

Author: **Mrs. Mathews**

Title: *Simple Facts; or, the History of an Orphan*

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Printed by S. Low, for the author

Date of publication: 1793

Edition: 1st ed.

Number of volumes: 2

The heroine rejects suitor after suitor, as she waits for her accepted lover, Charles Palmer, to return from India with a suitable fortune. Persecuted by family and friends, abducted and held captive by one over-zealous lover, Maria exhibits strength of mind and perfect virtue throughout the tale, finally reaping her reward on her lover's triumphant return.

Copyright Chawton House Library

SIMPLE FACTS.

VOL. I.

Copyright Chawton House Library

SIMPLE FACTS;
OR, THE
HISTORY OF AN ORPHAN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY MRS. MATHEWS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY S. LOW, GREAT PORTLAND STREET

FOR THE AUTHOR:

And Sold by Mr. RICHARDSON, Royal-Exchange; Messrs.
HOOKHAM & CARPENTER, Old and New Bond Street;
and Messrs. SCATCHERD & WHITAKER, Ave-Maria
Lane.

1793.

SIMPLE FACTS, &c.

CHAPTER I.

IN the county of Devon, about two miles from Torrington, lived Mr. Harcourt, a gentleman of respectable family. He had an estate of about two hundred a year, which he farmed himself. He married at the age of twenty-two, the daughter of a neighbouring Clergyman, a very amiable young lady, with no great fortune, but that Mr. Harcourt did not consider as an object to be put in competition with the many valuable qualities he discovered in his lovely Maria:—He had no reason to repent his disinterested choice. The prudence of Mrs. Harcourt, in the management of their domestic concerns, made ample amends for the smallness of her fortune. Their mutual attachment increased with their years, and they may with propriety, be numbered amongst the favourite few,

“Who in each other clasp whatever fair
“High fancy forms, and lavish hearts can wish.”

In the first two years after their happy union, they were blessed with two sons; and twelve years after the birth of the youngest, Mrs. Harcourt, was, to the great surprise of every one, delivered of a daughter, who was named after her amiable mother. Though Maria came so unexpectedly, she was not the less welcome. Mrs. Harcourt had long wished for a girl, to complete her happiness, and now that she was blessed with one, she had not another wish. She considered her little Maria, as a blessing from heaven to comfort her declining years.—How little do mortals know the designs of heaven?—Could that tender parent, have foreseen the distresses her beloved child was born to undergo, how different would have been her feelings? But,

“Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate.”

Mr. Harcourt, had prudently made it a rule from his oeconomy, to lay by a small sum yearly, for a provision for his second son; and the year before Maria was born, he purchased a small estate, which was immediately settled on him. He had now another to provide for; and he cheerfully determined to pursue the same plan. Maria grew a beautiful child, and early discovered uncommon abilities; her tender mother undertook the delightful task

“To teach the young idea how to shoot.”

Mr. Harcourt, had finished the same charge with his two sons, much to his credit and satisfaction; they were very fine lads, and appeared to be well disposed. The youngest, who was now fifteen, he put apprentice to an attorney. His eldest being comfortably provided for, Maria, remained their only care.

They were under no great apprehension concerning her, as Mr. Harcourt enjoyed a good state of health, and was not much above forty. Hope is a powerful passion in the

human breast; they fondly looked forward with pleasing expectation to the time when they should behold their beloved child, the admiration of all, and the delight and comfort of their old age.

It is sometimes a misfortune to be too secure. Had Mr. Harcourt experienced some of those ills, which are the lot of thousands of his fellow creatures—Had he been afflicted with any of those complaints, so incident to human nature—He would not have delayed making that provision for his child; the neglect of which, exposed her to so many dangers. Such was the happy state, Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt enjoyed; reflecting on the past, with a satisfaction which none can feel, but such as make virtue the guide of all their actions; and looking forward to the future, with the most flattering expectation.—When Mrs. Harcourt went one day with her eldest son and little Maria, to pay a visit to Lady Palmer, who had a seat about two miles from their house; Mr. Harcourt could not accompany them, having some business to transact, which detained him; but promised to join them in the evening, and they set out cheerfully without him.

They were received at the Grove with their usual welcome. Lady Palmer had a great respect for Mrs. Harcourt, and her children were doatingly fond of Maria. They clung about her, and strove which should shew most attention. They were all happy; Maria with her play-fellows in the nursery, and Mrs. Harcourt in the conversation of Lady Palmer, until the hour arrived when Mr. Harcourt promised to join them. That past, and almost another; but no Mr. Harcourt! Mrs. Harcourt could no longer conceal her uneasiness. She began to be seriously alarmed, and expressed her fears to Lady Palmer, that something of a very serious nature must have happened, or Mr. Harcourt, who was always punctual on the most trivial occasions, would not, she was certain, have forfeited his word.

Lady Palmer endeavoured by every possible means to persuade Mrs. Harcourt her fears were groundless; but to no purpose. She grew more uneasy, until it was resolved to send her son with one of the servants, to know the cause.

Lady Palmer, was the widow of Sir Thomas Palmer, who had been dead about two years; her elder son, the present Sir Thomas, was at this time at Oxford. She had two other children who were then at home; a daughter, who was about eleven years of age, and little Charles, who was only nine.

Lady Palmer, was one of those few amiable women, who after the death of their husband's, devote the whole of their time to the education of their children. She lived in a very retired way: Mrs. Harcourt and two or three of her old friends, were all the visitors she received. Young Harcourt entered the parlour pale and trembling; "my poor father" said he— "Heavenly God! preserve him," cried Mrs. Harcourt! "What has happened? tell me all?" "Be not so frightened my dear mother" said he, "it may not be as we fear"—but on my enquiry at home, the servants assured me he set out to come to us at the time he appointed; and coming by the river we found this cane; which, I immediately knew to be my father's. "Oh!" cried Mrs. Harcourt, he is then lost! he is gone for ever! and dropt on the floor. Every means were used to recover her, which for some time, proved ineffectual,

but at last coming a little to herself she exclaimed, "is he then lost?" and again fainted. Lady Palmer advised young Harcourt to take some of the servants and search the river—and likewise to send people different ways about the neighbourhood to endeavour to get at the real state of what she began now to dread to know.

Poor Mrs. Harcourt still continued in a state of almost insensibility—Lady Palmer, at her intervals of reason, begged her to compose herself—pressed her to take an apartment in her house; adding, "if things should be as we fear, (which heaven forbid) your own, will by no means be a proper place for you, at least for some time." "Oh! Lady Palmer," cried she, wringing her hands, I am in a state of distraction! "if I have lost my beloved husband what place will be proper for me—none in this world—but let me entreat your ladyship to send me home—I must see him dead, or alive—dead! repeated she, with a wildness in her looks, can I then live, if all I have to live for is gone—what will become of me?"

Lady Palmer was extremely alarmed at seeing her friend in such distress; begged her to consider her health, "if only for the sake of your dear child" said she. "My poor Maria," said Mrs. Harcourt (in a softened tone) "what will become of thee, if thou hast indeed lost thy father? but pray let me go home; even the certainty of what I dread, cannot be worse than what I now suffer."

Lady Palmer then entreated her to leave Maria, which she at last consented to. The carriage was ordered to be got ready, and Lady Palmer's woman to go home with her. Lady Palmer advised her not to take leave of Maria, as the child would be frightened to see her in such a distressed state; "indeed I am distressed," said she, "I am distracted"—"Oh! cried she, as they were told the carriage was ready, "what will become of me."

CHAPTER II.

LADY Palmer was deeply affected at her friends distress.—She offered up a sincere prayer to the Almighty, to comfort her under her suffering—and went to the nursery to poor little Maria. She took the little innocent in her arms, kissed her, and could scarce conceal the tear which stood in her eye. “My dear sweet child” said she, “will you like to stay with your play-fellows, two or three days? your mama has given me leave to keep you.” Maria, answered “she should like it very much; but if her ladyship pleased, she would wish to bid her mama a good night.” Lady Palmer then told her, her mama was gone home—she stood a few moments in a very thoughtful attitude; at last recollecting herself, “I wonder” said she, “what my papa will say, to see my mama without me.” Lady Palmer turned her head to wipe her eyes. Miss Palmer and little Charles, were delighted to have their favourite some days. It was settled for Maria to sleep with Miss Palmer. Lady Palmer embraced them—wished them a good night—and returned to the parlour full of anxiety, for her woman’s return. She soon entered the room. “Oh! my Lady,” said Mrs. Harris, “such a scene of distress at poor Mrs. Harcourt’s.” “It is then as I feared” said Lady Palmer; “but let me know the particulars.” Mrs. Harris then told her, that Mrs. Harcourt supported herself pretty well, till the carriage came within sight of the house. Then on seeing such a number of people about the door, she screamed out, that all was lost. Her dear husband was brought home dead; “her fears were too true,” continued Mrs. Harris, “for on searching the river, Mr. Harcourt’s body was found, and on examining the bank, they discovered the place where his foot had slipt.” Poor Mrs. Harcourt was taken out of the carriage quite insensible, and carried to her apartment. Doctor Johnson, who happened to be amongst the number of spectators, had ordered her a composing draught but she very much feared it would answer no purpose, as she did not think Mrs. Harcourt could live.

“Her two sons are nearly in as bad a state” said Mrs. Harris, “Poor Henry the youngest, is laying over the body of his father, and raving like a distracted creature: his brother seems in a state of stupid dejection. I desired Dr. Johnson to call here in the morning, as I concluded your ladyship would wish to know how Mrs. Harcourt did.” “You did very right,” answered Lady Palmer, deeply affected with the distressing scene her woman had described. “Poor Mrs. Harcourt—how I pity her—who but a few hours ago, was one of the happiest of women; the Almighty will, I hope, give her fortitude to support this great trial. Poor little Maria, a beautiful girl only eight years old, to be left at the mercy of a brother—to lose her father, and perhaps her mother, who adored her! who watched every turn of her growing genius, to find out where to improve, or where to check.”

Mrs. Harris put her lady in mind of the hour, and advised her to go to rest; she retired—but not to sleep—her thoughts were too much taken up with the sorrows of her friend to admit of any. She rose earlier than usual the next morning and went to the nursery. She was surprised to find the young people up and dressed; the thoughts of their new companion had awakened them. She found them in high spirits. She embraced them all tenderly—but when she took Maria in her arms, she could not conceal the tear which

started in her eyes; which Maria perceiving exclaimed “My dear Lady Palmer, you weep, and it seems about me—what have I done? I shall be very unhappy indeed, if I have been so unfortunate as to have offended you:” and burst into tears. Lady Palmer’s tears flowed now without restraint. She pressed Maria to her bosom; “You sweet innocent” said she, “you have never offended me, be not alarmed.” By this time her companions began to share in the distress of Maria and their mama. Little Charles took Maria by the hand, “Oh?” mama said he, “I cannot bear to see Miss Harcourt weep, indeed I cannot; it makes me weep too.” Lady Palmer felt extremely distressed how to act, she thought it would be proper, to prepare her for the sad news; yet feared to shock her sensibility, of which she appeared to have an uncommon share, for one of her years. “You must not be frightened at what I am going to say”— “but I am told your papa is very ill, and you know he may die: if he should, you must not make yourself more uneasy than you can possibly help; as God Almighty acts in those cases as he thinks best; and we must all submit to his will, or we cannot be considered as christians. You see, my dear, your companions have lost their papa, and they are not unhappy.” Maria now sobbed, as if her little heart would break— “but my papa” said she, when she was able to speak, “has always been so kind and good to me, I am sure I cannot live if he should die.”

Lady Palmer after endeavouring to convince her of the impropriety of such a thought, left her with her companions, who joined in her grief.

CHAPTER III.

DOCTOR Johnson was soon announced, he gave a most alarming account of Mrs. Harcourt's state; declared it was his opinion, that if she survived, it would be with the loss of her reason—but added, a few days will determine her case. "Never," said the Doctor, "did I behold such a distressing scene. Poor Mrs. Harcourt is really distracted, her second son almost in the same state, and the eldest melancholy; the poor labourers all lamenting the loss of a good master—indeed I have not seen one soul who is not affected at the news of poor Harcourt's death."

"His poor daughter," said Lady Palmer, "will, I fear be the greatest sufferer; I very much fear she is totally unprovided for." "Good God!" said Dr. Johnson, "Mr. Harcourt cannot surely have neglected so material a business as taking care of his child: but his death being premature, may in some measure excuse such a neglect. Joseph seems to be a good lad, but it is hard to be a dependant on a brother." Lady Palmer entreated he would call every day to acquaint her with the state of Mrs. Harcourt's health, which he promised to do, and took his leave.

She now acquainted Maria in the tenderest manner possible, with the death of her father. She was deeply affected with the loss, but after the first transports of her grief had a little subsided, she supported her sorrow with a fortitude, superior to her years; which gave Lady Palmer a high opinion of her understanding. She expressed a great desire to see her mama; but on Lady Palmer's assuring her she should, as soon as her mama was in a state proper to receive her—she readily submitted.

Mrs. Harcourt remained four days totally insensible; her fever was so high, that Dr. Johnson declared there must be a change in a few hours. In the evening she fell into a deep sleep, and continued in it twelve hours. The Doctor waited with great impatience for her awaking, in hopes of a favourable turn; he was not disappointed. When Mrs. Harcourt awoke, she lay a few minutes as if just recovered from a trance: she looked round, and on seeing the Doctor, who stood by the bed-side, without attempting to speak, till he saw what state she was in—she exclaimed, with her hands and eyes lifted up, "God Almighty is just! I have deserved all that has befallen me. I have, Doctor Johnson," said she, "for twenty years past been so happy, I had almost forgot I was mortal; I even dared to measure out the length of that happiness to a period, when I vainly imagined I should sink with my beloved husband gradually to the grave; after experiencing nothing but the blessings of this life. Wretch, that I was, what right had I to expect, to be exempt from the distresses my fellow creatures are subject to?" The Doctor begged she would not talk, or she would hurt her health; she answered she was perfectly composed, "Nothing can now change the state my mind is in, I am so thoroughly convinced of the justness of my suffering; I shall never utter another complaint, but be thankful to the Almighty for the many years of uninterrupted happiness, I have enjoyed."

The Doctor was very much surprised to see her so calm; he offered her some refreshments, which she consented to take. She enquired after her children, but expressed

no desire to see them. "This fatal blow, Dr. Johnson" said she, "has taught me a lesson I have never till now known; which is, not to be too much devoted to any thing in this world. I have had more than my share of the comforts, blessings I may say, of this world; it was time for me to experience the reverse, which I hope I shall support as becomes a christian." The Doctor again repeated his request, that she would not fatigue her spirits by talking too much; she promised to obey him, and he took his leave.

Lady Palmer was very happy when Dr. Johnson acquainted her Mrs. Harcourt had recovered her reason. The doctor being fearful she might fall into a state of stupid insensibility, advised Lady Palmer as soon as the funeral was over, to take Maria to her, in order to awaken her attention, which she agreed to do. Maria and little Charles then entered the room, she ran to Dr. Johnson, with a face expressive of the greatest anxiety, to enquire after her mama, and brothers, the tears ready to start from her eyes. He took her by the hand, and assured her, her mama was a great deal better, and that she should see her in a day or two, and her brothers were pretty well. She sighed—"God bless and protect you, sweet innocent" said he, "I wish you may not be the greatest sufferer." "But Miss Harcourt shall not suffer," cried little Charles; "you know Mama when I am seventeen, I shall go to India to my uncle, the Governor—where I shall make a great fortune, and I will give the half of it to her:"—"do not cry, Miss Harcourt," said he, taking her hand, "I cannot bear to see you." Lady Palmer looked at the doctor; her countenance expressed the satisfaction she felt at her son's generous sentiments—she took him in her arms, and kissed him.—Her feeling can only be conceived by a tender parent.

The day came, on which Maria was to be taken to her mama; her companions shed tears at parting. When Lady Palmer entered the room where Mrs. Harcourt was sitting, she was, notwithstanding what Dr. Johnson had said, greatly surprised to see her so composed. They embraced each other in silence—"I have brought Maria to see you," said Lady Palmer, "bless my child," said she—and ordered the nurse to bring her up—on her entering the room she ran and fell on her knees;—"Oh! my dear mama!"—was all she could utter.—Mrs. Harcourt now began to discover some signs of returning sensibility: the tears which had for some days forsaken her eyes, now began to flow.—She pressed her child to her bosom, when she was a little recovered—"Call my sons," said she, to the nurse,—they entered the room with dejected looks.—"Joseph," said she, taking him by the hand, and putting one of Maria's into the other—"behold your child—you my dear children," addressing her sons, "have had the blessing of both your parents to watch over, and instruct your youth: you are at present such as I wish you to be—continue the same, and you will be an ornament to society, and reflect honour to the memory of your dear deceased father. But this dear child, has too early lost one parent; and God only knows, how soon she may be deprived of both. I therefore commit her to your protection, and as you act by her, so may the Almighty deal with you."

This solemn speech, struck them so powerfully, it was some time before there was any reply made to it—the brothers at the same instant fell on their knees; vowed solemnly, Maria should never have cause to complain of them. Joseph assured his mother he would pursue the plan his dear father had adopted of laying by a sum yearly for her,

until she was of age. Mrs. Harcourt was very well satisfied with her son's behaviour, embraced them, and they took their little sister in their arms and kissed her, with great affection. Lady Palmer, who was equally pleased and affected with this tender scene, now began to hope Maria's case was not so bad as she had feared. She concluded, Mrs. Harcourt would be the better of a little rest, got up to take her leave; she asked if she should take Maria back to the Grove. "No, my Lady," replied Mrs. Harcourt, "I will have her with me whilst I am in this world; it may not be long—and then my Maria will stand much in need of such a kind friend to guide her young mind." "Let me entreat you to think otherwise," said Lady Palmer, "you will I hope, live to see her happy beyond the reach of fortune." Mrs. Harcourt sighed, and shook her head; but continued Lady Palmer, "should she, which Heaven forbid, ever stand in need of my assistance, I shall ever be ready and willing to give it;" and then took her leave.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. Harcourt seemed every day to recover more tranquillity: she was soon able to take short airings in Lady Palmer's carriage, which was every day sent to take her out. But her health had received such a visible shock from the late accident, that she grew extremely thin, and had entirely lost her appetite; and though she appeared calm, and sometimes rather chearful, it was very evident her mind was but ill at ease.

She paid more than common attention to the improvement of Maria's mind—she set forth in the strongest colours, the advantages derived from an early attention to piety and morality. "Let nothing, my dear child," said she, "tempt you to do a mean ungenerous action, or to deviate from the strict rule of propriety; remember this—that vice, however it may deceive you by appearance, is always attended with misery.

"To be good is to be happy.
"Angels are happier than us; because
"They are better."

One thing, Mrs. Harcourt charged her particularly to observe; "when you grow up," said she, "make this a rule; whatever you observe in the behaviour of your companions, that does not exactly agree with your own idea of right, impartially examine yourself—and you will perhaps find on a strict scrutiny, you have some time or other been guilty of the same fault; if you have the pleasure to find yourself free, this will imprint it so strongly in your mind, that you will be in no danger of falling into the same error." Such were the instructions Mrs. Harcourt gave her beloved daughter, and Maria lost not a word—she treasured them in her heart—and determined, whatever was her lot, never to deviate from them.

Mrs. Harcourt grew every day weaker, and on consulting Dr. Johnson, he discovered she was in a deep decline, and that it was not in the power of medicine to save her. She called her son Joseph to her, one day, and said, "my dear son, I find my dissolution fast approaching: indeed, there is nothing to induce me to wish to live, only if it had pleased the Almighty to have spared me till my poor Maria was provided for. But *his will be done*;—"you will, I make no doubt, be a kind father to her"—Joseph was really affected at his mother's words; assured her, Maria should be his sole care.

She then sent for her sister, Mrs. Young, and after acquainting her with the state of her health, and the natural consequences which must soon follow—she consulted with her concerning the disposal of Maria after her death. It was at last determined that she should board with her aunt, and go to school with her children. Mrs. Young was married to a linen draper, at Torrington, she had four children, two sons and two daughters; the youngest of whom was the same age of Maria, but very different both in person and disposition.

Mrs. Harcourt having settled this important business, now turned her thoughts wholly on her approaching fate, which she met with a calmness, that shewed she rather wished than feared to die. This second shock, which happened about twelve months after the death of Mr. Harcourt, was too much for Maria's tender nature—she was in hysteric fits for some days, and her life was despaired of. After every means had been used to reconcile her, to no purpose, Lady Palmer entreated Mrs. Young to let her pass a few days at the Grove, adding, "the society of her old companions might divert her melancholy." Mrs. Young agreed to the proposal, and Maria went home with Lady Palmer.

From the attention she received at the Grove, she by degrees recovered her health. Little Charles strove by every possible means to amuse her; and when he could not succeed, lessened her sorrows by sharing them—his sympathetic soul joined in her distress; which she perceiving, would often conceal, for fear of giving him pain; thus by assuming a cheerfulness, she soon became really so—Mrs. Young came for her, this was another trial to Maria, but she knew, she must submit, and therefore determined to do it with a good grace. She summoned all her resolution, and thanked Lady Palmer with great composure for her kindness, but, when she took leave of her young friends, her fortitude forsook her, they were all in tears.—Lady Palmer entreated Mrs. Young to let her pass the holidays at the Grove, which she consented to, and they took their leave.

Maria was received by her uncle and cousins with great pleasure, they at first shewed her every kind of attention, and Mrs. Young took a pleasure in hearing her praised. But her youngest daughter soon discovered a jealousy at her superior abilities, which she considered as a reproach to herself, and therefore conceived a violent hatred against her. She practised all those mean insinuations which little minds are capable of, to prejudice her father and mother against her—and Maria saw with sorrow her arts succeed, but too well. She soon discovered the progress she made in learning, which instead of gaining her the approbation she hoped to receive, would gain nothing but some ill-natured sarcasm, such as, "Ay to be sure, you are cleverer than any body." This affected her exceedingly, her situation became very uncomfortable, but she thought the most prudent method would be to bear it without complaint, as those little disagreeables would make her brothers unhappy without answering any other purpose. She mourned in secret the loss of her tender parents—the only comfort she ever enjoyed was in the holidays, which she always spent at the Grove—Maria had spent two years in this unhappy state, when Lady Palmer fancied she saw a settled dejection on her countenance, and kindly enquired if she was happy. She answered, "she was as happy as she could expect to be, without a parent." This negative kind of reply, and the dejection which accompanied her words, Lady Palmer was by no means satisfied with; she concluded Maria was not so well treated as she could wish, and therefore determined to get at the truth, as she loved her, both for her own sake and her mother's. She again repeated the question, respecting her happiness, and got nearly the same answer.—She took Maria's hand, "my dear child" said she, "I think you have no reason to doubt but I have a sincere regard for you, to suppose I should ask questions merely out of idle curiosity; I very much fear you are not happy; tell me truly, are you kindly treated? and be assured of this, if I cannot serve you, I will do you no injury"—Maria bust into tears, Lady Palmer,

pressed her to answer her— “I must not my dear Lady Palmer” said she, “expect to be so happy who have no parent as those who have—how can I suppose, but my aunt will be fonder of her own children than of me—I have nothing material to complain of, but I confess I every day feel more sensibly the loss of my dear mother—Oh! Lady Palmer! what a sad thing it is for a young girl to lose her mother.” Lady Palmer thought it unnecessary to enquire farther into the cause of Maria’s dejection, she could easily judge the rest. She began to consider how she could serve her. She consulted Miss Palmer, and they determined to take her wholly to live at the Grove. “She can attend,” said Lady Palmer, “whilst the Governess gives you lessons in French and Geography—and to music and dancing from the masters who come twice a week to instruct you. By that means she will save her brother Joseph, the expence of her board and schooling, which will be a sufficient inducement for him to consent to the change, and I shall have the satisfaction of seeing her happy.”

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER V.

LADY Palmer lost no time to put her scheme in execution. She sent for Mr. Harcourt, and acquainted him it was her wish to have Maria wholly at the Grove—but concealed from him the idea she had of her being uncomfortable; Joseph very readily consented to her proposals; indeed, he was rejoiced to have his sister taken, as he thought, off his hands. He had, after the death of his mother, taken a farmer's daughter to superintend his house, a girl of no education, and very few natural abilities; however, she had a very pretty face, and a great deal of artful insinuation, which prevailed with Joseph—he in a short time after Maria was settled at the Grove, to the great surprise of every one, married her. This gave Maria great uneasiness; she had flattered herself her brother's house would prove a comfortable asylum to her when she grew up; her hopes on that score were now entirely lost. Her brother Henry now remained her only hope; he had just finished the term of his apprenticeship with great repute, and was advised to settle at Bath. Before he set out, he came to the Grove to take leave of his sister, of whom he was always very fond. He expressed in the strongest terms his disapprobation of his brother's conduct; assured Maria, she should never want a protector whilst he lived; that when he was settled, if she liked it, she should come to him, and if he should marry, it should be such a woman as would love and be kind to his sister.

He then paid his respects to Lady Palmer; took an affectionate leave of Maria, and set out for Bath. Maria seriously lamented parting with her brother, he was the only relation she had, who for some time past had paid any attention to her; and now he had left the country, she very much feared he would soon forget her.

She applied herself with uncommon assiduity, to those improvements which she hoped might prove of advantage to her. She was soon able to speak French pretty well, and write it grammatically; her genius received no check; her companions were too liberal minded to entertain any of those little jealousies, which had caused her so much uneasiness at her aunt's; they all took a pleasure in instructing her; Charles was her writing master, a task he undertook with great pleasure, and Maria felt no less in studying under so agreeable a master: her happiness received a check when he was sent to school at Exeter; however, as he always passed the holidays at home, she consoled herself in his absence, with the pleasing expectation of seeing him soon again; and in the mean time, strove to improve in her studies, in hopes of surprising him with the progress she had made during his absence. Charles had the same motive for emulation; he had always his Maria before him—and his constant thoughts were how he should merit her approbation. Thus they imperceptably formed each other's mind; and their little hearts were united, before either of them were sensible they had one.

One thing surprised Maria exceedingly, which she endeavoured in vain to account for;—Charles and his sister met, and parted with such indifference—she observed his sister never shed tears at parting, or seemed to feel that tender emotion at his return, which she was so sensible of — “it is strange,” said she to herself, that his mother and sister should not love him better than I do!”—there was only one way she could reconcile

this. “Miss Palmer never knew what it was to be unhappy; she has always had a tender mother to comfort and cherish her;—therefore, she is unacquainted with those emotions which arise from kindness, shewn on such occasions. I should be very ungrateful indeed, if I did not love Charles—how kind he was to me when I lost my dear mama!” This seemed clearly to account to her why she felt more for him than his sister, and so far from conceiving there could be an impropriety, she thought it would be next to impiety not to adore him.

“By what thin spun threads, our affections are wove together.”

She often regretted he was not indeed her brother.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER VI.

SIR Thomas Palmer having finished his studies, left Oxford, and set out on the tour of Europe; Charles who was now fifteen, was taken from his school at Exeter, and sent to that University—when he returned at the vacation, he had acquired such a manly appearance, as struck Maria with uncommon emotion; when he, all animation, seized her hand—she blushed and an unusual trembling seized her, she found it impossible to appear easy—an involuntary sigh escaped her. Charles, as if he had caught the infection, turned pale, he fancied she received him with too much indifference—and endeavoured in vain to account for this change: he grew thoughtful, he shuddered at the idea of having offended her.—He examined himself with the most scrutinising attention, to find out if he had imperceptibly imbibed any of those follies so frequently learnt at the University. “Perhaps,” said he, “I have been so unfortunate, instead of attaining accomplishments which I flattered myself would render me more agreeable to her—only to have acquired some disagreeable manner which is disgusting; if so, how shall I regret ever going to Oxford. But how is Maria changed! if that is the case, how freely did she use to tell me of any action she thought wrong, and how readily did I attend to her.”

Thus with doubts and perplexities did Charles rack his imagination, to account for this change, which gave him so much uneasiness. Maria was far from being easy; her rest was disturbed; Charles occupied her thoughts more than ever, yet she could less support his presence—whenever she caught his eye, she would blush and turn away, as if she had committed a fault. A sigh from him, upbraided her for her cruelty.

This was all strange to Maria, she could not find out the cause of her extraordinary conduct; and more extraordinary sensations—the real cause never once entered her head. She had, indeed, heard of love, but had formed no idea how it affects—she saw Charles uneasy, and fancied it was at her strange behaviour. “My God!” said she, “what shall I do?—how shall I act?—ought I to make him unhappy, who has almost from my infancy shared in my sorrows, and greatly alleviated them.—She determined to appear as cheerful and easy as possible to him in company with his mother and sister; but she studiously avoided being alone with him.

Charles, who watched every look of Maria, felt greatly revived at this favourable change; he began to flatter himself, whatever was the cause of her reserve at their first meeting, he should soon recover her good opinion, and only wished for an opportunity of a conversation with her, to remove any little prejudice which he fancied she had formed to his disadvantage; but he found it no easy matter to get such an opportunity, as Maria, as carefully strove to avoid it. Fortunately, for him, the family received an invitation to dine where Maria was not asked; Charles pleaded indisposition for not accompanying them, and had the pleasure to find he should dine with Maria alone.

This was the very height of his wish, how did he long for the hour,—how tedious was the time until the bell summoned them to the dining parlour; Maria felt strange emotions at the thoughts of being alone with Charles, she trembled—she blushed—she

could not tell why—she wished to look better than usual, and spent more time in dressing that morning than common.

The signal Charles had so impatiently expected, at length arrived; they both blushed, and looked extremely confused. Whilst the servants continued in the room, they talked on indifferent things; but as soon as the cloth was taken away and the servants gone, they were both silent.

Maria, after setting a little time, made an effort to retire. Charles now started and caught her hand, “am I then become so very disagreeable,” said he, “that Maria cannot sit in the same room with me,—let me entreat you, at least to condescend so far as to acquaint me, wherein I have been so unfortunate as to offend you, unless you wish to see me unhappy.” He ceased to speak; he had still hold of her hand; she trembled—his looks were expressive of the tenderest anxiety; it is difficult to say, whether hope or fear was most predominant in his heart.

“Offend me, Mr. Palmer,” said Maria, “no, indeed, you have never offended me—I do not think it is in your nature to offend any one.” Charles felt a little revived at these words— “then let me conjure you to tell me why this change in your behaviour—why Mr. Palmer,—am I not the same Charles as ever?”—Maria sighed— “Oh, Maria,” continued he, if you knew what I have suffered from your cold reserve, you would not keep me in suspense; but freely tell me, what part of my conduct is disagreeable to you, that I might endeavour to become every thing you could wish.” “I think,” said Maria, “you are such as the most sanguine of your friends must approve. But— “but what, Maria—Oh, do not chill my very soul,—what is the approbation of my friends, no! it is your good opinion alone must make me happy: if I no longer have the pleasure to find my improvements, as I hoped they were, prove agreeable to Maria, I have no motive to continue them—to what purpose should I labour for accomplishments, if I have lost the end I flattered myself would recompense me”—Good God! what would you have me say?” said she, “if my poor approbation will afford you any pleasure, I will not withhold it—you are every thing I could wish to see in a beloved brother.” Charles kissed her hand and pressed it to his heart, with a rapture which surprized her. She was still more sensible of the impropriety of being familiar with him. “But,” continued she, a deep blush overspreading her face, “the same familiarities now, which in our childhood appeared innocent, would, in my opinion, be deemed improper; and you would not, I am sure, wish me to do any thing improper.” “Oh! my dear Maria,” exclaimed Charles, “If to love your Charles with the same warmth of affection he does you, is an impropriety, I am the most miserable of beings.”— “Love,” cried Maria, starting, and endeavouring to withdraw her hand;— “Yes, my sweet girl,” answered he, “I have long endeavoured to deceive myself, with an idea that it was only a strong friendship which had united, I hope our hearts, but I find friendship too cool a phrase to express what I feel; it must be, then love—the most pure—the most tender, and disinterested, that ever possessed the human breast, and only wants the assurance of a mutual return to make me the happiest of mortals— “What ails my Maria!” observing the colour forsake her cheek, and her hand turn cold, “I have said too much,”—Maria fainted—he caught her in his arms, and used every method to recover her, without calling the servant; in a little time she revived.

She begged he would permit her to retire to her room, as her spirits were very much flurried—he pressed her hand to his lips—“Will my dear Maria allow me to hope what I have ventured to disclose, is not disagreeable to her,”—she sighed,—“I wish,” said she, “we may not both be unhappy;” she promised to return to tea, and left the room. When Maria reached her room, a flood of tears came to her assistance, which greatly relieved her: “Then” said she, “this is love, which I have so long felt, and I am beloved by Charles, why then should I feel unhappy? he is amiable as lovely,” a thought of Lady Palmer came across her—she trembled—“Ah! what will be the consequence if Lady Palmer should discover our attachment, she had, no doubt, higher expectations for her son—I am a poor unprovided orphan—she is my only friend—no, I must not think of Charles, otherwise than a dear brother; it will surely be no crime to love him as such, he has always loved me better than either of my brothers; yes, I will always love him as such, and I will persuade him to think of me in the light of a sister.” These were Maria’s reflections when she was called to tea, Charles took her hand and led her to her chair: after tea, he, respectfully taking her hand, said, “Will my sweet Maria forgive me if I repeat the question which she left unanswered?” she blushed, “There is” said she, “but one way that I can dare venture to say I can love you”—Oh! cried he, “name it: whatever it is, I shall be satisfied, if I am only assured I am so happy as to be beloved by my Maria.”—“I will,” said she, “promise to love you as long as I live”—Charles fell on his knees, “Thank you my sweet angel” said he—“But” continued she “it must be as a brother”—“A brother!” exclaimed he—“no, my Maria, I cannot think of you in that light; my love is of a very different nature from that of a brother.” “Why,” said Maria, “will you deprive me the only pleasure I could ever promise myself—I never dare think of you, but in that light—I am a poor orphan, who have nothing to entitle me to you: even though you are so disinterested, your friends will despise me; and I should be very unhappy indeed, if I were to offend Lady Palmer, she has been so kind to me.” “Do not cry,” he, interrupting her, let such thoughts give you a moment’s concern—you will be an ornament to any family; mine are, I am persuaded, too sensible of your worth, to object to you—you are—you must be adored by all who know you: but should they, from interested motives, endeavour to prevent our happiness, I shall no longer consider myself as bound to abandon mine to such mercenary views. I shall go to India, there to make my own fortune, which I shall have an undoubted right to dispose of as I shall think proper—to make my Maria happy! Oh, my love, with what pleasure shall I bear every fatigue, with a prospect of such a reward? how, with your dear image ever before me, shall I double my honest endeavours to shorten the tedious absence. But nothing shall ever induce me to leave England until I am well assured of your affections. If you refuse me that—what is the riches of the East to me? Let those seek them, whose selfish minds can find pleasure in wealth alone; any little corner of the earth will suffice me; there is an end of my ambitious views, all my romantic hopes of happiness must for ever banish, if you deny me a place in your heart.”

He took her hand, and was going to press her to make him happy, by confessing a partiality, when the carriage stopped at the door with her mother and sister—“how unfortunate,” said he, “but, Oh!—say, am I to expect happiness, or eternal misery.”—“God send,” said Maria, “you may be as happy as I wish you.” Lady and Miss Palmer

now entered the room.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER VII.

MARIA'S mind was now occupied by a variety of ideas all new to her, that Charles loved her with the purest, and sincerest affection, she made no doubt—that she was no less attached to him was equally clear; her heart, in spite of all the difficulties her reason suggested, exulted in the prospect of her future happiness—the fear of offending Lady Palmer gradually diminished, and all other difficulties with it. All were trifling, when placed in competition with her Charles.—She regretted the lowness of her situation; and for the first time in her life, wished for riches.

Novice, as Charles was, in affairs of love, he began to entertain favourable presages from Maria's behaviour:—he now no longer supposed the reserve which had so much alarmed him, proceeded from dislike, but the effects of a growing passion, which she was herself insensible of. He determined not to shock her delicacy by pressing his passion too precipitately, but trust to some favourable juncture to discover what he so much wished to know;—he therefore treated Maria with the tenderest respect, but did not seek earnestly for an opportunity to renew the subject, which had been interrupted by the arrival of his mother.

Three days had elapsed since Charles had declared the state of his heart.—When Lady Palmer had some company, Maria was not disposed for any society—her heart was too full of what had lately passed between her and Charles. Seeing them all pretty much engaged, she slipped out and strolled into the garden, there to indulge her reflections.—She got to an arbour, and run over in her thoughts the hopes and fears which naturally arise in a susceptible mind, in such a perplexed situation.—She exclaimed aloud, “My God! why am I not more deserving, or he less amiable?”—Charles that instant entered the arbour, and throwing himself at her feet, “Who,” cried he, “that was less *amiable*, could dare ever to indulge a hope to possess so much perfection. Oh! my Maria, if I may presume to flatter myself, your last words alluded to me, I am the happiest of beings.”

“I could not,” said she, a little recovered from her confusion, “have supposed you capable of such an action, as to surprise me thus:”—“Do not,” said he, “my dearest life, regret having made me happy. It was chance alone which kindly directed my steps hither: I came merely to indulge my reflection, on the most perfect of the Creation.—I came, O! Heavens! just in time to hear, that already more that human voice declare a wish, she was still more deserving—could I then resist the sound; no, I must be indeed more or less than human, if I had:—never shall you have cause to accuse Providence for this happy removal of my fears—only assure me I was the subject of your thoughts, when I entered the arbour.” “To be sure,” said she, with great simplicity, “You could not surely believe I thought of any one else.”—“Bless you, my angel,” cried he, in extacy,—“Oh! I am the happiest of human beings; now fortune, I defy all thou canst do! My Maria has confessed herself mine, what more can I ask?”

“Ah,” said she, “Charles, if your happiness depended wholly on me, you would have nothing to fear—but I still tremble, when I think on Lady Palmer, and your other friends; you know I am no way intitled to such an alliance.” “Do not,” said he, “let me

entreat you not to torment yourself with these unnecessary fears; you know my resolution; should they be so cruel as to wish to separate us, I shall no longer consider them as friends; let us, my love, endeavour to keep our attachment a secret, until I return from India, when I hope I shall be in a situation to declare my love, and boldly assert my independence.”

Maria saw the propriety of this request; all reserve would have been now affectation; they exchanged mutual vows of everlasting love, and looked forward to the time when Charles would return with riches and honor—with an unbounded confidence in each other.

Providence, fortunately for youth, so ordaineth, that they shall only view the best side of things—or where would be that commendable spirit for emulation—that noble thirst for glory, were their generous minds damped by the many and probable chances there are against their success. The misfortunes of others, which every day present themselves to their view, no way affect their aspiring genius;—hope, kindly takes them by the hand, and leads them on with fair promises, that they shall escape such dangers.

Charles set out for Oxford, happy in the certainty of his Maria’s affections; and she was no less so, with the idea of being beloved by the most amiable of youths—she trusted to that Power, who knew the purity of their hearts, to protect them for each other. Four years of Maria’s life had passed at the Grove, in peace and happiness; the only thing which gave her uneasiness, was the indifference her brother Joseph had lately treated her with: his wife had never been received at the Grove, which did not a little hurt her pride; and add to the dislike she evidently shewed, whenever Maria went to pay her respects to her brother. Mrs. Harcourt never failed to wound her sensibility, by some ill-natured sarcasm—as “such a fine lady as you” or “I hope Lady Palmer intends to provide for you, since she has brought you up such a fine lady.”

Maria, with sorrow, saw her brother but too much inclined to join with his wife; her visits therefore became seldom and short. Her brother Henry wrote to her frequently; his letters were dictated with all the affection of a tender brother, to a much loved sister. In his last, which she received soon after Charles set out for Oxford, he acquainted her with his marriage to a young lady of a respectable family at Bath—that he was comfortably settled—and if she should ever want a home, begged she would consider his house as such; as he should never forget the promise he had made to his dear deceased mother.

Maria at the same time received one from his wife, expressing pretty much the same sentiments; she shewed them both to Lady Palmer, who, to her great astonishment, expressed much joy at the prospect she had of a comfortable home, at her brother Henry’s. “You will, my dear,” said her ladyship, “find Bath a most agreeable place; and under the protection of your brother, and your own prudent conduct, you cannot fail of being soon well settled.”

This speech from Lady Palmer, struck Maria motionless; she had long considered herself one of the family; every part of which was dear to her. Lady Palmer, observing her confusion, said, “you must, my dear, suppose both myself and Mary, will greatly regret the loss of so amiable a companion; but your leaving us, will, I hope, be to your own advantage; your brother is in a respectable line—he will introduce you into genteel company, and let me assure you, there is nothing in this world would give me more pleasure than to hear you were well married.”

The tears which had stood sometime in Maria’s eyes, now made their way down her cheeks.—Lady Palmer continued, “I will write to your brother, to prepare him to receive you, and likewise send for Joseph, to know what you are to depend on—I am sorry to say your expectations must not be too sanguine from him—if I may judge from his late behaviour, but I will try what I can make of him.”

Maria was too deeply affected with this discourse, to make any reply to it. All her agreeable prospects in a moment vanished. She saw herself going to be thrown a dependant on her brother.—Lady Palmer’s eagerness too for her departure, gave her great concern.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY Palmer lost no time to accomplish what she had proposed.—She sent for Mr. Harcourt, and acquainted him with her intentions respecting his sister—her brother Henry was ready to receive her; and as Maria was a beautiful accomplished girl, she thought it would be a pity not to introduce her into life; but it would be necessary for her to know, what she had to depend on.

Joseph, with great seeming humanity, lamented not having it in his power, without injuring his own family—which her Ladyship, or any other person could expect from him—to do much for his sister, circumstanced as he was. He was persuaded, had his mother lived, she would have been satisfied with his giving her a trade, whereby she would be enabled to maintain herself:—he was willing to advance fifty pounds, to apprentice her to a milliner or mantua-maker, or whatever she liked; and to allow her ten pounds a year for cloaths, during the term of her apprenticeship.

In vain did Lady Palmer argue the injustice of such a proposal, or represent how inadequate it was, to what Maria had a right to expect, either from the promise he had made his dying mother, or in proportion to his father's estate.

Joseph answered coolly, “he did not think it more disproportioned than her Ladyship's family were provided for; For instance,” said he, “Sir Thomas, enjoys an estate of two thousand a year; whilst the younger branches of the family have only one thousand pounds each to their portion.”

Lady Palmer was not prepared for this retort, she only answered, “That from the solemn promise he had made, in her presence, to his mother, she had conceived hopes he would have acted more generously: but if he could reconcile such actions with himself, it was more than she could have believed him capable of.”

“But suppose your brother Henry, or your sister should object to the scheme you propose,” said Lady Palmer, “what are you willing to advance to Henry, should he undertake to provide for Maria?” “He was willing,” he said, “to give her twenty pounds, by way of paying her expences to Bath, and at any time when she and Henry should think proper to draw on him, he would advance one hundred more, which was all he could do.”

Lady Palmer seeing it in vain to argue any farther with him, accepted this offer; he left the twenty pounds with her, and took his leave without expressing a wish to see his sister, either then, or before she left the country.

Maria heard the account of her brother's unnatural behaviour with concern; she lamented the loss of his affections more than his want of generosity—but her thoughts were employed on an object nearer her heart—her beloved Charles—that she must leave the country without seeing him, was a severe trial to her fortitude.—She visited every walk about the house and gardens, and shed tears at the remembrance of the happy hours

she and her dear Charles, had past in them.—On her entering the harbour where they had changed their innocent caresses, she fell on her knees—and vowed whatever should be her fate in the world, no power on earth should prevail with her to forget him—and then, after recommending herself to that Power, who was alone able to give her fortitude to support her afflictions, she became more composed.

She regretted leaving the rest of the family; she remembered, with gratitude, the tenderness, protection, and instruction, she had received; “Certainly” said she, “I had no right to expect Lady Palmer was always to maintain me: how thankful ought I to be, for the many advantages I have derived from this family. Wherever I am, I shall love Charles as much as here! and my heart tells me, no change of place or time will alter him.”

With these reflections Maria soon recovered her spirits: and she heard the day fixed for her departure, without any visible sign of uneasiness. Indeed she now appeared the most composed of the three; Miss Palmer was very much dejected, and Lady Palmer felt greatly at parting with the amiable Maria—but she had such reasons, as were, in her opinion, sufficiently urgent to make such a step necessary.

The parting between Maria and her friends was very affecting; they were all in tears. Lady Palmer gave her some very excellent advice, and some rules for her general conduct in the great world. She again hinted that the accounts of her being well settled for life, would afford her the highest satisfaction: this was the only part of her discourse, Maria paid no attention to.

Lady Palmer’s carriage and servants took her to Exeter, where she took the Bath Coach—Maria had just entered her seventeenth year, when she left the Grove—her stature was rather above the middle size, elegantly proportioned, with a regular set of fine features, beautiful auburn hair, and fine blue eyes, she had a peculiar sweetness in her countenance, a sort of tacit resignation, which at once interested and gained the respect of her beholders. She was, as Thompson describes, his Lavinia,

“Thoughtless of beauty, she was beauty’s self!”

Thus was Maria, when she entered that great stage—the world; one of nature’s master-pieces. She had heard of vice, but knew no more of it than the name.

The company in the coach consisted of an elderly respectable looking gentleman, who appeared about sixty years of age, a young officer, and a decent middle-aged woman. After the usual opening for a general conversation in a stage coach, such as a fine morning, the roads are pretty good, this is a good easy coach, and such like, which is a sort of introduction to each other: the old gentleman, addressing himself to Maria, “So Miss, you are going to Bath”—Yes, Sir, “it is a charming gay place, I can assure you—you will, I dare say, be quite delighted with it;” “of that,” said Maria, “I am not so certain—and I confess its being a gay place is in my opinion no recommendation. “It is very singular,” said the Captain, with a great oath, “for a young handsome girl, not to be fond of gaiety; but you will soon, I make no doubt, be of another opinion.”

Maria scarce heard this last speech, her attention being engrossed by a small hut at a little distance from the road, and the coach going slowly up a hill, she had time to examine it minutely.

It appeared so small as not to admit of more than one inhabitant; the door was almost concealed from view by the ivy which had made itself master of the outside, and seemed to be making its way to take possession of the inside also without opposition. She was still more surprised to see working in a little garden before the door, a tall figure of a man, who, notwithstanding the evident neglect of his person, did not appear to be above thirty.

“I do not wonder,” said the old gentleman, who observed Maria’s attention so engaged, “at your curiosity being raised by that strange character; you must know I have made some enquiries about him, but all that I can discover, is, that about twelve months ago he came to this country, a stranger to every one, and after searching about for some time, he at last found this hut, which he immediately purchased. He had, I was told, then very much the appearance of a gentleman, and a very elegant man they say he was, but he has never shaved himself, or dressed his hair, since he took possession of his hut. I was told he employs a boy belonging to one of his poor neighbours to get him provision once a week—and to carry his shirts, which are of the finest cloth, to be washed. One thing I must not forget to observe, it is thought he has changed his name, as his linen is marked W. S. and he calls himself John Moor.”

“He suffers no woman to come near him, and is very shy of any well-dressed man, but converses freely with the lower sort.—There are various conjectures concerning him; some think he is crossed in love.”—Maria sighed— “others are of opinion he is an American Spy”—and others— “that he has killed somebody in a duel, and has taken this method to evade justice.”

“I confess, I think it strange, for a fine young fellow to forsake the world and turn hermit, as one may say, just at a time he should be most attached to it;” “By G—,” said the Captain, “I will venture a good bet he is a highwayman, and belongs to some gang:” “No Sir,” said the Gentleman, “that cannot be, he would soon be found out, as the eyes, I may say, of the whole country are on him.” “I dare say,” said Maria, “he is crossed in love.”

“Perhaps,” said the Gentlewoman, “he is doing penance for some great sin; if so, he will, if he is a good Catholick, profit by the mortifications his director inflicts on him;” this caused a loud laugh from the Captain, and a smile from the rest. “He must be a poor stupid fellow,” said the Captain, “that wants a director at his time of life,” swearing a great oath, “I should like to see an old priest pretend to direct me, to mortify myself in that manner.” The Gentlewoman answered very gravely, “She thought he stood much in need of such a director,” he affected another loud laugh, although it was evident he did not much relish the reply.

Nothing worthy notice happened the remainder of their journey. Maria was met by her brother at the White Lion, who received her with great joy, and conducted her to his house.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. HARCOURT appeared no less happy to receive Maria, than her husband; she rather exceeded him in expressions of joy, congratulated herself on the acquisition of such an agreeable companion, and assured her, with great appearance of sincerity, that nothing on her part, should be wanting to make her situation comfortable.

Maria, whose heart was ever sensible of the smallest kindness bestowed on her, felt most gratefully for those attentions, the more so perhaps, as she had been so differently treated at her brother Joseph's. Indeed Mrs. Henry Harcourt, was a genteel, well-bred woman, and might be called rather handsome, though not a striking beauty.

Henry exclaimed with great indignation against his brother's unnatural behaviour— "But my dear sister," said he, "never you be uneasy, you will live to see him, or I am very much mistaken, in a state to deserve your pity. Such actions must sometime or other meet their punishment." Maria answered, "she never wished to see it, she only regretted his behaviour had put it out of her power to respect him as she ought."—They resolved to draw immediately for the hundred pounds which he had promised to Lady Palmer.

Maria then consulted her brother, what plan he would advise her to adopt for her support, adding, she had a great aversion to those her brother Joseph had proposed. Both Henry and his wife strongly objected to her forming any other, than that of continuing with them until she settled for life; as with such a person and accomplishments as she possessed, she could not fail of soon having advantageous proposals.

Maria entreated her brother not to form any such expectations, as she was much too young, and inexperienced to think of such a charge, as she considered the duty of a wife and mother required; that if ever she entered into that state, it would be many years hence. Her brother smiled and said, "she would soon be of a very different opinion."

The next day Mr. Harcourt resumed the conversation with his sister, "I have been thinking," said he, "when Joseph sends your hundred pounds, I will, if you please, take the charge of it for you; and whilst it remains in my hands, allow you twenty pounds a year, which will find you in clothes."

Maria thanked him with unfeigned tears for his generous offer, but assured him at the same time, she should not feel happy until she was in some way to provide for herself, without being totally depending on him. "You will, my dear brother," said she, "no doubt soon have a family of your own, who will have an undoubted right to all your earnings; let me not deprive them, and by that means render myself disagreeable, and with reason, to my sister. I have studied, I hope with some success, those accomplishments, which will, I flatter myself, prove useful, and enable me to support myself in a genteel line. I am pretty well acquainted with the principles of Music, French, and Geography; and, if I could get recommended to some genteel family, as Governess, I

flatter myself, by assiduity and attention, I should establish myself—I should then have the happiness to find, I should be no incumbrance to my brother.”

Henry begged she would make herself easy, at least for the present, adding, if she continued in that mind, something might perhaps fall in his way, which would probably suit her. In the mean time he endeavoured to render every thing as agreeable to her as he possibly could.

Mr. Harcourt lived in rather a comfortable, than splendid style; his friends were mostly professional: He had often little musical parties, where Maria was the principal performer. Dr. Curtis, a brother of Mrs. Harcourt, who was just established in great repute at Bath, played the bass, and Mr. Harcourt the violin.

The Doctor was a very handsome, agreeable man, about thirty years of age, much esteemed by every one for his affable and engaging manners: he soon saw in Maria, all he had figured to himself, as requisite to make the marriage state happy.—He discovered that her beauty, which at first surprised him, was by no means her principal recommendation:—that sweetness in her countenance, which he could perceive, proceeded from the innocence of her heart, charmed him; his visits to his sister, which used to be seldom, now became frequent.

This was observed by all but Maria; she could admire the Doctor’s good qualities, and even allow him to have a fine person, beyond which, her heart was too sincerely devoted to her beloved Charles, to bestow a thought.

Mr. Harcourt saw the Doctor’s growing attachment for his sister, with infinite pleasure, and formed to himself the most agreeable presages. He considered that the Doctor’s person and character was such as no woman could object to, and in his profession, there were very few to equal him. How fortunate did he think his sister in making such a conquest.

The Doctor now became a daily visitor, and appeared particular in his attention to Maria; which she, from the innocence of her heart, attributed to the respect she conceived he had for her brother. She therefore received his attentions with an unaffected openness, which he mistook, and considered as assenting to his addresses. He had, as he thought, no obstacle to surmount, no rival to supplant; he should, he vainly imagined, be the first that ever caused her tender bosom to feel the sensation of love; no wonder then he suffered love to take full possession of his heart.

CHAPTER X.

DOCTOR CURTIS communicated to Mr. Harcourt the state of his heart, and begged him, as a friend, to be sincere with him respecting that of his sister. Mr. Harcourt assured him with truth, he had every reason to believe Maria's affections were disengaged, as he was very certain she had no correspondence, or received any visitors but what he knew of. It was concerted between them, that Mr. Harcourt should endeavour to find out how he stood in her opinion, before he should openly declare himself to her.

When Mr. Harcourt saw Maria alone, he began a panegyric on the Doctor, which she artlessly joined in; she allowed him to be all her brother described, and ended with saying, she thought there were very few men so deserving.

"How happy," my dear Maria, said Mr. Harcourt, "you make me, to hear you are so sensible of his merit. He is the only man in the world, I should wish to see you united to; and I have the pleasure to tell you, he adores you: yes, Maria, you will be one of the happiest of women." She blushed, and appeared greatly confused.

"Do not be ashamed to acknowledge an affection for a worthy man. Come," said he, taking her hand, "I hope my sister will prove superior to those little arts of the weaker part of her sex, who take a pleasure in tormenting a man, for no other reason, than because they know he loves them; let me intreat you generously to confess your partiality for the Doctor, and make him happy."

"My dear brother," said she, "let me intreat you, not to press me to what I must refuse. I acknowledge all you can say in behalf of Doctor Curtis, but at the same time, declare, it is not in my power, to make any other return to his passion, than my sincere esteem, and I am extremely sorry, he should ever have felt more for me."

This answer, which was delivered with great earnestness, and appearance of sincerity, greatly surprised and confounded Mr. Harcourt. "Is it possible," said he, "you can seriously determine to refuse Doctor Curtis? Let me beg of you, to consider what you do—allow me, let me intreat you, to give him hopes, that your esteem may in time ripen into love; he is a man who deserves your affections; he will, I know, make you happy; or I would not, believe me, my dear sister—I would not, for the world, wish you to encourage him, come," continued he, "I know you will not refuse me."

Maria burst into tears—"let me beseech you my dearest brother," said she, "If you have any love for me—not to press me to what I cannot, grant. I never can love Doctor Curtis; therefore it would be treating him very ill to give him any such hopes. There is nothing in this world I could refuse you my only protector—my ever dear brother, but the disposal of my affections—that is not in my power to grant."

"Not in your power," said Mr. Harcourt, "are they then already disposed of?" Maria's tears flowed a fresh—"I mean," said she, endeavouring to evade the question, "it

is not in our power to command our affections: they must, so far as I am able to judge, be voluntary: and I am sensible, I never can command mine for him. Indeed I have determined not to marry any one, for some years to come."

"Suffer me, my dear Maria," said Mr. Harcourt, "to represent to you, the impropriety of keeping such a resolution; you have, I may say, no protector in this world but myself, and whilst I live, you shall never want one; but the uncertainty of human events are such, as I think, ought not to be disregarded; you have but too much reason to fear them. The melancholy accident of our much loved father, has thrown you unprovided for in the world; and should any thing happen to me, you will then be exposed to such dangers, as I tremble to think of. You are such, as the designing part of mankind pursue as lawful prey. Oh!" continued he, "if you have any value for the peace of mind of a brother who adores you, give him the satisfaction of bestowing you on a worthy man, who will protect your innocence, and make you happy."

"Oh! my brother," cried Maria, throwing herself at his feet, and bathing his hand with her tears— "Spare me, let me entreat you, to spare me the painful task of refusing you any thing you can ask; if you knew how it wrings my heart, you would not, I am convinced, you would not, urge me, to what I must still deny you."

Mr. Harcourt was deeply penetrated with the distress he saw his sister in—he caught her in his arms, and raised her to her feet;— "My dear Maria," said he, with great tenderness, "I would not, for the world, be the cause of a moment's uneasiness to you; but I thought it necessary to represent the dangerous situation you may be in; I will not distress you farther at present, you know my wish; think deliberately on it, and you will see I have nothing more at heart than your interest and happiness." He then embraced her with great affection; "Go," said he, "to your room, and compose yourself."

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Maria reached her room, she threw herself into a chair, and with her hands clasped, exclaimed, "Oh my Charles! could you but see my heart now, you would be convinced how sincerely it is devoted to you. This is indeed a severe trial of my affection; but no earthly power shall prevail, to eradicate thee from my heart. Even all the dangers my kind brother has described, I would brave with the prospect of being at last recompensed with one year—one month of happiness with thee. That would repay me for all my unhappiness."

Her heart exulted in the thought, it revived her dejected spirits; she dreaded, indeed, a second meeting with her brother. His kind and tender concern for her happiness, had penetrated her heart: she feared he would consider her refusal of the Doctor, if she assigned no reason, to proceed from obstinacy; she could not support that idea—"No," said she, "my brother deserves I should act openly with him, as he is gentle and kind hearted—he knows my Charles too, and therefore cannot be surprised at my partiality."

Dr. Curtis met Mr. Harcourt with a countenance full of hope, which was in a moment succeeded by fear. On observing strong marks of disappointment on Mr. Harcourt, "Oh, Harcourt," said he, "I see I have flattered myself too far—but tell me, has your sweet sister really rejected me? if she has, I am an unhappy man indeed!"

Mr. Harcourt then related as faithfully as his memory would permit, the whole of the conversation which had passed between him and Maria, and ended with saying, he still hoped, she would soon see the propriety of making them all happy, by consenting without reluctance to his generous proposals. "Reluctance," repeated the Doctor, "my dear Harcourt, not for the world would I receive your sister's hand, if I was not well assured she gave it willingly. My affections are of such a nature, as not to be satisfied with her barely consenting to be mine. I must be well convinced of her affections. If I have not the good fortune to be such, as she can love, I may be unhappy—I confess I shall be miserable, but I shall not make her so. No, Harcourt, so far from forcing your sister's inclination, you must promise me not even to use your influence to bias them in my favour. Maria says true, affections must be voluntary."

Mr. Harcourt answered, "he hoped there would be no occasion, as his sister was so sensible of his merit; he doubted not, but in a little time, her heart would be inclined to love, which at present she seemed frightened at the very name of." They agreed to trust to time, and the Doctor's assiduity for the accomplishment of what they all so much wished.

Maria joined them at tea. She summoned all her fortitude to appear tranquil; the very idea of even being in company with a man, who she knew wished to make an impression on that heart, which was so sincerely devoted to another, was, in her opinion, a deviation from the sincerity which she had determined to observe. She therefore could no longer feel cheerful and pleased with the Doctor's conversation, which used to be so agreeable to her.

Her heart revolted at the attentions she received from him: they appeared injurious to her love. Her situation became very uncomfortable: his connections in the family entitled him to her politeness, at least, and she could not, without doing violence to her inclinations, appear even easy, in his company. She determined, once more, to solicit her brother to look for a situation for her; being certain, she could no where be more uncomfortable than at present.

When Maria made this request, Mr. Harcourt answered, "He was extremely concerned, after the conversation which had passed between them, she should still persist in such a resolution. I should, Maria," said he, "be glad to hear what your objections to the Doctor are. He is in my opinion, such as no woman, of the nicest delicacy can object to; unless her affections were previously engaged, which is not the case with you; as I flatter myself, you would have favoured me with your confidence." Maria blushed. "I should hope," continued he, "if you had disposed of your heart, it would have been, to an object so deserving, you would have had no occasion to be ashamed to acknowledge it,—but I will not press to know any thing you wish to conceal from me."—She burst into tears—"My dear brother," said she, "there is nothing I wish to conceal from you—you are so kind, so good, and affectionate, it distresses me beyond measure—I cannot comply with your proposals: but you shall know the real state of my heart, and then judge yourself, how I could have acted otherwise than I have done by Doctor Curtis."

She then related, in the simplest manner, all that had passed between her and Charles,—she dwelt on the little attentions he paid her when a child—painted in the strongest colours, the tender sympathy he shewed on the death of her mother, and ended with,—she was sure, Providence must have designed them for each other, as their hearts were united by such imperceptible degrees,—their affections had indeed grown with their years; and she was sure no power on earth could prevent their ending but with their lives. Mr. Harcourt heard this with great concern—He saw the many and probable chances there were against his sister's happiness; but he saw at the same time, her heart was too deeply engaged to admit him to make any attempt to oppose her inclinations,—he knew any such attempt would only render him disagreeable to his sister, without answering any other purpose: he likewise knew Charles Palmer to be such as she described him, and therefore was not surprized at their mutual attachment—indeed they seemed formed for each other,—what gave him the greatest concern, and which he did not forget to represent to his sister, was: Charles he considered a man of family, living in gay dissipation, as he undoubtedly would, in the East Indies, might forget an engagement made at so early a period: but this had no weight with Maria; she judged of his heart by her own, and therefore had no fears. She felt greatly relieved in having made this discovery to her brother; again repeated her wish of changing her situation, which he now made no very strong objection to.

"There is a lady," said he, "who I do business for, who has spoken to me about you:—she is a very agreeable woman, and wants a companion. If you are determined to pursue such a plan, I think you cannot be more comfortable than with her." Maria thanked him, and expressed a desire to be introduced to the lady, which her brother

promised to do the next day. Mr. Harcourt then communicated to Dr. Curtis the insurmountable obstacle to his hopes, and advised him to endeavour to forget his sister. He answered, "that was more than he feared he should for some time, if ever, be master of himself sufficiently to do. The impression was too deep to be soon effaced.—Ah! said he, with a deep sigh, what a happy man is Charles Palmer."

Maria was introduced by her brother to Miss Scot, the lady he had mentioned.—She was struck with the elegance of her person, which was so majestic and commanding, it was impossible to behold her, without being impressed with awe, which the benignity of her countenance soon removed, or joined to a more pleasing sensation, that of respect and love. Maria found these emotions succeed each other so rapidly, that the former was soon lost and she only remained sensible of the latter. Miss Scot appeared delighted with her, and soon settled on the terms for her immediate removal to her house.

Maria had not been long with Miss Scot, before that lady conceived a sincere friendship for her, and testified it by the attention she paid her in all companies wherever they appeared together; unlike the generality of ladies who keep companions, merely to exercise their ill-humour on; she found more pleasure in seeing her happy and chearful; she treated her more as a favourite sister than a dependant.

Maria was so sensible of her happiness she began to fear it would not be permanent—she had experienced a little of the fickleness of fortune, as her being obliged to leave the Grove, at a time, when she found herself most happy; and again the disagreeable adventure at her brother's which had rendered his house unpleasant to her—these made her fear to depend too much on its continuance.

She was now introduced into a higher sphere of life: Miss Scot was visited by most of the nobility who frequented Bath. The first time Maria appeared at the play with her, was at the representation of the School for Scandal: the house was very much crowded, it was with difficulty they got in—In passing through the lobby a gentleman addressed himself to Miss Scot, and begged she would permit him to conduct her to her seat, she readily accepted his assistance, and they soon got to their box. "I fancy, Sir Richard," said Miss Scot, "we can make room for you, here seems to be a seat unoccupied"—he took possession of it, and made one of their party.—The play now beginning, engrossed their attention. Maria was greatly surprized to see it was not sufficient for the whole of the audience—two ladies in the stage box seemed to vie with the performers, and with each other, who should draw the attention of the house most: one of these ladies talked incessantly, and the other seemed to listen, but it was evident with no other motive than to exercise certain airs, which she fancied set off her person to advantage.

"I see," said Miss Scot to the gentleman, "Mrs. Prattle and Miss Andrews are still inseparable companions, which I am rather surprized at, as they are such very different characters." "That," said he "is the very reason of their intimacy; If they were of similar dispositions, they would never be seen together, for Mrs. Prattle is satisfied to let Miss Andrews pass for a very fine woman if she will not attempt to be clever, and Miss

Andrews is very happy to compromise the matter, as she thinks her person quite sufficient without rivaling her friend." Another act of the play now beginning put an end to their remarks. Maria was very much entertained with the performance; she was particularly struck with the two lovers, Charles and Maria, "how strange," thought she—"but how much happier am I than she, my Charles has all the good qualities of her lover, without his vices."

After the performance, the gentleman handed them to their chairs, and with a respectful bow, wished them a good night.— "Well, my dear," said Miss Scot, when they got home, "how do you like Sir Richard Harlow?—but you scarce looked at him—tell me sincerely, was not that a little artifice in you, to give him an opportunity of looking more at you? I can assure you, if it was, it had the desired effect, for his eyes were never off you, and he has begged my permission to call in the morning, to be introduced to you,—what do you think of that—if you should have made a conquest of the young Baronet,—what a delightful thing that would be."

Maria answered, She had not the vanity to suppose any such a thing, but if it was the case, so far from being pleased at such an event, it would give her great uneasiness, as she did not wish to attract the notice of any one.

"Come, come," said Miss Scot, "I think that is going a little too far; I have heard, indeed, you refused Doctor Curtis, which surprized me exceedingly, but should Sir Richard Harlow offer, I can scarce believe you would be quite so mad as to serve him the same—He has three thousand a year, my dear, in his own possession—He was the only son of the late Sir Richard Harlow of Nottinghamshire, who has been dead about two years—he is lately returned from his travels and taken possession of his estates—he has, as you must have observed, a fine person, and his morals are as good, I fancy, as most of his neighbours—I have not heard he is given to any particular vice—The ladies are all mad after him, I can assure you: so you see the conquest, if you have really made it, is not an inconsiderable one." Maria answered, she had no ambition to dispute the conquest with those ladies, who from their high rank were better entitled to it; for her part, she did not aspire so high. "But," said Miss Scot, "if Fortune should, without looking for, throw such favors in your way, I see no reason why you should refuse to accept her bounty." "It will be time enough for me to refuse when I have the offer," said Maria, "so if you please, we will change the subject. I am impatient to know who those two ladies in the stage-box were, who attracted the eyes, and I may say ears of the whole house."

"That was Mrs. Prattle and Miss Andrews," said Miss Scot, "two ladies very much in fashion at present; one for her great abilities, and the other for her beauty." "Tell me," said Maria, "if her abilities are really so great, as I confess I rather doubt it from the loudness of her vociferation in public."—"That you shall have an opportunity of judging of yourself," said Miss Scot, "they will be here on Tuesday at my rout, I will introduce you to them; I will not give you my opinion of them, until I have heard your's, as your observations are generally drawn from Nature, I will have them genuine."

“But I do not think it fair,” said Maria, “to give an opinion of a person at first sight, it requires time and intimacy to know a character thoroughly.” “I agree with you,” said Miss Scot, “in most cases, but not the present; you will know these ladies as well in one hour, as in years.”

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER XII.

THE next morning, before the ladies had well finished their breakfast, a loud knocking at the door announced Sir Richard Harlow. Miss Scot immediately introduced him to Maria. He enquired anxiously if they had caught no cold the preceding evening, and thanked his good fortune for being so lucky as to join them. The conversation then turned on the new play and the performers: "You seemed to pay particular attention to the piece, Miss Harcourt," said he, "will you favor me with your opinion of it, or which part you prefer." Maria answered, "so far as she was able to judge, it was altogether excellent, but she could not but acknowledge, she was most pleased with the character of Maria, as the other ladies of the piece were entirely without sentiment." Sir Richard applauded the justness and delicacy of her taste.

He then enquired if the ladies should be at the ball that night. Miss Scot answered, "she intended it,"—he looked at Maria, who said she should not go; he looked disappointed. "I think," said Miss Scot, "You had better go, Miss Harcourt," she replied, it was not in her power, as she was engaged at her brother's. He talked on different subjects as long as he could, without being particular, and then took his leave, saying, "He should have the pleasure of seeing them on Tuesday, as he had the honour of a card."

"Why," said Miss Scot, "you foolish girl, did you not say you would be at the ball, I am certain he came on purpose to engage you to dance with him."

"You know, Madam," said Maria, "I wish to go as little into public as possible, particularly to balls. I think, in my dependent state, it would be by no means prudent for me to assume the fine lady, and be dancing with Sir Richard Harlow." "I fancy," said Miss Scot, "you will not long be in a state of dependance." Maria took no notice of this speech. In the evening, Miss Scot went to the ball, attended by her uncle, Mr. Worthy, who was at that time at Bath, and Maria to visit her brother. She found him still kind and affectionate, but she saw, with concern, Mrs. Harcourt, although she behaved with politeness, did not receive her with the same cordiality as she hoped and expected. Indeed, Mrs. Harcourt considered Maria's refusal of her brother as a sort of an affront to her family: she was one of those women who know very little of what is meant by fine feelings; she possessed none of them herself, and therefore could form no idea of their influence—Maria thought it most prudent not to notice this change, as she saw Mrs. Harcourt endeavour to conceal it from her husband—she was extremely sorry to hear from her brother, that Doctor Curtis was in a very dejected state. She took her leave of them about eleven o'clock, and got home just before Miss Scot returned from the rooms. "Well, Maria," said she, as soon as she came in, "it is just as I wished, as sure as you are alive, you have fairly conquered the Baronet—He was at the ball, but quite out of spirits; he took an opportunity of joining me, and talked of nothing but you; enquired particularly about you, and when I related your little history, he really sighed, and said you was a sweet girl, and would be an ornament to any family:—so I will, by way of accustoming you to your new honors, ask your ladyship if you have supped, or if you will do me the honor of taking a bit with me.—You do not seem to rejoice at your good fortune; well

really this is too much, I may venture to say if I had communicated the same to any single lady in the rooms, she would have thanked me, almost on her knees, and have had very little sleep to night for thinking on her good fortune. Come Maria, I shall begin to suspect you of insincerity, if you do not freely confess you are pleased with this piece of intelligence." "I should," said Maria, "be guilty of it indeed, if I said I was. But I am willing to believe, Sir Richard may have talked in the manner you describe, with no other motive, than merely to satisfy his curiosity; therefore, it would be absurd to make any serious reflections on it."

"Well," said Miss Scot, "you are right not to be too sanguine—but if I have any judgement in those matters, and I think I have a little, I may venture to prepare to accompany your ladyship to Nottinghamshire." Maria felt greatly relieved by the entrance of a servant, with Miss Scot's supper.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER XIII.

NOTHING worthy notice past until Tuesday, when they were all busy preparing for the rout. Mrs. Prattle and Miss Andrews were among the first of the company. Miss Scot introduced them to Maria. "I had the pleasure," said Miss Andrews, addressing herself to Maria, "of seeing you at the play the other night: Was not you quite delighted? It is a most charming thing, it is not?"—Before Maria could make any reply, she went on,— "Did Sir Richard Harlow go in your party?" "No," answered Maria, "he joined Miss Scot by chance." "You were very fortunate," said she, "Is not he a charming man? Will he be here to night?" "Yes."— "La, that is delightful." "You look beautiful, Miss Harcourt, what a fright I am," looking in the glass, "I wish I had not put on this frightful dress, how yellow it makes me look, don't you think it does?"

Maria saw she was very well satisfied with herself, and only wanted to have the pleasure of hearing herself admired:—she answered coolly, she did not perceive it, but as she had only the honor of knowing her then for the first time, she could be no judge. "Oh," said she, "I look horrid." She turned from Maria to some ladies, who just then entered the room, and repeated the same lamentable story of her frightful dress and yellow looks; but they soon put her in conceit with herself, by assuring her she never looked to more advantage, and that her dress was beautiful—another view of herself in the glass, put her in perfect good humour.

The rooms being pretty full, Miss Scot began to settle the card tables. "You will have the goodness, Miss Harcourt," said she, "to entertain those ladies who are not engaged at cards, with a tune on the harpsichord." Maria, who had never exhibited before such a large party felt a little confused; however, she sat down, and after playing two or three airs, she went on with great ease. Just as she had finished a very pathetic air, which she had been singing, a deep sigh from behind her chair caused her to look round—she was greatly confused on seeing Sir Richard Harlow.

"I could not," said he, "be so cruel to myself and the rest of the company, as to interrupt you, Miss Harcourt, to pay my respects to you before." He then politely, and with great tenderness, enquired after her health. "You are very cruel, or very charitable, I know not which, to seclude yourself from the public; I have in vain looked for you every where, but find you are unlike the generality of your sex, only to be found at home." "You must not, Sir Richard," said Miss Andrews, before Maria could make any reply, "deprive us the pleasure of hearing Miss Harcourt sing—Come, Miss Harcourt, do favour us with another song." Maria obeyed.

Sir Richard kept close to her, much to the mortification of Miss Andrews, who used every method, without effect, to get him to take notice of her. Miss Scot addressed him, and asked if he would wish to play a rubber. "If you can do without me," said he, "I would wish to be excused, as I confess I am much more agreeably entertained."—She excused him, and he continued his station.

After Maria had played her favourite airs over, she offered her seat to a lady who stood by, and seemed to be a judge of music. She accepted it, and performed with great taste and judgement.

“I wonder,” said Miss Andrews, in a loud whisper— “Where Miss Harcourt buys her rouge?”— “At Jolly’s, Ma’am,” said Maria. “By the Lord,” exclaimed an Irish gentleman, who heard both the whisper and reply, “that same Jolly sells the only rouge in the world, that ever had, or ever will have, the power of animation; for I’ll swear, I have seen it turn high and low coloured about a dozen times to night:

“—————Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheek, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say, her very body thought.”

“Faith, I should like to purchase a few boxes, to make a present of to some ladies of my acquaintance, who go to the wrong shop.”

By this time the eyes of the whole room were on Maria and the Gentleman—Her face was perfect scarlet;— “there is rouge for you, ladies,” said he, “long life to that said Jolly, who has brought it to such perfection.” “No,” said Sir Richard Harlow, “Miss Harcourt wants no assistance from art, Nature has been more than sufficiently bountiful to her.”

Miss Andrews left her seat, and walked to the next room. “I vow and protest,” said Mrs. Prattle, as she came from the other room, “it requires the patience of Penelope, to play such cards as I have held to night.” “Have you had a bad run, Madam,” said Sir Richard, “Run, Sir Richard—If Socrates had been a card-player, and held such cards, he would never have kept his temper.” “I think,” said the Irish Gentleman, “begging your pardon, Madam, that after he shewed himself proof against a scolding woman, he might defy the Devil, and all the cards in the universe.”

“I wish,” said Mrs. Prattle, “he had tried; I am very much inclined to believe, they would have overset all his philosophy. I think I have as much command of my temper, as most people, and I confess I am fairly ruffled.” “Entreat one of those ladies,” said he, “to play a soft air, and if that will not set you to rights, you must be very much ruffled indeed.” “O, no,” said she, “I am too much out of tune, to relish harmony; I am afraid it would not have the same effect as the Pitch-pipe Julius Caesar made his slave use, when he spoke too high, to turn his voice to a proper key.” “I never understood,” said Mr. Worthy, “Julius Caesar ever stood in need of such a pipe.” “O, yes, Sir, he did.” The Gentlemen looked at each other with a sort of smile, at her ignorance, and the ladies with surprise, at her great learning. She run on at a great rate, brought in the ancients, of whom she only knew the names, and ascribed indiscriminately, the actions of one to the other.— In talking of eloquence, she was very unfortunate. “Cicero,” said she, “acquired his by dint of perseverance, he had originally an impediment in his speech, which obliged him to labour hard to get the better of, he used to speak with pebbles in his mouth.” “I fancy, Madam,” said Maria, “you mean Demosthenes, the Grecian; he was obliged to use that

method, but I believe Cicero had never any occasion." "O! no, Miss," said she, "you'll find I am right, it was Cicero." "Certainly no, Madam," said Mr. Worthy, "it was Demosthenes, Cicero had never any occasion." "Bless me," said she, "How came I to be mistaken?" The ladies looked surprised, that Mrs. Prattle should be mistaken, and that Maria should be able to set her right. Maria felt a little confused; in a moment it occurred to her, she had said too much—she dreaded the imputation of affecting to be learned, and as there were so many gentlemen present, she considered it would have looked better, if some of them had set Mrs. Prattle right: she determined in future to be more cautious.

This did not check Mrs. Prattle, she went on, spoke of all the new Publications and with great confidence pointed out their faults and perfections.

"By St. Patrick, Madam," said the Irish Gentleman, "I begin to be as much out of tune as you were, when you left the card tables; and if I cannot prevail on this lady," to Maria, "to relieve me with the melody of her sweet voice, I am afraid I shall get so low, it will not be in the power of my slaves pitch-pipe to raise me to a proper key." Maria then went to the harpsichord, and played until most of the company went away.

Sir Richard Harlow staid till the last, and then enquired if the ladies would be at the next dress ball. Miss Scot resolved to do Maria a little violence; thinking it would be to her advantage, answered, "Yes. Miss Harcourt," said she, "seldom goes, but she has been so obliging as to promise to accompany me on Friday." Maria looked extremely confused. "May I," said Sir Richard, "hope for the honour of your hand Miss Harcourt."—"You know, my dear," said Miss Scot, "you are not engaged." She said she did not intend to dance. "In that," said Sir Richard, "you shall do as you please, only allow me the honour of attending you." She gave a silent assent, and he wished them a good night. "I did not think," said Maria, "you could have been guilty of such a piece of cruelty."—"Cruelty," replied Miss Scot, "I know the time when I should have been very much obliged to any friend, who would have had the good-nature to have practised the same sort of cruelty on me. I see I must force you to be happy—they then parted for the night."

CHAPTER XIV.

“WELL,” said Miss Scot, the next morning at breakfast, “now tell me what is your opinion of the two ladies?”— “You expect a sincere one, I suppose?”— “certainly”— “why, then, sincerely, I would prefer real ignorance to the one, and ugliness to the other—Miss Andrews is undoubtedly, a very beautiful woman, she has one of the finest faces I ever saw; but she is, in my opinion, one of those beauties which excite admiration more than love: her face, though perfect, has nothing interesting in it—she seems entirely without sensibility, but what renders her disagreeable is, although she is quite certain, she is beautiful, she is not satisfied if she is not constantly put in mind of it—she courts admiration from both men and women.”— “So much for Miss Andrews,” said Miss Scot, smiling, “now for Mrs. Prattle, if you please.” “She has just learning enough to make her ridiculous—she has taken enough of the waters to intoxicate her poor weak head, but has unluckily neglected to drink again to sober herself—she talks disgustingly of the ancients, and her opinion of the moderns, I am convinced, she takes from the Monthly Review, and gives it as her own; what surprizes me is, how she can possibly pass for sensible.”

“I will tell you,” said Miss Scot, “how it is: most of the ladies of Mrs. Prattle’s acquaintance never read any thing, they are easily imposed on, they take all she says for granted, and by that means save themselves the trouble of study,—the opinions which Mrs. Prattle takes, as you observe, from the Monthly Review, they take from her, and by that means, most of her acquaintance become very intelligent. Those who think her clever, always tell her so, and those who have understanding enough to see her as she really is, are content to laugh at her, without taking the trouble of setting her right.—She married early in life, and had the misfortune to match with a professed wit; you may conclude they did not long agree—they were continually at variance which was most entitled to pre-eminence; they had not prudence enough to reserve their disputes for their private hours, but were constantly the butt of each other in all companies wherever they appeared together; this soon brought on a mutual aversion, and there remained but one thing they could agree in, which was—a separation—that soon took place.—Mr. Prattle soon found all women were not so insensible to his great abilities as his wife—Mrs. M——, who he took off the stage, consoles him for his disappointment of conjugal happiness; and Mrs. Prattle consoles herself with lamenting his want of taste and judgement.”

Maria’s mind was not easy; the thoughts of having consented to Sir Richard Harlow’s accompanying her to the ball, although she was in some measure forced to give it, shocked her. She regretted her want of resolution to contradict Miss Scot; yet she still hoped he meant nothing, and if that was the case, how absurd it would appear in her to shun him. “No,” said she to herself, “it would be ridiculous for me to appear distant and reserved with a man, who certainly can have no design to trouble me with his addresses. His wishing to dance with me, implies nothing more than a wish to dance, he must dance with some-body.” These reasonings gave her some ease; she determined to give Sir Richard no reason to suppose, from her behaviour, that she hoped or feared any thing

from him.

“But you intend to dance to night,” said Miss Scot, “don’t you Maria.” “I should wish not,” said she; “but I am afraid my declining may deprive Sir Richard the pleasure of dancing, and I should be very sorry to do that, as he has had the politeness of choosing me for a partner.” “Now that is talking like a rational girl,” said Miss Scot, “I begin to have some hopes of you.—I advise you seriously not to neglect to avail yourself of this opportunity, which I think offers of making your fortune; Sir Richard is a man of some consequence, therefore is little accustomed to refusals. He would feel his pride hurt, from any dislike to his person, knowing his fortune to be such, as to tempt almost any woman.” “I assure you, my dear,” continued she, “It is from friendship alone, I am induced to give my advice.”

Maria felt greatly alarmed when she found Miss Scot seriously thought Sir Richard had some intentions: “My dear Madam,” said she, “tell me sincerely, do you think he has any other motive for asking me to dance with him than mere politeness?” “Why—yes,” “and do you think, my accepting, any ways implies an encouragement to him to make proposals; for I confess, I am rather unacquainted with the etiquette of those matters?” “Why, no,” said Miss Scot, “it does not absolutely imply anything, unless, indeed, he had been more particular—but why do you ask?” “because” said Maria, “I would not for the world, go, if it had.” “Can you be serious? is it possible you should determine to discourage his addresses, should he be inclined to make them?”

“Why, my dear madam,” said Maria, “should you be surprized? what advantage has Sir Richard Harlow over Doctor Curtis, besides fortune, which has no weight with me, and if I had resolution to withstand the earnest entreaties of a beloved brother, who I knew had nothing more at heart than my interest and happiness; what great difficulty will there be in refusing Sir Richard Harlow?” “than I must conclude your affections are engaged,” said Miss Scot,— “does that follow?” said Maria, blushing,—“may not I have an aversion to matrimony?” “Oh, no,” “but I really have determined not to marry for some years to come, if ever.” “Then you must have some very substantial reasons, which I am unacquainted with,” said Miss Scot.

“Allow me, Madam,” said Maria, “to ask, if it may not be from choice? As I am almost certain there are instances of ladies giving the preference to a single state, and I cannot but observe, you are one.” “You are exceedingly mistaken,” said Miss Scot, “if you think so.” “Do not from my being single infer, that I have an aversion to the marriage state, for I freely declare, I have the highest opinion of it, though I fear” with a deep sigh, “I shall never experience its blessings. I see,” continued she, “I have raised your curiosity, you shall hear the particulars of my story some morning, when we are at leisure, for it will take up some time to relate: Although you do not honour me with your confidence, I will not withhold mine from you.” Maria felt this reproach very sensibly: “Let me entreat you, my dear Madam,” said she, “not to misconstrue my silence, on any of the little incidents of my life. If I have omitted to relate them, believe me it has not proceeded from want of confidence, but from an idea they were too trifling to merit your attention.”— “Well,” said Miss Scot, “I forgive you the past, but if in future, you suppose

I can be indifferent to any thing which concerns either your interest or happiness, I assure you you wrong the friendship I have conceived for you.”

Maria’s heart felt gratefully sensible of this kindness: she thanked Miss Scot in the warmest terms for such goodness, and then related much in the same manner she had done to her brother, the mutual attachment which subsisted between her and Charles Palmer. Miss Scot paid great attention to her simple narrative, which so clearly accounted for her conduct: Maria finished with saying, “Now, my dear Madam, let me entreat you, not to suffer me, through inadvertency, to give Sir Richard Harlow cause to think I should be pleased with his addresses.” “You will not,” said Miss Scot, “I fancy easily persuade him to think otherwise;—but how are you sure your Charles, for whom you make such a sacrifice, will reward you for such constancy?” Maria answered, she had no fears on that head, she knew their hearts were united by such irresoluble ties, as neither time nor absence could effect. “But,” said Miss Scot, “should he go to India without seeing you and renewing his assurances of constancy, I think you would be to blame to think more of him.” “He may be so circumstanced as not to have it in his power;” said Maria, “but that should have no effect on me—Indeed if I had, which I am certain I never shall, reason to think he had forgot me, I should still continue my affection for him, pure and unvariable.—I never knew what it was to have a heart, it was so early disposed of to him, and his it shall remain until it ceases to beat.” “Do not you think that a little romantic?” said Miss Scot, “I do not know,” said Maria, “but I am sure it is sincere.” “I sincerely hope you will be rewarded as you deserve,” said Miss Scot: they then parted to dress for the Ball.

Sir Richard was early in his attendance; he was elegantly dressed, and in high spirits. Maria’s dress was simply elegant, which set off the beauty of her person to great advantage—Sir Richard appeared delighted—he gazed on her with rapture, which he no longer endeavoured to conceal.

As this was the first time of Maria’s appearing at the rooms, she was very much struck with their elegance, and the brilliancy of the company; but her heart would not allow her to feel any enjoyment—She shuddered at the idea of being there by the means of Sir Richard Harlow,—her spirits were depressed—she sighed often, which he attributed to a wrong cause. Miss Scot and Sir Richard danced a minuet, which they performed to the admiration of all the company; the gracefulness and dignity of her person appeared to such advantage as even to surprize Maria. “How delightfully Sir Richard dances! what an elegant man he is! do not you think he is? Miss Harcourt,” said Miss Andrews, addressing herself to Maria, “He is very well,” said Maria, “but I think Miss Scot the most elegant woman I ever saw”— “Is she engaged to dance with Sir Richard in the country dances?”— “No, Miss Scot is to dance with Lord D. her brother-in-law.”— “Why, did not Sir Richard attend her to the rooms?”— “Yes”— “Perhaps he is to dance with you?”— “I am not sure,” said Maria, “whether I shall dance at all.”— “But if you do, shall you dance with him?”— “Yes, I believe so.”—She looked chagrined, but kept close to Maria, in hopes of shewing herself to Sir Richard; who, as soon as the minuet ended, handed Miss Scot to her seat; and then taking Maria’s hand, respectfully pressed her to do him the honour of only one dance. She answered, “she

should be extremely sorry to prevent him from dancing; but it would be much more agreeable to her, if he would choose another partner, and she would sit with Mr. Worthy, and look on." "No," said he, "I have no inclination to inflict such a punishment as that on myself: I should have more pleasure in being permitted to attend you, than I could possibly have in dancing with any other woman in the rooms."—Miss Andrews hearing this, and being convinced she only lost time in attempting to gain Sir Richard's attention, turned away to join her own party.

"I am afraid, Madam," said Sir Richard, addressing himself to Miss Scot, "you have more influence with Miss Harcourt than I have—will you have the goodness to use it for me? she will I am sure refuse you nothing—and it would afford me infinite pleasure to go down one dance with her." "O! she will I know," said Miss Scot.

Maria thought there could be no more in dancing than in sitting still; as she saw it was impossible to avoid Sir Richard, gave him her hand, and they took their places. Sir Richard and his lovely partner soon drew the attention of the company.—"What an elegant man!" said the ladies, and "What a beautiful girl," said the gentlemen. "Who is that sweet girl?" asked a gentleman, addressing himself to Miss Andrews, "I saw you speaking to her.—"La," said she, "what a fuss is made about that girl, I do not see she is so handsome."—The gentleman smiled. "But you do not answer my question, as to who she is." "Why, she is some poor orphan, whom Miss Scot has taken out of charity, a sister of her attorney. "I am surprised at her bringing her into public"—and turned away scornfully.—"It is a very extraordinary circumstance," said the gentleman, turning to Mr. Worthy, (who stood by) "that you cannot affront a fine woman more than by praising another; I think, if they would practice a little disguise, in that particular, it would give them a more amiable appearance, at least; but I am happy," continued he, "there are exceptions to this, I believe, too general a rule; and your niece, much to her honour, is one. It would have been a great pity for so beautiful a girl to have remained in obscurity: she will, I make no doubt, make some noise now she appears in public." "I fancy," said Mr. Worthy, "that will not be often, as it was with great difficulty she was prevailed on to appear to night." "That is rather singular," said he, "for one of her years, with so much beauty." "Her beauty," said Mr. Worthy, "is the least of her valuable qualities;—indeed, she does not seem sensible of having any. She is one of the most amiable girls I ever knew; and I hope she will be as happy as she deserves." "Sir Richard pays her great attention," said the gentleman, "she will be a lucky lass if she can make a conquest there." "In my opinion," said Mr. Worthy, "he will be lucky if he succeeds with her." "He has nothing to fear," said the other. "I would venture a good bet, there are not two single women in the rooms who would refuse him." "I am not certain of that," said Mr. Worthy.

Sir Richard having finished the first dance, now returned with Maria to her seat.—"Ah!" said he, "Shirley, how happens it you are not dancing?" "Faith, Sir Richard," said he, "I have had a great deal more pleasure in admiring your partner than I could have had in dancing myself.—You are in luck;—but I do not wonder at it.—You have the choice of the Bath beauties—and you have shewn great taste to-night." Sir Richard answered, "He was so sensible of his happiness, he would not exchange it with

e'er a gentleman in the rooms." Miss Scot now joined them, and the conversation became general.

Mr. Shirley entreated Mr. Worthy to introduce him to the ladies; which he did, and he took his tea with them.

Maria attracted so much notice, the gentlemen gathered about them, and a continual enquiry of, who is she? and, what a sweet girl! She grew so extremely embarrassed, that when Sir Richard solicited her to favour him with another dance, she readily consented, to avoid the gaze of some impertinent fops, who took a pleasure in putting her out of countenance, and continued dancing until Miss Scot expressed a desire of leaving the rooms. Lord D. pressed them to go home with him, to sup. As Miss Scot had not seen her sister that day, she agreed to go. He then gave Sir Richard an invitation, which he accepted, and they all went in Lord D's carriage. Maria had never seen Lady D. She having been confined with a slight indisposition, had not visited her sister since she had been with her.

She found her much such a woman as Miss Scot, elegant and affable. Lady D. though she was prepared, by her uncle's account of Maria, to expect to see nothing but sweetness and a lovely person, appeared surprized, and confessed to her sister, that she surpassed all which her imagination could form. She paid her particular attention, and at parting said, "I cannot allow you, Amelia; to keep Miss Harcourt to yourself; you must be content to share her with me. I shall be satisfied to have her whenever you are engaged, and she does not accompany you. I hear she has a dislike to going much into company, and as I go very little, she cannot oblige me more, than to bestow on me as large a portion of her time as she can spare."

Maria thanked Lady D. and promised to avail herself of her kind invitation. "Upon my word, ladies," said Sir Richard, "you seem inclined to make a very pretty monopoly.—I could not have suspected you of so much cruelty. What will become of Miss Harcourt's other friends, if she is thus to be shared, as you call it, between you two? I think her too valuable to be shared, and too great a treasure for any one mortal to possess."

These profusions of compliments confused Maria exceedingly, which Miss Scot perceiving, relieved her, by hastening to her carriage.

CHAPTER XV.

“HOW do you like the rooms, Maria?” said Miss Scot. She answered, “They were elegant, beyond her conception! and if she was a woman of fashion, she should take great pleasure in frequenting them; but as it was, she should never go again.” “What is your objection?” said Miss Scot. “I am sure you had your share of admiration; but I will do you the justice to say, you have less vanity than any girl of your age, I ever knew.” “You may be mistaken,” said Maria. “I am not without my failings; and if it is one, to feel a pleasure in being admired, I confess, I have that. But it is not public admiration which gives it; yet if it is a weakness to wish for the approbation of the deserving, those, whose superior understanding, will not, I know, allow them to judge from a fine outside; that weakness is mine. I was more flattered to night by the attention I received from Lady D. than Miss Andrews could be at hearing herself admired by the whole of the company at the rooms, and you must allow that is saying a great deal.”

“Upon my word,” said Miss Scot, “you pay a very handsome compliment to those whom you wish to make yourself agreeable to: you are an unaccountable girl, that is certain.—So good night.”

The next morning, soon after breakfast, they had a visit from Sir Richard Harlow. After the usual compliments, and enquiries, he addressed himself to Maria, and said, “I hope, Miss Harcourt, now you have once been so good-natured as to honour the rooms with your appearance, we need not despair of having that pleasure repeated. But you will please to remember, that it is on condition you do me the same honour; for to see your hand in the possession of another, if only for a few hours, would be too great a mortification for me to support.” Maria thought it best not to notice this speech; and only answered coolly, “She did not intend to frequent the rooms. That she was induced, partly by curiosity, and partly by the entreaties of Miss Scot, just to go once; but she believed she should never go a second time.” “I see,” said he, gaily, “I must have recourse to my old stratagem, which assists me on those occasions, and petition Miss Scot to use her influence. May I hope, Madam, for your interest.” Miss Scot, knowing the state of Maria’s heart, only answered, that “Miss Harcourt must use her own will in those matters; she would by no means wish her to do any thing contrary to her inclination.” He looked chagrined. He then enquired if they would be at the play that night? and was answered, No. He lengthened his visit as long as he could, and then took his leave, saying, “He would, with Miss Scot’s permission, do himself the honour of paying them another visit soon.”—He went away dejected.

Lord D. and Mr. Worthy dined with them, and were to accompany Miss Scot to a party in the evening. After dinner, “I have,” said Lord D., “a petition to present to you, Miss Harcourt, from Lady D., praying, if you are not engaged, you will have the goodness to pass the evening with her,—we will set you down.” Maria answered, “Lady D. did her a great deal of honor,” and accepted the invitation.

Lady D. and Maria were equally pleased with each other on a nearer intimacy; Maria entertained her ladyship with some little airs on the harpsichord, after which they entered freely into conversation. Lady D. was a woman, with great natural abilities, which she had improved by studying the best authors, both ancient and modern. She was greatly surprized to find Maria pretty well acquainted with both. She was so pleased with her society that she expressed great regret when Miss Scot returned to take her home, repeated her request that she would give her as much of her company as she could possibly spare, which she promised, and then wished her a good night.

Maria's situation was now so agreeable, she had nothing even to wish for—nothing but the uncertainty of the state of her beloved Charles, gave her uneasiness; she knew the time drew near, which was fixed for his leaving England: what surprized her was, that in all the letters she received from his sister, who kept a correspondence with her; his name was never once mentioned.

One morning, Miss Scot went out without her, to pay some visits. She had just taken up Cecilia, and was deeply engaged in a very pathetic scene, when a knock at the door took her attention. A servant entered, saying, "A gentleman enquires for Miss Harcourt." Before Maria could ask his name, Charles Palmer entered the room. "Oh! my Charles," cried she, letting fall the book, and nearly falling herself. "My ever dear Maria," exclaimed he, catching her in his arms, "do I once more see you? Do I once more embrace you?—Oh, my love! How!" said she, a little recovering her surprize, "to what miracle am I indebted for this unexpected happiness? I fear it will be attended with great inconvenience to you." "What inconvenience, my beloved, dearest girl!" said he, "can there be, that the sight of you will not compensate. Could you suppose I could leave England without seeing you?—No!—no power on earth should have forced me to it. If my Maria knew what I have suffered, on her account, she would indeed pity me," "Suffered on my account—God forbid!"—"In the first place," continued he, "you may guess my surprize when I returned from Oxford and did not see you, for I had never been made acquainted with your leaving the Grove,—I could not help enquiring of my mother where you were: she said you was at Bath with your brother, and continued she, 'I expect every day to hear she is settled for life: her brother writes me word, she has received the addresses of Dr. Curtis, a very amiable man; and he hopes she will soon make him happy.' Conceive, my love, my confusion at hearing this, she went on, without paying any attention to me, saying, there was nothing in the world would give her more pleasure than to hear you were well married. I could scarce contain myself to hear her out. I went immediately to my room, to consider what I should do.—I could think of nothing but to set out immediately for Bath, to prevent, if possible, your being for ever separated from me. I was certain some means had been used to force you to such a compliance—I feared you might want resolution to withstand the entreaties of your brother. I thought I had no time to lose, and was actually preparing to leave the Grove that night. When I saw the postman at the gate—I trembled.—Ah! said I, it is too late—I am undone;—this is a letter from Mr. Harcourt, to give my mother the intelligence she so much wishes for, and which will inevitably prove the utter destruction of her son.

“I flew to the parlour, more dead than alive to hear the dreadful tidings.—I watched my mother’s countenance whilst she read the letter, which was indeed from your brother, and found myself a little relieved, by observing on it some marks of disappointment. When she had read it, she exclaimed, with displeasure, ‘What can possess the foolish girl, she must sure be mad!’ I now recovered myself sufficiently to enquire if you had refused the gentleman proposed by your brother? ‘Yes,’ said she, with a look of anger, ‘she has; and it seems has assigned no reason, but a determined resolution not to marry for some years to come.’

“She was going on; but I had heard enough. I returned to my room with very different emotions from those I had when I left it. Oh, my Maria! you cannot possibly form an idea of what I felt from the sudden transition of the deepest despair to the very height of my wishes. I fell on my knees, and returned thanks to that Almighty Power, who had supported you with fortitude sufficient to act with such spirit. I was even thankful for the event which had proved your steadiness.—Your love I never doubted.—I shall now go happy to India; having this assurance of your being proof against all solicitations.

“I could now rest satisfied without seeing you until I left the Grove, to set out for London; from thence I am to embark for India. I took leave of my mother and sister yesterday, and they supposed I should take post at Exeter for London, but I took the Bath road. I soon found your brother, who behaved kinder than I expected, and offered to send for you; but my impatience to see you would not brook that delay.

“It is but just,” said he, “my Maria should have a companion in my absence, one whom she may look at with pleasure—press to her heart, and love.”—She looked surprized.—“I beg,” continued he, “you will take one of my choosing.”—On which, he presented a miniture of himself.—She took the little likeness—kissed it, and placed it in her bosom;—the tear starting in her eyes,—she was incapable of speech. Charles felt her distress; caught her again in his arms. “Oh, my beloved dear girl!” said he, “how do I long for the time when I shall have it in my power to reward you as you deserve for such goodness; but the time will—it must come.—My stay shall be no longer, than to acquire a sufficiency to support you in the style you ought to appear in. Then your Charles will be, indeed, happy. Oh, my Maria! How constant, how great, will be my bliss, when I have no other care than that of blessing you!” He ceased to speak.—Maria pressed his hand to her heart.—They continued silent some minutes.—Their silence was of that communicative nature, which spoke a language not to be expressed by words.—They understood each other.—How long they might have continued conversing in this way cannot be ascertained, had not a knock at the door interrupted them. “It is Miss Scot,” said Maria. Miss Scot entered the room. “Oh, my dear Madam!” said Maria, taking her hand, and pressing it, “give me leave to introduce Cha—a—Mr. Palmer.”—Miss Scot smiled.—“This is Mr. Palmer, Miss Scot.” She received him with her usual gracefulness.

Charles felt the same emotions as Maria had experienced at the first sight of Miss Scot, which was awe, succeeded by respect.

She was not less struck with his person. He was, at this time, not eighteen. His stature above the middle size, elegantly proportioned. His countenance manly and engaging. His eyes spoke the feelings of his heart, which was generous and sincere. She was no longer surprised at the mutual attachment which subsisted between him and Maria; on the contrary, she saw it would have been next to impossible for two such, to see, and converse freely with each other, almost from their infancy, without forming such an attachment. She became interested in their happiness, and determined within herself to do all in her power to promote it. She gave Charles a polite invitation to stay to dinner, which he readily accepted.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER dinner, Charles addressing himself to Miss Scot, said, "I know not, Madam, whether Maria has made you acquainted with the particulars of our story or not; but I think it necessary you should be made acquainted with it, as she is in some measure under your protection."

Miss Scot answered, "she was not ignorant of it, and sincerely hoped they would be one day or other united, and make each other happy." "You are very good, Madam," said he, "I shall leave with you all my hopes of happiness. My very existence, indeed, depends on her safety. If, continued he, I could have called her my own before I left England, I should have gone happy; as in that case, she could, with propriety, have received such remittances from me, as would have supported her comfortably, until I returned; but that, the cruel laws have put out of my power. All which now remains is, that I may be permitted to hope, she will find in you, Madam, a protection for her innocence. Oh!" said he, "if you knew how sincerely our hearts are united, you would, from your own goodness of heart, I am persuaded, find a pleasure in protecting my Maria until I return, to claim her as my own."

Miss Scot answered, that from the friendship she had conceived for Maria, she was sufficiently induced to afford her every support and protection in her power. "She shall," continued she, "remain with me until you return; and I will love, and treat her as a sister." Charles fell on his knees; and Maria, having no words to express her thanks, followed his example. This was too much for Miss Scot;—she entreated them to rise.—"I am no way entitled to your thanks, as I confess, I have my own happiness in view. I have a sincere regard for Maria, and find a great pleasure in her society. If, indeed, it had been to make her happy, I would, although I confess it would have caused me some uneasiness to part with her; but I own, it affords me a satisfaction to know I shall enjoy her society for some years to come, without any prejudice to herself." "Words are poor, Madam," said Charles, "they are very inadequate to what I feel at this moment; but if the thanks of two hearts, overpowered with the sense of your goodness, will any way repay you, I can assure you of mine, and my Maria's. If I suspected myself of so much ingratitude, as to be ever capable of forgetting your kindness, I should for ever despise myself."

Miss Scot was not less pleased with Charles's sentiments than with his person. She again assured him, he might rely on her protecting Maria; and then enquired when he proposed to leave Bath. He answered, he was under the necessity of setting out early the next morning, as the ships were ready to sail for India, his mother too would be impatient to hear of his getting safe to town. "I will not," said Miss Scot, "take my leave of you, as I expect to find you here, at my return from the cotillion ball." Mr. Worthy came to accompany Miss Scot to the rooms. "I cannot, my dear uncle," said she, "deny myself, and you, the pleasure I know it will afford one with your generous sentiments, of seeing two people, whom Providence has so nicely formed for each other as those in the parlour." On which, she opened the door, and introduced her uncle.—Maria blushed.—

Mr. Worthy looked surprised.— “Give me leave, Sir,” said Miss Scot, “to introduce you to my uncle, Mr. Worthy; and when you do Maria’s other friends the honour of thinking of them, you will not forget his name, as he is not the most indifferent of them.” “Mr. Worthy and Miss Scot,” said Charles, “shall be joined, with my Maria, in my prayers.”

After Mr. Worthy had chatted about an hour with the two lovers, he wished Charles all the success he might reasonably expect; adding, he could not fail of making a rapid fortune, as his uncle was governor of so capital a place; took his leave of him, and wished Maria a good night.

Maria sent a servant, to request her brother to do her the favour of his company for an hour. When Mr. Harcourt entered, Charles addressed him in pretty nearly the following words:— “As I am under the necessity of leaving England for a considerable time, I would wish you, Sir, to conceive the nature of the affection which subsists between your amiable sister and me. I must entreat you, Sir, to believe it is not the effects of a sudden fancy, which sometimes possesses the brain of youth, and they mistake for love; nor is it the fever of an over-heated imagination, which takes its rise from the desire of possessing a beautiful object, which they pursue, without giving themselves any further consideration, till the disorder abates of itself, and leaves them to wonder at the strange infatuation which had so bewildered their senses. Our loves are of a different nature from such as I have described: and although I cannot ascertain when I first loved your sister, or from what particular motive, you will not, I hope, believe it less sincere, when I declare, all I know is, that I remember no time of my life that I did not love her. We have never had but one heart, and one mind; and if I may be allowed, without being accused of too much vanity to say it, it is the similarity of our sentiments that has united our hearts. I would not, Mr. Harcourt, be assured I would not, had I taken a fancy to your sister from the beauty of her person, have so far relied on myself, as to have answered that time, or another person equally beautiful might not have altered my sentiments; but being well assured my affections, though I am unable to explain them, are of such a nature as cannot end but with my life; I may venture, with the firmest confidence in myself, to entreat your approbation of our continuing in the same reliance on each other, which I am persuaded our hearts are fixed on; and that she will not want a protector in you. Sir, until I shall have it in my power to claim her as my own, and make her happy.”

“I am going to India, where I have every reason to hope, Fortune will soon favour my honest endeavours, to gain a sufficiency to support her properly. My uncle is governor of —; he will forward my wishes; and as far as depends on myself, there is nothing in human nature consistent with my honour, that I will not undertake to shorten the tedious absence. Let me, Sir, but be assured you will protect her for me; for in her is centered all my hopes of happiness; and whatever expence you may be at, on her account, I will then, if it pleases Heaven but to spare my life, most thankfully repay.”—Maria wept.—Mr. Harcourt wiped his face, and then answered, that his affection for his sister was alone sufficient to induce him to afford her every protection in his power; that her safety and happiness were his two principle concerns; that if he could only be assured, he should live to see her beyond the power of Fortune, he should be completely happy.

Charles answered, that he hoped he should, one day or other, have it in his power to express his thanks otherwise than by words, which was all he could then offer, and those fell very short of what he felt. "I shall now leave England happy," said he "as Heaven has provided two such friends, as you and Miss Scot, for my Maria."

It was settled, that Charles's letters to Maria should be addressed to her brother. Mr. Harcourt lost his fears, on finding how sincerely Charles was attached to his sister; he began to flatter himself, he should still see her one of the happiest of women. He took an affectionate leave of Charles, for whom he felt the affection of a brother.

Miss Scot now returned from the rooms. Supper was brought in; but other concerns occupied the attention of Charles and his Maria. After supper he summoned all his fortitude, and took his leave of Miss Scot. He then took his Maria in his arms. "May," said he, "the Almighty bless and protect you—my beloved girl!—my wife!—and all that is dear to me!—Oh! be careful of your precious health, for the sake of your Charles, for his life depends upon yours!" Maria was unable to speak;—tears were denied her;—she pressed him to her heart.—Charles went three times to the door, and as often returned;—he thought there was something he had forgot to say.—Maria got to the door.—Miss Scot's tears flowed.—Charles made a strong effort.—"It must be," said he;—clasped her once more in his arms, and then—unable to articulate the word—farewell—shut the door. Maria dropt into Miss Scot's arms—her soul had followed her Charles;—and, for a little time forsook its old habitation. Miss Scot, by her tender soothings, soon called it back, and she revived. Tears now came to her assistance; Miss Scot, by joining hers, lessened her sorrow. How did this sympathy at once endear and exalt her to Maria. "Ah, Madam," said she, "your goodness at once flatters and distresses me. I am not ashamed of my weakness, since you can deign to share it; but you are as gentle as you are great." Miss Scot took her hand.—"Go, my dear," said she, "to rest; endeavour to compose your spirits; you will, I make no doubt, one day or other, be as happy as love and a worthy man can make you. You deserve each other, and that Power, who delights in innocence, will comfort and protect you."—Maria pressed her hand.—"How much happier are you," continued Miss Scot, "than your friend, who has not the most distant prospect of ever beholding the object of her affection again.—Ah, my poor much injured William!" cried she, with fresh tears, "where art thou." Maria looked as if she wished to know the meaning of Miss Scot's words. "I am afraid," said Miss Scot, "your spirits are too much fluttered to hear the particulars of my story to night; but to-morrow morning your curiosity shall be satisfied. You must now go to rest."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HISTORY OF MISS SCOT.

AFTER breakfast Miss Scot gave orders for no visitors to be admitted, but her uncle, and then began her story, as follows:—

I was, as well as you, left an orphan; with this difference, that I had twenty thousand pounds to my portion. My mother died in bringing me into the world; and my father soon followed her. He left me and Lady D. who was then only two years old, and heiress to fifteen hundred a year, to the care of my uncle, Mr. Worthy, who has been so kind a parent to us, we have never felt the loss we sustained. He, as soon as we were capable of receiving instruction, took a neat house, a few miles from London, and provided a proper governess to superintend our education and morals; and when we were old enough, she provided masters for us, as my uncle had a great aversion to public schools. When Lady D. was seventeen, he took us to London, and she was presented at Court. This ceremony was no sooner over, and she appeared in public, than a number of candidates offered for her heart; many of whom, as you may suppose, were in love with her fortune, though they all swore it was only for herself.

My uncle took as much care as possible not to allow us to be introduced to improper people. He assured us, he trusted so much to our discretion, that in the matrimonial way, he wished us to be guided by our own inclinations; as he rightly judged that was the only way for him not to be deceived. He entreated us to promise him, that before we disposed of our hearts, and as soon as we were inclined to favour the addresses of any one in particular, we would favour him with our confidence. This we promised him, and he was satisfied.

Lady D. about a year after we were introduced into public, declared in favour of Lord D. which my uncle was very well pleased at, and she made him happy.

Our house in the country was now disposed of, and it was settled for me to live with them until I became of age—as I had no inclination to marry;—indeed, I had never seen the man I thought I could love.

My uncle was appointed governor of an island in the West Indies, and, therefore, obliged to leave England. He invested his brother and Lord D. with his power of guardianship over me; with particular instruction not to use it in the disposal of my heart, farther than giving their advice, as he said, “He had so good an opinion of my

understanding, he was certain I should not make an improper choice." My twenty thousand pounds brought me a number of admirers;—some wanted to pay off old mortgages;—others wished to discharge their debts of honour;—and some, no doubt, thought it would enable them to keep the best race horses, and most expensive mistresses. I found no difficulty in discarding those. But, a Sir Wm. Warren applied to my uncle, and made such proposals, as he thought were worthy notice. When he communicated them to me, he said, "Although my brother wishes you to be guided by your own inclination, still I think it my duty, to point out the advantages of such a connection;" which he did not fail to do, in the most flattering colours. I thanked him for his care;—assured him I was sensible of his good intentions—but did not hesitate a moment to give him a downright refusal; at which he appeared greatly disappointed, but urged me no farther.

This refusal likewise surprised Lord and Lady D. as Sir William Warren had a very good estate, and had the address to impose on the world, who allowed him to be a man of good morals. But I thought I saw something;—a sort of disguise.—His sentiments did not appear to be the dictates of his heart. In short, I was sensible I could not like him, and that was, in my opinion, a sufficient reason for me to give him a plain, but polite refusal. He had artifice enough to receive it perfectly easy, and begged he might be permitted to continue his visits, as he had, he professed, a sincere friendship for Lord D. This, I answered, I was no way concerned in, as my objection to him, as a husband, did not go so far as to prevent his being a very agreeable acquaintance. He availed himself of this, and was very frequent in his visits, until we left town, to go to Lord D's country seat for the summer.

The November following, I received an invitation from Mrs. Hartford, a very particular friend of our family's—to accompany her to town for the winter. As my sister's situation was such, as to prevent her going that season, it was agreed for me to go with Mrs. Hartford. This being the last year of my minority, my uncle and Lord D. made no objection to trusting me to my own discretion.

Mr. Hartford, who was then in town, being a member of parliament, had taken a house for us in Pall Mall; they lived in great style, and their house was frequented by most of the nobility. Sir William Warren soon made an acquaintance with Mr. Hartford, and became a constant visitor. This gave me neither pleasure nor pain; we behaved to each other with politeness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I HAD not been long at Mrs. Hartford's when she had a rout. The rooms were, as is generally the case on these occasions, very much crowded. I was standing chatting with some company, who were not at cards, when a young gentleman entered the room. I was struck with his person, which I fancied was the most elegant, and graceful, I had ever beheld. I followed him with my eyes, to observe who he conversed with, that I might, by that means, form some idea how he was connected. I confess, I felt a strange desire to know, though I had not the confidence to make the enquiry. I was not displeased, when I saw him coming to that side of the room where I stood, or to observe he looked earnestly at me. I caught his eyes more than once.—We both blushed.

Mrs. Hartford now seeing him, paid her respects to him in so attentive a manner, as gave me reason to believe he was not an indifferent visitor. She addressed herself to me, and asked if I would play a rubber. I answered in the affirmative, and had the good fortune to cut-in at the same table, and likewise to get the elegant stranger for a partner. I soon found, by his conversation and the respect which was paid him, he was a man of family; and a gentleman addressing him by the name of Spencer, I immediately concluded he was son to Lord F——, who, I had heard, was lately returned from his travels. This conjecture was not unpleasing to me; I began to wish to make myself agreeable to him: and this was the first time in my life I had ever formed such a wish. I likewise flattered myself he had the same desire, and fancied he paid me more than common attention for a stranger. After the company went away, I enquired of Mrs. Hartford who he was; and she confirmed my conjecture of his being the only son of Lord F——. I confess, I got very little sleep that night, for thinking of him. My mind was agitated between hope and fear; hope, however, was the most predominant.

The next morning, just as Mrs. Hartford and I were preparing to go out to pay some visits, to my great joy, Mr. Spencer was announced.—I felt myself extremely confused.—She immediately introduced us to each other.

He chatted a considerable time on various subjects. If I was pleased with his fine person, I was much more so with his understanding. His opinions were just and liberal, and delivered with modesty; indeed, I saw in him all I had formed to myself as the height of perfection in a human being. It would be needless to recite all the little particulars of my hopes and fears; I will only tell you, that in a very short time I was relieved from the latter, by his openly declaring himself. You may imagine I did not endeavour to find out frivolous objections to his generous proposals. He immediately wrote to my uncle and Lord D. for their consent, and likewise to his father, who did me the honour of a letter, expressing, in very warm terms, his approbation of his son's choice—and with what pleasure he should receive me into his family. He likewise wrote to my uncle and Lord D. and offered such a settlement, as even surpassed their expectations.

I now thought myself one of the happiest of mortals—that I had disposed of my heart to a man every way so deserving. I justly supposed he would reflect honour to my

understanding, in making such a choice. I pleased myself with the idea of what my uncle would feel, on his return from the West Indies, to see me so happy. All these, and a thousand other emotions, which are better imagined than described, filled me with rapture for my ever dear William, who appeared, no only to love, but adore me. The time which was necessary, from decorum, for us to be apart became tedious to both; and, I confess, I was not displeased to see the preparations for our nuptials making hasty steps to a conclusion.—When, one fatal morning,—She paused, to give vent to her feelings by tears.—And Maria, though she knew not the cause, wept too.—After Miss Scot had a little recovered herself she proceeded.—A young woman, neatly dressed, with a very pretty face, enquired for me. I was sitting with Mrs. Hartford in the parlour, and desired she might be shewn in. I thought she was a young beginner in some business who wished me to employ her. She said, she wished to speak a word to me. I answered, she might, as that Lady, Mrs. Hartford, was my friend. She said, what she had to communicate was of such a nature, as only to be proper for my private ear.—I observed she trembled exceedingly, which excited my curiosity, and I took her to my dressing-room.—As soon as she entered, she threw herself on her knees. “In the first place, Madam,” said she, “you must promise, on your honour, never to reveal what I am going to disclose to you, or I never can make the discovery, though your destruction, as well as my own, depends on it.”

I was, as you may suppose, very much surprised at this; and without hesitation gave the promise she required,—made her rise.—Her countenance turned pale.—She could scarce speak.—I did all I could to revive her, as I really pitied her.

When she recovered herself, she exclaimed, “Oh, Madam! you are too good to be made for ever miserable, which you must be, if you marry Mr. Spencer.” I now began to tremble. What do you mean? cried I, greatly agitated. “I am,” said she,— “his wife.”—Heavenly God!—said I,—Is it possible?— “It is, indeed, true,” replied she, “I was a farmer’s daughter, at Oxford, when he was at that school;—he brought me to London, where he married me; but as he has a father, who is a great man, he made me promise not to disclose the secret till his death, and then he would acknowledge me to the world.

He allowed me a sufficiency to support me comfortably whilst he was abroad; and since he came home he has sent me enough, and promises, if I am a good girl, and keep his secret, I shall never want. But when I heard he was going to be married, I could not help, in justice to you, as well as myself, coming to acquaint you with his villainy, although I know he will allow me to starve, if he knows I have made this discovery.” Do not be afraid, said I, no one living shall ever know it from me. I think myself extremely fortunate, in knowing it thus timely; it has saved me from endless misery. She then wished me a good morning, and walked away.

I cannot describe to you the situation of my mind on this occasion. All my delightful prospects, which I had, in so high a degree, indulged, were, in a moment, lost. That Mr. Spencer should be capable of such actions; he, who did not appear to have a thought which ought to be concealed; he, whose pure sentiments seemed to be only the dictates of his still purer mind, was more than I could reconcile. I gave immediate orders,

if he came, to be denied, and likewise any other visitors. I sat down, and wrote a note to him; telling him, that his calling on me again would be unnecessary; that I would never be his; and when I acquainted him I was not ignorant of every transaction of his, during his stay at the university, his own heart would tell him my reasons; but that was all the explanation he must ever expect to get from me; that his crimes were of too black a nature; that his writing, or any effort to see me, would be ineffectual, as I would seclude myself from the world for ever, sooner than have the chance of meeting him. I likewise wrote to Lord D. and my uncle, and begged them to acquaint Mr. Spencer's father, in order to stop the preparations from going on, and to let them know, I should leave London the next morning.

I now determined, in my own mind, never to think of marriage again. I sometimes regretted letting the young woman go without giving some proof of what she had asserted, as I wished, at those times, to think him innocent; but when I reflected on the agitation she was in, and the simplicity of her manners, that thought, in a moment vanished. No, said I, it must be so, or what motive could she have to prevent our union.

I told Mrs. Hartford there was an insurmountable obstacle to my being ever united to Mr. Spencer, therefore she must not be surprised at my leaving London the next morning. She was very much concerned at this, and earnestly entreated me to explain my reasons, and by that means, give Mr. Spencer an opportunity of vindicating himself. I answered, I was well convinced of the truth of his villainy; but nothing should force the secret from me, as I had pledged my honour, never to disclose it.

I set out early the next morning for Lord D's seat; my heart torn almost asunder with various passions; love still was the strongest. Notwithstanding the proof, which I thought I had, of Mr. Spencer's baseness, I was often inclined to pity him. I imagined, the inadvertency of his youth might have led him into this folly, and that he now repented; then the injustice of such actions occurred to me, and turned my pity into rage; then I would regret his loss, being certain he was the only man in the world I could ever feel an affection for; again, I was thankful for my escaping from such a villain. In this state I arrived at Lord D's. You will not be surprised, when I tell you, the agitation of my mind brought on a fever, and I was for some days deprived of my reason; during which time, it seems, I let drop the words, his wife! Are you his wife? This clearly proved to my sister my reason for rejecting Mr. Spencer.

When I recovered, a deep melancholy seized me.—I shunned company.—I sought the most lonesome walks, where I might indulge it to the full. My sister carefully avoided mentioning Mr. Spencer. She concluded, from the state I was in, and from what she had collected when I was in a state of insanity, I had some very substantial reason for refusing him, and therefore declined to press me farther; but strove by every possible means to divert my melancholy. She forced me, in some measure, into company, and always followed, and joined in my walks. This I was very much displeased at, and watched every opportunity of stealing out, as it were, unperceived, that I might enjoy my dismal reflections; and my sister as studiously endeavoured to prevent my being a moment alone. They received more company than usual, and were constantly contriving new

schemes of amusement, which at first was extremely unpleasant to me, but it had its desired effect. I, by imperceptible degrees, became more tranquil, and my love of solitude a little abated; but I still found a pleasure in it, which, in order to indulge unmolested, I frequently rose early, and strolled to my favourite seat, which was under a great tree, facing a cascade, at the end of the park.

One morning, as I was indulging myself in this way, I was surprised at seeing a tall man, with a wooden leg, wandering amongst the trees in one of the avenues; he appeared in great distress, often lifted his eyes to Heaven, and clasped his hands, as if in the agonies of despair. I could not resist the desire I had to know the cause; and addressing myself to him, Friend, said I, do not imagine I am induced by impertinent curiosity to trouble you with enquiries of any thing you wish to conceal; but if your distress is of a nature to come within my power of alleviating, it will afford me great pleasure;—and I took out my purse.—“Ah, Madam!” said he, “you are very good!—I do not want money; but if you could restore me peace of mind, you would indeed be an angel; but that I must never hope for more. I justly suffer, from being too credulous, and too strictly adhering to a mistaking notion of false honour. May you, Madam, never know the pangs I feel from pledging my word of honour to a villain, who deceived me.”—I startled, and turned pale,—which he observed, and continued. “I was,” said he, “betrothed to a young Lady, amiable and lovely. Our affections were mutual; and the day was fixed which was to have made us happy; when a villain, who had been disappointed, came to me one morning, and told me, he had a secret to disclose to me; but I must first pledge my honour never to reveal it on any account. I foolishly gave him the promise he required. He assured me nothing but his concern for my honour could have induced him to discover what he was then going to do; which I should be convinced of. He then imposed a tale on me, which I too readily gave credit to, of the falseness and infamy of my intended wife. I was bound not to explain my reasons for breaking with her; therefore, I only wrote her a letter, saying, I was but too well convinced of her unworthiness; and immediately left the country, and set out for London.

I kept a correspondence with some friends, who acquainted me, the young lady, whom every one supposed I had injured, was at the point of death; she could not support the idea of my thinking her dishonoured, and her life fell a sacrifice to my credulity. The villain who had imposed on me did not long survive her. He took a fever, which soon put a period to his existence; but not till he disclosed his treachery.

“You will not now, Madam, be surprised at my distress. I wander from place to place, in hopes to find rest; but in vain. The innocent victim is constantly presenting herself to my imagination, whom I consider myself as the murderer.”

I was exceedingly affected with this story—it bore so strong a resemblance to my own—and he appeared so much affected.—I looked at him with a mixture of pity and concern. You have not so much cause, said I, to reproach yourself, as you have acted from a point of honour—that ought to reconcile you.—I do not see how you could have done otherwise, circumstanced as you were: you might, indeed, have regretted giving the promise; but it was not in your power, as a man of honour, to revoke it.

Ought I not Madam, said he, to have considered the probability of the lady being innocent, and have put it in her power to have justified herself? Impossible, said I, after you had pledged your honour to the contrary. I should, under the like circumstances, have acted just the same—and I let drop a tear.—If you, did, said he, you would feel endless misery.—I answered, that was possible; but it could not be equal to the misery arising from a breach of honour.

I asked if he lived in the neighbourhood? He answered, no, he only past that way in his rambles; where he should be to-morrow, he could not determine; but it was immaterial, as he was now fully convinced his happiness was for ever lost,—and struck his forehead in the utmost agony.—I was almost as distressed as him, and for a few minutes we were both silent.

And you would, Madam, said he, have acted as I have done? Most certainly, said I. I am well convinced I should; even were I assured such a conduct would have cost me my life. This answer, instead of reconciling him, as I expected it would, to himself, very evidently agitated him more, which surprised me exceedingly. I perceive it is not in my power, said I, to afford you any consolation;—I am extremely concerned for you,—and got up to walk to the house. He appeared unable to answer me. I looked back, and perceived him standing in great disorder; following me with his eyes, until I entered the house.

I cannot describe to you the situation of my mind on this adventure. I regretted more than ever letting the woman go without producing some proof of her marriage, or at least letting me know where she might be found; again, I considered, this proceeded from my own neglect; there was no doubt of her being able to produce such proofs, or she would not, I thought, have dared to venture such an assertion, as she might naturally have expected I should have required them; besides, the story was not impossible, and the simple manner in which it was told, served to convince me she must be some way connected, if not absolutely married to Mr. Spencer.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

SIMPLE FACTS.

VOL. II.

Copyright Chawton House Library

SIMPLE FACTS;
OR, THE
HISTORY OF AN ORPHAN.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
BY MRS. MATHEWS.

VOL II.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY S. LOW, GREAT PORTLAND STREET

FOR THE AUTHOR:

And Sold by Mr. RICHARDSON, Royal-Exchange; Messrs.
HOOKHAM & CARPENTER, Old and New Bond Street;
And Messrs. SCATCHERD & WHITAKER, Ave-Maria
Lane.

1793.

SIMPLE FACTS, &c.

CHAPTER I.

NOT many days after my adventure with the gentleman with the wooden leg, I saw a letter laying open on the parlour table; I just looked at the subscription, and saw Lord F. This raised my curiosity; I concluded, the contents could not be of a very secret nature, otherwise Lord D. would not have left it so careless; I took it up, and read as follows:—

“MY LORD,

“I was, when I had the honour of writing to you last, one of the happiest of fathers; as I had then a son, who promised fair to be an ornament to me, and to all whom he should associate with. He was such, my Lord, as I wished him to be. I will venture to say, he had not a vice; I think, I may go still farther, and add, he had scarce a foible. Such a son! and the only one too, of an old man just going out of the world, the only hopes of a family of some little note, to be lost to his father, is a matter of no small concern. Your sister’s cruelty has drove him from the world. I received a letter from him, telling me, that all enquiries after him would be useless, as Miss Scot had denied him the opportunity of vindicating his character, which had been, he was persuaded, very much injured, as he had no doubt of her affections. He would, he said, abandon the world for ever, as there was nothing in it worthy his notice, since all his hopes of happiness were for ever lost.— ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘if she should ever, by any fortunate circumstance, be convinced of the injury done me, it is all I wish; but that will never come to my knowledge, as before you receive this, I shall be so far secluded from the world, as to baffle all search.’—His words were too true;—for, on enquiry, I found he had left London, and no one could tell where he was gone.— Oh, my Lord! you, who know what it is to be a father, may, in some measure, judge of my distress on this melancholy occasion. All my hope which now remains is, that he may possibly have taken the road which leads towards the object of his affections; and under some disguise, be in your neighbourhood. If you should be the means of restoring him to his disconsolate father, you will lay an eternal obligation on

MY LORD,
Your Lordship’s
Humble Servant,
F——.”

P.S. I will pledge my honor for my son’s innocence.

The emotions I felt on reading this letter are better imagined than described. How did I repent pledging my sacred word so rashly? Then, I thought he might have made this an excuse to his father for abandoning the world, and living in retirement with his wife; this thought agreed with my reason, but not with my love. I found it in vain to endeavour to reconcile things, as one circumstance confounded another. I thought it best to trust to time, which, I hoped, would unveil those mysteries.

About this time, Sir William Warren came on a visit to Lord D. He appeared evidently shocked at the change he perceived in my looks, which seemed to give him more concern than I thought was natural to him. Whether he supposed I should, from the baseness I had discovered in Mr. Spencer, draw comparisons to his advantage; or whether he imagined I might be inclined to revenge; or what other motive he supposed might induce me to look on him in a more favourable light, I will not pretend to determine; but he actually renewed his addresses to me.

I was extremely surprised, and did not endeavour to conceal it. I looked earnestly at him, and asked, if he supposed I was eighteen months ago, the time he first proposed, incapable of judging of what would make me happy. He looked very much chagrined.—No, Sir William, said I, I should be sorry to suspect myself of so much caprice; and when I tell you, I can perceive no change in either you or myself since that time, the same answer I gave then, may be applied now.

He had not sufficient address to conceal the evident marks of disappointment this second refusal gave him; he only answered, he had flattered himself, time, and a thorough knowledge of him, might have altered my sentiments. I assured him, they remained the same,—and left the room:—and the next morning he left the house, which I was not sorry for, as this had confirmed my opinion, of his being capable of a great deal of deception.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER II.

THE September following Lord D. sent to engage a house for us in town, and the end of that month we set out for London; where we had not been many days before the same young woman who had given me so much cause of uneasiness called again, and asked to speak to me. My servant immediately knew her, and on delivering the message, said, "It is, Ma'am, the woman whom you saw the day before you left Mrs. Hartford's;—would you please to see her—?"—I answered,—by all means,—and ordered her again to my dressing-room.

I was very much surprised at her coming a second time, which clearly proved my mistake respecting her being a partner in Mr. Spencer's retirement. In order not to be taken again by surprize, I stopped a few minutes before I entered the room, to collect myself, being determined not to let this opportunity escape of making myself certain of the truth of her ascertions; but I was soon put out of doubt, on seeing her. She fell again on her knees. "Oh, Madam!" cried she, "have mercy, and forgive a wretch, who has been guilty of such a piece of injustice as must for ever destroy her peace of mind," What can you mean? said I, endeavouring, in vain, to raise her. Whatever is your crime, I will forgive it, only confess what it is.

"How!" said she, "did I dare to abuse you?—Wretch that I was.—I was far enough gone in guilt, without adding perjury to my crimes, although I was, in some measure, forced to it, by a more wicked wretch, if possible, than myself."—And she wept bitterly.

Notwithstanding the reason I had to suspect she had done me the greatest of injuries, I could not help pitying her. "This is," cried she, "too much. Spare your pity, Madam, for those whose innocence entitled them to it. I deserve nothing but the severest reproaches from you.

"I have dared to call myself the wife of a man I never even saw, injured his character, and destroyed the peace of a family, separated two hearts whom Providence seemed to have united, and all for a vile seducer, who only wished to sink me to the blackest of crimes, and then to leave me to a guilty conscience; the upbraidings of which are, indeed, a punishment equal to my wickedness." I turned from her, to pay a tribute of tears to my much injured William. After which, tell me, said I, who was so envious of my happiness as to prevail on you to do this? Heavenly God! what was there in our innocent connection displeasing to thee, that thou shouldst suffer such injustice? But proceed, said I, let me know whose agent you have been in this cruel unjust business. Observing she was in a state which deserved my compassion more than anger, I softened my tone. You have been, I am convinced, said I, prevailed on by some very designing person to destroy my peace. I am not accusing you, but them. "You know Sir William Warren, Madam," said she, Yes, answered I, I do, and believe him the only man in the world capable of such an action. "It was him indeed, who forced me to it.—It was him who seduced me from my disconsolate parents, who are, as I said, farmers at Oxford. He threatened to leave me to beggary if I did not succeed with you in preventing your union with Mr. Spencer. Oh, Madam! what is there not in the power of a man to make a poor girl do, who adored him? I dreaded to undertake such a wicked action: but I, unfortunately, dreaded his displeasure more. He said, 'If the union took place, he should be the most miserable of beings; that I should never see him again; but if I

succeeded, we might all be happy.”

“It is needless to relate the arts he made use of to prevail with me; to my eternal confusion, he did prevail. I succeeded, but too well; my agitation, which was the effect of guilt, your goodness of heart attributed it to another cause, and it favoured the deception. For three months after, Sir William behaved very kind and affectionate to me. He then went in the country, and I have never seen or heard of him since. What will become of me I know not; but I deserve all that can befall me.

“I thought it would a little relieve me, if I came to you and undeceived you, respecting Mr. Spencer, whom I shall pray God to forgive me for injuring.”

I desired her to give me her address, and asked if she was in any immediate want of money? She answered, No. But I feared she was, and pressed her to take some, as I thought it was a pity she should be abandoned to distress, it being evident she was not without principle. She fell again on her knees. “Is it possible, Madam,” said she, “you can still have so much pity for such a wretch as I? What can I say? Indeed I am so distressed with your goodness, I can say nothing; but, as you are so kind, if I could, by your means be restored to my unhappy parents, it should be the business of my life to pray for your happiness.” I asked their direction, which she gave me. I assured her I would do all in my power to reconcile her friends to receive, and treat her with kindness. I insisted on her taking something for her present support; and the poor girl went away with her heart lightened a little of guilt, and filled with gratitude.

CHAPTER III.

AS soon as I had a little recovered from the agitation this discovery had occasioned, I returned to the parlour to Lord and Lady D. and repeated every circumstance of what had happened, and requested Lord D. to write immediately to Mr. Spencer's father, and make him acquainted with every particular of this treacherous affair, and to assure him, should his son be found, I was ready to fulfil my engagement to him, and that I was determined, should he not be so fortunate, as to discover his retreat, to continue single the remainder of my life.

Lord F. answered, he feared the discovery was made too late, as he had caused advertisements in all the news-papers to no purpose—that he was a miserable old man, yet he sometimes indulged himself with the hopes that the Almighty might hear his prayers, and by some unexpected event, grant him the happiness of embracing his beloved son once more, and he should then leave the world in peace.

It is now two years since he disappeared, and I begin to fear he is dead.—“Two years!” exclaimed Maria “tell me—is he a tall man, with dark hair?” “yes,” answered Miss Scot, with emotion—“Oh!” cried Maria, clasping her hands in an extacy, “it is the same—how happy shall I be, if Providence should have given me the means of restoring your much injured lover—it is the same—the time—the name—his figure—all agree.” “What do you mean?” said Miss Scot, “is it possible you can have seen such a person?” “O yes,” said Maria, “it is the man in the hut, on the hill, near Exeter, John Moor—I am so happy I can scarce tell you the particulars—but I saw him working in a little garden, and was told he had been there about a twelvemonth, which makes it agree as to the time; the initials of his name too, which he had fortunately neglected to pick out of his linen, were W.S.—Oh, Madam!” continued Maria, kissing Miss Scot's hand, “you cannot conceive how happy I am, in being anyways instrumental to your happiness.”

Miss Scot caught her in her arms—“Tell me,” said she “you saw him, did you?” “yes,”—“was he a tall elegant man, with dark eyes?” “yes,”—“and black hair?” “yes, and it was hanging loose about his shoulders,” said Maria. “Had he a beautiful manly countenance?” “yes, working in a garden”—“that was too much,” said Miss Scot, “he is little calculated for such an employment” and burst into tears.

Maria then told her every particular of the man on the hill, and the opinion of the neighbours respecting him. Miss Scot had not the least doubt of his being Mr. Spencer.

Miss Scot immediately sent for Mr. Worthy, and communicated to him the fortunate discovery, which he soon dispatched to Lord F. who joyfully received the tidings, and without a moment's delay sent two servants off express to acquaint his son, his innocence had been, long since, cleared, and that Miss Scot, as well as himself, was impatient to see him. Lord F. appointed to meet him at Bath; where he soon arrived, to the great joy of all parties. It would be too great an attempt to describe the tender affectionate meeting of the two lovers. After the first transports of Mr. Spencer had a little subsided,—“Oh, my Amelia!” said he “what are my feelings, now, compared to those I had when I last saw you. I was then in the agonies of despair,

by your persisting in keeping the cause of my misfortune, a secret." Miss Scot looked surprized, "I have never," said she, "seen you, since the day preceding the fatal plot, which has given us all so much uneasiness." "Have you then, forgot the man with the wooden leg?" said he— "is it possible," said Miss Scot, "you can be the same? That man wore a wig, besides his complexion was much darker than yours." "I should not have succeeded in my scheme, if I could not have metamorphosed myself.—On my receiving your cruel injunction, never to see you again, and a reference to my own heart for the cause: I was, for some time, in a state of distraction; I examined my heart, to no purpose; there was nothing concealed in it, which was it exposed to open view, could lessen me in the estimation of my friends; my actions at the University, on the strictest scrutiny of them, I could not bring under the denomination of crimes, therefore was more at a loss the more I endeavoured to find out the meaning of your letter: I at last determined on seeing Mrs. Hartford, who acquainted me with all she knew of the affair, and likewise that you had left London that morning. We were both of opinion, that the woman, whom she said, had bound you by a sacred vow not to disclose what she had alledged, was hired by some enemy of one, or both of us, to destroy our peace. Despair, at being denied the power of clearing my innocence, and punishing the authors, made me loathe my existence; the sight of my friends became disagreeable to me, and I resolved to abandon society; but before I put my resolution in final execution, I determined to disguise myself in the manner you saw me, and to endeavour to work on your sensibility, by a feigned, but similar story; the success of which I need not repeat.—Oh, my Amelia! with what difficulty did I restrain from throwing myself at your feet, and imploring you to alter your dreadful purpose; but when I found you determined to persist in it, even should your life pay the forfeit—I no longer hesitated to put my plan in execution.

"I set out for Devonshire, that being the greatest distance from all my connections, and there I soon found a little hut which exactly suited the turn my mind had taken, which I have made a present of to the boy who was my steward, cook, and vallet: I had made a vow, never to suffer a woman to enter my habitation:—by what means I was discovered I am still at a loss to know." This was soon made clear to him, and they all blessed the happy event.

He then entreated Miss Scot to give him an opportunity of punishing his enemies, by informing him who they were, and as Miss Scot was well assured Sir William Warren had left England, she considered no ill consequences could arise from it, related every particular.

The young woman was through her means restored to her friends, and a very sincere penitent.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL things being adjusted, Mr. Spencer pressed for an early day to compleat his happiness. Miss Scot considered they had suffered too much by their separation, started no objection; and they were, to the great satisfaction of their friends, soon united.

Maria was not less happy than the amiable pair on the occasion. She was more than ever adored; they considered her as a superior being, sent amongst them to restore them to peace. Lord F. swore, if he was twenty years younger, his son, should not only have a wife, but a mother, as he was certainly in love; but his love was too great to wish to punish the object of his affections, by imposing an old man on her for a husband. He would, he said, pay his addresses to her in a way, which he made no doubt, would prove more agreeable to her, and love her as his daughter, and he would consider her as such too; she deserved it, as she had restored him to life, by giving him back his son.

Mr. and Mrs. Spencer were to set out in a few days for their seat in the North of England. Lady D. whose health would not permit her to accompany them, entreated her sister to leave Maria with her; and as soon as she was able to travel, she should accompany her down. Mrs. Spencer agreed to this proposal, and set out without her, and Maria went home with Lady D. She was made very happy, in receiving a letter from her Charles, who had written, on his sailing from England, both to her and her brother, in the most tender and affectionate style, which Mr. Harcourt was not less satisfied with than his sister. He was a little uneasy at a letter he received from Lady Palmer, who expressed great displeasure at the conduct of Maria; declared, “if she wished for a continuance of her friendship, she must expect it on no other terms than her bestowing her hand on some respectable man.” A letter from Miss Palmer to Maria expressed pretty nearly the same sentiments. She was very unhappy at this, as she had a sincere love and esteem for both the ladies. Her answer to Miss Palmer’s letter was as follows:—

“MY DEAR MISS PALMER,

YOUR kind letter which I had the satisfaction to receive this morning gave me both pleasure and pain. I should be wanting in gratitude and every proper principle, did I not sincerely rejoice at the welfare of a family to whom I am indebted for so many favours, and who continues to shew such tender concern for my interest. I cannot express the uneasiness it gives me to find Lady Palmer should so ardently wish, or even propose a thing to me, which I cannot immediately gratify. Pray, my dear friend, assure her, I am sensible of the honour she does me, in her kind advice, to which, as far as in my power, I shall ever pay a proper respect. But as I have ever considered the marriage state, without a mutual affection, and something of similarity of sentiments, to be a miserable one, I have determined to remain single until Providence shall think proper to dispose of me to a man I can both love and esteem as I ought. Whenever that happens, I shall not hesitate a moment; but until I have that in my power.—Oh! entreat your kind mother to continue the regard she has ever honoured me with; which were I so unfortunate as to lose, would cause me severe and heartfelt concern. Trusting in her goodness, of which I have had so many proofs, that she will still allow me a place in her esteem, it shall be my constant study to merit both her’s and your’s, which are necessary to the happiness of

“MY DEAR MISS PALMER,
Your ever grateful, and
Truly affectionate Friend,
“MARIA HARCOURT.”

Miss Palmer’s letters to Maria, from this time, were more cool and distant; and in a short time after, she dropt the correspondence altogether. This gave Maria great concern; however, she had the satisfaction to know she had done nothing to deserve their displeasure.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER V.

SIR Richard Harlow still continued his attention to Maria. He was very frequent in his visits to Lord D. She endeavoured as much as possible to avoid him, which he attributed to her prudence. He fancied, if she was once assured he had honourable intentions towards her, her conduct would be very different. He was every day more convinced, she was worthy the shining sphere he intended to raise her to, and therefore determined to obtain the happiness of seeing and conversing freely with her, by openly avowing his disinterested passion.

He pleased himself with the idea of the agreeable surprise she would feel at her good fortune—no wonder the possibility of her rejecting him never once entered his head, as he was so universally sought after by ladies of high rank; he little expected a poor unprotected orphan would have heard of the conquest she had made with indifference; on the contrary, he expected it would not be in her power to conceal the joy she must feel at the prospect of such an elevation. How was he then surprised? when on declaring his love, and the state he intended to raise her to: Instead of the great joy which he expected to see in her countenance, she, without any emotion, coolly thanked him for the honour he intended her, but politely declined accepting it. It is impossible to describe the surprise and disappointment which Sir Richard discovered at this refusal;—he doubted the evidence of his senses. He entreated she would seriously consider his disinterested affection; that he was ready to settle half his estate on her; that he should be the most miserable man existing, if she did not, at least, give him some hopes, that time might alter her sentiments. But Maria steadily persisted in her refusal; which, instead of abating, seemed rather to inflame him the more.—He petitioned and raved by turns.—He at length went so far as to put her in mind of her dependent state, and drew the comparison between it and the envious one he then offered to raise her to.

She rose to ring the bell,—saying, she had given him an answer, and, therefore, must acquaint him she wished to be alone.—He threw himself at her feet.—“Oh!” said he, “forgive the effects of my disordered senses. I would not, for the world offend you; but unless you wish to hear of my death you must give me hopes, that you will, some time or other, make me happy. Let pity, if no other motive can induce you.—Oh, pity my sufferings!—He appeared greatly agitated.—“Let me entreat you, Sir,” said Maria, “if you have no respect for me, to consider what is due to yourself. Let me beseech you to leave me.” “What!” cried he, impatiently, “without your permitting me the poor consolation to think you even pity my sufferings?—I cannot—Miss Harcourt—I cannot.—If you knew the heart you reject with so much indifference, you would not, I am persuaded, wish me to leave you. That heart, since the first moment I saw you, has had no rest. To what,” exclaimed he, “am I reduced! Rejected by the only woman in the world capable of making me happy? Tell me, Miss Harcourt” seizing her hand eagerly, “what part of my conduct is displeasing to you? that I may endeavour to become any thing you like.—My fortune you cannot object to;—but was it twenty times as large, it should be yours. Say what I shall do to obtain you—for mine you must be—or I am the most miserable man upon earth.”

“I make no doubt, Sir Richard,” said Maria, “but you consider a refusal from me as a sort of insolence: but know, that although I am in a state of dependence, I am as much above a mean

unjust action, as you can be, with all your boasted wealth; and was I so mean as to be dazzled with the splendour of your fortune to marry you, without any other inducement, it would sink me so low in my own estimation, I should for ever despise myself. You, I make no doubt, little expected a refusal from me. I confess I consider myself very highly honoured by the preference you have given me; but I did not expect, when I had acquainted you, I never could make a suitable return to your affections, you would so far have forgotten yourself, as to have troubled me farther: but since you oblige me to repeat, what is as disagreeable to me to say as for you to hear, I must tell you again, I never can be your's, and I hope, you will never again, by any vain importunity, lay me under the disagreeable necessity of saying as much."—And she rose from her seat.

He again caught her hand.—“Let me entreat you Miss Harcourt,” said he, “to condescend so far as to tell me what your objections are.—Are your affections engaged?”—Maria answered, he did not conceive it necessary for her to lay open the state of her heart; but if it would afford him any satisfaction to know her objection did not proceed from personal dislike, he was at liberty, if he pleased, to form that conjecture.

“What an unhappy man am I!” said he, “who now will look up to me with envy? What do I profit by having riches and a title?—They cannot give me peace of mind.—How gladly would I exchange my high rank with the meanest subject, possessed of your love.—How have I deluded myself with false hopes!—How flattered myself with the pleasure it would afford me, to raise you to a sphere which many would look up to with envy; and I may, without vanity, say, few would refuse. You are the only woman in the world, I believe, who is superior to the dazzling of riches, and therefore are best entitled to them. To my utter destruction I must love you more than before for this greatness. But tell me, are you so far engaged as no hopes remain for me? Is this envied rival so much my superior? What does he do to deserve you, which I would not undertake?” Maria again entreated him to leave her. “Do not Miss Harcourt,” said he, “drive me to despair.”—In great disorder.—“I cannot exist without you.” A knock at the door greatly relieved Maria. Lady D. returned from an airing, then entered the room. Sir Richard could not conceal his agitation; saluted her in a confused manner, and took an abrupt departure.

CHAPTER VI.

“WHAT! in the name of wonder, have you done to the Baronet, Maria?” said Lady D. “but I can guess his pride has received a shock he did not expect. Have you really had the resolution to refuse three thousand a year, and a title to the bargain? Upon my word, you are an heroic lass, and deserve to have a monument erected in honour of your constancy. I think, it is a pity you cannot make a transfer of your lovers to those who stand so much in need of them; you would then be as much sought after by the unmarried ladies as the gentlemen; the young ladies then would have no occasion to run away with the husbands of their friends. I am told, Miss Andrews is gone off with Captain D. who has left his wife and five children.”

“Miss Andrews gone off with Captain D.!” exclaimed Maria. “I am really sorry for it. What a pity she should be so indiscreet, with so much beauty as she possessed.” “That,” said Lady D. “was her great misfortune; had she been less beautiful, she might have passed her days in peace, and been respected. But her head was turned with admiration, the inordinate love of which is the dangerous rock where thousands split;

“For praise too dearly loved or warmly sought,
Enfeebles all internal strength of thought.”

“A beautiful woman, as well as a learned one, if she is not endowed with a good share of sense, is a most unpleasant companion; but when either, are under the government of good natural abilities, they cannot fail of gaining universal love and esteem.”

“I cannot,” said Maria, “comprehend why women should be vain of what they have been at no pains in acquiring, and what, indeed, is given by Nature, indiscriminately, to the deserving and undeserving. But that any woman, who has had the advantage of a proper education, should be so lost to every principle of honour and virtue, as to even listen to a married man, is what most surprises me.”

“A married man,” said Lady D. “has the best chance. Few men of understanding would take such a woman for a wife, therefore, she is most liable to listen to improper offers. She would naturally expect a single man would make honourable proposals, and would be startled at finding them otherwise; but the other, not having it in his power to make such proposals, regrets his unfortunate situation, swears he is miserable, which she readily believes, pities him, and the natural consequences follow.”

Maria enquired, if it was known where they were gone? “No,” said Lady D. “I only heard they went off last night, after the play; I suppose to the Continent. Miss Andrews has five thousand pounds in her own possession; but Captain D. has nothing but his commission. I am extremely concerned for his family, who will, through his indiscretion, be reduced to a state of indigence. What has such unfeeling wretches to answer for, who, to gratify their vicious inclination, forsake all which ought to be most dear to them.”

In the afternoon, Maria received a note from her brother, requesting, if she was not engaged in the evening, she would pass it with him; and she accordingly went. After tea, he addressed her thus: "My dear Maria do not imagine I mean to shake your constancy for Charles Palmer, who I think deserves it; but I must fulfil the promise I made to a gentleman, who applied to me this morning, and requested me to use my influence; but that I declined. It is Sir Richard Harlow; he appears sincerely attached to you; offered whatever terms you or I would propose. I gave him no hopes, knowing the state of your heart." Maria, after thanking her brother for his tender regard to her happiness, expressed her astonishment at Sir Richard's meanness in persecuting her further, after the conversation which had passed between him and her in the morning. She had then given him such an answer as was, in her opinion, sufficient to satisfy any man of the least delicacy, and therefore did not consider it necessary to give him any other; but if her brother pleased, he might tell him her affections were unalterably engaged.

Mrs. Harcourt said something about the romantic notions of young girls, who suffer themselves to be led away, and perhaps injure both themselves and their families, by supposing they are violently in love, before they are capable of judging of what will be to their advantage; that it was ridiculous they should be allowed to act for themselves in those matters, when they had friends who were so much better able to judge of what was proper for them. She had, she said, never interfered in Maria's concerns before; but she could now no longer forbear, as she thought she was acting very foolishly, in refusing such a man as Sir Richard Harlow, who, in her opinion, had the advantage of Charles Palmer in every respect, for the ever distant prospect of being united to him God knows when! besides, she must not expect ever to be received by Lady Palmer, as a daughter, as she was well assured she never would.

Maria was greatly concerned to hear Mrs. Harcourt speak so unfeelingly. She only answered, that if any power on earth could have prevailed to have shaken her resolution, respecting Charles, it would certainly have been Dr. Curtis. As she had withstood the entreaties of him, joined with those of her brother, she should consider him as very ill-treated indeed, if she was so mean as to be allured by the splendour of Sir Richard Harlow's fortune to marry him. Indeed, she confessed, had she not known Charles Palmer, she should have given the Doctor the preference to any man she had ever seen. She had refused him for Charles Palmer, and therefore should not hesitate a moment in as steadily refusing Sir Richard.—Mr. Harcourt was not displeased at his sister's sentiments, which reflected honour to her. But Mrs. Harcourt disapproved them, from not understanding them. Maria was very happy to find her brother had too much generosity to be biassed by his wife, who, she saw, was very much inclined to favour Sir Richard.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Maria returned home, she acquainted Lady D. with Sir Richard's applying to her brother, and expatiated on his meanness in endeavouring to obtain her by such means. Lady D. said if that was the case, he might prove very troublesome. "These young heirs," said she, "are so little accustomed to refusals, they do not know how to brook them; but you are well protected, I think he will not dare to offer you any violence. I shall soon be able to travel, and will deliver you safe to Mrs. Spencer, who writes me word, that although she has her beloved William constantly with her, she wants you to compleat her happiness."

Maria rejoiced at the prospect of soon seeing her beloved friend. She had the sincerest respect for Lady D. yet the tenderness she had received from Mrs. Spencer had deeply penetrated her heart, and she longed to be a witness to her happiness.

Sir Richard had called several times at Lord D's; but Maria had had the good fortune to escape seeing him; he then wrote her a letter, which she, being unacquainted with his hand, to her great confusion, opened and read as follows:—

TO MISS HARCOURT, AT THE RT. HON.
LORD D——'S.

"MOST charming; but Ah! most cruel of women! may I be permitted to hope you will pardon my presumption, if I once more venture to implore your pity for one who is reduced from one of the happiest of mortals to misery and despair. Though the splendour of my fortune, and all I have on earth to offer, are too trifling to merit your consideration, let that pity, which is an inseparable companion to a mind, such as yours, where sweetness and benignity shine so apparent, plead in my behalf. To that then let me address myself; there alone I rest my hopes, that you will not surely single me out to be made for ever miserable, by denying me the happiness of seeing you. How have I deserved your cruelty? How offended you? Is it by having given up my whole soul to you, that you treat me with such disdain; yet, let me hope you will still hear me. If to adore you is any way to deserve you, my title I would yield to none. No man living can love you more ardently than I do. Since the first moment I saw you you have ever been present to my imagination. My heart beats to tell you of its aching. I loath the sight of those friends who have witnessed my former happiness. Where can I fly for peace, but to her, who is alone capable of restoring it to my troubled breast. You, who are all gentleness, will surely feel a pleasure in giving peace to that heart which must soon cease to beat, if not permitted to pour out its suffering at your feet; whilst it has life it must be most adorable of women!

Your's,

RICHARD HARLOW."

Maria was greatly distressed at having opened this letter. She immediately shewed it to Lady D. and begged her advice; who said, the only way to prevent his troubling her with another, would be, to enclose it, and send it back;—which she did, with the following lines:—

TO SIR RICHARD HARLOW.

“I little expected, when I assured Sir Richard Harlow it was not in my power to make a proper return to his addresses, he would have known so little what was due to himself, as to have persecuted me farther, and by such a conduct reduced me to the necessity of returning his letter, with the disagreeable repetition of what I have already assured him. When he did me the honour of his personal addresses, my resolution was then unalterably fixed never to be his; therefore I will only add to what I have said before, that his troubling me farther can have no other effect than to render himself odious to

MARIA HARCOURT.”

Having sent this, she expected to hear no more of Sir Richard. Lady D. was now pretty well recovered, and they were preparing for their journey, when Maria's peace received an unexpected shock. Her beloved brother who had been sent for to make a will for a gentleman who was dying had caught a fever, and his life was despaired of. It is impossible to convey an idea of her distress on this occasion; her brother was dear to her from every tender tie; his gentle treatment, and the kind sympathetic concern he shewed for her happiness, when she all trembling had laid the state of her heart before him, had warmed that heart with gratitude. Add to this, he was her only protector, the only relation who had for some years bestowed a thought upon her; and it is no wonder her affliction at the danger of losing him was more than her tender nature could well support. She was forbade to see him, as his fever was of a contagious nature. She from the agitation of her mind soon became nearly as bad as him; she shut herself up in her room, and spent the whole of her time in prayer, for the Almighty to spare her brother her friend, her only protector. Lady D. entreated her to compose herself, and urged all that tender friendship and religion could suggest, to strengthen her mind, to trust in a merciful Creator, who would, if he saw good, restore him; but not to forget her christian fortitude in resigning to his will, should he, from motives too obscure for our weak nature to comprehend, think proper to take him from her.

Maria clasped her hands, and fell on her knees. “Oh!” cried she, “Almighty and merciful God! I beseech thee to spare my brother. Look with pity on a poor unprotected orphan, who has no other friend, whose protection she can claim. Spare him! Oh, spare my brother!” Lady D's tears flowed apace, she raised Maria, and took her in her arms. “Be comforted, my sweet girl,” said she, “all who know you will act the part of brother, sister, and friend to you.” Mr. Worthy tapped at the door. Lady D. opened it,—his looks were those of compassion and tender distress,—which Maria observed, and exclaimed, with horror in her countenance, “Ah! he is gone!—Tell me, Mr. Worthy,—am I, indeed, without a friend?” He could not speak. At last, taking her hand, “You shall never be without one whilst I live,” said he. “I see I have lost my brother,” said Maria, “I see it by your generous pity. Oh, Mr. Worthy,” continued she, bathing his hand with tears, “he was the kindest, gentlest, and most affectionate brother ever known;—but he is gone;—I am now an orphan indeed.” Her words became incoherent; her looks disordered. It was judged necessary for her to be put to bed; and Mr. Worthy sent for a physician, who ordered her a composing draught, and desired she might be kept quiet. Mr. Worthy had accounts from a servant, whom he had sent to enquire how Mr. Harcourt did, that he died about a quarter of an hour before; that he had not been sensible since he was first taken ill, but in his ravings had talked much of his sister.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER VIII.

THIS unfortunate circumstance obliged Lady D. to postpone her journey until Maria was recovered; which, for some days, they were in great doubt about. At her intervals of reason, she lamented the loss of her brother in the most pathetic terms. Lady D. considered it best to let nature have its course, and therefore forbore to distress her with unreasonable expostulations. She knew, in the state Maria was in, it would only augment her grief to tell her it availed nothing. She endeavoured, by tender acts of kindness, to call her mind back to its peaceful state. As soon as Maria's fever had a little abated, she perceived, and was pierced to the heart with gratitude for Lady D's attention. She took her hand, and pressed it to her heart, and with her eyes lifted to Heaven, exclaimed. "Father of mercy! forgive me if I have erred in this grief, which my weak nature was unable better to support for my poor brother, whom thou hast thought proper to deprive me of! Oh! deign to look with pity on me, and enable me to continue to act so, as to deserve the kindness of those amiable friends though hast raised up to protect me from the designing people, whom my poor brother feared I might fall a prey to! And thou blessed spirit of the best of brothers, Oh! continue to guard and protect thy sister!"

Lady D. was exceedingly affected with Maria's piety. She appeared more composed, and soon fell into a gentle sleep. She recovered very fast from that time, and in a few days was able to sit up: a tranquil resignation appeared in her countenance, which added to her natural sweetness, she looked something more than human.

Lady D. was sincerely rejoiced to see Maria so well; she strove by every little attention in her power to divert her, and succeeded so well, that in a short time, she was so far recovered, as to acquaint her ladyship, she hoped soon to be able to travel, as she longed very much to see her dear friend Mrs. Spencer.

This gave Lady D. great pleasure; she hoped, as Maria was able to think of her absent friends, the violence of her grief was a little abated; yet, it was evident, notwithstanding the strong effort she made to appear composed, sorrow had taken deep hold of her heart. Lady D. was at a loss how to contrive for Maria to take leave of her sister. She feared, if she went to the house, she would not be able to support the shock she must receive on entering it. It was at length determined for Mr. Worthy to wait on Mrs. Harcourt, to entreat her to come with him in Lord D's carriage, to sit an evening with her. Although Lady D. had prepared Maria for this visit, she, on Mrs. Harcourt's entering the room, fainted. Her struggles were vain, her fortitude, though she had a considerable share, gave way to her tender sensibility.

"Oh, my dear sister," said she, when she was able to speak, "we are two unfortunate creatures; you have lost a kind, tender, and affectionate husband, and I, the best of brother's. But who dare question the Omnipotence of Heaven? Let us, by patiently submitting, render ourselves objects worthy the compassion of that awful Judge, who alone can give us strength to support our sorrows. When I reflect on the many friends he has raised me up, to instruct my infant mind, and protect my dangerous years, I think I do wrong in indulging my grief. But I trust, he who knows the weakness of my Nature, will pity and forgive me."

Let us, my dear sister, though the tie is dissolved which united us, not forget it once subsisted; let the remembrance cement our affections, if possible, more closely. I shall, which ever way Providence may think proper to dispose of me, ever consider and respect you as my sister."

Although as has been already observed, Mrs. Harcourt had not the greatest share of sensibility, she was very much affected with Maria's words; assured her, she should ever love and esteem her, for her husband's sake, and would always be happy to render her every service in her power.

After these mutual assurances of friendship, Maria acquainted Mrs. Harcourt she should leave Bath in a few days, and they embraced each other, and took an affectionate leave.

Lady D. was more than ever delighted with her young friend, and on communicating to Lord D. and her Uncle Maria's discourse, expressed her surprise to find such propriety of thought in one of her years. "Her mind, poor girl," said Mr. Worthy, "has been softened by early adversity. I hope her latter days will be crowned with peace and tranquillity. God grant I may live to bestow her on her Charles, who will, I make no doubt, value her as she deserves. I never was more interested for any person in my life, than I am for her." "She is," said Lord D. "a most excellent girl, and will, I hope, be happy. I wish Sir Richard Harlow may not cause her some uneasiness; I saw him this morning at the Rooms, he seems not to relish the refusal she gave him; he talked of her with great warmth, and enquired particularly whether Lady D. intended to take her with her into the country; I answered yes, Miss Harcourt was now considered as one of our family, and as such, would be protected." "That she shall," said Mr. Worthy, "I have no desire to use a sword or pistol again, but by G—" continued he, with an honest warmth, "I would with great pleasure blow out the brains of any man, who had the rascality to take an unfair advantage of that girl, old as I am." "My dear Uncle," said Lady D. "you would not surely fight a duel for her?" "Would I not," answered he, "but you are mistaken, who is more fit to protect her? She has no relation who takes that charge, and she shall not suffer from the want of one, whilst I live; I am an old man, and cannot expect to have many years to come; my life is therefore of no great value, I have risked it in a worse cause, and should think it well bestowed, were it lost in defending an innocent, unprotected, deserving girl." "Upon my word Uncle," said Lady D. "if I were not pretty certain of Maria's constancy, I should be inclined to believe, from your great warmth, she had accepted you as a lover." "You may call it what you please," said Mr. Worthy, "but I suppose you will not allow it the name of love, without there is a desire of possessing the person. I will confess to you, I think I do love her; of what nature my love is, I leave to the casuist, but I know, to see her happy, would be a great means in making me so. I was not so fortunate as to meet with such a girl thirty years ago, or perhaps I might have felt a different passion, and should not have been now, what is called an old batchelor."

CHAPTER IX.

MARIA'S mind had been so occupied this last fortnight, with the thoughts of her brother, that her Charles had scarce been admitted to enter her head. The morning after Mrs. Harcourt's visit, she was agreeably surprised with the following letter, brought by a ship, which had met that which Charles went in, on their passage.

TO MISS HARCOURT, BATH.

"IF my most adorable Maria, the prayers of one, whose heart and soul are devoted to you, have been heard, this will find you well and happy; every night do I implore the Almighty to protect and comfort you, and to guard and watch over your innocence, and he will protect you I most confidently believe; he approves our loves, he knows the purity of our hearts. In the morning I repeat my prayer, that he will avert from my Maria every unfortunate accident which is incident to human nature, and endow her with fortitude. Oh, my love! my dear Maria! what does this separation cost me? And so well I know your heart, I suffer more when I think of your feeling the same anxiety for your Charles; but let the thought which supports me to bear it with fortitude, likewise cherish and comfort you. Think, my love, on the happy—happy—time, when we shall meet to part no more;—that is what animates me;—that thought is alone sufficient to enable me to suffer all fatigue; nothing will appear difficult to me, that may any way tend to shorten the tedious absence and hasten the time when we shall be blessed with each other. How do your amiable friends Miss Scot and Mr. Worthy? How happy am I, my Maria is so well protected! It affords me a satisfaction which were I deprived of, my existence would be insupportable. On your safety, my beloved girl, depends all the future happiness of your Charles. What would this world be to me but a loamsome desert, were I, by any fatal accident, deprived of you? To you I am indebted for every good principle. Let me look back to the happy time, when my Maria and I walked hand in hand, communicating our innocent hopes and fears to each other. Oh! my love, what a pleasure do I feel, when I reflect, that I never had a thought towards you which I could not with confidence look up to Heaven to support. Let no fears disturb you, my beloved girl; but with me look forward to happiness; such happiness as few are capable of tasting. Before you receive this I shall be at India, when I will write again. The only pleasure I can promise myself in this cruel separation is, in writing to my Maria, and receiving her letters. I think I need not doubt, but she will feel the same; therefore, it will be unnecessary for me to solicit you on that subject. How could I support my existence, had I a doubt of your constancy? It would be impossible: How shall I thank you for the open unaffected assurances you so generously gave me of your love. Oh, my love, how restless and impatient will the days of your Charles be, till he finds some better way than that of words to express the sense he has of your excellence! But the time will come;—yet a life devoted to you will still be too short to repay you. I know not how to finish writing; it is like parting a second time. May every good angel guard and protect you, my heavenly girl, is the constant prayer of your ever loving, and truly affectionate,

CHARLES PALMER."

"P.S. I have written to your good brother by the same packet."

Dated at sea, 30 degrees, north latitude, and 10 east longitude.

This letter gave Maria great comfort; she shewed it to Lady D. who congratulated her on the prospect of being united to a man, who, from the style of his letter, appeared to deserve her. “Ah!” said Maria,—the tears gushing from her eyes,—“he may be dead by this time. My poor brother was well a month ago.” “Let me entreat you, my dear,” said Lady D. “to think otherwise; do not give way to such melancholy reflections. Were we constantly to indulge such gloomy ideas, human nature would become insupportable, we should live in continual apprehension for our absent friends; but that kind Providence, who wishes not to see his creatures unhappy, has implanted in our nature a sufficiency of hope to comfort us: we must not neglect to make a proper use of his goodness, lest he in anger deprives us of the power, and leaves us to despair.”

Maria thanked Lady D. for her kind admonitions, and assured her, she would, as far as her weak nature would permit her, profit by them.

The day which was fixed for their leaving Bath arrived. Maria shed fresh tears to the memory of her brother, and then gave her hand to Mr. Worthy, who conducted her to the carriage. Every thing worthy remarked on the road, such as the names of the gentlemen’s seats, and any other circumstances which might entertain, Mr. Worthy and Lady D. pointed out, in order to divert Maria; this was very agreeable to her, and she became sufficiently mistress of herself to appear chearful. After an agreeable journey of three days, they arrived safe at Mr. Spencer’s seat. The joy of Mrs. Spencer at seeing them was evidently checked by the alteration she perceived in Maria’s looks. She embraced her tenderly.—Maria could not conceal the tears, which, in spite of her struggles, made their way down her cheeks.—“When you left me,” said she, “I had a kind brother.”—She wiped her eyes—Mrs. Spencer did the same.—Mr. Worthy coughed, and turned to the window.—Not a word was uttered for some minutes.—Mr. Spencer, taking that hand of Maria which was disengaged, Mrs. Spencer having the other, broke the silence. “Will not,” said he, “Miss Harcourt do me the honor to consider me her brother; you know as my father has adopted you, I may claim that relationship, and you shall find I will not confine myself to mere words. If you ever should stand in need of the protection of a brother, I will shew you, I will, with my life, defend you.” Maria could only thank him with tears, and a look, which spoke more eloquently than words. He pressed her hand as an earnest of what he had said. They then entered on general topics until dinner was announced.

Maria was greatly delighted to see the mutual happiness which subsisted between Mr. and Mrs. Spencer; the respectful lover appeared in his every look and action and the tender, affectionate, and obliging wife was successfully practised by Mrs. Spencer. “Let no one say,” said Maria, to herself, “there is no happiness in this world, after witnessing such as this. What more is the human mind capable of enjoying, than the dear delight arising from the desire of pleasing those we love, and to see our endeavours succeed, to meet a reciprocal return,

“Thought meeting thought, and Will preventing will.”

Happy they! Such it must ever be, where two people meet in each other good sense, good humour, and mutual affection. Possession, instead of satiating, endear them the more. They every day discover new valuable qualities, and their life is one continual scene of delight.”

Maria anticipated the happiness she should enjoy, if it pleased Heaven to restore her beloved Charles. She figured to herself the pleasure it would afford her to pay him that attention she saw practised by her friend with so much success.

The rural situation of Mr. Spencer’s seat was admirably calculated to suit that calm tranquillity Maria’s mind was every day gaining. The house stood in the middle of a wood, with so many pleasing walks, that she was never weary with rambling from one labyrinth of delight to another—cooling breezes—singing of birds—with the charming murmuring of water, are pleasing sounds to a mind just regaining its peace. She spent most of her mornings in these shades, generally accompanied by Lady D. and Mr. Worthy, whose observations, from the knowledge they had of botany and natural philosophy, rendered their conversation both agreeable and instructing. The two lovers, as Mr. and Mrs. Spencer may justly be stiled, were often of their party. Lord D. spent most of his mornings either on horseback or in his study.

Their party received an agreeable addition by the arrival of Lord F. who said, he was induced to set out the instant he heard of their arrival, by the great desire he had of seeing his adopted daughter.

“Well my little girl,” said he, “will you not come and tell your father how you do?” Maria gave him her hand, which he kissed. “It is well my Lord,” said Lady D. “you take sanction under that name, or I should be in fear for you; you would be in danger. I can assure you, no man will be suffered with impunity to use freedoms with Maria; she has a champion ready to defend her;” who replied, he would not turn Knight Errant for such a dulcinea. “By all that is good, I would fight myself, sooner than sit quietly by and see her ill treated. That man who has not decency enough to be kept in order by the sweetness and innocence of such a countenance, I think, deserves to be sent out of the world, as being unfit for society.” “That is exactly my opinion,” said Mr. Worthy.

The next morning Lord F. took an opportunity, when he saw Mrs. Spencer and Maria alone, to present the former with a casket of jewels; saying, he meant to have reserved them until she did him the honor of making him a grandfather, and to have given them by way of an acknowledgement; but as he might not live to see that day, she must do him the honor to accept them now, and he would depend on her gratitude. Mrs. Spencer made a suitable acknowledgement to his generosity, and accepted his present. He then turned to Maria. “May,” said he, “an old man venture to make a present to a young lady without being suspected of having a design. But as a father I think I may beg your acceptance of this little box, as a small token of the obligation and love I bear you, both for your worth, and for making me one of the happiest old men in England.” Maria was so surprised and confounded with this generosity, she knew not how to act, whether to receive or refuse his present. “Indeed, my Lord,” said she, “you distress me exceedingly by over-rating the service I have done you;—it is to Providence alone you are indebted.” “No matter,” cried he, interrupting her, “I hate to be in debt any where, and I do not

see how I can discharge what I owe to Providence better than being grateful to you, whom she has appointed her agent; and my acknowledgment for her kindness, in hearing the prayers of an old man, almost sunk to the grave with despair, shall not stop here. I have enough, and can, without injury to my son, provide for an amiable girl, who is, from misfortune, not misconduct, in a state of dependence. I know William too well," continued he, "to believe he will be displeased at what I have done for you; he will, I know, respect my memory the more." "That," said Mrs. Spencer, "I will answer for."

Maria was again reduced to her usual way of expressing her thanks; having no words any ways adequate to what she felt; tears answered all the purpose; and an involuntary pressure of Lord F's hand, convinced him she had a grateful heart.

As soon as Maria could conveniently leave the room she retired to her own, there to pour forth the effusions of her heart to the great disposer of events. The box contained jewels to the value of five hundred pounds. The satisfaction she received at this unexpected kindness, did not proceed from the value of the present, but that the Almighty, to whose goodness she justly attributed every attention she received, should have raised her up such friends, was what exalted her. "Let no one," said she, "despair or repine at the dispensation of that Power, who seeth best what is proper for his creatures." Her mind was employed in thanksgiving, and prayer, that Heaven would enable her to continue that rectitude of conduct which had endeared her to this worthy family, until the bell summoned her to the dining parlour.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT two months after this, Mrs. Spencer, one day, on reading the news-paper and looking significantly at Maria, said, "Here is good news for somebody!" Maria's colour changed. Mrs. Spencer read an extract of a letter from ——.

'Our worthy Governor has appointed his nephew, Mr. Palmer, who lately arrived here, his principal secretary, in the room of Mr. ——, deceased.'

"There is news for you, my dear, your Charles is in a fair way of making a great fortune, without exposing himself to danger." Maria confessed it afforded her great satisfaction to know he had arrived safe; but expressed her surprise at not receiving a letter from him by the packet which brought that intelligence. Mrs. Spencer advised her to write to Mrs. Harcourt, to enquire if any such had arrived, directed to her husband; which she did, and received for answer, that there was no such letter. There was an insinuation in Mrs. Harcourt's letter of the probability of Charles having forgot her; and an earnest request, that she would not be so blind to her own interest as to continue indifferent to Sir Richard Harlow's generous offer; who still adored her. This letter gave Maria great uneasiness; she made no doubt but Sir Richard had gained Mrs. Harcourt over to his interest, and dreaded, least she should have been prevailed on to suppress Charles's letters. She was shocked at the idea of her being capable of such an unjust action; but when she reflected on the forced civility Mrs. Harcourt had shewn towards her ever since her refusal of her brother, she did not think her suspicions were without foundation. She communicated her fears to Mrs. Spencer, who was of the same opinion; but advised her to make herself easy until the next packet arrived, and if she did not receive a letter by it, she might reasonably conclude there was some treachery practised. "We go to Bath," said she, "in October, when you will have an opportunity of judging from Mrs. Harcourt's conversation how she is affected; if you have then reason to believe her unfaithful, you have nothing to do but to write immediately to Mr. Palmer, acquaint him with the death of your brother, and desire his letters may, in future, be addressed to Mr. Spencer." Maria endeavoured to reconcile herself to this disappointment; she considered it could not be attended with any serious consequence, therefore she made up her mind to wait the event patiently.

The remainder of their time in the country was spent in the same rational manner as before described; admiring the beauties of nature; paying and receiving visits from the neighbouring gentry, who were hospitable and friendly. Maria wished it had been consistent with propriety for her to have remained at this peaceful abode until her Charles returned; but fate had otherwise disposed of her. As the time drew near which was fixed for their leaving the country, she every day spent some portion of her time in her favourite shades; there, in earnest thankfulness, did she pour forth in ejaculations the language of her grateful heart to that power who had restored it to peace, and ardently prayed for his support and protection when she should be again exposed to the world.

Lord and Lady D. were to go from Mr. Spencer's seat to London, accompanied by Mr. Worthy. Lord F. said he would return to his mansion, there to prepare for a long journey, this

being the last excursion he fancied he should make in this world. "I have," said he, "lived to have my prayers granted; the happiness I have felt on the occasion is not to be described," and, continued he, "I made a solemn promise, that if Heaven would permit me once more to embrace my son, I would then cheerfully meet death, and be at any time ready to accompany him whenever he should think proper to call for me. I have had some warnings of his near approach, and I do not intend to break my promise; but not to be taken by surprise, I will receive him as a friend, and entertain him in my own house. If, my dear children, I should walk off without seeing you again," taking one of his son's hands and one of Maria's, "you will, William, remember this, my last request, to consider this dear girl as your sister; she deserves all we can do for her." Though he spoke this in a jocular manner, there was not one present but was affected.—Maria's tears flowed plentifully.—Mr. Spencer was unable to make a reply.—Lord F. was satisfied.

These affectionate friends took leave of each other, with a promise from Mr. and Mrs. Spencer and Maria to join them, the spring following, at London. Maria's mind was variously occupied during the journey—the parting with her friends—her Charles's letters—and the thoughts of her deceased brother, depressed her spirits, notwithstanding the efforts Mr. and Mrs. Spencer made to divert her.

As soon as they arrived at Bath, she waited on Mrs. Harcourt; and after paying a tribute of tears to the memory of her dear brother, and some kind enquiries and expressions of tenderness to her sister, she expressed her surprise at not having received a letter from Charles. Mrs. Harcourt appeared evidently confused; but on recovering herself, said, she hoped Maria did not think if any such had come to her hands, but she should immediately have sent it to her; she had no other interest in wishing her to think less of Charles Palmer than what proceeded from her regard to her happiness; he was very young when he made his engagement with her, therefore, it was not an improbable conjecture that he might, as he grew older, see the impropriety of marrying contrary to the consent of his friends; or, indeed, he might be dead. That, Maria answered she was happily convinced, was not the case, as she had lately seen an account of him in the news. "Then," answered Mrs. Harcourt, "you have the more reason to suspect him of inconstancy." She acquainted Maria, her brother, Dr. Curtis, was very well married. "You must," said she, "be now convinced, I have no other motive for wishing you to forget Mr. Palmer than your own happiness." Maria entreated, she would forbear to urge her further on the subject, if she really wished her happiness, declared, that any insinuation against Charles would answer no other purpose than to disturb her peace of mind; but it never would in the smallest degree shake her constancy.

Mrs. Harcourt appeared greatly disappointed. She again entreated Maria to attribute what she had said to the sincere friendship she had for her; but since she was determined to persist, she must take the consequence; this was the last time she would trouble her with her fears.—They parted friends.

Notwithstanding these professions of Mrs. Harcourt, Maria had her doubts of their sincerity. That Charles had written on his arrival at India she had the firmest persuasion; and there was no other way to account for her not having received his letters; she likewise fancied she saw a conscious guilt in Mrs. Harcourt's countenance, which strengthened her opinion and

augmented her fears. She was not displeased at her not having mentioned Sir Richard Harlow, concluding from thence, he had given over further thoughts of her; but on communicating to Mrs. Spencer the purport of the conversation, that lady was of a different opinion. She assured Maria, there was great reason to believe Mrs. Harcourt's silence on that head proceeded from some design. "Sir Richard is not, at present, at Bath," said she, "as I desired Mr. Spencer to enquire at the rooms. Should he come whilst we are here, I would advise you to go very little to your sister's, as I confess, I am fearful she is in a plot against your peace. You must write to Mr. Palmer by the packet which sails next week, and acquaint him with all which has happened.

It cost Maria many a severe and heartfelt pang, to think it would be twelve long months before she could hope to hear from her dear Charles. Her distress on the occasion was doubled, when she figured to herself the anxiety he would suffer from not hearing either from her or her brother. She every day found some relief, in pouring out the sorrows of her heart to him on paper. She had a large packet ready to send off the next day, when Mrs. Harcourt sent to request she would pass the evening with her.

She went with great reluctance, as she was under the necessity of practising deceit which was repugnant to her principles to appear with common politeness.

Mrs. Harcourt paid her uncommon attention; and when Mrs. Spencer's servant came for her, at ten o'clock, pressed her so earnestly to stay to supper; Maria wanted resolution to refuse her. She then sent away the servant; saying, she would send Miss Harcourt home.

After supper Maria expressed a desire that a servant might call her a chair, and she need not trouble him to go home with her. "What occasion have you for a chair?" said Mrs. Harcourt, "it is a fine night, and the streets are clean." Maria fearful, lest her sister should misconstrue her objections to walking, and attribute to pride what was by no means due to it, consented to walk. When she came to the top of Milsome-street, where she had occasion to cross, a chaise with four horses obstructed the way, and as she was turning to look for another convenient crossing, two men seized her and forced her into it; one of the men entered with her. She screamed for help; but the postillions went off with such velocity, it was impossible for any one to come to her assistance. The person who entered the chaise addressed her: "Be not alarmed; no harm is intended you." Notwithstanding the fright Maria was in, she immediately knew him, and exclaimed, "Is it possible Sir Richard Harlow can be capable of such an action as this? Can he be so mean as to take such a shameful advantage? For Heaven's sake!" cried she, falling on her knees, "set me at liberty, and do not bring eternal remorse on yourself; be assured you can never reap any advantage from this step." He endeavoured, in vain, to raise her. "No!" said she, "Here at your feet will I remain till you promise to set me at liberty. Pity me! Oh, Sir Richard, pity an innocent unprotected orphan, and do not render her existence insupportable." "My dearest life," said he,—catching her in his arms, and forcing her on the seat,— "be composed: upon my honor, no harm is intended you." "Dare you, Sir," said Maria, "name honor, when you are acting contrary to the laws of your country, religion, and equity? But before it is too late, Oh! order your postillions to return with me to my friends; they will thank you, and I will pray for you, as long as I live, I will respect you." "Will you," said he, "swear you will be mine? Only give me your honor you will be mine, and I will return with you more happy than any mortal existing; nothing

but despair could have induced me to the step I have taken; but life without you is insupportable;—mine you must be,—no power on earth shall take you from me.” “Think, Sir Richard, on what you do. What happiness can you promise yourself from one you thus force, even were I to consent to be your’s under such circumstances, I never could love or esteem you; our future life would be one continual scene of misery; I should ever consider you as the destroyer of my peace,” and she burst into tears. “No,” said he, “my dearest life, you will thank me for the step I have taken to make you one of the happiest of women. At all events I must proceed, as nothing can be worse than to part with you; even at this moment, cruel as you are, I am happier than it is possible to describe. Oh! Miss Harcourt, think on the love I bear you; attribute this action to its true motive; only endeavour to think well of me, and it shall be the business of my life to make you happy.” “Never!” exclaimed she, “Do not cherish such a thought. Happiness can never more be known to me, if I cannot prevail on you to return with me to my friends. If to see me rendered, through your means, the most miserable woman existing; to feast your eyes on me in the agonies of despair, or perhaps death, will be pleasing to you, then persist, for that is what you must expect.” “Your fate, Miss Harcourt,” said Sir Richard, “depends on yourself, only resolve to be happy, and you will be so. I need not put you in mind of the station you will be raised to, or the many who will look with envy up to you. “Pity,” said she, “would be more applicable. I should, indeed, deserve it, were I reduced to accept a situation which I look on with horror and aversion.” “Have a care Miss Harcourt,” said he, “how you treat me with scorn, by Heaven! I cannot support it. It will drive me to desperation. What is there in me so very objectionable, that I may not presume to hope that time and my tender assiduities will not conquer; however, if I must suffer, it will be some consolation to me, you are a witness to the effects of your cruelty.” “But,” said Maria, “you will surely change your purpose, when I tell you I am engaged by every sacred tie to another.” “A childish engagement,” answered he, “made before either of you were capable of judging of what was right, or what would make you happy.” “No matter” answered she, “when, or how it was made, you have no right to force me to break it.” “I have this right,” replied he, “to prefer my own happiness to any other man’s, who, I am not sure, deserves you more than myself. I am convinced, my existence depends on you, which I cannot be so certain is the case with this much envied rival: however,” continued he, with a resolute tone, “you will do well to forget him, as your future fate must depend on me.” This speech, and the tone with which it was uttered, struck terror to her very soul, and silenced all her faculties; she was deprived the power of utterance, and the remainder of the way vented her complaints by sighs and tears.

CHAPTER XI.

THEY travelled at a great rate all that night and till about nine the next morning, when the chaise stopt at a genteel house in the middle of a park. An old servant opened the door; Sir Richard handed Maria into a very elegant parlour, where breakfast was prepared; he pressed her to take some, which she declined; but begged he would permit her to retire. He then rang the bell, and a decent elderly woman entered, whom he ordered to wait on Miss Harcourt to her apartment. He again pressed her to take some refreshment. She made no answer, but followed the woman, who conducted her to a very elegant apartment; consisting of a library, dressing-room, and bedchamber; on her entering which, she threw herself on her knees, regardless of her attendant, and implored the Almighty to guard and protect her. The woman looked with astonishment. "I am sorry," said she, when Maria arose, "to see so sweet a lady in distress; but hope you will soon be happy; indeed, you cannot be otherwise with so good a man as Sir Richard; do not be uneasy Ma'am," continued she, "he means nothing but what is honourable, I can tell you as much as that. Ah, he is a good man; many a day have I carried him in my arms and nursed him when he was a child, and a sweet baby he was."

Maria paid no attention to this, but walked the room greatly disordered. The old woman pressed her to take something, till she at length consented to take one cup of tea, which was brought. She then requested to be left alone. The old woman made a curtsy and retired. Maria now finding herself alone, gave vent to her feelings. "Merciful God," said she, "to what am I reserved? Oh, have pity on me, and release me from this confinement. Ah, my ever dearest Charles, could you but see your poor Maria now, what would be your sufferings?—No," cried she, in a louder tone, "he may keep me a prisoner for life, he may kill me, but never will I be his." The old woman who was ordered by Sir Richard to stay in the adjacent room now entered. "Wretch," cried Maria, on seeing her, "leave me; am I to be debarred the privilege to complain." The woman concluding from the manner she spoke, and the colour in her face, she was in a fever, acquainted her master, who entered the room very much agitated. Maria, on seeing him, gave a loud scream. "Save me," cried she, "Heavenly God! save me from that monster, that wretch, who is the destroyer of my peace! but you shall suffer for this," continued she, in a distracted tone. "I have friends who will not let you treat me thus, and I will go to them," walking towards the door; finding it fastened, she burst into tears. "No," said she, "I cannot go; I am a prisoner; a poor unhappy prisoner." Her words became more incoherent; she raved and wept alternately, and soon became totally insensible. Sir Richard exclaimed, he was an unhappy man. He feared to send for a physician lest he should discover the cause of her fever; he therefore trusted to the judgment of his old nurse. Maria continued eight days delirious; during which time she raved against Sir Richard; called on her Charles to come and release her; and sometimes in piteous accents, would she bewail her unhappy fate. Love, pity, rage, and jealousy, took possession of Sir Richard by turns, as he witnessed her distress; then he would curse his obstinacy for having caused her such uneasiness, and swear he would restore her to her friends the moment she was able to travel; the next hour he would die sooner than part with her.

Maria's fever, to the great joy of Sir Richard, began to abate, and the ninth day she recovered her reason. Sir Richard thought it most prudent not to appear; therefore, he contented

himself with staying in the next room, there to inform himself with the state she was in. She looked round, and on seeing the nurse, "Pray," said she, "where am I? and who are you? Ah! I now recollect. Gracious God! why have I recovered my reason? only to be sensible of my wretchedness; but I will not complain; I will strive to bear my misery; the Almighty will not, surely, inflict more on me than I am able to support."—The old woman wept.—"Do you pity me?" said Maria. "that is kind, I did not expect pity here." "Oh, Madam," said the nurse, "I wish I could but see you happy." "That," said Maria, "will never be in this world." She recovered very fast from this time, and in a few days was able to sit up. A faint ray of hope came to her assistance, which cherished her. She endeavoured to persuade herself, Sir Richard might, on seeing the effects of his obstinacy, restore her to her friends; slender as this hope was, it greatly assisted her recovery. Sir Richard had his hopes too; he flattered himself, now the first transports of her grief were abated, she would be inclined to view him in a more favourable light, and on her seeing the impossibility of escaping, reconcile herself to the necessity of consenting to be his. He kept out of her sight for near a week after she sat up; and then, on being told she was perfectly recovered, sent to request she would permit him to wait on her in the library.—She admitted him.

Sir Richard entered with trembling solicitude in his looks, and respectfully enquired after her health. "I still live, Sir," said she, "for what purpose, whether to suffer more wretchedness, or to thank you for restoring me to peace, depends on you, Sir, to determine?"

"You live, my dearest life," answered he, "to bless all who know you. I will not at present mention my hopes; I came purely to congratulate myself, and you, on your happy recovery, and to entreat, you will sometimes permit me the honour of visiting you. Be assured, I will consider every moment you bestow on me as an infinite favour; and that I never will intrude on your goodness."

Maria's hopes of liberty vanished. "Are you," said she, "still determined to detain me? Will nothing but my death cause you to relent?—Must I then look for death as my only refuge?—Well, be it so.—you will then be satisfied." "Your happiness, Miss Harcourt," replied Sir Richard, "depends on yourself. All I ask is, that you will receive me with kindness, and not to drive me to desperation; but consider where you are; and how much in my power." "And can you," said she, "Sir, presume on a power so meanly, so disgracefully gained? How can I see you? How even think of you, after what has passed, without horror and detestation? You have seen me in the agonies of despair, even at the very point of death; yet do you inhumanly persist in detaining me. No, I despise a selfishness such as yours; to gratify your own inclinations, you would sacrifice the happiness, nay, even the life, of her you profess to love, without even one pang."

"Do not," said he, "think so hardly of me as to believe me so insensible; my sufferings have been little inferior to your's; often have I resolved to restore you to your friends; but, I own, I want the resolution for such an action.—I cannot master myself so far,—my fate is finally fixed.—That moment which separates us, is the last of my existence." Maria was struck with silent astonishment.—Sir Richard walked the room greatly disordered.

"Your persisting, Miss Harcourt, in this cruelty," said he, after a long pause, "may be the

destruction of us both; for were I assured of eternal perdition, I cannot consent to part with you.” She trembled, and turned pale. “Then,” said she, “I am lost indeed.” She requested him to leave her, and Sir Richard fearing his stay might agitate her too much, consented.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER XII.

THIS was more than Maria had even feared. The feeble ray of hope which had supported her, now disappeared, and with it all the delightful prospects she had formed of happiness. Nothing remained, but her pledging her eternal vows to a man she detested, or to end her days in perpetual confinement. It was too much; she was surprised at herself how she lived to support it. She now gave herself up to despair, and refused to take nourishment. In vain did her attendant argue the ill effects of her refusal; that it would injure her health; death was her only wish." "But Ma'am," said the old woman, "you seem to be a pious lady, do not you know it is a great sin to refuse nourishment, it is next to suicide, which is never forgiven, neither in this world, nor the world to come." This had the desired effect; she took a little broth.

As Maria was now fully convinced of the impossibility of prevailing with Sir Richard to set her at liberty, she began to consider if there was any possible means for her to make her escape; in order to effect which, she expressed a desire of walking in the garden and sometimes the park, which was granted; but the old woman constantly attended her.

Almost a fortnight had elapsed since her interview with Sir Richard in the library. He had sent often to request liberty to visit her, which she had always refused. When he one day joined her in the garden, and respectfully enquired after her health, she entreated him to leave her; but he paid no attention to her. "Then," said she, "I must shut myself up in my room, for I cannot support the presence of the destroyer of my peace," and was walking with hasty steps to the house. He caught her hand, with a look that struck terror to her very soul, and exclaimed, "But you must, and shall hear me. By Heaven, I cannot support this treatment? therefore, if you have no pity for me, have some respect for yourself, and do not force me, by your obstinacy, to take measures which I never intended." "You would not," said she, endeavouring, in vain, to withdraw her hand, "surely, dare to treat me improperly." "I know not," answered he, "what I may dare to do, if you drive me to despair. Think on what you do, it is yourself you have to condemn, if you meet with treatment contrary to your expectation. Heaven is my witness, I wished to call you mine on honourable terms. I never entertained an unworthy thought towards you, but mine you must be on some terms; therefore reflect on what I have said, and determine your own fate."—She turned pale.—A cold shivering seized her, and she fainted.—He caught her in his arms. "Oh!" cried he, "what have I done. Curse on this tongue for having offended such innocence. Look up once more, loveliest of women, and command me in every thing." He called for assistance, and she was carried to the parlour, where she soon shewed signs of recovery. "My God!" exclaimed she, on opening her eyes, "why didst thou permit my spirit to return to its hateful abode? Oh! why suffer me to live to be thus wretched?" and burst into tears. Sir Richard walked the room greatly disordered, often clapped his hand to his forehead, as in the agonies of despair. He then threw himself at her feet. "Loveliest of women," said he, "forgive what I have said, and attribute it to my distraction; be assured your innocence shall receive no injury from me. Bad as you may suppose me to be, I could not offer an insult to such true virtue. Say but you forgive me! and O! say you pity me! for I am a most miserable man. Permit me to see you, to converse freely with you, I ask no more." She entreated, he would allow her to retire, as her spirits were not equal to the task of hearing more. "Say," said he, "that you forgive me, and you

are at liberty.” “To return to my friends,” said she? “Ah! do not make that request,” replied he, “it distracts me, command me in every thing else, even my life, and I would resign it; but you are dearer.”—She got to the door.—“Will you,” said he, taking her hand, “promise to come down to dinner?” “Not to day.” “Will you to-morrow?” “I do not know.” “Thank you, my angel,” cried he, taking this for a promise, and allowed her to leave the room. Maria’s grief was now too great to find vent; the fountain which used to relieve her on smaller occasions was nearly dried; her heart too was almost shut against hope. Her attempting to escape was impracticable, it being the middle of December, and in a strange country. She fancied if she could make herself a little acquainted with the neighbourhood, she might, when the weather became fine, make a trial; she therefore begged to be permitted to take airings in the chariot, which was readily granted.

Sir Richard sent to claim her promise of dining with him; but she pleaded indisposition from day to day. He then entreated permission to wait on her, and being fearful lest he should again grow desperate, she admitted him. He thanked her in the most respectful terms for the honour she did him; assured her of the sincere regret he had felt on having given offence to her delicacy; and begged she would rely on his promise, never more to give her uneasiness that way. Maria only answered with a deep sigh; which was echoed back by him. He took his leave without renewing the disagreeable subject of his passion, which was some small comfort to her.

Two months had she passed in this dreadful confinement without one prospect of an end. The airings she took afforded her no hopes, as she could not perceive a house near his, and it appeared an open desolate country. She gave herself up to despair, and earnestly entreated the Almighty to put a period to her existence. She was under the necessity of sometimes admitting Sir Richard to see her; and as she saw the impossibility of escaping, he became the more shocking to her.

One night, after she had been, as usual, thinking over all the wretchedness of her situation, bewailing her beloved Charles, who she considered as lost to her, she kissed his picture, wept over it, and then imploring the protection of Heaven, she at length fell asleep, and dreamt she saw her deceased brother standing before her, who looked on her for some time with a countenance full of pity, and addressed her thus:— “My poor unhappy sister, I am come to bring you comfort, let not your fortitude forsake you, great happiness is in store for you; but you cannot obtain it without first going to church with Sir Richard Harlow.” He then smiled on her, and disappeared, but the illusion continued. She fancied she went trembling to church, and just as the Minister was going to pronounce them one, an Angel caught her up and carried her off; at that instant she awoke. Though a dream at another time would have had very little effect on Maria, this made a great impression on her. A mind depressed almost to despair catches at any trifling ray of hope, which at another time would pass unnoticed. Certain it is, that from this circumstance, she began to cherish a hope that Providence would, by some unexpected event, afford her relief, and therefore she committed herself wholly to its guidance.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM this time Maria grew more tranquil, though she could not account why. If she believed her dream in its literal sense, wherein could consist that promised happiness? "You must first go to church with Sir Richard Harlow." That, of all things was the most shocking to her; but—the Angel's catching her up—afforded her comfort. She appeared so composed, she could support the presence of Sir Richard without that visible horror it used to occasion. It is impossible to describe the joy he felt on observing this change, from which he formed the most agreeable presages. He endeavoured by every possible means to render himself agreeable to her. He never intruded himself on her; but was always thankful whenever she condescended to admit him to visit her. Maria found, by the old woman who attended her, this was not Sir Richard's principal country house, but a kind of hunting seat, which he came to but seldom; that he had but few servants with him then, as he did not wish the neighbouring gentry to know he was there.—"La, ma'am," said she, "it is surprising to me you cannot love him; he is a worthy, good gentleman, and I am sure a handsomer man never trod shoe leather; many a lady's heart has he made ache—bless him." She was running on, but Maria stopped her, by entreating her to be silent. "Mercy," said the old woman, "it is wonderful to me—but to be sure I have no business to speak, I am but a servant, as one may say, but one cannot help one's thoughts." Maria enquired if they were near any town? "No, Ma'am, N—t—h—m is the nearest, and that is six miles." "Have you no neighbours?" asked Maria. "Only Farmer Wills, who rents a farm of Sir Richard about three miles off." This gave her no comfort; she considered her attempting to escape, should she not effect it, which was hardly possible, would render Sir Richard desperate. She therefore gave up the idea.

Thus passed another month of her confinement. Sir Richard began to solicit her to consent to make him happy, and urged the necessity of her fixing as early a time as she could, as the sooner she appeared in the world as his wife, the less her character was liable to suffer from what had happened. Maria remained a few minutes silent—he seized that moment, and throwing himself at her feet—"Now" said he, "whilst you hesitate, let me entreat you to determine on your own happiness and mine; you shall never have cause to repent. Say, loveliest of women, but when you will accompany me to the altar." "Rise, Sir," said she, "and attend to what I am going to say:—If I consent to accompany you to church, whatever cause you may hereafter have for regretting having obliged me to take such a step, you owe to yourself; I stand acquitted, as I call Heaven to witness with what reluctance I do consent.—But something must be done—my character, which is now at the mercy of the world, must be justified; therefore, it will be proper for my friends to be present at the ceremony."

Sir Richard could not contain his ecstasy—he thanked her with the warmest expressions of joy, for permitting him to hope she would be his. "I would wish you, Sir," said Maria, "to moderate your transport, as it cannot possibly be lasting; a triumph gained by such means as you have used, ought not, neither can it, to a mind capable of sensibility, afford any great cause for joy." "My lovely woman," said he, "do not endeavour to damp the happiness I feel, which is inexpressible, by any unkind reflections; were I not fully convinced I could make you happy, I would not have persisted in detaining you. Say, do you resolve to accompany me to the altar?" "I

do," said Maria, "on my honour; there, in the presence of Heaven, to make a vow, which nothing shall ever induce me to violate." "That is enough," said he, "I am now the happiest of mortals.—" "You wish, no doubt, for Mr. and Mrs. Spencer to be present at the ceremony." She answered, yes. "Have you another wish?" cried he, "make it, if you have, that I may have the happiness to gratify it." She said no; only to have as few present besides as he pleased, as she wished it to be private. This he consented to.

He wrote immediately to Mr. Spencer, acquainting him, he had Miss Harcourt's permission to write to him, to entreat he and Mrs. Spencer would do her the honour of meeting her at N——, and begged they would fix on an early day, as his happiness remained in suspense until they would make it certain, by being present at the solemnization of the nuptials of him and Miss Harcourt. Mr. Spencer answered Sir Richard's letter immediately, expressed great pleasure in hearing Miss Harcourt was found, that her friends had suffered much on her account, and she might rely on meeting them the Monday following at the —— Inn, at N——, at nine in the morning.

Sir Richard was in ecstasy, to think he was so near the accomplishment of his wishes. Maria appeared calm. He greatly regretted the shortness of the time would not permit him to make preparations for her to appear splendid; but she assured him it was her earnest desire to appear in the same dress she wore when she left Bath. She should, he said, have her way; but when she appeared at London, where he hoped she would accompany him the following week, she should outshine the first Duchesses in the Drawing-room. "How," said he, "shall I delight in hearing the admiration you will gain wherever you appear? how feast my ears on your praises?" Maria was silent.

The next morning Sir Richard set out early for N——, to procure a licence, and to engage the Dean of —— to be in waiting at the Vestry the Monday following. He wrote to the steward of his other country house, which was about twenty miles distant, to provide an elegant entertainment on that day, as he should bring home company.

The morning came so much wished for by Sir Richard, and not unwelcome to Maria.— He was early up and dressed.—About eight o'clock Maria appeared. He could not contain his raptures.—She was perfectly calm.—He thanked her for the composure with which she received him, and entreated her to support her spirits during the ceremony.— "This," said he, "my lovely woman, will be the last trial of your fortitude; all your life, from this day, will be peace and happiness." Maria answered, she sincerely hoped so; and allowed him to hand her to the chariot.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEY soon reached N——, and stopping at the —— Inn, Maria had the happiness to see Mr. and Mrs. Spencer at the window; they had arrived the preceding evening, in order to be in time.—Sir Richard handed her out, and she run to Mrs. Spencer, who, with open arms, received her. “Tell me, my dear girl,” said Mrs. Spencer, “what has happened to you, where you have been, and if you are here by your free consent?” “My dear Madam,” said Maria, “let me beg of you to suspend your curiosity a little while, and you shall be satisfied.—I am here by my own consent, to accompany Sir Richard Harlow to church.” Mrs. Spencer looked surprised—Mr. Spencer doubted not but Sir Richard, who was in high spirits, had gained an ascendancy over her heart. They now proceeded to church, where the Dean of —— waited to perform the ceremony. Mrs. Spencer watched Maria’s countenance, to endeavour to find out whether she did not do violence to her inclinations; but to her great astonishment, she appeared steady and composed. The Minister began, and read on till he came to— “I charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why you may not be lawfully joined in matrimony, ye do confess it.”

“There is,” said Maria, with great firmness, “an insurmountable one to our union.” Sir Richard turned pale. “For Heaven sake,” said he, “Miss Harcourt, permit the Minister to proceed.” “No, Sir.” Mr. and Mrs. Spencer looked with silent amazement at each other. “What then, Madam,” said the Dean, “brings you here?” “To free myself,” said Maria, “from a wretched confinement, and to oblige this gentleman, in the presence of the Almighty, never more to molest me. It is now above four months since he forcibly carried me from my friends; since which time, I have been kept a close prisoner in his house. He has seen me in the agonies of despair, and at the very point of death; yet did he inhumanly persist in detaining me. I saw no prospect but to remain in confinement for life, or to take this method to free myself. He knew my faith was pledged to another; and that faith I will, whilst I have life, hold sacred. I hope, Sir, you are now satisfied with the propriety of my taking this step, and that I am at liberty to return with my friends.”

The Dean turned to Sir Richard. “Is it possible,” said he, “Sir, that what this Lady alledges is true?”

Sir Richard was so agitated, he could scarce speak; at length, a little recovering himself he answered, he could not deny it; he had long loved her, and was certain it was in his power to have made her happy; that he was driven to despair by her persisting in refusing his addresses; that despair with the advice and assistance of her sister-in-law, Mrs. Harcourt had induced him to take the method she had mentioned to gain her, for which he sincerely begged her pardon; and if she required any farther satisfaction for the uneasiness he had caused her, he was ready to give it. “No, Sir,” said Maria, “only let me be assured I shall never again be molested.” “You may rely on it,” said Sir Richard, “you never shall by me, or through my means.” That was sufficient. Maria then turned to Mrs. Spencer. “Can you, my dear Madam,” said she, “take me again under your kind protection?” “Can I,” said Mrs. Spencer, “yes, my sweet innocent sufferer, and love you, if possible, more than ever.— Come,” said she, “you have nothing farther to do here let us

take you where you will find peace.” They then paid their respects to the Dean, and walked out of church, leaving Sir Richard behind.

To describe the feelings of Maria on finding herself once more at liberty and with her friends, would be a weak attempt. She on entering Mr. Spencer’s carriage fell into Mrs. Spencer’s arms and burst into tears; Mrs. Spencer wept with her, and Mr. Spencer was not unmoved.

“Oh!” said Maria, when she was able to speak, “am I once more with you? I can scarce believe myself so happy; if you knew what I have suffered since I left you, you would be surprized I should live to tell it.” Mr. and Mrs. Spencer did all they could to soothe her; entreated her not to think on what was past, but to endeavour to compose herself. She begged they would leave the town immediately, as she dreaded the chance of seeing Sir Richard; she could, she said, scarce believe herself safe though she was so well protected. Mr. Spencer answered, they should fight well who took her from him; he came determined to protect her, and to see she did no violence to her inclinations; but when he saw with what composure she went, as he expected, to bind herself by such sacred ties, he considered his interference would have been deemed impertinent; “but,” said he, “you are an heroine capable of great actions—who could have suspected you of such a one as this?” Mrs. Spencer confessed she was greatly surprised to see with what calmness she allowed Sir Richard to lead her up to the altar. “I promised,” said Maria, “to accompany him to church, there to make a vow which I never would violate; he fortunately required no more, and my plan, which was the only one that was possible for me to adopt, succeeded.” Mr. Spencer ordered his postillions to proceed on the London road, and to stop at the next post town, where they dined. After dinner, Mrs. Spencer related what past on Maria’s being taken from Bath. “You may, my dear,” said she to Maria, “guess the confusion I was in when Mrs. Harcourt’s servant came, I suppose, by his mistress’s orders; and asked to speak with me. He said, as he was conducting you home, a gentleman was waiting for you at the corner of Milsome-street with a chaise and four horses, and had taken you off, he supposed by your own consent, as you made no resistance. This I knew to be false, and therefore I called Mr. Spencer to him, who threatened to have him immediately taken up, as an accomplice, if he did not confess all he knew of the affair. He then said you did resist, but the postillions went off with such rapidity, it was impossible for any one to come to your assistance. I doubted not but Sir Richard Harlow was the man, and dreaded what has really happened, that he would keep you shut up. I cannot describe the distress I suffered on the occasion; I feared your life would fall a sacrifice; I feared indeed every thing that could happen. I sent,” continued Mrs. Spencer, “the next morning for Mrs. Harcourt, and questioned her, but could get no information; she pleaded ignorance to the whole of the transaction. Come, said I, Mrs. Harcourt, it is in vain to use this artifice, I have every reason to believe you have acted a treacherous part by your sister, or she would not have been so long without receiving a letter from Mr. Palmer. She insisted on her innocence. Well said I, Madam, you will have to accuse yourself with being accessory to an innocent creature’s death, as I am fully persuaded she will not live to be wife to any other man than Mr. Palmer; but if you have any respect for the memory of your husband, I entreat you will let this affair be kept as secret as possible, as I have some hope the wretch who has thus forced your sister away will, on seeing the effects of his action, restore her.”

Notwithstanding Mrs. Harcourt made this promise, I found in a few days it was publicly reported, you were gone off with a gentleman. This gave me the more uneasiness, as I could not contradict it; I was therefore under the necessity of telling the circumstances as they really happened. We all lamented your loss until the letter arrived from Sir Richard, which gave us the satisfaction of knowing you were alive, and we readily set out immediately to meet you." Maria then related all which had happened to her, and they congratulated her on her happy deliverance. As Maria's disappearance had made some noise at Bath, they agreed to proceed straight to London, to join Lord and Lady D. and Mr. Worthy, who were in anxious suspense for her. Mr. Spencer wrote to Bath, to order their servants to meet them in town: they pursued their journey, and the next day they joyfully embraced their friends. Mr. Worthy was in such raptures at the sight of his favourite, as he could scarce contain: they all admired the fortitude with which she had supported herself, and agreed that the stratagem she had used was a master piece of policy. "Let no woman after this," said Mr. Worthy, "pretend to say they are forced to do what is not proper; there is always means to escape dangers, if the will does not, in some measure assent: there is a certain charm in real virtue, which disarms the most licentious libertine, a dignity which gives fortitude to those who are truly so, and enables them to support trials which others would sink under."

Copyright Chawton House Primary

CHAPTER XV.

MARIA finding herself once more safe with her friends, began to reflect on her beloved Charles,—two years had nearly elapsed since she received his Letter:—she shuddered at the idea of what he would suffer from not getting an answer to the letters, which she doubted not of his having sent. On her communicating her distress to Mrs. Spencer, that lady advised her, by all means, to write by the next packet, and acquaint him of the particulars of all which had happened, adding, it would defeat the purpose of her enemies, who might take advantage of the event and represent it in a wrong light; she advised her to send all the papers she had written previous to her being carried from Bath, which Maria agreed to, and the next packet which sailed conveyed to her Charles a full account of all she had suffered. This being done, she found herself more at ease, and could enjoy the society of her friends.

“I was,” said Mr. Spencer, one day after dinner, just as Maria had left the room, “present at a curious conversation this morning, which I would not have missed for a great deal; I would not mention it before Miss Harcourt, for fear of wounding her delicacy. “He had called,” he said, “on Mr. Townly, but not finding him at home, he paid his respects to his Lady; with whom he had to not been many minutes, when the Dean of —— was announced. Miss Harcourt soon became the subject of their discourse. Mr. Spencer enquired what became of Sir Richard, and the Dean told him, that on their leaving the church, he in a state of distraction took a pistol from his pocket, “the contents of which was, I suppose,” said Mr. Spencer, “intended for me had I attempted to take his bride from him,” and was going to discharge it on himself; but the Dean fortunately caught his arm and expostulated with him on the rashness and impiety of such an action; and got him at length to promise to bear his disappointment as became a man. He left the church with a resolution to abandon England for ever. The Dean, Mr. Spencer said, had scarce done speaking when two ladies entered with faces full of news: one of them seized the first pause in the conversation to enquire if Mrs. Townly had heard the extraordinary affair which had lately happened in the North? being answered no, “O,” said she, “Sir Richard Harlow has shot himself dead in N—— church.” “Ah!” said the Dean, “who told you so?” “I had it,” replied the lady, “from very good authority, or I could not have believed it, as the story itself is not very probable; but strange things do happen sometimes. It seems Sir Richard took it in his head to marry some girl whom he had had in keeping four or five months; and she, from some unaccountable whim or other, when they got to church, refused to go through the ceremony. The Baronet exasperated, as well he might, to be rejected by a woman he was indeed doing too much honor to, took a pistol, which he happened to have in his pocket, and shot himself on the spot.”

“And this,” said the Dean, “is true?” “Yes,” answered the lady, “it is certainly true. I was told it by Mrs. Tattle,—who heard it from Lady Racket,—who got it from her own woman—who had it from Lord Nightly’s butler—who saw a letter which Mrs. Loyal’s maid had received from her sister, who is married to the sexton at N——, where the affair happened.” “Really,” said the Dean, with a smile, “you have, Ma’am, traced the story to its foundation, the very church; but in order to save yourself the trouble of repeating so many names to get at the sexton, when you tell it again, suppose you say, you had it yourself from the Minister who was present on the occasion.” “That,” said she, “to be sure, would be much better; but how can I say that?” “I will,”

said he, “put you in a way, if you will promise to repeat it verbatim as I give it you.” She promised by an inclination of the head. “Then,” said the Dean, “as I was present at this transaction, being the person who was to have had the honor of performing the ceremony, I think I can give a more circumstantial account of the matter than the sexton has done.” “But did Sir Richard shoot himself through the head or the heart?” asked the Lady, eagerly—for Lady Racket was not quite certain. “I will just tell you, Ma’am, by way of putting you out of pain for the Baronet: he has not shot himself at all; and now you shall have the story in regular order.” The Dean then gave a just account of all he knew of the affair, and ended with a short exhortation for them to do justice to the character of an innocent, amiable young lady, who had acted steadily from a principle of right. The Ladies were as much surprised at the story, the way the Dean had told it, as they were with the sexton’s account.—It was very strange—it was odd, that a girl who was nobody, should refuse to marry Sir Richard Harlow.

Mr. Spencer seeing the Dean both able and well inclined to support Maria’s character, left him, he said, to reconcile the ladies to such an unaccountable action. Mr. Worthy declared, he was not at all surprised that weak minds should have no conception of an action so much superior to what they could be capable of under the like circumstances; that the story was thought strange by such, in his opinion, reflected the more honour on Maria.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARIA had no inclination to go much into company; she excused herself as often as she could; but Mrs. Spencer would not always take a denial. The family all received cards for Mrs. Townly's rout, and she was obliged to attend. After the company were assembled and differently engaged, she, on looking round the room, caught the eyes of a gentleman who struck her as a person she had somewhere seen, but could not recollect where. He seemed to have the same idea of her, for he kept his eyes fixt on her until she found herself embarrassed, and to avoid his gaze, walked into the other room, and sat down by Mrs. Spencer, who was engaged at a card table.

As soon as Maria had left the room, the gentleman addressed himself to Mr. Worthy, and begged he would have the goodness to inform him who that beautiful creature who just left the room was; adding, she very much resembled a person he once knew; but it could not be the same, as that lady had gone off with Sir Richard Harlow. "Gone off with Sir Richard Harlow," repeated Mr. Worthy, "I must entreat you, Sir, to give it another term. I will never suffer any one to speak in that style of a young lady, whose merit I am so well acquainted with; and let me tell you, Sir, you ought to be better informed before you venture such assertions. A young lady's reputation is a nice point; there is a very material difference between going off and being forced off, and I must beg in future you will make that distinction." "Sir," said the gentleman, with surprise at the warmth with which Mr. Worthy had spoken, "you very much mistake me if you suppose me capable of wilfully injuring any lady's reputation, much less Miss Harcourt's, who is the lady I allude to; and permit me to add by way of convincing you, Sir, of the sincerity with which I declare it, that no one is more concerned for her than some of my nearest connections. If I have spoken contrary to truth I sincerely beg her pardon; but I have been misled by a letter I saw from her sister-in-law, Mrs. Harcourt, who asserted, as a truth, she was gone off; whether Sir Richard would marry her or not was uncertain." "Mrs. Harcourt," said Mr. Worthy "is, an infamous woman, and deserves some very severe punishment. But as you say, Sir, some of your connections are interested for this much injured girl, I think it necessary to give you a full account of all which has happened to her, and hope you will have the candour to undeceive those who have been misled by that artful woman."—This the gentleman promised on his honor.

Mr. Worthy then related every circumstance of Maria's being forced from Bath, with the part Mrs. Harcourt had acted, of her confinement, and the method she had taken to gain her liberty; he only omitted the mention of her attachment to Charles, and ended, with saying, "You see, Sir, this is very different from going off." The gentleman thanked Mr. Worthy for this account; declared she had acted an heroic part; but he made no doubt her affections were engaged; it was a great trial of her constancy, for which he hoped she would be rewarded. Mr. Worthy answered, he sincerely hoped she would, as he did not know a more amiable girl. The stranger assured Mr. Worthy, he felt interested in her behalf, and she might, at some future time, be convinced he was not her enemy; so saying, he wished Mr. Worthy a good night, and left the room.

Mr. Worthy being anxious to know who he was, made the enquiry of Mrs. Townly, who answered, the gentleman who just left the room was Sir Thomas Palmer, of Devonshire. How did

Mr. Worthy's generous heart rejoice in having had so fine an opportunity of clearing Maria's character where it was of such material consequence to her, it should stand in a fair light. He made no doubt but Sir Thomas would in future prove her friend, and that she would, by his means, be kindly received by the rest of the family. After they returned home, he with great joy communicated to Maria and the rest of the family the conversation he had had with the stranger, and the pleasure it gave him to know it was Sir Thomas Palmer. "Courage, my girl," said he, "we have nothing to fear now, we have made the Knight your friend." Maria trembled, she said, to think Lady Palmer's family should have been so vilely imposed on. She had that respect for them, that the idea of their having remained for months under the persuasion of her having acted imprudently, gave her the greatest concern; but when she considered that the mischief, in all probability, might not end there, but that the accounts of her dishonour were sent to her beloved Charles; that thought took such strong hold of her, she fell into a state of dejection. His not having received answers to the letters she was confident he had written, would, she feared, strengthen his belief of those accounts. Often would she fancy he was then trying to tear her image from his heart, as unworthy a place there. "Oh!" would she exclaim, "may some pitying Angel whisper him that I am innocent! Tell him that I have never deviated from the purity of our infant years. He cannot, surely, believe me fallen so low; yet, when he has his mother's authority, and every circumstance unfortunately tended to corroborate the account, what could he think, but that she was false and abandoned?" Mrs. Spencer often surprised her at those distressing intervals, and represented in the strongest terms which argument could suggest the impropriety of indulging such reflections. She might, Mrs. Spencer assured her, rely on it, her Charles would not easily believe any thing to her disadvantage; he would believe any thing sooner, even that his mother had been misinformed; he would rack his imagination to find reasons to believe her what he wished; besides, he would not be many months in suspense, as Maria's letters would reach him soon after those of his mother, if she had written, which might not be the case. "Months," said Maria, "one day, one hour, would be too long for him to support such a thought." She dreaded every thing,—his life, perhaps,—and burst into tears. "Come," said Mrs. Spencer, "I shall really be angry with you if you give way to this melancholy. You who have shewn such noble fortitude under the severest of trials, to sink under those which are only imaginary! It is the privilege of innocence to hope for the support of Heaven: none but guilty minds, such as dare not look up for protection despair: you have every reason to hope." Maria promised to profit by Mrs. Spencer's advice, and endeavour to hope for the best; but notwithstanding the strong efforts she made to appear cheerful, there was an evident dejection on her countenance, and deep sighs would often escape her. This gave her friends great concern; they feared she would fall a sacrifice to her imaginations, as all the efforts they made to divert her proved ineffectual. They had some hopes her favourite shades at Mr. Spencer's seat might recall her mind to peace, and were preparing to set out when Mr. Spencer received a letter from Lord F's physician, telling him, if he wished to see his father alive he must hasten to Berkshire, as he did not expect his Lordship to live many days. Mr. Spencer, full of filial duty, set out immediately, but was too late; Lord F. expired a few hours before he arrived. The new honours Mr. Spencer, now Lord F. acquired by the death of his father, did not make amends for the loss of so indulgent a parent. He was exceedingly affected on the occasion.

The late Lord F. had, by his will, left the whole of his estates, real and personal, to his son, with legacies to his old servants and some worthy friends. Maria was not forgotten; to her he

bequeathed five thousand pounds. Lord F. assured her, on communicating the account, he was never more pleased with any action of his father's than with this, which so perfectly agreed with his opinion of her merit. Maria shed unfeigned tears. She had the sincerest respect for his Lordship, who had always treated her with the kindness of a father; as such she lamented his loss.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER XVII.

THEY were again preparing to set out for the North, when Maria, on looking over the East India news, as was her constant practice, to see if she could get any account of her beloved Charles, she to her great surprize, saw an account of the death of the governor of —; which likewise mentioned his having made his nephew, Mr. Palmer, heir to his great riches. This gave her the satisfaction of knowing he was alive, which, in the state of uncertainty she was in, was no small comfort to her. Her friends congratulated her on the happy event; they all agreed in opinion, it would facilitate her Charles's return, as his end in going was answered. This she was willing to believe, as it was, of all earthly blessings, what she most wished.

They set out for the North, accompanied by Mr. Worthy; but Maria could not divest herself of her fears, that the accounts of her dishonour would have some fatal effect on her Charles, she was fully persuaded, and this lay heavy on her heart. Lady F. with sorrow saw the struggles she made, and to prevent her reflecting too much, never allowed her to pass a moment alone. The efforts Maria made to appear easy, when she was so very much the reverse, instead of having the desired effect, only added greater force to her grief: being deprived of the opportunity to indulge in it during the day, she gave vent to it more fully when she retired to her apartment, where she often spent the greater part of the night in viewing the gloomy pictures her imagination represented before her.—Often would she find herself in the same seat five or six hours after she had entered her room, without having made an effort to go to rest.

This agitation of Maria's mind brought on a slow intermitting fever, with loss of appetite, and other dangerous symptoms, which alarmed her friends. They were the more concerned, as it was impossible to remove the cause of her complaint. Lady F. could think of nothing which could afford her consolation, but the assurance of being reinstated in Lady Palmer's esteem; she was certain that, next to a letter from her Charles, this would tend most to make her easy, and therefore she resolved to write to Lady Palmer, which she did to the following purport:

TO LADY PALMER, AT THE GROVE, NEAR
T—R—G—N, DEVON.

YOUR Ladyship will, I make no doubt, be surprised to receive this from one, who has not the honour of being personally known to you; but from the dependance I have on your humanity, I have ventured to address you in behalf of an amiable, injured, young lady, who has nobly supported herself under the severest of trials; I trust your Ladyship is fully acquainted with the particulars of Maria's sufferings, as my uncle had the good fortune to fall into conversation a few months ago with Sir Thomas Palmer, and gave him a circumstantial account of them. Her fortitude never entirely forsook her, until she heard you had been misinformed respecting her conduct; but both her health and spirits have gradually declined since that time. She declares she cannot support the idea of your Ladyship's thinking she has acted imprudently, and that the approbation of your family is of the highest importance to her peace. She is in a very alarming state indeed, which is a matter of serious concern to all my family, to every one of whom she is deservedly beloved; to me she is particularly dear—so much so, that the idea of losing her is

more than I can well support. I think I need not say why to you, who cannot be unacquainted with her merit, the praise of which she attributes to the early instructions your Ladyship gave her in pious morality. I write unknown to her; and if you would please to favour her with a line, without mentioning having received one from me, it may prove of more efficacy in restoring her tranquillity, than any means in our power. If you have any doubts respecting the propriety of her conduct, I am so happy as to have it in my power to remove them, as there is not a circumstance respecting her since she left the Grove that I am not intimately acquainted with. Trusting you will attribute my officiousness in writing, to its true motive, I have the honor to be, with the sincerest respect,

Your Ladyship's most Obedient,
and Humble Servant,
AMELIA F——.

Lady F——. sent this letter off, and anxiously waited for the time, when it might be answered. She then, to her great satisfaction, received a polite letter from Lady Palmer, thanking her for the attention she had shewn to Maria; and Maria, to her great joy and astonishment, was favoured with a letter, containing the following words:—

TO MISS HARCOURT,
AT THE RT. HON. LORD F——'s,

L——.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I KNOW not how to write to you, whether to begin with telling you the sincere concern we all felt at the false accounts I received from that woman, who is unworthy to be called your sister, or the pleasure it afforded us when Thomas made us acquainted with the real state of all which has happened to you, which are as great as affecting. Whatever motive induced you to refuse Sir Richard Harlow, I most sincerely hope you will not be disappointed in, as you have proved yourself worthy the most exalted rank; I will go farther and say, so far as remains with me to forward your happiness, it will afford me the highest satisfaction. You will perhaps be surprised at this from me, who have, I confess, wished to see you differently disposed of than I believe your heart was inclined; but, at that time, though I knew your worth, I did not believe the attachment you had formed, was of so serious a nature, and if that had been the case, situated as you and Charles—for I think I may venture to name him—as the person, for whose sake you have refused such high rank, and supported such trials.—I say, as you were both situated, I thought, if you could have been equally happy without each other, it would have been better for you—but I no longer have such a wish; on the contrary, it shall be my earnest endeavour in future to facilitate your union, and will with pleasure receive you as a beloved daughter, whenever you shall think proper to return and put yourself under my protection. Your brother, Joseph, has suffered much from the accounts of your going off. He looked on himself as the cause, and felt the severest remorse at the treatment he had given you. I made his mind a little easy by telling him, how very greatly you had acted, and the many noble friends you had gained by your prudent conduct. He said, he very much feared you would never forgive him, but if you knew how much he had suffered, you would pity him; his wife, who was, I make no doubt the cause is dead. I

shall say nothing of Charles, as I dare say you have had later accounts from him, it being near twelve months since any of our family had intelligence of him besides what the public papers gave. God bless you and continue your rectitude of conduct; and that you may at last be rewarded as your merit deserves, no one more sincerely wishes than your affectionate friend

M. PALMER.

Maria's feelings on reading this letter may be imagined, but they cannot be described. She read it a second time, to see if she had not deceived herself;—she wept;—she gave thanks; which she never failed to do for any kindness she received, to the great disposer of events, and when she had a little composed herself she sought for Lady F. "My dear Lady F." said she, on seeing her, "I am so happy." "What," said her Ladyship, with a smile, "is your Charles returned? for I do not believe any thing else can possibly make you so." "Indeed you are mistaken, I am really happy, and he is no way concerned." "Ah," said Lady F. "let us see how you will contrive to make that out." "Read that," said Maria, "and you will see." After Lady F. had read it, she returned it, saying gravely, "I thought you were a little hypocrite; why, it is all about Charles you express so much joy." "La," said Maria, "do you think it nothing for me to know I have recovered Lady Palmer's esteem?" "Yes, certainly," said Lady F. "in the present state of your affairs, it is of the highest importance to have the sanction of Mama, and what is better, she has not told of your running off, which is the great cause of all this joy." Maria blushed, and answered, she believed Lady F. was right, though she really thought at first she had no other motive for the uncommon satisfaction which this letter had occasioned than what arose from Lady Palmer, independent of her son; but she might as well confess, much as she respected her Ladyship, had not Charles been concerned, it would not have been in her power at once to have freed her from the cruellest of apprehensions; "but," said she, "we sometimes want a friend to give us a true knowledge of ourselves." Lady F. said now the cause of her complaints was removed, she hoped, she should hear no more sighs; her fever would soon go off, and she should see the smiling affable Miss Harcourt. Maria answered, that after what she had suffered from the force of imagination, which had depressed her more than any real distress she had ever met with, she should be careful how she viewed things on the gloomy side, as she was convinced, by experience, the greater half of the troubles of this life were imaginary. She then parted with Lady F. to answer Lady Palmer's letter, which begins the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TO LADY PALMER, AT THE GROVE, NEAR
T—R—G—N, DEVON.

HOW shall I, my dear and much honoured Lady Palmer, convey to you an idea of what I feel, on being assured I again hold a place in your esteem; indeed, it is impossible, as there are no words adequate to the sense I have of your goodness. That you are pleased to restore me to your favour, and to add to your former condescension, that of bestowing the dear name of daughter on me, is so much beyond what I ever dared to hope. I am at a loss to account either for your kindness, or to know how I am entitled to it. To be permitted to acknowledge my love for Mr. Palmer to his dear mother, is too much to be expressed. My heart is ready to burst at the idea; your kindness has filled it too full;—my eyes at this moment overflow with the effusions of gratitude. Much have I suffered from having, as I feared, lost your esteem;—much from having disappointed your hopes of seeing your son settled according to his rank.—Yet could I never bring myself to regret loving him. My heart was his, before my reason was sufficiently strong to point out the inequality of our stations; and when that reason grew more mature, it only served to confirm the choice my heart had made. It shewed me your son's merit in such shining colours, that instead of wishing myself free, in spite of every obstacle my heart exulted in being honoured with his love:—to render myself worthy of which, and your ladyship's esteem, what are the sufferings I have sustained? Had they been years, instead of months, I should consider myself over paid, by being united to Mr. Palmer, with the consent of his friends.

By the same treachery that misrepresented my conduct to your ladyship, I am deprived of the satisfaction of hearing from him; and though there cannot be a more anxious state of mind, than to remain in ignorance of the fate of those who are dear to us, yet I trust that Power, who has inclined his Parent to speak comfort to me, will also protect him to return, and crown us all with happiness. I must not forget to acquaint you with the distinguishing mark of esteem the late Lord F. honoured me with, in bequeathing me five thousand pounds. Indeed I feel oppressed with the favours I daily receive, but I beg your Ladyship will believe me sincere, when I declare none has ever afforded me such sincere heart-felt satisfaction as this last, which you have been pleased to honor me with, which has impressed that grateful respect and love, which can never be effaced from the heart of

My dear Lady Palmer,
Your ever obliged, and
most respectfully Obedient
Humble Servant,
MARIA HARCOURT.

The same post conveyed to her brother the following lines:—

MY DEAR BROTHER,
I CANNOT describe the satisfaction I felt when Lady Palmer informed me you still remembered your sister. I am extremely concerned you have felt so deeply for what has happened

to me, as she describes.—Indeed you exaggerate your fault, if it may be called one, in exposing me to the world. If you will only reflect a moment on the events which have happened in consequence, that it has been the means of discovering the retreat of an injured amiable character, who was lost to his friends, and uniting two persons, who were by Providence designed for each other; you will see with me, you only acted a secondary part. The great disposer of events—willed it so. Great as have been my sufferings, I now sincerely rejoice in having suffered; had I never known adversity, I should never have been so thoroughly convinced of the mercies I have received, which afford me comforts beyond the power of words to describe.—Let me therefore, my dear brother, entreat you not to regret what is past, but to reflect on the advantage it is to your sister, to have, with honor, supported her trials; that I have so many friends who oppress me with their favors, and that I hope and trust the remainder of my days will be crowned with peace.

Take a view my dear brother of what has happened in this light—believe me, it is the only true one to account for such events, and you will no longer feel remorse at the part you have acted; and be assured, it has not in the smallest degree, alienated my affections from you. My heart, at this moment, feels an inexpressible satisfaction in being allowed to acknowledge a brother, and wants only to be assured, he is as much at peace with himself, as I am with him, to be perfectly at ease. Do me the favor of a few lines, and you will oblige,

My Dear Brother,
Your truly affectionate Sister,
MARIA HARCOURT.

Maria, to the great satisfaction of her friends, soon recovered; she began to look forward to the time, when she might expect to hear from her beloved Charles:—Eight months had elapsed, since she had written; four more would bring her, she made no doubt, the wished intelligence. She received another very affectionate letter from Lady Palmer, but as it contained nothing of consequence to the Reader, it would be unnecessary to give it a place,—One from her brother may be worthy attention.

TO MISS HARCOURT,
AT THE RT. HON. LORD F—'s,

HOW shall I write—how address you—for I dare not call you sister, as so near an alliance to such perfection makes me dispise myself the more, for being thrown at so great a distance. Oh! Maria, your affectionate letter has, if possible, made me more wretched than I was before; it has shewn me what a wretch I must have been, to expose to the mercy of the world, such amiableness. That the Almighty has protected and raised you up friends, more kind than your brother, though it confirms me in my belief of his goodness, does not lessen my offence. When I heard you were gone off with a gentleman, I instantly upbraided myself as the cause of all which might happen to you:—the vow I had made to my dying parent, occurred to me—what said I must I expect, for having paid no regard to the most sacred of all trusts, that of a helpless Orphan, committed so awefully to my care? Oh! Maria, you have suffered, but you are ignorant of the sufferings which arise from guilt—you never knew what it was to feel the upbraidings of a bad conscience, therefore you can have no conception of what I have suffered. I figured to myself

all which could possibly befall you—you might, for want of that protection I had denied you, perhaps have been deluded by some designing villain, who would abandon you to want. I reflected on the many unhappy women, who though not otherwise ill-disposed, had, from the like circumstances, fallen to the lowest state, to which human nature can be reduced. How could I, with these reflections, rest in peace. I could not—No, I fell into a state of dejection, my rest at night was disturbed—sometimes I fancied I saw you abandoned in the streets, and just as I was going to take you from one who was ready to pay for your hire, I would awake.—At another time, my imagination would represent my deceased mother, standing before me, and with an angry look, upbraid me with the ruin of her beloved child. About this time my wife died, which I looked on as a just judgment. In this state I remained till Lady Palmer received a letter from Sir Thomas, full of accounts, much to your honor. These have been your brother's sufferings. Your gentle heart has forgiven, and even palliated the offence, but that is more than will ever be in his power to do. May that Power, who has made you his peculiar care, still guard and protect you, is the prayer of him, who with shame subscribes himself,

Your truly affectionate Brother,
JOSEPH HARCOURT.

The distress of Mr. Harcourt, which was so strongly pictured in this letter, affected his sister exceedingly; she wept with pity over it, and determined to shew her brother every kind of attention. She wrote to him, and in the tenderest terms entreated he would reconcile himself to what was past, and as a consolation, to be thankful what he had so much feared had not happened, that she lived, and would never bring reproach on him; beseeched him, as he valued her peace of mind, not to think on her with regret, but to rejoice in her happiness.

CHAPTER XIX.

LADY F's situation, to the great joy of the family, was such as to oblige her to pass the winter at their country seat. This was very pleasing to Maria, as she had a great aversion to the gay world. The life they led in the country was according to her taste, and she hoped nothing would cause her return to the world but her Charles.

Lady F. was the March following delivered of a daughter, who, Maria, by the request of the family, gave her name to. Before Lady F. was able to leave her room, Maria received a letter from Lady Palmer, acquainting her with Miss Palmer's marriage to a Mr. Cleveland, a gentleman of a good estate, and equally good morals, and that they were to be at London the beginning of April, where she requested Maria would give her the meeting; begged she would prevail on Lady F. to spare her, if only for a few weeks, to indulge Mrs. Cleveland with her company. Lady F. regretted parting with her, but endeavoured to conceal her uneasiness, as she considered it would appear too selfish to prevent her meeting the companion of her youth, and her Charles's sister.

Lord and Lady D. were to pass the spring in town, and had taken a house for that purpose in St. James's -Street: it was settled for Maria to accompany them. She assured Lady F. her stay should be no longer than necessity obliged her to make it, as she could no where find that happiness as her society afforded; then, with a promise to write daily accounts of herself, she took an affectionate leave, and set out for London, where they soon arrived.

Mrs. Cleveland was not yet arrived, but was expected in the course of the following week. They had not been many days in town, when one night, after they had been about an hour in bed, Maria had been counting the days which stood betwixt that and when she might reasonably expect to hear from her Charles, was just fallen into a most delightful dream, when a loud knocking at the door, and a cry of fire awoke her. How was she shocked when she heard nothing but shrieks of "for Heaven's sake save your lives;" and on opening her door, saw the stair-case in a blaze; she gave herself up for lost; she had just presence of mind to slip on a petticoat and a loose dressing gown, and then made an attempt to escape: she saw it was impossible to go down the stairs, as the flames were so violent; she flew to the window, where the danger appeared almost equal. A gentleman passing in a chair, saw her distress, and determined to assist her: he got a ladder, which some of the firemen had brought, ascended it, took her in his arms, and brought her safe down; he then put her into his chair, and had her conveyed to a house in Pall-Mall, where he had once lodged, at a Mistress Motherly's. After he had entreated Mrs. Motherly to take particular care of the lady, he returned to the scene of confusion, to see if he could discover any of the family, to acquaint them where they might find her. He was happy to see the flames were nearly extinguished; was told the fire had happened through the carelessness of a servant, who had left a candle burning on the stairs. He soon found one of the footmen, who was very happy to hear Maria was safe. "I will," said the man, "run and acquaint my lady, as I know the fright she is in about her—and she deserves it, for a better creature never lived; God bless her, say I." He enquired if the family were all safe, and was answered all but my Lord, who had sprained his ankle in leaping too hastily from the window. He returned to Maria, thinking the account of her friends safety would afford her satisfaction; he felt

uncommon concern when Mrs. Motherly informed him she had been in continual fainting fits ever since he left her, and she very much feared the shock would prove fatal to her. He entreated Mrs. Motherly to keep her quiet, and when she was able to understand her, to acquaint her with the safety of her friends; he would, he said, call in the morning, to see if he could be of further service; then wished Mrs. Motherly a good night, and went to his hotel. He found it impossible to sleep, or to think of any thing but this strange lady; he was surprised at himself; it could not be love; no, that was impossible, his heart had been long deeply engaged; yet the sensations he felt bore so strong a resemblance to it as startled him: no, it must be pity. Who would not feel the same for such beauty in distress? He felt a desire to know who she was, which he checked: "What, can that be to me? I will only enquire how she is, and go in search of her who is alone mistress of my heart." He rose early, and walked out; his feet involuntarily carried him to Pall-Mall; he knocked at the door, and a trembling seized him as he made enquiry after her health. Mrs. Motherly answered she had just dropped asleep. "Poor lady," said she, "she has been delirious several times to-night; I sat up with her all the night." Just as she had said this, a footman rapped at the door, and Lady D. entered to enquire for the young lady who was brought from the fire? "She was," she said, "very ill able to come abroad, yet she could not be easy till she saw her: pray, madam, how is she?" "Why, my Lady," said Mrs. Motherly, "she is just gone to sleep. Poor thing, I am sure she has made my heart ache to-night, she has been in such a way." "Poor Maria," said Lady D. "when will she be at peace?" The gentleman started at the name, and turned pale. "I fancy," said Mrs. Motherly, "the young lady is in love, she talked so much about one Charles"—"Who," said he eagerly; "Charles," answered she, "and the poor creature did so kiss and weep over a little picture which hung about her neck, I have almost cried my eyes out with her." "It is not surely Miss Harcourt," said the gentleman, greatly agitated, "pray, my lady, tell me, Oh, you know not how much I am concerned." "It is certainly Miss Harcourt," replied Lady D., greatly surprized. "Is it possible?" exclaimed he, "that I should be so fortunate as to return just in time to save my Maria from the flames?" "Surely," said Lady D. still more astonished, "I do not see Mr. Palmer?" "Yes," replied he, "I am indeed, that happy man, yet I can scarce believe myself so, till I see my Maria; Oh, my lady, permit me just to see her, I would not, for the world, disturb her." Lady D. entreated him to moderate his transport, and wait for her awaking, and then to allow her to prepare Maria to see him, as she very much feared, in the present state of her spirits, such a surprize would be too much for her: Charles reluctantly consented,—Mrs. Motherly ordered the maid to let her know when the young lady awoke; Lady D. ordered the servant to tell her woman to bring Maria some clothes.—"Am I," exclaimed Charles, "so happy, as to be once more in the same house with my Maria? Have I had her in my arms? My heart was just, it acknowledged her power.—But your ladyship will excuse me, I understood she was with Mrs. Spencer, formerly Miss Scot." "Mrs. Spencer," replied Lady D. "now Lady F. is my sister—Maria is equally dear to us both, and it not being in my sister's power to come to London this Spring, and Maria being engaged to meet your sister, it was settled for her to accompany me," "My sister!" said Charles, "is she then in London?" "No," replied Lady D. "she is not yet arrived, but is expected every day," "and my Maria is in intimacy with her; that is all I wish.—How, Lady D. am I indebted to your amiable family for the protection my Maria has received?" Lady D. answered it was impossible for any one to know Maria and not to love her. Lady D's woman entered with clothes for Maria, and soon after Mrs. Motherly, saying the young lady was awoke and appeared much better; Lady D. laid a strict injunction on Charles not to appear till she gave the word, and then followed Mrs. Motherly to Maria's room.

CHAPTER XX.

“MY dear Lady D.” said Maria, on seeing her, “do I live to see you again? I last night thought I should never have had that happiness more, but I am still preserved.” “Yes, my dear,” said her ladyship, “you are, and for greater blessings than you expect.” “What do you mean,” cried Maria, eagerly, “are there letters from India?” Lady D. answered if she was certain she would be calm, she would tell her a very agreeable piece of news, but she was almost afraid to trust her with it: Maria entreated her not to fear, for he who had supported and given her fortitude under her misfortunes, would surely enable her to bear the reverse. “Then what will you say,” said Lady D., “when I tell you, your Charles is in England?” “In England!” answered Maria, “then I am blessed indeed, but I fear to believe it.” “There is a gentleman below,” said Lady D., “has a message to you from him,” “From my Charles?” exclaimed Maria, “let me this moment get up and go to him—but what shall I do? I have no clothes,” “Oh,” said Lady D., smiling, “he has seen you almost naked, for it was he who brought you here last night,” “Ah!” said Maria, “I thought he was some good angel, I felt an uncommon emotion in being in his arms, which I could not account for, but really had it been Charles himself, I believe my heart would not have fluttered more.” Charles tapped at the door, “Pray,” said Lady D. “have patience one minute, and you shall be admitted. You must not be surprized,” said she, to Maria, “if you soon see him.” “Tell me, Lady D.,” said Maria, “if he is indeed come—Oh, tell me, where he is, and let me see him?” “He is come,—he is here,” exclaimed Charles, entering the room, “to bless you my love,” “It is—it is my Charles!” exclaimed Maria, and fainted—“I told you how it would be,” said Lady D., “why would you not wait till I called you?” “how could I?” answered he, “when I heard her so enchantingly call on me—Look up my dear Maria, and bless your Charles, this is the last time thy gentle spirits shall be discomposed.” Lady D. and Mrs. Motherly were busily employed in applying hartshorn; Charles held one of her hands in his,—the manly tears dropped from his eyes.

“He is gone again,” said Maria, coming a little to herself—“Ah, it was all illusion.” “No, my love,” said he, “it is no illusion; look up, your Charles is here, never more to leave you.” “Father of mercy,” said Maria, “I thank thee for granting me this moment; it repays me doubly for all my past unhappiness—My dear Charles, this is more than I am well able to support,” and she burst into tears—Charles was unable to speak, he pressed her hand to his lips, and bathed it with tears: Lady D. and Mrs. Motherly wept also—a silence ensued, which after continuing some minutes was broke by Mrs. Motherly, exclaiming, “Ah! may God Almighty bless you both—this is, now, what I call real and true love, the Lord bless us—how many talk of love, who know no more about it than I know of the man-o’-th’-moon.”

After the lovers had a little recovered themselves, Lady D. ordered her woman to come up with clothes for Maria; and Charles retired to the parlour, whilst she dressed. Maria soon forgot her fright, and was sensible to no other feeling than what proceeded from a fulness of joy: Lady D. congratulated her, in the sincerest manner on her good fortune; expressed her admiration of her lover’s person and sentiments. Maria declared the happiness she felt oppressed her to that degree, her heart was ready to burst it was so full. “Is it not strange,” said she “Lady D. that we may be too happy.” “Our nature is such,” said Lady D. “that if over loaded with too great a

proportion of joy, it has the effect you describe; it requires the same steadiness to support excess of joy, as excess of grief—you have nobly bore the one, and therefore will not, I hope, want calmness to support the other.” Lady D. would she; she said, write an account to her sister of Maria’s good fortune, as she supposed she would be too much engaged to do it herself: Maria thanked her ladyship, and then hastened to the parlour, where her Charles impatiently waited her coming. After they had congratulated each other on their happy meeting, Maria enquired if he had received her packet: “Yes, my love,” answered he, “I did, and all the wealth of the East should not have bribed me to have staid after I knew to what dangers you were exposed.—Oh, my Maria what has been my suffering these four years of tedious absence, almost three of which have been passed under the most dreadful apprehensions—Think, what I must have felt, at receiving no answers to the letters which every packet carried for you and your brother, entreating in the most earnest manner, the favor of an answer. By every ship that arrived I hoped to get the wished intelligence, but in vain—I only met with disappointments; often did I resolve to leave India, and at all events to return to England to inform myself with what had happened; then I determined to write again and wait the success, which was no better than the former. In this state of uncertainty, fearing the worst which could happen, I was, when my uncle died, at which time I found myself possessed of more wealth than my highest ambition every aspired to,—it afforded me no comfort;—what pleasure could I find in riches when I had lost the delightful prospect of sharing them with my Maria?—I now determined, at all events to come to England, and as soon as I had settled my uncle’s affairs, I engaged a passage, but to my great joy, three days before we were to sail, a ship arrived which brought the accounts from you. What a variety of emotions did the reading them cause me? Joy, admiration, and resentment seized me by turns—I blessed you, my love—I cursed the villain who had caused you so much uneasiness—I admired your steadiness, and longed more than ever to reward you but that is impossible, though it shall be the business of my life to deserve you. I now saw my wealth with pleasure.—Now I thought it of some value as it would put my Maria in a more exalted state than the one she had so nobly refused. Full of these ideas, I sailed for England; Heaven, propitious to my prayers, granted us a quick voyage, and yesterday evening I arrived at London. A gentleman, who had been my companion during the voyage, kept me to sup with him, and on going to my hotel, fortune kindly conveyed me to my Maria.”

CHAPTER XXI.

LADY D. now conducted the lovers, to her lodgings and introduced Charles to Lord D. who received him as a brother. Maria communicated to her Charles, the kindness she had received from Lady Palmer, and shewed the letters she had lately honored her with, which gave him great satisfaction. He wrote that day to acquaint his mother with his arrival, and to express his grateful thanks for the kindness she had shewn his Maria, who he hoped soon to have the happiness to present to her as a daughter: he shewed the letter to Maria, and watched her looks whilst she read it; she blushed when she came to the part which concerned herself. "My Maria," said he, tenderly, "will not hesitate in fulfilling its contents, for I cannot, my love, be truly happy till you are mine beyond the power of fortune; let me, therefore hope, the next week will bless me with all I can ask of Heaven." "Next week!" repeated Maria, "mercy," "Yes, my dearest life, why should we put off our happiness one day longer than is necessary, when every moment I am separated from you, appears tedious, and I wish it annihilated, I can only be said to live, when I am with you." Maria felt the justness of his observations too sensible, to object to it, she only regretted not having Lady F. present on the solemn occasion: Charles answered, as his sister was to be in town, she would gladly supply her place, and then, if it was agreeable to Maria, they would set out for Devon, to receive the blessing of his mother; after which, pay a visit to Lady F. Maria gave a silent assent to these proposals, and preparations were made for the following week, to crown their wish.

Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland arrived. The joy of Mrs. Cleveland at seeing Maria, was greatly increased on meeting her brother so unexpectedly. They embraced each other with tears, and mutual congratulations passed. Charles acquainted his sister with the office he intended her in a few days, which she undertook with great pleasure. Maria received a letter of congratulation from Lady F. who added, there was a wish very near her heart, which she hoped Maria would join in. "There was," she said, "a very noble seat to be disposed of, within a few miles of them, and if her Charles did not wish to make her unhappy, which he surely would, if he took Maria from her altogether, he would purchase it." Maria was delighted with the proposal, she shewed the letter to her Charles, who was not less pleased with the agreeable prospect, and immediately determined on making the purchase.

The evening preceding the day appointed to unite this amiable pair, Mr. Worthy arrived in town. He was, he said, determined to be some way concerned in Maria's happiness, therefore he came to take the office of her father—he should, with great pleasure bestow her, as he made no doubt but the receiver would be sensible of the value of the gift. "You are, Sir," said he, addressing himself to Charles, "the only man in the world that I should not think her too great a prize for—I believe you deserve each other, and if there is such a thing as happiness in this world, it must fall to the lot of such as you."—Charles politely thanked Mr. Worthy for his good opinion, and declared he was so sensible of her worth, that it should be the whole business of his life to render himself worthy of her. Maria sighed, and the tear dropped from her cheek.

The next morning they were accompanied to church by Lord and Lady D. Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland, and Mr. Worthy. Maria supported herself with great steadiness; but, when the

Minister came to the part where she had stopped the ceremony with Sir Richard Harlow, she trembled, but had no inclination to interrupt him. Lady D. caught her eye, and smiled. After Maria had a little recovered from the terror, occasioned by the awfulness of the ceremony, a calm satisfaction succeeded in her breast, such as she never before experienced.

Copyright Chawton House Library

CHAPTER XXII.

FOUR days after this happy union, Charles and his lovely bride set out for Devon, where great preparations were made to receive them. What heart, less susceptible than Maria's, but would feel strangely affected at returning to the country which gave her birth, and where she had received those valuable instructions which had enabled her to support all her difficulties with dignity—Returning too with the object of her affections to meet his mother, was more than her most sanguine hopes could ever have formed; she found it required all her fortitude to support her good fortune.

When they came within about two miles of the Grove, they saw a great concourse of people. The peasants hearing that Charles and his charming Maria were to return that day, had all dressed themselves in their best suits, to come to meet and welcome them. They soon eased the horses of their labour, and went on with loud shouts and singing rustic songs in praise of constancy and virtue.

Though Maria was scarce able to support herself, yet encouraged by her Charles not to sadden the hearts of those innocent creatures, whose countenances expressed the sincerity of the joy they shewed, she appeared pleased with them—Shouts of “long live those patterns of Virtue,” announced their near approach to Lady Palmer, who with Sir Thomas, waited to receive them in the parlour.

On their entering, they unable to speak, threw themselves at her feet—“Bless you both, my dear children,” said Lady Palmer, raising and tenderly embracing them, “may you enjoy that happiness to which your merits entitle you;” they were all in tears. Sir Thomas received them with equal warmth of affection, and congratulated them in the sincerest manner on their happy union.

“There is another,” said Lady Palmer, “who wishes equally to pay his respects, but declares, he cannot support your presence,” “my dear brother,” said Maria, “Oh, where is he?” Lady Palmer then opened the door, and led Mr. Harcourt from the adjoining parlour. Maria threw herself at his feet, “Bless,” said she, “my dear brother, bless your happy sister,” “Oh,” exclaimed Mr. Harcourt, “this is too much, it is I, who ought to kneel, I who can scarce dare to look up to you, you much wronged excellence.” They embraced each other with tender tears. “Do not my dear brother,” said Maria, “mention wrongs—but think on my happiness, which if you do not wish to damp, let me have the satisfaction of seeing you join the general joy.” She by her tenderness, soon in some measure reconciled her brother to himself, and he became chearful.

There was open house kept at the Grove for the country people, for a fortnight, the neighbouring gentry all came to congratulate the virtuous pair, and all rejoiced in their happiness. One circumstance worthy of remark is, on their appearing at church, the Minister, in order to impress his young hearers with a proper sense of virtue, chose his text from the 4th Psalm, and part of the 6th verse.—“*There be many that say, who will shew us any good.*”

He then proceeded to shew the vanity, of expecting happiness from any other source, than a strict observance of religion and morality. He pointed to Maria as an example, he drew her character from the time of her being exposed an helpless Orphan to the world, and expatiated on the many friends the Almighty had raised her up to protect her innocence;—he enlarged on the greatness of her mind, in rejecting that splendour and pomp, which young minds are so apt to be dazzled with; and concluded with observing, that the good, must in the end, meet their reward. Maria's tears flowed most of the time this discourse lasted, and the congregation were all so deeply affected, there was scarce a dry eye in the church. After the service was over, she was led by her Charles through the crowd, who pressed to see them, and offered up prayers for their long life, and continual happiness.

After passing a month at the Grove, they took an affectionate leave of their friends, with a promise to renew their visit annually, at least, whilst Lady Palmer lived, and proceeded to the North, to pay their respects to Lord and Lady F. where they were received with equal marks of esteem. Charles purchased the seat near them, which was their summer residence. Those amiable friends were seldom apart; they spent their time at each other's houses alternately, and enjoyed more happiness than in general falls to the lot of mortals.

FINIS

ERRATA.

VOL. I. Page 38, line 6, for to suppose, read
neither can you suppose.

Page 59, line 10, for her mother, read
his mother.

Page 97, line 7, for in the world, read
on the world

Page 190, line 2, S wanting in Sir.

VOL. II. Page 69, line 15, for North Latitude,
read South Latitude.

Page 78, a superfluous p in the word
indebted.

Copyright Chawton House Library