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THE
CURATE
AND HIS
DAUGHTER;
A CORNISH TALE.

BY
ELIZABETH ISABELLA SPENCE,
AUTHOR OF SUMMER EXCURSIONS—A CALEDONIAN
EXCURSION—THE NOBILITY OF THE HEART—
THE WEDDING DAY, &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

..... No mother's care
Shielded my infant innocence with prayer;
No father's guardian hand my youth maintained,
Called forth my virtues, and from vice restrained.

* * * * *

Alone from strangers every comfort flowed.

SAVAGE.

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PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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CHAP. I.

IN a remote village in Cornwall, called Boss Castle, stood the parsonage. It was inhabited by an elderly clergyman, whose whole household consisted of a little girl, and one female domestic. The dwelling was so old and out of repair, that it was by the neighbouring peasantry often compared to its owner, who had the reputation among them of being somewhat crazed; although it was admitted that he strictly fulfilled his parochial duties, gave much in charity (slender as were his own means of support, from the smallness of the curacy), listened to and relieved every just tale of distress, in the most benevolent manner—yet he associated with none of the gentry, who had invited him till they were weary, and for some years had desisted from it: neither did he receive any visitors at home. His time was devoted to religious duties, and often to intense reading; but he was subject to long fits of melancholy, when he shut himself up in his apartments, and the only thing that raised him from his torpor, was the society of this little girl, on whom he doated. Yet there were periods when her presence threw him into such despondence, that he was compelled to dismiss her; on these occasions he took long and solitary walks in the most retired parts of the country.

Various were the surmises whom this child might be, and what was her relationship to him; but not even the domestic could discover, for he never permitted any questions to be asked, and she was known by no other name than that of Matilda.

It was at the period when she had entered her eighth year, that Mr. Trevanion lingered, during the winter, through a violent nervous fever, which rendered him so languid and debilitated, that it was thought, by the medical man who attended him, he could not live a week. Mr. Trevanion, as a pious christian, had long been resigned to die; but, on account of this little girl, in whom all his joy and grief appeared to centre, he would cheerfully have lived, had it been permitted him, a few years longer.

Matilda, had never known any other parent or friend except Mr. Trevanion; to him she imparted all her chat, and all her wishes. He had not allowed her to associate with any of the children in the village, nor to go beyond the limits of the parsonage garden and orchard. Her sports were less infantile than most children of her age; for his affection made her more attentive to the words of instruction, with which his conversation was always blended: and her early habits were founded on the strictest principles of benevolence and integrity.

Margaret, the domestic, who saw her master's end rapidly approaching, was extremely anxious to know what was to become of the child. She found him tenderly caressing her, and Matilda putting up her little hands, stroking his cheek and then kissing it, while she pathetically said, "I shall have no one to love me if you send me away;" for Mr. Trevanion had told her they must part, but she understood not that he meant he was going to die.

"My fortitude," cried he, "will desert me, if you do not take this child away. Poor thing!—that look—that voice unmans me. Oh! resemble not, sweet blossom, thy unfortunate parent, even in the artlessness of thy disposition, for that was her destruction.—Too innocent to be acquainted with guile, she sunk into the destructive snare spread for her! Such was——" He fell back in a fainting fit, and left the sentence unfinished.

After Margaret had administered different cordials, Mr. Trevanion once more feebly revived. When he was able to speak, he desired to have pen, ink, and paper, and, with much difficulty, addressed a few lines to an elderly widow lady, who lived a short distance from the parsonage. He was greatly agitated while writing; but having finished his letter, he ordered it to be taken with all speed to the Countess Dowager Seyntaubyne, at Pengwilly Hall.

Margaret stood suspended in surprise, and did not offer to move. Her surprise was natural. The Curate never allowed any person even to mention the name of the lady to whom his letter was addressed; it was the only subject, if he chanced to hear her spoken of, which put him out of humour; and, although possessing an unusual share of christian charity, it was parsimoniously extended towards her ladyship. That he should write to this person in his dying moments, appeared a step so extraordinary, Margaret began to give credit to the reports of the neighbourhood, that her master was sometimes out of his senses.—"Do you mean this letter to go, sir?" said she, holding it in her hand and reading the direction.

"For what purpose else was it written? It must go with all dispatch," continued he, in evident agitation: "neighbour James will take it." Margaret lifted up her hands and departed. In less than two hours, a violent ringing at the gate announced Lady Seyntaubyne, who, with hurried steps, entered the poor Curate's chamber.

Margaret, all curiosity, stood at a little distance from the door, but she was desired to leave the room.

The countess and Mr. Trevanion were several hours together before the bell rung; when it did, Margaret was desired to bring in Matilda. The child was led in by Margaret, who scarcely waited the bidding, and was ordered to remain.

"You are a witness," said Mr. Trevanion, in faltering accents to Margaret, "when I am no more, that I now resign this child to the Countess of Seyntaubyne's care for ever."—"You accept, madam," addressing her, "this precious relic?"

"I do," she replied.

"Sweet innocent!" exclaimed Mr. Trevanion, (Matilda gazed wistfully in his face), "look not so piteously."

"Will you, madam, cherish her with kindness? Will you promise to love her?—You will find her, young as she is, worthy of your love.—She has been the ministering angel to my woes; and, while she has awakened

‘The nerve where agony was born,’

she has poured the balm of peace into a mind touched by incurable sorrow.”

Matilda shrunk from the extended hand of the countess.

“It were as well,” said her ladyship, “the child went home with me now;—if to-morrow you are better, I will bring her to see you.”

“To-morrow!” exclaimed the Curate, mournfully, “I shall not see to-morrow. The world is fast closing upon me, and I would have no temporary concerns break in upon my thoughts at so awful a moment. On your promises, madam,” continued he, “I rely for a permanent home to Matilda. The gaiety of childhood will soon dispel her sorrow.—She will regret me for a time; I would wish her to regret me; and, young as she is, perhaps, in after years, remembrance will picture to her imagination one who cherished her infant years, and who doated on her as he once doated ——— Distracting thought!—but, no more; for I am unequal to the touching subject. Name me sometimes to Matilda; and, if she enquires—if she weeps my absence, tell her I am gone to be happy.—Sooth, with tenderness, her regrets: and assure her we shall meet again in the regions of the blessed!”

“If,” added he, “she lives to womanhood, present her with this miniature (which he gave into Lady Seyntaubyne’s hand);—this packet give her at the same time. It is proper she should know to whom she belongs; but, till then, spare her, and spare yourself, madam, the painful subject. To divulge it, would answer no good purpose: to deceive, would but lead her into error. She has never with me been known by any other name than that of Matilda, but you may call her *Trevanion*; and though with me she would have bloomed unseen, unknown, nor ever been transplanted from her native soil, her days would have proved as innocent as happy. Portionless, yet contented; gay as the lark which carols in the morning,—her spotless life ending, as it began, in obscurity;—all the honours she would have received at her death, would have been the simple flowers of the village maidens, scattered over her grave, bedewed with tears of sorrow.”

“With your ladyship, riches, temptations, flattery, admiration, will await her; O may she have sense and discretion to resist their baneful influence. Instruct her of the danger attendant in such allurements; how inimical they are to happiness, and that religion and virtue are the only passports to heaven.”

Lady Seyntaubyne heard Mr. Trevanion with a look of impatient uneasiness; the very reason which made him enforce the importance of his argument. Again he made her promise solemnly, never to resign Matilda to any who might demand her, except by marriage, nor to renounce the protection she was henceforth to give her. Her ladyship assured Mr. Trevanion she would not forfeit the promise she had given. He was prejudiced against her ladyship; therefore, it appeared strangely inconsistent, his consigning this darling little girl to her care; but there are often contradictions in human nature, not only beyond the power of human reason to explain, but also human ingenuity to imagine; this was one of them.

“You will go home, my child,” said Mr. Trevanion, feebly folding Matilda in his arms, “with this lady; I am ill, my dear, and she will love you.”

The countess saluted Matilda, with large promises to make her happy; and she reluctantly departed with her to Pengwilly Hall, never more to return to her early and peaceful home.

CHAP. II.

THE following morning, tidings were brought that Mr. Trevanion had expired during the night.

The affliction of children is violent, but, happily for them, it is transient. The painful impressions of the past gradually faded away; and the diversity of amusement Mrs. Grey, the housekeeper, an excellent and tender-hearted woman, contrived for Matilda, had the desired effect of curing her sorrow.

Lady Seyntaubyne was ill calculated to educate this lovely child, having, for the last twenty years of her life, lived wholly secluded from the world; its manners and habits had undergone, during that period, such a total revolution, she was a perfect novice in the customs of the present day. Her fortune was ample; and her family, of elevated rank, was one of the most ancient of the English nobility. Her only son had succeeded to the title and estate of his father, situated not more than six miles from her ladyship's present residence. By birth, she was Cornish; and had been an heiress, as well as a beauty. Her son, the present Earl of Seyntaubyne, had disappointed her expectations and wishes, in marrying, a few years since, against her consent, the daughter of an Irish peer, of very small fortune. She died at the end of a twelvemonth, after giving birth to a girl. His mother, still ambitious that he should form a splendid alliance, was afterwards offended with him, beyond forgiveness, on his entering into another engagement, which she considered of so derogatory a nature, that all intercourse and friendship had entirely ceased between them; thus disappointed and grieved, she renounced society altogether.

The Dowager Countess of Seyntaubyne, was a woman of a vigorous, strong mind, a mature understanding, and a persevering temper; with a heart, sincere, open, and liberal. Though she was superior to the little sensitive tenderness which displays itself in tears, the native benevolence of her disposition shone forth whenever her feelings were awakened; and no call of charity was unanswered, if the objects were deserving her bounty.—She gave without ostentation, and was never more pleased than when dispensing good around her. She had out-lived most of her early friendships,—new ones, she had no inclination to make; and, perhaps, she had formed no very erroneous idea in thinking, that the general class of people sought her acquaintance more from motives of vanity than real kindness. Benevolently disposed, she liked to confer favours only on those who were dependent on her, but she would receive none. Indeed, she required nothing from the world, as her fortune was large, and the establishment of her house munificent; her table was spread, not for herself alone, but for the industrious poor, to whom she daily devoted its superfluities.

Like all persons who live much to themselves, particularly in the decline of life, she was impatient of contradiction, and her word was made a law with her domestics; to them she was so generous and indulgent, that they had all become old in her service.

Lady Seyntaubyne had been educated in the old school; her manners, therefore, partook of the fixed formality of that day.—She knew those of the present, merely from the descriptions contained in modern publications; which gave her a decided prejudice against all changes or improvement.

A certain ostentation, formerly preserved in the establishment of persons of elevated condition, she considered so essential to their consequence, that she piqued

herself on being the only remains of an ancient family, who knew properly how to respect themselves.

It was not the fashion in her time to teach young ladies Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, nor to make them vie with the professors in their several arts. No; all was feminine, which constituted female charms, in her happy days; and fortitude only in pain and disappointment, was the strength allowed to woman, except where they were born to govern a kingdom. But she had herself received a superior education to the times in which she lived. Her ladyship could write and spell correctly; was an excellent grammarian, read French and Italian fluently, was well acquainted with the most distinguished authors, and much of her time had been devoted to them.

Her ladyship had not any knowledge of music, for it was not the custom, when she was educated, to teach it to those without a musical talent, merely because all learn it, whether they have a taste or not. She was skilled in the best modes of œconomy, and practised it without meanness; and, from never being defrauded (for she allowed no waste), she had always a liberal purse for the necessities of the industrious poor.

A few months reconciled Matilda to her new home. Lady Seyntaubyne had found an object to whom she was attached, and in whom she was interested. The winning manners of this lovely little child so insensibly stole into her heart, she could scarcely bear her out of her sight; but, unfortunately, what small portion of knowledge she had attained in her infantile years, was not improved; for the countess could not be at the trouble of instructing her, though she liked very well to amuse her by shewing her pictures, relating their history, making her fill the china jars with flowers, and devising a thousand other little amusements for her. There was one point, however, on which they could not agree: Matilda, at the parsonage, had been suffered to range the garden and field uncontrolled in all seasons.—Lady Seyntaubyne was a great admirer of beauty, and Matilda was so fair, she would seldom allow her to walk abroad if there was the least wind or sun, and then only shaded by a large bonnet, for fear of injuring her complexion. As the weather became colder, Matilda hoped to be at liberty, but the fear of inducing any chilblains was an excuse to detain her in the house; and the only freedom she could obtain, was to play at ball alone in the long gallery.

More than a year passed before Lady Seyntaubyne perceived the necessity of seriously adopting some mode for Matilda's education.—A governess was sent for from London.—When she arrived, a thousand drawbacks arose in the education of this new spoiled child. The governess required the uncontrolled guidance of Miss Trevanion, to which the countess objected, always finding fault, or pointing out some different mode for her instruction, and prevented any governess from remaining long in her appointment; hence the child, instead of acquiring knowledge, seemed to have her senses bewildered.

Matilda had naturally a quick perception, and an excellent understanding; but what was taught one month, was untaught the next; and some new system, introduced by a variety of teachers, which rendered her, at twelve years of age, more ignorant than children at that period usually are.

Lady Seyntaubyne, disappointed and mortified, was at a loss what method next to adopt; she was ambitious of rendering Matilda highly accomplished and well-informed. Completely disgusted with the superficial acquirements which she too often found in the women who undertook the important charge of education, and how incompetent they were to such an office, from the specimen given her of modern governesses, and having

even a worse opinion of fashionable boarding-schools, she determined to give up both these plans in the future instruction of Matilda, and endeavour to fall upon some other, more likely to tend to her advantage and real improvement.

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CHAP. III.

LADY Seyntaubyne had seldom, through life, submitted to any thing contrary to her inclination; neither had any sacrifices of her own ease been necessary for the benefit of others.—She would have made many for her son, had he considered his own happiness less, and her's more; but his conduct, she imagined, should eradicate her affection, and casual objects excited no interest or esteem. But when she beheld this darling little girl,

“Wasting her sweetness on the desert air,”

for her sake she determined to relinquish her present situation, and take a house in London.

Rapid in devising plans, which, when formed, she had no doubt of realizing, her ladyship sat down and addressed the following letter to the Reverend Doctor Arundel, the oldest, indeed almost the only person, whom she professed to call by the name of friend.

To the Reverend Doctor Arundel.

Pengwilly Hall.

“Dear and Rev. Sir,

“IT is only an extraordinary cause could draw a letter from me. You know I never write any except when excited by an interested motive. For these last twenty years I have retired from the world, indifferent to its objects, its pursuits, and what, in the amusements it affords, are called its pleasures. By my neighbours I am considered a female misanthrope, because I have closed my doors against a set of triflers, whose visits are *‘fit only for those, who if they did not that, would do nothing.’* *

“An event has lately occurred in my domestic arrangement, which has excited their curiosity and wonder, as it has given a new interest to my life, when I thought it impossible that any thing in this world could happen to rouse again my natural energy of character.

“You remember the Reverend Francis Trevanion, the poor but benevolent curate, who lived at the parsonage in the small village of Boss Castle, not very far removed either from Penrose Castle, or Pengwilly Hall, and the melancholy history annexed to a part of his family, whose fate was so involved with a member of mine, as to have occasioned me much domestic misery, while I verily believe it broke old Trevanion's heart.

“In his dying hours he sent for me, and consigning into my hands a beautiful child, with such earnestness requested I would adopt her, that when I beheld her loveliness I could not withstand this interesting petitioner, who otherwise would have become an outcast on the world.

“I have a decided aversion to being asked favours, and make a point of always refusing, if they do not come spontaneously from myself; but on *this* occasion the request was irresistible; and I find this engaging little girl has obtained an interest in my old

* Cowper.

heart, which is surprising. It is very odd the love which this creature has excited, and the happiness and anxiety she alternately creates in my bosom.

“Matilda is at present a child of nature, I wish her to remain so; not to be spoiled by those female puppets who set themselves up as teachers to young people. If, my dear doctor, you had seen as much as I have lately, of the pretensions they make, you would have smiled at the arrogance of the attempt. The consequence is, Matilda is more ignorant than the first hour she came to me.

“To boarding-schools I have a particular aversion. My prejudice may be ill founded; but children are better without a mixture of companions. The bad habits of one tend to corrupt the whole flock: they form their little cabals together, and if one child has the misfortune to labour under any bodily deformity, she is made a subject of ridicule by her companions. If her parents are not affluent, and she is not on an equality with them in birth, she is cruelly taunted with it; whence arises a spirit of discontent, or feeling of envy in the happier lot of her playmate, who is filled with pride and arrogance. The early habits of religion, it is true, are instilled by rule, but the Scriptures are not explained, nor their actions founded on the principles which they inculcate.

“But, in truth, I could present such manifold defects, that I have no inclination this child should be subject to fall into them.

“I am too old and too indolent to attempt instructing her myself. I have never been accustomed to take any trouble for others, and now it is far too late in life to begin the task; besides, I should make a sad hand of the business.

“It is to *you*, my good Doctor Arundel, I would commit the education of this darling child. You must not refuse me. My whole soul is bent on it, and I cannot submit to contradiction. Indeed it is the greatest proof I can show of the respect and esteem I entertain for your profound sense, learning, and genuine piety, my consigning this precious gem to your and Mrs. Arundel’s care. If Matilda is so happy to merit her affection, she has so much of the milk of human kindness in her nature, that while she will not spoil her by a mistaken indulgence she will feel for her all the interest of a mother in what concerns her future importance and happiness through life.

“Request Mrs. Arundel to do me the favour to hire a house for me in London. As Matilda will chiefly reside with you at Richmond (where she will have the benefit of the good air), I should prefer it in some of the streets or squares which it was the fashion to live in when I was young; such as Soho Square, Argyle Street, or Pall-mall, for the modern mansions are all shew, with no comfort or warmth in them.

“Your reply, my good friend, will be a great favour, and remember, I will not take a refusal. I remain, with true esteem,

“Dear Sir,

“Your obliged and

“Obedient servant,

“DOROTHEA SEYNTAUBYNE.

“P.S. I shall give Matilda a handsome fortune.”

The contents of Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter much surprised Doctor Arundel. The request it contained required deliberate consideration ere he could determine whether or not he ought to comply with it. His health had obliged him sometime since to withdraw from his church, and rendered him incapable of fulfilling those active duties of life his

holy function led him to perform, with a zeal not the effect of ostentation, but flowing from the firm principles of piety and benevolence of heart. He was not content to preach the way which led to heaven; he showed his flock by his own example that it was not by *faith* alone, but by *works* also they could obtain admittance into the regions of the blessed. He despised not those who differed from him in their religious opinions; he regretted their errors; he would have rejoiced had he been able to persuade them they were wrong, but he wished not they were changed except from conviction; for he was assured that all true christians would be received into the bosom of the Father, if they acted up to the tenets they professed. He was certain the too general laxity and indolence of the clergy of the established church had been the cause of such numbers dissenting from it. He with concern witnessed the sectaries daily springing up, but he never beheld those schisms where the minister of the parish was active and vigilant in his duty. Dr. Arundel was not satisfied with going through the service of the day and then considering its business ended. He every Sunday evening opened his house to the poor of his parish, to whom he read and expounded the Scriptures: he expected their attendance; and the genuine piety of his manner was such, that while it deeply impressed his auditors his instruction was at once so clear and easy, his hall was overflowing with the crowds who never were dismissed without being amended.

The Reverend Doctor had travelled as preceptor to the Duke of N—— over Europe. His learning, his manners, and above all, his principles, had entitled him to universal respect. He married a lady of the highest degree of worth and accomplishments, but on the death of an only daughter, withdrew from the large circle they had been accustomed to mix in, and though grief had subsided into resignation, they had no longer any taste for the society of which they were the ornament and pride. They had been induced to fix their residence at Richmond, to enjoy the soothing friendship of Lady Sophia Clairville, who had been the favourite associate of Mrs. Arundel, on the death of her beloved daughter, who was snatched away in the bloom of youth and beauty. She had been educated by her parents, and was so superior in genius and temper, that her loss was remembered with respect by all who had seen and known her. The Countess Seyntaubyne had particularly distinguished her, and she wished her adopted protégée to be such a one.

Dr. Arundel having meditated for some days on her ladyship's letter, gave her the following reply.

To Countess Dowager Seyntaubyne.

Richmond, April 30.

“Dear Madam,

“To refuse a request made in so earnest a manner is extremely painful to me. I have maturely considered the nature of it, and the more I weigh the subject, the more numerous are the difficulties arising by a compliance.

“Many people would unhesitatingly accept your protégée without reflecting on the important duties which they have to fulfill. The information that your ladyship will give the young lady a handsome fortune is one very principal objection; for many indulgencies and luxuries are the accompaniments of large expectations. Our establishment is very circumscribed: we live with gentility but economy. My health has

obliged me to withdraw from my public function, and I have taken a small but neat house on the banks of the Thames. Another objection to my receiving your protégée is, my incapacity to attend so closely to her studies, as I deem it conscientious in every person who acts in the character of a preceptor, to do. Mrs. Arundel's health and spirits, alas! broken down by affliction, are unequal to the smallest exertion. Few people once were so capable of performing the task you would assign her; but we are fast retiring from the world, and wholly unsuited to so serious a charge. In short, my dear respected lady, I must decline a proposal your too high opinion of me has induced you to make. Come to London, however, where we will converse the matter over.

"Mrs. Arundel has seen a handsome house in Soho Square, which she thinks will suit you. She unites in regards to your ladyship, and I have the honour to remain,

"Dear Madam,

"Your much obliged

And obedient servant,

"MARTIN ARUNDEL."

Disappointed as Lady Seyntaubyne felt at the non-compliance of the reverend doctor she still resolved to persevere in her application, and therefore at once desired Mrs. Arundel to take the house she had seen in Soho Square for a twelvemonth.

CHAP. IV.

THE countess prepared without delay for her journey, and at the expiration of a fortnight found herself set down at her mansion in London, after an absence from that metropolis of twenty years.

The day following she ordered her coach to take her to Richmond, and was most respectfully welcomed by Doctor and Mrs. Arundel.

When once Lady Seyntaubyne formed any plan, and set her heart on its accomplishment, she left no argument unpleaded to carry her point. She told the doctor she positively would not quit his house until he yielded to her request. At length the extreme benevolence and excellence of his heart led him to give a reluctant assent on certain terms, which he laid down.

One chief cause which induced him to forego his own inclination in the affair, was the conviction how unfit the countess was to educate this lovely and engaging child, who already had entirely won over Mrs. Arundel in her cause, while her husband was conversing with Lady Seyntaubyne. This excellent couple soon perceived that a mistaken fondness would spoil her by the most improper indulgence. It was therefore, in consideration to the future formation of her mind and disposition, they acceded to taking on themselves so important a charge. Lady Seyntaubyne, elated at having gained her point, took leave of her friends in high spirits; and it was agreed they were to receive Matilda in the course of a few days.

When the morning arrived that was actually to separate the countess from this idolized protégée her resolution almost deserted her. Ashamed to shew uneasiness, she kept in her dressing-room, and would not see her till it was the time to depart.

Had the child been going a voyage to India a larger wardrobe would not have been necessary, to which was added toys, trinkets, and *bonbons*, innumerable.

If Matilda had not been blessed with a most docile and sweet disposition, it must have been spoiled. She was nearly broken-hearted at the idea of parting from Lady Seyntaubyne, and retraced in her memory the imperfect recollection she had of her early benefactor and friend, shedding additional tears over his memory, which she cherished with peculiar fondness.

When the countess and her protégée were ushered into Mrs. Arundel's drawing-room, Matilda shrunk back, and seemed afraid to advance. The doctor approached her with a countenance full of benignity. He took her hand with kindness, and said, "I trust, my dear young lady, when we are better acquainted, you will consider me rather as a tender friend than a severe preceptor; Mrs. Arundel will cherish you with the affection of a daughter, and she will not feel satisfied if you do not love her."

Mrs. Arundel approached and saluted the pale and weeping Matilda, while she said with pensive tenderness, "I have no daughter now, may I hope that Miss Trevanion will endeavour to supply to me the one I have lost."

This was an appeal to Matilda's feelings she could not withstand. She flung her arms gracefully round Mrs. Arundel's neck, and sobbing on her bosom, replied, "Might I be worthy to be called your child, I shall be happy."

"This child," interrupted the countess, "has been used to much indulgence. You must, my good doctor, be very kind to her. And though, madam, I chide her, you must

not severely; but she sometimes tires me to death with her carelessness and want of application. When she is older she will improve.

It was not Matilda's fault that she wanted application, for she was seldom engaged in any pursuit without being called away on some frivolous excuse; and her carelessness might be ascribed to the little value which she was taught to place on every thing in her possession. This was the fault of the countess; for any trinket when broken or lost was always replaced by a new one; and happy was it for Matilda that the precepts of Dr. and Mrs. Arundel counteracted in her maturer years her disposition to waste and carelessness during her childhood.

The reverend doctor replied to Lady Seyntaubyne by saying, "that in consigning Miss Trevanion to their care, he understood they were to have the uncontrolled management of her. If," added he, "I am mistaken, ere I commence a charge so arduous and important I must decline it; for only on the terms proposed will I be induced to receive your protégée."

"What, doctor, would you deprive Matilda of the indulgences to which she has been used?" naming several.

"Yes, my good lady, if those indulgences are by me considered unnecessary and improper luxuries, she must be denied them. Whatever is requisite to health and comfort Miss Trevanion shall not want: here she will be treated with kindness, not mistaken tenderness."

"Well, Sir," returned the countess, "I perceive you are a very positive man; but I have resolved to part with the child, and you must have your own way. You will, however, allow her to spend a few days with me now and then."

"It gives me concern, I cannot even in that comply with your ladyship's wishes. If I am to do justice to Miss Trevanion you must see her only for a few hours, and very seldom. When the attention is called off, and the interest awakened by unceasing and pleasing objects, the dull and arduous pursuits of life, if they are not forgotten, are at least merely thought of as a hardship. Young minds in particular seek pleasure with avidity; they rarely have application; but the constant habit of employment will bring on application. Habit becomes second nature; we begin to delight in what we are accustomed to; hence arises the necessity of constantly keeping alive the attention of children, as by varying their pursuits they do not tire by instruction."

"Like all irascible people," answered her ladyship, "I find you are determined not to be subdued; therefore I must consign my treasure to you 'for better and for worse,' and be assured I have not another on earth I prize so greatly."

"I will madam," returned the doctor, "estimate the value by endeavouring to render Miss Trevanion more than accomplished,—an excellent young lady."

"That is all right, but Matilda must excel other young women in knowledge and attainments to satisfy me. Italian, French, Spanish, and German, she must understand, and read with fluency. The dead languages women have no business with. She must be a correct historian, have some acquaintance with astronomy, natural history, botany, and mineralogy. She must understand every thing she undertakes. I would wish her to be an Angelica Kauffman in painting, a Saint Cecilia in music, a Sevigné in letter-writing, a Montague in wit, a Hebe in beauty, and one of the graces in dancing."

"Rather, madam" replied Doctor Arundel, smiling at Lady Seyntaubyne's enthusiasm, "if she is to be wise, let her be a Lady Jane Grey; if she possesses learning, to

possess also with it her piety and humility of mind; with equal virtue and fortitude to resist temptation, however splendid its allurements, if inconsistent with her sphere in life. Wit is a dangerous weapon in the hands of a woman; I know but one who has judgment to play with it gracefully, and not wound her friends. If she possess beauty, O may her mind be far more radiant than her person.”

“Well, well, my dear Sir, take your own way, for in such hands Matilda has every opportunity of becoming what I wish her; and to good Mrs. Arundel I commit her for all those feminine and graceful accomplishments for which she is so eminently distinguished. I will not interfere with your plans; choose your own masters for her, and I shall send them daily from town. Allow me to see her as often as possible, for without that pleasure I cannot exist.”

Doctor and Mrs. Arundel assured Lady Seyntaubyne they would adhere to her wishes in every thing that was proper; and with these assurances she took leave.

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CHAP. V.

HAPPILY for Matilda the different modes of life which she experienced in her infantile days prevented the luxuries to which she had latterly been accustomed from becoming almost indispensable; for as many and great were the deprivations she was destined to endure.

The countess never permitted

The air of heaven
To visit her face too roughly,

nor allowed her to go abroad, except in a carriage. To walk in the sun would spoil her complexion, and the morning dews would give her cold; consequently she was weak, pale, and so delicate, that although she lived in a healthful open country she was a stranger to all its charms.

At night Mrs. Arundel conducted Matilda to a neat airy chamber, and informed her that all the family assembled to prayers at eight o'clock every morning, in the doctor's library, where she also was expected to attend.

Matilda retired to bed, but not to rest. Her thoughts wandered to her beloved Lady Seyntaubyne—to her late happy home—and the indulgence it afforded her. She felt disposed to like Doctor and Mrs. Arundel, but as yet they were strangers to her.

Matilda had not been taught to meditate seriously; yet, young as she was, she was by nature prone to reflect. Often and often she endeavoured to discover what were the claims she had on the countess's bounty and affectionate indulgence: but it was a subject too much involved in mystery for her to develope; and the desire to obtain any knowledge of her parents only added to the anxiety which she felt, without even enabling to form the smallest conjecture; so complete was the silence maintained by those with whom she was connected.

Little inclined to sleep, she was awakened at an early hour, by a concert of birds, to which she listened with a sensation as new as it was pleasant. The air was scented with the perfume of flowers; the tender green of the lawn was spangled with the dew of morning; the sun burst in streaks of orient gold athwart the firmament; and the magnificent Thames presented a busy scene of barges and boats perpetually gliding along its broad clear surface. The opposite shores were luxuriantly scattered with trees, amidst which were indistinctly seen innumerable elegant villas, studding the mazy borders.

Matilda stood lost in wonder and delight. She possessed a natural energy of soul, and was, from her earliest years, susceptible of the enjoyment derived from the charms of nature.

She dressed herself, and lightly tripping from her chamber, was pleased to find it was not yet seven o'clock. She entered the breakfast room, which opened on the lawn. Its borders were enamelled with a profusion of roses in full bloom, emitting the most delicious fragrance; the little birds were tamely hopping amongst their branches; and as she proceeded by a path to the river, which flowed past the side of the garden wall, she discovered a pretty alcove, shaded by a luxuriant accasia, which expanded its elegant branches in a green canopy over it. To this spot she determined in her hours of recreation

to repair with her books. She was conscious of her extreme ignorance, and resolved to lose no opportunity of making up for the time hitherto diverted from her mental improvement.

After the first week of her residence at Richmond, Matilda found the mode of instruction Doctor Arundel laid down for her so easy and clear, that she was not less astonished than delighted with the progress she made. The best masters came daily from London, to instruct her in music, painting, and dancing. All the other branches of her education Doctor and Mrs. Arundel took upon themselves, and their capability to execute this important task was soon manifested in the rapid improvement of their pupil.

The regularity of her hours, the cheerful, yet tranquil, habits of her life, made an equal improvement in her personal appearances. The rose of health bloomed on her cheek, the vivacity of youthful hilarity sparkled in her eyes, and smiles of contentment quavered on her lips. Her regard for Doctor and Mrs. Arundel bordered on filial affection. She felt grateful for their forming her mind in the purest moral sentiments, in the virtuous principles of integrity and honour; and she loved and respected them for the eminent goodness they possessed.

Lady Seyntaubyne, some days after Matilda's removal to Richmond, came to visit her, and she was sensibly struck, even in so short a period, at the look of improved health and beauty she had acquired.

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CHAP. VI.

DOCTOR Arundel knew too well the value of time to throw it away either in paying or receiving idle visits; yet the company of the enlightened he sought and cultivated; and those persons who frequented his house, consisted only of a superior class in talents, accomplishments, and manners. He was an enemy to seclusion, and had experienced that much of the joys of life consisted in social intercourse, unalloyed by idle ceremony, with a select circle of friends. Mrs. Arundel, since the death of her daughter, had wished to seclude herself from the world; but her husband, convinced that solitude nourished grief, used all his efforts to persuade her occasionally to mix with society; and got her friend Lady Sophia Clairville to draw her into those circles which are entertaining, without being either frivolous or extravagant.

Lady Sophia and Mrs. Arundel had been educated in the same convent abroad, where they formed a friendship, strengthened not only by time, but by a maturer judgment of each other's character; and in the anguish of mind which Mrs. Arundel experienced from the loss of her only child, she had derived, in coming to reside near her ladyship, the first consolation since her heavy affliction.

Lady Sophia Clairville, in early youth, had been extremely beautiful. That beauty was now rather blighted by the chilling hand of grief than the withering impress of time; but her eyes were not robbed of their lustre, nor her countenance of that exquisite sensibility which beamed with the most irresistible sweetness in every feature. She was by nature more the daughter of Thalia than Melpomene, yet her chequered journey through life had given her an air of affinity with the latter; so pensive and melancholy of late years had been her demeanour. Sometimes, however, the native gaiety of her disposition appeared when she was thrown into the society of loved and partial friends; and the charms of her conversation, in a temporary forgetfulness, were unfolded by the most fascinating wit, and sportive vivacity.

Few persons had so great, so capacious a mind; and, though tremblingly alive to the slightest touches of human woe, it was firm, collected, and pious, in adversity. Her strong sense was pourtrayed in every action of her life, and in every word she uttered. She despised the affectation of learning, yet few women had so much wisdom and knowledge. She was proud, but it was the pride of dignified greatness, which would not descend to familiarity with common-place people, or every-day acquaintance. She was cautious in bestowing her friendship, but when it was conferred, her heart glowed with all its finer sentiments.

Lady Sophia had been blessed far above the generality of the world, in parents, sisters, husband, and children; but she had experienced the social calamity, that they

“Who have most to love have most to lose.”

and had been no less happy in her union, than she was now disconsolate in her widowhood.

She had been the mother of several children, but one son alone remained, and his impetuous and aspiring spirit, in the choice of a sea-faring life, had proved to be a source

of incalculable anxiety: she preferred, had he yielded to her wishes, some more tranquil and domestic profession.

Her ladyship's elder sister, Lady Julia O'Brien, had married an English peer, against the wishes of her family, and, after giving birth to a daughter, expired. The young Lady Julia, her niece, she sometimes had the gratification of having for a guest. She was a year older than Matilda, who, since she became one of Doctor Arundel's family, had excited a lively interest in the transitive breast of Lady Sophia Clairville, from the artless sweetness of her manner, the solidity of her understanding, and the excellence of her disposition, at once ingenuous and amiable.

Her ladyship encouraged the intimacy of her niece with Matilda, shortly after an introduction to her; but when she heard that she was a protégée of the Countess Seyntaubyne, she became shy and reserved, and seemed disinclined to any further acquaintance with her. This prejudice, however, Matilda, by her engaging manners and irresistible sweetness, soon had the happiness to overcome; for her ladyship, conscious how unjust it was, merely because she did not like the countess, to extend her disesteem to such an innocent, so interesting and attractive a young person, who, ere she knew her six months, had entirely gained her friendship. She sometimes fancied that she perceived a strong personal likeness between Julia and Matilda; and though their features were not the same, they certainly bore a sort of fleeting resemblance, which, though lost when they were together, was often very apparent at a distance. Her ladyship had more than once remarked it to her reverend friend, who had been greatly struck with it himself, but always wished to evade the subject; and when Lady Sophia questioned him closely respecting Miss Trevanion's family, who were her connections, and particularly if the Countess Seyntaubyne acknowledged her in any other manner, than as her protégée, he gave her an indirect reply.

Lady Seyntaubyne often chid Matilda for expressing so much regard for Lady Sophia and her niece. She seemed to have so great an antipathy to them, that could she, without offending Mrs. Arundel, have withdrawn Matilda, on any pretence, from their company, she would most willingly have done it; but finding it impossible, she always cautioned Matilda, on pain of incurring her displeasure, against any intimacy with them.

When Matilda thus discovered how unpleasant even their names were to the countess, she wholly ceased mentioning them, although the highest pleasure which she experienced was in their society. Yet while she greatly lamented the deep-rooted and determined prejudice which subsisted between those she most loved and valued, she could not help thinking, that if the countess and Lady Sophia could only meet under more agreeable impressions, all unpleasantness would die away.

There was a peaceful happiness in the domestic circle at Dr. Arundel's, which no passing event interrupted. If sorrow visited them it was chased away by piety and resignation. The doctor had taught Matilda, from her earliest residence with him, to practise self-denial, and never to diminish happiness by useless repinings at trifles; by these means she acquired a serenity of disposition, although her temper was naturally petulant and impatient. On her first manifesting these defects, they were soon effectively cured, by the forbearance which he made her practise.

Her knowledge on all subjects became in time as profound as it was universal. Accustomed to employ every hour of her time, instead of the late habits of idleness, she had acquired such a desire for application, that she was never happy except when

studying some useful attainment; and she soon verified what Doctor Arundel had said, that “the constant habit of employment will beget the powers of application.” It was her ambition to excel,—hence Matilda did excel. In Lady Julia Penrose she had a powerful excitement; for, by nature, her ladyship’s mental endowments were more acute, her perceptions quicker, and her understanding, like her aunt’s, sound and capacious. Sometimes it was necessary to restrain the playful gaiety of her disposition from a dangerous tendency to poignant wit, which her vivacity rendered it difficult, but wise, to temper; for though her remarks were never malevolent, they were sometimes apt to border on humorous ridicule. Mrs. Arundel, who observed Matilda could not help laughing and being amused by it, pointed out so seriously the injurious consequences of making enemies by so dangerous an indulgence of even sportive ridicule; and that when Lady Julia was in the vein, not even her friend would be spared, Matilda ceased to be diverted by it, and seriously entreated her to desist.

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CHAP. VII.

FOUR years passed rapidly away under the fatherly tuition of the Reverend Doctor Arundel, who always blended kindness with his wise instruction and advice. Matilda had long been alive to the essential benefit she had derived from him. But the period of her separation from these inestimable friends was just approaching; she had entered her seventeenth year, and in the ensuing spring it was Lady Seyntaubyne's intention to bring her home, that she might introduce her into the world of gaiety and fashion.

Lady Sophia Clairville always joined Mrs. Arundel's domestic circle, for a few days, at Christmas: they were anticipating the pleasure of her arrival, when a messenger brought the intelligence that his lady was very ill, and requested to see Mrs. Arundel immediately. Lady Sophia had read the dreadful account in the public prints, which the doctor had likewise seen, but was too prudent to speak of, without its being fully authenticated. The frigate in which Albert Clairville was lieutenant, had been taken, after a desperate engagement, by a French vessel of superior force. After their becoming prisoners, a violent storm arose, by which they were driven on the English coast, where they were shipwrecked, and it was supposed that every soul had perished.

Mrs. Arundel, without delay, hastened to her suffering friend. The situation in which she found her was truly alarming, for the shock she had sustained seemed to have overwhelmed every superior faculty; she appeared the very statue of despair; she neither moved, spoke, nor wept; and that sensibility which was ever alive to the afflictions of others was smothered to stupifaction in her gentle bosom.

Various were the efforts Mrs. Arundel used to raise her friend from this frightful suspension of sensation; and after some hours, she had the pleasure to see her imprisoned faculties yield to native sensibility, and a shower of tears relieved the oppression of her heart. When Lady Sophia was restored to a sense of suffering, from the idea of being thus deprived of her only son, the fortitude of a mind as firm as it was resigned, prevented her from giving way to such repinings; and at the end of a few days she requested Mrs. Arundel would allow Matilda to spend a short time along with her, as her niece, Lady Julia Penrose, always passed the Christmas with her father; and she thought the society of any amiable young person would cheer her. Mrs. Arundel therefore returned home, and Matilda supplied her place at Lady Sophia's.

The amusements Matilda devised to divert her ladyship's attention had a very beneficial effect; and she had the gratification, during her short stay, to perceive her daily amend in health and spirits, and she found when the endearing ties of reciprocal regard and flattering testimonies of approved friendship were united and blended with enlightened conversation, the hours fled ere she seemed sensible of their movement, and she heard announced with regret, that the carriage was ready to take her from her ladyship's captivating society. Descending the steps of the house to reach the coach, Matilda's attention was arrested by a figure leaning over the railing. From the reflection of the moon, which cast her beams on it, she discovered an interesting face, overspread by melancholy, tintured with a look of despondence, which made her pause, to observe further the person. He was a young man, who, beneath the most homely garb, preserved

an air at once noble and engaging; beside him stood a youth of an equally dignified appearance.

At sight of Matilda the young man started from his position; he uttered a deep sigh, struck his hand to his forehead, and half retreated, as she advanced towards the carriage.

She had reached the door, when the stranger, with a hurried step, and in evident agitation, touched her garment.

“Pardon, madam, the enquiry,” said he, in a tremulous accent, “but allow me to ask if you are the lady of this mansion?”

“I am not,” replied Matilda, in a dulcet accent; “of whom are you in search?”

“One, young lady, I now, alas! despair to find. If the person I hoped to meet is not here, the transporting interview I had anticipated is lost to me for ever. Come then, my brave comrade,” continued he, in a disappointed tone, “for the bosom which would have fostered us is surely dead to every sense either of suffering or of joy.

“Yet methinks, madam,” exclaimed he to Matilda, “you are not a stranger to me, for you greatly resemble Lady Julia Penrose, and though we have not met since childhood, she was too interesting and lovely to be forgotten.”

“You had better, young man,” interrupted the footman, “go away. There is no one here to assist you, and you detain the lady.”

Matilda, though she knew the heart of Lady Sophia was alive to the most generous benevolence, yet thought it would be imprudent to disclose her name to the young man; but he had interested her so much, from saying that she resembled Lady Julia (which both Lady Sophia and Doctor Arundel had frequently remarked) she had not resolution to quit him without adding, “from whence come you, Sir, at this unseasonable hour? for you appear a stranger and a fugitive.”

“A stranger, madam, I am, it is true, but England is my country, this very house was once my home, though now you behold me a wanderer indeed!”

“Your appearance, Sir,” replied Matilda, “is above your forlorn condition, and as these doors are never closed against the unfortunate, I will endeavour to procure you some refreshment, and a resting-place for the night, in the neighbourhood, for yourself and friend—”

“Sweet excellence,” exclaimed he, “to reject your kindness would be to refuse you the joy of administering to the unhappy and distressed.”

Matilda desired the footman to shew the strangers into the parlour, and to remain with them, while she went to Lady Sophia, to whom she related the circumstance which had occurred, requesting her to accompany her below, to which she readily consented, as, from the interesting detail Matilda had given her, she was anxious to see the strangers.

The young man who had addressed Matilda was sitting with one hand folded over his bosom, and with his other he was endeavouring to brush away a tear, which started in his eye, while beside him, in mournful silence, stood his companion.

When her ladyship and Matilda entered, he raised his head, and discovered a face pale and worn with fatigue and anguish.

Lady Sophia Clairville stood for a moment gazing ardently on the persons she beheld, and then uttering a wild and piercing shriek, sprang towards the young man who had addressed Matilda, folding him in an agonizing transport to her bosom. She spoke not—she moved not—the sudden joy and surprise had overcome her; again she relapsed

into insensibility, and she was lost to all sensations of either joy or sorrow. Her son (for it was her shipwrecked Albert) assisted Matilda to lead his mother to a sofa. He knelt beside her—he pressed her hands to his lips, as he vehemently exclaimed, “Oh my mother!—Your lost Albert intreats your benediction—speak but one little word to sooth him with your maternal tenderness.”

It was long before her ladyship opened her eyes. Insensible to the surrounding group who in anxious solicitude hung over her; it appeared as if she never would awaken to bless her son with her smiles; so much time elapsed in this dreadful suspense. At length she appeared to breathe, and heaving a deep sigh, as though her heart was breaking from its imprisonment, she started, and looking wildly around her (Matilda had requested Clairville to retire out of sight) she exclaimed, in a tone of disappointment, “It was then only a vision of my Albert I beheld, and, oh! what a woeful figure did it exhibit of my precious boy; a spectre, indeed, of his former self. Yet I knew, or thought I knew him, even with his palid and emaciated countenance, and in his homely garb. I folded the precious vision in my arms, I heard his melodious voice utter the transporting name of mother—I felt his cheek wet with the tears of filial tenderness—I saw ineffable sweetness beam from his fine eyes upon his parent.—Alas! alas! long has my dream of happiness been over, and I return to life only to mourn his destruction.” “Awaken no more to sorrow, my beloved mother,” cried Clairville, approaching and throwing himself on his knees before her; “if again to behold me is indeed a source of joy, what, though late a prisoner and a fugitive, shipwrecked and expiring, a shadow of my former self, yet will you find me unchanged in filial duty, unbounded in tenderness to a mother who is a model of all that is excellent in woman. To know that I merit your affection is a proud and ambitious feeling.”

“Dearest Albert!” exclaimed Lady Sophia, letting fall the most grateful tears she had ever shed, while she embraced him, “you alone could have awakened me to a sense of tenderness and joy. I see you beside me—I press you to my anxious bosom—and in this mighty bliss I behold the merciful goodness of a gracious Providence guiding you amidst such perilous scenes with his protecting shield, and conducting you in safety from bondage and from death, to the attentive and fostering care of a mother who had deplored the loss of her darling son.

“Raise your soul, my child,” continued she, “in gratitude with mine, for the mercies you have experienced. Who,” enquired her ladyship, casting her eyes on his young companion, “is that youth?”

“What, my brave companion, who saved me when I was sinking.—Mother, you have found one son, but you must receive another. I cannot part with my noble friend—I told him my mother had a heart that would administer to the sufferer—and I am sure I told him true, for Lady Sophia Clairville never turned the stranger, nor the afflicted from her board.”

“Nor ever will,” interrupted she, warmly. “Come then, my son, and let that board be spread, and with joyful welcome partake of it. O my sweet Matilda,” (now addressing Miss Trevanion, who in silent admiration and emotion, had witnessed the scene) “it is only by being a parent you could enter into my present sensations, or guess the overwhelming happiness I experience.

“Clairville,” added her ladyship, “you must become acquainted with this interesting young friend of mine. You had a warm advocate in her.”

“In truth I thought we were acquainted, she is so like my cousin Julia. They are sisters, at least, in loveliness, and in minds resemble one another, for this young lady was the benignant angel who conducted me to your arms.”

Matilda had never spoken during this affecting interview, but her glistening eyes bore testimony of what had been her sensations.

“You must not go back to night,” said Lady Sophia; “Mrs. Arundel will excuse you, and we will write the doctor and my friend to breakfast with us to-morrow morning. Miss Trevanion,” added she, “has been brought up under their tuition.”

“Then, madam,” cried Clairville, “you have had the pattern of every excellence before you; and seem to have fully profited by it.”

It was not until a late hour the happy party separated for the night.

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CHAP. VIII.

THE influence of sudden joy is often as serious in its effects as violent grief, on a delicate frame, and a heart full of sensibility. Lady Sophia was seized with a nervous fever, which nearly terminated her life.

Short as was now to be the period of Matilda's stay at Richmond, she would not quit her ladyship, and watched over her with the most tender and unremitting attention.

To a young person, whose days have passed on in an even tenor of uninterrupted happiness, whose mind has felt no depression from affliction, and who is insensible of its existence, except by name, there is, perhaps, no lesson so beneficial, on first being ushered into life, when full of hope, joy, and expectation, as the awful contemplation of the sick bed of a pious Christian. Such was the picture now presented to the youthful Matilda as she attended her suffering friend. It was a beautiful and affecting lesson; for while she learned the fallacy of all earthly enjoyments, and the uncertainty of long retaining the most valuable, she was instructed to extend her prospects beyond what this world can bestow, in the example of the exalted Lady Sophia. Her ladyship, full of piety and resignation, was prepared with firmness to quit this sublunary scene; she cheered instead of depressing those around her, taught them almost to blame themselves, in wishing to detain her, for she beheld death stripped of all his terrors. There was no gloomy horror in her countenance; it was serene, resigned, and lovely; it bespoke a soul full of hope, springing with transport to the bosom of her Creator.

But it was the will of heaven to restore a life so valuable. Matilda had the felicity of seeing Lady Sophia gradually recover. Her amiable conduct, and the little consideration for herself during the fatigue and exertion she underwent, created an attachment for her in the heart of young Clairville, which he was scarcely aware of till her return to Doctor Arundel's was mentioned.

Thus were two young persons accidentally thrown together, first by a sudden and joyful event, which as quickly changed into one of the most mournful. These circumstances had established an intimacy which rendered the approaching separation most fatal to his peace. Clairville's whole soul was devoted to Matilda. It was not the idle start of a romantic passion which had fixed his regard, he had seen her in a character which raised her every hour in his highest estimation, attending the sick-bed of a mother he adored with a tenderness and interest that declared the goodness of her heart. He was sure that his cousin Julia would have performed the same office, but she was absent, and Matilda's resemblance to her, which had at first enchanted him, now began to strike him with remorse, and painful consciousness that Matilda had superseded her in his affections, he would fain have dismissed.

From childhood Lady Julia Penrose had always been called his *little wife*, a title which he proudly acknowledged, having felt peculiar affection for her. Was it then generous to take advantage of Julia's absence, and to place his affections on another? His mother's highest ambition, he knew, was the alliance—and could he disappoint her hopes? No: he would sooner die; and he determined when Matilda departed never to see her more, if it was with any other sentiment than that of friendship.

Matilda was counting the few remaining days of enjoyment she was still to experience in the society of Lady Sophia, who was now able to set up and converse,

when the following letter was put into her hand. On perceiving it was Lady Seyntaubyne's writing she broke the seal with anxiety, and read with surprise and consternation to this effect:

To Miss Trevanion.

“DEAR MATILDA,

“You have displeased me very much; I have repeatedly expressed my disapprobation of your intimacy with Lady Sophia Clairville; and on my coming to Dr. Arundel's yesterday I was surprised to find you were staying at her house. I desire you will leave her ladyship immediately, and be ready to come home with me, to remain, next Monday.

“Remember, I expect from you obedience and *self-denial* in every thing I require. I shall not be unreasonable in my demands upon you; but I have a particular cause for interdicting all future intercourse, either with Lady Sophia or her niece, Lady Julia Penrose. I have very substantial motives for so doing, which it is not expedient to disclose to you.

“I remain,

“Dear Matilda,

“Your sincere friend,

“DOROTHEA SEYNTAUBYNE.”

Soho Square, March 2.

As Matilda closed her letter, Lady Sophia perceived a crimson glow overspread the cheek of her young friend, whose confusion was so evident, her ladyship said, “I would not be impertinent in my enquiries, but I am afraid your letter is of no pleasant import.”

“It is a summons,” replied she, frankly, “from Lady Seyntaubyne, to be ready to attend her on Monday. I should be wanting in affection and gratitude not to obey it cheerfully; yet,” added she, with a heavy sigh, “to leave friends to whom I am so warmly attached, and whom I may meet no more, requires some philosophy not deeply to lament. There is no feeling in nature so painful as bidding farewell to those whose society has constituted all the joy of life. Such has been my happy lot; great, therefore, must be the deprivation I am going to endure.”

“My friendships, Matilda,” cried her ladyship, “have been very circumscribed through life. I have found few who have possessed that liberal spirit, worthy in my estimation, to be admitted a partnership in the heart. What is called general society, I have found constituted a set of individuals, who associated with each other not from the endearing union of kindred minds, and the tender reciprocation of friendship, but merely for the purpose of dissipating time, without affording any pleasing retrospection. It is living in a crowd without tasting, the delight of society; for such people meet without joy, and separate without regret.

“It is true, a heart of sensibility is spared an infinity of pain, but its emotions are joyless, and it is a stranger to the transports arising from the sober domestic circle of endearing friends, where ‘thought meets thought,’ and every wish is anticipated to constitute the felicity of participating a mutual regard. Oh! to a mind of feeling, without such soothing balm, what a blank is existence, when none are worthy of being beloved!

“If,” continued she, “you are young and beautiful, *ton* may give you importance in the world of fashion, and for a time you will be run after, courted, and admired: but the reign is transient, and on resigning the empire to some new favourite, you will return neglected and forgotten. But even youth and beauty are of little avail without fortune; for, in these days, there are few faults greater than that of poverty. *Self* is the leading principle in all characters bred to opulence; the distinction of high birth is no longer regarded, or even respected; and when the wives and daughters of mercantile men are to be allowed on a level with peeresses, is it to be wondered at, that all difference is forgotten?”

“The low-born and uneducated,” added her ladyship, “I never could assimilate with. There is a self-importance—a coarseness of mind—which a refined taste cannot tolerate; and the heart sickens and pants for something better. Thus, then, my sweet young friend, quarrelling with half the world, I must have society new modelled, with very few exceptions, before it can repay me for the trouble of spending my time in it. A scene of dissipation fills me with sadness; when I behold such a giddy multitude, all born rational beings, divested of reflection, and panting after folly in such a varied succession.

“But with you, dearest Matilda,” cried her ladyship, “I have found a sweet associate,—a second daughter! You have been the soother—the restorer of my life! and, to my son, you have conferred the joy (under Providence) of giving him back his mother. What, then, do we not owe you? and how can we ever sufficiently estimate your value?”

“How, indeed!” exclaimed Clairville, with energy; “unremitting have been the tenderness and solicitude with which Miss Trevanion watched you; and the remembrance of such goodness will be ever cherished with sentiments of more than gratitude;—she has been the benignant angel, as I once called her, who hovered over us both.

“Sweetest Miss Trevanion!” continued he, with emotion, “when you see us no more, believe, at least, that we never can forget you. Oh! that it were possible——” He became embarrassed, stammered, and left the sentence unfinished. “What were possible?” hastily interrupted his mother.

“No matter;” replied Clairville, colouring, “it cannot be. It were unjust to Julia; neither could I presume to hope that Miss Trevanion—Forgive me; I know not what I would say,—but this I know, that Matilda—Miss Trevanion I mean, is entitled to my warmest gratitude, and possesses my highest admiration. Every virtue dwells in her bosom;—she is full of sensibility, with a dignity, a firmness of mind, which I have never seen equalled. To her friendship I may aspire,—but to her love I would not.”

“You may to both,” exclaimed Lady Sophia; “love Miss Trevanion as a sister, and ever cherish her remembrance with the tenderest friendship, for to it she is justly entitled.”

“Your kindness, madam,” said Matilda, in a faltering accent, “overwhelms me. What have I done to deserve such praise? no more than humanity prompted; and the pleasure resulting from your ladyship’s society, whatever distance may divide us, and though we should meet no more, will be one of my fondest recollections.”

She dared not trust herself to give any reply to Clairville. He attended her to the carriage, and as she stepped into it, he pressed her hand to his lips, whilst she faintly articulated, “May all felicity attend you!”

A few days after Matilda’s departure, Lady Sophia sat down and wrote to her niece as follows:

To Lady Julia Penrose.

“COME, dearest Julia, come and participate in the felicity which awaits you; for I have actually folded my beloved, my long lost son in my arms. Oh! the joy was almost too much, and had nearly destroyed me; but, like most violent emotions, it has not exhausted itself, and I think it is impossible to ever more return to my former state of depression. For I now most forcibly feel a truth,—a truth to which my heart has long coldly assented, acknowledging, that after the most bitter and heavy affliction, the bosom may again expand to joy. But it is not a trifle that can reanimate the stupified palsied faculties; (mine once were suspended from all sense, either of sorrow or of joy) and nothing less than the return of my precious child could have raised me to a conviction that it was possible ever again to experience more than a temporary absence of the most painful emotions, which for the last few years of my life chased away the natural gaiety of my disposition, to introduce sorrow, solicitude, and apprehension.

“I glory in the bravery, the intrepidity of my boy, whilst I tremble at the perils he encountered. He yielded not in a most sanguinary engagement with the enemy: covered with wounds, he and his brave comrades were forcibly taken prisoners, and as they were sailing for France, next contending with the waring element which overwhelmed them, the vessel was driven on our English coast, where it was split in pieces. My Albert, and one of his companions, on a plank, floated ashore, the rest of the unhappy crew perished.

“Almost without clothes, and without money; sometimes taken for vagrants or impostors, starving and exhausted, they on foot arrived in this forlorn condition, piteously pleading for admittance into that house which my poor Albert imagined was never more to shelter him.

“Such, Julia, is the dangers which your lover has encountered. Oh, hasten to us, and bless him with your hand; then you may prevail upon him to exchange the tumults of war, the perils of the ocean, for the sober scenes of domestic life, and leave this dire and unequal contest, to those who must engage in it, for my heart sickens at the very name of war, at the mournful desolation it has occasioned. The cities it has depopulated and laid waste; the thousands it has sacrificed, and the bleeding hearts it has occasioned. Can even the laurels so dearly purchased, steeped as they are in blood, restore the suffering victims of this sanguinary strife.—Can it heal the agonized heart of a wife—a parent—a sister?

“The picture is so hideous, that I turn from it, Julia, with trembling, for I had nearly been grouped in the same scene of its woe.

“Clairville is anxious, impatient, and abstracted; he appears to experience some strong emotions which he does not explain, and I have no means to discover. Come to us without delay. I remain,

“Yours most affectionately,
“SOPHIA CLAIRVILLE.”

CHAP. IX.

A FEW days after the receipt of this letter Lady Julia joined her aunt and cousin.

The abstraction of Clairville's mind, which his mother complained of, was occasioned by the distressing situation in which he was placed. As a British officer, whose honour was no less unblemished than his bravery and patriotism were conspicuous, he could ill brook the necessity of being obliged to surrender his sword to the enemy. And though the accident of his shipwreck liberated him as a prisoner, yet as a matter of etiquette, he could not fight against the enemy, and to remain inactive at such a time, depressed his aspiring spirit. Sometimes he thought of surrendering himself immediately a prisoner; so romantic were his ideas of honour; but the misery such a step would occasion to his mother, checked so wild a fancy, and he, for the present reluctantly submitted to his fate.

Matilda in the meantime was preparing to leave Richmond. Doctor Arundel's concern in parting with his pupil was mingled with much anxiety and apprehension, that the religious and moral principles which he had inculcated would gradually decline, and at length cease to exist, after she had been sometime initiated in fashionable life. Her future destiny dwelt much in his thoughts. He was unusually grave the evening previous to her departure, and wore such a look of tender solicitude, whenever he looked on her, as penetrated Matilda's heart. She rose, and approaching the great chair he always sat in, took his hand, and while she respectfully pressed it to her lips, a tear glistening in her eye, she said, "I hope, dear Sir, though I am so soon to leave you, that my maternal Mrs. Arundel will allow me sometimes to become your inmate, to profit by your councils, which I shall always endeavour to make the guide of my life."

"What I have taught you, my dear child," replied the reverend doctor, "was founded on those principles which instruct you how to live here, so as to live in felicity hereafter. Let not dissipation allure you into its seductive path; it will appear strewed with roses, but, alas! how pungent will you find its thorns. When languor succeeds to health, when the sunshine of the mind is clouded by the dark retrospection of hours mis-spent, how unsatisfactory will be your feelings. Think, Matilda, when at first, perhaps, you are unwillingly drawn into the vortex of folly, of the contrast of your present with your former life. Compare them, and when we meet, tell me candidly which of the two leads to the most permanent content, not to say happiness."

"Were I, Sir," interrupted Matilda, "ever to forget the lessons you have taught me, I should be unworthy the pains you have bestowed."

"Where," observed he, "the heart and the principles are good, I think none of us can greatly err. We cannot step at once from excellent habits to vicious ones; but even those customs and manners which at first we naturally shrink from, time and habit may reconcile us to:

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
Which to be hated needs but to be seen;
But if seen too often, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

“So weak is human nature, that if we do not by the firmness of principle oppose those encroachments which fashion sanctions, we shall at length become converts to mean vices, which reason condemns.”

The morning arrived when Matilda was to leave her respected friends; and Lady Seyntaubyne appeared in her coach, to take her home. She felt displeased to find her spiritless, pale, and weeping; and rather hurt, she exclaimed, “Is this like the salutation of joy I expected to welcome me; is this the pleasure, Matilda, that you promised me on your return home?”

“Doctor and Mrs. Arundel have, madam,” returned she, mildly, “been to me in the character of parents; to leave them with indifference is impossible; though, to betray so much regret, I acknowledge to be not merely unpardonable weakness, but an undue return for the tender concern your ladyship takes in me. You must pardon it, as due to those who have inculcated every warm and grateful feeling.”

While Matilda went to direct the packing of her clothes, Doctor Arundel said to the countess, with much energy, “I present Miss Trevanion to your ladyship a most excellent young woman. I resign my precious charge with the deepest regret. I deliver her with a mind all purity—unskilled in guile, unsophisticated in fashion. Innocent, as amiable, gentle, docile, and engaging you will find her. Oh, with care preserve and guard so amiable a young creature; consider how difficult a task it is to guide a beautiful girl free from blame through the wily paths of the world of fashion, into which, alas! she is so soon to be ushered. Keep her as you would heaven’s best gift, and lead her only into those paths which may enable her hereafter to reflect with satisfaction on the life she has spent. Embitter it not, madam, with the remembrance of unavailing remorse. Sadden not her days with any painful retrospection. Oh, may the innocent gaiety of youthful enjoyment in maturer years be gilded with the sober but lasting glow of a tranquil sunshine, which no cloud will have power to overshadow, and may she gently retire, when full of years, into those blissful regions, of which she has rendered herself worthy to become a sharer.

“Forgive, madam,” added the reverend doctor, “the freedom of an old man’s advice and benediction. Had I valued Miss Trevanion less, you would have been spared them.”

“If, my good Sir,” replied her ladyship, with a smile, “Mrs. Arundel has bestowed as much pains on forming Matilda’s manners, as you have done on her education and morals, she will do you some credit. Your advice, I admit, is all admirable and proper; but if we are to live in the world, we must become something like it, or withdraw from it altogether.”

Many kind regrets and tender advices were expressed at parting; and Matilda left Richmond with an anguish of mind she felt ashamed to confess even to herself: but she endeavoured to rouse her thoughts, and to enter into something like cheerful conversation with her benefactress.

CHAP. X.

IT was not the intention of Lady Seyntaubyne, in bringing Matilda home, that she should make either a permanent or long residence with her, having formed very ambitious views for her future establishment in life; and neither pains nor expence had been spared in educating her highly. The accomplishments she possessed, united with her personal beauty, graceful deportment, and engaging manners, she felt confident would render her a desirable alliance for any man of elevated condition. Her ladyship despised the romantic idea of marrying from affection. She was a perfect stranger to those endearing attachments which spring from similarity of taste and sentiment, excited by mutual interest and regard. She was married by her parents at a very early age, for the mercenary convenience of uniting two estates. She soon became a widow, and, unfortunately, never had experienced the delight derived from a domestic circle, where reciprocal tenderness prompts those endearing attentions, which, unguided by interest, are of the most delicate and binding nature. As convenience had directed her union, so Lady Seyntaubyne would have directed her son's; but he determined to fix his own choice; and by marrying the younger sister of Lady Sophia Clairville, who was the daughter of a poor Irish peer, had caused a breach between himself and his mother no time could restore, and which, from some events that shortly followed, had degenerated into the most determined dislike and separation on both sides.

Thus alienated from her son, and disappointed in those plans which she had formed, she had for some years retired to the country, where she had renounced society, and forsworn all friendships. In bringing Matilda home, the countess had made no acquaintances but what she considered of utility to her; and though she now again entered into a numerous circle, it was much against her taste and inclination; but it was necessary, she thought, to do so, that she might be able, more effectually, to convict her son of his matrimonial errors, and to realise the plans which she was perpetually forming for Matilda's introduction and future establishment.

She had never seen her beautiful grand-daughter, Lady Julia Penrose; and the tender affection she entertained for Matilda, had excited a sensation of jealousy in her bosom, when she imagined that Lady Sophia Clairville and Mrs. Arundel were by her more regarded.

Lady Seyntaubyne was an idolizer of personal attractions. It was the infantile loveliness of Matilda which first engaged her attention; and when she advanced to womanhood she was somewhat disappointed that the expectations of her becoming a perfect beauty were not fully realised. Many faces were more beautiful than that of Matilda; and it was rather the expression of native innocence, than the regularity and isolated beauty of her features, which characterised her, produced the fascination that she excited whenever she appeared, possessed an electric charm, and drew forth so much admiration.

Matilda's countenance, open and ingenuous, beamed with the most engaging sweetness of expression. Hitherto a stranger to sorrow; indulged and beloved by the friends who had educated her, she was gay, cheerful, and easy. Free from guile, a stranger to the arts and habits of the world, she conversed with freedom, chastened by diffidence, and modified by good sense. What her manners wanted in dignity, were supplied by a

graceful artlessness, with which she alone seemed to be gifted. No study could have attained it, for it was as natural to her as the unerring truth which guided all her actions. She was the child of nature, and that in its loveliest form: her movements were so elegant, her step so light, she seemed rather a being of another world, who had descended in the form of a sylph, so ethereal was her general appearance; her voice was full of melody, and there was something so touchingly soft in its tones, as to excite a tender interest in every one who listened to her persuasive accents.

Such was Matilda Trevanion at the period when she left the Reverend Doctor Arundel's.

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CHAP. XI.

THE sphere in which Matilda now moved seemed to have transplanted her into a new world: she might truly be said to live in constant society, without any participation of enjoyment. Those persons with whom she associated were as numerous as they were uninteresting, frivolous, and dissimilar to her taste.

The peaceful days of domestic bliss which she had enjoyed at Richmond appeared for ever fled, and were succeeded by an unsettled routine of idleness and folly. The rational society of Lady Sophia Clairville—the pleasing friendship of the interesting Julia—the tender attentions of young Clairville—the benevolent countenances of Doctor and Mrs. Arundel, were all remembered with a sigh, and rendered her present life not merely irksome, but almost unhappy. She had, it was true, looked forward with agreeable anticipation to the period when she was to come home to her benefactress, for whom she entertained a tender regard. But on her return the ideal bliss died away, and she scarcely dared trust herself with the comparison which was continually present to her imagination. She chid herself for being discontented and ungrateful, but she missed the fond maternal manners of Mrs. Arundel. She found a fearful void in her heart; for Lady Seyntaubyne was a stranger to its soft and fine emotions; and without chiding Matilda for doing wrong, seldom praised her for doing well.

The hour of breakfast at Richmond was always filled up with a cheerful and animating conversation. In Soho Square, it proved a solitary meal; and the time Matilda would have devoted to study, was broken in upon by frivolous company, or paying idle visits till dinner time. In the evening she was conducted to some party, or some ball, by any woman of fashion who would take charge of her; for the countess had been very vigilant in forming a numerous acquaintance previous to her coming home.

It was understood, that the countess would give Matilda a splendid fortune. No cost was spared to render her dress and appearance fashionable. She possessed a native grace, which, united with her liveliness, drew round her a crowd of admirers whenever she was seen.

Lady Seyntaubyne sometimes attended her into public, for the pleasure of observing the notice she engaged; but her antiquated dress rendered her so conspicuous, as often to distress Matilda; who, though a novice in the late adopted mode of quizzing, evidently perceived she was the subject of ridicule.

One of the ladies to whom she was introduced, was the young Marchioness of Etherington. Matilda had been at one or two of her concerts and parties, and she had been accompanied by her to a ball. But it required little penetration to find out that she paid no regard to the females who were of her party, and that her whole aim was to secure admirers for herself. Her ladyship danced well, played high, laughed, quizzed, flirted, and was so full of levity, that Matilda, not merely disgusted, but shocked at such a display of folly, requested that Lady Seyntaubyne would find her a more proper "*chaperon*," for it was quite disagreeable to appear with her in public.

The men who joined them, Matilda thought bold, impertinent, and self-sufficient. They talked to her with a familiarity to which she had been wholly unused; at the same time, that there was an affectation of absense in their manners, that had none of the polite gallantry which she expected to meet with in high life.

But if she was sensible of these deficiencies in the men, she daily saw she was as much tormented with the high-flown compliments which were paid her by the old Duke of Elmwood. He followed her like a shadow; and she would have smiled at the absurdity of his conduct, if she had not perceived that his daughters, not very young women, had watched her with an eye of jealousy, and behaved with a constrained civility, which gave her pain.

Matilda had likewise become acquainted with a rich West-Indian merchant's family. It was in vain that she urged to the countess their insipidity and dulness. But they gave splendid entertainments and great dinners, therefore Lady Seyntaubyne was desirous their acquaintance should be cultivated.

"I tell you, child," said she, "you know nothing of the world. What does it signify whether people are agreeable or not, if they are but in fashion. The Butlers give the finest dinners of any family in town. Young men think it worth while to go to a good dinner, and that is the way mothers get their daughters married, by inviting them; and it is at such parties you have the best chance of becoming acquainted. The Butlers' evening concerts, I am told, are distinguished for having the best chosen performers, because they permit their rooms to be hired by them for the night. The hostess is now a mere passive machine, and remains nugatory. It is an admirable plan, for it saves much trouble and expense.

"It was quite different," added her ladyship, "in my youthful days; I remember so much state and ceremony were preserved, so much court and respect paid me, I was like a queen in my own dominions. In the present day it is quite reversed, for the hostess does not, it is probable, personally know even one third of the people who frequent her house, and she takes no part in the trouble of entertaining them."

"And can any pleasure, madam," replied Matilda, "be derived from such a mode of entertainment. If you wish to hear music there is the opera, and several concert rooms, without converting one's house into a public hotel, where no choice nor selection can be made of proper company."

"Lady Sophia Clairville has taught you so many dull old-fashioned notions, to cure them will take half a century. Pray, Matilda, what is your objection to Mrs. Butler and her daughters?"

"She is destitute of all the powers of conversation; and when you send me to spend the day with them, if there is no other company, I am always inclined to fall asleep. The pride of Mrs. Butler is insufferable, united with all the insolence, and all the indolence, of those who are elevated by fortune rather than by birth. Her air is stiff, without dignity, and her address so cold, formal, and supercilious, it is difficult not to take her for a prim old maiden of the last century. When Mrs. Butler does speak, it appears as if she were doing violence to her inclination, to perform those civilities due to her guests; and a few monosyllables is all that is ever heard from her.

"Her daughters," continued Matilda, "are mere automotons, and as pretty pieces of stale life as I ever beheld. They can only drawl out an affected whisper of yes, or with a languishing air, except when they are surrounded by beaux, or one or two young women of their own coterie, when they get into a corner, and by jeers and sarcastic smiles, think that they have turned all the company into ridicule. The Miss Butlers are also unfeeling, as well as ill-bred. One evening at their house, in a very crowded party, when there were not seats for half the company, I was rising to offer a poor lame lady, who must have stood with pain, my chair, when Miss Butler, who chanced to be close by,

pulled me by the arm, and asked me how I could be so silly. Such, madam, may be *haut ton*, but in my opinion, it is *mauvais ton*, and inspires me with disgust.”

“That speech,” again interrupted the countess, “is so like one of Lady Sophia’s sentimental ones, I should have thought that she had taught you it. But see what she has made of her romantic notions of love and friendship. She possesses a title, and little fortune to support it.

“Pray, Matilda,” added she, “what is become of that young Scotchman, who talked in such a droning and barbarous accent?”

“He is returned to Scotland, with his father and mother.”

“I wish he did not speak in such an unintelligible language, for he is a sensible young man. He is an only son, and will be heir to a large fortune. I desire, Matilda, the next time the Duke of Elmwood comes here, you will behave to him with more civility. I do think he has taken a serious fancy to you, and you know he is worth fifty thousand a year. What does it signify he’s having daughters older than yourself, they cannot interfere with you; and I am persuaded, with a little finesse and management, you might have him at your feet to-morrow. But you are a mere baby in the ways of the world. Indeed I have always observed persons who are reckoned to possess the most sense are so; but there is no teaching you to act like other people.”

“Mercy on me, madam, marry me to the old gouty Duke of Elmwood. Matilda Trevanion is indeed to be pitied if it is come to this.”

“Never,” cried Lady Seyntaubyne, angrily, “was a girl so void of ambition. What does it signify, as I said before, the difference of age between you. Don’t you see young women every day marry men, for the sake of a handsome settlement, old enough to be their fathers?”

“And grandfathers, sometimes,” interrupted Matilda, sarcastically.

“I hope,” cried her ladyship, turning a penetrating look towards her, “I hope, Matilda, that young man, you know whom I mean, is gone to sea again?”

Matilda blushed deeply, and began pulling to pieces a rose she had been copying.

“Why don’t you answer me. Where has Lady Sophia sent the boy?”

“I—I really”—

A servant opportunely brought a letter for the countess, and Matilda, in confusion, was glad to escape out of the room.

CHAP. XII.

MATILDA withdrew to her *boudoir*, where she was pensively sitting, with one arm on the table, thinking most probably of the very young man the countess had just told her to forget, when she entered, accompanied by a shewy fashionable looking woman, whom she had never seen before. Hastily rising, she endeavoured to dispel the tears that filled her eyes.

“Mrs. Aldersley, Matilda,” said Lady Seyntaubyne, “who not only kindly returns your visit immediately, but begged to be admitted to your *boudoir*, that she might be introduced on the familiar footing of a friend.”

Matilda curtsied, and said something of the honour intended, in a low voice, for she had no desire to cultivate Mrs. Aldersey’s acquaintance, notwithstanding her society was in much request in a particular quarter. For to be of Mrs. Aldersey’s parties, conversations, and her concerts, many persons were vainly solicitous, as she was considered one of the *cognoscentè*. Matilda had often seen long paragraphs in the papers about her parties; but she had heard Lady Sophia Clairville speak of her as one whose society was rather alluring than estimable, and Matilda entertained a high opinion of her friend’s judgment in her discernment of characters.

Lady Seyntaubyne courted notoriety for Matilda, and wished for nothing so much as that she might be brought forward by some lady of taste and talents. How far Mrs. Aldersey was entitled to that distinction was doubted by good judges. She, however, formed high pretensions to be ranked as such, and by superficial observers was classed amongst the *litterati*.

“I should guess,” exclaimed Mrs. Aldersey, looking earnestly at Matilda, “my young friend, by her pensive look and tearful eye had been studying the character of Melpomene for the next masquerade. Am I right?”

This speech made the countess observe her, and perceive she had been weeping. “Matilda is a singular girl,” cried her ladyship, “with all the trouble I take to introduce and amuse her, she always prefers being at home, and has no ambition, like other young women, to be admired. If she had, she would know that there is nothing so unbecoming as tears.”

“Commit Miss Trevanion to my care,” replied Mrs. Aldersey, “for the rest of the season, and rely on it, my dear madam, she will soon repent her taste for solitude.” Mrs. Aldersey could not have made a proposal more agreeable to Lady Seyntaubyne, who not only availed herself of it with avidity, but closed an agreement, before she departed, to take a share of a box with her at the opera, for Matilda’s use, during the season, to commence on the following Saturday.

After Mrs. Aldersey took leave, her ladyship said, “you objected to the young Marchioness of Ethrington, as being too gay and full of levity, therefore this is a fortunate acquaintance, for at Mrs. Aldersey’s house you will meet people, at last, suited to your taste. She will kindly too take all trouble off my hands. I could not have found a more proper *chaperon*; and your taste for music will be constantly indulged in going to the opera.”

True, Matilda was passionately fond of music, particularly the Italian, in which she excelled; but she would rather not have attended the opera at all than attend it with Mrs. Aldersey.

It might be the effect of prejudice, for how apt are we to imbibe the opinions of those whose judgment we think well of; but yet Matilda was not satisfied with the general appearance of her new acquaintance. There was too much self-confidence in her manner, and a bold expression in her full dark eyes, which were brilliant softness; and her dress was too gaudy for a woman past forty.

Mrs. Aldersey was the daughter of an officer, and had married splendidly. She was early left a widow, and without the encumbrance of any family or connections, had a large fortune at her entire disposal. She was ambitious of popularity, and opened her doors with munificence to all classes of society. She did not confine her circle alone to the gay, but made her house a sort of rendezvous for the most eminent geniuses of the age, in all the various branches of human knowledge; giving the most liberal support and encouragement to those who rose only by their talents.

Matilda, almost dissatisfied with herself for the ungracious return she was making the countess, in her reluctance to form an acquaintance with Mrs. Aldersey, which, from continual intercourse, must become a sort of friendship, retired to dress for the opera, and at nine o'clock was set down at Mrs. Aldersey's house in Portman Square.

On being shewn into the drawing-room, she found her stretched on an ottoman, and a foreigner seated beside her, reading aloud in Italian; she nodded to her, waving her hand at the same time for the signor to go on, and whispered to Matilda, "We will just hear out the sixth book, and begone. Dantè is such a divine poet, so full of brilliant descriptions; his characters are so interesting, and so little inferior to Virgil, I wonder every woman does not learn Italian on purpose to read Dantè's *L'Enferno*. Many passages are sublime: his picture of the infernal regions is perfectly Miltonic, and his *Paradiso* surpasses even the enchanting display of Elysium in the *Æneid*."

Matilda, not inclined to argue with her new acquaintance, gave a silent assent to her remarks, and shortly after they arose to depart.

As she surveyed Mrs. Aldersey, she was not quite satisfied with her mode of dress. The rouge and pearl-powder, she thought, rather spoiled than improved her looks; and the lightness of her clothing, with the exposure of her person, was displeasing.

The first act of the opera was over when they arrived; and when the ballet commenced, several gentlemen, in succession, came into the box. It was known amongst her acquaintance, that, contrary to the usual mode, she was so unfashionable as to attend to the music. Mrs. Aldersey piqued herself on being an amateur; and, therefore, never suffered any person to interrupt her during the performance. This was a circumstance most agreeable to Matilda, who was spell-bound by the enchanting note of Catalani and Tremazzani: and was so entirely absorbed in Semiramis, as to forget Mrs. Aldersey, or the knowledge that there were one or two in the box beside her.

"The fable of this opera," said Mrs. Aldersey to Sir Charles Dashwood, (who had come into the box at the close of the act,) "is extremely interesting. The disciples of John Bull consider it burlesque tragedy to utter all the dialogue in recitative and song; yet, could even Mrs. Siddons, all eloquent as she is, throw more interest into the scene than Catalani; who, as well as being a fine tragedian, gives to all the airs such a tenderness and enchanting melody, as touches the very soul. Tremazzani has been said to sing to the

passions. Taken in a literal sense, the meaning is bad. But who ever wrote poetry without pathos? Who, that ever attempted it, did not wish to give a richness to the numbers—a force of expression, mere prose can never reach, without becoming rodomantade? Shakespear goes so far as to say, no man ever knew how to write poetry until he had been in love. Let me see—the lines run thus:—

‘Never durst poet touch a pen to write,
Until the ink were temper’d with love’s sighs.’

“Italy is the land of music; and their song is all romance, formed on passion. Hence, the tenderness they display, is found to inspire enthusiasm, and is the reason why the Italian operas so far excel our heavy English ones; and if the fable be sometimes absurd, it partakes not of that mass of dulness, or of silly pantomime, which always inclines me to fall asleep.”

“After so eloquent a disquisition,” replied Sir Charles, “I am almost afraid, madam, to confess, I should not be sorry to see the opera put down altogether; though I acknowledge, with you, the music is highly grateful to every person of taste. Yet even taste may become vitiated from the prevalence of fashion. The luxury and extravagance of the age are now carried to such excess, we lavishly confer thousands on foreigners and spies, (the hirelings of a most ruthless enemy) whilst our honest men and women are sinking under indigence with fine talents, which rather prove their misfortune for want of adequate encouragement, than, as was intended, their means of support.

“Is it necessary,” continued he, “allow me to ask, to instruct young women of fashion in the accomplishment of music, as if they were to become public performers? Those, of an inferior class, might apply their time to more advantage. I am at this moment acquainted with some girls, whose parents are far from rich, that pay Tremazzani a guinea for only three quarters of an hour, to instruct them to sing, with very ordinary voices; and more than six hours of a day is lavished to the practice of music. What sort of wives do you imagine these women are to make men of moderate fortunes? for, as they are very plain, it cannot be an attraction to any coxcomb of fashion.”

“You are straying, Sir Charles, wide from my topic,” cried Mrs. Aldersey, “I will give you no opinion, if it is your idea that the opera should be abolished. I quite give you up as a bad subject. What induced you, may I ask, to come to night? Curiosity, to hear Tremazzani—who certainly must be allowed to be a beautiful singer, and one of infinite taste.

“I suppose you object to the dancing?”

“Not altogether; but, like many other modern amusements, it wants to be reformed. Dancing is a long established custom; not only amongst the ancients, but even the savage Indians throw great expression into their attitudes and movements. This is an age where such free scope is given to the encouragement of taste, whether real or perverted, it ought to be as pure as it has become refined. One mode of dancing, I hope, Mrs. Aldersey, you will not allow in your house,—the German Waltz.”

“It is become so fashionable, I am sure I shall have no quarter from my young friends if I do not. The curtain is rising,” she added, “we will discuss the subject another time.”

Sir Charles seated himself by Mrs. Aldersey, and with no small interest contemplated the youthful innocence and beauty of Matilda, to whom he had not been introduced. The earnestness with which he regarded her, made her blush. It was not a look of impertinent curiosity he wore, but rather one of mingled pity and concern; for, though she was unknown to him, he was sorry to see her alone with Mrs. Aldersey, who was not respected, except in her own class.

Sir Charles Dashwood was a single man, and his society was in much request, for the grace of his manners, the pleasantness of his conversations, and his extensive knowledge. He had travelled much in early life, and acquired a taste for every elegant science, of which he was considered a perfect judge. He had been attracted to Mrs. Aldersey's house, from a certainty of there meeting with persons of almost every nation, whose knowledge and conversation would amuse him.

When the opera was ended, Sir Charles told Mrs. Aldersey he would attend her to her carriage, if she would wait till he had spoken to two ladies in the next box, and disappeared in a moment. She was very curious to know who they were, and desired Matilda, as she was stationed next them, to lean over and observe.

She did so, and beheld with surprise Lady Sophia Clairville and her niece, Lady Julia.—Ardently did she wish to speak to them; but the wish, after the first impulse, was momentary, and sunk into a *sentiment* of mortification, for fear her ladyship should observe it was Mrs. Aldersey who was her *chaperon*. It might lower her in her estimation; and she was sure it would displease Doctor Arundel. Yet, to be so near her beloved friend and amiable Julia, and pass them in silence, hurt her extremely. But where was Clairville? Anxiously she strained her eyes in hopes of discovering him, yet she saw him not.

Forgetful of Mrs. Aldersey's request, Matilda, lost in reflection, started from her reverie on a tap from her fan. "A silver penny, fair lady, for your contemplations. I am sure they are worth knowing, they have so suddenly recalled the deserted roses to your cheeks."

Fortunately, Matilda had not time to reply, before Sir Charles returned, on whom she cast such a look of anxious enquiry, Mrs. Aldersey exclaimed, "In pity to Miss Trevanion's anxiety, tell me to whom you were talking,—and say, was not some Adonis behind the curtain; for Miss Trevanion took such a tender interest in the scene, I might have as well called upon the winds to answer me."

He turned with a degree of curious solicitude towards Matilda, who blushed more deeply than ever.

"First, madam," replied he, "introduce me to your lovely young friend, before I presume to address her."

"True, that is very proper; and I think this lovely young friend, Miss Trevanion, ought to feel a little piqued, at the request not being made before. Now tell me to whom you were talking."

"To Lady Sophia Clairville; she is rarely seen in public; but in the circle of her friends she ever diffuses pleasure. Few women possess her sense, her wit, and her excellence. Her niece, lady Julia Penrose, who was with her, is the most beautiful creature that has appeared for an age in the circle of fashion."

"Introduce me to them, Sir Charles. I positively must know them. I shall rejoice to find a woman out of the common run."

“Lady Sophia is difficult of access. The very notoriety which you court, is the very circumstance which would make her decline your acquaintance. But do tell me,” added he, in a whisper, loud enough for Matilda to hear, “who is that angelic young woman you have along with you? I have once or twice seen her before in public. Whence comes she? and to what family does she belong?”

“That,” replied she, with a sarcastic smile, “is more than I can tell.”

“Not tell?” repeated he, in amazement.

“True, upon my honour. The old Countess Seyntaubyne picked up the girl in some of the mines in Cornwall.”

“They have brought forth precious ore,” replied he.

Matilda, who had hold of Sir Charles’s arm, let it drop.—She trembled, and grew sick with the contending emotions, which overwhelmed her, and would have been lost in the crowd if he had not seized hold of her, and with peculiar tenderness and respect said, “Be not afraid. I perceive you are unused to these places; but, however painful to yourself such timidity, rather, Miss Trevanion, glory in the possession, than wish to be deprived of what must ever prove one of your leading attractions.”

Sir Charles was persuaded by Matilda’s emotion, she had overheard a conversation carried on in a half whisper, and Mrs. Aldersey’s ill-natured and ill-judged reply. Whether what she uttered was true or false, he felt indignant at the want of delicacy and feeling she had displayed. If Miss Trevanion was really *nobody*, it was the less pardonable, while she was under her care, to speak so equivocally of her to an unmarried man. He would not, but there were many others he knew in the world who would, have taken advantage of Mrs. Aldersey’s remarks, to have treated her with indignity and freedom.

So poignant were Matilda’s feelings, she spoke no more until she was set down at home; and then coldly wishing Mrs. Aldersey good night, she withdrew to her chamber. Lady Seyntaubyne had retired sometime.

CHAP. XIII.

MATILDA was lost in the most painful retrospection, of what faint remembrance she retained of her infantile years. Uncertain as to the future, involved in mystery with respect to her family and connections, ignorant of what nature her claims were on her benefactress, she sat musing till the daylight reminded her it was time to go to bed. She bore the name which best she loved,—that of Trevanion. A name she had been taught to lisp in her infant days. She recalled the tenderness of him to whom it belonged; but to it she never had attached that of father. No parents' smile had blessed her;—no mother had watched over her with maternal fondness. Even of her origin she was ignorant.—Was she then ignobly born? Her soul shuddered at the terrible suspicion.—Was the name of her parents disgraceful, that she must not hear it? Perhaps they were lowly, but virtuous; and, as Mrs. Aldersey had said, she was taken from the habitation of some of the poor miners. “Oh!” cried she, in a transport of grief, “unhappy parents of your unhappy child, if ye but live, take me to your dwelling, however humble;—to virtuous poverty let me return, rather than be pampered in splendid misery, and tormented by the unfeeling world, with my humble origin. And if, O God! ye are not virtuous, in some lorn wilderness let me hide myself, unseen, unknown, that I may breathe out the remainder of my little life, (for short will it prove) in prayers and tears for your conversion.”

Matilda, exhausted with anguish and weeping, rose in the morning so pale and sorrowful, that the moment the countess beheld her, enquired with the utmost anxiety if any calamity had befallen her.

Matilda wept, and could not reply.

“Why are you silent,” said Lady Seyntaubyne, “if any thing has made you uneasy, and I can remove it, tell me; have you not always found me a steady friend?”

Matilda simply related Mrs. Aldersey's conversation, which she had overheard with Sir Charles Dashwood.

The countess paused a few minutes, and seemed to be considering how she ought to reply.

“It is, then,” exclaimed Matilda, “as I guessed!—It is to you, madam, I owe the advantages I have received!—Thus let me express my gratitude,” falling on her knees, and kissing her hand. “But, Oh! tell me to whom I belong? Who was the mother that gave me birth?—what the name of a father I have never known?—and the claims I had on the venerable man who cherished my infant years?”

The earnest and distressful manner of Matilda, made her ladyship again pause before she answered. At length she said: “Your mother has ceased to exist; and, though your father lives, it is not for you—The venerable Mr. Trevanion guarded your tender years; and, while deserving my affection, you shall never be sensible of the deprivation you have suffered, having excited the interest of a parent in my bosom.”

The heart-piercing words, “*though your father lives, it is not for you,*”—thrilled every nerve of Matilda. She sunk, pale, weeping, and horror-struck, at the feet of Lady Seyntaubyne.

To have, indeed, a father breathing, yet dead to her, whose tender affection was never to smile upon her, whose presence was never to shield her, seemed a sorrow too

mighty to be borne. For sometime she remained overwhelmed by the shock she had sustained, unable to speak or to move.

“Endeavour to recollect and compose yourself,” interrupted the countess, who was likewise much agitated, “at a proper opportunity Mr. Trevanion’s papers shall be given for your inspection; in the meantime,” added she, (taking from her cabinet a small case) “if it will prove any consolation to possess the picture of your mother, here it is.”

With a trembling hand Matilda took the miniature; and, pressing it to her lips as she let a tear fall on it, “Precious relic of a mother! who, even in this inanimate portrait, seems to smile upon her child. Never more will I part with all that now remains of her to bless me.”

The miniature presented a young woman in the bloom of youth and beauty. The countenance beamed with intelligence; and was lighted up with the gaiety of innocence and vivacity. The expression of the eyes was eminently beautiful, and an arch smile played around the mouth, which Matilda had stolen from her. The drapery was simple white, divested of all ornament, and pale auburn hair fell in careless ringlets over her snowy neck and forehead. Matilda eagerly examined the miniature, in hopes of discovering a name attached to it, and was greatly disappointed to find none; and the miniature was contained in a plain case.

The treasure she now possessed, mitigated the sufferings she had experienced; and hoped, in the papers she was promised a sight of, to have the painful mystery attached to her life fully elucidated. To be folded at some future period to the heart of a father, whom she could only picture as worthy of her filial tenderness, was one of the gayest dreams of her youthful imagination.

CHAP. XIV.

MATILDA had excited in the bosom of Sir Charles Dashwood an interest such as it was not usual for him to experience. He would not admit that it was any thing bordering on a tender sentiment he felt for Matilda, but merely a benevolent interest for her reputation: a desire to know who were here relations, that he might refute to them all the ill-natured calumny Mrs. Aldersey appeared disposed to raise against her.

The morning after the opera he drove to Mrs. Aldersey's house, to gain all the information he could collect in regard to her; and hereafter, if he should ever become better acquainted with Matilda, to guard her against too great an intimacy with so dangerous a woman.

"You were surely, madam," said Sir Charles to Mrs. Aldersey (after the first compliments had passed) *en badinage*, when last night you gave me such an equivocal account of Miss Trevanion; for her air, her manner, her address, little as she spoke, seem to contradict your assertion. In point of beauty, except Lady Julia Penrose, she is the brightest star that has illuminated the hemisphere of fashion for these several winters. With whom does she reside?"

"She resides," answered Mrs. Aldersey, "with the old antiquated Dowager Countess of Seyntaubyne, who is at least an hundred years old, and who has so many *outré* ideas, as if she had just come out of Noah's ark. I was serious when I told you that she brought her out of Cornwall four years ago, and placed her where you will never guess, with the quizzical Doctor Arundel, a puritanical old parson, who had educated this pretty doll, and has put into her wise little head such a farrago of nonsense, under the semblance of vast learning, I expect before it is long to hear that she has become a member of the *bas bleu*."

"Whatever learning Miss Trevanion possesses," interrupted Sir Charles, "is veiled, you surely will admit, by a diffident and engaging timidity, which is most rare."

"*Mauvaise honte*, you mean, Sir Charles. If she were to be submitted to my tuition, it would take me half a century to undo what old squaretoes and his prim wife have been prosing into her, to give her a fashionable manner, or becoming *nonchalance*."

"Positively," added she, "the little rustic made me blush at her ignorance the other morning. She rises when any person comes into the room, and the same when they depart, with a thousand old-fashioned formalities. She never stares at you through a glass, as if she did not know you, nor looks straight forward when she will not recognize you, and chooses to give you the go-by. She would, I am sure, consider it a heinous sin to turn any person into ridicule, which is simply quizzing; but says a thousand civil and obliging things, which she positively means, and now-a-days are only understood as mere words of course, as void of truth as of sincerity."

"Now this antiquated dowager," continued Mrs. Aldersey, "wishes me to introduce Matilda Trevanion in every place where I visit. How is it possible, without I knew who she really is. Some people say that she is her grand-daughter, but she had no other child than the present earl; he married the daughter of an Irish peer, and the Lady Julia you spoke to is his daughter. Penrose, not Trevanion, is the family name. I have, however, thought the girl was something like her ladyship, if one can trace any resemblance between youth and age."

Sir Charles made no remark on all Mrs. Aldersey had said, and she was too full of her subject not to go on.

“Then people of ton would just as soon visit you in Houndsditch as Soho Square. O what a barbarous sound to a fashionable ear! It is true these visits are usually paid by a footman; yet a card lying on your table with Russel, Bedford, or, in short, any of those out-of-the-way squares, which are not considered genteel, would mar your reputation, at once, as a woman of fashion. For my part, I laugh at these absurdities; because, for amusement, I make a point of visiting people of genius wherever they may chance to live,—whether they have taken flight to the attic, or are to be found within the precincts of the King’s Bench. I know many persons who have found it very convenient to visit such and such people in the country, because they gave good dinners, and because no better offered, were thought good neighbours, were dropt on their coming to town, because not in the circle of fashionable persons. I must persuade the dowager to move her quarters, if she wishes to marry Miss Trevanion highly; and I think she is likely to succeed if she gives her a splendid fortune, the age is grown wiser, than now to think of family; and the offspring of an illicit connection, in our times, seems to be born under a lucky planet.”

“To the disgrace of the age we live in,” exclaimed Sir Charles, emphatically. “Is no line to be drawn between virtue and vice? I would have the unfortunate offspring of such amours taken care of. I would have them educated in safe obscurity, suited to their origin; not superceding in society young women of noble birth, and of ancient and respectable families. Ladies of fashion, by your account, madam, consider it derogatory to their consequence to visit persons residing in such and such squares and streets, and yet they are proud to entertain at their houses actors and actresses, and make hirelings on a footing with themselves. I would, by all means, have talents encouraged; but it is a bad plan to take people out of their sphere.”

“Now suppose, Sir Charles, after all you have been advancing, if Miss Trevanion should be one of those whom you have been describing, what will you say, then?”

“The same thing. Those who see Miss Trevanion, whatever may be her origin, must admire her extreme loveliness, and the innocence which adorns her appearance, with a retiring modesty I have never seen equalled. But if it should prove that she possessed not a correct mother, depend upon it, to the men who would be the most likely to render her happy in the married state, it will be an unsuperable objection. For, without inheriting the vicious properties of her parents, she will have the credit of doing so. To some dissipated young man of fashion, who estimates her beauty and fortune, rather than her excellence, she will perhaps become a prey, unless she has discremination to judge for herself, and to choose wisely. I am much interested in the fate of this charming young woman, and request you will introduce me to Lady Seyntaubyne.”

The entrance of company put an end to further conversation.

Mrs. Aldersey, sarcastically ill-natured, when she took a dislike, had been thus severe in her opinion of Matilda, from pique. She perceived, on their first interview, that she was, by no means, a favourite; and, therefore, instead of giving her the support she had felt inclined, if she had courted and flattered her, she now determined to do all in her power to injure and depress her in society.

CHAP. XV.

A SHORT time after the foregoing conversation, Sir Charles Dashwood renewed his request, that Mrs. Aldersey would introduce him to the Countess Seyntaubyne. "My sister is coming to town," added he, "to spend some time with me, and I should like her to be known to Miss Trevanion."

Mrs. Aldersey, who regarded Sir Charles with some partiality, assented, and took him in her carriage to Soho Square.

When they were shewn into the drawing-room, they found Matilda seated at her harp, and the strings reverberated to her voice the air "*O dolce concerto*," &c.

"Oh!" cried Sir Charles, as he approached, "Away with Melancholy, never may it dwell in that fair bosom."

"You are right," interrupted Mrs. Aldersey, "to sing it away, for it seems to be rather a favourite inmate of yours. The first time I saw Miss Trevanion, I thought she had been studying the character of the tragic muse, she looked so woe-begone. O now I have it, (pondering a moment) I verily think you are in love, the symptoms are so suspicious."

The countess entered, and with much cold formality, was going to address Mrs. Aldersey, who heeding it not, exclaimed, "Sir Charles Dashwood wishes to be introduced to your ladyship; he admires Miss Trevanion exceedingly."

Her eyes brightened, and she smiled. Nor did she avert to the reflections she had thrown out against Matilda, she was so much pleased with the introduction to the baronet. She liked his appearance, and therefore gave him a gracious reception. "To enter into my good graces," said she, "you must like Matilda, she deserves the esteem of the amiable."

"Her countenance," replied Sir Charles, "is the herald of intelligence, and proclaims a mind all excellence."

The countess drew Mrs. Aldersey to the window, and said, "Sir Charles Dashwood is a personable and elegant man, and possesses discernment in his admiration of Matilda. What is his fortune; for I should not object to him, if it is splendid?"

"If," returned she, "Miss Trevanion has power to make a benedict of him, who has forsworn matrimony, she will have achieved what half the young ladies of fashion, for these last ten years, have in vain essayed to do."

"Then I shall triumph in her influence. Has he a handsome income?"

"His fortune is magnificent. But what of that, he will not confer it on any of the love-lorn maidens, who have without number been dying for him."

"Don't be too sure that he will not. The women do not manoeuvre with ingenuity; it is their own faults if they do not obtain any man they choose to fix on."

During this aside conversation, Sir Charles was hanging over Matilda's harp enraptured. He had requested her to go on. She changed the air which she had been singing to a pathetic English canzonet, composed by Mrs. Cumberland: the words were—

"Go, you may call it madness, folly,
You shall not chace my grief away;
There's such a joy in melancholy,
I would not, if I could, be gay.

Oh, if you knew the pensive pleasure,
Which fills my bosom when I sigh,
You would not rob me of a treasure
Monarchs are too poor to buy.”

She gave the words all the touching expression the composition was formed to inspire.

“If grief,” cried Sir Charles, with emotion, “is so happily depicted, not for worlds would I exchange it for sportive gaiety.”

“I hope, Miss Trevanion,” said Mrs. Aldersey, “you mean to go to Lady Maltrevers’ ball this evening?”

“Her ladyship has sent me a ticket, but as I do not dance waltzes, and I hear there is to be nothing else, I shall not go.”

“You will soon learn them. The Count Haldermere, who is lately come from Germany, will be happy to teach you. He dances elegantly, and understands all the attitudes. I left him just now practising with Lady Maltrevers and her daughter, Mrs. Saville. Her ladyship, who is not young, is a very apt scholar.”

“Does an old woman, between fifty and sixty,” asked Matilda, “dance waltzes with a man almost young enough to be her grandson?”

“True, upon my honour.”

“You object, Sir Charles, I know,” interrupted Mrs. Aldersey, “to waltz-dancing, give your reasons.”

“Did your ladyship ever see waltzes danced,” said the baronet.

“Never,” returned she. “Minuets and Sir Roger de Coverley were the most fashionable when I was young; and, to tell you the truth, I am not very fond of your figurants at the opera. Both the singing and dancing, I think out of nature. I went once to the opera, for the sake of Matilda; it was a comic one, and I never was so weary of any thing in my life. A good old play has something sensible and rational in it. Mr. Garrick performed when I used to frequent the theatres. People then went to see fine acting, not a mere puppet-shew.”

“Do, Sir Charles,” added her ladyship, “describe the waltz. Perhaps you will shew it us, with Matilda for your partner. Mrs. Aldersey, play a waltz.”

“Excuse me, madam,” returned he. “I would not take advantage of Miss Trevanion’s delicacy, by permitting her to throw herself into my arms. The waltz is literally nothing less. My arm encircles the lady’s waist, her arm mine; my other one she supports on her shoulder, while mine rests on her’s; thus united, a rapid motion succeeds to the music, till it excites a giddy sensation which ends by the gentleman catching his partner in his embrace, to prevent her falling. It is said that by fixing your eyes steadily on each other’s countenance the giddiness subsides, but that is a mere puerile error.”

Such was the effect the waltz produced on unenlightened minds. Morier, in his travels through Persia, relates the following anecdote:

“When the hour of dancing arrived, the Mirza entered the ball-room, escorted by all his servants. Then his people were more than ever in amaze, particularly when the whole assembly was in motion. Of all the dances the waltz excited the most wonder, and perhaps apprehension; for one of them quietly asked my servant, in Turkish, ‘Pray does ever any thing happen after all this?’”

“Shocking,” interrupted the countess; “I desire, Matilda, you will never waltz. Your anecdote, Sir Charles, is very much in point after your description. I am obliged to you for both.”

If Miss Trevanion is not to waltz,” cried Mrs. Aldersey, “her elegant dancing will be all lost. Depend upon it, we shall have nothing but waltzes all the spring; at least, she may be permitted to look on.

“Are you serious,” addressing Matilda, “in not going to Lady Maltrevers’ to night? All the world will be there; and you will see a greater mixture of character in a few hours, than in all the years you lived with that prosy old doctor.”

“You shall go, Matilda,” said the countess.

“I had rather be excused.”

“Lady Maltrevers,” cried Sir Charles, “is the gayest of the gay. For once, it can do Miss Trevanion no injury to be seen at her ball, when there will be such a multitude; but she might sustain an injury in being often seen in her private parties.”

“How so?” enquired her ladyship, eagerly.

“The reputation of a female,” replied the baronet seriously, “is a nice point to talk of. Though, were we to judge according to Lady Maltrevers’ standard, I am afraid we should agree with Pope, that

‘Every woman is at heart a rake.’

“In the true acceptance of the word, she is a virtuous woman. But when a wife preferred dissipation to conjugal duties,—deserted a sick husband, even when he was on his death-bed, and gave parties and balls in her house at so melancholy a period, is such a person proper society for Miss Trevanion?—She dragged her daughters about from one scene of folly to another.—Every morning they were to be seen in the park or Bond Street,—every evening at a party, when it was not the night of the opera, till she took in some weak young men of fashion to marry her girls. Mrs. Saville, the eldest, is separated from her husband, and already returned upon her mother’s hands. The younger, under better management and example, might have proved an ornament to society; but, neglected by a husband who is a gamester, she is dying of a broken heart. The Sunday evenings, Lady Maltrevers and Mrs. Saville spend either at the card-table, or dancing waltzes.

“An irresistible desire,” continued he, with much warmth, “to caution Miss Trevanion from an intimacy in such a house, must plead my excuse. Nothing could be more agreeable to her ladyship, than to have Miss Trevanion of her coterie. But she is new to the world, and it would be a pity the world of fashion should spoil her.—It is a contagious atmosphere to live in.—Let me not, however, frighten Miss Trevanion from this evening’s engagement.” It was agreed, that Mrs. Aldersey should call for Matilda at twelve o’clock, and Sir Charles promised to join them at Lady Maltrevers.’

Lady Seyntaubyne appeared so desirous for Matilda to go, she once more very reluctantly put herself under Mrs. Aldersey’s escort.

Her reception of her was cold and reserved, viewing her with a sort of dignified contempt. But, since she had left Dr. Arundel’s, she had seen no person she was so much disposed to like as Sir Charles Dashwood;—every one else had appeared cold, indifferent, and uninteresting. His manners seemed to partake of the benevolence of her

heart;—they were easy, without familiarity, and polished by sense and good breeding. His just remarks, displayed a nice discrimination and sound judgment. He had taken no improper advantage of Mrs. Aldersey's ill-natured suggestions: on the contrary, he had shewn, from that moment, a warmer interest in her welfare, and the propriety of her appearance, which could not fail to prove most flattering.

Matilda felt grateful for his friendly concern; and if she had been engaged with any other lady than Mrs. Aldersey, to Lady Maltrevers she would have been pleased, as she expected to derive much amusement and instruction from the baronet's observations.

Sir Charles was gratified by his visit in Soho Square. There was an originality and frankness in Lady Seyntaubyne which he liked, with a fond affection for Matilda,—a zealous warmth in all that related to her, which discovered the excellence of her heart. In her person, she reminded him somewhat of the portraits which decorated the gallery of his mansion in Staffordshire. Her air was imperious, yet dignified, and proclaimed her to be a woman of quality. Her manners were ceremonious, without being formal. She resembled a beautiful ruin; for her features were lovely, even in decay. Though her eyes were robbed of some of their lustre, they emitted a spark of no small animation in speaking of Matilda. Her complexion, though pale and wan, was fair as alabaster. The fine aquiline nose indicated her strong sense, and was in symmetry with her other features; and her mouth retained a pleasing smile when she spoke. Her dress was suited to her years; its peculiarity excited respect, except from fools.

Sir Charles was sure he never before had seen an elderly lady so entirely interesting and beautiful.

CHAP. XVI.

THE house of Lady Maltrevers was decorated for the evening in the most fanciful and elegant taste. The profusion of rare flowers which filled the hall, the wreathes of roses which artfully concealed the balustrades, hanging in careless beauty, sent forth the delicious perfumes of Arabia, and Matilda could almost have fancied herself in fairy-land. When she entered the suite of apartments she was struck with the graceful lightness of the drapery, the splendour of the mirrors, reflecting the moving multitude. The festoons of flowers which decorated the apartments, lit up with a brilliancy at once dazzling yet becoming; and the elegant groups of figures so happily executed, as to appear already sporting on the floor, with the mixed assemblage of persons, young and old, beautiful and plain, presented a striking contrast; yet all seemed so much pleased and satisfied, Matilda's spirits partook of the universal gaiety which prevailed.

Sir Charles Dashwood, who had stationed himself next the door, advanced to meet them. "You will admit, I hope, Miss Trevanion," said he, "that the *coup d'oeil* of this gay region is very alluring, and would almost invite the serious to partake of a festivity which wears such enchanting a form."

"It is, in truth," replied Matilda, "the palace of pleasure, and its goddess seems to understand the art of drawing her votaries hither with success."

The dancing soon commenced, not with waltzes, but with "*Miss Platoff's Fancy*," which Lady Maltrevers began with the Marquis of ———; Matilda had the offer of several young men of fashion, but she preferred Sir Charles, who half-sportively had offered himself, if she could do no better, and she stood up with him. Mrs. Aldersey took the opportunity to withdraw to the card-room.

When the dance was ended, Matilda took her seat beside two ladies, who, while they were in conversation with a young man, appeared to her to be turning him into ridicule, by the significant looks and smiles she observed passing between them. "You are surprised, Miss Trevanion," said Sir Charles, "at the conduct of your neighbours. They are quizzing the poor fellow at a most unmerciful rate; and he is so stupid as to be completely duped by them. That is also one of the fashionable accomplishments of the present day."

Matilda was much shocked that any person could thus wantonly sport with another, and be amused by it. During the few years she had resided with Mrs. Arundel she had never met with any thing of the sort, and ventured to enquire whence it originated.

"The English women formerly," replied Sir Charles, "were not merely reserved, but silent in company; but since diffidence had been banished, and they have substituted ridicule for wit, in all parties you will now find large coteries of young ladies engaged in quizzing."

"By quizzing," continued he, "is meant a species of contemptuous ridicule, which though divested of the attic poignancy of wit, is envenomed with such malice, as never fails to wound those who come within reach of its shafts, levelled without distinction even at your most intimate friends while discoursing (as in the present instance) with approving smiles; and it is only by noticing a sarcastic glance that one discovers one's self to be the subject of ridicule. Another species of quizzing is magnifying the most

trifling defect into an absolute fault. Nothing is considered a fairer subject than old age. Instead of hearing a young woman speak of her venerable parents with the tender appellation of father or mother, he is denominated *the old gentleman*, she the *old lady*, and by indifferent persons, the *old quiz*. If a woman is handsome, she excites envy; if otherwise, she is odious—too tall or too short, and a thousand other defects which a candid mind would never perceive in her. Mrs. Rowe justly observes, ‘*You would think mankind born in a state of hostility with one another; and that the end of public assemblies was to pry into the faults, and expose the defects of their own species.*’ Quizzing has only become universal since the union with Ireland. We aim at a talent which we do not possess; for wit is innate, and results only from a brilliant and vivacious imagination, untinged with malice. While quizzing originates solely from a depraved and vicious mind. Your’s, Miss Trevanion, will never, I am sure, for a moment nourish such propensities.”

They were joined by Mrs. Aldersey, who nodded and spoke to a young lady next Matilda.

“I perceive,” said she, to her, “Miss Deacon has not got a partner. She is on a visit to Lady Warner, who, though she has been a wife above sixteen years, is so passionately fond of dancing, she never thinks of the young people who chance to be her guests, whilst she is unprovided. They, no doubt, are as fond of the amusement as herself; but Warner is wiser than to relinquish her own gratification for the sake of another. I have often remarked, she has a succession of partners all the evening, when her young friend has the mortification of sitting still. Oh! here comes that old quiz the Duchess of Drinkwater; did you ever behold such an absurd dress for an old woman verging on fourscore.”

She was attired in a robe of silver tissue; and the venerable grey hairs which formerly added respect to age, were shorn away, and supplied by a flaxen coloured wig, ornamented with a profusion of diamonds. Rouge gave a fierce colour to her wan cheeks, and white paint filled up all wrinkles, while eyebrows were supplied by art.

Few young women had apparently more vivacity than her grace; she talked and laughed incessantly. She went to half a dozen parties most nights, and remained abroad till morning sun lighted her to bed, from whence she rose in the afternoon, gay and as much refreshed by laudanum as the former day; and thus successive years passed on as though she had been emerging into life, not fading from it; nor thought she that she was fast approaching towards that “*bourne whence no traveller returns.*”

Her daughter, Lady Arabella Hayward, (who came up and spoke to Mrs. Aldersey) though she was the mother of several children, had all the thoughtless levity of fifteen. She had eloped with a young ensign to Gretna; notwithstanding he was supposed to be on the eve of a desperate engagement abroad, it proved no restraint to the heedlessness of her conduct. She coquetted with every young man who came in her way; and unfortunately not the single, but married men, she warily ensnared, and by her insinuating address had admitted them into her society so as to make many an amiable wife’s heart ache. The very name of one, which ought to have been an invulnerable shield to guard her from folly, was the pretended sanction to err with impunity. She danced all night, rode or walked all the morning without any female associates, for she considered them only a restraint.

The mother, like many other silly mothers of the age, sanctioned what she ought to have reprobated. But what could be expected from a parent who in youth had acted the

same part, and initiated her children in follies and vices as multitudinous as the waves of the sea.

At three o'clock the supper rooms were thrown open, and the company sat down to a magnificent repast.

On their return to the ball-room Matilda perceived Lady Julia Penrose, and the next moment she advanced from her party to address her, exclaiming with a look of surprise, "Where, dear Matilda, have you hid yourself all this time? You are as inaccessible as if you were immured within the walls of a convent. In changing your abode, you surely have also changed your nature, by relinquishing your old friends altogether."

"I know not," replied she, "to what you allude; but to forget Lady Sophia Clairville, or my friend Julia, were indeed to render myself deserving your reproaches."

"Women's tastes," replied Lady Julia, "we are told, vary with every wind; some of our poets compare us to weathercocks. The term is apt; for as uncertain has been Miss Trevanion's friendship."

"For Heaven's sake," returned Matilda, with surprise and emotion, "to what do you allude? Retire with me to this seat, and be more explicit."

"I cannot detain my father, he looks impatient to be gone. I should like to have introduced you to him, had you not renounced the friendship of all the family."

"Cruel Lady Julia; is it possible you can be so unjust, so ungenerous?"

"I am neither, it is proof alone that could have convinced me. Adieu; when next we meet may it be under happier auspices; not in war, but in peace. Forgive me if I have hurt you; but from Matilda Trevanion my aunt, of all people, least expected to find instability of character."

Dismayed and perplexed she was going to urge an explanation, when the gentleman and lady whom Julia accompanied joined the group; and though Matilda was certain that she had never seen the former, his face seemed perfectly well known. He gazed at her with an eager curiosity which made her blush, and as with extreme earnestness he fixed his eyes upon her, he turned ghastly pale, gave a sudden exclamation, and seizing hold of the arm of his daughter, faintly said—"The room is very close let us go into the air."

Julia who perceived her father's colour fade, immediately drew him away; but whatever cause had excited such extraordinary emotion, he did not explain, remaining lost in thought and abstraction.

Matilda felt a sickness come over her, and the mysterious severity of Lady Julia's speeches, so unlike her usual sweetness of character, made her ready to weep. The singular emotions of the stranger she could not dismiss from her thoughts; she enquired whether Sir Charles knew him, but he had never seen the father of Lady Julia; and her discourse with Matilda had been aside. He however observed that whatever had passed between them had strongly agitated and affected Matilda, and his curiosity to learn what it might be was alone restrained by her extreme depression.

Matilda would have given worlds to have returned home, but Mrs. Aldersey had determined to remain to breakfast; and she knew, if she proposed it, Sir Charles would insist upon attending her, which she wished to decline. In vain he endeavoured to amuse her by his conversation, and irksome were the hours which passed until eight o'clock, when in a lovely morning, the end of May, she returned home from her night's revel.

She started as she beheld her figure in passing one of the large mirrors in the drawing-room, when she beheld her pale and languid appearance, so complete a contrast to her gay attire. She was shocked at converting night into day, and that now only she was going to repose. She thought of the peaceful and beautiful scene so fine a morning had a thousand times presented her at Richmond, and could not help shedding tears at the recollection, contrasted with her present life, wearing merely the semblance of pleasure; for it was only delusion, and gave no permanent enjoyment even to its greatest votaries.

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CHAP. XVII.

THE increasing paleness and languor of Matilda's appearance, the effect of late hours, vexed Lady Seyntaubyne. Her lovely bloom was all fled, her vivacity was succeeded by depression, and she observed so great an alteration in her, that again she would have sent her to Richmond for change of air, if Lady Sophia and her son had not lived in its vicinity.

Matilda, alike dissatisfied with herself, listless and depressed, scarcely dared enquire whence the alteration sprung; why she had not more fortitude than to give way to discontent, so little self-command as not to profit more from Doctor Arundel's admirable lessons, who she was sure would be both displeased and grieved could he now behold her. She would have requested permission to have spent a week with her maternal Mrs. Arundel, in the hope of again being restored to health and peace; but was not Albert Clairville at West Grove? Had not the family of late shunned her, notwithstanding there was a mystery attached to Julia's speeches which she could not develope; and she begun to fear some means had been used by the countess to prevent any intercourse between them. The effort to appear cheerful in her presence was most irksome; yet she did rally her spirits and relate to her at dinner how much Sir Charles's remarks at the ball had tended to amuse her.

When Lady Seyntaubyne found that Matilda preferred him for a partner to any of the elegant young men who were present, she set it down as certain, her approval of him as a lover. Hitherto she had seen no man she liked so well for Matilda, and determined henceforth to take an active part in promoting the union. Most graciously therefore was her ladyship pleased to receive his maiden sister, now denominated Mrs. Dashwood; with whom Matilda was to dine on the following day. Mrs. Aldersey was engaged, and the countess excused herself until the evening.

Mrs. Dashwood, at five o'clock, fetched Matilda in her carriage to Wimpole Street.

Matilda, who had not the least idea of the countess's surmises and plans, nor how unmercifully Mrs. Aldersey rallied Sir Charles on her account, had accepted with pleasure his sister's invitation; for she was a woman of polished manners, with much benevolence of character; sensible, well-informed, liberal in her sentiments, and possessing a thorough knowledge of the world. She had none of the asperity which usually belong to single women. When she could not commend she was charitably silent; she knew the foible of her sex, and the absent always found an advocate in her bosom.

"We do not expect any company," said Mrs. Dashwood, when Matilda was seated in her carriage, "except Lady Sophia Clairville, her son, and Lady Julia."

Matilda changed colour at this intelligence. Her heart beat high with expectation. She wished, yet dreaded, to meet them, and her thoughts became so much engrossed by the subject, she with difficulty supported any conversation during the drive to Wimpole Street.

Sir Charles received them with easy politeness. "You will only meet," said he, "a few of our friends. My sister has an aversion to formal dinner parties."

Matilda faintly replied, "she was happy to meet any friends of their's."

“Mr. Clairville,” exclaimed he, “is a very elegant young man; and I must caution you to guard your heart against the fascination of his manners, for he is engaged to his cousin Lady Julia Penrose.”

Though she before knew of his engagement, she turned sick when assured of its certainty; and when the party were announced, she trembled so violently as to be scarcely able to stand.

Lady Sophia looked much surprised when she saw her, with an expression of pleasure scarcely to be concealed beneath the cold formality with which she curtsied, and hoped she was well.

Matilda, who with delight had advanced towards her ladyship, and held out a rejected hand, petrified at her reception, shrunk back on her seat, and Lady Julia as distantly addressed her. But Clairville, insensible to the behaviour of his mother and cousin, eagerly sprang forward, and with an unrestrained emotion of joy, cried with warmth, “Is it possible I again see Miss Trevanion!” he was proceeding, but suddenly checking his impetuosity, added, in a far different tone, “I hope, madam, you are well;” and then retreating to a vacant seat, placed himself beside his cousin.

Matilda, possessed of the keenest sensibility, would have been overcome by the variety of emotions which oppressed her, had a consciousness that she was treated unjustly not supported her; and she made an effort to be as reserved as the rest of the party. Something like conversation was attempted, but the effort to support it was so feeble, it proved an agreeable interruption when they were summoned to dinner.

If Matilda had not known the intended alliance between Lady Julia and Clairville was a settled thing, she would have viewed it as an event to take place rather from a point of honour, than mutual inclination and assent. There was a marked indifference in the conduct of Julia which excited her surprise. “Ah!” thought she, “with the prospect of spending my life with such a husband, friend, and companion, how blissful would every moment prove, that was to lead to such an event. How cold—how insensible is Julia to the felicity which awaits her. When so rare a union of excellence is combined in one character, to awaken that happy confidence which can alone exist where thought meets thought, and every wish is prevented by the anticipation of its fulfilment.”

She next directed her eyes towards Clairville. There was no expression of joy in his countenance—he looked pensive, thoughtful, and absent. He tried to smile when he addressed his cousin, but the attempt was vain; and his attention appeared to be rather directed towards herself than his intended bride.

When a general restraint prevails, all effort to support conversation is ineffectual. Sir Charles Dashwood was lively and agreeable, his sister courteous and kind; but in vain they essayed to amuse their friends. They saw something was wrong, but to rectify it was beyond their ability.

On the ladies returning to the drawing-room Matilda retired to the window, Lady Sophia followed, and cast on her a look of such beaming sweetness, all sense of her former coldness fled; and, unable longer to restrain her emotion, she exclaimed, “Often have I wished for this meeting!—Often anticipated it as abounding with joy!—but I find it productive only of grief and mortification.”

“Rather,” replied her ladyship, with dignity and returning frigidity, “it is me who ought to be mortified, who ought to be filled with regret, in finding that where I placed most confidence, I have been deceived—where I expected stability, I find caprice—and

though I have to lament the fallacy of my judgment, I have been able to extract from it an admirable lesson.”

“Dear Lady Sophia,” interrupted Matilda, earnestly, at the same time taking her half-withdrawn hand, “if you knew but half the regard and respect I entertain for you, how I venerate and admire your virtues, you would not utter reproaches so full of asperity. Though they are unmerited, I perceive at least that I have been so unhappy as to incur them.”

“If really you do not merit them, you will then have candour to forgive them, and allow something for the mortified feelings of being discarded and forgotten, for new friends and new favourites.”

“How discarded?—Pray explain?”

“Repeatedly I have called at your door. Sometimes you were not at home; at others engaged, and could see no person. A week ago, after my niece met you at Lady Maltrevers’ ball, I wrote to you, and to add to the indignity, my letter, though returned in a cover, had been opened.”

Matilda greatly hurt and surprised, said, “these, madam, are circumstances which might indeed fully justify your severity, and of which I was totally ignorant. I perceived I had lost your friendship, though in losing it, could not guess the cause. To have known Lady Sophia Clairville and not to lament the privation of all future intercourse, is impossible; and I shall consider it one of the heaviest misfortunes which could befall me; for I must resign the valuable possession, since my benefactress wishes it: and severe is the law she dictates; by it I will implicitly be guided.”

“Noble Matilda,” exclaimed Lady Sophia, much penetrated, “you speak as becomes the pupil of Doctor Arundel. His excellent maxims have not been thrown away. Go on thus through life, and you cannot err. If you are not happy, conscious rectitude will give you peace of mind—it will gild your days. Let no selfish gratification or secret enjoyment prevent your dutiful compliance. If you should see me no more, remember, if it can sooth your feelings, there are few I estimate so truly. Our friendship was formed under the influence of deep-rooted family prejudice, which your engaging manners and sweetness of disposition not merely dissipated but overcame. Should our friendship ever be revealed, then will you find how much your interest and Julia’s clashed together, and that in Matilda Trevanion she possessed a formidable rival.”

Matilda’s countenance expressed an anxious curiosity to know how that could be; but her ladyship waved the subject, and joined the party in the other drawing-room.

Lady Seyntaubyne was announced before the gentlemen had left the dinner-table. She frowned, and looked greatly displeased when Lady Sophia Clairville was introduced to her; but on Lady Julia’s being likewise named, she turned pale, then red, hastily seated herself, as hastily rose again, and going up to her, said, in an abrupt manner, “Is your father in town?”

Julia never before had seen the dowager countess, but she well knew who she was; and though little disposed to answer her question, she replied to it with dignity, by saying, “neither my father’s nor my being in town can surely be a matter of interest to your ladyship, who takes no concern in the event.”

Matilda was in astonishment on seeing Lady Seyntaubyne address Julia, and more so, when she heard the question she asked.

“I knew,” returned her ladyship, with increased displeasure, “that he would not teach you either duty or respect towards me; and no doubt, has represented me as a cross implacable old woman. I do not desire to see your father; I do not wish ever to speak to him again: he has long alienated himself from my affection as he has done mine from his child’s; yet, Julia, I could have loved you if he would have allowed me.”

“Though my father,” returned Julia, “would not force me into your presence, never, madam, has he spoken to me disrespectfully of you.”

“I am glad of it: but say no more; for there is something so pleasing and interesting about you, that were I to listen to you, would take my affection by surprise, and I am determined that shall not be.”

The singular conversation, and events which had occurred, during the whole of the visit at Sir Charles’s, was more suited to a domestic party than the one assembled. But the situation of each individual had been so extraordinary, as by waving all ceremony to call for discussions which appeared at once strange and unaccountable.

Sir Charles and Clairville entered the drawing-room. There was a vacant chair next to Matilda, and the latter threw himself on it. Matilda blushed deeply; she made an effort to rise and go to another part of the room, but he looked at her so mournfully, she reseated herself, as he said in a half reproachful tone, “Is it not mortification sufficient to be denied admittance at your door, but when chance favors my seeing you again, you fly as though my presence were become hateful. O Miss Trevanion, how have I offended, thus to incur such marked displeasure?—If you knew but how precious——”

“Rather, Sir,” interrupted Matilda, with offended pride, “talk thus to Lady Julia Penrose. Every attention conferred on me, whether she is present or absent, is an insult offered to both.”

“Cruel, unjust Miss Trevanion, see you not that Julia is alike indifferent as yourself. Ah! that I could take example from each, then how easily would peace of mind be obtained; and how callous should I prove to your determined coldness.”

Matilda was going to reply, when the penetrating eyes of the countess steadily fixed on her, covered her with blushes; and she rose in hasty confusion and placed herself on a sofa at another end of the room.

Sir Charles Dashwood, who had been endeavouring to support something like conversation with his guests, had not been an indifferent spectator of the passing scene; and perceiving there was more in it “than met the ear,” to remove, if possible, the distressing situation of the party, he requested Lady Julia would favour them with some music.

The countess eager to hear her perform, warmly seconded the proposal, and Julia seating herself at the piano, accompanied herself in an elegant air of Tramezzani’s, *Tendendo*, &c. which she executed in a beautiful manner.

When she had finished, Lady Seyntaubyne desired Matilda to go to the harp. She did so; and while her fingers trembled on the strings, she sang in a faltering accent—

“Hope told a flattering tale
That love would soon return,” &c.

Clairville, who stood by her, when she had finished, said, in a low accent, “*Hope*, did indeed, *tell a flattering tale*; and the accents which proclaim it proclaim my misery.”

“Clairville,” said Lady Julia, sportively, as she advanced, “you look so rueful with that melancholy countenance, I positively will know whether it is love or treason you are uttering. If I guess right a little of both; love towards Miss Trevanion, and treason towards me; is it not, Matilda? If so I cast you off as a faithless knight. I will have none of you. No one shall wear my chains on whom they sit heavily; for remember, those of love should be so silken, that while they bind closely, their shackles should not be even felt.”

Clairville looked so confused that Julia continued—“Guilty on my honour;” and was proceeding with her speech when Lady Seyntaubyne joined them, and taking Matilda’s arm, said—“My carriage is ready, I wish to go home;” forcibly dragging her away without permitting her to take leave of Lady Sophia, or any of the party, though Julia did whisper—“Think nothing of my *badinage*, Matilda, I like to tease Clairville, but not for worlds would cause you a moment’s pain.”

Thus ended a visit fraught with some pleasure, but infinitely greater perplexity and distress than the temporary gratification of having once more seen Lady Sophia and Clairville.

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CHAP. XVIII.

MATILDA had scarcely stepped into the carriage, when she was roused from the reverie she had fallen into, by Lady Seyntaubyne exclaiming—"I should not have gone to Sir Charles Dashwood's, nor permitted you, if I had known that he had invited Lady Sophia and her niece. Julia has something vastly captivating about her," continued she; and after a long pause, added, "I have never seen any one so radiant in beauty; her air is fashionable and elegant; she is dignified without pride, and graceful without affectation. Then the transparent fairness of her complexion is happily tinged with the rose of health, which, diffusing itself over her cheek, gives additional lustre to the brilliance of her eyes, so eminently beautiful, and fringed with long silken eye-lashes. The whole expression of her countenance is full of intelligence and animation. Her mouth, when drest in smiles, is expressive of the playful vivacity of her temper.

"The style of her dress is simple and becoming, she seems to know that 'loveliness needs not the foreign aid of ornament,' for her head was divested of all decoration, except the redundance of her pale chestnut hair, which partially confined by a comb, shaded in graceful ringlets her snowy forehead.

"Her manners," continued her ladyship, "devoid of the bold assurance and self-importance so many of the young women of the present day possess, have all those winning and pleasing attractions, which, without mean servility, result alone from a good heart and an excellent understanding. There is a captive air in them which insensibly steals into the affections.

"Her conversation I listened to attentively; it has all the gaiety natural to youth, sparkling with a playful wit, which tends to illumine rather than to shade her fine sense, and gives a peculiar charm to her intellectual endowments. Indeed, Matilda, she has much the advantage of you, and I hope will not prove a formidable rival."

"How?" exclaimed Matilda, with the most eager enquiry, somewhat hurt and surprised, by the very warm description her ladyship had just given.

The countess, entirely off her guard, replied, "How? Because you know Julia Penrose is my grand-daughter."

"Heavens!" interrupted Matilda, with emotion, "is it possible. Then, madam, I am usurping her rights—I am possessing those kindnesses which should be conferred on her."

How delicate, thought Matilda, how amiable the conduct of Julia, in every instance her rival; how sweetly, how patiently has she conducted herself towards me.

"What is the name," cried the countess, "of the young man with whom Julia and you were conversing? There is something extremely prepossessing in his appearance. I like his countenance. The present fashion of not introducing people is a very stupid one, for you are left in utter ignorance who or what may be the persons with whom you mingle. In my day nothing would have been considered so ill-bred and affronting. The person not being named would have been looked upon as by no means proper or respectable. But the world is absolutely turned topsy-turvy, and the ruder inferior people behave the higher they are ranked in ton."

Matilda passed over this harangue, to avoid replying to Lady Seyntaubyne's question; and found in this instance how often we are ignorantly guided by prejudice, not merely in our actions but opinions."

"The young man," added her ladyship, "appeared to distinguish you by his attentions, of which my grand-daughter seemed to be rather jealous. You have not told me his name."

"Mr.—Mr.—Clair—Clairville," returned she, stammering violently.

"Lady Sophia's son?"

"The same."

"I wish he was not her son. For then if his fortune proved ample, I should have no objection to listen to his proposals for you. He and his mother have called repeatedly at my door, but I gave orders they were never to be admitted. When my son, Lord Seyntaubyne, married Lady Julia O'Brian, Lady Sophia took a very officious part in promoting the alliance, for which I have not forgiven her."

"If you only knew, madam, how far her ladyship surpasses the generality of women, not merely in sense, but in the most exalted virtues, you could not fail of admiring her."

"What are her son's views in life? Report has given him to Julia Penrose, but I think the ambition of her father, little as he possessed in his own alliances, with her beauty, would look higher for his daughter than a poor naval lieutenant."

"Report," said Matilda, in an accent so low as scarcely to be heard, "does, I fancy, say true, and Lady Julia will marry her cousin."

"I know you love him, Matilda, by your blushes and confusion. Now be sincere, and tell me whether an alliance so averse to your wishes will not destroy your peace of mind."

Matilda, with dignified pride, replied, "My ardent wishes for Mr. Clairville's happiness are so sincere, that I have never for a moment suffered my inclinations to interfere with an engagement I knew was to take place, though, had it been otherwise, I might have chosen Albert Clairville in preference to any person I have hitherto known, as likely to render me happy."

"Your just sentiments, Matilda, on the subject," observed Lady Seyntaubyne, "are not lost upon me. From henceforth I will rather consult your happiness than my own ambition, provided you make a wise and judicious selection. If Mr. Clairville had not been engaged to my grand-daughter you should have married him."

Ah, thought Matilda, of what avail is such a sanction to my choice, when reason, duty, honour, all oppose it.

Lady Seyntaubyne had been surprized into an interview with the very people she wished to avoid. Her grand-daughter, however, she could not dismiss from her thoughts; her extreme loveliness had dazzled and surprized her, and her very spirited, yet not unbecoming reply to her address, had gained her esteem and admiration. The Earl of Seyntaubyne possessed much of her ladyship's disposition—a temper too implacable to conciliate, and too proud for concession. Irritated and displeased at his incorrigible obstinacy, Lady Seyntaubyne had resolved neither to see nor notice his daughter. But when she beheld her beauty and captivating manners, she no longer wondered at Matilda's attachment and friendship.

In Lady Sophia Clairville she found all the dignity of high birth, with a softness the most attractive; and though she was unwilling to own it, was persuaded, that Matilda, in the advantages derived from her society, had acquired an easy elegance, that even Mrs. Arundel could not alone have taught her.

Albert Clairville she found no less graceful than he was pleasing. A manly deportment, at once commanding and dignified, gave him the air of a naval officer, whose courage and bravery seemed to be characterised in his open and ingenuous countenance, which was full of intelligence, beaming with sensibility and goodness. He was just the person, the countess was persuaded, most likely to gain an easy ascendancy in the heart of Matilda, who was alive to all the tenderness which appeared to have impressed her in his favour, notwithstanding the engagement which was currently reported to subsist between him and Julia.

Lady Seyntaubyne, usually regulated in her actions by the impetuous inclination of the moment, which was no sooner formed than, if possible, realized, and often rather excited by whim than sound judgment, was herself so much charmed with Clairville, that if any other rival except her grand-daughter had interfered with Matilda's attachment, she immediately would have made the proposal to Lady Sophia to unite the young people, and have given down with Matilda a handsome fortune. Indulging the plan she had formed, she felt internally vexed and mortified it was impossible to fulfil so extraordinary an idea; but from her close affinity with Julia she felt it impossible to attempt breaking off an alliance she had reason to suppose would soon take place.

CHAP. XIX.

WHEN Julia returned home from Sir Charles Dashwood's, she related to her father, having met the countess, his mother, and the salutation which had passed between them.

"Your reply, my Julia," observed he, "was dignified and respectful; it became what I might expect from you. I am told," continued he, "that my mother brought some girl with her out of Cornwall, whom she has adopted, and means to amply provide for. The daughter, probably, of one of her tenants. What is she like?—a pretty little rustic, I suppose."

"She is thought very like me: several persons have been struck with the resemblance"

"That is a strange fancy; tell me her name; I am anxious to hear it?"

"Trevanion."

"Trevanion!" exclaimed the earl, violently agitated, and changing colour. "Oh!" continued he, with a sigh, not heeding his daughter's presence, and as if awakened by some powerful and sudden recollection, "that was a name once fondly cherished. Source of all my joy, and of pangs which at this moment sting me with agonizing remembrance. That name revives a thousand tender images which tortures me almost to madness."

Julia gazed with anxious and earnest surprise on Lord Seyntaubyne, who somewhat regaining his presence of mind from her watchful attention, said, "Leave me, my dear child; I am not well; I know not what I utter. Think nothing of my incoherence. Some events, long long passed away, and connected with the name of Trevanion, excited this sudden emotion. I shall recover my composure when I am alone."

"Julia pressed the hand of her father respectfully to her lips, and departed; but she left him not to tranquillity. She insensibly had opened a wound which no time had healed, and now bled with renewed anguish.

The Earl of Seyntaubyne was the only child of his widowed mother. By nature he was wilful, impetuous, and overbearing. Unused to controul or contradiction, these evil passions encreased by a mistaken indulgence, yet his heart was generous, noble, and humane. He was endowed with an excellent understanding; and had his actions been under proper restriction, he would have proved an ornament to society; for he was eminently gifted with reason, and every quality to adorn it.

The blind partiality of his mother, when he arrived at years of maturity he ill requited, by forming an alliance entirely contrary to her wishes. The countess had selected for him the daughter of the Duke of R——, whose splendid fortune exceeded her most sanguine expectations; but the young earl, in passing through London, after having visited those parts of Europe, not shut out by civil contention, was introduced to the youngest daughter of an Irish peer, with whom he became captivated, but whose beauty was her principal dowry.

On his arrival in Cornwall he opened his heart to the countess, who persevered in refusing her consent. The earl, unaccustomed to sacrifice his own inclinations, and never taught from his infancy to do so, hurried back to London, and rested not, till through the persuasion of Lady Sophia Clairville, he obtained her sister Lady Julia O'Brian; and an immediate union took place in defiance of Lady Seyntaubyne's opposition. From the church he carried his bride down to Penrose Castle, accompanied by her sister.

Fleeting proved his lordship's bliss with his lovely and excellent lady. At the end of a twelvemonth, after giving birth to their daughter Julia, she expired in Lady Sophia's arms, leaving her disconsolate husband in a state of mind bordering on distraction. With acute feelings, and violent passions, which he never knew how to restrain, his grief became that of a madman. No soothing could mitigate it; no reason could convince him of the impiety of such extravagance.

In this mournful situation the admirable foresight of Lady Sophia introduced the respectable curate of the parish, from whose society he insensibly acquired more composure of mind; for his piety, which was not austere, but unaffected and meek, excited his lordship's veneration and respect. His manners partook of the simplicity of his life; they were benevolent and mild. Though poor, he was not servile, and the sanctity of his appearance gave a dignity to his demeanor, which ensured respect. From the soothing cheerfulness of his conversation Lord Seyntaubyne experienced much consolation. He sympathized in his grief, for he had also lost the wife of his tenderest affection; and though philosophy had taught him to subdue his sorrow, he considered the nature of Lord Seyntaubyne's too sacred to be interrupted. His own calamity had taught him to commiserate the distresses of mankind.

Such was the society in which Lady Sophia left her brother-in-law. Soon the violence of his grief abated, and by way of varying the scene the venerable curate ventured to invite his lordship to accompany him for a day or two to his peaceful and sequestered dwelling, about four miles distant from the castle.

"I live," cried his reverend conductor, "in the bosom of my family; it is very circumscribed, yet to me it comprises a world. In this little secluded spot all my joy, all the treasure I possess, is centered. You will not, my lord, find us destitute of comforts; luxuries we know not, and we are contented and happy. In being removed from the world we are strangers to its vices, and possessing the primitive simplicity of our ancestors, we possess, also, I hope, a portion of their hospitality."

The earl had scarcely time to reply, when they arrived at the romantic little village where the curate lived. He was ushered through a gothic old fashioned sort of hall into an antique apartment, which served as a library and parlour. At a table was seated a young woman, who appeared to be instructing the child of a peasant to read. She rose in hasty disorder, and a blush suffused her cheek; but when her father said, "My Lord Seyntaubyne," she coloured more deeply than before; it became her, for it displayed the modest timidity of her character.

The earl made an awkward apology for interrupting her. In truth, he scarcely knew what he uttered; he had been thrown into so much astonishment and surprise. The sylph-like air of the young creature he beheld; the delicate fairness of her complexion—the mild radiance of her full blue eyes, of the most melting expression—the careless ringlets of her pale auburn hair, half shading her snowy forehead—the perfect simplicity of her dress, but above all, the bewitching smile that played round her mouth, when she addressed her father, seemed at once to transport him into a terrestrial paradise. "This place, Sir," said his lordship, in extacy, "seems to be, as you described it, the region of bliss."

"Thank God," replied his host, "in this world I have nothing to wish for but what is contained here; while my Anna is spared to me: for no other treasure have I here. Go, my dear," addressing his daughter, "and bring us a basket of your fruit. We always, my

lord, contrive to have something of the sort from our garden to present to the stranger who may chance to visit us.”

Anna left the room to obey her father.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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THE
CURATE
AND HIS
DAUGHTER;
A CORNISH TALE.

BY
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AUTHOR OF SUMMER EXCURSIONS—A CALEDONIAN
EXCURSION—THE NOBILITY OF THE HEART—
THE WEDDING DAY, &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

..... No mother's care
Shielded my infant innocence with prayer;
No father's guardian hand my youth maintained,
Called forth my virtues, and from vice restrained.

* * * * *

Alone from strangers every comfort flowed.

SAVAGE.

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THE
CURATE
AND
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A CORNISH TALE.

CHAP. I.

THE parsonage house was an old fashioned building, and much gone to decay, yet its aspect was by no means gloomy. The walls were almost entirely concealed by the luxuriance of the vine which half hid the lattice; and such an inviting air of serenity prevailed, as seemed to characterize the happiness which dwelt within. The door opened upon a wide lawn, bounded by the glebe and orchard. The windows presented a view of the sea, a small inlet of which almost washed the cottages of the little village; and the surrounding mountains gave the spot an air at once wild and romantic.

In the evening a walk was proposed; the path they took led to a rustic arbour, enclosed by bold rocky scenery, whose entrance was almost impeded by the profusion of woodbine which carelessly wantoned around it. There was a rude table placed before the bench. A guitar, a few drawings, some books and flowers, were scattered upon it.

The earl requested the young lady to touch the guitar.

“My daughter,” replied his host, “has a pleasing voice, but we have no leisure for superfluous accomplishments. I sometimes, however, indulge her, by allowing her to accompany herself on that simple instrument, as she is self-taught.”

Lord Seyntaubyne was so pressing, it was rude to refuse; and she sang a tender air in a plaintive and graceful manner. In speaking, her voice was soft and persuasive, but in singing, it was melodious and beautiful. His lordship was going to pay her many compliments, when the old man rebuked him. There was, however, an irresistible insinuation in his lordship’s address and conversation, which soon gained a complete ascendancy over the innocent and unsuspecting Anna.

The poor curate possessed too much native urbanity of character, when he observed the enjoyment his noble guest derived from his visit to wish him to depart, and he already had spent a week at the parsonage. From the castle his lordship furnished his host’s table with every delicacy which it afforded.

The secret attention Lord Seyntaubyne paid Anna, the ardency of his vows, the tenderness of his conduct, she was too simple to question the truth, for every word and action seemed to proclaim his sincerity.

Too soon did her father remark the influence he was daily acquiring, and how dangerous a visitor he had admitted. He grew uneasy and alarmed, and hinted his apprehensions to his daughter. It rendered her unhappy that he should suspect Lord

Seyntaubyne but of the purest affection. She separated from him in tears, and at that dangerous interval she met his lordship as she was retreating into the orchard. His insinuating address soon drew from her the cause of her weeping. He reiterated his vows of eternal fidelity and tenderness, and throwing himself on his knees, intreated her to elope with him from the parsonage. Anna shuddered at the proposal; she feebly objected, and in the deepest anguish tore herself from his presence.

In the cooler moments of dispassionate reflection she recollected with indignation and surprise, that notwithstanding the fervency of the earl's professions he had fixed no time nor place for their union, in naming an elopement.

Perfectly ignorant of the libertine characters of those denominated men of the world, a stranger to art, she attributed the neglect to agitation of mind, and determined, when next he renewed the subject, to entreat him to obtain her father's consent to their marriage. The wide distance of rank between them had never struck her. His lordship's protestations she believed too warm not to be sincere, and that without entertaining a passion for her, he never would have professed so much.

Anna had no knowledge of the world. She had been taught to consider a hypocrite so odious and diabolical a character, that to unite such an idea with Lord Seyntaubyne was utterly impossible.

Listless and unhappy, she strayed to her rustic arbour, and carelessly taking up a book, which was a volume of the *Mirror*, she accidentally opened it at the pathetic story of Venoni.

Her thoughts at first were too much bewildered to attend to what she read, but gradually she became deeply interested in the tale. She was struck with the apparent similarity of her own situation. Lord Seyntaubyne had all the persuasive insinuation of Sir Edward. She wept violently, at the relation of the grief of the old man, after Louisa's elopement with Sir Edward. She read no farther.

The earl, who had been sauntering over the lawn, entered the arbour when she departed. Curiosity to see what she had been reading, prompted him to take up the book. It lay open at the page which had so greatly affected Anna, and was wet with her tears.

"Good heaven!" exclaimed he, "what a villain!" He paused: something like remorse stung him to the soul. He changed colour, while he added, "Such is the villain I would have proved myself. I, like Sir Edward, would have stolen the old man's daughter, the prop, the comfort of his declining age, and have sacrificed her reputation to my selfish views. It shall not be!—Rather will I relinquish her altogether than prove so vile a wretch, for to marry the curate's daughter is impossible."

Such were Lord Seyntaubyne's wise resolutions; while remorse of conscience came home to him in the character of Sir Edward, who, like himself, had been received into the bosom of the old man's family—soothed under his calamity, and in like manner he was going to forfeit every law of hospitality. But when again he saw Anna his virtuous intentions were vanquished by the ardency of passion, as he had never practised *self-denial*.

The tale, however, had not merely put her on her guard, but completely opened her eyes: she was astonished at her folly and want of discernment, and she fain would have hated Lord Seyntaubyne; but that she found could not be.

Her happiness seemed to be so strangely interwoven with his, that to break the link of tenderness which enchained her, seemed to threaten her very existence.

In this state several days passed away in wretchedness, for she avoided all opportunities of being alone with his lordship. He saw her intentions, but wavering in his own plans, and led away by the violence of a passion he found it impossible to controul, with that art he knew too well how to practice, he determined at once to awaken and alarm her tenderness, by a proposed retreat.

At dinner Lord Seyntaubyne declared his intention of returning to Penrose Castle in the evening. As he suspected, at the information the heart-sick Anna turned pale and trembled, and the tears started in her eyes, when her father made no attempt to oppose his lordship's going; she took advantage of the first moment to withdraw, that she might weep uninterrupted.

In a short time afterwards the following billet was pushed under her chamber door.

“In a few hours hence I go to return no more. Inexorable as you have proved to the fervency and sincerity of my vows, refuse me not, too cruel Anna, the solitary consolation of bidding you farewell! Meet me in your woodbine arbour at seven o'clock, when I shall have taken leave of your father.

“SEYNTAUBYNE.”

To consent to an interview Anna felt conscious was wrong; yet to suffer this too fondly cherished idol of her soul to depart without breathing an eternal adieu, she wanted the courage to persevere in; and in a luckless moment, with an impropriety, which tintured with unavailing sorrow and remorse her after life, she determined to meet Lord Seyntaubyne.

How feeble is human nature.—How full of error and imperfection, where the conduct is opposed by duty, and where *self-restraint* is not practised. Then does cold philosophical reason shrink under the feelings, as if they had no connection with the understanding, and when too late to regain its ascendancy it is succeeded by remorse, repentance, and sorrow.

At seven o'clock the agitated and trembling Anna awaited in the woodbine arbour Lord Seyntaubyne's arrival. It was contiguous to the gate which divided her father's premises from the high road, and was overhung by wild rocky scenery. She was drawn unconsciously to listen to the vehemence of his lordship's protestations, which he reiterated with fervency, urging her to accompany him to Scotland, in the carriage she beheld waiting at a little distance, to carry him hence; and while in the act of chiding him for again making such a request, she was forcibly lifted into it, and driven with a velocity which took away her senses. In the struggle to be free, overcome with surprize, agitation, and alarm, she fell into successive faintings, while every mile removed her farther from her paternal dwelling.

“Oh forgive,” cried Lord Seyntaubyne, “the stratagem to call you mine. Life and all it has to offer is valueless without you.”

“Restore me, Sir,” exclaimed Anna, feebly, but with dignity, “Oh restore me to my father! It was ungenerous to take a mean advantage of my confidence in your lordship. I never more can respect a man who thus could violate the rights of hospitality. Whither is it you would carry me?”

“Inexorable,” replied he, “as you were to the ardency of my declaration, now, at least, lovely Anna, listen to the sincerity of my intentions, place some confidence in them, when I assure you, that if you will only suffer me to call you mine, we will afterwards return to your father.”

“Left without choice,” answered she, mournfully, “I yield my hand in opposition to my duty. I claim your proffered vows, my lord, as the only means to restore my apparent deviation from virtue. It is due to my fame.—It is due to my suffering parent, the conferring on me your paltry title, to prevent his sinking into an untimely grave. It is the justice I require and demand.”

Exhausted by the exertion of addressing Lord Seyntaubyne in so spirited a manner, she again sunk into insensibility, obliging the earl, instead of proceeding to Gretna, (which he now seriously intended, for the virtuous dignity of Anna had vanquished) to put up at the first stage they arrived at, and send for medical advice.

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CHAP. II.

IT was not originally Lord Seyntaubyne's intention to marry Anna; he meant artfully to draw her from her father's home, under the delusion of such an idea, but only if he could not subdue her will to his base intentions, to have recourse to marriage as a *dernier* recourse, rather than lose her altogether.

There is something in the form of dignified virtue and unprotected innocence which overcomes a mind not totally depraved by vice. The distressing appeal which Anna made to Lord Seyntaubyne, he found it impossible to withstand. He was subdued; and after a painful struggle with himself, his pride yielded to his tenderness for Anna, whom he resolved to make his wife. To avow his union, however, scarce three months after the death of his former lady, was not his intention. He proposed living with Anna in the remote spot where he now was in the character of a private gentleman, under his christian ones, of William Frederic, to be married. Such measures had been adopted by others, who wished for privacy; and it was only necessary to be asked in the parish church, three successive Sundays, under those names, to render the ceremony legal. Anna, still confined by a fever which threatened her life, could not know, and therefore could not be alarmed at the circumstance.

Lord Seyntaubyne desired the ceremony might be conducted as privately as possible. To that the sick and sorrowful Anna had no objection; and only the landlord and his wife, of whom his lordship rented part of a house, were the witnesses.

Urgently did she now petition to return immediately to her father; but every entreaty proved in vain, for Lord Seyntaubyne was inexorable. Unable to lull her anxiety, he consented that he would carry her home at the end of a few days; at the same time taking her promise that she would not write to her father, but wait till he presented her to him as his wife, as he had reasons for not choosing to disclose his marriage by letter. Such a request was unnecessary; Anna felt her heart sicken at the idea of addressing her father, until she could throw herself at his feet and demand his forgiveness, which she languished to obtain, and felt that no elevation of situation, nor even being united to the object she so fondly loved, could render her happy, until she was once more folded in his paternal arms.

About a week after their marriage, his lordship came into the breakfast room, booted, and said to Anna, "Soon now, my love, I hope to carry you to Penrose Castle, as becomes my wife. I am going thither to give the necessary orders for your proper reception. In the mean time you will remain quietly here; I shall be absent not more than two or three days."

Anna looked surprised and dismayed. She would have said, "Why may I not go also?" But she dared not. Lord Seyntaubyne would not submit to contradiction, and tenderly as Anna loved, she stood in awe of him.

Affectionately saluting her, he put a bank note into her hand, which she never looked at, and departed.

The earl, in returning to Penrose Castle, merely did so under the false pretence of preparing for a long tour, which he gave out to his domestics it was his intention to make, that his extraordinary absence might not create curiosity and idle surmise. For he meant to return to the remote town where he left Anna, and there reside for at least three months

with her in retirement. Allowing her, however, to write to her poor father, and inform him of the event which had taken place,—her union with his lordship.

During Lord Seyntaubyne's absence, it was rumoured in the neighbourhood where Anna was left—the extraordinary circumstance of his marriage—by some person who had chanced to see and know him.

The clergyman, to whom the report was circulated, alarmed to find that he had married a nobleman under a borrowed name as he supposed, and as a private individual, waited on Anna, to whom, in the most delicate and tender manner, he revealed the circumstance,—soliciting to know the real names of the persons he had united.

Horror-struck at the relation, she fell into faintings; and, unable to give any reply, was carried to her chamber. When she came to herself, indignant at being so deluded and betrayed, she was convinced, into a false marriage, frantic with grief, and shocked at the wickedness of such deception, where most she trusted, she formed the fatal and desperate resolution to see neither her father nor Lord Seyntaubyne any more. Often had she wondered at the mystery and reserve which he had practised, and the objections he always made to her writing to her poor father. Now, indeed, all were explained; the terrible conviction appeared with every horror before her. Sensible it was impossible ever to remove the fatal truth, or the impression to her father of her lost virtue, she formed the frantic resolution of setting off for the wild solitudes of Cumberland, and there immure herself alive for the remainder of her existence. She was persuaded she could not have survived a sight of Lord Seyntaubyne, after the cruelty and despection he had practised.

By the earliest dawn she softly stole down stairs, and escaping by a back door into the garden, she crossed some fields which led into the high road, when a passing coach took her up, and fortunately contained no other passenger. The bank-note she possessed was for five-hundred pounds: she had, besides, a few guineas in her pocket. Indignation seemed to give her strength and courage. She reached London in safety; and having, during her last day's journey, travelled with a very humane elderly woman, she with her obtained one day's asylum, and was by her attended to the stage for Penrith.

Anna fixed on Cumberland from no other reason than because it was the native country of her mother; and she had heard her describe it as a romantic part of the world. Far distant she knew it was, and therefore least likely to lead to a discovery of whither she was gone. The sum of money she had, would enable her to procure a humble dwelling, and hereafter, if she lived, she must find some mode for her future subsistence.

CHAP. III.

LORD Seyntaubyne having arranged his plans at Penrose Castle, returned to ———, where it was his intention to devote his life, for some time, entirely to the society of his Anna. Instead of finding her with impatient wishes and tender anxiety, awaiting his coming back, great was his dismay, when a letter was put into his hands, and the landlady informed him the young lady had escaped three days since, she knew not whither, not having been missed for several hours after her departure.

The writing was Anna's; and the letter, to the following effect, was directed to Earl Seyntaubyne.

“Vain, my lord, will every attempt prove to discover the retreat I have chosen; as far removed from you as possible. I take of you an eternal farewell. Deluded, under the semblance of the most solemn of all ceremonies—taught to suppose myself the wife of a man whose name is now become abhorrent, the very freedom which proves my destruction releases me at once from an object who is entitled to no portion of my esteem, and whose idea excites nothing but disgrace and misery.

I leave you to the reflexion of your own conscience: I wish you not a greater evil. You never can restore comfort to the once happy family whose peace you have destroyed. But you must expect hereafter to meet with a just retribution for the determined cruelty of your conduct.

“ANNA.”

On the perusal of this letter, the unhappy Anna need not have wished Lord Seyntaubyne a greater evil than he experienced in the remorse and anguish which assailed him, notwithstanding the unjustness of her accusation with regard to the deception practised in their marriage. The loss of Anna excited such frantic despair the people of the house thought him a maniac. He flew to the clergyman, from whom he learned the source of all his misery. Unable, through any channel, to obtain the least tidings of the unhappy wanderer, he visited all the remote places in the neighbourhood, as the most likely to trace her; and after sometime, in hopeless despondency, gave up the pursuit. The violent agitation he experienced, with the irritability of his temper, brought on a brain fever, which for some weeks rendered him an object of the truest commiseration. The compassionate and sympathizing Lady Sophia, with her amiable husband, came to Penrose Castle, where they watched over him with the tenderest solicitude; for though her ladyship was rigidly severe in her condemnation of vicious conduct, and vicious habits, yet, when she could do good to an erring mortal, her benevolence was never withheld: if she could not amend the object, she considered it a duty to extend her christian charity, not only by wise council, but by deeds of kindness.

It is seldom that even persons, the most hardened in vice, do not view with reverential admiration the celestial form of virtuous piety; and if they are not edified by it, are, at least, prevented for a time from the commission of evil.

The little respect Lord Seyntaubyne had paid to the memory of Lady Sophia's sister, and the evanescence of his affection in so early and new an attachment, after the violence of his grief, had filled her with disgust and indignation. The disappearance of the

poor curate's daughter with his lordship, was soon spread over the country, and the known gallantry of his character left little room for her ladyship to believe that the lovers were united. But when she heard the unfortunate young woman had withdrawn herself from him, and that he was supposed to be dying of a frenzy fever, without one friend to sooth his pillow, or to represent the awful world, which was opening to his view, and whither he was hastening,

“With all his imperfections on his head.”

She prevailed on her husband to accompany her to Penrose Castle, there to remain till the scene was closed for ever.

By the unremitting attention of this excellent pair Lord Seyntaubyne was at length restored to reason, repentance, and deep remorse; becoming from that period a reformed and exemplary character.

No effort was left unessayed to discover the retreat of the hopeless Anna. Advertisements were sent to all the papers, intreating her return to the husband she had deserted, but no tidings could be obtained.

Many long years had now passed away, and Lord Seyntaubyne concluded she must have become an inhabitant of a better world. Time had softened his affliction, but it had left a shade of melancholy in his character which not all the gaiety of his darling Julia could dispel. It would have made his lordship happy to have been on terms of amity with his mother, but she had disapproved of his first marriage, and had declined the overtures he some years since had tendered, of a reconciliation.

The accidental and transient view Lord Seyntaubyne obtained of Matilda at Lady Maltrevers' ball, in a manner revived the impression of Anna. She seemed to live again before him in all her native loveliness. Vague and distracting ideas floated in his mind, yet he dared not trust himself with the delusive hope which in a moment crossed his imagination, and which, with a saddened joy, he was almost tempted to cherish.

After a sleepless and agitated night, his lordship rang at dawn of day for his carriage, and drove to Lady Sophia's at Richmond. The hour was so early she was not risen. He requested she might be called, and in a short time her ladyship joined him in the breakfast-room, not without alarm, afraid some accident had befallen Julia.

Lord Seyntaubyne was walking in hasty disorder up and down the room. In a tender yet firm voice, she enquired the cause of being favoured with so early a visit.

“Last night, my sister,” said he, “a fair vision presented itself at Lady Maltrevers' ball, so like in person and in loveliness my lost Anna, that she seemed again restored to this terrestrial sphere, and a period of eighteen years sunk into no space when this angelic being lighted upon me with heavenly smiles of love and tenderness. She spoke to Julia, whom, strange to say, she somewhat resembles. I should have asked my daughter the name of this fair creature, but agitated, overwhelmed by surprise and emotion, I had no power to utter the enquiry, and Julia had promised to go home with Lady Milner. I was half disposed to detain her, but ashamed of my weakness, reluctantly I suffered her to depart without satisfying my curiosity. Now, dear Sophia, as you most probably know all my daughter's associates, tell me who this interesting creature is likely to be.”

Her ladyship, persuaded it was Matilda he had seen, did not choose, for reasons best known to herself, to divulge either her name, or that she resided with his mother. The

resemblance she had often been struck with, which she bore to her niece, and it is possible the same vague ideas floated in her mind, which had taken possession of his lordship's. Too prudent, however, to disclose them without certainty of their reality, she merely replied, "Julia knew so many people to whose very names she was a stranger; and she would not take upon her to assert who the young lady in question might be;" with much address directing the conversation into another channel, while she insisted on his lordship partaking of her breakfast.

Lady Sophia was too much interested, however, in the subject to let it rest, except for the present hour, and pleading an engagement, set out with only a servant, to Doctor Arundel's, determined if she gained any satisfactory intelligence, to immediately communicate it to her brother.

After some indifferent topics, she led to the subject by speaking of Matilda. "I have often remarked, doctor," said she, "Miss Trevanion bears so great a resemblance to the Seyntaubyne family, that I am almost inclined to think her a Penrose instead of a Trevanion. Tell me, my dear Sir, is not the latter her real name? For I suspect," looking archly, "that you are in the secret."

The reverend doctor hesitated, and appeared at a loss how to reply.

"I remember," continued her ladyship, "that more than once, my good Sir, you have evaded the question. Be assured, it is not prompted by idle curiosity. I might see half the world without wishing to hear their names, or to be personally acquainted with them."

"Then let Matilda, my dear lady, be added to that half world."

"How strangely mysterious," cried she, sighing, "is the situation of this interesting young creature. If she has parents living, why are they not made known to her? If she has not, the Dowager Lady Seyntaubyne ought at once to proclaim to the world, that she is a destitute orphan, born in wedlock, whom she has adopted, and not allow her to be subject to the erroneous and ill-natured surmises of the world. For, if Trevanion be not a name given her by chance, then is it fondly cherished by one, who, were the events of her life made known, would take her to his bosom, and spare Lady Seyntaubyne's adoption."

"You distress me, madam," replied Doctor Arundel; "I am in confidence bound not to disclose the little I know of Matilda's history. I should be happy, were it no breach of honour, to extend my confidence to you. Be assured, however, that Lady Seyntaubyne will give her a portion suited to the elevated sphere in which she is placed. Whatever may be her name—her connections—her claim on others, in the way of relationship, while the dowager lives, I am assured, she will never part with her; for to her charge she was individually consigned by a dying relation, with a sacred promise, *never*, by either persuasion, nor pretended right, to relinquish her to another. She accepted the solemn charge. She has nobly fulfilled it; and though I lament that in some points her ladyship has rather considered Matilda's worldly interest, than what might more permanently tend to her future happiness, much praise is due for the truly maternal part she has acted. To strangers, the noble qualities which adorn her character are unknown; she is generous without ostentation, warm and zealous in her friendships, and though she possesses some faults, she has eminent virtues. I regret her implacability towards her son. For several years he has merited her affection; but she could never tolerate his want of self-denial in his vicious propensities, and considered one unfortunate act of his life an enormous crime."

“I no longer urge you, Sir,” replied Lady Sophia, “to disclose more than you now have, in regard to Miss Trevanion’s history. You have elucidated some circumstances to my satisfaction, which strangely agree with a certain association of events long passed away, confirming, as strangely, ideas which, whenever I have seen Miss Trevanion, have idly floated in my mind. We will drop the subject, and if ever her real name transpires, she will have no cause to lament being known to the persons to whom she will find herself closely allied. It is best, till that happens, all relating to her should remain in oblivion.”

Her ladyship took leave. She thought it cruel to torture Lord Seyntaubyne with vague surmises, and therefore she determined to leave to future chance the renewal of Matilda’s case.

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CHAP. IV.

IT was two days after the preceding conversation Julia was engaged with her aunt to dine at Sir Charles Dashwood's. On her return from her visit, her father was then informed of Matilda's name, and discovered her to be the person he had seen at Lady Matrevers'. The agitation he had formerly experienced was renewed with augmented poignancy. There seemed, it was true, no affinity between the person his mother had adopted, and the lost Anna; nor did it appear within the pale of probability that there was any; for never through any channel, direct or indirect, had he heard of her being a mother. That *his* mother should adopt the child of what she believed an illicit connection, so violent as she had been in her resentments, so unreasonable in her prejudices, seemed, of all things, the most improbable. Yet still the loved, the cherished name of Trevanion brought back a thousand tender images. The very sound was fraught with new life and new joy. It belonged to a being the very counterpart of his own Anna. Her celestial form was again embodied; and to behold this fair creature once more was the most ardent wish of his soul.

To Lady Sophia, the affectionate participator in his grief, he unfolded all his daughter had communicated. He requested she would devise some means of learning to whom Matilda was allied, and if it would be possible to see her.

Thus painfully urged, her ladyship again waited on Doctor Arundel, and related what had passed between the earl and herself.

The reverend doctor was absolutely averse from awakening in his lordship the slightest hope, without it was possible to prove the certainty of her tender relationship, in which case he then would have a right to bring forth his claims; but without being able to do so, by legal authority, it would be only occasioning himself fruitless anxiety.

This judicious council Lady Sophia related to the earl; who, though he perceived the fallacy of surmises, he could not dismiss them, and at length determined, without acquainting his sister, to take a bold measure, which was, at once to write to his mother, with whom he had not had any intercourse for a series of years. His lordship's letter was as follows:—

To Countess Dowager Seyntaubyne.

“MADAM,

“Nearly twenty years seem to have dissolved the tender interest and affection which usually subsist between a parent and child. When family dissensions unhappily occur, they generally arise from wilful error on both sides; and while each person remains averse from concession, the breach becomes so wide that time rather augments than diminishes it.

“Such, madam, has been our ill-judged case. You, from implacability, have been deprived the joy of beholding your lovely grand-daughter, Julia Penrose, who could not fail of exciting interest in your bosom. Do not allow the prejudice you imbibed against her mother to be longer extended towards your child. In forgiving my union with Lady Julia O'Brian, which so much offended you, forgive also a succeeding one with a lowly maiden, which proved less consonant to your wishes.

“The objects you disapproved have ceased to offend you; they are each gone to join their kindred angels; and in the kindred one left on earth, which is sheltered beneath your maternal wing, allow me also to be a partaker of your felicity.

“It is essential, mother, to my future peace, to know *who* the *Matilda Trevanion* is that you have adopted. I urge you to disclose it; for if she has any claim to my paternal affection, oh! hold not back from me this angelic creature.

“Surely, if she claims consanguinity to us, it is unjust your not bringing her forward as your grand-daughter. Such she is, if you know her to be the child of Anna Trevanion. If, on the contrary, this Matilda is of humble birth, and obscure parentage, you have placed her out of her sphere; and you are depriving Lady Julia Penrose of that portion of your affection and inheritance she has a title to expect. It will be a stigma to the memory of my mother she would be sorry to hear offered to it, her having *willed* away her estates to a lowly stranger, in preference to her grand-daughter. But if, on the contrary, this Matilda is a *Penrose*, instead of a *Trevanion*, how much do I then owe to my mother, and how largely am I become her debtor in gratitude and affection.

“SEYNTAUBYNE.”

“Grosvenor Place, June 1.”

The countess and Matilda were descending the stairs to pay some visits, when the preceding letter was given her. She looked at it earnestly, and said, “I should know the hand; I am sure I have seen it before.” Then turning to the seal she changed colour, became much agitated, and enquired who brought it?

“A footman, my lady, not a minute ago, from my Lord Seyntaubyne’s.”

Matilda observed her ladyship was violently affected, by the variation of her countenance, but she dared not notice it, as she proceeded to the drawing-room, and desired her to go into the library and wait till she came to her.

Matilda obeyed. More than an hour elapsed, and Lady Seyntaubyne neither came nor sent. Lost in a thousand conjectures of what might be the purport of a letter from her son, whom she was not ignorant she neither saw nor held any correspondence with. Though not naturally curious, yet on this occasion she could not help feeling anxiety and interest to know what were its contents, when even the outside had entirely overcome her ladyship’s usual self-command.

Every minute appeared an hour while kept in this painful suspense. Matilda was surrounded by books; she could not acquire composure to look into, and she could only sit opposite the door, watching and listening to every footstep.

At length the drawing-room bell rang, and the next minute the footman appeared, who told Matilda that his lady desired she would not wait dinner, for she was going out on business and might be absent some hours.

Matilda’s anxiety and apprehension that something was amiss, overcame all idea of the countess’s displeasure, and she determined to meet her in the hall.

“Permit me,” said Matilda, in a tender accent, “to wait your ladyship’s return to dinner;” for she observed, though her cheek was flushed with displeasure, a tear she could not restrain, had forced itself into her eyes.

“I desired you would not wait for me,” returned she, hastily, “it is uncertain when I shall be at home.”

“Then allow me, dearest madam, to go along with you in the carriage; I will wait in it for you. It is now past four o’clock, and if the distance be considerable, it will be night before you are at home.”

“Don’t tease me, child. You are likely to be my torment, instead of a comfort.”

With these bitter and mysterious words Lady Seyntaubyne departed, leaving Matilda to digest them as she could. Listless and unhappy she was unable to employ herself. “*You are likely to prove my torment instead of a comfort,*” resounded in her ears. She could not refrain from weeping, and felt most truly wretched.

“Ah!” exclaimed she, “how happy is the humble cottager, surrounded by her family, loving and beloved; whilst I, a child of bounty—a solitary being—ignorant to whom I belong, yet set up as an object of envy, seemingly caressed and admired, how little am I what I appear to be; and how much entitled to commiseration, if it was only known.”

Such were Matilda’s mournful reflexions, whilst the countess was driving with all speed to Richmond.

She was above an hour in confidential conversation with her reverend friend. On her ladyship’s return home, Matilda perceived, that whatever had proved the result of her business, though she now spoke with much tenderness, her mind was far from tranquillized.

“Never, child,” cried she, “attempt to interrupt me, by what I know you intend well meant attention, when my thoughts are occupied. I cannot bear to be put out of my way. In future, when you observe any thing has disconcerted me, take no notice of it, if you wish to escape a rebuke, for I despise all sort of sympathy.

“However,” continued she, “as a punishment for your intended kindness, I shall send you to-morrow out of my way. You are to spend it with Doctor and Mrs. Arundel. I have prepared them to expect you: good people, they long to see you.

“Now tell me, Matilda, shall you break your heart, if in two or three days hence we set out for Cornwall, and leave this smoaky town, in which, for your sake, I have borne the self-denial of spending almost five years.”

“No plan,” exclaimed she, delighted, “can prove so congenial to my wishes. What I have seen of London during the three months I have now dwelt in it, has been so adverse to my taste, so different from the pleasing tranquillity, and the rational delight which illumined the domestic circle at Doctor Arundel’s, that in your society, madam, I may anticipate a return of such days, and take leave of parties, in which my heart had no share, for they were divested of all enjoyment.”

It was evident to Matilda, notwithstanding the silence Lady Seyntaubyne maintained, in regard to the purport of the letter which she had received, that she had disclosed its contents to Doctor Arundel, and their sudden departure from town was the result. Had she been permitted a close intercourse with her friends at Richmond, her regret would have been infinite in the prospect of so distant a removal from them, but in her present situation she looked forward with pure satisfaction to the sequestered life she had the hope of spending. If little should offer to interest or delight, as little, it was probable, would interrupt the still monotony it would afford. She rejoiced in escaping from the treacherous civility of Mrs. Aldersey, the insipidity of the Butlers, the disgusting

compliments of the old Duke of Elmwood, and even to see Sir Charles Dashwood no more, for whom she entertained a sincere esteem, would prove a relief. From his society and conversation she had derived her only source of pleasure, amidst the numbers she had known. But of late it had become oppressive, from the unremitting attention he paid her, too marked not to be understood; and she felt it was not in her power to return it in a way which she considered his due.

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CHAP. V.

WITH eager alacrity Matilda in the morning prepared to go to Richmond, where she was to pass the whole day, and return to town on the following. She longed to receive the maternal embrace of Mrs. Arundel, and to behold once more the doctor's benevolent countenance.

When Matilda saluted Mrs. Arundel, who tenderly folded her in her arms, as she earnestly gazed on her wan and faded countenance, she exclaimed with emotion, "My dear child—our own Matilda—unaltered, I perceive, in affection, by the gleam of sunshine in that good-humoured countenance. But why, my love, have you been so great a stranger?"

"We would quarrel with you, Matilda," interrupted the reverend doctor, "if we thought it was your fault. Old people are very tenacious of attention from the young; and though it is the fashion, and apparently the maxim, of the present day, to slight and disrespect those who are no longer young, I hope, my dear, it is a maxim which you will have too much wisdom to follow. If young people only knew the amiable light they appear in when

'They rock the cradle of declining age,'

and what silly frivolous beings they are considered by persons of sense when they assume an opposite mode of conduct, they would learn to estimate themselves.

"But tell me ingenuously, my dear Matilda, whether you prefer the life of a town-bred lady to the simple habits and domestic sameness which you experienced beneath our roof? You do not look happier. Late hours and heated rooms have stolen the roses from your cheeks, and the remaining lilly droops by their absence."

"I can never be happier," said she, with animation, "I fear never so happy, as in those former days, when you, Sir, and my maternal Mrs. Arundel prevented every reasonable wish by your kindness."

"I have heard," exclaimed the doctor, "of numberless suitors in your train. Take an old man's advice, my dear—be wary whom you select. Do not listen to the vain coxcombs who flutter about every young woman, that is considered the fashion. Believe me, it is not the sort of notoriety to give you consequence in life. It will make you, indeed, the theme of every busy tongue; but rather aim at attaining the respect which can alone be derived from being seldom seen, and little known. Be assured, that a woman's surest safeguard is retreat."

"It is reported," said Mrs. Arundel, "that you have given ear to Sir Charles Dashwood's addresses. He is well spoken of by Lady Sophia Clairville, and therefore, I am sure, deserving of being so. Yet I would prefer a younger lover for our Matilda."

"Talk not, madam," interrupted she, hastily, "I beseech you, of lovers: so many are given to me, I am weary and disgusted with hearing their names."

"I am sorry," cried the doctor, very seriously, "report has been so busy: nothing can be more detrimental to the respect and advantage of a young and interesting female than such a circumstance. Without perhaps deserving, she will have the reputation of a flirt and a coquet, an enslaver of hearts. Young men may like the society of such a

woman *pour passer le tems*, but no sober thinking one would wish to make her his wife; and those most likely to render her happy are the ones to keep aloof.

“Fortunately, my dear child,” added the reverend doctor, “you are going from this contagious city; I observe that hitherto you have retained all that native purity of character which I trust will never desert you, and is likely to prove one of your chief attractions to an amiable man.”

A summons to dinner put a period to the discourse; and once again Matilda sat down to their social and happy table.

After tea, the evening looked so lovely, and wore that serene aspect, which towards the close of a sultry summer evening it often assumes, when scarcely a breeze whispers through the trees, and the declining sun falls in long shadows on the landscape, Matilda wished to enjoy it, and wander in the pleasure-garden which margined the river. She excused herself to her friends: it was the beginning of June, and the first time since she had quitted Richmond that she had beheld the reposing beauty of such enchanting scenery. She paused to contemplate it. The verdant meadows, in which groups of cattle were feeding, were richly enamelled with golden king’s cups, and enclosed by thick hedges, where the wild rose and woodbine grew in such luxuriance, as to send forth the most delicious fragrance. The translucent Thames reflected the pensile branches of the trees, while on its clear bosom boats and pleasure-barges were gliding; and as the sun disappeared in the western sky, it was richly coloured with a crimson hue in a cloudless horizon.

The sounds which alone interrupted the stillness of the slumbering landscape were of the most inspiring nature. A pleasure-barge, decked with a white awning and streamers, glided down the river, with a party, the sound of whose horns and clarionets sounded on the breeze, while every grove was made vocal by the plaintive songs of innumerable nightingales.

Matilda stood gazing and listening till approaching twilight almost hid every object from her view. At length she mournfully exclaimed, “Sweet spot! I take of ye, perhaps, an eternal farewell. Scene of my departed joys, of my happiest years, pure and tranquil as the days which then were my portion. Fostered with maternal tenderness in this terrestrial paradise, fond remembrance shall often recal ye to my thoughts when far far distant.

“Venerable and respected friends,” continued she, “Matilda Trevanion will ever cherish you in her heart. No time shall banish ye; and when discontent or sorrow prevails, then will she think of the wisdom of your councils, and endeavour to make them the guide of her life.

“And you too, sweetest Lady Sophia, bright pattern of every excellence, whose friendship was too large a portion of happiness to be permitted the indulgence, of you also I take a sad farewell! Be ye blessed in the affection—in the society of your children—for Julia Penrose soon will be your daughter. Ah, too lovely and interesting Julia—innocent bane of my peace—make Clairville happy—Matilda wishes it—oh, how ardently! Slight not his tenderness—and think not your felicity alloyed, because she, alas! was too prone to estimate the virtues of your husband.”

Again the sound of music rose on the breeze. It was accompanied by voices. Matilda listened attentively, for the air was familiar to her: she had often sung it with Lady Julia. The words, from Metastasio, were tender and pathetic. She observed the party

were making towards the garden, and putting to shore. She would have retreated, but in the next moment she heard a voice, whose well known accent thrilled her to the soul, exclaim, "There is some female pacing the reverend doctor's garden, *in mournful meditation.*"

"Speak to her, Clairville," said Lady Julia (for it was Matilda's Richmond friends.)

Clairville, who by the indistinct light, yet thought he recognized the figure of Matilda, cried—

"Fair nymph,
In thy orisons be all my sins remembered."

Matilda, who found it was in vain to escape, approached the boat, and with as firm a voice as she could command, exclaimed—

"That strain again,
O it comes o'er my ear like the sweet south,
That breathes upon a bed of violets."

In a moment Matilda was recognised by Julia, who replied, "Away with heroics, though this indeed is the scene for inspiration—push to shore, Clairville, and let us greet our charming friend. But whence come you, that at so late an hour, a benighted maiden, you are wandering in this spot in solitude?"

"My solitude is voluntary," she replied; "and the shades of night, I believed, would have concealed me even from my friends."

"Dear Matilda," cried Lady Sophia, "I rejoice to see you. We will storm the doctor's castle; I presume there is no company, without," added she, archly, "there is some incognito in that arbour. Sir Charles Dashwood, for instance, '*in such a night as this.*'" She was going on, when Matilda, much hurt, said, "I did not expect this from your ladyship."

Lady Sophia, concerned that she had unwittingly given her young friend pain, was going to reply, when Doctor Arundel called from the walk, "My wife, Matilda, is anxious you should come out of the night air. But I was not aware you had such engaging company to detain you." He invited the party into his house, and the invitation was cheerfully accepted.

The air and manner of Julia was lively and unembarrassed. She expressed sincere pleasure in meeting Matilda thus unexpectedly. Not so Clairville; he became silent, cold, abstracted, and took no part in the conversation.

"What enjoyments," cried Lady Sophia, "are those people loosing who are immured in London, in such a season, when all nature courts us so powerfully in every varied form; it is wonderful there are any who can refuse its alluring voice, who have reason and free-will. How artificial are the modes of enjoyment custom lays down. To dine by borrowed light* in the month of June, when the glorious sun bursts in all its

* Some fashionable persons of the present day breakfast at three o'clock in the afternoon, dine about ten at night, and cannot attend divine service on Sunday, even in the afternoon, at their parish church, *not being ready in time.*

radiance on every object. O it is a monstrous absurdity, to be shut up in heated rooms—oppressed with *ennuie*, for want of air, and all this because it is the fashion. It is a direliction of all rationality, perverting the system of things, by introducing false taste and false indulgence.

“I hope,” continued her ladyship, addressing Matilda, “that you, dear Miss Trevanion, will not undergo such durance vile; but that we shall often see you at Richmond in the course of the summer.”

“You see me here,” returned she, mournfully, “to say I come not again. In a few days we go to Pengwilly Hall.”

“To remain long?” asked Clairville, eagerly. Yet why he asked a question in which he felt he ought to take no interest, he scarcely knew when his future destiny was marked out for him, and soon to be decided by so important an event as his marriage with Julia.

“Young ladies’ movements,” interrupted Lady Sophia, hastily, “are among these events which it is not always politic to disclose; they are often influenced by such various causes.”

“Clairville is anxious,” said his cousin, sportively, “to bid you beware, Matilda, of a little lurking god, who generally lies in ambush amidst the deep shades of sequestered woods to entrap poor maidens—though, in truth, if I am to judge by your looks, he has already been somewhat busy.”

“O, no,” cried Lady Sophia, alarmed for her young friend, “Miss Trevanion rather looks the

‘Pensive nun, devout and pure,
‘Sober, steadfast, and demure.’

“But a truce with all this nonsense. If Mrs. Arundel will give us some supper, for I know she has not banished the old fashioned sociable tablecloth, but still makes her guests sit round her hospitable board, we will partake of it, and then return home.”

Lively and general conversation succeeded the social meal, and it was midnight when they rose to depart.

“Matilda,” exclaimed the doctor, looking at his watch, “you have absolutely brought your dissipated hours into my sober house, so infectious is bad example.”

“Yes,” answered Lady Sophia,

‘Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say good night, till it be morrow,’

“So, in one word, dear Matilda, positively I will have no taking leave—it is a mournful sort of business which I do not like. I desire, Clairville and Julia, you will depart without one word of regrets, adieus, and all those frightful appendages which accompany separation.”

Her ladyship saw her son’s agitation, who changed colour alternately, and therefore she wisely included her niece in the authority she assumed.

It was not even at Richmond Matilda tasted repose, so little influence has the most inviting spot over the mind when it is not at peace with itself. She arose in the morning with the same sleepless eyes and pallid countenance she of late had done in Soho Square.

Doctor Arundel's penetration read what was passing in her thoughts. In the morning when he shook hands with her, he said,—“This will never do my sweet young friend.”

Matilda, sensible he guessed the mournful ideas which occupied her, blushed deeply, while he continued—“It is not London or Richmond, my dear, which is longer a suitable residence for you. I rejoice you are going so far into the country. Employ your time in various and useful recreation which will divert your attention, and all will yet be well.”

Tears came into her eyes. The tender, the considerate tenderness of her reverend minister, was so much like what she formerly had experienced from him, she was deeply penetrated, and returned in a faltering accent—“I will endeavour, dear Sir, to profit by your advice.”

Matilda departed after breakfast with a very affectionate wish and warm benediction from her venerable friends.

She tried to rally her spirits, and not suffer her thoughts to revert to Albert Clairville; determined to view him with firmness already in the character he soon would appear in—the husband of Julia Penrose. However severe the pang would prove, she was resolved not to weakly sink under the trial, which, though a wise resolution, was more easy in the theory than in the practice.

CHAP. VI.

ON her return to Soho Square, after the first salutations were over, Lady Seyntaubyne presented Matilda with a letter. It was already open, and she desired her to read it. A stranger to the hand, she enquired who it came from.

“Read, child, and you will see.”

It began, “Most lovely Miss Trevanion.”

Matilda, though little inclined to smile, could not avoid doing so, and said, “Either it is some quiz, or the person is mad.” She looked at the signature and saw Elmwood at the bottom of the page.

“O I’ve read enough,” exclaimed she, “this poor superannuated old duke is not satisfied with uttering a thousand absurd compliments, wherever he meets me, but must now expose himself on paper.”

“I desire, Matilda,” cried her ladyship, “you will go on.”

She read as follows:

To Miss Trevanion.

“Most lovely Miss Trevanion,

“Notwithstanding your persevering cruelty, I do not abandon the hope that at length you will condescend to listen to the vows of a man who adores you; and permit him the felicity of laying his person and fortune at your feet.

“The noble title of duchess few young ladies would have resolution to withstand. I not merely proffer my hand to you, madam, but a *carte blanche*, for Lady Seyntaubyne to fill up with a settlement to whatever extent she may think proper, with which I shall cheerfully comply. Be assured it shall be the study of my future life to estimate and render happy so angelic a creature.

“I remain,

“Madam,

“Your adoring and

“Obedient servant,

”ELMWOOD.”

St. James’s Square, June 3.

“Be not hasty, Matilda,” cried the countess, as she indifferently folded up the letter, “in your decision. Ponder on all the advantages of such an alliance until to-morrow. I rashly have given my promise never to controul your choice. At the same time you know how entirely I have set my heart upon seeing you splendidly settled, and this offer is far beyond my most sanguine ambition. You have formerly heard my sentiments in regard to the Duke of Elmwood. How little I considered his large family an objection. They will all probably soon marry, for they are handsome women, and with their rank and fortune, some man of fashion will be glad to catch at such a match to repair his broken-fortune.”

“Gracious,” cried Matilda, “your ladyship speaks of marriage as if it were a mere matter of traffic. Better at once advertize the ladies, and some sordid bidder will make his bargain, without considering either the intrinsic value or probable defects of the object till too late, when he may have cause to lament his unfortunate purchase.”

“You argue like an ignorant girl. But I have often observed, Matilda, you are fond of arguing without at all understanding your subject.”

“I argue, madam, not from any intention to contradict you, but when we differ, in the hope of being convinced.”

“Well, then,” interrupted her ladyship, “be now convinced that it is to your future advantage to accept the Duke of Elmwood.”

“Your ladyship has promised,” cried she, “never to controul my choice. Resting on your word, which I know to be your bond, so full of integrity and truth is your character, forgive me if I say, in point of conscience, were you to consult Doctor Arundel he would also disapprove of it; for when rank and fortune are the sole considerations, how inimical will they prove to happiness.”

“It is true,” replied Lady Seyntaubyne, “I would have given the preference to Sir Charles Dashwood, as he really seems to be fond of you, but he has not made an offer. I am almost inclined to tell him of the duke’s proposal, and then, perhaps, he may come forward. But if he were, I should not be surprised did you reject him likewise.”

“I esteem and value Sir Charles,” returned Matilda, “I delight in his conversation; but in any other character than that of a respected friend, I never for a moment have regarded him.”

“Would you refuse him,” said her ladyship, impatiently, “were he to propose to you?”

“He has not put me to the test,” she answered, half smiling. “I should regret he did, for I could not estimate him as he merits, and is entitled to be from the person he honours by selecting.”

“You have a strange way, Matilda, of parrying my questions, and never coming to a point. I greatly dislike indecision. Tell me, at once, whether you would or would not marry Sir Charles, for I perceive you intend to reject the Duke of Elmwood.”

“I certainly do intend to reject his grace, trusting, as I said, madam, on your former generous declaration of allowing me to follow my own inclination. To reply as you would wish me, in regard to Sir Charles Dashwood, is a difficult point. If my refusal of him were likely to incur your ladyship’s everlasting displeasure, and to disappoint the expectation he had formed of happiness, in being united to me, then would I practice the *self-denial*, in foregoing every consideration of myself, and think it incumbent on me to fulfil the duties of a wife to the best of my ability; and if I could not repay him with that tenderness of affection which his excellence entitled him to, I would by every attention to his comfort and happiness, endeavour to make up that void my heart will always sustain, even when the object I regard is alienated from it. I will never deceive so excellent a man by allowing him to suppose he was always its sole possessor. I will unfold the weakness I have been guilty of, and then if his generosity prompts him to marry me, he shall not find me ungrateful nor unworthy the confidence he has placed in me.”

“You are a singular girl,” observed Lady Seyntaubyne, kindly smiling upon her. “As I said, there is no contending, and you must have your own way.”

Matilda, grateful and delighted, quickly wrote a polite rejection to the Duke of Elmwood. She had scarcely finished her letter when Mrs. Aldersey was announced. Matilda, who was afraid of her raillery, if she saw the direction, in hasty confusion put it into her writing case, but not before her quick observation guessed that something particular was going forward; and she said, significantly,—“By that becoming confusion it requires, dear Miss Trevanion, no great penetration to believe those pretty fingers have been either signing some poor man’s death warrant, or else sending him into the third heaven in an extacy.—What may it be? Fatima was scarcely less anxious to peep into the blue chamber, than I am into that secret desk. Suffer me to be your ambassadress on this occasion.”

The entrance of Lady Seyntaubyne fortunately interrupted Mrs. Aldersey’s ill-timed raillery.

“The porter,” said she to Matilda, “will be here in an hour for your trunks; has Smithson got them ready?”

“True,” exclaimed Mrs. Aldersey. “I heard a flying report that your ladyship was going immediately out of town, and came purposely to know the truth of it.

“It is very true,” answered Matilda.

“Surely, madam, you will not have the cruelty to take Miss Trevanion into the country, when all the world are in town. No person of fashion now leaves London till August. Don’t you know that things are quite reversed. We spend all the winter in the country, and all the summer here. It is perfectly gothic to reside on your own domain; when, formerly, the nobility were so extravagant to keep open house. We are grown wiser in this age: we live only for ourselves; and turn every thing to the best advantage. Our houses, when we don’t inhabit them, are left to the highest bidder; no matter whom, if it is but left. Our very carriages we convert into stage-coaches. Nay, the master is so condescending as to drive his own men; and whilst they are idly rolling at their ease, he endures all the fatigue of coachmanship. I would advise your ladyship to have a dicky-box to your coach, to convey you even out of town.”

“Never,” cried Lady Seyntaubyne, with indignation.

“It is my pride to preserve our old-fashioned respectable customs. If every person had kept their proper place we should have had no revolutions in Europe. But equality is a fine thing; we feel the blessed effects of it. I drive my coach in six, and will drive it as long as I live. It becomes the wife of a British nobleman to do so. In my house, you should know the footman from his master, if it had one. None of your servants out of livery, aping gentlemen, nor ladies’-maids drest unbecoming their station. It is an excellent idea of some Scotch countess, I don’t know her name, who dresses all her female domestics in a uniform of tartan stuff. I think when I return into Cornwall all mine shall wear camlet.”

Sir Charles Dashwood’s entrance put a stop to the conversation. Matilda blushed from the remembrance of her discourse with the countess, as he approached her. Mrs. Aldersey, in a view for something, exclaimed,—“Sir Charles, I do think Miss Trevanion has been writing you, or some other happy man, a love letter, if I may judge by the becoming confusion I found her in.

“Whatever happy man,” cried he, gallantly, “is honoured by a letter from Miss Trevanion, if not inimical to his peace, must consider it, next to herself, an invaluable possession.”

Matilda coloured deeper than ever.

“You had better, Miss Trevanion,” interrupted Mrs. Aldersey, “go with me to Tunbridge Wells; I have just taken a house there, from September for the three succeeding months.—You will be quite *ennuie*, when you are buried alive amongst the savages of Cornwall.”

“You are not going out of town immediately?” asked Sir Charles, eagerly.

“Positively so,” returned Mrs. Aldersey.

“Could I,” replied he, with much emotion, “hope any thing, I might say, would have any influence, no intreaty would be unattempted on this occasion.”

“Matilda,” cried Lady Seyntaubyne, “has, apparently, no inducement for remaining; and without *some motive*,” (laying great stress on the words,) “there is no occasion to sacrifice, not only her health, but all my comfort, by spending a longer time in this disagreeable city.”

“Is not the pleasure resulting to your friends,” answered the baronet, “a motive?”

“Mere pleasure is a vague gratification,” said her ladyship, “when no good is to result from it. However, Sir Charles, if you like our society I shall be happy to see you at Pengwilly Hall, where you will find a cordial welcome.”

Mrs. Aldersey, offended at not being included in the invitation, rose to depart, and took leave. After she had done so, she said to Sir Charles—“I am going to take a second sitting at Laurence’s for my picture. You are a connoisseur, and I should like your opinion; if you have not any thing better to do with yourself,” (looking sarcastically at Matilda) give me your company.”

With a bad grace Sir Charles said he would have the honor of attending her. He offered his good wishes to the countess and Matilda, half promising to see them if he visited Devonshire in the course of the summer, and went with Mrs. Aldersey.

“The old dowager,” exclaimed she, “made rather a pointed attack, Sir Charles. It is plain she will leave no means untried to get Matilda married, even if she should be denominated like Belinda’s aunt Stanhope, the match-making countess. Depend upon it she has got some new plan in her head by going out of town so suddenly. I know Matilda is dying for Clairville, or I would recommend you, Sir Charles, to take her off the old lady’s hands. If this little upstart was not so pert and consequential, I should pity her being under the dominion of such an antiquated dowager.”

Sir Charles, who perceived nothing but malice in these observations, and had now forced himself to attend Mrs. Aldersey, merely to escape her future raillery, replied, that with Miss Trevanion’s attractions it was not probable the mode she pointed out would be necessary to be adopted by Lady Seyntaubyne; and then he changed the subject.

Had he been certain that Matilda would have returned his affection, he would not have allowed her to leave town without making her an offer of his hand; but Mrs. Aldersey’s hint in regard to Clairville had alarmed him; for, though he knew him to be on the point of marriage with his cousin, he yet was afraid there was some truth in Mrs. Aldersey’s remark, from his own observations on the day the party had met at his house. But he was determined to avail himself of Lady Seyntaubyne’s invitation in the course of the summer.

CHAP. VII.

IT was with sensations of the most lively pleasure Matilda bade adieu to London; and every mile which carried her from the metropolis, she found her spirits exhilarated by the perpetually moving landscape.

When they reached the rural village of Hartford Bridge, consisting of a few scattered houses, at the foot of a gentle ascent, with its quiet and pastoral scenery, Matilda first became sensible of being in the country.—They merely changed horses, for Lady Seyntaubyne disliked travelling, and she was anxious to reach Salisbury that night, intending to proceed as rapidly as possible to the end of her journey.

Innumerable were the magnificent seats which they passed; but to Matilda every place wore the charm of novelty; and when they entered Salisbury, she was delighted with the air of uniformity and neatness which it possessed. She found the city seated in a cheerful valley, watered by the Avon, which flowed through the streets in clear streams, and surrounded by chalk hills. The tall and elegant spire of the cathedral, with the grandeur of its structure, made Matilda wish to view the interior, and she expressed a desire to do so before their departure in the morning.

Unfortunately for her the countess had no taste either for the beauties of nature, or for surveying noble edifices, and therefore said—“If we were to stop to look at every object your journey points out, we should not get to Pengwilly Hall for a twelvemonth. Travelling is so troublesome and disagreeable to me I shall rejoice to be at home again; for I have never been comfortable since I left Cornwall. If half the world disliked moving as much as I do, we should not have a set of idle people running from place to place, infected, one would suppose, with a universal mania, which could only be cured by either dipping into salt water, or sipping out of some fashionable font, enough to create, instead of allaying diseases.”

Matilda could not assent to her ladyship’s opinions, and therefore remained silent.

The country around Salisbury, of a chalky soil, and by no means rich in culture, Matilda thought cheerless and uninteresting; and although Dorsetshire presented an open prospect, it had not sufficient diversity to suit her taste. The unbounded downs covered with flocks of sheep, or whitened by long lines of chalk, had nothing inviting in their aspect, and the cottages were very thinly scattered on the road.

With the approach to Dorchester she was much pleased. The town lying on the green banks of the river Frome, and approached by an avenue of trees, had a picturesque air. The streets, without being regular, wore a cheerful aspect, though the town looked prettier at a distance than it proved on entering.

Passing through Bridport, the romantic village of Charmouth, lying on a steep ascent, on reaching the top, presented Matilda with a view of the sea, which blending its world of waters in the landscape, excited so much admiration, she exclaimed, with enthusiasm,—“There, madam, is the ocean. Only look what a sublime picture it makes in the scene—the bold cliffs projecting along its margin—the blue expanse of sea fading in the distant horizon—the softer scenery of the green hills which surrounds this lovely spot, with the beautiful tranquillity of the evening, are surely enough to make one in love with the country.”

“I suppose, Matilda,” cried her ladyship, “you have just been reading some of Mrs. Radcliff’s glowing descriptions, which put those romantic flights into your head.”

“I am persuaded,” replied Matilda, “with difference to your ladyship, you would not depreciate Mrs. Radcliff’s rich and beautiful style of delineating so true to nature, if you were acquainted with her works. For though I have no desire to lose my time in the perusal of romance, it is impossible not to read her descriptions with an interest she alone has the magical power to give. Even the author of *The Pursuits of Literature*, so severe on that species of writing, denominates her *The Mighty Magician of The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Doctor Arundel put the work into my hands, telling me, at the same time, in the domestic scenes I might profit by the character of Emily, in being properly taught to endure the pressure of misfortune, without yielding to the weakness of an over-refined and mistaken sensibility; while, in the descriptions, I should travel with them through the finest parts of France, Italy, and the Appenines, and see them such as they really were.”

“I wish,” replied Lady Seyntaubyne, “the good doctor had given you a taste for theology; it would have been more to the purpose.”

Matilda was not ignorant of theological subjects, though not deeply read in them; for the reverend doctor considered a perfect knowledge of the Scriptures the most important ground work, and the only sure guide to heaven.

Shortly after losing sight of Charmouth, the travellers entered into Devonshire, and drew near the ancient town of Honiton. Matilda was enchanted with the beauty of its sylvan valley, its clear rivulets, verdant meads, and the shady luxuriance of the hedges and trees, were so pleasing a contrast from the awful magnificence of the recent sea view, so rich and soft, as if breathing peace on every object. The arcadian appearance of the cottages, covered with the blooming myrtle, whose tender green leaves expanded over the white walls of the rural little dwellings, had a most romantic appearance.

Advancing further into Devonshire, the country became extremely unequal, which considerably added to the beauty of the prospects. The hills being usually verdant to their summits, richly interspered with wood, the venerable city of Exeter, with the river Ex rolling its clear waters towards the distant sea, and the valleys sprinkled with the substantial houses of the gentry near Exeter, gave the cheerful appearance of culture and civilization.

It was a late hour when they arrived at Exeter, and they left it by dawn of day.

Approaching into Cornwall, the features of the country gradually changed by no means for the better. Dark and barren moors, for a considerable extent, rendered several of the stages very dreary. The insignificant coppice-woods which now and then partially clothed the hills, after the pleasant woodlands they had passed, bespoke the sterility of the country.

Pengwilly Hall was situated between Camelsford and Strattan, and being nearest the latter place had the advantage of a more cultivated appearance, from the neatness of its town, and the pretty orchards and gardens which surround all the dwellings.

For centuries the antique mansion, Pengwilly Hall, had belonged to Lady Seyntaubyne’s family, of which she was a younger branch. She had married her first cousin, the present earl’s father, besides being an heiress on the maternal side. After the death of her lord, on quitting Penrose Castle, she returned to the seat of her childhood, where (except the late period she spent in London) she had past the last twenty years of her life. The two noble estates of Penrose and Pengwilly were within six miles of each

other, but the present Lord Seyntaubyne had never resided at the castle since the death of Lady Julia's mother.

Pengwilly Park was situated at the foot of a steep range of barren hills, and was approached by an avenue of Spanish chesnuts, whose noble and lofty appearance excluded the naked moors from the view.

Pengwilly Hall had nothing of architectural beauty to recommend it, being a large heavy stone-building, with inconceivably small paned sash-windows, and stood on a plain with a broad terrace in front. Behind the mansion, at a short distance, was the pleasure-grounds, laid out in bad taste. The walks were confined by heavy box hedges, and at each angle the yew trees, not suffered to extend to their natural growth, were clipped into the hideous forms of various birds. A large pond stood in the centre of the garden, filled with gold fish, and an old-fashioned pavilion, heavy and gloomy, terminated the principal garden-walk.

To shelter the garden from the bleak easterly blasts, on the hill which over-hung it, was a plantation of melancholy firs. Some noble trees grouped the park, through which moved so grand a piece of water, as to resemble a lake, where wild-fowl and swans resorted.

The hall, as is the case in most old-fashioned mansions, occupied the chief part of the ground-floor. Horns of stags, with ancient armour, pikes, &c. were ranged against the wall. At one end of it, a broad heavy oak staircase led to the gallery and the various apartments. There were several on the ground-floor, but except the dining-room, were by no means spacious; and from being wainscoted with oak, had a gloomy aspect.

Lady Seyntaubyne was once more in high spirits. At Pengwilly Hall she felt her own importance, and that she was queen of the whole dominion: in London she was nobody; neither respected for her age, her birth, nor even her fortune, more than other people.

She kindly saluted Matilda, and bade her welcome, though at the same time she added, "I never expected to bring you back to this place Matilda Trevanion. It is your own fault; so if you find it dull you must reconcile your mind to the lot you have chosen for yourself."

She assured her ladyship it was perfectly congenial to her taste, and she entered into a very cheerful conversation while they took their coffee together.

The chamber destined for Matilda was more spacious and handsomely furnished than the one which she had formerly occupied; out of it was a dressing-room, with a large old-fashion-bookcase to contain her small library. The view from the windows presented the most cheerful one, for it looked on the park and the fine piece of water.

Never had Matilda felt so happy since she had left Richmond; and the countess was scarcely less delighted to get back to Pengwilly Hall than she was. With a light heart she retired to bed, and immediately sunk into repose.

CHAP. VIII.

IT was Matilda's whole amusement the following day to examine the interior of the building. She was extremely pleased to find a valuable collection of books in the library, containing the works of the first authors, in various languages. She determined to obey Doctor Arundel, and fill up her time, which he had happily taught her never to squander.

Lady Seyntaubyne spent so many of her hours alone, Matilda was left at liberty to devote those of her absence to walking or riding; and she anticipated much pleasure in exploring the neighbouring country.

In going through the suite of apartments, the collection of paintings arrested her attention. The gallery was hung with a vast number of portraits: the costume discovered some of them to have been done more than a century ago. One of modern style interested her much, for she imagined she somewhere had seen the person it represented. It was a full length portrait of a very handsome man, in the prime of life. He was dressed as a sportsman, and stood leaning on his gun, with two dogs beside him. A perplexing and imperfect recollection of knowing the object it was painted for, possessed her so strongly for some time, she inquisitively examined the picture to endeavour to find out who it could be, and at length recognized the face of the stranger who was so much agitated when he accidentally saw her at Lady Matrevers' ball, only he appeared at least twenty years older. While lost in curiosity and wonder at the odd coincidence, the old housekeeper passed through the gallery; Matilda called to her, and enquired who the portrait was intended to represent?

"Our young lord, to be sure," replied Mrs. Grey, "and as like as a copy can be to the life. My lady has often talked of having it removed out of sight; but I know, though she was so angry at first at my lord's marriage, and then afterwards for his running away with the poor curate's daughter, she will, when she thinks no one sees her, come and look at the very picture for an hour together."

Matilda could scarcely restrain the eager curiosity she felt, and looked at Mrs. Grey in so earnest a manner, the woman suddenly exclaimed—"Gracious, Miss! if you have not my lord's very eyes; and for that matter too, a look of my lady; only, she being old, they are not so bright, but they are the same colour."

When the idea was suggested, Matilda looked again on the picture, and could not help fancying there was some resemblance; but the circumstance was so strange, that the longer she dwelt on it, the more she was bewildered. She resolved to take the earliest favourable opportunity of soliciting Lady Seyntaubyne would relate the history of her family; for there was something so mournful in the circumstance of having no cognisance of her parents, it affected her extremely, and often gave a pensive cast to her character.

In the mean time, Lord Seyntaubyne, who with some degree of patience had waited a whole week for a reply to his letter, at the end of it again dispatched a messenger to Soho Square. Great was his disappointment and mortification to hear the house was shut up, and a bill on the window for sale. It was evident then Lady Seyntaubyne had left London altogether. He found it in vain at present to pursue the subject; but it was by no means his intention to let it rest; for as soon as his daughter's nuptials were over, he determined to wait on his mother without announcing his visit.

Lady Seyntaubyne, foreseeing what was likely to happen, and having substantial reasons for not replying to her son's letter, though her resentment towards him was dying away, and something like tenderness returning to her bosom, saw no other alternative than immediately going into the country, which plan she at once put into execution.

Notwithstanding Matilda's extreme youth, when she was taken from the only person she had ever regarded in the light of a parent, the situation of the parsonage had been too deeply impressed on her infantile mind ever to be forgotten. She recollected the name of the village Mr. Trevanion resided in was called Boss Castle. Charmed to find on enquiry it was within the easy compass of a walk, being little more than a mile distant from Pengwilly, by going at the foot of the hills, she was certain of readily finding it from its vicinity to Tintagall Castle, of which many legends were told, from being the residence of the famous King Arthur.

Shortly after Matilda had formed her plan, a favourable opportunity offered of effecting it. The countess informed her she should be engaged the whole day with her steward in looking over his accounts, and desired her to spend it as she liked.

Thus left at liberty, Matilda strayed to that spot dearer to her than any other in the world; and which, from being the scene of her infancy, was replete with interest and many mournful recollections.

The road she took lay through a deep valley, inclosed by mountains, broken sometimes by craggy fissures, and interspersed with brushwood; a small inlet of the sea washed this romantically wild situation, where a few scattered cottages, together with the parsonage house, formed the whole of the village. Old and decayed as was now its desolate appearance, Matilda approached the gothic ivy-clad gateway, with an agitation which almost subdued her, and she was obliged to pause for some time before she had resolution to proceed.

The little venerable church was half concealed by the yew trees which shaded it. Matilda entered by a style its sacred boundary. A few straggling tombs marked the spot where

“The rude forefathers of the hamlet slept”;

while, beneath the humbler sod, though unstrewn with primroses or violet, yet,

“Spring with dewy fingers cold,
Return'd to deck their hallowed mould.”

Treading with solemn contemplation over the awful precincts of the dead, which ever inspires a good mind, not with glowing ideas, but a cheerful conviction of the shortness of our sojourn here, and the happy termination of all earthly suffering, Matilda came to the grave of the venerable pastor of his little flock, the cherished friend of her infancy. On a simple stone she read these words—

SACRED
TO
THE MEMORY
OF
THE REVEREND FRANCIS TREVANION.

“An Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile.”

Volumes could not have better defined his true character. The words thrilled to Matilda's heart, and tears of tender recollection streamed from her eyes. She seated herself on the grave-stone, and put up an humble, but fervent prayer, that she might so live on earth as to be worthy hereafter to meet that pure spirit, she firmly believed, was returned to the bosom of his God.

Almost sinking with the emotion which overwhelmed her, she next proceeded to the parsonage house. With a sensation of pleasing sadness she contemplated the exterior, for she perceived it was inhabited. The impression of childhood might mislead her; yet she thought, that formerly the lattices were covered with vines; and, that what now appeared to be a sort of cabbage and potatoe garden, used to be a rude sort of lawn, bordered with a profusion of flowers. Matilda was correct in her remembrance; for such as she had pictured the parsonage, it had formerly been. The change which it had sustained, was a true emblem of the vicissitudes of life.

She retreated by a gate which, leading to the road, was overhung by some wild rocky scenery, in which appeared a sort of artificial aperture, but it was rendered almost inaccessible from the unrestrained woodbine which covered it, and appeared formerly to have been a sort of arbour. With some difficulty she entered it, and found scattered on the ground, the fragments of an instrument, which, by the shape, seemed to have been a guitar; —a book torn, and almost from the wet rendered illegible, she discovered was a volume of the Mirror.

Anxiously interested to know to whom it had belonged, she was quite unable to discover. On looking around, however, she saw cut in rude letters on the wooden table, the initials A.T. and beneath it *Seyntaubyne*. She thought, yet she had no cause to do so, that some way she must be connected with the person who owned the latter initial of the name she bore, and almost was inclined to attach to it the fond and tender title of mother. She was so bewildered with the ideas which possessed her mind, she was by no means rendered happy by the scene before her, nor aware how rapidly twilight was advancing before she reached the hall. Accustomed to spend several hours every day alone, she had not been missed; and, from the unusual depression of her spirits, was greatly relieved when Lady Seyntaubyne sent to request that she would sup alone, being too much fatigued with business to see her until the following morning.

CHAP. IX.

MATILDA, during her walk the former evening, observed, the nearer she drew to Boss Castle, the scenery improved in romantic grandeur. Determined to explore the neighbourhood of Tintagall Castle, she expressed to Lady Seyntaubyne her desire to do so; and, on the next fine evening, she was permitted to go on horseback attended by the groom.

The scene was awfully sublime. Tremendous craggy precipices overhung the sea; and the frowning cliffs, impending above her head, gave a terrific magnificence to the bold desolate spot, which was wholly without vegetation. A brisk wind rendered the ocean more turbulent than Matilda had ever seen it. The roaring waves, rising mountains high, dashed in foaming violence on the opposite rocks; while the scream of the sea-fowl, hovering near land, seemed to be the forerunner of a storm.

The ruin of the castle spread wide its high and broken ramparts, on a bold promontory jutting into the sea; and, frowning in gloomy majesty, seemed to defy the approach of any bold invader. Indeed, to Matilda, it had the appearance of being quite inaccessible; and, to those who might prove bold enough to venture to climb to what remained of this huge and massy fortress, she saw nothing to repay the stranger for his perilous undertaking.

As Matilda stood gazing on this once pondrous edifice, her imagination carried her back to the remote age when the celebrated Arthur, renowned for deeds of prowess and chivalry, resided within its walls; when many a festal gaiety was held, and the harp and song of the minstrels had recorded the valorous achievements of the conqueror:—closing with tilts and tournaments the joyous scene. All now was silent, awful, and mournful desolation. The voice of mirth which echoed through the walls had been long mute. The arm, which in war had spread slaughter and dismay, was withered into dust; and shortly the very hero, who, in this her day, struck terror and destruction throughout the land, would, like the great Arthur, be seen no more.

Matilda, from a very early age, had been taught to reflect, and moralize on the passing occurrences in life. Doctor Arundel had strengthened the principle; and to each of the excellent men, under whose guidance she had been brought up, she was indebted for being void of the thoughtless levity, too many of the young woman of the present day are led into.

The countess, who saw Matilda at Pengwilly Hall shut out from all society, was surprised, at the end of a fortnight to observe, that, instead of expressing discontent, or appearing low-spirited, she every day became more cheerful; and the pale and languid look she wore in London, was exchanged for a lovely and blooming complexion. To bury her, however, in total seclusion, was by no means suitable to the plans her ladyship formed for her future establishment; and she intended, as the autumn advanced, to request that Doctor and Mrs. Arundel would accompany her to Bath, where she would take a house for them during the winter.

Matilda's maid, who began to feel, what she called, moped to death, in such a retired place, said, one day to her, "I hope, ma'am, we shall not be here much longer; for, to be sure, it is the most dismal place I ever saw. And then one hears so many frightful

stories of ghosts, I am afraid of my life to go to bed at night, as I pass through that melancholy old gallery.”

“If you are idle enough,” replied Matilda, “to credit the tales of all the old gossips, I do not wonder you are frightened. I have always observed, the most ignorant are the most superstitious.”

“Believe them or no, ma’am,” returned Watson, “as sure as you are alive, a figure dressed all in white, was seen last week in the church-yard at Boss Castle, sitting on the grave of the poor crazy clergyman, who, they say, lived some years ago at the parsonage. You don’t know, ma’am what odd stories they tell about his daughter, who ran away from him, poor old man, with my lady’s son.”

“What are the stories?” enquired Matilda, as eagerly as Watson had been to tell them.

“Nay, for that matter, ma’am, as you will not believe them, there is no use in repeating them.”

Matilda, again urging her to proceed, she went on.

“Well, ma’am, as I was a saying, the curate’s daughter eloped with the handsome young lord about eighteen years ago; and in all that time she has never been heard of or seen, till that very night eighteen years, when they say her vision was seen all the evening hovering about the church-yard, and at last stopped at the place where the old man was buried; after which, it disappeared somewhere amongst the neighbouring rocks. The old folks say, it must be her troubled spirit; for it was as like the curate’s daughter as two peas. They knowed her again as soon as ever she appeared; and they say, it is no wonder her spirit cannot rest, for her going off with the young lord broke her father’s heart.”

Watson was a London servant, or she would not have dared relate any thing concerning Lady Seyntaubyne’s family; for who ever ventured to even name the curate and his daughter, was instantly dismissed. Watson was a great gossip, and had picked up her intelligence from some of the villagers, with whom she had formed an acquaintance, for the purpose of hearing marvellous stories, which she was fond of.

At any other time Matilda would have smiled at being taken for any thing supernatural; but in the present instance there was such an extraordinary and mysterious analogy between her and the person described by Watson, she became confident she must have been related to the venerable pastor. The agony which he experienced in parting from her, could not have been so acute, without the ties of kindred had excited such excess of tenderness. The affectionate separation, deeply engraven on her young mind, had never been forgotten; and the scene was as strongly impressed in her imagination, as if it had happened yesterday.

The subsequent conversation with Watson determined Matilda, without further delay, to address Lady Seyntaubyne on the subject of her birth, with an earnest request to know who were her parents, and with whom she might claim connection; or whether she was a destitute being, supported by her bounty, cherished by her benevolence, and by her alone prevented from sinking into indigence and obscurity. These were interesting and affecting enquiries, which she found it essential to her future peace to make.

CHAP. X.

IN the morning, Matilda rose with an intention, in the course of the day, to fulfil her plan; when a letter from Mrs. Arundel, for the present, put her intention to flight.

After treating on various subjects, she closed her epistle with a paragraph to the following purport:

“We have lost, for the present, our charming friend and neighbour, Lady Sophia Clairville. She is gone to town to prepare the nuptial wardrobe of her niece, Lady Julia Penrose; an event, so long to take place, and deferred from time to time by the idle scruples of Julia, cannot surprise my dear Matilda. I think it better the intelligence should come from me, than newspaper report.

“Be firm, my lovely young friend, in subduing the tenderness of your nature. Sink not under the influence of a misplaced attachment. The regulation of the mind is much in our own power. We often sicken at a distant view of evils we are afraid will take place, which, when they actually happen, we are armed with fortitude to endure. While suspense hovers over us, we are alternately agitated by hope and fear; but when there is no longer any thing to hope, we wonder at the dismay the anticipation of the evil excited, and calmly endure what is irresistible.”

A letter from the reverend doctor to Lady Seyntaubyne, communicating to her the same intelligence, explained to her in a moment, without making the enquiry, why Matilda turned pale, and with trembling steps hastened to the window to conceal her emotion, soon after quitting the room.

The purport of Doctor Arundel’s information was by no means agreeable to her ladyship. He told her, that her son, Lord Seyntaubyne, who had not resided at Penrose Castle for several years, intended celebrating his daughter’s nuptials there with splendid festivity. That Lady Sophia Clairville had been prevailed on to accompany them thither; and from the church they were to proceed to the castle, where they were to remain during the summer.

This intelligence threw the countess into the greatest consternation. To have her son within a few miles of her, and on so important an event as his daughter’s marriage, to remain at enmity with him was by no means agreeable to her inclination; but an insuperable barrier prevented her from at present acceding to any terms of cordiality. Neither could she, if at all she considered Matilda’s peace, from her latent attachment to Clairville, visit her grand-daughter’s husband. She saw the surest method to preserve happiness was to retreat to a distance. Yet so recently fixed at home, after so long an absence, at her advanced period of life, was a sacrifice she was averse from making. She had cultivated a smaller circle of acquaintance than her inclination had prompted for Matilda’s future interest and advantage. She had been so repugnant to form an intimacy with those persons who moved in the fashionable world, that Lady Seyntaubyne found it difficult to establish her as she wished amongst them. At Doctor Arundel’s Matilda’s taste for refined and enlightened society had been too firmly fixed to tolerate frivolous people; there she saw no one from whose company and conversation some advantage could not be derived; for though they resided in one of the most populous and elegant

neighbourhoods about London, on the plea of bad health they declined all indiscriminate acquaintance. Mrs. Arundel had always been averse to Matilda's having juvenile associates, (except Lady Sophia's niece) for she considered girlish attachments were usually so full of romantic folly, as only to engross time which might be better spent.

On Lady Seyntaubyne's return to Pengwilly Hall, an opportunity was afforded of inviting her neighbours; but she could not invite them without waiting upon them in return; and the distances were so wide, a native indolence of disposition prevented her from doing what was not absolutely necessary, if attended with any trouble. Yet she had been considering the propriety of forming some intercourse with the most respectable families for Matilda's sake, who, though she evidently preferred seclusion, the countess did not altogether approve of it. Doctor Arundel's letter now occupied her thoughts. It was requisite immediately to determine on some plan for the removal of Matilda; yet where to send her, except again to Richmond, she knew not. Mrs. Aldersey had proved convenient as a casual acquaintance in London, but her habits of life she did not consider sufficiently correct to consign Matilda to her protection, although she had invited her to Tunbridge Wells; but she was certain, that from Matilda's sober taste, she would not be happy with her.

Perplexed and uneasy, Lady Seyntaubyne wrote by return of post to her reverend friend what was best to be done, intreating he would suggest some eligible plan to be immediately adopted. She would have requested Mrs. Arundel to accompany Matilda to Clifton, but the Doctor was unfortunately confined by a severe fit of the gout, which she knew would prevent Mrs. Arundel's leaving Richmond.

In the mean time, while the countess was employed in writing, Matilda ashamed to betray, even to herself, the little fortitude she possessed, on the confirmation of an event which she so long had expected to take place, put on her hat, and escaped into the park, where uninterrupted she might endeavour to sooth her agitated spirits, giving way to the tears she could not restrain, and which seemed to relieve her oppressed bosom.

Secluded from every eye, she seated herself on a rustic bench, overshadowed by high trees, and gave way to the most mournful contemplations. Ah! thought she, even this union likely to tend to the happiness of Clairville, I am not so selfish but to have ardently desired its accomplishment. But Matilda viewed it rather as a family compact, from which there was no honourable escape than a union founded on mutual affection. In ties so little binding, she trembled for the happiness of Clairville. With a high sense of honour, she was sure whoever was the fortunate woman destined to be his wife, she would meet with nothing but tenderness. Yet, if she slighted that affection (which she was afraid Lady Julia would do) and consider it worthless, then did she dread the loss of their future peace; for she knew Clairville to be proudly jealous of the smallest unkindness, warm in his temper, but generous, noble, and humane.

Matilda had studied both their characters, and she found no similarity of disposition between them. Julia wanted neither softness nor tenderness, but they were apt to be veiled by a gaiety of manner and poignancy of wit, which she often had observed Clairville did not parry in the same lively manner. She was afraid, that instead of soothing him when he was pensive (which his mother said his misfortunes frequently rendered him) she would sport with his feelings in playful raillery, which might lead him to believe her indifferent to his interests.

In a conversation Matilda had with Mrs. Arundel, previous to her leaving Richmond, she told her, Lady Sophia had endured the greatest anxiety from Clairville's wild idea of surrendering himself a prisoner, and that unknown to him, she was endeavouring to get him exchanged in the first cartel; in the mean time was anxious the union between the cousins should take place, which she hoped would make him relinquish the project he had formed, excited by his aspiring and undaunted spirit.

Though Matilda felt assured, from a thousand occurrences which happened when she was under the same roof with Clairville, during his mother's illness, their tastes and dispositions were similar, and that she might have rendered him happy, "yet," exclaimed she, mournfully, "how do I know, with even all Lady Sophia's affection towards me, she would have consented to our union. Ignorant who were my parents, doubtful whether the alliance might not prove disgraceful to him—portionless, except for the bounty of my benefactress—unclaimed, unacknowledged by any one; how could I hope to be received into her family under these disadvantageous circumstances? Herself nobly born—elevated in rank, as she is in spirit—dignified, without pride—it could not be expected that Lady Sophia Clairville would suffer her son to marry, as Mrs. Aldersey once sarcastically said, '*nobody knows who*,' and degrade himself by an ignoble alliance. No! dearest Clairville," continued she, "under such adverse circumstances, even Matilda would not have given you her hand, till assured she was your equal."

Lost in these painful reveries, the certainty that in his marriage all future acquaintance with his beloved mother must cease, she exclaimed, "Thus ends, then, all intercourse between us! so finish our greatest felicities and warmest friendships!"

She was roused by the sound of the first dinner-bell, and hurried back to the hall, that she might prepare to appear below with some degree of composure. But her eyes were red and swelled with weeping, and her face so pale and languid, she dreaded Lady Seyntaubyne.

To her infinite surprize and relief, when she entered the dining-room, her ladyship, instead of chiding her for the extreme appearance of dejection she wore, took no notice, though it was evident she perceived it the instant they met. She addressed Matilda with unusual kindness, and with much solicitude endeavoured to divert her attention and thoughts from the subject she knew her to be engrossed in.

Matilda felt grateful for the delicate consideration; for she was not ignorant of her grand-daughter's intended marriage, having informed her that she had received a letter from Doctor Arundel.

CHAP. XI.

In the course of a week from the period of the countess's addressing Doctor Arundel, she received the following reply:

To Countess Dowager Seyntaubyne.

“My dear Madam,

“I entirely agree with you, that Miss Trevanion will be far better for the present at any other place than Pengwilly Hall. Your reasons for wishing to remove her are too substantial for me to controvert.

“At Richmond Matilda will always find a permanent home, with tender friends, who love her like a daughter, and who are so warmly interested in all that concerns her, she has only to come to them to be received with open arms; but your ladyship expresses a desire she should spend the summer in some place preferable to Richmond, if I am acquainted with any genteel family, who will admit her as a boarder, or allow her to join them on a tour of pleasure.

“If, madam, you are not alarmed at the idea of so long a journey for Miss Trevanion, there is an amiable and respectable couple just setting out to visit a relation in the Hebrides; and I can venture to assure you, the pleasing addition of Matilda's company will be a desirable acquisition to them. She is slightly acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. M' Arthur. On their marriage, last winter, they settled in our neighbourhood. I have known Mr. M' Arthur from a boy, and his wife is so amiable and engaging a woman, as to do honour to his choice.

“If this plan is agreeable to your ladyship, it will, in my opinion, be a mutual advantage and gratification to all parties.

“Young persons, whether male or female, always derive improvement from visiting different countries. It renders them citizens of the world; neither partially confined nor wedded to one spot. It is by an intercourse with strangers, whose habits and modes of life differ from our own, that our petty prejudices, illiberal and false opinions, are removed. We view the different manners and characters of our sister kingdoms, whether Scotland, or Ireland, as they really are. We then become sensible from observation, and demonstration, that genius, science, refinement, and hospitality, are not confined to one little spot, but that they are equally to be found in the various parts of the habitable globe, whether in the Hebrides or in London.

“Even the great Doctor Johnson, with a mind clouded by prejudice, could not avoid admitting, that in the houses in which he was entertained, in the Western Isles, *‘he found nothing but civility, elegance, and plenty.’*

“It is not, madam, in the circle you were desirous Matilda should move in, when she left us, she was likely to find much to either improve the heart or the understanding. No: to obtain knowledge is by the experience of difficulties—to be reconciled to the deprivation of accustomed luxuries—to be content under adverse events, to practice self-denial, the heart and temper can alone be amended.

“Prone as we are to error, the constant indulgence of free-will would spoil the best of us. The different scenes in which Matilda will be not merely a spectator, but a

partaker, I recommend, as the most certain cure for the malady I know that she has at present to contend with. Tell her, the gentle and engaging manners of Mrs. M'Arthur will prove as soothing as salutary, and that I by all means wish her to accompany her to Scotland.

“I have the honour to remain, with regard,

“Your Ladyship's

Obedient servant,

MARTIN ARUNDEL.”

Richmond, June 25.

After dinner, while Lady Seyntaubyne and Matilda were conversing, the latter more cheerfully than she had done for the last week, her ladyship gave her Doctor Arundel's letter to read, desiring her opinion of its contents.

Ignorant of the motive why she was to be removed, and much hurt, as well as surprized, to find so hasty a plan had been formed without her knowledge or desire, no sooner fixed in one place than she was to be removed to another, she replied, “Under your ladyship's and Doctor Arundel's guidance, who regulate those plans you judge it proper for me to pursue, I can have no voice either to oppose or assent; and were my inclination contrary to your wishes, it would ill become me to dispute with my benefactress. I go, madam, to the Hebrides, as it is your and Doctor Arundel's wish, without hesitation; nor ask, if the question is improper, the cause why I am not permitted to remain with you, since I am not sent away in displeasure. The doctor is too good and benevolent to have said any place was better for me at present than Pengwilly Hall, without some very urgent reasons; or to have, I should hope, so bad an opinion of the weakness of my understanding, as to think it necessary to send me from place to place to conquer a recent attachment.”

“Be assured, Matilda,” replied her ladyship, “my parting with you is founded on no diminution of affection. If I considered your happiness less, you might remain here. The gloomy seclusion of Pengwilly, with no other society than that of an old woman, I never thought permanently suitable to so young a woman; though the summer months I intended you should have spent here.

“Tell me,” continued she, “would you wish to do so, when very soon Lady Sophia, Albert Clairville, and my grand-daughter, will be our close neighbours? They will come direct from church to Penrose Castle, not six miles distance. On no terms of cordiality with them, how painful would a meeting prove, which must inevitably happen at least every Sunday, and sometimes at the houses of the neighbouring gentry; for to bury you alive here several months was out of the question, and I have been daily anticipating (till this intelligence came) giving an entertainment, on purpose that you might have some associates.”

At the mention of names so fondly loved, Matilda turned pale, and all her composure fled. She tried to reply, but the words died on her lips ere she gave them utterance.

“Ah, Matilda!” cried the countess, smiling significantly, “I perceive you are no philosopher. There is nothing for it but banishing you to the Hebrides.”

“It is, indeed, true,” she faintly replied. “How little can we judge what is best for us. Doctor Arundel was most considerate and kind, in pointing out a journey so eligible.

Mrs. M' Arthur is an engaging woman; gentle, amiable, and benevolent. I shall be happy in being with her,—as happy, at least, as I can feel, removed from those friends whom I value most. Her husband is a man of sense and knowledge. We had much pleasure in their society last winter.”

“Who are they?” said her ladyship. “It is not a mere nobody I should like you to go with.”

“Mr. M' Arthur was at the bar. By his eloquence and profound judicial knowledge he soon acquired a genteel fortune, on which he lately retired. His lady is many years younger than he; but I understood there was a very long attachment, although it is only a year or two since they were married. Mrs. M' Arthur has very delicate health, brought on from the fatigue and anxiety of waiting on an aged parent in a tedious illness; and not till after his death would she consent to give her hand to the object of her choice. I have heard Mr. M' Arthur talk of a brother, who is resident in one of the Western Isles, and I suppose it is he they are going to visit.”

Lady Seyntaubyne, perfectly satisfied with Matilda's account of Mr. and Mrs. M' Arthur, was eager to realize the plan formed for her as quickly as possible. She desired Matilda to write to the reverend doctor, and gave her own consent to accompany his friends to Scotland.

Matilda readily complied. The prospect of Clairville and Julia's being so near to her, materially altered the object of her journey: no longer considering herself either discarded or going into banishment. The serenity which she had hoped to pass at Pengwilly, removed from the fatigue of dissipation, vanished like a faded chimera. Distant from those cherished objects who had made up the full sum of all her earthly bliss, she could reconcile herself to lose, but to have seen them without the power to enjoy their society, was a trial she was unequal to withstand; and she was glad to fly from them, and from herself. Lady Seyntaubyne wrote by the same post to Doctor Arundel, to inform him that Matilda would set out for Richmond on the following day, in her post-chariot, attended by Mrs. Grey, the housekeeper, and a servant on horseback.

CHAP. XII.

WHEN the time of separation approached, Matilda's spirits died away. She was going with almost strangers into a strange country, far distant from the spot she hoped to have considered her future home.

Though it was not unnatural that she should love Mrs. Arundel more tenderly than Lady Seyntaubyne, yet a sentiment, so full of gratitude and obligation, accompanied her affection for the latter, she felt unusually sad at the idea of separating from her. To Matilda, the countess had supplied the place of a mother; and, notwithstanding her ignorance, whether it was the claims of relationship or only compassion, which had afforded her that indulgence, she was sensible of oweing every thing. Lady Seyntaubyne had protected her infant years from adversity. She had educated, supported, and intended to portion her. Of what magnitude were her obligations to this admirable lady; who, with such judicious kindness, instead of educating her at a frivolous boarding-school, had placed her under the tuition and care of Doctor and Mrs. Arundel; and while they had formed her mind into what it was, they had taught her to be sensible of her own deficiencies, and also a proper emulation to excel.

Matilda observed some domestic uneasiness preyed on the spirits of Lady Seyntaubyne, though her almost unequalled strength of mind endeavoured to resist the pressure. She wished to have shared, and soothed her anxiety, from whatever source it sprung; but she had too much delicacy, from the check which she had formerly received, to venture her present sympathy.

Ever unhappy when she recurred to the cloud of obscurity which hung over her birth, and the extraordinary mystery which appeared to be attached to her parents, Matilda formed the resolution not to depart from Pengwilly without having the subject fully elucidated, whatever future misery the disclosure might produce. If her birth proved disgraceful, she determined never more to return to England, but, in the insular spot to which she was going, pass the remainder of her life;—when no eye, which formerly regarded her with either tenderness or envy, should see her more. Yet, notwithstanding ideas so mournful, she felt within her a certain dignity and nobility of soul, that almost persuaded her she was not ignobly born.

Agitated with the thoughts of so important a disclosure, which was for ever to stigmatize or exalt her, not only in her own estimation, but that of the world, she met Lady Seyntaubyne at tea, with a sort of breathless expectation for the discovery of an event so full of momentous interest. She was absorbed in the idea how, properly, to introduce the subject, when Lady Seyntaubyne rose, and going to an inlaid cabinet which stood in the room, took from it a large packet in the form of a letter. Approaching Matilda, with a solemn voice she said: "The hour is now arrived, my dear Matilda, when I may present you with these papers; but it is only on condition you do not break the seal until you arrive in the Hebrides, that you receive them. They will reveal to you the name and condition of your parents; and I if live not to welcome your return to your native country, you will find in this packet what claims you had on my bounty, and that I have provided for you as becomes your rank in life. Should you see me no more, (for who dare count, at my advanced age, of years, nay, even months, without presumption?) you will

always find a permanent home with Dr. and Mrs. Arundel. Though, with them, I do not think you will chuse to live, when a more suitable one will be afforded you.”

Matilda took the packet with emotion; and while, with tears, she pressed the extended hand of the countess to her lips, exclaimed, “This precious packet, as you desire, shall not be opened till the period you mention! Yet believe, madam, whatever may prove its important contents, whether I am allied to you or not, I shall ever consider myself in the light of your daughter, from your tender affection and unbounded liberality.”

Lady Seyntaubyne, not wishing Matilda to see how much she was affected by the events of the evening, desired her to go and carefully lock up the packet, which put an end to the subject.

In the morning her ladyship’s carriage, which was to carry Matilda to Richmond, was in waiting at an early hour, and every thing was soon ready for her departure. She swallowed, or rather attempted to swallow, a hasty breakfast alone, for the countess never rose till a late hour; but Matilda sent a message by her woman with a request to bid her adieu. Lady Seyntaubyne had a decided aversion to personal farewells; and was so much affected and overcome at the separation, she could not be prevailed on to see Matilda. Greatly as she was hurt and disappointed by so positive a refusal, yet she dared not enter the countess’s presence without permission, and was obliged to depart under so severe an affliction.

The shock and surprize which she experienced by so unexpected a denial, drove all remembrance of her important packet from her thoughts. She had carefully locked it up the evening before, with an intention to put it in her pocket at the moment of her departure, and actually set out without being conscious of having left it behind. It is probable she soon would have missed it, if the recent event of having quitted her benefactress without her benediction, had not affected the tender heart of Matilda with the deepest anguish; for it appeared to her so like a disgraceful and eternal dismissal from Pengwilly, she could not discard the mournful impression from her thoughts.

When Matilda arrived at the Hall from London, the evening was so entirely closed in, as to preclude her discerning, for some miles, the surrounding objects. Now, as she travelled along, the extreme grandeur and extent of a castle, towering above every other object, with its heavy walls, square towers, surmounted with golden balls, glittering in the sun-beams,—the high arched windows and wide extended woods, fixed her attention, and carried her back to feudal times. The immense pile of building, which stood on a rocky eminence, commanded, she observed, a view of the sea, and was surrounded by bold and majestic rocks of granite, in shapeless and grotesque forms, spreading to a great extent; but these wild features were happily contrasted by the rich luxuriance of the tall elm and lime trees, which, in some points, almost shrouded the castle from the view.

“To whom,” asked Matilda, “does that noble edifice belong?”

Mrs. Grey looked surprised at Matilda’s question, and stared oddly at her when she enquired.

“What is the name of this place?” continued she, not heeding the singular expressions of the old woman’s countenance.

“Penrose Castle, to be sure, ma’am,” replied she; “it belongs, you know, to my lady’s son.”

“Penrose Castle!” exclaimed Matilda, with equal surprize in her turn. With the name of Penrose Castle, there was connected a thousand interesting circumstances, which brought back the never-to-be forgotten name of Clairville to her mind. “Ah!” cried she, “when banished to the remotest part of Great Britain, it is here that Clairville and Julia reside. In this terrestrial paradise their nuptials will be celebrated; while I, no more remembered, shall be cast on the friendship of strangers,—without kindred, or one being whom I may regard to cheer my melancholy days.”

Her future prospects appeared so mournful, she threw herself back in the carriage, and gave way to the indulgence of tears, which she was unable to restrain.

Without accident, or any event to interest or amuse, Matilda reached Doctor Arundel’s house on the evening of the third day.

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CHAP. XIII.

SO much distress and anxiety of mind had Matilda suffered in leaving Pengwilly, that it was not until the end of the first evening of her journey she missed her important packet. The vexation such remissness occasioned, interrupted her sleep; yet she trusted there still might be time to forward it to Richmond, before she departed for the Hebrides.

The sight of her beloved and respected friends, who gave her the most tender reception, proved some relief to her oppressed heart. Doctor Arundel informed Matilda Mr. and Mrs. M'Arthur were so impatient to commence their journey, as the summer was now rapidly advancing, they hoped she would be ready to accompany them the day but one following.

Desirous as she felt, to wait the arrival of the papers, she could not properly detain them on that account, having already kept them a week beyond the period they had fixed, and there was no alternative but immediately departing.

Matilda found the reverend doctor and his lady shunned every topic that could possibly lead to the subject of Clairville's marriage, while she, on the contrary, thought, when the event had actually happened, she should be less uneasy than enduring the torture of suspense.

After Mrs. Arundel had embraced and wished her good night, Matilda took her hand, and exclaimed with much earnestness, "I perceive, madam, you consider me a weak girl, divested of fortitude, by withholding from me all intelligence of our Richmond friends. Is the event," continued she, anxiously regarding her, "actually over?—I am certain I shall be easier when it is."

"Great," cried she, clasping her hands together, "be their felicity! Oh! may it be perfect as their virtues—unclouded as their spotless minds—and may every future year be crowned with the choicest blessings! Tell them it was Matilda Trevanion's most fervent prayer."

Mrs. Arundel observing a pale cheek, trembling frame, and tearful eye, accompany this apparent composure, said, "the marriage has *not* yet taken place, but we have every reason to suppose that it soon will. Compose your spirits, dear Matilda," continued she, "for you look fatigued." She kindly saluted her, and retired.

Matilda's agitated spirits had another painful scene to contend with, in taking leave of these amiable friends. She found the doctor in a declining state of health, and his lady worn down by care and fatigue. Doctor Arundel's was no common life, for he existed but for the purpose of dispensing good. It was not alone in the circle of his friends he would be missed, but amongst the numbers whom he fed and maintained by his bounty; wherever distress was, he mitigated, if he could not relieve it. His example, his piety, his benevolence, rendered him universally beloved and revered. He was the friend of the poor, the oppressed, and the suffering.

The morning after Matilda's arrival, Mrs. Arundel accompanied her to wait on Mr. and Mrs. M'Arthur. They received her with much friendly politeness, while Mr. M'Arthur good-humouredly said, "we ought to feel proud, madam, that we are to have with us so fashionable and lovely a young lady, who abjures the gaiety of London, and actually consents to be buried amongst the most desolate of the Scottish Isles."

“It is even so,” replied Mrs. Arundel, “yet if you find Miss Trevanion’s vivacity clouded for a time, do not ascribe it to regret for the gaieties of London, but to the true cause, regret in parting from her friends.”

Greatly did Matilda feel obliged to Mrs. Arundel for her kind consideration.

“We must endeavour,” answered Mrs. M’Arthur, with much sweetness, “ourselves, to win Miss Trevanion’s regard, and then I hope she will be somewhat reconciled to the change which she is going to experience, and not think she is sent into actual banishment. We will, dear madam,” added she, “make a mutual compact to be mutually pleased; and though we now meet as strangers, we will part, when we do so, as perpetual friends.”

“I have no apprehension, madam,” returned Matilda, “of the want of kindness with you and Mr. M’Arthur, I know I am going, though to a land of strangers, to a land of hospitality, whose inhabitants are as justly famed for their sense, as for their benevolence.”

“But,” cried Mr. M’Arthur, “what will your train of admirers, dear Miss Trevanion, say, to my carrying you off from them all in triumph. I am afraid, if I do not make good a retreat with my prize, I shall have a dozen duels to fight, and half a dozen lives to answer for. Without some idolatrous knight prefers making a pilgrimage to so fair a creature, instead of the shrine of St. Columba; in which event, I may perhaps be tempted to resign you to those you consider the most deserving.”

“Be assured, sir,” replied Matilda, smiling, “you will be suffered very quietly to carry off your prize, as you are pleased to call me. No, no, the days of chivalry, as Burke says, are passed away.”

“Well, we shall see; for on that score I am rather incredulous.”

It was agreed they were to set out at eight o’clock on the following morning. Matilda took leave; wishing to spend the few hours which remained with her friends.

When Doctor Arundel received Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter on the subject of Matilda, it immediately occurred to him, Mr. and Mrs. M’Arthur intended a visit to the Hebrides, and that they, in so long a journey, would probably be happy to have such a pleasing associate, and he lost no time in making the proposal. He informed them, the secluded manner in which Lady Seyntaubyne lived, in a remote part of Cornwall, had prompted the desire that Miss Trevanion, if it was possible, should join in some respectable party of pleasure, during the summer, to vary the scene. The doctor then added, “he knew none so entirely calculated to suit the countess’s plans; and believing it might prove a mutual pleasure, as they knew Miss Trevanion, he had been induced to offer it to their consideration.”

No sooner was it mentioned, than Mr. and Mrs. M’Arthur cheerfully acceded; for the little they had formerly known of Matilda, had left strong impressions in her favour.

Matilda, likewise charmed with what she had now seen of Mr. and Mrs. M’Arthur, as well as before, on her slight acquaintance, became persuaded the accompanying them to Scotland was the best plan for her future tranquillity, unpleasantly as she had viewed it on a first proposal.

Previous to leaving Richmond, she wrote a letter, full of gratitude and affection, to Lady Seyntaubyne. She assured her how intirely she was reconciled to the plan marked out, and that, with content, she should remain estranged from her, until it was judged proper to recal her; when, joyfully, she should return to her maternal protection. She

bitterly deplored forgetting the valuable packet, which she requested might be sent to Doctor Arundel's by the first opportunity; begging, likewise, that her harp might be forwarded to Inverness, where she heard they were to spend the winter. Matilda spoke in high terms of Mr. and Mrs. M' Arthur; closing her letter with fervent wishes that the happy period might arrive when she should return to Pengwilly.

Mrs. M' Arthur was so interesting, it was impossible to be long in her society without a wish to possess her regard. Very delicate health gave a languor and softness to her appearance, which was heightened by gentle and unassuming manners. Her father, in his second marriage, had given her so austere and unkind a mother-in-law, as to have subdued her temper, and left a pensiveness in her character, which was rather engaging than otherwise. She had no children; and the whole of her attention was directed towards a husband, who perfectly adored her. Indeed, so infinite was his solicitude, if she discovered more than ordinary indisposition, in the dread of losing her, she often concealed her sufferings; for a slow fever preyed on her delicate frame, which was gradually destroying her.

Although there was a long attachment, they had not been married two years; as it was not until the death of Mrs. M' Arthur's father, she would consent to their union. She entertained so high a sense of filial duty, that, after she lost her mother-in-law, she could not be prevailed on to desert her parent, whom she watched and attended during a tedious illness, patiently submitting to all his peevishness and ill-humour. When released from her arduous undertaking, she gave her hand to her faithful and persevering lover; with a constitution so much broken and impaired, as to leave little hope of a long existence.

Mrs. M' Arthur's brother, who was one of the lairds residing in the Isle of Mull, had for several summers been so earnest and pressing to see Mr. Collin and his amiable wife, that on the physician's assuring him the journey would rather improve than injure her health, if, in winter, she was removed to a more genial climate. No obstacle remained to their setting out, as they intended remaining till spring with a married sister of Mr. M' Arthur's whose husband had a beautiful villa called Craignegar, in the environs of Inverness. The addition of Miss Trevanion's company, both Mr. and Mrs. M' Arthur looked forward to with mutual pleasure. They were persuaded her loveliness was her least attraction; Mrs. M' Arthur would have an agreeable companion, who would prove a most valuable acquisition.

CHAP. XIV.

IF Matilda could have indulged her inclination the evening previous to her leaving Richmond, she would have stolen out and taken a last look and last farewell of Lady Sophia's habitation, though she knew it to be shut up and deserted by its interesting inhabitants. But to have been seen wandering alone in the vicinity of Richmond, as she was known to several of its inhabitants, would bear such a strange appearance, she dared not realize a plan she thought would have rendered her happier if she had effected it. To Mrs. Arundel she could not express her wish, knowing, if she did not ridicule it as romantic and absurd, she would condemn it as a most improper weakness. She was therefore compelled to be contented with passing an hour in the doctor's beautiful garden which bordered the translucent Thames.

Again, in the pleasure barges which moved on the surface of the river, she heard the notes of music, and the voices of merriment. But the sounds, instead of soothing her, as on a former occasion, distressed and rendered her unhappy. She returned to the house, and endeavoured to compose her spirits; but the image of Clairville was ever before her, with the remembrance of the evening which she had spent in the very house with his mother and Julia.

Doctor and Mrs. Arundel, who saw the anguish of Matilda's mind portrayed in her expressive countenance, did all they could to divert her attention; and were too feeling and humane not to enter into the depression it was natural to feel, in the prospect of so long a journey, and the estrangement from all her early connections.

Matilda spent an hour in the morning in Doctor Arundel's closet, listening to his excellent admonitions.

"It is probable, my dear child," cried he, "we shall not meet again, for I find my health and strength daily declining. I am therefore anxious, while I admonish, to impress on your mind a proper fortitude, to endure the calamities incidental through life; for you will find, the longer you are in the world, they will rather augment than diminish. Remember, this is intended to be a probationary state of suffering, not a scene of unmixed felicity. Were it not so, how little should we be reconciled to quit the scene; and how wise is the Almighty Disposer of good, to call us to a recollection of our own weaknesses in the afflictions he tries us with, and which it is unbecoming a christian to sink beneath.

"I have," continued the reverend doctor, "remarked, during the few hours we have been together, the imbecility of your mind, and the tender hurry of your spirits. You are not, Matilda, the only young woman who has been disappointed where she placed her affections; and though I admit the object to be most deserving your regard, yet you never had encouragement, from the first hour of your meeting, to cherish the hope of being united. Nay, you are guilty of the greatest injury to Clairville and Lady Julia, in the weak indulgence of a hopeless passion. If he should discover it, you are undermining his happiness, and sapping it to the very foundation. You are creating endless misery, and destroying the best of your days in hopeless despondence.

"Rouse yourself," added he, "my dear young friend, from the torpor which is stealing upon you. Though there seems to be little in life to interest, for which you think existence desirable, remember it is always in our own power to become useful and

valuable members of society. We are not here intended to live for ourselves, nor our own gratifications; and there is no situation we can be placed, in which we must not be more or less subordinate to others.

“A female, destitute of near relations, particularly a young and lovely one, is a very desolate being, who has no tender friend, in the character of a husband, to guard her from infamy, oppression, and calumny. Without the ties of parental or maternal affection, were you to be deprived of Lady Seyntaubyne, you would find the world abounding in selfishness, envy and ill-nature. Even the fair semblance of kindness and attachment, is by no means an invulnerable shield from its attacks; for, frequently, those very persons, on whose friendship and confidence you placed the most reliance, will play you false, and prove deceitful.

“This, Matilda,” continued Doctor Arundel, “is a dark portrait of mankind, but it is a true one. At present your own native innocence paints every thing in the most pleasing colours; but as you advance in years, disgust, to find how much you have been mistaken, will weaken your enthusiasm, and the agreeable picture your imagination had created, will fade into disappointment.

“It is natural Lady Seyntaubyne should wish to see you respectably married, and somewhat to her own taste, from the former vexations and uneasiness which she has experienced. Do not disappoint her hopes, if you can avoid it. She has to you been unbounded in kindness and generosity. I need not point out how much you owe her.

“Consider, Matilda, what I wish to enforce. A tender interest in your concerns, and a fatherly affection for my amiable pupil, is my only motive. God direct and bless you, my dear child; pray to him to guide you, and then you cannot err.”

The venerable doctor was affected. He waved his hand for Matilda to leave him, as he said, “Go to Mrs. Arundel, and desire her to give you some breakfast.”

Matilda, bathed in tears, entered the room where Mrs. Arundel was anxiously waiting for her. She took a cup of tea, and after receiving her maternal embrace, stepped into Mr. M’Arthur’s carriage, which was waiting to carry her to his house, whence they immediately departed.

CHAP. XV.

It has frequently happened through life, that many persons have formed, in imagination, the same flattering impressions the present party had done of each other; and from not being sufficiently acquainted to discern the dark blemishes which, on a more intimate association, appeared in their characters, destroyed at once the first partial impressions, when nothing but mortification, disgust, and disappointment afterwards ensued.

The present instance, however, proved a happy exception, for Mrs. M' Arthur and Matilda had journeyed almost a week together, daily improving in the estimation of one another.

The conversation of Mr. M' Arthur was lively, sensible, and full of information. His wife was interesting and amiable. Both were so flattering in their attentions to Matilda, she felt it would be extremely ungrateful not to endeavour to show that she was content in her new situation.

When she was alone she dwelt much on Doctor Arundel's admirable advice. In some instances she felt its truth, though the picture of mankind which he had drawn, she hoped was more darkly coloured than it merited. Except Mrs. Aldersey, she knew none who deserved the character he had described, though she acknowledged that hitherto her experience had not been extensive.

They travelled very deliberately, stopping at every place where there was any thing worth seeing. Mr. M' Arthur was a man of research and universal knowledge. He had a taste for antiquities and natural curiosities, therefore Matilda derived much pleasure as well as advantage from his society, accompanying him to visit every spot deserving of notice. As they approached the borders they left the great north road, for the gratification of viewing Melrose Abbey.

Matilda was glad to exchange the dark and naked mountains of Northumberland, for the soft and pastoral vallies of Tweed and Teviot Dale, skirted with woodlands, and watered by pure streams.

In passing near Kelso Mr. M' Arthur pointed out Flodden Field, at the same time reciting the following lines from Marmion:

“Still from the sire the son shall hear,
Of the stern strife and carnage drear,
Of Flodden's fatal field.
When shivered was fair England's spear,
And broken was her shield.”

The pretty town of Kelso, with the ruins of its ancient abbey, resting on the banks of the broad and rapid Tweed, they entered, by an elegant stone bridge. It was environed by gently swelling hills, and all the charms of sylvan scenery.

Proceeding along the borders, Matilda observed several small fortresses, in the shape of square towers, which Mr. M' Arthur told her was formerly designed as a protection against the banditti, which in ruder times infested the country. And as they travelled further into Teviot Dale, he pointed out Hermitage Castle, where the powerful

and wicked Soulis was said to exercise his infernal necromancy, and which is still shewn as the resort of demons.

The romantic town of Hawick, situated amidst rocks, rivers, and cataracts, with its old bridge, next engaged Matilda's attention. Thence to Selkirk the stage was greatly diversified, though now changing into a more mountainous and naked aspect; yet still embellished by partial woody banks, at whose base the river fancifully wended. As one scene succeeded another, they each recalled some song, some verse, some legend. The lyric poetry and music of the borders, abounding with romance, carried Matilda back to those remote ages; and she said to Mr. M'Arthur, "The words of the old song is justly verified—

"How sweet are the banks of the Tweed."

"You will scarcely travel," replied he, "a mile, as you advance into Scotland, but some river, some burn, some castle, some glen, will be pointed out to you, as the subject either of song, or of poetry. How inferior are all the ballads of the present day, compared with the original Scotch ones. Even the old songs, Ettric Banks, Tweedside, and the Braes of Yarrow (what can be prettier, for instance, than the following lines:

'Sweet smells the birk^{*}, green grows the grass,
Yellow on Yarrow banks the gowan,[†]
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowing,")

are so full of poetic imagery, and their plaintive simple melody is so happily adapted to their tender and affecting words, that no person of taste or sentiment can listen to them without viewing the scenes and persons they are intended to characterize, with a beauty and truth almost unequalled. To Percy we are indebted for a valuable compilation which will render ancient ballad-poetry for ever interesting.

"Burn," continued he, "with all the fire and originality of native genius he possessed, owes much of his celebrity to his just and simple delineation of the primitive manners and customs of his country. Even the absurdities of some of its superstitions are described in the form of tales, with such genuine humour and accuracy, that you are actually at the celebration of Halloween, and partake of all the Shakesperian horrors of 'Tam o' Shanter.'"

The travellers spent a few days in the magnificent city of Edinburgh. Matilda had an opportunity of seeing all its romantic beauties, ancient structures, and numerous curiosities, to much advantage, from Mr. M'Arthur's acquaintance with several of the most eminent characters in that seat of learning.

From Edinburgh they proceeded to Glasgow, where they staid a sufficient time to view its noble and ancient cathedral, college, manufactories, and establishments, and to notice the extraordinary progress of a town, being a few years ago only the seventh in rank, now the second in the empire.

* Birch trees.

† Dandelion.

It proved no small comfort to Mrs. M'Arthur to find the roads excellent, and the inns commodious; for she had never before been fifty miles beyond London, and formed, like many other persons, who have moved little from home, no very favourable opinion of the accomodation she should find on the northern roads. Agreeably disappointed, she partook with her young friend in the pleasure derived from the journey. The novel scenes she witnessed appeared in some degree to amend her health, while the winning attractions of Matilda, gained her esteem.

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CHAP. XVI.

AS the travellers proceeded to Dumbarton, the magnificent waters of the Clyde, covered with vessels, the bold and two-pointed rock on which the castle stood, the sloping banks feathered with wood, from amidst, where partial openings, the villas of the gentry were just seen, was one of the grandest and most pleasing views they had hitherto looked on.

Every mile they now journeyed the solemn grandeur of the mountains shrouded in the mist, which rolling away, sometimes unveiled their stupendous summits, filled Mrs. M'Arthur and Matilda with astonishment and awe.

From these rocky heights rapid streams precipitated in foaming violence, and hurried into the lake beneath, which showed on its clear bosom little tufted islands, and the striking ruin of a castle. Sometimes the road wound so close on the verge of the water, they appeared, by one false step of the horses, to be in danger of being dashed into the undulating waves, while the melancholy green of the pine woods, that partially hung on the sides of the dark mountains, added to the gloomy aspect of the scene.

At Aroquhar they seemed to have taken leave of all the habitable world, and to be journeying into a new one, formed only of mountain above mountain; for no other region was to be seen, and scarce any trace of human habitation, except one gentleman's villa, lying in lonely solitude on the verge of Loch Long, with a few miserable herdsmen's huts, perched in rocky nooks, where they could barely find subsistence for themselves and family.

If Matilda had admired the clear and rapid waters of Loch Long, whose salt waves were scarcely rippled by the breeze, the day was so calm, when the magnificent scenery of Inverary magically burst on the view, she could not contain her rapture. The antique castle embosomed in wood, overshadowed by the towering mountain of Duniquaisch, whose craggy point rose in terrific majesty far above the clouds, and was skirted by lesser ones, some naked, others verdant to their summits, intersected by romantic woody glens, with the picturesque fishing-town of Inverary, spreading in a crescent along the bay of Loch Fine, and shaded by tall and stately beech trees, with the little fleet of vessels for the herring fishery, with the two fine bridges thrown over the Shyra and the Aray rivers, formed altogether so romantic, novel, and wild a scene, Matilda almost fancied herself transported into Switzerland, instead of Scotland; so entirely did the landscape partake of the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque.

She admired not merely the gothic architecture of the castle, but the singular stone of which it was built. Mr. M'Arthur informed her that, according to Pennant, it was called the *lapis ollaris*, or pot stone, because used by the ancients for utensils, and was of the same kind as that with which the King of Denmark's palace was built, at Copenhagen. It was a variety of granite found at Inverary, and when polished resembled spotted marble. The next stage was to Dalmally, where they were to remain for the night. Mrs. M'Arthur complained of fatigue, and Matilda walked with her husband along the borders of Loch Awe, in which were scattered several pretty islands, distinguished by the naked points of rocks rising from their surface in such grotesque shapes as to have the appearance of elegant ruins. The projecting promontories, woody banks, with the stupendous summit of Cruichen-ben darkly frowning in the north, gave a solemn grandeur to the scene; while

the western kingdom was lighted up in all the glowing, but mellow tints of a summer evening, after the sun had set in cloudless majesty, spreading soft richness over the landscape, and reflecting the shadows of the mountains in the clear lake.

Matilda was arrested at every step by the curious specimens of minerals and pebbles which lay at her feet. She shewed Mr. M' Arthur those she picked up, and he informed her that they were chiefly jasper, dark crystal, agate, cornelian, serpentine, zeolite, hornblend, and mica; and that the hills were chiefly of red, grey, or blue granite.

Here also she observed a few huts scattered on the side of the lake; the habitation of fishermen. She was shocked at the wretched appearance of these dwellings, and the slender means they had for support, living entirely, Mr. M' Arthur informed her, on milk, potatoes, fish, and oatmeal. Yet she saw what a hardy race of people they seemed to be, and how athletic in their appearance. At Dalmally she first heard of the superstitions of the highlanders, and their belief in witches, fairies, and ghosts. On a little green hillock, called by the peasantry Shian, or *Fairy Haunt*, Mr. M' Arthur told her they still performed their nocturnal revels.

Travelling over the dreary Menalin, a long moor, and winding amidst steep and naked mountains, they reached the small town of Oban, resting on the edge of a fine bay, commanding a view of the Sound of Mull, the Ferry of Kerra, which they were to cross, and the blue and distant hill of Morven. At Oban they were presented with a view of the old castles of Dunstaffanage and Dunolly, seated on rocky promontories jutting into the sea. In sequestered nooks, clusters of cottages were half concealed by the broom, which glowed in rich yellow on the ridges of the brown hills, where innumerable goats and kids were frisking, and gave a pleasing wildness to the scene. But when the momentary novelty had subsided, Matilda, with a sigh, gazed at the spot of her distant destination, from all she loved. The enchanting scenery she had beheld, and which had filled her with a transitory forgetfulness, was now to be exchanged for a naked and dreary prospect. The lowering aspect of the morning, with the turbulence of the sea, did not tend to cheer her spirits; and as she stood at the inn window the tears came into her eyes. Mrs. M' Arthur approached and kindly taking her hand, said,—“There, my dear Miss Trevanion, are the friendly islands before us; let us hail them, not as if we were going into banishment, but as a welcome home after our long journey.”

Matilda, by a faint smile, gave her assent, and in the next minute Mr. M' Arthur came into the room—“The tide serves,” cried he, “and there is no time to be lost. Come Miss Trevanion and Amelia, we shall have a fine breeze, a fair wind, and the day is clearing up.” He drew Matilda's arm through his, adding—“Never fear, my sweet young friend, though we are rocked a little roughly by the rude billows, it is not all smooth sailing you know through life; and you shall be goddess supreme in this desert island, if we once fairly land you there.”

“Your kindness, Sir,” returned she, “makes me blush at the weakness I discover. Remember, before we set out, I told you, that instead of a prize, as you called me, I should prove a torment.”

They had scarcely set sail for the Isle of Mull, before the late impenetrable fog rolled away, and the sun breaking through the heavy vapour, shewed the tops of the distant hills. The beams played on the bosom of the ocean, which became so much calmer as to divest it of this terrific grandeur, which united with the rude and uncultivated country, was apt to inspire the mind of strangers with no very favourable impressions.

Yet as they sailed along, Matilda expressed some admiration at the wild view of the rugged mountains which were bounded by the mountains of Morven, wearing a grand and awful appearance.

Mr. M'Arthur's cheerful spirits supported his wife and Matilda during rather a formidable voyage. He was delighted with the sight of his native country, bleak and barren as was its aspect; and saw, or fancied he saw, many beauties in the bold and uncultivated objects which neither of his companions could join him in admiring. Mrs. M'Arthur was only restrained from expressing her horror, from the apprehensions of hurting her husband's feelings, whose enthusiasm was unbounded; she therefore remained wholly silent. But the ungenial climate and sharp sea-breeze already struck a chill through her whole frame, which even the cloak and plaid in which she was enveloped could not prevent her from feeling; and she began to fancy she was going to be banished to a ruder spot than even the deserts of Siberia. She found she had been preaching that philosophy to Miss Trevanion, so much required for herself.

The impression the aspect of the country made on Matilda was hardly more favourable; yet she envied the delight which shone in Mr. M'Arthur's countenance, and was determined to assume, at least, a gaiety she did not experience, for the sake of his amiable wife.

They were landed towards the afternoon at the beach, and in a few minutes found themselves within the hospitable walls of Kilnorney, the Lord of Mull's mansion. He came out to meet his guests; and though the ladies were strangers to him, according to the old fashioned custom of his country, he saluted each, as he bade them welcome. There was an honest courtesy and kindness in Mr. M'Arthur's manner which made Matilda in less than an hour feel herself at ease.

"If you do not make yourself happy, my bonny lassie," said he to Matilda, "it will no' be Donald M'Arthur's fault. You, my dear sister, cannot be otherwise, where your good man is."

"I told Miss Trevanion," replied Mr. Collin M'Arthur, "she was to reign supreme in this island. Even Saint Columba will not be half so much worshipped and adored as this fair lady."

"No man in his senses," observed his brother, "who would not prefer worshipping a living object, more particularly so engaging a one, for which there is some compensation to the other, which brings nothing but penances and fasting."

They were shewn into a comfortable dining room, where a sumptuous repast awaited them.

CHAP. XVII.

THE secluded situation in which Matilda now found herself, was quite different from any she had ever experienced. The place was so great a contrast to the soft reposing landscapes of Richmond, or even the old-fashioned splendour of Pengwilly Hall, that when she looked around on the wild and sullen objects, she wondered whither fate next would lead her.

Every comfort that fortune could bestow in this insular spot was afforded; and while the tempestuous blasts which swept over the dark and scowling mountains almost rocked the dwelling she inhabited, the elegance and hospitality which reigned within, seemed to bid defiance to the contending elements, for all was hilarity, good humour, and kindness.

The establishment of the household and its arrangement was so unlike an English one, it surprized Mrs. M' Arthur and Matilda; more particularly on observing the cheerful contented countenances of the domestics, who were satisfied with only the necessaries of life, for the luxuries they have not. Instead of roast beef and plum-pudding, set down to their hirelings at home, they found the servant's table of a Scottish nobleman or laird spread only with barley broth, potatoes, oat-bread, and milk. There were no lazy insolent powdered footmen, lolling in half-dozens in the hall. Every moment of the day was here employed for the benefit and interest of their master; and though they spoke in an uncouth language, it was with civility, at a respectful distance.

The women servants were not fine ladies. Mrs. M' Arthur thought their dresses too homely, yet she preferred it to the flaunting finery of a London maid. The young girls of the household wore no cap, but their hair was bound up with a *snood*;* and they were dressed in a short bed-gown and petticoat of the same colour. The want of shoes and stockings, together with their unbecoming attire, gave them a savage appearance, which not even the custom of the country could reconcile to Mrs. M' Arthur and Matilda.

The women employed themselves, when the occupation of the day was over, in spinning; and while they turned the wheel, it was usually accompanied to the tune of some Highland ballad, or parts of Ossian's poems, in the Gaelic language, which was familiar to all the inhabitants of the Western Isles.

There was a wild air of romance in the Celtic songs, relating to the deeds of Fingal, that harmonized with this rude spot, whence arose the enthusiasm of these simple and superstitious people.

Mr. M' Arthur, like most Scotchmen, gave implicit credit to the authenticity of Ossian, and found it abounding with beauties. But when Matilda wished to read the works, Doctor Arundel called it *prose run mad*; therefore when she heard Mr. M' Arthur reciting long passages as the hills of Morven rose to the view, she rather inclined to be of the reverend doctor's opinion, for they appeared to her mere hyperbole; yet when converted into a rude language, characteristic of the country, and sung with wild melody, she was pleased to listen to them.

The habit of the country, consisting of the tartan kilt, plaid, bonnet, and hose, she admired, for it gave a fierce grandeur to the appearance of the dignified highlander, that seemed to characterize him rather as a warrior than a vassal.

* A band of narrow ribbon, or worsted, tied plain round the head, and confining the hair.

Mr. M'Arthur's house was situated on a high promontory, which overhung the sea. It was built of granite, and though an irregular gloomy pile, was somewhat in the form of an antique castle. Within, it was comfortable, being well furnished. A sort of orchard and garden, with a few solitary fir and pine trees, environed the grounds. Matilda and her friends missed the trim neatness, and elegant decorations of their English gardens.

Beyond the stone inclosures, all was a dreary sameness. Mull was not diversified by bold headlands like some of its neighbouring islands, but a hilly desolate tract of a rude uncultivated country, covered with brown heath, except what was partially divided for the produce of scanty crops of oats and barley. The lower parts of this seemingly desert waste, of a marshy mossy consistence, were of too ungenial a soil to repay the husbandman for his industry. Agriculture was in some parts almost unknown. The cattle and sheep, having no tender and luxuriant herbage to feed on like the spontaneous flowery meads of England, were tended by shepherd boys, or *herds*, (so called in Scotland) to prevent their straying far amidst these wild regions.

Matilda always found these boys knitting, or reading their bible; as there, no child, even of the most uncultured peasant, but what was thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures.

When the weather admitted of Matilda's going abroad, she would escape from her friends; for she loved to wander alone in these desert regions, which wore so contrasted an aspect from

“The deepening woods, gay lawns, and airy summits,”

of Richmond. She wished to explore and become acquainted with the variety of natural curiosities which she discovered in her rambles. The innumerable streams, pouring in liquid crystal from the hills in sullen and mournful music, she delighted in listening to;—it was the only sound which interrupted the profound stillness of the scene, except when she approached the sea, and caught the murmuring of the undulating waves, which broke upon the shore.

In her wanderings, she was always finding specimens of jasper, lapis nephriticus, agate, violet-coloured quartz, porphyry, and often large masses of chalcedony.

These minerals and natural curiosities, which abound in various parts of Scotland, were so pleasing a study, that Matilda determined to give some portion of her time to the pursuit of mineralogy, which Mr. M'Arthur was so well acquainted with.

Sometimes a cairn, or large pile of stones, crowning the summit of a hill, pointed out the burial place of some hero, with whose history she amused herself by guessing. Often Matilda visited the wretched dwellings of the inhabitants of the island, to whom she would have given money to relieve their misery; but if they were poor, they were also proud:—they would receive no charity from her; and she was forcibly struck with the little selfishness, as well as independence, of their spirits.

The cottages in Mull, or rather huts, which formed an irregular hamlet, were built of stones, heaped one above another, without mortar to unite them. The floor of their dwellings, consisting of the bare earth, always damp and swampy, was often filled with puddles; while a hole in the roof, which was thatched with turf, supplied the place of a chimney, and a cavity in the wall the light of a window.—A peat fire, in the middle of

these miserable dwellings, dressed their provisions in a pot, suspended over it by a chain, hanging from the roof. A kind of wooden crib was the only sort of bed used by the poor in the island.

When Matilda beheld the miserable accommodation of these people, who could scarcely procure a bare subsistence for themselves and starving families, in a country so sterile, and under the rigour of a climate so ungenial, and compared their situation with the meanest and poorest of the English peasantry, even in so remote a part as Cornwall, she was astonished at the vigour and health of their appearance; and became persuaded, that the content and cheerfulness with which they maintained so hard a lot, sprung from the genuine piety, and primitive simplicity of their characters.

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CHAP. XVIII.

IN these sequestered isles Matilda was agreeably surprized to find large families possessing elegant manners, enlightened conversation, and high accomplishments. The young women were lively without frivolity, and the native gaiety of their amusements inspired a temporary cheerfulness when she joined in their dance and song, which there was no resisting. Good humour, benevolence, and kindness, were the prevailing manners of all the inhabitants of the different islands, who visited at Mr. M'Arthur's house. Every person felt happy and at ease; and his guests seemed rather one family of cordiality and love, than of different clanships.

The national music of the bagpipe played always during dinner. Its tones were harsh and dissonant to Matilda's ear, yet she listened to it, though without enjoyment, with something like pleasure, when she observed the universal hilarity which it inspired. In the evening the carpet was always rolled away, and highland reels and highland songs, concluded the amusement of the day.

Thus passed the first three weeks of Matilda's sojourn in these remote islands, caressed, admired, and esteemed by strangers. If anything could have soothed the sadness of her heart, it would have been the kindness which she experienced.

The young laird of Lismore, Mr. M'Laurel, one of the guests, who had never seen so fair a creature, soon became a captive to Matilda's charms. The gentleness of her manners, the pensive sadness of her looks, so unlike what he had pictured of a haughty English beauty, and a graceful and unreserved deportment, which rather deluded, than discouraged her admirers, tended so entirely to ensnare Mr. M'Laurel, that he could not live out of her presence.

It was almost the only weakness Matilda possessed, her irresolution to check by distance and restraint, those whom she found amiable and pleasant. Hence, on some occasions, she had acquired (particularly from Mrs. Aldersey) the reputation of a coquette. But so perfectly unconscious was Matilda of the magical gift she possessed, of being followed and admired, wherever she appeared, she often wondered how she had power to induce the flattering attentions which were paid her, and felt it would be rude to return them with incivility, enslaving thereby her willing captives.

Matilda danced with more grace and airiness than the generality of young women. The lightness of her figure made her scarcely touch the ground. Her movements were beautiful without study: she had no affected attitudes, but possessed a degree of ease, that gave a peculiar charm to the natural elegance of her deportment. She was fond of dancing. The young laird of Lismore excelled in that accomplishment; and she preferred tripping with him through the Highland-reel to any other person. When she spoke, there was something so tender and dulcet in the tones of her voice, M'Laurel could have listened to it for ever, if he had not heard her sing. He was fond of music, and her mode and taste was so perfectly different from any he had been accustomed to, in the simple Scotch airs, that when she warbled some of the beautiful Italian ones, he hung over her chair for hours together, as she accompanied herself on the piano-forte. Like another syren, she seemed to have enchanted him to this fatal island to charm and to destroy.

Mr. M'Laurel's sister, who had accompanied him to Kilnorney, was a good-humoured genuine character. Lively, unpolished, but warm-hearted and obliging. She

sung her native airs in a simple and pleasing manner, and was so much delighted with Matilda's taste and knowledge in music, she profited greatly by the instruction she readily gave her.

The brother and sister always accompanied Matilda in her walks; and as her solitary rambles for the present were interrupted, she amused herself with taking views of the wild scenery with which she was surrounded.

Sometimes before she retired for the night she went on the sea-beach, to look at the wonderful radiance of the aurora borealis (particularly luminous in the Hebrides), darting in such long rays of light, as to have the most sublime and awful appearance. She was filled with astonishment and admiration at the extraordinary grandeur it gave to the scene, when the wild and gloomy mountains would have been wholly veiled in night, but for the fiery glow which it emitted.

"I am happy, Miss Trevanion," said Mr. M'Laurel (who had stood sometime silently at her side) "you find any natural beauty in so remote a region can excite your admiration, and that you are apparently not dissatisfied, for a time, amongst its rude inhabitants. Oh that you could reconcile it to your taste to remain for ever in these islands. But the wish is vain as it is selfish, therefore I ought not to express it; for Miss Trevanion was formed to adorn the more polished circles of an English metropolis. Yet, in no place can your sweetness be more estimated, or your society more valued, than in this insular spot."

Matilda looked with a doubtful sort of surprize at Mr. M'Laurel, so little was she aware of the impression she had made on his heart. He was in general a plain spoken young man, and he had never before uttered any thing bordering on a compliment. The constant habit of overwhelming a pretty woman with them, in England, seemed in Scotland scarcely to be known. Here she had always found the men appeal to the understanding of the women to whom they directed their discourse; they did not consider them as weak fools, silly enough to smile assent to the multitude of idle words which they took the trouble of uttering, and turning the next minute on their heel, to laugh at their folly.

Matilda began to be alarmed, fearing there was something more meant in Mr. M'Laurel's compliments than met the ear, and she determined the following day to assume a more distant and reserved manner towards him. It would cost her some effort to do so, he was so sincere, good-humoured, conversable, and obliging. She felt grieved at the idea of giving him pain; yet to encourage and mislead him would be ungenerous and dishonourable in the extreme.

Dwelling on the unremitting attention which he had shewn her, not without pain she recollected that both the Mr. M'Arthurs had sanctioned and encouraged every opportunity to place them together. Mr. M'Laurel had considerable property in the small island of Lismore. He belonged to one of the most ancient clans, and was much beloved and respected. Matilda understood it was his intention to marry, for before Mr. Donald M'Arthur introduced him to her, he said, "Here, my dear lassie, is a sure match for you, if you have not already bestowed your heart on some of your English chaps. If you will but look with that bonnie smile on the handsome chiel, who is to be here the day, you will do his business. He has a pocket-fu' of siller, and a warm housie over his head to keep out the cold of a winter's day. Think o' it, my sweet heart. There is na in all the Hebrides a braver better lad than Collin M'Laurel, ye may take my word for it."

“My brother,” interrupted the younger Mr. M’Arthur, “is anxious, I perceive, to keep you, Miss Trevanion, amongst them, and to make you, after all, goddess of one of these isles.”

The evident attachment Mr. M’Laurel had discovered, of which Matilda could have no doubt, when she recurred to a variety of trifling circumstances, which before had passed over unheeded, gave her extreme pain. She in vain had attempted to drive Clairville and Julia from her remembrance, and had with careful anxiety examined the English newspapers which always came with their letters. Nothing like their marriage had appeared, nor was any intimation given of such an event being to take place. Mrs. Arundel had never written, though she had faithfully promised, and her silence gave Matilda the most serious uneasiness, persuaded it must be occasioned by some extraordinary cause. From Lady Seyntaubyne she had heard more than once, but she of all persons was the least likely to mention her grand-daughter’s marriage. She felt severely the long long distance she was placed from all her friends. In Mrs. Arundel she had lost her guide, her consolation, her able adviser in every doubt and difficulty. Matilda esteemed Mrs. M’Arthur, but she was a stranger to her connexions and her affairs. They were involved in so much mystery that to speak of them was but to expose the singularity of her situation. Thus reflecting, Matilda felt she was wretched, without a friend to whom she could unfold her wretchedness, or who could soothe the anguish of her mind.

CHAP. XIX.

THE weather becoming very favourable, Mr. M' Arthur informed his guests if they entertained a desire to visit the singular natural curiosity of Staffa, which of late years many English travellers had beheld with astonishment, since it had been first seen by Sir Joseph Banks and Mr. Pennant. There was no time to be lost, the sky and sea being unusually serene.

Matilda eagerly caught at the proposal, to which Mrs. M' Arthur, though still a great invalid, gave a cheerful assent, and it was fixed on the following morning; at a very early hour the ladies were to put themselves under the care of the two Mr. M' Arthurs and Mr. M' Laurel.

As the distance to Fingal's cave was by no means considerable from Kilnorney, they hoped, with ease, to accomplish the voyage before the close of day.

The mists rolled from the hills soon after day-break; and the sun bursting in full splendour above their bare summits, discovered a morning highly favourable to their aquatic excursion. The laird's boat was putting to shore. The white sails flitted in the sunbeams. The Highlanders who guided it, as they advanced on the undulating waves, reminded Matilda of Walter Scott's line—

“See the bonnet sink and rise.”

A basket of provisions, with wines, whisky, &c. was placed in the boat. The party, delighted with the cheerful aspect of the morning, put to sea for Staffa.

In vain Matilda endeavoured to shun Mr. M' Laurel's attentions. As they got into the boat Mr. Donald M' Arthur said to him, “Take ye care, Collin, of the young lady, and I shall look to my sister; they are both of them poor tender things, and need warm hearts to comfort them.”

“Presuming,” replied Mr. M' Laurel, as he seated himself by Matilda, and colouring highly, “on Mr. M' Arthur's charge to me, will you allow, madam, a *warm heart*, full of sincerity in its admiration of you, to tender it to your devotion.”

“When,” replied she, smiling, and affecting not literally to understand him, “a Highland Chief gives the command, all his vassals must be under subordination;—we are so at present; and to mutiny might be dangerous.”

“Miss Trevanion,” cried the younger Mr. M' Arthur, “has ever, I perceive, been taught subjection. Our good friend Doctor Arundel's modes of discipline were so excellent, I should have been surprised to have found her any other than she is.”

“Come,” interrupted Mr. Donald M' Arthur, addressing one of the boatmen, “give us my laddie one of your Highland kilts, or some of the valourous deeds of Ossian, we cannot have them at a better time, when we are going to visit the cave of his fathers.”

“With what a variety of romantic history does Scotland abound,” said Mrs. M' Arthur. “Even in this remote and circumscribed island, you have the tales of Ossian, which form a perfect romance. Much ancient history is connected with the antique abbey of Icolmkill. I hope it will be the next place which we shall visit. My husband was speaking of another singular cave, in the Isle of Skie, which I should like also to see.”

“The cave,” replied Mr. Collin, “somewhat resembles those in Derbyshire; but this one, of Fingal’s, is singularly curious from a distinct cause: that the basaltic column, of which it is entirely composed, have all the uniform correctness of the finest architectural pillars; besides that, they are all magnetic.

“But we are losing,” continued he, “in conversation, the first view of these extraordinary rocks. Observe, Miss Trevanion and Amelia, that rude and stupendous one, which, even at this distance, resembles an immense pile of building. The traditions of the island concerning this cave are, that it was built by a race of giants for Fingal, the father of Ossian. By others it is said, that it was built for St. Columbia. All these idle fables are very well to amuse the credulous and superstitious; but all the naturalists agree in considering this extraordinary specimen of Nature’s work, to be occasioned by some volcanic explosion, which formed these basaltic columns with so singularly regular an appearance.”

A short sail now brought the party to the mouth of Staffa. The extreme turbulence of the overwhelming waves, excited much terror in Mrs. M’ Arthur; nor was Matilda divested of fear, though it was somewhat checked by the awful sublimity of the scene.

The basaltic rock, towering in stupendous pillars, had a grander appearance than any thing the most creative fancy could have imagined. Though these pillars were somewhat broken by the brown moss and lichens which sprung from stones, yet the whole had the aspect of a vast building, which, on a near approach, wore the magnificent form of a cathedral. The lower part was broken by the fury of the waves, foaming and dashing with such violence, the ladies expressed the impossibility of entering, except at the risk of their lives.

Mr. M’ Arthur, who was not to be disappointed by fears, which he however thought were not altogether groundless, instead of showing his displeasure, by soothing and gentle persuasion, at length obtained their consent to enter; and the men, who were careful and skilful, often having been in the place before, launched them safe into the entrance of this gigantic and terrific cave.

“Is it not,” exclaimed Mr. Collin M’ Arthur, in rapture, “worth encountering some difficulty to behold this wonderful place?”

Mrs. M’ Arthur and Matilda could only gaze in awful silence; for the terrific majesty it wore, seemed to deprive them of their utterance.

“You cannot,” said Mr. Donald M’ Arthur, with a look of triumph, “shew me in all your England, with your boasting, any such curiosity as this place. You may tell me of your cathedrals, but where will you find one so magnificent as what you now see? There is regularity and beauty! Pillar above pillar, cut as curiously as if the nicest chisel had formed it.”

“It is, indeed, most extraordinary!” exclaimed Mrs. M’ Arthur.

They found the cave formed of perfect and regular ranges of basaltic pillars, as if shaped by the most ingenious sculptor, and which appeared to bid defiance to the rude hand of nature; while the roof, wonderfully wrought in a sort of Mosaic work, presented specimens of white zeolite, with a variety of other minerals. The vast dimensions of the cave, and its elevation from the base to the summit, astonished them.

Mr. M’ Arthur wished to have examined further into it than the ladies would venture. The awful solitude of its situation, and the terrific gloom of its appearance, with the turbulence of the ocean, the dismal scream of the sea-fowl, and the roaring of the

wind and waves, altogether were so terrific, that, astonished and gratified as Mrs. M' Arthur and Matilda had been, they so earnestly petitioned to depart, the gentlemen desired the men to land them at the small island of Booshala. They found there a few miserable huts, built of the fragments of some of the pillars, which constitute the whole of the island. Taking their provisions along with them, they entered one of these miserable dwellings, and found the interior equally wretched.

Mrs. M' Arthur, who was extremely indisposed, was afraid the damp floor, composed of mud, would give her an additional chill, dared not venture to sit down; and the little light, with the suffocating smoke, made her prefer returning into the open air.

Mr. Donald M' Arthur in vain pressed them to swallow a glass of whiskey, but they took a draught of the *gude wife's* new milk; and being refreshed with some part of their provisions, they set sail for Kilnorney, which they reached soon after the close of the evening.

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CHAP. XX.

Mr. Collin M' Arthur and Matilda, excited by their visit to Staffa to view the ancient remains of Icolmkill, proposed going thither in a day or two, as Mr. M' Laurel and his sister were soon to depart.

Mrs. M' Arthur, whose tender frame could ill contend with the uncertainty and moisture of the climate, had been seized, the day after going to Staffa, with so violent a cold, accompanied by fever, that the intended sail to Icolmkill was obliged to be deferred. Several days passed away, and Mrs. M' Arthur daily getting worse, she would not admit of the party waiting any longer for her, as Matilda had a female companion in Flora M' Laurel, for the season was advanced as far as September.

The day at length fixed on, proved equally favourable as the one on which they sailed to Staffa; and the party were put on shore at a spot some distance from the abbey, in order to search for pebbles and curious plants, with which that part abounded: Mr. M' Arthur having promised to shew various specimens of each to Matilda. As they proceeded, he pointed out a quarry of white marble, of which there were large masses distributed near the abbey, with specimen of jasper, porphyry, and granite. The rare plants, the *eryngium maritimum*, or sea-holly, covered the shore, which Mr. M' Arthur told her he had seldom seen except on the shores of Swansea, in South Wales. She gathered, near the marble quarry, quantities of the *salix lapponum*, or Lapland willow. But the scene was desolate in the extreme, from the ruinous appearance of the abbey, half diminished by the hand of time. Even of the large court, only part of the wall remained; and the roof of what was formerly the chapel, was in a state of decay. That chapel, once a religious sanctuary, when the choral hymn ascended in solemn chaunt to the pealing strains of the organ, with fervent devotion, was now degraded into a place of shelter for cows. A few mutilated grave-stones, much defaced, and nearly illegible, marked the spot where slept kings, chieftains, and abbots.

Near what was once the garden and fishponds, Matilda gathered the pink blossoms of the *pulmonna*, or sea burgloss. The ruin of the cathedral was covered with the *cotyledon umbilicus*, or navel wort; and the beautiful wild *menyanthes trifoliatum*, or trefoil, grew in abundance near the same place. All these plants, Mr. M' Arthur informed her, were peculiar to this wild and uncultured spot.

The beautiful workmanship, which formerly adorned the cathedral, retained scarcely any visible remains of its former elegance. The gothic window was the only specimen of the fineness of its architecture.

Several crosses marked the superstition of those days; and a large room joining the chapel seemed to have been the refectory.

"How mournful is it," cried Matilda, "to tread over this place of desolation. To observe the changes a few centuries produce. That this former grandeur, like its inhabitants, are gone to decay; and this ruinous pile remains only as a striking monument of the mutability of every earthly thing. That, however vast, however grand, it, like ourselves, must yield to the devastation of time, and in the words of Shakespear,

'Leave not a wreck behind.'"

“You must not,” interrupted Mr. M’Laurel, “speak in such sober sadness, or you will infect the whole party.”

“I wish not to do so; yet the very echo of our footsteps seem to whisper the solemn stillness of the place, where it would be sacrilege to be gay. Hark!” added she, “did I not hear voices?”

They listened a moment. “There certainly,” replied Mr. M’Laurel, “is the distant sound of footsteps and of voices. Strangers like ourselves, probably, come to look at the abbey.”

In the next minute, two persons crossed the large court. Matilda only caught a glimpse of one of the figures, but she turned pale, and uttering a faint exclamation, stood still.

Her emotion did not escape Mr. M’Laurel, who, with an agitation which he could not conceal, asked Matilda, “Whether the strangers were known to her?”

“I thought so,” she replied, in confusion; “yet it cannot be. I should like, however, to discover who they are.”

“Shall we go towards the spot where we saw them?”

“Yes, if you please,” returned she, with hesitation; “yet it does not signify.”

Mr. M’Laurel, irresolute what to do, was standing in silent anxiety beside Matilda, when the strangers again appeared.

When she saw them once more she changed colour and exclaimed, “Is it possible?” while the tallest of them advanced with hasty steps; and as a deep blush suffused Matilda’s cheek, he said, “Who expected to have seen the fair Miss Trevanion doing penance at the shrine of St. Columbia, when a thousand knees ought to be bent to her devotion? Yet some penance is necessary, I admit, for the sin of leaving so many friends to mourn your absence.”

“And who,” returned she, somewhat regaining her composure, “expected to see Sir Charles Dashwood also a pilgrim at this shrine, who has so many attractions in London? But,” added she, with a pleasure which she could not disguise, as she shook hands with him, “I am truly glad to meet an old acquaintance in a far and strange country.”

The sight of Sir Charles Dashwood brought so many interesting circumstances to her mind, and recalled so forcibly the friends she cherished with unabated tenderness. Her varying countenance and embarrassment, which she could not altogether shake off, at the singularity of the meeting, did not escape Mr. M’Laurel, who the moment he saw the pleasure that beamed in Matilda’s fine eyes, when she spoke to this elegant stranger, was convinced he saw a favoured and formidable rival.

Matilda was at a loss how to act in regard to Sir Charles. She was certain an introduction to her friends would immediately lead to an invitation to Kilnorney. No stranger came to the Hebrides unwelcomed and not hospitably entertained. She was lost in conjecture what could have brought him, and thought it was perhaps some stratagem of Mrs. Aldersey’s, and therefore wished to avoid introducing him; aware, if she guessed right, of the raillery it would lead to, if he was admitted on the familiar terms of a friend. She ardently longed to ask whether Albert Clairville was married. Sir Charles must know, but to make the enquiry was impossible; and she hoped, yet dreaded, that he would lead to the subject.

“I do not enquire,” cried the baronet, “who you are with; I have a letter of introduction to your friends, and I have one for yourself.”

“A letter for me,” exclaimed Matilda, in amazement. “May I ask from whom?”

“All in good time you shall know.—Now for my credentials, that I may not be taken for some idle adventurer, but present them to Mr. M’Arthur, the laird of Kilnorney. I have been a day or two,” continued he, “in the Isle of Mull. I knew too well the power of female charms not to be sure that I should be spell-bound, if I made my appearance before I had seen the extraordinary curiosities with which this insular spot abounds, and been taken for a very stupid fellow. I have been at Staffa, and to day I have taken up my quarters in the most wretched of all hovels, though it goes by the name of an inn. Piteously both man and beast have been accommodated. And now, sweetest Miss Trevanion, I come to kiss your fair hand, and to be welcomed by your smiles.”

This speech of Sir Charles much perplexed and distressed Matilda, while Mr. M’Laurel listened to it with an impatient jealousy which stung him to the soul. She was distressed in being alone with the two gentlemen; and expressed her anxiety for the Mr. M’Arthurs’ return, who had walked on to some distance, accompanied by Miss M’Laurel to look at some agricultural improvement; and she was not mistaken in guessing Flora had intentionally left her alone with her brother.

Sir Charles, elated by his reception, was in high spirits, and talked without ceasing. “It is unnecessary,” said he, to “enquire after your health, for the roses have usurped the lily, and I never saw you, though ever lovely, half so charming. Lady Seyntaubyne was afraid the rude breezes would spoil your complexion. If the Hebrides were to agree with every London lady half as well, I would recommend them to take a trip every summer.”

“I intreat, you Sir Charles,” replied Matilda, half angry (as she observed M’Laurel gravely regarding them), “do not talk such nonsense to me. Tell me when or where you saw Lady Seyntaubyne, And,” added she, stammering violently, “how were my other friends, all of whom I suppose you have seen?”

“Mrs. Aldersey,” cried he, smiling, “do you enquire after?”

“How malicious. She, I dare say, would not bestow a thought upon me; and is too much a woman of ton to think of any of her dear friends when she sees them no longer.”

“You say true,” said Sir Charles, more seriously. “Mrs. Aldersey, like half the world, lives but for her own amusement. She only *chaperons* and introduces a beautiful young woman, to give herself importance; and I am afraid, would rather *mar*, than, according to the acceptation of the word, *make their fortune*.”

“No, lovely Miss Trevanion,” continued the baronet, with vehemence, “it is not on her judgment I form my opinion; I build it on my own discrimination. I build my hopes on your smiles, on the letter which I bring from Lady Seyntaubyne. I have been to Pengwilly Hall, and have travelled thence to the Hebrides on the wings which Cupid has lent me. I boldly bid him defiance, but he has taken ample revenge of my bravery.”

Every word Sir Charles uttered increased Matilda’s distress and confusion. M’Laurel, deeply hurt, although sensible he had no right to be offended, walked to a little distance, finding it impossible to take any part in the conversation. Soon after Matilda saw the Mr. M’Arthurs and Miss M’Laurel approaching, and she immediately joined them.

Sir Charles Dashwood introduced himself by presenting Lady Seyntaubyne's letter to Mr. Collin M'Arthur, and to the laird of Kilnorney he gave one from a gentleman in Edinburgh, his particular friend, which immediately led to an invitation to his house in the most pressing and friendly manner. It was settled that the baronet should go back with them in the boat, which there was no refusing; and what Matilda dreaded actually happened, Sir Charles becoming a member of the family.

On their landing at home, Matilda went to Mrs. M'Arthur's chamber. She found her gone to bed, with considerable increase of illness. Full of anxiety and distress of mind she pleaded fatigue, and retired also for the night, that alone she might ponder on Sir Charles's unlooked-for visit. She was all impatience for Lady Seyntaubyne's letter, which she could not have till the morning, when his baggage was brought. Yet she was afraid, from the hints he threw out, her ladyship had induced, and sanctioned his journey.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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THE
CURATE
AND HIS
DAUGHTER;
A CORNISH TALE.

BY
ELIZABETH ISABELLA SPENCE

AUTHOR OF SUMMER EXCURSIONS—A CALEDONIAN
EXCURSION—THE NOBILITY OF THE HEART—
THE WEDDING DAY, &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

..... No mother's care
Shielded my infant innocence with prayer;
No father's guardian hand my youth maintained,
Called forth my virtues, and from vice restrained.

* * * * *

Alone from strangers every comfort flowed.
SAVAGE.

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THE
CURATE
AND
HIS DAUGHTER;
A CORNISH TALE.

CHAP. I.

WHILE Matilda remained in London, Sir Charles Dashwood had only thought of her as a lively and interesting young woman, from whose society he derived peculiar pleasure. Perhaps, in the first instance, his vanity had been flattered by the distinction which she had shewn him, and the preference she always gave him in the dance to younger partners. He found, the ingenuous simplicity of her character, united with much good sense, feeling, and gentleness of disposition, that she insensibly excited an interest he conceived to be only friendship, while she was daily winning on his affections. The oblique and malevolent hints Mrs. Aldersey threw out, of her suspicious origin, he did not regard. The mystery that enveloped her birth, was to him a matter of indifference; for, notwithstanding his former opinion on that subject, to which he still adhered, he saw Miss Trevanion an exception.

Sir Charles had carefully watched her conduct; and he found it free from levity, as it was correct,—full of modesty and sweetness. Her mind had been formed under the guidance of one of the most dignified and pious men of the age. Even if her parents were of humble condition, she would adorn the most elevated; and, in his choice, he had no person's opinion to consult. His fortune was splendid; and the prospect of felicity she promised, was too flattering not, if possible, to realize it. Mrs. Aldersey's raillery had first led him to think seriously of Matilda; and Lady Seyntaubyne's indulging smiles and invitations encouraged him to hope that he would not be rejected.

Once, the idea of Matilda's entertaining a secret partiality for Albert Clairville, came across his mind, and the varied emotions of such, struck him at the moment as somewhat extraordinary; but, since that period, his marriage with Lady Julia Penrose, had not only been confidently talked of, but he heard, from undoubted authority, would soon take place.

While Matilda was travelling into the Hebrides, Sir Charles took the opposite road to Pengwilly Hall.

He met with a very gracious reception from the countess, who informed him whither Matilda was gone. He at once unfolded the motive of his visit, made such liberal and disinterested proposals, her ladyship became extremely desirous that Matilda should accede to them. She assured the baronet of her interest in his cause, which would be

warm and sincere; at the same time, she must refer him to Miss Trevanion, to whom she would give twenty thousand pounds; and though certain circumstances prevented her from disclosing, until the day of her marriage, her real name and connections, he might rest assured neither would disgrace him.

Sir Charles, delighted with his reception, told Lady Seyntaubyne, thus encouraged, with her permission, he would lose no time in proceeding to the Hebrides, adding, with a smile, "*delays were dangerous.*"

The countess much approved the zeal of his conduct, and immediately addressed letters (of which he was to be the bearer) to Mr. M' Arthur, of Richmond, and Matilda. Sir Charles, elated with his success, took leave, and, in little more than a week after his visit to Pengwilly Hall, found himself landed in the Western Isles.

In the morning when the family assembled at breakfast, Sir Charles, now a member, was treated with the most cordial kindness by his friendly host.

Matilda dreaded the raillery of Mr. Collin M' Arthur, and was somewhat surprised to escape it; but the laird of Kilnorney, by significant nods and smiles, seemed perfectly to understand the nature of Sir Charles's visit, and no longer encouraged M' Laurel to pay attention to his young guest;—placing Sir Charles beside her at breakfast, while her Scotch admirer, hurt, and somewhat offended, haughtily yielded his seat to the baronet.

Matilda's embarrassment was considerably augmented by the increased indisposition of Mrs. M' Arthur, who was unable to leave her chamber; for though she had the presence of Miss M' Laurel, a good-humoured rattling girl, she was so different from the women Sir Charles was accustomed to associate with, she was concerned he should be led, from her unsophisticated character and unpolished address, to form his opinion of Scottish manners. Most of the women she had seen, during her sojourn in the Hebrides, possessed some claim to elegance and gentleness of demeanour.

When the social meal was ended, (such is always a Scotch breakfast) Mr. Donald M' Arthur requested his guests would choose in what manner they would like to spend the morning. He told Sir Charles, "if he was fond of reading he would shew him an excellent library; or," continued he, "if you like field sports I can furnish you with arms. On these barren heaths there are abundance of patrigans*. Perhaps the ladies would prefer a walk. We do not, Sir Charles, pass our mornings here as you do in England, in playing at billiards, which possible you would have preferred."

"I dislike," returned he, "all sorts of gambling. If the ladies will trust themselves with me in a walk, I should like to look at that cairn situated, I observe, at no great distance."

Matilda excused herself by saying, she wished to sit with her invalid friend. Sir Charles looked disappointed as she hurried away. She was followed by Mr. Collin M' Arthur, who requested to have a few minutes conversation with her in the drawing-room.

"Will you, Miss Trevanion," said he, "pardon my seeming officiousness on so short an acquaintance, in venturing to speak on your affairs? Will you consider me in the light of a brother if I presume to do so with openness and freedom? In truth, were you my sister, I could scarcely feel a more lively interest in all that may concern your future happiness."

* Wild-fowl, grouse.

Matilda coloured highly. She guessed that he was going to name either the baronet or Mr. M'Laurel; and without power to reply she suffered him to go on.

"In my idle raillery," continued he, "I was not aware that what I then predicted would so soon happen, and that I should have two of your admirers to plead for. Mr. M'Laurel, poor fellow, has, I perceive, no chance with this elegant and worthy baronet, or else I should be inclined to enlarge a little on the known worth of my Highland friend."

"Talk not, sir," replied Matilda, very seriously, "of admirers; for indeed I am little inclined to give either of these gentlemen encouragement. It is very painful to me, Sir Charles Dashwood's having taken so long and so fruitless a journey. His distinction, though it does me the highest honour, is quite adverse to my wishes."

"I would not, my dear Miss Trevanion," cried Mr. M'Arthur, "distress you by entering on so delicate a subject, nor to pretend to dictate what you ought to do. You are probably acquainted with Lady Seyntaubyne's having written to me, requesting that I would use my influence in prevailing on you to listen to Sir Charles's addresses. Her ladyship speaks of him in the handsomest terms of his disinterested proposals, and the ardent wish she has to see you properly allied. What am I to say to her? What to you, if you are so repugnant to the subject? I have pleaded many cases for others, but that of love only for myself."

Matilda, overwhelmed with distress, said, in a faltering accent, "Thus urged, thus beset, Oh! Mr. M'Arthur, you cannot guess the anguish it occasions me. Why should I marry, if I repine not at the lot which Providence has assigned me? Why may I not, unknown, unheeded, pass through life unmolested? I was ignorant that Lady Seyntaubyne had written to you on such a subject.—I have not yet read the letter Sir Charles has brought me.—Too well can I guess the contents.—You are no stranger it seems to the subject."

Mr. M'Arthur, concerned to see Matilda so much agitated, kindly taking her hand, said, "Shall I talk to Sir Charles?—Tell him how averse you are to him; and, while I request him to remain my brother's guest a few days longer, intreat he will not distress you by renewing his proposals?"

"O no! That would be treating him unkindly,—unhandsomely. If he is to be rejected, from myself let the rejection come. I will first read Lady Seyntaubyne's letter, and then I shall be better able to judge what is to be done."

"Well, my lovely young friend, you alone must and can decide on this important business. Of this, however, be assured, that you may command my services; and that I take too lively an interest in your welfare to promote your being unhappy, if I can prevent it. My Amelia's gentleness," added he, "is better suited to you than our boisterous young friend. I would therefore advise you to go to her, and I will amuse the baronet."

Mr. M'Arthur left Matilda, who went to her room to peruse Lady Seyntaubyne's letter: it was as follows:

To Miss Trevanion

"Dear Matilda,

"I hope that a little more knowledge of the world has taught you some experience, and you have begun to discover the idle fallacy of cherishing what I call an improper attachment. It is a subject I have talked to you but little upon, because, as you do not want

sense, I flattered myself your pride would predominate over your weakness; and that knowing Clairville was engaged to his cousin, you would see the impropriety (that is too gentle a term), the wickedness of indulging a preference for an engaged man. I therefore suffered you to depart without wounding your feelings on so tender a subject.

“I hope you will now reward my forbearance. I am imposing no hardship, in requesting that you will receive Sir Charles Dashwood as becomes a pupil of Doctor Arundel, and shew that his wise precepts have not been thrown away; and get rid of the love-sick romantic chimeras which have taken possession of your fancy.

“Remember, although I have said, and still repeat, I shall not controul your choice, or insist contrary to your inclination, yet I would fain persuade myself, and build much of my happiness in seeing you so connected as will reflect honour on yourself, your family, and name; which would make me close my days in joyful serenity, in finding my utmost wish towards you fulfilled.

“I remain,

“Dear Matilda,

“Your sincere and affectionate,

“DOROTHEA SEYNTAUBYNE.”

Pengwilly Hall, Sept. 1.

The contents of the countess’s letter gave Matilda much inquietude. Irresolute and distressed how to act, she would have unbosomed herself to her gentle friend Mrs. M’Arthur, and shewn her Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter, had she not been unwilling to disclose the weakness of her continued partiality for Clairville. Sensible of the truth of her ladyship’s remark, that she was indulging an improper regard for now, most probably, a married man; and remembering with poignancy that Doctor Arundel had also strongly pointed out the dangerous error she was guilty of, in undermining the happiness of that being whom most she valued, if she nourished so ill-judged a tenderness, she resolutely determined to think of Clairville no more.

“If he were really married, why,” exclaimed she, “not tell me so at once? for then might I consent to give my hand with some degree of satisfaction to another, and endeavour to return the affection Sir Charles entertains for me.

“Yet,” continued she, heavily sighing, “why be so selfish to consider merely my own happiness; a few short years will end this transitory scene, and hereafter I shall have the inward gratification of knowing that I yielded to the wishes of my benefactress, and those whom I was led to believe I might render happy, instead of consulting my own inclination; and that by submission to the will of one to whom I owe the numerous advantages and blessing I possess, I shall hereafter have no bitterness of self-reproach.”

Thus reasoning, thus reflecting, Matilda took up the pen, and thus replied to Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter:

To Countess Dowager Seyntaubyne.

“Dear Madam,

“To dissappoint the expectations you have formed of me in yielding to your wishes, would be no less unworthy than ungracious.

“I am perfectly aware of the painful truths you have advanced, and though I feel it impossible at once to transfer my affections from one object to another, yet, so far will I obey your ladyship, that at the end of six months, if Sir Charles Dashwood still retains the same tender impressions in my favour, I will at that period consent to confer on him my hand.

“You say such a determination will leave no wish of yours unfulfilled. You, madam, have a right to some sacrifices from me. You have made many on my account; and your maternal care is indelibly impressed on my heart.

“Of whatever degree may be my family, whether elevated or humble, and whatever name they own, of this be assured, that the respected one I bear will prevent my doing any thing to tarnish it; and that the memory of the venerable character who conferred it upon me, will be a perpetual shield from wilful error.

“I have the honour to remain, madam, very respectfully your ladyship’s

“ever grateful and obliged

“MATILDA TREVANION.”

Kilnorney, Isle of Mull,
September 15.

Matilda had scarcely courage to peruse what she had written. She folded up the letter, and watched at the window Mr. M’Arthur’s return from his walk, and when she saw him, hastened into the hall to meet him.

With concern he beheld her cheeks pale, her eyes red and swoln, with weeping. They withdrew into the parlour together, when she put her letter to Lady Seyntaubyne into his hands, and requested he would read it.

“You have acted nobly, my dear Miss Trevanion,” cried he, as he returned it. “If Sir Charles does not know properly how to value so excellent a young lady, he is unworthy the inestimable blessing he will possess. I will add a line to Lady Seyntaubyne in the letter.

“Mr. M’Laurel,” continued he, “has lost a treasure; but he guessed too certainly, poor fellow, the little hope he dared indulge, when the baronet made his appearance.”

“Mr. M’Laurel’s flattering partiality,” replied she, “gives me concern; but if it will be any consolation to him to know it is by the wishes of my friends I listen to Sir Charles’s addresses, tell him so.”

“He perceived he had lost you,” remarked Mr. M’Arthur, “and unable to endure the presence of his rival, he departed an hour since, along with his sister. That you may not be altogether without female society, Amelia will endeavour to come down to dinner; but she is so seriously indisposed, my dear Miss Trevanion, I am quite alarmed about her; and begin to wish I had never brought her to this ungenial climate. If she is not soon better, will you have any objection to remove to Inverness?”

“All places,” answered Matilda, mournfully, “are to me alike. Wherever your excellent lady is I shall feel myself a part of your family, for at least some months to come.”

“Sir Charles,” said Mr. M’Arthur, “is all impatience to know whether you have read Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter. Shall I tell him the result?”

“By no means. Sir Charles will naturally enter upon the subject with me. I have much to say to him, and we must now be sincere, if we would be happy hereafter.”

“Excellent Miss Trevanion! your virtuous and wise intentions require no other monitor than the correctness of your own mind. I leave you to its direction; and may the felicity you deserve pursue you through life.”

Matilda, though by no means happy, yet experienced a secret satisfaction in the sacrifice she was going to make, which cheered her amidst the anxiety she endured.

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CHAP. II.

AFTER the conference with Mr. M' Arthur, Matilda hastened to the chamber of her sick friend. She found her dressing to appear at dinner; so pale and languid, she was shocked at her looks, and offered to spend the day with her above stairs.

"No, my dear Miss Trevanion," replied she, "that will never do. What," added she, with a faint smile, "would Sir Charles say to my monopolizing you. Besides, I am not a little anxious and interested to see this handsome and elegant baronet, who has had the spirit and gallantry to proceed so far in pursuit of my fair friend."

"Ah! that he had not," exclaimed Matilda, sighing. "In this remote region I hoped, with you and Mr. M' Arthur, to have spent my days unheeded and unmolested; and if you were but well, I should have been quite satisfied."

"That," observed Mrs. M' Arthur, "will never be. I would not, causelessly, alarm my husband: nor would I, intentionally, distress you; but this climate is destroying me. I am therefore happy, that you will have a kind friend and protector, in Sir Charles Dashwood, who will lead you back in safety to dear England and your English friends.

"I have, for many days," continued she, with much seriousness, "anticipated entering on this subject; but aware that it would frighten and grieve you, I have deferred it until I now consider it incumbent on me to prepare you for the event which is likely to happen. As a stranger here, I have considered, my sweet young friend, your forlorn and distressing situation, without a female associate; but when I am no more, your removal will be speedy from hence."

"If you feel so ill," replied Matilda, much afflicted and alarmed, "why not send for immediate advice? Let us not delay another hour in procuring medical assistance."

"It would prove of no avail, my dear Miss Trevanion. Therefore why, needlessly, distress those around me. A slow wasting fever has long preyed upon me, and at length it must consume me. It were far better, as you will be taken care of, that I should die here; for my husband is in his native country, and with so affectionate a brother, he will console him when I am gone."

Mrs. M' Arthur observing Matilda much affected, added cheerfully, "Come, my dear friend, you have promised to introduce me to Sir Charles Dashwood."

"I will," replied she, "after changing my dress. I shall be with you in a quarter of an hour."

Heavily oppressed with sorrow, Matilda retired to her chamber to acquire some degree of composure and fortitude, to endure the painful scenes which followed so close on each other. She knew Mrs. M' Arthur to be far from one of those fanciful nervous ladies, who, causelessly, tease those around them by imaginary illness. She was, therefore, rendered extremely uneasy by the subsequent conversation, and determined to advise Mr. M' Arthur, without her knowledge, to send immediately for a physician, or else remove her from the island. Yet the rigour of the sea-breezes, and the almost constant drizzling rain which fell, Matilda was afraid, even in the short voyage, would hasten her dissolution, for she appeared much worse since their aquatic excursion to Staffa. During the last fortnight she had remarked the pallid and sunk countenance of her friend, and how languid and thin she became; yet she had no apprehension of any immediate danger, and the shock came like a thunder-bolt upon her.

Removed into a far country, in which she was a stranger, what was to become of her, situated so peculiarly in regard to Sir Charles Dashwood? She had no Mrs. Arundel, no Lady Sophia Clairville, to fly to for advice; and she could not avoid considering her situation as singularly distressing.

Having changed her dress, and bathed her eyes to remove the effect of weeping, she returned to Mrs. M'Arthur, whom she led into the drawing-room.

Sir Charles had been impatiently waiting her entrance for above an hour. Never had he beheld a countenance which gave so little promise of hope to an ardent lover, as the one Matilda discovered. Her pale cheeks, heavy eyes, divested of all their brilliant and playful expressions, with the melancholy of her interesting countenance, seemed to give no promise of felicity, if he judged by her general demeanor. Yet when he beheld the fragile appearance of Mrs. M'Arthur, he attributed her dejection to that cause, rather than to the contents of Lady Seyntaubyne's letter.

When the M'Arthur's joined them, Mr. Donald expressed, and discovered, such unfeigned concern in observing his sister so very ill, as quite alarmed his brother; and all attempts at cheerful conversation, when they sat down to dinner, were in vain. With difficulty Mrs. M'Arthur supported the fatigue of company till tea was over, and then requested her husband to lead her up stairs. Matilda offered to attend her, but Sir Charles entreated half an hour's conversation, and Mrs. M'Arthur begged her to remain. She did so, returning with much embarrassment to her seat.

"I would not for the world distress you," observed Sir Charles, after a pause, "nor intrude on your time from your interesting friend; but it is necessary to my peace, lovely and beloved Miss Trevanion, that I should know your sentiments. Of course, Lady Seyntaubyne has not left you ignorant of the motive of this journey, and that when you quitted London, it became to me little better than a desert. Its amusements I never enjoyed, and they were then most irksome. In no society I took delight; and Mrs. Aldersey's raillery I had not the courage to return;—it augmented the misery I endured from your absence, and I hastened into Cornwall, when you alone were to become the arbitress of my fate. If so inestimable a treasure was not to be mine, it was my determination to take my leave of England, and embark for Madeira. But Lady Seyntaubyne, kind and considerate, bade me follow you to the Hebrides and plead my cause in person. She told me you had no engagement, and were mistress of your own fate.

"O sweetest Miss Trevanion!" continued he, with vehemence, "be so of mine, and bless me with your hand. My whole soul is devoted to you—my life—my fortune. It is you only I require to make me happy. No interested motives guide my wishes; for I should value you even more in being portionless, than if you brought with you the riches of Golconda."

He took her hand, and, while he pressed it respectfully to his lips, threw himself on his knees before her.

"Rise, Sir Charles." exclaimed Matilda, "and hear me; I will be sincere, for by that sincerity you must be influenced. Lady Seyntaubyne told you true, when she said that I had no engagement; yet, I have no present intention of changing my condition. Be assured, however, I am so far from being insensible of the honour of your election, it is only that I may endeavour properly to estimate the distinction you have paid me. I must gain time to return the affection that is due to Sir Charles Dashwood's eminent worth,

whom it would be treating unjustly to bestow my hand upon, under any circumstance than that of estimating him as he deserves.”

“Oh! let not such a plea,” interrupted he, eagerly, “be any objection. Defer not my happiness, if you are not absolutely averse from my addresses. Then shall you find, when one interest unites us, that it shall be my whole study to gain such an interest in your gentle heart as your sweetness cannot resist, and your gentle mind will return a tenderness which will prove as unbounded as my admiration is sincere.”

“I will not, Sir Charles,” cried Matilda, greatly agitated, “listen to you any longer;” at the same time endeavouring to retreat; “confident it is necessary to the happiness of each to form no hasty decision. If, at the end of six months your wishes remain the same, then I shall consider myself bound to fulfil the desire of Lady Seyntaubyne, if my doing so is likely to render you happy.”

“Torture me not,” cried he, impatiently, “with the cruelty of such a long suspense. Why not be mine at once? I will empower Mr. M’ Arthur to draw up settlements, and procure one of the Episcopalian bishops of the country to unite us. Lady Seyntaubyne made no objection: why, sweetest Miss Trevanion, should you, if there really exists none?”

“Urge me not,” replied she, infinitely distressed; “my mind is deeply afflicted from a variety of causes, and——”

“Suffer me, then,” interrupted he, tenderly, “to be its soother;—to share your real griefs, as your mind is too elevated to sink beneath imaginary ones; for I have watched, from the first hour of our acquaintance, all its various emotions.”

“And discovered, perhaps,” added she, sighing, “all its weaknesses.”

“All its excellence! It is full of purity and tenderness! Once, indeed,” added he, with hesitation, “I did suspect——”

Matilda coloured deeply, while she hastily exclaimed, “What did you suspect?”

“That Albert Clairville——; but he was engaged;—you knew of the engagement, therefore it could not be. Forgive the suspicion and——”

“Sir Charles Dashwood,” exclaimed Matilda emphatically, and changing colour every moment, “I will not deceive you. God forbid I should be accessory to your misery. If you cannot accept a heart, that once was innocently prone to love Albert Clairville, ere I knew of his engagement to his cousin, and which I now offer to you, and you will find not the less pure in its attachment to you, as it is long since I thought of him, except as the husband of Lady Julia Penrose, relinquish me at once; I shall consider the rejection no indignity.”

Matilda was so much overcome by the subject, she was obliged to cover her face with both her hands to conceal her tears.

“Weep not, beloved Miss Trevanion,” cried Sir Charles, kindly taking her hand.

“Oh! forgive the question I am going to ask, and be assured, not for the world would I wound the delicacy of your feelings; but it is necessary to my peace to ask, whether Clairville knew of your partiality?”

“He had too high a sense of honour,” returned Matilda, extremely hurt at the question; “circumstanced as he was, to seek to discover a partiality which could only tend to evil. Though we were for several weeks together at his mother’s, Lady Sophia’s, neither by words nor actions was it ever revealed. His attentions, the moment I discovered that he was engaged to another, he was too generous to insult me by

confessing. I should have spurned them with indignity and abhorrence, for they were due alone to his cousin.

“I have been, sir, thus explicit,” continued Matilda, with dignity and spirit, “because disguise is painful; and this communication was necessary to my justification, after what you witnessed when we all were accidentally assembled at your house. It was highly important, Sir Charles, you should be no stranger to what I have related, that you may be influenced accordingly.”

“Thus then am I influenced,” said he, warmly, as he pressed her hand to his lips. “Noble Miss Trevanion! your sincerity and candour reflect on you the highest honour. No heart, thus feeling, thus acting, can be impure. I value it not the less for once estimating Albert Clairville; and though it did, as Lady Seyntaubyne tells me you still are free, I henceforth, angelic Matilda, consider you mine, and thus I seal the bond,” again respectfully kissing her hand.

Matilda silently acquiesced, afterwards saying in a faint accent, “suffer me, Sir Charles, to depart, for in truth I am quite unequal to converse any longer.”

“Go, then, sweet excellence,” replied he, “and may peace light on your pillow.”

She hurried to her chamber, and throwing herself on a chair, gave unrestrained freedom to tears, which relieved her oppressed heart. The conflict was over—her future destiny was irrecoverably fixed. Fixed too with her own consent. It was true, that for some time she should retain her own name, but she considered herself absolutely engaged to Sir Charles, and no circumstance, in all probability, would now prevent her from becoming his wife.

Matilda having somewhat composed her spirits, stole into Mrs. M’Arthur’s room. She was pleased to find her sunk into a quiet slumber.

CHAP. III.

MATILDA retired to rest; but it was in vain she sought forgetfulness on her pillow. As she courted it she repeated the following lines in one of Charlotte Smith's sonnets:

“Come, balmy sleep, tired nature's soft resort,
On these sad temples all thy poppies shed,
And bid gay dreams from Morpheus' airy court
Float in light visions round my aching head.”

She had fallen into a disturbed sleep towards morning, when she was awakened by the maid standing at her bed-side. She informed her, that Mr. Collin M'Arthur wished to speak to her as soon as she was up. She rose, and quickly dressing herself, in some alarm, went into the breakfast-room. She found him sitting with folded arms, and a countenance of such despair, that she was frightened when she saw him.

“Pardon my sending for you,” cried he, starting from his seat; “but I could not be at ease to depart for Inverness without first soliciting, in my absence, your tender care of my poor Amelia; yet I am sure I need not ask it, for you are full of compassion and kindness.”

“I rejoice,” replied Matilda, “you are at length going for medical advice. Be assured, no attention on my part shall be wanting to the invalid.”

“Would to heaven,” said he, mournfully, “we had never left Richmond. But who could foresee so fatal a termination in this visit to my brother. You too, dear Miss Trevanion——”

“Think not of me, a moment,” interrupted she, “but hasten your departure. I shall be most anxious for your return; and will not leave my friend during your absence.”

“Sir Charles Dashwood will not readily admit of such a deprivation. Indeed he could not have come at a more unseasonable period. The distraction of my mind, even were I to be here at present, would prevent me from paying him the attention I wish. And my poor brother is so much distressed about Amelia, he will depend on you to amuse the baronet. But you, in truth, are his sole object.”

“I wish,” exclaimed Matilda, after a minute's consideration, “you would take Sir Charles along with you to Inverness. Engage his benevolence, and I am sure he will accompany you. His remaining here, situated as we are, is inconvenient and improper. It is impossible for me to devote my time to him; and even were I inclined, without a female companion, though by no means a prude, I should not deem altogether decorous.”

“You are right,” observed he. “Persuade him to accompany me.”

At the instant they were conversing, the baronet came, and finding Mr. M'Arthur and Matilda in earnest discourse, he was retreating, when she called after him, and said, “I have a plot against you, Sir Charles, come and hear it.”

He joined them, when Matilda added, “No sooner are you arrived than I mean to exert the influence I possess by sending you away.”

“What do you mean?” interrupted he, rather alarmed.

“Mrs. M’ Arthur is very ill; her husband is going to Inverness for a physician; and I am sure the addition of your company on so melancholy a journey, would prove a desirable acquisition.”

Sir Charles saw at once the propriety of Matilda’s request; and in the most friendly manner immediately offered his company to Mr. M’ Arthur. It was cheerfully accepted, and in less than an hour the tide serving, they set sail for Oban, in their way to Inverness.

It was now that Matilda began to experience the inconvenience and distress attending the insular situation they were fixed in. Every surrounding object wore the most gloomy aspect.

The heavy mists which hung in the atmosphere, the chilling blasts which swept

“Wi’ angry sough,”

along the mountains, and the festivity and mirth which before reigned in the mansion, were now exchanged for the utmost melancholy and dejection. Mrs. M’ Arthur’s illness affected her spirits extremely, and it required more than common fortitude to prevent her friend from discovering the anxiety and uneasiness which she endured.

Except Lady Seyntaubyne’s letter by Sir Charles Dashwood, it was many weeks since Matilda had received any tidings from England; and she knew no more of her absent friends than if they had been out of existence.

Sir Charles Dashwood’s presence greatly augmented her distress. She hoped to be able to prevail on him to return to England; and she ardently wished to return herself. For whatever might be her future fate in life, she was resolved ere it was irrecoverably fixed, to first come to the knowledge of the name of her parents, and what was the rank they were entitled to hold in society. An innate dignity and pride made her feel repugnant to bestow her hand on any person who was a stranger to her family and connections; and she determined that no time should be lost on her return to her native country, in discovering who she really was. Lady Seyntaubyne had told her that the forgotten packet would disclose the important information. If her father yet lived, she anticipated the hope of being cherished and acknowledged by him.

Mrs. M’ Arthur, unable to rise, and wasting hourly with the fever and cough, had brought on a violent inflammation on her lungs, and Matilda saw, with dismay, was evidently dying. She anxiously counted the days which followed one another in mournful succession, until Mr. M’ Arthur’s return. But it was a long distance to Inverness, and no skilful aid could be procured nearer. She had seen many melancholy instances since she had been in the island, of persons dying for want of medical advice.

The weather too became so tempestuous, the sea ran mountains high, and the idea of her friends being on the infuriate waves filled her with horror; for there seemed to be every prospect of their being buried in its overwhelming waters.

Mrs. M’ Arthur, patient and resigned, expressed no other wish than that she might just live to breathe her last sigh in the arms of her husband. But life was fast ebbing to its last verge, and Matilda was persuaded if a few more hours did not bring him back, she would not have that satisfaction.

The laird of Kilnorney was too deeply concerned, to offer any consolation to Matilda. He almost lived on the sea-shore, watching the few boats which were in sight,

though the violence of the winds and waves seemed to bid defiance to a possibility of landing; and in the most mournful anxiety and suspense a week had elapsed since their departure.

Matilda, who had sat by the bed-side of her dying friend for two or three successive nights, now began to feel so much exhaustion and fatigue, Mr. Donald M'Arthur was quite alarmed at the paleness and languor of her appearance. He insisted on her going immediately to bed, in her own chamber. She reluctantly complied, on condition of being informed the moment his brother arrived.

"The wind is now fair," said he, "and the sea so much calmer, that in the course of the evening I have no question of their being here. Do go to your bed, my sweet lass, for you have much need of rest."

Matilda having repeated her request, departed to her own room.

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CHAP. IV.

QUITE overcome by the anxiety she had endured, together with the unremitting attendance which she had given Mrs. M' Arthur, Matilda sunk into a profound sleep, from which she awoke not till late the next morning:—then did remembrance,

“With all her busy train;”

and she immediately rang to enquire whether Mr. M' Arthur was returned, flattering herself it might be the case, as the morning was serene, and the sun shone with feeble rays into her window.

It was sometime before the bell was answered.

Matilda was almost drest when Jenny came into the room. She was going to ask the cause of her tardiness, when the girl burst into a flood of tears, and ran away. Quickly did Matilda follow. When she reached the door she was met by Mr. Donald M' Arthur, who, in a faltering accent, said, “My poor brother is come, but his Amelia's pure spirit was fled to a better world; and she died unconscious of the pangs of separation.”

Matilda, though prepared, in some degree, for the event, was so greatly shocked, she turned very sick, and so faint, Mr. M' Arthur was obliged to lead her to the window of the gallery, where he bade he stay till he brought her a glass of water.

Stunned, as it were, by the event which had taken place, she was unable to move, and was pensively leaning against the wainscot, when Sir Charles and Mr. Donald waited on her together, while the latter presented her with some hartshorn and water, which he entreated her to take.

“You are come, Sir Charles,” said Matilda, now finding relief in tears, “to a mournful scene.”

“Would to heaven!” exclaimed he, in a voice of the tenderest sympathy, “that my presence could mitigate the anguish of my friends. But the first effusions of a grief so natural, admit not of consolation. To intrude upon it, is only to augment the affliction.”

“True,” replied she, dejectedly. “Yet sympathy alleviates, where the participation is sincere. Where is Mr. Collin M' Arthur? Why did he not come sooner? Was Amelia's gentle spirit hushed into rest before his arrival?”

“Only an hour too late he came. No intreaty,” added Sir Charles, “can prevail on him to leave her chamber. In almost frantic grief he has shut himself up, and the physician whom we have brought, assures me, in the present irritable state of his nerves, a fever will be the consequence, if he is not taken away.”

“I will go to him,” cried Matilda, “for I should like once more to behold my beloved Amelia. Envious is her state: for so pure was her life, she no doubt is now amongst her kindred angels. Would that it had been Matilda's lot also to have been taken from a world of suffering; and that hand in hand we had ascended to that heaven where I hope to rejoin her.

“Lead me, Sir,” said she to Mr. M' Arthur, “to your brother. I would not intrude upon his sorrow, but I fain would take leave of my lifeless friend.”

While he hesitated whether or not to obey, Sir Charles exclaimed, with much earnestness, “You will destroy yourself, Miss Trevanion, by such an attempt. Indeed you

must not go. If our company is oppressive, let me intreat you to retire, and endeavour to compose your agitated spirits.”

“The housekeeper,” interrupted Mr. Donald, “shall be sent to attend upon you. It is not right that you should be alone.”

He ran down stairs himself for Mrs. Maclean, a sensible, respectable woman. She led Matilda to her chamber, and prevailed on her to take some coffee which she made.

After having swallowed a cup, wishing to be alone, she told Mrs. Maclean, that were she to leave her, perhaps she might get a little rest, upon which the good woman withdrew.

Matilda threw herself on the bed, and gave way to the most mournful reflections. She dwelt on the extraordinary situation in which she was placed, looking forward with timid apprehension to what might next happen. The difficulty of returning to England, left now only to the care of Mr. M’Arthur, with the additional presence of an ardent lover, whose perseverance had followed her to the Hebrides, was a very painful consideration. She saw no possibility of dismissing Sir Charles in her present distress, neither did she think that Lady Seyntaubyne would approve of it, were she to make the attempt.

Most of the day passed in the above painful rumination. In the evening, finding Mr. M’Arthur had left the chamber of his deceased wife, Matilda prevailed on the housekeeper to accompany her to visit the lifeless Amelia. The aspect of death struck her not with dismay. Her friend seemed only to be in a gentle sleep. She was rather soothed than appalled by the appearance of so happy a release from suffering.

Before she retired to bed she had a kind message of enquiry from Mr. Collin M’Arthur, saying, that he hoped to be able to see and converse with her in the morning. Matilda dreaded the interview, but it was necessary to determine on what was to be done in arranging some way to convey her to England. She was by no means certain that Lady Seyntaubyne wished her to return to Cornwall so soon; the reason for removing her remained in full force: yet Mrs. Arundel’s house was open to receive her, and to it she could always go. An idea so soothing, she looked forward to with anxious solicitude, as the only likely restoration to her lost peace.

When Matilda met Mr. Collin M’Arthur in the morning, and attempted to address him, her voice faltered, and the words died on her lips.

“We will not,” said he, in vain attempting composure, “speak of the past—God’s will be done! But permit me, my dear Miss Trevanion, to ask what you would wish me to do in regard to your removal. I have,” continued he, “a plan to propose, which appears to me the most eligible I can think of. Doctor Cameron will return to Inverness, the day after tomorrow. If you will allow him to take care of and conduct you to my sister, Mrs. Sutherland, till I can join you at Craignegar. With her you will experience every kindness; and at her house you can wait till you receive a letter from Lady Seyntaubyne.

“If Sir Charles Dashwood,” added he, “insists upon attending you as far as Inverness, as you stand engaged to him, it will be impossible to refuse. My sister being a stranger, he will probably return to England; and I shall, I doubt not, be able to find some lady to make a third in my carriage to accompany you to London.”

“How good, how considerate,” replied Matilda, much penetrated by his kindness, “at such a moment to think of me. I know, dear Sir, no plan that appears so advantageous;

and though I am unwilling to obtrude on a stranger, yet, from a sister of yours, I am persuaded I may promise myself a flattering reception at Craignegar.”

“Doctor Cameron,” said Mr. M’Arthur, “shall conduct you in safety to Mr. Sutherland’s house, after first preparing my sister for your arrival.”

Matilda expressed her gratitude and acknowledgments for Mr. M’Arthur’s kindness, and then hastened to acquaint Sir Charles of the arrangement which was to take place.

He appeared perfectly satisfied; and told her, that he should go with her and Doctor Cameron as far as Inverness, whence he should proceed to Edinburgh, where he should wait Mr. M’Arthur’s arrival, and then accompany them both to England.

Matilda was not quite satisfied with the plan, yet thought it injudicious to dissent, from the apprehension of displeasing Lady Seyntaubyne.

They were not to depart until the last mournful ceremony was performed. In Scotland it is usual to inter the dead the third or fourth day. The solicitude Mr. M’Arthur felt, that Doctor Cameron and Sir Charles should attend the remains of his beloved wife to the grave, induced this humane physician to stay a day longer in the island.

Matilda was surprized, and in some degree shocked, at the little solemnity of form with which the funeral was conducted; and though no long procession

“Blacken’d all the way,”

yet the omission of scarfs and hatbands to dress the mourners, the absence of mutes carrying the staffs, and above all the irregular procession of the company of mourners, as they moved along without even a clergyman in his robes to receive and pray over the body, in the church, was an omission of decorum and sanctity that she could by no means reconcile to her mind. Unsummoned by the deep and solemn toll of the bell, the little group of friends assembled round the grave of the deceased, and after seeing the coffin committed to the dust, they with merely a simple bow departed; for that was the only obsequies performed over the dead.

But while Matilda felt hurt and dissatisfied, she did not revert to the various religious customs and forms of different countries, and that no disrespect was intended to the dead. The zeal of those emancipated from superstition at the reformation, overthrew all the ceremonies, which the Scotch regarded as only a bigotted remnant of popery, and was the means of establishing a religion as devoid of forms as possible. It not only stripped their churches of every ornament, but divested their magnificent cathedrals of all interior grandeur, and of even the solemn music of the organ, considering its strains as too much bordering on the Romish church. While the episcopalians religiously preserved and maintained some of their decorations and forms, the plain Presbyterians gloried as much in the simplicity of their mode of worship.

Mrs. M’Arthur’s remains were deposited in one of the ruinous chapels not far from the laird’s mansion. When the small group of real mourners returned, Doctor Cameron was anxious to take his leave. Matilda having packed and collected the few things she had to carry, took leave of Mr. Donald M’Arthur, who with a thousand tender and kind wishes bade her farewell. His brother had shut himself up in his chamber, but the evening before, he promised Matilda that he would follow her in the course of a week.

As the dreary scenery of Mull faded from Matilda's view, she shed tears to the memory of her deceased friend; and experienced even a transient regret on quitting a spot in which she had been so hospitably entertained.

It was the last week of September when she departed from the Hebrides, and the weather proved favourable for their voyage.

Matilda found Doctor Cameron a sensible and agreeable man. But from the society of Sir Charles Dashwood she derived real consolation. He cheered and prevented her from feeling the unpleasantness she otherwise would have experienced, in being thrown amongst strangers, so far from her native land and the friends she loved.

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CHAP. V.

AFTER a quick voyage, the travellers proceeded to Fort William, a very insignificant little garrison. Matilda found it corresponded with the description given by Mrs. Grant, who says, "It is a sea-port, without being animated; it is a village, without the air of peace and simplicity; it is military, without either being gay or bold-looking; it is a country, without being rural; it is high land, without being picturesque or romantic; it has plains without verdure, hills without woods, mountains without majesty, a sky without a sun, at least his beams so seldom appear."

After a miserable accommodation at a miserable inn, they proceeded on the banks of the Lochy towards Fort Augustus. Close on the river stood, in dismal majesty, the ponderous castle of Inverlochy, with its round towers and heavy stone walls, which, from its strength and magnitude, seemed rather to be inhabited by a race of giants than of men. But accustomed as Matilda of late had been to gaze on elevated mountains, when the awful and stupendous Ben Nevis* was pointed out to her, presenting its rugged sides, while its towering summit was covered with eternal snow, she was filled with astonishment, and wondered how it was possible for any person to venture to ascend its tremendous heights, for it hung over the lesser mountains in such frowning majesty, it appeared ready to crush them beneath its gigantic bulk.*

Passing over the barren district of Lochaber, the travellers came into a more fertile country as they approached Fort Augustus, a very neat town, with a regular fortification, beautifully situated on the brink of the lake, and bounded by woody hills. Every mile now to Inverness the landscape improved in picturesque objects; and the change of scenery from the desolate aspect of the Hebrides to the romantic beauties which encompassed Inverness, was one of the first things which renovated Matilda's spirits. She seemed to be once more going into the land of Arcadia. The soft reposing landscape, and its sylvan scenery, mellowed by the tints of the luxuriant trees crowning the hills, hanging their brown and yellow branches in pensile elegance, with the meandering ness, on whose clear and broad waters rode at anchor ships innumerable, with the town spreading in a fertile plain, presented, altogether, objects so novel and pleasing, Matilda could scarcely restrain the pleasure which she experienced, on being once more in a cultivated and luxuriant country.

Sir Charles Dashwood now saw Matilda's character in a new point of view. He had beheld her, some months since, dressed in all the taste and elegance of the highest fashion, moving in the gayest circles, flattered, followed, and admired; this situation had not spoiled her, and he found she would cheerfully abandon it. Next, he saw her placed in one of the most remote of the Scottish isles, banished from the amusements of London, divested of all society, except what Mr. M'Arthur's house afforded, and watching with the most amiable tenderness an interesting friend, whose loss she now had to mourn. In all situations Matilda was the same, equally innocent and unaffected, with a beautiful simplicity of character which no fashion had power to impair, and no circumstance could

* The perpendicular height of this mountain is 4370 feet. *Garnett's Tour.*

* As an ancient Briton, I lament the disgrace of Snowden, which was esteemed the highest hill in the island, but must now yield the palm to a Caledonian mountain. The height of Ben Nevis, from the sea, is said to be 1450 yards. *Pennant.*

conceal. Open, candid, pure in intention as she was in heart, he adored the virtues which she so eminently possessed. The taste she discovered for rural beauties delighted him. Sir Charles was fond of a country life, and he hoped she would not object to spend some months of every year out of town.

Matilda received a very polite reception from Doctor Cameron's lady. After the fatigue and anxiety which she had endured, she was glad, at an early hour, to retire to the neat and comfortable chamber appropriated for her.

Doctor Cameron insisted on Sir Charles Dashwood's spending the following day with him. In the morning, he accompanied Mrs. Cameron and Matilda to view the town and the environs; and she purchased mourning in one of the shops for her deceased friend.

Matilda was much pleased with the capital of the Highlands. She found it a handsome town, possessing an air of elegant neatness. Without the trading bustle of a sea-port, it was rendered cheerful by its traffic and manufactories; and the Highland dress and bonnet, still worn, bespoke its antiquity; but, above all, she was charmed with the purity with which her native language was spoken; and she could almost have fancied herself in an English town, and once more amongst English people.

Mrs. Cameron pointed out a steep hill, about a mile from the town, which she told Matilda commanded a beautiful view of Fort George, if she would like to ascend it. The climate appeared so genial and renovating, after the unfavourable one in the Western Isles, that she cheerfully consented. When they reached the top of Craig Phatric, she was amply compensated, by the fine view of Fort George, standing on a peninsula, and encompassed by an extensive coast.

At the summit, what seemed an extensive earthen mound, she understood, from Mrs. Cameron, was the extraordinary natural curiosity, a *vitrified fort*,* of which Mr. M'Arthur had told her there were many on the tops of the hills in the Highlands. But the greatest part of these extensive ramparts were almost concealed by the turf which covered them. She wished for Mr. M'Arthur to have shewn her of what the rocky substance was composed, and to have explained how geologists account for this singular phenomenon. But neither of her companions having any taste for mineralogical enquiries, she was obliged to defer her curiosity until a future opportunity.

During the two or three days Matilda passed at Inverness, she was shewn by Doctor Cameron the plain of Culloden, where the Duke of Cumberland defeated the rebels, and destroyed all pretensions of the only remaining branch of the Stuart family, in the unfortunate Prince Charles, as he was denominated in Scotland.

The top of Craig Phatric is flat, and has been surrounded by a wall in the form of a parallelogram; the length of which is about eighty yards, and the breadth thirty, within the wall. The most curious circumstance attending it is, that the stones are all firmly connected together by a kind of vitrified matter, like lava, or like the stay or scorix of an iron-foundry, and the stones themselves, in many places, have been softened and vitrified.

Considerable masses of vitrified matter are found in the second rampart, under which is the natural rock, chiefly granite, with some breccia, or pudding-stone, composed of red granite, pebbles, quartz, &c. in a cement of clay and quartose matter. The Bishop of Derry, when on a tour into Scotland visited Craig Phatric, and expressed his opinion that the mound of vitrified matter are not the remains of an artificial work, but the traces of an ancient volcano.

The mound on Craig Phatric is likewise called the Giant's Castle. Mr. William says, the vitrification had been produced by builders unacquainted with cement, in order to make the forts stronger; and refers to the time of Fingal. *Garnett's Tour.*

Matilda's new acquaintances liked her so well they would not part with her for some days; and reluctantly, at the end of that time, suffered Mrs. Sutherland, who came to accompany her, to take her away.

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CHAP. VI.

MR. Collin M' Arthur had described his sister as merely an affable, sensible woman, with a benevolent heart; Matilda was therefore surprized when she was announced, to see a lady of an appearance so dignified, that she would have supposed her air somewhat tinctured with *hauteur*, if the grace which lent a peculiar charm to her address, had not set her at immediate ease in her presence. Her figure was tall and commanding, yet by no means *gauche*, like many of the tall Scotch women. Her air was feminine and elegant; and the tones of her voice so melodious and soft, Matilda thought she could have listened to the sweetness of her accents for ever, there was something so soothing in her manner and conversation, which truly indicated the refinement of her mind. Her countenance was highly interesting; and though she was not absolutely handsome, her eyes were so beautiful, they gave a general expression of loveliness to her face. A native pensiveness of character was by some of her enemies deemed cold reserve, which reserve proceeded from an indifference to objects that excited no interest. But she was as warm in her friendships as she was difficult in the choice of her friends.

Mrs. Sutherland was eminently distinguished for the strength of her understanding. It was highly cultivated. Her reading had been extensive, and her knowledge was profound. In most of the elegant accomplishments she excelled. Matilda observed the very superior air of fashion Mrs. Sutherland possessed above most of the ladies she had seen. She dressed with a taste and neatness she rarely saw characterize the Scotch ladies, who attired themselves more gaudily than English women.

Mrs. Sutherland's house displayed the elegance Matilda expected to find, after seeing the lady to whom it belonged. Every thing was conducted with ease and regularity. The pleasure-grounds at Craignegar reminded her of those which adorn the pretty villas in England, from the pleasing taste with which they were laid out. The hospitable table she sat down to was abundant, without profusion, and always surrounded with people of knowledge and refinement. Indeed, during the whole of her sojourn in Scotland she had never met with any silly or trifling characters.

Mr. Sutherland possessed agreeable manners, and like most of his countrymen, he was acute, intelligent, full of integrity and benevolence. He was an excellent husband, and an indulgent father, to a lovely family of eight children.

It was impossible for Matilda not to feel delighted with her new friends. Mrs. Sutherland had the perfect knowledge of true good breeding: she did the honours of her house with a grace that seemed to be peculiar to herself. Matilda had never met with any one who knew so happily the pleasing mode of conferring those delicate and kind attentions, which insensibly steal upon the soul; and the anguish of mind she so lately had experienced was greatly mitigated by this delightful visit.

Matilda had been about ten days at Craignegar when both the Mr. M' Arthurs joined her. Sir Charles Dashwood had previously taken his leave, but not without Matilda's promise to give him intimation of her arrival in Edinburgh. She told Mr. Collin M' Arthur that she was extremely averse to meet Sir Charles in that city, being confident he would insist on accompanying them on their journey to England. For although she had consented to listen to his addresses, yet she did not like publicly to proclaim her having done so to the world, until the period drew nearer of their being united.

“When once, my dear Miss Trevanion,” said he, half smiling, “a man is allowed the privilege of being received as a lover, be assured, he will not easily be dismissed from all due attendance. Sir Charles will be too anxious to look after his prize not to follow you closely. Nor indeed do I see how you possibly can prevent him, as now you are circumstanced. However,” added he, with much kind consideration, “I have a plan to propose, which, while it will beguile the melancholy of my now, alas! desolate home, will, I flatter myself, render your journey agreeable. It is my intention to invite my sister and her husband to accompany me to Richmond, for a few weeks. Marian has never been in London. The governess can take care of the children during her absence; and you seem to have excited such an interest and affection in the heart of each other, that I think it will prove a mutual gratification.”

“Under such agreeable circumstances,” returned Matilda, smiling, “I am afraid I shall have no plea to banish Sir Charles from your inviting society.”

Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland observing the extreme depression of their brother Collin, consented to spend part of the winter with them in England, a circumstance which gave Matilda the truest pleasure, for it not only removed the awkwardness of her situation, had she been obliged to travel only with Sir Charles and Mr. M’Arthur, but it gave her the lengthened society of her new friend, with whom she was so much charmed.

Previous to their departure from Inverness, Matilda received the few following lines from Lady Seyntaubyne.

To Miss Trevanion.

“Dear Matilda,

“The melancholy event of Mrs. M’Arthur’s death leaves no other alternative than your return to England. In the meantime you are happy in the society of such pleasing friends as you describe; and we both stand much indebted to them for their kindness and friendship.

“You do not mention Sir Charles Dashwood, who, I suppose, will attend you to London. Do not be ridiculously scrupulous in declining his company if he offers it.

“You will go to our friend Doctor Arundel’s, at Richmond, where you are to remain until I can send for you. Both he and Mrs. Arundel have been very ill; they are now recovering. I am, dear Matilda,

“Your sincere friend,

“DOROTHEA SEYNTAUBYNE.”

Pengwilly Hall, Sept. 30.

It was not without a sentiment of regret Matilda took leave of the Highlands of Scotland. For though during her residence there, she had witnessed so mournful a scene, she had experienced such genuine kindness, and found the society she mixed in composed of such an enlightened people, who were vivacious without levity, and hospitable without ostentation, that what she missed in the higher polish of English refinement, was made up for by sincerity and benevolence.

She cast a lingering look of regret on those hills which fast receded from her view, amongst which, as a stranger, she had been so warmly received, and kindly entertained.

The laird of Kilnorney accompanied them to Edinburgh; and on bidding adieu to Matilda, he invited her, when she became Lady Dashwood, to make a second visit to the Hebrides.

On quitting Edinburgh it was agreed they were to take the Carlisle road to England, as Mr. Sutherland wished to pay a visit to a particular friend he had not seen for several years, who had a house situated in Cumberland, on the small sequestered lake of Ennerdale Water.

It was the last week of October when the party arrived in Edinburgh. They found excellent accommodation at the elegant hotel recently opened in Sr. Andrew's Square. Mr. Sutherland's connections in that city introduced his brother and Matilda into the society of all those persons of knowledge, genius, and taste, resident in that modern Athens.

Sir Charles Dashwood became one of their party as a matter of course. He shortly wound himself into Mrs. Sutherland's favor. She had rarely seen so elegant and well-bred a man; and Matilda was half angry with her friend for proving so warmly his advocate. She felt an indescribable repugnance to shorten the period of his suspense, for which he was most urgent.

"Why," said Mrs. Sutherland to Matilda, "thus wantonly trifle with Sir Charles's peace. Having once consented to be his, why should you delay his happiness? You have a mind superior to coquetry; and by allowing him to be seen perpetually in your society, you give scope to a thousand idle observations, which the world are too apt to take advantage of making on a beautiful young woman, if she chances to be more unreserved and affable than common. Sir Charles here sees you surrounded by young men of fortune and fashion, who would be glad to aspire to the honor of your hand, did they not understand you were engaged; and while they are allured by your attractions, a tenacious jealousy is excited in Sir Charles's bosom, from the danger of losing you.

"Excuse my freedom," continued she, "my amiable young friend, if I add I should be inclined to suspect you of a little flirtation, if I did not know you better."

Matilda somewhat hurt and offended by Mrs. Sutherland's remark, said, "I did not, madam, expect this severity from you. If Sir Charles Dashwood will be so persevering in his attendance, he cannot expect that I shall give up all intercourse with the world for his gratification."

Mrs. Sutherland was not wrong in suspecting that a little species of coquetry did belong to Matilda's character. She was by nature so full of frankness and ease of manner, that she could not practice cold reserve, if people were not quite disagreeable to her; and she had almost from childhood been so accustomed to admiration, she had no dislike to receive the attentions of the men who flocked around her, without intending to distinguish any particular one by her favor.

During the month they spent in Edinburgh, Mr. Sutherland's universal acquaintance had thrown Matilda into the society of several young men, whose entertaining conversation, added to their taste for music and dancing, had rendered her more free and unguarded than usual. But she would have been shocked if, for a moment, she really had supposed that her innocent gaiety had given any cause for uneasiness, and

therefore was rather displeas'd at Mrs. Sutherland's surmises, conscious that Sir Charles had no real ground for indulging a moment's suspicion of the want of rectitude in her intentions.

Yet, when Matilda began to seriously reflect on Mrs. Sutherland's speech, she felt, in some degree, alarmed, in remembering how many serious admonitions she had received from her reverend friend on the subject of flirtation, on hearing that she was surrounded by admirers in London. In how despicable a view he had pourtrayed the character of a coquette. Recollecting how innocently she had destroyed Mr. M'Laurel's peace, by the familiarity with which she had treated him, she felt something like a conscious pang, and determin'd never more to lie under such an imputation as the one she had been charg'd with.

Matilda was in this disposition of mind when Sir Charles met her in the morning. Accidentally they were left alone, when taking advantage of the moment, with so much ardour he entreated her to shorten the period of his suspense, and consent to be his. At length he drew from her an inadvertent promise, that on her return to Pengwilly Hall, she would, with Lady Seyntaubyne's approbation, permit him to claim her hand.

It was under this auspicious circumstance the party proceeded on their way to England.

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CHAP. VII.

AT Carlisle they stopt to dine, and remain for the night. The three gentlemen were set down about half a mile from the city, having promised to spend the day with a friend of Mr. M'Arthur's, and were to join the ladies at the inn in the evening.

Just as Mrs. Sutherland and Matilda were alighting from the carriage, a post-chaise drove rapidly into the yard, and as Matilda caught a transient glimpse of the person who was seated in it, she fancied that he resembled Clairville; yet the idea seemed so wild and impossible, that he should be in a spot so distant from home, and alone, so lately married to Julia, she tried to dismiss the impression from her thoughts, when the sudden surprize and agitation had subsided.

Mrs. Sutherland, however, quick and penetrating, was in a moment certain something very extraordinary had happened, from Matilda's variation of countenance and total abstraction. Too polite to enquire the cause, as she did not seem to be inclined to disclose it, they each remained wholly silent.

Matilda went to the window, on which she intently fixed her eyes, to watch whether the person she had seen proceeded on his journey, but he did not appear.

When the waiter came into the room to lay the cloth, she enquired, "Whether there were many travellers on the road?"

"A gentleman, ma'am, drove in just as your barouche did, but he has ordered no horses. He asked if I knew to whom the carriage belonged, and to enquire, as I could not tell him. So, ma'am, I took the liberty of asking the out-rider, and he has told me all your names, which I have just communicated to the gentleman."

"Rather a singular piece of curiosity," said Mrs. Sutherland, "however, as we are on no secret expedition, he is welcome to our names. He is, perhaps,——"

The waiter had not withdrawn many minutes, when another one came into the room with a note in his hand. "I was desired, ma'am," said he, addressing Matilda, "to deliver this to you, (presenting it) if your name is Trevanion."

"My name is certainly Trevanion," returned she, with considerable emotion. "Who ordered this note to be given to me?"

"I don't know the gentleman's name, ma'am; he drove into the yard at the same time with your carriage."

"You need not wait," cried Mrs. Sutherland to the man, observing what passed with astonishment. She was going to rally Matilda, till she perceived she trembled so violently as to be scarcely able to hold the billet, which, on opening, contained these few lines:

To Miss Trevanion.

"Mr. Clairville presents compliments to Miss Trevanion, takes the liberty of soliciting the honour of a few minutes conversation with her, when she is disengaged, previous to her leaving Carlisle."

It was, then, actually Clairville that she had seen! What extraordinary event could have brought him on the road so near to Scotland? and what could he possibly have to say to her, to induce the request of an interview, as he was circumstanced?

Matilda, indignant at what she considered so improper a demand, and sensible, as she was situated in regard to Sir Charles Dashwood, she ought by no means to see him, rang the bell and desired the waiter to give her compliments to Mr. Clairville, and she must be excused from seeing any company.

The effort this painful struggle cost Matilda, was more than she could support, without discovering to Mrs. Sutherland the anguish she endured; who, observing how pale she turned, approached, and tenderly taking her hand, said, "I ask no questions, for I guess how it is;—this unfortunate young man comes too late; and, from whatever cause, it is evident you both are wretched."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Matilda, speaking with difficulty from the violence of her emotion, "he rather comes to insult me with his presence; to triumph in his marriage. In discovering that I was here, he ought rather to have shunned, than sought me. O Clairville! is this like the delicacy, the tenderness, I expected to find in your character?"

"Is he then married?" cried Mrs. Sutherland, as she regarded Matilda with a look of the softest pity, faintly aspirating, "poor thing!"

The waiter again entered with another note, which Matilda ordered him to take back, but which Mrs. Sutherland countermanded, and bid him leave it.

"You commit no impropriety," said she, "towards Sir Charles Dashwood, in at least hearing what this poor young man has to say. Allow me to open the note; I will be answerable for the consequence."

Matilda sighed, and making no opposition, Mrs. Sutherland read to this effect:

To Miss Trevanion.

"After so long a journey, cruel, but too fondly loved, Miss Trevanion, you drive me from you in despair, when I was thus far on my way to lay open my whole soul, and to disclose the extraordinary circumstance which has happened. Think you that I would have wounded your delicacy, and treated you with such unbecoming indignity, as to venture into your presence, if I were not free? No; unworthy should I be of possessing a being so pure as Matilda, and with justice might you then have spurned me from you. Surely, after this justification, you will allow me to see you. But that you may no longer have a moment's doubt of the motives which actuate my present conduct, I enclose Julia's letter.

"If you be unwilling to admit me alone, the lady whom you are with may be present at the interview, for I glory in my affection for you!—I shall glory in proclaiming it to the world. But I solemnly declare, that I will not leave this place without seeing you; and if I am to be rejected, from your lips alone will I hear the refusal, which stamps my misery in this world for ever.

"ALBERT CLAIRVILLE."

Mrs. Sutherland next read to Matilda Lady Julia's letter to Clairville. It ran thus:

"The period of our existence here is so short, and our joys so few, that, wilfully, to draw on ourselves evils we can avoid, were, indeed, to deserve the misery which would too probably ensue from a mistaken delicacy of conduct.

“There is no error more common, nor any more fatal, than the misjudging ambition of parents, who, from motives of policy and interest, form alliances for their children in which the heart takes no share; and the very tie by which they wish to unite them is, of all others, the least binding. Probably from an odd perverseness in human nature, which, by fettering the parties, renders the choice at perfect variance with the persons elected to come together.

“From children, these bonds were created for us. Too inexperienced to judge whether our affections were likely to spring from similarity of taste, or were united in one interest; as cousins and play-fellows, we happily assimilated together; and in sport we were called by the endearing names we did not understand, and by which hereafter we were to spend our lives together. But when maturer years should have warmed our friendship into love, the capricious little god, instead of artfully levelling his arrows with success, maliciously withdrew them altogether.

“You have too much penetration, Clairville, not to have discovered long since, that though I have yielded a reluctant consent to fulfil an engagement, in which I am persuaded our hearts were at perfect variance, I have yet continually framed feeble excuses to delay our union, in which I saw you considered your honour too deeply engaged in fulfilling to wilfully break off, though, like myself, you languished to be free.

“Surely, then, dear Clairville, thus to come together, would be bartering away our happiness for a mistaken point of honour. *Julia Penrose sets you free!*

“Not for worlds would I do you so great an injury, as to offer you a hand with a heart cold and insensible, in opposition to a generous and exalted spirit, which so nobly, I am persuaded, would have sacrificed itself to one who finds it impossible to bestow on you that tenderness which you so justly merit.

“No, Clairville, the man I marry must possess more than my esteem; and I will never confer my hand until that happen.

“I grieve that this affair has gone so unfortunate a length; it has rather been occasioned by the warm importunity of your mother, than my indecision. I grieve, also, for her disappointment. My father, marrying himself from excess of affection, remains very passive on the subject. He has of late never wished to influence my inclination; but, on the contrary, has always said, ‘I am sure my Julia will marry no man that I do not approve, therefore it shall never be said that I directed her choice in a measure so important to her happiness.’

“O Clairville! direct your choice where your virtues will be rewarded, where your excellence is known, and where your tenderness will be repaid as it merits; for you are eminently formed to render the married state happy. There is a lovely fair one calculated to make you far happier than I could have done. Seek her out, and tell her, that Julia Penrose promises her the felicity to which she was insensible.”

Mrs. Sutherland having finished the letter, paused in silent interest to contemplate her young friend.

“Clairville then is free!” exclaimed Matilda, almost panting for breath. “Not married to Julia! and he offers me his hand! At an earlier period, perhaps, it might not have been rejected. Now,” cried she, with dignified resolution, “I am in honour bound to become the wife of Sir Charles Dashwood. My promise is passed, and worlds would not induce me to recal it.

“I cannot,” continued she, with extreme emotion, “see Mr. Clairville, neither, as almost wedded to another; can I write to him. I would not, willingly, wound his feelings in the disappointment which he will experience, neither would I awaken in my own bosom an unavailing and improper tenderness.

“You, madam, shall see him instead of me, if you will fulfil so unpleasant an office. Tell him how I am circumstanced;—how situated. Intreat him immediately to depart, if he would not sacrifice my peace ere Sir Charles arrives. They are acquainted with each other; and, with Clairville’s impetuosity of temper and warm affection, I should dread the consequence of their meeting. Tell him, if he ever loved Matilda he will leave her; and if it will soften the anguish of eternal separation, assure him if I had been free —— . No, do not say it:—far better he should not know how tenderly I loved him.”

If Mrs. Sutherland was before charmed with Matilda’s character, the exalted resolution she formed, which discovered the rectitude of her mind, governed by the strictest principles of honour, now excited her warmest admiration. She saw how greatly a good mind can act when called into exertion. Though she perceived the necessity of these young people not meeting, yet, as a stranger to Mr. Clairville, Mrs. Sutherland thought there would be so great an impropriety in her opening a subject of such a delicate nature, she at length, with difficulty, prevailed on Matilda to write to him, as the most likely mode not to irritate and wound his feelings; at the same time assuring her, that it appeared to her to be both unhandsome and ungenerous, after so great a proof of his tenderness and honour, not to afford him so poor a consolation.

Mrs. Sutherland added, with much kindness, “I will undertake to deliver the letter, rather than send so many notes to and fro by the waiters, which naturally will excite impertinent curiosity and idle whispers.”

Matilda, deeply penetrated by Mrs. Sutherland’s goodness, yet distressed how to act for the best, and greatly hurt at the idea of seeming unkindness towards Clairville, though by no means satisfied of the propriety of writing to him, at length, after blotting several sheets of paper, and not pleased with what she said, gave Mrs. Sutherland the following lines to present to him:—

To Lieutenant Clairville.

“I grieve for the disappointment I am sensible you will experience, and ardently wish it were possible to soften the regrets which may arise on my declining an interview; but when you know that I no longer consider myself as having power to act by my own free agency, you are too candid and generous not to admit the propriety of a seeming unkindness, rather than I should be guilty of doing wrong.

“Could I have known, or even guessed, O Clairville! that you were free, before I was induced to enter into an engagement, which no circumstance now can alter, it is unnecessary to say where my choice would have been directed. Yet this confession I almost deem it improper to make, and except from the idea that you might suppose I was insensible to your predilection, nothing should have drawn it from me.

“The circumstance which has occurred to finally separate us, you will be acquainted with from my friend Mrs. Sutherland, for I am quite unequal to such an office. Dear Clairville farewell.

“MATILDA TREVANION.”

When Clairville was desired to walk into the room which the ladies occupied, he was surprised to find only a stranger. As his cheek flushed with disappointment and anger, he exclaimed, after a minute's pause, "Miss Trevanion then, madam, refuses to see me?" And, not appearing to regard the presence of a person he had never beheld, he added, "She neither deigns to allow me a few minutes conversation, nor answers my letter. Though I said you, madam, were at liberty to be admitted."

"Miss Trevanion, sir," cried Mrs. Sutherland, sincerely compassionating him, "has answered your letter; judge not of her so hastily and unkindly. She rather merits your commiseration than your displeasure, which you will find hereafter."

"Why will she not see me?" interrupted he, impatiently. "In what have I offended? and how drawn on myself this unmerited severity?"

"You have not offended," said Mrs. Sutherland, with much feeling; "this letter, which Miss Trevanion requested me to give you, will explain,—will——"

"Confirm," replied he, impetuously, "I perceive her determination not to listen to me. Oh! where," added he, mournfully, "is the tenderness, the gentleness I expected to find in Miss Trevanion!"

Clairville took the letter from Mrs. Sutherland in much agitation. Having ran over the contents, he exclaimed, in a tone of despair, "She refers me to you, madam, to confirm the truth or the fallacy of the ideal felicity which I had created for myself. That Miss Trevanion is lost to me for ever is evident. I was not, indeed, prepared for the event. Yet rather trusted to the ardency of my imagination, that she would be mine, than to the probable chance, with a softness so attractive, and a loveliness which is her least perfection, she would be free.

"Had I considered myself at liberty," continued he, "when on a first acquaintance I became sensible of the various attractions which so eminently adorn Miss Trevanion's character, to have declared my sentiments, I had been spared the anguish of this moment.

"I presume, madam, you are not ignorant of the circumstances which led me to fulfil an engagement formed for me from infancy by my friends, and which my cousin Lady Julia Penrose, had too high a sense of rectitude to allow me to perform, from the indifference with which she regarded me. But, from the period of my acquaintance with Matilda, I never suffered her image to dwell on my mind, until I found it possible we could be united. On the swiftest wings of hope and expectation I flew, and would have done so, to the most remote part of the habitable globe, to have prevailed on her to be mine. I had cherished the fond and fallacious hope, that as I knew not of Miss Trevanion's having formed an engagement, so rare a felicity would be my lot. It is true, that no confession of regard had ever passed between us; yet, still, a something whispered to my ardent imagination, that I should not be rejected."

Mrs. Sutherland was too prudent to discover to Clairville her perfect ignorance until an hour or two ago, of all acquaintance between him and Matilda, by encreasing his embarrassment, in opening his heart to a perfect stranger. Indeed, she so truly sympathized in the adverse fate of each, though sensible that Matilda's engagement could not be recalled to Sir Charles Dashwood, she was almost induced to lament it; and felt much concern, having no idea that Matilda had any concealed attachment, in having rather warmly urged his cause. Trembling for the event, if Sir Charles and Clairville meet, she said, with much earnest solicitude, "As Matilda cannot be yours, is it not far

wiser that you should not meet? It would answer no purpose, but to awaken a tenderness which might prove fatal to the happiness of both. I am sure, Sir, a moment's cool reflection will convince you, that the more distant you are removed from each other, the better it will be. Miss Trevanion urges it, and you cannot refuse."

"It is a matter of indifference," returned he, "whither I go. Yet to drive me away so impatiently, surely there is no necessity; for my being here will not, I suppose, impede her union with another. You have not told me, madam," added he, "to whom —;" his voice faltered, and he could not go on.

Mrs. Sutherland, who thought it best to remove at once the suspense he endured, in as considerate a manner as possible unfolded Matilda's intended union with Sir Charles Dashwood; and closed her narrative, by an earnest repetition of her request, that he would depart before the baronet and her husband returned, which she every moment expected.

During Mrs. Sutherland's communication, Clairville walked up and down the room with hurried and agitated steps. When she had finished, he exclaimed, in a voice vainly struggling for composure, "Sir Charles Dashwood is worthy of Miss Trevanion. Oh great be their felicity! she could not have bestowed her hand on a more excellent man.

"I will not, madam," continued he, "oppress you any longer, by my impetuosity of temper. You possess too much candour and benevolence not to make allowance, and to forgive the various emotions of my mind, which you have witnessed in this, to me, unhappy conference. Accept my warmest acknowledgements for the tender consideration you have bestowed on a wretched stranger. Assure Matilda I depart, though with the most painful sensations, with a perfect consciousness that her sincerity and firmness results from the rectitude of her mind, rather than the coldness of insensibility."

Clairville took leave of Mrs. Sutherland, and immediately ordered post-horses, proceeding to Kendal that night.

Mrs. Sutherland inherited all the resolute firmness of the Scotch character, blended with the engaging softness and sensibility of the English. She had, without yielding to the native tenderness of her disposition, maintained a becoming dignity and gentleness in her conversation with Clairville; she had supported the consequence of her young friend in a most arduous and difficult situation. She had discovered no imbecility of mind, but a sense and discretion which regulated all her actions. Mrs. Sutherland, without knowing the circumstances of Clairville's and Matilda's acquaintance (for she had never heard her mention him) felt the utmost sympathy and compassion for them both. But she was too judicious to allow them to discover it, to weaken their fortitude and resolution.

Whatever vexations or anxieties she endured, she made it a principle never to torment her husband with them. She silently suffered in secret, and if she had not power to overcome them her tears excited no sympathy, for they were always shed in private.

Mrs. Sutherland went to Matilda's chamber as soon as Clairville took leave. She found her waiting in the most painful anxiety for a summons. She related what had passed, dwelling as little as possible on Clairville's distress and disappointment, which she softened as much as was in her power, faithfully repeating the high opinion he entertained of Sir Charles Dashwood, and how entirely worthy he considered him of being her husband.

“Now, my dear Matilda,” added Mrs. Sutherland, “since there are events in life which there is not preventing, so it is our duty to reconcile the mind to them with cheerfulness and content. Your good sense will point out the necessity of endeavouring to banish, as much as possible, all recollection of the occurrences of this evening. Compose your hurried spirits, retire to repose, and in the morning I shall expect to meet you with that firmness which becomes your character.”

She took an affectionate leave; and deeming it best for Matilda to be alone, retired to her chamber, somewhat overcome by the distressing conflict which she had witnessed.

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CHAP. VIII.

IT was not until some weeks after Matilda had left England that Julia formed the resolution to put a stop to the preparations which had been making for her nuptials. As she said to Clairville, she had continually framed feeble excuses for delay. But when she found, that without treating him dishonourably, she must consent to sacrifice her inclination to the wishes of her family, she at length took courage to communicate to her father how averse she was to form an alliance in which her heart took no share, and that she gave her hand to Clairville merely from a sense of obedience. Lord Seyntaubyne listened to her with more concern than displeasure. He had rather agreed that his daughter should marry Clairville to please Lady Sophia, than from his own desire. He therefore immediately told her, that she was at liberty to take what measures she chose to prevent its completion. Julia lost no time in writing to Clairville; and though the hopes of his mother in an alliance on which she had set her heart were baffled, and she suffered a severe disappointment, yet she was too noble-minded to desire a union promising so little happiness.

Clairville replied to Julia's letter by at once setting her free. He spoke not of Matilda, nor suffered his thoughts to point towards her, until Julia, when they again met, no longer as lovers, entreated him to seek his happiness where she was persuaded he would not be disappointed.

Thus urged, Clairville without hesitation unfolded to his mother his latent affection for Matilda.

Lady Sophia from the period of their becoming inmates beneath her roof, suspected the mutual partiality which she had always strongly opposed. She loved Matilda with the tenderness of a daughter; she was alive to the engaging qualities she possessed, so likely to ensure happiness in the married state. But she objected to Matilda's alliance with her son. Had she chosen a woman for him, it would have been Miss Trevanion, if the mystery which enveloped her birth could have been explained to her satisfaction, but she positively forbid Clairville to think of her under so disadvantageous a circumstance. Want of fortune she regarded as a paltry consideration, compared with those qualities of the mind calculated to perpetuate felicity. But her ladyship was tenacious to whom her son was allied; and if Matilda proved to be the illegitimate offspring of the Seyntaubyne family (which she strongly suspected) the objection became insuperable.

Lady Sophia had again closely questioned Doctor Arundel on the subject; but he, bound in honor not to disclose the little he knew of Matilda's history, remained resolutely silent on the subject.

Clairville perplexed and distracted at the difficulties and objections which his mother stated, at length drew from her a reluctant consent to obtain Miss Trevanion's hand, on condition that she would disclose to him who were her parents; and if she proved the offspring of an honourable alliance, on that condition she would no longer withhold her approbation.

Clairville immediately on these terms followed Matilda to Scotland; buoyant with hope, and elated with the certainty of finding her not merely free, but obtaining the satisfaction of clearing his mother's doubts of her legitimacy; for he would not allow

himself to believe that her parents would not stand the test of the strictest enquiry; so tenacious did he feel of the least disapprobation being cast on any person with whom Matilda was connected.

When Clairville arrived at Carlisle, as Matilda was alighting from the carriage, he saw, and knew her.

The result of his interview with Mrs. Sutherland spared him the necessity of any enquiry in regard to Matilda's family; and spared her also the embarrassment which it would have occasioned.

That she should not have heard of the alliance between Clairville and Julia being put an end to, was by no means surprising. Mrs. Arundel knowing Lady Sophia's objections to Clairville's coming forward, was of all people the least likely to mention it, and awaken expectations in Matilda. Lady Seyntaubyne had heard the circumstance from public report; but having consented to Sir Charles Dashwood's addresses for Matilda, would, if possible, prevent any information, connected with Clairville, to reach her.

After the disappointment which he sustained, he determined to obtain an immediate appointment, to return to sea, having been exchanged as a prisoner in the last cartel.

When Sir Charles Dashwood and Mr. Sutherland reached Carlisle, the hour was so late, they were not surprized to find the ladies had retired some time.

The contending emotions which Matilda endured, in struggling to banish the idea of Clairville's tenderness, his disappointment, and the anguish she was conscious she should occasion him, were so painful, in the morning when she arose from a disturbed sleep, so much fever hung about her, all her friends remarked her extreme languor, and Sir Charles with infinite solicitude, enquired whether she was ill.

She complained of a violent head-ache, and asked Mrs. Sutherland to take a short walk, to try if the air would remove it, while the carriages were preparing to proceed on their journey.

When Matilda reached the street she became so sick and giddy, she said, with a faint smile, as she held Mrs. Sutherland's arm, "It will not do.—I fain would shake off the illness, but I find it stealing upon me. Perhaps travelling will remove it."

Mrs. Sutherland, who beheld the extreme heaviness of Matilda's eyes with much alarm, proposed to the gentlemen remaining another day at Carlisle, but Matilda was so urgent to proceed, they got as far as Kendal, when she felt such an increase of illness, she thought she was going to die, and with difficulty was led to her chamber by Mrs. Sutherland.

Matilda who had struggled against the anguish of her mind during her attendance on Mrs. M'Arthur, was now, from the late conflict, quite overcome. She was seized with a violent nervous fever, which threatened to terminate her existence.

The physician they sent for from Carlisle immediately pronounced her illness to be the effect of some violent mental agitation, and affliction and alleged, without the cause was speedily removed, he could not promise that her life would not prove the sacrifice.

Sir Charles heard the report with astonishment and dismay. He questioned Mrs. Sutherland so closely, that the integrity and unerring truth, which guided all her words and actions, put her to much difficulty how to reply; but she said, the fatigue and anxiety

Mrs. M'Arthur's death had occasioned Miss Trevanion, was likely to affect a mind of so much sensibility.

"The malady, madam," replied the physician, "is more recent. It is some late shock and agitation which the young lady has experienced. I should guess, something of a tender nature."

"That cannot be," returned Sir Charles. "Has any thing, concealed, occurred, which you are acquainted with, Mrs. Sutherland, which can be removed? Speak, my dear madam."

"There is nothing," said she, "to remove which is not already done. And I am assured, that no suspense hangs on her mind."

"Has the young lady," interrupted the physician, "met with any opposition from her friends where she had placed her affections?"

"Miss Trevanion," replied Mrs. Sutherland, "is engaged, but I understood with her own free consent."

"Well, madam, I only speak to visible effects; the causes, as a stranger, I cannot know."

When Sir Charles retired for the night, his valet, who had the fault common to servants, of being too communicative on some occasions, acquainted him, that a gentleman had arrived at Carlisle during his absence, and that two or three letters and messages had passed between him and Miss Trevanion: at last he was admitted into the room where she and Mrs. Sutherland were sitting; that he staid with them a long time, after which he ordered post-horses, and took the road for Kendal.

This communication did not tend to promote Sir Charles's sleep. He proceeded to his chamber in perplexity and agitation, dwelling with surprize on so extraordinary an event. Before it was day-light he rang for his servant to again hear all the particulars which he had related. He could not tell the gentleman's name, but enquiring of one of the waiters, remembered Miss Trevanion's letter was addressed to Mr. Clair——something."

"It could not," exclaimed Sir Charles, in much agitation, "be Clairville?"

"Yes, Sir, that was the very name."

He dismissed the man, and hurrying down stairs waited with the greatest anxiety and impatience for Mrs. Sutherland's appearance. At once Sir Charles narrated to her all that he had heard, requesting her with ingenuousness to inform him whether it was true.

"All is true," answered she, "this busy tale-bearer has told you, except that I alone was admitted to the conference with Mr. Clairville. You have nothing, Sir Charles, rely upon my word, to fear from him. I know not which of the two has acted most nobly, he or Miss Trevanion. He said, with the warmest generosity, you were worthy of her; while she, absolute in her refusal to see him, spoke of her engagement to you, in a few lines, (which I gave Mr. Clairville) as an event which no circumstance would prevent her from fulfilling."

"Generous Matilda," exclaimed he, much moved. "Rather would I forego my own bliss than witness the terrible conflict which your engagement to me has occasioned. Surely Clairville's intended marriage with his cousin Lady Julia Penrose must be broken off. Yet it seemed so fixed—so certain—had I only known—only guessed.—Madam," added Sir Charles, after a pause, "I take your promise never to divulge to Matilda that I have any knowledge, or even suspicion, of Clairville's visit. We will proceed on our

journey homewards, when Miss Trevanion is sufficiently recovered, as if no such circumstance had happened.”

Mrs. Sutherland readily gave her promise to conceal from Matilda Sir Charles’s knowledge of what could only have produced unavailing regret, had she guessed that he had been acquainted with the late event which had happened.

Mrs. Sutherland, who had no part of impertinent female inquisitiveness in her character, yet felt very desirous to know who Clairville and Lady Julia were, and the first day she was alone with Sir Charles Dashwood, he related his acquaintance with Lady Sophia Clairville, and the suspicion that Matilda was not indifferent to her son, from the meeting he witnessed at his own house. He then spoke of Miss Trevanion in the handsomest terms, and told Mrs. Sutherland how much enjoyment he had derived from her society, even in some of the gayest parties in London.

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CHAP. IX.

IT was several weeks before Matilda gained sufficient strength to be able to travel. She felt quite hurt in detaining her friends so long from reaching England, and her gratitude was awakened by the unceasing attention of her friends. The tender care Mrs. Sutherland had bestowed on her had greatly mitigated her sufferings. She had watched her with the fond solicitude of a parent, and Matilda was unable to express the extent of her obligation to a person only so recently a perfect stranger. But Mrs. Sutherland possessed all the fine qualities of the heart, which only wanted to be called into action to display themselves. She had firmness with feeling; and a warmth and zeal of friendship, where she professed it, which experienced no diminution in being put to the test.

Mr. M'Arthur had written several times to Lady Seyntaubyne; and the apprehension and anxiety Matilda's illness occasioned her, would have made her set off immediately for the north, if Mr. M'Arthur had not earnestly requested her to desist from so imprudent a plan; assuring her that Miss Trevanion was paid every attention to, and had most skilful advice.

It was determined, as it was now on the verge of Christmas, the whole party were to accept of Mr. Maitland's invitation, to spend the fortnight of that festival with him and his lady, at their noble mansion on Ennerdale Water. The rigour of winter had not yet set in. The season was unusually mild, and promised to be open favourable weather for the travellers.

Journeying by slow stages, Matilda found her health and strength daily improve. It was only Mrs. Sutherland, who happened to be a witness of her heroic conduct, would have known that any latent uneasiness dwelt upon her mind; so proper was her demeanour towards Sir Charles Dashwood. He could not constantly see her and be in her society, without discovering the tenderness of his attachment, which, however, he appeared to be making every attempt to subdue. He was often extremely absent and silent; and Matilda fancied, though his attentions did not decrease, they were neither so marked, nor full of compliments as formerly, except sometimes, when he was thrown of his guard.

Buried in wooded hills, the travellers at length reached the small sequestered lake of Ennerdale Water, which, although seldom visited by the tourist, they found by no means deficient in the grandeur of scenery, although on a circumscribed scale, which distinguished its neighbouring lakes. Retirement and tranquillity seemed to characterize it as the most inviting haunt of love and meditation.

The clear unruffled bosom of the water, which softly glided at the foot of the alpine hills, was environed with pastoral and arcadian landscapes, which softening the wildness of the steep mountains, conspired to render this spot as inviting as it was lovely.

Mr. Maitland's house stood on the margin of the water, and its picturesque appearance seemed to intimate the owner to be a man of sentiment and taste.

There was no other habitation near, except a low neat dwelling, which appeared above an ordinary cottage, as its white-washed chimneys peeped from amidst the leafless trees, whose summer foliage, would intirely conceal it.

Some days passed away very agreeably with Mr. and Mrs. Maitland. During that period Matilda, more than once, expressed her curiosity to Mrs. Sutherland, to know to

whom the pretty white cottage belonged, which was situated at about a quarter of a mile distant.

“The owner,” said she, “is not, I suspect, of vulgar degree, for every thing around displays such an air of simple elegance.”

“Do, sir,” cried Mrs. Sutherland, turning to Mr. Maitland, “satisfy my friend’s curiosity; what shepherd or shepherdess of your mountains is the possessor of the rural cot which we see from your windows, and which forms no unpleasing object.”

“The owner,” he answered, “is called Mrs. Bertie; but whether she is a widow or a wife, I cannot inform you. The little I know of her history, is somewhat romantic. She made her appearance on this lake almost nineteen years ago, without introduction either to me, or any person on the neighbouring lakes. The cottage which she inhabits, was originally a little fishing-house; but the man to whom it belonged fitted it up, thinking it might let to advantage during the summer months; but finding Mrs. Bertie likely to prove a permanent tenant, he allowed her to take it upon a long lease at a very trifling rent, not more than seven or eight pounds per annum. From whence she came, no one could ever discover; and I find she supports herself by works of ingenuity, which she sends to the neighbouring museums. She receives no letters, nor holds correspondence with any one, therefore to trace her is impossible.

“Once, during the series of years she had resided here, we missed her for a short period, I think it was about ten autumns ago: and, on her return, she was seized with a severe illness, during which, Mrs. Maitland conferred on her so many essential kindnesses, as to have since formed something like an intimacy between us.

“When my wife and I,” continued Mr. Maitland, “first saw Mrs. Bertie, which was accidentally, soon after she came into this neighbourhood, she was eminently beautiful; she was fair as the new-blown lilly, and her eyes had a melting softness of expression, such as I have rarely seen. But the increasing languor and dejection of her appearance has, of late, faded that dazzling loveliness which she then possessed. We have derived much pleasure from her society; for though her manners are simple, they are very graceful. She has been well educated, and her principles seem to be founded on piety and virtue.”

“Did she never express,” enquired Mrs. Sutherland, “during that illness, any desire that her friends should be written to?”

“No, on the contrary; when asked by Mrs. Maitland, she said she had taken a final leave of the world, and every person in it, and that she wished to die as she had lived, unknown.

“Once I think she murmured the name of daughter, but the agony the name awakened alarmed my wife, who, for many hours, in vain endeavoured to compose her.”

“How extraordinary!” exclaimed Matilda. “O that it were possible to see this interesting creature!”

“She, generally,” replied Mrs. Maitland, “walks out in a fine day. Perhaps we may be so fortunate as to meet her; but when I have company staying in my house, she always avoids us.”

Matilda could not dismiss the stranger from her thoughts, and felt singularly interested about her.

CHAP. X.

A FEW days after the subsequent conversation, Matilda, strolling with Mrs. Maitland along the gravel walk which led to the cottage, observed Mrs. Bertie at a little distance; but on seeing a stranger she abruptly turned away.

“I will go to her,” said Mrs. Maitland, “and request she will allow you to look at her drawings; they are different views of the lakes; she cannot refuse me.”

In a few minutes Mrs. Maitland returned, accompanied by Mrs. Bertie.

“I understand, madam,” said she, addressing Matilda in a soft and pensive voice, “you have expressed a wish to look at my trifling landscapes; will you favour me with your company to only a rustic cottage, inhabited by a solitary recluse.”

“You do me honour, madam,” replied she, “by indulging my wish. I have always felt an irresistible desire to see the interior of a rural abode which looked so picturesque, as to promise the inhabitant to be of no common order of beings.”

“Ah, madam!” returned she, with a heavy sigh, while tears started in her eyes, “I perceive you have lived in the world by your flattery. People of the world are well versed in it, and know too well how to flatter and to deceive.”

“Pardon me, I spoke but what I thought; and this inviting seclusion would almost make me renounce society.”

“To me,” replied Mrs. Bertie, “this spot has proved the soother of the heaviest sorrow. I have lived here, as Mrs. Maitland has told you, for a length of years, and, except from her friendly society, have passed my days in the perfect seclusion which is my choice.”

“And yet, methinks,” added she, gazing wistfully at Matilda, “you, young lady, would prove an exception to an acquaintance with strangers. There is something so lovely, so interesting, about you, and which recalls——”

“Recalls what?” interrupted she, eagerly.

“Merely,” said Mrs. Bertie, mournfully, “a resemblance to a person I once knew. But pardon the inadvertance of my observation; it is so striking I was taken by surprize. If you please, we will drop the subject. Allow me to shew you the way to my cottage.”

They entered a small room, decorated with much taste. The window-curtains, only of white cotton, were tied up with knots of pale green ribband. The jars on the chimney-piece were filled with lauristina, and bunches of mountain-ash. In the recess, stood a profusion of myrtles and geraniums, and above them hung some painted shelves containing a few books. The walls were covered with landscapes of the lake in various points; and, though not finished with the hand of a master, gave a correct idea of the places they were intended to represent. It was a true English cottage, so beautiful and neat.

Matilda expressed her thanks for the favour which had been allowed her; and when she rose to depart, Mrs. Bertie expressed a hope to see her again before she finally quitted Ennerdale Water.

“Miss Trevanion will, I am sure,” replied Mrs. Maitland, “be happy to repeat her visit; she seems to have fallen in love with your cottage.”

Mrs. Maitland had scarcely finished the sentence, when Mrs. Bertie turned so pale, and discovered such extraordinary emotion, she seemed ready to faint; while in

trembling perturbation, she said to Mrs. Maitland, "Did not you call that young lady Trevanion?"

"Yes," returned she. "Do you then know her?"

"Oh, no!" cried Mrs. Bertie, sighing, "to me the young lady is a stranger."

"Then suffer me not to be so long," interrupted Matilda, "but permit me to see you again soon."

"I not only permit," cried Mrs. Bertie, emphatically, "but I intreat that I may. For the interest which you have excited has awakened, from your name, the remembrance of years and persons which I fancied had long been buried in eternal oblivion."

"Let me hope, madam, that Matilda Trevanion has excited an interest in your bosom in a name, which, if not indifferent to you, she has cherished with the fondest reverence from the earliest period of her existence."

"This interview," answered Mrs. Bertie, "with a stranger, has led to such a coincidence of events long, indeed, passed away, that I cannot but think, though I never saw you before, that we shall hereafter be more intimately known to each other."

"The idea," cried Matilda, as they took leave, "is, believe me, madam, most pleasing."

Mrs. Bertie's sudden agitation had much surprised Mrs. Maitland; while, in Matilda, it produced such an earnest desire for more conversation with her, she determined to slip unnoticed to Mrs. Bertie's cottage on the following day.

"This poor woman," said Mrs. Maitland, as they walked home together, "has, probably, been unfortunately married to some man of the name of Trevanion, who has deserted her, from the emotion it excited when you were mentioned. It will be odd, if your visit here should lead to a discovery, after her living so long an incognito, of who she really is. People who live in so recluse a manner, generally have some romantic history annexed to them."

Matilda made no reply. A thousand vague ideas floated in her mind relative to Mrs. Bertie, which, by turns, soothed, agitated, and alarmed her.

Afraid of being questioned as to the result of her visit, she immediately went to her own room. Cautiously locking the door, she took from her bosom the picture which she always wore of her mother. With eager anxiety she examined the features. It represented a girl of seventeen in all the vivacity of youth, and the full radiance of beauty. But yet every feature, though changed by time, resembled Mrs. Bertie.

The sparkling lustre of the eyes were sunk into a mournful expression, yet the melting softness they emitted was the same; and the contour of the face gave a likeness so striking, that Matilda determined to shew the miniature to Mrs. Bertie.

Lady Seyntaubyne had told her, that her mother was no more. But might not her remote seclusion be unknown; and, that dead to the world, she was dead to those to whom she was related? There appeared to be an extraordinary and mysterious connection between the Seyntaubynes and Trevanions: and so inexplicable were the circumstances attending her own history, the more she attempted to develop it, it became the deeper involved in mystery.

Matilda knew not any one that she resembled, except it was Lady Julia Penrose, and Julia was thought to be very like her father, the Earl of Seyntaubyne; to whom, perhaps, this interesting recluse had been no stranger, from the agitation which her name excited, and was possibly the one which she bore.

Perplexed by the alternate ideas which took possession of her mind, Matilda resolved the next day, as soon as breakfast was over, to make her escape to Mrs. Bertie's cottage.

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CHAP. XI.

MRS. Sutherland was so wise and discreet, Matilda thought it most prudent, in case she should be missed, to inform her she was going once more to visit the recluse; begging her to say, if she was enquired after, she was gone out to walk.

Not without some degree of agitation Matilda gave a gentle tap at Mrs. Bertie's door, and was shown by the servant into the parlour. She found Mrs. Bertie lying on a couch, pale as death, with a look of such anguish in her countenance, Matilda was going to retreat, with an apology for her intrusion, when, in a languid voice, she said, "Do not go, dear madam. I have much, very much to say to you, if I can collect fortitude to utter it, and I shall not tire your patience, if you will sit down by me."

"And I, madam," replied Matilda, with earnest solicitude, "have much also to say, if you were not apparently to ill to ear it."

"No; your voice is so persuasive and soothing, I like to listen to you. Begin; and, afterwards, I will take the liberty, although a stranger, of asking some questions, which I hope you will not deem impertinent, so important to my peace, you must have the sweetness with candour and sincerity to reply to them."

"I will, to the best of my ability. In the mean time, look, madam, at this miniature, which you so greatly resemble. It was painted for my mother, whom, alas! I never had the happiness of knowing. And I cannot but regard you, though a stranger, with a tenderness and respect such as I never before experienced. There is something so beautiful in the name of mother, oh! that it really were possible to call you by that endearing title!"

Matilda opened the case which contained the miniature, and presenting it to Mrs. Bertie, said, "Judge yourself, madam, how perfect is the resemblance."

Mrs. Bertie took it from her, and gazing at it for a moment in a sort of wild astonishment, let it drop, and fell back into a state of insensibility.

It was sometime before Matilda could restore her. When she did, Mrs. Bertie feebly exclaimed, "Oh! tell me how you came by this miniature?"

"It was given me by Lady Seyntaubyne."

"Seyntaubyne!" cried she, "Oh name once too fondly loved! source of all my woes—of years of anguish and unavailing regret. Why, why, reverbrate in my ears in accents which were so fatally seductive? Oh look not upon me; go, go—I cannot bear it. Just such the expression of Seyntaubyne's countenance, when with his alluring voice he tore me from my paternal dwelling.

"Don't you know," added she, looking with wildness at Matilda, "that I broke my poor father's heart? that I hurried his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?—that I bereaved him of his senses;—and that even my cherub girl could not heal the anguish of his bleeding heart?"

"What mean you?" cried the weeping Matilda, "by this incoherence? It speaks daggers, though so wild in the utterance."

"I mean," exclaimed Mrs. Bertie, "what I have uttered. I speak only horrid truths. Truths, written in dark characters on my penitent heart. In this solitude in mourning over the past, I hoped to have died in peace. But you have pointed the arrow with ten-fold poignancy to my lacerated bosom."

“I knew not,” said the afflicted Matilda, “I meant not to distress you. How, indeed, could I guess that in shewing you that miniature——”

“That miniature,” interrupted she with quickness, “was in my father’s house. He had it painted for me when I was happy, and when he was blessed in his daughter, till the enemy came, and like a midnight assassin, bereaved him of what he was pleased to consider his only treasure.

The *Curate* and his *Daughter* were the talk of all the neighbourhood; for though we were very poor, no people were so happy. How came you,” added she, “did you say, by my picture?”

“The Countess of Seyntaubyne gave it to me. I was adopted, brought up, educated, by her ladyship:—she has proved to me a mother;—I have known no other.”

“Once more,” said Mrs. Bertie, with much perturbation, “tell me, if your name is Trevanion, whether it is real or fictitious?”

“That I know not. The venerable man who at his death consigned me to her ladyship, bore the name of Trevanion. I am called Matilda Trevanion.”

“O God!” exclaimed Mrs. Bertie, rising with wild emotion, and clasping Matilda in her arms, “I thank thee, for having preserved my child!—Oh, beloved, but unfortunate Matilda, you are indeed my daughter!—A smiling, rosy infant, I sent you to my venerable father, to sooth, to mitigate the anguish which I had occasioned him—and to steal, with your prattling innocence, into his affections.”

Matilda, overcome with emotion and surprize, could only weep on Mrs. Bertie’s bosom, as she tenderly murmured the word “mother!”

Some time elapsed before Mrs. Bertie acquired sufficient composure to give Matilda the following narration.

“A few years after I sent you to my father, who was the curate in the small parish of Bossney, or Boss Castle, in Cornwall; listless and unhappy, I languished to behold my precious child, and to be restored to the arms of my father, I travelled hence to my native village. Sorrow had so altered me, there was little probability of my being known or remembered as the same person who had left it some years before. I reached the parsonage with an agony of mind which it is impossible to describe. It was in the dusk of an autumnal evening when I knocked at the door of my native home: it was opened by a stranger. I enquired for the curate, and was shewn into what used to be the little library, so altered, I should not have known it, and thought that in displeasure my father had changed the appearance of the room. But, O heavens! what was the shock I sustained, when a stranger came in, and demanded my business? I enquired for Mr. Trevanion. The person informed me that he had been dead above four years. Sinking at the terrible intelligence, with trembling steps, I left the house, and entered one of the cottages in the village, to learn, if possible, the particulars of my father’s death. Drest like the wife of a peasant, the people had not the smallest suspicion who I was, nor, that every word of the ‘round unvarnished tale’ which they told, was a thousand daggers to my soul. The woman informed me, ‘the poor curate, Mr. Trevanion, had a good-for-nothing daughter, who had run away some years since, with a great lord, and what became of them was never known. The circumstance, however, had not only broken the old man’s heart, but for a long while had bereaved him of his senses, and at last sent him to his grave.’

“Almost deprived of utterance at this terrible intelligence, with difficulty I just had power to ask, if she knew what had become of the little girl who lived with him; and

was told, 'that some great lady had taken pity on her, and they were gone to live at that place, a long way off, called London.'

"Thus I lost all traces of you, my beloved Matilda; and in hopeless despondency returned thither to end my days and my griefs together. But the astonishing event of thus discovering and seeing my precious child, is a felicity I never dared hope for.

"Now, my beloved daughter, inform me how you chanced to be consigned to Lady Seyntaubyne's protection; for it appears a most extraordinary circumstance, knowing my poor father's well-founded prejudice against the Seyntaubyne family."

"I just remember," returned Matilda, "the reluctance I felt to leave Mr. Trevanion, when I was forcibly taken from him, by Lady Seyntaubyne. I thought my little heart would have broken, it was so heavy. But what led to her adoption I am perfectly ignorant of. I never had seen her until an hour before she carried me away from the parsonage to Pengwilly Hall. I had scarcely become her inmate, when intelligence was brought of Mr. Trevanion's death; and from that period I experienced the tenderest affection from her ladyship. On comparing dates, it appears to me, that you had come to Boss Castle when Lady Seyntaubyne fixed her residence in London, for the benefit of my education; and great indeed was the advantage I derived from the restraint she imposed on herself, in a town life, on my account. To the Reverend Doctor Arundel, and his excellent lady, I owe the formation of a mind which derives all the good it possesses from their precepts and example.

"But," continued Matilda, with much earnest solicitude, "tell me, O, my mother! who is my father? though I guess, in trembling apprehension."

"Unfortunate child, of a deluded mother," exclaimed Mrs. Bertie, with an agony which pierced Matilda to the heart. "Why seek to know what will only tend to excite your misery, and disclose the weakness of an erring parent. Better far bury the name in oblivion, for it reflects no honour upon either him or upon you."

"Oh, horrible!" cried Matilda, weeping and covering her face with her hands. "Hide, banish me for ever! if such is the truth. Lord Seyntaubyne then, it is evident, is my father. I am a daughter—yet no daughter. Lady Julia Penrose alone claims all his affection, and the poor Matilda is alienated and disowned."

"Lord Seyntaubyne never knew that he had any other daughter than the one you have named; neither has he the least idea of your existence. Deceived by him, under the specious form of marriage, (for the ceremony was actually performed by a clergyman in the town where we were sometime stationary) I discovered, when all redress was fruitless, that he had not married me under his own name. Indignant and dismayed at the great, the irreparable injury I had sustained, I rested not until I reached the wilds of Cumberland. By happy chance this little dwelling was pointed out to me by the honest people with whom I lodged. It belonged to them, and here I fixed my residence. Lord Seyntaubyne imagines me long since dead; and he by no channel ever was informed that he had a daughter; for when I consigned you to my father, it was my ardent request, that he would conceal you from all the world."

Mrs. Bertie ceased speaking. Matilda heard her with profound attention: she, alas! had no comment to make. In finding a mother, she found her a most injured and wretched woman, and the anguish of her own mind required the truest sympathy.

She had spent several hours at the cottage, and alarmed at the idea of her long absence, she promised to see her mother again the next day, and took leave.

CHAP. XII.

THE subsequent conversation which had led to so distressing a disclosure, wholly absorbed Matilda's thoughts; and she found it impossible, from the agitation she experienced, to appear at dinner. She sent Mrs. Sutherland a little billet, requesting to see her in her own room; and when she came, Matilda told her, "She had been hearing such an affecting narrative from Mrs. Bertie, it had quite overcome her spirits, and given her so violent a head-ache, she begged she would make her excuses below."

Mrs. Sutherland, who with concern observed Matilda's unusually depressed and pale looks, readily undertook to be her apologist.

Left to herself, the most mournful thoughts took possession of her mind. The anxiously looked-for period was at length arrived, which had unveiled the mystery of her birth. To be folded to a bosom of a parent had been the fondest wish she had indulged, every earthly happiness she had imagined would be comprised in so blissful an event. But, alas! it had, when realized, been fraught with nothing except sorrow and disgrace.

"And yet," thought she, after deep reflection, "if the marriage ceremony was actually performed, surely, though under a borrowed name, if their persons could only be identified, by those who were the witnesses, it must stand good in law. To secure my respect in the world," exclaimed Matilda, "my mother certainly would not scruple allowing proper measures to be taken, to prove my legitimacy, and endeavour to have me acknowledged by Lord Seyntaubyne as his lawful child."

Matilda believed it also possible, that the important packet, unfortunately left at Pengwilly, might disclose some favourable circumstance, at present unknown, in establishing her proper rank in society, as the Earl of Seyntaubyne's daughter. She was determined when she got back to Richmond, to entreat Doctor Arundel to urge Lady Seyntaubyne to the disclosure, if it were at all possible. Nor would she give her hand to Sir Charles Dashwood until she either was acknowledged as Lady Matilda Penrose, or be obliged to withdraw her claims altogether, to the honour of so noble a title. Thus reasoning and thus reflecting, passed the remainder of the day: one moment sunk to the lowest ebb of despondence, the next induced to cherish higher prospects.

Matilda endeavoured to see her mother some part of every day; but in doing so she did not escape the raillery of Mr. Sutherland, on the romantic preference which she shewed for the society of the unknown recluse. But Sir Charles Dashwood and Mrs. Sutherland, who generally penetrated into the movements of Matilda's mind, strongly portrayed in her sensible and expressive face, easily discovered that some new anxiety and grief dwelt on her spirits.

Sir Charles one day said to her, with a half smile, when she was extremely thoughtful, "I should certainly, Miss Trevanion, be tempted to put a stop to these stolen visits, if we were not going hence in a day or two."

To Mrs. Sutherland, however, without being explicit, she said, as she was regarding her with a sort of enquiring solicitude, "Ask me no questions, my dear friend, for I feel it would be impossible to refuse you, of all people, any thing you might wish to know; but rest assured, when I am at liberty to reveal the interesting events connected

with my accidental knowledge of Mrs. Bertie, you shall know them. Little indeed can you guess how eventful to me has been this acquaintance.”

Mrs. Sutherland kindly smiled upon her, as she replied, “May all the events of your life, dear Matilda, prove happy.”

The party having spent above a fortnight at Mr. Maitland’s, Mr. M’Arthur began to feel anxious to return home, it was agreed they should all part on the following morning.

Matilda, sure when the separation took place it would sensibly affect Mrs. Bertie, thought it best to daily prepare her for expecting the event. To detain her new-found daughter she knew would be neither wise nor politic; and she loved her too well to allow any selfish consideration to interfere with her future prospects. Matilda had related to her mother every incident of her life, except her acquaintance with Clairville, and informed her of her intended union with Sir Charles Dashwood. Naturally anxious to see the person to whom her daughter was to be allied, Matilda arranged it, that when she took her usual morning walk with the baronet and Mrs. Sutherland (for he always made a point of her accompanying them) they should take the gravel path which led to her cottage, and she was to meet them, as if by accident, when Matilda, by stopping to speak to her, would afford an opportunity to Mrs. Bertie of seeing Sir Charles, and a friend of whom she spoke in such flattering terms.

The same day this little plan was agreeably realized, nor was any suspicion excited that they had met, except by chance.

It was settled between Matilda and her mother that she was to communicate to her by a letter inclosed to Mrs. Maitland, what were the contents of the packet which she unfortunately had left behind at Pengwilly Hall; as by it they were to be guided in the necessary measures to be taken for introducing Matilda to her father, which Mrs. Bertie was extremely anxious should be done, although it was her determination not to see Lord Seyntaubyne. Matilda was also to inform both Lady Seyntaubyne and Sir Charles Dashwood, at a proper period, of her mother’s existence, and the interviews which had passed between them. She likewise took her promise, that soon after her marriage with the baronet they were to pay her a visit.

Tender and affecting was the parting between the mother and daughter, as Matilda, with tears of filial affection, bade her farewell.

CHAP. XIII.

THE party once more proceeded on their journey to the metropolis; and as they drew near the termination, Matilda was much struck with the increased dejection of Sir Charles Dashwood, which, for the last week, had gradually been stealing upon him. Nor could she help imagining there was something very strange and unaccountable of late in his conduct. Instead of being elated and gay that they were once more in England, and the period drawing each day nearer when they were to be united, he would sit for an hour at a time beside her without speaking, then sigh heavily, and walk out of the room.

The day before they reached London, and they were accidentally left alone together, he, lost apparently in deep reflection, Matilda half smiling said to him, "Indeed, Sir Charles, you are such melancholy company, you are enough to affect one with ennui. I shall certainly banish you altogether, if you do not promise in future to be more entertaining. I should say you had left your love behind in the Hebrides, if you had not given me the assurance to the contrary."

"With such a prospect of happiness before me," exclaimed he, raised from his reverie, "too charming Matilda, as you have allowed me to hope for in your promised alliance, I seem, indeed, to be making you a strange requital. Trust not, however, to delusive appearances, but trust to a little time, which will unfold all; and of this be assured, angel of a woman, that your generous regard for me, your disinterested and noble conduct, shall not go unrequited, at least it shall not be my fault. My tenderness for you rises superior to my own felicity. There is no sacrifice I would not make, though great will prove the struggle;—only those who have loved like me, can at all imagine."

Matilda regarded him with earnest solicitude; but before she could speak he quitted the room, leaving her in much perplexity and astonishment, wholly unable to explain or discover his meaning.

When they reached London, Sir Charles Dashwood insisted on the whole party's dining with him in Wimpole Street, previous to their departure to Richmond.

With difficulty he seemed able to do the honours of his house, in his usual elegant manner; and when his friends rose to depart, in a faltering accent, as he pressed Matilda's hand, he said to her, "If I do not come to Richmond, you will hear from me in a few days; and may the choicest blessings be showered on your head, too fondly loved Matilda."

There was something so extraordinary, so solemn, so emphatic, in Sir Charles's words and manner, Matilda was more and more confounded and surprized. When she was alone with Mrs. Sutherland, she repeated what had now passed, and also on the subsequent day; but she appeared rather to avoid making any comment, and merely said, "If he comes not, he is to write; wait patiently till then, and see if he has any thing particular to say or explain."

If Matilda had been governed in her actions by selfish principles, she would have gone immediately on her arrival at Richmond, to her maternal Mrs. Arundel. After the various agitating scenes she had gone through, the repose of their house would have been more suited to her present tone of spirits, than even Mrs. Sutherland's engaging society. But so manifold were the acts of disinterested kindness and friendship which she had experienced from Mr. M'Arthur and the Sutherland family, it was impossible to refuse

Mr. M' Arthur's invitation to spend a month at his house along with his sister, who, a stranger in England, had no acquaintance except Matilda. The request had been made to Lady Seyntaubyne, but no answer having been returned, she considered her silence as assent, not doubting but she would see the propriety of complying.

As the sight of all the well-known objects opened upon her view, Matilda welcomed them with new joy and new delight. Richmond had been the scene of her happiest years; no sorrow, no anxiety, no vexations, had broken in upon her peace. But since the first hour of her quitting it, until her present return, she had spent a life of tumult, of distress, of care, all following in endless succession. But with the scenes of Richmond again before her, Clairville and his mother were not absent from her thoughts.

The first thing she did on her arrival was to write to Mrs. Arundel, promising to see her in the morning; but before she, with propriety, could leave Mrs. Sutherland, the venerable doctor and his lady came to wait on Mr. M' Arthur's sister, and to welcome him to his mournful home.

The ladies appeared to be mutually pleased with each other, and Mrs. Sutherland promised herself infinite pleasure in an intimacy with Matilda's Richmond friends.

Matilda did not feel altogether satisfied or happy in remaining absent from Lady Seyntaubyne, for she regarded her with true affection, and never for a moment forgot that every blessing and benefit which she enjoyed she owed to her. She felt, likewise, the greatest anxiety to possess her important packet, and to communicate the contents to her mother; but till she had read it, she did not think it prudent to reveal, even to Doctor Arundel, the existence of her maternal parent.

She had been two or three days at Richmond without being able to discover whether or not Lady Sophia, Clairville, and Julia, were at West Grove, having only seen Mrs. Arundel in company; but when she took leave of her at night, guessing too well Matilda's anxiety on that subject, she said to her, "Breakfast with me to-morrow morning, I have a letter to show you."

Matilda was at the doctor's by nine o'clock. When she was left alone with Mrs. Arundel, she expressed the satisfaction her judicious and proper conduct in regard to Clairville, had given them both. "His journey," added she, "was too sudden and rapid, to inform Lady Seyntaubyne of it, and afterwards, it was as well avoided. He has got an appointment in a king's ship, in which he sailed about a week since for —— . When Lady Julia set aside her engagement, almost immediately after Lady Sophia and she went to Dublin to visit some of her mother's relations; and they intend spending the winter in that city. I shall surprize you, when I tell you, that Julia is going to be married to one of your Scotch admirers."

"I am indeed surprized; to whom may it be?"

"You shall read Lady Sophia's letter."

Matilda took it from Mrs. Arundel, and what related to Julia, was to this effect:—

"A vast number of gay amusements go forward in this city. About six weeks ago, to please my niece, I accompanied her to a private masquerade at the Duchess of N ——'s. It is a motley assembly of persons, which seldom tends to good. But sometimes, in abridging young women of certain diversions they have set their hearts upon, they form erroneous ideas of them, which the reality destroys.

“This masquerade had led to an event which will surprize you. But I have so long ceased to regard my own wishes through life, from having them perpetually frustrated, that in considering the happiness of others, I at least derive the satisfaction from it, of feeling the felicity of those I love, has never been a matter of indifference to me, and that I can readily forego my own gratification to promote theirs.

“Julia having lately read Ossian’s Poems, fancied the character of Malvina, which she determined to personate. Amongst the most conspicuous characters was an Oscar; a tall commanding figure, dressed as an Highland warrior, and who supported the character with so much spirit, Julia became perfectly captivated. At supper all the company unmasked. The stranger had placed himself beside my niece, and when she unveiled her face, he started in a sort of wild surprize, and changed colour. She wondered at his emotion, and without enquiring the cause, felt her interest towards him much engaged, from the insinuating tenderness of his manner, and an expression of sensibility and softness in his fine dark eyes, united with a most animated and manly countenance.

“When he handed her to my carriage, he said, ‘Lady, may I presume to ask your name? You surpass in loveliness the fair being you so strikingly resemble, and seem born to be an enslaver of hearts: for, *“There lies more peril in thine eye”*’

‘Than,’ interrupted Julia, sportively, ‘I hope you gallantly mean to say, in all the arrows of Cupid.’

‘Even so: and perhaps, like him, you will maliciously smile at the mischief you have done.’

‘We seldom sport,’ cried she, ‘with what touches us nearly.’

‘Beautiful incognito, tell who, and what you are! that with a captivation there is no resisting, you flatter, while you ensnare.’

‘If,’ replied she, ‘there be any truth in what you utter, the fates will ordain that we shall meet again; and Malvina will not forget her Oscar.’

“The gentleman who personated Oscar, rested not until he discovered the lady’s name that had so intirely subdued him. Julia’s rank and beauty rendered her too conspicuous not to be easily discovered; and the day after the masquerade Mr. M’Laurel, the young laird of Lismore, in the Hebrides, was introduced to us by one of the most respectable families in Dublin.

“My niece’s resemblance to Miss Trevanion, (who I understood rejected him) first excited his particular interest. But soon, Julia’s vivacity, and the tacit preference which she gave him, rendered him so ardent a lover, that in the short acquaintance of six weeks every preliminary is settled for their union, which will have taken place before you receive this letter. Her father has not opposed her choice; and it is determined, after spending the winter months in Dublin, we are to visit him at Penrose Castle in the spring. Mr. M’Laurel will not consent that Julia shall visit the Western Isles, except under the favourable aspect of a summer sky. The Earl of Seyntaubyne would have been present at his daughter’s nuptials, if an unfortunate fit of the gout had not kept him a close prisoner in Cornwall.”

If Matilda was surprized at the whimsical acquaintance between Julia and the young laird of Lismore, she was also much pleased. She knew them worthy of each other; and their romantic attachment, she thought, promised permanent happiness; often having heard Julia declare, in her sportive manner, that she never would marry any man with whom she was not desperately in love.

Under the present situation of Matilda's own affairs, she rather rejoiced at Clairville's and Lady Sophia's absence. She felt somewhat hurt and offended at Sir Charles Dashwood's conduct, for she had been several days at Richmond, and yet he neither wrote nor came. Lady Seyntaubyne's extraordinary silence likewise occasioned her much anxiety, so very unlike her usual punctuality.

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CHAP. XIV.

THE following day one of Sir Charles Dashwood's servants brought Matilda the promised letter. "Ah!" thought she, before she opened it, "he comes not; and I suppose this is some feeble apology." Somewhat piqued, she indifferently broke the seal, but not indifferently perused the contents, which were—

"My dear Miss Trevanion,

"When you receive this letter I shall be on my way to Madeira. That within a short space of time I might have claimed your promised hand, was a felicity which you allowed me to hope, but I cannot bring myself to permit you to sacrifice your happiness to one whom you think yourself bound in honour to marry, when, had you been free, you would have bestowed that hand without hesitation on the sole object of your choice,—
Albert Clairville.

"Of your disinterested rejection, I am not ignorant; nor, that your alarming illness was occasioned by the struggle which it cost you. Think not it was from Mrs. Sutherland I gained the intelligence of Clairville's visit at Carlisle; it came through a very different channel. From that period it was my fixed determination not to fetter or compel you to fulfil an engagement, which could terminate only in misery to each.

"Think not, beloved Matilda, it is in pique I make this declaration. Oh, no! could you but guess the struggle it has cost me, loving you with a tenderness almost bordering on idolatry, to arm myself with courage to resign you to another, then would the displeasure with which perhaps you may read these lines, sink into pity, and your native benevolence be extended towards an unhappy man, who will never see you more, until it be as the wife of Clairville.

"Adieu, and adieu,

"CHARLES DASHWOOD."

Wimpole-street,
January 20.

Now then, thought Matilda, is Sir Charles's manner accounted for, as she closed his letter, deeply penetrated and affected by its contents, which she shewed to Mrs. Sutherland.

She was not surprized at what she read, having suspected by some oblique speeches which now and then had dropt from him, it would be so. She was going to congratulate Matilda; but before she spoke, she exclaimed, "What will Lady Seyntaubyne say? she naturally will imagine that I have trifled with Sir Charles's happiness. She knows not of Clairville's visit to Carlisle. Oh! my dear Mrs. Sutherland, advise me what I am to do. Wretched every way; I am bewildered; and truly grieved this excellent man should be so great a sufferer on my account."

"It appears to me," replied she, "that you can at present do nothing. Things are always much better said than written, on matters of difficulty and importance. In letters, meanings are often mistaken, and misapplied. When with truth and simplicity you state the circumstances which have occurred, to Lady Seyntaubyne, I doubt not but she

possesses candour enough to see things in their proper light. I would, however, have you take Mrs. Arundel's advice; she is far more able to give it than me."

"I will do so," said Matilda. "We are going to dine at Doctor Arundel's. I will go an hour before, to have their opinion."

She retired to dress, and while she was at her toilet, the maid came into the room, and informed her, Mrs. Arundel was below, and wished to be admitted to her immediately.

She desired her to be shewn up; and conjectured that, perhaps, Sir Charles Dashwood had also written either to her or to the Doctor. But when Mrs. Arundel entered, the look of deep concern which was spread over her countenance, with the traces of tears, which she seemed to wish to conceal, gave Matilda such alarm, she, in trembling apprehension immediately exclaimed, "Oh! speak—tell me at once what has happened? I am sure it is something dreadful."

Mrs. Arundel desired her not to indulge such sudden alarm, without knowing why it was excited, and requested her to sit down.

"Instead," cried Mrs. Arundel, with as much composure as she could collect, "of having the pleasure of all your company at my house to dinner, you must, my dear child, put on your riding-habit, and prepare to go with me to Pengwilly Hall, without delay. In less than an hour the chaise will be at the door, to carry us thither. I have seen Mr. M'Arthur and Mrs. Sutherland, to whom I have made your excuses."

"Wherefore, madam" exclaimed Matilda, with extreme emotion, "the cause of this sudden journey? Something terrible I know has happened. Tell me at once; I can support any thing rather than this dreadful suspense. Is Lady Seyntaubyne then dead? for your looks bespeak some dreadful calamity."

"No, not dead, but I apprehend that she is dying. An express arrived at our house not half an hour ago, desiring your return to Pengwilly with all possible speed. She had been seized with apoplexy, and could not speak when the messenger came away. It is a fortnight since the melancholy event happened, and no hopes are now entertained of her recovery."

Matilda burst into an agony of tears; and the apprehension of not finding Lady Seyntaubyne alive, affected her extremely. But Mrs. Arundel left her no time to dwell on the terrible shock she had sustained, assisting and preparing her for their immediate departure.

Mrs. Sutherland, with the truest concern, parted from her young friend. She loved her with the affection of a sister. After taking a promise that she would write to her, she gave her a pressing invitation to spend the first summer she could spare along with her in Scotland.

Mrs. Arundel and Matilda had a melancholy journey into Cornwall, and melancholy was the reception which awaited them. The closed shutters announced the event which had taken place, and a death-like silence reigned throughout the gloomy mansion. The housekeeper met them in the hall, but she could only say, "My poor lady!" for the sobs which choked her utterance. Her ladyship had been dead two days.

Matilda looked the picture of woe; and with difficulty could support herself.

"I would speak to you alone, madam," said Mrs. Grey to Mrs. Arundel, as they crossed the hall, and Matilda was desired to go into the breakfast-room.

“What would you wish to communicate, good Mrs. Grey?” cried Mrs. Arundel, as they went into the dining-parlour together.

“Only, madam, that my lord is in the house. I thought the surprize would not be agreeable, if you were not prepared.”

“Thank you Mrs. Grey, it was very considerate. When did his lordship arrive?”

“Thank God, madam, just in time to be reconciled to my lady. She died in his arms blessing him, and blessing his children. Thank the Lord, her speech returned to do so. Yes, madam, he knows that Miss Trevanion, or I should rather say, Lady Matilda Penrose, is his daughter. She is declared to be such in my lady’s will, which has been opened. She is his legitimate child by Anna Trevanion, the poor curate’s daughter. O madam! had you seen the joy of my lord at this news, even in the height of his grief for my lady, it would have made you cry, it was such a moving scene. I had sent off the express before my lord’s arrival, for I was sure my lady wished to see Miss Trevanion, Lady Matilda I mean. She has left her thirty thousand pounds, besides all her trinkets and jewels. But I must go and inform my lord you are come; he desired to be acquainted the moment you arrived.”

Mrs. Arundel found Matilda, when she joined her, in very deep affliction.

“Consolation,” said she, “is always to be found under the heaviest misfortunes. You lose one valuable friend, but you obtain another. Lord Seyntaubyne, your *father*, is in the house; he expects to see you; and to be presented to his daughter *Lady Matilda Penrose*, for such you are.”

Matilda fell prostrate on her knees, as she uttered, “O God! I thank thee that it is so. My mother, my beloved mother, then, is a lawful wife!”

“What mean you, my dear,” exclaimed Mrs. Arundel with surprize, and rather alarmed at her seeming incoherence.

“That my mother lives,” cried she, in a transport, “I have seen her! I have been folded in her maternal embrace. Oh! that it had been permitted for Lady Seyntaubyne to have known this hour.”

“Seen her!” exclaimed Mrs. Arundel, beginning now to think Matilda wandered in incoherence, “she has been dead for years.”

“No, no! she lives to bless her daughter. Another time, rather than this solemn moment, I will tell you all.”

Mrs. Arundel silently acquiesced, little imagining what Matilda said was absolutely true.

Lord Seyntaubyne sent a message, that he was too much disturbed to see his daughter before the morning; but, in the meantime, she was to read the packet of papers which Mrs. Grey delivered into Matilda’s hand.

The present solemn scene was particularly suited for the employment assigned to Matilda; who, after taking coffee with Mrs. Arundel, withdrew to her chamber. Instead of going to bed, with a trembling hand she broke the seal of the packet; the contents of which were as follows:

CHAP. XV.

To my Grand-daughter Matilda.

“HAPLESS child, of erring and misguided parents, attend to the narrative which your grandsire is going to unfold; and, oh! may it prove a lesson through a life, I trust will pass unmarked by the woes which pursued your unfortunate mother, when she withdrew herself from the fostering wing of a tender father. Poor thing! She was self-deluded; and that innocence which should have proved her invulnerable shield, proved the source of all her misery.

“Had it been the will of Heaven to have prolonged my days upon earth, I would, Matilda, have watched over your maturer years as I have done over your infant ones, with a tenderness I am afraid you will not experience. I would have cherished you in my bosom like a delicate sensitive plant, which shrinks from the touch of any rude hand that would chill its existence. Since, however, my days are almost numbered, and shortly the grave will enclose this fleeting form, oh! think that my voice speaks from it with the most impressive and awful admonition. Never suffer your *will* to conquer your judgment, if they prove at variance. Act, not from the impulse of passion, but take the cool and sober moment of prudence and reflection to regulate that important step which is to direct your future destiny in life. Be not impelled by inclination, if it is opposed by duty. It was therein in your mother was guilty, and bitter were the sufferings which followed. Respect, however, her memory, if she exists not; for she was virtuous as she was lovely, and it was not from wilful disobedience she erred.

“In the vicinity of the parsonage, stands Penrose Castle; the ancient and noble seat of the Seyntaubyne family. It was my misfortune to admit the young earl a guest in my family, after he lost a beautiful and an amiable wife whom he idolized. Called on in my official capacity to ‘minister to a mind diseased,’ I thought a change of scene would prove salutary, and his lordship condescended to become the guest of *The Curate and his Daughter*. I introduced him to my precious child.—Your mother, simple, innocent, and beautiful, as the humble and modest violet which courts the shade, required only to be seen to be admired, and at once awakened a tender passion in his lordship. It was as rapid as it was decisive; but I saw it with alarm, as it did not appear of that pure nature to meet with my approbation; for, without being being a man of the world, and unskilled in its arts, I yet knew sufficient of it to be aware of the vast distance placed between the noble earl and my child, in point of rank, and that though he loved, it was not probable he would marry her. But my innocent and unsuspecting girl was the last to perceive it; and, in an evil hour, when his lordship pretended that he was going to withdraw himself altogether, he prevailed on my deluded Anna to elope along with him, and from that fatal day never have I beheld her.

“Two years after that period, one evening when I was sitting in that profound solitude which followed her departure, *you* were presented to me by Margaret, who said a person had left you at my door, and to your neck was tyed with a ribband the inclosed letter from your mother.

“Never shall I forget the impression of that moment. I had sunk into a perfect torpor from the hour of your mother’s departure. Abstracted from the world—insensible

almost of my own existence, I seemed at once awakened from a frightful dream by the celestial creature who stood before me. You smiled with ineffable sweetness, and stretched forth your little arms towards me. I snatched you in a transport to my bosom; I bedewed you with my tears, as you sunk into a balmy sleep, unconscious of my various and overwhelming emotions. Gradually softening and dispelling my anguish, I read my daughter's letter, which had nearly a second time annihilated me. To know that she lived, yet to be unable to trace her dwelling, was a most afflicting circumstance. Stunned by the event of her elopement—rendered by it incapable of acting, I found, with horror, I had lost above a twelvemonth of my existence, unconscious of its having passed away. You, however, roused every stupified faculty, and I was determined to be vigorous to discover her, if possible, and to trace her steps from the hour of her departure. In a remote spot, so novel an event, as a nobleman carrying off an obscure young woman, naturally excited much curiosity and interest. It was therefore without much difficulty, even at an interval of two years, I traced them to a small town, where my child had been detained by illness. But, oh! Matilda, how was my oppressed heart lightened, when I found that in this town they actually had been married. I saw the clergyman who had performed the ceremony—I read the register; and though Lord Seyntaubyne thought fit to drop his title, and assume his christian names alone, by which he is registered, yet as his person can be identified by those who witnessed the marriage, it stands good in law; and I inclose you a certificate, which carefully preserve, for you are the Earl of Seyntaubyne's legitimate daughter, Lady Matilda Penrose, and are entitled to be amply provided for by him.

“My poor child being deluded into the idea of her marriage not proving legal, is beyond my comprehension. But had I lived, Lord Seyntaubyne never would have known the blessing he possessed, in such a daughter, as it was my Anna's earnest wish that you should be concealed from all eyes but mine; consigning you to perpetual obscurity, as the greatest safeguard to happiness. When, however, I found, that in me you would soon lose your sole protector, then did I send for the Countess Dowager Seyntaubyne, shew her the copy of the register of her son's marriage with Anna Trevanion, the curate's daughter, urgently soliciting her adoption of you. For sometime she persevered in refusing; but there was something so irresistibly alluring and beautiful about you, and so melancholy your destiny, that afterwards her ladyship became as indignant at her son's conduct as before she had been positive in refusing my overtures; appearing all at once as much delighted at the idea of avenging your mother's wrongs, as she was in adopting you. I took a solemn promise that she never would desert you, nor resign you to Lord Seyntaubyne; and only on the day of your marriage, or that of her death, to acquaint you with your real name and birth.

“Under these sacred promises, lovely and innocent child of my precious Anna, I now consign you to your paternal grandmother. Love her with tenderness, reward her kindness by your duteous conduct; and after a life well spent, may you gently sink to repose, beloved and lamented.

“FRANCIS TREVANION.”

Parsonage House,
Boss Castle, Oct. 10.

Matilda next read her mother's pathetic letter, addressed to her grandfather.

“Deceived, where alone I placed my confidence, ah, whither shall the lost and hapless Anna fly for refuge! No longer dare she ask it in the fostering bosom of a beloved parent. The ties of parental affection, which she tore asunder, in the fatal hour in which she quitted her peaceful home, can never more be united. Too pure yourself to look upon your contaminated daughter, except it were with an eye of pity, in the profoundest solitude, far removed from those attaching and fond caresses which smiled on the days of innocence and joy, she will pass the remainder of her miserable existence. Dead to my former self, entombed, though yet living, oh! my father, consider me so in reality. Mourn not for my sorrows, they were self-created, and were a just retribution for violating the sacred mandate which you laid upon me. I scorned to listen to the authoritative voice of a beloved parent: I thought it unjust, severe, cruel. Infatuated by the fatal passion which misled me, I found a charm in the persuasive and too powerful eloquence of my destroyer, to think of all the attendant evils which accompany disobedience. Every path before me appeared to be covered with roses. Deluded myself by error, I considered you to be so, believing unbounded tenderness, with every joy under heaven, awaited me; while you, unconvinced, would have severed me from that being who was the idol of my soul, and on whom my very existence hung. Oh, how deep was your foresight!—how profound your penetration! Inexperienced, relying firmly on a character which wore the most enchanting semblance of celestial goodness, and which I believed faultless as the outward form, was it to be wondered at that I fell into the alluring snare, wove with such artful nicety? even the most wary might have been equally entangled. I have however escaped from the man who has wantonly violated the most sacred of all ceremonies, and with an incurable wound rankling in my bosom, slowly journeyed to the banishment which I have chosen, there to meditate, to weep, and to die.

“A hapless babe extends its little hands to implore your pity and protection; at this moment, with cherub face, it smiles upon me. Oh, my father, love not my precious girl the less for being the offspring of your daughter. To you I consign her in her infant years, that she may never know her wretched mother. Instruct her in the paths of virtue; and as my sweet Matilda dawns into maturity, be watchful over her spotless innocence. Hide her from the world as a miser would his treasure. Tell her not that her father is in existence; and if she is solicitous to know her mother, say that she was taken from her ere she was conscious of possessing one; and to you she was bequeathed as the most precious relic of herself.”

CHAP. XVI.

THIS affecting narrative of Lady Seyntaubyne's fully elucidated to Matilda the whole circumstances attending the history of her parents. The close ties of consanguinity between herself and the late countess, as also to Mr. Trevanion, were clearly explained. She saw the fatal rashness of her mother had proved the source of her own misfortunes, which had been extended to her child, in having deprived her of the blessing, till now, of knowing that either of her parents existed. She was greatly moved at such a touching transcript of her mind as the papers contained, and the woe which she had occasioned her venerable grandfather. But the period was now fast approaching when she hoped her mother would meet with just retribution, and that Lord Seyntaubyne would do her justice. Acknowledged in her grandmother's will as his daughter, Lady Matilda Penrose, she longed to receive the earl's paternal embrace, and with timid apprehension anxiously waited for the morning.

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CHAP. XVII.

FROM the commencement of Matilda's residence with Mrs. Arundel she had always taken the most lively interest in her concerns. She knew not exactly who were her parents, but she remembered hearing from the reverend doctor, at the time of Lord Seyntaubyne's elopement with the curate's daughter, all the events attending it. And when Matilda was consigned to their care, from the letter which the countess previously wrote, she formed a suspicion the little girl was somehow related to the family. The circumstances which now transpired, in the papers Matilda gave Mrs. Arundel to read, she regarded as the most fortunate incident that could have befallen her young friend, in so auspicious a moment. In losing her kind benefactress she would be immediately received into her father's family, and be acknowledged by him, without being allowed to feel the loss she had sustained in the death of Lady Seyntaubyne. The history Matilda gave of her extraordinary meeting with her mother would also, she was persuaded, tend greatly to her happiness; convinced that Lord Seyntaubyne, sensible of his former error, would now be happy to be able to do her justice, in recalling her from obscurity, and placing her in her proper rank, at the head of his family.

Mrs. Arundel tenderly attached to Lady Sophia Clairville, and her niece Lady Julia, rejoiced these new arrangements, so likely immediately to take place, had happened at a period when they would not interfere with their prospects or plans: for though they both were too noble-minded to be hurt at such new and close connections becoming a part of Lord Seyntaubyne's family, yet it was far better that Julia was to be fixed in a distant part of the world, when it was probable her aunt would remain with her, or spend the winter amongst her relations in Dublin, until Clairville's return to England.

When Lady Seyntaubyne was seized with apoplexy, the physician who was called to her aid pronounced her case to be hopeless, and advised Mrs. Grey to send immediately for her son. Before the earl arrived, a transient gleam of perception appeared, with an attempt to speak, and she just uttered indistinctly, "Send for Lord Seyntaubyne and Matilda." Previous to her dissolution, he had the mournful satisfaction to receive her last embrace, and to learn from her own lips, that Matilda was his daughter. She told him "A packet which he would find in her cabinet, given her by the Reverend Francis Trevanion, the curate of Boss Castle, and addressed to his grand-daughter, Matilda, would explain the reason why she had not consigned her to him before. Along with those papers he would find a certificate of his marriage with Anna Trevanion, the curate's daughter." In the most solemn manner her ladyship resigned Matilda to his future care and protection, requesting that from henceforth he would acknowledge her as his daughter, Lady Matilda Penrose, which she unquestionably was. She also informed him of her engagement to Sir Charles Dashwood, which she wished to be soon fulfilled; and that on her wedding-day she was to be presented with thirty thousand pounds, which she bequeathed her, also the whole of her jewels. Exhausted by this short but interesting detail, which with infinite difficulty she had laboured to utter, her ladyship shortly after breathed her last sigh, in the arms of her son.

The suspicions which Lord Seyntaubyne had formerly entertained, alternately torturing, and then diffusing a gleam of joy, thus confirmed, beyond all possibility of doubt, proved, even in the midst of the present mournful scene, a felicity so pure and

unexpected, he anxiously counted every moment until Matilda's arrival at Pengwilly Hall.

The Reverend Francis Trevanion's papers addressed to his grand-daughter, after what his mother had told him, he scrupled not to open. Therein he found explained the cause of all his woes, originating in his attempt to disguise his noble condition, in his union with Anna Trevanion, by dropping his title; and saw in her touching letter to her father such an instance of the tenderness and elevation of a virtuous mind, he would have given more than all his vast possessions, had it been possible, to have conferred on her a just retribution; for severely as he had been punished, Anna had suffered far more severely, by her rash and unjust impression of his conduct; and little aware that she yet lived, he with the deepest contrition deplored the impossibility of not being able to acknowledge her to all the world, which joyfully he would have done, as his wife—the Countess of Seyntaubyne.

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CHAP. XVIII.

MATILDA, after breakfasting with Mrs. Arundel, was desired to go into the library where her father was sitting. With quick and agitated steps she approached him, and throwing herself on her knees, exclaimed, "Is it indeed true, my lord, that you will acknowledge and receive your daughter Matilda?"

"Joyfully do I acknowledge thee!" returned he with much emotion. "Oh, daughter of the hapless Anna Seyntaubyne! Though never seen till now, thus does your father, with just contrition for your mother's woes, fold you in his arms. Rise, Matilda Penrose! equally the child of my tender affection as the absent Julia. Be ye sisters in affection, as ye are in loveliness."

"Oh, my father!" cried Matilda, "may I live to deserve your tenderness. Thus admitted to your paternal bosom, I would fain express the transport of this moment, but it is unutterable."

"Ah!" interrupted he, greatly moved, "that your mother had lived to guide, to bless, to joy in such a daughter! without alloy, then, would my felicity have proved. For the sight of you, Matilda, recalls her injured shade to my mind. In you she lives again before me:—just such the look of innocence, of angelic sweetness which she wore. Bitter the pang you occasion. But, thank God, I am not the villain she imagined me. She was deceived; deluded by the most fatal and cruel error,—Anna Trevanion was my wife! I always meant,—I always intended, at a due period, to acknowledge her Countess Seyntaubyne."

"And will you, my lord, do so yet?" enquired Matilda, in eager anxiety.

"In acknowledging you," replied he, "Lady Matilda Penrose, I establish beyond all doubt, Anna's title to my name."

"And will you give it her?" said she, with continued earnestness.

"To her memory I will give it, Matilda, in a noble monument, sacred to her virtues, in the church at Boss Castle, and her image will ever live in my heart, to the last moment of my existence."

"Lives she still in your heart? Oh! then, not on marble monument shall it be recorded, but to her very self you shall, my lord, declare it. I will make an interest in her bosom which she will not be able to resist, when it comes from the voice of Matilda, your daughter. I will lead you to her; for she lives to bless your succeeding years,—to bless also her Matilda. Lady Seyntaubyne lives! and, oh, may the felicity you once promised yourself with her, now be your portion."

"What mean you? Trifle not with me thus; nor torture me with hopes which have been for years delusive."

"No longer shall they be so, my father, Oh! awake then to new happiness and to new life. Let us go, when the mournful ceremony is passed for my beloved, my respected grand-mother, to that distant spot whither I will lead you, if, indeed, you will promise to receive my mother as becomes her natural right, and acknowledge her as Countess of Seyntaubyne."

"I do promise," answered the earl, "if what you say be true, I promise every thing that can tend to a just retribution. But explain, my child, how you became acquainted with so extraordinary an event, as the seeming renovation of your mother."

Matilda kept the earl no longer in the agony of suspense which he endured, but related to him all the circumstances connected with her visit to the recluse in Cumberland; which, on comparing with her own and Mr. Trevanion's papers, left not a doubt of Mrs. Bertie's being the long estranged wife of Lord Seyntaubyne.

The extacy he felt, when perfectly convinced that Anna was alive, and likely to be restored to him, gave Matilda a very favourable impression of the native goodness of his Lordship's heart. She ardently longed to bring her new-found parents together; and it was fixed, as soon as the funeral was over, they were to set out for Cumberland.

Matilda would have written to her mother of their intention, but it was judged better to take her by surprize, rather than allow her time to dwell on the expected interview.

Matilda, however, was anxious to remove immediately the fatal error she had been in, with respect to her union with the earl not being legal, and enclosed, for her satisfaction, the certificate of the registrar obtained by her grand-father.

Lord Seyntaubyne chose to be present at the last mournful ceremony, and attended the remains of his mother to the grave. Matilda shed tears of sincere regret to the memory of her grand-mother, who had fulfilled in every sense the character of a parent. Lady Seyntaubyne left numbers to deplore her loss. To the poor she had been a liberal friend; to her domestics, a generous and indulgent mistress. Her hearse was followed by a multitude of people, who, by their tears and lamentations, bore testimony to her excellence.

The day after the funeral, the earl left Mrs. Arundel and Matilda for the purpose of visiting the small town where, nineteen years ago, he married Anna Trevanion, that he might endeavour to find out whether the clergyman was alive who had united them, and the two persons who had witnessed the marriage, that on his return from the north, they might, if necessary, identify his person; though it was his determination, for the satisfaction of Anna, to have the ceremony again performed. He had the pleasure of finding the clergyman still resident at ——, and also the man and his wife with whom he had lodged. They perfectly remembered his union with Miss Trevanion, and at once recognized his lordship for the same person.

Lord Seyntaubyne wrote to Lady Sophia an account of the extraordinary events which had happened, and desired his daughter (now Lady Julia M'Laurel) to henceforth acknowledge and consider Lady Matilda Penrose, formerly known to her as Miss Trevanion, as her sister.

Immediately on his lordship's return from his short excursion, he set out for Richmond, accompanied by his daughter and Mrs. Arundel, intending to proceed thence with all speed to Ennerdale Water.

Matilda was delighted in the opportunity of once more seeing her charming and highly valued friend, Mrs. Sutherland, who, with all the warmth of a sincere friendship, felicitated her on the pleasing circumstances which had occurred; and that, in the interesting recluse of Cumberland, she had found so amiable a mother. Mrs. Sutherland insisted on Lord Seyntaubyne and his daughter's promise of making Mr. Maitland's house their home during the period of their stay at Ennerdale, and previously wrote to his friends to prepare them for the reception of their noble guests.

The season was unfavourable for so long a journey, but that had no influence in retarding it: so anxious was both Lord Seyntaubyne and Matilda, to realize the happiness which was in store.

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CHAP. XIX.

IN the course of post Lord Seyntaubyne received very pleasing letters from Lady Sophia and Julia, who also wrote to Matilda as follows:

To Lady Matilda Penrose.

“Allow me, beloved Matilda, even at this distance, to salute you by the tender and endearing title of sister. Though I have quarrelled with the name of Penrose, you will reflect on it so much honour, that my father will have no cause to regret the exchange he has experienced in losing one daughter, while he has obtained another in Matilda.

“A certain capricious little god, called Cupid, has been playing a strange game amongst us; and after doing all the mischief in his power, sporting cruelly for some time with our happiness, at length thought fit to direct his arrows at a proper mark, by fully retaliating on those who bid him defiance. The urchin, unused to be treated with scorn, took ample revenge upon me—levelling his darts so surely, that your rejected lover was happy to accept Julia Penrose, who, like another Sappho, was so madly in love, she almost would have been tempted to have plunged into the Leucadian main, if M’Laurel had proved to her a second Pheon.

“What, Matilda, have you been doing, thus wantonly to sport with your own happiness, in consenting to wed Sir Charles Dashwood, while your affections were given to Clairville? Surely it was not in pique you have acted so decided a part against your inclinations. Clairville came home to us in despair; and deeply do I lament, that as you alone can render him happy, you have been so determined in your rejection.

“M’Laurel sends you his fraternal regard. Julia offers you the affection you always possessed, with the now united tenderness of a sister.”

Lady Sophia’s letter contained merely these few lines:

To Lady Matilda Penrose.

“Believe, dear Lady Matilda, that in being declared the daughter of Lord Seyntaubyne, you will possess from every branch of his family their regard; and while Julia salutes you as a sister, I also put in my claim to be remembered by you as a friend, warmly interested in all that attaches to your happiness.

“In spring I flatter myself that we shall meet a large family circle of harmony and love at Penrose Castle; and however widely, at times, distance may separate us, I hope a tender interest towards one another will not cease to be excited in our hearts.

“SOPHIA CLAIRVILLE.”

Dublin, 6th February.

To be thus graciously received into Lord Seyntaubyne’s family, by Lady Sophia and Julia, was a most gratifying circumstance to Matilda, who replied to their letters with the affection which they had inspired.

The earl and his daughter made a rapid journey into Cumberland, and were kindly and hospitably entertained at Mr. Maitland's, during their short but decisive sojourn on Ennerdale Water.

The interview between Lord Seyntaubyne and Anna was tender and affecting.

Matilda, by the description which she gave of her father's anguish of mind, and contrition for what had passed, awakened all the fond partiality which Anna had felt on her first acquaintance. They met as long divided lovers; and their daughter, who had proved the interesting mediator between them, and the joy of seeing her parents united once more in those indissoluble bonds, which death alone could sever.

The earl introduced the fair recluse to Mr. and Mrs. Maitland, as his wife, Countess Seyntaubyne. They spent two or three days with this amiable couple, and then took their final leave of Ennerdale Water, proceeding direct to Penrose Castle.

The variety of scenes which Matilda had gone through in the space of the last six months, appeared rather like an extraordinary dream than events that had actually happened. She surveyed the past with wonder, looking forward with timid hope towards the future. Even the felicity which she tasted was incomplete, while Clairville was absent, and some months elapsed ere she had any tidings of him.

The domestic happiness Lord Seyntaubyne enjoyed, in possessing such a wife and such a daughter, appeared almost beyond the lot of humanity; every wish of his heart being now fulfilled. The years of misery Lady Seyntaubyne had formerly experienced were no more remembered, for the succeeding ones of her life were unclouded by a single anxiety or misfortune.

Late in spring Lady Sophia Clairville, Julia, and Mr. M'Laurel, joined the happy circle at Penrose Castle, where they formed a family of bliss.

Clairville, who had been engaged in a dangerous naval action, which was crowned with victory, was immediately promoted to the rank of captain, and returned to England full of honours.

Transported and surprized to find Matilda free, Lord Seyntaubyne presented his daughter to him. "Accept," said he, "my precious girl, as the noblest reward you can receive for your brave and gallant conduct. May the name of Clairville, as now, in ages to come, be signalized alone as one of the bravest in our British annals."

Clairville in extacy took the hand of Matilda, and replied, "Thus given, oh, my mother! seal it with your blessing?"

"I do from my soul!" cried Lady Sophia. "Be ye blessed, my Albert, and Matilda, in each other."

But it was left to the Reverend Doctor Arundel to unite them, and Clairville and Matilda were married by special licence at Penrose Castle, where for several days rejoicings and festivity prevailed.

Lord Seyntaubyne presented Pengwilly Hall to Matilda for her marriage portion. Julia had determined to live in the isle of Lismore during the summer months; and it was agreed that she and her husband should divide the winter alternately between her father and aunt, at Penrose Castle and at Richmond. Her interesting mother-in-law, the Countess of Seyntaubyne, she loved with the affection of a daughter; and her noble and liberal mind fully partook in the happiness of her father.

In the felicity which Matilda tasted, she gratefully enjoyed the present good, nor repined when Clairville returned to take his command at sea. She had been taught by

Doctor Arundel, and had learnt from experience, that the happiest lot in life is not exempt from temporary suffering; and

“That perils multiply as blessings flow.”

She philosophically balanced the evil with the good; and, if Clairville’s absence awakened anxiety and regret, his return was always hailed with transport.

THE END.

E. Blackader, Typ.
Took’s Court, Chancery Lane, London.