glance towards their windows, and saw Lord and Lady Hootside conversing, apart from the lady and gentleman who accompanied them (whom she did not know) apparently as sedulously watching her abode, as she was doing theirs, she wrought herself up to a belief that they were canvassing the propriety of making such a visit as she dreaded; and it seemed, in imagination, comparatively easier to die upon the spot, than to have her identity

explained to Lord Lochcarron in such a way, with the Hootsides for witnesses of the consequences which would ensue.

In the next place, the stay of Lord Lochcarron had now reached the utmost bounds, to which any prescribed forms of visiting could allow a stranger to extend a morning call; she might hope, though she scarcely dared to do it, that he had not found her society beyond endurance; he would now go, but when, or how should they meet again: would Mrs. Brooks, to whom, when at Dorchester, she had delegated the power of acting in the affair as she should judge best, permit him to depart once more, after all they had suffered by having missed an opportunity of speaking to him? surely not; every moment she changed her position, moved her head, or opened her lips, Cordelia expected that the awful truth was coming out, either in some form of words, or by the presentation of Lord Dunotter's packet; and every time the least noise was heard on the stairs, she believed that Lord Hootside was coming up; so that between these two sources of apprehension, her fears and trepidation became so great, that she was scarcely able to support herself by the aid of salts, held within her handkerchief, and applied by stealth when the attention of her companions happened to be directed another way; anticipations and events are, however, found to differ widely; matters take unlooked for courses, and ends are brought about by means neither foreseen nor expected. Cordelia was perfectly right in conjecturing what were the intentions of Lord Hootside; he did indeed express a wish to step over, and pay his respects to Lord and Lady Lochcarron; but it so happened that his lordship, though he had never in his life been amenable to the control of either his lady, mother, or any other authority, natural or delegated, was completely held in thralldom by the young countess his wife; the ways and means by which her ladyship had already obtained this ascendancy over her spouse were manifold, and some of them the certain consequences of causes which might be explained, were it at all relevant to this history; but it is sufficient to observe simply, that the mortification her eyes endured when she raised them a second time to Cordelia's window and beheld the handsome face of Lord Lochcarron peeping over his lady's shoulder, called up all the spleen of a disposition, from childhood rendered perverse and wilful, by injudicious parental indulgence; and when Lord Hootside, with frank good-nature, expressed the purpose which Cordelia dreaded (lest it should bring about discoveries of the first magnitude, and that in all the wrong points of time, place, and company) his lady decidedly negatived his proceedings, by saying in her wonted tone of pettish command, "No, indeed, Hootside, you shall not go."

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. Brooks was well aware that Cordelia expected her either to contrive some pretence of sending her out of the room, until she had placed in the hands of Lord Lochcarron the letters of his father, or else when she attended him to the door to appoint a future meeting for that purpose; but it was not her present intention to do either: she knew that delays of indolence always prove prejudicial, and frequently ruinous; but those that are dictated by prudence are usually the paths of safety and success; her penetration very readily enabled her to see, that if Lochcarron *did* know Cordelia, he was surprised and delighted; if he *did not*, he was astonished and charmed by her uncommon endowments of mind, and (Mrs. Brooks could not help thinking) by her graces of person also; to prematurely say, "Behold your wife!" to seem bent on insisting that he should acknowledge her by that title, would, she thought, be the certain means of ruining their cause. "The progress of pure settled affection in the heart of man," (so she argued with herself) "is slow, but sure; those intense passions which are the growth of a day—perhaps of a few hours—are consumed by their own fervency, and usually decay as fast as they sprung up; he cannot now leave Andover without first seeing us—politeness, and I think I may venture to add, inclination forbid that, so that it will always be in my power to make the discovery, without risking every thing by precipitate and indelicate haste;" thus she reasoned with herself, and, acting upon these principles, when Lochcarron rose to take leave, she said with a smile, "We are all solitary sojourners here, and bound in duty to assist in amusing each other; may we hope, Sir, to be favoured with your company to tea?—eight o'clock is our hour." Lord Lochcarron gracefully bowed his thanks for the invitation, while the bright sparkle of his eye, and its involuntary, yet scarcely perceptible, glance towards Cordelia, seemed to say that Mrs. Brooks's politeness really conferred on him the pleasure, which in signifying his acceptance, he said it did. "I have no hesitation, my dear," said Mrs. Brooks, so soon as Lochcarron had taken his departure, "I have no hesitation in saying that your lord is, in person and talents, one of the finest young men I have ever seen; and I sincerely hope his heart will hereafter justify all the eulogiums which his father, in his letter to Mrs. Emerson, bestowed on it."

"I know not what to hope, or to conclude," said Cordelia, with mournful frankness; "surely never person was placed in so singular a situation as I am; I have been in agonies all this while, lest Lord Hootside should take it into his head to come over and inquire for Lord and Lady Lochcarron." "I was greatly apprehensive of it," returned Mrs. Brooks, "and had hastily settled in my mind how to act if it should happen so." "Oh! what would you have done?" questioned Cordelia, in much trepidation. "I should have left the room the moment I saw Lord Hootside making for the house, and, receiving his message myself, I should have returned, and, addressing you, have said: 'My dear, there is a young nobleman below inquiring for Lord and Lady Lochcarron;—as they are both here to return their own answer, I have not ventured to give orders, either for his admission or denial.' then taking your right hand in mine, I should have placed it in that of your lord, and giving him his father's letters, which I had ready in my pocket, I should have said, without allowing him time even to think of the surprise, 'My lord, I have the honour, as the delegate of your excellent father, to present to you your inestimable, and, I

must add, injured wife, together with these letters of explanation from my Lord Dunotter:—I will now go to Lord Hootside, and tell him that your lordship will wait upon him in two minutes;—I should then have quitted the room, and—” “Oh! my dear Mrs. Brooks!” interrupted Cordelia, “and would you really have done all this?” “Indeed I should!” she replied; “reflect a moment, and you will be convinced I could not have acted otherwise.” “And how will you act now?” questioned Cordelia, averting her face; “That is quite another matter,” answered Mrs. Brooks, smiling; “when we are threatened with sudden invasion, we hastily throw up such outworks as time will allow us to construct; but when we prepare for a distant attack we take more deliberate measures, and call in the skill and assistance of experienced engineers.” “But do you not think, my dear madam,” said Cordelia, diffidently, “do you not think it might have been better to have been more explicit before my lord left us?” Mrs. Brooks replied in the negative, adding, very affectionately, “seeing as I do, my dearest Cordelia, how certainly your merits are making their way to the heart of your lord, I think it best not to be too precipitate; his turn of mind, allow me to say, is singularly romantic, and must be managed with extreme caution.”

“But, my dear friend,” interposed Cordelia, “consider the situation of my father—of Lord Dunotter; think of the weak state he is in, and the anxiety he is enduring every day of my protracted absence, uncertain whether I have yet seen Lord Lochcarron; oh! if he knew that I have now seen him thrice, and yet—” she paused, and her cheek was tinged with a faint blush.

“These,” said Mrs. Brooks, “are amongst my chief reasons for delaying the explanation; should Lord Lochcarron be confirmed in his unreasonable prejudices, by any mismanagement on our part—” she hesitated, but Cordelia felt her argument in full, even greater force than it was intended. “Oh!” she exclaimed, “say no more; that brings back to me all that I felt and thought at Dorchester;—I must for ever remain degraded in my own eyes, for having been prevailed on to come in search of my lord.”

“No! no!” interposed her friend, “that is not my meaning; you must permit me to recur to what I said before: your lord has a peculiarly romantic way of thinking; and it requires the utmost caution and delicacy to deal with minds of that class; I dare say the singularity of your meeting yesterday would be quite an adventure suited to his taste.”

“I think,” said Cordelia, faintly smiling, while the sigh which she could not repress proclaimed that her smile was not genuine, “I think that if ever we should be established in life, my happiness would rest on a slender foundation if my husband’s feelings were thus powerfully excited by every trifling incident that came in his way.”

“My dear girl,” said Mrs. Brooks, very seriously, “allow me once for all to give you this solemn caution: should you, which I trust in Heaven you will, be soon indissolubly united to Lord Lochcarron, study his temper, accommodate yourself to his way of thinking, and become the sharer of his pursuits; whatever plans or alterations he proposes, be ever ready to promote, if any way within the pale of moderation, even though your taste or judgment may not entirely approve them; be the cheerful partner of

all his little excursions; see, or at least say you see, female beauty and merit with the same eyes that he does; and, beyond all, never seem to remember that his heart has rested any where but with you; and if ever circumstances should unavoidably call up the remembrance, let it only be with a sigh to the memory of her who will then repose in the grave. I have observed through life," she added, with peculiar emphasis, "that a considerable portion of domestic infelicity—I do not mean matrimonial infelicity alone, but that which we too frequently see in families, by whatever ties they are connected—arises from undue appreciation of, or indifference to, the characters of those we are thus united with; thousands of feeling hearts are chilled into apathy, numbers of ardent, generous minds raised into passion, highly brilliant talents sunk to despondence, and virtues of the first order of sublimity withered and blasted, and all because those with whom the ties of nature, or the bonds of society have linked their possessors, have neither discrimination enough to find out their excellencies, temper to sustain their defects, nor sense to impel or restrain them with gentleness, address, and delicacy, as reason or prudence may direct."

It is probable that Mrs. Brooks was induced to this long lecture by observing certain little ebullitions resembling jealousy, which, whenever any thing occurred to call up the idea of Miss Borham, seemed to overcome the native meekness of Cordelia's character; be that as it may, and however she might appropriate the friendly hints, her good sense and grateful sweetness received them as intended kindnesses.

"And are you still, my dear Madam," questioned Cordelia, "of opinion that my lord does not know me?" "Decidedly I am," was the reply; "I thought," she resumed with some hesitation, "that after he saw the Hootsides there was something in his look which I could not altogether translate, but which seemed to betray that he did know me."

"That," said Mrs. Brooks, "I am persuaded was only emotion originating in the fear that Lord Hootside would detect Lord Lochcarron beneath the assumed character of Mr. Campion; however," she pursued, first with a smile, and then rather seriously, "I shall be enabled to judge with greater certainty this evening, and to take my measures with more decision."

"I think he won't come this evening," responded Cordelia; "so you said this morning, my dear; but on that score I have no apprehension; I have seen the first dawnings of love before now, and I have no hesitation in saying that what Lord Lochcarron now feels for you, whether he does or does not know you, will, if nothing intervenes to crush it, expand to the truest and tenderest affection."

Great was the agitation of Cordelia's heart when Mrs. Brooks uttered these words; for one moment the dear idea of being the object of Lochcarron's love, seemed worth all that could be risked, hazarded, or sacrificed; but in the next her innate rectitude of judgment, and delicacy of principle, recoiled from the slightest shadow of deception in a matter so sacred; "No!" she exclaimed in a tone where the firmness of virtue struggled with female tenderness, "had I the wealth of the Indies, oh! how cheerfully would I give it all to be blest with the affection of my husband; but he must love me as myself, or—

oh! what must I think of Lord Lochcarron, were he capable of cherishing such a sentiment, while the holy tie which unites us remains uncanceled: my dearest Mrs. Brooks, in pity mention it no more, I cannot bear to think of it; I cannot do evil and expect good to result from it.”

Mrs. Brooks, with great strength of mind, and all that clearness of judgment which is the result of experience, had none of that exquisite refinement, that keen and quick perception of the gradations of right and wrong which distinguished Cordelia. “You are truly a fastidious simpleton,” she exclaimed, laughing, “you would barter your chance of happiness for a shadow.” “Oh! no! no!” was the reply; “the path of duty is that of true happiness, and may no temptation ever induce me to swerve from it; if Lord Lochcarron, as you would have me believe, knows me only by the name of Beaumont, he must suppose me the wife of another, and to think that he feels any thing like admiration for a woman so situated—oh! gracious heaven! I cannot support the idea!”

Cordelia, in saying this, spoke the genuine dictates of her mind; its gentleness and goodness, combined with her affection for the man she had married, and her sense of the solemn duties of veneration and obedience incumbent on a wife, were such, that she could readily have said with Eve,

“Witness, heav’n,
“What love sincere, and reverence in my heart,
“I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,
———Thy suppliant
“I beg, and clasp thy knees: bereave me not
“Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
“My only strength and stay: forlorn of thee,
“Whither shall I betake me?
“Between us two let there be peace.”

Yet her gentle nature recoiled from the slightest shadow of crime or profligacy, and her discriminating judgment required that he to whom she could thus bend, for whose sake she was willing to make such concessions, should at least be distinguished by

“Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure.”

Mrs. Brooks was beginning to rally her young friend on the singularity of her apprehending that her husband should fall in love with her, when their attention was called off by the departure of the Hootsides, who had only stopped at the Star and Garter to change horses, and take some refreshment; Cordelia, as may be supposed, took care to keep out of sight; but Mrs. Brooks watched their motions, every now and then reporting to Lady Lochcarron what they were doing; when they got into the carriage, she said that both the earl and countess looked up at the window where she sat, affirming that when the latter found Lady Lochcarron was not there to view her, she seemed mortified and disappointed; Cordelia did not feel disposed to doubt this fact, but with all due deference to Mrs. Brooks’s penetration, she could not help thinking that fancy had assisted her in

this instance, for she did not deem it exactly possible to trace the expression of any countenance across a street; however she rejoiced in their absence, as it released her from the painful apprehension of being intruded upon while this important crisis of her fate was pending.

An hour passed at the dinner table, and another devoted to such arrangements of the toilet as the state of their wardrobe at Andover would permit, helped to wear away the time; whatever might be Cordelia's other perfections, she certainly was not gifted with the spirit of prophecy; she had pronounced that Lord Lochcarron would not make his morning call, and the event proved that she was no seer; again, she had predicted that he would not keep his engagement in the evening; and though people are generally supposed to be a good deal chagrined when circumstances prove the futility of their pretences to divination, or at least to that penetrating faculty which serves its purposes, Cordelia did not look either displeased or disappointed, when a loud knocking at the door announced the arrival of Mrs. Brooks's expected guest, though it must not be dissembled that she hated to receive him by the name of Campion, in the same proportion that she did passing by that of Beaumont herself.

Lohcarron entered, wearing an aspect of smiles and gaiety; but as if his cheerfulness had the singular effect of depressing Cordelia's spirits, the more lively and animated he seemed, the more she felt disposed to be pensive and dejected; either in consequence of her recent discourse with Mrs. Brooks, which had opened her eyes to the situation in which she stood with her lord, the object of his present attention indeed, but under a borrowed appellation, as the wife of another; or else it was that feeling or presentiment which is supposed to haunt the mind upon the approach of grief or calamity.

Mrs. Brooks however was neither reserved nor out of spirits; she met Lord Lochcarron with the cordiality of an old acquaintance; and when the interchange of short sentences, consequent on the first entrance of any one, had given place to general conversation, she kindly endeavoured to draw Cordelia away from her sad meditations, and to give her in the eyes of her lord that exaltation and consequence to which she was, in every point of view, entitled, and which Mrs. Brooks deemed it highly essential to take every pains to impress on his mind.

Lord Lochcarron was most becomingly dressed, combining a very elegant taste, with just enough of fashion to mark the gentleman; his lady, in the simple costume which her travelling circumstances permitted, with no more of decoration than suited the domestic fireside, was,

“When unadorn'd, adorn'd the most.”

Mrs. Brooks, as her eye wandered from one to the other, thought she had never seen so lovely a couple; Cordelia, felt a sensation too like real happiness to be long either grave or silent; Lochcarron detailed the little of what was doing in the great world, which had transpired by that day's post; and those topics dismissed, the conversation reverted, as it ever does with a trio of persons possessing taste and refinement, to subjects of literature

and the fine arts: they talked of books (as Gibbon and Fox did, when the latter visited the retreat of the former in Switzerland) from Homer to the Arabian Nights; they talked of music from the sublime oratorios of Handel, to

“The strains whose wandering echoes thrill
“The shepherd, lingering on the twilight hill.”

And they talked of paintings, from Raphael and Rubens, to West and Lawrence.

Cordelia had read and reflected much for her years, and since her intercourse with Lord Dunotter, she had heard a great deal also; hence she possessed a vast fund of knowledge; but her youth, the retirement in which she had been educated, and the subsequent circumstances which had confined her exclusively to the vicinity of Holleyfield, had prevented her from reaping much from actual observation; true, she was eminently gifted with that rare and happy faculty which is the result of united judgment and reflection, and which Richardson has happily ascribed to his *Clarissa*, when he says, she is “The most capable of any one I ever knew of judging what an *hundred* things are by seeing *one* of a like nature.” But though Cordelia possessed this capability in so high a degree, it had one consequence inseparable from it—that of producing a constant recurrence of the same ideas to her mind; thus when pictures were talked of, the visit to Orton-Abbey was always called up in her memory, because she could refer to it as a standard of her practical knowledge of the subject; and now as restraint wore off, and her spirits became more elevated by the dear society she was in, she could not resist the temptation of describing the whole scene at that place, all that had occurred about the paintings and the china, and all the whimsicalities and peculiarities of the Cottingham family; she took care, however, to conceal the names of those who were of her party; and when she had occasion to mention them, only said, “one of the ladies,” or “one of the gentlemen who accompanied me;” for though she might have enriched her story by saying that the acquaintance of Lord Hootside and his countess commenced that day, she would not venture to do so; she gave the narrative with such humour and vivacity, yet such gentleness and sweetness, that Lochcarron listened with a strong and powerful interest.

Had Mrs. Brooks and Cordelia not known that the young nobleman was acting with duplicity, concealing his real name and character, and assuming such as did not belong to him, the fact must have struck them that he was doing so; it is hardly possible for people to associate much with others without explaining to them, in some degree at least, their connexions and relationships, recurring to past times, and talking of their home, and the friends they have, or have had there; even English reserve, the greatest, perhaps, of any, usually wears off in a third interview, and the parties grow communicative, and begin to place confidence in each other; but Lord Lochcarron had done none of these things; he had studiously and cautiously confined his discourse to subjects unconnected with himself; or when compelled to approach his concealment, he had done it in such a way, that though any stranger of penetration might see there was a veil, they could not catch a glimpse beyond it. Cordelia trod the same path, and this Lochcarron, whether he did or did not know her, must have seen very plainly; but there

was this essential difference, Lochcarron seemed resolved to keep his secret at all events—Cordelia was only anxious to hide her's from a timid fear of being the first to disclose it; however as she talked a great deal less than her lord, she certainly had the better chance of escaping detection. Mrs. Brooks had nothing to conceal, and probably was not very anxious to prevent any thing she said from betraying all, and thus being released from restraint she was at liberty to attend to all that her companions said or did: it was scarcely possible to hear them talk without being convinced that they had drank at the same fountain; or to speak without metaphor, that they had imbibed their knowledge from the same source; for Lord Dunotter was so transcendently well-informed, particularly on topics which a comparatively small number have the advantage of hearing discussed, and the coincidence of knowledge in his son and Cordelia was so striking, that it seemed as if one or both must exclaim every moment, "You have had your information from Lord Dunotter."

When Cordelia paused after describing her visit to Orton-Abbey, Lord Lochcarron said, "Then you have been in Buckinghamshire, Mrs. Beaumont;" and his countenance betrayed such visible emotion, that Mrs. Brooks began to think she had either been deceived in supposing he did not know Cordelia, or else that the truth was flashing on his mind; the heart of Cordelia wildly throbbed, her nerves trembled, and the blood receded from her cheek, while in a voice which in gasping, as it were, for firmness, only made agitation the more evident, she replied, "Yes, I have resided a great deal in that county."

A pause of some moments now ensued; Lord Lochcarron seemed abstracted in thought, and Cordelia dared not trust her voice with any addition to the sentence she had uttered; Mrs. Brooks thought matters looked so like a crisis, that she would not say a single word for fear of doing harm in so delicate a juncture; it was past nine o'clock, when Gardiner, Cordelia's new servant, entered, and whispering something in her lady's ear, she instantly rose, and followed her out of the room. Lady Lochcarron, after she dined, had given orders that inquiries should be made at the post-office, whether any letters directed for either Mrs. Brooks or Mrs. Beaumont had been forwarded from Dorchester, as she had requested; this commission was given to the servant of the house, who chose to take her own time in executing it, and as it was Sunday evening, to remain out to the last possible minute: on her return, she put into Gardiner's hands three letters, all superscribed, "For Mrs. Beaumont;" and as Gardiner knew that her lady had been anxiously expecting letters, both that day and the preceding, she thought it would be in the line of her duty not to retard their delivery a moment longer, now that they were in the house, in consequence of which she summoned Cordelia from the room, as has been already related. When struck by the vivid and peculiar expression of Lord Lochcarron's countenance, as he noticed her having been in Buckinghamshire, trembling for what would follow next, and wishing for, yet dreading those explanations which must take place, she hailed this interruption as the most seasonable relief that could have occurred; beyond which she felt deeply anxious to see the contents of the three letters which she was told awaited her; for thinking only of Holleyfield and Lord Dunotter, she imagined him to be very ill, and that these were the messengers of fatal news despatched to her one after the other, and that by mistake or negligence they had been suffered to lie at

Dorchester until their number amounted to three: she took a light, and retiring with them to her own room, hastily glanced her eyes over the superscriptions; her worst fears seemed verified, for none of them were in the writing of Lord Dunotter; one was the hand of Lady Dunotter, another that of Philipson, and the third the well-known characters of Mrs. Emerson; the last she threw to a side for after-perusal, and having, to her great relief, ascertained that neither of the others were sealed with black, pondered a moment which she should read first; nothing surprised, and indeed alarmed her, more than that Lady Dunotter should have been enabled to trace her to Andover, should have written to her, and directed by the name of Beaumont; she was about to tear it open, and end astonishment in certainty, but anxious beyond every thing else to know how Lord Dunotter did, she hastily threw it down, and snatching up that from Philipson, broke the seal, and with mourning, pained, and agitated feelings, read the following lines:

“My honoured Lady,

“It is with the deepest concern I discharge the painful task of acquainting your ladyship, that my Lord Dunotter has made several unsuccessful efforts to reply to your ladyship’s last letter, and has now honoured me with his commands to do it; but I shall not send the letter which I show his lordship, finding it my incumbent yet sad duty to write more at large, and be more explicit than I should presume to be if I did not think my lord in a very weak and declining state; his lordship’s symptoms I think are becoming lethargic, and are I fear increasing; but the two physicians who were in attendance when your ladyship was at Holleyfield are both dismissed, and only Dr. Herbert and a friend of his, neither of whom are in my poor judgment very skilful, are suffered to see my lord; indeed I think since his lordship was in their hands he has altered daily for the worse. Mr. Swinburne, my lord’s worthy chaplain, has been here, but my lady would not permit him to see his lordship, alleging he was too ill; but I am sorry to say, that ill as he is, her ladyship intends he shall travel; for, though it is endeavoured to be kept a secret, I am well informed that preparations are making for a journey to Dunotter Castle, which I suppose is to take place as soon as your ladyship returns; the two doctors are to go with my lord—I cannot help thinking that their medicines are more calculated to increase than cure this lethargic complaint, which I am sure my lord never had any symptoms of before. My young lord has not written to his father: I humbly entreat your ladyship’s excuse for mentioning the subject, but Capt. Thornton has been here these two days, and here have been two proctors of the ecclesiastical court closeted with my lady, Capt. Thornton, and Mr. Crompton; again humbly begging your ladyship’s pardon for the freedom of this letter, I remain with the most profound respect,

Your ladyship’s dutiful servant,

Robert Philipson.”

The date was the only addition to this letter, which in every point of view, but chiefly as it concerned Lord Dunotter, was a source of the most heart-felt affliction to Cordelia: every motive conspired to render it not only proper but absolutely necessary that the contents should, without loss of time, be made known to Lord Lochcarron; the treatment the earl was receiving, and the evident intention of removing him to Scotland, were matters of the first moment for his son to be made acquainted with; and in the event

of his sudden demise, which was too much to be apprehended, every consideration of feeling and decency required that his heir should be upon the spot, not wandering about England, in a way which seemed to have no other end in view than to await the dissolution of his matrimonial tie: if such was indeed his aim, and poor Cordelia shuddered as the thought passed over her mind, one part of the letter now in her hand would give him pleasure; so far at least seemed certain, that whether he did or did not know the person now called Mrs. Beaumont, for the Cordelia Walpole he had married, he at least knew that Cordelia to be in existence, and that her sufferings, which it might naturally be supposed were very great in consequence of his desertion, made no part of his regret, or even, it should seem, of his thoughts; all this, however, did not prevent Cordelia from wishing to be back to the apartment where she had left him; but she thought she would first glance her eye over the countess's letter; she opened it, and found the following lines:

“With shame, with grief, with every thing which parental anxiety, wounded delicacy, feminine dignity, and all that is dear to woman can inspire me with, I take up my pen to address my wandering, degraded child, who is disgracing herself, her talents, her family, and her situation in life, by traversing the country under a feigned name, after a man who does not care a straw for her; who offered her the highest possible injury and insult by running away the very hour he married her; and whose behaviour has been the death of her poor father. Yes, Cordelia, I know from a friend who wishes you I am sorry to say better than you deserve, that he is skulking in the West of England, and that you are following him about in a way that outrages decorum, and scandalizes your rank in life: had you been situated like many unfortunate young people without friends to advise you, there might have been some excuse for your conduct, but now there is none; Capt. Thornton, your nearest relative, so well principled, so high in the world's estimation, so every way competent to compel justice to be done you; Mr. Crompton so admirably skilled in every point of law, your joint guardian, appointed by your excellent father; and myself, the widow of that father, his delegated representative, and constituted by that ought-to-be-respected tie, your fittest adviser, have been all scorned, contemned, set at nothing: you have chosen new directors, who are, I am afraid, of the first order of impropriety, as it respects your subject: your ever-to-be-lamented attachment to that bad young man—the son of my lord, which commenced, I suppose, in the chaise as you journeyed from St. Albans, and which I discovered the very second day of your residence under my roof, induced me to make a thousand sacrifices, to bring about your union with him—I have since had ample room for repentance; but I erred from tenderness of heart, from affection for you; and while reason censures, conscience acquits me. However, I must now, in the quality of your guardian, insist upon your returning immediately home, and ceasing to act *Patient Grizzle*, for which you can now have no excuse: your separation from Lochcarron is advanced in every preliminary step as far as it can be, and the hearing of the cause will come on at an early period of the sittings; Lochcarron has by this time had the proper notices, so that you no longer have even the pretence of any claim upon *him*, but you still have a too powerful one on the heart of her who, grieved as she is, must still subscribe herself your most affectionate mother,

Harriet Dunotter.

Holleyfield, March.”

“My good mamma has been studying declamation from the Morning Post,” though Cordelia, as she finished reading this curious epistle; still she could not help feeling indignant at some parts of its contents, and uneasy at others. As to Lady Dunotter’s mean attempts to pique her pride, and wound her delicacy, she passed them by as unworthy notice; but she felt more than disgusted—horror-struck by the gross duplicity she displayed in ascribing the pains she had taken to bring about a marriage between Lochcarron and Cordelia, to the predilection she had discovered in the latter for the former, when the fact obviously was that her own union with the father, and nothing that concerned the son, constituted her chief motive of action in the affair.

As to the pretence that a friend, zealous for her honour and welfare, had traced her to Andover, she knew it was futile; the Harringtons, who had seen her at Lyme, had given Lady Dunotter the first intelligence; and Crompton, who, in the line of his profession, possessed the means of discovering almost any thing, had, by some of his agents, found out her present abode, and, she doubted not, that of Lord Lochcarron also.

The countess, she observed, entered into no particulars on the subject of Lord Dunotter’s health, and never hinted at the projected journey to Scotland; but now that her mind was enlightened on those points by the communications of Philipson, she was at no loss to account for the eagerness Lady Dunotter displayed for her return to Holleyfield. That part of the letter which gave her the most pain, was what her ladyship said about the suit of separation from Lord Lochcarron; but it was a topic on which she could not at present bear to dwell—better, she thought, to lose the painful idea in the smile, the converse, of Lochcarron himself, from whom she had now been absent half an hour; “I will return to my lord,” she said mentally, whilst putting up the letters; “for the next hour at least I may enjoy his dear society, if we are never to meet more.”

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Cordelia quitted the room at the summons of Gardiner, in the way described in the last chapter, after having said in reply to her lord that she had lived much in Buckinghamshire, Lochcarron sat for some moments seemingly abstracted in thought; he then said rather abruptly, and with an emotion which spoke a strong interest in the question; "Pray, Mrs. Brooks, is the husband of your friend one of the Beaumonts of Yorkshire?" Mrs. Brooks saw that the die was cast, and that had concealment been desirable, it was no longer possible; to trifle in a matter of such deep consequence, was not to be thought of; and only studying to combine gentleness with dignity in her answer, and to blend the solemnity which the subject required, with the kindness which might be requisite to re-assure Lochcarron in a moment so trying to his feelings, she replied, "No, sir, his family is of Buckinghamshire." "Indeed!" said Lochcarron, "I do not recollect any family of the name in Bucks;" either forgetting in the impulse of the moment that he was betraying his own intimate acquaintance with the county, or else thinking reserve no longer necessary. "Oh, yes," responded Mrs. Brooks, with the most perfect calmness of manner, "you must know her husband's relations, and, I think, himself; reflect a little—do you know Holleyfield?" "Holleyfield!" he reiterated in wild perturbation, "you know me then!" "Delia does, my Lord!" she replied, with a composure which she strove and struggled as if life had depended upon it to render perfect. "Delia!" he repeated, "gracious heaven! do not torture me! if you have mercy in you do not! who is this lady? is her name really Beaumont?" still calm and unruffled, she firmly replied, "No, my lord! her name is not Beaumont; need I go farther, and say what it ought to be?" The agitation of her auditor told her she had gone far enough; his frame trembled, and his fine face became pale, as if life no longer gave it animation. Mrs. Brooks was now effectually roused from her assumed stoicism, and internally rejoicing that Cordelia was spared this scene, she compelled him to swallow some wine, and said in a tone of cheerfulness, "Come, my lord, exert yourself—you know the truth now!" Lochcarron recovered in a moment; but all the strong impetuosity of his character revived with the energies of his frame, and the powers of his mind: "Oh! merciful heaven!" he exclaimed, "and this is the angel who I have treated so infamously! the truth seemed to flash upon me the moment she mentioned Buckinghamshire: what an infatuated monster have I been! how she must despise me!—but she is changed in every feature—she is considerably taller—still how dull, how stupid have I been! Oh! Mrs. Brooks, how cruel you were not to tell me this morning; where did she discover me?—but she knew me at first."

Mrs. Brooks replied, by putting into his hands the packet of letters, directed in the writing of his father, and by saying, "That, my lord, will explain every thing."

As his eye glanced on the superscription, a sigh that seemed irrepressible burst from his bosom; he broke the seal with convulsive eagerness; at sight of Pringle's letter, and that which himself had written to his father on the night when he so inexcusably abandoned his family and his bride, he seemed to start; when he beheld that written by Miss Borham, a sudden flush came over his cheek; and Mrs. Brooks, who knew enough of these letters, from both Cordelia and Mrs. Emerson, to be enabled to follow the

changes of his countenance as he read, and to conjecture what parts affected him; as he went on with the perusal, which he did very rapidly, his agitation became more violent and visible; and the letter of his father, the contents of which neither Cordelia nor Mrs. Brooks were acquainted with, but which it may be conjectured was one of strong remonstrance and exhortation, seemed to work up his emotion to the very acme; "Oh, what a fate is mine!" he exclaimed, with a stifled groan, "but why do I blame fate for the act of my own folly—it would be well if all connected with me could forget that I was in existence." Then hastily depositing the letters in his pocket, he snatched his hat from the sofa; his features wore an expression so like despair, that Mrs. Brooks became really alarmed: "You are not going, my lord?" she said, placing her hand on his arm; he released himself from her hold, but detained her hand for a moment, yet the pressure which he gave it was not like that of a friendly good night, it was rather the grasp of agony; and the tone in which he said, "Yes! I go, and no matter where," corresponded with the action; he then rushed from the room, and flew down stairs, and out of the house at the very moment when Cordelia opened her chamber door to return to the apartment where she had left him, as detailed at the close of the last chapter; but in that moment her eye caught his retreating form, and her ear his flying steps; and in the next she heard the loud sound of the house door as it shut after him: petrified with astonishment, she stood rooted to the spot; but too soon she was recalled to the sad reality of her situation, which rose to her mind painted in its very worst colours; she believed that Mrs. Brooks had revealed the truth, she believed that Lochcarron had not, till that moment, known that in Mrs. Beaumont he beheld his despised, detested wife; and she believed that now when such knowledge was obtruded upon him he had fled from her as he did on the evening of their marriage; and influenced by all these torturing beliefs, she hurried to Mrs. Brooks, and met her at the door of the drawing-room coming in search of her: the countenance of her friend did not tend to dispel her fears; it was not melancholy indeed, but it wore none of that gaiety of expression which Cordelia was well aware would have characterized it had the issue of her embassy been a successful one; "Where is my lord?" she gasped out, in nearly breathless trepidation, "is he gone?" "For a little while he is, my dear," said Mrs. Brooks; and alarmed by her paleness, and visible agitation, she earnestly entreated her to compose herself. "Oh! do not deceive me, let me know the worst at once!" she exclaimed in accents which bespoke the acutest misery, "am I indeed so hated that he flew out of the house in the way I heard him do the moment he knew it contained his unhappy wife!" "No, no, my dear," returned her friend, "believe me, you do Lord Lochcarron the highest injustice; so far from hating, he spoke of you in terms of not only respect, but admiration; you must make some allowance for his surprise, and more for the circumstances he is placed in; his father's letter, whatever might be the contents, seemed to agitate him very much; he merely glanced his eye over the others, but it is natural to suppose he could not bear a witness to his emotions while he read them." "But he is callous to my sufferings!" said Cordelia, while gathering despondence checked the ray of hope which was beginning to dawn on her soul, when Mrs. Brooks said Lochcarron had mentioned her with tenderness, "if he had the slightest regard for my peace, he could not leave me in this dreadful suspense; oh! tell me every thing he said, how did he begin—or did you introduce the subject?"

Mrs. Brooks in reply, gave her a faithful transcript of all that had passed between herself and Lord Lochcarron, until the time of her putting his father's letters into his hand; and seeing Cordelia somewhat tranquillized, she added, "Indeed, my dear, I think you distress yourself without cause—your lord will return in the morning." "Oh! but he did not say he would return!" replied Cordelia, who clearly saw that Mrs. Brooks threw a veil over the latter part of her conversation with Lord Lochcarron, and that consideration for her peace induced her to conceal some circumstances, and to gloss over others: the conflict became too severe; hope, which had been raised to the highest pinnacle, drooped and fell; and as she contrasted the happiness of the last few hours with the dark despondence of the present moment, she melted to tears, and wept in the bitterness of anguish. "It was not like to last," sobbed out the poor sufferer, "I was too happy." Then again memory gave back the thrilling joy with which, when Lochcarron began to apologize the preceding evening for the alarm his dog had given her, she heard the first sound of his voice; the tender thrill of the heart with which but an hour before she had poured out his tea; and as sigh swelled upon sigh, and her tears chased each other, she felt more forlorn, dejected, and heart-sick, than even in the early period of Lochcarron's first desertion: her eye glanced on the seat where he sat; her bosom seemed to bleed in sorrow; and she felt as if, dearly as she valued those fleeting moments she passed in his society, she had not valued them enough.

Again she reverted to every look which she had flattered herself spoke approval, every word which hope had whispered betrayed dawning tenderness, "All has been fallacious," she sighed mentally; "why was I so infatuated as to follow him hither!" Alas! she might too truly have replied to herself, that

"Love, ev'ry hope can inspire,
"It banishes wisdom the while,
"And the lip we are wont to admire
"Seems for ever adorn'd with a smile."

Mrs. Brooks hung over her, and soothed her with maternal affection; and Cordelia, never insensible to kindness, never deaf to reason, never wanting to herself where exertion or fortitude were requisite, strove, struggled, prayed for composure of spirit, though in her own mind too fatally convinced that she had seen Lochcarron for the last time. "Oh! my dear friend!" she sighed, at the same time producing the letters she had received, "how unfortunate it was that I staid to read these, or at least the one from Lady Dunotter; look at this, and you will see how important it is that Lord Lochcarron should know the contents;" and as she said *Lord Lochcarron* she wept afresh; since their ill-starred union, she had always hitherto said, "My lord," when speaking of him; but now it seemed as if she had no longer a right to call him so; as if, in the words of her mother-in-law's letter, she had indeed "No longer a pretence of any claim upon him."

Mrs. Brooks read both letters with great attention, and was of opinion that their contents ought, without loss of time, to be communicated to Lord Lochcarron; "That which concerns his father's health, and the treatment he is receiving, he certainly ought to know," said Cordelia, "but as to Lady Dunotter's letter, it could give him no new

information, for I think his conduct to-night proves plainly that he no longer considers himself as bound by any tie to me.” “You are the greatest self-tormentor I have ever known, my dear,” said Mrs. Brooks, compelling herself to smile; “you said all along that you were convinced your lord knew you; I asserted the contrary, and the event proved I was right; you believed he would neither keep his morning nor evening appointments to-day; he did both, and I am equally certain that we shall see him again to-morrow morning; but as I am decidedly of opinion that no time ought to be lost, as it respects these letters, I will, if you think it right, go immediately to his lodgings, and explain to him such parts of their contents as it is proper he should know.” “Not for worlds!” said Cordelia, with eager wildness; “no, not for any earthly consideration would I send after Lord Lochcarron to-night! no,” she added after a short pause, “I have made up my mind how to act; we will leave Andover early in the morning, and I shall seal up Philipson’s letter, and give it to Mrs. Fleming to send to his lodgings immediately on our departure; there is nothing in its contents which I can have any objection to his seeing:—but I believe I may spare myself such trouble, for he will have left Andover before me—perhaps he has done so already!”

It was now past ten o’clock, and Mrs. Brooks lost the hope, she had hitherto secretly cherished, that Lochcarron would return; she urged Cordelia to retire to rest, for her wild and anguished look proclaimed how much she required it: “Have you heard from Mrs. Emerson, my dear?” asked Mrs. Brooks, now first noticing the letter which had arrived with the others, and which lay unopened on the table, having been forgotten by Cordelia in the agitation of this dreadful evening; “I have not read it,” she replied; “pray open it, and tell me what she says.” “It is sealed with black,” observed Mrs. Brooks, “our friend was not in mourning when I left Leeds.”

Cordelia did not anticipate any very great addition to her heavy catalogue of sorrow from this circumstance, as it was evidently the writing of Mrs. Emerson, and knew of no other friend in Yorkshire for whom she would grieve much; but she was not quite prepared for the intelligence contained in it, which was as follows:

“I write you a few hasty lines, my dearest Cordelia, to announce to you the death of your aunt Holmes, which was sudden in every respect, excepting that her very advanced age made it an event to be looked for; her demise took place on the 20th inst. but I only learned it last night, by a letter from a friend in her neighbourhood, no notice having been sent either to me, or to any other relation; no will, I understand, has been found; and my friend writes me that there is the greatest reason to suspect a fraudulent collusion between her attorney and her favourite servant to embezzle and secrete, not only part of her household goods, but those documents and papers which are necessary to prove the full extent of her property, which is very considerable, in the funds and similar securities, in mortgages, and in cash, notes, and bills, which she was in the weak and censurable practice of keeping by her in the house, but of which, it is to be feared, little will be suffered to see the light; you, my dear, are her undoubted heir-at-law, the nearest of kin she had in the world, and I stand in the next degree of relationship; it is much to be lamented that her sordid, unsocial, jealous habits should have swayed her to keep estranged from all her connexions in the way she did through life, which must have sadly

diminished those comforts she might have enjoyed in the esteem and attentions of her friends: you know, my dear Cordelia, it is the duty of Lady Dunotter, as your guardian (if the task of asserting your rights be not now finally vested where we all wish to see it) to send a legal person immediately to take possession in your name; thirty thousand pounds, which by the lowest computation Mrs. Holmes has died possessed of, is too considerable a fortune to be thrown away for want of proper measures to counteract base and mercenary designs; write to Lord Dunotter, my love, on the subject; I hope and trust that his lordship still retains the power, as I am sure he has the will, to obtain for you such legal advice and ability as will see justice done you. Anxious to save the earliest post, and uncertain where this may reach you, I shall only add my sincerest regards to Mrs. Brooks, and the assurance that I am as ever, my dearest Cordelia, yours with the truest affection,

Matilda Emerson.”

This letter was dated nearly a week back, of course long before Mrs. Emerson could know any thing of Mrs. Brooks’s illness; Cordelia, in the present anguished state of her spirits, listened to the contents with very little emotion. What was accumulation of fortune to her whose brow, after a coronet had impended over it so long, was now doomed only to wear a wreath of care and despondence; whose heart, in the day-spring of existence, when other hearts expand to their kindred ones, was to be lonely and blighted in prospect and in hope; and who was to be held up to public scorn and contempt as a despised, abhorred, repudiated wife: “Oh!” she groaned in the bitterness of her soul, “oh! that I might with this thirty thousand pounds endow some solitary convent, where, without abjuring my faith, I might abjure a world I am weary of, and which when Lord Dunotter leaves it will not contain one being able or willing to protect me from the injustice and oppression of my mother-in-law, who has secured to herself the inheritance which ought to have been mine; and who will leave no means untried to either possess herself of this also, or to compel me to form ties which my heart loathes to think of.”

This was the first time that Mrs. Brooks had heard Cordelia express herself thus of Lady Dunotter, or notice the shameful way in which she had been deprived of her father’s property; and from the hint she now gave of the countess’s wish to unite her to Capt. Thornton, it was evident she considered Lord Lochcarron as lost to her for ever; and indeed from the time which he had now suffered to elapse—considerably above an hour—without either returning or sending any message, she began not only to incline to the same opinion, but, from the wild agitation in which he left her, and the dark expressions he suffered to escape him, to have much worse fears than she imparted to Cordelia; she tried however by every possible means to draw the poor sufferer from herself, and to fix her attention to the letters she had received, particularly that of Mrs. Emerson, and to the prospect of independence which it opened; for she doubted not in the range of her own acquaintance, and that of Mrs. Emerson, to find professional men whose ability and integrity would contend with Lady Dunotter’s wealth and power, and with Mr. Crompton’s arts and chicanery, and eventually compel them to do their ward justice; but the unhappy Cordelia, in her present frame of mind, would find no ray of consolation: it would be harsh to say that she saw every thing through a jaundiced medium; her trials were indeed great, and though there was no reason to suppose that the

heroic firmness and fortitude she had hitherto displayed, would now fail her, still she must have been insensible indeed not to have betrayed, in such a trying moment, how keenly she felt her miseries.

“We must be gone early in the morning,” she said, raising her pale countenance to the view of Mrs. Brooks, and speaking in a tone from which the last note of hope was exiled. “You know it will be a long journey to Holleyfield, my dearest Cordelia,” said her friend, seriously alarmed by the expression of despair which marked her sweet features; “let me implore you to defer talking about going till the morning, and retire to bed now, and endeavour to obtain some rest; I am sure you need it; I still hope and believe that all will yet be well.” “Oh, what can ever be well with me now!” said Cordelia, in accents which might have moved the hardest heart to pity; and sighing heavily, as the clock struck eleven, Mrs. Brooks rang for their attendant, not to assist them in undressing, for she knew that Cordelia would prefer having nobody but themselves, but to say that they should not want her any more that night.

“When I get to Holleyfield,” resumed Cordelia, “it will be only to see my best friend reduced to a state of torpor and inanimation, perhaps of total insensibility, and no longer able to recognise me; to see him, and myself with him, hurried down to Scotland against my will, in the power and at the mercy of Lady Dunotter and her creatures, close by the melancholy spot where Miss Borham is dying, if not already dead;—to——” Mrs. Brooks, fearful that she would quite exhaust herself by enumerating evils not less true than irremediable, earnestly wished for the entrance of Gardiner, who seemed very long in answering her summons; just as poor Cordelia was beginning to specify another of her numerous afflictions, the girl came in, and saying to Mrs. Brooks, “I was half way up stairs to answer the bell, ma’am, when I heard some one inquiring for Mrs. Brooks’s servant, so I went back, and a gentleman gave me this note for you, and said, I must be sure to deliver it immediately;” she put into her hands a sealed paper: Cordelia, between the fear that it contained Lochcarron’s eternal adieu, and the wish—for she durst not suffer it to amount to a hope—that it was the harbinger of his return to her and happiness, could scarcely prevent herself from sinking down from the sofa where she sat; what inclined her the more to apprehend the worst was, that Gardiner had said a gentleman brought the note; this she had no difficulty in supposing to have been Harris; and as Lord Lochcarron himself had said, that he only waited his return to leave Andover, she felt a dread, nearly amounting to a conviction, that he was now going; for there could not, she thought, be a doubt that Harris would bring his lord intelligence both of the state of his father’s health, and of the steps lady Dunotter had taken in the affair of their separation. Mrs. Brooks dismissed Gardiner, saying she would ring when she wanted her; and Cordelia, trembling, unnerved, and almost breathless, yet all eye and all ear, watched the opening of that paper on which hung the last decision of her fate; Mrs. Brooks read as follows:

“Madam,

Aware that your delicacy can appreciate, and your goodness sympathize in my sufferings, deserved as they are, I venture to implore your mediation with that angel so

greatly injured and insulted by my infatuated folly. So deeply conscious of my errors, that my unsteady hand betrays my remorse as I write, I should only trespass on your time to-night to beg that you will exert your merited influence in prevailing with Lady Lochcarron to read—not the extenuation of my fault, I have none to offer—but the record of my deep humiliation and penitence, which I shall devote the first dawn of the morning to write—believe me, madam, with the highest respect,

Your most obedient servant,
Lohcarron.

Sunday evening, half past ten.”

The uneven characters of this note, did indeed betray the agitation of the hand which had traced them; perhaps that unequivocal proof of the sincerity of her lord's repentance endeared them to Cordelia, who gazed on them until tears springing from a joy, such as had never before swelled her heart, dimmed her beautiful eyes; she then pressed the note to her lips, and sinking on her knees, acknowledged with fervent gratitude the dawn of hope and of happiness which seemed now opening for her. Mrs. Brooks embraced and congratulated her lovely friend; nor did she find the task which Lord Lochcarron had imposed upon her—that of prevailing with Cordelia to receive his letter in the morning—a very arduous one: yet though she felt flattered by the deference Lord Lochcarron had paid to her, and by his having requested her mediation, she could not, in the deep recesses of her own mind, perceive the necessity for it; but thought it might have manifested full as much respect for his wife, and repentance for his errors, if instead of writing, he had thrown himself at once at her feet, acknowledged his faults, and implored her forgiveness.

Cordelia, though she could not be aware of Mrs. Brooks's thoughts, reflected on the same subject, but viewed it in a clearly different light; she drew a happy augury from that seeming delicacy of mind which had induced Lochcarron to seek pardon and reconciliation through the medium of her constituted directress; and neither to approach her without permission, nor by writing at once to herself, subject her to the humiliation of answering his letter, and thus as it were to *invite* a reconciliation between them.

All thoughts of immediately retiring to rest were now laid aside; for as it was undeterminate at what time they could quit Andover, it became requisite that Cordelia should write in reply to Philipson's letter, and despatch it by next morning's post; this task she set to without further delay: after expressing her regret at the unfavourable account he gave of Lord Dunotter's health, and her sense of Philipson's zeal and fidelity, she commissioned him to tell Lord Dunotter, with a gentleness and caution which she left to his own discretion, that she had that day seen Lord Lochcarron, and that they might both be expected at Holleyfield very soon after the receipt of the letter she was then writing; but she warned him to take especial care to guard this intelligence from the knowledge of Lady Dunotter.

Cordelia and Mrs. Brooks held a council of deliberation before this letter was despatched, and both were of opinion, that it said neither too much nor too little; they did

not allow themselves to doubt for a moment that it would be Lord Lochcarron's fixed determination, more especially when made acquainted with the present state of his father, to return immediately home; but at the same time they deemed it by no means prudent to write any particulars of the interviews they had held, and the explanations that had taken place, or to inclose the note which Mrs. Brooks had received from Lord Lochcarron, and trust matters of such momentous importance to a defence so weak and uncertain as the seal of a letter, even though Cordelia should write to Lord Dunotter himself, and inclose the letter in that for Philipson; for considering the present precarious state of the earl's health, no one could calculate upon his being able to read it when it reached Holleyfield, and it might eventually fall into the hands of the very last persons the writer would wish to be made acquainted with such communications: thus then they resolved; the letter to Philipson was finished, and committed to the care of Gardiner, to be put into the office in time to save the post, and between one and two in the morning, Lady Lochcarron and her friend betook themselves to repose.

CHAPTER VI.

THE light slumbers of Cordelia fled before the elastic spirits of youth, and love, and joy; and when Mrs. Brooks rose about nine, she found her seated at a small casement, which commanded a view of the pleasant environs of Andover, inhaling every scent which breathes of the spring, and listening to every sound which speaks of renovated nature, and the joys which return in the train of summer; only yesterday, and none of these would have touched Cordelia's heart; the smiles of early day, and the promise of the rising year, would alike have passed over her senses without exciting the sensation of a moment: oh, with what knowledge of the human heart does Gray, when lamenting the death of his friend West, exclaim,

“In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
“And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire,
“The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
“Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.”

As she sat in deep meditation, her memory wandered back to the same period of the preceding year, which was nearly that of her first arrival at Holleyfield; and though her sufferings and trials in that time had been very great, yet how many mercies had she to be thankful for! she now clearly saw the chain, the concatenation of circumstances which had preserved her from becoming—what but for those very sufferings she would inevitably have become—a mere votary of fashion, with all those feelings and principles which refine and dignify our nature; sunk and absorbed in selfishness and an apathetic disregard of every thing but what should conduce to her own pleasure.

Young, lively, and inexperienced, separated from the monotony of her youth, and without a parent to guide and direct her, she well remembered the time when, swayed by the example of the Hootsides, and the rest of Lady Walpole's associates, she had ardently desired to go to Brighton, and to plunge at once into all the gaieties of high life; from this, her attention was only turned by the prospect of a union with Lord Lochcarron; but conscience now reminded her, as it had often done before, that even then she had been too giddy, too thoughtless; more attached to the show, the glitter, the parade of the elevated station in which she seemed destined to move, than to the sacred and important duties which that station involved: by being separated from her new-made lord in the way she was, serious reflection was not only presented to her mind, but, as it were, “Brought home to her business and bosom.” Her recovery from the severe illness consequent on that separation, was another mercy for which she owed gratitude to heaven; and that of Lord Dunotter, by being the occasion of her passing so much of her time with him, had opened and expanded her mind, and given her such just notions of right and wrong, such clear conceptions of real greatness and true humility, and of the exact bounds which the one prescribes and the other requires, that while mentally petitioning for grace that she might through the whole of her future life be enabled to act up to the light which was in her mind, she could lay her hand on her heart and say, with a deep conviction, how truly she was applying the text, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”

In this contemplative mood she was found, as was before said, by Mrs. Brooks; after a little raillery on her early rising, they sat down to a cheerful breakfast, though Cordelia was not without some subjects that pressed heavily on her spirits: Lord Dunotter's evidently approaching dissolution, Lady Dunotter's tyranny, and even her own fate, which until she should again hear from her lord she could not consider as decided, alternately occupied her thoughts; and as the moments wore over, she could not divest herself of pangs of undefinable apprehension, for which her past and recent sufferings certainly presented an excuse; but soon after ten, suspense was once more relieved by the entrance of Gardiner with a letter for Mrs. Brooks; Cordelia started, but her friend, with more calmness, broke the seal, and found it only an envelope, containing a packet addressed to Lady Lochcarron, who read it with more emotion than language can express; it was in these words:

"If the deepest, most genuine, and most unequivocal expressions of penitence could be offered in atonement for voluntary error and intentional offence, oh, in what plenitude should this paper present them to the eyes of my Cordelia—my wife;—for not for the best hopes and the dearest prospects on this side eternity would I yield my right to call her by that endearing title; but no effusion of words, no auricular professions can or ought to extenuate the fault, or deprecate the punishment of the wilful offender; on Mercy alone, working of its own free grace, can he rely, and from you, my beloved, my own Cordelia, so pre-eminently gifted with that and every other angelic attribute, I will venture to implore it. It is my earnest, solemn wish, that for the future, every thought of my bosom should be open to its adored partner; and as it respects the past, I will neither attempt to veil nor gloss over the visionary fallacies, for they do not deserve the name of principles, on which I have acted. You probably know, my love, that the period of life which is of most importance in forming the future character; the years which intervene from thirteen to twenty, were chiefly passed in the society of my aunt Malcolm—the best of women, so far as good-temper, kindness, and purity of intention are implicated, and so indulgent to me, that since I lost my own beloved mother, I have regarded her as a second parent; but—for I have solemnly engaged to reveal truth, and it demands the confession—her modes of thinking are romantic, ideal, and calculated for some utopian region, which we may either suppose existed in the golden age, or does so still in some other planet, but are far unfitted for the constituted order of the globe we inhabit; yet though I am well aware that in suffering the mind to contract those fantastic habits, we enervate and weaken its noblest faculties; obscure the clear light of reason, and that in proportion as they raise and refine our joys, they deepen and depress our sorrows; though the latter, alas! are too frequently destined to preponderate in the scale of life; I must allow that I have ever been the disciple of my aunt, and that I have imbibed her maxims, if not always exactly in letter, at least in spirit; I began by *believing* that the real patriot had neither party-zeal nor animosity, but was solely actuated by the love of his country, and perhaps of the human race; that the true hero never steeped his laurels in blood; that the ardent adventurer who explored other regions, sought only fresh discoveries, and new accessions of knowledge, unswayed by either vanity or self-interest; and that the poet would only light his heavenly lamp to illumine the shrine of virtue; as time and acquaintance with life weakened *belief*, I sheltered myself in the *hope* that *many* such

might be found; and now, when at twenty-three, I am compelled to admit, that men seldom love and follow virtue and glory from abstract motives, I still *wish* that *some* exist who do so. Thus prepared by education and early habit to view matters through a *false*, yet in justice to myself I must add not a *base* medium, I became attached to Caroline Borham; spare me, my Cordelia, on that subject: it was my father's wish to ally me suitably to my rank in life; and here again my perverted judgment interfered to mar my happiness: with high-wrought chimerical notions of mental independence, and of what I conceived to be the unalienable right of every human being, to be left free and unbiassed in the circumstance which most materially concerns his future felicity, I felt indignant that my affections should be bartered with; and though I in part submitted to my father's commands, and in part was swayed by his reasons, I wilfully, pertinaciously, blinded myself to the perfections which, with deep humiliation, I confess myself unworthy to call mine; yet in the bitterness of self-accusation, let me not withhold from myself common justice; had time been allowed me to see you often, to converse with you, to become acquainted with your virtues and your talents, to contemplate you in the hours of domestic retirement, I could not have acted in the unworthy manner I did, because to know without loving you is impossible; but matters were hurried in a way which your better judgment even then condemned. Oh, well do I remember your emphatic words in the plantation at Holleyfield, "Precipitate measures are seldom justified by subsequent circumstances—both reason and propriety demand an acquaintance of much longer date." And now, my Cordelia, with a shame which, even as I write thus alone, dyes my cheek, and a horror which paralyzes my hand, as you will trace in the irregular characters which it forms, I must revert to that letter which I addressed to my father on the evening of our marriage; to affirm most sacredly, that not a line of it was premeditated, but the actual feeling of the moment;—to make my solemn recantation of all the rash and hasty vows and resolves of which it is the record;—and to implore heaven not to impute them to me as sin, but to accept my deep and profound repentance, as it shall be evinced by every action of my future life, so far as respects my Cordelia. In the first flush of my resentment against my father, I hurried over to France, and the more effectually to prevent my family from tracing me, went down to Marseilles; in the vicinity of that city, I lived retired nearly four months, striving to keep resentment alive—I blush to make the confession, but I will compel myself to be candid and sincere—and that I might not be induced to return to my father, who had, I conceived, so deeply injured me, I carefully and cautiously concealed my residence from every one whom I thought could communicate it to him, even at first from my aunt Malcolm; but when I received that letter which (as I learn by the one Mrs. Brooks gave me yesterday, from my father) you, my injured, forgiving angel, caused Mr. Brewster to write, acquainting me with the accident my dear parent had met with, I forgot every thing but his sufferings, and immediately joined a party of friends who were going to Paris, and from thence to England by the way of Dieppe; I landed at Southampton, and determined to remain there under the name of Campion, while Harris made inquiries into the actual circumstances of my friends; my aunt he found was in Scotland, otherwise I believe I should have gone to Shellmount-Lodge; but the intelligence he received concerning the state of affairs at Holleyfield was such, that I fear, my Cordelia, I must accuse Mr. Crompton at least, if not Lady Dunotter, of having caused the grossest misrepresentations to be imposed upon me, for what purpose I cannot guess, except to keep me away from Holleyfield; yet if so, I have only

to blame my own folly, which placed me so much in their power; nor let me be suspected of seeking to extenuate my faults by deepening those of others. Harris was told by one of my father's men of law, who affirmed that he had his information from Mr. Crompton, that Lord Dunotter, though he had suffered amputation, was not nearly so ill as was represented; and he added, that not only at the express wish, but by the absolute sanction of Miss Walpole—so he termed you, my Cordelia—the proctors of the ecclesiastical court were proceeding with all possible celerity in the steps prelude to obtaining a sentence of separation between us; I now know from my father's letter that such was not the case; that unworthy as I was, as I am, or I shall ever be, your transcendent goodness, soaring above the jealous and indignant feelings of our nature, even then imitated celestial goodness, and rather wished the forgiveness than the punishment of an offender; but that I could not know, I dared not expect, and my haughty romantic nature strove to persuade itself it did not desire; yet I solemnly aver that there were hours when I bitterly repented my conduct, and when reason, and dare I say virtue? struggled with pride as it respected you, and with resentment towards my father.

“When Harris returned, and told me what I have said above, I yielded up all thoughts of going to Holleyfield, and debated with myself whether to return to the continent, or to visit my aunt in Scotland; unable to resolve immediately on either, and not choosing to remain long in one place, lest I should be discovered, I quitted Southampton, and went to Poole; where, as my father informs me, I was seen by an old friend of his, who was there on public business; I knew nothing of this, and supposing myself undiscovered, kept journeying about from place to place, until I was imprudent enough to go to a concert at Dorchester, where I met with a gentleman and his sister, whom I had known in France; I now saw that concealment was no longer possible, and decided on quitting Dorchester the next morning, going to Andover, and from thence despatching Harris once more to inquire the state of my father's health, and if I found him really as ill as my fears now began to suggest, I determined to go to Ravenpark, and from thence to write those submissions which, as a son, it was my duty to offer. On your subject, my Cordelia, I could make no decision; my wishes and my hopes were at variance, for I confess the former inclined me to seek reconciliation through the medium of my father; but when I reflected on my past conduct, the latter seemed completely chilled, and I believed I had no alternative but to submit to the fate I had courted, and to wait the promulgation of that sentence which should separate us for ever.

“And now, my Cordelia, I have brought down the manifesto of my errors to that period of Saturday evening, which shall hold the dearest place in my memory to the moment of closing life; that period, when Providence restored to me the inestimable treasure which, ever with deep humility I must acknowledge, I had so ill deserved to be blessed with; changed as you are in stature, voice, and expression of countenance, in every thing but beauty and goodness, how little did I imagine as your lovely hand held my arm, that it was resting in its sacred, devoted, unalienable home: oh! Cordelia, in what a light must I have appeared to you! I dare not—cannot dwell on the idea, for your sake, my adored wife, I cannot—if I were to indulge remorse and retrospection, you would see your Lochcarron the most miserable of men.

“When the Hootsides were at the Star yesterday, I was so solicitous to shun observation, that, knowing me as you did all the while, it must have required even your goodness not to have despised that fear of detection which was the consequence of my own folly: your mention of Lady Caroline Harrington in the course of conversation gave me surprise, and a sort of indefinite confused idea that you knew me; though why I should trace any connexion between your knowledge of the Hootsides and the Dunotter families, I could not explain; but the interesting fact never flashed on my mind, until Mrs. Brooks mentioned Holleyfield in the way which I doubt not she has described to you.

“When made acquainted with the truth, my agitation was so great that I could not bear to see you until I had reasoned myself into composure; on reaching my lodgings, I found Harris just arrived; he has been in the vicinity of Holleyfield, and had an interview with the brother of Philipson, my father’s confidential servant; from him he learns that his lordship is very ill;—oh! my Cordelia, I fear my haughty spirit has carried me too far in his instance also, and that I have been too unrelenting to my parent; you have been to him a consoling angel; with what rapture, in his letter to me, does he describe all the soothing affectionate attentions he has received from his best and dearest child, as he styles you; my soul feels the most ardent, eager desire for my father’s embrace and restored affection; and to hear him bless us together: we must return immediately to Holleyfield; perhaps the pleasure of that return may do more to improve his health than any thing else: within an hour from the date of this, my Cordelia will behold me at her feet, supplicating her forgiveness, and imploring her to believe that the whole of my future life shall be dedicated to prove myself her most tenderly affectionate husband,
Lohcarron.

Monday, 10 o’clock.”

Though this letter was at best but a very weak, inadequate, and trivial apology for the worse than neglect and unkindness of Lord Lohcarron’s past behaviour, Cordelia read it with tears of joy, and gratitude to heaven, which had wrought so complete a change in the heart of her beloved lord; for sweetly harmonious to her ear as were the compliments of Lohcarron; dearly as sounded the note of praise from him, her keenly discerning mind easily saw that he had early received, and hitherto cherished, a very unfavourable impression of her understanding: one point however gratified her extremely, that was the scrupulous and cautious delicacy with which he avoided, as much as possible, mentioning of Miss Borham, but this she did not notice even to Mrs. Brooks; that lady gave the letter and the letter-writer all due praise, and gaily observed, “Now you see, my dear, I was right; your lord did not know you in the concert-room at Dorchester.” “So it appears,” said Cordelia; adding with a smile, “he certainly never saw me when we were married, for I think it is hardly possible I can be so totally changed;” her countenance then assuming an expression of the deepest pensiveness, she subjoined, “I see he has no idea how very ill his father is—he cherishes hopes of his speedy recovery.” “You must show him Philipson’s letter as soon as you find it convenient this morning, my love,” said Mrs. Brooks, “and that of Lady Dunotter also; it is highly requisite that Lord Lohcarron should immediately be made acquainted with every thing that is transacting at Holleyfield.” “But that strange epistle of Lady Dunotter is so gross,”

returned Cordelia, blushing deeply, "how can I, with any propriety, show it to my lord?" "You now know, my dear Lady Lochcarron," said Mrs. Brooks, "what cruel injustice Lady Dunotter and Mr. Crompton have done you, by proclaiming the falsehood that it was your wish and desire to be separated from Lord Lochcarron; and you would be equally unjust to yourself if you did not draw aside the veil, and show them to your husband in their true colours." "I cannot show him such a letter," said Cordelia, who had been hastily glancing her eye over it, while Mrs. Brooks was speaking; "Then I will," returned the latter, "for see it he must;" "you forget that Captain Thornton is mentioned in it as my chief adviser—gracious heaven! only consider, should my lord resent his interference!" "Your lord is too much of a self-accuser to resent any thing that has been done by him, my dearest Delia," Mrs. Brooks replied; "however," she added, "we can explain the contents of the letter without showing it; he must see both the other letters you received last night, and see them to-day; there is a propriety in it which will not admit of evasion; that of Philipson you can feel no repugnance to showing him yourself, except on the score of giving him pain; still less that from Mrs. Emerson, since it will only enhance your value thirty thousand pounds; and the contents of this," taking the countess's curious letter from the hand of Cordelia, "it shall be my part to communicate to your lord."

Time allowed of little more conversation, for Lord Lochcarron was punctual to the hour he had named in his letter; Mrs. Brooks met him on the staircase; and Gardiner, who was ushering him up, heard his anxious inquiry how Lady Lochcarron did; and Mrs. Brooks, in replying, styled him "My lord;" which furnished subject-matter for curiosity and conjecture below.

When he entered the drawing-room, Mrs. Brooks immediately retired, and closed the door; he threw a wild and anxious glance to the spot where Cordelia, though deeply and violently agitated, had advanced to meet him; and then kneeling before her, he said in a tone which blended the dignity of a man and a husband, with the sincere repentance of a conscious offender, "I have transgressed against you, my Cordelia, beyond all excuse or extenuation; I offer neither, but thus at your feet sue for that pardon which mercy may grant, and that oblivion which goodness like yours can alone extend, and which the truest and most sincere contrition now supplicates."

This was the moment of Cordelia's triumph, the victory of meek endurance, gentleness, and patience; had Lady Lochcarron, as perhaps many ladies in her situation would have done, yielded to the strong feelings of resentment, the first impulse of a wounded and indignant spirit, and sanctioned the measures which were taken to dissolve her marriage, her earthly happiness would have been irretrievably wrecked; she might, it is true, have formed a second union, as eligible and desirable in the points of rank and fortune as her first had seemed; but that fond and ardent glow of affection which had wedded her soul to its kindred one would have been chilled for ever; no future husband would have been Lochcarron; no other voice would have thrilled to the inmost recesses of her bosom, and called up associations of such dear and tender interest, and to no other form or features belonged those lineaments which were entwined with every fibre of her beating heart; she might have shone in the circles of splendour and fashion, blazing in

jewels and arrayed in smiles, but she would have been internally wretched, spiritless, and dejected; and Lochcarron, when he found himself thus thrown from her with contempt—(that such contempt was merited is not meant to be denied)—would have awakened from his fit of stubborn perversity, and, either to show his unconcern, would have plunged into all the evils of foreign dissipation, an alien to his family, and his country deprived of those promising talents with which nature had endowed him; or else he would have wandered about the world that romantic visionary which his education under Lady Charlotte Malcolm had fitted him for. Cordelia's mild and patient forbearance had reversed the picture, and she had now the indescribable joy to contemplate in Lochcarron's deep conviction of his fault, and determined purpose of atonement, the best guarantee of her married happiness, and of glory, dignity, and consequence reflected from the future fame and celebrity of the partner of her life.

Yet no pride, no female caprice, no self-gratulation appeared in either word or look, when she beheld her husband at her feet, and heard him beg for pardon, mercy, and oblivion; she did not mar the heavenly boons by a cold, ungracious, ill-accorded "Rise, my lord, I do forgive you," which many in her situation might, perhaps, have thought more than enough: but she asked her heart what duty required, and it replied, "You supplicate every day to have your offences forgiven as you forgive those of others, and you know the divine injunction to extend that forgiveness, 'Not until seven times, but until seventy times seven;'" and ever in the habit of promptly obeying what duty dictated, she kneeled beside her husband, and said with meek humility, "Mercy and pardon, my dearest Lochcarron, you must not stoop to solicit; in your letter of this morning you have so well accounted for every part of your conduct, and so fully explained every circumstance, that I can only add one observation, and that is but the echo of yours—those who ought to have been the guides of our youth, were too precipitate, and hurried us into a union without giving us time to become acquainted, which is the true source of all the mistakes we have made, and the uneasiness we have endured; then let OBLIVION be indeed the word, and the subject be buried in it for ever;" and with these words, she kindly pressed the hand of Lochcarron between her own.

Charmed, astonished, and delighted by a conduct so noble, so superior to what could have been expected in one so young, he ardently embraced her, and with a fervent assurance that it should be the study of his whole life to deserve her affection, he raised her from the floor, and seated himself by her on the sofa, where, as he held her to his heart, he yielded himself to all the liveliness of youthful spirits and a fine imagination, rising elastic from the pressure of recent affliction; formed innumerable schemes for their future comfort and happiness; planned various excursions, and proposed a thousand modes of employing and improving time.

Cordelia listened with deep and heartfelt delight, to accents and topics she had so long and ardently wished to hear; but she saw that her lord in all his plans pre-supposed the perfect recovery of his father, and themselves acting and journeying as Lord and Lady Lochcarron; she felt deeply for the pain she must inflict by showing him Philipson's letter; but she saw the propriety of not delaying to do so; and taking advantage of a pause in the conversation, she said in a tone of tender sympathy, "You do not know how very ill

your dear father is, my lord;" and taking out the letter, she presented it to him; he perused it with a countenance of deep interest: "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "they are killing my father, purposely and designedly destroying him; Cordelia, my love, we must be off as soon as possible; Mr. Swinburne denied access to Lord Dunotter! his physicians dismissed! and Captain Thornton and two proctors of the ecclesiastical court closetted with Lady Dunotter and Crompton! it is high time I were at Holleyfield; oh! I could execrate my own infatuation!" Cordelia, not less impatient to return to Lord Dunotter, and anxious at all events that the projected journey to Scotland should be put a final stop to, was expressing her readiness to leave Andover immediately, when Mrs. Brooks came in; Lord Lochcarron presented his hand, and warmly thanked her, both for all the kind offices she had rendered himself, and for her maternal care of Lady Lochcarron through the whole of their excursion; he then reverted to the contents of Philipson's letter, and indignantly blamed the conduct of Lady Dunotter to her lord; Mrs. Brooks joined in the censure, bluntly adding the information that Lady Lochcarron, together with that letter received one from the countess herself; "Her ladyship," she added, "scarcely notices the state of your father's health, my lord; nor does she make any mention of going to Scotland, so that one cannot ascertain whether or not Philipson be correct." "I hope to ascertain it in person, before many hours have elapsed," said Lord Lochcarron. "Harris is gone to order a chaise and four to be ready by two; will that be too early, my love?" he asked his lady; "Not at all," she replied, "I will put on my habit," and quitting the room, she left her lord and Mrs. Brooks together; it is needless to say that the praises of Cordelia, poured forth in terms of rapture, and re-echoed in expressions of the most affectionate attachment, was a theme not soon dismissed; Mrs. Brooks then reverted once more to Lady Dunotter's letter, adding, "There is one point in it, my lord, which I think it is proper to mention; her ladyship affirms that a notice from Doctor's Commons has been served on you—may I take the liberty of asking if such be the fact?" "Never!" he replied, with blended surprise and emotion; "I thought as much," resumed Mrs. Brooks; "I believed it an unwarranted assertion, but I am convinced it has given Lady Lochcarron some uneasiness." Then in compassion to the visible distress and self-accusation which his countenance displayed, she prevented his reply by inquiring if Lady Lochcarron had told him that she had lost a relation; he replied in the negative, his looks expressing the surprise he felt; she took Mrs. Emerson's letter from a drawer in the table, where she had seen Cordelia deposit it, and put it into his hand; great was the variety of conflicting feelings with which he perused it; he could not but remember that Lord Dunotter, when enumerating the advantages which would attend a marriage with Miss Walpole, had mentioned her expectations from a rich aunt; these, it now appeared, were realized, this inheritance added to the ten thousand pounds unconditionally left her by her father, would have been an ample dower on which either to marry or live single, had she been inclined to separate herself from him, through the good offices so kindly and officiously obtruded upon her by Lady Dunotter and Mr. Crompton; and though the heart of Lochcarron bounded with ecstasy that such had not been her choice, he yet felt his own inferiority, or in other words the folly and criminality of his past conduct with tenfold keenness, when thus contrasted with the greatness of mind and exalted affection of Cordelia, who in the dawn of their reconciliation had not chosen to mention a circumstance which threw into the scale of her own consequence, that weight which will always be attendant on wealth; yet desirable as he knew wealth to be in the present state

of his father's affairs, he would, if the matter could have rested in his decision, have preferred taking Cordelia with only the portion he married her; however since fate had determined it otherwise, he rejoiced that she had received his letter of penitence before he could possibly have any knowledge of her accession of fortune; but beyond all, there was one point which gave him the highest pleasure—that passage of Mrs. Emerson's letter which implied, that to see him the undisputed assertor of Cordelia's rights, was the sincere wish of her real friends.

He was meditating on all this with the open letter in his hand, Mrs. Brooks offering no interruption to his thoughts, when Cordelia returned to the room; "You have got Mrs. Emerson's letter I see, my lord," she said in her sweet way; "it will convince you what trouble a wife brings with her; for all that is requisite to be done in that affair, it will now be yours to do."

Lochcarron was at no time a man of many professions; in making his peace with his lady, he had exerted himself to say and write much more than was natural to him, because he thought his past conduct required it; but now he only emphatically replied, with a glance of ardent tenderness, "All that can be done for your interest, my Cordelia, it shall indeed be ever mine to do." "Poor Mrs. Holmes!" resumed Lady Lochcarron, "she was the sister of my maternal grandmother; her peculiarities were very great—so great, indeed, that they nearly proved a bar to all intercourse between her and her relations, none of whom I am sure were ever wanting in intentional respect; I cannot pretend to deplore her death—it would be hypocrisy in me to say I do so; but oh! how painful must be accession of fortune, when it is purchased by the loss of a friend we love!" and as she spake, her eye turned in tender commiseration on her lord, as she reflected that he would soon be called to elevated rank, and to the possession of all that remained of the fortune attached to it, by the death of his sole surviving parent.

CHAPTER VII.

HARRIS now arrived, to say that the chaise would be there in half an hour, and Mrs. Brooks went to settle matters with Mrs. Fleming; as she did not feel herself called upon to enter into any explanations in which her noble friends were concerned, she only said (in reply to the home-hints of Mrs. Fleming, who was bewildered in a maze of wonderment by the positive assertion of Gardiner, smilingly, though tacitly admitted for truth by Harris, that Mr. Campion and Mrs. Beaumont were Lord and Lady Lochcarron) that his lordship having now finished the business which had detained him first on the continent, and since in that part of England, was now ready to attend his lady home.

Mrs. F. did not appear over well satisfied with this demi-disclosure; but as Mrs. Brooks seemed pertinaciously bent on not being more explicit, she was obliged to take it as it was given; and at all events she had reason to be highly pleased with one circumstance—the generosity with which her bill was paid.

Lady Lochcarron, who greatly preferred both the disposition and qualifications of Gardiner to those of the personal attendant she had left at Holleyfield, offered to take her with her, which was accepted with gratitude and joy.

Harris, after completing some little arrangements for his lord at Andover, was to follow him post, and Gardiner was assigned him as a travelling companion; all these points adjusted, the travellers quitted Andover about two o'clock. In the midst of the delight which Lochcarron's speaking features evinced, in thus carrying home his Cordelia, there might still be traced a great degree of self-accusing humiliation, that she was thus in consequence of his romantic folly compelled to travel without that retinue which her rank demanded; and with an equipage so ill suited to the daughter of a baronet, and the wife of the heir-apparent to an earldom. Cordelia, who had already learned to translate the expression of his countenance, and as she used to do that of her mother-in-law, read his emotion and its cause, and took the most delicate and effectual means to evince her satisfaction by her sweet accommodating manners, and the interest she appeared to take in the different scenes and objects they passed on the road: as to Mrs. Brooks, now that she saw her beloved Cordelia restored to peace and happiness, she yielded herself to all the native cheerfulness of her disposition, and all the habitual activity and observation of her inquiring mind; during the whole of their excursion, subjects of historical and local interest had continually been recurring on which she wished for information, and she now found Lord Lochcarron highly qualified to give it, and truly desirous of obliging and giving her pleasure: they chatted on with little cessation; there was not a town in the counties of Dorset and Hants but they traced back its history and antiquities to the earliest known period; told which were Roman stations; when and how they were besieged in the civil wars; what battles were fought in their vicinities; what monarchs granted their charters and privileges; who were their benefactors; and what eminent characters were natives of them; Cordelia listened to all these details with not only pleasure, but with something approaching to delight; she might have remembered—for the reader will—how irksome and uninteresting she had thought

such conversation, when it passed between Mrs. Brooks and Mr. Jefferson at the inn at Poole, and how cordially she wished the latter any where but in the place where she was doomed to see and hear him; a proof, if proof could be needed in a case so common and obvious, that our opinions more frequently take their colour from our feelings than our reason.

They took a slight dinner at Henley, where their attendants came up with them, and then pursued their journey with fresh horses; but the evening had closed in by the time they entered Buckinghamshire; a sad variety of painful feelings pressed on Cordelia's heart; the season of the year was exactly that at which she first came to Holleyfield; it was too dark to distinguish objects; but the hour and the party she travelled with, Lord Lochcarron by her side, and Mrs. Brooks the substitute of Mrs. Emerson, made her almost fancy time restored again; the idea of the robber rose to her imagination with a force which made the whole scene seem present; the report of the pistol by which the ruffian fell, and the danger which threatened death to that bosom on which she now leaned, altogether rushed on her memory, and affected her so powerfully, that she could not suppress a deep and heavy sigh; Lochcarron tenderly apprehensive that the fatigue of the journey was too much for her frame, pressed her to his heart, and endeavoured to re-animate her with the certainty that it would soon be terminated; she strove to exert herself and be cheerful, but it was an effort beyond her, for when she tried to abstract her mind from the subject which occupied it, in the next moment it reverted to the melancholy situation of Lord Dunotter; the approaching interview between the Countess and Lord Lochcarron, which she had no reason to think would be a very cordial one on either side; and to the distressing probability that Capt. Thornton might be still at Holleyfield, and should Lord Lochcarron resent his interference in their affairs, who could calculate on the consequences?

When they had passed the last mile of the public road, and entered on the domain of Holleyfield, Lord Lochcarron submitted it to the judgment of his lady, whether it would be proper to send Harris on to announce their approach; Cordelia thought not, from apprehension that any one might, either through thoughtlessness or design, incautiously, and without due preparation, apprise Lord Dunotter of his son's arrival; Lochcarron acquiesced in the propriety of her decision: they passed the porter's lodge, drove up the avenue, round the sweep, and were at the door before time was allowed for Lady Dunotter to hear what, Cordelia was well aware, would give her no pleasure. The train of servants at Holleyfield was numerous, far beyond any necessity. Lady Walpole, in her widowed state, had a very large establishment; and Lord Dunotter, so long resident abroad, and so high in public estimation, had always, as may readily be supposed, a very splendid retinue; the chief part of these now thronged the entrance hall, gazing with delighted interest on Lord Lochcarron and his lovely wife, as he conducted her into the house; Mrs. Greville, the old housekeeper, one of Cordelia's most attached friends, who knew so well what had been her sufferings during the illness consequent on Lochcarron's desertion, soon appeared, and welcomed her return, and that of Lord Lochcarron, to Holleyfield, with feelings approaching to rapture; she led the way to an apartment on the left of the hall, to which a variety of refreshments were quickly brought; Lady Lochcarron as she approached it, observed that every place was thronged with boxes and

packages, from which she was at no loss to understand that all was prepared for the journey to Dunotter castle, and that the countess had only waited her return, which her ladyship no doubt supposed would be immediate in consequence of the command to that effect which her letter contained; and Cordelia, as she in silence viewed those preparations, mentally blessed that providence which had now given her a protector from her tyranny: her first anxious inquiry of Mrs. Greville was after the state of Lord Dunotter's health, and Lochcarron himself seemed to wait in breathless solicitude for her answer; the shake of the head, and the mournful countenance, too certainly proclaimed what her words confirmed, that the earl was very ill. Lord Lochcarron in extreme emotion went to his father's apartments to converse with Philipson, who, Mrs. Greville said, never quitted his lord, but evinced a fidelity and attachment nearly unparalleled. Cordelia, when her lord was gone, made it her first inquiry whether Capt. Thornton had left Holleyfield, and to her great relief found he had; she was then enabled to sit down with more composure, and had just taken off her hat when Lady Dunotter entered. As her letter had so severely censured Cordelia for seeking reconciliation with Lord Lochcarron, now when that reconciliation was effected, she certainly had every reason to expect chiding and displeasure, if not downright anger: but no such thing; the countess met her with the fervent embrace of maternal fondness, and the exclamation of "My Cordelia, my beloved child! to see you thus returned with your husband, confirmed in your rank, restored to peace, is a happiness, which in the midst of my deep overwhelming affliction consoles me, and gives me a degree of comfort which I cannot express;—where is your lord?" "Gone to inquire after his father, mamma." A well-measured sigh, or rather groan, of anguish, a shrug of the shoulder, and an eye thrown up to heaven, prefaced the exclamation of "Oh, Cordelia! how ill his dear father is! I am persuaded," and she spoke with strong emphasis, "that Lochcarron's eccentric conduct, and not the accident he met with, is the real cause of his—" here her ladyship either was, or seemed to be, interrupted by her tears; but soon recovering herself, she added, "that conviction and the deep, the keen, the acute anguish it gave me to behold his sufferings, prompted me to write to you in the terms I did the other day; I feared, as did all your friends, certainly with every show of reason, that Lochcarron had entirely deserted you; and I could not stand self-acquitted in the capacity of your delegated parent and guardian, if I permitted you to act in a way I conceived to be degrading—" Cordelia, totally unable in the present state of her spirits, to support this hypocritical harangue, which she perceived was only intended by Lady Dunotter to display excuses for her own behaviour, said, "I entreat your ladyship's pardon for the interruption, but my lord has accounted to me most satisfactorily for every part of his conduct; and I was honoured with so large a portion of my father's confidence previously to my going down to Dorsetshire, that I cannot be at any loss to know in what degree he approved or disapproved of the way in which my lord acted." She then introduced Mrs. Brooks as the friend of Mrs. Emerson, adding with conciliating sweetness, "and who as your representative, my dear mamma, has been my maternal monitress through the whole of our journey."

Lady Dunotter courtied low, and had recourse to all those powers of insinuation which length of time and frequent practice had reduced to a system; indeed it was one of her established maxims, to flatter and ingratiate herself with every stranger who came in her way, and in this she generally succeeded, though a more intimate acquaintance drew

aside the veil, and dissolved the charm; her address to Mrs. Brooks was a rare and happy combination of attractive grace, overawing dignity, and winning condescension; in short, it was exactly calculated for the meridian of Mrs. Brooks's character, as the countess pictured it to herself—a lady educated in the country, too much a novice to possess any great depth of penetration, and of course not qualified to see, or artful enough to parry, the masked battery she immediately opened, to discover how long Cordelia and her lord had been reconciled; but she erred in her estimate of Mrs. Brooks's understanding: she clearly developed her designs, and took care that she should be no wiser for any of her inquiries, whether made in the shape of direct questions or otherwise. The countess was beginning to find she could learn nothing, when Lord Lochcarron returned to the apartment; Lady Dunotter started from her seat, and presented her hand, exclaiming, "My dear Alexander! I cannot express the pleasure, the delight, the consolation, the happiness it is to me to see you thus together; oh! had your dear father but been able to participate in my joy!" then as if overcome with the subject, she faltered, paused, and sobbed; Lochcarron saluted her; he was grave, depressed, and seemed as if he had shed tears during his interview with Philipson, "My father is very ill, I understand," he said with a deep sigh; the countess waved her head; Lochcarron resumed with evident emotion, "Why, why were my father's medical advisers changed? why were Mr. C. who amputated his arm, and the other gentlemen from town superseded in their attendance?" "For reasons grounded in the highest wisdom, my dear Alexander," said Lady Dunotter, with prompt impressiveness; "their prescriptions were of no efficacy; your dear father's health continued to decline; doctor Herbert, so eminent in skill, so extensive in practice, a man of so enlarged a mind, so comprehensive a judgment—he saw their treatment of the case was wrong, and at once as a friend and a professional man, warned me of it; alarmed, distressed, worn down with anguish, no one to advise me, you absent, I knew not where, I deeply felt my obligation to Mr. Herbert; in short all—every thing has been done—" she paused a moment, and Lochcarron subjoined, "I conceive not; Mr. Swinburne, my father's old respected friend, why was he refused access to him? I was absent, it is true, but he was infinitely better qualified to advise;—however no further time shall be lost, I have sent express for the first advice in London, and also for Mr. Malcolm and Mr. Swinburne." The countess now felt herself compelled to say, that the physicians had strongly advised a journey to Dunotter castle, the earl's native air, and that she had only waited Cordelia's return to set off. "I cannot think it proper, or even practicable," said Lochcarron; "at all events we shall have able advice to-morrow; I have had a few minutes conversation just now with Mr. Herbert; I do not doubt his skill on many occasions, but he does not appear to me to have by any means a clear conception of what ought to be done in my father's case." Then wishing by all means to avoid the appearance of purposely seeking any disagreement with his father's wife, and too deeply conscious how faulty his own conduct had been, to notice the pains taken by both Lady Dunotter and Mr. Crompton (as he stated in his letter to his lady) to induce him to believe that Lord Dunotter was by no means so ill as he was in reality, and to bar all reconciliation between him and Cordelia, he turned the discourse to another subject; and as he would not risk disturbing the earl until Philipson should in the morning gradually prepare him for the interview, the party soon separated for the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY Dunotter, for reasons already detailed, had not only wished that her son and daughter might never be reconciled, but had done all in her power to prevent such reconciliation from taking place; but now that it *had* taken place, the position of affairs was totally altered, and it became her part to conciliate Lord Lochcarron by every possible means; she had reason to apprehend that Sir Charles Walpole's will would not stand the test of inquiry, at least an inquiry backed by the power and influence which a young earl of Dunotter would possess; while there existed a probability that Lochcarron intended to forswear his matrimonial vows, she deemed it her best interest, as the guardian of Cordelia, to promote the suit of Capt. Thornton, who thus bound by obligation, would never dispute with her the will of Sir Charles Walpole; but now that affairs had assumed so different a position, Thornton ceased to be any thing, and Lord and Lady Lochcarron became every thing to her; she chose to honour them with her presence at breakfast, and had recourse to all her modes of insinuation; to Cordelia, she appeared to all intents and purposes the kind affectionate mother, tender of her health, and solicitous for her happiness: to Lord Lochcarron she seemed to look up as the head of the family, to rely on him as her adviser and protector; well aware that woman, by this tacit homage, seldom fails to make her way to the heart of man: while towards Mrs. Brooks, there was at once that marked respect which is perhaps the most refined species of flattery that can be practised by a superior to an inferior, and a demeanor modelled to express the most cordial and friendly regard.

From the hour of the preceding day in which Lord Dunotter saw the note which Cordelia had written from Andover, in reply to Philipson's letter, he expressed so much impatience for the arrival of his children, that it visibly affected his weakened frame; when Lord Lochcarron visited his apartments, he had just lain down for the night, and though his attendants ascertained that he did not sleep, his son would on no account permit him to be disturbed; but at a proper time in the morning, Philipson, with all due preparatory caution, told him that Lord and Lady Lochcarron were come.

The way to their interview thus cleared, Lochcarron soon knelt by the couch of his father, acknowledged his errors, and implored forgiveness; the earl was deeply and severely agitated by many conflicting passions: joy was certainly the predominant one; for the first, it may be said the only, wish of his heart was fulfilled in the re-union of Lochcarron and Cordelia; but there was likewise so great a degree of shame, so much of a painful consciousness, that his own faults had laid the foundation for those of his son, and so deep a feeling of remorse for those faults, consequent on the near prospect of the grave, that his feeble strength and exhausted spirits sunk under the accumulation; that powerful, though misapplied, force and energy which would once have supported the haughty earl of Dunotter beneath the severest tortures of self-accusation were gone; weak in body and enervated in mind, he could no longer contend with his feelings; but while embracing his son, and listening to his rapturous praises of Cordelia, he fainted on his bosom; Lochcarron in wild alarm called assistance; the earl was soon restored, but continued so ill for some hours, that he could not receive his daughter: when he was

again able to sit up, his first inquiry was for her; their meeting was tender beyond all description; but Cordelia (as she contemplated his altered features and wasted frame, and yet more, his mighty mind, now, if the mode of expression may be allowed, evidently in ruins) experienced that acme, that quintessence of human misery—the certainty that the eternal fiat has gone forth against the being we affectionately love, that the day—the hour is numbered and fast approaching, when the tone of that voice we delighted to hear will cease for ever, and those eyes which were wont to be fixed on us in joy and kindness, shall sleep in the silent grave.

The earl fervently blessed his children, and offered up a pious prayer for their happiness; he could not support the exertion of conversing long together; but Lord Lochcarron scarcely ever quitted him, and Cordelia passed the chief part of her time in his apartment. Lady Dunotter also, though her attentions had not hitherto been very marked, was now his constant nurse; it was observed that her ladyship had displayed a much stronger attachment to Sir Charles Walpole during his illness, than to Lord Dunotter under the same circumstances; but they who knew her easily traced the cause: Sir Charles had it in his power to do—what he really did—bequeath her by will the chief part of his large fortune; but a very early period of her union with Lord Dunotter had given her to see that from him she needed not to expect any such concession; by far the greatest part of his landed property was entailed on his son, and what remained had been deeply mortgaged, until redeemed since his marriage, with part of Sir Charles Walpole's hoarded wealth; not an acre of this, she had every reason to believe, would he alienate from Cordelia and her descendants; yet to try if he could be so induced had been a chief motive for the projected journey to Scotland; and as to the personal property of value, such as plate and pictures, the whole of it, she was convinced, would go as heir-looms with the entail; of course she had nothing to look for beyond her jointure, and it would indeed be a departure from worldly wisdom, to waste time and assiduity where no recompence could be looked for: but now the case was altered; it became of the highest importance to cultivate the friendship of Lord Lochcarron; and to do this, no way seemed so effectual as to evince attachment to his parent.

One of the first points on which Lochcarron consulted his father, when alone with him, was the position in which his lady stood as heir-at-law to her deceased aunt; Lord Dunotter, as may readily be supposed, expressed himself highly pleased that his children would have this accession to their fortune at their outset in life; he counselled his son to write immediately to Mr. Brewster, his principal agent, who was then in Scotland, to send a person to Mrs. Holmes's late residence, with legal qualifications and proper instructions to take measures on the part of Lady Lochcarron.

The course of the day brought the medical gentlemen who had been sent for to Holleyfield; Lord Lochcarron himself then dismissed Mr. Herbert and his colleague from all personal attendance on his father; Dr. B. and Mr. C. only tacitly blamed the conduct of their predecessors by ordering a total change in the medicine, and of course in the regimen of their noble patient; Mr. Swinburne also complied with Lord Lochcarron's request to pay that visit to his patron which, but for Lady Dunotter's interference, he would have done sooner; and Mr. Malcolm arrived the following day; these were both

men of eminent piety; the former distinguished by vast acquirements, and the latter by peculiar tenderness of heart and delicacy of mind. From their conversation, the divine and exalted views they opened, Lord Dunotter derived inexpressible comfort; he had in his early youth been religiously educated by a truly excellent mother; but that school of the world in which all his later years were passed, had dimmed the fine glow of devotional feeling, and with decayed piety came its invariable concomitants—relaxed moral habits; the good seed which had been sown in his heart had long lain dormant; but now at this awful crisis, he felt awakened compunction, and an earnest desire to propitiate an offended Deity; he had much to repent of, but he had once been habituated to the exercises of religion, and his soul seemed to hail their revival from its inmost recesses; most true is the observation of Mr. Addison, that “It is of the last importance, to season the passions of a child with devotion, which seldom dies in a mind that has received an early tincture of it. Though it may seem extinguished for a while by the cares of the world, the heats of youth, or the allurements of vice, it generally breaks out, and discovers itself again, as soon as discretion, consideration, age, or misfortunes have brought the man to himself.”

Ill as Lord Dunotter was, he expressed a desire to see Mrs. Brooks, and to thank her for her maternal care of Lady Lochcarron; she cheerfully obeyed his request to pay him a visit, and on a personal acquaintance, he found the partial friendship with which his son and daughter regarded her amply justified.

The projected journey to Scotland was entirely a scheme of Lady Dunotter, Crompton, and Herbert, planned to answer purposes of the former; nor had its necessity ever been urged to the earl, except in distant and ambiguous hints, when it met his decided disapprobation; and it certainly had been intended to take advantage of that disposition to lethargy, to which the symptoms of his disorder seemed to point (to which his medical treatment had too probably contributed) and to have set off immediately on Cordelia’s return; for they made themselves certain that she would arrive unaccompanied by her lord; but, as it happens to many profound schemers, they were out of their policy for once.

Lord and Lady Lochcarron had been three or four days at Holleyfield, when one morning Philipson sent to request permission to speak a few words to the latter: Lord Lochcarron and Mr. Malcolm she knew were gone to Ravenpark; and her heart beat in wild alarm, lest the earl’s complaints had taken some sudden and fatal termination; she gave orders to admit Philipson immediately, and he soon relieved her fears on that score, by an assurance that Lord Dunotter was not worse than usual, yet he hesitated to explain his errand; Cordelia, translating his look that he wished to be alone with her, dismissed Gardiner; he then drew a letter from his pocket, sealed with black wax, and directed to the earl of Dunotter; the impression on the seal and the hand both told her it was from Lady Charlotte Malcolm: “I entreat your ladyship’s pardon for the liberty I am taking,” he said with great modesty of manner, “but this letter, sealed with black, is from Lady Charlotte Malcolm: I believe my lord daily expects to hear of Miss Borham’s death; and perhaps it may not be right to give his lordship this without some preparation; if I place it with the letters of compliments and business, my Lord Lochcarron will open it, for my

lord always requests my young lord to look into all such; so I thought it would be better to ask your ladyship.”—Cordelia, well aware that Philipson could be no stranger to the attachment which both father and son had felt for Miss Borham, was sensibly struck with the delicacy of mind which had dictated this mode of conduct; she took the letter, and assured him she would carry it herself to Lord Dunotter; at the same time giving him to understand, in terms of condescending kindness, how truly she appreciated his considerate attention to his lord.

She then went to the earl’s apartment, and after she had, with her wonted soothing gentleness, charmed away, as far as was possible, the lassitude of illness, she said, “This letter from Scotland is for your lordship: an event which we have long looked for, has, I imagine, taken place:” then without any of those trite additions applicable to the subject which might have too forcibly reminded the suffering invalid of his own approaching fate, she put the letter into his hand, saying, she had promised to walk in the plantation with Lady Dunotter and Mrs. Brooks, but would come back to him when their stroll was over; she did not stay long; it was highly proper that she should again see the earl before the return of Lord Lochcarron, for every consideration demanded that no conversation on the subject of Miss Borham should pass between the father and son; and she wished to repossess herself of Lady Charlotte’s letter before she again saw her lord, aware that another task remained for her to perform; Lord Dunotter seemed perfectly composed, but his countenance was even paler than usual, and Cordelia thought she could read the traces of a recent tear; “Poor Caroline is gone at last, my Cordelia!” he said, as he placed the open letter in her hand; “she is gone to that blessed state, where ‘sorrow and sighing shall flee away;’ and I trust I shall soon follow her,” he added in a low subdued voice. Cordelia, as she heard this sad sentence, and read the letter, tried in vain to stay her tears; yet all the particulars it gave of Miss Borham were comprised in a few words; Lady Charlotte said: “Poor Caroline Borham was released from her earthly sufferings at nine on Sunday evening; her frame was so entirely exhausted, that her departure was easy; but her mind retained its powers to the last; sweet saint! the remembrance of her piety, and of her sincere contrition for her errors, if such they could be called, will remain with me always.” The remainder of the letter related to other matters; Lady Charlotte, like the rest of Lord Dunotter’s friends, had been imposed upon with a belief that he was not nearly so ill as he was in reality; her ladyship added in the conclusion, “I shall leave Scotland in about a fortnight, and will then visit you, my dear brother, at Holleyfield and hope to find my wayward nephew returned to his home and to his duty.” Some expressions were added, highly flattering to Cordelia, inasmuch as they evinced the tender partiality with which Lord Dunotter had mentioned her in his letters to his sister: she strove to be composed: “This letter,” she said, “have I your lordship’s permission to retain it, and to —” she paused; but the earl comprehended the refined principle on which she acted, “Do as your exalted mind shall dictate, my inestimable Cordelia,” he said; “you are Alexander’s guardian angel; leave me now, my love, for the present.”

Mr. Swinburne entered just then, and Lady Lochcarron retired to her own apartment, where she was visited by her lord, at his return from his ride; Cordelia felt most reluctant to damp the vivacity with which he read and commented on a new publication he found on the table; but it must be—laying the letter on the book he held in

his hand, and gently kissing his cheek, as if to assure him of her sympathy, she quitted the room, and retired to an inner one; in little more than a quarter of an hour he came to her, and embracing her tenderly, said, "Oh! my Cordelia, how shall I ever deserve thus to possess an excellence, in which I did not believe existed in human nature:—my poor father—have you seen him, my love?" "I have been with him a long time," she replied; "he is composed, and not worse than usual, but does not wish to see us just now;" then putting her hand in his, and affectionately pressing it, she added, "now, let us go to dinner."

When that was finished, Lord Lochcarron visited his father; but the name of Miss Borham was never mentioned between them; there was, however, a singular coincidence, which, though merely accidental, made some impression on Cordelia—the day and even hour of Miss Borham's death, were exactly those in which Lochcarron was discovering his wife in a supposed Mrs. Beaumont; and avowing to Mrs. Brooks his sincere remorse for the injustice he had hitherto done her.

For about a fortnight after the change had been made in Lord Dunotter's medical advisers, his lordship's complaints exhibited symptoms of amendment, and his children, who were most really and deeply interested about him, flattered themselves that his recovery was possible; but at the period just named, he became suddenly and alarmingly worse; the physicians held consultations, and most probably tried other medicines without success, for it soon became evident that they had no hopes.

The spring now bloomed in all its wonted beauty; but everything at Holleyfield was despondency and gloom; yet the earl had intervals of ease, when his faculties were clear and unclouded, and then he would converse with his son, in somewhat of his former energetic way; he gave him many precepts for the conduct of his future life, adapted, it may well be presumed, to a character which he had studied with the anxiety of a parent, and the acuteness of a man of the world; "I earnestly exhort you, my dear Alexander," he said, "now at your outset in life to establish yourself in the public estimation as a consistent nobleman; do not adopt the chimerical notion that you can either be a useful servant of your sovereign, or an efficient friend to your country, without professing yourself of some political party; trust my experience, that in such a case neutrality is impracticable; your own single unassisted efforts cannot new model the settled axioms and opinions of mankind; you must bend to them, if you would be good either to yourself or others: I never knew one of those theory-mongers who pretended to be too wise, too conscientious, or too independent to think and act like other people, who was of any use either to himself or his fellow-creatures; depend upon it, if you are once known to profess visionary abstracted principles, you will find few to coalesce with you whose friendship and co-operation are worth having; who would not shun a man who evidently thinks his head more enlightened, and his heart more pure, than those of any one else? no, Lochcarron, choose your own party, make your own election, and once made, adhere to it firmly; a wavering unsettled politician cannot be said to fulfil the divine precept, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works;' for he tacitly tells the world that his light has never been able to show him the difference between truth and falsehood. I confess I wish you to walk in the same path your father has trod before you,

because it is that in which, for a long series of years at least, our family has distinguished itself; but I only say I wish it—if you prefer the opposite side, declare for it in the first flush of your political career; and do not think, my dear Alexander, that when you have espoused your party all is done: when I now look back on my public life, and take a retrospective view of my own course of action, and that of my contemporaries, I see the causes of our success, or our failure, so plainly, that I can only wonder the consequences could then be hid from our eyes; a moment given to reflection will convince you that the glory of a nobleman may be drawn from three different sources, and that he only can be called truly glorious who unites them all: I have known celebrated characters—and so I dare say, in your short experience, have you also, whose note of praise is sounded to the skies, but who yet owe it all to some brilliant action, the result of great talents; or perhaps, to use a homely phrase, of great good luck, while yet they possess not one amiable quality to conciliate affection, or one solid virtue to claim reverence. Again, Alexander, I have seen others, who to the most splendid qualifications of mind, added great integrity of character; but were yet cold, stern, severe, and forbidding in their manners; these men might be applauded, feared, and even respected, but were never loved.

“There still remains another description of persons who are candidates for public favour, men on whom nature has bestowed great abilities, and who have acquired a polished insinuating gentleness of behaviour, which delights and captivates those they converse with, but are totally destitute of moral worth; profligate in their lives, and dangerous by the example they set; these are often the idols of the multitude, basking in the full blaze of popularity, but never acquiring the esteem, or possessing the confidence, of those whose confidence and esteem are of any value. In short, Alexander, I now receive it as a sacred solemn truth, that fame, unaccompanied by respect and esteem, is evanescent and unsubstantial; and as what we cannot esteem we soon cease to respect, the inference I would draw, is, that to secure popular celebrity, esteem, and respect, is the ultimatum of human policy, and the certain path to worldly wealth and earthly honours; born to fill an exalted station in life, your talents and education will, if it is not entirely your own fault, most certainly secure the first; and united as you are to one of the finest women in England—I might add in Europe—you have the best possible guarantee for that parity of conduct, and that internal happiness, that sunshine of the soul, which diffuses itself to all within the sphere of its influence.

“How often, during the early part of my illness, when your angelic wife was exerting her gentle efforts to sooth my sufferings, have I earnestly prayed to be permitted to witness your re-union, and my prayers have been heard: oh! Alexander, she was surely never equalled! her’s is exactly that soft and attractive description of female beauty which is calculated to charm in a partner for life; yet is it the least of her perfections; she possesses a delicacy of mind and a purity of heart, which I have never found to exist in any other human being—I am far from supposing that they never *did* exist—I only say *I* never witnessed them to such an extent; her understanding and talents are very great—I should have no hesitation in saying too great for her sex, were they not shaded by a gentleness and modesty so charming, that no one would wish them less to lose so fine a

contrast; and beyond all, she is gifted with two qualities which, in my opinion, constitute the very perfection of female character—she is superior to art, and above trifles.

“There are yet a few more points on which I wish to address you, my dear Alexander: in your intercourse with your friends—I include both personal and political ones—avoid as much as possible all those narrow and petty jealousies which are the result of suspicion, misconstruction, actions viewed in an erroneous light, or words taken in a wrong sense; never complain of one friend to another, unless clearly satisfied his conduct is such that you can no longer keep terms with him; carefully guard all your friendship from wearing out, for friendship may be compared to those master-pieces of art which increase in value, in proportion to their antiquity.

“Yet in giving you this advice, suffer me to caution you never to be governed or influenced by the opinions of others, when they oppose the dictates of your own judgment; hear the counsel of your friends, but decide for yourself; and having formed your decision, make a rule to give the friends whose esteem you value ostensible motives for your actions; for if left to conjecture as to the principles on which you act, they may, when they hear you attacked, defend you on wrong grounds, and thus, with the best intentions in the world, do you infinitely more harm than good.

“There is one point of caution which I will add concerning those persons you may have intercourse with; all men have their weak sides, and however self-love may assist to veil them, no man can be wholly unacquainted with the vulnerable parts of his own character; but settle it as a maxim never to trust him who trumpets forth his own imperfections; such a mode of conduct always gives room to question either his principles or his understanding; if he unblushingly accuses himself of vices, recoil from his profligacy, or suspect his hypocrisy, which is most probably wearing the appearance of one fault, to mask the reality of another; and if he lays to his own charge light foibles, and what are absurdly termed *amiable weaknesses*, set him down for a vain coxcomb, who is making an ostentatious display of seeming candour, and setting traps for compliments.”

Such was the substance of many conversations which Lord Dunotter held with his son; whether the principles contained in them were those which himself had always acted upon in public life, he best knew; those were only concerns of temporal interest; on others, of infinitely more importance, he often conversed with Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Malcolm, and feelingly regretted that he had through life been in many respects too nominally a Christian: but wide is the difference of mental vision in high health, and on the verge of the grave; the cares, the pleasures, and the honours of life then pass away like dreams and shadows, and nothing of retrospect remains, on which hope or comfort may rest, unless conformity to the precepts of the gospel can be traced there.

The marriage of Lord and Lady Dunotter had been one of convenience on the part of the earl, and of ambition on that of the countess; love was entirely out of the question, and esteem nearly so; her ladyship was too selfish to regard any human being but herself; and though Lord Dunotter's feelings were not quite so concentrated, his lady was not an

object who it could possibly be supposed might attract them; hence through their short union they had been a civil but not a cordial couple; and though Lady Dunotter had certainly been less attentive to her lord during his illness, than both duty and humanity demanded, he was now so sincerely in earnest to forgive every one, that he set aside all remembrance of such neglect; and more than once hinted to his son his wish that when he should be no more, he should continue in perfect friendship with Lady Dunotter, both as the widow of his own and his wife's father; and not by any quarrel or litigation expose family affairs to public discussion; to which Lord Lochcarron solemnly and readily engaged himself.

Pringle, the uncle of Miss Borham, still remained in Buckingham gaol; for Lord Dunotter had been so much exasperated by the thought that his crafty letter was the efficient cause of Lord Lochcarron's withdrawing himself from his bride and his family, that he would listen to no terms of arrangement for the release of the wretched culprit; but he now sanctioned his lawyer to set him at liberty, upon condition that he should immediately quit the kingdom; kindly solicitous to spare his beloved son the pain of taking any harsh measures with so near a relative of the woman he had so fondly loved.

CHAPTER IX.

LORD Dunotter lived about six weeks after the return of Lord and Lady Lochcarron; for the last few days he was in a state of lethargic torpor, and in that state he expired: when the arrow of death takes a lingering aim, it blunts the acuteness of the survivor's anguish. Lady Dunotter, as she had done on the demise of her first husband, indulged her sorrow apart and alone; but the young earl and countess wept together; Lord Dunotter's grief for the loss of his parent was deep and sincere; and Cordelia mourned for him with filial tenderness.

Time, the best and surest physician for the ills of the heart, soothed their sorrows, and left only a painful yet pleasing remembrance, mingled with pious resignation.

The whole unentailed property belonging to the earl, he bequeathed unconditionally to his daughter-in-law, certainly as a mark of respect, though at the same time it was only an act of strict justice, for it had been mortgaged as deeply as it could be, and redeemed after he married Lady Walpole, with part of the money he then came into possession of; there was no bequest to his lady excepting a highly valuable and curious ring, and some other articles, which though they could not add much to her already immense fortune, evinced a degree of respect which might lead the world to suppose they had been a much more happy and attached couple than they were in reality.

Legacies to Mr. Malcolm, Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Brewster, and some other friends, and one thousand pounds to Philipson, were the only additional contents of the will worth noticing.

In the affair of Mrs. Holmes's property, the prompt and decisive measures taken by the gentleman employed, were attended with every desirable effect; her delinquent servants were compelled to yield up their embezzlements; and when the whole was secured to Lady Dunotter, it amounted to even more than Mrs. Emerson had stated in her letter, after every deduction made for actual loss or expense.

In the course of the summer, the fine old mansion of Ravenpark underwent every repair and decoration that fashion, elegance, and convenience could dictate; in the disposition of the grounds, Lord Dunotter combined the fine taste of his charming countess, and his own excellent judgment, with such rare and happy effect, that Ravenpark is never mentioned otherwise than in the class of the first situations in Great-Britain; but when they visited Cottingham park, and saw the fountain playing with such force and effect from the mouth of the great marble dragon, Sir Roger's delectable purchase at Orton-Abbey, Cordelia laughingly told her lord, that unless they could procure the original Sphinx of Egypt, their seat must yield the palm of attractive wonder to that of the worthy baronet.

The countess dowager set up her head-quarters in the splendid mansion of Holleyfield, where she maintains a retinue evidently intended to answer the purposes of

parade, since it cannot be utility in her unconnected state; with the first change of her sables, she emerged from all the gloom of widowhood, and entered into fresh schemes of aggrandizement with all the original spirit of her character; her breach with her old associate Lady Hootside is healed, and they are now, to all appearance at least, better friends than ever; innumerable are the plans they have formed to gain the ascendancy over the young representatives of their respective families; but in this laudable struggle for sway, neither of them, it is whispered, makes the smallest progress; Lady Dunotter has the worst of the contest, for her ladyship finds the firm, collected, repelling, yet conciliating dignity of her son-in-law, and the mild uniform elegance of Cordelia so difficult to make war upon, that she can neither gain the conquest, nor with any grace complain of her failure; while on the part of Lady Hootside, the facetious yet systematic mischief of the young earl, and the vindictive perversity of his lady, look so like aggression on their side, that her acts of hostility seem justifiable reprisals.

Poor Lady Dunotter has another cause for disquiet, to remedy which, her fertile brain is ever at work; the unfortunate accident which ultimately caused her lord's death happened before her presentation at court had taken place, and the consequence was, it never took place at all; now it is not to be thought of, for whoever heard of the presentation of a countess dowager? the Marquis of Belford had lately lost his wife, and her ladyship thinks it very likely that she may, in due time, be constituted successor to the deceased marchioness, only it happens very unfortunately that no one else, not even the noble marquis himself, can see the smallest probability of any such event taking place.

Just as little likelihood does the countess herself see of Mr. Crompton's hopes on her subject being realized; she well knew that the lawyer had, on the death of Sir Charles Walpole, flattered himself with a notion that she would marry him; and though he had seen his expectations defeated by her union with Lord Dunotter, they revived again when the accident the earl met with threatened his life; but though it had suited her ladyship's plans, when those plans sought the separation of Lochcarron and Cordelia, to lull Crompton into a belief that he would succeed in his wishes, she was in reality as far from an intention of uniting herself to a commoner, with a fortune greatly inferior to her own, as of bestowing herself and her possessions on the Dey of Algiers; still it suits both their interest to remain on the same terms of apparent cordiality, which they have done for such a length of time, and Mr. Crompton continues at the head of her ladyship's legal department, as Mr. Herbert does at that of her medical one: they have left no methods unattempted to secure to themselves the same places of trust under the young earl; but they are not exactly the persons to whose uncontrolled management his lordship would choose to confide either his property or his health.

Lady Charlotte Malcolm was detained in Scotland longer than she expected, and had not the melancholy consolation of a last interview with her beloved brother; but time has ameliorated her sorrow, and she now, with a feeling of laudable pride, sees her accomplished nephew at the head of their ancient and noble house, while (if the old English mode of expression may sanction the use of the word in such a sense) she may be said to worship Cordelia.

Capt. Thornton paid an early visit of condolence at Holleyfield, where the graceful and handsome manner in which he indirectly apologized for his past interference in the concerns of his fair cousin, and the blended dignity and the humility with which Lord Dunotter tacitly acknowledged the justness of such interference, laid the foundation of a sincere and lasting friendship between them: he is recently married to a very amiable lady of a noble Scotch family, and they are amongst the most respected guests which the hospitable portals of Ravenpark receive.

Mr. and Lady Caroline Harrington are also of the number of Lord and Lady Dunotter's select friends; aided by the judicious advice of her excellent husband, Lady Caroline has quite new-modelled her character; divested of that affectation which in early life obscured its gentleness and goodness; she is now a very amiable woman, and more generally esteemed and respected than any other member of her family; her sister, Lady Melissa Mannark, is Lady Melissa Mannark still, both in name and attributes; her memory is more defective than ever, deplorably so indeed, as she has forgot that she is the eldest of her mother's children, and always speaks of herself as the junior of both Lord Hootside and Lady Caroline.

Lady Dunotter, ever gratefully remnescent that to the invaluable moral precepts impressed on her ductile mind by Mrs. Emerson, she owes that rectitude of principle which has led to such happy results, is earnestly desirous that in the elevated station of life she is called to fill, she may yet have the benefit of her excellent judgment and experience; and Mrs. Emerson, most tenderly attached to the pupil of her care and affections, has made arrangements for passing at least one half of the year beneath the roof of Lord Dunotter. As to Mrs. Brooks, she has set up her rest there; Cordelia cannot be without her society and counsel; and it so happens that there is such a fellow-feeling between the earl and herself, the dawn of which first became visible on the journey up from Andover, when they were occupied with such a learned antiquarian dissertation, that they never seem happier than when poring together over Grose or Camden.

Philipson attended the remains of his respected and lamented lord to Dunotter castle; and after the interment had taken place, passed some time with his friends in the vicinity of Aberdeen, of which place his mother was a native; here he became acquainted with a very respectable woman, a widow of some fortune, and after a short courtship they were married.

Lord and Lady Dunotter, feeling that they owed him gratitude for his faithful services to their late parent, doubled the legacy which the earl bequeathed to him, and continue from time to time to add testimonies of their regard, so that he is now in easy circumstances, and enjoys the esteem of all who know him.

It may fairly be questioned whether any nobleman of the present day is a more highly respected candidate for both popular favour and private estimation than the earl of Dunotter; after the death of his father, he conversed a great deal with men of piety, learning, and moral worth; and read, reflected, and studied much more deeply than he had ever done before; too well aware that a stigma attaches to his conduct in the early part of

his marriage, he is most anxiously solicitous to wash it away, by not resting short of excellence in every point of his character; habituated as an only child, and heir to the family honours, to act as he pleased, without being amenable to control, he was, it must be conceded, very headstrong and impetuous; conscious that this disposition of mind led to the abandonment of his bride, and that such an act could only be construed into deep contempt of the most solemn laws, divine and human, he has so sedulously watched for, and curbed every little ebullition of haughtiness and self-will in his temper, that he has brought it to be perfectly under the dominion of reason in every instance, and on every occasion.

In the senate he is distinguished for depth of reasoning, and brilliancy of eloquence; in the intercourses of public and social life, by plain, dignified, elegant manners; easiness of access, and inflexible integrity and justice; and in the habits of private life by undeviating prudence and temperance.

In portraying the character of his lovely countess, what higher note of praise can be sounded than to say that she is still HERSELF? that no example drawn from elevated rank, no temptation incident to fashionable life, no human weakness on her own part, no artful sophistry on that of others, has ever been able to draw her aside from that sacred maxim in which she intrenched herself, "Never to do evil that good may come;" that as it is the constant aim of Lord Dunotter to attain excellence, so it is that of his lady to fulfil her duty, that the same meek submissive sweetness which was her distinguishing characteristic before she married, still accompanies her every action; and that one of the most striking features of her disposition is that lofty superiority to all that is puerile, trifling, and worthless, for which she was so highly extolled by the discriminating judgment of the late Lord Dunotter.

The elevated sphere of society in which she now moves, has of course brought with it associated duties and incumbent modes of conduct in which, as in every thing else, she shines resplendent; when presented at court, and blazing the meteor of the circle, her dignity, modesty, affability and discretion, delighted the wise, charmed the good, and repelled the presumptuous; when admired as the model of elegance, and looked up to as the standard of fashion, she is most solicitously scrupulous not to set any example in dress or manners which may possibly injure public morals, or militate against true taste; her three several establishments at Dunotter castle, Ravenpark, and Portman-square, are under such a system of graceful economy, that while plenty and hospitality are the order of every day, and magnificence of all proper occasions, waste and prodigality are never permitted beneath those roofs.

Fully aware of the divine and important truth, that "Where much is given, much will be required," and impressed with a deep conviction of the powerful efficacy which her influence may have on her neighbours, tenants, and dependents, she neither squanders her time and wealth in wandering needlessly from home to see sights, nor in a protracted residence amid the dissipations of London, Bath, or Brighton; when Lord Dunotter's political avocations might admit of their retiring to one of their seats, it is there, in the sacred circles of home, that the earl and countess of Dunotter are seen in their purest

lustre and highest glory; the munificent patrons and encouragers of all that can promote piety, virtue, and industry; and the bright examples of connubial harmony, faith, and affection.

FINIS.

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