

ASHTON PRIORY.

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ASHTON PRIORY:

A N O V E L.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

BENEDICTA AND POWIS CASTLE.

VOL. I.

LOVE is not Sin, but where 'tis sinful LOVE,
Mine is a Flame so holy and so clear,
That the white Taper leaves no Soot behind,
No Smoke of Lust.

DRYDEN.

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ASHTON PRIORY.

CHAP. I.

Characteristic Sketches.

SIR Bevil Grimstone had passed the meridian of life without having entered into the matrimonial connection. In the younger part of his life he had possessed the advantages of a showy person, an assured air, together with that facility of utterance, which, though certainly not wit, nor any ways related thereto, often passes with the multitude for the quality itself;—of course, he had figured in the beau monde with no inconsiderable éclat: but time, whose depredations, all things, sooner or later, confess, had wrought some unfriendly effects on the figure of the baronet; such as undermining a tooth or two, sallowing the freshness of his complexion, and planting a few wrinkles in his forehead. Yet, in spite of all, (as habit is allowed to become by long indulgence a sort of second nature,) his passion for dress still existed, though the smiles of the female world had long since been transferred to beaux of a more recent generation. In the circles of the fair, therefore, he could only discover the ghosts of his former pleasures, which induced him to retire in disgust to scenes in which he was in no fear of being overlooked as an insignificant person. The truth is, Sir Bevil, at the time we are now speaking of, was a professed gamester, and his finances were in that state of derangement, that his fortune might truly be said to depend on the four aces.

Miss Grimstone, who was about eight or ten years younger than her brother, (with whom she resided,) and though rather on the wrong side of forty-five, would, if the most flippant airs and girlish affectation could have affected the point, have passed herself on the world for a blooming lass of twenty. Her temper, indeed, was not very amiable; but as this was a circumstance discoverable only by her domestics, which class of people are usually supposed to possess neither feeling or discernment, we shall pass it over in silence. Suffice it to say, that by an outrageous affectation of delicacy, she had contrived to be esteemed by all her acquaintance as a lady of the most consummate prudence and rigid virtue, and her tea-table and routs were the resort of the fashionable of both sexes.

The baronet and his sister were lolling one day after dinner in an easy careless manner, with all that complaisant attention to each other which persons long used to the society of one another are commonly observed to bestow, when, after a profound silence, Sir Bevil, stretching himself in his easy chair, and extending his legs in a parallel direction towards the fire, exclaimed that the town was horridly dull.

“I think (said the lady, with a most becoming yawn) you were at White’s last night, brother: had you a good run?”

“No, faith! My unlucky star has prevailed for some months past, and I must devise a scheme of reimbursement, or take a trip to the continent.”

All was again silent. At length the baronet, rising from his chair, and leaning with his back against the chimney-piece, resumed,

“Charlotte Overbury is really a prodigious fine girl.”

“I wonder you can think so. There is nothing at all striking in her figure; and, as for her air, it is quite destitute of the majesty one sees in some women.”

Miss Grimstone, uttering the words *some women* with particular emphasis, had quitted her chair in order to exemplify her meaning by a solemn movement, to which, in her own opinion, she had affixed the appellation of dignity. “But indeed, Sir Bevil, (resumed she,) you and I always disagreed in our notions of these things.”

“Why,—did you ever see a more elegant shape? Her complexion, though purely natural, is not inferior to your own, sister;—and then her teeth and eyes”——

There was something or other in this speech which occasioned the lady to redden pretty deeply, could the blush have penetrated enamel; but, not choosing to discover her chagrin, she hastily interrupted him by saying, that, for her part, she never admired black eyes. “I prefer the dove-like softness of the blue; however, Sir Bevil, you must acknowledge her nose to be quite foreign to the standard of beauty.”

“Why so?”

“It is frightfully prominent I am sure, and not very unlike the beak of a hawk.”

“You have egregiously mistaken the matter, sister. Charlotte’s nose is the exact model of beauty, and the feature which of all others I admire.”

“You have an odd taste, truly. Well, since we are upon the subject, what say you to the colour of her hair? Is it not something like the hue of our curate’s canonical coat? Ha, ha, ha!”

“And even that grace (somewhat spitefully) would be preferable to an iron grey: but the truth is, Miss Overbury’s hair is an exact auburn,—the very colour so much extolled by the poets. However, to wave a point which I perceive you are no ways disposed to admit, I must tell you that, as she is now turned of seventeen, I think it high time she should be introduced to company, or, in other words, see something of genteel life.”

Now, as Sir Bevil possessed not the advantage of a window in his breast, which an ancient sage deemed so eligible a thing, and as Miss Grimstone was not endowed with the faculty of divining, it happened that she did not at all enter into his meaning, and therefore replied, “Indeed, brother, I should suppose Miss Overbury could not be more properly situated than at the school where she now is; but, allowing she ought to mix in public life, where could you find a proper family to place her with?”

“That question surprises me, sister.—Where could a young lady of fortune be so prudently placed as in the house of her guardian.”

“Surely you do not intend to make her one of our family?”

“Indeed I do.—Am I not her guardian, and of course in great measure responsible for her conduct to the world; nor, as a conscientious man, could I well avoid so cautionary a resolution.”

As in those actions, of which we suppose the world has a right to take cognizance, the motives are usually of two distinct kinds,—the one secret, the other ostensible. So the baronet had another, besides what he chose to avow to his sister, which will probably appear in due order. Mean time we shall observe, that it was by no means suitable to the aim which Miss Grimstone for the last dozen years had pursued, to have a blooming girl of seventeen perpetually at her elbow. It was actually worse than the affair of Penelope’s web; for, whereas that grave matron only unravelled by night the quantity she had woven by day, this would be unravelling the whole piece at one stroke.—It was not to be permitted, and therefore Miss Grimstone resolved to oppose the design by every method in her power. “Since (resumed she) the girl must be taken from school, it were surely better to place her with her other guardian in the country; for you know, brother, we see a vast deal of company, which circumstance must unquestionably render our family a most improper one for her.”

Sir Bevil at this suggestion burst into a loud laugh.—“Send her into the country!” (reiterated he.) “You most unconscionable creature, would you really have the cruelty to bury a lively young girl in a dormitory? for, on my honour, Butterfield’s mansion is no better. Some eight hundred years ago it was a Carthusian monastery: it is true, the present proprietor has not much the air of one of that austere order; for, by feeding pretty freely on roast beef and plumb-pudding, his bulk exceeds that of a city-alderman. His head bears a nice analogy to the attic story of his Gothic mansion; that is to say, it is the receptacle of lumber; for, excepting the fag-ends of acts of parliament, he has no idea above those of his fox-hounds; but what he wants of intelligence is amply compensated by self-consequence. Being a justice of the Quorum, he has been so long accustomed to harangue a parcel of petty constables and trembling paupers, that he believes himself possessed of all the wisdom and ability which the awe of the poor wretches before him would seem to imply, and, in fact, is in his own estimation, as great a man as Cæsar thundering in the Capitol.—His lady—”

“Aye, (cried Miss Grimstone,) pray let me have her character.”

“Is a person of excellent accomplishments.”

“Accomplishments!—really?”—

“Oh, very great ones!—Having kept her father’s house (who was a neighbouring fox-hunter to the justice) till she had attained her five and twentieth year, a maiden aunt took her to town, in order to put the finishing stroke to her elegant attainments, which consisted of an extensive knowledge in the culinary art, a small insight into the method of scrawling, for I will not say writing, and the being able to read a whole page without the necessity of spelling above a score or two of words; and, besides all this, she could go down more country-dances at a heat than any lady in the country. Three months residence in the metropolis was sufficient to compleat so accomplished a personage by giving her so refined an idea of the graces, that her behaviour is now the most ridiculous jumble of native rusticity and affected politeness.—She will talk an hour together on taste, elegance, and gentility; but, if you happen not to be uncommonly ready at comprehension, it is much if you understand five words out of ten that she speaks, she has so charming a knack of curtailing her mother-tongue, transposing the situation of verbs and substantives, and so wonderful a facility of illustrating her ideas by words of an opposite and contradictory signification.”

Miss Grimstone, all attention to her brother’s characteristics, waited in smiling silence for him to proceed, when, unfortunately, he again touched the discordant note by saying,—“Well, sister, would you really be so cruel as to immure poor Charlotte in a dismal old mansion amongst such a set of uncivilized beings?”

To this question there was no answer to be given, and the lady knowing her brother to be rather peremptory in his designs, thought it most prudent to wave the subject.

CHAP. II.

The Heroine introduced.

HOWEVER incongruous the opinions of mankind, there is one point in which all agree; namely, never to suppose the existence of merit, except attended by the adventitious circumstances of birth, wealth, or rank; to this prudent and liberal determination it is owing that, whenever a new character starts on the public, a thousand enquiries re-echo, "Who is it?" and, if the stranger (whether man or woman) chances not to have a good herald at hand to inform the world that such an one possesses a great deal of wit or other estimable qualities, he may perhaps pass a whole life without meeting with any body quick sighted enough to make the discovery. Now, though we cannot suppose but that the heroine of our piece will tolerably well answer for herself, yet, being about to introduce her to the world, we are desirous of observing all requisite etiquette on the occasion, and not expose a timid young lady to the whisper so mortifying in the ear of sensibility, "Who is she?"—"What is she?"—"Of what family?" All which interesting particulars we mean to specify in this place, that the kind reader may henceforth have nothing to do but attentively to mark the historic thread,—to smile as often as he can,—and pacifically fall asleep when he gets tired, which by the bye is a mode we would strenuously recommend to critical novelists in general, as calculated to lull those acescent humours which are apt to break forth in the exclamation, "A d——d dull thing!" for, according to the opinion of our friend Yoric, that every time a man laughs he adds something to the mortal span, we may affirm that the said acescent humour is altogether unfriendly to the delicate vessels of the human constitution,—it were actually better to go to sleep.

But, for shame, don't keep the lady waiting thus in the anti-chamber;—open the door.—It is Miss Overbury.

The father of this young lady was descended from a younger branch of the S—— family; but, wisely considering that the enumeration of a hundred noble ancestors would not, as to the purposes of life, prove an assignat worth a sous, and that, though every artery and vein in the animal system were filled with the best blood in Christendom, yet that circumstance could neither cause a man to look plumper,—nor line his pockets with l'argent,—nor add a shirt to his ruffles,—nor heighten the goût of his soup maigre; &c.—I say, considering all these things duly and properly, Mr. Overbury resolved to apply himself early to the mercantile profession, by which, with much honour and reputation he realized about fifty or sixty thousand pounds, and might have acquired as much more, had he not been troubled with some sneaking propensities, which led him often to remit of his just dues, where payment would have stretched the cord of ability beyond a convenient degree of tension,—and sometimes to lend considerable sums to those whose bond he would have deemed scarcely worth a farthing; by these, and similar odd practices, he prevented the tide of fortune from exceeding the limits before-mentioned. At his decease, his property was equally shared by his two children, viz. a son, whom he had appointed to the service of his country in the marine department, and the young lady, whose history will make a conspicuous part of these memoirs. "If my children (said the

old gentleman) are what I wish them to be, the fortune they will inherit will be sufficient; if they are not, it will be too much.”

Miss Overbury had now attained her seventeenth year. From the death of her father she had resided at a capital boarding-school near town, where she had gradually acquired every accomplishment which constitutes a genteel woman. Nature had endowed her both with an excellent understanding and great sweetness of temper, qualities which could not fail to ensure her the esteem of those concerned in the care of her education as well as the love of her young companions. When, Sir Bevil, on a morning ride, informed her that it depended entirely on her own choice, either to remain at school or make her residence in town, he received exactly the answer he had expected: for, as it is the property of young minds to exalt the idea of untried pleasures, Miss Overbury’s heart dilated with rapture at the opportunity of exchanging the dulness of a school for the variety of the capital. She therefore replied, that, although she felt herself quite happy in her present situation, she should like to see something more of life than hitherto she had been allowed to do.

“As I am confident, my sweet girl, (said the baronet,) that you cannot make an improper choice, I hesitate not to assure you that your will shall always determine mine, as both my duty and inclination prompt me to pay the tenderest regard to your happiness.”

Charlotte, who possessed one of the most grateful hearts in the world, melted into tears of rapture at an expression so replete with paternal indulgence; and, unable to express her feelings by any other mode, she took the hand of her guardian, and pressed it to her lips. Her engaging sensibility affected him in a very particular manner, but he judged it most prudent to give the conversation a different turn, by enquiring when she had heard from her other guardian Mr. Butterfield.

“Not very lately Sir Bevil. I am a letter indebted to him.”

“But, my dear Charlotte, the old Somersetshire justice must know nothing of this scheme of ours until we have actually put it in execution.”

“Surely he could have no objection.”

“Who knows what opinions so singular a being might entertain;—the country people commonly suppose that when a handsome young woman goes to London, she is running pell-mell to destruction. I must allow there is something hazardous in it, but in my house and under my eye, Miss Overbury”—

“There can be nothing at all to fear,” rejoined she with a *gaité de cœur* which the baronet thought infinitely agreeable; nor did he wish her possessed of one grain of seriousness more than her deportment on this occasion seemed to indicate.

In fine, within a few days, Miss Overbury was removed from the family of Mrs. T—— to Sir Bevil's house in town, where she was received by Miss Grimstone, with a sort of constrained civility,—a circumstance which in the hilarity of her heart she did not at that time much attend to.

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C H A P. III.

A Masquerade-Scene,—or a Hint to Ladies of a certain Description.

SIR Bevil Grimstone's home was both spacious and elegant, and, in order to convince his ward of his solicitude to render her situation eligible, even in the minutest instance, he took care she should be assigned the best apartment in it. His attention was next directed to the establishment of her finances. Five hundred pounds, he said, for the article of pin-money, was the smallest sum which could with propriety be assigned her. "Yet, even thus, (added he,) I foresee we shall have some difficulty in prevailing on the old miser in the country to consent to the arrangement; but leave the affair to my management, Miss Overbury, and I will engage you shall have every requisite for appearing in a suitable manner."—Here Miss Grimstone observed, that times were much altered since the juvenile days of our grandmothers, when even fifty pounds per annum, merely for the purposes of pocket-money, would have been deemed an exorbitant sum.

"And you might have included your own juvenile days, Grace, (replied he sarcastically:) but, as you say, times are since much changed, and as things at present stand, I am positive my amiable ward cannot appear with propriety on a less sum annually.'

Charlotte's eyes applauded the munificence of her guardian's behaviour as much as they resented the ill-natured parsimony of his sister, whose temper already began to appear in its native colours on a variety of trifling incidents; nor could the pain she felt at having a rival to her imaginary charms perpetually near her be concealed by all the decorums of good breeding. The first instance of its becoming strikingly apparent was on occasion of Miss Overbury's first appearance at the theatre, when, notwithstanding the remonstrances of her brother, the lady positively refused to accompany her.—Sir Bevil was not unacquainted with the motives of his sister's disobliging deportment towards his ward, nor was he in fact really displeased with it;—the bringing Miss Overbury to regard himself as the only amiable person of the family was a point he thought much to be desired. "I am not at all surprised, (said he to her,) that my sister's jealousy of your superior charms should have this displeasing effect on a temper naturally unamiable; but do me the justice, my sweet girl, to believe me most ardently devoted to the promoting your satisfaction."

He had introduced her to some respectable ladies of his acquaintance, in whose company she accompanied him to the play-house; but, before the performance was half-finished, he began to repent of his facility in ushering her to the attention of the public eye; the lustre of her beauty, together with the novelty of her person attracted so universal a gaze, that he determined henceforth rather to retard than accelerate her acquaintance with the beau monde; but it was not long before fortune shewed herself disposed to counteract so selfish a measure.

Miss Grimstone apparently to atone for her late unhandsome conduct invited Charlotte to accompany her to a masked ball; but, in reality, her complaisance originated in the reflexion that there was less cause to dread the force of comparison in a promiscuous group than in a side-box at the theatre. It was now the baronet's turn to demur. He expressed an abhorrence of masquerades in general, and adverted to the many ill consequences often attendant on them, but fired with impatience to mingle in so novel a scene, Charlotte espoused the point so warmly, that he thought it improper to make farther objection. On the appointed day the ladies prepared for the ball, and Miss Grimstone (very appositely no doubt) chose to appear in the character of Hebe.

As this lady's age was somewhat declining from the meridian of life, it will probably appear surprising that she should endeavour to personate immortal youth; yet such mistakes, we presume, are common enough in the grand masquerade of the world, where pride affects the exterior of affability,—rogues descant on honesty,—misers boast of liberality,—and canonical epicures preach of temperance. Is it a matter of wonder then that Miss Grace Grimstone should have mistaken her proper character at a masked ball.

“And you, Charlotte, (said she,) shall be an Arcadian shepherdess.”

“Truly, madam, I am no ways enamoured of the romantic taste; but, if it must be something in a rural style, suppose I were metamorphosed into a plain English milk-maid.”

“The very thing. I admire the character of all things.”

An elegant suit of rooms being open for the reception of the company, the usual flippant chit-chat began to pass between the different masks, but the general observation was soon turned on the singular attractions of our milk-maid's shape and air, around whom a motley groupe was presently assembled, to whose impertinencies she replied with all the gaiety of juvenile sprightliness, exhilarated by the whimsical novelty of the scene around.

An Apollo, distinguished by a sun on his breast, which was composed of brilliants of prodigious value, singled out the cup-bearer to the Gods, expressing surprise at her being absent from the ambrosial banquets, Hebe replied, that she had obtained leave of absence for that evening; but, unluckily, the lady having lost a tooth or two, her speech most impertinently betrayed the devastation. “O ho! (cried a harlequin) I doubt your Godships are somewhat riotous over your nectar, for it seems as though some of you had fallen foul of Miss Hebe's masticators.” A loud and universal laugh here succeeded at the poor lady's expence, who, overpowered with chagrin, hastened to conceal her confusion in the crowd, at the same time a mask in the character of time cried out, “I acquit their divinities of that uncivil act. Here stands the offender, the implacable enemy of beauty and all terrestrial excellence. Go, go, build your impregnable towers, rear your splendid monuments of architectural skill, and I will level them all with the dust as easily as I blast the lustre of a sparkling eye. Even you, fair maiden, (turning to the milk-maid,) shall, in

your turn, feel the effects of my power,—that sprightly air shall droop; I'll blast the lustre of those brilliant twinklers."

"I dread you not, insulting tyrant, (replied she,) nor value ought which you have power to destroy: yet know, to your mortification, that it shall be my care to acquire a treasure which your utmost malice shall not injure; nay, farther, even your own rapacious hand shall contribute to its improvement."

"Bravely said, (cried Time.) I pursue those who fly me with relentless cruelty, and smile only on them who defy me.—Since you, fair lass, have courage to make one of that number, henceforth know me for your friend; and, though I despoil half your sex of the power of pleasing, my influence shall serve but to establish your's."

The company beginning to prepare for dancing, our heroine's hand was solicited by a tall graceful figure, in a blue domino, who, during the evening had appeared to regard her with peculiar attention; nor, when unmasked at the side-table, was he less charmed with the beauty of her face than he before had been with the uncommon elegance of her figure. There was in the person of this young gentleman so many striking *agrémens*, as must have interested a heart less susceptible than was that of Miss Overbury;—a set of features which justly might be called handsome, a certain expression of superior intelligence, and upon the whole a *je ne sais quoi* so irresistably striking, as rendered him in her estimation the most agreeable man she had ever seen. This circumstance was doubtless the very one which prevented her from observing herself closely watched by a person in a white domino, who had been a close inspector of her actions for some time, and who now came up to her in an interval of dancing, as her partner was conversing with some masks at a little distance, and asked if she knew the name of the gentleman she had been dancing with.

In this address, Charlotte, much surprised, discovered the voice of Sir Bevil Grimstone, who, she understood, had not intended being at the masquerade. On her pleasantly rallying him on the privacy with which he had conducted himself on the occasion, he replied, "I did not, my dear Charlotte, intend being present at an amusement which I entirely dislike; but, upon reflection, I could not rest satisfied in leaving an amiable girl wholly unprotected amidst scenes so very inimical to her delicacy and character. From this motive I determined to follow you,—but pray inform me who it is to whom you have given your hand."

"Indeed, Sir Bevil, I am perfectly a stranger to his name."

The baronet was not, however, as much at a loss in this respect as herself: he well knew the name and family of the young gentleman; but, assuming an air of much solemnity, he resumed, "Not acquainted even with his name, Miss Overbury?—You astonish me!—Is it possible then you could consent to dance with a person you knew nothing of?"

“Good heavens! Sir Bevil, you alarm me.—What impropriety have I been guilty of?”

“The greatest, madam. Your character is perhaps ruined by this unguarded circumstance for ever. How could my sister be so unpardonably negligent of her valuable charge! But come, since it is so, let us make the best we can of it by retiring immediately.”

Too much alarmed by these terrible suggestions to be able to make any objection, Charlotte suffered him to conduct her to the carriage without so much as giving her partner the notice of a parting glance. Greatly to her surprise, she found Miss Grimstone already at home. It was a circumstance of a most displeasing aspect: Charlotte was inexpressibly hurt at it. To leave her in so ungenerous a manner, without one intimate acquaintance in a place so pregnant with danger as Sir Bevil had represented the scene she had left, was cruel,—was horrid. The alarming suggestions of her guardian now struck her in a most formidable light, and had so sensible an effect on her mind, that she retired to her own room with visible marks of uneasiness, and prudently vowed never more to go to a masquerade.

But, however unfriendly Miss Grimstone’s conduct on this occasion might appear, we must do her the justice to own that her motives at this time contained nothing hostile to the safety or reputation of Miss Overbury, nor indeed did she think on the predicament which her precipitate retreat might possibly have placed that young lady in. The simple fact was nothing more than finding herself wholly unable to conquer those mortifying feelings which the displeasing sarcasm of the God of Day had excited in her bosom, she had privately retired from a place where she could not but be assured the laugh was so much against her, intending to indulge her vexation at home, where she expected to have no witness of her chagrin, for she was very far from imagining her brother would be at hand to receive her; but such happened actually to be the case.—“What, sister! are you returned so early? Where is Miss Overbury.”

“How should I know?” peevishly.

“What do you mean? (alarmed.) Where is she? What has happened? What”—

“Don’t put yourself in a fright, brother. I left her very comfortably engaged in a cotillion.”

“Ungenerous, unfeeling woman, is it thus you discharge the obligations which youth, beauty, and inexperience, demand from you; or did you think her an object as unlikely to provoke danger as yourself?”

Ill-fated woman!—but just escaped from the most mortifying circumstances that ever befel female vanity, and now, when thou soughtest to pour out the feelings of thy wounded peace in retirement, to be cruelly insulted by a brother’s sarcasm, it was too much;—nor can so uncivil a speech, dropping from the lips of the polite Sir Bevil

Grimstone, be accounted for otherwise than by supposing that the interest he really felt in whatever concerned his ward, occasioned him to see the behaviour of his sister in so unfavourable a light, as to provoke him for once to over-step the bounds of ceremony in the warmth with which he reproved her conduct.

However that may be, the poor lady was dissolved in a paroxysm of grief and resentment, at the instant the baronet left her, which he now did in order to supply her place at the masquerade, equipping himself on the way with such an habit as he judged most proper for the occasion.

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CHAP. IV.

The delicate Embarrassment.

TOO much dissatisfied within herself to relish the pleasures of conversation, Charlotte, on the following morning, breakfasted in her own apartment, where her thoughts were employed on a series of delicate and embarrassing reflections.—To have publicly danced with a person whose character might perhaps destroy her own, or who at best was a low fellow, was a subject of the most sensible mortification to her; yet there was something in his manners which declared the gentleman, if a polite address and refined conversation could give that denomination:—again, he was handsome, sprightly, and entertaining; and, farther, had discovered an attention to herself very different from the nature of common civility.—She would give the world for one more half-hour's conversation with him; probably he would call to enquire her health;—what then? must she not positively refuse to see him, or forfeit, in the opinion of her guardian, all pretensions to prudence?—Yet Sir Bevil might not chance to be at home, and where would be the harm of civilly answering a young gentleman's enquiries after her health? Oh! but cried Pride, he is no gentleman;—a fellow perhaps of despicable character,—one whom nobody knows. If he calls, said she to herself, I will be denied to him. No sooner had this prudent resolution passed, than a loud rap was heard at the door. “Is he come, Jenny?” cried she.—“I will be at home.” “Who do you mean, madam?” replied the girl. The question again awakened a very insulting reflection, and Charlotte once more determined not to be at home. No visitor however was at that time announced to her, nor did she quit her dressing-room till told that dinner was on the table.

“How do you do to-day, Miss Overbury?” said the baronet, with somewhat of a clouded aspect.

The emphatical to-day reminded her of yesterday. She only returned a bow to the enquiry.

“Has your partner, madam, sent his compliments this morning?”

Charlotte blushed, and returned a faint negative.

“Nor yet personally waited on you?”

“Neither, Sir Bevil,” coolly.

“A proof then, my dear, that his name can be no recommendation to a lady's acquaintance. You certainly acted very incautiously in the affair, nor can I yet acquaint you with the worst consequences attending it.”

The pride and delicacy of our heroine had already suffered too much by her own reflections, for her now to stand the shock of farther aggravation:—she burst into tears.

Sir Bevil, alarmed at her emotion, felt his heart smite him for what he had advanced, and, tenderly taking her hand, said, "Although, my sweet girl, there was much imprudence in accepting a partner whom you knew nothing of, yet you must not be too much alarmed. In a select assembly, the incident might perhaps have afforded room for much unfavourable discussion, but in the motley group of a masquerade, it probably was not noticed at all. Take courage then, madam, and only be more guarded for the future."

Charlotte felt herself much encouraged by this speech, and politely thanking Sir Bevil for his attention to her interest, said she hoped she should no more have occasion to appear in public without the advantage of his presence; "for, (added she, obliquely glancing at Miss Grimstone,) I am persuaded Sir Bevil will not retire unhandsomely from the scene of action."

The baronet understood the hint, and replied in a tone of sarcastic severity, "As our sex must, madam, reverence, not envy, the beauty of yours, there are occasions when you may safely place more confidence in our friendship than in that of the ladies, who are seldom well affected towards the possessor of accomplishments which nature denies to them; yet (recollecting himself) it is too often the melancholy fate of beauty to be no less the prey of the men than the envy of the women; where then shall youth and inexperience find safety?"

"In the counsels of so disinterested a friend as Sir Bevil Grimstone," replied she with vivacity; but, observing the countenance of Miss Grimstone to express feelings which, as much offended as she really was at the behaviour of that lady, she could not but pity, she endeavoured to give the conversation another turn, by asking her if she should be at home that evening. Miss Grimstone made no reply to the question; but, after a silence of some moments, she said, though colouring deeply at the same time,

"I do not wonder that my retiring so early from the ball appears both to you, Miss Overbury, and my brother, as an act not perfectly consistent with politeness; but, indeed, I felt myself much indisposed, and was unwilling, by signifying my intention, to interrupt the amusement I saw you engaged in."

The baronet would by no means admit the excuse, as in such a case he was certain Miss Overbury would have accompanied her home, and then with a look of severity added, "Indeed, Grace, I cannot but say the apology is positively the weakest I ever knew you to frame on any occasion, and its being so convinces me that you are ashamed of confessing the real motive."

Charlotte, though not more the dupe of so poor an excuse than Sir Bevil, yet, considering the bare endeavour of extenuating a fault as at least some palliation of it, begged that the subject might never more be resumed, since, whatever ill consequences might have accrued, they had all been happily avoided; of course, the incident was not worth their farther remembrance.

Sir Bevil's profound knowledge of the world had, in the opinion of his ward, reduced all doubts respecting the quality of her masquerade-partner to an absolute certainty. He was unquestionably one whom nobody knew, and she blushed when, on examining her own heart, it obstinately persisted in giving a verdict in his favour.— However pleasing he might be, should she indulge a partiality for a man to whom she should be ashamed to give her hand? Pride and dignity of character were absolutely against it; but, then, was it not probable she might some time meet the same person again, and, if so, would he not endeavour to improve the acquaintance? Heavens! how should she be mortified at being familiarly accosted by him! In such a case, what was to be done?—She must affect a perfect forgetfulness of having ever seen him before; yet, how would her heart accord with this?—he was so engaging a creature. In fine, all she could do was to hope she should never meet with him again.

These embarrassing cogitations were however quite unnecessary, as nothing was farther from the young man's intentions than ever seeking to renew the transient acquaintance of the evening. He had not so much as enquired the name of the lady who had honoured him with her hand; not that he was indifferent to her attractions: on the contrary, he certainly thought her the most accomplished and amiable woman he had ever conversed with; but there were reasons which forbade him to encourage reflections of so tender a nature. In short, though Sir Bevil had insinuated that Charlotte had danced with a person whose name could not procure him admittance to polite company, he well knew to the contrary; but, for this conduct, he had two motives; one, the hope of extirpating from her breast certain remembrances which he feared might have gotten possession there; the other, by thus alarming her delicacy, he depended on inspiring her with a timid dread of every man's address but such as he himself should introduce to her. The project, in the latter instance, had in great measure taken effect; though, with respect to the former, his success was not altogether so certain. However, to return. Miss Overbury's partner happened to be one who both by birth and education was a gentleman, though as to pecuniary matters infinitely inferior to herself. Conscious of the mediocrity of his circumstances, he was, with all the accomplishments which ever adorned his sex, the most modest and unassuming of it. With merit sufficient to have demanded the first fortune in the kingdom, he had never dropped an expression of the tender kind to any lady whatever, before the person of our heroine excited such sensations in his bosom as it was perhaps impossible for him wholly to conceal; yet upon calm reflection he condemned himself even for those innocent sallies of sensibility, although they scarcely amounted to any thing more than the usual homage paid to the sex at large by every man of common politeness. The lady, who had been the object of his attentions, was probably a person of fortune; would she then condescend to honour him with her regard, or would it not be a meanness in him to solicit it? On the other hand, if she were not affluent, how could he ungenerously endeavour to obtain the affections of an amiable woman, when the only portion he could settle on her must be indigence? As for the fashionable mode of possessing a female heart, without the formality of marriage, his notions were too unpolished to admit the thought. These considerations sufficiently pointed out the impropriety of indulging a secret penchant for his fair partner. Perceiving she had abruptly retired, without making any enquiries for her, he soon after quitted the company, resolving, if possible, to forget the masquerade and all its attendant circumstances.

CHAP. V.

Fracas between rustic Hauteur and town-bred Insolence.

THE two ladies having amicably adjusted their preceding differences, Miss Grimstone one morning took her fair companion on one of those tours which are so much the delight of persons, who, having no station of importance to fill themselves, find pleasure in interrupting those who have;—in other words, called *shopping*. As they were exhausting the patience of an eminent tradesman in —— street, by tumbling over half the goods in his shop, with the generous purpose of purchasing none, they perceived a mob gathering near the door, in the midst of which stood an elderly gentleman, dressed in a suit of blue and gold, a kind of bashaw wig, and in his hand a strong oaken cudgel, which he brandished on all sides, vociferously exclaiming, “Disperse, I tell you, ye rogues, or I will order you all to the house of correction.—What! don’t you know me, you dogs, ant I justice of the quorum?”

The ladies, intimidated by the apprehension of disagreeable consequences, immediately retreated to their carriage. On their return home, they gave a ludicrous account of the scene to Sir Bevil, who replied, “By the description you give, I am positive it could be none other than the worshipful Justice Butterfield, whose ignorance and rusticity have doubtless drawn on him the insults of the populace. I cannot imagine what should have drawn him from his Gothic dormitory. However, if he is really in town, we may expect the pleasure of his company I presume.”

He had scarcely done speaking, when a violent rapping was heard at the door, which was no sooner opened, than a voice of the Stentorian cast exclaimed, “What! have ye got Charlotte Overbury among ye?—Eh,—her is here, is’nt her?”

Poor Charlotte, on hearing her name pronounced in so uncivil a manner, was ready to faint with apprehension, but the baronet assured her of his protection as he rose to receive his visitor, who indeed proved to be the identical Mr. Butterfield.

“How do, Sir Bevil (making a sort of school-boy scrape as he entered.) How do, Miss Grace.—Ho! there is the little rogue, (pulling Miss Overbury roughly by the arm.) Gad, how her’s grown! her was but a little thing when I zeed her last, but her’s a pretty one, I can tell ye that.”

“Pray be seated, Mr. Butterfield, (said Sir Bevil.) This is an unexpected favour: when did you arrive in town, Sir?”

“Only last night. We heard zomething of this young maiden’s being with you, and zoo, as I had a little business here as a body may zay, nothing would do but my wife must come to Lunnon too.”

“Mrs. Butterfield is then in town?”

“O aye, you may be zure of that, if I am here, her’s so main fond of her husband.”

“An excellent pattern, Sir, for our town wives;—but we shall have the pleasure of seeing your good lady I hope?”

“Aye, aye; you must come and see she,—you, Miss Grace, and my little ward there; and you and I, Sir Bevil, must crack a bottle or two together before I go back; but now we are upon the matter, as a body may zay, I suppose young Overbury is only on a holiday-visit or zoo.”

“Miss Overbury has entirely quitted school, Sir. I should have apprised you of it, but judging of your feelings by my own, I concluded you could have no objection to the young lady being obliged in so trifling a matter of choice.”

“Why no, as you zay it is her choice. My wife seems to think her had better staid at school; but I don’t zee why her mayn’t be here if her likes it.”

Miss Grimstone then observed, that she was afraid he had experienced something of the rudeness of the canaille that morning; to which Mr. Butterfield returned,

“Why look ye zee, madam; I was trudging along, only standing still now and then to look at the fine gewgaws in the shop-windows, and calling to the man within to tell me the price of this thing and that thing, when whip—up comes a puppy, and tweaked my wig, another twitched me by the cuff of my coat, and a third was very near running off with my hat. I told them that I was Justice Butterfield, of Zomersetshire; but all one for that: on they went with their fun, till I gave one or two of the dogs a handsome knock on the scull with my oaken towel here.—Add zooks, Sir Bevil, I thought as how you Lunnon folks had been a very well behaved sort of people.”

“You will not, I hope, Sir, form your estimate of us from the manners of the populace, who you know are in all countries an ignorant uncivilized set of beings.”

After some farther chat, Mr. Butterfield took his leave, charging Miss Overbury not to fail paying his lady a visit. “And now, my dear madam, (said the baronet,) what think you of your Somersetshire guardian? Could you endure the society of such a being?”

“The very idea is horrible, (she replied.) O Sir Bevil, how much am I indebted to your goodness for providing me so much more eligible a situation!”

This was considering the matter in the very light he wished her to do. “It will always be my study, my sweet girl, to render you happy. On the morrow you will give me leave to conduct you to the Justice’s lady, who, though a different character, is as great

an oddity as himself. I expect she will exert her utmost endeavour to prevail on you to go with her into the country.”

“I shall carefully avoid that, Sir Bevil; though, from the specimen I have had today, I fear I shall be incapable of coping with rustic hauteur, except you promise to encourage me.”

“Doubt it not, (with warmth.) It is,—it must be the first wish of my heart to secure your satisfaction. My regard for your dear father and your own merits, Miss Overbury, demand it.”

So friendly an assurance brought a tear of gratitude into the eyes of Charlotte; she would have expressed that sensation, but could only press the hand of her guardian; it appeared to her as the hand of a father.

CHAP. VI.

Sagacious Schemes planned by the wise Ones.

WHEN Mr. Butterfield arrived at his lodgings, his lady's first interrogatory was, whether it was true that Charlotte Overbury was in town.

"True enough, (replied he.) I zeed her with my eyes."

"Well, and how have you managed?"

"How should I have managed, sweetheart? Her has an inclination for staying in Lunnon, and zoo it must be as far as I can zee."

"*Redickerles*, (cried Mrs. Butterfield in a rage.) A very proper person truly are you to have the care of a young woman, and resolve to let her do as she pleases. You are worse than a brute, you are, to have no concern for your own family. Here now is this girl, with a fortune of five and twenty-thousand pounds, to be picked up by any body, and your poor son Arthur, for whom I always designed her, may look for a wife where he can.—O you vile man you!"

"Why, what a deuce ails the woman? Would you tie them together before they are out of leading strings? Arthur is not twenty till next hay-making time, and her is not sixteen."

"What of all that, you simpleton!—While she stays here, who can be sure of her? but were she safe in the country with us, the matter could be managed very easily."

"Suppose, duckling, we send Arthur word that he must come from college, and shew himself out of hand;—that will do, I warrant, for there's not a spark among them all has such a goodly countenance; her cannot withstand him when her zees him:—and then for speech, why he is such a main deep scholar, he will cut up forty of your finical puppies. Don't you remember how he used to talk of them there things? Zooks, I forget the name of them;—Met—Met—Metamorphoses, I think he called it."

"Metal physic, * you mean, (with a sagacious nod.) Aye, he is perdegis clever."

"Clever!—Goodness heart, how he will talk about matter and motion, and argue a man out of his seven senses, all by dint of them there things! Oh! it is a fine thing to be a scholar. Never do you fear; Charlotte Overbury cannot withstand such a fellow as this."

"All this is nothing, Mr. Butterfield.—*Prepositions* go a great way, and if some gay fop should step in and run away with the girl's affections, 'twill be too late for poor

* It is presumed the lady meant the word *metaphysics*.

Arthur. I know the world, and am sure it will not do for her to be left in London.—She must and shall go with us into the country.”

“But one cannot compel her to this;—one must proceed according to law, as my friend Martin zays.”

“Leave the matter to me; I’ll undertake to *concide* it. I thought you had known my skill and *redress*.”

“I know thou art a deep one, and zoo I leave it all to thee.”

“And you shall conceive that I am too Philip Butterfield. Arthur, I say, shall have the girl, and our Bessey at home shall marry Jack Overbury.”

“Why, that will be keeping the groat in the family, as the zaying is. Oh!—so then we shall be able to portion off Betsey, and the family be never the poorer?—Well said.’

“The very thing!—Though I zay it myself, there is not one of the bench that has a wife of greater *rapacity*.”

There are occasions in life when it may be a disadvantage to be too knowing. Now it unfortunately happened that Mr. Butterfield remembered to have heard the word *rapacity* used by a brother-magistrate, at the quarter-sessions, in a very different sense than the one to which it had just been applied by his lady. The mistake struck him in so ludicrous a light, as plainly to affect his risible muscles, which being instantly observed by Mrs. Butterfield, she flew into a violent rage, and, clenching her fist, applied it so forcibly to her husband’s nose, that a copious effusion of blood ensued; exclaiming at the same time, “What do you laugh at?—Eh, do you doubt my *rapacity*?”

“No truly, (returned the pacific husband,) nor your *ferocity* neither, love.”

It is said, that when the balance of power was so warmly contested by the several potentates of Europe, the plenipotentiaries assembled to settle the point were about to separate in dudgeon, till the English ambassador luckily called for another bottle, which operated so favourably, that Bellona with her thundering engines was for that time kicked off the stage.—The Justice indeed did not call for a bottle to determine whether it should be peace or war, but he did that which answered the purpose as well; for, happening to use the word *ferocity*, Mrs. Butterfield’s brilliant apprehension immediately understood him to have complimented her with the expression of *veracity*. She therefore felt herself so entirely gratified, that, in a few seconds, all was well again, and she declared herself ready to forgive the offence, provided he would promise to leave the disposal of Miss Overbury wholly to her management. Hostilities thus happily superseded, Mr. Butterfield retired to wash away the sanguinary stream, and his lady to adjust her head-dress, which had been somewhat discomposed by her Amazonian heroism.

When Sir Bevil Grimstone conducted his ward to pay her respects to Mrs. Butterfield, the latter, though prepared to expect a young lady of singular agréments, discovered in her appearance so ineffable an elegance and dignity, that she sat for some time overpowered by awe and surprise. The baronet, with his accustomed easy politeness, introduced the topics of the day, and, after chatting some time, Mrs. Butterfield, somewhat relieved from her embarrassment, opened the important business, by asking the young lady how she liked London. On her replying in terms of encomium, the other observed that she thought it of all places the most unfit for her residence; adding, "I hope, my dear, you will *incur* with the friendly wishes of Mr. Butterfield and myself, by making choice of our mansion for your abode."

"I hope, madam, I shall always retain a grateful sense of the generous solicitude of my friends for my advantage; but really, at present, I find myself no ways inclined to a country residence."

Mr. Butterfield, who was also present, remembering that he had bound himself to a strict neutrality, turning to the baronet, said, "You and I, Sir Bevil, will leave the women to settle the matter by themselves. What will you drink this morning?"

"I never drink in a morning, Sir."

"Hey-day, what a milk-sop are you! You would cut a very sorry figure among us in Zomersetshire, let me tell you, if you could not toss off a good toast and ale by way of whet before dinner. Well, you may do as you will, but I must have my thimble-full;"—saying this, he rang a bell, and a footman, pursuant to order, brought in a two-quart tankard, with a toast, about the dimensions of a quartern-loaf. —The baronet feeling himself interested in the conversation of the ladies, directed his attention wholly to that quarter, and heard Mrs. Butterfield descanting with great volubility on the pleasures of a country-life. The Londoners (said she) have a notion that we are dull, but it is all a notion, and nothing else. We have sessions, assizes, races, and all manner of amusements:—then, was you to see the company which on those occasions meet at the Ball, you would be charmed. We have plays too, I assure you. You know, Butterfield, what an excellent company of comedians played last summer in our barn. I assure you I never saw a better performance."

"Perhaps not, madam, (replied Charlotte, scarcely able to stifle a laugh;) but, though I should like a temporary visit to the country, I never can think of confining myself entirely to it."

Mrs. Butterfield, finding this mode of arguing ineffectual, began to assume a more elevated aspect, and, addressing Miss Overbury in a peremptory style, said, "You know, my dear, you are not yet your own mistress, and therefore it is your duty to be guided by the discretion of your guardians. Now both myself and Mr. Butterfield are of opinion that the country is the most *properest* place for you, and I must beg you will not think of being *refectory*."

“I should be extremely sorry, madam, to be thought capable of an improper conduct on this occasion, and therefore, as Sir Bevil kindly offered me the protection of his family, I deemed it both my duty and interest to accept it.”

Sir Bevil, thinking the subject had been pursued to its utmost limits of propriety, rejoined, “I am certain, my good madam, that Miss Overbury will always pay due respect to your family; but, since she appears averse to a country-life, I beg you will be assured of every attention on my part as the guardian of so valuable a charge.”—He then, observing that the hour of dinner approached, requested the honour of Mr. and Mrs. Butterfield’s company the next day in Bedford-square, and Charlotte, willingly embracing the hint, took her leave, with every demonstration of respect.

As soon as the visitors were withdrawn, Mrs. Butterfield severely reproached her husband for his passiveness on the affair.—“Why (said she) did not you second me by exerting your authority; but you care for nothing as long as you have your tankard of ale.”

“Surely, my dear, you forget that you commanded me to leave the business entirely to yourself?—I was not for fishing in troubled water, d’ye zee?”

“Oh! you are mighty complying when you know it will thwart your wife. Well, well, poor Arthur may marry a wench without a shilling for what you care, and then live as he can on the estate which your *successors* have mortgaged for more than half its value:—but I have done. We will set out to-morrow morning for the Priory, for I will not stay here spending money, since no good is to come of it.—Ah, poor Arthur!

The justice, perceiving a storm gathering in the domestic horizon, wisely determined to avoid its fury by taking shelter at a neighbouring public-house, where he dined on a beef-steak and a pot of porter, esteeming for once so humble a repast preferable to the entertainment of his own table, with the sauce which was likely to be served on the occasion.—

Consoling himself with a pipe, (that cordial-opiate for domestic care,) the evening was pretty far advanced before he returned to his lodgings, and when he did so, he found the whole family in commotion, preparing for the journey of to-morrow;—for Mrs. Butterfield had no ways relaxed of the resolution her resentment had prompted. — Early in the morning the Butterfields sat out for their habitation in the West, and thus ended the journey to London, as successfully as many a scheme planned by wiser heads have done before. But thus it will be, while, in the prodigious extent of our ideas, we are for stuffing the future into the shallow budget of the present,—or, in other words, as long as mankind will be content to button themselves in a strait waistcoat, in order that the coat may be cut of larger dimensions.

CHAP. VII.

*Contains what the Reader probably knows
before.*

THE sudden retreat of the Butterfields was a circumstance no ways displeasing either to Charlotte or the baronet, the latter of whom carefully maintained such a line of conduct as he judged most effectual to secure him her confidence and esteem.—The character of her other guardian was a sufficient ground of congratulation, on the good fortune of having the rusticity of the one counterbalanced by the generosity and politeness of the other. Her situation was therefore entirely to her satisfaction, except we consider the unamiable temper of Miss Grimstone, which now, irritated by perpetual mortifications of her vanity, often appeared intolerably petulant. Charlotte, however, was of too lively a disposition to be seriously affected with trifles, especially as she could not but perceive Sir Bevil's attention to augment in proportion as his sister was deficient therein. He was, indeed, too politic not to make the utmost advantage of this circumstance, and, lest the good nature of the one should overlook the incivility of the other, he took care, on every proper occasion, secretly to lament the inconveniencies of his domestic situation during the many years he had endured the petulance of his sister's humour. By such methods, he ingratiated himself into a kind of confidential familiarity with his ward, and actually inspired her with that sort of sympathy which he judged a favourable prelude to the sentiment he was most anxious to excite.

Charlotte had really a most perfect esteem for him, as she firmly believed his intrinsic merit to be equal to the elegance of his manners and the polished complaisance of his conversation. The sphere of life in which he had ever moved, united to a penetrating understanding, rendered him, in her opinion, so competent a judge of propriety, that she constantly paid the utmost deference to his judgment, and he was encouraged to believe himself so thoroughly acquainted with her heart, as that she would never engage in any important connection without previously consulting him. But casuists in human nature affirm, that a man might explore the whole terraqueous globe with more ease than he can develop the profound turnings and windings of a female heart.—So to his cost was poor Columbus convinced, when the same illustrious dame, whose munificence had enabled him to investigate the extremities of the ocean, could suffer him at his return to be ignominiously loaded with irons.

It would be paying the Reader but an ill compliment even to suspect that he has not already discovered Sir Bevil's designs to be levelled directly at the hand and fortune of Charlotte; but as, in spite of all his vanity, he could not but entertain some doubts of her cordially coinciding with his wishes, he was willing to wait the result of long and patient assiduity, rather than, by too precipitately discovering his sentiments, risk the destruction of the whole plan. He believed her affections at present totally disengaged, and as long as he should have address to continue them so, he could not doubt but that he was every hour gaining his ground, and at last should succeed to the highest bounds of his selfish hopes, particularly as he perceived her inclined to treat the regards of the other

sex more as a matter of diversion than any real concern. It might naturally be expected that a young lady of Charlotte's beauty, accomplishments, and fortune, would be attended with a train of admirers. She in fact was so; for, though the baronet by no means was fond of promoting her appearance in public, the fame of such a person could not fail of attracting to his house the young and gay, as well as the needy aspirer to beauty and affluence, and, as Miss Grimstone saw a great deal of company, their access could not be well avoided; yet the soft things perpetually whispered in the ears of our heroine seemed no otherwise to affect her than as a theme for exerting the lively sallies of her natural vivacity. If a tender compliment had given occasion to a smart repartee, it had had with her all the value she thought it deserving of.—Sir Bevil would often affect to rally her on this insensibility, telling her, in good humour, he doubted she would prove a very coquet; to which she replied,

“Indeed I should despise myself, were I capable of trifling with the real feelings of an honest heart; but, as I suppose the flattering speeches alluded to are meant no less to gratify the speaker's vanity than mine, I may be allowed the liberty of treating them as they deserve,—that is, to laugh at them.”

“I see, my dear Charlotte, your good sense anticipates all which my warm friendship would say on the occasion; yet, whenever I shall find among your train of admirers one whom I shall think deserving my amiable ward, I shall be the first to condemn this insensibility.”

“Then I sincerely hope, Sir Bevil, it will never be your chance to think so; for I really set so high a value on my liberty, that I cannot but dread your persuading me to give it up.”

This reply contained an insinuation so very flattering, that the baronet was assured the entire ascendancy of her affections belonged wholly to himself. Never could man be more enraptured than he was at the idea: his eyes sparkled with pleasure, and more than once was he prompted to express the whole of his sentiments; but he was too much the man of the world to suffer his heart to hang upon his lips, neither was his passion of that lively kind which is not to be restrained by the suggestions of policy or prudence. Sir Bevil, as has been observed, had long since passed the ardour of youth; besides, the passion of avarice, which was now his predominant one, allows not a deep impression of the tender kind.

Among the few who possessed the entire esteem of Miss Overbury was a Mrs. Danby, the widow of an officer who had formerly lived on terms of the strictest intimacy with Mr. Overbury, and, indeed, had experienced the benevolence of his temper at a period when every hope of relief from impending ruin was obscured. This lady, being one of those singular characters who retain a warm sense of past favours received, had ever borne a tender regard to his family, and was no sooner apprised of his daughter's being in town, than she hastened to pay that respect she thought so justly her due.—Mrs. Danby's income was by no means large; yet, having always moved in genteel life, and her reputation as a person of singular merit being generally allowed, she had many

cordial friends in that sphere, whose kind attentions rendered her situation tolerably comfortable. At her house, Charlotte passed many agreeable hours, for she was a woman in whom a brilliant understanding had received the highest improvement which a polished education could bestow. She was moreover of an amiable temper, and naturally so cheerful, that her company was in an uncommon degree entertaining; it is therefore no wonder, that, notwithstanding a disparity of years, our heroine should discover an extraordinary fondness for her society; nor could she form any probable conjecture as to the reasons which often led her guardian to suggest something of disapprobation in her choice of a companion. The truth is, Mrs. Danby had a son;—but that son being then at Cambridge was a circumstance which rather alleviated his anxieties; nor had he as yet devised any expedient for breaking off so hazardous a connection.—Visibly to put a restraint on the young lady's visits would be destroying his own interest, particularly as, besides her own personal merit, Mrs. Danby came recommended to her esteem by the friendship of her deceased father. We must however do him the justice to suppose his prolific brain was not unemployed in contriving some decent method of interrupting this inauspicious intimacy, in which he hoped some lucky contingency might concur with his own diligent endeavours. But, before any thing of this kind could be effected, Chance, who is never better pleased than when outwitting human contrivance, had decreed what will be shewn in the next chapter.

C H A P. VIII.

The unexpected Rencontre.

MISS Overbury having received a card of invitation from Mrs. Danby, found that lady, on arriving in Great Ormond-street, quite alone. After a social *tête-à-tête* over their tea, they agreed to sit down to a game of picquet. Soon after a young gentleman suddenly entered the room, at whose appearance Charlotte instantly changed colour, the cards dropped from her hand, and a universal trembling succeeded. Mrs. Danby also expressed some surprise, and exclaimed, as she rose from the table, "My dear George, I was far from expecting this happiness. What brought you from Cambridge at this time?" Whether the enquiry was distinctly heard we will not undertake to say;—it is certain it was not answered: the young gentleman's attention was directed to another quarter. Recollecting himself however, he respectfully addressed his mother, and then profoundly bowed to Miss Overbury.—"My dear, (resumed Mrs. Danby,) give me leave to introduce to you my son.—George, this lady is the daughter of your father's benefactor, Mr. Overbury." After some hesitation he was able to articulate that he was happy to see her, and hoped she had found no inconvenience from the masquerade.

"You are old acquaintance then I find."

Charlotte blushed, and Mr. Danby, a little confused, acknowledged that he had had the honour of seeing Miss Overbury before.—We presume it would be superfluous here to remark that the young couple recognized in each other the milk-maid and the blue domino. After a surprise natural to the occasion had subsided, a general frankness and good-humour took place. Mr. Danby leaned on the back of Charlotte's chair as she played,—not indeed much to her advantage, for his proximity seemed to be particularly inauspicious. The cards were all her own, yet, by a strange fatality, the game was absolutely lost:—possibly she was congratulating herself on the fortunate circumstance of not having danced at the masquerade with a person whom nobody knew. Sir Bevil could no longer terrify her with the frightful insinuation; the world could report no such mortifying an incident concerning her.

Mrs. Danby, being here called out of the room, desired her son would take her cards.—"Most willingly, madam." Charlotte was never less disposed for play, but to refuse it now would have been improper.—The deal was forgotten.

"It belongs to me, Sir."

"Pardon me, madam, it is mine."

"We will cut for it."

She did so, and turned up the queen of hearts.

"I acknowledge you the sovereignty, madam," with a gentle sigh.

"It is a doubtful title, Sir."

"Here is a subject (laying his hand on his heart) wishes to avow allegiance."

Charlotte blushed.—Mr. Danby was silent. He feared he had expressed more than he ought to have done. His mother returned, and he resigned to her his seat, retiring once more behind Miss Overbury's chair, where, in spite of every effort to repress, a sigh now and then escaped him, vibrating as it passed on the gentle ear of her whose presence had excited them. Charlotte now looked at her watch, and found she had already transgressed the rules of etiquette in the length of her visit. She arose to take her leave. Mrs. Danby entreated the happiness of her company at supper.—George's looks more than seconded the request.

"Don't go," said Inclination.

"Do go," said Prudence.

"I will go," said Resolution.

The chair was ordered and Mr. Danby respectfully conducted her to it. As he did so, an involuntary pressure of the hand convinced her he was actuated by something more than politeness. "Adieu, madam," said he, as she hurried to her chair; and, if we mistake not, the plaintive accent in which it was uttered resounded on the ear of Charlotte some hours afterwards.

On his return to the drawing-room, he found his mother walking across the room apparently in a very thoughtful mood. She had not indeed seen much to draw a serious conclusion from, but she had discovered something which awakened suspicions rather of the unpleasing kind.

"Miss Overbury is a very amiable young lady, George; do not you think so?"

"Most certainly, madam, I do."

Whether that reply was uttered with unusual warmth or not we shall not determine; but Mrs. Danby, turning towards him with a solemn air, fixed her eyes most expressively on his face.—"Do you know who she is, George? (resumed she.) Miss Overbury is the daughter of that excellent man who saved your father from misery,—from a jail."

We suppose there must have been something more in this speech than a bare reiteration of a fact he was already informed of, as the young gentleman, without making any reply, immediately cast his eyes on the floor, in a sort of modest confusion, which Mrs. Danby observing, she put her handkerchief to her eyes.—"Sit down by me, my good

George,” resumed she. He implicitly obeyed, and for some moments both kept profound silence.

“It has been my peculiar happiness (continued Mrs. Danby) to possess a son, who, to the obligations of filial reverence, has added the ties of love. Hence that sweet confidence has ever subsisted between us which does not always accompany the relation we stand in to each other. I will, therefore, address you with the frankness of a friend rather than the authority of a mother, and doubt not but your amiable and ingenuous temper will readily accept of that mode.—Excuse me, George, if the watchful solicitude of a parent causes me to appear ridiculously suspicious;—but indeed,—indeed I think you see Miss Overbury with no indifferent feelings.”

Mr. Danby hesitated for a reply.

“You do not answer me, my son. Does my officious earnestness offend you?”

“Offend me!—Oh! do not, my beloved mother, adopt that expression. I will be as explicit as your tenderness has an undoubted right to expect. If I was silent, perhaps a painful consciousness was the cause. O madam, you have seen what I scarcely dared to avow myself;—Miss Overbury has indeed——”

“Then I am truly wretched.”

“Why, my dear madam?”

“Because you must unavoidably be either ungrateful or unhappy.”

“I comprehend all which my mother would urge on the occasion. But, madam, your son will not disgrace his father’s principles: he will not repay the generosity of Mr. Overbury by endeavouring to make a beggar of his daughter.”

Here Mrs. Danby burst into a flood of tears, and, folding her arms tenderly around him, exclaimed, “My noble George, there spoke your father’s spirit; but, while I applaud so heroic a sentiment, I cannot forget the feelings of a mother. O my son, can I bear to see you miserable!”

“No, madam.—I will not be so. A generous mind cannot be miserable while conscious of pursuing the laws of rectitude. The tenderness I confess to feel for Miss Overbury is yet an infant-passion; time and resolution I trust will overcome it. Rest satisfied, my honoured mother, that, as it has hitherto been my study to imitate your virtues and my father’s honour, so it shall still be, nor will I indulge a sentiment which either might condemn.”

The scene here became too tender for Mrs. Danby’s feelings to support. She retired to her closet to vent the effusions of an overflowing heart in tears.

CHAP. IX.

Romantic Enthusiasm.

WHATEVER Charlotte's cogitations might have been after her return from Ormond-street, it is certain that the next morning she was observed to spend a much longer time than usual at her toilette. Though in the article of dress ever accustomed to observe an elegant exactness, yet, on the present occasion, she was singularly attentive to that point. Her reflections were now of a very different nature from those which had immediately succeeded the masquerade; much then as she dreaded recognition, she had now no intention of being denied, should the blue domino endeavour to improve the acquaintance.

Miss Grimstone, observing her when in the parlour to run often to the window, and to appear particularly attentive whenever a rap was heard at the door, could not help asking her if she expected any visitor. A little abashed at the question, Charlotte hesitatingly replied, "Me, madam,—no, indeed."

"I thought you had by your going so often to the window."

"I was only looking at——"

At that instant a servant delivered a letter inscribed to Miss Overbury, who, eagerly snatching it with a trembling hand, felt not a little disappointed when she saw a country post-mark on the outside. By this circumstance her impatience received a complete check. She opened it with a careless air, and found it an epistle from Miss Butterfield, the contents of which were as follow.

"If it be true, my dear Charlotte, that souls are often congenial, then surely yours and mine are of this nature. They must be of a kindred order; for, though I have never been so happy as to see you, I feel myself attached to your dear self by the warmest ties of friendship. My mother, indeed, is eager in your praise, but there needs not her description to familiarize me to your idea. I have already pictured in my mind your charming person, and that so exactly, that I am confident among a hundred I should recognize my Charlotte Overbury. Your mind,—I know its minutest sentiment, and all I wish for is the supreme satisfaction of your amiable conversation. And why cannot I possess this inestimable bliss, or how is it possible you can be enamoured of the scenes around you? The dense atmosphere of a crowded city is not only unfriendly to the functions of animal life, but also to the sublime aspirations of the soul: the uncontaminated air of verdant hills and flowery vales is that in which she becomes truly exhilarated. Here springs that genuine hilarity of heart, which, like the sun, gilds every object in nature, and here expand those delicious meditations in which the sentimental mind finds a luxurious banquet;—but the sweet emotion dwells not amidst the polluted breath of thronged assemblies; it evaporates in noise, and is annihilated by the buz of impertinence and folly. Come then, my sister,—my friend, and share the ineffable

pleasures enjoyed by your Eliza in the calm shades of Ashton; come, listen to the music of the purling rills or sweet cascades, dashing from rock to rock. We will roam together over the enamelled meadows, following the snowy lambkins, or in the embowering shade exchange the delights of sentimental converse. Here, my lovely maid, your beauty will bloom fresher than the opening rose-bud; you will no longer hear the odious flattery of those, who, in the praises they bestow on you, pursue their own applause, but you will receive the homage of uncorrupted hearts, and be accosted only in the pure strains of artless love.

“What shall I say more to prevail on my charming friend to quit the noisy scenes of the metropolis? Much I suspect the efficacy of my humble pen in painting the unadulterated joys of a country life. Come, then, and detect the vanity of my attempt. This is now the season when the rosy-footed spring strews the meadows with a thousand sweets, when the fragrant hawthorn scents the fanning gale, and the charming nightingale gives pleasure to the soft hour of eve. Can you be insensible to these accumulated beauties?—No; you are formed with the most refined sensibilities. Come, then, my beloved Charlotte, and bless with your presence this venerable mansion; come, bestow a new untasted joy on your own

Ashton-Priory, April 20.

ELIZA BUTTERFIELD.”

Charlotte could not help smiling as she ran over this curious epistle. The invitation it contained had something in it frank and good natured though the romantic taste of the writer was not at all suited to her disposition. “I little expected (said she to herself) to find any of the Butterfield’s of so sentimental a cast. A medium, between the romantic softness of this girl and the shocking rusticity of her parents, would form a tolerable character.” She put the letter however into her pocket-book, intending to answer it at some convenient period.

Scarcely had she done so, when the baron Vanhawsen was announced. As this was no more than the second visit that nobleman had made at the baronet’s, and Charlotte having been from home at the time of the former one, she had not seen him before, though she was no stranger to his title, which being recognized by many of the nobility; he was well received in every polite circle, in one of which some acquaintance having commenced between him and Sir Bevil, he did the family the honour of calling on them in a style of familiarity highly pleasing to Miss Grimstone. The baron was of an ancient house in Germany, and, by some lucky demises, heir to the fortunes of his whole family. He was therefore extremely rich, and had come to England on much the same purpose to which many of our countrymen visit the continent;—that is, to waste money and glean folly; for we do not think our dear island deficient in the latter commodity any more than some other parts of the world. His age was about thirty, his form much inclining to the gigantic,—features rather calculated to terrify than please,—voice harsh and unpleasing,—and manners as inelegant as his person. This accomplished nobleman, struck with the figure of Miss Overbury, did her the honour of staring for some minutes most earnestly in her face, and, when she arose to retire, (which she did in about ten

minutes after his arrival,) he seemed as though about to lay hold of her gown in order to detain her.

Such a sentiment, however coarsely expressed, could not be very agreeable to Miss Grimstone; for, though we believe the baron beheld that lady with as chaste a veneration as he did the marble image of his patroness St. Ursula, yet so it was, that she fancied the visit wholly designed to herself, and translated some unpolished compliments into the language of actual attachment to her person. The idea of becoming the Baroness Vanhawsen was not to be relinquished without reluctance; and, however slight the grounds of jealousy might be, even an ideal interruption of so charming a hope was not to be patiently borne.

Some days after the above incident, the breakfast things being removed and the servants withdrawn, Sir Bevil, gaily addressing his sister, asked whether she should like a trip to Germany.—“Nothing in the world (answered she, bridling) could delight me so much.”

“I dare say then you will cheerfully shew your respect by accompanying thither Madam the Baroness Vanhawsen.”

Miss Grimstone turned pale. Charlotte, with a look of curiosity, demanded if the baron were about to be married.—“You best will determine that question, madam.”

“What do you mean, Sir Bevil?”

“I will tell you, my dear Charlotte and at the same time may, I hope, congratulate you on so important a conquest. The baron is your avowed admirer. I yesterday received a card, requesting my attendance at his house. After a polite reception and apologies for the step he had taken, since he said it was rather his place to have waited on me, he frankly acquainted me with his penchant for my lovely ward, to which he flattered himself I could have no objection, as his family was not unknown to several Englishmen of the first distinction, and, for his fortune, he should give me the most indubitable proofs of its being extremely ample, the whole of which he would settle on yourself in any manner you approved.—You may suppose, my dear, (continued Sir Bevil,) that I could make no objection to so liberal a proposal.”

Miss Grimstone, not choosing longer to witness a discourse so far from being to her taste, thought proper to retire, and the baronet, perfectly to his satisfaction, read in the countenance of Charlotte an entire disapprobation of the overture. He was therefore emboldened to proceed with more warmth than probably he might otherwise have done. Without stopping to hear the objection she was about to express, he proceeded as follows.

“I have your interest so much at heart, my dear Charlotte, that I cannot but rejoice in the prospect of an alliance so entirely to your advantage, and I am persuaded that you will overlook the trifling consideration of personal attractions in the opportunity you now have of acquiring rank and splendor.”

But, in reality, the sagacious baronet was assured she was the last person in the world to do this. He well knew her soul was insensible to the sordid considerations of avarice;—that, young, gay, and susceptible of the finest feelings, he could not suppose a person of Baron Vanhawsen’s description in the least likely to acquire her favour, nor was her temper of that kind to be dazzled by the splendor of rank. From these convictions, he was induced to hazard the above insinuation, to which he received exactly the answer he had expected.

“My good Sir Bevil, (said she,) can you possibly shew me one reason in nature why a girl, blest as I am with a fortune sufficient to all the purposes of life, should give her hand to a man she dislikes, merely to have more wealth than she can have occasion for? Titles, I assure you, are in my estimation very empty things; and, since I can discover nothing attractive, either in the baron’s person or manners, I beg you will be so good as to make my reply, by acquainting him that I can never accept the honour he proposes.”

“My dear child, (returned he, more pleased than he chose to discover,) do not suppose me of so sordid a principle as really to be a zealous advocate in behalf of this suit, although, as your guardian, it might be my duty to urge those advantages which the world would condemn me for overlooking; yet, I confess, I would not wish to see my Charlotte Baroness Vanhawsen.”

“Ah! Sir Bevil, was this kind? Where shall I now look for sincerity, for paternal frankness, since I must no longer expect it from you?”

Her emotion affected him, for the tears glistened in her eyes, and for once, we presume, Policy might be said to have outwitted itself. Had he not been morally assured the baron’s suit would be absolutely rejected, it is probable he had never stood forth as an advocate for it. As it was, he believed it might do so without hazarding the least detriment to his own affairs, and at the same time inspire her with a higher opinion of his candour and disinterestedness.—Her distress convinced him he had gone too far, and had certainly over-acted his part. It was a point of the greatest moment to him that the cause of such reflection should be speedily removed.

He proceeded now to explain himself on the motives of his conduct, in doing which something would probably have escaped him which it was not yet the proper period for introducing, had not a footman announced the arrival of Mrs. Danby. The baronet’s countenance fell at the name,—the very sound of which had something in it he did not like; and, bowing slightly to the lady as she entered, he immediately withdrew.

CHAP. X.

More disappointments than one.

NOTHING could be more agreeable to Charlotte than the presence of Mrs. Danby. She had not seen her since the rencontre mentioned in a preceding chapter,—not but that she much wished it, but, supposing George Danby to be still at her house, delicacy, arising from the consciousness of certain ideas, rendered her visiting there highly improper. Mrs. Danby, having in the interim called in Bedford-square, and not finding Miss Overbury at home, had left a card, (agreeably to the familiar nature of their acquaintance,) requesting too see her at her house the next day, to which the other returned a polite excuse. This incident, and other correspondent proofs of the shyness of her young friend, induced that lady to suppose that what she had discovered of her son's attachment was also suspected by Charlotte, who, in consequence, feeling her pride hurt, had thought proper to refrain her visits: This was just as she wished it to be: however, not willing to lose entirely the society of one for whom she had a most unfeigned affection, she determined to make one more effort to regain so valuable an acquaintance.

“I am come, (said she,) my dear Miss Overbury, to upbraid your unkindness.—Why am I so unfortunate as not to have seen you of so long a time?”

Charlotte in excuse pleaded company and engagements, assuring her however, and with the strictest truth, that she should at all times find the sincerest satisfaction in her company.

“If you would have me believe this, (resumed Mrs. Danby,) you must consent to give me more of your company than you have done of late. Besides, it will now be charity, as I am quite alone.”

“Is Mr. Danby then returned to Cambridge, madam?” anxiously.

“He is gone to France, my dear, from whence I do not yet expect his return.”

“To France!—(in a tone of surprise;) Really?”

The intelligence was not pleasing:—that he should engage in so long an absence, without bidding her so much as an adieu, had something in it rather ungentle. Yet, what right had she to expect that ceremony?—she was nothing to Mr. Danby,—he ought to be nothing to her. While this reflection was making unwelcome entrance into her mind, Mrs. Danby resumed:

“You may remember, Miss Overbury, that his presence, when last you did me the honour of a visit, was wholly unexpected; but it was to communicate an advantageous proposal which had been made to him.”

Charlotte, affecting an air of indifference, turned the conversation to another subject; but, no sooner had Mrs. Danby taken leave, after chatting with her a considerable time, than she fell into a very serious meditation. I have then deceived myself (thought she) in supposing George Danby's behaviour to have been any thing more than the effect of civility; true, I have heard as many tender things a hundred times over from all the young gentlemen of my acquaintance,—but from his mouth it had a weight, which, I perceive, I was extremely weak in allowing it;—it was all mere bagatelle. But, perhaps, there is in the matter something worse than this. How did I behave that evening? May not my surprise have discovered too much? Perhaps he read my partiality to himself, and despised it. If so, then, Charlotte, be thyself. He was so condescending as to give a poor love-sick girl some soft insinuations to encourage her. Yes, yes, this was the case. Oh! I shall expire at the mortifying thought: yet (rising from her seat with an animated air) the daughter of William Overbury, though open to the impressions of genuine merit, can yet despise the heart which holds her cheap.—

The advantage which Mrs. Danby had intimated was simply an invitation, from a young nobleman at the university, to Mr. Danby, of accompanying him and his tutor on the tour of Europe. The young gentleman, having nearly completed his studies, had come to town, in order to consult his mother, for whose opinion he had the profoundest respect. It was an opportunity she warmly desired, though she had despaired of obtaining it. Her little abilities had been exerted to the utmost in supporting her son at college; the expences of a travelling plan were absolutely beyond the limits of her purse, yet she wished her beloved George to acquire the accomplishments of a gentleman, not in order to adorn a fortune, for he was born to none, but, if possible, to acquire one. The proposal being cordially accepted, he had taken his leave of her on the evening of the next day, and, after the conversation related between him and his mother, the reader will, we believe, consider his departure from England in a different light from that in which it appeared to Miss Overbury.

That young lady's pride being effectually piqued by the incident, the idea of George Danby never occurred to her but it was dismissed with the resolution of thinking of him no more. Whatever might have been her former remembrances, she was now persuaded of his being an object of total indifference to her; yet, in spite of this opinion and her natural vivacity, she was much more addicted to the pensoroso style than before. She often visited Mrs. Danby, but, as both ladies had different reasons for avoiding the mention of his name, neither had an opportunity of discovering the other's sentiments.

About this time there was a certain young viscount, who, in a very particular manner, paid his court to our heroine. Sir Bevil was not ignorant of the circumstance, but he had at the same time the pleasure of knowing she discovered no greater sensibility of his attachment than she had before done that of the baron. It was nothing, indeed, very surprising, to one who knew her disposition, that she should reject a Baron Vanhawsen; but absolutely to refuse a young nobleman, whose personal and mental accomplishments were far superior to the common standard, was an incident which must have excessively puzzled the baronet, had not his own vanity helped him to a clue for unravelling it.—The improbability of a girl of sixteen falling in love with an old beau of threescore was a

circumstance he had entirely forgotten; and, as Charlotte (though the sentiment was purely filial) had constantly manifested a behaviour full of affection and gratitude towards him, he actually believed himself the subject of some tender sighs which now and then escaped her, for nothing is more common than to frame our ideas of things correspondent to the nature of our hopes.

“What can be the cause, my dear Charlotte, (said he one day,) that a heart so eminently susceptible should yet remain unmoved by all the soft solicitations it receives? The baron’s rejection cannot surprise me, but Lord P— has surely too many *agréments* to be wholly disregarded. What can be the meaning of all this coldness, my sweet girl?”

“Surely (replied she laughing) affairs are not yet so desperate, Sir Bevil? Sixteen, I hope, is not the age of despair.”

“No; but it perhaps is the age when the heart is most susceptible of impression, and therefore I cannot think your’s, my Charlotte, absolutely insensible to every tender emotion. What means, may I ask, (looking tenderly at her,) what means that pensiveness which so often steals across that lovely brow?”

At that question Charlotte was covered with blushes, and hesitatingly replied, “Pensive, Sir Bevil?—Surely you have not seen—?—Indeed, I hope my behaviour has discovered no improper——”

She would have said *gravity*; but, translating her meaning as most agreeable to the visionary hopes he had indulged, he seized her hand, and exclaimed with rapture,

“Improper, my adorable girl!—No. It transports me even to ecstasy. O Miss Overbury, you have made me the happiest of men by this sweet hope, that my tenderest wishes will receive their blest accomplishment. I will say,—it is all I can say,—that the happy object of those soft sensations, though certainly unworthy, will at least repay them by a life of the sincerest love,—the warmest gratitude.”

“Heavens! (cried she, in a kind of joyful confusion,) is it possible! Has he then discovered himself?—has George Danby declared his sentiments?”

“George Danby, madam! (starting back.) O Miss Overbury, it is not for him I would solicit. The man, who presumes to hope for your favour,—who loves you with the extremest ardour,—whose life shall be devoted to your happiness, is now before you. I offer you, most amiable of women, a heart devoted to your charms,—a heart which not the combined attractions of your whole sex could have power to impress, till your incomparable perfections have entirely subdued it.”

“Sir Bevil Grimstone! (cried the astonished Charlotte,)—my guardian, whom I have honoured as a father!—Can it be possible he should address me in a strain like this?”

“And why not, my Charlotte? The difference of our years is adapted rather to warrant the stability of love than to be a barrier to its access. Passion, madam, in a younger man, may be more ardently expressed, but its refinements can only exist in minds matured by reflection; consequently an expectation of permanent felicity is, on such a basis, the most rationally founded.”

“Mention the hated subject no more, I entreat, Sir Bevil,” with an air of resentment.

“Your affections are engaged then, Miss Overbury, and by whom?—a young fellow not worth a shilling. Consider, I beseech you, of the imprudence of such a measure; for, however speciously he may have varnished his tale, I know the Danbys, and I know them to be indigent.”

“Possibly;—I believe indeed they are so; but I must do him the justice to acquit him of the baseness you have insinuated. George Danby has never entertained me a moment on the subject you suspect.”

“Ah! Charlotte, do not tarnish that admirable frankness for which I have ever adored you;—how happened it then that his name dropped so promptly from your lips?”

“It proceeded merely from my foolish inadvertence. I will be frank, Sir Bevil, and acknowledge that I have regarded Mr. Danby with partial eyes; yet, on my honour, he is still a stranger to that sentiment, and ever must remain so.”

“There, indeed, you are my sweet ingenuous girl; but, give me leave to ask, are you aware, my Charlotte, of the imprudence,—nay, the destructive tendency of the sentiments you so generously confess?”

“I am aware, Sir Bevil, (melting into tears;) I have seen the folly of it,—I lament it;—what shall I say?”

“Nothing, my angel. Your charming frankness already atones for the error which cannot in the least diminish the fervor of my affection; banish, therefore, so chimerical an idea, and consent to receive the vows of a man whose attachment to you, though ardent, is rather the result of reason than passion.”

“No more, Sir Bevil. I cannot allow this language from you. I have honoured,—nay, loved you as a father, and it has been my pride to manifest that sentiment; but you have now laid an unhappy restraint on those feelings. I would be grateful, yet the pleasing demonstration of that principle must henceforth be denied me. You have distressed me more than I can express, since, by the avowal of a passion so unworthy yourself, you restrain me from evincing the proper sense I ought to have of your goodness. Indeed, indeed, you have rendered me most unhappy.”

“Then, madam, I am most miserable;—yet, to possess that endearing confidence with which you have hitherto favoured me, whatever the sacrifice may cost me, I am ready to promise all you require.”

“I insist then that you never more indulge a thought of this unbecoming nature.”

“A thought, my Charlotte?—not one sweet reflection on the happiness I had so deliciously painted?—But you shall be obeyed, madam. I would sooner die than occasion you one moment’s uneasiness. Say that you forgive me,—nay, that you pity me. O Charlotte, shall I not be entitled to your pity at least?”

An affectation of feelings so unsuitable to his years almost impelled a smile on her countenance, at the same time it forced her to consider him in a very ridiculous and contemptible light. “Rely (said she firmly) on my feeling every sentiment due to the character of Sir Bevil Grimstone, as long as he chuses properly to support it.”

Somewhat abashed at the severity of her manner, he promised never more to importune her on the subject, provided she would allow him that share in her confidence which hitherto he had been so happy as to enjoy. However unfavourably she had received the declaration he had made, nothing could ever make him abate of that zealous regard it was his duty to retain for her happiness; and, to prove the heroic nature of his feelings, insinuated that he would, if she approved, endeavour to promote her union with the man whom she honoured with a secret attachment.

Charlotte, highly offended at so indelicate an intimation, absolutely forbid his interference on the subject, assuring him, that, whatever her thoughts might have been, she never would accept an overture of the kind from Mr. Danby.—The entrance of Miss Grimstone here put an end to the *tête-à-tête*.

CHAP. XI.

Shews there are Stratagems in Love as in War.

JUSTLY offended as Miss Overbury was at the gross intimation of Sir Bevil, as well as disgusted at the meanness of his conduct, there was certainly nothing farther from his intentions than the very measure he had so indelicately proposed; on the contrary, he took a resolution the same hour of waiting on Mrs. Danby, in order to cut off all hopes she might have entertained of seeing her son allied to his ward. Rather surprised at so unexpected a visit, Mrs. Danby received the baronet with her accustomed politeness, and, as she happened to have no company, they were no sooner seated than the following conversation took place.

“I have been induced, my dear madam, to do myself the honour of this visit solely by the opinion, which, in common with the rest of the world, I have justly entertained of Mrs. Danby’s uncommon candour and discernment. (The lady bowed.) An apology for the motives of this visit would be an affront to both.”

“Be explicit, Sir Bevil: you have both interested my attention and curiosity.”

“Then, madam, give me leave to ask one question.”

“As many as you please,” with a smile of candour.

“How long has there subsisted a tender connection between Miss Overbury and Mr. Danby, your son?”

“You infinitely astonish me by the enquiry, Sir Bevil. There never has subsisted any connection. What reason can you possibly have for supposing so?”

“Pardon me, madam; I am sufficiently sensible of the merit of every part of your amiable family, and beg you will believe, could my wishes effect it, every desired happiness would attend it.”

“But your reasons for asking the question, Sir Bevil.”

“Common report, madam; I have not been favoured with a better authority.”

“That is at best but a vague one, and is founded in mere conjecture on the intimacy so happily subsisting between Miss Overbury and myself. You are no stranger, Sir Bevil, to the character of that young lady’s father, though possibly you are to the obligations which he conferred on my family, the remembrance of which has prompted me to shew every possible respect to his amiable daughter, whom I entirely honour for her own personal merit.—I know of no other connection.”

“It is not an infallible consequence (smiling) that Mrs. Danby must be apprised of a fact of that kind.”

“Excuse me, (speaking in a more elevated tone;) the consequence is indubitable. George, and I glory in the assertion, has a soul superior to disguise, and would blush to be thought capable of sordid or dishonourable views.”

“Nobody in the world, my dear madam, can possibly have a more perfect conviction of Mr. Danby’s exalted merit than myself; and, had I a daughter of my own, such an alliance would be my pride: but, as the guardian of Miss Overbury, a different mode of conduct may be necessary. She has a fortune, and the world, you know, my good Mrs. Danby, will not permit her marrying without one. You comprehend me, I see.”

“Perfectly, Sir Bevil. I honour and applaud your sentiments, and am extremely happy to be convinced that the daughter of my friend is blest with a guardian so duly attentive to her interest. For your more entire satisfaction, give me leave to assure you, that I should despise my son, did I suspect him capable of endeavouring, by any means whatever, of seducing Miss Overbury’s affections, who, for more reasons than one, never could be his. George’s behaviour to me warrants me to say that I know every secret disposition of his soul, and therefore do now assert that he entertains not the remotest thought of aspiring to the honour of Miss Overbury’s hand.”

“I am perfectly satisfied, good madam; this frankness and condescension fully justifies the expectations I had formed on the occasion; but, as such a report may possibly be of some disadvantage to the young lady, we ought to suppress it as far as lies in our power.”

“It will drop of itself. My son is gone to the continent, and his absence (which I expect will be for some time) must of course be a proper refutation.”

“Something more effectual may be done. As Mrs. Danby’s superior judgment convinces her of the importance of quashing so idle an opinion as this which the public has imbibed, she will, I am confident, readily concur in any innocent measures to that purpose. I have just thought of a scheme. Suppose we insert a paragraph in some morning-paper, importing that Mr. Danby is actually married to another lady.—This will do the business at once.”

By this method the baronet secretly hoped to give the last blow to Charlotte’s acknowledged tenderness for the young gentleman, a circumstance which he did not think proper to divulge to Mrs. Danby. That lady, however, reddening with indignation at the proposal, replied with some warmth, “I have ever found truth, Sir Bevil, so abundantly effectual to all the purposes of honour and generosity, that you must pardon me for refusing, in this case, to deviate therefrom.”

Stung at an expression which conveyed, though tacitly, a pointed reflection on his principles, Sir Bevil at first felt a little chagrined; but, as it was not the first time he had been called on to put a clean gloss on a dirty sentiment, he soon recovered himself, and, with a good deal of effrontery, resumed, with a laugh, "How necessary it is for us to have a prudent and amiable mistress sometimes at hand! 'Pon honour, madam, you have saved me from making a slip I was scarcely aware of;—it would indeed be a subterfuge unworthy either you or me."

He then, politely thanking her for the frankness with which she had received his visit, took leave, apparently impressed with the highest opinion of her candour and generosity.

But, as we generally draw the characters of our neighbours as much like the dark side of our own as possible, the baronet was very far from giving entire credit to all which Mrs. Danby had asserted. To think one thing and speak another was, he knew, extremely practicable, and therefore he concluded it might be very possible for her to facilitate the connection between the young people, notwithstanding all she had urged to the contrary, especially since it was her interest so to do. In short, he resolved to break off all further acquaintance between the two ladies. With regard to the promise he had given Charlotte, of no more importuning her on the subject of his passion, he did indeed literally observe it. Yet, as the acquisition of twenty-five thousand pounds was so very convenient to his deranged finances, he could not tamely submit to the relinquishing it. While, therefore, his discourses manifested the utmost confidence in her sincerity, and implicit submission to her will, he was, in fact, acting the part of a jealous spy on all her actions. Under colour of paying her the highest respect, he was become her constant attendant wherever she went, and even proceeded so far as to forego the business of the gaming-table rather than not be the witness of her conduct when at home. Finding it impossible for her to visit even her beloved Mrs. Danby without the impertinent attendance of a third person, she had declined going as often as usual to Ormond-street, yet the intimacy was still supported by the exchange of the most friendly billets. A longer time than she expected having elapsed since she had heard any thing of that valuable acquaintance, she expressed her surprise in a short note, which, having sealed, she delivered to a footman, with orders to convey it. About half an hour afterwards, happening to pass swiftly through the lobby, she perceived the same servant putting a letter into Sir Bevil's hand, which a glance of the eye was sufficient to convince her was the identical one she had addressed to Mrs. Danby. The nature of her situation (of which before she had some suspicion) was now clearly demonstrated, and the circumstance, added to the behaviour of Miss Grimstone, who had never forgiven the affair of Baron Vanhawsen, operated so sensibly on a temper naturally warm and open, that, in the first emotions of resentment, she determined on accepting the offers of the Butterfield family, rather than longer reside in a house where she was guarded with Spanish jealousy. Without condescending to notice the excessive meanness she had just discovered in the baronet's conduct, she immediately dispatched the following letter by the hand of her own woman to the post-office.

MISS BUTTERFIELD,

ASHTON PRIORY,

SOMERSET.

“I know not how to atone for the rudeness of suffering my dear Eliza’s letter so long to remain unanswered, otherwise than by asking her permission to make my apologies in person. The politeness and friendship expressed therein demand my gratitude, which I cannot better demonstrate than by immediately complying with the invitation; but, as, for some particular reasons, I cannot absolutely fix on a time for leaving London, I would wish to submit that point entirely to your good mother, whose commands in that and every other respect will always be properly regarded by,

My dear madam,

Your obliged and affectionate

CHARLOTTE OVERBURY.”

C H A P. XII.

New Arrangement of Family-Matters.

THE foregoing epistle was received at the Priory with a satisfaction greater than Charlotte could possibly have expected. Mrs. Butterfield was no sooner apprised of its contents than her rapture was beyond all bounds of moderation; for it is to be noticed, that, though her daughter had been the means of conveying the invitation, and certainly did wish for the society of one of her own sex and age, yet she durst not have taken that measure but at the express command of her mother, who, finding her policy hitherto ineffectual, rationally supposed that the most likely way of obtaining her point would be by setting a correspondence on foot between the two girls. The project seemed now ripening beyond her hopes, and, after exhausting her breath, in an eloquent speech, in praise of her own abilities, she declared it to be absolutely necessary that the coach should be sent to town to fetch the young lady.

“A good thought, (said Mr. Butterfield,) and I will go vor her myself.”

“You go! (with a sarcastic smile.) I believe I know your *debilities* before to-day. No, Sir, I will go first; you may *precede* me if you will.”

“As you please, (cried the pacific magistrate.) I hate the being jolted along your Lunnun streets;—but won’t you take Bess with you?”

“Pray, madam, (said the young lady with an air of modest entreaty,) do give me leave to see the capital?”—Nothing could be more unfortunate for her suit than her father’s having moved it before; for Mrs. Butterfield, in all things valuing herself on the properties of a good wife, as one instance of her domestic qualifications, had resolved to have every thing her own way. To comply with the request of a husband was generally considered by her as a conduct too pusillanimous for a house-wife of talents and spirit to submit to.—“You go, child, (replied she;) a pretty request truly for one of your age. I was at least five and twenty before I went to London, and then, indeed, (drawing her head half a dozen inches higher,) I made some improvement by it.”

Eliza, however, as soon as her father had retired, exerted herself so effectually, that Mrs. Butterfield, for once, receded from her established maxim; and, although the proposal had come from her husband, consented that her daughter should accompany her.

It will not be necessary to insert a detail of the journey; suffice it to say that the lady, though extremely anxious to reach town, did not travel post, but by such easy stages as she knew the old family vehicle would bear, and arrived at length in the metropolis. Not much regarding the rules of etiquette, Mrs. Butterfield was no sooner set down at the inn, than, ordering the coachman to take care of the horses, she immediately sat off for Bedford-square; where, enquiring for Miss Overbury, she was introduced to her presence, and received with the satisfaction of a prisoner when the prospect of liberty is once more

afforded him. Miss Grimstone soon after joined them, as did Sir Bevil, when dressed; for, though his heart recoiled at the name of Butterfield, he could not possibly be seen by a lady before every minutiae of dress had been duly adjusted— Mean time, after the introductory compliments had passed, the following conversation took place in the parlour.

“You know the world, Miss Grace, as well as I do, and therefore must allow that it is not prudent for a young lady of remarkable *contractions* to live in this London. No, no, it is not the thing. Young women, instead of *perspiring* to be admired, should learn good housewifery in the country.”

Miss Grimstone, as yet unacquainted with the sentiments of Miss Overbury, and scarcely able to conceal her joy at the hopes of parting with so hated a rival, replied,

“You are perfectly right, my dear madam. My brother, Sir Bevil, indeed, out of a culpable softness of disposition, was fond of indulging his ward in whatever she made an object of choice; but, for my part, though excessively fond of dear Charlotte’s sweet company, I must confess, I always thought the measure an improper one.”

“There, do you see, Eliza. I was quite in the right. Ah! I know the world,—the arts of *undesigned* men,—the schemes of *contingent* fortune-hunters,—all these things should be considered; and, as Miss Overbury was intrusted to our care, it is my duty to act as a mother to her. Indeed, my dear child, (taking Charlotte fondly by the hand,) I love you with a true *fraternal* regard, as though you were my own daughter.”

“Though I shall suffer extremely by the loss of so charming a companion, (resumed Miss Grimstone,) I cannot but confess, Mrs. Butterfield, the propriety of your arguments, and, since you have been so kind as to take a second journey confessedly from a motive of pure regard to Miss Overbury, I hope she will not be so much her own enemy as to reject your very friendly overtures. I am compelled, my dear Charlotte, (affecting to weep,) thus to avow my sentiments, though the pain I shall suffer in parting with you is inexpressible.”

The hypocrisy of this declaration excited the utmost contempt in the candid bosom of Charlotte. Sir Bevil here broke in on the discourse, expressing the most entire satisfaction at the sight of Mrs. Butterfield, “Which (said he) is a happiness I could not so soon have presumed to expect.”

“Indeed, Sir Bevil, I should not have been here now, had it not been for the purpose of attending Miss Overbury back.”

“Attending Miss Overbury, madam! (agitated;) she does not wish to quit her London friends I believe.”

“Why not? She may find as good, though not as gaudy, ones in the country.”

Charlotte, to satisfy Sir Bevil's doubts at once, addressing herself to Mrs. Butterfield, said, she was quite ready to accompany her into the country. "And you shall, sweet one, (returned the lady.) We will set out to-morrow: but, now I think on it, it cannot be till the next day, as the poor horses must have some rest."

"Then, madam, give me leave to be with you till that time."

"Pretty soul;—you see, Miss Grace, she is very *dulcet*, and easy to be led. Let me alone for the management of young folks: I always *redress* them with such arguments as *infect* their reason. Our *sect* is not to be governed by contradiction: I never was in my life."

During this elegant harangue, Sir Bevil appeared half petrified with astonishment.—He perceived that all was lost. However, making one effort more, he said, "Surely, Miss Overbury, you will give us your company as long as Mrs. Butterfield stays in town?"

To this she replied, that, in order to spare Mrs. Butterfield the trouble of making another visit to the square, it would be full as well to accompany her now. Perceiving, as much by her looks as words, that she was peremptorily bent on quitting his family, he resumed, that, since this was her intention, it was necessary he should settle some affairs with her before she went into the country, and therefore requested she would give him her company for a few minutes in the library. The request being accompanied by a particular earnestness of manner, Charlotte judged the respect due to a guardian obliged her to comply with it, and therefore suffered Sir Bevil to conduct her to his library, where, taking her hand, he said with an impassioned tone, "I doubt, Miss Overbury, I have only to blame the temerity of my own conduct for this unexpected measure, and therefore conclude all attempts to alter your determination would be ineffectual. I am unhappy, and perhaps deserve to be so; yet, could I think you would remember me with pity, my situation would be rendered less insupportable."

"With pity, Sir Bevil?—No. I will suppose you capable of exciting a more exalted sentiment. I will consider you only in the light in which I formerly revered you; that is, as the best of guardians and most generous of men, and as such assure yourself of my gratitude and esteem."

"Your oblique reproaches, Charlotte, force me to blush; yet, could you read my heart:—but no more of this. May you be happy.—Might I but be assured in one point—"

"What is that, Sir?"

"That you will never give your hand to Danby, for then I am certain your ruin will be inevitable. Promise me only this."

“Of such an event there is not the most distant probability. Whatever might once have been the nature of my sentiments, I hope I have now suppressed every remembrance of Mr. Danby, but such as the respect I bear his mother entitles him to from me. Yet, Sir Bevil, give me leave to say, that I consider your endeavour to extort such a promise as a farther demonstration of that arbitrary meanness which your conduct of late has discovered, and therefore tell you, that Charlotte Overbury will be free.”

Had Sir Bevil, some months before, proposed such a promise to her, she would doubtless have considered it as the effect of a disinterested regard to her welfare, and consequently have returned a very different reply. It could now be esteemed only as the dictates of selfishness and hypocrisy, and consequently was received with that warmth which, on some occasions, was the characteristic of our heroine. The baronet plainly perceived, that, as much an adept as he was in the art of dissimulation, he had now to deal with one, who, though perfectly a stranger to artifice herself, was mistress of too much penetration to be long the dupe of his selfish policy. The only means of coming off, as he thought tolerably decently, was to affect a compunction for the weaknesses into which his affection for her had betrayed him, and this he did with so serious, contrite, and respectful, an air, that Charlotte, in spite of her resentment, was led to afford him the very sentiment he at first had demanded,—namely, pity. After assuring him of her readiness to forget whatever had given her displeasure, and to remember him only with gratitude and respect, she returned to the parlour, and soon after took a polite leave of Miss Grimstone, in order to accompany Mrs. Butterfield and her daughter. As for Sir Bevil, he had avoided the pain of a formal adieu by abruptly retiring. His feelings on this occasion were certainly not the most enviable; for, though pecuniary motives had been primarily predominant in his addresses to Miss Overbury, he really entertained for her a very tender regard. We do not mean that kind which is usually denominated love, but such as a man of common sensibility must unavoidably imbibe towards an amiable young creature, with whom he has long been intimately acquainted. The being thus unexpectedly deprived, as well of her company as her confidence, was a circumstance, which, abstracted from selfish considerations, afforded him sensible concern. His house, when no longer enlivened by Charlotte’s innocent vivacity, appeared a perfect vacuum. The conversation of his sister, more stupid than ever, and that intolerable petulance, which had so often been directed to the most engaging girl in the universe, was now too odious to be borne. In short, they saw each other as seldom as possible,—the lady devoting herself with great alacrity to redeeming, by augmented flippancy, the time she supposed had been lost during the blaze of rival beauty, and the gentleman to recruiting a broken fortune at the gaming-table, since Hymen had stubbornly refused to do him that good office.

C H A P. XIII.

Specimen of Economy.

ELIZA Butterfield, though a very different character from Charlotte Overbury, was nevertheless one of that description, in whom a person of tolerable good-nature might find a pleasing companion. Her understanding was by no means contemptible, and her temper was remarkably sweet. Conscious of her own inexperience, she was modest and unassuming, perfectly delicate in her manners and refined in sentiment,—qualities which she owed more to nature than the benefit of parental example or tuition; in short, she was in every respect the very reverse of her mother, whose rusticity and illiberal ideas formed the very opposite extreme to the mental refinement of her daughter. The young ladies experienced a sincere satisfaction in each other's society, and soon such an intimacy was formed between them as proved that friendship may subsist independent of entire congeniality of taste. Miss Butterfield materially differed from her companion, in that she was far gone in the romantic taste;—so far, indeed, that she had acquired exactly that softness of soul which is peculiarly inimical to the happiness of common life, by teaching the possessor to despise every satisfaction which is not rapture, and to overlook every virtue which is not heroic. Nor are its effects less pernicious with regard to honour and reputation. Too often the fair enthusiast nourishes a fatal sensibility, which lays her open to the designs of the artful and the vile: while fondly dreaming of chimerical perfection, she takes a serpent to her bosom, who stings her peace and fame. That Eliza was one of this cast was more her misfortune than fault. Immured in a country-village, without one companion of her own sex whose conversation could soften the rigours of solitude, her lively imagination panted for amusement of a higher kind than what the dull domestic circle in the Priory afforded. Books were a resource; she was fond of reading,—yet who should direct her literary pursuits? The justice read only acts of parliament, and Mrs. Butterfield knew one book from another merely as it treated of the culinary art or not. Some ancestors of the family had possessed the publications of their day, but these had long since been thrown by as useless lumber, and consequently were torn to pieces. Thus left to select her own subjects, it is no wonder that amusement rather than instruction was the object, and that such trash as chance afforded became the pernicious food of a mind naturally adapted to the highest improvement. Charlotte was not long ignorant of this part of her friend's character; she knew and pitied it. She did more, she hoped, with the assistance of time, to rectify so improper a taste.

But we are anticipating matters when we ought to be soberly pursuing the thread of our story.

Mrs. Butterfield, perfectly at ease in having effected her plan with so little difficulty, and finding she had now a whole day on her hands, resolved to employ this time to be spent in London in the most advantageous manner, which, according to her idea, (being what is called an excellent œconomist,) consisted in purchasing every thing she thought cheap, whether absolutely necessary or not; for, as long as her house was stored with pennyworths, the interest of money lost in such useless purchases was a point

to which her genius did not extend. As soon then as breakfast was over, she began her tour among the shops, cheapening every thing which caught her eye. Having picked up a quantity of upholstery and cabinet goods, &c. many of which she might have purchased equally cheap and good in her own neighbourhood. Her next business was to stock the wardrobes of the family, (which indeed were sufficiently stored before,) on which occasion her behaviour was absurd and affronting; for, concluding doubtless that she was dealing with some of those pedlars who hawk the country so much to the disadvantage of honest stationary traders, she would, when a piece of goods was shewn her, very modestly offer just half the given price.

“For shame, mamma, (whispered Eliza, with a gentle twitch of her cloak,) how can you do so?”

“Hold your tongue, child, Do you think I am so weak as to give people just what they ask for their goods?—Let me alone: I did not come to town to fling money away so foolishly.”

At the different shops where she chose to display her excellent talent of bargaining, some were seriously offended, others would bid her repair to Rag-fair. One among them, however, penetrating into the nature of her character, very coolly put back the piece of silk she had been cheapening, and, taking down some others, the price of which he prudently affixed at exactly half as much more as he chose to take, told her there were some goods, which, he believed, would suit her. Mrs. Butterfield could not but own they were elegant and good in their kind, though most extravagantly dear, and, according to expectation, offered her own price. The shopman, after a decent reluctance, consented to the bargain, and the lady, perfectly satisfied with having outwitted a Londoner, retired to her carriage with the trophies of her address and understanding.

It remained now for the several articles to be properly disposed for carriage, many of which were necessarily obliged to be committed to a stage-waggon; but, in order to save expence, it was resolved that as many, or indeed more than the strength of the coach could well sustain, should be packed in and on it, in the most commodious manner. Accordingly, behind was lodged a large mahogany dining-table, which served as the basis of looking-glass cases, &c. which, being piled in a very ingenious manner, supported the enormous load of boxes and trunks placed on the top of the carriage: neither must we omit to say that the minute attention of this good lady had provided that the fore part of it should also sustain a proportionable part of the general burden, by contriving to stow as much as she could in the vacancy between the axle-tree and the coach-box. As for parcels, there being only three inside passengers, they were deposited on the seats, leaving only as much space as would admit of themselves to squeeze in.—Robin, the coachman, muttered and swore that the horses were unable to draw such a luggage; but, Mrs. Butterfield observing, that, as they were not straitened for time, they could travel by easy stages, the matter was settled, and the next morning they began their journey to the West.

Moving in a sort of solemn state, by the third evening they had reached the city of Salisbury, where it was determined they should rest for the night. The uncommon appearance of this moving warehouse excited a good deal of mirth among the gentry of the inn-yard. The hostler, a lad of more vivacity than prudence, no sooner saw the coachman and footman properly settled by the kitchen fire, than, catching up a brush out of a pot of red paint which stood by, he wrote, in legible characters, on one of the pannels of the coach, Butterfield's common Stage-Cart.—Mrs. Butterfield, intending to set off early in the morning, retired, as soon as supper was over, as did also the servants, who had not been long withdrawn when there arrived a sailor, who some days before had landed at Portsmouth, and, being obliged to quit the service on account of ill health, was then on his way to his own parish. Perceiving the inscription with which the waggon of the hostler had honoured Madam Butterfield's vehicle, and not stopping narrowly to investigate particulars, he exclaimed, "What ship, my lads? I want a snug berth to the westward." The hostler immediately caught the joke, and told him if he would be content to wait a few hours, he would insure him a safe passage for sixpence. The poor fellow had no objection to repose his weary limbs over a jug of ale by the kitchen-fire, mean while the other contrived for the due completion of his plan. He had received orders to summon Mrs. Butterfield's coachman at four o'clock, which was at least then two hours before day-light. As the latter was busied in accoutring his horses in the stable, the hostler informed the sailor that the cart was ready to set out, who thereupon, paying the stipulated premium of sixpence, crept, unperceived, into the coach, and fell very comfortably asleep. It not being quite light when the ladies got in, it was not easy for them to discriminate their guest amidst such a profusion of luggage, and Robin was ordered to go on. They had drove about five or six miles, when their companion, endeavouring to shake off the bonds of Morpheus, yawned so loudly, that the ladies, dreadfully affrighted, uttered a most violent shriek. The sailor, not less surprized than themselves, bawled out, "Avast there,—avast there, I say;—what news from the deck?" By this time the coachman had stopped his horses, and the footman was come up, of whom Mrs. Butterfield demanded, in great wrath, what wretch he had suffered to get into the carriage. "Hold there, (cried the sailor,) let us have none of this lingo. We are all bound to the same port, I suppose, or somewhere about, and so let us sail quietly together, I say." The footman having opened the door, and let in the rays of the dawn, the son of Neptune was discovered jammed into a corner amongst the luggage. Mrs. Butterfield, perfectly outrageous, told him to be gone that instant.

"Not I truly, (replied the man,) I like my cot well enough. If you are not pleased, mistress, turn out yourself for me."

"Drag him out, Tom, this instant.—A pretty fancy, indeed, for such fragrants to get into a gentleman's coach!"

"D—n it, (cried the sailor,) why the woman is groggy this morning.—A gentleman's coach, eh!"

Charlotte, to whom the habit of a sailor was always a recommendation, discerning more in the affair than Mrs. Butterfield's passion would permit her to do, observed that

there must have been some mistake, and then, in a voice of good-nature, added, "Pray, honest friend, tell me by what means you got into this carriage."

"Aye, (answered the other,) now you speak civilly, I will say something to you. Why you must know, that, being half dead with the rheumatism and scurvy, I was looking out for some conveyance, when the hostler at the inn told me I might get a lift in Butterfield's stage-cart here; so, having paid my fare, I got quietly in, d'ye see,—that's all, my lass. What a deuce makes that old Jezabel set up her whistle so loudly?"

"I told you, madam, (said Charlotte,) there must have been a mistake. The poor fellow is not to blame.—My friend, (turning to the sailor,) you have been grossly imposed upon: this is a gentleman's carriage."

"Nay, then, I will get out this moment, and I heartily ask the lady's pardon;—but, by my soul, it was as I say, and I paid my sixpence to the bargain; but d—n the money, if that's all."

"Dear mamma, (whispered Eliza,) it can do us no harm if he goes a little farther,—he is so lame."

A look from her mother half petrified the compassionate girl. Mean time the sailor had quitted the coach, but Charlotte followed him with her eye till she saw they were not more than a couple of yards from a public-house, at which she desired they might stop and get a glass of water, though, in reality, it was a pretext in order to obtain some conversation with the poor invalid, who was but a few paces behind the coach when she stepped out of it. She saw him pallid with sickness, his crutch scarcely supported his emaciated limbs. "Take this, (said she, putting two guineas into his hand,) and procure a more peaceable conveyance.—From what part of the world are you last come, friend?"

"The West Indies, lady, (brushing off a tear of gratitude.) The Hector was my ship, Captain Overbury, commander."

"Jack Overbury! (clasping her hands.) Is he well,—is he?" Here she could utter no more, tears had choaked her voice.

"You know him then, lady?"

"He is my brother.—But, say, is he well, is the ship expected home?"

"You are then akin, madam, to the bravest gentleman that ever rode the wooden horse. Captain Overbury is a true-hearted lad as ever snuffed sea-air; and, though I am infirm now, if I live to recover, I would sail with him to the world's end."

"But is he well?"

“He was last June, and I hope will long remain so. It was the sorest trouble I ever knew in my life, when I was obliged to be put aboard the Swallow to come to England; I blubbered like a child when the captain bid me never fear; “for, though it be hazy weather at present, (said he,) it will clear up, my lad.”—Ah! he is true heart of oak, madam.”

“Honest soul, I honour thee for thy affection. Where is your home and what is your name?”

“Will Sanders, madam. My wife and children live about three miles from Ashton; though I am sure I had forgot Madam Butterfield as much as though I had never seen her in my life.”

Here, Mrs. Butterfield becoming impatient of the delay, Charlotte was obliged to resume the carriage, but not before Sanders had received an assurance that his honest zeal should be remembered on a future day.

“I wonder, Miss Overbury, (said Mrs. Butterfield, with an air of disdain,) how you could suffer such an *objectful* wretch to speak to you.”

“I could have heard him for ever, madam, on the subject we were upon. He gave me intelligence of my brother.”

“That alters the case, to be sure. The captain is coming home perhaps. Eliza, hold up your head, child: the captain is a worthy man.—I wonder if he is married.—What an ugly cast you have with your eye, child!—I dare say (musing) he is not married.”

Charlotte could give no decisive evidence on the point, and the subject was dropped.

C H A P. XIV.

Ludicrous Effect of excessive Sensibility.

OUR fair travellers once more reseated, they proceeded on their journey without farther interruption, till the spacious plain of Sarum lay far behind them, when an incident occurred, which, in order to illustrate the fine feelings of one part of the company, we think ought not to be omitted. —The person, who travels towards the extremities of this kingdom, must not expect the wheels of his carriage always to move with the same facility as if they were rolling over a bowling-green; for, though there is scarcely a village in the whole island which does not contain some one who, having filled an official character in the management of the turnpikes, will talk as loudly on the matter as a minister of state on opening the budget, yet it happens here sometimes as in matters of higher concern, much speaking is apt to produce an *afflatus*, and a good dinner, or a bowl of punch, becomes necessary to set all to rights again,—and here the business rests. Now Mrs. Butterfield's carriage was necessitated to pass through a long narrow dirty rugged lane, at the end of which was a collection of waters, not much resembling the pellucid streams of Pactolus; for, instead of golden sands, its bottom was composed of a deep black mud. Robin, nothing intimidated, lashed his steeds boldly into the dusky wave: but here, so fortune would have it, the old coach gave way;—crash went the axle-tree, and screams uttered the ladies. What was to be done?—Robin was preparing to unharness his coach-horses, in order to extricate the unfortunate dames from so unpleasant a situation, when, very fortunately, a single-horse chaise appeared, in which sat what is called in the country, by way of honorary distinction, a gentleman-farmer;—that is, one who, by dint of good seasons and long leases, can afford to tack a pair of wheels to the tail of his mare, and thus, if the gout or rheumatism makes an attack, comfortably lounges it in a “leathern conveniency.” This gentleman, considering the distressful scene before him, politely offered to take the three ladies into his chaise, which offer was readily accepted; but, alas! before the misfortune could be thus redressed, poor Eliza's brilliant eyes were closed in darkness,—or, in other words, she had, or pretended to have, fainted. She was, however, conveyed into the chaise, which soon brought them to a very decent house, where they were received by the farmer's wife with much hospitality, and very comfortably accommodated while the coach was repairing by a neighbouring carpenter.

Eliza, having been laid on a bed in the best apartment, recovered in due time.—Mrs. Butterfield was withdrawn to have some chat with her good hostess, and Charlotte only remained with the fair invalid, who now began to breathe such profound sighs as seriously alarmed her companion. “What is the matter?” said she anxiously.

“O Charlotte, why that distressing question? Would you wrest from me a secret which I dare not confess to myself?”

“Bless me, Eliza, what can you mean?—what secret is this?”

“Oh! ask me not, I intreat. Yet, my sweet friend, in your sympathetic bosom, I know it might be safely deposited, and perhaps your compassion may administer consolation to the ill fated Eliza.”

“Do not torture me, Eliza. Speak out, I beseech you, for you alarm me beyond expression.”

“Ill-fated day! (resumed the young lady, sighing most bitterly;) O most unfortunate accident!”

“If that be all, my dear, we shall do well enough. The coach is in a fair way to be repaired, and in the mean time we are very comfortably situated I assure you.”

“I doubt it not;—but where is he?—where is that all-accomplished youth, who, by redressing my misfortune, has rendered me the most miserable of human beings?”

Miss Overbury, actually concluding her to be in a state of delirium, quietly drew the curtains close around the bed, and seated herself in silence on the chair which stood beside it.

“Cruel girl! (exclaimed Miss Butterfield,) is it thus you repay my confidence? Is this the sympathy I was led to expect from you?”

“Compose yourself, my love; you want rest.”

“Name not rest!—that is ever more denied me, since I have seen this exalted, this divine creature. Did you not observe the enchanting grace with which he offered his assistance? What expression in his eyes! What delicacy, what sentiment, in his manner!”

“Whom can you mean, Eliza?”

“Happy Charlotte! That insensibility of yours has now been your security. Ah! why was I formed with such exquisite perceptions!”

“Seriously, my dear, there was not a single person near us but the friendly old gentleman at whose house we now are.”

“I see the aim of this. You have discovered the state of my heart, and would suppress a hopeless passion by persuading me those eyes could be deceived. The intention is kind, but, O my Charlotte, the mischief is beyond those means of cure. Never, never can I obliterate from my memory the idea of that lovely youth at the moment my enraptured eye beheld him approaching to our relief. Was it the effect of a too sanguine imagination that I thought his looks were directed to me with an expression which, though ineffable, my fond heart too readily understood?”

Here Miss Overbury could no longer repress her risibility; bursting into a hearty laugh, she replied, "Well, Eliza, I will not think this dreadful case absolutely hopeless. If a first sight has done so much mischief, the second I am sure will effectually redress it." We know not how the young lady might have been inclined to resent this want of sympathy in her friend, but, at this juncture, the good woman of the house, having provided a refreshment of tea, coffee, cakes hot from the oven, new butter, and cream, dispatched her daughter to request the two ladies' attendance. Scarcely were they seated when the farmer himself entered the room, hobbling on his crutch, with both legs swaddled in flannels, having but lately obtained a respite from a fit of the gout. He was a little fat swarthy man, of about fifty-five, with a face seamed by the small pox, and had on a blue coat, scarlet waistcoat, a small round black wig, and a silk handkerchief, tied round his neck by way of cravat. "Much good may it do you, ladies, (said he;) I hope none of you are now the worse for the fright."

"My dear Miss Butterfield, (said Charlotte, archly) this is the kind gentleman, who so opportunely arrived to our assistance. See, my dear, (with a particular emphasis,) the generous deliverer, to whom your acknowledgments are due."

Eliza, conscious of her folly, threw her eyes on the ground with a confusion incomprehensible to all but the confident of her romantic weakness. Both the farmer and his wife attributed her apparent reserve to a certain hauteur not uncommon in the behaviour of those who would blush at being thought in company of their inferiors; neither was it perhaps the first instance of the kind they had met with. Superior, however, to so despicable a sentiment, the good farmer replied, that there were no acknowledgments necessary,—the being at hand to render assistance, when needful, was to him a sufficient satisfaction. Charlotte, though more disposed to pity than ridicule so palpable a weakness, could not help whispering in her ear, that she hoped her malady was not of the most desperate kind; to which she received no other answer but a deep blush.—During the remainder of the journey, Eliza observed a profound silence, and so painful was the sense of shame excited by this ridiculous incident, that, had not this mental disease taken deep root, we believe it must have now met with an effectual remedy.—Whether this was actually the case, the subsequent part of this history must demonstrate.

C H A P. XV.

*Introduces such Characters as the Reader may
find any where.*

AMONG the first visitors at the Priory, on Mrs. Butterfield's return, were Mr. and Mrs. Martin;—the former a petty-fogging attorney of the neighbourhood, who for some years past had officiated as amanuensis to Mr. Butterfield. The knowledge which this worthy gentleman possessed of the law was exactly such as served the purposes of a narrow, selfish, and irascible disposition. He knew enough of it to be a rogue whenever occasion served, but either from dulness of parts or baseness of soul had never been able to catch any thing of its spirit, by which, rather than the letter, the welfare and happiness of society is promoted. It rarely happened but he had entangled in his net some unfortunate being or other, and had actually been the ruin of several petty farmers in the neighbourhood, who chanced not to be sufficiently submissive to the tyrannical oppressions of the little great around them, to whom Martin's activity and genius was often peculiarly useful. In consequence, he became the scourge and terror of the peasantry for twenty miles round, and was dreaded much more than the justice himself, to whom the judicial character appertained, but the real power was lodged in this limb of the law.

The same ascendancy which Mr. Martin's abilities acquired in respect of Mr. Butterfield, his wife, by singular address, had obtained over his lady. This woman possessed a most artful disposition, some knowledge of the world, and withal that busy restless spirit which is never at ease but when interfering with the affairs of its neighbours.—The latter trait, which in some persons is the effect of an idle inquisitiveness, in Mrs. Martin was the result of a temper sordid and malignant, which is ever watching opportunities of employing the weakness and foibles of others to selfish mercenary purposes. Mrs. Butterfield was a weak illiterate woman, very opinionated, fond of flattery, and of course credulously open to the designs of every one who offered it. This the other perfectly well understood, and therefore her business was not to affect the possessing any superior talents herself, but on all occasions to suppose the existence of such in her neighbour, by which means she had contrived to become the *primum mobile* of the family, nothing of moment being ever transacted at the Priory that had not first obtained her sanction. We are not however to suppose that the lady's views were merely those of empty honour; for, besides dining two or three times a week at the justice's table, her own was pretty well supplied from his larder with fish, game, or other rarities of the season, not to mention the frequent presents of apparel, &c. which she received from the generosity of Mrs. Butterfield.

On her introduction to Miss Overbury, the latter could not avoid seeing that she seemed to eye her with particular scrutiny, which was indeed the case. Mrs. Martin was not entirely satisfied whether the residence of that young lady in the family might prove so desirable a circumstance. There was something in her looks she did not like,—an air of intelligence and penetration not altogether pleasing. Eliza was a sweet girl, so ductile,

so soft; but in the other she could discover nothing of so hopeful a disposition. The two elder ladies having withdrawn to look over the London bargains, Charlotte made some enquiries respecting Mrs. Martin, to which Miss Butterfield replied, "I assure you, my dear, she is the sweetest woman in the world,—so good humoured, and withal so sensible. Mama never does any thing of consequence without consulting her. Her knowledge is really universal. She is the best companion imaginable. I should never have been able to sustain this solitude but for her. Then she seems to enter into one's feelings with so ready an apprehension; were she but a few years younger, she would make an excellent confidante. As it is, Mrs. Martin and I have always been on very intimate terms, and I verily believe she loves me as well as she could have done a daughter of her own."

While Eliza was thus indulging the panegyric strain, Mrs. Martin was exerting herself much in the same way, though not with equal sincerity.

"I have been fatigued to death, my dear Martin, (said Mrs. Butterfield,) since I saw you last,—so much business on my hands."

"I do not doubt it in the least. You are not one of those who would miss a good opportunity, and I dare say have well employed your time."

"You must judge of that. To be sure I have bought a few articles, and you shall now give your opinion whether I have been imposed on."

"That I'll be sworn you have not. No, no, Mrs. Butterfield, I know you too well for that."

By this time they were got into a large spare gallery, where the various purchases laid in a promiscuous huddle, as it required some study, furnished as was every apartment already, to dispose conveniently of so vast an acquisition.

"Look at this table, Martin; is it not *belegant*? These glasses, what do you think they cost me?"

To this interrogatory the other took care to mention about double as much as she supposed them to have cost, purposely to have a better opportunity of admiring the sagacity of the purchaser.

"And should you really think them worth so much? (with a smile of self-applause.) They stood me in little more than half that sum."

"You absolutely astonish me. Positively, my dear madam, I never saw your equal. Well may Mr. Butterfield be the envy of all the husbands around us."

"Pshaw! you jest."

Although this little word *pshaw* must be allowed, according to all the rules of verbal criticism, to imply disbelief or indifference, yet, in the present case, it actually meant no such thing. Mrs. Butterfield believed every syllable which the other had advanced; it was impossible to resist the impulse of the moment, and accordingly Mrs. Martin's profound discernment was rewarded with a piece of rich flowered silk, (not very modern indeed, but gaudy enough to cut a splendid dash in a country-church,) which, after due compliments, she condescended to accept. The conversation then turned on the young lady who now made one of the family.

"Don't you think Miss Overbury a *perdegis* fine girl?"

"She is very well."

"She is certainly a perfect beauty, Martin. We used to think Eliza a tolerable figure, but she must now yield to her companion."

"I beg your pardon there, my good madam. Miss Overbury has a good person, and as to height might have the advantage, but I cannot give up my sweet Eliza. In my opinion she infinitely exceeds in point of beauty."

"I own I cannot see that; but prithee, Martin, (affecting an air of pleasantry,) do you know any clever young fellow that we can pick out as a husband for Charlotte; you know she has a *commence* fortune."

It required no skill in the art of divination to be able to fathom the depth of Mrs. Butterfield's policy. Mrs. Martin had already cast the plummet, and therefore could venture to say, "Why, truly, madam, if I may speak my mind, I think you need not look far from home."

"That is the very thing I have been thinking of, between ourselves, Martin.—What is your opinion of such a scheme?"

"It has my approbation and warm wishes also, I assure you; not but Mr. Arthur's merits may demand the first lady in the land: but this would be making it quite a family-affair."

"Aye, so it would. The poor girl has no friends but ourselves, and if we could promote her advantage——"

"How benevolent is that reflection! Such disinterested goodness! Happy Miss Overbury! to have fallen into such excellent hands; but, pray, my good madam, when do you expect Mr. Arthur home?"

"I hope he will be here in the course of a week or two. It is best not to allow young people too much liberty of fixing their inclinations improperly."

“Right, perfectly right,” cried Mrs. Martin, which was the mark of approbation she seldom failed to bestow on the suggestions of her wise neighbour.

And here we must observe, that, though the above conversation may at first sight appear trifling, it must not be considered as unimportant to the design of this history. Great events are usually made up of trifling incidents; and, not to suppress a good simile this moment dropping from the pen, we would add, that an indifferent spectator of many of our manufactories would be apt to regard with inattention a minute wheel or a single screw, yet of such are composed those most ingenious machines which do honor to the mechanical heads of our countrymen; and this, by the way, may serve for an apology, if, in our domestic scenes, we should hereafter stand charged with descending to low or insignificant matter.

CHAP. XVI.

A Country-Mansion described.

ASHTON-Priory, as Sir Bevil Grimstone once rightly observed, had formerly been appropriated to religious retirement. The gothic air of the building clearly revived an idea of the gloom of the twelfth or thirteenth century, somewhere about which period it was doubtless erected: yet, durable as was then the architectural taste, it had, ere now, shared the fate of many structures in this kingdom of similar antiquity, had not successive proprietors, from time to time, added such repairs and supplementary erections as suited either their choice or convenience; insomuch, that this venerable fabric, in its present state, exhibited an appearance which would puzzle the best connoisseur in architecture to determine from which of the orders it ought to receive a denomination. The center was manifestly Gothic, as the pointed arches of the windows and front door fully expressed. In this part was the great hall, where the justice, in solemn pomp, exercised the duty of his function. This, with some gloomy apartments of smaller dimensions, vaulted passages, and long resounding ailes, composed the body of the building, which, with a sort of pious respect, was surrounded by some additions of a more modern aspect. Here a balcony, supported by Doric pillars, there a Venetian window ornamented by Corinthian capitals, emblazoned escutcheons, boars' heads, flying serpents, &c. exhibited an almost endless variety.

This most extraordinary pile was situated in a deep valley, closely surrounded by hills, as though the very light of the sun had been an indulgence too great for the mortified beings who once inhabited there to enjoy, while the croaking of rooks, the dashing of a waterfall, and the gloom of overhanging woods, seemed well calculated to sooth that melancholy, which, in the idea of monkish superstition constituted that divine principle whose real existence dissipates every mental gloom, and diffuses serenity and joy through all the powers of the soul.

It will perhaps be thought improbable that a person of Miss Overbury's sprightly temper could possibly support existence in a situation so opposite to the one she had lately been accustomed to; but her vivacity was not that kind which is the result of levity, but a constant cheerfulness of mind, arising from unsullied purity of heart, and universal benevolence,—capable, indeed, of occasional exhilaration, but never of absolute depression. This, with a taste for literary pursuits, music, drawing, and other polite accomplishments, was the reason that the solitude of the Priory was not so utterly insupportable as once she had imagined it must be.—The Butterfields kept a good table, and visited the best company in the neighbourhood, among whom she met with some not altogether unworthy her esteem. It might also be supposed, that a young woman of fortune would not be wholly unacquainted with the pleasures arising from the exercise of pity and beneficence. In reality, Charlotte was eminently susceptible of what is called the milk of human kindness, and often enjoyed the satisfaction of alleviating the pressure of indigence, and restoring comfort to the miserable, in which delightful employ Miss Butterfield had an opportunity of sharing: for, however compassionate her disposition

might naturally be, she had hitherto been restricted from indulging it, in the latitude she wished, by the parsimonious temper of her mother, who valued herself too much on her economy to allow her daughter to squander money on vagabonds, the light in which she always considered those on whom the gripping hand of poverty had alighted.

One day, just as dinner was over, the justice was told that a certain person required his attendance to take cognizance of a theft which had been committed on his premises. "Very well, (replied he,) I will hear the case in a few minutes; mean time, run Tom, and tell Mr. Martin to step hither."—The case at length having been duly stated, Mr. Butterfield returned to the parlour in a violent pet, exclaiming, "the rascal, he cannot be above sixteen at most, but I'll do for him, I warrant." He then sat down to finish his bottle in profound silence, which nobody seemed disposed to interrupt. When Mr. Martin had drawn up a copy of the indictment, he sent it in for the justice's perusal, who, cursorily scanning it over, said, "Aye, aye, it will do well enough, I dare say;—let him go to prison."

Miss Overbury, curious to know the nature of the offence, took up the paper, and read the following words: "Richard Sanders, convicted of stealing, taking, and carrying away, five turnips from a field inclosed, in the parish of Ashton, the property of one Humphry Jones, without his leave and consent."

"Five turnips! (exclaimed she,) and will you send this poor lad to prison for so trifling an offence?"

"Will I?—aye, and for half a turnip too."

"You do not properly consider this matter, Miss Overbury, (said Mrs. Butterfield.) If the venal laws were not duly put in force, there would be no living for such pretty rogues. Besides, we magistrates are obliged to do our duty."

It is here to be observed, that Mrs. Butterfield actually considered herself as much a magistrate as her husband, and it is still a query with those well acquainted with the family, whether she were not more so. During this eloquent speech, Charlotte recognized the name of Sanders with a very interesting emotion, and, going instantly out of the room, found the culprit standing in the hall, expecting his fate with trembling apprehension, of whom she demanded the name of his father.

"William Sanders," was the reply.

"And what is his occupation?"

"He is a sailor.—It is but a few weeks since he came home so ill, that he could scarcely reach his journey's end. It was on his account, but not with his knowledge, that I did this thing; for mother had got a bit of mutton to make him some broth, and she said she wished she had some turnips to make it good. I asked farmer Jones here to give me a few, knowing he had a great many in his field, but he would not, and I thought there

would be no harm in taking two or three. I don't mind going to jail, no, nor being whipped neither, on my own account, so much as the grief it will be to my poor father;—it will be the death of him.”

Too much affected to make any reply, Charlotte hastened to the office where Mr. Martin was employed, to whom she observed, that it would be cruel to commit a poor lad to prison for a first, and that so trifling, an offence; to which he coolly replied, that the law must take its course.—“But surely, Mr. Martin, the affair might be compromised. I will pay for the damage myself sooner than he shall be sent to prison. Here (taking out her purse,) are five guineas, that is a guinea for each turnip: do, pray, Sir, take it, and prevail on the prosecutor to release the boy.”

Martin told her that the matter had gone too far for that, he feared: besides, the farmer loved justice better than money;—to oblige her, however, he would speak to him, for which she warmly expressed her thanks. Nothing, however, was farther from his intention than such a measure;—if it must be so, there were other ways of contriving it, and the five pieces would as easily slip into his own pocket as that of Jones; besides, as Charlotte appeared so much interested in the event, it would not be difficult to procure an augmentation of that sum. He knew Sanders would not want presence of mind to improve an opportunity of escaping, and therefore caused the farmer and his party to be invited into the kitchen to a jug of ale, who, supposing all safe, readily complied. The lad no sooner perceived his attendants withdrawn, than, concluding all ceremony might be dispensed with, he prudently took himself out at the front-door, choosing rather to trust to the swiftness of his heels than the lenity of the magistrate.

The news of this unhandsome retreat soon reached the parlour, not more to the displeasure of the justice than the satisfaction of Miss Overbury, who soon after took an opportunity of expressing her acknowledgements to Mr. Martin, on which he said that he would not have engaged in such an affair, had it not been purely to have obliged her; that he had found more difficulty in it than he had expected, for the farmer would not be prevailed on to listen to terms of pacification under ten guineas. Charlotte, on this information, readily reimbursed the other five guineas, and departed with a satisfaction that abundantly rewarded her benevolence.

It was not long, however, before she obtained an insight into the nature of the case; for, calling one day at Sanders's cottage, she found the poor lad was compelled to be an exile from his paternal dwelling; for, though he had luckily escaped the hand of justice, yet the affair was far from being settled as she had concluded it was. The circumstance, however, had prudently been concealed from the father, who now lay on the verge of dissolution. She desired to see him, and, on drawing near his bedside, tenderly asked how he did. “My bark, you see, mistress, (returned the honest tar,) has suffered a little by this gale, and, to say truth, cannot, I think, hold together many hours; but that would not be a matter of much concern, as I trust there is a good port at hand, were it not for the thoughts of leaving my poor wife and family.”

“Let not that disquiet you, my good friend. My brother and I will take care that they shall be comfortably provided for.”

“Blessings on your heart for this, young lady. What words of comfort you give a dying man!—but Dick, I fear, will do himself no good; not but that he is a good lad in the main, though, unluckily, his mother has put him to a trade which, I doubt, will not do for him.”

These apprehensions were too well founded; for Sanders’s wife, burthened with four children, had gladly embraced an opportunity of placing her son Richard apprentice to a shoemaker, which occupation was totally inconsistent with a genius naturally active; hence it happened that Dick was engaged much oftener at wrestling, foot-ball, &c. than in his shop at the last, which occasioned heavy complaints on the part of his master, who, in spite of his displeasure, would often affirm that a more generous open-hearted lad never existed.

“The name of Overbury, (resumed Charlotte,) has been dear to you. Your family shall have cause to respect it also. I will take your eldest daughter under my own care, and my brother will pay so much regard to the memory of an honest seaman as to provide for your son more suitably to his inclinations. Your wife shall be enabled to bring up the rest,—thus you may discharge all anxiety on this account.”

The sailor’s heart was full: instead of words, tears expressed his feelings. In fine, Charlotte, having done every thing which humanity prompted, returned to the Priory, and the next morning was informed that Will Sanders had breathed his last. Soon after, pursuant to her promise, she took the eldest girl to wait on herself, and also furnished the widow with a sum of money to set herself in a small way of business with her younger children. As for Richard, she deemed it best to leave him in his present situation till her brother’s return, very properly supposing that his feelings on the occasion would prove a salutary reprehension for his fault.

C H A P. XVII.

Pride and Pedantry exemplified.

AT length, the young gentleman, for whose arrival Mrs. Butterfield had been long impatient, appeared at the Priory. Mr. Arthur Butterfield had not received from nature any great portion of personal elegance. His stature was considerably above the common size, yet one would be apt to conclude him no ways satisfied with the superiority, as he appeared desirous of sinking to the ordinary standard of height by a remarkable stoop of the head, by which means his shoulders exhibited a rotundity not altogether consistent with our ideas of a graceful figure. His complexion was sallow, nor was there any part of his face that bore the least approximation to beauty, except the eyes: these indeed were black and sparkling, but most maliciously concealed, as much as could be, by the envy of a pair of protuberant cheek-bones. Little as this gentleman may be supposed indebted to nature, he was determined to owe still less to art, by manifesting, on all occasions, an utter disregard of those minutiae which are allowed to embellish a handsome face, and to improve a plain one. He was, in fact, a sloven in dress, not so much from insensibility to those things as from pride. His natural abilities being, at best, but very mediocre, he had gone to the university a blockhead, and returned a pedant, consequently deemed it beneath the dignity of literature to stoop to external trifles. During his residence at college, he had certainly merited the reputation of a diligent student; but his mental ability proving too weak to digest the substance of so many ponderous volumes, it is supposed that the heterogeneous matter, lodging in the pericranium, in defect of sufficient force to promote due concoction, had degenerated to a mere calx, the dry particles of which, affecting the optic nerve, produced at length that kind of malady in which the patient is incapable of discerning the most obvious degree of merit in another, at the same time he supposes no ordinary portion of it to be centered in himself. In other words, Mr. Arthur Butterfield was proud, conceited, and pedantic, a coalition of qualities infallibly adapted to inspire the ridicule and contempt of mankind. The chance, therefore, which he stood of acquiring the affections of Miss Overbury will, without much difficulty, be easily computed, who, not entertaining the remotest suspicion of Mrs. Butterfield's long meditated scheme, considered him as one, whose good or ill qualities could not be an interesting object to her, and therefore, though probably disgusted with his manner, thought civility to the family obliged her to conceal any secret contempt she might feel towards the heir of it. Some days after his arrival, the sagacious mother deemed it high time to set her plan in motion, and, seizing a convenient opportunity, accosted him with, "Well, son Arthur, I should be glad to know how you have passed your time at college."

"In academical pursuits you may be sure, madam."

"Aye, to be sure, *economical* pursuits.—Greek and Hebrew, I suppose. Very right! You will be a justice of the Quorum, and such things will be useful to help you to know the laws of your country; but, besides all that, a young man has other pursuits sometimes, Atty. What particular lady have you paid your court to?"

“The Muses, madam, have received my principal devoirs.”

“I am sorry to hear that;—bad women, son, will bring a man to ruin.”

“You misunderstand me, mother. I mean only the liberal sciences.”

“That is well; because I must tell you I have looked out a wife for you,—one to whom you can make no objection.”

“Indeed, madam, as much devoted as I am to philosophy, I have no mind to exercise my patience by the example of Socrates. We men of letters are apt to consider a wife as a disagreeable incumbrance.”

“Incumbrance, sirrah! Let me tell you that your father well knows a good wife to be no incumbrance.”

“Dear mother, do not be offended. I only mean that a single life leaves us more at liberty to pursue our favourite studies. I confess I have no inclination to marriage, yet, to oblige you and my father, I may perhaps consent, provided the lady is to my taste.”

“I’ll tell you what, Arthur, the Butterfields are a good old modern family, and it is your duty to take care that the name be not distinct. You can have no objection to the person I recommend, since it is no other than your father’s ward, and a fine girl she certainly is.”

“As to personal advantages (with a supercilious indifference,) we, who are accustomed to abstruse studies, do not make those an object of attention. Provided a woman is properly domesticated, and knows how to observe a proper distance towards her husband, we are anxious for no more.”

“I will engage she will leave you to your obtuse studies; but the main point is, that she will have as good as thirty thousand pounds to her fortune; therefore I hope you will not miss the opportunity which I have taken so much pains to procure you.”

“I shall take occasion to consider the lady more attentively, and, if I find her deserving, I may perhaps condescend to the measure, though I assure you, madam, I consider the affair of matrimony rather as a point of duty than choice,—a step which, with regard to moral fitness, may be proper, but in respect of inclination not at all desirable.”

Satisfied with this acquiescence, Mrs. Butterfield left him to determine the precise plan of procedure, which he resolved should be conducted on philosophical principles.—Love was a passion, he thought, could only govern women and fools, it was therefore beneath the dignity of wisdom to affect it, or to flatter the natural vanity of the weaker sex so far as to suffer them to suppose a wise man’s happiness could depend on them;

yet, in order that the lady might not be altogether ignorant of the favour he designed her, he would often present her with the finest fruit at the desert, or, if walking in the garden, present her with a nosegay. These were all the direct intimations he thought proper to give of his passion, but he had also another mode of shewing his regard, not quite so intelligible, which was that of contradicting her humour on all occasions, as a specimen of which we will, from a variety of such incidents, select the following.

Charlotte's conduct towards the widow and family of poor Sanders was of a nature not to be long concealed. The whole neighbourhood resounded with applause of that beneficent action. To Mr. Arthur Butterfield was reserved the glory of proving it the result of a principle very opposite to that which the world generally supposed. He very freely told her such liberality was nothing more than selfish gratification. "Examine your own heart, (said he;) say, what were your feelings on that occasion?"

"Such (answered she) as I think the trifling sum I bestowed well employed in purchasing."

"Why, that confession demonstrates the truth of my preposition;—you bestow on the indigent purely to gratify a thirst of pleasure."

"I suppose then you would have one resist the best impulses of the heart out of mere self-denial."

"When, as in this case, they spring from a selfish motive, it is virtue to resist them."

"Do you call that a selfish motive which prompts us to the alleviating the miseries of a fellow-creature?"

"I say that the merit of all the melting hearted tribe is not worth a rush, since you all confess yourselves more than repaid in the luxury of your own feelings."

"Back to thy tub, thou surly Diogenes! (cried she, laughing,) and leave me to taste the pleasures which reason and nature scatter in my way."

Here, with a look of ineffable disdain, he reiterated, "Diogenes!—What a lamentable circumstance, madam, is it, that your sex should always be aiming to soar above their sphere. If you knew how unsuitably the wrinkles of study sit on your brows, you would be inclined to leave it to us, who are better adapted to such pursuits."

"Since, my good friend, (with an ironical air,) you seem to think ignorance the brightest of all feminine accomplishments, I trust you will not deny me all pretensions thereto, as it is possible that a woman may know something of the name and character of Diogenes without breaking into the stores of learned lore."

“True; but, as you find yourselves compelled to receive this sort of information at second hand, it certainly would become you better to let those subjects entirely alone.—Your heads, madam, are not formed for those things.”

“Of all the cants (interrupted she, stealing a little from Sterne) which are canted in this canting world, the cant of pedantry is most insupportable.”

Sometimes he would interrupt her on the most trivial subjects, with refutations borrowed from the Berkleian system, to which he was a zealous convert. He would tell her that external bodies had no real existence, and tease her for half an hour together with arguments drawn from that ideal philosophy, all which she generally cut short by some sprightly repartee, without giving herself the trouble to express the perfect contempt she entertained of his character.—At these kind of rencontres Mrs. Butterfield was frequently present, secretly congratulating herself on the abilities of her son, who, she was certain, was hourly gaining ground in Charlotte’s esteem. Often, with a smile of delight, she would whisper the justice, “Atty will gain the day at last. I am sure it is impossible for any girl to withstand him. I can see she is over head and ears in love with him already.”

C H A P. XVIII.

Unexpected Intelligence.

SUCH was the posture of affairs at the Priory, when Miss Overbury received the pleasing intelligence of her brother's ship being arrived at Spithead, and some days after received from him the following letter, though the contents of it were not perfectly agreeable to her expectations.

"My dear sister,

Though it is now six years since we have seen each other, yet I hope you have not forgot you have a brother. It were to be wished that his circumstances at this time were such as could cause you to remember him with pleasure; but a sailor's life, you know, Charlotte, is exposed to a thousand accidents which landmen are secure from; it may not then, perhaps, surprise you to find me in a condition to solicit your assistance; for, though at sea we have small occasion for l'argent, and certainly care as little about it as any people in the world, yet in port there is no doing without the needful.—The accident by which I have lost my fortune, and am compelled to apply to you, shall hereafter be explained by

Your affectionate brother,

JOHN OVERBURY."

This epistle (the postscript of which contained his address) Charlotte ran to present to Mrs. Butterfield, exclaiming, at the same time, "Jack, my dear Jack, is arrived!" and then dropt lifeless on the floor. As soon however, as she was recovered, Mrs. Butterfield, having read the letter, returned it to her, saying, "I see no reason you have to be so overjoyed, Miss Overbury, at the captain's return, since he has reduced himself to this plight. Five and twenty thousand pounds, all sunk in wenches, I suppose, at every port he came to!"

This being a suggestion which had never entered the mind of the young lady, she hastily replied, "I cannot suffer myself to suppose he has dissipated it by any improper methods. A too benevolent or unsuspecting disposition, or else unexpected misfortune, has——"

"Be that as it may, (interrupting her,) it is a pretty story, indeed, that he should expect any assistance from you: he ought to take the consequences of his own folly. Let him go to sea again, for I do not know what he should do at home in this case."

To this charitable strain Charlotte deemed no reply necessary;—immediately quitting the room, she went in search of her guardian, and, having briefly acquainted him with the misfortunes of her brother, desired he would be so kind as to advance her a hundred pounds of her next year's salary.

“A hundred pounds!—Odd zooks, for what?—to fling away upon a spendthrift. I hope you know better, child, than to think of such a thing.”

She doubted not, (she replied,) but that her brother had met with some of those adverse accidents which are too often the fate of the best people; but, by what means soever the misfortune had happened, it was both her duty and inclination to assist him.”

“You young people (resumed the magistrate) are wonderfully generous before you know the value of money: but I shall at this time prevent your imprudence, by assuring you, at once, that I will not advance a single shilling.”

Poor Charlotte, both disappointed and chagrined, now felt herself in a painful dilemma. Her disposition too strongly inclined to liberality to allow her the hoarding any considerable part of her stipend, and at this time her pecuniary store did not exceed ten guineas. Her friend, Eliza, she knew had it not in her power to assist her. After some consideration, she resolved on applying to Mr. Martin, though, for recent observations, he was certainly the last whom she would have preferred on the occasion. However, it was her dernier resource, and she immediately went to his house, where, having made known the purport of her visit, the attorney, after a short pause, told her he was extremely sorry, but really he had not such a sum by him.

“Perhaps you have forty or fifty by you. It is only for a present occasion, and, as my usual stipend will become due in a fortnight, I should then repay it with gratitude.”

Mr. Martin declared he had not ten guineas in the house, and very politely opened the door of his office for her to withdraw.—That instant appeared the attorney’s lady, who, to say truth, had been indulging a little innocent curiosity at the key-hole of the door. With extraordinary civility she pressed her to sit a few minutes in the parlour, where the conversation was so properly managed, that Charlotte readily disclosed the nature of her distress, which indeed the other had contrived to understand before.

“I know (replied Mrs. Martin) that my husband at present is short of cash, but I would not for the world so charming an impulse of benevolence should be checked, and therefore I will myself endeavour to procure for you such a sum of a neighbour.”

“Will you be so obliging, madam?”

“Most willingly. Call on me in about half an hour, and I hope things will be settled to your mind.”

Charlotte was no sooner gone, than Mrs. Martin stated the affair so clearly to her husband, that he was induced to fetch forty guineas from his scrutoire. “If I did not confide in thy prudence, Bet, (said he, on giving them to her,) I would not entrust thee with such a sum. Be sure, you baggage, you order things properly, or——”

“Leave me alone for that. What! I warrant I know how to manage a thoughtless young mad-cap before this time of day.”

At the appointed time, Miss Overbury returned, and, as her thoughts were entirely occupied by the business in hand, her first interrogatory was, whether Mrs. Martin had procured the money.

“I have, with much difficulty, my dear; and, had it been on my own account, I do not think I could have had the courage to have been so importunate as I have been; but, to accommodate Miss Overbury, what is there I would not do?”

“You infinitely oblige me, my dear madam. I will give you a note payable in a fortnight.”

“Pshaw! what signifies a note between friends; yet, as I see your delicate scruples will not be satisfied without that ceremony, I will humour them for once.”

She then wrote a promissory-note, the form of which she had just received from her husband; but, instead of forty, inserted the words fifty guineas, which Charlotte, in the ardour of her impatience, signed without looking over, and then departed with proper acknowledgments.—We will stop here to observe, that, within three weeks after this occurrence, Miss Overbury carried the forty guineas to the donor, who, affecting surprise, produced the note for fifty. “There must have been a mistake, madam; I had only forty.” Mrs. Martin at these words, with most astonishing effrontery, began to express both concern and resentment at the thoughts of being deemed capable of such a conduct,—threw out some reflections on the return she was likely to meet for her friendship, &c. when Charlotte, though convinced of her duplicity, in order to avoid altercation, put the specific sum on the table, flung her note into the fire, and departed, resolving to be more frugal in future, and dreading those pecuniary straits which could put her in the power of avarice and dishonesty.

But to return.—

Charlotte, together with as large a sum as she could raise on the occasion, dispatched the following letter to her brother.

“Your misfortunes, my dear Jack, affect me no otherwise than as they have been the subject of pain to yourself. It is impossible that the loss of fortune can lessen my affection for you. I know not if I am not even gratified by the circumstance, since an opportunity is thereby afforded me of testifying the sincerity of my love. The little pittance I here present is all in my power to do at present; but the time is not far off (would it were now arrived!) when I will convince the best of brothers that I despise a good which he does not share;—in other words, we will divide the fortune bequeathed me by our dear deceased father.—But have you unkindly resolved to leave England without giving me an opportunity of seeing you?—Tell me, my ever beloved brother, where I shall find you, that I may fly on the wings of sisterly affection to enjoy your

company, if but for one half hour. Do not deny me this happiness, which so long has been impatiently desired by

Your affectionate

CHARLOTTE.”

To this letter Miss Overbury, by return of post, received the following reply.

“Pardon me, my dearest sister, if, although I came to England prepared to shew you the true affection of a brother, I yet endeavoured by this trial of your temper to find a proper basis for that kind of esteem which is not found always between persons so nearly related.—The success of my experiment exceeds even my expectation. You are a noble girl, Charlotte, and henceforth I shall glory in my sister. I am happy in telling you that my distress was only feigned, in order to make full trial of your disposition. My fortune is rather augmented than otherwise, and that as well as life itself, if requisite, shall ever be sincerely devoted to my dear Charlotte by

Her affectionate brother,

JOHN OVERBURY.”

Eager to wipe every unfavourable aspersion from the character of her brother, Charlotte hastened to unfold the contents of his letter to Mrs. Butterfield, who, assuming a smile of good humour, cried, “Well, I declare, this is the pleasantest joke;—the matter is just as I thought it. I had too good an opinion of the dear captain to believe his case could be as bad as you concluded.—Charming fellow! send him word this instant that we long to see him at the Priory’

“I think, my dear, (said Mr. Butterfield,) it would look better if I were to do it.”

“No, (returned she hastily;) it would look better if I were to do it. You know, Mr. Butterfield, you are nothing at all at a pen.”

“No, truly; I do not practise it child, for I think you have not permitted me to send a line out of my own house these twenty years.”

“And are you not obliged to me for taking pains that you may not *repose* yourself? Letter-writing requires a great deal of labour and study I assure you.”

“Pardon me, madam, (said Charlotte,) I have always been told that familiar letters should bear nothing of this tincture.”

“Those who told you so did not understand it. I have wrote a cart-load of letters in my time, and I assure you they were always admired for expressing the *confusions* of the mind.”

Charlotte, not to offend by discovering a smile which it was impossible to repress, retired, and Mrs. Butterfield sat down at her writing-desk, where, after having scratched and blotted two sheets and a half of paper, she produced in about a couple of hours this finished epistle.

“Dear Captain,

We are all *contaminated* with the most *deleterious* feelings, at hearing you are safely returned to England. We should not do justice to the great affection we bear you as the *predecessor* of that worthy man your father, did we not desire you to consider Ashton Priory as your home, as long as you shall remain in England. You must be assured we are very desirous of having you constantly at home with us, and therefore hope that some happy she will so *pre-engage* your affections, that the *preceding* part of your life will be spent in a state less *concoctious* to danger than that which is past. I dare say you are not at a loss to *misconstrue* my meaning.—We all join in hoping a few days will bring you to the Priory, and I beg you to believe me, dear Sir,

Your most *obstreperous*

And most *devout* humble servant,

A. BUTTERFIELD.”

“What do you think of my letter?” said the lady to her husband, with a self-applauding smile.

“I dare say, sweeting, it is vastly clever, though I cannot pretend to say I understand much of it.”

“How should you?—You know nothing of fine writing; but did you observe the hint I gave respecting matrimony? Was it not dexterously brought in?”

“To be sure; but I should have thought it time enough for that.”

“You should have thought!—People who know how to express themselves, with propriety, may say fifty things which another durst not touch on, because they do not know how to skim the subject as one may say; for instance, now, if some folks had been to write on such a matter, they would have said downright, I design you shall marry my daughter;—but you see how I have managed it, eh!

“Yes, love, I zee it. But pray, now we are talking of them there things, how does Atty’s affair go on? Does her give him any encouragement?”

“As much as a prudent young woman ought to do. They are ever at cross purposes, and, when he comes near her, she puts on a frown, which you know was the very manner of my shewing my regard to you.”

“True, my dear, and, like a good wife, you continue these tokens of fondness to this present day.”

As it may not be necessary to pursue this matrimonial *tête-à-tête* farther, we will leave the justice and his lady to themselves, only observing that the latter, seeing every thing just in train as she could wish, resolved to have some discourse with her daughter, the substance of which will appear in the following chapter.

END OF VOL. I.

ASHTON PRIORY: A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

BENEDICTA AND POWIS CASTLE.

VOL. II.

LOVE is not Sin, but where 'tis sinful LOVE,
Mine is a Flame so holy and so clear,
That the white Taper leaves no Soot behind,
No Smoke of Lust.

DRYDEN.

LONDON:

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M DCC XCII.

ASHTON PRIORY.

CHAP. XIX.

*An excellent Method of directing a young
Lady's Inclinations.*

"I Have sent for you, Eliza, in order to discourse you on a matter of consequence.—Hold up your head: how frightful you look in that beggarly jacket!"

"It is too bad to be worn, madam, and therefore I designed giving it to Jenny."

"Giving it!—No, no, it will do to cover a bed-quilt for one of the servants. You must not think always to be so squandering; it is high time you should study economy, and know how to make the best of things, which, by the bye, brings me to the subject I want to talk with you upon. Do you know, child, you are to be married very soon?"

Miss Butterfield's astonishment prevented her making a reply, and her mother again resumed, "Yes, Eliza, I have provided a very worthy man to be your husband,—one who is rich enough to keep you a coach, if you can bring him to that point. Indeed, I like for people to make a figure abroad, however they may stint themselves at home."

"But, dear madam, let me know to whom I am to be sacrificed."

"You might have found a better word, miss. The person I have fixed on is Captain Overbury.—What! is the idiot got to whimpering? I am astonished; but, let me tell you, girl, that I am determined on the thing; and, if you shew the least resistance to my will, I will never own you as a daughter more."

"Hear me (cried Eliza, sobbing) at least one word."

"Not half a one, you undutiful baggage! What! have I taken all this care, and set my poor wits so hard at work for nothing? I won't bear it, and therefore I charge you to prepare for receiving the captain as you ought to do, or turn out of my house immediately."

It is certain that, had Mrs. Butterfield employed her cogitations for a month together, to discover the most effectual method of defeating her own purpose, she could not have hit on one better adapted than this she had chosen; for Miss Butterfield, being, as before observed, far gone in the romantic taste, no sooner heard her mother propose marriage in so peremptory a style, than her inclinations instantaneously revolted to absolute disobedience. Whatever the *agrémens* of the captain might be, he was the man which parental tyranny attempted to impose on her, and consequently to be rejected with invincible firmness.

Eliza, in the true spirit of romance, retired to her chamber to bewail her misfortunes, and Mrs. Butterfield was somewhat comforted by the presence of Mrs. Martin, who, perceiving all was not right, and burning with impatience for an active part in the matter, whatever it was, addressed her with, "Lack-a-day! my worthy friend, I am afraid something rather unpleasant has happened.—Bless me, how I am distressed!" This sympathetic cant had the desired effect. The angry dame unfolded the whole affair, weeping and raving by turns at the monstrous obstinacy (as she termed it) of her daughter. Mrs. Martin was immediately in the same key, lamented the folly of young women who were averse to submit their inclinations to parental direction, and then, to wind up the farce, joined in a bitter shower of tears, for these she had always conveniently at command. Having wept, and railed, and sympathized, as much as appeared becoming the occasion, she next proceeded to counsel: "To be sure, my dear madam, you are the best of mothers. I have heard so high a character of Captain Overbury, that I cannot but be surprised at the conduct of Miss Butterfield;—she is infatuated surely. Will you give me leave to try what my remonstrances can effect on her?"

"Aye, do, dear Martin, give the simple girl a little of your good advice. Perhaps you may bring her to reason."

Mrs. Martin immediately withdrew for that purpose, and found, as she expected, the young lady in tears.

"My sweet girl, my best Eliza, what can occasion this distress, which cuts me to my very soul to witness?"

Here, as before, an ample explanation took place; the confidante had only to take the other side of the argument to be as acceptable to the daughter as to the mother.

"To be sure, my dear, parents have a right to command their children."

"Not in affairs of the heart, my dear Mrs. Martin."

"Why,—no. I confess nature seems to have limited their power there, and it is a pity that they are so apt to forget those exquisite sensibilities which they themselves were once endowed with. It is true, I am not a parent, but, if I were, I think I should proceed on a different plan."

"Good creature!—I wish you were my mother."

"Why, then, suppose you fancy me such, and unbosom to me all your griefs. Are you acquainted with the captain?"

"Not in the least."

"How absurd, to expect a young woman to love a man she has never seen!"

“Aye, a man she has never seen!—But one may love a man one has seen but once, Mrs. Martin.”

“Undoubtedly. Refined minds are eminently susceptible of delicate impressions.—The captain, I think, is a sailor.”

“Yes,—a vulgar, unpolished, odious, tar!”

“I must say, my love, that, from what I conceive of this gentleman, he cannot be suitable to one of your refined taste and sentiments: besides, it looks so like a Smithfield bargain, that I do not wonder you are hurt at the idea. I pity you from my soul, nevertheless——”

“You would advise me to accept of him,” interrupting her.

“I do not know what to say, my poor girl. If you do, you may probably be miserable, and, if you do not, your parents’ resentment will fall heavily, I fear.”

“And let it, Mrs. Martin.—What is life to love!

Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment dies.
At least, such ties as those my good mother would impose on me.”

Sweet girl!—But, Eliza, listen to me.—However disagreeable this match may be to you, (and such I fear it infallibly will,) you must resolve to submit to it.”

“Can you be serious?”

“Unquestionably so. Consider the duty you owe to your good parents, who, though they may be a little mistaken, can mean nothing but your advantage.—The captain is rich.”

“But, my good friend, am I not also to consider the duty I owe to myself?—Tell me that.”

Here Mrs. Martin thought proper to give the young casuist the advantage of the argument by pretending to have nothing to say in reply. Eliza concluded she had actually foiled her, and it was the intention of the other that she should draw that very conclusion; but, for what reasons, the good reader must be content to learn from some future chapter. At present, we can only say that Mrs. Martin concluded her part by advising Eliza to pacify her mother, for the present, by concealing her feelings so far as not openly to avow her repugnance to the captain. Much (she said) might be effected by such a conduct; whereas, declared opposition could but serve to accelerate the fate she dreaded.

Such a mode was certainly beneath the dignity of romance, but, the age of chivalry being no more, Eliza considered that she had at present no valorous knight to defend her cause, and therefore submitted, (though reluctantly,) to the advice.—In the mean time, Mrs. Martin promised to exert her endeavours with the mother to bring her over to a more reasonable way of thinking; not doubting, (she affirmed,) but that lady would in time be induced to see the cruelty of desiring her daughter to give her hand to a man who could never obtain her heart;—but, as the bond of this stroke of friendship, she insisted that Miss Overbury should never be informed of the conversation that had passed between them.—“It is her brother, you know, Eliza.”——The suggestion implied a selfishness Miss Butterfield could never suspect to be any part of Charlotte’s character. However, to oblige this kind friend, she promised her all the reserve she desired on the occasion.

C H A P. XX.

The Serenade.

ALTHOUGH, pursuant to the advice of Mrs. Martin, Eliza assumed as cheerful an appearance as she could, the penetrating eye of Charlotte discovered more at the bottom than the former chose to avow; but, as she had not the honour of being in the secrets of the family, it was impossible for her to suspect the cause from whence the uneasiness of her companion arose. An incident, however, occurred, which intimated to her a part, though not the whole occasion of it.—Happening one night to make a longer stay than usual in Miss Butterfield's apartment, which lay in a remote part of the Priory, she was suddenly surprized by the sound of a violin played under the window, to which a plaintive voice sung the following stanzas.

Ah! why did Nature form you fair,
Yet gave a heart of steel?
Why was I doom'd those charms to see,
And yet my love conceal?

Deep in my pensive eyes 'tis writ,
Sighs rend my aching breast;
I pine the tedious night away,
Depriv'd of wonted rest.

The sun breaks forth to glad the earth,
Sweet flowers hail his ray;—
Be thou my sun, and let thy smile
Chase all my gloom away.

“The voice (said Miss Overbury,) is more harmonious than the poetry; but, prithee, Eliza, who is this nocturnal serenader?”

Covered with confusion, she replied, affecting an air of indifference, that she supposed it was some village-rustic, not worth enquiry.

“But who, my dear, would take the liberty of approaching your window in such a manner?”

“Perhaps he has mistaken it for one of the maids.”

Charlotte, giving her a look of serious attention, perceived she seemed to shrink from so nice a scrutiny, and in her blushing countenance saw room for a suspicion pretty nearly the truth. She would not, however, discover her thoughts at that time, but wished her good night with more solemnity than was usual to her.—Eliza was not yet so much an adept in dissimulation as to be able to meet her on the following morning without

discovering manifest uneasiness. Charlotte read her feelings, and, with the most friendly intentions, persisted in following her, though it was plain the other industriously avoided her company. At last they met in the garden, where the following conversation took place between them.

“Eliza, I cannot but observe a visible alteration in your manner. You are no longer the dear lively communicative girl you used to be. What is the occasion of it?”

“You distress me, Charlotte, by a mere suspicion of this nature; yet, if you had not anticipated the remark, I should perhaps have made exactly such an one on your own behaviour.—In what manner did you leave me last night!”

“I confess, my dear, it was with some seriousness and much concern, but with a heart animated with the warmest affection.”

“I saw that foolish affair occasioned you to look grave; and, to confess the truth, my beloved Charlotte, I have severely upbraided myself ever since for the want of confidence I manifested towards you, for my poor heart longs to repose itself in your friendly bosom,—assure me but of your forgiveness and pity.”

“The first is unnecessary, as I could have no cause to be offended; the latter I am incapable of withholding, whenever my Eliza’s affairs may be so unhappy as to require it.—Come, come, (smiling,) this looks like so pretty, so tender an affair, that I long to be at the bottom of it. You have an enamorado incog, is it not so?”

“Ah! if you knew my feelings, you would treat them with less levity; but you never were sensible of the power of the soft passion, Charlotte.”

“Not so far as to allow it to disturb my repose, I confess; yet, for all this, I can sympathize with those who believe they do.”

“You think love then an imaginary sentiment.”

“A good part of what is called so I do sincerely; but, dear creature, do tell me something of the charming fellow who has raised such a combustion in that gentle bosom;—his name, I mean.”

“I scarcely know it myself.”

“But you do his family, at least.”

“I am quite a stranger to it. All I know is, that he is a gentleman. Do you recollect, Charlotte, a genteel young fellow, who frequently sits in the next pew to us at church.”

“I do:— but surely this cannot be the lover of my Eliza?”

“And what would there be so extraordinary in the matter if it were?”

“Because nobody knows any thing of him.”

“You, perhaps, mistake. Mrs. Martin has assured me that she has been credibly informed he is of a very ancient and wealthy family, and came hither merely for the benefit of his health.”

“I never heard this village remarked for the salubrity of its air.”

“Nor I neither. You see then that this cannot be the true motive of his stay.—To be plain with you, Charlotte, I saw this young man one morning in a solitary walk, and I verily thought he would have rivetted his eyes on me. He was then at Ashton, on a shooting-party, but since that time has constantly resided at the farm on the hill.—Do you comprehend me now?”

“Too plainly, I fear, my love.”

“What now would sagacious insensibility forebode?”

“To be plain with you, Eliza, there is something in this affair which makes me shudder to think on. Consider seriously, that, if he is thus attached to your person, a man of fortune and respectable connections, there can be no reason why he should not openly make his proposals to your father.”

“How indelicately you judge, Charlotte! Is it not time enough for these odious formalities?”

“Ah! my sweet friend, I doubt you stand on a fatal precipice, from which a too visionary imagination will fling you into ruin. Be not offended, I love you, and therefore would prevent whatever might be destructive to your welfare. Depend on it, this clandestine lover is either too high or too low to become a proper object of your regard. Possibly he is some libertine of quality, who has marked you as the prey of the most abandoned principles; but, if not so, then be assured it is some despicable wretch, who seeks merely the fortune which you possess as the gift of your aunt. At all events, I am convinced there is something in the affair which will not bear the light.”

“My aunt’s legacy is no more than five thousand pounds, too small a sum surely to become a bait to avarice.”

“It would be affluence to a beggar, Eliza. Look well to it, my dear girl, (the tears swimming in her eyes,) for ruin is before you.”

exclaimed, "Save me from myself, my best friend, and tell me what you would advise me to do."

"Resolve to put an end to so imprudent a connection at once."

"You know not what such a sacrifice would cost me."

"It will cost you nothing, but the extirpation of certain romantic ideas, Eliza.—I confess there are *agrémens* which might involuntarily interest one in the behalf of particular objects almost at first sight; but is this the sentiment on which you would hope to build the happiness of life?—A permanent passion must have esteem for its basis; and, trust me, my love, all impressions, which are not thus founded, (as your's in the nature of things cannot be,) may be easily managed with the assistance of reason and resolution. Believe me, I advise you nothing which I have not myself found practicable."

"You have been in love then," eagerly.

"I confess I know what it is to feel a partiality for an agreeable man. I also know that pride and reason were abundantly able to surmount so idle a prepossession, as long as there was reason for me to suppose the object unworthy of my regard."

To be short, Eliza, by the remonstrances of her friend, was prevailed on to give up the cause of her incognito, and to resolve never to speak to or hear from him more. Whether this resolution was the effect of momentary conviction or the more permanent suggestions of reason time only must shew. It is certain that Charlotte firmly believed it to be the latter, and, as she was no less charitable in her censures than warm in her friendships, she threw the veil of pity over the weakness of her friend, and resolved to remember it no more.

Affected with Charlotte's emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

C H A P. XXI.

A Stranger arrives at the Priory.

WHAT the captain's opinion of Mrs. Butterfield's epistle was, or by what enigmatical genius he discovered the direct purport of it, this history doth not declare.—In a short time after the dispatch of it, Charlotte was made happy by seeing at the Priory an only brother, whom she ardently loved, and their meeting was mutually celebrated with tears of joy. It being several years since they had seen each other, he could not avoid testifying both surprise and pleasure at the singular improvements which, in that time, had taken place in his sister's person. The fine expression of her countenance, together with the proof he had lately made of her amiable disposition, inspired him with a very elevated and pleasing sensation, while, with a satisfaction almost approaching to rapture, she contemplated in him the generous protector and unfeigned friend.

By a certain concatenation of ideas not unusual on such occasions, Eliza had drawn the picture of this young gentleman, in her mind's eye, in a style so totally different from the original, that she felt a sort of agreeable surprise, when, instead of the figure her prejudiced imagination had pourtrayed, she beheld a handsome person, of about twenty-five, with a set of features remarkably regular; a clear brown complexion, animated with the freshness of health; dark expressive eyes, arched with the exactness of the nicest pencil; and, in short, the very reverse of that which she had expected to see. Captain Overbury was certainly an interesting figure, and every glance of the eye spoke the man of intelligence and urbanity. A liberal education rendered him superior to professional peculiarities. He was not necessitated through a deficiency of conversable talents to adopt the affectation of sea-phrases or shocking expletives; but, though on board he was the intrepid skilful officer, yet, on shore, he appeared, in every sense of the word, the polite and accomplished gentleman.

Such was the husband Mrs. Butterfield had pointed out to her daughter; not, indeed, so much from conviction of his merit as a regard to his fortune, and the young lady, on her first acquaintance with him, could not but be conscious that he merited not the repugnance she had felt to her mother's command.—But now a question of some moment was depending between the parents, respecting a proper mode of directing the young gentleman's attention to their daughter. Fortune, however, happily stepped forward to relieve their embarrassment, for the Captain had not been long at the Priory before he discovered something of an attachment, which they had formed a score of ridiculous plans for effecting.

Miss Butterfield (much about Charlotte's age) was a little lively brunette, with so charming an air of naïveté, and so much good-humour in her countenance, as gave additional charms to the symmetry of her shape and features. The Captain had seen much of foreign countries as well as his own, without meeting a woman capable of attaching his affections or exciting the remotest wish of the Hymeneal bond. He sought not beauty, though not an admirer of deformity. He desired not wit in a wife, though determined to

marry with no one who was not capable of enlivening a domestic hour by the charms of a solid understanding and refined mind. In fine, he had long looked for a woman who was devoid of the levity of fashion, the disguise of art, or the caprice of an illiterate and ill-disposed mind, and such an one he imagined to have found in the person of Eliza Butterfield. Yet, before he ventured to drop any thing of a serious nature, he determined, with a most endearing confidence, to reveal his sentiments to his sister, not doubting but she had it in her power to give a more certain information respecting the object of his attention. With this view, meeting her one day alone, he thus accosted her, "It appears to me a little extraordinary, my dear Charlotte, that a girl of your lively disposition should prefer this solitary mansion to the agreeable family of Sir Bevil Grimstone, except (as I must suppose to be the case) you found something more engaging in the company of Miss Butterfield than in that of Miss Grimstone."

"That, indeed, was part of my motive for quitting London, brother."

"I am not surprised at it. She doubtless appears a very amiable girl in your eye."

"And, if I am not mistaken, (archly,) she does in your's also, my good brother."

"You are a girl of close observation, I find, Charlotte. I would have the most latent secret of my heart exposed to my sister, for it is not merely a fraternal affection I boast of bearing you, but an esteem and friendship the most lively and sincere; therefore, to confess a truth, I have sought an opportunity of making you the confidante of my secret thoughts on a very interesting subject."

"And may you ever find me deserving of such confidence!"

"As the first proof of it, tell me with sincerity, sister, what is your real opinion of Miss Butterfield. The intimacy subsisting between you must have given you an unreserved acquaintance with her disposition.—In one word, is it such as your brother might look to for happiness in the matrimonial state?"

"The taste of you gentlemen is so very capricious, how is it possible for me to determine what are the qualifications you require! However, to be serious, I assure you, in the first place, that her character is entirely free from disguise. She is, I verily believe, perfectly artless and sincere."

"And that, Charlotte, I confess, is what I almost despaired of finding in your sex, therefore had nearly bound myself to a vow of perpetual celibacy."

"Come, Sir, (laughing,) no sarcasms on us poor females, or you bind me in sullen silence."

"Pardon me, sister.—But have you nothing more to say in recommendation of your friend?"

Affected with Charlotte's emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

“It should seem by your own account I have said enough, for sincerity appears, in your esteem, to comprehend the whole of female worth.”

“By no means. Sincerity, indeed, illustrates all other virtues; but it is not every lady, Charlotte, who would be a gainer by its exercise.”

“Sarcastic again.—However, for your comfort, I can assure you Eliza would be no loser by it, since the native goodness of her disposition would bear the strictest scrutiny. She is gentle, benevolent, diffident of her own merit; in short, every thing to be desired in a wife. Her understanding,—but first give me leave to ask if you are one of those gentlemen who think the latter an indifferent point of consideration.”

“I would have my wife possess at least as much sense as should leave me no room to blush either at her conversation or conduct.”

“Why, then, I think Eliza is endowed with a good natural understanding, but you guess, I suppose, from the character of her parents, that it can have derived no advantages from cultivation; yet, should she happily fall to the lot of a sensible worthy man, I doubt not but it would soon receive its proper lustre. She has, however, one defect, which, as a person sincerely interested in your happiness, my dear Jack, I must not conceal from you.”

“What is that?” impatiently.

“An imagination ridiculously romantic, owing, I conceive, to the little pains that have been taken in cultivating her mind, and directing a lively fancy in its proper bias. This, if left to itself, will, I fear, unfortunately mislead her; but, should you be able to make an impression on her heart, brother, it is probable such a propensity would be no disadvantage to your mutual happiness.”

“I thank you, my dear Charlotte, for the frankness which you have so generously shewn on this occasion. One question more, and I have done.—Do you believe Miss Butterfield’s affections are wholly disengaged?”

This enquiry threw the young lady into some little perplexity. She was not willing to reveal that part of Eliza’s conduct which she had lately witnessed with so much concern, since she firmly believed her to be convinced of the impropriety of it. She had, moreover, so steady a reliance on her integrity, as to be assured she would not accept the addresses of her brother, provided her affections were not wholly disengaged from any other object, therefore replied,

“I will not pretend to satisfy you on a point of that nature, brother; but I think neither Eliza’s honour nor the disposition I have just apprised you of would permit her to give you a favourable reception, should her inclinations be placed on another object.”

Satisfied with the force of this suggestion, the Captain determined on making proposals to Mr. Butterfield, and was by that gentleman referred wholly to his lady. On the application being made to her, it was with difficulty she concealed the joy she felt at finding affairs in so promising a way. Together with every possible encouragement, she gave him an assurance that her daughter's affections were entirely disengaged, and then added, "As you have now broke the ice, Captain, I will tell you what I have been thinking;—we will make a cross-match of it; you shall have Eliza, and my son Arthur shall marry your sister:—will not this be quite the thing?" The Captain replied that he could have no objection to the measure, provided his sister had none. "Why, as to that, a word from you, Captain, will do the business effectually, for I know she has a great *reveration* for you."

"I would by no means take advantage of my sister's kind partiality to attempt the biassing her inclinations. Mr. Arthur, madam, will doubtless be the most proper person to effect that point."

"Well, well, be that as it may. You agree to marry Betsey, so I will set Martin on making out a settlement in readiness."

"But, my dear madam, you forget that I am not yet so happy as to have obtained Miss Butterfield's consent."

"Her consent!—You have mine, and that is sufficient. You may tell her, indeed, of what we have agreed on, but if she should be *refectory*, I shall know how to act."

Eliza, however, when formally addressed by her lover, gave him such a reception as he concluded he had no reason to be dissatisfied with; that is, she heard him with a modest silence, which he interpreted as a tacit permission to continue his suit. As she expressed no repugnance, he naturally believed she felt none. Nor, indeed, did she at that moment. Charlotte's remonstrances on a late occasion had made an impression on her mind which was not yet erased. Besides, the Captain was in every respect so unexceptionable a lover, his address so delicate, (for she did not yet know he had applied to her father and mother,) that, had the first interview been rather more romantically brought about, and she could have put Mrs. Butterfield's stern command out of her head, it is extremely probable she would have indulged for him a most ardent affection. As it was, she was far from appearing out of humour in his company. Mrs. Butterfield was in raptures, Charlotte delighted, and the Captain as happy as a man could be, who saw apparent room to hope he should one day obtain the only woman he had ever regarded with affection.

Affected with Charlotte's emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

C H A P. XXII.

A Trial of Sensibility.

IT should have been noticed before, that Miss Overbury, a day or two after the Captain's arrival, acquainted him with the circumstance of William Sanders's death, as also of the situation of the surviving family. Respectfully recollecting that honest sailor, he thanked his sister for her beneficence to the widow, "for which (added he) I consider myself your debtor;" and then, obtaining directions, sat out instantly for the cottage. The road to it laid through the village church-yard, in which, on a rising ground, shaded by an old yew-tree, was a grave, over which the turf seemed newly laid, nor was the verdure of the binding osiers entirely withered. On this spot a boy of about three years old laid crying, in piteous accents, "Daddy, won't you come to us? You sleep here so long, and I am come to awaken you."

"And who was your daddy, my poor child?"

"He was called William Sanders.—You can speak loud, come and make him hear."

The Captain was a man of exquisite sensibility. He put his handkerchief to his eyes with one hand, and with the other drew a shilling from his pocket. "Take this, my sweet fellow, and buy yourself a cake."

The child immediately forgot his infant-sorrow in the view of present gratification, and ran directly to his mother. The Captain sat down on a stone close by the grave,—a tear dropped from his eye. "It is thus, (said he,) I pay the tribute of respect to thy honesty and worth: but no,—(rising with a noble ardour in his countenance,) there are other means of doing so."—Pursuing his way to the cottage, he was soon a spectator of the widow's tears, which he found flowed no less for the disgrace of her eldest son than for the loss of a beloved and faithful husband.

"Had my poor boy, your honour, (said she,) committed the fault from any wickedness of disposition, I could have borne it; but to think that love for a poor dying father should have brought him into this mischief cuts me to the heart."

"Be in no pain on that account, (replied the Captain). Let the lad be immediately got home, for I will myself be his patron, and your's too, my good woman, for poor Sanders's sake."

To describe the widow's grateful emotion would be impracticable. Suffice it to observe, that, in a short time, young Sanders ventured to appear once more in his native village, the Captain having compromised the affair with the farmer as well as purchased his indenture of the shoemaker, his master, after which he took him into his own service. Miss Overbury (it has already been observed) had taken Sally, the eldest daughter, in

quality of waiting-maid; and was so well pleased with her behaviour, that she already entertained a more than common respect for her. Sally was a girl of acute parts, and of a most grateful and affectionate disposition, though rather too pretty, as Mr. Arthur used to observe, for a waiting-maid. "I wish (said he one day to Charlotte) your brother may not run away with her, for I perceive he eyes her very cordially."

"I am sure (returned she, piqued at the suggestion) he has too much politeness to think of supplanting you in a scheme on which you might have set your mind."

One evening as they were sitting at supper, the footman delivered a letter to Captain Overbury, the contents of which appeared to give him sensible pleasure. "It is from a friend (said he) whom I have not seen for a long time, and if you, madam, (addressing Mrs. Butterfield,) will permit the liberty, I will propose a meeting with him at the Priory."

"Dear Captain, (returned that lady,) I beg you will spare such a superfluity of apology. You are absolutely polite in *recess*. But it gives me *inaccessible* pain that you should forget you are quite at home at the Priory."

After a little reflection, the Captain was enabled to pick out of this eloquent speech, that he might take the liberty of inviting his friend, who was then at the distance of about twenty miles to the Priory, and therefore immediately retired for that purpose.

"Pray, Miss Overbury, (said Mr. Arthur, inquisitively,) do you know who this friend of the Captain is?"

"Indeed, Sir, I have not heard my brother say."

"Some jolly tar, I suppose," a little contemptuously.

"Fortune forbid it should be an academician!" returned she in the same strain.

"Why, madam, do you think the character contemptible?"

"My dear Sir, the universe, you know, cannot bear two suns, nor Ashton two scholars."

Mrs. Butterfield, who certainly thought this a very high-raised panegyric on the lustre of her son's abilities, declared it was *perdegis* cleaver. Mr. Arthur, however, felt the full force of its irony, and retired in sullen silence.—Of this nature were the conversations which usually took place between this young couple, and, in Mrs. Butterfield's estimation, they amounted to a proof that the fond pair were merrily jogging on their way to the temple of Hymen. "We shall have two weddings in the family very shortly, (said she,) and we will have a sumptuous *galley** on the occasion."

*It is supposed the lady meant the word *gala*.

Affected with Charlotte's emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

“Why, child, our river is scarcely able to bear a wash-tub, it is so shallow.”

“You do not understand French, Mr. Butterfield, or you would have known that I meant a feast, or entertainment.”

“Truly, sweeting, I never knew that you dabbled in French lingo before.”

C H A P. XXIII.

Interesting Conversations.

EVERY body at the Priory wearing a face of joy, Mrs. Martin thought it convenient to assume one of the same cast, and accordingly seemed to participate in the general satisfaction with the utmost sincerity. She often assured Mrs. Butterfield of the inexpressible happiness she felt in seeing every thing succeeding so desirably. “It is to you, my dear Martin, (replied that lady,) I am in great measure indebted for its being so.—Your good counsel has had its due effect, I hope, on the behaviour of that perverse girl. It is a charming thing to have such a sensible prudent neighbour at hand.”

“Ah, well-a-day! my poor abilities can have done but little service; yet, what is there I would not attempt for the advantage of this dear family!—It will be a match you think?”

“Oh! certainly. I am persuaded Eliza has a sincere regard for the Captain.”

Mrs. Martin wished to have some conversation with the young lady herself, and, understanding she was in the garden alone, followed her thither. Eliza, as usual, was reading in an alcove. The other, affecting not to discover her, fell into the following soliloquy: “Poor sacrificed victim! my heart bleeds.—Oh the cruelty of unfeeling parents!”

“Who are you speaking to, my dear Mrs. Martin?” said Miss Butterfield.

“Heavens, Eliza! (starting,) how you have surprised me! I little thought any one was so near; I was only talking to myself, as I am apt to do when my heart is warmly interested.”

But who, pray, is the subject of so pathetic a soliloquy?”

“Pshaw! it signifies nothing.”

“I know you meant myself, did you not, my good friend?”

“I confess I did. Ah! my sweet girl, when I see you thus heroically determined on sacrificing happiness to duty, I look upon you with admiration and pity.”

“But perhaps (interrupted the young lady with a serene air) I may find happiness and duty go together.”

“Oh that you may! (weeping and grasping her by the hand.) But, my dear child, I see your secret struggles, though concealed from every other eye; and you would, if possible, hide them from yourself:—but friendship is keen-sighted;—I know them all.

Affected with Charlotte’s emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

Captain Overbury is a mean-souled wretch, to persist in taking the advantage of your mother's partiality in his favour; but, indeed, he looks on you as his purchase.—To be sure, he drove a good bargain with her, and who can blame him?—It is a well concerted affair.”

“He has already solicited my mother, then?”

“Yes, long before he did you. We are not to expect delicacy of sentiment in a sailor. Provided pecuniary matters are well settled, they have no notion of the ineffable union of noble and virtuous hearts. How should they, as they get wives in every port they come to?”

Eliza sighed deeply.

“Nevertheless, (resumed Mrs. Martin,) this gentleman may make a good husband, provided you will not be jealous, and that I know is a weakness you would be superior to.”

“In its grosser sense I trust I should; yet, Mrs. Martin, I doubt I could ill bear a rival in a husband's heart.”

“A fiddle for the heart! that is out of the question. I dare answer you would have as much of that as any other woman; and, if you can overlook a thousand indelicacies which are ever the result of inelegant minds, you will, as you say, find happiness and duty go together.”

Here the young lady burst into a flood of tears. Mrs. Martin threw her arms round her, and pressed her warmly to her bosom. “My poor Eliza, my sweet girl! (exclaimed she,) how my heart bleeds for you! Yet let a friend give her best advice. I know you dislike the Captain, nor can I pretend to say he is a person at all suitable to you; yet it is the will of your parents that you marry him: it is also, no doubt, the wish of your beloved Charlotte. In short, every thing makes for it, and you must have him. The Captain, I hope, has some good qualities, and, if you can only exert a little philosophy, you may be tolerably happy.”

To talk of philosophy to a romantic enthusiast was saying nothing, or worse than nothing.—Eliza, after some time, recovering from her emotion, calmly replied, “My dear Mrs. Martin, I know you would, if possible, promote the happiness of the family, but it must not be at the expence of an individual of it. My eyes are now open to the horrid gulph before me; for, indeed of late, I have been sleeping on the brink of a precipice. The stars had certainly fascinated me, I think, or I never should have dreamt of happiness with Captain Overbury; but my good genius has broken the spell. I see the affair in its proper light, and will sooner die than consent to this odious marriage.”

“What! (with an air of astonishment,) will you tarnish at last the noble heroism for which I just now admired you? Consider, I beseech you, Eliza, what sufferings, what

poignant distress will attend such an imprudent resolution!—Better to lead an insipid life with the Captain than bear the resentment of all your friends; but I see company coming towards us. You shall drink tea with me this afternoon, and we will endeavour to set this matter on a proper footing.’

Charlotte and her brother advanced to join them, and the former in a sprightly tone said, “Here then we have found the little runaway. We have been seeking you, my dear, in every corner and thicket of the park.”

Mrs. Martin made an effort to withdraw, which the Captain by his looks heartily wished she would; but Eliza, with a secret twitch of her gown, desired she would take a turn or two with them, to which she consenting, the conversation of course became general, and that lady, notwithstanding the inelegancies she had discovered in the Captain’s mind, condescended to pay him particular attention, applauding every syllable he uttered, and declaring, at the end of their perambulation, that she had not spent half an hour so agreeably a long time; but this Miss Butterfield imputed to her friend’s excessive politeness. It is certain, that, if she had another motive, the Fates ordained that it should be confined to her own breast, as the Captain, whose penetration probably gave him some insight into her character, mortally hated her, and could never bring himself to treat her with more than distant civility. This was a sensible mortification to one, who, on all occasions, would have had it thought that her interest was of consequence in the family. Had the Captain, therefore, endeavoured to engage her mediation in favour of his suit, she perhaps would not have pronounced him so very inelegant a character.

In the afternoon, Eliza got leave of her mother to drink tea at Mrs. Martin’s. The two ladies had taken their work, and were beginning to revive the conversation of the morning, when a servant brought word that a gentleman at the door wanted Mr. Martin. “Will you excuse me, Miss Butterfield, (said she,) it is a person on business, and I must invite him into the parlour.”

“By all means.”

“I am extremely sorry (said Mrs. Martin on the gentleman’s appearing,) that my husband is from home, Sir; but, if you will take the trouble to call again, or would choose to leave your business with me”—

“It is only, madam, (replied he rather pensively,) to enquire if he has drawn up that paper for which I gave him instructions the other day.”

“I believe not, Sir, (smiling,) and I hope there is no occasion for him to be in a hurry on the business.”

“More than you are aware of, (returned the other angrily.) Tell him, if you please, madam, that I will be delayed no longer.”

The gentleman then withdrew, and Mrs. Martin, turning to her companion, observed she was covered with confusion. She took no notice of it, however, but said, "I pity from my heart that poor young man. He is certainly in a desponding way, and I fear has some fatal design in his head, for he has employed Mr. Martin to make his will, and you see how earnest he is that it should be done."

"I hope not, (answered Eliza with a tear glistening in her eye;—for, to confess a secret, it was no other than the very gallant mentioned in a preceding chapter, and whom she had not seen since the Captain's arrival) I hope not.—Pray, Mrs. Martin, do you know any thing of that young man?"

"Very little, (coolly.) They say his name is Wilmot, and that he is of a good family in Yorkshire. Now I know something of such a family there, and I confess, by the young gentleman's countenance, I should think he belonged to it. They are vastly rich, and the most respectable people in the county."

"But what should occasion his being here so long?"

"That, I confess, puzzles me. His arrival here was merely accidental; but then his long continuance:—though, whenever he goes, the people where he lives will half break their hearts, they say he is so sensible, affable, and genteel, in his manners;—generous as a prince, and seems to regard money no more than dirt. I never saw such linen for fineness in my life, as some of his which the farmer's wife shewed me.—He certainly is a gentleman."

"Poor young man!" exclaimed Eliza with a sigh.

"I fear, indeed, (resumed Mrs. Martin,) he is to be pitied. Something seems to hang on his mind, but what, nobody can tell.—Sometimes he talks of leaving Ashton, and orders his things to be packed up; then he unpacks them again,—swears he cannot stir. It is a most inexplicable affair; however, every body agrees that he deserves a better fate than he seems to have met with."

"You affect me much," weeping.

"It is the tenderness of your disposition, my dear;—but let us talk no more of it."

Tea was then brought in, after which Mrs. Martin proposed a walk in the fields, to which Eliza assenting, they directed their way through a meadow, shaded on one side by a hanging wood. They had not proceeded far, when a person was observed to rush suddenly from a thick inclosure, and walked with remarkable swiftness some paces before them. "There is that poor young fellow! (cried Mrs. Martin.) Bless me, how fast he walks!—Ah! as I live he is making towards the lake which lies by yonder hedge. I was afraid of this,—but let us follow him. Perhaps we may come time enough to prevent so dreadful a step."

The two ladies immediately quickened their pace, though Eliza felt scarcely able to support her trembling frame. "Let us run, (said she,) or we shall surely be too late."— She had no sooner spoken, than Mrs. Martin, in her prodigious haste, stumbled over a stone, and sprained her ankle so violently, that she was forced to recline herself on the grass.

"How unluckily this happens, Miss Butterfield! I cannot possibly stir a step farther, but do you go on, and I will wait for you here. To save the life of a fellow-creature will be charity."

Without stopping to expostulate, the young lady flew towards the spot, where she found Mr. Wilmot with his hat off, standing pensively on the side of the pond. It will be unnecessary to add the effect of this interruption, farther than to observe, that, in compliance with her intreaties, he desisted from his purpose. What the nature of their farther conversation was will appear in the sequel of this history.

Affected with Charlotte's emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

C H A P. XXIV.

Best Method of lessening parochial Expences.

MISS Overbury one evening, returning from a charitable visit in the neighbourhood, found her brother's expected friend was arrived. But how shall we describe her emotion, when, on entering the parlour, she beheld in him the person of George Danby. Nothing could appear to her more inscrutable than did the motives of this visit. The Captain had never mentioned to her his being particularly acquainted with any branch of the Danby family, though the fact was, he had formerly been at school with this young gentleman, and ever since a very strict friendship had subsisted between them. Hearing Mr. Danby was returned to England, and then on a visit at an acquaintance's in the West, the Captain had embraced the opportunity of enjoying the pleasure of his friend's company.

Mr. Danby, on the appearance of Charlotte, seemed no less agitated than herself, for, to say truth, he was very far from expecting to meet her at the Priory. The resolution with which he had gone to France prevented him from making any enquiry after her on his return; and, as he had staid but a few hours in town, the circumstance of her having quitted the Grimstone family was unknown to him.—Fain, however, would she have indulged a very different idea of the case, had not appearances strongly forbid the conclusion; for, as soon as the surprise attendant on the first salutation had subsided, his behaviour rather demonstrated the polite gentleman than the assiduous lover; though, indeed, had he been inclined to treat her with any particular attention, the conduct of Mr. Arthur absolutely precluded such an attempt. That gentleman, if incapable of the weakness of love, was not insensible to the irritation of pride, which stimulated him on this occasion to personate the warm inamorato, rather than give the stranger an opportunity of conciliating the lady's favour, which, without soliciting, he thought he had a right to monopolize himself. During supper, and the remainder of the evening, his civilities to her were so ridiculously excessive, that they could not but be obvious to every body present. Charlotte, who on all occasions saw him with the eye of aversion, was now provoked beyond measure. Without considering what the motive of such conduct might otherwise be, she supposed it only a malicious attempt to crush any secret hopes Mr. Danby might have indulged, whose distant and cool behaviour she immediately imputed to the effect of such design. In fine, she retired at an early hour, much out of humour, to her own apartment.

The next day happened to be what is called a parish-feast; or, in other words, a meeting of the overseers, and others concerned in the management of the poors expences. Mrs. Butterfield, being a woman of economy, would on no account have her husband absent on the occasion; for, as he was the principal payer to the poors rate, she wisely observed he ought chiefly to direct its expenditure. The Justice's convivial temper stood in no need of much solicitation; but he insisted that the Captain and his friend should accompany him, which they both would have declined. He swore, however, it should be so, and they were merely, in point of civility, obliged to comply.

“You may as well go with us, Arthur, (said he,) and wet the whistle, boy. Study, as I take it, is dry work.” The student, as might be expected, superciliously declined the overture, and the magistrate, with his two guests, departed without him.

Every body knows that a village public-house is an appendage to the great house hard by, being destined to proclaim its honours by bearing in front the ensigns armorial of the family. Accordingly, the one at which the company were to dine was dignified by the appellation of the Butterfield-Arms, and contained, if not a splendid, yet at least a spacious, apartment, called the club-room. Here they found assembled all the eminent personages of the parish, viz. the curate, the surgeon, the exciseman, the parish-officers, and principal farmers; the whole consisting of about thirty persons. Dinner not being quite ready, a bowl of punch was brought in by way of exciting an appetite to the feast, over which much learned conversation passed.

“I have heard as how (said one of the company) that the poors rates in this country amount to a larger sum than it takes to maintain some states abroad.”

“May hap (cries another) they starve the poor out of the way.”

Here the company expressed their approbation of this shrewd suggestion by a loud laugh, when the surgeon, with much gravity exclaimed, “The sum which we appropriate to our poor is, to be sure, enormous,—out of all rule, and a disgrace to a commercial people, who ought to make the plebeian order more industrious, rather than support it in idleness, which is the case.”

“You do not consider, gentlemen, (said the curate, who supported a wife and three children on a stipend of twenty pounds per annum,) that, in Popish countries, the poor are generally fed with provisions from the convents and religious houses around them.”

“How the d——I can that be! (cried a wiseacre;) do not these people shut themselves up in those houses on purpose to fast?”

Not to pursue this extraordinary dialogue farther, with which we believe Mr. Danby in particular was heartily tired, we will go on to observe, that the dinner being now set on the table, the company began to take their places in order, unanimously assigning the upper end of the table to the magistrate, who, to say truth, did sufficient honour to the fare, as did also most of the rest; after which, bowls, bottles, and glasses, being ranged in due order, the guests began to prepare for a serious Bacchanal. As they were most of them approved disciples of the jolly god, it was expected every body would prove sincere in the service, except the two strange gentlemen, as they were called, on whom the rest seemed to look with a suspicious eye; but the Justice vowed he would have no flinchers. “As for you, Captain, (said he,) I hope you are not afraid of a bottle.—To tell you the truth; I would not have a milk-sop for my son in law.”—The weather happening to be warm, Mr. Danby soon became sensible of a more exhilarating effect from the wine he had unavoidably drank than he wished to excite. Nature had given him a happy flow of spirits, which could never want the aid of artificial ones to render him an

Affected with Charlotte’s emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

agreeable companion; and, as he particularly detested that vice of vulgar souls, intoxication, he determined on giving the company the slip, in spite of all the Justice's vigilance. This he soon after effected, and, on his return to the Priory, finding himself more flushed than he would wish to appear before Miss Overbury, he took a turn in the garden previously to his entering the house; but, as it sometimes happens, that what we industriously endeavour to avoid is pushed by malicious fortune full in our teeth, so the very interview, which he then would least have desired, was most accidentally brought about.

Charlotte, desirous of indulging certain meditations alone, had retired after dinner to a private alcove in the remotest part of the garden. Here she was sitting when George Danby reached the identical spot.—He bowed, and retreated a few paces: she arose, curtsied, and would have withdrawn. It was an opportunity not to be lost by a doating lover. The wine had superseded all sedate reflection; it had loosened that firm barrier which reason and honour had imposed on his lips. “No, madam, (cried he,) if the presence of George Danby is so offensive, he will withdraw: it must not be yourself.”

The pensive look, the agitated air, which accompanied that speech, tenderly affected her. “Offensive, Sir! (reiterated she,) that it cannot be for your dear mother's sake.”

“And is it impossible then Miss Overbury you can see me in a favourable light for my own?”

A question so extraordinary, so unexpected, not a little embarrassed her. She looked down,—blushed,—but could give no answer. In an instant he was at her feet.

“Ah, Charlotte! (resumed he,) is it possible you cannot have seen the struggles of my tortured soul,—or, if seen, not to pity them?”

“Rise, Sir, I command you, rise; and give me leave to say I cannot in the least comprehend this discourse.”

“I know too well you ought not to comprehend it. It is not your love I seek, madam. What would I say!—O most divine woman, dare I hope it?—But no! I do not hope it;—you ought not to bestow it.”

Affected by the tender incoherence of his words, she replied, “I must have little discernment, Sir, were I not duly sensible of worth like your's.—I honour, I——”

“Merit, madam, (interrupted he,) I have none. I am a villain,—the basest of mankind; for, though I know you never can be mine, I have dared to love you.—O Miss Overbury, (in a calmer tone,) honour, virtue, every sacred consideration, forbid the fond idea, yet I indulge it! Death only can efface your image from my soul. You may pity,—I know you will pity these distracting feelings, though that is all which I must ask or you bestow.”

It is probable the lady's reply would not have been calculated to drive him to absolute despair, had there been an opportunity for her to pronounce it; but, at that instant, Mr. Arthur, who from the window of his study had observed Danby's return, and, not caring to allow him too fair a chance with his nominal mistress, thought proper to trace his progress, and now appeared in the walk which led to this little recess. Not the visible apparition of her evil genius could have been more horrible to Charlotte's sight than was now the figure of that gentleman moving towards them. Mr. Danby, immediately rising, offered him a seat, which, with the consequential air of a proprietor, he directly took by her side; on which, giving him a look of ineffable disdain, she instantly arose, but perceived Mr. Danby had withdrawn. Arthur, observing her in haste to retire, roughly seized her by the arm, demanding why she could not as well stay with him as that fop, adding, "You women will listen to any nonsense which comes from the mouth of a pretty fellow. I warrant you now he has been telling you a fine story. Come, tell me what was the subject you were upon."

"Your effrontery (struggling to get away) absolutely astonishes me. What right, pray, Sir, have you to ask that question?"

"Why, as matters are between us, I should think I had a right. You may as well be easy, for I shall not part with you yet."

He then placed himself just in the entrance, exactly in the attitude of Colossus, and Charlotte, seeing no way of escaping, went and threw herself on the bench, fretting with vexation and resentment. "You are, to be sure, a very silly girl, (resumed he;) but, to oblige my mother, I have condescended to take some notice of you, and therefore I think it time we should talk seriously together. You know things are in great forwardness, and we may as well agree on a day for our marriage. Come, tell me when it shall be."

"Odious creature! (cried she,) I know not how you can have the audacity, or folly rather, to insult me with this language.—Were I compelled to marry such a being as yourself, I would soon put an end to my existence."

"Mighty well, madam, (replied he,) I shall not be at much pains to induce you to alter your resolution. To say the truth, I never thought you one to my taste, and so (bowing very low) your most obsequious humble servant."

He then, to her great satisfaction, walked towards the house, which she did also as soon as she found him out of sight. It was now plain that she was beloved by George Danby, and that reflection afforded her a sensation which she had never experienced before; but, as the disparity of fortune was never considered by her as an obstacle to their union, she was entirely at a loss to comprehend the motive of his visible embarrassment, unless (which at length she thought very probable) he believed her under an engagement to Mr. Arthur, but this mistake time and expedients might rectify; she therefore returned to the parlour with a much gayer air than she had quitted it an hour before.

Affected with Charlotte's emotion, and touched with the affectionate earnestness of her manner, Eliza burst into tears; throwing her arms round her neck, she, sobbing,

Mr. Danby did not appear at tea; he complained of a head-ach, and begged leave to repose himself, which incident Charlotte considered as very opportune to her present situation, for she feared, and perhaps not without some reason, that the aversion she might discover towards Mr. Arthur would appear so palpable an encouragement of the other, as was not consistent with her idea of female delicacy; and, when the Captain returned, which he did soon after, he found his friend so much disordered, as to think it necessary to advise him not to quit his chamber for the evening. Disordered he certainly was, but purely from a mental cause, for he had no sooner recovered the faculty of reflection, than he was conscious of having done wrong in disclosing the secret of his passion; he had violated the earnest injunctions of his mother, as well as his own principles of honour and rectitude; in fine, he appeared in his own eye the most culpable of mankind, and therefore, without assigning the cause, desired his friend's permission to leave the Priory the next morning privately. The intimacy subsisting between these gentlemen was of that nature, that mere etiquette was out of the question; they therefore parted with a mutual promise of seeing each other shortly in town.

When Mr. Danby rode out of the courtyard, Charlotte was standing at her dressing-room window, and was soon informed by Sally, that, having sent his apologies to Mrs. Butterfield, he was now set off for town. Gone, without so much as taking leave of herself!—Astonishing!—yet so it was, and all she could do in so strange a case was to rack her brain in order to extort the most plausible excuse for that conduct. The Captain, without observing the particular earnestness of her enquiries, told her in brief that Mr. Danby was gone to London, and would shortly make another tour to the continent, on some secret service appointed him by the minister, to whom the interest of friends had recommended him. A secret sigh escaped her; she went down to breakfast, however, with as cheerful an air as she could assume, though, had the company been at liberty to make their observations, they had certainly discovered that all was not right within; but things of a different nature engaged at that time their attention.

The Justice, who did not return from the parochial meeting till the morning was considerably advanced, had just produced the landlord's bill of expences, by which it appeared, that, as those worthy personages thought the maintenance of the poor so very enormous an expence, they determined (from public-spirited motives perhaps) to prevent as far as possible the appropriation of the whole sum to so extravagant a purpose, by devoting a decent part of it to their own enjoyment. Now, as these good people professedly met for the good of the poor, no doubt but they eat and drank for the good of the poor also, we see no reason why so beneficent a measure should not meet its due panegyric, which we design it shall by producing a part of this bill verbatim, which, after sundry other charges, ran as follows; and, if the reader remembers that this entertainment was provided in the country, he will be inclined to admire the moderation of mine host as much as the abstemiousness of the guests, who, we have already observed, were about thirty in number.

	£	s.	d.
To six couple of chickens	1	4	0
8 bundles of asparagus		16	
4 couple of ducklings		18	0

green peas 12 pecks, at 3s.	1	16	0
dish of fish	1	1	0
	£6	5	0

We stop not to mention an innumerable host of puddings, pasties, tarts, and cheese-cakes, as well as other more solid dishes.—But proceed to state the convivial spirit of true Britons by giving a few other items, viz. 200 quarts of sixpenny, 250 ditto of porter, 86 half-crown bowls of punch, 9 dozen of red port. After which, nobody can pretend to deny but that this mode was infinitely better than applying such a sum to the relief of the poor of a paltry village, and it is to be hoped will consequently give it due praise.

“More than you are aware of, (returned the other angrily.) Tell him, if you please, madam, that I will be delayed no longer.”

C H A P. XXV.

A Pedant in woeful Dilemma.

THAT part of the summer being now arrived which is usually appropriated to the diversion of horse-racing, by which almost every country-town in England, at the present æra, on some annual period is distinguished, the family at the Priory determined on being present at that species of amusement, which was now to be held at the country-town of ——; lodgings were therefore provided for the Justice, his lady, their son and daughter, Miss Overbury, and the Captain, together with a suitable retinue.—The perceiving every body in a bustle was sufficient to convince Mrs. Butterfield that the place was filled with good company, and, consequently, to induce her to overlook the inconvenience of a small inelegant lodging and other disagreeable circumstances, among which we shall reckon the being every day obliged to dine with the two young ladies only, for Mr. Butterfield was determined on taking that repast at the public ordinary of an inn, where he perceived a large number of brother fox-hunters to be assembled, and also insisted that the gentlemen of his party should accompany him.

At this table, on the second day of the races, the conversation, as usual, turned on the sports of the preceding one. Every body declared themselves entirely satisfied except Mr. Arthur Butterfield, who, with a solemn dictatorial air, took upon himself to oppose the common opinion of the company, by declaring that the race was paltry. “I am astonished, gentlemen, (said he,) to hear you speak of so poor a diversion with any degree of satisfaction! What is this race, or what is any race, to those of Olympia, which drew together so many thousands of spectators! where, indeed, the management of the courses was not left, as with us, to grooms and stable-boys, but the greatest personages were proud to contend for the victory.”

Perceiving the company staring at this discourse with silent surprise, our scholar, with much self-importance, went on, “I am persuaded, gentlemen, that not one of you can form an idea of the magnificence of these sports. The poet, with amazing fire, celebrates the skill and agility of a certain prince, who had won the prize.—He says——”

“Where do you say these races are held? (interrupted one of the company impatiently.) I was to have been at Newmarket, but, faith, I’ll take a trip to this place.—What is it called?”

Without condescending to answer so illiterate a question, Mr. Arthur resumed his discourse, “The races were doubtless beyond conception, noble, yet wrestling, boxing, and other athletic exercises, had also peculiar prizes assigned.”

“Mere poltroons, I assure you! Mere kittens to that phænomenon of Athletæ, Milo, whose strength, my dear Sir, was even beyond imagination. I could relate various instances of this, but one I think will suffice to give you a tolerable idea of his abilities. He was one day attending a course of philosophical lectures, when the pillar which supported the school suddenly gave way; on which this extraordinary man supported it by his single strength, and gave the auditors time to escape unhurt.”

“D—n me, (cried a lively Nimrod,) if I don’t go to,—to—. Where did you say, Sir, this place lies?”

“Near the city of Olympia, bordering on the river Alpheus, in Peloponnesus.”

“I never heard of it.—Pray is it in France?”

“It is in Greece, Sir, (with a supercilious triumph.) I am convinced the moderns never can vie in elegance and taste with the ancients.”

“Oh! damn the ancients,—if you are thereabouts, young gentleman.— Captain, push about the bottle.”

“Aye, aye, (rejoined another,) let us wash down this dry stuff.”

Shortly after the toast-master gave a certain popular orator, which afforded our young pedant another opportunity of displaying his erudition, though probably much more to the satisfaction of himself than the company, which principally consisted of country-gentlemen, who, if they had ever dipped into ancient literature, had forgotten it in the sports of the field and other avocations. What is called taking the ton of one’s company was an art with which he condescended not to become acquainted. He therefore began a florid harangue on the eloquence of Æschines and Demosthenes, compared to whom he affirmed the British senate produced no individual worthy of mention. The Justice, supposing every one must be as much enamoured of his son’s abilities as himself, cried out, “Atty, give us the story you used to tell of these two gentlemen;—’tis a main brave one.” Mr. Arthur, clearing his voice, and making several ridiculous gestures, began thus, “Æschines and Demosthenes had not been on the best terms, on account of——”

Here the auditors could hold no longer. Some affected a violent fit of coughing,—others called for a song, and one in particular exclaimed aloud, “D—n all bookworms, I say! May folios be their fare, and the gout their companion!”—So singular an execration was sufficient to set the table in a roar, during which, the Captain, observing young Butterfield to discover symptoms of a painful sensibility, reminded him that it was time they should prepare for the ball. As they were going out, an elderly respectable-looking gentleman took the scholar by the arm, and, with a smile of benignity, whispered him, “My good friend, remember in future the old adage, Think with the wise, and talk with
“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

the vulgar.”

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On arriving at the lodging, they found Mrs. Butterfield out of all patience at their delay, the blame of which she very charitably threw on her husband. Affairs, however, being at length pacifically adjusted, and the gentlemen dressed with as much expedition as possible, the party sat out for the ball-room, which was already crowded by a large number of both sexes. Eliza, not desiring a more interesting object among the group, was content to accept the Captain for a partner. As for Charlotte, it is supposed that Mr. Arthur secretly designed her that honour; a smart young gentleman, however, happening to step up to her, she consented to give him her hand for the evening, and, all things considered, began to think the evening not disagreeably passed.

Mrs. Butterfield, at length, quitting the card-room, in order to take a view of the dancers, to her great surprise discovered her son, lounging on a vacant bench, somewhat in dudgeon; yet he could not alledge that Charlotte had treated him ungenteelly, as he had not positively solicited her hand.—“No matter for that, (returned the offended mother,) she is your property, and ought to be considered as such. I insist, therefore, that you go, and resent the insult to her partner.”——The young gentleman, more versed in the rules of an academy than in those of a genteel assembly, implicitly obeyed. What he said does not expressly appear. Some lively young fellows, however, over-hearing and recollecting the incident of the tavern-dinner, resolved to have what they called some fun. Charlotte’s partner, in concert with the scheme, soon after stepped out for about five minutes, in consequence of which Mr. Arthur, at his return, found at his lodgings a formal challenge from that gentleman.—Never was woman more delighted than was Mrs. Butterfield at the event, which she considered as the finishing stroke to her son’s character.

“Why, this is quite as it should be, (said she.) It will be the means of making her your own in a trice, for the girls love a man of spirit.—Yes, yes, Atty, you shall fight him.”

“At a boxing-match I make no doubt of overmatching a score of such *petits maitres* as this; but, as to fencing, it is an art which we literati do not study.”

“I am ashamed to hear you talk so much unlike a gentleman. What then did you go to the *university* for, I pray?—But you can manage a pistol, I suppose, and you see your *bantagony* gives you the choice of the weapons. I beg you will sit down to write him a proper answer, and name your time and place, which will be doing things genteelly.”

“Dear mother, there is no occasion for such haste. Surely it is a question that requires some deliberation, whether one shall agree to have one’s brains blown out or not.”

“A fiddle-stick for that!—It is not by dint of scholarship (peevishly) that you may expect to win such a girl as Charlotte Overbury. Here, I suppose, you have been chopping your old-fashioned logic, while that powder-monkey has run away with the prize which it has cost me such a world of thought and care to put into your hands.—I am out of all patience. Let me tell you, if you do not do something to get yourself a character, you will never marry a woman worth a groat.”

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

Here Mr. Arthur, hearing his father's voice on the stairs, took an opportunity to slip out of the room, and Mrs. Butterfield, running eagerly up to her husband with the challenge in her hand, cried, "This is the charmingest thing in the world!—A real challenge, I assure you. Atty shall fight, Mr. Butterfield, that he shall."

"Z—ds! what a plague has the woman got in her head now.—Fight! with what, I wonder!—No, no, I'll have no fighting, d'ye zee."

After some farther altercation, in which Mrs. Butterfield wept and stormed by turns, finding no likelihood of reconciling two such opposite opinions, the good couple went much out of humour to bed; but they might have spared themselves the trouble of debate, for the student, after mature reflection, concluded the best way of answering the challenge would be to take horse, and quietly return to the Priory, which design he actually put in practice some hours before the family rose next morning; the breakfast-hour was therefore productive of much consternation, till the non-appearance of Mr. Arthur was satisfactorily accounted for by some of the servants. The Captain and the two young ladies, who till now had been unacquainted with the affair depending, secretly rejoiced that no serious consequences were likely to ensue, as did the Justice also; but Mrs. Butterfield was like a fury on the occasion: at length, she declared that she would not stay to become the ridicule of the place, and immediately ordered the coach to be got ready to convey her to the Priory, to which place the rest of the company, glad it was to prove no worse, readily agreed to accompany her.

C H A P. XXVI.

A String of unlooked-for Events.

ON the way home, Mrs. Butterfield could think of nothing but the pusillanimous conduct of her son. Burning with resentment, she loaded him with a torrent of bitter invectives, and declared that, were it not on Miss Overbury's account, he should be disinherited.

Charlotte, feeling herself rather in an awkward situation, though certainly not in the least accessary to the ridiculous affray, replied, a little spitefully, "I beg, madam, you will not suppress your inclinations out of a compliment to me."

"Well, but Captain Overbury, (resumed Mrs. Butterfield), do you not think it a shameful affair? Would you have acted in this manner?"

"Not exactly perhaps; but I would have convinced the world that I despised an assassin's principles."

"What, then, would you never fight?"

"Yes, on a laudable occasion, madam."

"What, pray, do you call so?"

"The honour of my king, the good of my country, or in the defence of my own life or that of my friend."

"And is not accepting a challenge fighting in defence of one's own life?"

"That is not properly to defend it, madam, but meanly to expose it to the folly or baseness of another, and the result of a contemptible timidity, which dares not avow the most sacred principles in the face of arbitrary custom or chimerical honour."

The lady, finding she was likely to get nothing by the argument, prudently declined it, and indulged her displeasure in silence; but the Justice declared that the Captain had spoken his sentiments exactly. "I have not (said he) a knack of wording it, but I think just the same thing."

When the coach set them down at the Priory, they found all the domestics expressing the utmost consternation. Sally Sanders (Miss Overbury's waiting-maid) had disappeared the very evening on which the family had set out for the races, and, after searching all the ponds and rivers about the place, they had been told she was seen on horseback a few miles from Ashton. —Never was an incident more inexplicable. —She had ever appeared one of the most modest and prudent young creatures in the world, and so perfectly was Charlotte convinced of the purity and goodness of her heart, that, in

"The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza."

spite of appearances, she would still pronounce her undeserving of censure. "I wish it may be so, (said Mrs. Martin, who was already there to receive them,) but I thought no good would come of setting those people so much above themselves." As Sally was an universal favourite with the servants, they sincerely regretted the loss of her company, and the young men, who had all of them been emulous of her favour, forgot their rivalry in the general concern. As for Charlotte, she really felt more than she chose to express; however, she consoled herself with thinking that, whatever misfortunes the poor girl might have plunged herself into, it would still be in her power to befriend her.

The Captain, having received letters from town, by which he understood that his presence there was absolutely necessary, became very urgent to have the marriage-ceremony performed, that he might (as he expressed it) have the felicity of his lady's company. Mrs. Butterfield supposed some time since that a sufficient time had been allowed for bringing family-matters to a proper crisis, and, though she despaired of so soon accomplishing her wishes with respect to Miss Overbury, yet she determined that the marriage of Eliza should take place the following week. The precipitancy of the measure gave a serious alarm to that young lady. She was convinced there was no time to be lost, and therefore, as her *derniere* resource, resolved to lay open the state of her heart to her lover. Accordingly, when the Captain with trembling expectation approached her, to solicit her compliance with his earnest wishes, he was surprised by seeing her drop on her knees before him, in which posture, with a face bathed in tears, she intreated him to exercise towards her that compassion which her distress could not excite in the breasts of her inexorable parents. With the astonishment natural to so extraordinary an occasion, he heard her farther declare, that, though, in obedience to parental authority, she had passively admitted his addresses, yet her affections were unalterably fixed on another:—from his (the Captain's) generosity, she had every thing to hope, yet should he unfortunately persist in demanding her hand, he must be content to enjoy only the esteem due to his merit; the feelings of the heart were not capable of submitting to arbitrary controul, and therefore love was not in her power to give him, since her warmest and tenderest regards were and ever must be centered in another person.

After a pause of some minutes, the Captain, with a solemn and tender air, replied, "Whatever my own feelings may be, Miss Butterfield, you have nothing to apprehend from a perseverance on my part, which, after such an avowal of your sentiments, would be incompatible with my sense of the honour I lately aspired to; yet you must permit me to regret that this declaration was not made at an earlier period, before I had so familiarly accustomed myself to the idea of calling you mine. True, (with a sigh,) I indulged the pleasing belief that the favourable reception with which you honoured my addresses was the result of an affection as sincere (if less ardent) as my own. But I design not to upbraid you, though something might be allowed to a disappointment of so tender a nature. Adieu, madam!—May you be happy!—It is the wish of my soul."

"Stay, Sir, one moment, (perceiving he was going;) suffer me at least to excuse my conduct, as well as to express an unfeigned sorrow for the part I am thus compelled to act."

“No, Eliza; the former would be unnecessary, nor would I be the cause of exciting an unpleasing sensation in your breast. You are free;—I can no longer retain a wish of calling you mine.”

One would be apt to conclude the young lady felt her situation at this juncture extremely irksome, but the truth is, the whole of this proceeding was so perfectly consistent with a romantic *dénouement*, that she was reconciled to circumstances which must otherwise have excited a tender and delicate embarrassment.

“This generous behaviour (resumed she) is what I might justly have expected from the magnanimity of Captain Overbury.—O Sir, if you knew the overflowings of my grateful heart at this instant, this delicacy, this elevation of soul exalts you in my esteem even above the high opinion I have ever entertained of your character, and compels me to aspire to the honour of being the first in your list of friends; yet is there something farther I would request as necessary to complete the generous sacrifice you have made.”

“If to promote, in any degree, the happiness of Miss Butterfield be within the compass of my ability, she may command my utmost exertions.”

“This then it is; you know my mother’s inflexible temper, and, should she ever suspect the incident which has now passed between us, I could expect nothing but the extremity of resentment from it, from which you, and you only, most noble of men, can save an unhappy damsel.”

“Inform me, madam, in what manner I can be accessary to your peace.”

“By permitting the grounds of this separation to rest with yourself; or, in other words, to suffer it to pass for your own act.”

“Heavens! to what lengths would your caprice lead! What, madam, would you have me avow myself capable of so base a conduct as that of repaying the partiality and confidence of your parents by treating their daughter in the most dishonourable manner? No, Eliza!—Command my warmest endeavours to serve you in every thing but the affixing such a stigma on my honour:—here I dare not promise my assent.”

“Cruel man! (weeping,) recall then the generous sacrifice you have just made.—Accept my hand,—I offer it,—and would I could give my heart!

“Miss Butterfield, (replied the Captain with a steady countenance,) trifle no longer with the peace you have already sensibly disturbed. Thus far I consent to oblige you, by promising to come to no *éclaircissement* with your parents on the subject: you are then at liberty to represent an honest heart in what colours your integrity may allow you to adopt; but surely you cannot imagine me so weak as verbally to brand myself with infamy?”

“More than you are aware of, (returned the other angrily.) Tell him, if you please, madam, that I will be delayed no longer.”

This very extraordinary request had struck the Captain as an artful design of playing upon his credulity, insomuch that, feeling himself unable to preserve the temper he deemed becoming the occasion, he made a respectful bow and abruptly retired. A few minutes of deliberation decided his conduct. He immediately took a hasty leave of his sister, and, without acquainting her with the circumstance which had taken place, he only said, as he went out of her dressing-room, "Remember, sister, your brother may be unhappy, but he never can be base;" then, avoiding an interview with any other of the family, immediately quitted the Priory.

A retreat of this kind it might be expected would occasion much commotion among the principals of the family. Eliza, when questioned on the event, thought proper to observe an obstinate silence: sufficient latitude was thereby left for conjecture, and it was soon agreed that Captain Overbury was the most ungrateful and dishonourable of men; nor was it possible for Charlotte to vindicate him in an affair with which she was totally unacquainted; she was therefore reduced to the painful necessity of hearing him accused of the most palpable baseness without being able to say more in his defence than that she was certain there must have been something very mysterious at the bottom, as she was convinced her brother was incapable of acting so culpably as appearances dictated.

"Yes, (cried Mrs. Butterfield,) there is something mysterious indeed at the bottom. The wench, whom you imprudently took to be your waiting-maid, Miss Overbury, is the mystery. Now its out, and my poor child is abused for such a beggarly wretch."

"Aye, aye, (rejoined the Justice,) there goes the hare and the old woman, as the saying is. I zee it plain enough;—the Captain loves a pretty wench, and, in truth, I don't blame him, but then he should not have befooled our poor girl neither."

This surmise was immediately confirmed by Mr. Arthur's observing that he had often surprised the Captain looking very kindly on the young woman; to which Charlotte warmly replied, that she was certain her brother would abhor the idea of seducing a poor young creature, whose father he so eminently respected.

"Why, that is it, child, (cried Mr. Butterfield,) one may now see what all this charity meant, and he has made a dupe of you into the bargain,—for, you know, it looked better for the kindness to come rather from you than himself."

Piqued at so unjust an aspersion, she replied, that, so far from the Captain having any sinister design in the affair, that he knew nothing of the assistance she had given that family till a considerable time after. Nothing, however, which she could alledge was effectual when opposed to prejudice and ignorance. In short, matters had now arrived at such a crisis, that Charlotte declared her resolution of entirely quitting the Priory.

At this intimation, Mrs. Butterfield, tho' not accustomed to stop short in the career of passion, suddenly began to recollect herself, and to suspect she had proceeded

too far; for, since one part of her plan had failed of accomplishment, there was no reason why she should not endeavour to secure better success to the other.—Bursting into tears, the usual resource of angry people when their ill humour durst proceed no farther, she took hold of Charlotte's hand, and said, "I doubt, my dear girl, I have been to blame in allowing this foolish affair to *infect* me so far; but, though you cannot entirely excuse me, I hope my son has not *recited* your displeasure."

"No more, madam, than he has done long since. Mr. Arthur never was nor can be a pleasing object in my eyes."

Having said this, Miss Overbury quitted the room with an air of dissatisfaction which shewed how deeply she resented the injurious aspersions thrown on her brother's reputation.—Mrs. Butterfield, suspecting that the supercilious temper of her son was not very likely to conciliate that young lady's favour, and fearing that all her sanguine hopes were about to vanish into air, now told him plainly, that, except he would resolve to carry himself with that complaisance which the nature of the affair demanded, she wished to see him no more in her presence; to which, with his usual hauteur, he replied, that he never conceived himself bound by any obligations of duty to act with a meanness unbecoming a man of sense, and that, in short, since matters were got so far, he would flatly assure her that he had sooner do penance in purgatory than take a wife of Miss Overbury's cast.—Enraged and disappointed, Mrs. Butterfield's feelings transported her almost to the verge of distraction, when the Justice, to prevent the effects of her excessive rage, took his son aside, and there, as the most prudential step he could advise, persuaded him to make a visit for some time to the university. He could not possibly have proposed an expedient more agreeable to the young man's inclinations, who, for some private reasons, had long meditated a decent retreat. Being properly accommodated with the needful, in which article indeed he had never been retrenched, he sat out the next morning for Oxford, and Mr. Butterfield began to indulge the hope that peace might once more be restored to his abode on the old terms of passive obedience on the one side, and indefeasible right of command on the other.

Two succeeding days were passed in a kind of sullen silence; but, on the third, the gloom was rather penetrated, not by the kindly beams of social conviviality, but by a hurricane, compared to which all that had passed was as the light breeze of summer to the rough Borean tempest. Not to keep the reader in suspense, Miss Butterfield had eloped with her incognito swain. The window of her apartment found open, with a ladder of ropes suspending from it, afforded strong reasons for conjecture as to the nature of her flight; nevertheless Mrs. Martin, who had been summoned immediately on the discovery being made, gave it as her opinion that the poor dear child had been forcibly carried off by thieves, and probably would be found dying, or dead, in some adjacent place. Ridiculous as this supposition must appear on the present incident, it had with Mrs. Butterfield all the force of demonstration. The coach, which had been ordered, was again put up, and all the servant's employed in searching every wood, field, and ditch, for four or five miles round. These fruitless researches took up the greatest part of the day, which certainly ought to have been passed in a very different manner. At length, the chit-chat of "The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza."

the neighbourhood had reached the Justice's kitchen, and by degrees Mrs. Butterfield's

At this intimation, Mrs. Butterfield, tho' not accustomed to stop short in the career of passion, suddenly began to recollect herself, and to suspect she had proceeded

ear also; the substance of which report was, that her daughter was certainly gone to the land of matrimony with a young fellow whom nobody knew, but whom every body saw, except the family, was a suitor of the Squire's daughter.—The coach was again ordered out, and Mrs. Martin having no longer any other expedient to offer, they actually set about what any other people would have done eight hours before,—going in pursuit of the lovers.

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

C H A P. XXVII.

An Expedition to the North.

AS there could now be no doubt but the runaways were gone towards Gretna-green, the enraged parents took the northern road, travelling with as much expedition as possible, and avoiding even the approaches of Morpheus, except when he slyly took captive the Justice's eye-lids as he lounged in a corner of the coach, and at length arrived at the populous town of B—, where on a change of horses being absolutely necessary, they just stepped out of the coach to take the refreshment of a glass of wine and some biscuits, when Mrs. Butterfield, accidentally casting her eye towards the gallery of the inn, observed some persons in a close whisper at one end of it, who immediately entered the next apartment, and shut the door. With a curiosity which no circumstances could suppress, she demanded of the waiter whom they had got in that room. The lad, rather surprised at the question, appeared to hesitate for a reply, which tended still more to augment her inquisitiveness, till, by a strange concatenation of ideas, it suddenly came into her head that the couple they were in pursuit of were concealed in that very apartment.—“Boy, send your mistress to me this moment.”——The landlady appeared.

“Who, pray, have you got in that room yonder?” pointing with her finger.—
“Really, madam, I have not asked their names,” returned the other with a pert smile.

“Adzooks! (exclaimed the Justice,) what vagary is got in the woman's head now! Do you think, Mrs. Butterfield, they would be such fools as to linger here in the business they are upon?”

“No matter for that. You know I could always see farther into things than you, and therefore I insist on your demanding entrance into that room.”

“Are you actually mad?—What right have I to demand it?”

“Are you not a justice of the Quorum, simpleton?”

“Yes, simpleton;—but dost think my commission extends all the world over?”

The astonishing effrontery, of retorting the very civil appellation she had used, provoked the lady so excessively, that she immediately rose, and gave her husband a box on the ear; after which, turning to the landlady, in a peremptory tone, she ordered her to shew her into the before-mentioned apartment.

“Truly, madam, (replied she,) this is a liberty we never take with our guests.”

“Tell me not of liberties, woman, I will have entrance.”

“Indeed you shall not.”

At this intimation, Mrs. Butterfield, tho' not accustomed to stop short in the career of passion, suddenly began to recollect herself, and to suspect she had proceeded

Unused to be controuled, Mrs. Butterfield here attempted to rush by. The landlady opposed her passage with as much strength as she was mistress of, till, in the scuffle they both tumbled down; at length, the former, being by much the strongest of the two, took the advantage of her adversary's situation, and forced her way to the gallery.—The door of the said apartment not being locked, in she rushed, without much attention to the rules of ceremony, and the first object which struck her eye was her son Arthur fondly reclining on the bosom of Sally Sanders.

As we despair of finding the English vocabulary sufficiently copious to express the feelings of the respective parties on this unexpected rencontre, we shall only say that Mrs. Butterfield bitterly upbraided her son with the meanness of associating with so abandoned a creature, when he, not entirely relishing that epithet, desired his mother to speak less harshly of a person for whom he had the highest regard.

“Hey! (exclaimed she,) what is it come to this!—Art thou so besotted as to profess a regard for such a strumpet?”

“Softly, good mother, this young woman, I assure you, is no strumpet.”

“What then dost thou call her, ideot?”

“What I judge it not prudent to mention at this juncture, madam.”

During this discourse, poor Sally, who well knew the violent temper of Mrs. Butterfield, had crept, trembling, behind an easy chair, where, as she stood half-dead with terror, and resting her left hand on the back of it, she inadvertently discovered a certain small trinket which struck the sight of the enraged lady more tremendously than a flash of lightning.”

“Merciful, merciful!—what, has the slut the impudence to wear a ring?”

Mr. Arthur, perceiving all was discovered, replied, “The perfect perturbation of your mind, dear mother, renders an *éclaircissement* improper at this time. However, I must say, that, if Sally wears a ring, she probably has a right to do so.”

The Justice was by this time come up.—“Here, Philip Butterfield, (cried his lady as well as passion would give leave,) see what a pretty *perdickity* I have found your son in!—and——”

“Well, well, if this be all, (replied he, impatient of farther delay,) we must pass it by as a trick of youth, and let us be going.”

Mrs. Butterfield, very far from believing that her son was actually married, declared she would never overlook it, except he would promise to return immediately to the Priory, and marry Charlotte Overbury.

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

“What confounded palaver is this!—You must be blind, wife, that’s for zartain, if you don’t zee that the girl perfectly hates him.”

She could by no means credit the assertion, and therefore still insisted on his going back, in order to compass a matrimonial union.—“Well, well, (eager to get rid of the business,) promise her boy, and get back, and strike up a match with Charlotte by the time we come back.”

“It is now absolutely impracticable, Sir.”

“Why?”

“Because, (falling on his knees,) I have already married her waiting-maid,—Dear father, pardon my first offence.”

“Thou hast not, zure, been such a fool?”

“Condemn me not, Sir, till you have heard my vindication.”

“Whew!” (whistled the Justice.) Come along, wife, we’ll e’en jog home again, and let the other young hopeful get married too, as fast as she can.”

With these words he took hold of his lady’s arm, and led, or rather forced, her down stairs, leaving the fond pair to console each other for the disaster which had thrown somewhat of a cloud over their honey-moon.—As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Butterfield got to the parlour, they sat themselves down in opposite corners of it, without speaking a word,—she weeping, he whistling, which were only different modes of expressing the same feelings:—where we will leave them for a while, to account for an event which we doubt not has a little surprised the good reader.

At this intimation, Mrs. Butterfield, tho’ not accustomed to stop short in the career of passion, suddenly began to recollect herself, and to suspect she had proceeded

C H A P. XXVIII.

Which is to serve as a Lecture on over-wise Heads.

HOW much soever absorbed in profound speculation, Mr. Arthur Butterfield was not absolutely insensible to the power of beauty. He beheld it indeed in Miss Overbury, who was incontestibly a very handsome woman; yet the sensation thereby excited in his breast was accompanied by an awe which forbad him to love what he could not but admire. This undoubtedly was owing to the opposition of their characters. Her lively disposition being so unsuitable to the gravity of his, and her understanding above the size of his own, were circumstances not very likely to nourish a tender passion which the severe glances of her eye, the smile of contempt on her countenance, whenever he approached her, tacitly prohibited him from indulging.—The beauty of Sally Sanders was of a different kind, or, at least, it was the same jewel, set in an inferior metal, which, if not so valuable, was certainly less dazzling. From the first interview, he had discovered a sensible pleasure in gazing on her face, where he met none of those frowns which from her mistress caused him often to tremble, and the difference which fortune had made in their circumstances causing that young woman always to behave with a humility becoming her station, he contemplated her charms till he became eminently sensible of their power. In the presence of Charlotte he felt a painful restraint;—in that of Sally, an easy pleasurable sensation, which by degrees ripened into love. In addressing her, he had no room to dread the severity of a repartee, or the penetration of a cultivated understanding. In short, the docility and meekness of her character pointed her out as the only proper wife for one of his cast. He had not, however, resolved absolutely to thwart his mother's inclinations before the garden-adventure which we have mentioned in a former chapter, when Miss Overbury so explicitly declared her aversion to him, that he thought himself at full liberty to give Sally an offer of making her his wife;—in accepting which, she could not conceive she should violate any moral obligation, for she had constantly witnessed her lady's detestation of him, and therefore prudently determined to embrace those offers which another had rejected with contempt.—After that period, the affair went on so warmly between them, that Mr. Arthur proposed her privately decamping, in order to wait for him at a convenient place, in which he solemnly swore he would meet her, and make her his lawful wife. It must be confessed that Sally, in complying with this scheme, had given an unequivocal proof of her confidence in his sincerity and honour; but she really loved him, and had consequently the highest opinion of both. At the time of this unwelcome rencontre with his mother, she was actually his wife, and probably he was then concerting some measures for properly disposing of her till the offence should be pardoned by his parents.

We will now return to the gentleman and lady whom the reader remembers we left in the parlour of the inn. Mrs. Butterfield was the first who broke silence, by asking her husband whether they should proceed to Gretna-green, or set out on their return to the Priory,—to which he replied, that it would now be the height of folly to think of the former, as there could be no doubt but the marriage had taken place, and then added, “The horses are tired, and, in truth, so am I. Suppose, child, we ordered a bit of supper.”

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

“Do you imagine, Mr. Butterfield, I would sup while I knew those wretches were in another room of the house?”

“May hap then you would have no objection to their sitting here with us.”

“I am astonished at your stupidity!—You cannot be in earnest.”

“Look ye, wife, life is but a vapour,—a snuff of a candle,—a will o’ the wisp,—a bird on a spray,—a—a—”

“And what of all this parsonish stuff?”

“Why, then, I think it all nonsense to make such a fuss about it. The boy has pleased himself, and what signifies you and I making ourselves miserable.”

So pacific a system was not to be readily adopted, and supper being then brought in, Mrs. Butterfield, to express her resentment, flung out of the room, and instantly retired to bed; after which, the Justice, finding himself at liberty, resolved to indulge those lenient feelings with which he felt himself inspired. Revolving in his mind the present posture of affairs, he happened to recollect that his own marriage had been the result of paternal direction, and, having experienced no remarkable sweets therein, was the more easily induced to excuse his son for having obeyed the dictates of inclination; he therefore sent for both him and his wife, and, after some little time, granted a complete pardon; but, as it was probable Mrs. Butterfield would not easily be brought to terms of reconciliation, it was agreed the young people should look out some distant residence, where he promised to allow them a sufficient maintenance till time should effect something more in their favour.

The next morning as the Justice and his lady were pensively taking a cup of chocolate before they got into their carriage, a post-chaise and four drove into the courtyard, in which were Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot, or, to be more intelligible, the late Miss Butterfield and her tender swain, who, having accomplished their business beyond the Tweed, were returning with all expedition, in order to try the force of submissive pleading at the Priory. Recognizing her father’s equipage, she had nearly fainted in her husband’s arms, who carried her into a distant apartment.

Wilmot was a shrewd artful person, who knew, on some occasions, how to turn the passions of others to his advantage, and therefore judged that to take the old folks by surprise would be a better way of going to work than opening a formal negotiation.—The proposals which he made his wife, in consequence of that reflection, required, it is true, no small share of temerity to execute; yet, encouraged by his persuasions, and prompted by the yearnings of affection, Eliza acquiesced in the plan, and, at a moment when such a circumstance was of all things least expected, she rushed into the room where her mother was sitting at that instant alone, and, falling on her knees, burst into a flood of tears. The scheme had even a better effect than had been expected. Mrs. Butterfield’s passions were

At this intimation, Mrs. Butterfield, tho’ not accustomed to stop short in the career of passion, suddenly began to recollect herself, and to suspect she had proceeded

meliorated by grief and disappointment; all her favourite projects were frustrated,—her hopes of family aggrandizement levelled with the dust,—and she now could only turn aside her head and weep. Animated by so favourable a symptom, Mrs. Wilmot ventured to plead her engagement to Mr. Wilmot prior to her seeing Captain Overbury. She had (she alledged) married a gentleman, whose merit and fortune were equal to his birth.—Of all others, this was unquestionably the best argument she could have used on the occasion, as it appeared by the sequel that Mrs. Butterfield had not supposed the culpability of her daughter to lie so much in the act of disobedience as in marrying a man whom nobody knew. The probability of its being a different case gave a favourable turn to affairs. In fine, as she had not, like her brother, married beneath herself, the offence might be pardoned.

But the Justice, who had discovered some sympathy with the feelings of his son, could allow nothing in the present instance: it was an act of disobedience never to be forgiven.—It was now his lady's turn to take the moderate side of the question. Archly retorting the very argument he had before addressed to herself, she said,

“Life you know is a vapour,—a snuff of a candle,” &c. &c.

“True, madam, (he replied,) and therefore you ought to have given your daughter such an education as would have taught her to value the little good to be found in it, and not have let her fill her head with vagaries and nonsense.”

“And you, Sir, (she resumed,) should have contrived to have given your son some knowledge of the world, instead of chaining him to a parcel of fusty old books. He would then have known better than to throw himself away upon a beggar.”

“Well, since we have been both in the wrong, it seems, let us for once resolve to be in the right, and give Atty liberty to bring home his wife.”

“Not unless you agree to receive Eliza and her husband.”

“I never will.”

“Nor will I forgive your son.”

Thus, from a spirit of opposition perhaps more than any other motive, this good couple determined severally to forego the wish of their hearts rather than grant any thing to the gratification of each other.

All business being now at an end, the carriage was got ready to convey them to the Priory, and, soon after their departure, Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot sat out for London, where it was agreed their residence should be for the present.

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

CHAP. XXIX.

An unpleasant Eclaircissement.

DURING the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Butterfield, Miss Overbury had very unexpectedly received a letter from Miss Grimstone, the purport of which was, that, finding herself in a declining state of health, and being advised to try the effect of a milder climate, she earnestly desired the favour of her company on a jaunt to the South of France.

Charlotte's situation at the Priory was now, for several reasons, become extremely disagreeable; she therefore could not hesitate a moment to accept a proposal which promised both variety and pleasure; but to set out in the absence of Mrs. Butterfield would be a piece of rudeness she could not resolve to commit. Her reply to Miss Grimstone, however, contained an assurance of joining her in town at the expiration of a few days.—The Justice and his lady, it might be expected, did not return home in any remarkable flow of good-humour; the temper of the latter, naturally unamiable, had not received any improvement by the late untoward events; perhaps, too, she secretly bore our heroine a grudge, from a supposition that she had treated her son too contemptuously. The intimation of Miss Overbury's departure was therefore received with coolness, and they parted, at length, with distant civility on both sides.

Charlotte directed her course immediately to the capital, where she met her brother, who received her with the warmest affection, but she could not without concern observe that the conduct of Miss Butterfield had affected him much more seriously than she could have wished. He had entertained a sincere regard for that young lady, nor could the treatment he had received from her induce him to discover any vindictive sentiments towards her. When informed of her elopement, he said, with a sigh, "I wish it were possible I could be assured of her happiness."—Charlotte, though not inferior to her brother in real generosity of soul, was yet too sensibly hurt on his account to be able to digest her friend's duplicity, and therefore replied, that, if she should fail of obtaining that point, the blame could only be due to herself.

"True, sister, (replied he,) and therefore a disappointment will be the more galling. There are many arguments capable of supporting a good mind under a sense of injuries undeservedly brought on; but, when we are conscious that the evil originates in ourselves, the bitterness of that reflection must render it intolerable:—never may it be the portion of Eliza!"

Miss Grimstone not being quite ready for her journey, Charlotte was obliged to pass several days at Sir Bevil's house, but she had not the smallest reason to be dissatisfied with his present behaviour, as he appeared entirely to have abandoned that preposterous idea which had formerly rendered her residence in his family so disagreeable; in a word, he was himself, and consequently the same frankness and good-humour which had once subsisted between them was again restored. Gladly she would have prevailed on her brother to make one of the party in the continental tour, but the

At this intimation, Mrs. Butterfield, tho' not accustomed to stop short in the career of passion, suddenly began to recollect herself, and to suspect she had proceeded

posture of his affairs not allowing it, the two ladies, attended only by the Baronet, sat out for Dover, at which place we will leave them to wait the opportunity of wind and tide, while we return to the Priory.

Mrs. Butterfield, when she parted with her daughter at the inn, had advised her to go to her husband's seat till she should be able to soften the vehemence of the Justice's displeasure. Now, though this appeared a very proper measure, it was not altogether a practicable one; for Fortune, in her hurry of dispensing among mankind lands, houses, and noble mansions, had uncivilly overlooked poor Wilmot, and, in fact, left him not so much as a cottage to take a wife to when he should get one. It will be said that it was an easy matter to hire a suitable house: we allow it;—but quite another matter to furnish or pay for it; and therefore this gentleman, not being overstocked with specie, judged it convenient to leave his lady in a lodging in town, while he made a visit to the Priory, where he got himself introduced just as the Justice was setting out on a morning-ride.

“And what, pray, Sir, is your business with me?”

“Only to request an order on your banker, Sir, for the sum of five thousand pounds.”

“Who the d—l are you?”

“Your worship's son in-law, at your service,” bowing with rather more humour than prudence.

Provoked at the insolence of such behaviour, Mr. Butterfield ordered his servants to kick him out of the house. Whether the command was precisely obeyed we cannot say, but it is certain the Justice's son-in-law retreated with less audacity of aspect than he had assumed at entering. The matter, however, was not to rest here. By the will of an aunt, Eliza was legally entitled to the above-named sum on the day of marriage, which, having been a principal object in this matrimonial embarkation, was not to be passively relinquished; accordingly, Mr. Martin, as deputed by Wilmot, soon after waited on the Justice, to solicit payment in behalf of his client, at the same time remarking, as a friend, that a refusal must be attended with disagreeable consequences, since the law would not fail to give sentence in favour of the claimant. All this Mr. Butterfield well understood, and, having had a little time to cool since the unexpected rencontre of the morning, resolved to get rid of the business by giving drafts on his banker to the requisite amount.

But now, for so the Fates would have it, a mystery of a very extraordinary nature came to light. Wilmot, it appears, was to make Mrs. Martin a present of five hundred pounds on the day he should receive his wife's portion, which being the reward of secret services, the cautious attorney, not choosing to appear himself in the business, instructed his lady to get him under proper articles, and Wilmot had really signed to her a deed for that purpose. Now, it not being convenient to that gentleman to part with so considerable a sum, he gave them both to understand that he knew too much of the law to conceive himself bound by an instrument made to a femme coverte, and consequently, if he

“The d——l! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

expected payment, it should only be obtained by a legal process.—Thus the biter was fairly bit. As Mr. Martin by no means chose to put the issue of the affair on a public trial, all the recompense left was to rail at his own folly and exhaust his breath in invectives, which certainly answered no better purpose than the covenant he held in his hand.

During this dispute, Mrs. Butterfield, having heard the disgraceful circumstance which had attended her son-in-law's first visit to the Priory, and supposing him to be of that class for which she had indiscriminately the profoundest reverence, that is to say a man of family, resolved to send him an invitation to her presence, in order that she might make the apologies necessary on the occasion. Wilmot, as may be imagined, readily obeyed the summons, and, concluding from the terms on which he now stood with the Martins, that they would avail themselves of his absence to conceal the part they had acted in the affair, as well as to employ every means to his prejudice, he determined on revealing the whole of it; therefore, when Mrs. Butterfield, after desiring he would impute the ill-treatment he had received to her husband's ignorance of his rank in life, added, "And I think, Mr. Wilmot, it would now be proper for you to declare what and who you are." He replied, with an effrontery natural to the education he had received, "As to the first, madam, I am not at present of any occupation, though I had the honour of being put apprentice to a hair-dresser."

Rage and astonishment absolutely suppressing the lady's powers of articulation, he resumed, "And, as to the other enquiry of whom I am, be it known to you that I am first cousin to your honest neighbour Mrs. Martin, to whose advice and good offices I am indebted for the dignity of bearing a relationship to your noble family; not that this favour was to be brought about for nothing, for they intended to have made me pay handsomely for it, if I had not outwitted them.—And now, madam, may I tell Mrs. Wilmot you will give her leave to wait on you?"

"Never, never! (actually foaming with rage.) I verily hoped she had married a gentleman; but now, let the idiot know, I will take care her cloaths shall be sent her, which is the last notice she shall ever receive from any one of this family."

"Very well, (returned the hair-dresser,) as you please for that, and so your most humble servant, my very civil mother-in-law."

Such a degree of insolence, on so interesting an occasion, will appear scarcely compatible with common sense; but this was a commodity in which Mr. Wilmot did not eminently abound, though what he wanted of this point was made up by a large share of that impudence and low cunning which mark the manners of the canaille, to which sphere he properly belonged, having been left in his infancy to the care of the parish, and, by the charity of an old lady, apprenticed to the business of hair-dressing, in which occupation he figured as a journey-man, till the genius of Mrs. Martin devised the generous scheme of imposing on the romantic turn of Eliza in the manner before described.

"More than you are aware of, (returned the other angrily.) Tell him, if you please, madam, that I will be delayed no longer."

C H A P. XXX.

The critical Appearance.

THE two ladies, with the baronet, were no sooner landed on the other side of the Channel, than Sir Bevil, recollecting some business he had to settle in the Austrian Netherlands, told his companions that it was necessary they should go to Paris, and wait for him there a short time, at which place he would most assuredly rejoin them. To this proposal Miss Grimstone replied, that, for her part, as a change of air was principally prescribed her, she saw no reason why one place might not do as well as another, and therefore wished to accompany her brother.

“It is certain, (resumed he,) that no place can equal Montpelier in salubrity of air, yet, if you are disposed, sister, to make an excursion more to the North, I have this to add for your encouragement, that we could have recourse to the Spa waters, should your malady make it necessary;—but what says Miss Overbury to our scheme?”

“It is a matter of the greatest indifference to me, (she replied,) whether our rout be to the North or to the South;—Miss Grimstone’s advantage is principally to be consulted.”

Without farther hesitation, it was agreed that the whole party should take a trip to the Netherlands, nor can it be denied that Charlotte thought the jaunt excessively pleasant, as the fineness of the weather, the variety of scenes, together with the politeness and attention of her two companions, were conspiring circumstances to render it agreeable. Sir Bevil strenuously exerted those companionable talents with which he was certainly endowed, and Miss Grimstone appeared to have left her envy and her ill humours on the other side of the water. All was high good-humour, in which strain they had travelled through part of Flanders, and were now in the province of Brabant, when, stopping at a certain town to change horses, the Baronet happened to espy the equipage of his old acquaintance Baron Vanhawsen. The recognition was mutual. That nobleman stopped his carriage, and, being told that the ladies were within at the inn, politely determined on paying them his respects.—Miss Grimstone was vastly glad to see his lordship once more, and, contrary to the old spirit of rivalry, introduced him to Charlotte, who received his compliments with graceful civility.

The Baron’s château was not more than a league distant.—Would they pass so near it without doing him the honour of stopping at it?—Should he not have the satisfaction of entertaining his English friends, whom he so greatly respected?

Charlotte was no ways disposed to accept the invitation, but, as both Sir Bevil and his sister complied with it, she had no choice left but to accompany them.

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

superb and dazzling; the plate, if not remarkable for taste, was massive and abundant: in short, the Baron's house, table, and equipage, bespoke the riches of the owner, who, it has already been observed, inherited the estates and affluence of many branches of his family, and, on this occasion, nothing was omitted that could tend to display the circumstance.

To her infinite concern, Miss Overbury was soon convinced that the Baron had not relinquished his former attachment to her. He now renewed the subject of his passion in terms so ardent and importunate, that she really felt a secret pain in rejecting his addresses, which, however, she constantly did in terms the most serious and positive; but what prodigiously surprised her was to find Miss Grimstone a warm advocate in his favour. "Is it possible (said that lady) you can refuse a man of the Baron's merit, rank, and fortune, who, it is evident, adores you? Will you reject those offers, of becoming the Baroness Vanhawsen, with a revenue more than princely at your command?—with a splendor equal to that of courts, and more vassals ready to obey your will than many crowned heads can boast?"

"Ah! Miss Grimstone, (returned she,) why should I barter happiness for these toys? The Baron, with all his merit and possessions, can never be the man of my choice. Mention it no more, I beg; but rather oblige me by prevailing on your brother to proceed on our journey."

"That is more than I dare promise you, Charlotte. Sir Bevil, as you see, is so agreeably engaged here, that I can perceive no probability of persuading him to remove as yet."

"Let you and I then leave him, and take our rout to Paris, where he will doubtless join us in a short time."

"No, truly, my dear, I am not yet tired of this château. I tell you frankly, I shall not stir till my brother proposes it."

Nothing, at length, could be more disagreeable than was Miss Overbury's situation. Teazed every day, nay, every hour, with the Baron's professions of regard,—advised with the utmost solemnity by Sir Bevil to accept them, and importuned by his sister to the same purpose, there was nothing she so anxiously desired as to remove from the castle; but her companions were immoveable. How then could she quit it alone?—whither could she go, and to whom?—There was no remedy but patience, and to that she would have submitted, had there not been some circumstances to create her a very serious alarm.

Happening one day to be sitting alone in her apartment, a paper, as from an invisible hand, was dropped at her feet. In her surprise she took it up, and found it contained the following expressions in French, "It were best to do that with a good grace which one may be forced to do at last.—A favour voluntarily bestowed demands a

The castle was an ancient building, but magnificent in the extreme. The furniture and ornaments, as usual with the Germans, more splendid than elegant; every thing was

grateful return, but, when obtained by compulsion, can merit only unthankfulness.”—

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

This billet she immediately communicated to Miss Grimstone, not without visible marks of consternation, and asked what she thought it could mean.

“I will tell you (said Miss Grimstone) candidly what I think of it. It appears to me to imply a suggestion that the Baron intends to marry you by force.”

“By force!—You jest surely. How can he possibly dream of so chimerical a project!”

“Perhaps it may not be so chimerical as you imagine. Remember, Charlotte, you are not now in England:—the Baron is absolute sovereign here.”

“Ah! Miss Grimstone, how you terrify me! He cannot possibly desire to marry one who dislikes him.—What happiness could he propose to himself by such a measure?”

“You forget that it is not in Germany we are to look for delicacy of sentiment. No doubt he thinks, that, were you once his wife, his rank, fortune, and attentions, would easily reconcile you to your destiny.”

“I cannot suppose you in earnest in all this; but, put the case that it were so, certainly Sir Bevil and you would not be passive spectators of such an outrage.”

“And what could we do to oppose it? We are all the Baron’s prisoners whenever he chooses to make us so.”

Charlotte, though more disposed to consider this discourse in the light of a jest than otherwise, yet saw something in it which she could not entirely comprehend. If Miss Grimstone really saw cause for any suspicion of the kind, then certainly the conduct both of her brother and herself, in resolving to continue at the castle, looked like infatuation, or something worse. Upon the whole, she determined, since they would not remove, to withdraw herself without them, but she soon after had sufficient reason to conclude that all her motions were watched; and one day, on unlocking her travelling trunk, she discovered that her whole stock of bills and cash had been clandestinely removed from thence. This was sufficient to induce a public declaration of the theft. The servants were examined, and the suspicion suffered to rest on a chamber-maid, who was accordingly marked out for punishment, though the thief was certainly a very different person, nor was it really intended the girl should suffer.

At length affairs began to draw to a crisis. The Baron was no more the obsequious lover, but openly declared he neither could nor would live without the privilege of calling Charlotte his wife. Sir Bevil was wholly passive. Miss Grimstone said not a word on the subject; and, in fine, the poor young lady was but too fully convinced that she was betrayed, though from what motives she was still at a loss to determine. The morning, however, arrived which was to decide her fate. The Baron and his guests had breakfasted together, when the former, rising from his seat, vowed he would no longer be without the

The castle was an ancient building, but magnificent in the extreme. The furniture and ornaments, as usual with the Germans, more splendid than elegant; every thing was

happiness which it was in his power to enjoy, and, taking Miss Overbury by the arm, "Come, madam, (said he,) you shall this instant repay with your hand the uneasiness I have suffered on your account." It was to no purpose that she vowed rather to die than become his wife: regardless either of her tears or entreaties, they took her in their arms, and carried her into the chapel of the castle. Here the chaplain stood ready to perform the marriage-ceremony. Sir Bevil supported her in his arms, Miss Grimstone applied salts to her nose, and the Baron forcibly held both her hands in his, while the chaplain proceeded with the ceremony.

At this dreadful moment, when all hope was lost, her guardian-angel, in the shape of George Danby, rushed in to her deliverance. "Is this with your own consent, madam?" demanded he of the almost lifeless Charlotte. "No, no, save me!" was all she could reply.—"I will save you, or perish in the attempt!"——Swords were instantly drawn, and Mr. Danby had undoubtedly been lost for ever, had not two of his friends, with a servant, at that moment come up to his rescue. Numbers being now on their side, they bore the lady in triumph from the hands of her vile betrayers, and without farther opposition (for the Baron, in order to effect his scheme with the greater privacy, had ordered none of his domestics to appear) they conveyed her to a chaise which waited hard by the castle. Here Mr. Danby, seating his charge, who had fainted through the mingled emotions of joy and terror, took his place by her side, while his two friends followed on horseback, attended by their servants, who, as well as themselves, were properly armed against any pursuit, which it was probable might be made. Fortunately, however, they proceeded without molestation, (for the Baron and his party, either from the timidity of guilt durst not follow, or by good luck mistook the road they had taken,) and at length arrived in safety at Breda, the capital of Dutch Brabant, where, being in perfect security, they stopped, as well to procure the lady the rest and refreshment she stood in need of, as to concert farther measures of procedure.

"More than you are aware of, (returned the other angrily.) Tell him, if you please, madam, that I will be delayed no longer."

C H A P. XXXI.

Proves the preceding Incident no Miracle.

HAVING, in the former chapter, dealt a little in the marvellous, it remains that we descend into the region of probability, and convince the reader that all that we have there recorded was brought to pass by means extremely natural and common; and, first, of this marriage, which it was designed so oddly to bring about.

Sir Bevil Grimstone, morally assured that Miss Overbury would never bestow her hand and fortune on himself, began to regret that he had not supported with more warmth the Baron's addresses, from whose liberality and gratitude something might have been expected. After her departure from town, these gentlemen, no longer rivals but friends, continued on very intimate terms, in the course of which the Baron would often declare, that, rich as he was, he should have considered Charlotte's fortune a trifle not worthy his acceptance in comparison of the happiness of possessing her.

These expressions at length suggested a hint to the Baronet, which occasioned him much profound and secret deliberation;—but, not to swell this work with a detail of pros and cons, we will cut it at once, and say that a bargain was finally struck between these two intimates, by which it was covenanted and agreed, that Sir Bevil Grimstone, on the one part, should, either by force, fraud, or persuasion, cause his ward to become the Baroness Vanhawsen; on which condition, the Baron, on the other, engaged to resign to the said Sir Bevil Grimstone all the estates, real and personal, to which he should become entitled in right of the said Charlotte Overbury, then to be his wife.—It being determined, on all sides, that England could not be the proper scene for such a manœuvre, the Baron returned home to wait the event, and the Baronet set himself diligently to watch the opportunity of executing his engagement.

During Miss Overbury's residence at the Priory, he had taken care to have sufficient spies on all her actions, and was perfectly satisfied that he had nothing to fear from the schemes of Mrs. Butterfield; but how to get her once more in his power was a point which, for some time, much perplexed him. He saw the necessity of getting a female into the plot, but his sister, for several reasons, was the last person he could think of for the purpose. At length a most fortunate incident occurred. Miss Grimstone, despairing of ever effecting an honourable connection, had cast her eyes, with some tenderness, on a spruce valet which her brother had newly taken into the family, and, being just of that age when the heart is said by some to become a second time susceptible of soft impressions, it was impossible she could be long insensible to the attacks of love; but pride absolutely forbidding her to make one of mean degree her lawful lord and master, she, for once in her life, stepped over the boundaries of strict prudence, but not quite so secretly as she had hoped and believed.

Sir Bevil had taken cognizance of the *faux pas*, consequently her precious

soon settled.—“Acquiesce in my measures, or I will discard you from my house with the infamy you deserve.” What followed has already been related in the foregoing chapter. It only remains to account for the means by which Mr. Danby was so opportunely brought to the young lady’s rescue.

It will doubtless be recollected that this young gentleman was appointed to an employ on the continent. Richard Sanders, who was now become a favourite servant of Captain Overbury, was a young fellow of a shrewd active genius, and exactly such an one as Mr. Danby’s present situation required; to oblige his friend, therefore, as well as to give the young man an opportunity of improving his natural good capacity, the Captain consented that he should attend Mr. Danby on his tour, which necessarily laid through part of Flanders. Here, foreseeing his affairs would detain him for some time, Sanders’s new master gave him permission to make a little excursion with an acquaintance he had picked up on the journey.—Chance, or rather inclination, led them to the town which laid in the vicinity of the Baron Vanhawsen’s *château*; for Richard’s companion being a Frenchman, and of course incapable of living without an amour on his hands, had, it appeared, a secret penchant for one of the Baron’s female domestics, who was his countrywoman. Love, no less than curiosity, being a foe to reserve, the secrets of the castle were confided to the happy lover, who, by the impulse of a certain characteristic volubility imparted the same to his comrade.

Sanders, after due enquiries, being abundantly satisfied as to the truth and circumstances of the affair, felt his honest bosom glow with indignation at the insult and violence about to be offered to his benefactress; yet, unable of himself to obey the dictates of his grateful zeal, in effecting any mode for her instant redress, he left his companion, and returned back to his master with all possible expedition. Mr. Danby was surprised at seeing him before him with tears in his eyes, and all the marks of horror and concern in his countenance. “For heaven’s sake, Sir, (cried he,) save a country-woman from the cursed clutches of these popish villains!—They will force her to marry;—indeed they will:—that sweet young lady who saved me from a jail,—yes, ’tis she herself,—’tis Miss Overbury.”

The name was sufficient to rouse every generous and noble feeling in the breast of Mr. Danby. Apprized of the situation of his beloved Charlotte, he immediately communicated the story to two Protestant gentlemen of his acquaintance, who generously offered to risk their lives with him in the service of the lady. The interposition of the civil power, if obtained at all, must have been productive of a delay which might have been fatal in its consequences. Mr. Danby resolved to effect her rescue by his sword. The two friends and their servants engaged to second the brave attempt. Conducted by the faithful Sanders, they arrived at the Baron’s *château*.—The domestics, intimidated by their resolute demeanour, attempted not to oppose their entrance, and Mr. Danby, foremost in the enterprize as in zeal, entered the chapel as we have seen.

At Breda he proposed to attend his fair charge to Rotterdam, about twenty-two miles distant from thence, where, as his affairs would not allow him to wait on her “The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

farther, he would intrust her to the care of a respectable gentlewoman, with whom he had

Sir Bevil had taken cognizance of the *faux pas*, consequently her precious

contracted some acquaintance on his former travels, and where he was assured she would be perfectly safe, as long as she should choose to remain in that place; and, provided she approved of the measure, he would himself return that way, and be her conductor to England. So eligible a proposal met with due acceptance and acknowledgment.

The two gentlemen, who had so generously assisted in this enterprise, now took their leave, and Mr. Danby, having seen his dear Charlotte safe in a respectable lodging, was obliged to retire, in order to obtain a surgeon's assistance in examining a wound which he had received in the contest at the castle, the pain or danger of which he had been utterly regardless of till he had effectually secured her safety. It was found to be of dangerous tendency, and had already excited a fever, which threatened the most serious consequences. On the morrow, therefore, instead of attending her to Rotterdam as was designed, he was absolutely incapable of quitting his bed.

Charlotte, who knew nothing of the circumstance, was anxiously expecting his arrival at her lodging, when Sanders appeared with the alarming tidings of his master's dangerous condition. No consideration in nature could have prevented her from flying to the apartment of her deliverer, whose case she was convinced, by the surgeon's declaration, was extremely hazardous.—What words can now paint her feelings! Tears, in spite of all her regard to appearances, (if, indeed, on this occasion she thought of any,) flowed down her cheeks at the idea of an amiable man expiring of the wound received in her service.

Mr. Danby calmly advised her to lose no time in repairing to Rotterdam, and added, that he had already begun a letter to the lady whose protection it was his wish to procure her.

“And can you think so meanly of me, Mr. Danby, (replied she with unusual earnestness,) as to imagine I would leave you in this situation? Surely those little attentions, which it may be in my power to shew on so melancholy an occasion, are the least return I can make. No, Sir, I will not quit Breda, be assured.”

Mr. Danby's eyes flashed a beam of pleasure at this tender assurance, but he attempted not to reply.

In short, our heroine was his nurse, his companion, his friend, in a place where not one sympathetic acquaintance was at hand to sooth his pain or alleviate his sufferings.—Sanders spent the nights in watching by his pillow, and in the days she constantly supplied that place while he took the necessary repose. Their cares and assiduities were at length rewarded with reviving hope, but not with the removal of all apprehension for a considerable time.

During this period, Miss Overbury had written her brother an account of his friend's situation and her own, urging him, if possible, to come to them; but there needed not that solicitation. Anxious for a man he esteemed,—a sister whom he tenderly loved,

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

the Captain no sooner received the unexpected relation, than he determined to set off immediately for the Netherlands.

At length, to the entire satisfaction both of Charlotte and the faithful Sanders, Mr. Danby was pronounced out of danger,—was able to leave his bed, and to enjoy the conversation of the woman he adored. What an opportunity was here for the tender sympathies of mutual love!

The liveliest gratitude and the purest passion must (one should imagine) have conspired to give a pathos to those ineffable effusions;—but, at present, nothing like it was the case. Mr. Danby saw,—yes, with rapture too high for expression, he saw,—that he was tenderly beloved by the mistress of his soul; but that conviction, instead of animating his conversation with the ardour of hope, actually froze it to the torpid style of mere civility.

In proportion, as by a thousand unguarded instances, she demonstrated that something more than gratitude lurked at the bottom of her heart, his behaviour became more distant and reserved. The first time she had visited him in his illness, he had said that he regretted not the loss of life in the exulting thought of its having been devoted to her; but, whenever the subject was now mentioned, (and it perpetually hung on the lips of the grateful Charlotte,) he seemed to treat it less cavalierly.—He was happy in having effected any thing to the advantage of a lady.—The impulse of benevolence called for what he had done.—It was no more than what he owed to any other oppressed individual of the human race.

This conduct was absolutely inexplicable to her, when she recollected an incident which happened at the Priory; but, in fact, that very incident was the cause of his restraint. He had secretly and deeply lamented the imprudence of his conduct at that period ever since, and he was now convinced he had excited a sentiment in her breast which she ought never to have felt respecting him. The heart would sometimes exult in the thought, but reason assured him he had been culpable; yet his error, he sincerely hoped, was not totally irremediable, and he resolved, however painful the restraint, to indulge no future sallies of a passion which his principles condemned.

“More than you are aware of, (returned the other angrily.) Tell him, if you please, madam, that I will be delayed no longer.”

C H A P. XXXII.

Prudential Considerations must be allowed their Weight.

WHILST things were thus situated, the arrival of Captain Overbury was announced.—At any other period, George Danby would have hailed the presence of so dear a friend with unaffected joy, but now he seemed to shrink from it with the consciousness of self-condemnation.

Charlotte, who had as yet discovered no necessity for constraint, behaved with all the openness natural to her character. She spoke of her deliverance in terms so elevated, and expressed her sense of the obligation so warmly, that it fully corroborated a suspicion which the Captain, when at the Priory, had, it seems, entertained.—He was a man of penetration, and it was not long before he fully comprehended the respective feelings of the lovers. He had long known and admired his friend's exalted notions of honour, and, as the reserve he had imposed on himself was obviously unnatural, the Captain entered immediately into the motive of it, and with one glance read the delicate embarrassment he laboured under. He saw two amiable persons, who tenderly esteemed and were apparently formed for each other, about to be miserable by a separation which nothing but a chimerical idea of honour could inspire.—Mr. Danby's family was certainly most unexceptionable,—his personal merit undoubted. The only impediment which the world would oppose to such an union was the want of fortune on his part; but, in this respect, Captain Overbury differed in opinion from the world.—He thought merit the only real fortune either in man or woman; and, as in the present case, there was wealth enough on one side for all the reasonable purposes of life, he readily concluded that pecuniary matters ought not to be allowed any considerable weight.

Mr. Danby was now so far recovered as to be able to prosecute his business; but, as peace of mind does not always accompany corporeal health, so it was easy to see, that, in recovering the latter, he had not with it retrieved the former. "I shall quit this place (said he) happy in the certainty that Miss Overbury is now in the hands of a protector with whom she will have nothing to fear from the treachery with which she was lately threatened."

The Captain and he were alone when this was spoken.

"But do you consider, Danby, (said the former,) that my sister's situation peculiarly requires one of another nature than the relation betwixt us can supply. In fine, her person and fortune will, I fear, prove still inimical to her peace, unless some honest man secures both as his property. Now, from what has passed, I think no person so well adapted to become such a proprietor as yourself."

"The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza."

much more; but, know, my friend, that my principles are yet untainted, and I have still enough of honour left to blush at a weakness which my soul condemns.”

“You confess, then, (smiling,) that you have been betrayed into some weakness; that is, in other words, you love my sister.”

“I will not add falshood to temerity,—I confess I do; as who, indeed, can see her, and not be sensible of her perfections; but, at the same time, I know that I ought not to ask, nor she bestow, a return of that sentiment.”

“But suppose she does actually return it, what will your heroics say to this? Come, come, my friend, all this is mere chimerical refinement,—downright sentimental nonsense. You love each other, and, to confess a truth, it was always my secret wish that you might do so. I have my sister’s happiness anxiously at heart, and I think I cannot promote it better than by giving her to you.”

“Your partiality, dear Captain, lays me under an everlasting obligation; yet, excuse me in saying, that, in the zeal of friendship, you forget what is due to your honour as well as the interest of Miss Overbury.—What would the world say? Would it not reproach you with having sacrificed your sister to your own private feelings? Her merit and her fortune may justly entitle her to nobility, or at least an elevated rank in life; nor will you be allowed to deprive her of these without falling under the public censure.”

“I assure you, George, (resumed the Captain gravely,) that, were you possessed of a grain of merit less than I know you to be, I would disdain a reply to so ridiculous an argument. In securing my sister’s happiness, I should infallibly procure that testimony of conscience in my favour which I think of more consequence than the applause of a thousand worlds; yet, in urging this point, I take it for granted that you would have loved my sister, had she not been mistress of a shilling. Say but—that she is not absolutely essential to your felicity, and I have done with the subject.”

“I cannot strictly affirm this, Sir; but I will say, that, in seeing Miss Overbury united to a person of equal fortune and merit, I should experience that sensation which, I trust, would balance every selfish feeling.”

“All this I easily believe from the known generosity of your mind, Danby. Since, therefore, you acknowledge that the possession of Charlotte is essential to your happiness, I will take upon me to say that you are also essential to her’s; so that (to meet you on your own ground) you find you are necessitated to accept what you term an honour so far above you.—Thus your scruples are fairly done away, my very sentimental friend, and I will leave my sister and you to talk over it farther at your leisure.—But here she comes quite apropos, I declare.”

“And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

Mr. Danby, immediately on Charlotte's entrance, was about to withdraw; but the Captain, guessing his design, said, "George, I am going out on a little business, and shall commit this lady to your care in the mean time; but, hark ye, (with an arch smile,) she is

"The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza."

an excellent casuist, and, if you think proper to lay your question before her, I know she will answer it in a trice.”

To be short, the lovers, by the Captain’s interference, soon came to understand each other. Danby was the happiest and most grateful of mankind; yet, though he constantly from this time expressed the liveliest sense of the felicity and honour conferred on him, that sentiment by no means hurried him to that servility of conduct which little minds alone are capable of, or caused him to forget in the lover the man of sense and spirit. In a word, under the influence of conscious dignity of soul, his deportment was such as did honour to his mistress’s condescension and his friend’s exalted attachment.

The Captain, exulting, with the honest triumph of benevolence, in the happiness which apparently awaited two persons whom he tenderly regarded, told them, he had yet performed but half the business he had assigned himself; for, as Mr. Danby’s affairs indispensably demanded a speedy separation, he had it in contemplation to join their hands in wedlock before they took leave of each other.

The lover, who durst not so early have ventured a hint of the kind, looked his friend a thousand thanks; but Charlotte, with an air of surprise, exclaimed, “Surely, brother, you have forgot how short a time has elapsed since——”

“Since what, my dear girl? (interrupting her with a smile;) since you both determined to obey the dictates of common sense, you might have said; but the sentiments now subsisting between you are of a much older date than this:—and why is not the present time as proper for the solemn ceremony as any period seven years hence?”

“Indeed, Sir, I cannot consent to so precipitate a measure, and I should be very sorry to suspect Mr. Danby could be so imprudent as to prompt it.”

“Condemn me not, my dear Charlotte, (replied he,) before you have proof. I dared not, indeed, to have suggested it; yet, since the Captain has thus kindly moved a point so consonant to my wishes, I will take the liberty warmly to second it.”

“Then receive the answer so improper a request deserves,—that is, an absolute negative.”

Mr. Danby saw she was displeased, and therefore replied, that, although her condescension in this respect would render him the happiest of men, yet, rather than offer the smallest violence to her choice, he would be content in this, as on every other occasion, to forego his own wishes when not consonant with hers.

“Why, you will absolutely spoil this sister of mine, George, (said the Captain.) I see that already; however, Charlotte, (a little seriously,) since you will not consent to oblige either of us, have the prudence at least to consult your own reputation.”

“And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

“What can the present instance have to do with this, my dear brother?”

“A great deal, I assure you. Here will it be whispered in England, that Mr. Danby has forcibly taken a young lady from the hands of her guardian; that she chose to remain with him, near the space of a month, in a foreign city, where she was not known to a single being, and all this with no other attendant than the gentleman’s own servant; nay, farther, that her brother, informed of the disgraceful incident, went post after her, and, after much expostulation, prevailed with her to quit her paramour, and return to her native country. This, my dear sister, and probably much more, will the foul mouth of slander report to your prejudice, and its having some facts to support it will be an undeniable proof of the whole.”

“You alarm me, indeed, Sir.—Can this be possible?”

“It is very possible, and what in the nature of things may reasonably be expected; for Sir Bevil and his sister, to palliate or conceal their own conduct, you may be morally assured, will improve the smallest advantage afforded them in prejudice of your character; besides, as my situation in life will necessarily call me in a short time again from England, have you not reason to dread the future machinations of this crafty guardian, of whose detestable principles you have already had so dreadful a specimen.”

“I am indebted to your friendly consideration, brother, much more than I was aware of.—What shall I say, but that I resign myself wholly to your disposal?”

Mr. Danby was in raptures at this reply; the Captain’s eyes beamed ineffable satisfaction, “I shall now then have the felicity (said he) of seeing my Charlotte secured from the treachery of avarice and dissimulating meanness, and in possession, I trust, of all which can constitute her happiness.—This hour the Dutch minister shall make you one.”

“This hour, did you say?—Indeed, indeed, it cannot be.”

“But Mr. Danby, you know, is obliged to leave us to-morrow morning.”

“And to-morrow morning I promise to give this gentleman my hand, if he thinks it worth acceptance.”

“O my Charlotte! (exclaimed the enraptured Danby,) had I a diadem to offer, I would lay it——”

“At my feet, (interrupted she, laughing;) I understand you.—But, good people, we have certainly had enough of this subject, and, as it grows late, I beg leave to have a little consultation with my pillow.”

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

She then bade them good night, and retired with more satisfaction, perhaps, than she chose they should be spectators of.

“And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

C H A P. XXXIII.

A Lover's Heroism rewarded.

LONG before the sun had entered on his radiant course, the happy lover had quitted his repose, for excessive joy no more favours the drowsy God than excessive grief. Charlotte, in due time, appeared sparkling as the morning, (and that, it must be confessed, was a very bright one.) The feelings of her heart, on this occasion, gave additional lustre to the charms of her fine person. Her eyes, it is true, were cast to the ground with an agreeable reserve in them, yet the purest love beamed therein, and diffused its animating spirit amidst the blush which glowed on her cheek. The Captain was gone out on some affairs necessary to the approaching ceremony. Mr. Danby met his charming mistress at the entrance of the parlour, and, catching her in his arms, (a liberty he had never taken before,) said, in a tone of chastened rapture, "Joy to my beloved Charlotte on this auspicious morning!—May every succeeding hour augment her felicity and her Danby's gratitude!"

"Mine (replied she, disengaging herself) ought to be the latter sentiment. Are you not the generous, the noble preserver of my liberty, and every dear consideration in nature, for which you risked your own valuable life?"

"No, my Charlotte.—It is only now I feel it such. Existence, at that time, was no desirable privilege to me, and where could be the merit of hazarding that which one puts no value on? I had learned, indeed, to suppress the first wishes of my heart, and to consider the only object of its purest and most ardent affections as a good too supreme for me to aspire to; yet, in this constrained philosophy, (if such it might be called,) the mind had lost its energy; every laudable principle gradually became inert, and I sunk insensibly into an apathy which rendered life itself a burthen. Such, my beloved, is at best the state of human virtue; its lines, indeed, are amply drawn, but it is incapable of soaring beyond the narrow limits of the passions."

"But, George, you had placed your idea of that virtue even at a visionary point of eminence. It was not reason, but a too refined imagination marked the distance betwixt us, and imposed a silence which you own so irksome."

"Oh! say not so, my Charlotte!—Could your Danby's poor deserts, his indigence, and unpropitious fortune, be a proper offering to worth like your's?"

"You are a sorry philosopher, I find, since you thought the goods of fortune so very essential a point to be considered."

"Not quite so contemptible a one neither. Had the woman I adored been like myself, the inheritor of indigence, pecuniary considerations had held up no bar to my felicity; then, in the meanest cottage, blest with my Charlotte's love, I should have looked with contempt on all the advantages of the world beside."

"The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza."

"I readily give you credit for the assertion, and I confess (with an air of pleasantry) it gives me great satisfaction to find you avow so good a stock of philosophy, as, in taking Charlotte Overbury with all her ill humours, impertinences, and folly, you will have plentiful occasion for the exercise of it."

"If you, my sweet girl, (replied he in the same tone,) do not absolutely annihilate this little stock, it will be very fortunate on my side; for, you know, an uninterrupted course of happiness has spoiled many a good philosopher."

The Captain, here returning, interrupted the *tête-à-tête*, and Charlotte soon after leaving the room, a conversation ensued between him and Mr. Danby, which might be termed a contest of generosity. As the usual business of settlements, &c. could not properly be transacted here, the latter had before proposed that the lady's fortune should be wholly vested in her brother's hands, that it might hereafter be disposed in such a manner as he should deem most for her advantage. This the Captain had refused, and now, when, previous to the sacred ceremony, Mr. Danby re-urged the point, he rejected the proposal with indignation, "Do you imagine, Sir, (said he,) that, in committing my sister to your generosity and tenderness, I am afraid to intrust you with her fortune?"

"Pardon me, dear Overbury, but you know those things are usual even when an equality of fortune is supposed to be the case; and, since I can offer my dearest Charlotte no jointure but indigence,—my natural inheritance, what can I do less than invest her with an entire right to her own? You must indulge my request; nay, I insist on it."

The Captain, however, would listen to nothing of the kind, and Danby, though reluctantly, was obliged to acquiesce in this proof of unlimited confidence; yet, if any thing could be said to cloud the sunshine of his breast at this blissful period, it was surely the being restrained from demonstrating the disinterestedness of his affection so clearly as he wished to have done.

The happy party took but a slight breakfast, and then repaired to the spot where the Dutch minister waited to perform the sacred office. In receiving the hand of the lovely bride, Danby's animated countenance expressed the sublimest emotions of gratitude and love, while every exalted sensation beamed through the deep carnation of her blushing cheek. The awful ceremony concluded, the Captain, taking a hand of each, pressed them, locked as they were in each other, to his breast. "Now (he exclaimed) I am completely happy! and so, my dear Charlotte, had he lived till now, would have been that excellent man to whom we owe our being." A tear, glistening in his eye as he spoke, suppressed his voice, so nearly are the symptoms of excessive joy allied to those of grief.

They returned together to their lodgings for the last time. The bridegroom's baggage was already set off,—himself necessitated that hour to bid his adorable Charlotte a long adieu. The Captain foresaw the conflict of the parting moment, and wisely determined to evade, in some measure, its force.—Already was the gloom of separation apparent in the countenances of the bridal pair, when, without allowing either to mention

"And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

the distressing subject, he called Mr. Danby aside, and thus addressed him, "My dear George, the hour is arrived, and necessity calls you hence. Spare then your own sensibility and my sister's, by avoiding a painful adieu. May safety attend you, and felicity await our future meeting!—Farewell, my friend. Remember, Charlotte is with her brother."

Mr. Danby felt the eligibility of the measure. He sighed,—cast an expressive look towards the apartment which contained his soul's best treasure,—then, in silence, pressed the hand of his friend, (for words he could not utter,) and immediately quitted Breda.

Charlotte could not but be pleased with her brother's motive in prompting this measure, and, as that city no longer contained any thing estimable in her eye, she was no less impatient than himself to return to England. Every thing being previously ready for the journey, they sat out for their native country by the way of Holland.

"The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza."

C H A P. XXXIV.

Short-lived Satisfaction.

CAPTAIN Overbury, having conducted his sister to England, immediately on their arrival in town, announced the circumstance of the marriage to Mrs. Danby, senior, who received her with tears of joy.—“To embrace you really as my daughter, my sweet girl, (said that lady,) is a felicity I could not have permitted myself to hope for. O may your union be crowned with all the bliss this world can yield!—To have found my son unequal to the trial which his severe fortune had exacted of him cannot surprise me, when I reflect on the imperfect state of all human virtue; yet, though he had not fortitude to abide by his own principles, I trust his future gratitude will veil the culpability of his recent conduct.”

Charlotte was sensibly hurt at hearing the man of her choice spoken of in terms of so much severity, and the Captain said, “Be in no pain, good madam, on this account; my friend has not disgraced the noblest principle you could have wished to inspire him with.—My sister will explain every thing to you, whom I will beg leave to intrust to your protection till I shall have provided a house proper for her reception.”

Mrs. Danby again fell on Charlotte’s neck, and wept. “This is too much, too much! (said she.) To be indeed the mother of my angelic girl, my Charlotte, whom I have constantly loved with the most ardent affection, is a felicity too great for expression.”

Charlotte returned the good lady’s tenderness with every demonstration of gratitude and respect. In the mean time, the Captain sat out on the business in hand, taking his faithful man Sanders along with him, who had attended them to England; for, so much had his conduct endeared him to all, that, as a proof of their regard, they resolved on giving him his choice, either to follow Mr. Danby further on his travels or accompany the Captain and his sister to his native country. Sanders immediately declared that he had seen enough of foreign countries, and wished to return to his own; on which, however useful his abilities undoubtedly were to him, Mr. Danby readily consented, happy in knowing his dear Charlotte would be served by one that had so sincere a zeal for her person.

It was not long before an elegant house was found to the Captain’s purpose at the West end of the town, which he immediately engaged, and then caused it to be furnished in a style of the highest taste. The coach, horses, liveries, and domestics, were adapted in that mode of elegance in which he thought it incumbent on him to establish his sister, to whom (having conducted her thither,) he said, “My dear Charlotte must pardon me if, in the arrangements and ornaments of her house, I have shewn less taste or judgment than she would herself have done. Such as it is, however, I beg she will consider as her own,—a sort of nuptial present from her brother.”

There was nothing, indeed, to be disapproved; and, if there had been, it is probable, that, under the deep sense she entertained of the Captain’s generosity and

“And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

affection, she would not have been the first in discovering it. Here they were visited by a large and respectable acquaintance, the names of Overbury and Danby being equally loved and respected by many of the first distinction.

In this manner some months were passed, with the highest satisfaction both to the Captain and his beloved sister, when, most unfortunately for her, he was again called to plough the ocean. The thoughts of that event filled her with every gloomy appresion, to alleviate which was his anxious though fruitless endeavour.

“My dear Charlotte, (said he,) you can have nothing to fear from the machinations of any, in a land where arbitrary power has no existence; and I have so perfect a conviction of your prudence, as to believe you will have nothing to encounter with, during my absence, or that of your husband, but the tender anxieties of an affectionate heart. I would wish you, however, to beguile these as much as possible, by enjoying the amusements which your fortune puts in your power.—Be on all occasions yourself. The character of George Danby, independent of your own merit, is sufficient to insure you respect.—Be happy, then, and let these unavoidable separations serve but to augment the pleasure of future meetings.”

Before his departure, the Captain, taking Sanders aside, presented him with a purse of a hundred guineas, as an earnest (he said) of the friendship he should ever bear towards him, and then added, “The attachment you have already manifested to my sister induces me to believe you will be a valuable attendant on her person during my absence; for this reason I leave you in England. Continue to shew her the same fidelity, and depend on my future acknowledgements.”

Charlotte accompanied her brother to the water side. She saw him received on board with every testimony of joy and respect from the officers and men, and then continued to haunt the shore till orders were issued for weighing anchor, when, with a heavy and boding heart, she returned to her habitation.

“The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza.”

C H A P. XXXV.

It was all a Joke.

PREVIOUS to the departure of Captain Overbury, Charlotte had solicited Mrs. Danby to reside entirely at her house, as long as she should be compelled to sustain what she termed her forlorn situation; and that lady, having readily acceded to the proposal, had wholly quitted her own habitation, and was now a constant resident with her daughter-in-law.—As the most unfeigned affection subsisted between these two amiable persons, so the similarity of their tastes rendered them very desirable companions to each other. They had both a relish for intellectual pleasures, and equally despised those amusements which have nothing more to recommend them than their being merely sanctioned by fashion.—Thus qualified for the real enjoyment of life, independent of the caprice of others, Charlotte determined on contracting the circle of her visitants, as well as on appearing less frequently in public than she had done during the time of her brother's residence with her, for she thought, and perhaps not unreasonably, that the nature of her present situation eminently exposed her to calumny, and consequently demanded a greater degree of circumspection and reserve than that of many other young ladies: besides, her disposition, though never a dissipated one, more than ever inclined to domestic scenes, as the void which she sensibly felt in her heart could not be filled by any amusements which the fashionable world had to offer. In short, the only satisfaction she was now capable of enjoying she found in her music, reading, and the agreeable conversation of Mrs. Danby, with, now and then, the company of a few select friends.

One morning, as the two ladies, were out on an airing, a card was left at the house to the following purpose.

“Sir Bevil and Miss Grimstone are much disappointed in not finding Mrs. Danby at home; yet, as they cannot resist an anxious desire of being personally assured of her health, they present compliments, and will do themselves the pleasure of waiting on her to-morrow morning.”

Tuesday Morn.

This being the first intimation which Charlotte had received of the Baronet's being in town, it gave her a sensible concern, for she had fondly hoped to escape the mortification of seeing either him or his sister till the presence of a protector should give her spirits for the dreaded interview. They had not indeed been long arrived; for, after the affair of the castle, they were unable at once to command audacity sufficient to face the circle of their acquaintance, and had, therefore, actually made the tour of France. The circumstance of Miss Overbury's marriage with Mr. Danby was one of the first articles of news they received on their return, but in what manner they were affected by it will be gathered from a future chapter.

“And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

Extremely distressed and puzzled how to act on so unexpected an occasion, Charlotte applied to Mrs. Danby for advice. "What is to be done? (said she,)—I cannot really see this vile Sir Bevil."

"I think you cannot avoid that, my dear, (replied her mother,) as a refusal on your part would be considered as the commencement of hostilities, and it is best to preserve the exterior, at least, of peace with our enemies."

"But I cannot dissemble, madam;—nor is there any reason to imagine this overture proceeds either from contrition or friendship."

"That, my dear, is more than you can be certain of. It is possible there may be something of penitence in it; but, be that as it will, you have nothing farther to fear from them, and therefore it may, perhaps, be right to preserve a distant acquaintance with them."

Mrs. Danby's opinion had always the weight of absolute command with her daughter-in-law, and therefore, on the following morning, Sir Bevil and his sister were admitted.

Their arrival being announced, Charlotte instantly turned pale as ashes, and it was with great difficulty she could be kept from fainting. "Be composed, my best love, (said Mrs. Danby,) there can be no cause for this agitation. Are you not in the land of liberty?—Assume then the dignity which becomes you as the sister and wife of those who will never suffer you to be insulted with impunity."

Somewhat reassured, she endeavoured to collect her scattered spirits, and at length entered the dining-room with an air of tolerable serenity. Sir Bevil immediately approached her, and in a polite and affectionate manner expressed his happiness in seeing her so well, to which he added a warm congratulation on the subject of her marriage, hoping it would be attended with all imaginable felicity; to all which (astonished at his effrontery) she returned only a distant curtesy. Having paid Miss Grimstone the attention which mere civility demanded, they all three took chairs, and the Baronet with a gay air resumed, "Pon honour, my dear Charlotte, I hope you were not seriously alarmed at that whimsical joke of the Baron Vanhawsen. I should have thought it excessively droll, had I not been under some apprehensions of the light in which you seemed to consider it."

"Joke, do you call it, Sir Bevil?" reiterated Charlotte, at once provoked and amazed.

"Surely, my dear madam, no reasonable person could consider the affair in any other light. Could you possibly imagine, that, had I thought there had been any thing serious in the matter, I should tamely have submitted to the outrage intended my amiable ward?"

"The d——! (cried another.) I would go fifty miles to see a good boxing-match, though I lost a cool hundred on the last between Humphries and Mendoza."

“I will wage a thousand guineas (cried Miss Grimstone) that she really supposed you capable of such a conduct, and that it was the very consideration which drove her into the harbour of matrimony.”

“A pleasant dénouement, by Jupiter! (exclaimed the Baronet, laughing.)—But were you really married in the Netherlands, Charlotte?”

Concluding that an explicit information respecting that point might secure her a more serious as well as respectful behaviour, she here briefly related the time when, and the place where, the marriage was solemnized.

“And your brother (rejoined he) was one of the happy party?”

“Otherwise, Sir Bevil, that event would not have taken place; at least, at so early a period.”

“Well, I vow there was something excessively laughable in the whole,—that you should run away from the castle in such a fright and fairly leap into Danby’s arms.—May you be happy, my dearest creature! (rising to depart;) I wish it with all my soul.—But I will not forgive you though, except you promise to give us as much of your time as possible during your widowhood.”

Miss Grimstone also joined in the invitation, which Charlotte civilly returning, they took their leave, laughing as they went down stairs at the oddity of the adventure.

“More than you are aware of, (returned the other angrily.) Tell him, if you please, madam, that I will be delayed no longer.”

CHAP. XXXVI.

The Commutation.

LEAVING our heroine to meditate at leisure on the extraordinary circumstances of Sir Bevil Grimstone's visit and behaviour, we will, if the kind reader has no objection, take a trip once more into Somersetshire, in order to examine the state of affairs at the Priory, for the proper estimate of which, it will be necessary to be somewhat retrograde in our motions, by adverting to that period of time when Mr. Wilmot took leave of the village in order to convey five thousand pounds worth of paper to the capital, where, in an obscure alley, he had placed his bride, the poor deluded Eliza.

Mrs. Butterfield was bursting with rage at the treachery of her quondam friend, Mrs. Martin, at the very instant when, by a most singular address, that lady procured herself admission to her presence. Perceiving how matters were likely to proceed, she judged the best method of moderating this vehemence of wrath would be by counterbalancing rage with rage, and therefore sagaciously affected to be in the height of resentment at the insolence of the wretch who could have the assurance to claim a relationship with her.

"What! (cried Mrs. Butterfield,) is it not true then that the fellow who has ruined my daughter is your cousin?"

"Not a syllable of it, I assure you on my honour!—Never saw the villain in my life till this day.—Surely (weeping most violently) you cannot imagine me so base as to connive at so detestable an act.—I shall never know a moment's peace more.—To be suspect—ed (sobbing) of such a thing,—oh! it will be the death of my poor Martin and me too."

In fine, so effectually was the credulity of the Justice's lady wrought on by the talents of her crafty neighbour, that an annihilation of past animosities succeeded, and Mrs. Martin, before she quitted the Priory, was duly reinstated in all the rights and privileges of a confidante, of which it was now her business to make a proper advantage.

As things had turned out, it was by no means her desire that Eliza should be restored to favour, since, in that case, such an *éclaircissement* might succeed as would rather degrade her in the estimation of the family.—To prevent it was henceforth to be the object of her attention, nor were there any means so likely to answer that purpose as the procuring a pardon for Mr. Arthur Butterfield.—Mrs. Martin already understood the favourable disposition of his father in that respect, nor did she despair of bringing Mrs. Butterfield herself over to the same point.

Now, while affairs were in this posture, the Justice had just knocked the ashes out of his second pipe, one evening, after supper, when the arrival of Sir Bevil Grimstone

was announced. "Why, man, (cried the former,) I should zoo soon have expected snow in harvest, as they zay, as to zee you in this country."

"I dare say (rejoined Mrs. Butterfield) Sir Bevil's calling on us is purely promiscuous; but we are *intensely* honoured by his company, happen how it might."

"You are infinitely obliging, good madam, but I assure you I am not indebted to accident for the happiness of seeing you, having done myself this pleasure on business of a particular nature."

"Well, well, get your supper vurst. Mayhap you are weary, and we will talk of other matters to-morrow."

Supper being a second time placed on the table, the Justice left his guest to replenish exhausted nature, while he took a trip to the land of forgetfulness, or, in other words, fell fast asleep in his elbow-chair; mean time his lady, incapable of repressing the impulse of curiosity, desired Sir Bevil to acquaint her with the purport of his visit, which he did in the following manner: "You are not unacquainted, I suppose, madam, with the imprudent marriage of Charlotte Overbury with that worthless young man, Danby, who, every body knows, is not possessed of a shilling. So preposterous a step cannot but excite the sincere concern of those who have her interest at heart, and therefore——"

Here Mrs. Butterfield, who, for obvious reasons, had not the most cordial affection for Charlotte, interrupted him by saying, that, since Miss Overbury had thought proper to act so imprudently, she did not see that her friends had any reason to be concerned for the consequences.

"That is not the point in question altogether, (replied he,) for you must be sensible, my dear madam, that, as this young man has no fortune of his own, that of his wife must necessarily be appropriated to their support. Now it behoves us, to whom the care of that fortune was intrusted, to prevent its expenditure in so improper a manner."

"How are we concerned, (cried the lady, peevishly,) in what becomes of the girl's fortune now?"

"Here me with patience, good madam. By a clause in Mr. Overbury's will it is expressed, that, in case his daughter marries without consent of guardians, her property becomes forfeited to them."

"That is quite another affair; and, as you say, Sir Bevil, it is recumbent on us to see that her fortune be not unprofitably wasted."

"And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

“That is the very thing I mean. Now the question is, whether this marriage was without consent of guardians or otherwise.”

“I am positive she never had any consent from us, Sir Bevil.”

Now, while affairs were in this posture, the Justice had just knocked the ashes out of his second pipe, one evening, after supper, when the arrival of Sir Bevil Grimstone

“Nor from me, I assure you, madam.—Indeed, I suspected she entertained a penchant for this fellow, and did every thing in my power to frustrate it.”

“A *pension* in the case, was there?—Then it’s no wonder.”

At this interval, the Justice, happening to awake, Mrs. Butterfield referred the subject of conversation to him, who, after a pause of some minutes, replied, in a tone of displeasure, “If the poor girl has made a bad bargain, the worse her luck; but it shall never be said that my family were enriched by her ruin. For my part, I will never consent to this thing, d’ye zee; nor do I think it will do you, Sir Bevil, any credit neither. Howsomdever, you may do as you list, but I tell you squarely I won’t meddle in such a dirty job.”

Mrs. Butterfield on this gave the baronet a significant wink, as much as to tell him she knew how to manage her husband, after which the discourse was turned on a different subject, and soon after the family retired to repose.

Sir Bevil being too fashionable a person to quit his bed before noon, Mrs. Butterfield, on the following morning, had sufficient leisure for discussing the topic with her husband, who, for a long time, persisted in his abhorrence of the measure, notwithstanding every endeavour to convince him that it was for the benefit of his family she urged it. “Zooks! (replied he) what family have we now to care for, since we have both agreed on banishing our children?”

“As to Eliza, (resumed she, fetching a deep sigh,) it is impossible that I can ever wish you to forgive her, since I have resolved not to do it myself; but Arthur’s fault might, perhaps, admit of some excuse.”

“Excuse!—Odds my life! why, after all, he has only taken a wife to his own liking, and where is the harm of that?”

“So far you judge not amiss; but then, as the heir of our house, and the *perpetrator* of the Butterfield name, he ought, you know, to have married a woman of fortune. Now this scheme of Sir Bevil puts one in a method of making up for that *efficiency*; so that, if you will be wise enough to come into it, I do not see but Arthur may be allowed to bring his wife home.”

In fine, perceiving there was no other method of carrying the point which he had so earnestly at heart, the Justice at length consented to the division of Charlotte’s fortune with the Baronet, who, in consequence, returned post-haste to town, and the same day Mr. Arthur was informed that he had liberty to bring his wife to the Priory.

“And am I so unfortunate (replied he, greatly agitated) as to have deserved these tacit reproaches?—Yes, (with a look of self-accusation,) I have deserved them all, and

C H A P. XXXVII.

Prospect of the Future unexpectedly clouded.

SIR Bevil, on his return to the metropolis, having immediately taken the proper steps for preventing Charlotte from touching any part of her fortune in future, thought proper to send her a very polite epistle, in which he regretted the being legally constrained to a measure which gave him the most exquisite pain to execute, but he was under the disagreeable necessity of acquainting her, that she was no longer mistress of the fortune bequeathed her by her father, which, in consequence of her precipitate marriage, devolved thenceforth to her guardians, agreeably to a clause in the said will.

Charlotte's consternation may here be better imagined than described; but Mrs. Danby, being a person who united great firmness of mind to a solid understanding, her presence, on so distressing an occasion, was highly consolatory. By her advice, a lawyer was directly sent to the commons to examine the nature of Mr. Overbury's will; but the result produced nothing satisfactory, and he delivered his opinion of the matter, in a few words, to the following purport:—That the will of the deceased certainly empowered her guardians to take possession of the said fortune, in case of a marriage entered into, without their consent, previous to her attaining the age of twenty-one years:—that, consequently, it remained for the lady either calmly to acknowledge that right, or, which he thought more advisable, to refer the case to a decision of the Court of Chancery.—The latter was a measure, which, if ever deemed expedient, could not be undertaken in the absence of her husband; Charlotte therefore replied, that, since it was so, she had no alternative but to submit to the letter of the law. The lawyer therefore withdrew, and, flinging herself into the arms of her mother, she lamented her situation with all the warmth of that refined sensibility which had ever made a part of her character:—not that the immediate prospect of sinking from affluence to absolute penury was the consideration which simply afflicted her; this she believed herself endowed with fortitude sufficient to bear, had the evil of it been of a nature to alight singly on herself; but the thoughts of having brought distress and ruin on the man she loved, by involving his narrow circumstances in the additional expence of supporting her, was that which rendered this event the most galling to her imagination.

Whilst her mind was occupied by these torturing reflections, Mrs. Danby had given way to meditations no less painful. She considered the unfortunate affair as the effect of her son's temerity, who, by indulging an improper passion, had involved the amiable object of it in the most complicated distress. In the transports of her emotion she could not forbear exclaiming aloud, "O George! how has thy rashness and presumption ruined this angelic creature!" Charlotte, starting with horror at the reproach, caught hold of her hand, and with great vehemence replied, "No, madam, it is I only am culpable,—I who have ruined your generous son, and rewarded his love with distress and beggary." If ever a contest might be called amiable, that which succeeded between these two exalted women certainly merited the appellation;—the one obstinately appropriating all blame to herself, the other as anxious to place it on the temerity of her own son.—At length Mrs.

Now, while affairs were in this posture, the Justice had just knocked the ashes out of his second pipe, one evening, after supper, when the arrival of Sir Bevil Grimstone

Danby observed, that, since there appeared no remedy against the evil, it was incumbent on them to devise the means of rendering it as tolerable as possible. "The income which I enjoy (said she) will be sufficient to support us together, nor can I doubt but that my son's gratitude and affection will stimulate the exertion of those abilities which, properly directed, will doubtless procure an ample support for you both; and your virtue and good sense, my Charlotte, will, I know, convince you that superfluity is not absolutely essential to happiness,—though, I own, the hint is calculated more for the promoting your tranquillity than my own."

"And that, madam, will ever be safe while George Danby's is so."

"Generous creature! If you can only reconcile yourself to the idea of moving in a less elevated sphere of life than you had a right to expect, George, I am convinced, must glory in the opportunity of evincing that his Charlotte only, independent of her fortune, was the object of his love, and, for myself, I can only say that the daughter of Mr. Overbury would have possessed my warmest affection, though I had never known her the heiress of any thing more than indigence. What then must be my feelings when I know that indigence is the consequence of a generous attachment to my son!"

"O my mother, (cried Charlotte, embracing her with tears) how much are you in every respect my superior!—This exalted goodness makes me poor indeed!"

In fine, pursuant to Mrs. Danby's advice, she immediately disposed of her equipage, and such articles of furniture as by the bulk of mankind are deemed superfluities, after which it was agreed they should retire together to a small house in the suburbs of the capital, there to wait the arrival of the Captain or Mr. Danby.—The next thing to be performed was the discharging as many of the servants as the mode of life they had resolved on rendered unnecessary; but this was a more painful task than their kind mistress had been aware of. There was not one of them but loved her as greatly as they honoured her, nor could they with dry eyes receive the notice of a discharge from her service, though those tears flowed far less from selfish regard than unfeigned sorrow for the misfortunes of a lady whose carriage had endeared her to them all.

E N D OF VOL. II.

ASHTONPRIORY: A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

BENEDICTA AND POWIS CASTLE.

VOL. III.

LOVE is not Sin, but where 'tis sinful LOVE,
Mine is a Flame so holy and so clear,
That the white Taper leaves no Soot behind,
No Smoke of Lust.

DRYDEN.

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M DCC XCII.

ASHTON PRIORY.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

A sudden Resolution.

THERE was, perhaps, no woman in England, of Charlotte's education, accomplishments, and youth, who possessed so small a share of vanity as herself, or to whom the idle distinctions of rank and splendor appeared with less allurements.—The shock which her fortune had sustained, when considered with reference to herself alone, could therefore have no power of destroying her peace of mind; and, when a little time had seconded Mrs. Danby's kind exertions, she would pleasantly descant on the subject of her misfortunes, which, she said, had deprived her of nothing really valuable.—“The convenience of a carriage, blest as I am with health and youth, would be a mere bagatelle, and what thousands, whose age and infirmities require it, do without; and, as for those acquaintances who pay more deference to éclat than merit, it is certainly a privilege to be released from them, and I am now pretty sure of seeing none but such as really regard me.”

In this tranquil situation the two ladies had for a considerable time enjoyed a satisfaction which the rapacious spoilers of her fortune could never deduce from their parsimonious acquisition; but even this humble scale of happiness was not to be long allowed them. Mrs. Danby had, during her widowhood, subsisted partly on the interest of a small sum in the funds, and the rest of her very moderate expences had been generously supplied by an annuity constantly granted her by a maiden gentlewoman, who was a distant relation. It is highly probable this good lady intended by will to place her beyond the reach of pecuniary distresses, but unfortunately, at this period, she expired suddenly, and her heirs seizing the whole of her property, Mrs. Danby was consequently deprived of further assistance from that quarter, and her income reduced to the small sum arising from her funded property, which was scarcely considerable enough to preserve her from the pressure of absolute indigence; but, though the misfortunes of her daughter-in-law had sensibly affected her, she bore her own without complaint, and scarcely appeared touched with the loss she had sustained.

Charlotte, on the other hand, considered this event as putting her under a necessity of doing something to procure her own support, rather than meanly share that pittance which was scarcely sufficient for the maintenance of one person. “Is it not enough said she to herself) that I have brought ruin on my poor George, but must I embarrass his mother also?”

Some hints of this kind she had dropped to Mrs. Danby, who always heard them with displeasure. “There is enough (said she) left, thank heaven! for the support of both, my Charlotte. We know how to bound our desires, and consequently may yet be rich, in

spite of ill fortune. I will never consent to your leaving me, except I should see a prospect of your enjoying a more eligible situation than it is in my power to procure you.”

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Convinced by this that she must either remain a burden on her mother's narrow circumstances, or quit her in a clandestine manner, after much painful reflection she determined on the latter, and therefore, rising one morning very early, she expressed the reasons of her conduct in a short but affectionate billet, which she left for Mrs. Danby on the table, and then, taking the little money she was mistress of, and a small part of her apparel, got into a hackney-coach, and was set down in Pall-mall. From hence she traversed several streets before she could discover a bill of lodgings to her mind. At length she met with rather a retired situation, where, at the window of a cook's shop, she read, 'A second floor to be let,' and, on farther enquiry, found the apartments, consisting of a ready-furnished dining-room and bed-chamber, so much to her satisfaction,—that is, so consonant to the state of her finances, that she immediately agreed for it, intending to subsist entirely by her needle, in which she was an excellent proficient.

During the time of her conversing with the mistress of the house, she observed the woman to eye her with a good deal of attention, who at last took the liberty to ask if she knew any of the name of Overbury. "What is your reason, pray, for that question?" replied she, a little confused. "Only, madam, because I think you particularly like the family."

"Why, did you then ever know that family?"

"Perfectly.—The greatest, and I am sure the happiest, part of my life was spent in their service. I was house-maid to Mr. Overbury at the time he died, and a better master no one ever had. Thousands of tears have I shed for him, and I would give the world to see either of his children."

Charlotte was instantaneously dissolved in tears.

"I think, (said she, after considering the woman more attentively,) I recollect something of your person.—Were not you called Betty?"

"Yes, Betty Holmes was my name; and, if it was not for that I know it cannot be, I should think you, madam, were my sweet Miss Charlotte, who was but a little thing then, though the best-natured child in the world."

Charlotte, however, did not satisfy the good woman at that time, though she could not but think it an instance of good fortune in having her abode with one who professed so great a respect for her family; nor was it long before she fully discovered herself, though under promise of inviolable secrecy, of which she had no cause to repent, for Mrs. Bates thought it impossible to pay her too great an attention and respect; and, as the former kept no servant, willingly rendered her those little assistances without which she must have felt her condition very disagreeable.

The plan which Charlotte had fixed on was that of earning a living by plain work; but she was soon convinced, that mode of subsistence was already in too great a number

of hands for her to expect much encouragement. Mrs. Bates, who much better understood those matters than herself, advised her rather to commence milliner, which, she said, was both a lighter and pleasanter employ, and she doubted not but that, as she was pretty well respected in the neighbourhood, it would be in her power to recommend her to some good customers, adding, "My husband is a careful good creature, and we make shift to live, but that is all: however, if you, my dear young lady, will condescend to accept our humble fare, there will be no necessity for you to work at all, for you should be as welcome to us as our own child." Charlotte acknowledged this benevolence in the manner it deserved, but told her she would only trouble her to do what she could in procuring her business, which the other readily promised, not without a little self-consequence in her air.

Our heroine now entered on a scene of life, altogether new to her, and, like most other young adventurers on the same voyage, flushed with hope, and believing every thing easily practicable which a lively imagination presents,—the idea of being able by her own industry to acquire subsistence, without becoming burdensome to any one, was exceedingly pleasing, though, perhaps, the practical part of the scheme was not quite so easy as the theory; and of this it was not long before she was forced to admit some suspicion; for, however zealous Mrs. Bates might have been in the service of her old master's daughter, the ability for that purpose was not so great as she had flattered herself.

Her first application was to the wife of a neighbouring tallow-chandler, who, having two or three smart daughters, no doubt could be entertained but that this would prove an excellent house of work to our milliner; accordingly, a whole bundle of matters were dispatched, with orders to let them be executed with particular neatness, which, on opening, proved to consist of some yellow gauze caps, (which had already employed the clear-starcher's dexterity more than once,) a quantity of ribbands, and some old white sarsenet, all which it was expected, when washed and made up, should enable the young ladies to rival their neighbours in the splendor of new finery.

Charlotte, having been accustomed to genteel life, and to have her own things made by the most fashionable milliners, would not have been at a loss in trimming a hat or cap with elegance and taste, which was the very reflection that determined her to embrace that mode of employ.—But here was a trial to which she was by no means equal. However, with all the ardour of a mind intent on pleasing, she sat about the task, and the tattered finery was sent home, as might have been expected, not altogether rivalling the whiteness of new-fallen snow.

Within a quarter of an hour afterwards, a female voice was heard on the stairs, bawling most vociferously, that she wondered how her neighbour Bates could suffer her to put such valuable articles in the hands of one who knew nothing at all of her business. Immediately the door opened, and discovered poor Charlotte at the other end of the room, whom Miss Cotton thus accosted. "Here is the money,—but mama says you do not

deserve a farthing for it. I wonder, and so does every body, how you could have the assurance to pass yourself on genteel people for a milliner.—Here you have spoiled a cap

The plan which Charlotte had fixed on was that of earning a living by plain work; but she was soon convinced, that mode of subsistence was already in too great a number

which cost half a guinea but a twelvemonth ago, and I am sure it was not so dirty but you might have made it look tolerable, for this is only the third time of its being washed.— You creature, you,—here are my ribbands, and—”

“Take back your money, and be satisfied,” returned Charlotte, hurrying into the next apartment, where, having shut the door, she left the enraged belle to vent her indignation, while she indulged her own feelings in a flood of tears.—Merely to be poor was a circumstance which many had borne, and she as well as they could also bear with fortitude, but to be thus treated by vulgar and illiberal minds was a reflection which stung her sensibility to the quick.

C H A P. XXXIX.

Success not equal always to Abilities and Application.

SO mortifying a stroke to a young beginner was sufficient to have damped a larger share of effrontery than was possessed by Charlotte. The millinery-scheme was now entirely given over, and Mrs. Bates again gave her advice, which was, that, for a person of genteel education, there could be no mode of subsistence so eligible as the keeping a school; adding, that she was certain of being able to procure her twenty or thirty pupils immediately. Her sanguine expectations, somewhat dashed by the late success, Charlotte readily overlooked every thing disagreeable in the plan, and, pursuant to the advice given her, from that period commenced school-mistress.

Certain it is, that no one could be better qualified for the undertaking than herself, as, besides the advantages of a liberal education, she possessed that equanimity of temper, which in this station perhaps is more necessary than in any other. She therefore opened her academy with five pupils, for the rest of Mrs. Bates's twenty were, it seems, ideal ones, or rather what she could have wished than actually procure; and, after three months waste of money, time, and patience, another was added to the number; but, as all of mortal race are not born geniuses, so it unfortunately fell to Charlotte's lot to have but two who had any pretensions to that endowment, the other four were incontrovertibly the greatest dunces that ever tired the patience of a teacher; hence it happened that the parents of these bright luminaries became jealous of the improvements of the others, and roughly upbraided her with negligence in their tuition.

Charlotte simply remarked, in her defence, that all children were not endowed with equal capacities for improvement; but, as neither of these sagacious people would suppose it possible the deficiency laid in their precious offspring, the consequence was that they were taken from under her care with every mark of contempt and low spite.

But this was not the worst consequence which had attended this scheme. For nearly half a year she had devoted her time to this little school, the emoluments of which being by no means sufficient for her support, her finances were become miserably deranged, and her privy purse yielded no more than one solitary half-guinea for the payment of considerable arrears to her landlady and laundress.

In this dilemma she was obliged to have recourse to a pawn-broker. Taking her watch from her side, and dropping a few tears as she held it in her hand, she determined on pledging it, as an article less really necessary than some others. The broker advanced her twenty guineas, which, with a sigh, she dropped into her purse, and hurried out of the shop, without noticing a young man who had observed her with a very particular attention during the time she had been in it. She had not been long at home before she was told that a person desired to speak with her, who proved to be no other than her late servant, Richard Sanders.

The plan which Charlotte had fixed on was that of earning a living by plain work; but she was soon convinced, that mode of subsistence was already in too great a number

The poor young fellow was so much affected on entering the room, that it was a considerable time before he could speak. At length, with tears in his eyes, he entreated her to pardon the liberty he had taken in waiting on her, but that he had seen her in —— street, and had now come to present her with some money, which the Captain, her brother, had left in his hands for her use.

“How can this be, Sanders? You can have no money of my brother’s.—Come, come, (perceiving his confusion,) there is more in it than this.—What money do you mean?”

Sanders here, dropping on his knees, besought her to forgive his presumption in hoping he might have it in his power to tender a trifling service, but confessed that the money he had offered was the Captain’s donation to him, which he declared he had no use for at present; and, since she would accept it no other way, begged at least she would borrow it of him, as it would be safer in her hands than his own.

It was impossible to remain unmoved on such an occasion. She, however, refused the offer in suitable terms, and then, drying her eyes, told him to sit down, for she had much to enquire of him. He replied, that he would wait her commands, but hoped he knew his duty better than to sit in her presence. After indulging her emotion a few minutes, she asked several particulars relating to Mrs. Danby, &c. and found by his replies that he had left that lady’s house soon after herself, and was now in the service of a nobleman, waiting the return of the Captain or of his dear master;—that, on her departure, Mrs. Danby had been inconsolable, and for some time was much indisposed through grief, and, though now better, was incapable of enjoying any amusement or satisfaction;—that letters had been received from Mr. Danby, but his return was not expected yet. “And can you tell (demanded she) whether those letters have been answered yet?”—He believed not. “I am glad of that, (resumed she,) as I would not have his worthy heart distressed by the relation of painful circumstances.”

In fine, Sanders, after she had charged him not to reveal the place of her retreat to Mrs. Danby, departed with a respectful melancholy air, and Charlotte once more took up her pen to write to her mother, as she had often done since her departure from her house, though she carefully avoided the representing any thing as disagreeable in her present situation, as well as giving any hints which might lead to a discovery of where she was, for she was fully resolved, however poignant her own distresses might be, never to augment the pecuniary difficulties of her mother.

C H A P. XL.

Mortifying Rebuffs.

IT has been one of the valuable acquisitions of genius to discover that misfortune and imprudence are synonymous terms, by which, no doubt, these speculative gentry have opened a most consolatory source of reflection to the unfortunate of their own species; but, as Mrs. Bates was only a person of ordinary capacity, this charitable maxim had not entered her head, she therefore loved and pitied our heroine the more for the disappointments her late endeavours had been attended with; and, as her *derniere* resource, advised her to apply for work to a mantua-maker's of eminence in the neighbourhood. Here, indeed, she met with better success.—The expedition with which she managed the needle rendered her a desirable assistant in that branch; the only disagreeable circumstance which attended it was the being frequently obliged to attend at the mantua-maker's house, where one day, as she was sitting, two ladies suddenly rushed into the parlour from a carriage, one of which she immediately recognized to be Miss Grimstone.

Confused at so unwelcome a meeting, she would have hid her emotion by turning to the window; but that lady was too polite to suffer so delightful a rencontre to pass unenjoyed, and therefore, running up to her, exclaimed, "What, Charlotte Overbury! or, rather, Mrs. George Danby! my dear child, where is it possible you can have been concealed so long?—Why, one never meets you in any place of genteel resort, nor even at the theatre, so much. Surely you resolve to bury yourself alive?—But, my dear creature, we are to have the sweetest *fête champêtre* next week, at my Lady E—'s country-seat, imaginable;—shall I tell her ladyship you will be there?"

Charlotte, disdaining reply, gave her a look, which, if we mistake not, penetrated her ungenerous soul, and then with a majestic air retired; but what use Miss Grimstone intended to make of this interview will best appear by the following incident. Returning one day to her lodgings, Mrs. Bates ran up to her with a countenance of rapture, exclaiming, "O my dear young lady, all will end well at last!—I am sure it will.—Here has been the handsomest gentleman in the world to enquire for you; aye, and in a grand coach too, I assure you."

"I hope, then, you denied my residing here."

"Why, I did at first; but he said he was certain this was the house; and then, seeing my little boy, he slipped five guineas into his hand,—true, as I am alive,—and bid him be a good boy, and he would do more for him another day."

"Well, and then you told him the truth," interrupted Charlotte, in a tone of displeasure.

The plan which Charlotte had fixed on was that of earning a living by plain work; but she was soon convinced, that mode of subsistence was already in too great a number

“Why, to be sure I did, madam; but not before he had assured me that he was recommended to call on you by a friend of your’s; and so I thought it would be wrong to keep him in the dark about it:—as perhaps he may do you a piece of service.”

“But I will not accept of it, and therefore I charge you, whoever he may be, to deny me if ever he calls again.”

The woman on this retired, not perfectly pleased with the reception her good offices had met with, and some few days after Sanders was again announced, who came into the room, bearing a large parcel in his hand, with a letter inscribed to Mrs. George Danby. “O madam, (cried he, before she had time to demand his business,) you are betrayed! Some ill-minded person has discovered you to my master, who has sent me with these presents, as I guess they are; but, pray, good madam, do not touch them, for, if you do, you are ruined.”

Astonished at the incident, she enquired what farther he knew of this business; on which he replied, that, some little time ago, Sir Bevil Grimstone had been with his lord, who, a few hours after, ordered his coach to Bates’s house;—that he, being footman, had attended. “At that time, (pursued Sanders,) I thought nothing of it; but yesterday my lord ordered me into his dressing-room, and asked if I had not once lived in your service, madam. I said I had: on which, putting a guinea into my hand, he bade me be an honest fellow, and he would do well for me. He then told me to carry you this parcel with a letter, adding, I would have you see her yourself, and take notice how she looks:—you understand me, my lad. And now, madam, though I know my bread may depend upon it, I was resolved to tell you all. My lord has a wife in Ireland, and therefore can mean you no good; and I am sure I had rather die than see you, madam, insulted.”

It required no uncommon penetration to discover that Miss Grimstone was at the bottom of the affair. She had, indeed, with a triumphant envy, acquainted the baronet with the circumstances of her meeting with Charlotte; but her feelings so far gratified, she had indulged them no farther, except it was by revealing the same to some ladies of her acquaintance;—the rest was the product of Sir Bevil’s fruitful brain, who, recollecting that he had some nights before lost a large sum to Lord S—, prudently hoped a piece of service might be accepted in lieu of specie. Lord S— was a professed debauchee,—Charlotte a young and friendless beauty, whose present situation presented her as come-at-able. Thus there might be some money saved, (the Baronet concluded,) and no great harm done.

Charlotte, without a moment’s deliberation, resolved on returning the parcel unopened, and Sanders departed with tears and prayers for her safety.—The next day, Mrs. Bates, dressing herself as fine as possible, went out with a servant in rich livery, and did not return till the evening, when she came up stairs, saying, “Well, lady, I have heard and seen the finest things to-day!—You must know I have been at my lord’s, and I can tell you he adores you.”

“And what would you infer from this, Bates?”

“Why, madam, my heart aches to see such a lady as you live in so poor a manner, and for a husband who, if ever he comes back, has it not in his power to make things better. Now my lord is as generous, aye, and as rich too, as a prince, and he says he will settle on you, for life, whatever you choose:—for life, only consider,— and is not that better than —”

“No more, I insist.—You have either mistaken my character or I have your’s.—However, offend me not by the mention of my lord any more.”

Bates was at once put to silence by the solemnity of this reply. She durst say no more, though her heart was full of the subject.—To do her justice, she was a woman of too much simplicity to act the part of a procuress to perfection, nor did her principles really incline to such measures as she here seemed to recommend; but the truth is, she thought penury the greatest evil in nature, particularly when it alighted on those who had been accustomed to better days; consequently, that, to accept a settlement from a rich and generous lover was better than mourning the absence of an indigent husband, who, if he had sense, might improve by the incident; and, finally, that constancy in such cohabitations was not very remote from chastity itself.

Lord S—, on finding his present, which consisted of rich silks, contemptuously returned, had sent for Bates, and, by dint of liberality, brought her over entirely to his interest, especially as he made it clear that compassion for that unfortunate young lady was the motive of his attachment to her; but Charlotte, relying on the rectitude of her own principles, concluded she had nothing farther to apprehend from his lordship, much less from the people of the house where she lived, till one day the following note was brought her by the penny-post.

HONoured MADAM,

Plots are forming against you. Mrs. Bates is not in your interest; and, if a poor servant may presume to give his opinion, you cannot be safe where you are.
From

Your faithful servant,

RICHARD SANDERS.

On receipt of this letter, as she pensively sat considering what were best to be done, she accidentally cast her eyes on a morning-paper that laid by her, in which was an advertisement for a private governess to a young lady. One would wonder how this mode of life did not present itself to her thoughts before;—it never did. However, she resolved now on applying for the place, and accordingly took coach, and drove to Stepney, but without discovering any thing of her intention to the people of the house where she resided.

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The person who had inserted the advertisement had been once a cheesemonger, but now had retired from business, and with a wife and daughter lived in a snug box at the above-named place. On being introduced to the parlour, Charlotte found there a middle-aged man in a round wig and drab-coloured cloaths; his wife about the same age, though rather more gaudily dressed, and a girl of about seventeen, miserably thrumming a jig on the harpsichord, to which her fond parents seemed listening with great delight.

The subject of her visit being properly introduced, Charlotte was asked if she understood French, to which she replied in the affirmative;—"And Italian?"—"Yes." "Music, drawing, geography?"—to all which she answered as before. "It is too much to be true, I doubt, (said the mother.) Let James run, and tell our neighbour Stiles I want to speak to him."

In a few moments Mr. Stiles appeared;—this gentleman was, in plain English, a school-master, though, by a board over his door, he had been pleased to distinguish himself by the appellation of "Professor of the Languages and Mathematics." As to his abilities in the latter, they will remain unquestioned, by us at least, but, in regard to the former, he certainly had so vile a pronunciation, and his diction was so extremely ungrammatical, that it was with difficulty Charlotte could suppress her risibility as she passed her examination, for this it seems was the business on which he had been sent for. However, he was pleased to declare her a perfect mistress of French and Italian. She was now desired to give a specimen of her skill in music, which she did in a most inimitable manner,—not that any of the present company were judges in the science, but it was a mere matter of course, and they were satisfied.

"There is one point more, (said the old lady.) Pray what sort of a hand do you write, young woman?"

"By no means a correct one."

"But you can teach my girl that sort of a scrawling hand which the quality use, no doubt.—Do you know any thing of accompts?"

"I have some little knowledge of the four first rules,—nothing farther."

The father declared that was sufficient for a woman, and all were quite satisfied with the governess's abilities, for the due exertion of which they would give her *five guineas per annum*, which they assured her was a most extravagant sum. The salary was really no object in Charlotte's estimation, who only wished for a peaceable asylum till her husband's or brother's return, and doubtless would have accepted the situation, but madam happening to observe that she supposed she could bring a character of her honesty, Charlotte felt herself hurt at the intimation, and, forgetting the humility necessary to her new condition, replied that her character was sufficiently known.—"But you can recommend us to somebody of reputation for one?"

“None, madam, that I choose to apply to on this occasion.”

“Oh, ho! (cried the professor of languages) that will not hold water I doubt.—I thought these fine accomplishments had not been for nothing.—Child, will not your last keeper give you a character?”

Shocked at this cruel speech, our heroine burst into tears.—“You see, madam, (resumed the pedagogue,) I have touched the galled horse.”

“Yes, yes, (cried the lady,) I find it will not do.—Young woman, you may go about your business, for you will not do for me.—I will have nobody about me but people of reputation.”

Charlotte was about to reply, but the door was opened for her, and she immediately withdrew, though with an emotion hardly conceivable by any except such as have unfortunately experienced the like trials of delicate sensibility.

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C H A P. XLI.

News from the Continent.

REFLECTING on the former incident, Charlotte began to suspect that she might have been hurried by a false delicacy to discover rather more hauteur than was suitable to the occasion;—that, although those sort of enquiries had in them something irksome to ingenuous minds, yet, nevertheless, they might possibly be common to such occasions, and therefore, as her present situation afforded nothing favourable to that purpose, she thought it best, instead of looking out for another lodging, to return once more to Mrs. Danby, whose character in life must infallibly facilitate any farther attempts she might make in this way.

As it was not necessary to apprise Mrs. Bates of this intention, she was supposed to have gone to some other lodging, and by that means was happily released from Lord S—’s farther pursuit for the present, much indeed to the concern of her former hostess, who thereby lost a fine opportunity of replenishing her privy purse.

On Charlotte’s unexpected arrival at Mrs. Danby’s, she found that good lady busied in looking over some letters, which instantly dropped from her hand at the sight of her lost daughter, and she fell back lifeless in her chair. In fine, on her recovery, tears of joy, tender reproaches, and maternal caresses, expressed the feelings of her heart. Nor were the transports of Charlotte less ardent or sincere, who with tears related more fully than she had done by letter the reasons which prompted her recent conduct. Mrs. Danby, though tenderly chiding her for the precipitancy of it, could not but admire the magnanimity of her sentiments. She then put a letter into her hand, which she had received the day before from her son, to whom she had given an account of Sir Bevil Grimstone’s procedure, though prudently avoided acquainting him with the step which his wife had taken in consequence of it, well knowing that the pain such a relation must have given him would have been as fruitless as intolerable. In this letter, addressed to his dear Charlotte, he touched on the subject of her misfortunes in the following manner.

“Had this event taken place two years ago, it could not have affected me. I should not then have experienced the feelings which harrow up my soul as often as I reflect that it is for my sake the dearest object of my affections is deprived of those accommodations which she has so just a right to enjoy. It was my temerity which provoked the unhappy incident.—I dwell on the dreadful thought till distraction seizes on my brain. Why were you not born to poverty?—then had there been no torturing remembrance to sting our peace. I could then have loved, and not been criminal.—You did not write to me, Charlotte, when my mother sent her distressing letter.—No, you could not; you must abhor the man whose culpable passion has reduced you to penury. It is natural you should do so, and I deserve it; but, to be hated by you, methinks I cannot bear that; and yet, could the banishing me for ever from your sight,—could the being loaded with ignominy, chains, and, what is worse than death, the certainty of being hated by you, restore you to the fortune our union has deprived you of, I would calmly bear it all; nay, I would

cheerfully embrace the fate I merit. But, O thou most amiable of womankind, is there no soft impulse in your breast which whispers we might yet be happy? Were it possible you could cease to regret the empty satisfactions of wealth and splendor, we might yet be blest beyond the conception of vulgar minds. We shall still enjoy a competency. I trust I shall acquire this; at least, I will deserve it for your sake much more than my own. With your love, my charming wife, I could deem the meanest cottage superior to the splendor of a court; yet, for my Charlotte I would wish for something more. Has she then fortitude enough to think with tenderness on him who is the author of her wrongs?—Something whispers me that she has, and we shall still be blest above the reach of fate. Transporting hope!—Wealth, fame, and splendor, what are the delights you offer, compared to this!

“Many tedious miles have I yet to pass before I can behold my soul’s beloved, but my thoughts are ever near her. O Charlotte, dearer to me, now penniless and stripped of all, than when in the possession of affluence, when shall we meet?—when shall I kiss the tear from thy lovely cheek, and whisper that thy Danby envies not the lot of kings?”

In the pleasing emotions which this affectionate epistle excited, Charlotte for some time forgot all her schemes and distresses.—As it appeared that this faithful husband could not be in England yet a considerable time, the plan of self-maintenance again was revived, and communicated to Mrs. Danby in a manner which demonstrated that no argument should prevail on her to relinquish it. Finding her so determined on the point, Mrs. Danby forebore expostulation, and contented herself with directing her to the most eligible mode of acquiring her favourite independence, and none certainly appeared more desirable, in the present case, than the one she had lately meditated herself. An advertisement was therefore inserted in one of the papers, which brought her proposals from the mistress of a boarding-school of some eminence in the country, which, after due consideration, was accepted; not only as such a retired spot was most congenial to her choice, but from the supposition that a teacher in a boarding-school would be exempt from many little circumstances attending the station of a governess in an opulent family, and which, circumstanced as she was, would perhaps have been somewhat mortifying; for Mrs. Danby rightly observed, that young women of quality are too often encouraged to treat their tutoresses rather as waiting maids, than with the respect due to the character.

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C H A P. XLII.

An agreeable Surprise.

THE second separation being accompanied with none of those embarrassing circumstances which had attended the former, Charlotte took leave of Mrs. Danby with frankness and affection, who, on her part, poured the effusions of her soul in pious ejaculations for her welfare and happiness.

Animated by the proof she had recently received of her George's fidelity and affection, the former took her seat in the mail-coach with cheerfulness and alacrity, and in due time arrived safely at the place of destination, which was at a considerable distance from the capital, and about three miles from any market-town. So retired a situation was perfectly agreeable to her taste, and she entered on her new character with ardour and diligence. Perfectly qualified to initiate the younger part of her own sex in the principles of liberal education, it was impossible she could fail of acquitting herself with due approbation in the station she had engaged in, and the natural sweetness of her temper, in a short time, so entirely endeared her to her young pupils, as rendered the business of instruction a far less irksome and laborious task than it is often found to be.—Unfortunately for her, however, Mrs. P— was not calculated to promote the happiness of domestic life.—She had formerly been waiting-woman to a lady of quality, but the abject servility often necessary in that capacity was now exchanged for the other extreme of haughtiness, a quality which, in the middle class of society, more especially, proves the bane of all social satisfaction. Sordid, suspicious, and passionate, she could neither inspire respect nor shew any to others, except where her interest was concerned, and then indeed she could be as submissive as, on other occasions, she was supercilious. Without possessing one requisite qualification for the undertaking, she had opened a boarding-school, and, by the help of a pompous board over her door and some ostentatious advertisements, had contrived to fill her house with pupils, who, instructed to interlard bad English with a few French phrases, dress smartly, and move with affectation, had obtained her a tolerable reputation in that part of the world.

Such an assistant as Charlotte, it might be expected, would have been esteemed by her a valuable acquisition. So in fact she was; yet, as, in spite of all restraint, nature, long repressed, will now and then break forth, so she often discovered such sallies of temper as would have ruffled a mind not already regulated by the lessons of adversity; but, in fact, without aiming at the distinction, Charlotte was insensibly become a practical philosopher, and, galling as she undoubtedly felt many circumstances, she had learned to endure them all with equanimity of soul; and, in fine, comparing the present with the past, to think herself in possession of affluence and felicity, which ought undoubtedly to be reckoned as one of those advantages she had acquired in the school of misfortune.

Somewhat more than ten months had elapsed since her entrance on the office of teacher, when, sitting one day in the midst of a juvenile circle, word was brought that a gentleman below desired to speak with her. She was yet on the landing-place of the

stairs, when, glimpsing the profile of her beloved George Danby, she instantly gave a spring, and bounded into his extended arms. “My George!”—“My heart’s dear Charlotte!” were severally uttered in the same extatic moment. They then entered the parlour, where we will leave them to express by mutual tears that joy which was too vast for the scope of language.

On his landing at Dover, Mr. Danby had left the care of his baggage and other concerns to his servant, and, taking post-horses, had set off the same hour for London, eager to surprise his lady by his unexpected appearance; but how great was his disappointment on not finding her with his mother! Here he learned those particulars which overwhelmed him with affliction and chagrin; yet, admiring, as he was compelled to do, that noble fortitude of mind which had prompted her conduct, he drew from it a most flattering presage of future connubial felicity. Without stopping to accept of any refreshments, he immediately repaired, or rather flew, to the school where his dear Charlotte resided, whom he would have that hour taken from so subordinate a situation, but her engagement with Mrs. P— had been for twelve months, and on no account would she be prevailed on to remove before the expiration of that period; for, though she had not always experienced from her the treatment due to so superior a merit, she would not ungenerously occasion a detriment to her school, by quitting it before a successor had been provided. Mr. Danby was therefore, however reluctantly, obliged to acquiesce, and content himself with seeing her as often as possible.

In one of these interviews it was, that a trifling incident discovered to him that extremity which Charlotte, from an unwillingness to give pain, had concealed even from Mrs. Danby. Having occasion to enquire the hour, he found that he had not his watch about him, and desired she would look at hers. The circumstance, trivial as it was, visibly embarrassed her, for she had not yet had an opportunity of redeeming the pledge, and the remembrance of that distressing period forced tears into her eyes. Too plainly he read their meaning, and exclaimed, “Surely this cannot be!—My dear girl cannot have been reduced to such an extremity of wretchedness! It is too plain she has. O Charlotte, (heaving a bitter sigh,) what hast thou suffered on my account!”

“Rather, my dear George, (interrupted she,) what have you yet to suffer on mine, who am destined to deprive you even of the comforts of mediocrity.”

“Cruel girl! thus to wound my already-tortured heart with those tacit reflections.”

“What have I said! (perceiving she had really distressed him.) George, my dear George, forgive me.—Indeed, I meant not to give you pain.”

“Do you not know, my love, (pressing her to his bosom,) that the conscious breast is jealous of reflection? Knowing myself to have been the source of your wrong, I feel those expressions as the bitterest reproof; yet, at this moment, deprived as you are of your paternal fortune, I swear to you, my dearest Charlotte, that you are dearer to my soul than ever. We cannot want the necessities of life, and these, with the supreme felicity of calling you my own, will, in my estimation, be a treasure superior to any the world can

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afford, if destitute of that inestimable bliss. Be but you reconciled to ill fortune, and your George will exult in the opportunity of proving the sincerity and purity of his affection.”

C H A P. XLIII.

Court-Favour awarded to honest Merit.

DURING that period which remained unexpired of Charlotte's engagement with Mrs. P—, Mr. Danby diligently exerted himself to improve the interest he possessed with the great, and so well were his late services accepted by the Minister, that it was thought expedient to reward them with a sinecure of the value of about eight hundred pounds per annum.

Flushed with the happy success of his fidelity and zeal, he repaired to his beloved wife, who, being now at liberty, quitted her employment, and accompanied him to town. "Fortune (cried he, enraptured) still favours us, and now let the avaricious mind vainly seek enjoyment in ill-acquired wealth. Competency and love will secure us the possession of a happiness which the sordid knows not."

It would be in vain to attempt an adequate comprehension of the felicity of this amiable pair on so agreeable an event.—Their first visit was to Mrs. Danby, whose joyful emotions kept her long speechless as she pressed her children alternately to her heaving bosom. "It is enough! (cried she, at length,) My heart, long torn with anguish, is now at peace, and I have nothing left for the remainder of my life but to rejoice in your mutual happiness and virtue. My children, the purity and generosity of your attachment is rewarded, not indeed by what the world calls affluence, but with sufficient to afford you every real comfort, and I doubt not but your good sense and amiable dispositions will teach you its proper value. I need not say that riches are not essentially necessary to solid happiness. You are already convinced of that truth, and the fault can only rest within your own breasts, if you are not as truly happy as it is allowed mankind in the present state to be."

Referring the disposal of his emoluments entirely to the choice of his lady, Mr. Danby wished her to fix on the spot she would approve for their future residence, but she positively declared her resolution never to be separated from Mrs. Danby, who had, she said, an indisputable claim to all her gratitude, duty, and affection. "Alas! my dear Charlotte, (said that lady,) the disparity of our years might be expected to produce a dissimilarity of tastes not altogether favourable to social satisfaction. Enjoy, therefore, the pleasures suitable to your youth and condition, and leave me to those more serious pursuits which become my age.—Why should I be a check on your innocent enjoyments?"

"I should blush (replied Charlotte) to own a propensity which my amiable mother could not approve in herself. When our fortunes were more humble than at present, we found no dissimilarity of taste to prevent our mutual happiness; the hours we then passed together will ever yield me an agreeable reflection, and do you think so meanly of me as to suppose an unexpected emancipation from adversity will alter me so much for the worse, as to render me incapable of tasting the highest pleasure in your society."

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At length it was determined that Mrs. Danby's small, though neat and convenient, mansion at Hackney should be the future residence of all three, and a happier trio surely the whole metropolis could not boast. Their domestic establishment, though not on an expensive plan, was yet settled with a proper regard to elegance and social comfort. Slaves to no passions, unambitious of splendor and ostentatious distinctions, the income they enjoyed was abundantly adequate to every purpose of their hearts, and perfect content appeared in every countenance within the happy dwelling. Mr. Danby, though possessed of talents sufficient to have rendered him a very popular character, was yet endowed with every qualification requisite to the promoting domestic felicity. Amiable in his temper, ever serene and cheerful, with a mind enlarged by liberal study and enriched by the knowledge of mankind, he was as eminently calculated to prove the polite and tender husband, the agreeable and intelligent companion, as he ever had been a most attentive and affectionate son.

Richard Sanders, having quitted his late service, and accidentally hearing of the return of Mr. Danby, availed himself of the opportunity of waiting again on his benefactress. His application was readily accepted, and from him she learned that Lord S—, foiled in his attempts by her removal from Bates's, had given over all thoughts of pursuit, till Sir Bevil Grimstone was so kind as to remind him that it was probable the lady was with her husband's mother. Hither, therefore, his search was directed; but, by that time, she had gone into the country, where, choosing to assume a different name, the Baronet's civil intentions for once were effectually disappointed.

C H A P. XLIV.

Law and Equity a little at Variance.

SEVERAL months having passed in the most agreeable manner imaginable, Charlotte was led to expect an augmentation of her happiness by the presence of her brother, whose ship, she was informed, laid at Spithead, and shortly after the Captain arrived in town.

He was not altogether a stranger to the circumstances which had taken place respecting his sister in his absence, but he was far from considering the conduct of the guardians with the same passive resignation as herself; and though, for obvious reasons, Mr. Danby had not stirred in the business, the time was now come when the grounds of that transaction were to undergo a more exact scrutiny than hitherto had been the case.

Mr. Overbury's death having happened before either of his children had properly attained the years of discretion, the contents of the will had been taken on trust, in full reliance on the judgment and integrity of those gentlemen which had been nominated as the trustees thereof. Captain Overbury's first business was therefore to examine his father's testament, by which, according to the opinion of the best lawyers, it appeared that the forfeiture of Charlotte's fortune could only be for the term of her natural life, and that, on her decease, it must return to her immediate heirs, or, in default of issue, to the heirs of her brother. The design of the good old gentleman, by this, was unquestionably no more than to prevent the idle expenditure of his daughter's substance, should she unfortunately marry a spendthrift to the detriment of her posterity, his opinion of the guardians he had chosen being such as to leave him no shadow of doubt but that they would readily accede to her choice of a virtuous young man, abstracted from pecuniary considerations. This idea the preamble to the said clause fully expressed.—Mr. Butterfield's character led him to expect every paternal feeling for his child, and Sir Bevil he supposed to be apprised of his partiality to young Danby, for such it will appear he certainly entertained. In fact, the Baronet understood it perfectly well, and it was the very reason which induced him to consider that young gentleman with so restless a jealousy from the time of Charlotte's meeting him at the masquerade.

The case then being as above recited, Captain Overbury deemed it expedient to call a meeting of the guardians, supposing, from his own feelings, that men of honest principles would always distinguish between the letter and the spirit of legal right, and, as he had it in his power fully to elucidate his father's meaning, he could have no great doubts of prevailing on them to forego the claim. On the appointed day, the gentlemen, who, in complying, had probably paid only a respect to appearances, being met, Captain Overbury, in a sensible and manly strain of discourse, set before them the motives of his father's conduct, respecting the clause relative to his sister, in so plain and rational a manner, as must have prevailed over every feeling but that of avarice; and, as an undeniable proof of his arguments, produced a letter which his father had written to him in his last illness, and but a few days before his decease, in which his sentiments on this subject were expressed in the following words.

The plan which Charlotte had fixed on was that of earning a living by plain work; but she was soon convinced, that mode of subsistence was already in too great a number

“As to your sister, my son, I have amply provided for her, and taken every precaution which a tender father could devise for the security of her future welfare. The persons that I have nominated in my will her guardians are men of integrity and property, consequently every consideration may be expected from them which is due to the child of a departed friend; yet, remember, it is yourself that I look on as the real guardian of her youth, peace, and honour. In this confidence, I will express a wish with which you only ought to be explicitly entrusted. In respect of marriage, I had rather she were happy than rich. Do not then direct her views merely to worldly considerations, but, should she place her affections on a man of real merit, though he may not possess a fortune equal to her own, let her not be deterred from making him her husband. In this description I confess I have one in my eye; the son of my respected friend Mr. Danby is the person I mean. From what I can discover of his disposition at present, he will prove the very husband I could wish for my dear Charlotte. Her fortune will be enough for both. Yet, even here, I would not have her inclinations biassed. Be careful therefore, and conceal my sentiments on the point. Sir Bevil Grimstone knows my attachment to the family, and that will be sufficient. Forget not, my dear son, that your sister, being several years younger than yourself, will naturally look to you for a protector and a friend.—I charge you, let her not seek in vain.”

“And now, gentlemen, (continued the Captain,) what is your opinion of this letter?”

“We have nothing to do with it, my dear Sir, (replied the Baronet with great coolness;) it is our business to go by the letter of the will alone.”

“Very well.—You have informed yourself though, I suppose, Sir Bevil, that your right to this money is only temporary, and that, in case of my sister’s death, it reverts to her heirs.”

This was a point which Sir Bevil had not indeed considered, nor would allow. However, as the gentlemen of the law, engaged by the different parties, were also present, after a short consultation, they unanimously gave their opinion, that the lady’s heirs would have a clear right to demand payment of the principle, though, as to the interest, during the intervening time, it might be a point of litigation. This decision could make no alteration in the sentiments of the Baronet, who only wanted a temporary supply, and, as it was not probable he should ever be called to account himself, he cared very little how his heirs and those of Mrs. George Danby should settle the affair hereafter.

“You then insist, Sir Bevil, on exercising this temporary right?”

“Certainly, my dear Sir.”

“And what says Mr. Butterfield?”

“All the same as Sir Bevil do, I zay, be it what it will.”

Here the company burst into a laugh, and one of the lawyers, smoking his character, had a strong propensity to roast the country-magistrate, as it is sometimes termed; but the Captain, resuming the subject, said, “That, since they were determined to adhere to the letter of the law, it was his duty to do the same; therefore, as the will gave them simply a right to the five and twenty thousand pounds bequeathed his sister, the interest of that sum, which, during her minority, had been accumulating in their hands, must be accounted for and refunded.” Sir Bevil, having been the principal cashier, did not much relish the intimation; for, to say truth, except the allowances which he had from time to time made to his ward, the remainder of the interest had annually circulated at the gaming-table, and, as this amounted to a very considerable sum, the twelve thousand five hundred pounds which came to his share would be sensibly diminished when accounts came to be duly stated. However, he considered that five thousand pounds would, to a man in his circumstances, be better than nothing.—As there was no more to be said on the subject, the conference broke up, the Baronet very politely expressing the pleasure he should feel in seeing Captain Overbury at his house; for, so long had he been accustomed to the routine of complimentary phrases, that they slipped insensibly from his lips, even when his heart was actually burning with rancour, as we suppose might have been the case on the present occasion.

The plan which Charlotte had fixed on was that of earning a living by plain work; but she was soon convinced, that mode of subsistence was already in too great a number

C H A P. XLV.

The Case altered.

A Few days after the incident recorded in the former chapter, the friendly circle at Hackney were agreeably surprised by the receipt of a packet from Mr. Butterfield, containing a full and formal resignation of all right whatever to any part of Mrs. George Danby's fortune, together with a letter to the following purport.

To Captain Overbury.

DEAR CAPTAIN,

I cannot tell what bewitched me to have any thing to do along with Sir Bevil Grimstone, in taking your sister's fortune from her, 'twas a job I never thought kindly of, though my wife, that's dead and gone, would have it so;—but a word to the wise is enough, as the saying is. Howsomdever, this is to let you know, that I give up all title and claim to the matter, as you will see by the deed I herewith send, and which I got drawn up by a turney, and, if you don't think it sufficient, I will put my name to any other you may think better.—So, wishing the young couple a world of happiness, and yourself along with them, I rest

Your humble servant at command,

PHILIP BUTTERFIELD.

“And now, my dear sister, (said the Captain,) I congratulate you on the recovery of at least sixteen thousand pounds of your fortune; for I shall take care that Sir Bevil pays the arrears of interest in his hands, which, together with this moiety, will make it full the sum I have mentioned.”

“And I congratulate this gentleman, (replied she, looking at her husband,) on the acquisition which my brother's generous activity puts him in possession of.”

“Indeed, my dear Charlotte, (answered Mr. Danby,) I am not capable of receiving any additional happiness by the circumstance, except as it affords you pleasure, and gives me an opportunity of discovering a new instance of the Captain's friendship.”

“Very well, (replied she pleasantly,) you soaring minds may see those things with as much contempt as you please, as long as you leave us weak women to enjoy them in our way. I confess honestly, that, though I was perfectly happy before, I shall think the addition of these thousands no incumbrance;—but I am excessively puzzled though to account for the Justice's being in so relenting a mood.”

Now, as we think it must appear equally inscrutable to the reader, it is our place to account for an event, which, according to the common course of things, was scarcely to have been expected; and, in order to this, it is necessary for us to take a review of the Butterfield family once more.

Mrs. Butterfield, as the above letter has intimated, was no more. She had paid the debt of nature some time after the restoration of her son to his native dwelling, not so much to the affliction of any one, but that a little time was sufficient to conquer all the sorrow which might have been excited by the event. The Justice in particular, though not a man of letters, was observed to conduct himself on the occasion with true philosophic composure, and, feeling no propensity to enter the holy state of marriage a second time, began to turn his thoughts to the promoting of peace and unity in the domestic circle. Indeed, this scene presently began to assume a very different aspect;—no noisy brawls, no contests for pre-eminence, no selfish eulogiums, disturbed the quiet of his meals, or the repose of his nightly hours. He was at last permitted to be the master of his own house, and saw people about him ready to consult his satisfaction. Sally, whom Mr. Arthur had married, was a most amiable young person.—Her disposition was naturally placid and obliging; besides which, the good understanding she was mistress of pointed out to her the propriety of observing a submissive and dutiful behaviour towards the parents of her husband, for she had always treated Mrs. Butterfield with the highest respect, though her situation, during the life of that lady, was far from being a pleasant one.

The Justice, perceiving so agreeable an alteration in family-matters, seemed to have entered on a new state of existence. The natural goodness of his heart, no longer restrained, was apparent on many occasions; and, not only in his own family was he now loved and revered, but sincerely respected by all his tenantry, who, instead of the rigid landlord, found him to be their common protector and friend.

Mr. Arthur had more of his mother than father in his disposition; nevertheless, as he had married purely from inclination, and, happily for himself, a woman of good sense and prudence, there was a strong probability that the bias of his temper would in time be duly rectified. Sally, whom fortune had placed below the reach of liberal acquirements, was inclined to pay a profound deference to her husband's intellectual abilities, and really to esteem him the cleverest man of the age, as the preference he had given her to ladies of birth and fortune was a perpetual subject for her gratitude. From these circumstances we gather, that the choosing this young woman for his wife was both the best and wisest thing he ever did in his life, as certainly no other could have been so suitable to one of his character. Respect, affection, and submission, then being, on the one side, exerted in their fullest latitude, it was almost impossible that condescension and tenderness should not exist on the other.—Upon the whole, they were certainly as happy a couple as might at any time be found amongst that order of beings, who, being strangers to sentimental refinement, have no idea that happiness can be improved thereby.

Mrs. Arthur Butterfield's oeconomic talents were no ways inferior to those of her late mother-in-law, though they were certainly exerted with less fuss and self-

The plan which Charlotte had fixed on was that of earning a living by plain work; but she was soon convinced, that mode of subsistence was already in too great a number

sufficiency.—Every thing in the domestic line was managed with neatness, regularity, concord, and that degree of elegance which suited the rank of the family. The meanness of her original was totally overlooked in the respect which her equitable and becoming behaviour exacted from all the servants, and, through the propriety of her conduct, she was properly noticed by all the friends and acquaintance of the family. But that, which principally promoted those happy effects, was a resolution which we mention to her eternal honour,—of entirely discarding Mrs. Martin from the post she had so long held of manager, tale-bearer, and toad-eater, to the Butterfield family; by which prudent step, unanimity was secured at home, and justice, benevolence, and peace, attended the environs of the Priory. Much about the same time, and, perhaps, influenced by the example, Mr. Butterfield also found out that he could do without the services of a sordid, pitiful, pettyfogging attorney. Both the husband and wife were, therefore, much lowered in their consequence; but, in proportion as that took place, the happiness of the whole village gradually augmented.

But now, hoping the kind reader will pardon the digression, (if such it might be called,) we have to observe that Mrs. Arthur Butterfield, presuming on that high degree of favour in which she stood with the Justice, had endeavoured to prevail on him to abate something of the resolution he had taken with respect to Mrs. George Danby's fortune. "She could not bear (she said) that her own poverty and meanness should be atoned by any part of her dear young lady's property; and that, rather than this should be the case, she would be degraded to the footing of the lowest domestic of the family."—This topic she had often introduced whenever she saw her father-in-law in a humour to bear it, and, had it depended only on himself, she had certainly carried her point long before; but a step of this nature was not to be taken without consulting his son, and that young gentleman had not yet sufficiently shaken off the sordid rust as to be expected cordially to consent to the renouncing twelve or thirteen thousand pounds.—In fine, he peremptorily charged her to mention the subject no more, if she paid any regard to his displeasure:—but Mr. Butterfield's late journey to town had now thrown some new lights on the affair.

Arthur, how much soever he affected to regard money-matters with philosophical disdain, yet certainly thought the *having* and *holding*, though no subject of Longinus, had nevertheless in them something of the true sublime. But, as it now appeared this *having* and *holding* could only be for the term of Mrs. George Danby's life, and, from something which had dropped from Captain Overbury during the conference, might also be productive of a Chancery-suit, the case was materially altered. In short, Mr. Arthur at length consented that his father should make a formal renunciation of all claim in the affair, and the old gentleman with real satisfaction immediately dispatched the packet mentioned in the beginning of this chapter.

C H A P. XLVI.

Contains various Matter in a little Paper.

ALTHOUGH the manner of life which Mr. Danby and his lady enjoyed with their mother at Hackney was such as might have excited the envy of those in far more elevated stations, yet the Captain did not think it attended with that degree of éclat which their merit deserved.

Looking over a paper one day, he saw the elegant villa of a certain baronet, lately deceased, advertised to be sold. The situation he knew was delightful, and not more than twenty miles from town, and the building in that style of architecture which unites simplicity, elegance, and convenience. The estate around it was one of the compactest in England, and contained an extensive park, well stocked with deer, on the borders of a fine river, and bounded on either side with wood and pasturage. The gardens were laid out in the most exquisite taste, and the whole calculated to give no imperfect idea of Elysium.

This agreeable purchase Captain Overbury made his own, or rather Mr. Danby's, to whom he soon after presented it; but, in the mean time, the transaction was conducted with entire secrecy, till the villa was completely furnished, and every convenience added which taste or usefulness could point out. Then, with a heart glowing with every fraternal and beneficent sensation, he one morning took his sister and her amiable husband, as on an airing, to the charming spot. Having examined every particular, they were both justly warm in their admiration of the whole, and Charlotte declared she thought it a terrestrial paradise.

“And such (cried the Captain, in an animated voice,) may it prove to you both, for it is your own!—Mr. Danby, the title-deeds are drawn up in your name: accept it as a proof of my regard. Charlotte, I purpose being your guest when in England, provided you are not too much in a hurry in filling this little mansion.”

This sly inuendo he had purposely made use of, in order to prevent that grateful flow of soul which he saw impending on her lips. As for Mr. Danby, his emotion had hitherto kept him in profound silence, and the Captain, seeing his generous distress, abruptly mounted his horse, and retired to London, leaving the happy pair for some time to recover their usual equilibrium of tranquil felicity.

Charlotte, when somewhat recovered from her pleasing surprize, immediately proposed to Mrs. Danby the accepting apartments in the villa, which the Captain's generous affection had placed her in possession of; but this she now earnestly declined, alledging, that the style of life, in which they were now indispensibly enagaged, would be less suitable to her years and inclination than her little retirement at Hackney. “To be an occasional witness of my children's happiness, (added she,) will give energy to my

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meditations when absent from them, and render my eve of life blest beyond what my most sanguine wishes could have aspired to.”

Respectfully acquiescing in her choice, Mr. and Mrs. Danby mutually agreed to settle on their beloved mother two hundred pounds per annum for her life, which, together with the income she already possessed, they knew would enable her to command every thing which she would really deem necessary to the comfort of life; and splendor, she had often said, would be considered by her rather as a burdensome incumbrance than actual enjoyment.

In the amiable beneficence of his heart, Captain Overbury had not overlooked Richard Sanders, the actual preserver of his sister’s happiness. Perceiving that he entertained a penchant for a young woman of virtue and reputation, he determined on facilitating the union, and therefore, possessing a small farm in Kent, he immediately stocked it; repaired a comfortable house which stood on the premises, in which, as soon as they were married, he placed the young couple, and then gave them a lease of the whole for life, Mr. Danby presenting them with a sum of money to begin with, and Charlotte undertaking to furnish the house, together with making suitable presents to the bride.

Thus, by indulging the nobler feelings of the soul, these worthy persons found the true secret of happiness, and enjoyed that heartfelt bliss which thousands seek in vain.

In due time, Charlotte became the mother of a lovely boy, who, at the Captain’s desire, was christened John Overbury.—Some little time having passed since this joyful event, Mr. and Mrs. Danby were sitting in the parlour, she at work, and he reading to her a new publication, when Captain Overbury returned from a short visit to the metropolis. After a desultory conversation of a few minutes, he drew a paper from his pocket, and, addressing Mr. Danby, said, “I cannot feel myself completely happy, my dear George, except you condescend to be the guardian of this deed, which will henceforth relieve my mind of every possible anxiety.”

“What is it?” cried Charlotte, curiously peeping at the margin.

“Not a marriage-settlement, (replied he, laughing;) you have had your day.”

“Ah! I guess it now. What melancholy whim is this, brother. I should rather have expected it had been a jointure to some happy lady.”

“I have done here that which gives me more satisfaction, sister. Nay, never look so gravely. A man is surely not the nearer death because he makes his will?”

Charlotte’s face was bathed in tears. She was incapable of enduring so painful a subject, and therefore immediately withdrew.—“Poor girl! (resumed the Captain, smiling,) her affectionate heart is full. But you, brother, must give me leave to acquaint you with the contents of this instrument, which I have had properly attested; after which,

you will be kind enough to take it into your care.” He then read the will, which contained a bequest of the whole of his estates, real and personal, to Mr. and Mrs. Danby for their several lives, and afterwards to their posterity.

“This must not be, (cried Mr. Danby earnestly.) I trust it shall not be. The intention alone, my worthy friend, is sufficient to render me more grateful than I can express; but you must marry, my dear Overbury, and experience, as I doubt not but you will, the happiness which, in so perfect a degree you have procured me.”

“Never, never! (with a gentle sigh,) once indeed I thought on the subject with pleasure; but persons of my disposition, George, can love but once with fervour.—I will never marry.”

“Not in your present frame of mind;—but this disgust to the sex is only a temporary consequence of the treatment you unfortunately met with, and must wear off with time. At least, I hope it will; for, as there are many ladies worthy of your regard, so I must give it as my opinion, that, in resolving on celibacy, you would be wanting to society and yourself.”

“That resolution, George, can only be culpable when originating in mercenary and selfish motives. It is possible to serve the interests of society in a single state.—As to my own part, I shall, by participating in your’s and my sister’s happiness, enjoy a far more exalted share of it than I should now be capable of, were I to engage in the marriage-state.”

“I can readily believe you susceptible of every satisfaction arising from the principles of philanthropy and benevolence; yet, as you are but a young man, it may——

“Mention it no more! (interrupted the Captain eagerly.) My resolution is past, which nothing can possibly shake.—Let us go in quest of Charlotte.”

CHAP. XLVII.

An old Acquaintance discovered.

BUSINESS of a particular nature happening to demand Captain Overbury's presence in the City, he was hastily passing through a certain alley, when a young woman, dressed rather in the shabby-genteel style, stepped out of a baker's shop, the mistress of which instantly called her back, telling her that the sixpence she had just paid was a counterfeit. The young woman, with the air of one, who, by a long acquaintance with distress, had lost the acute sensibility of it, returned, laid down the bread on the counter, wiped off an intruding tear, and went her way. "I am not very hungry," said she, as she went out; but her meagre countenance, together with a profound sigh which she uttered, contradicted the assertion.

The voice struck the Captain as that of one he had known. It was, in short, Eliza's—that Eliza, whose idea was still precious to his soul. He followed her steps, and saw her enter a mean-looking habitation, and, as she turned to shut the door, had a clearer glance of that person which often he had beheld with rapture. Convinced of not being in a mistake, he immediately repaired to his sister, and acquainted her with the incident.

"She is distressed, Charlotte, I fear, (said he,) exquisitely so. I need not intimate, that, on this occasion, you would be a more proper assistant than myself."

Charlotte needed no stimulative to sympathy. Her heart already bled at the imagination of her friend's sufferings. In a word, she took a direction to the spot, and immediately drove to town. On enquiring for Mrs. Wilmot, she was shewn to a threepair-of-stairs room, where, over a few dying embers, sat the pale emaciated shadow (for it was indeed but little more) of the once lovely and blooming Eliza. Her dress, the poor remains of former finery, was reduced to tatters, and her whole figure exhibited the extremity of wretchedness.

At a scene of distress so much beyond any idea she had been able to form of it, Mrs. Danby stood for some time at the door, incapable of speaking. Eliza, at length, suddenly turning her head, seemed to gaze at her with piercing attention, but without discovering any great emotion; then, moving towards her, said, in a languid voice, "I did not expect to see you here, Charlotte." Unable to utter her feelings, she could only reply by a flood of tears.

"Had I known (resumed Mrs. Wilmot, in a solemn and melancholy accent) of your intentions, I would have spared you the pain of this interview.—Do not grieve, my once dear Charlotte; I think I do not now myself.—But your presence has a little discomposed me."

"O my Eliza! (cried she, embracing her,) could I have expected to meet you

“Why thus, my dear? Can I have merited a better fate?—But you should not be so much affected. I deserve not pity from you nor any one,—except——”

Charlotte, concluding she meant her husband, said, “And where is that vil—?—What would I say!—Where is your husband, Eliza?”

“Do not name that sacred relation, (bursting at last into tears.) I would, if possible, forget it.—No husband, but the most unfeeling wretch that ever disgraced the human form.—I know not where he is.”

“No matter.—You must quit this place, and go with me to more comfortable accommodations.”

“No, never!—The world has now forgot me; at least, I would believe so, and it would be ill policy to force the recollection of my errors on its memory. You too are married:—are you happy, Charlotte? Yes, I see you are, and long, very long, may you remain so. You must not cloud the sunshine of your breast by retaining an anxiety on my account. This apartment shocks you, but it is familiar to me, and it will be well enough to die in, for I expect not to live, and surely cannot wish it.”

Charlotte had been for some moments buried in thought; at length she said, “I have one favour to ask of you, Eliza,—that you will promise, if I call on you to-morrow at this time, you will not be withdrawn, or take any steps to avoid another interview.”

“Whither should I go? (returned she sighing.) The spirit of adventure is long extinct. I shall assuredly remain here, yet I could wish you to visit this humble dwelling no more. It is not fit you should, neither can you, nor any human being, be of real service to me now.”

Too much affected to bid a ceremonious adieu, Charlotte could only press the emaciated hand of Mrs. Wilmot to her bosom when she withdrew; and, instantly hurrying into her carriage, gave orders to drive with speed to Hackney, where, at Mrs. Danby’s house, the Captain and her husband waited her arrival. The latter, meeting her in the lobby, enquired the particulars of Mrs. Wilmot’s unfortunate case, to the relation of which she added, “I cannot be easy, George, except this poor sufferer be placed where she may have the advantage of my own personal attendance, for she is extremely ill.”

“Indulge the amiable impulses of your heart, my Charlotte, in any mode you think expedient. Suppose we go instantly, and take Mrs. Wilmot to our house.”

“I fear (returned she) that might not be quite eligible. My brother has great sensibility.”

thus?”

“A proper hint, my love. What if we were then to place her with my mother, who, I am certain, would cheerfully undertake the care of her. You might see her as often as you wish, and also supply her pecuniary exigencies.”

“Nothing in the world could be better, George.”

The Captain here broke in on their discourse, and they immediately acquainted him with the little plan their benevolence had suggested. “You have sensibly obliged me, (replied he;) that unfortunate woman shall find a friend in me; but, as some regard must be paid to appearances, as well as to the delicacy of Eliza herself, it would not become me to appear in the business; but you, sister, will oblige me by placing whatever expences you may find necessary for her present assistance and future support to my account.”

Mrs. Danby senior hesitated not a moment to second the measures so generously adopted, and it was finally agreed that Charlotte, on the morrow, should convey Mrs. Wilmot to Hackney. Eliza, for some time, rejected the kind proposal of her friend, declaring that her present accommodations were better than she merited, and, dreading a rencontre with any one who had formerly known her.—At length, however, Charlotte prevailed, and had the satisfaction of seeing her in Mrs. Danby’s comfortable and friendly habitation.

C H A P. XLVIII.

Fatal Catastrophe.

WHEN the carriage stopped at Mrs. Danby's, Charlotte, tenderly taking Mrs. Wilmot by the hand, presented her to that good lady, who received her with maternal cordiality; but it was too much for the feeble frame of Eliza to support.—She fainted on the bosom of her friend.

“Why this exalted kindness? (cried she, when recovered,) to one so little deserving it. I feel I cannot repay it even with due acknowledgment; and you, my kind Charlotte, should have left me to finish a wretched existence where I was, rather than have suffered me to become, as I fear I shall, a painful burden on this generous lady.”

“Be comforted, my dear Mrs. Wilmot, (said Mrs. Danby.) You shall experience here every regard your misfortunes ought to excite, for I am prepared, by some acquaintance with the cruel deception put on you, to love you as my child. Look on me henceforth as your mother.”

“Tender goodness!” exclaimed Eliza: but she could say no more, and was with difficulty prevented from fainting a second time.

After this, Charlotte constantly saw her every day, but with the painful conviction that her health, as well as peace of mind, was gone for ever. Neither change of air, nor the more than maternal assiduities of Mrs. Danby, could procure any rational expectation of her life. A constant hectic wasted the vital springs, and the physician which they had called in, declared there was not the least probability of her surviving long. She was, however, perfectly serene, and seemed to consider herself as having done with mortal things. In this situation, Charlotte one day asked her, if she would not wish her father to be informed of her condition, for she had already told her of her mother's death, to which Mrs. Wilmot replied,

“Why should I trouble my family any more? Their displeasure is too deeply rooted to be removed, and a farther proof of it would discompose me more than I could wish any earthly consideration should do. I have more than once solicited my parents' forgiveness, and, could it then have been obtained, it had been a cordial to a half-broken heart, which now is incapable of the sensation of joy from that or any other incident. I charge you, my dear friend, make no application on my behalf, but leave me to look forward with satisfaction to that state, where a defect of worldly prudence shall not be considered, I trust, as unpardonable.”

“Have you never made notes of your life for these last unhappy years? (said Charlotte.) Methinks I could wish to be acquainted with the sad particulars of my Eliza's sufferings.”

thus?”

"I have, my dear Charlotte, and, while I have strength will arrange them for your perusal. They will give you pain, I fear, but they may perhaps serve to convince you that the errors of my youth have not been altogether unexpiated."

From one of these melancholy visits Charlotte was, on an evening, returned, when she was informed that Captain Overbury was gone to town on a message from Sir Bevil Grimstone, which had arrived soon after she had set out for Hackney. As Mr. Danby and she were indulging their speculations as to the nature of the business, the Captain returned with an air of greater pensiveness than they had ever seen him discover.

"What is the matter, brother? (said Charlotte.) Has Sir Bevil been forming new plots against our tranquillity?"

"He will trouble you no more, sister.—Sir Bevil Grimstone is no longer."

"On the message (pursued he) which I this morning received, I immediately sat out with the servant, who, on the way, informed me that his master, having had a remarkable run of ill luck at play, on the preceding evening, had been as usual out of temper, and in his heat let fall some reflections on one of the party, not of the most honourable kind. In consequence of which, a challenge was immediately given, and accepted by the Baronet, who went out early this morning, unknown to his sister, and soon after was brought home mortally wounded. Convinced himself that dissolution was at hand, the first words he uttered to his sister were, "Send for Captain Overbury."

"On my arrival, (continued the Captain,) I was instantly shewn up stairs, where Sir Bevil laid, a shocking spectacle indeed!—He turned his eyes wildly on me, and, grasping my hand as I drew near the bed, said, "That I should send for you, Sir, on this occasion, no doubt appears very extraordinary; but I know of no one whose integrity I could so well confide in, or from whose generosity I had so much to expect. I have always honoured your character, though never solicitous of imitating it."

"What would you wish of me, Sir Bevil? (replied I.) Be explicit, and assure yourself I am ready to serve you."

"That is just what I expected.—You can forgive my sordid meanness then; but is it possible your sister can?"

"I will answer for her, that she can as readily forgive as I do, since you desire it."

"That is great!—It is noble! Oh! you compel me to feel my own mortifying littleness.—But I must be brief. Life flows apace, and leaves me—to what?—Annihilation. Yes, I will hope so."

Here he gave a dreadful groan, and paused some minutes. I made no answer, concluding, that, as no time seemed left for repentance, it would be wrong to awaken the horrors of despair. At length he resumed,

“I have sent for you, Captain Overbury, to disclose the sad state of my affairs. I have long known myself insolvent, and this event saves me only the trouble of finishing my own wretched existence. I empower you before these witnesses to make sale of all my effects, and to do justice as far as they will allow.—Will you undertake the affair?”

“I will, Sir Bevil.”

“That is kind, and may you be for ever blest! My sister’s fortune is sunk in mine, but she can have little cause to complain. There is something which afflicts me much more,—your sister’s injuries,—that part of her portion, which, in spite of the upbraidings of my own mind, in defiance of every sacred obligation to her father, I unjustly seized; for well,—yes, I confess it all,—well I knew the secret wishes of that good man; but my former profusion was the parent of avarice, and this, or rather the embarrassments in which I was involved, prompted the several actions of meanness which I have committed respecting that dear orphan, Charlotte.—Let her be repaid, I conjure you, Sir, as far as possible.”

“Concern not yourself on this point, Sir Bevil. My sister is rich enough. I will dispose of every thing with justice.”

Here the unhappy man appeared in great agony. Cold sweat bedewed his face, and every feature seemed writhed with excruciating torture. He grasped my hand as if he would implore help. “Save me!” exclaimed he, with a dreadful groan, and throwing his eyes distractedly about the room: “I will not die!—Infernal furies wait me!”——I drew the curtains close round the bed, and waited the event in awful silence. In a low and muffled voice, he uttered for some minutes the most shocking imprecations,—then with a furious groan expired.”

Mr. and Mrs. Danby were too much affected by this melancholy relation to speak, and the Captain for some time indulged his own feelings in silence. At length, he resumed, “Finding all was over, I enquired for Miss Grimstone, and was shewn into a parlour where she sat, resembling the picture of despair. She pointed to a chair. I sat down, and, after a little pause, told her, I was now come to give her every assurance of friendship and protection which her situation demanded, or it should be in my power to afford. Her eyes thanked me, but she could not reply otherwise than by a bitter flood of tears.—I then left her to give the necessary orders for the disposal of the corpse, and, having locked every apartment where I supposed any valuables were contained, I farther secured them by affixing my seal.”

“You have acted on this occasion, brother, (said Charlotte,) with a generosity peculiar to yourself; yet permit me to say, that you seem to have forgot one material point of benevolence; for, whatever Miss Grimstone’s disposition may naturally be, her feelings now must be particularly distressing, and therefore you should have given her the offer of this house till the unhappy affair should be settled.”

thus?”

"I had not forgotten it, Charlotte; but purposely left my sister an opportunity of displaying her noble superiority to the resentment of injuries."

"You leave me nothing in so doing, brother, but the imperfect reflection of your own virtues."

Miss Grimstone certainly felt some repugnance to the accepting this friendly offer. Though not eminent for sensibility, the conduct of this worthy family could not fail deeply to affect her. Their generous contempt of resentments brought her own behaviour so forcibly to her remembrance, that she could not without the most mortifying sensations appear in the presence of Mrs. George Danby. From her, however, she received every endearing attention which the nature of her situation required, as also from Mr. Danby, who had often declared to his lady that he was incapable of entertaining any unfriendly idea of the Grimstones, since their conduct had happily been the means of putting him in possession of a felicity he dared not so much as hope for.

C H A P. XLIX.

Second Thoughts.

THE said remains of the unfortunate Baronet having been decently interred, Captain Overbury diligently applied himself to the settling his affairs, which he found in a far worse condition than he could even have imagined. Of the little which remained of a once-opulent estate, every acre was mortgaged to nearly its value. The town-house was also in the same case, and, of the splendid furniture it contained, a considerable part was yet unpaid for. The other debts were to a large amount. The first step therefore to be taken, in so disagreeable a business, was to dispose of every thing to the best advantage, which was immediately done with the greatest expedition, and after every one had received a proportionable dividend, it appeared that Miss Grimstone's fortune, originally five thousand pounds, was reduced to little more than three parts of that sum. Mr. Danby generously proposed to make up the deficiency from the interest of his lady's fortune, which Sir Bevil with much unwillingness had refunded; and the motion, being seconded by Charlotte, was approved by the Captain; but, when mentioned to Miss Grimstone, was rejected with a magnanimity of sentiment not to have been expected from her.

"No! (said she,) I cannot allow you in every respect this superiority of soul. I already feel it in a manner which I hope will be of happy consequences to my future conduct. The generosity of your behaviour, on this melancholy occasion, convinces me of the frivolousness of my own character.—It is time I should aim at something more."

In fact, her situation had, for the present at least, a very salutary effect on her temper. She was mortified by the coolness which, since her alteration of circumstance, she had experienced from the generality of her former acquaintance, and assured, that some degree of personal merit was necessary to counterbalance the absence of affluence and splendor. "I am disgusted with the world, (declared she;) and, as the only favour I can farther accept from you, my generous friends, I would intreat you to look out for me some calm retreat, where I may spend the remainder of my life in atoning, by remorse, for the levity and faults of the former part of it."

So rational a proposal promised the happiest effects to herself; and, not doubting the stability of her resolution, Mr. Danby diligently enquired for a situation in which she might enjoy the peaceful fruits of reason and recollection, nor was it long before one presented, much to the satisfaction of all. The widow of a clergyman of small fortune wished to board a middle-aged lady of character, partly with a view to assist her own narrow circumstances, and partly to alleviate the weight of solitude. The house she lived in was a small elegant retirement, some miles from town, and surrounded with every thing which could render a rural life desirable. Here it was proposed that Miss Grimstone should take up her abode; and, in order that she might be accommodated with every convenience to which she had hitherto been accustomed, the two gentlemen agreed on supplying any deficiencies which her small fortune might occasion.—Thus, unmolested

thus?"

tranquillity, and even some degree of elegance, appeared in waiting to crown the remainder of her life.

But, as vicissitude is the grand characteristic of all sublunary things, it will appear no wonder that a lady's resolution should be subject to the same general law, or that Miss Grimstone, in the fiftieth year of her age, should exchange the plan of solitary retirement for the boasted pleasures of the conjugal state. The valet, whom we have already mentioned as the favoured Adonis of this antiquated Venus, having, by some means or other, heard that she had now a few thousands in her own possession, contrived to dispatch Cupid, in the form of a billet-doux, to rekindle that flame which of late had burned but dimly; and, so successful was the little urchin, that, on the very morning appointed for the lady to enter on her new mode of life, she met the happy lover in a church not far from the Strand, and there gave him a legal right to her person and fortune.

C H A P. L.

Paternal Relentings.

DURING these transactions, Mrs. Wilmot's malady rapidly increased; but she still remained immoveable in her wishes of finishing her unfortunate life undiscovered by her family. It happened, however, that the circumstances of her situation being known to Sanders, it immediately occurred to him, that it was now the duty of Mrs. Butterfield, his sister, to attempt something in behalf of that unhappy lady. He therefore determined on writing to her in the following terms.

HONOURED SISTER,

I hope you will not be offended with me if I take the freedom to put you in mind that the good luck you have met with in the world ought to make you of a tender heart to those who have not had so good a chance. Some, you know, are fortun'd to go up the ladder, and some down. You are got up; but the Justice's daughter has had the hard fortune to go down it;—and down she is, I can tell you; and, were it not for the charity of my good master and his worthy sister, must have wanted bread, as far as I can find:—and, after all, she was not so much to blame as some other people. I thought I would give you this hint;—so no more at present from

Your affectionate brother,

RICHARD SANDERS.

P. S. My wife desires to be remembered. If I were to see you, I could tell you such things of the Captain and the rest of that worthy family, as would make you bless them as I do.

This short letter was abundantly sufficient to answer the purpose designed, for Mrs. Arthur Butterfield possessed one of the best hearts in nature, and there needed no strains of eloquence to warm it with the tenderest feelings on this occasion. She was in tears when Mr. Butterfield entered the room to invite her to take a morning-ride. "Hey, hey! (exclaimed he, seeing her disorder,) what is amiss? Atty and you, I hope, have not been at cross purposes. I can tell him, if he behaves unkindly, he shall have none of my good will."

"I can complain of nothing on that score, Sir, (replied she) but the cause of my concern is the distress of a poor innocent young woman, who, having offended her parents by marriage, is now nearly perishing with want."

thus?"

“Aye, that is hard.—Won’t they forgive her? I think they should:—but some folks have strange stony hearts.—Well, sweeting, do not grieve, and I will take care that want shall never be your portion.”

Sally resolved to improve the favourable moment. She threw herself at the old gentleman’s feet, and, sobbing, cried,

“O Sir, it is your own dear daughter that is this sufferer!—Your once-happy Eliza!”

Mr. Butterfield was moved. The tears stood in his eyes, yet he endeavoured to conceal them by assuming a look of displeasure. Sally, however, nothing intimidated, clasped his knees, and resumed, “Can you, my dear Sir, be possessed of one of those stony hearts? I will not believe you are. On my knees I implore your forgiveness for your poor unhappy child.”

“Forgiveness!—Why, I forgive her, if that is all.”

“But it is not all. Consider, Sir, she must perish for want if you refuse to receive her. I intreat,—nay, I will never rise till you consent to her returning home.”

The Justice could hold out no longer, but burst into tears. In fine, he consented to receive his daughter, who, he said, should be immediately sent for to the Priory. Elated with the success of her intercession, Sally flew to convey the good tidings to her husband, who, she supposed, would be no less gratified thereby than herself. But, in this, she was mistaken. He told his wife, with an air of sternness, that she had taken too much upon her. It was a matter in which she ought not to have meddled. “Perhaps, (replied she, with rather more spirit than was natural to her,) I should not if I had not been more regardful of your character in the opinion of the world than you seem to be yourself.”

This was certainly touching the right key, for Mr. Arthur, duly weighing the *fitness of things*, was persuaded that much of moral beauty consisted in bearing a fair reputation in the popular estimation; and therefore, taking the hint from his lady, that, by suffering a sister really to depend on the charity of those who were no ways related to her for a subsistence, would reflect no credit on his own character. He said, “That, although he did not approve of women’s making themselves so busy with matters which could not belong to them, yet he would give the affair some consideration.” Mrs. Butterfield, on this, retired not perfectly satisfied with this proof of her husband’s disposition to implacability. When the family met at dinner, the subject was revived, and Mr. Arthur, having by this time made up his mind thereon, declared, that, though he was of opinion some allowances might be made to his sister’s present distress, yet it was no part of his father’s duty to receive the person she had chosen for her husband; that, upon the whole, provided Mrs. Wilmot would come alone, with no incumbrances whatever, she might be permitted so to do; for, if she had children, (a circumstance he was in fact the most apprehensive of,) the father was by law obliged to support them.”

Mr. Butterfield, readily acquiesced in the propriety of the argument, and at length it was determined that a letter should be dispatched to Mrs. George Danby, desiring her to acquaint Mrs. Wilmot of the permission given her to return to the Priory, carefully signifying, however, that she would be expected to come alone.

While these things were transacting, Mrs. Wilmot, little suspecting the resolution taken in her favour, was meeting her fate with cheerful resignation, or rather, we should say, with joyful hope. At her particular request, she was frequently visited by a worthy divine, whose name will hereafter be more particularly mentioned in these memoirs, which, having duly arranged, she now, agreeably to her promise, delivered to Charlotte, and which we design shall be the subject of the ensuing chapter.

C H A P. LI.

HISTORY OF AN UNHAPPY MARRIAGE, BY MRS. WILMOT.

HOWEVER imperfect the present condition of human happiness and virtue, the mind is found to retain an idea of absolute perfection in both, which doubtless can only be an impression of Nature's forming hand, since it is in our earliest years we feel it most lively, and do not without unwillingness resign it, when the knowledge of the world forces us to a different persuasion.—Born in a station of life which called neither for the exertions of mind nor body, I had leisure to nourish the warm sallies of imagination; and, bred in retirement, which wholly excluded any opportunity of acquainting myself with the world, I naturally formed a sanguine and romantic notion both of the happiness and virtue to be found in it.

Fond of literary pursuits, yet not so happy as to be surrounded with any one sufficiently qualified to direct my studies therein, it is no wonder that the food of my mind was rather trash than profitable sustenance, or that the course of my reading should tend to inspire a set of chimerical ideas, detrimental to moral conduct. My sentiments were indeed refined, but my understanding was clouded, and I nourished a fictitious sensibility, which, like an embosomed serpent, served but to wound the heart which had cherished it. The common satisfactions of life were despised, because inadequate to my visionary expectations of happiness, and the most perfect characters sunk in my esteem as far below that romantic standard of merit I had created to myself. In proportion as the ordinary satisfactions of social life palled on possession, my sickly imagination still dwelt on unalloyed and extatic felicity, which I supposed somewhere to exist, and the course of my reading left me at no loss where to affix it. In fine, the mutual affection of the two sexes was the state in which I fancied this ideal bliss could be found, and absolute perfection, the basis on which it was to be built.

All the gentlemen of my acquaintance had hitherto discovered the common blemishes of human nature, and, as if I had been of a superior species myself, I viewed their manners with disgust, and despised the little attentions they shewed me. My mother's circle of acquaintance were still less to my taste. I shunned their conversation with contempt, and, as she always affected to treat me with austerity and reserve, I became enamoured of solitude, where I could indulge my own reflections, and pleased myself with objects which had no existence but in my own chimerical fancy. A lonely walk was my delight, and to recline on the margin of a brook, with a book in my hand, was luxury. In these amusements, no one thought of interrupting me, or enquiring into the nature of my employments; for, as neither my father nor mother had the smallest taste for reading, I was obliged to pursue my favourite entertainment as private as possible.

I could have been very well content to waste the whole of life in these soft pleasing dreams, without feeling any ambition to distinguish myself as a being of any use in the rank of society; but, at my entrance into my seventeenth year, when I had just

brought myself to conceive that mutual love was the ultimatum of human felicity, and represented it to myself as a pure involuntary sentiment, which had in it something too refined for vulgar apprehension, my mother began to speak of my marriage as a mere prudential affair,—a state which it was my duty to engage in, because she had found out a match for me which would, in every respect, be highly to my advantage.

All this was worse than Gothic barbarism to one of my turn of temper. I ventured to say something in opposition to the modern notions of love and happiness; but this was as incomprehensible to her. She told me I was a fool, and had nothing to do but to submit to her will. In this opinion, however, I secretly dissented from her, and that the more readily, as I had seen a young man more than once at church, who seemed to honour me with particular notice. The pew he sat in was the very next to ours, and I often heard him sigh deeply during the service. Sometimes I surprised him looking at me with great earnestness; but, whenever his eyes met mine, he would quickly withdraw them with a sort of emotion, which I inclined to believe arose from the consciousness of some tender sensations in my favour.

At length, my mother thought proper to be more explicit, and to acquaint me that Captain Overbury was the man of her choice. I had never seen that gentleman, nor heard his character from any body but herself. She assured me he had great merit, but I was not disposed to rely on her judgment in that respect, especially as the constant topic of her discourse was the prodigious fortune he possessed, and she generally concluded with telling me, that, if I discovered any repugnance to the match, I should instantly turn out of doors.

I pretend not to any excuse for myself, in relating the effects which this method of introducing a lover had on my sentiments. I mean only to mention the fact, which, with one of that turn of mind I was unfortunately endowed with, could scarcely have been otherwise;—namely, that I conceived a mortal aversion to the Captain, was prejudiced both against his person and character more effectually than if I had heard ten thousand unfavourable representations of both, and was led to dread his arrival as of that of a person who regarded me only as a convenient appendage to his wealth, rather than the object of a pure disinterested passion. I have only to regret that there had not been more delicacy and tenderness in the manner of introducing that subject, since it is more than probable, that the arbitrary mode of speech used to me on that occasion tended to precipitate me on my ruin.

Ruminating with horror of mind on this intended match, I went one morning to take my usual solitary ramble in a small wood, which I often frequented alone. I was going to seat myself at the foot of a tree, when I beheld a young man (the same I had seen at church) sitting close by, with a book in his hand. He was dressed in a chintz morning-gown, fastened round the waist with a pale-blue sash. His fine brown hair fell in agreeable negligence over his shoulders. In fine, a figure more romantically charming I had never seen: it equalled all which a luxuriant fancy could have painted. His person was certainly excessively pleasing;—I then thought it beautiful. He started at my approach, and instantly arose, made me a respectful bow, and retired.

thus?"

On his retreating, I perceived he had left the book he had held in his hand on the grass. Curiosity tempted me to take it up, and, on opening it, a paper dropped out, on which was written neatly the following apostrophe. "O Cupid, thou hast amply revenged the slight I have hitherto offered to thy power! My heart, untouched and lighter than the summer-breeze, was used to mock thy efforts; but, alas! I am no longer that gay insensible being. Thou hast now robbed me of my repose for ever; for despair triumphs over my wounded heart, and hope, sweet hope, withholds her cheering ray."

I perceived by these lines that the writer was far gone in the tender passion. Yet, as the object of it was not so much as intimated, I felt something uncomfortable about my heart. A passion so ardent, and, as I also supposed, as refined as that sentiment I had often languished to inspire, awakened my pity; yet I was in a painful uncertainty, till, on looking round, I saw my own name carved in several places on the trees around. This was sufficient to animate my breast with every warm and tender sensation.—How far preferable, thought I, is such an artless secret passion to those nauseous professions which I am soon to receive from the man of my mother's choice! This, this is pure love!—not that unmeaning insipid attachment which subsists in mere common marriages, which scarcely deserves the name of sentiment. All must be energy of soul, all extatic bliss, in such an union of hearts as must spring from such a flame as actuates this unfortunate young man.

I confess my inclination, from that day, more than ever favoured that particular walk; yet I had prudence enough to avoid it, and several days succeeded without any thing happening to disturb my solitary meditations. One afternoon, as I was searching my work-bag, I met with a sealed billet, which contained the fullest declaration of love, from a person who signed himself Edward Wilmot. I could have no doubt but this was the name of my charming innamorato, and, I own, I read the contents of the note with eager satisfaction; yet, affecting some displeasure, I sternly interrogated my maid on the affair, who, I believed, had been the means of conveying it in this manner; but she denied all knowledge of it with so much simplicity and appearance of sincerity, that I was puzzled to account for the incident, except I should allow the paper to have been placed there by Mrs. Martin, who had been sitting with me in the morning in the same apartment,—a supposition I then scrupled to admit, though I have since had reason to conclude it by no means improbable.—However, I was that evening met by my incognito swain, not far from my father's house. He was differently, yet genteelly, dressed, and, as I thought, handsomer than ever, and an *éclaircissement* took place, which was far from tending to render me more compliant with my mother's measures.

My lover informed me that he was heir to one of the best families and estates in Yorkshire; that, happening to arrive in that part of the country on a shooting-party, he had accidentally seen me, and was instantaneously struck with my person, which he assured me was the index of an all-perfect mind,—such an one as he had long sought in vain to discover in the sex: from that moment he had no power to quit the spot, but, entirely to

the surprise of all his family, had remained nourishing a secret flame at Ashton, though the motives of his stay the delicacy of his passion had never suffered him to reveal.

Ridiculous as such a declaration must have appeared to a person of sober sense, it was calculated to charm every sensation of my mind. The ardour and refinement of such an attachment were irresistible. He offered to reveal himself to my parents, but this I absolutely forbade, as a measure which must inevitably prove a barrier to both our hopes; and indeed, I believe that reply was exactly the one he expected, for I have since found he was no stranger to the plan adopted in the family respecting Captain Overbury long before I acquainted him with it, which I did on this occasion, and urged the improbability of my mother's acceding to any other proposal, however eligible. He appeared greatly agitated by this intelligence, and expressed the deepest apprehensions of his rival's success, though, from my manner of receiving his professions, he neither had nor could have reason to be seriously alarmed.

After this, we frequently met, and, as I firmly believed him to be a man of the nicest honour, I every hour became more enamoured of his person and conversation; but what gave me the most favourable opinion of the nature of his professions was the noble contempt he seemed to discover of wealth. I had taken care to convince him that my parents would never be brought to approve of our union, attached as they were to Captain Overbury, and that, consequently, by marrying me, he could expect nothing more than the five thousand pounds bequeathed me by my aunt, which I really judged too trifling a sum to be mentioned to one of his great expectations. To this he replied in terms which gave me the fullest conviction of his disinterestedness. In fine, I concluded myself to be loved with equal ardour and purity of passion, and, on such a basis, doubted not of erecting that ideal fabric of perfect felicity, which was drawn in glowing colours on my romantic imagination.

Circumstanced as we were, it was necessary that our amour should be conducted with all possible secrecy, which gave it so much the more the air of an adventure, that I verily believe it served to conciliate my affection for Mr. Wilmot. The only person, who ever discovered a suspicion of the affair, was my amiable and beloved Charlotte, who, though far from a dissipated temper, knew too much of the world to suffer her judgment to be misled in so equivocal a circumstance. Her remonstrances on the occasion were those of friendship and good sense, and so forcibly did she express them, that I began at length to suspect she had reason on her side.

In this posture of affairs, Captain Overbury arrived at the Priory; and, though prepared to hate, I found myself compelled secretly to acknowledge him to be a most amiable, intelligent, and accomplished young gentleman. He had not, indeed, that effeminate softness of manners which appeared in Mr. Wilmot, but there was a manly frankness in his behaviour which discovered both the man of generosity and good breeding, and I must here confess, that, had I not been previously prejudiced against him,

thus?"

by the arbitrary language of my mother, I could not have been insensible either to his merit or my own happiness.

In consequence of a promise I had given my kind monitress, Miss Overbury,

reason began so far to exert herself, as to occasion me some very severe struggles of the mental kind, and doubtless would have been finally victorious, had not Mrs. Martin,—but why should I seek an extenuation of my folly, or meanly wish to transfer the blame of my conduct on another?—Suffice it to say, that, at a period when I was very far from seeking, and still less desiring, an interview of the kind, I met Wilmot, whose situation of mind convinced me that I had gone too far to recede with justice to him or honour to myself.

Our connexion was now renewed more frequently, and with greater tenderness than ever, though still I was too much in awe of my mother to resolve on explicitly declaring the state of my mind to Captain Overbury. Not that I was apprehensive of any serious effects from my behaviour to that gentleman, as I supposed his addresses to proceed merely from my mother's contrivances, yet my heart was conscious of something wrong, since I industriously avoided the penetration of my dear Charlotte, whose counsels would undoubtedly have extricated me from my embarrassment, and saved me from dishonour and misery; but I weakly imagined her prejudices, in behalf of her brother, would render her less favourable to my inclinations than she prudently might be: but, in thus supposing her capable of a partial judgment, I wronged the candour of my noble friend, and in this instance, and that the only one, estimated her character rather by my own narrow feelings than the experience I had ever had of her frankness and generosity.

My mother now becoming more urgent for accomplishing my marriage with the Captain, Wilmot, of course, pressed his solicitations for a clandestine marriage with greater earnestness. This I could not immediately resolve on; however, something must be done to prevent the intended union with Captain Overbury, and I knew that could only be by making a full discovery of the state of my affections to himself. This I did, and the event fully illustrated both the generosity of his sentiments and the sincerity of his affection for me. Why was I thus infatuated? What evil genius forbade my real felicity? Why did I thus perversely shun the man, whose merit alone could have answered my high-raised expectations? But wherefore now these idle regrets?—Let me do justice to the worth I was then as insensible to as undeserving of.

Ill treated and injured by my duplicity, that exalted man disdained reproach, and, abruptly quitting the family, left my offended mother to fix the odium of caprice on him, who, of all persons, was the least capable of it.—Infatuated as I was at my imaginary advantage, I privately stole from my chamber, about midnight, to the arms of Wilmot, who, having a chaise provided at some little distance, conveyed me to the borders of Scotland, where I became the wife of the most worthless and the most ungrateful of mankind. Yet it was some time before I suspected this fatal truth, and considered myself as the happiest of women.—Wilmot, at this time, appeared to be all rapture and disinterested love; and I foolishly thought we had attained an elysium which never could have an end.

thus?"

C H A P. LII.

Continuation of the same.

AT our return from Scotland, we unexpectedly met my father and mother at an inn on the road, the presence of whom I would have avoided, but for the persuasions of my husband, at whose request I summoned resolution to enter the room where my mother was sitting. The circumstance of my brother's marriage, which she had just acquired the knowledge of, tended, no doubt, to soften the natural violence of her temper, and procured me an opportunity of pleading my cause, which I did by assuring her I had married a gentleman and a man of large fortune. "Why, then, (replied she,) you have acted with more prudence than your brother has done." In fine, before we parted, I had obtained her cordial forgiveness, and a promise to interest my father in my behalf. I asked her permission to introduce Mr. Wilmot to her, to which she answered, that time would not now permit, as she expected my father to come in every moment, who probably would be too much enraged by the incident; but added, that she hoped ere long to secure us both a kind reception at the Priory.

Delighted with a success so much beyond rational expectation, I flew to Mr. Wilmot, weeping for joy. He assured me, that, though, for my sake, he could not but be pleased with the event, yet, had it been otherwise, I should have found a fond and kind protector in himself. These words dissolved me in an ecstasy of bliss. I said all which an affectionate and grateful heart could suggest.

He told me, at length, that he judged it not expedient for us to go to his family immediately, on account of his uncle's prejudices, who, having been crossed in a love-affair in his youth, had conceived so entire an aversion to the marriage-state, that he would never hear of his nephew's engaging therein; but, by the interest of his other friends, he doubted not but the old gentleman would soon be brought to think reasonably, and to receive me with the respect due to my family and merit; but, till this should be accomplished, he judged it advisable we should go to London.

We sat out, therefore, for the metropolis, where I own I expected to have been placed in a handsome house, or, at least, an elegant lodging; nor could I avoid discovering surprise, when he ushered me into a small, dark, dirty apartment in some obscure court. He read my sensations, and, tenderly taking me in his arms, said, "Although I am convinced that my father and mother will joyfully receive my beloved wife, yet, as I have taken this measure without their knowledge, and am not yet in actual possession of my paternal inheritance, it will appear an act of prudence for us to avoid making what is called a figure, till we have been properly received by them, and probably tend to give all my friends a higher idea of my Eliza's virtues."

This argument I thought so reasonable, that I readily assured him I would cordially forego every thing for the happiness of possessing him. Nothing could be more tenderly respectful than was the whole tenor of his behaviour. We went out, indeed, but

In consequence of a promise I had given my kind monitress, Miss Overbury,

little together, but he had introduced me to a middle-aged lady, who, he said, was a person of high rank, and intimately acquainted with his family. With her I frequently passed many hours in his absence, for he often went out, and sometimes staid till a very late hour; but, as I supposed a young man of his fortune and connexions must necessarily have many gay acquaintance, I felt no anxiety on the account, and seldom troubled him with any enquiries.

Mrs. Merlin I understood to be a widow of a large independent fortune, and the splendor of her mode of living left me no room to doubt of it, for she had a superb house at the West of the town, kept her carriage, and a great number of servants.—She appeared to have seen a great deal of life, and was extremely chatty and affable; yet, though, in complaisance to Mr. Wilmot, I passed a good deal of time with her, I could not feel an entire satisfaction in her company, for her conversation was what I thought inelegant, and sometimes even vulgar; nor did the gaiety of her behaviour seem at all consistent with her years, for she could not be less than fifty, a period of life which I thought demanded rather more seriousness than she appeared to discover. However, I was induced to suppose her levity nothing more than the consequences of a town-education and an intercourse with fashionable people.

At her house, for the first time, I saw Lord S—, so well known in the polite world for a professed libertine; and, as I was not a stranger to his character, it appeared a little extraordinary that a single lady, who valued her reputation, should admit the visits of one of his lordship's description; but Mr. Wilmot assured me that there was not the least impropriety in it:—nobody in genteel life concerned themselves with making any remarks of that kind. Conscious of knowing nothing beyond the circle of my native village, I implicitly assented to all which his superior knowledge approved, and, continuing to visit Mrs. Merlin, was frequently obliged to endure the impertinent stare and fulsome adulation of that nobleman. I was led, however, to suppose it all a matter of course, and therefore never gave myself the trouble to examine the motive.

In the mean time, Mr. Wilmot, contrary to my opinion, had resolved on making a visit to the Priory, which I thought highly improper, till we should have received an intimation from my mother that such a step would be agreeable. He was, however, peremptory in the design, which I supposed proceeded from an ardent desire of promoting my happiness. I certainly did not suspect he would deem any other motive worth his attention.

At his return from Ashton, which was at the expiration of a few days, I met him with all the tenderness of a sincere affection; but I perceived him to be rather out of humour, from which I concluded that his precipitancy had destroyed my hopes of a reconciliation with my parents. He cared not, however, to speak on the subject; and, at length, changing his dress, took his hat and cane, and abruptly went out, nor did I see him till about ten the next morning, when he came home in a state of inebriety, and immediately went to bed. After some hours of repose, he appeared in rather a better humour, and I ventured to ask him what had been his success at the Priory, to which he replied in an accent which cut me to the heart, “Why, Bess, the old fellow was for having

thus?”

me kicked out of doors, but I made him down with your aunt's legacy. Here it is, (shaking his pockets,) here is the coal, and now he may rave as he will!"

I could not refrain from tears at the indecency of his expressions. At last I enquired what reception my mother had given him. "Oh! d—n the old Jezebel, (cried he,) I never desire to see her more." I was now convinced that all was over, and could not help saying that I feared his precipitancy had ruined my hopes; at which, he lifted up his arm in a fearful passion, as if designing me a blow. I ran, and threw myself into his arms, and, tenderly embracing him, cried, "Thus, my dear Wilmot, let me atone for the ill treatment you have received from my parents."—But, uttering a dreadful imprecation both on myself and them, he roughly pushed me out of the room, and locked the door. I threw myself in an agony of grief into a chair in the opposite apartment, and my feelings, at that moment, were certainly little short of distraction. In about half an hour I saw him come out of the chamber, smartly dressed, and, without deigning to take the smallest notice of me, went gaily down stairs, whither, wiping my eyes, I attempted to follow him, but was told he was gone out.

Presently after, Mrs. Merlin's carriage drove up to the door. I went to receive her, and found her accompanied by Lord S——.

"What! in tears (cried she) so soon after marriage?—See here, my lord, the blessed effects of wedlock!"

"I will not believe (replied he) that a person in the world can be so void of sensibility, as to force tears into the finest eyes in the universe."

I affected to receive the compliment with as much gaiety as possible, and slightly replied, that the dissipation of a town-life did not agree with me.

"Poor thing!" said Mrs. Merlin, ironically. Lord S—— proposed a walk in the Park. "Will you honour me so far, ladies, as to give me your company?"

"If your lordship can prevail on Mrs. Wilmot, (returned the lady,) I am cordially willing."

I said I felt myself rather indisposed, and begged to be excused. "But, indeed, (cried Mrs. Merlin,) if I were Lord S——, I would not let you off so easily."

"As greatly honoured, madam, (replied he,) as I should esteem myself by Mrs. Wilmot's compliance, I cannot resolve to urge a point she appears so averse to."

"Then leave it to me, my lord; for my part, I resolve not to leave her a prey to this matrimonial demon, melancholy, nor shall she deny her company to your lordship and me."

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In order to avoid farther importunity, I consented to go with them, though my heart was far from being attuned to amusement of any kind. We had taken a turn or two in the park, when a loud horse-laugh caused me to turn my head towards one of the benches, where, to my utter mortification, I saw my husband in company with five or six young men in liveries, with whom he seemed conversing very familiarly. I commanded myself sufficiently to take no notice of the incident, and passed on. At my return, I found Mr. Wilmot already there, and resolving, if possible, to conciliate his affections, I approached him with an air of perfect good humour, though he was sullen, which I affected not to observe. He would eat no supper that evening, and, snatching up a candle, went abruptly to bed. The next morning, at breakfast, as I supposed his having been in the company of footmen to proceed from an indiscreet affability, I thought an intimation that I had noticed the incident would be a proper and tacit rebuke, and therefore, with a smile, said, "My dear Mr. Wilmot, I should actually have believed I had seen you yesterday in the park, if the company had not consisted of party-coloured gentlemen."

He seemed hurt at my observations, and spitefully replied, "No matter who were my companions,—you had your gallant, and that is sufficient." This reply induced me to reflect whether there might not have been some impropriety in my walking with Lord S—. I thought I discovered something like jealousy in this speech, and determined to avoid the most indifferent action which could give him displeasure. It was my fixed resolution to visit no more at Mrs. Merlin's. Henceforth I shunned her as much as possible, and, having no other acquaintance in town, passed my time almost entirely alone, as Wilmot was now seldom at home, and, indeed, when he was, it was only to render me more sensible of his want of affection.

Distressing as that conviction was, I endeavoured to support it without upbraiding, firmly believing that the whole proceeded from youthful levity and attachment to fashionable company. A constant appearance of good humour, on my part, was, I concluded, the only means of finally reclaiming him. Hitherto, however, I could boast of but little success, as his temper every day became more intolerable, and his behaviour, from being sullenly cool, became at length actually brutal; for, happening, when he returned one night, to ask him in good humour if he had spent an agreeable evening, he immediately struck me a violent blow with his fist, and uttered such a torrent of opprobrious abuse, as I thought might only have been expected from the canaille. On this, as on other similar occasions, silence and tears were my only resource.

Ruminating one day on my unhappy fortune, it occurred to me, that, perhaps, the ferocity of my husband's temper might be occasioned by the disappointment he had met with in applying for reconciliation with my parents, and which might be too galling for a susceptible mind to bear with equanimity. I therefore privately resolved on addressing my mother by letter;—not to make complaint, for that I disdained, resolved as I was to bear the misfortunes I had brought on myself in silence, but merely to express the affliction I sustained under the sense of her displeasure; pleading the forgiveness she had once granted me, and, after extolling the merit of my husband, begged for permission to throw myself at her feet. To this letter I received such an answer as I do not choose here to insert. Suffice it to observe, that it was in the last degree severe, and concluded with

thus?"

assuring me, that any future application I might make to her or any of the family would not be honoured with the least notice.

I was now five months gone with child, a situation which it might have been expected would interest the feelings of a man of common sensibility, yet it effected no alteration in the conduct of Mr. Wilmot, who continued to treat me with the same cutting neglect, to which, when heated with liquor, as was often the case, he added cruelty; but, in spite of my distress, I behaved with serenity, nor once upbraided him with the barbarity of his treatment, but I could perceive that the perpetual agitation of my spirits had a sensible effect on my health.

I had not seen Mrs. Merlin of a long time, when, one day, as I was sitting in tears, as usual when alone, she rushed into my apartment. "I will see you, my dear Mrs. Wilmot, (cried she,) although you so unkindly endeavour to avoid me;—and what can be the reason of your coolness? I protest I can assign no cause, except you have taken it into your head to object to Lord S—, who is so good as to visit me sometimes."

"I have no right (returned I) to make any objections to his lordship, or any other person whom Mrs. Merlin thinks proper to admit as her visitor."

"You country-ladies (resumed she,) are so prudish!—But, however this be, you may safely visit me now, as his lordship is in the country."

Whatever dislike I might have had to the company of Lord S—, it was by no means necessary she should be acquainted with it, I therefore waved the topic, and endeavoured to converse with cheerfulness, though not so successfully, I believe, but that she discovered something of the state of my mind. At parting, Mrs. Merlin pressed me so earnestly to pass the next day with her, that, wearied with the burden of my own meditations, I consented. In the evening, she took me out in her chariot, under pretence of calling on a person in business, but, to my great surprise, stopped at Drury-lane theatre. She knew my aversion to appearing in public, and had devised this expedient to draw me to the playhouse. "I cannot bear (said she) that you should lead such a moping life at home, without partaking in the amusements with which the town abounds. Be in no pain as to your appearance here, for we will get into the pit, and nobody will take any notice of us."

On this occasion, I can believe she was actuated by no motive but that of endeavouring to relieve my visibly-drooping spirits; and, as I was fond of dramatic works, was agreeably enough entertained, particularly as nobody noticed, or gave us any interruption. Casting my eyes round towards the boxes, I discovered Mr. Wilmot in one of them, with a female of a very elegant appearance, and not contemptible person. Such a sight a little surprised me, but seemed not to give me any pain, as I did not know but it might be some lady of fashion with whom he had acquaintance.

On our return to Mrs. Merlin's house, she pressed me to stay supper, which I declined; but she told me I might as well pass an hour or two with her as at home alone,

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for she was pretty certain Wilmot would not return very speedily. I asked what reason she had for concluding so.

“Why, my dear, I think you saw him in the house with a lady.”

“Yes,—and I wonder who it was.”

Here, smiling significantly, she replied, “Whoever it was, you may be assured they will not part very early.”

I could not be at a loss to understand her meaning, yet, affecting an air of indifference, I said gaily, that one ought not to expect a young gentleman of Mr. Wilmot’s education and mode of life to be wholly exempt from fashionable levities. The only answer Mrs. Merlin made to this was, by reiterating the words *young gentleman* with an air of contempt and ridicule. I was irritated beyond patience, and declared I could no longer bear with a treatment which I supposed was meant purposely to insult me, and demanded what impropriety I had been guilty of by the expression.

“None that I know of, (replied she;) since every fellow now apes the foppery of his master, and, in this respect, Wilmot is as good a gentleman as the best.”

Perceiving me to be seriously offended, (for I arose to depart) she resumed, “Mrs. Wilmot, I assure you I did not intend you an affront, nor have I said any thing which he himself could have resented. Surely you are not till now a stranger to his rank in life?”

The submissive manner of this reply a good deal softened me, and I said, “Your discourse, Mrs. Merlin, appears to me totally inconsistent. What can you mean, for I am persuaded you know Mr. Wilmot to be a gentleman both by birth and fortune?”

“Poor child! (exclaimed she,) and dost thou think so? He was, madam, about fifteen months ago, a journeyman to my Lord S—’s friseur, and I assure you, that, except I had been convinced of your being of so respectable a family, I should scarcely have visited the wife of a fellow who has often dressed my hair.”

There could be but the choice of two motives to account for the conduct of this woman in giving me the above intelligence; namely, an interested or malicious one. As I do not think her an ill-natured person, I must solely impute it to the former, and, indeed, her behaviour since has sufficiently proved it. However, I fainted at the shock, and, on my recovery, entreated her to be both open and sincere in acquainting me with what farther she knew of the affair.

“To be plain with you then, (said she,) I knew of this adventure from first to last, having often seen the letters which Wilmot sent to his confidant, my lord’s valet, during the time he spent at Ashton.—Is not that the name of your village?”

I nodded assent.

thus?”

“And had you not neighbours of the name of Martin?”

“I had.”

“Then you must know that woman is first cousin to your husband. It was at her invitation he went into the country, in order to make love to you in the character of a gentleman in disguise. I know not exactly the premium she stipulated for, but assure yourself, you were actually sold for the sake of some share in your aunt’s legacy.”

The horrible account, so circumstantially stated, left me no room to doubt the truth of it, as, indeed, the coarseness and brutality of Wilmot’s behaviour too strongly confirmed the lowness of his birth and station.—My feelings were now too severe to admit the common alleviation of tears: I sat stupid and motionless, and Mrs. Merlin again resumed:

“You are undone, my dear child, past redemption, and I pity you from my soul. I only wish I had known your merit time enough to have prevented the wicked scheme; yet, if you will now accept the offer of my friendship, I most sincerely tender it to you, and perhaps it may not be impossible for me to prove of real service.”

“You can be of no service to me, madam, (I replied.) My case admits of none, except the poor comfort of confiding my sorrows in your bosom, for I should be still more wretched, should Wilmot ever suspect me privy to his deceit?”

“Why, will you not resent it as becomes a woman of spirit?”

“Whatever, Mrs. Merlin, may be his real condition, he is now my husband, and as such it ought to be my study to acquit myself in an affectionate and faithful manner.”

“Bravely resolved! but not so easily executed, I presume; especially as he is spending your fortune as fast as he can, and, in a few months, I will engage he leaves you to beggary.”

“Do you delight in torturing me?” cried I, bursting at last into tears.

“Far from it, my dear. I would assist you, and, let what will happen, you shall find me a warm and steady friend.”

I thanked her for this kind assurance, and then desired a chair might be called to convey me home. Wilmot, as she had prognosticated, was not returned, and I immediately went to bed, where I was soon after seized with strong convulsions, which continued till the following noon, and then ended in abortion, by which I was reduced to a condition more resembling death than life. In the afternoon Mr. Wilmot came home. I heard him say, as he came up stairs, “Is she dead?” He then advanced to the bedside, and, opening the curtains, said in a rough voice, “How do you find yourself, Bet?” I could

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make no answer. Closing the curtains again, he went down stairs, and soon after left home for the space of two days, during which time I laid at the point of death, nor did he once send to enquire whether I were still alive or not.

Nature at length got the better, and I began to feel some signs of recovery. I frequently heard my husband's voice in the house, but saw nothing of him for near a fortnight, at which time I was able to sit up about half an hour each day. He then condescended to make me a visit, and I received him with the same apparent cordiality as usual; for, during my illness, I had deeply reflected on the nature of my situation, and, however mortifying I might be supposed to feel the deception so culpably passed on me, yet I had once loved him, and was convinced that, in spite of all I could yet do so, should he manifest an affection for me. To attain that point was both my duty and interest, and I was now firmly resolved never to intimate to him my knowledge of the case, nor to abate in the least of my solicitude to regain his love.

At this time he appeared more tender than he had been of a long season, spoke of my recovery with apparent pleasure, and then, for the first time, discovered to me the posture of his affairs,—I mean his finances. He said he had had his pocket picked as he was carrying money to a banker; that all he was now possessed of in the world was insufficient to support us, and then added, as I thought, in a most extraordinary manner, that he wished me well. Alarmed at these last words, I caught hold of his hand, and eagerly cried, “Surely you do not intend to leave me, Wilmot?”

“No:—but you may leave me, Eliza, and I should think you much to blame if you would not.”

“What can you mean! (I resumed:)—leave you?—No, never, my dear Wilmot. I will share in your distress, be it what it may, and only ask the consolation of your love to make the worst supportable.”

“Why, that sort of talking did well enough when we were at Ashton, but the case is altered now, and so I would have you bethink yourself what to do, for I have no great notion of this living upon love. I know a person who would be glad to take you, and you may ride in your coach, and be mistress of his whole fortune, if you play your cards well. I would advise you to take the offer, or, faith, you are likely to starve.”

“Forbear, (cried I,) barbarous man!—I shall not long trouble you, and death now would be sweet.”

Here he fell into a violent rage, giving me the most scurrilous language, and swearing I should either comply with the offer or starve. I heard not the whole of his horrid speech, for, excessively weak as my late indisposition had rendered me, I fell into fits, which rapidly succeeded each other for the space of nine hours, nor did any about me expect I should survive the relapse. Wilmot, I was told, had retired in a furious passion as soon as he perceived me insensible, and I saw him no more for three weeks.—Mrs. Merlin visited me constantly during my illness, and manifested so much sympathy and tenderness, as greatly endeared her to me. Indeed, to her care I believe it principally was

thus?”

owing that I did not even want the necessary comforts which my situation required. I concealed from her, however, every thing which had passed between Wilmot and myself, though his indifference to me neither was nor could be unknown to her.

When I was able to bear the motion of a carriage, she often took me on an airing in her chariot, and sometimes stopped at her own house, where we generally found Lord S—, who expressed a more than common concern at my altered appearance. His behaviour was that of a tender brother, and I frequently observed him, after fixing his eyes on my pallid countenance, to turn from me and weep. In the most soothing accents he would ask how I felt myself, and what he could do to serve me. Such endearing sympathy excited my gratitude, and compelled me to admire the benevolence of his character.

Mrs. Merlin, either having, or pretending to have, a great deal of family-business on her hands, often left us together. On those occasions, his conversation was always in the liveliest strain of friendship, in which he commiserated my misfortunes, and offered me his assistance to procure me a redress of my wrongs.—I would not acknowledge that I sustained any, but he said he too well knew the nature of my situation. I could not help upbraiding Mrs. Merlin with having revealed more of my circumstances to Lord S— than was consistent with the friendship she professed for me; to which she replied, “I assure you, my dear, I have told him no more than I thought necessary to promote your real benefit. His lordship is deeply interested in your sufferings, and, if I were in your place, I would not hesitate to put myself under his protection.”

“Of what advantage, my dear madam, could this be to me?”

“What advantage?—Why, he would assist you in procuring a separation from the brute your husband; and, what is more, would support you as his own sister, for I am convinced he loves you as such. Do not you, then, my dear child, refuse the benevolent offers of the only friend you have.”

“I can make use of no friendship to the prejudice of Wilmot, Mrs. Merlin.”

“Do not deceive yourself. Your separating from him would be the only act to oblige him; and I am pretty certain if you do not resolve so to do, he will leave you ere long to your hard fate.”

“I will hope better things, madam; and, should so sad an event take place, it will then be time enough to devise expedients.”

“Well, (rather peevishly,) you must use your own mind, but remember I tell you, you will one day repent slighting the friendship of Lord S—.”

On my return home, I once more began to take a melancholy survey of all the distressing circumstances peculiar to my condition, and plain it was that I was not only regarded with indifference by my husband, but that he even desired to be released from

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me. With this conviction, I again took up my pen to write to my mother, and in this second application set forth the nature of my sufferings, not with more feeling than unaffected contrition for my past conduct. Finally, I entreated her to permit me once more to return to Ashton, pleading that I would be content with performing the lowest offices in the family, might I be allowed to see again my paternal dwelling. Contrary to her former resolution, she deigned to notice the receipt of my letter, but it was in a manner which afflicted me more deeply than her silence could have done. She now upbraided me with much greater severity than she had done before; told me, she rejoiced in the account of my sufferings, and should still be more gratified with hearing I had perished on a dunghill:—that, I remember, was the cruel expression, and from this time I resolved to trouble her no more.

As I was sitting one morning at work in my own chamber, Wilmot entered it, conducting a porter, and, without speaking to me, directed him to a chest containing my linen, which the man immediately conveyed out of the room. I demanded the reason of this procedure, but was answered by Wilmot with horrid oaths and imprecations, that it was none of my business. I could only conclude that he was about either to sell or pledge my apparel, which indeed was the case, and instantly burst into tears, at which he raved, stamped the ground with his foot, and swore, that, since I were so squeamish as not to accept the proposal he had made me, I must take the worst, adding, “Do you think your fortune could last for ever? I must get money how I can; and, as for you, madam, do not suppose you are to sit at your ease as when in the country.—Folks in London must work or starve, and I would advise you to see about getting some washing to help you to a dinner now and then.”

“I will submit to any thing, (I replied,) to which my imprudence has reduced me, but this mode of support I doubt I am not capable of undertaking. There are other means of subsistence;—the needle, for instance.”

He then cursed my delicate hands, as he called them, and said he had better have married an orange-wench.

I could not forbear saying that I wished he had, which enraged him so much, that, snatching up the poker, he levelled it at my head, but I escaped the blow by getting out of the room.

C H A P. LIII.

Mrs. Wilmot's Story concluded.

I Dared not again venture into my husband's presence; but, when he was gone out, I found my whole wardrobe stripped, and all, excepting a very small part, entirely removed. It was at this period that I meditated a design, the recollection of which fills me now with horror. To one accustomed to the comforts of affluence, the apprehension of pecuniary distress is formidable; yet was not this the idea which principally irritated my sensibility? To be convinced that I was regarded with indifference, if not absolute hatred, by the man for whose sake I had forfeited all the endearing satisfactions of life;—to consider myself as under the dreadful malediction of my parents, and that the whole world afforded not one friend to whom I could fly for consolation in my distress, were reflections so intolerable, that I resolved to rid me of a wretched life.

With this dreadful purpose, I went to a shop, in order to procure, with almost the only shilling I was mistress of, that fatal potion which only could give relief to my sorrows; but, hesitating in the choice of the means to die by, I first asked for arsenic, then for opium, as supposing the effects of the latter to be less violent. The manner of my expressing the errand, together with my wild and haggard countenance, probably excited suspicion of the design, and prompted the druggist to refuse selling me either. On leaving the shop, I perceived myself followed by an elderly gentleman, dressed in black, who had seemed to observe me with particular attention as I stood in the shop. I walked pretty fast, and soon turned down the Temple-cloisters. Here it was that the benevolent stranger, coming up with me, desired I would not be alarmed, for he intended me no harm. "I am afraid, (added he,) young woman, by the errand you have just been on, that you are meditating some dreadful deed. If so, stop, I beseech you, before it be too late:—pause, ere you forcibly break open the tremendous doors of futurity."

The solemnity of this address deeply affected me, and forced me immediately to burst into tears. He took hold of my arm, and led me into the Temple-garden. I was glad to sit down on the first vacant seat. The stranger placed himself by my side, and, finding I was not disposed to speak, resumed his discourse. "My conjecture, I find by those tears, was not ill founded. Suffer me then, in a few words, to give you my advice, nor think the worse of it for proceeding from a stranger,—a preacher of that gospel which affords solid and sublime consolation for every woe, but that into which you are rashly determined to precipitate yourself."

Although, in the transports of grief and despair, I had actually meditated the horrid deed, I had not with cool deliberation reflected on the crime of suicide, nor was I capable of thinking of it, when thus awfully represented, without shuddering. My soul was aghast at the dreadful idea. Deeply I sighed, and wept afresh.—He pitied my distress, which, he said, he perceived to be great, and then proceeded to expatiate on the irrecoverable misery of those who choose to die by an act of rebellion against the dispensations of heaven. "But I have no reason (I replied) to suppose that my misfortunes

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are the effects of those dispensations, but rather the natural consequence of my own folly and rashness.”

“It is thus (resumed the good man) that the over-ruling hand of Providence is concealed in the agency of second causes. We suppose ourselves to be the carvers of our own condition; hence, in prosperity we are arrogant,—in adversity we despair. It is true, we act from the impulse of the will, and are often left thus to do, in order that infinite wisdom may deduce good from evil, and which, if it be not your own fault, will be an advantage still attendant on yourself.”

I did not at first comprehend the meaning of this discourse, for, though our family had seldom failed to appear at the parish-church once every Sunday, to hear a few moral sentences tacked together by way of a sermon, yet this was all the religion judged necessary: it is therefore no wonder that I should have been at a loss to apprehend the nature of any advantages besides those of a mere temporal kind; but the pious minister soon gave me to know, that there were others, and those of a more permanent and valuable nature; such as the benefits of self-knowledge, humility, trust and dependance on a divine Wisdom, which were often (he said) the happy fruits of temporal misfortunes, and always intended to be such.

After some farther serious exhortation and consolatory counsel, he invited me to accompany him to a chapel, where he was then going to preach. I accepted the proposal, and had an opportunity of hearing the most comfortable truths of religion enforced with a clearness, solemnity, and earnestness, which I had hitherto been unacquainted with. The worthy pastor delivered an extempore discourse from the words, “Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee.” From that hour I felt a source of consolation unknown to me before,—a consolation far superior to earthly satisfactions.

When the service was over, the reverend Mr. Curtis gave me his address, earnestly desiring me to call on him, or demand his attendance, whenever I should find occasion for either his counsel or assistance; and I must not here omit to mention, that I often obtained the most important benefit from both, during my succeeding distresses; for, not content with directing my perturbed mind with a truly pastoral care, he also procured for me the contribution of his charitable friends, at periods when I should otherwise have perished beneath the double weight of sickness and indigence.

But to return to my story. I had never seen Mr. Wilmot since the day on which he thought proper to deprive me of my apparel, till one morning he returned, and began to employ himself in packing up every thing of value he could find, which I supposed was destined to the same disposal. He then went out without speaking, and from that hour I saw him no more.—In about two hours after, the apartment was entered by a couple of ill-looking men, who, shewing me an inventory, required me to produce the several articles of furniture therein specified, which they said they had just purchased of Mr. Wilmot. I left them to act as they chose, and retired to a small closet adjoining, where I heard them stripping the lodging of every thing, even to the bed I slept on.

thus?”

The woman of the house, understanding their errand, came up to me, and, resting her hand on her prominent sides, exclaimed, "Why, mistress, mistress, how happens this? You are left in the lurch, I find; but I cannot afford to lose my money, and therefore should be glad if you would pay me for the use of my house." I told her, I made no doubt but Mr. Wilmot would speedily return and satisfy her, but that it was not in my power to do it at present.—"But you have a watch, and those sort of things, and, to oblige you, I will take them." I replied I had no such thing, (for, indeed, Wilmot had privately taken my watch.) On this, she desired I would then turn out immediately, and began to rail bitterly at people who set up for gentlefolks without the means. In the midst of this strain of invective, Mrs. Merlin's chaise drove up to the door, nor could any thing at that juncture have been more welcome to my breaking heart.

"You must come along with me, (said she:) this place is not fit for you." Without enquiring how she had received the intelligence of what was passing, or, indeed, at that time thinking about it, I gladly quitted that scene of wretchedness. She led me to her carriage, and, soon after we were seated, said, that, believing a country situation, for several reasons, would be the most eligible for me in the present case, she would accompany me to a friend's villa a few miles from town, where, as the family was not at home, she hoped I should recover my exhausted spirits.

As to the disposal of myself, I was wholly indifferent about it, nor did I recover from my melancholy reverie till the carriage drove into the court-yard of an elegant mansion, into which my companion led me with the air of a proprietor rather than of a visitor.

We were shewn into a superb apartment, and Mrs. Merlin seemed to consider herself as perfectly at home, issuing her commands with an authority to which the servants seemed not unused. Dinner was served, of which I was unable to partake, but at her importunity swallowed a few sweetmeats and a glass of wine, and then desired leave to retire. She conducted me herself to a handsome bed-room, and, desiring me to endeavour to take some rest, left me alone. Nature, exhausted by the conflicts it had lately sustained, sunk into repose, and I slept some hours more soundly than I had done for a considerable time. At length Mrs. Merlin came to enquire how I did, and I replied that I felt myself much refreshed. She then sat down by the bed-side, and, taking my hand very affectionately, said, "My dear Mrs. Wilmot, I now congratulate you on the happy turn your affairs are likely to take.—You have seen the end of your afflictions, and all before you is happiness." I assured her that I did not at all comprehend her meaning.

"No? (resumed she:) then give me leave to inform you, that this noble mansion is your own; at least, it is at your command, as is also the generous owner of it, Lord S—."

My heart sunk within me at these words, and, emotion preventing my interrupting her, she went on thus, "You do not, I believe, entirely suspect the villany of Wilmot, yet from it you may derive the most happy consequences. Know that, from the time of your marriage, you have been destined to the arms of Lord S—, who certainly is the best and most generous of men. Foreseeing the consequences of your rash connexion, he

In consequence of a promise I had given my kind monitress, Miss Overbury,

concerted the means of your deliverance, and has actually purchased you of your husband for the sum of five hundred pounds, with which he is gone to the continent, and will never more give you any disturbance.”

“Purchased me! (cried I, with indignation.) What power does the law afford for so vile a transaction?”

“Softly, my dear girl, and do not trifle away your own happiness. The purchase I mean is rather a premium to restrain the wretch your husband from giving any farther trouble to your benefactor, and, since you are now actually in his power, I would, as a friend, advise you to secure the best terms, which can only be done by sweetness and compliance. You have no means whatever of escaping, nor will his lordship easily be duped; but by kindness you may render him really your lover,—your slave.”

The whole of this deep laid plot was now apparent. I saw clearly the part which my supposed friend, Mrs. Merlin, had so long been acting. This woman, I have since been informed by Mr. Curtis, is one of those abandoned creatures, who, having passed the flower of life in licentiousness, subsists at present by acting as the procuress of vicious pleasures to the debauched; or, in other words, ensnaring and training up unfortunate girls for the purpose of prostitution, for filling which infamous department, she is liberally supported by a set of abandoned youth of quality and fortune. Having already taken so active a part in the horrid scheme, I could not doubt but her diligence would be now equally exerted in accomplishing it. It was in vain, therefore, I perceived, for me to express any sense of virtue to one who was lost to every sentiment of the kind. A resentment of my injuries must have proved wholly fruitless, and possibly have frustrated the means of my deliverance; yet, secretly I determined to encounter every distress, even death in its most dreadful form, rather than sink to a level with the basest of all rational beings, I requested that I might be left to my repose, on which that artful woman immediately bade me adieu, and quitted the room; but, as she went out, I heard her lock the door, and have reason to think she herself slept in the next apartment.

I was no sooner alone, than I implored the divine aid, to enable me to escape the hands of these vile people, and preserve unsullied the purity of my soul, for I was no stranger to that source of all consolation, prayer. I felt myself, as it were, animated with fortitude. To those, who believe their help is at hand, every thing is possible, and despondency flies from before them. Religion only can be the parent of true courage. When I thought the family were retired, I rose from my bed, and examined the windows, which I found were grated, yet not so closely but that, being slender, I could pass through them; nor did the height from the ground intimidate me, the chamber where I was being only on the second story. Having thus laid my plan, I dressed myself as speedily as possible, and, fastening the sheets to the bars of the window, got safely down into a court-yard, the gate of which I found locked. It was not a time for deliberation, nor could I possibly dread any danger but that I was partly escaped from, I therefore immediately climbed the gate, which, though set on the top with iron spikes, I passed unhurt, and without farther difficulty got into the high road, where it was my intention to travel on

thus?”

foot to town, but fortunately at that instant I heard the sound of a stage-coach, which I hastened to meet, and got a seat by the side of the coachman, in which situation I arrived in London, and was sat down in Piccadilly.

But here, like a miserable outcast from society, I knew not where to go, nor of whom to implore protection; at length I recollected the worthy minister I have mentioned before, and, having about me his address, I went strait to his house. A servant from the chamber-window demanded my business at that unseasonable hour, but Mr. Curtis, hearing my voice, ordered me immediate admission, and rose himself to meet me in the parlour. I told him, in a few words, the circumstances I had escaped from, and he, in the most friendly terms, assured me of a paternal asylum in his house.

The first step he advised me to take was, to solicit once more the forgiveness of my parents. This I knew would be of little avail; yet, that I might not appear to be wanting in what he thought both my duty and interest, I complied, and penned a letter to my mother in the humblest and most pathetic terms, which Mr. Curtis accompanied by one from himself, in which he urged my contrition and sufferings, and enforced the whole by arguments drawn from the example of heavenly mercy. As a sequel to this incident, I will only add, that the return of the post brought the same letters back again; not indeed unopened, but inclosed in a blank cover, addressed by my mother's own hand.

Convinced there was nothing to be hoped for from this quarter, Mr. Curtis began to think of some plan for my future subsistence, his own income being too small to promise a sufficient support, independent of other means. I was for my own part desirous of retiring to some obscure village, but to this he objected, as thinking I could no where be so secure from the pursuit of Lord S—, or the interruptions of my husband, as in town, where concealment could be more easily effected; besides, being on the spot, he should have it in his power to assist me with occasional helps from the affluent part of his congregation, to whom, he assured me, he would instantly apply for employment for me, as I had proposed subsisting by my needle.

I was recommended to a very neat and comfortable lodging, but, in the humble and contrite state of mind I was then in, I would not be prevailed on to take up with any other apartment than the attic story.—It was here, for the first time, after a long and painful period, that I beheld my ever-amiable Charlotte. Every thing about me was indeed mean, compared to the accommodations I had been accustomed to; but temporal things were now beneath my concern, and in this obscure situation I enjoyed a peace of mind which no sublunary gratifications can bestow,—comforts, to which I had, during the most prosperous part of my former life, been unacquainted with.

But my mind was no sooner released from the anxieties and perturbations which it had so long sustained, than I sensibly felt their fatal effects on the animal frame, which now was so much disordered, that all intended efforts of industry were become impracticable. In fine, I was thrown on the bed of sickness, a violent fever brought me to the verge of dissolution. On this occasion, the mistress of the house attended me with true Christian benevolence, and the reverend Mr. Curtis assisted me both by his charity and

In consequence of a promise I had given my kind monitress, Miss Overbury,

pious counsels. The violence of the malady at length abated. I recovered, though slowly, from the fever, but my constitution was broken by my former sufferings, and I became sensible of a gradual inward decay, which convinced me that the taper of life was approaching towards its final extinguishment.

The unmerited goodness of my dear Charlotte has now prevented me from being any longer burdensome to the excellent people before mentioned, yet, while I live, must I ever remember their kindness, their true Christian charity, with gratitude. My span, I believe, is short, but I look forward with transport to the awful event, and am thankful for those sufferings which, in the hand of Providence, have been made the instruments of an advantage which will follow me beyond the grave.

How contemptible now appears all the delight so eagerly sought by mankind! Had I been more fortunate in my connexions, I had been less happy. Had I abounded with wealth, I could not have possessed so amply that treasure which I would not give in exchange for worlds.

C H A P. LIV.

Repentance sometimes comes too late.

WHEN Mr. Butterfield's letter arrived, Charlotte eagerly sat out to impart the unexpected contents to Mrs. Wilmot. "I congratulate you, my dear friend, (said she,) on your reconciliation with your family, which some good soul, unknown to me, has brought about; but, whoever it was, may blessings attend the benevolent agent."

Mrs. Wilmot received the intelligence without discovering any emotion,—nor earthly joy nor sorrow could affect her more. "The event (said she) pleases me more for my poor father's sake than my own. It elates not me; yet, to have known his child had gone unpitied, unforgiven to the grave, must, sooner or later, have been a source of keen affliction to him; and, in this sense alone, my dear Charlotte, I rejoice in this token of my father's forgiveness."

But that permission, which had been solicited in vain by a distressed and penitent daughter,—that permission, which but a few months before would perhaps have saved her from an untimely grave, was now given too late. Mrs. Wilmot was much too weak to endure a removal from the friendly mansion where she now was. "I cannot hope to see my father, (said she,) neither have I strength to thank him for this kind invitation. Do you, my good friend, assure him of my gratitude, and implore for me his solemn benediction, while I can be sensible of it."

Charlotte, convinced there was no time to be lost, immediately took up her pen to write to Mr. Butterfield, which she did in a style that, to Eliza, (had she seen it,) would have appeared too much of the acrimonious nature; but she was irritated to the quick by a sense of her friend's injuries, and of too frank a temper to palliate her abhorrence of an implacable disposition, which is all that can be alledged in excuse to those who would plead for less asperity of diction.

TO PHILIP BUTTERFIELD, ESQ.

"IT is an instance of good fortune, my dear Sir, which (excuse me) I hardly think you deserve, that you should have been informed of your injured daughter's condition time enough to prevent, by some shew of relenting, that weight of remorse, which, in the course of things, must have been accumulating for you. It is, however, too late to be of service to her, though it may possibly be some to yourself, and those of your family who possess an equal clemency with yourself. She is too ill to be removed, much less to bear such a journey, and a few days will perhaps remove her to that state where the error of a young and uninstructed mind will not be considered as a crime too heinous for mercy. But she asks, and, remember, it is her last request, that you will, by a line under your own hand, give her your blessing, and ratify her forgiveness. Her prayers are for your welfare: her dying lips implore blessings on your head; for I can assure you she is too much an angel already to remember that those who gave her being left her to consume it in misery.

In consequence of a promise I had given my kind monitress, Miss Overbury,

I am, Sir, &c.

CHARLOTTE DANBY."

It was not the keen reproach which this letter contained that occasioned Mr. Butterfield, on the receipt of it, to sink into a state of agony which must have excited the compassion even of Mrs. George Danby herself. No:—it was the dreadful certainty of Mrs. Wilmot's fate; for, from the letter which Sanders had sent to the Priory, he had only gathered that she was involved in mere pecuniary distress, a consequence he deemed extremely natural, and which the invitation he had given was calculated wholly to redress:—but to know that his child,—that child to whose contrite supplications he had long been deaf, was really on the point of death, and that it was not probable he should any more see her alive, was a reflection too excruciating to be conceived.

He immediately ordered a post-chaise, and, taking Mr. Arthur's lady along with him, sat out post for the capital, bitterly condemning his inflexibility, and declaring that the future peace of his mind depended on his poor Eliza's recovery.—We must do the old gentleman the justice to acknowledge, that he had certainly been, in this cruel affair, the least culpable of the family. His late lady had not only concealed from him the last application which she had received from her unfortunate daughter, but actually reported to him many false assertions which Mrs. Martin had propagated to the scandal and prejudice of that virtuous sufferer, which, whether he really credited or not, was nothing to the purpose; for, since Mrs. Butterfield herself chose to believe them, it was sufficient to prevent any effort of compassion on his part, had he been disposed to shew any; and that, we must think, was the case, for, though a weak man, he by no means possessed a malignant heart.

The morning was just dawning, when Mr. Butterfield and his daughter-in-law rapped at Mrs. Danby's door. "How is my child? (cried he;) is she alive?—Shew me to her,—this instant let me take her in my arms!"

"Compose yourself a few minutes, my good Sir, (replied Mrs. Danby,) and I will step up stairs, and prepare her for this blessed sight."

She did so, and, approaching softly to the bed, where Mrs. Wilmot laid in blissful expectation of the last moment, gently took her hand, kissed it, and asked how she felt herself. After taking every prudent precaution to prevent any fatal effects from surprise, Mrs. Danby acquainted her with her father's arrival. A glow of satisfaction once more lighted the closing eyes of Eliza.—"And now (said she) I have received the completion of every thing desirable on earth. I die blest."

"But you will live, I trust, my love, to enjoy the smile of paternal love."

thus?"

“No, (replied she, faintly,) it is past, and this unexpected joy hastens, I feel, the approach of dissolution; but I die full of gratitude and——.”

Here the transient glow which had been excited on her cheek began to disappear,—her eyes regained their former dimness,—she sunk exhausted on her pillow. Mrs. Danby flew to conduct the old gentleman to the room, who, as he approached the door, exclaimed, “Where is my long-lost child, my blessed Eliza?”

“O precious sound!” cried Mrs. Wilmot, and immediately, reclining her head on the bosom of Charlotte, with an extatic smile, expired.

Motionless as a statue, and exhibiting all the marks of unutterable anguish, the unhappy father stood suspended for some moments over his departed child,—his arms folded across his breast, his haggard countenance the image of wild distraction. It was thought expedient to remove him from the painful scene. In a sort of wild stupidity, he seemed insensible to every thing around him, and without opposition was conveyed back to the parlour.

Mr. Danby and the Captain, having been apprized of the awful event, at length arrived. The latter was not in a state of mind to suggest arguments of consolation, but Mr. Danby exerted every friendly endeavour to calm the anguish which seemed to pervade the soul of the wretched parent, yet in vain. He paid no attention to any thing that was either said or done, but sat with his eyes rivetted on the ground, sometimes heaving a dreadful groan, which was the only effort afflicted nature was observed to make for her relief.

Charlotte, informed of his deplorable condition, could no longer indulge a resentful feeling. She entered the parlour where he sat, and attempted to forget her own emotions in offering consolation to the venerable mourner, but without the least success. He remained in the same insensible attitude during the remainder of the day.

Towards evening, Mrs. Arthur Butterfield desired to see the corpse, which, now dressed in the habiliments of the dead, was placed in the coffin. Charlotte and Mrs. Danby accompanied her to the apartment, where they beheld Captain Overbury standing by the side of the coffin, pressing the cold hand of the lifeless Eliza to his lips, and bedewing it with tears. He started at their entrance, put his handkerchief to his eyes, and, without speaking, hastily retired. Charlotte, heaving a profound sigh, as soon as her brother was gone, exclaimed,

“How innumerable are the sources of affliction to a mind capable of sympathy! In vain we seek the aids of reason to sooth our own sorrows, while those of the friends we love pierce us no less deeply. What inauspicious fate forbade the union of two amiable hearts, which must have found the most sublime felicity in each other.—Surely something is amiss in the moral constitution of things.”

“But it will all, ere long, (replied Mrs. Danby,) be put on a better issue.”

In consequence of a promise I had given my kind monitress, Miss Overbury,

CHAP. LV.

AT that instant, Mr. Butterfield's voice was heard raving in all the wildness of despair. The ladies hastily quitted the melancholy scene to prevent his viewing again what could only serve to augment his distress. "Sally, Sally, (cried he, in hollow accents,) take me back to Ashton! No,—stay, I will not go!—I will die here with my child!"

Mr. Danby, fearing the consequences of his affliction, was of opinion that it would really be best to convey him to the Priory, where, he said, he would take care to have Mrs. Wilmot's remains conveyed, in order to be interred in the burying-place of the family. This appeared to give him some little comfort, and he consented to return. "But, what! (said he,) must I tear myself from my murdered child?—aye, murdered by my cruelty! No, no, I will stay here, and we will be buried together." Finding he was about to relapse into his former melancholy condition, Mr. Danby gently took him by the arm, and led him to the carriage, where the duteous and afflicted Sally followed, endeavouring by every effort of tenderness to sooth the perturbations of his breast.

As nothing circulates with greater velocity than news in a country-village, the knowledge of this sad event was soon diffused throughout the whole parish of Ashton and its environs. Eliza, for the sweetness of her temper, had been the object of general esteem, and her fate now drew tears from every eye. Mrs. Butterfield's memory being universally execrated among them, her character was now lashed anew with the greatest severity. "Those (cried the tenants) who had no feeling for their own flesh and blood, could not be expected to shew kindness to others."

On the appointed day for the funeral, the road through which the hearse was to pass was lined, for a quarter of a mile, with the inhabitants of every house and cottage around. The solemnity of the minute-bell seemed to aggravate their sorrows and resentments, and, while some deplored the untimely fate of Eliza, the rest were uttering bitter imprecations on the cruelty which had promoted it. At length, a procession of the principal people in the neighbourhood, dressed in deep mourning, proceeded to meet the hearse, which now appeared, followed by Mrs. Danby, Captain Overbury, Charlotte, and her husband, together with the reverend Mr. Curtis, whom Eliza had particularly requested might perform the funeral obsequies, which he did with a solemnity and emphasis that caused tears to distil anew from every eye. When the corpse was deposited in the vault, by the side of that of the late Mrs. Butterfield, Charlotte could no longer repress her feelings, but, as she leaned on her brother's arm, exclaimed, "Cold, cold are thy resentments now, thou most implacable mother, and death gives thy injured child that place, which, when living, thy hard heart denied her."

Just as the solemn rite was finished, a commotion was observed among the common people, who had crowded in vast numbers into the church. A general hiss was heard, and a cry of "Away with her to the horse-pond!" The fact was, Mrs. Martin, whose conduct had been fully known in the village, had imprudently mingled amongst the spectators of the melancholy scene, and her presence on such an occasion excited the

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indignation of that class of people who are usually seen to be warm in their resentments of whatever militates against their uncultured ideas of honesty and uprightness of heart. They had already seized that vile woman, and were actually proceeding to put their ducking scheme into execution, when the interference of Captain Overbury and some other gentlemen repressed, in some degree, their fury; but, though, by these means, she rather escaped their hold, yet no remonstrances could prevent them from following her, as she fled, with a shower of stones and dirt, till she took shelter in a cottage, the door of which was already open, or it is probable she would not there have been readily granted a retreat.

Mr. Butterfield had been incapable of attending the remains of his child to the grave, and Mr. Arthur thought best, for certain reasons, to absent himself also. At the request of the former, Captain Overbury, and the rest of that amiable party, consented to pass a day or two at the Priory, in which time the discourses of Mr. Curtis had happily succeeded in diffusing the mild beams of pious consolation through the tortured bosom of the afflicted parent. "Be comforted, Sir, (said that good man,) and disengage your views from the present scene of things. All yet is right,—is best. Your daughter, suffering, dying by the consequences of her own mistakes and your severity, (humanly so to speak,) is more advantaged than if she had still reclined in the fond bosom of ease and kind indulgence. It is thus we are permitted to act under the influence of depraved nature, and, by our corrupt passions, throw misery and confusion over the moral scene, but it would not be so allowed, were it not certain that the whole should terminate in a future glorious state of order, harmony, and beauty."

Mr. Butterfield was so much enamoured of the piety, good sense, and Christian virtues of that reverend gentleman, besides, animated by the liveliest gratitude for his benevolent conduct to Mrs. Wilmot, that he was very desirous of detaining him constantly with him, and to that end offered him the possession of a very valuable benefice, to which he had then the right of presentation. But Mr. Curtis declared, that no prospect of emolument should ever tempt him to desert his flock in town, amongst whom, he said, he trusted that his labours had not been wholly unsuccessful. However, he promised to see the poor old gentleman as often as opportunity should give leave, and, in the mean time, if his counsels and exhortations should appear of service in alleviating the force of sorrow, he would, from time to time, convey such by letter as the nature of the case required, and his own humble talents should suggest.

In fine, Charlotte and the rest of that worthy company returned to their respective homes, to enjoy, in their several situations, those rich rewards which never fail to crown the philanthropic heart. Mr. Butterfield was in time, and by the correspondence he held with Mr. Curtis, brought to submit to the afflictive stroke of Providence with patience, humility, and resignation; but, having himself felt the force of mental anguish, his heart was ever after open to the distresses of others, and rendered him a sympathetic friend to every son or daughter of affliction.

The character of Mr. Arthur was softened into an proximity to virtue, by the recent incident which had taught him, that it was possible even for a profound

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philosopher to err in the common obligations of social life. By degrees, he descended from the unamiable heights of pride and narrow self-love, and was convinced, that, though the acquisitions of literature and study may very properly adorn, yet active benevolence alone is that which imparts real dignity to a human being.

FTNTS.

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