

Author: **Frances Jacson**

Title: *Things By Their Right Names*

Place of publication: London

Publisher: Printed for George Robinson, by T.
Davison

Date of publication: 1812

Edition: 1st ed.

Number of volumes: 2

Copyright Chawton House Library

THINGS
BY THEIR
RIGHT NAMES;
A NOVEL,
IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY A PERSON WITHOUT A NAME.

Let us “encompass virtue with associations more than mortal; associations whose steady light may survive the waving and meterous gleams of sentimental illusion.”—ANONYMOUS.

—“Servant of God, well done! Well has thou fought;
And for the test’mony of truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence; this was all thy care,
To stand approv’d in sight of God, though worlds
Judg’d thee perverse.”—— MILTON.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR GEORGE ROBINSON, 25, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1812.

TO

THE DETHRONED SOVEREIGN

TRUTH.

MADAM,

ALTHOUGH your language has become so nearly obsolete, that, in addressing you, I have scarcely a hope to make myself understood; and your abode so obscure, that I know not where to find you; yet, as I am assured by very high authorities that you do still really inhabit this sublunary globe, I venture to present to you the following work.

In laying at your august feet so humble an offering, I am actuated by no selfish consideration. I too well know the rigid limits to which your favours are restricted, to hope that any mark of your grace will be extended to me. But, in attempting to restore “things to their right names,” I thought not of myself, but of you.

On all who rank on the side of your too potent adversary, Falsehood, from the pitiful meanness of well-bred duplicity, to the brazened vice of hardened perjury, I would make war: and if I have laid open one insidious snare of your pretended friends, or repulsed one rude attack of your open enemies, I have accomplished my aim.

May the blow be followed up by able hands, until your Most High Mightiness be restored to your own legitimate sovereignty over the human mind, and recognised as the conservator of all that is dear and precious to man!

I am,

Madam,

Your greatest Admirer,
And humblest Votary.

THINGS
BY THEIR
RIGHT NAMES.

CHAP. I.

PHILOSOPHERS have said, and poets have sung, that every individual of the human race is distinguished by a leading passion peculiar to himself. Now, I have not been so neglected by Nature, as to be left without this appropriate mark of humanity. I too, like the rest of my species, have my ruling passion; and this passion is, *the desire of being useful*.

Of the means to attain this end, money, talents, and leisure, are the most powerful. Of talents I must not boast, of money I have not any, of leisure I have a great deal. It is my leisure, then, that I must dedicate to the good of my fellow creatures.

Were I a woman, I might find, in an unwearied application to my distaff, the enjoyment even to satiety, of my favorite desire; but being, unfortunately, of the other sex, and far gone in the habits of gentlemanly idleness, I am reduced to my pen, as the single mean in my power of being useful in my generation.

But even to the use of this single mean there is an impediment. What is there in this all-sapient age which is yet to be taught? Where is the mystery undeveloped? the truth that is hidden? Where the most recondite science, that is not made “easy to the meanest capacity?” Let us not, however, despair: in gazing on the sky, we may sometimes stumble over a mole-hill. Thus, while we are learning to direct the winds, to change the temperature of climates, and to disturb the whole economy of Nature; and while we are giving to our astonishing discoveries new and imposing names, do we not conduct our every-day affairs in a jargon where the expression is so foreign from the thing meant to be expressed, as to confound and bewilder our principles of morality,—our ideas of happiness,—our sense of every thing that is just, true, and desirable? The science, therefore, that remains still untaught, is “the science of calling things by their right names:” and this science I undertake to teach.

I could do this in periodical essays, in weekly sermons, in evening lectures, in a poem, a play, a pamphlet, all, no doubt, equally well; but I am not one of those churlish physicians, who, provided they cure their patient, do not care though they half poison him in doing so: no, as the draught is wholesome, so shall it be, if I can make it so, palatable also. The form, at least, shall meet the taste of the age. Sovereigns, statesmen, archbishops and bishops, deans and prebendaries, literati and non-literati, queens, dutchesses, and their chambermaids, all read novels; and therefore,—I will write a Novel.

As the work that I am about to enter upon is not an epic poem, I think myself at liberty to take up my story where it best suits my purposes to do so. And as not only the fortunes, but the characters of many persons, take their colour from the faults or virtues

of their remote ancestors, I must be allowed to trace the source of those which distinguished my heroine as far back as I see proper. I shall begin, therefore, with her maternal grandfather.

In an ancient mansion, belonging to an ancient family somewhere in that part of Somersetshire which is washed by the waves of the Bristol Channel, once resided Sir Edward Pynsynt. At the period when the personages were born whose virtues I have undertaken to commemorate in the ensuing history, Sir Edward had been dead many years, but his memory still survived in the hearts of all who had known him.

Sir Edward had been distinguished alike by the superiority of his character, and the more than common share of felicity that had fallen to his lot.

Descended from an illustrious family, the heir of large possessions, and nothing having been wanting in his favour of any of those means which the world esteems necessary to perfect what it is pleased to call a good education, Sir Edward had, from his earliest infancy, been trained to those manners, and initiated into those acquirements, which distinguish the high-fashioned and high-bred. He had, of course, entered the world with all those advantages which are so sure to meet with a good reception there. But, beyond all these adventitious and extraneous gifts which he had received from fortune and from culture, he possessed qualities which he owed to God alone. I have not mistaken the word. When I am teaching the science of true nomenclature, it would ill become me to put the effect for the cause. The philosopher may, if he please, erase the simple monosyllable, and put his favourite *Nature* in its stead, and let him explain how he has amended the phrase. Will he have rendered his meaning one jot clearer to those of his own sect? while, on the other hand, he will have made it tenfold more obscure to nine parts out of ten of the rest of the human race.

The gifts bestowed upon Sir Edward Pynsynt were worthy of the divine origin from whence they proceeded. An understanding vigorous, clear, and acute; a heart warm, tender, and true; a temper cheerful and conciliating; an integrity incorruptible, with all that marks the honest man from the knave. This was so distinguishing a part of his character, that truth, open and fair as daylight, shone forth in every look, word, and action. Subterfuge, chicanery, double meanings, were far from him; even the allowed duplicity of politeness was abhorrent to his taste, and made no part of his system of benevolence.

Sir Edward had been determined in the choice of a wife less by the charms of the lady's person, than by the apparent sweetness of her temper, and the quickness and teachableness of her understanding: or, to express myself more accurately, these were the qualities that Sir Edward *himself believed* to have determined his election. In fact, however, the beauty of Caroline Montford was such as to render it something doubtful, whether Sir Edward's judgment could have had fair play; and made it a question, whether his heart had not been betrayed by his senses, rather than yielded by his reason. If this were the case, Sir Edward was not less fortunate in this particular, than in all the other circumstances that have been enumerated above. Caroline was not only "all that youthful poets fancy when they love," but all that human excellence *can* be in a girl scarcely eighteen. The gay and frank manners of Sir Edward, and the spirit of his conversation, had carried off the fair prize from several competitors, his superiors in station and fortune; and the bridal hours were scarcely past, before she discovered that she had gained a possession beyond the value of all that rank and riches can of themselves

bestow.

As the standard of *possible* merit was high in the mind of Sir Edward, he would not easily have borne that the object of his most impassioned affections should have fallen much below it. He regarded his Caroline as the connoisseur regards the inestimable gem which gives distinction to his cabinet. No eye gazes on it with delight equal to his own; but neither does any so soon perceive the casual particle of dust, or the gathering damp, which threaten to obscure its lustre. With these feelings, Sir Edward was not more the lover, than the guardian and preceptor of his Caroline; and under his forming care the charming girl became the all-accomplished woman.

Sir Edward had represented to her, that it was not when surrounded by pleasure, assailed by flattery, and pampered with all that riches can procure, that at eighteen we learn to know ourselves, or to understand the claims that others have upon us; and he had easily led her to retire with him to the seat of his ancestors, on the confines of the Bristol Channel. Here, in a regular series of instructive reading, in the cultivation of every elegant talent, and the acquirement of every useful art, and in the interchangement of the good offices and real pleasures which the society of the good and the rational may every where afford, their hours of amusement were past; those of duty, in every exertion of active benevolence and even-handed justice, that their situation as lords paramount of the neighbourhood, or as the richest people in it, could give occasion for. But the line of demarcation between pleasure and duty;—that line which, to the worldling and the licentious, appears sketched with so broad a stroke, and with a colour so deep and decided, was with them but faintly defined. Their pleasures and their duties were so much the same, were so intermingled and melted into each other, that the social dinner was often an act of benevolence; and the amusements of the drawing-room the saving of a law-suit. A visit to a sick cottage often superseded the hour of study; and the harp and the pencil gave way to the instruction of the village-girl in the arts of the needle or the spinning wheel: nor, when the hour of reflection came, was it possible for Sir Edward or Lady Pynsynt to discover whether they had that day been pursuing their duty or their pleasure.

This harmony between the good and the pleasant was not to be imputed alone to the scene on which they acted the part of life. It is true, that a residence in the country is favourable to the virtues of moderation, order, and benevolence; but it is equally true, that they are not necessarily connected with it. Intemperance, misrule, and oppression, may be seen under the shade of a tree, as certainly, though, perhaps, not so frequently, as amongst “the crowded marts of busy men.” But actions that spring from principles, are the same in all situations, however varying. Sir Edward and Lady Pynsynt called themselves Christians. What they called themselves, they strove to be: and it is in the divine system of christian ethics that we are to look for the rule of conduct which they prescribed to themselves. Hence they saved much confusion of ideas, and many puzzling disquisitions, on the right and wrong of their every-day actions. How a “*man of honour*” would act in such or such a case; what might, or might not, be consonant to the *manners* or *ideas* of a gentleman; what did, or did not, accord with his rank and dignity, might admit of debate, and a variety of opinions; but, to “do justice,” to “love mercy,” and to “walk humbly with their God,” was a plain doctrine, in which there could be no mistake. And so they did walk, for several years after their marriage, in the flowery paths which surrounded the Priory, themselves the happiest of human beings, and the blessing and

delight of all with whom they had to do. Having thus, in the security of retirement, allowed time for their principles to take deep root in their hearts, and their virtues to grow strong by habit, they did not fear to enter again into the world; from which, before they were so well secured from its seductions, they had so wisely withdrawn. Not only in the capital of their own country, but in that of most of the states on the continent, did they, in the course of some years, mix with the great, the polite, and the learned. From this varying experience, ever endeavouring to extract something by which to amend themselves, or to benefit others; and learning, as the result of the whole, that virtue is the parent of happiness, and home her most favourite abode!

Lady Pynsynt had now been the wife of Sir Edward twenty years. In the course of this time she had born him several children, three only of whom now survived—a daughter who had completed her eighteenth year, a son who had not yet attained his fifteenth, and a girl of eight years old.

Sedulously occupied in the cultivation of the good qualities of her children; blest in the unabated love of the fondest of husbands; surrounded by friends; followed by the prayers and blessings of her dependants; high in affluence; and her bosom yet glowing with the warm energies of youth; perhaps at no one period of her existence had Lady Pynsynt been so completely happy; at no time could she have thought so little of the darkness of futurity.

On the uncertain tenure by which all sublunary bliss is held, Lady Pynsynt had not unfrequently reflected: nor did she suppose that she was wholly unprepared to meet, with patience and resignation, whatever change might be appointed. She was now called upon to prove, by experience, how different is the degree of courage necessary to *contemplate* the greatest evils as *possible*, and to *feel* them as *certain*.

Sir Edward, on mounting his horse to take his morning's ride, had promised an early return:—but Sir Edward returned no more!—a fall from his horse had at once terminated his mortal existence, and rendered life an almost insupportable burthen to Lady Pynsynt.—Yet she sunk not under the blow.—Dead to every *pleasure*, to every *duty* she was alive. Her children, her friends, her dependants, lost nothing of her care, her attention, her activity: but, although she had not yet attained her fortieth year, although she was blest with beauty, health, and affluence, many years wore away, and no one could say that they had seen a smile enlighten her countenance.

Lady Pynsynt survived Sir Edward about fifteen years; and this period was marked by several events which were ill calculated to dispel that gloom with which his death had overshadowed her mind. Her son, on the death of his father, had immediately been placed, by his guardians, at one of those public schools where the manly character is supposed to unfold itself with so much advantage. From hence he had been removed to one of the universities. Here he soon discovered, that a fatherless youth of eighteen, the certain heir of ten thousand pounds a year, could be under no necessity to regulate his expenses by any other rule than his own ungoverned appetite. Nor did he suffer the discovery to remain inefficient.—“Honour,” says some body, “is not hereditary, though honours are.” Sir George Pynsynt resembled little the parent from whence he sprung: and although he had qualities which might have been trained into virtues, had they continued longer under the judicious and fostering hand of Sir Edward; yet being now suffered to wither from neglect, or allowed to run wild in a wrong direction, the weeds, with which they were surrounded, soon checked the good seed, and made Sir George's mind appear

like a garden long uncultivated, where, though here and there a beautiful flower rears its head, and excites surprise and admiration, the general appearance is forbidding deformity.

From the university, Sir George went abroad: he returned to be elected to Parliament for one of his own boroughs, found means to exchange his borough for a peerage, dismissed his Italian mistress, married splendidly, and continued to make laws for his country, and to break them in every action of his life. Lady Pynsynt, however, had not the mortification of witnessing the whole of this worthy career: other cares, other sorrows, before she had quite lost all hopes of better things from the degenerate son of so worthy a parent, had conducted her to the tomb. Her eldest daughter, when on the point of marriage with a gentleman as well approved by Lady Pynsynt as acceptable to the young lady herself, saw all her prospects of happiness snatched from her grasp by the hand of death. The lover died, after a few days' illness, of an inflammatory fever; and Lady Pynsynt felt the full weight of this accumulation of misfortune. It seemed, indeed, as if the death of Sir Edward had been the signal of disaster, or misconduct, to every individual of his family: and the life and death of Lady Pynsynt were an awful display of some of those mysterious dealings of Providence, which it is not given us in this world to understand. The star of her morning had risen with no common brightness; she was virtuous as she was happy; yet did she lie down in sorrow, and her name was repeated with a sigh!

In the little sprightly engaging Louisa, however, both the mother and the daughter found an object of interest that still attached them to the world. But Lady Pynsynt's vital powers were now nearly exhausted; and the last act of her existence was the concluding a marriage between Louisa and a young gentleman of the name of Fitzosborn.

Mr. Fitzosborn was the second son of a gentleman of good birth and large estate; but this estate was settled on the eldest son; and there being a third boy; and a numerous train of sisters, the provision for the younger branches of the family was not proportionable to their rank in life. Neither ambition nor avarice had, however, a place in Lady Pynsynt's bosom: her daughter's fortune was fifteen thousand pounds; and she thought this sum in addition to Mr. Fitzosborn's property, and the profits that might be reasonably expected as the result of his abilities and industry, would afford such a competency, as would be sufficient to secure the end of all riches—happiness. She had, upon these reasonings, yielded to the earnest wishes of her daughter; and pleased herself in believing, that the humble establishment of the sister would be productive of more happiness and virtue, than she dared to flatter herself would result from the larger possessions and more extended power of the brother.

A few months after the marriage of Mrs. Fitzosborn, Lady Pynsynt breathed her last, and left Miss Pynsynt one of the most desolated of human beings. From the period that had deprived her of her betrothed lover, she had dedicated all her affections to her mother and sister. The one was lost to her for ever in this world; and the other had now so many new calls upon her heart and attentions, that Miss Pynsynt could scarcely hope that she should retain that share in either, which had, for the last ten years of her life, made the sweetest part of her existence.

Mrs. Fitzosborn's residence was to be in London, the scene of Miss Pynsynt's greatest sorrows, and the place to which she had resolved to return no more. Sir George was, at the time of his mother's death, residing in Italy; and, had he been in England,

Miss Pynsynt had but little reason to suppose that she would have found in his family a comfortable asylum. The gleams of affection, the flashes of generosity, which had, from time to time, illuminated his earlier years, had now ceased; and her intercourse with him was one dispiriting, unbroken darkness. Thus, not perceiving that any connexion which remained to her offered either indemnification for those of which she had been deprived, or even support under the acute sense that she had of such deprivation, she resolved to seek her consolation in the indulgence of her sorrows; and, at four and thirty, to bid adieu to the world. Lady Pynsynt had been enabled to add to the original fortune of Miss Pynsynt some thousand pounds; and, with a property amounting to something more than twenty thousand pounds, she retired to a small house within thirty miles of the Priory.

Here she had lived for more than ten years, almost wholly forgotten by all who had once known her: seldom seen, except by her servants, and by the neighbouring poor, to whom she was a most unwearied and tender-hearted benefactress; to the extent, and beyond the annual extent, of her means. She had no source of expense which at all entered into competition with the call of benevolence, except the adorning her house and gardens: and, by employing the labourers and workmen of her neighbourhood, she contrived to gratify at once her taste and her principle.

When first she retired to the Grove, her sorrows were legitimate, and her plan rational: but, by having removed herself from the control which the eye of society has over the conduct of every human being, she had accustomed herself to consecrate as virtues all the feelings of her heart, and, in the want of other objects for her affections, had found one in the indulgence of affliction. Hence she had converted her habitation into a temple of constancy and sorrow. Every room was adorned with the memorials of her loss, or emblems of her grief. She had surrounded it with shady groves, formed for contemplation; and with gloomy grottos, where sorrow might meditate—"e'en to madness."

Do we find it scarcely credible that the pupil of Sir Edward and Lady Pynsynt, of whose virtues she was almost an adorer, and whose words were to her as the fiat of a Superior Intelligence, could thus deviate from the line of sound reasoning and genuine resignation? The anomaly arose from "calling things by wrong names." An indulgence of every selfish feeling she called "a dedication of her mind to the virtues of her lost friends;" a withdrawal from the reciprocal duties of society, "an abandonment of all earthly affections." Thus, without one culpable inclination, without one wrong intention, Miss Pynsynt, with the exception of her beneficence to the poor, scarcely performed one laudable action. With the consciousness of the eye of Providence over every thought, she suffered her heart to dictate to her reason: with submission to the decrees of her Creator in her mouth, her whole life was a continued murmur against his will: and in the indulgence of her grief for the past, she overlooked the present, and forgot the future.

But the period, which had thus been nearly a blank to Miss Pynsynt, had been one of much bustle and vicissitude to her nearest relations. Sir George, within the term named, had returned to England, had been made a peer, had married, and had now two sons and a daughter. Mrs. Fitzosborn had passed through all the degrees of matrimonial love; from the most ardent passion to the coolest indifference. The happiness that Lady Pynsynt had promised herself, as the result of her daughter's marriage, was to have been founded on the unostentatious virtues of prudence, diligence, frugality, and moderation. It happened, however, that those were not the virtues that distinguished either Mr.

Fitzosborn or his lady. One guinea had not been saved by her prudence, or gained by his industry. While they had continued to love each other, they had played the fool together; when they had grown indifferent, they had played the fool separately. For their mutual accommodation, Mrs. Fitzosborn had found means to give up her settlement: the money was spent; debts were accumulated; and, at the end of ten years, with broken fortunes and a ruined constitution, Mrs. Fitzosborn found herself on the eve of bringing into the world a wretched human being, whom she had deprived of the means of subsistence.

The voice of conscience, often silenced, now spoke in accents it was impossible not to hear, and hearing to regard. Mrs. Fitzosborn poured out all her self-reproach, and all her misery, to her sister: to that sister, of whom she had seldom thought in her gayer hours; or thought of, only to ridicule as romantic and visionary. This letter awakened Miss Pynsynt as from a dream. In her withdrawal of the eye from Mrs. Fitzosborn's conduct on the entrance into life, and the progress through its difficulties and temptation, she thought she saw the origin of all her deviations from the line of rectitude; and charging her own negligence, rather than Mrs. Fitzosborn's weakness, with the whole guilt of the consequence, she considered herself as not less culpable than the sister who now implored her compassion and assistance. The call was not in vain—she forgot all her once fancied virtues, in the performance of real duties. Mrs. Fitzosborn was received at the Grove with all the sympathy, and consoled with all the kindness, that even a mother could have felt. But no sympathy could heal the broken heart, or restore a ruined constitution. Mrs. Fitzosborn lived only to bring into the world a daughter; and Miss Pynsynt felt the difference between the *reality* and the *romance* of sorrow.

After the first paroxysm of her grief was past, she found, however, in her infant niece, a genuine, and a more allowed source of consolation; and, from this hour, she dedicated all her faculties, and all her affections, to the cultivating and fostering this tender plant. On considering her own past conduct, she found much to reprehend; and, on retracing her errors, she easily discovered the source from whence they had flowed. To guard her young pupil from the illusions of fancy, to fortify her reason, and to moderate her feelings, was therefore her most assiduous care. If it be possible, said she, with a sigh of reflection on her own mistakes and those of her brother, Sir Edward and Lady Pynsynt shall have one descendant worthy of the stock from whence she sprung! What our heroine, in consequence of this resolution, became in the process of time, the progress of this history will show, but, until she has charms that can interest in her favour others besides a maiden aunt, we shall say little of her. It will be sufficient to add in this place, that Miss Pynsynt, from the birth of her niece, made an entire alteration in her mode of life. She sought the neighbours from whom she had before secluded herself; she busied her mind in every research which she thought might be of service to her charge; and she put regularity and economy in the expenditure of a fortune, which she now wished to leave behind her unimpaired. Some years afterwards, the death of a relation made so large an addition to her original property, that she found herself at liberty in some degree to resume the lavish benevolence in which she had before indulged, without too much intrenching on the provision which she had destined for her niece. Although I have spoken of this infant as being wholly given up to her maiden aunt, yet Caroline Fitzosborn was not quite an orphan—she had still a father. We have seen him, in the early part of his life, dissipate not only his own property, but the property of his child. The years, however, in which this dissipation took place, were not, in the eye of a certain

part of the world, wholly thrown away. It is true that he had failed in becoming a good lawyer, or even a good member of society; but then he had made himself *a man of fashion*; that equivocal being, who *may* possess every estimable quality of the head and heart, and yet to whom not a single perfection of either is essential. Mr. Fitzosborn had taken a middle course: he had a good share of understanding; was not wholly without wit, was tolerably skilled in all gentlemanlike literature, and possessed uncommon readiness in conversation. He was liberal towards himself—courteous towards others; was never out of humour, when he had his own way; or out of spirits, but when he wanted money. To these personal qualifications Mr. Fitzosborn added all the claims to distinction that pedigree could bestow. His family, disdaining to boast of the lineal and unbroken succession which united them with their great ancestor, Sir Hugh Fitzosborn, the favourite knight, companion and friend, of William the Conqueror, fearlessly challenged inquiry into all the unintelligible MSS. of the long destroyed monastic retreats of Normandy; and asserted, that long before the period of the Conquest they would be found, by all who had patience and ability for the search, springing upwards into barons, counts, dukes, and princes, even until they reached the apex of human grandeur, in the person of the emperor himself. In this long succession of ages, it is to be supposed that these high distinctions had differently affected the different possessors of them: the grovelling pride of some, it may be presumed, had rested satisfied with the honours derived from their forefathers, while the more soaring ambition of others had, probably, by their own meritorious deeds, sought to make that personal, which was before only derivative. How many of the one sort, or of the other, which had disgraced or dignified this illustrious family, cannot now be known; but certainly the Mr. Fitzosborn of whom I am now writing, was rather of that humble turn of mind which led him to take pride in what had been done by others, than of that lofty spirit which might have prompted him to earn honour for himself. Of his noble ancestors he thought little, but as they served for a kind of passport into families, whom, though he considered as inferior to him in point of birth, had, however, certain other distinctions and advantages that he was very willing, condescendingly, to share. Nor had he any reason to complain of the neglect either of his personal or derived merits: he was generally well received, and associated with men of the first rank and fortune. As he gave place to no one in point of birth, so he was not unwilling to vie with the richest of his companions in expense. The consequence of this competition, in the earlier part of his life, has been seen; but he had not bought his experience in vain. No sooner did death set him free from the shackles of his first marriage, than he sought to repair the mistake of his youthful choice, by taking a wife whose riches would at least take a longer time in dissipating than the moderate fortune of Louisa Pynsynt had done. In this design he was not long without success. He married; and as money was the only merit that he sought, he had no reason to complain, if it were the only merit that he found.

Disencumbered of the care of his infant daughter, he soon almost lost the remembrance that he had one; and having, by a desperate family arrangement, as he called it, possessed himself of a very considerable sum of money, in addition to the wealth brought him by his wife, he established himself in a large and elegant house, furnished it with all that taste and expense could suggest, hired the first cook, and became known for giving the best dinners: confidently exulting in the wisdom of his plans, and unfeignedly believing that life had no more to give, or the heart of man to desire. His

dream of felicity had been a little disturbed by the sources from whence it had proceeded being, in a long succession of good dinners, considerably diminished; and it seemed to vanish wholly from his view, on a summons into Somersetshire, for the purpose of receiving his daughter from the hands of her aunt, who now lay upon her death-bed. He now first recollected, that one of the conditions on which he had obtained the wealthy hand of his present lady, was, that the dreaded step-daughter should never be admitted under his roof; and he had but too much reason to know, that any attempt to infringe this condition would be the destruction of that gentlemanly household quiet on which he piqued himself, and which he had hitherto preserved, by yielding to every wish of the lady, except that of giving her his company. No two people could live more apart than they did; and Mr. Fitzosborn would have preferred any alternative (except death) to the necessity of discussing any single point with the Fury that he called his wife. A habitation for Caroline must, however, be found; and in the dilemma *where*, he turned his thoughts towards her uncle, Lord Enville, the former Sir George Pynsynt. Mr. Fitzosborn and Lord Enville were in the habits of intimacy; they even called themselves friends: and as Mr. Fitzosborn had no doubt but that Caroline would inherit all that her aunt could bequeath, he did not consider a request, that she might become a member of her uncle's family, as too great a favour to ask. The proposition met with a most ready acquiescence. Lord Enville, it is true, had seen little, and cared less, for either his sister or his niece, for several years past; nor was he without his jealousy, on the probability that Caroline would engross all the property possessed by his sister: but the proposal of Mr. Fitzosborn, to receive her into his family at so early an age as that to which she had as yet attained, opened to him a prospect of rendering the undue partiality of his sister less injurious to his interests than it might otherwise have been. He therefore scarcely suffered Mr. Fitzosborn to open his difficulties, before he cried out, with the greatest cheerfulness, "Oh, let the girl come to us. She will be no embarrassment whatever at present; and if, in future, Lady Enville should find it too much to chaperon half a dozen young ladies, we will think of some other expedient for your daughter."

No philosopher, no religionist, could more fully adopt the maxim of leaving the events of to-morrow to provide for themselves, than did Mr. Fitzosborn; to dispose of the present evil was all his care. He therefore thanked Lord Enville very cordially for his so ready reception of his daughter; but, he added, "At present, I believe, she will give more trouble to your governess than to any body else. She is, in fact, scarcely out of the nursery; and, considering how she has been brought up, can hardly be fit for any society. I shall be much obliged to Madame de Tourville if she can form her into a rational creature. I have not seen her these three years: but when I did see her, she was the reverse of every thing I should have chosen a daughter of mine to be; except, indeed, that she promised to be handsome: but your lordship knows, that it would have been cruel to have deprived your sister of her only comfort; and a little polishing will soon rub off the rust." "Undoubtedly," returned Lord Enville, who well knew to what to impute his brother-in-law's tenderness to the feelings of Miss Pynsynt: "and if she is handsome," added he, "in addition to the sparklers that she will inherit from aunt Beatrice, nothing more will be necessary." "Oh, my lord," replied Mr. Fitzosborn, "of those sparklers of which you speak, no doubt but that your daughters will come in for their share, as certainly they ought to do; yet that will be a little hard too, because, with their native charms—(they are charming girls! my lord)—and the accomplishments that you have given them, they will

want no such aid to establish them in life; while my poor rustic will scarcely be passable, with all the mines of Golconda for her auxiliaries.” “The world,” said Lord Enville, with a slight bow for the compliment to his daughters, “is not so fastidious: but, after all, our girls must take their chance, and there’s an end of the matter.”

Lord Enville, since the period of Mrs. Fitzosborn’s death, had added two daughters to his family; both, of course, younger than Caroline. Of his sons, one had completed his twentieth, and the other his nineteenth year; while the eldest daughter had scarcely attained seventeen. On his marriage, not only his paternal estate, but also the large possessions that Lady Enville had brought him, had almost wholly been settled upon his eldest son, twenty thousand pounds being all that had been allotted as the provision for younger children; and as there were already four of them, this sum did not promise a very splendid provision to any. Lord Enville’s yearly expenses regularly exceeded the amount of his yearly income, and thus consumed the only part of his property from whence he could have supplied the deficiency which was likely to arise in the provision for his younger children: yet let it not be supposed that Lord Enville was an unkind or a partial parent. The sacrificing the comforts of the subordinate members to the splendour of the head of his family, he genuinely believed—how truly, let those who call things by their right names determine,—to be an imperious duty: but, with this exception, his children equally shared his cares and his affections; in their sports, their habits, their expenses, and school education, there was no difference observed between the boy who, beyond five thousand pounds, was to owe his future subsistence to his own industry, and the one who, without any exertion whatever, was to have annually four times that sum. The hereditary statesman, and the humble expounder of his country’s laws, were alike encouraged in the pride of high birth, and the insolence of superfluous expense. He who was to be isolated from his fellow man by his privileges and his pretensions, and he who was to have no distinction but what he could derive from his talents and his virtues, were equally taught to regard the mass of mankind as beings of an inferior order, and were habituated to pride themselves upon circumstantial rather than inherent qualities. As Lord Enville was not a fool, and as he had no intention to injure his children, we can only account for the error in his calculation, by referring it to his ignorance in the “science of calling things by their right names.” Nor did the mistakes which this ignorance led him into, stop with his sons; his daughters equally profited by so well-judged an impartiality, and a fondness equally discreet. As expectant dutchesses, marchionesses, and countesses, they were indulged in all the fastidiousness of refinement, and all the imbecility of elegance. Lady Enville went a step beyond her lord: what with him was indulgence, with her was system and injunction. To be “lady-like,” was the ultimate end of their education; and in attaining this end, they learnt to be ashamed even of the little power which they possessed of being useful either to themselves or others. Hence their boast was rather of negative than active qualities. They were sure “they could not dress or attend upon themselves.” Every trifling inconvenience was beyond their power of sufferance; and every little difficulty surpassed their means of contest: hence they sometimes sought distinction from a feigned ignorance of what it would have been becoming them to have known, and sometimes by a real extravagance, which it was their disgrace to indulge.

When people are weak themselves, it is necessary to look abroad for support. Lady Enville knew that the whole basis of so much cultivated helplessness, and expensive refinement, was the above-named sum of five thousand pounds; and she was

too good an arithmetician not to be sensible how inadequate were the means to the end. In her calculation, therefore, for the future establishment of her daughters, she thought much less of what was certain, than of what was contingent. It was her design to marry them, not according to the number of thousands which they were to receive from their father, but to their rank; and as she had already marked out the several noblemen on whom she designed to bestow the charms and talents of her daughters, she rather regarded in their education the rent-roll of their future husbands, than the humble dower that they could bring with them. It was no difficult matter to instil into the bosoms of these young ladies hopes so flattering to their vanity, or to inspire them with every solicitude which would promote designs so advantageous to their fortune. Hence matrimony, and a splendid establishment, were ideas so connected in their imagination, that they were, in fact, one and indivisible; and hence, every talent that they cultivated, and every accomplishment that they sought, had reference to the rank which they expected, so undoubtingly, to fill. That inconsistency, however, which is the distinguishing mark of selfishness, was not less observable in Lord and Lady Enville, than in their neighbours. Although they could see no reason why the smallness of that portion which they could give their daughters should impede their connexion with the heir of some noble family, they found it absolutely impossible that either of their sons should take the equally portionless sister of that heir in return. That Mr. Pynsynt must marry, was indispensable: how otherwise would the title, so lately attained, and so highly valued, be perpetuated? That he should marry a woman of large fortune was indispensable: he would have his brother and sisters' fortunes to pay, he would have debts to discharge, he would have a family to provide for: the estate was already scarcely adequate to the honours which it had to support; not one acre could be spared—less than a hundred thousand pounds would do nothing. Charles, indeed, if he were wise, would not think of matrimony at all: if he did, it must be with some one who could bring him thirty thousand pounds at least.

Such were the politics of the present heads of the Enville family. How widely different from those which regulated the conduct, and pointed the sollicitudes, of Sir Edward and Lady Pynsynt! But, as Lord Enville would frequently observe, "My father and mother, who were certainly the best people breathing, had a most extraordinary kind of understanding! well adapted, perhaps, for a residence in the country: but, as I have no fancy for either its pleasures or its duties, I must regulate myself by other rules; and, as I live in the world, do like the rest of it."

In their hopes, and their views for their children, Sir Edward and Lady Pynsynt had been disappointed: Lord and Lady Enville were probably less so. But let us not, therefore, conclude that Lord and Lady Enville were wise, Sir Edward and Lady Pynsynt foolish. In the competition between virtue and vice for the good things of this life, it will commonly be found, that "this world was made for Cæsar:" hence the imperious necessity, if we would be virtuous, to look beyond it—hence the duty of "calling things by their right names."

Into this high bred and politic family we have now to introduce Caroline Fitzosborn. The death of her aunt, as it was the first sorrow which she had known, so she thought it was the most severe that she could ever know. She had given to her benefactress her first affections; and, with all the enthusiasm of youth, considered her as a perfect being, and loved her rather as a superior intelligence, than as a fellow mortal.

The attacks of a violent disease proved, however, the mortality of her friend but too fatally for the peace of Caroline. The symptoms of the disorder were such, as gave the most certain prognostic of her approaching dissolution.—She did not conceal from Caroline what must be the event; but she called upon her to prove, on this first trial, that the cares which had been bestowed upon the cultivation of her reason and her heart, had not been thrown away.

“Let my closing scene convince me,” said she, “that I have not lived in vain. Let me see that I have trained a mortal and dependant being to view death with a steady eye, and to submit with patient resignation to the decrees of its Superior.”

Caroline pressed the hand of her aunt, in token that she would be all that she wished her to be—nor did she overrate her own powers; she continued to attend at the bed-side of Mrs. Pynsynt night and day; the most obedient and adroit assistant to those whose greater experience entitled them to direct her; and the most acute observer and diligent supplier of every wish and want of her dying friend: and this with so solemn and so touching a steadiness of voice and feature, as showed that it was not that she did not feel, but that she knew how to command her feelings.

Mrs. Pynsynt had breathed her last before the arrival of Lord Enville and Mr. Fitzosborn, who both had hastened down on the intelligence of the dangerous indisposition with which she had been attacked. Their hearts beat alike with hope and fear, but not in equal proportions; Lord Enville had more of the latter, and Mr. Fitzosborn of the former: and though each, in apportioning their wants to the means of supplying them, were accustomed to speak of twenties of thousands as trifles; yet, when such a sum as one twenty was supposed to be about to fall to the disposal of one of them, they acknowledged, by their mutual anxiety, all the importance of the prize.

Caroline was called from the death chamber of her friend, to receive her father and uncle. The tears, which, since they could no longer give pain to her benefactress, she had suffered to flow freely, as a relief to her oppressed heart, she wiped from her eyes, lest they should increase the sorrow which she believed that she was going to witness in two persons so nearly connected with the deceased. On entering the room, however, in which they were, she perceived instantly, that her precaution had been unnecessary.

“So, Carry,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “I find it is all over—we are come too late.” “My poor sister!” said Lord Enville, “I hope she did not suffer much?” Caroline had no voice to reply to the observation of the one, or the question of the other—her heart swelled; and the tears so lately suppressed, again streamed down her face. “Come, don’t cry,” said her father; “your aunt was very good to you, but she was an old woman; this event was to be looked for; we are come to take you away from this dismal place.—Pray—pray—who have you had with you?—is there any man of business in the house?—has——” “Yes,” said Lord Enville, “do you know whether my sister has left any will?”

Caroline stood aghast.—“Mr. Somers, I believe, is in the house,” replied she.—“I thought I could know nothing of such things. Dr. C—— was very good to me, and he told me that he and Mr. Somers would take care that every thing was done that was proper.” “Who is this Mr. Somers?” said Lord Enville. “My aunt’s executor, I believe,” replied Caroline.—“Oh! then there is a will?” said Mr. Fitzosborn. “Mr. Somers can inform you of every thing,” returned Caroline. “Shall I desire him to come in?” “Pray do,” cried both the gentlemen in a breath; “and Caroline,” added Mr. Fitzosborn, “prepare to leave this place to-morrow. Lord Enville and myself may find it necessary to

remain here some time; but you can have nothing more to do, and had better proceed towards town in the morning." "Not, I hope, till after the funeral," said Caroline. "What have you to do with the funeral?" said her father. "I am sure the sooner you are gone the better, your eyes are swelled out of your head, and you have lost all your colour." Caroline withdrew; and having desired Mr. Somers to attend the gentlemen, sat down to wonder, and to grieve, at what appeared to her so strange and so sad. The curiosity of the two gentlemen was soon fully gratified, but neither the wishes of the one nor the other fulfilled.

Mrs. Pynsynt had given the whole of her property to her niece, excepting some few trifling legacies to her friends and servants; and she had given her the full and entire power over this property on her attaining the age of eighteen; appointing as her executor, and trustee for her niece, Mr. Somers, a gentleman in the neighbourhood; without mentioning either Lord Enville or Mr. Fitzosborn in the will, except by signifying, that as the former and his family were already so amply provided for, she concluded that he would not consider the disposal that she had made of her property, in favour of her portionless niece, as arising from unkindness, or as an undue distinction from others who stood in the same degree of relationship to her. Lord Enville, though he had feared that Caroline would have the largest share of her aunt's possessions, was not prepared for so exclusive a preference in her favour: and Mr. Fitzosborn, though sufficiently pleased that his daughter was sole heiress, felt extremely disappointed in having no right to interfere in the regulation of her money concerns. Lord Enville betrayed his chagrin by muttering, "Amplly provided for indeed!—What could an old woman know of what is an ample provision for young people in these days? or the necessary expenses of a man of the world?" And Mr. Fitzosborn no less betrayed what his wishes were, by saying, "Strange! that so conscientious a lady as your sister, my lord, should think any one so proper to take care of a girl's interest as her father! But these old maids are always for depreciating the rights of fathers and husbands." "Surely you do not complain?" returned Lord Enville. "Complain! no, my lord; I think I have said nothing like it: not that I shall benefit one farthing by this extraordinary will. I know this gentleman executor pretty well. You must have observed that he is one of those over-righteous people, who adhere to the letter of their duty, without once regarding its spirit. I dare say I might go to jail before he would advance one penny of what he would call my daughter's property."—"And I should consider him as being perfectly right in so doing," returned Lord Enville, drily. "And do you consider your sister as perfectly right," retorted Mr. Fitzosborn, "in having given the reins entirely into the hands of a girl of eighteen? What a preposterous notion, thus to antedate the period of supposed discretion to one who is of a sex which never arrives at discretion at all!" "Then the act of antedating is of little consequence," replied Lord Enville. "My lord, my lord," said Mr. Fitzosborn, warmly, "the girl whose interests you seem so careless about, is your niece, as much as my daughter. What will you say when, at eighteen, she runs away with the first needy adventurer who has presumption enough to ask her to do so?" "I say it is an event that will never happen," returned Lord Enville; "Lady Enville will take better care of her." And, indeed, Lord Enville had already determined upon the course that would restore his sister's coveted thousands to his own family; which, though a little more circuitous than he could have wished, he did not consider as apocryphal.

The conversation was here interrupted by the return "of the gentleman executor,"

who had left the room for a moment, after having finished reading the will. He addressed himself to Mr. Fitzosborn. "I consider it, sir, as necessary that Miss Fitzosborn should be present at the breaking of the seals which were affixed before my arrival: but as this is not necessary to be done before the funeral, I hope there will be no objection to the young lady remaining in this house till that ceremony is over. This she is greatly desirous of doing; and it would be very distressing to her at this time to look over Mrs. Pynsynt's personal effects, and to attend to the information which she ought to receive." "You would not talk of such things to a child!" said Mr. Fitzosborn. "My daughter must begin her journey to town to-morrow; but surely the business you talk of may be transacted as well in her absence as if she were here. I will attend you on the breaking of the seals, an inventory of all may be taken, and I will be accountable to my daughter." "Pardon me, sir," replied Mr. Somers, "I am alone accountable to Miss Fitzosborn; and I am desirous that the trust which has been committed to me, shall be not only faithfully, but literally performed." "My daughter cannot remain in this dismal place any longer," returned Mr. Fitzosborn; "she is losing her spirits, she is losing her health." "If it is so necessary that Miss Fitzosborn should be removed immediately," said Mr. Somers, "she will, I dare say, so far conquer her feelings, as to do to night all that is desirable to be done; and, with your permission, I will now wait upon her for the purpose."

This rigid observer of forms well knew Mr. Fitzosborn's character, his conduct during the life of his first wife, and the whole of the reasons that had induced Mrs. Pynsynt to exclude him from any interference in the money concerns of his daughter; and, as his understanding was of that limited nature that did not enable him to discover the meaning of the words "righteous over-much," his rule for conduct was, to do *all* that he knew or believed to be right; and he was perfectly persuaded that it was right to keep Mr. Fitzosborn as distant as possible from the property of his daughter.

Caroline, although shrinking from the task that was proposed to her, was easily prevailed with to do that which she was told was proper to be done; and what would enable her, with whatever sacrifice on her part, to oblige her father in the point of her speedy removal. The business lay in a small compass, and was soon despatched. Caroline was put into possession of all the documents which would enable her to understand her rights, when she should be at leisure to attend to them; and the harder task of taking a last view of the lifeless body of her beloved friend being performed, she accompanied her father and uncle into their carriage, and, with a heart half broken, bade adieu to all that she had, as yet, ever loved, and to the scenes of past pleasures which she thought no future ones could rival. Her cousins were prepared to receive her as a creature of another world; awkward, rustic, and uninformed: and though she derived some merit, in their eyes, from the amount of the thousands which they had now learnt had centered wholly in her, yet they considered them as the costly setting of a worthless pebble; and thought how much better their own graces and accomplishments deserved, and would have adorned, such an accompaniment. They were, therefore, a little startled, when, upon Lord Enville presenting Caroline to his family, they found the clumsy country cousin which they had imaged to themselves, an elegant formed girl, tall of her age, and graceful in her movements, with an intelligent countenance, and features, which, if not critically handsome, formed a whole which every eye must acknowledge as beauty. Her cheek was, however, now pale; and her eyes, where at present no gaiety sparkled, were too frequently bent to the ground. Here, indeed, her cousins had much reason to congratulate

themselves on their superiority; for, instead of the unembarrassed air with which they were conscious that they should have presented themselves, they saw Caroline blush and tremble, as Lord Enville presented her first to one, and then to the other of her unknown relations. Lady Enville, observing on her confusion, said, encouragingly, "But this is wholly to be imputed to the fault of education; I dare say, Caroline, we shall soon be able to make you more like the rest of the world." But it was not by bashfulness alone that Caroline drew on herself the contempt of her cousins. As the superiority of her fortune was never a moment out of their minds, so they concluded that it was never out of her's; and they were not unprepared to pay her all the deference which they had so well learnt to be due to wealth. But when these pupils of fashion and fastidiousness observed the modest reluctance that Caroline manifested to give trouble; her indifference with respect to food and accommodation; the simplicity of her taste, and her frank and genuine satisfaction in all the pleasures suited to her age, they regarded her as the most rustic and undistinguishing of mortals. "I do assure you, mamma," said the youngest of these well educated ladies, "Caroline has been so strangely brought up, that she does not care whether the eggs are new laid or not, and is not afraid to eat them when they are old. Dear, how strong her digestion must be!"

Miss Pynsynt was, however, more tolerant than her sisters; and she had not known Caroline a week, before she told Lady Enville, that she did not despair of the poor girl: "For, indeed, mamma, she is not quite unladylike; and when she has been with us a little longer, I dare say she will succeed very well." Caroline was not, however, a very apt scholar in the lessons that her cousins sought to teach her. At first astonished, and then amused by the helplessness of her companions, she thought of nothing so little as imitating them. She had been accustomed to be praised for her activity, her diligence, the due regulation of her expenses, and the exactness with which she performed all that was intrusted to her; nor could she view lassitude, indolence, forgetfulness, and inattention, otherwise than as objects of reprehension or ridicule. Her youth, and her natural disposition, led her more to laugh than to reprove; and her cousins found themselves rather engaged in repelling her raillery, than in rectifying her opinions. In all these little disputations, she found a never-failing advocate in her cousin Charles; who, though he was not a whit behind any of his family in his pretensions to all that constitutes a man of the ton, for some reasons, either of his own or his father's, was willing to conciliate the good opinion of Caroline, and to uphold, at least in theory, the maxims of prudence, regularity, and moderation. Caroline, on her side, now first, under the form of an uncommonly handsome youth of twenty, began to be sensible to the charms attendant on highly polished manners, and to awaken to the delight that gay and refined conversation can bestow, and, in consequence, repaid the attentions of Charles by a partiality that seemed to secure to Lord Enville all that his heart could wish with respect to the at present alienated property of his sister.

On Caroline's removal to London, she first became known to some branches of her father's family, which she had hitherto never seen, and of some of whom she had scarcely ever heard.

Mr. Fitzosborn had had two brothers. The eldest had never married. His youth had been spent in a state of constant indisposition, which having taken from him both the power and the inclination of mixing with the world, had occasioned him to remain almost wholly in the country. His pleasures were planting and gardening; and looking up

“through Nature, unto Nature’s God,” his mind had become imbued with the strongest religious principles. He had applied all the energy of a vigorous understanding to the investigation of the evidence of the Christian religion; and, in consequence, he considered its truth as little less than demonstrable. What he believed to be true, he did not suffer to be inoperative; and every action and every thought was, with him, referred to a gospel rule. As he associated little with his fellow men, the affections of his heart had never been called into action; and having, in his own mind, a high standard of right, he thought there was scarcely a human creature deserving of his love. He had found it easy to himself to avoid all wandering into forbidden paths; and he therefore concluded all who thus went astray to be such volunteers in vice, as left them without excuse. “The Seer of hearts,” would he say, “may balance the temptation with the crime; parblind man can judge only by the outward act: if the mark is in the forehead, it is reasonable to conclude that the murder has been committed.” With him, one established failure in the path of rectitude fixed the character as vitious; and with vice he would hold no communion: for the anomaly of the human mind he knew not to make any allowance; and with a heart naturally disposed to kindness, no one appeared to be less kind.

Caroline’s father has been induced, in a moment of extreme pecuniary pressure, in consideration of an ample temporary supply, to join with Mr. Fitzosborn in cutting off the entail of the family estate; and, from this hour, the elder brother had considered the younger as no better than another Esau. He had ceased to have any intercourse with him; nor would he suffer his name to be mentioned before him. “He has sold his birth-right,” said he, “and is no brother of mine.”

The power, however, that he had thus gained of disposing of his property, he had used liberally towards most of the other younger branches of his family; rather, however, as the head of his house, than as an affectionate relation who rejoices in the participation of good. He had portioned his sisters bountifully, and established them in the world; but to his youngest brother he dealt out his kindness with a more sparing hand. The young man had married imprudently; and Mr. Fitzosborn observed, that as he had gratified his passions at the expense of his duty, it was right that he should have an opportunity of feeling the consequence of such an election. The wife he would not see; objecting to her, that a woman who overlooks prudence in a matrimonial connexion, must be a slave to the worst propensities; and when the early death of his brother left her a widow with four children, with little to subsist on, he relaxed from his rigid rule of right no farther than to allot to her and her daughters a scanty provision, and to assign them a small house, in a distant county, as their residence. The boy he put to school, and gave him such an education as would enable him to follow the law; but without any distinction that seemed to point him out as his future heir: on the contrary, he publicly declared that he would have no regard to blood or name in his choice of an heir, but that he would alone be determined by the worthiness of the individual. “The family which has not worth to stand upon, had better fall to the ground,” said he. From such declarations, and from the whole tenor of his life, he was considered so much of a humourist, that no one durst promise themselves that his ample possessions would not become the property of the most artful of those who were allowed to approach him. For some years past he had nearly shut himself up from all society, his servants, and people on business, being the only persons who in general were admitted to see him. The world was, however, much mistaken in the character of Mr. Fitzosborn. Humourist as he was supposed to be, no one in fact could be

less so; his will was ever dependent upon his principles: and if there appeared any irregularity in the course of his virtue, it was not that he ever *disregarded* the right line, but that he *mistook* it: nor, secluded as he appeared to be, and regardless of all that passed beyond the confines of his own domain, could there be a more observant or a more sagacious overlooker of all that passed amongst his expectant relations, than Mr. Fitzosborn. He knew the characters of each, and how to appreciate and balance the different merits and claims of the contending candidates for his favour.

The mistakes of Mr. Fitzosborn arose not from any deficiency of heart; they arose only from a false nomenclature. "Severity of punishment," he called "vindicating the cause of virtue;" the "fallibility of human nature," he called "vice;" and "misanthropy," he called "sitting loose to the world."

Of Caroline, Mr. Fitzosborn had scarcely ever heard; and it is probable, if Mrs. Pynsynt had lived, she would never have engaged his notice. Lord Enville, however, knew what he called the world much better than his sister had done; and as he had already, in hope, converted the fortune that she had left Caroline to the uses of his own family, he was not willing to be so wanting to himself, as to neglect any means which he thought likely to dispose of the possessions of Mr. Fitzosborn in the same manner. There was indeed, some difficulty in introducing Caroline to her uncle's notice; but the prize was a tempting one, and well worthy of some vigorous efforts to secure it; nor was Lord Enville a man to be easily turned aside from the path of interest. He believed, that if Caroline could once enter the doors of Henhurst, the work was done; so much did he rely upon the charms of ingenuous youth; and so powerful towards the conciliation of favour did one of the most artful of men feel the influence of artlessness to be. This step, however, upon which all was to depend, Lord Enville found it impossible to make. Amongst the numerous family connexions to which Caroline had been introduced since her arrival in town, there was but one who was willing, had they been able, to have introduced her at Henhurst. They most of them hoped that her name would never reach the ear of Mr. Fitzosborn; and while they continued to show her every polite attention themselves, represented the impossibility there was of making her known to her uncle. There was, indeed, one exception to this general fear of a rival, and this exception was Edward Fitzosborn, the fatherless boy of the indiscreet brother of Mr. Fitzosborn, who was now expiating by a laborious profession, little cheered by the bounty of his uncle, the mistakes of his father.

Edward Fitzosborn had now had chambers in Lincoln's-Inn about two years. From being the intimate friend of Charles Pynsynt, he was in the habits of the most perfect familiarity in Lord Enville's family. As the possible heir of Henhurst, this young man had not been thought wholly unworthy of Lady Enville's attention; as furnishing, at least, a resource for the disposal of one of her daughters; but, on the introduction of Caroline into her house, she had fully agreed with her lord, that the interests of the family would be better provided for by securing to her Mr. Fitzosborn's estate, and marrying her to one of their sons, than by an union of Mr. Edward Fitzosborn with their daughter Charlotte. She was the more readily led into this conclusion from there being nothing in the character of Edward that constituted, in the opinion of Lady Enville, the excellence of man. It is true that he had the reputation of acute sense, and of much information; of industry in his studies, of moderation in his pleasures, and of unimpeached rectitude. He was already considered as being an ornament to his profession: and the grave, the wise,

and the good, spoke of Edward Fitzosborn with approbation: but the grave, the wise, and the good, were neither the oracles nor the associates of Lady Enville. She thought it ridiculous in a young man to decline a late engagement because his duty awaited him at an early hour in the morning; and mean-spirited to limit his expenses by the power he had of paying his debts. The young ladies had, indeed, a more favourable opinion of him; for while they candidly confessed that he had "some strange notions," they contended that nobody made prettier verses, or looked more like a gentleman; and Charles Pynsynt summed up the whole by saying, "that Edward Fitzosborn was the worthiest creature breathing."

How much of each of these opinions Caroline combined in that which she formed of her cousin, may be seen hereafter. At present she gave no sign of favour towards him, farther than sometimes withdrawing her attention from the rattle of Charles, to listen to the arguments of Edward, and sometimes making him the compliment of giving up her opinion to his. On his part, he rather seemed to regard her as a younger sister, to whom his protection was due, than either as a rival in the competition for his uncle's estate, or as a lovely female growing into charms that might make his happiness dependent on her will. "How I wish my uncle could know Caroline!" would he sometimes say. "He thinks but indifferently of the rest of us, but he would be puzzled to find fault with her; she would put his misanthropy to a nonplus." Time, however, passed on; and neither the good-natured disinterestedness of Edward, nor the more politic endeavours of Lord Enville, had advanced Caroline one step in the knowledge of the elder Mr. Fitzosborn: and so hopeless did Lord Enville consider her chance of becoming the heiress of Henhurst, that he entirely gave up the idea of uniting her with his eldest son, and began to turn all his thoughts to the accomplishing her union with Charles.

Accident, however, did that for Lord Enville which all his management had failed to accomplish. The female servant who had attended upon Caroline from her birth, had accompanied her on her removal to London, and had remained with her for more than two years. At the end of this period, finding her health decline, she resolved to return to her native place, and to pass the remainder of her life amongst her relations. This native place was a village scarcely a mile distant from Henhurst; and the relation with whom Mrs. Hanbrooke had taken up her residence was one of the principal tenants of Mr. Fitzosborn. Caroline, who entertained an almost filial regard for this old servant, had continued to correspond frequently with her; and learning that she grew daily into worse health, she was resolved to visit her.

Caroline found no opposition to her purpose from any one. The distance from town did not exceed fifty miles, and she intended to pass the single night in which she should be absent, in the farm house to which she was going, and where she had learnt from Mrs. Hanbrooke that she could be accommodated. Attended, therefore, only by her own maid, and in one of Lord Enville's carriages, Caroline made her little journey very successfully; and the situation in which she found her friend made her sincerely rejoice that she had undertaken it. Her complaints had increased so rapidly, that she was now confined to her bed; and Caroline learnt from the apothecary, that her life was not likely to be long. The poor woman was so transported and cheered by the sight and kindness of Caroline, that the latter naturally feared some bad effects from her quitting so immediately as she had intended. She therefore resolved to continue where she was, at least for a few days; and she conveyed the purest delight to the heart of her dying friend,

by assuring her that she would not leave her while she wished her to remain. This was no long protracted period. Mrs. Hanbrooke drew her last breath within four days after Caroline's arrival. This death-bed scene recalled to the mind of Caroline that which had bereaved her of the friend whom she had always most tenderly loved, and whose loss she had not found any one in her now more extended circle of acquaintance in any degree fitted to supply. Indeed, she considered this second stroke of death as having deprived her of the human being who, next to Mrs. Pynsynt, had most sincerely loved her, and that she was henceforward to be comparatively alone in the world.

Her mind saddened with these thoughts, and with the reflections that they drew after them, she was sitting, the morning following the death of Mrs. Hanbrooke, in the little parlour that had been appropriated to her use, when the door opened gently: she raised her head, expecting to see the servant, and beheld not a woman, but a little old man. On seeing a lady he started, begged pardon, and seemed to intend to withdraw; yet stopt, as if he had a right to enter. The farmer, who appeared at the same instant, hoped his honour would forgive him; said there was a fire in another room; again hoped to be forgiven; and again desired his honour would let him show him to the other room. Caroline had risen, on the gentleman's hesitation to withdraw; and she now said, with all the sweetness of civil deference, "I beg I may not be in the gentleman's way; I will go into my own room, and I am sure it is more agreeable to the gentleman to be here." "May I ask," said the intruder, "who is this obliging young lady, who is so desirous to do what is agreeable to an old man?" "Oh your honour," said the farmer, "pray don't be angry; it is Miss Fitzosborn. She is a very obliging young lady indeed. She came here only for a few days, to look after my sister, who, please your honour, was dying, and now she is dead; and the young lady will go away. I believe, my lady," turning to Caroline, "I believe you are going away to-day?" "Yes, indeed I am," said Caroline, who had by this time discovered in the old man the misanthropic uncle of whom she had heard; "and I am sure I shall be very sorry if my having been in this room has been any inconvenience to you, sir." So saying, she turned to go away. "Stay, stay, young lady," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "you and I must have a word or two together. Child, do you know who I am? do you know that I am your uncle?" "I did not know it, sir, when you entered the room," returned Caroline; "but I concluded from Mr. Hanbrooke's manner that it could be no other, and I really beg your pardon if I have been any ways troublesome to you." "Why don't you fall on your knees, and ask my blessing, and call me your dear uncle, and tell me how much you have always loved me?" said Mr. Fitzosborn. Caroline smiled. "I would ask your blessing, indeed," replied she, "with all my heart; and though I could not say that I had always loved you, yet I durst engage to love you for the time to come, if you would let me; and then, sir, you would be *my dear uncle* of course you know." "You are saucy, I see," said the old man, smiling upon her, and taking her by the hand. "I should like to know a little more of you, but I will have nothing to do with those Envilles—have you any of that tribe with you?" "I have only my own maid with me," said Caroline. "I came only for twenty-four hours, merely to see poor Mrs. Hanbrooke, but she was so ill I could not leave her, and now I am returning immediately." "Then you could not pass a night at Henhurst, if I were to invite you?" said Mr. Fitzosborn. "I can do any thing that you wish me to do, sir," said Caroline, "and I shall be happy to receive your commands." "Well then, go into your own room till I have finished my business with Hanbrooke here, and then be ready to accompany me to Henhurst; to-morrow you

shall return to town.”

Caroline withdrew, as she was ordered, and scarcely knew whether to be sorry or glad that accident had introduced her to a person of whom she had heard so whimsical a character, and whom she did not know whether, she ought to consider as a worthy or unworthy person. Her three years' residence in the family of Lord Enville had given her a but too sufficient insight into the selfishness of human nature; and she had but too frequently heard the difficulties that some of her relations had raised to the introduction of her at Henhurst imputed to their fear of her as a rival in the favour of its master, to be unaware that her visit to him would be considered by all her connexions as an event of importance, and her conduct upon the occasion as an object of severe scrutiny. Hitherto she had scarcely bestowed a thought on the bickerings and gossipings that the opposite interests of the different parties concerned had given rise to; and the only wish that she had ever entertained upon the subject was, that Edward Fitzosborn should be her uncle's heir: but she now felt that she should from henceforth be considered as one of the contending parties; and she shrunk from the ill-will, envy, and evil imputations that she saw she should be exposed to.

The hour that Mr. Fitzosborn spent with Mr. Hanbrooke, was occupied by Caroline in reflections such as these: and when she obeyed her uncle's summons to accompany him to his carriage, they had spread over her face an air of thoughtfulness almost to sadness. “You don't look pleased,” said he, the moment he saw her: “if you repent your promise, I will leave you where you are.” “No indeed,” replied Caroline fervently, “that is not the case.” “Well then,” said he, “let me see you smile; for surely you are innocent, and smiles become innocence.” In fact, Caroline had soon reason to smile, for nothing could exceed the good-humoured pleasure that her uncle seemed to take in her company. The old housekeeper saw with surprise a young lady accompany her master into the house; and this astonishment was increased in a high degree, when she received orders to prepare a room for the new guest. This surprise seemed to spread itself through the whole household, and she perceived that she was considered as an object of general curiosity. Caroline, on her part, looked around with equal wonder. She was surrounded by magnificence; but it was magnificence grown grey,—all was stately and gloomy: and when her uncle led her into the dining-room, and placed her at the head of the table, she beheld, prepared for two people, a hecatomb, rather than a dinner. The first entrance into this ancient habitation had reminded her of the seclusion and privacy that had pervaded her favourite residence in Somersetshire: but the simplicity, the freedom and unceremonious order which was observed there, formed a striking contrast to the magnificence, the restraint, and stately subordination that seemed to prevail at Henhurst.

Her uncle was, however, with her, perfectly easy and familiar; and seemed resolved to try both her understanding and her heart, by putting her upon giving her opinion; not only of every individual of the Fitzosborn family, her father excepted, but of all the Envilles. Caroline acquitted herself in this difficult task so much to her uncle's satisfaction, that, when he parted with her at night, he touched her cheek with his lips, and said, “Good night, child; it is a pity the world should spoil thee; at present thou hast less of original sin than any one I ever conversed with.” When they met at breakfast, Mr. Fitzosborn appeared more grave and thoughtful than he had been the evening before: at first he spoke little; and Caroline took care not to interrupt his reflections even by her attentions. At length he said, “I have been thinking whether I should like to keep you

with me; but I believe it is better not: you would, of course, be tired in this dull place, shut up with an old man, for I see no company; and I should not intend to make you what perhaps you might think would be a recompense. You will not be my heir; you are rich enough for a woman; and are but too sure, as it is, to be the prey of somebody who will love your money better than yourself. I shall not increase your danger. So you see you would get nothing by shutting yourself up here, and therefore I think we had better part to-day." "All I should wish for," returned Caroline, "in shutting myself up with you, as you call it, sir, would be, that I might add to the pleasure of your life; and if you think that my remaining with you will do so, I have no doubt but my father will consent to my removing to Henhurst." "I have no doubt but he would," replied Mr. Fitzosborn with a frown. "I know his motives. But don't mention your father to me: he is no brother of mine. He has enabled me to leave my estate as I choose to leave it, and I tell you this will not be to you: and having fully considered the matter, here we will part: only promise me, if I feel a desire once again to see the human countenance undisfigured by the bad passions of the human heart, that you will come to me whenever I send for you." "You may depend upon it that I will," said Caroline. "And I do assure you, sir, with infinitely more pleasure after the declaration that you have made, than I could have done before: because now I shall not only be sure of myself, that I am not swayed by an improper motive, but I shall be able to convince all my friends that there is nothing interested in the duty that I wish to pay you." "I charge you," said Mr. Fitzosborn in a raised voice, "not to mention to a human creature what I have said to you. I will have all those whom uncertainty *can* torture, left in uncertainty; it is what they deserve. And though I tell you who will *not* be my heir, I do not tell you who *will*." Caroline had the name of her cousin Edward on her lips; but she felt that it did not become her to dictate, and she suffered it not to escape.

Mr. Fitzosborn, who considered fifty miles as a long journey, hastened the carriage, lest Caroline should be late in town; and, as he touched her lips at parting, he put on her finger a very valuable diamond ring. "Take this to remember me by," said he, "it was my mother's; she was a good woman: when you are tired of being good, send it me back again." "Rather," said Caroline, "my dear uncle, when you hear any thing of me which you disapprove, do you send for your ring again; and oh, how much do I wish that you could see and hear all I do and say, that while I retained the ring, I might be sure that I was not doing wrong!" "Child," said Mr. Fitzosborn sternly, "this is flattery: you have your bible and your conscience, it is enough—if you transgress against those two guides, you will not have the plea of ignorance to allege; and while you do not return the ring, I will believe that you are worthy to wear it." An involuntary tear dropt from Caroline's eye upon the old man's hand as he said these words: he seemed surprised.—"Well," added he, "I see that you are a tender plant: God keep you alike from too much storm, or sunshine; some of each you must be exposed to, or those qualities, which look so like virtues in you now, will never grow beyond good dispositions.—Farewell!"

Caroline, on having informed Lady Enville of her intention to remain with Mrs. Hanbrooke, had desired that no expectation of her return to town at any precise time might be entertained: but she promised to do so the first hour she could, consistent with her attention to her dying friend. She was well aware that the day and night passed at Henhurst would not be considered as an unpardonable infringement of this promise: she had, therefore, no apprehensions of being ill received on her reappearance in Grosvenor

Square. It happened, however, that her father, on being apprised where she was gone, and for what purpose, was by no means pleased with the expedition. He called every day at Lord Enville's with an earnest inquiry after her; and was, by her lengthened stay, become entirely out of humour with her. The feelings that had led his daughter to the sick-bed of a faithful servant, and which still detained her there, were of no estimation in his eyes; and he could not help reproaching Lord Enville with the ineligible consequences of the lessons which she had received from Mrs. Pynsynt. In the evening of the sixth day from Caroline's departure from town, Mr. Fitzosborn was sitting with Lord and Lady Enville, all warmly disputing as to the propriety of having permitted the indulgence of so romantic a fancy, as Mr. Fitzosborn called the visit to Mrs. Hanbrooke; but all agreeing, that if Caroline did not return that night, Lady Enville should go herself the next day into Kent, and bring her back with her: Mr. Fitzosborn at the same time promising to indemnify himself for the uneasiness that her absence had occasioned, by the severity of the reproof which he resolved to bestow upon her when she returned. Indeed these three well-bred people had talked themselves into so ill a humour, and had so inflamed their minds against poor Caroline and each other, that when her carriage stopt at the door of Lord Enville's house, they thought only of who should receive her in the most disobliging manner. Caroline, whose mind, since she had quitted Henhurst, had been wholly occupied with what had passed in her interview with her uncle, and the effect that this interview would have upon so many, on whose temper and dispositions depended so much of the comfort of her life, had never once thought of the displeasure that awaited her, and which, on entering Lord Enville's drawing-room, she saw so plainly marked in every countenance.

"If this," began Lady Enville, the moment she saw her; "if this is the fruit of my indulgence"—"It is the fruit," broke in Mr. Fitzosborn, "of making young ladies independent at eighteen; but I can tell you, madam,"—"Pray," interrupted Lord Enville, "let Caroline tell us; let us hear what she has to say in her defence: pray, child, what can have induced you to make so preposterous a sojourn with that foolish old Hanbrooke?"

Caroline, astonished by a reception so contrary to any thing that she had looked for, was going humbly to inquire what was her offence, when the mention of her lost friend in terms so contemptuous, brought the tears into her eyes, and at the same time gave something of the quickness of resentment to her spirit; and she replied, without any deprecation or apology, "I have been at Henhurst." The famous, "It was this day I conquered Hannibal," could not have had a more powerful effect in repelling accusation, than had these few words of Caroline. The effect upon the nerves of her accusers was evident as it was instantaneous: they each shrunk back, as if into themselves; and retreating a few paces from her, all with one voice repeated, "Have been at Henhurst! Well, and what, and how?"—"Give me leave to sit down," said Caroline, "and I will tell you every thing." "Sit down by me, my love," said Lady Enville; "but first you must have some refreshment; have you dined?" "I have not had any thing since I left Henhurst," said Caroline; "but not because I had no refreshment in my power; for my uncle, who considers fifty miles on the high road between London and Henhurst as a very formidable pilgrimage, ordered me such store of good things into the carriage, as would be sufficient for my sustenance for a week to come." As she said this, she accidentally pulled off her glove: Lady Enville instantly espied the ring: "Bless me, my dear, what's that? I never saw you wear that ring before." "My uncle gave it me," said Caroline. "It was my

mother's," cried Mr. Fitzosborn; "it was a part of the family jewels; with what delight do I see it on your finger! I hail it as the auspice that the estate will follow." "Indeed, sir," replied Caroline, "my uncle gave it me with a very different intention; and I assure you I have no more reason to expect to be his heir than I had before my visit to Henhurst." "Tell us, however, all about it," said he: and her impatient auditors now gathering about her, made her enter into the most minute detail of every action, word, or look of the old man. They would, too, have been glad to have had an exact inventory of all the moveables at Henhurst; but in this Caroline could not indulge them, not even so far as to satisfy her father whether such and such particular pieces of plate and furniture had escaped the general pillage. "For no doubt his servants rob him every day," said Mr. Fitzosborn. "Upon my word," said Caroline, "there is no appearance of any such robbing; I never observed any household that appeared more under the command of the master of the house. My uncle, apparently, sees and acts for himself on all occasions, and is to be obeyed with a promptitude and respect that is not usually seen. And as to depredations, the whole house, as far as I saw, is fully and magnificently furnished; and," added she, with a smile, "the furniture seems as if it stood just where it has done for the last fifty years." "So much the better, so much the better," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "there will be fine rummaging: but when do you go again, my dear? I suppose, now your uncle has once seen you, he will scarcely bear you out of his sight." "He does not seem to have any such predilection for my company," returned Caroline: "however, I thought I might venture to promise him your permission, sir, to attend him whenever he wished to see me." "Undoubtedly. Poor Edward! I would not give him a pinch of snuff for his chance." As Mr. Fitzosborn said this, *poor Edward* entered the room; and all, except Caroline, were eager to tell him of the important event that had taken place, and of the high favour that Caroline was in with her uncle. Edward heard all this without the smallest change of countenance, or a single pulse beating faster or slower: but turning to Caroline, he said, a sun-beam of benevolence *then* spreading itself over his features, "I congratulate you with all my soul, my dear cousin; but I congratulate others more than I do you; for, had you all the world's wealth, it would only be used in doing good." Caroline blushed, and said, "Edward, you might equally have spared your congratulations and your compliments, they are both equally unfounded: I have no reason to believe that I shall be my uncle's heir; and if I were to be so, I have no confidence in myself that I should use his riches worthily." The party was now increased by the return of the young people from their dinner engagements, and Caroline was obliged to go over again the story of the visit to Henhurst.

From this evening, in spite of all Caroline's assertions to the contrary, she was generally considered, by every member of her own and the Enville family, as the undoubted heir of the "old man." It signified nothing to disclaim any such expectation on her part, such disclaimings were treated as finesse and art; and many of those who felt themselves the most disappointed by the allotment, which yet they were so ready to make of Mr. Fitzosborn's property, did not scruple to insinuate that the visit to Mrs. Hanbrooke was all a pretence, under which Caroline had designed, and had succeeded in forcing herself upon her uncle's notice. In the mean-time poor Caroline gained nothing by her supposed good fortune, but an additional weight of envy and ill will, and a clearer insight into the bad part of human nature. Nor was this made more evident by the taunts and sarcasms of those who believed that she stood in the way of their interest, than by the

increased deference and attention that she met with from the Enville family. Of this family, the only individual on whom her brilliant prospects did not seem to have any effect, was Charles Pynsynt. So far from becoming more assiduous in his attentions, he was, from about this time, more and more careless in his manners towards her, and less at home than he had ever before been. The time, however, was now passed, if indeed it had ever existed, in which this estrangement on the part of Charles could have caused Caroline any mortification. A more general acquaintance with the other sex had taught her that he was not the only young man of graceful manners, or of gay conversation; and if, on comparison between the lively good humour of Charles, and the supercilious coxcomby of Mr. Pynsynt, Caroline gave the palm to the younger brother, yet there were others, who, in her mind, as far excelled Charles in all that pleases the fancy and warms the heart, as Charles excelled Mr. Pynsynt in all the lighter graces of familiar intercourse. Indeed, her ripened understanding had enabled her so to appreciate his character, that, upon the whole, she found in him more to pity and condemn than to admire. If her vanity might still be supposed to find some mortification in this falling off of one of her admirers, she had, perhaps, in the eye of her companions, more than an indemnification in the increased adulation and solicitude of another. Mr. Pynsynt had hitherto, of all the family, been the least desirous to conciliate Caroline. He had often treated her with neglect, and had even shown some disposition to mortify her; but now his manner was wholly changed. He was scarcely ever from her side; and, when there, endeavoured to retain her ear and win her heart by the softest and most insinuating flattery: but if she had been little pleased with his former treatment, she was disgusted with his present manner. If before she had regarded him as an impertinent coxcomb, she now considered him as equally mean and mercenary. How did Edward Fitzosborn shine upon the comparison!— If, as Mr. Pynsynt, he did not seem to regard her more, neither did he, as Charles, seem to seek her less. He was still the same obliging companion, the same easy unrestrained relation, the same sincere monitor, which she had always found him. They were, in fact, the only individuals of their family who were not swayed by a pecuniary bias; and they found, in the similarity of their sentiments, an interest and mutual attraction, of which they had not till now been sensible. The years which had passed since Caroline first saw Edward, had not, with him, been time thrown away: the promise of excellence which he then gave had been fulfilled: the small circle was extended; his reputation had taken a wider range. The first men in his profession thought *themselves* honoured by distinguishing *him*; the social dinner wanted its best attraction when he was absent; the ladies called him "*Sauvage*," but thought him charming; and he had found the means of defending and befriending so many in the lower classes, that, had he been a citizen of Athens, he might have been in danger of banishment from the repetition of his praises. None of his good qualities were lost upon Caroline, nor did it appear that he was blind to hers. He gave his full credit for her disavowal of any expectation of her uncle's property; and, in discussing together the old man's character, they agreed in their conclusion, that the issue of the hopes and fears of every one would be the disappointment of all. "My uncle," said Caroline, "is not the whimsical mortal that he is supposed to be: caprice will not dispose of his estate; but so many qualifications and so many circumstances must unite in the person whom he would think worthy of being his heir, that, in mere despair of finding what he wishes, he will probably fix upon one who will be most distant from all that he would have chosen." "For my own part," said Edward, "I waste not a thought

upon the subject. My uncle has given me the means of providing for myself, and for this I sincerely thank him: I will make use of those means while they are in my power, and leave, even as to my wishes, the future in that obscurity, in which, after all our attempts to raise the veil, every thing future is involved.”

A few months had passed since the visit to Henhurst; and affairs were in the above situation, when, on the return of Lord Enville’s family from their country habitation, Caroline completed her eighteenth year. According to Mrs. Pynsynt’s will, she was by her faithful trustee put in full possession of the property left her by that lady. The affluence which the uncontrolled expenditure of so ample an income gave her, awakened Caroline to new duties and new cares. She had been the almoner of Mrs. Pynsynt, and by her hands had been distributed those ample charities which had been bestowed on all around her. Accompanied by Mrs. Hanbrooke, she had also been accustomed personally to visit the poor and the sick; and of every indulgence granted by her aunt, she had felt none dearer than the privilege of doing so. On her removal to town, she had been extremely surprised to find that such cares made no part of the economy of Lord Enville’s family. She had questioned Hanbrooke on the subject; but that prudent woman contented herself with reminding her young lady, “that every body had ways of their own, and that it was not according to Christian charity to search into the secrets of others.” The perfect humility which had been implanted in the mind of Caroline, and the deference to all who were older than herself in which she had been brought up, occasioned her, even thankfully, to receive such admonitory hints from a servant whom she considered as wiser and better than herself, and to whom she had been, for many years of her life, accountable for her conduct. But, as Caroline grew older, she easily perceived, without any breach of that Christian charity which Mrs. Hanbrooke had warned her against, what “the way” of Lord and Lady Enville, with respect to almsgiving, really was; and she felt fully assured, that it was not such as would give her any assistance in the little plans that she was forming for the regular expenditure of her increased income: nor could she expect more help from her young female cousins. They said, papa and mamma took care of all such matters: they were sure papa subscribed to every thing that every body else did; and, when they were in the country, mamma gave, at Christmas, flannel and shoes, and they supposed the cook gave broth. No doubt every thing was done that was right of that sort; but it was not their business: and mamma said herself it was quite extraordinary how they could dress so elegantly, and run so little in debt.—“To be sure,” they would sometimes add, “if they were as rich as Caroline, they should be so happy to be generous! and to do like Lady Elizabeth, who was always giving caps and pretty things to those of her young acquaintance who had not so much money.”

Caroline wanted no such hints as these to draw her bounty towards her cousins; but such gifts she did not place to the account of charity, and she was resolved that they should not encroach on that which was legitimately so. She had other cousins, whom, though she had never seen, she was inclined to love better than those whom she had seen; and these were the mother and sisters of Edward. Their wants she knew to be more serious than “a change of pretty caps” could be. The limited stipend that the elder Mr. Fitzosborn had thought sufficient for their support, and which he thought liberal, because it was more, he said, than they had a right to expect, the accumulating price upon all the necessaries of life, and the increased expense attendant upon the growth of human beings,

had rendered so disproportionate to the real wants of poor Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn, that she was not only obliged to abridge her daughters of every gratification suitable to their age and rank in life; but was, notwithstanding every prudent effort on her part, so much distressed, that she lived in perpetual dread of contracting debts that she should be unable to pay, and which would also rise up in condemnation against her with Mr. Fitzosborn. She well knew that he would consider her not living upon what would scarcely find her family food and clothes, as a fresh offence, and as an additional reason why he should do nothing more for her. Never, indeed, had any one paid more dearly than poor Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn for a single act of indiscretion! for, except an imprudent marriage, at the early age of eighteen, her whole life had been irreproachable. During the lifetime of her husband she had been an affectionate and frugal wife; and since his death a most exemplary mother; bearing her own deprivations and sorrows with humility and resignation, and instructing her children in every duty which could render the present life more comfortable, or best secure the happiness of that which was to come. Happily for Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn, the rigid justice that makes “the fault its own punishment,” and that “visits the sins of the fathers upon the children,” was not the favourite morality of Caroline. As she loved the reported virtues of Mrs. Fitzosborn, so she most feelingly pitied her distresses; and the first use that she resolved to make of her affluence, was to testify her sense of the one, and to relieve the other. She felt herself at a loss, however, to determine both the amount of the sum that she ought to give, and the best means of giving it. Caroline had no romance in her disposition; she aimed not at doing things “prettily:” she hated mystery and concealment of every kind: what she knew was right to be done, she did plainly and openly: but not being confident in her own powers of judgement, as to the best method of doing it, she was frequently led to ask advice of those whom she thought wiser than herself. She would, however, as soon have consulted with the blind on the choice of colours, as with any of the Envilles on the assistance that she was meditating to give to Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn. Of her and her daughters they never spoke, but with contempt; and would not have failed of being extremely jealous of such a channel for a bounty which they wished to flow wholly to their own advantage. Edward was accustomed to be her counsellor and adviser upon most occasions; but upon this subject she could not apply to him. Her father was in all respects her proper confident in this matter, and she was not able to account agreeably to herself for the reluctance she felt in making him so. “I see him so seldom, and never alone,” said she to herself: but she was conscious, as she said so, that this was not her reason for not consulting him. “Mrs. Fitzosborn is so repulsive,” added she; and she was aware that she only wandered from the point. “To be sure he would be extremely happy to have his brother’s children made comfortable,” continued she, encouraging herself, “and he is himself so affluent”—the current of thought was checked, it flowed into another channel, and poor Caroline pursued it till she had convinced herself that there was not a more improper person existing than her father, to be her confident on this occasion. What was then to be done? Nothing? or should she act wholly from herself? She resolved on the latter; and reproaching herself for the time already lost in these fruitless deliberations, she instantly wrote the following letter.

“Dear Madam,

“The relationship in which I have the honour to stand to you, will, I flatter myself,

render unnecessary any apology for the contents of this letter. You may probably have heard that the partial kindness of my aunt Pynsynt has made me affluently independent at a much earlier period than the laws of England have supposed it prudent to entrust power into the hands of youth. I have not the vanity to imagine myself a just exception to such a rule; and I feel all the weight of the responsibility that results from having been made such. In these circumstances, you will be aware that nothing can be so acceptable to me, as the appropriating a part of my income to a purpose, of the rectitude and propriety of which no one can admit a doubt. You must therefore forgive me, my dear madam, if I have so far consulted my own pleasure, as to have taken the liberty to enclose you notes for three hundred pounds. A similar sum shall be paid you annually, in regular half yearly dividends.

“I beg leave to present my affectionate regards to my cousins; and

“I am, dear Madam,

“Yours very respectfully,

“CAROLINE FITZOSBORN.”

The pleasure that results from a consciousness of well-doing, was still throbbing at her heart, and beaming from her eyes, when Caroline met her father in the drawing-room. They were accidentally alone; and on her tenderly regretting that she had of late seldom seen him, he answered, “I cannot see you in this house with any satisfaction, watched as you are by these greedy Envilles, each striving who shall get the most out of you. I am determined, if possible, to take you home to me.” “I fear, sir,” replied Caroline, “such a step would not contribute to your domestic happiness; for, let me do what I will, I find that I cannot conciliate Mrs. Fitzosborn.”

“Domestic happiness!” repeated Mr. Fitzosborn, contemptuously; “not conciliate Mrs. Fitzosborn!” Yes, yes, Caroline, you have the means in your power to conciliate Mrs. Fitzosborn.” “I shall be much obliged to you to point them out,” said Caroline; “but it really appears to me that she has quite an aversion to me.” “An aversion, I grant you, to charging herself with the care of a girl before she was out of her nursery; but the case is now altered. You are woman grown now, Caroline; and, as your good aunt has sufficiently shown, in the opinion of some people, at years of discretion.” “I hope,” said Caroline, “I have so much discretion as to refer myself to the judgment of others, rather than to depend upon my own; and if so, I trust no great evil will result from my kind aunt’s too partial favour.” “Well, that’s well said,” returned Mr. Fitzosborn: “and on whose judgment ought you to rely more than on a father’s?” “I hope, sir,” said Caroline, “I have never given you reason to think there was any other opinion that I preferred to yours?” “I don’t say what you *have* done: let us see what you *will* do. And now tell me what has your sagacity discovered as to the designs that Lord and Lady Enville have upon you?” “Designs?” replied Caroline; “really, sir I do not understand you.” “Why, do you not see that they mean you to marry their son Charles? And do you not hear that every body says that you are to marry him?” “No, indeed; neither the one nor the other,” replied Caroline; “and I do assure you, sir, that if such were their designs they would not succeed.” “What, you like the elder brother better?” said her father. “To this I possibly might have no objection: and, since it has been known that you are to be your uncle’s heir, I have observed that he has been very assiduous about you. If this could be brought

to bear, I shall like it very well; but remember, I will never consent to your marrying Charles, or any other poor man." "My marrying," returned Caroline, colouring, "is not in question; and I again and again assure you, sir, that if it depends upon my being my uncle's heir, it will never take place." "Pshaw, nonsense! Child, child, I know the world a little too well not to see through all these modest disclaimings. You will as surely be mistress of Henhurst, as it is fact that I ought to be its master: and though I certainly do not lament any dereliction on my brother's part by which you benefit; yet, Caroline, I think I have some right to a consideration from you for what you deprive me of." "My dear sir," said Caroline, trembling, "why should we discuss this matter? my uncle is still alive, and, to all appearance, likely to live; and surely the youngest of us all cannot be justified in trusting to survivorship. Let us not disturb our minds with contingencies. I hope that you do not doubt but that whenever I have the power, I shall not fail in the will to do all you wish me." "You are not wholly without the power now, and——." As he was proceeding, the entrance of company broke up the conference, to the great relief of Caroline, who had caught from this conversation a glimpse of her father's character that filled her with very painful apprehensions.

When he bade her good night, he said in a whisper, "Think of what I have said of your quitting this house, and do not fear the barking that may greet you at mine: take my word you have a sop that will silence Cerberus."

Caroline retired to her pillow with much cause for uneasy reflection. She saw clearly that she should have claims made upon her that she should be equally unwilling to comply with or to resist: and the arrangement that she had made in her own mind for the expenditure of her income, with all the heart-felt pleasures which she had promised to herself from the generous uses to which she had appropriated it, faded from her imagination, and she already saw it ingulphed by the never satisfied plan of selfish extravagance. She rejoiced that she had secured her gift to Mrs. Fitzosborn. The letter was gone, she had given her promise, and she said to herself exultingly, "It cannot be recalled."

Lord Enville saw, even more clearly than Caroline, all the consequences that were to be apprehended from the depredatory disposition of Mr. Fitzosborn; and he was equally aware how unequal Caroline was to the effort of preserving her property from the rapine of a parent: he was therefore impatient so to unite her interest with his own, as to give him a right to defend it: or, in other words, he wished to become the depredator himself, and to place the spoil out of Mr. Fitzosborn's reach. The only objection to the proceeding immediately to the securing his point, was an apprehension that the elder Mr. Fitzosborn might disapprove of the marriage of his niece with the younger son of a needy nobleman; and that the consequence of too greedily seizing some hundreds a year, might be the loss of as many thousands. He had, however, learnt from Caroline the indifference that her uncle had expressed towards all the honours, riches, and pleasures of this life; with the paramount value that he gave to moral and religious worth: he therefore thought, that if he could secure Caroline's affections on his side, he might by her means succeed in persuading a man who knew so little of what was going on in this world as he supposed Mr. Fitzosborn to do, that Charles was a paragon of sobriety, rectitude, and virtue. He had observed Charles had lately been more remiss in his attentions to his fair cousin than formerly: but imputing this rather to accident than design, or perhaps to the indifference which is the offspring of security, he waited only for Charles's return from

an excursion on which he had been for some little time, to open his whole plan to him, and the reasons which called for its being carried into immediate execution: nor did he doubt his ready and earnest concurrence in all he wished. From Caroline's first entrance into the family there had been a tacit understanding between the father and the son; and Lord Enville had lately had some reasons to believe that a settlement in life, which would at least procure him a present flow of ready money, would at this time be particularly acceptable to him. As to Caroline, he considered her as so wholly in their power, and (to say truth) of so dull an apprehension as to her own interests, that he foresaw no difficulties on that side, and doubted not but that the fervent love-making of a handsome young man would carry all before it. Of the consequences of any opposition from Mr. Fitzosborn he did not dream; for as Caroline had no expectation of any pecuniary advantage from her father, it did not occur to Lord Enville that she could have any motive for sacrificing her inclinations to his. While these thoughts were passing in Lord Enville's breast, Caroline was fearfully awaiting a farther explanation from her father; but he did not appear again in Grosvenor Square for some days, nor did Caroline receive any answer from Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn to the letter she had written. She had begun a little to wonder at the latter circumstance; when being alone one evening, and having begun to take her coffee, the door opened, and Edward walked in. He approached her with an emotion wholly unusual with him.—“How fortunate, my dear cousin, to find you alone! But what have you done? What an extraordinary person you are!” “What *have* I done?” said Caroline, surprised, and not at that moment thinking of her bounty to Mrs. Fitzosborn. “What have you done?” repeated Edward; “you have given away the fifth part of your income to poor relations whom you never saw in your life!” “They have not the less claim upon me,” said Caroline, blushing; “and I should be sorry that what appears to me so simple, should appear extraordinary to you.” “Then, my dear cousin,” said he, looking on her with ineffable delight, “I am afraid that you must be sorry; for I do assure you my whole experience does not furnish me with such another act of indiscretion as that which you have been guilty of.”—“Indiscretion! Edward?” “Must we soften the word?” said he, smiling; “Shall we call it miscalculation?” “I am not inclined to call it one or the other,” said Caroline; “and I doubt whether all your prudence, and superior skill in arithmetic, can convict me of either.” “Have you calculated all the wants of a fine lady?” said Edward. “Do you know the calls that will be made upon your vanity, upon your taste, upon your senses?” “I have calculated the wants of a human creature,” replied Caroline. “As to my vanity, I intend to keep it upon very meagre fare; and as to my taste and my senses, I have consulted them both upon this occasion, and they are fully satisfied.” “Then,” said Edward, “the tear that glistens in the eye of gratitude, outshines, with you, the water of the brilliant; and the incense of affection exhales a sweeter perfume than the otto of roses.” “Pray let us talk prose,” said Caroline. “If I have had it in my power to relieve in any degree the pressure that rendered the life of near relations uneasy, I assure you I have given myself the greatest pleasure I can know.” “Take, then, the pleasure which you so well deserve,” said Edward, presenting her a letter; “and may it be multiplied a hundred fold on every action of your life!” Caroline took the letter; and as the tear strayed down her cheek on reading the animated expressions of gratitude and affection which her bounty had called from the warm heart of Mrs. Fitzosborn, Edward stood contemplating her with such looks of love and delight, as, when she raised her eye to his, on having finished the perusal of the letter, dyed her cheeks with the deepest

blushes. "It is too much, indeed!" said she. "Your mother, Edward, values the little I have done for her much too highly." "That is impossible," said Edward: "but, my dear cousin, let us talk a little seriously upon this matter; for though I could fall down, and do all but worship you for your kindness to my mother, yet I cannot suffer your heart to run away with your judgment, without endeavouring to restore the reins to the hands which ought always to hold them." "Spoke like my Lord Chancellor himself!" said Caroline. "Well, my lord, I am ready to plead at your bar." "May I then ask," said Edward, "upon what calculation you have gone, when you have alienated the fifth part of your income so absolutely and irrecoverably as I know you will consider your promise of a continuance of your bounty to have done? Have you considered not only your present occasions for money, but those future contingencies which you ought so properly to look to?" "This is really a very pretty catechism," said Caroline; "and I am not sure that my answer will satisfy so close an inquisitor; yet I have satisfied *myself* that I have drawn a very logical conclusion from very evident principles: and thus I have done it:—Here am I, Caroline Fitzosborn, the uncontrolled and absolute mistress of a clear fifteen hundred pounds a year, besides a ready money thousand or two not taken into the account. Three hundred of the above sum afford me the protection and accommodation that I and my two servants enjoy under this roof: I have been for the two last years as fine as I ever wish to be, for one hundred pounds each year; and I am lavish enough to myself, to allow another fifty pounds for any calls that my fancy, or, if you please, my vanity, may make. My servants may, perhaps, cost me another fifty. And thus, in the first instance, all absolute wants are supplied. If I have indulged myself in the appropriation of three hundred pounds to the comforts of some of my nearest connexions, I have still seven hundred pounds per annum to answer any demands that either my virtues or my vices may make; and I trust that neither are so exorbitant, but that I can fully satisfy them from such a fund. So much, my dear cousin, for the calculations that refer to the present hour. As to the contingencies that you speak of, I have no very clear notion to what they refer: but if what I have parted with lessens my value in the eyes of any one who professes to regard me, I have certainly cheaply purchased a knowledge of the *kind* of merit to which they were attached. I am confident that I have retained sufficient for all that can contribute to my own happiness; and when I have another home to seek, remember that I have only to turn my eyes to dear Somersetshire, where a beautiful little country house awaits me, and where I know I can live to my heart's content upon less than I have left myself. Such is my defence. I await the judgment of the court."

Edward, astonished and enraptured by the disclosure of such an union of warm feelings and correct judgment, stood for a moment silent, not venturing to trust his voice. Then, "Oh my too dangerous cousin!" broke he out: but, checking himself: "Dear Caroline, you have more than acquitted yourself: forgive my investigating spirit; forgive my having doubted for an instant that you could reason as well as you could feel. Yet suffer me to ask one more question; Does Lord Enville, does my uncle, know what you have done?" "They do not," said Caroline; "and I am aware that I may seem to deserve censure for having acted in such a matter without the opinion of those who are naturally the guides of my conduct and the guardians of my character; and if you are inclined to indulge this censure, I must at present submit to it, for on this part of my conduct I can enter into no defence." Edward's heart again swelled within him at this fresh proof of the mingled frankness and delicate prudence of his lovely cousin; he had certainly never

thought her half so lovely before: yet a sudden consciousness, or recollection, or some other cause, overshadowed his brow with a sadness that did not escape her observation; and she said, "I see you think I have done wrong?" "No, indeed I do not—I think—no matter what I think—Dearest Caroline, how shall I ever thank you enough for what you have done for my mother and sisters! Did you know the worthy hearts that you have lightened of an almost insupportable burthen, you would be still happier than you are in this indulgence of your praiseworthy feelings." "I mean to procure myself this happiness," said Caroline; "for I shall certainly make myself acquainted with my aunt and cousins." Edward made no reply; and indeed he seemed to be so absorbed in thought, and so little inclined to conversation, that Caroline thought it would be a relief to him to be reminded of the hour. "You are right," said he, rising; "it is time for me to retire to my solitary chambers, and there to bed, with what appetite for sleep I may:" and so saying, he bade her good night, and left her, not perfectly satisfied with the latter part of their conversation.

Lord Enville, who now expected the return of his son to town in a few hours, thought it time in some degree to open his designs to Mr. Fitzosborn; rather, however, by way of showing him that no opposition would avail, than as seeking his concurrence. For this purpose he called at his house at an hour when he knew it was probable that he should find him at home, and he was accordingly admitted into his dressing-room.

After a little indifferent chat, he said, carelessly, "I see plainly that this affair between Caroline and Charles will soon come to an issue; and I really do not know what you and I can do with a high-spirited and independent girl of eighteen, and a young man, who, I am ashamed to confess, has always had his own way, but let them please themselves, and make every thing as easy to them as we can." "What affair?" said Mr. Fitzosborn, affecting a surprise he did not feel. "Why, the fancy—the love—the liking—the—I don't know what to call it, that they have taken to each other. It is not to be supposed that they will postpone much longer the gratification of it, now Caroline has her fortune in her own power; and, upon my word, I should be puzzled to find a reasonable cause for opposition to their wishes." "I should find no such difficulty," replied Mr. Fitzosborn; "but this is the first time I ever heard of their wishes, nor do I believe that Caroline entertains any on the subject." "My dear sir," returned Lord Enville, "you are not a man, not to see what is going on before your eyes. I am sure I have always believed that you knew more of the matter than myself; and yet it is pretty plain to me where Caroline's inclinations point." "Not, I think, to your son Charles," said Mr. Fitzosborn: "and if they do, she must teach them to change their direction, for I shall never consent to her becoming a beggar." "Nay," rejoined Lord Enville, "the match can be no object with me: but there is no fear of beggary if she marry Charles: yet I acknowledge they will not be rich, as some people estimate riches: but really Caroline does not know how to spend money; and Charles is so moderate in his expenses, and so much attached to your daughter, that I am confident he will not, as her husband, have a wish beyond what their united property will allow the gratification of." "Pray, my lord," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "do you take my brother's estate into your calculation?" "I never think about it," returned Lord Enville. "Such a humourist as he is, may 'die and endow a college or a cat,' more likely than give one penny to any relation he has: but this I will say, that if Caroline is not mistaken in the estimate that she has made of his character, so disinterested a connexion as this might perhaps appear to him, would be no improbable means to draw his favour to

her." "He is no friend, I can tell you," replied Mr. Fitzosborn, scornfully, "to such disinterested connexions. He never forgave my brother for marrying for love. He starved the poor fellow for it while he lived, and now most religiously continues to starve his widow and daughters for the same cause. I am sure my heart bleeds whenever I think of them." "But really, my dear sir," returned Lord Enville, "Charles and Caroline are in no danger of starving, let who will have the Henhurst estate: there is nothing in my power that I will not do for Charles; he deserves all I can do: and I am not without interest in proper places, as you know: and if he and Caroline can be happy without the pomps and vanities of the world, why should you or I prevent them?" "You will allow me, my lord, to keep my reasons to myself," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "but I think it fair dealing to tell you, that I will never allow Caroline to marry your second son." "Upon my word," replied Lord Enville, "I wish I had been aware of your determination sooner; and that for your own sake. Some method might have been hit upon to have nipt this unfortunate passion in the bud; *now* I don't know what can be done, for you must be sensible that you can have no control over Caroline." "No control over my own daughter?" said Mr. Fitzosborn: "this is very new doctrine indeed!" "I really fear not," said Lord Enville, shaking his head: "what control can you have over a daughter who does not look for a shilling from your hands?" "Are there no ties of affection?—of duty?" "Weak barriers against the swell of passion! Besides, have you any right to make your daughter miserable?" "I have a right to prevent her being poor," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "and I will exert that right: and if matters are as you represent them, there is no time to be lost in declaring an intention that I have meditated for some time. I acknowledge a thousand obligations to your lordship and Lady Enville for the shelter you have afforded my daughter hitherto, but it is not necessary to trouble you any farther. Mrs. Fitzosborn reasonably objected to the education of a girl, but she makes no scruple to receive a companion. She is ready to admit Caroline into her house; and if your lordship had not done me the honour of this visit, I was intending to have waited upon you, for the express purpose of informing you of this arrangement."

This was a blow wholly unexpected by Lord Enville, and what he scarcely knew how to parry; but feeling confident of the interest that his son had in the heart of Caroline, he replied, with all the indifference that he could assume, "Never talk of obligation; it is all on our side; Caroline is a charming creature; the whole family will be broken-hearted to lose her: but we have certainly no rights that we can oppose to yours." "I will, with your leave, call in Grosvenor-Square in the course of the day," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "and inform my daughter of the intended removal: but it may be late before I shall be able to get to you; perhaps, my lord, you would be so good as to mention it to her." "Indeed, my dear sir, I shall be glad if you will excuse me; it will be a most painful subject to me; and perhaps, when you talk to your daughter, you may see cause to alter your purpose, and I shall then have executed an unpleasant task unnecessarily." "I should be sorry to impose any task upon your lordship," replied Mr. Fitzosborn; "I will make the communication to my daughter myself."

These two worthy friends now parted, each resolved to thwart the other in the favourite project of his heart. Lord Enville perceived that he had not a moment to lose: it became absolutely necessary that the young people should come to a perfect understanding with each other, and that Caroline should have a precise view both of what she herself wished, and what her lover desired from her; that she might fully comprehend

all that was to be yielded to the opposition which her father had threatened: and when Charles was fairly opposed to Mr. Fitzosborn, Lord Enville had little apprehension as to which side would preponderate in the mind of Caroline. Lord Enville, therefore, hastened home, to make all the use he could of the day, which seemed still to be his own: and Mr. Fitzosborn, no less active on his side, did not lose a moment in despatching the following billet to Caroline:

“You will have an immediate proof that I was not mistaken in the designs that are meditated against you: but remember that my prohibition to listen to such overtures is absolute. Your apartments here are preparing. I shall see you in the evening, when we can appoint the day of your removal.”

Lord Enville, on his arrival home, heard with pleasure that Charles was returned, and he instantly summoned him to his library. Had not his mind been too full of his own schemes to think of any thing else, he must have been struck with the disordered air and altered countenance of his son: but pursuing only the train of thought that fully occupied him, he said, almost without looking at the object before him; “I am extremely glad that you are returned: there is not a moment to be lost: the thing must be done directly.”—“Good God!” said Charles, with a voice that made his father start, “Is it possible? Can my ruin be known so soon?” “Ruin!” repeated Lord Enville, “What is it that you say? what is it that you mean?” Charles, confounded, and stammering, replied, “I thought you had heard—I thought you had known”—“What?” cried Lord Enville, eagerly; “do not torture me thus! what is to be known? what is to be heard?” “My imprudence,” said Charles, in a smothered voice. “I come to offer you a remedy for any common imprudence,” said Lord Enville. “Speak openly to me, Charles: I am no morose moral-preaching father; I know young men must have their indulgences; I have long provided the means for yours: now reap the fruits of my care. A little warm love-making is all that is wanting on your part; and the pretty Caroline and all her thousands will be yours.” “I cannot add baseness to indiscretion,” said Charles. “How now?” said Lord Enville, angrily; “what new tone is this? Pray let us not have any sentimental flights. Have you not always intended to marry Caroline? I tell you there is not a moment to be lost. If you do not secure the prize, that harpy, her father, will snatch it from you. You are bound in honour to save her from ruin!” “I am ruined myself,” replied Charles; “and would you have me spread destruction?” “Ruin! destruction! what is it that you mean?” said Lord Enville. “My lord,” cried Charles, with a voice of inexpressible anguish, “the thing cannot be concealed. Since I last saw you, I have lost five thousand pounds at play. My honour is at stake, and who shall redeem it?” “Not I,” said Lord Enville, in a firm tone; “the penalty, as the folly, be your own.” “I could expect no other,” said Charles. “But oh, sir, you are not inexperienced in such matters; I entreat that you will give me your advice, that you will endeavour to suggest some expedient.” “There are ways; there is a ready and an easy way: clear up your countenance, and fly to the feet of your lovely cousin, and all will be well.” “Not for worlds!” said Charles; “I would not so deceive her to be master of the globe!” “What a parade of honesty is here!” said Lord Enville: “Have you not already deceived her? Have you not won that little foolish easy heart, which you would now leave to break?” “No, on my honour!” said Charles; “nor do I believe, were I inclined to try the experiment, that I could succeed. It is not *me* whom Caroline prefers.” “I tell you it is,” said Lord Enville, vehemently; “go tell her your soft tale, and make her and yourself happy.” “Impossible! impossible!” said Charles: “press the matter no farther, my

lord, the thing is impossible." "Then is it equally so to pay your debt of honour. I leave you to think of the alternative." And thus saying, Lord Enville withdrew into his dressing-closet; while Charles, scarcely knowing what he intended to do, or where he was going, left the house in an agony of mind which no words can express.

Had Lord Enville understood the real meaning of the words "losing money at play," and "the indulgences that all young men must have," there could scarcely have been at this moment a more miserable being. But it must be acknowledged that a false nomenclature here stood his friend: he thought not of the immoralities of which his son had been guilty; the worldly inconveniences which they drew after them, alone engaged his attention, and he thus escaped from the severest agony to which the human mind is liable. If his *experience in the ways of the world* had deadened his feelings, it had rendered his understanding more acute; and he saw resource and consolation in the present case, that would have been hid from the affectionate and Christian parent, sorrowing over the moral turpitude of a beloved child. In all such embarrassments he had always found Lady Enville a most able counsellor and assistant: and when he heard the door close after Charles, he immediately left his closet, and sought Lady Enville in her dressing-room. Lady Enville heard the overthrow of their hopes for the establishment of their son, and the account of his follies, as she called them, with more *sang froid* than her lord had done. "I cannot say that I am surprised, my lord," said she; "there is no end to necessary expenses now-a-days: young people, who live in the world, must do as others do; and Charles is so well received wherever he goes, and is so gentlemanlike and pleasant, that I am sure we have great reason to be proud of him: and really, considering how little you can afford regularly to allow him, we must look to these plunges now and then. I am sure Charles will never do any thing that is ungentlemanlike." "Yet five thousand pounds," said Lord Enville, "is a considerable sum. I have told him I will not pay a farthing; a little severity is not amiss, now and then; nor do I, indeed, know how to pay it; and perhaps if he believes I will not assist him, he may be brought to his senses, and find that it is better to look his former companions in the face, as the husband of Caroline, than to sneak about this town with the abashed countenance of a country girl doing penance for her first indiscretion." "Why really, my lord," returned Lady Enville, "I have not, for some time past, looked upon that connexion with the favourable eye with which I once regarded it: but, as I considered the matter as nearly settled, I did not think it worth while to derange it all again: and I am equally a mother to both my sons. But the fact is, that since it is now pretty certain that Caroline will have the Henhurst estate, she would be a much properer match for Mr. Pynsynt than for Charles: and if our expectation in that particular should fail, I doubt whether what she inherits from your sister would be a decent support for a person of Charles's habits and liberal turn of mind." "I really do not see where he would be likely to do better," returned Lord Enville; "and the ready cash with which she would furnish him, would be very convenient at present." "You know, my lord," said Lady Enville, "that I always submit to your better judgment: but I have thought a good deal of this matter lately: and though I should have considered it as unkind to have interfered with Charles's wishes, yet as he does not seem to entertain any for the possession of Caroline or her fortune, it appears to me, that it is no more than justice to further Mr. Pynsynt's interest: and I know that he is lately become much attached to Caroline." "You mean to the Henhurst estate," replied Lord Enville. "Well, I must say for Pynsynt, he knows as well what he is about as any young man of his age,

and suffers his fancies as little to interfere with his real good as can be expected; and though I am afraid he is still a little infatuated in a certain place, yet I have no doubt but that he will make a very good husband, and Caroline would certainly adorn a coronet." "She must not inquire too curiously into such matters," returned Lady Enville, "no more than the rest of her sex: and if I might advise," added she, with great show of deference and humility, "the business of Charles should be entirely given up. We should have much opposition to contend with on Mr. Fitzosborn's part, and I doubt whether Caroline has spirit enough to assert either her rights or her inclinations against the will of her father. Besides, she will be easily reconciled to a change that will be so much in her favour. I think I know the female heart pretty well; and though love will carry us a good way, ambition will go still farther. But what can be done for Charles? we must leave the poor fellow to cut his throat. He is new to his situation, and, by your account, takes it to heart piteously." "Some arrangement must be thought of," said Lord Enville; "but as for paying the money for him, I assure you I could as soon pay the national debt." "Oh, as to paying, that probably will not be necessary. The sum does not exceed the amount of his settlement. He cannot have the money now and hereafter. Some expedient may be found to save his honour as a gentleman, and to give him a gentlemanlike subsistence. Such things are done every day; and I am sure nobody will think the worse of Charles for an act of indiscretion to which all men are liable." Lord Enville agreed to these liberal sentiments, and saying, he would think of the matter, these careful parents separated, each in their respective department, to labour for the happiness and advancement of their children. The misfortune was, that they neither of them knew the true meaning of the words.

In the mean-time, Caroline had received her father's note, and found no difficulty in determining to comply with his prohibition with respect to Charles; but she did not receive his intimation of an immediate change in the place of her abode with the same ready acquiescence. She had an invincible repugnance to becoming an inmate of a house of which Mrs. Fitzosborn was the mistress; and she had an undefined dread of being exposed to a constant and unrestrained intercourse with her father. She did not dare to tell herself what it was that she feared: but she repeated ten times in an hour, "My promise to my aunt must be inviolate." She was prepared by her father's note to meet Charles at dinner; but she was disappointed in the expectation: none of the gentlemen of the family were at home. The party was entirely a female one; and more than the usual gloom and dulness of such parties seemed to prevail on this occasion. Lady Enville withdrew immediately after dinner, and then the young ladies, all at once, began to indemnify themselves for the silence which they had hitherto maintained.

"I suppose, Caroline, you have heard of this shocking thing!" said Miss Pynsynt. "I am sure it is very monstrous of Charles, when my father is so generous to him, to go and lose such sums at play. I wonder who is to be the sufferer?" "Mamma says," joined in Miss Louisa, "that papa won't pay a guinea." "I know better," returned Miss Pynsynt: "I know he will always pay money for my brother; no matter how our pleasures are abridged." "Surely I do not understand you right?" said Caroline, extremely shocked; "I hope Charles has not been so unfortunate." "So foolish, call it," interrupted Miss Pynsynt; "I am sure it *is* very foolish in him, he knows so much better, and he knows he has no chance of establishing himself but by marriage; and who that has any thing will marry a gamester?" "Don't call things by such harsh names, Charlotte," said the younger

sister; "I am sure Charles is the best humoured creature alive; and if I had an hundred thousand pounds, and were not his sister, I would give it him." "You will have calls enow upon your generosity, never fear," returned Miss Pynsynt: "such extravagance cannot be supported but by the ruin of a whole family." "Pray explain this matter," said Caroline, earnestly; "you quite fright me: surely Charles cannot so far have forgotten his principles." "Nay, as to that matter," said Miss Pynsynt, "poor fellow, he is not so much to be blamed as to be pitied; he has only done what so many in his rank of life do. Nobody will really think the worse of him; but to be sure it is provokingly foolish, when he knew so much depended upon his prudence. However, he is a noble creature; and I assure you he said, that he scorned to add baseness to indiscretion!"

By this time Caroline's faculties were completely bewildered: she knew not whether she were to commiserate or to congratulate her cousins; whether she were to condemn or glorify Charles; and in despair, without clearer information, of being able to accommodate her sympathy to the feelings of her eager auditors, she contented herself with saying, "I find it quite impossible to comprehend whether Charles has done well or ill; whether I am to deplore his indiscretion, or exult in his magnanimity: but I am sure there is no member of this family in whose good conduct I shall not rejoice, and whose mistakes I shall not sincerely lament and pity." "Charles has lost five thousand pounds at the gaming table; and with it all his prospects of doing well in life: Do I now speak intelligibly?" said Miss Pynsynt, angrily. "Too much so, indeed!" said Caroline, shrinking from the horrible intelligence, and shocked to her very soul. "And yet," says Miss Pynsynt, "there is nothing so very terrible in this, except the inconvenience it must occasion: nothing, my dear cousin, that need drive the colour from your cheek, whatever my aunt Beatrice may have taught you. Charles, no doubt, will be wise in future: and if those who are kind enough to lament his errors, would have generosity enough to repair them"—"I dare say Lord Enville will do so," interrupted Caroline; and as she spoke she arose, and withdrew to her own room. When there, she stood for some moments lost in thought; nor did one pleasant reflection occur to her mind, when suddenly a ray of light darted across the gloom. To the guilty propensity of Charles, with which she had just become acquainted, she thought she might perhaps refer her father's so peremptory aversion to her connexion with him; and in recognising so legitimate a care for her happiness, she acquitted him of every mercenary design, and gave to the winds all those uneasy and indistinct fears of residing under his roof which had so lately disturbed her. From these more cheering thoughts her mind again turned to the family scene which she had just witnessed. She saw, with pain and astonishment, the perfect ignorance in which these young people were, as to the just boundaries of virtue and vice; and felt, that with virtue on their lips, and their hearts as yet uncontaminated by any absolutely vitious indulgence, there was still but a step between their present elevation of character and the lowest degradation.

The reflections that the conduct of Charles gave rise to, were yet more painful. He had once been with her a distinguished favourite; she still retained much partiality for him. His manners and conversation pleased and amused her; and she had given him credit for many of those virtues of which he had so much the appearance: but she saw with a sincere regret, that however the outside was fair, the inside of the sepulchre resembled but too nearly that of the surrounding monuments. These thoughts made Caroline forget the business of the toilet; and the gay crowd that was that night to assemble at Lord

Enville's had already filled the apartments below, when she joined the company. The first object that met her eye was Edward Fitzosborn, and the weight was instantly removed from her heart. "An Edward Fitzosborn," said she to herself, "may atone for half the follies of the age!" But the gloom that was spread over his countenance damped the joy which the thought of his excellence had excited.

"I do not ask you," said she, "what is the matter; I see that you can participate in the unhappiness of your friend." "If I do," replied Edward, "it is not in compliment to any of his family. See Lady Enville, her whole soul absorbed in the chance of the pool: look at Lord Enville, how gayly he smiles, and how complacently he listens to the story of that royal duke,—of—they neither of them know what. Regard those butterfly sisters,—the gayest of this motley group. As Miss Pynsynt passed me on the wing just now, she asked me what made me look so dismal; and advised me, if I had a law case to study, to return to my chambers. "And Charles,—" said Caroline, with an inquiring voice. "Charles," returned Edward, "the son and brother of these happy personages, is one of the most wretched of his kind: with a full conviction, I verily believe, not only of the consequences of his indiscretion, but the turpitude of it." "Is this an accidental lapse?" said Caroline, anxiously; "or is the vice habitual?" "It *may* hitherto have been habitual," returned Edward, looking with an earnest and scrutinizing eye on Caroline, "and the severity of the present blow may break the habit for ever. If such should be the case, we, who love him, may have reason to rejoice in his present sufferings." "I am sure I should sincerely rejoice," replied Caroline; "for, with all his failings, Charles has certainly many good dispositions, which, by cultivation, might become virtues; and till this day, I never suspected him of vice." "And,—" said Edward, hesitating,—"Can you forgive me," added he, after a pause, "can you forgive me, if I should be very impertinent?" "I think I might promise forgiveness to any impertinence of which you would be guilty," said Caroline; "but I have no pope-like power to pardon sins that *may* be committed: if you choose to make the cast, you must stand the hazard of the die." "I will stand it then," said Edward; "yet do not be very angry if I ask, Whether I am to believe, what all the world says, that you have a particular and personal interest in the good conduct of poor Charles?" "None in the least, I do assure you," said Caroline, earnestly; "nor can I conceive from whence such a report could arise; for I am persuaded there is no foundation for it in the inclinations of either of the parties." "Thank God!" said Edward, with a warmth that made Caroline both start and blush, and which seemed, the moment the words had escaped his lips, to confound himself. "What is the cause of so much thankfulness?" said Mr. Pynsynt, coming up at that moment; "is it that you are fully sensible of the privilege of having had an hour's tête à tête with Miss Fitzosborn?" "Tête à tête!" said Caroline, laughing; "a tête à tête in the midst of two hundred people must be a great privilege indeed!" "Oh, there is no privacy like a crowd," said Mr. Pynsynt; "and now poor Charles is obliged to give in, you will find many, my fair cousin, who will let you know as much." The intelligence that Edward and Caroline conveyed to each other in a look, spoke volumes, and made them better acquainted with each other's character in a moment, than the common intercourse of fashionable society would have done in a twelvemonth.

Caroline was now accosted by her father, who, drawing her on one side, said, "Well, is the attack begun?" "Indeed, sir," returned Caroline, "I am in no danger of any attack that I know of, and least of all from the quarter you mean." "I tell you," replied he,

“that I know better: Lord Enville this morning avowed to me the design; nay, he assured me that you were in love with Charles, and that I had no authority over you which would control your inclinations.” “I hope you did not believe the latter part of the intelligence?” returned Caroline: “and whatever were the designs of this morning, I am sure there are none entertained at present of uniting me with poor Charles.” “Poor Charles!” replied Mr. Fitzosborn; I like not such pitying epithets.” “Dear sir,” said Caroline, “do you not know what has happened?” “What, the play-debt?” returned Mr. Fitzosborn: “one reason the more why they should not let you slip through their fingers.” “Were this their wish,” said Caroline, “what would it avail against my so contrary opinion? I give you my word, sir, that I will never marry Charles Pynsynt.” “Nor any other poor man?” said Mr. Fitzosborn. Caroline was silent for a moment, and then replied, “*That* would be too comprehensive an exclusion; but I will give you my honour, that I have no intention to marry any man at present.”

As she said these words, Lord Enville joined them, and taking Mr. Fitzosborn by the arm, led him out of the room. Caroline now mingled with the crowd; but found, that wherever she moved, Mr. Pynsynt attended her: and so explicit and unequivocal were his expressions of attachment, that she could not doubt but that the family politics were changed, and that it was not by her means that Charles’s broken fortunes were designed to be repaired. She had never seen reason to believe that the attentions which she had once received from Charles, and the favour with which he had continued to regard her, had proceeded from genuine and self-springing love: but she had heard so much of his passion from the rest of the family, and Mr. Pynsynt had appeared hitherto so wholly to allow of Charles’s prior claim, that Caroline heard with inexpressible disgust his present pleadings for favour, and the fervency of hopes that could only be realized by a still farther supposed destruction of the happiness of a brother, already rendered sufficiently miserable by his own imprudence. The selfishness of Mr. Pynsynt, the unthinking indifference of the sisters, the apathy of the parents in circumstances so calculated to call forth all the sympathy of filial affection, and all the fears and regrets of parental love, astonished and offended Caroline; and there was scarcely any situation that she would not have preferred to becoming a member of such a family. “Is this what is called knowing the world?” said she. “Is this the submission of virtue to inevitable evils? or is it an indifference to vice?”

It was not wholly either one or the other: it was the misapplication of terms, and the false calculation of consequences.

Caroline repulsed Mr. Pynsynt with a disdain that surprised him, and of which he thought her incapable.

“How is all this, my dear cousin?” said he; “are you going to play the tyrant? I thought you were above coquetry.”

“Coquetry!” returned Caroline. “Is the plain and simple expression of disapprobation to be called coquetry?”—“Plain and simple indeed!” said Mr. Pynsynt, piqued: “you did not so treat Charles.” “I had no occasion so to treat him,” said Caroline. “Tell me how I can please you,” returned Mr. Pynsynt; “for please you I am determined I will.” “It is scarcely worth your while, sir,” said Caroline, walking from him; “I shall not be the heiress of Henhurst.”

While Caroline was thus taking her part, Lord Enville and Mr. Fitzosborn were entering into engagements in direct opposition to her determinations.

These two able masters in the science of worldly wisdom knew the talents of each other too well, to hope that either would be able to circumvent his opponent; and thinking it safer to meet the danger they could not shun, mutually preferred, on this one occasion, the broad plain of truth, to the covert of deceit.

“It is ridiculous, my dear sir,” said Lord Enville to Mr. Fitzosborn, “that you and I should act like two fencing masters, rather showing our skill, than accomplishing our end. It is more manly, it is more friendly, to speak openly to each other, to state the wishes of each, and the conditions on which each will concede to those wishes. You told me this morning, that you would not suffer your daughter to marry my second son. The events of the day have rendered such an union entirely ineligible. Charles has undone himself in fortune and in love. Caroline will certainly never listen to the overtures of a gamester: nor could I wish it, loving her, as I do, as though she were already my daughter: but I have now discovered, what the generosity of the young man had hitherto concealed, that Pynsynt has been long attached to his cousin, and that nothing but his brother’s prior claims, as he thought them, have kept him aloof. This barrier removed, he has desired my permission to make his addresses to Caroline. You cannot doubt, that not only my permission, but my most ardent concurrence, attends upon his wishes; for Caroline is a jewel that would dignify the diadem of a prince. But, after what had passed this morning, I was resolved to avoid every risk of falling into a second error, and I told Pynsynt I would not move a step in this business but as you should point the way. May I give him any hopes?” “My lord,” replied Mr. Fitzosborn, “you say well, that it is both more manly and more friendly to speak openly. I will be as candid with you, as you are with me. It is my determination that Caroline shall not marry a poor man: for which I have my own reasons. Your lordship has a noble estate, but it is not a clear one. Mr. Pynsynt is of age; and you and he may, by acting together, get rid of those restraints which settlements may have imposed upon you. Thus the number of acres may be reduced below that number which I should consider as worthy of Caroline’s acceptance. I know the Henhurst estate would supply all deficiencies: but the possession of that estate is a contingency: and if it were to be Caroline’s, it ought, in reason, to raise her matrimonial views. Perhaps, however, I might, in consideration of the regard which I bear your lordship and your whole family, be induced to wave this consideration: but if my whimsical brother should disappoint our reasonable expectations, what can Caroline bring that will make her a prudent choice for Mr. Pynsynt?” “What can she bring?” returned Lord Enville, smiling. “Upon my word, my good friend, you have a pretty just notion of the value of money. A clear fifteen hundred pounds a year, with some loose thousands to set out with, is not an inconsiderable portion for a wife to bring to any man, even in these days of the depreciation of money; and what I am sure Pynsynt would be well satisfied with, even if the poor fellow was not so much in love, as to think of nothing but the lady.” “My lord,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, with profound gravity, “you miscalculate Caroline’s wealth. Her husband, whoever he is, must be content with little more than two-thirds of the property you mention; in addition, indeed, to her personal charms, which, as you well observe, are no doubt above all price.” “How am I to understand you?” replied Lord Enville. “Do I not know the property that my sister possessed? and do I not know that she left it all to Caroline?” “Admitting these two facts,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “yet I assure you I am not less correct in my statement, that Caroline will bring to her husband no larger a portion than I have mentioned. I think it right to deal

openly with you; and it is your part to determine, whether a girl with little more than twenty thousand pounds, is a proper match for your eldest son." "You astonish me! I cannot comprehend you," returned Lord Enville. "I am sure Caroline has not alienated any part of her property; and I am sure that no one else has a right to alienate it." "My lord," replied Mr. Fitzosborn, "in the proposal that you do me the honour to make me, it is reasonable to suppose that you are not wholly without a view to the advantage of your own family. You and I are past the age of romance. My daughter's fortune must, of course, be destined to discharge some encumbrances: you would indemnify her by means of settlements. So far all is fair. But is it not equally so, my lord, that I too should look at home? My daughter is a good girl; she cannot be happy except her father is made easy; nor can I scruple to accept an obligation from my child. I tell you honestly, that some certain difficulties of my own must be done away before I can attend to those of another."

Lord Enville, with all the self-command he could assume, was not able to conceal his chagrin on this explicit declaration of Mr. Fitzosborn. "I feel obliged to you, sir, for your candour towards me," returned he; "but you must forgive me if I say, that I should have been better pleased if an injury to my niece had not given occasion for it." "It depends upon your lordship," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "whether your niece shall sustain an injury or no. You, as well as myself, must consider her as the heiress of Henhurst. I have, indeed, no doubt but that your lordship does regard her in that light: her present property is paltry, in comparison; yet it is sufficient, perhaps, to accommodate the present wants both of you and me, if we can agree that it shall do so. The advantages of the future will be all yours and her's: and I am persuaded, that the few thousands which, with so truly a filial duty, she offers to my acceptance at this time, can neither, in reason or in fact, be any object with her or your lordship." "But how is it possible," said Lord Enville, "that you can be in want of these few thousands? The terms upon which you gave up your own claim to the Henhurst estate, the ample fortune that Mrs. Fitzosborn——" "My lord," interrupted Mr. Fitzosborn, "all this is nothing to the purpose. It might as well become me to ask, How, after the noble inheritance which descended to you from your forefathers, and the handsome fortune which you received with Lady Enville, you can have any wants, any difficulties? But I really feel no surprise on the subject. The only use of money is to spend it: and, in spending it in times of such pressure as these, it is not possible for men of liberal habits, and a certain style of life, always to accommodate their expenses to their income. You have a large family, my lord; you have many calls upon you. I can easily suppose that money must be a necessary with you, in any connexion Mr. Pynsynt can form. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to be assistant to your lordship in his establishment in life; and if, instead of cavilling at the wants of each other, we mutually endeavour to supply them, I have no doubt but an union of your son and my daughter will afford us the means of doing so; while we, at the same time, establish the happiness of the young people." "I acknowledge, my dear sir," replied Lord Enville, "that nothing can be more fair and candid than what you say; and I am ready to expose my affairs wholly to you; while you, on the other hand, I have no doubt, will be equally explicit as to the amount of the accommodation that you expect from your daughter's fortune." "My lord," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "I must have ten thousand pounds. If the remaining three or four and twenty thousand pounds in present possession, with the reversion of the Henhurst estate, will make her a wife for Mr. Pynsynt, such as your prudence can approve, there is not a man in the world that I should prefer to him as a

husband for my daughter, or any thing that could make me happier than to consent to their union.” “The reversion of the Henhurst estate would make the way smooth,” said Lord Enville: “but this is no certainty: and how I could be justified in allowing Pynsynt to marry a woman with only twenty thousand pounds, I know not: but, poor fellow, his heart is set upon the thing; and his generosity in not entering the lists with his brother while there could be any hopes for that brother, deserves reward. My good old friend it shall be so. We must not be prudent at the expense of happiness. And really Caroline, with her quiet spirit and moderation of desires, is a treasure in herself. You will prepare her for this happy change in her destination; and I will rejoice Pynsynt, by informing him that he may win his fair cousin’s heart if he can.” “I wish my daughter to remove to my house in a day or two,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “and if I am again so soon to lose her, I shall prefer the least possible delay. Her apartments may be ready for her to-morrow. Let us now return, my lord, to the drawing-room, that I may apprize Caroline of her intended immediate removal; but as to any farther arrangement, I believe it will be best to say nothing about it till she is under my own roof: she has tender spirits, and I would not have her hurried.” Lord Enville highly approved of this precaution: and these two Machiavelian fathers, having thus concerted the sacrifice of the happiness and the property of their children, returned with lightened hearts, gay faces, and easy consciences, to mix with their fellow creatures, and to assert and urge their claim to the distinction of “honourable men.”—Could they have dared to make such a claim, had they called “things by their right names?”

Mr. Fitzosborn, in a few words, informed Caroline that he should expect her to remove to his house the following evening; and Caroline, disgusted with every individual of the family she was now in, heard this notification rather with pleasure than with pain. She looked round for Edward, wishing to have communicated to him the intended change in the place of her residence; forgetting, at the moment, that his sober habits had long withdrawn him from the gay scene before her. Recollecting that he was no longer present, she said to herself, “Let me imitate what I so much approve; nor be led, by mere example and habit, to the waste of time that will return no more.” With this reflection she withdrew to her own apartment; and when there, was at no loss for such employment as called forth at once the exercise of her faculties and the feelings of her heart. The tumult below died away, by degrees, into silence; and at length the disorderly household sunk to rest.

The next morning, at breakfast, she announced her intended departure: intelligence which seemed very little to affect any of her hearers. Lord and Lady Enville believed, that while she seemed to escape, she was in fact only drawing the net closer round her. Mr. Pynsynt was offended by her conduct the night before, and sat apart in all the dignity of sulky silence: and the young ladies, however they were ready to profit by the bounty or good humour of Caroline, so little resembled her in her pursuits or disposition, that they had hardly an occupation in common; and there was scarcely a word in the English language which they used in the same sense. At dinner the scene was something changed. Lord and Lady Enville spoke much of their regret to part with her, even for so short a time; and Mr. Pynsynt, with a kind of proud humility, entreated her to forgive any unintentional offence which he might have committed. Caroline returned little answer to either: the day had seemed to her uncommonly long, and she rejoiced to see the carriage arrive which was to carry her from a family which had sunk so low in her

estimation. Not one pitying word had she heard for the follies or the sufferings of poor Charles; nor could she gain the least information as to what was become of him, or what were his prospects. In answer to her inquiries on this head, Miss Pynsynt could tell her only, that “mamma said all would be settled very well, she had no doubt; and Charles having smarted a little, as to be sure he well deserved, would be wiser for the future.”

“Good bye,” and “farewell,” and “we will come and see how you go on with that boar of a step-mother,” were the parting regrets of the family whose “hearts were to be broken” by the absence of Caroline; of that Caroline, “who was a jewel that would dignify the diadem of a prince.”

Caroline was too much occupied with the past, and had too fearful an anticipation of the future, to give a thought to what was passing before her at the present moment; but she was recalled to her full attention, when upon making her acknowledgments to Lady Enville for all her past kindness and indulgence, Lady Enville, embracing her, said, “Say no more of that, my dear; you will soon have it in your power to prove your sense of my maternal affections; and I have no doubt but that I shall be as well satisfied with you as a daughter, as I have always been as a niece.” The look of astonishment and dismay with which Caroline heard these words, was not lost upon Lady Enville; but, patting her cheek, “Oh you little rogue,” said she, “do you think to run away with the hearts of both my sons without any return? No, no, Pynsynt must reap the harvest that Charles has lost.” “I protest, madam—” said Caroline.—“Come, come, no protestations,” interrupted Lady Enville. “Like a true woman I have perhaps suffered my tongue to outrun my discretion; but I see no reason why an event that will make us all so happy, should be buried in silence: and do you think I should have parted with you so easily if I had not trusted to Pynsynt’s influence to bring you back?” “I really do not understand you, madam,” said Caroline, very gravely, and with a dignity that awed Lady Enville. “I wish you good evening” Lady Enville attempted a laugh. “Good night, my little tragedy queen! there is a time for all things; and there will be a time for confession, with all your reserve and decorum.”

Caroline, angry and confounded, stepped into the carriage; nor, during her short drive, had she a single thought that was not given to what had just passed between Lady Enville and herself. She entertained no doubt but that it was the intention of the Envilles that she should marry Mr. Pynsynt, and she thought with painful apprehension on the probability that such a design would not encounter from her father the same opposition which he had declared to her union with Charles. If so, it was not the moral character of the husband that could make any part of his consideration; for Mr. Pynsynt was still more objectionable in this point of view than Charles.

On her arrival in Sackville Street, Caroline was received by Mrs. Fitzosborn with a kind of sulky civility; which the vulgarity of her manners made the more revolting.

“I shall be very glad if I can make you comfortable, Miss Fitzosborn,” said she; “but really a fine lady, who has been living in Grosvenor Square so many years, can hardly expect all the accommodations which she has been used to, in so small a house as this. I never thought of any addition to our family, or we should have had a larger: and a larger we will have next winter I am resolved; for it will be but fair, with your large fortune, Miss Fitzosborn, that you should contribute your share; and Mr. Fitzosborn tells me that he is sure you will be willing to do so.” “I shall be very happy, madam,” replied Caroline, “to contribute every thing in my power to the gratification either of my father

or yourself.” “Oh, as to power, you have power enough; and take my advice, and keep it in your own hands. Don’t do as I did, throw it all away before you well know how to use it. Pray, what did you pay those Envilles for your board?” “Three hundred pounds, madam,” replied Caroline. “And little enough too, as dear as every thing is, and these nasty taxes; and I understand you have two servants. To be sure they could not want it; and, besides, there was no occasion that *they* should get any thing by you; but no doubt you would wish that Mr. Fitzosborn should benefit by your fortune, of which it was hard that he had no share. I am sure that I think five hundred pounds would not be a bit too much for you to give here, and I hope you think so too?” “We will leave all these things to be settled by my father, if you please, madam,” said Caroline. “Settled by your father, child!” replied Mrs. Fitzosborn: “then I am sure I shall never be a guinea the better. Do you not know that he would eat and drink gold? If you don’t look about you, he will not leave you a shilling. No, Miss Fitzosborn, your best way will be to make me your friend. Propose to your father to give a very handsome sum for your board; suppose it is more than five hundred pounds; and insist upon paying it yourself to me; and then you and I can settle what will be reasonable for me to keep, and I can return you the overplus. It will be your only way. If you once let Mr. Fitzosborn have the fingering of your rents, you will find that they will all stick to his fingers. Don’t I know him?”

Caroline, as she listened to this low-minded and low-worded harangue, could not help confessing that there is a charm in good-breeding that can throw a degree of shade over even the revolting forms of avarice and selfishness. The designs that the Envilles had upon her property were not very dissimilar from those of Mr. Fitzosborn; yet the coarseness with which they were avowed by the latter, made her look back with some little regret on the mansion which she had left; where, though there was not more virtue in the heart, there was more politeness on the tongue. Thus are we governed by sounds, thought Caroline: our nerves, rather than our principles, are offended: and hence the advantage of calling “things by their right names.”

Mr. Fitzosborn’s evening engagements soon gave Caroline an opportunity of withdrawing to her own apartment, and afforded her leisure to ruminate on the change of her situation.

There was an indistinct suspicion and dread that hung upon her mind, that she could neither account for nor shake off. She thought that she had no difficulty in understanding the designs of the Envilles or of Mrs. Fitzosborn, and she felt that she was equal to disappointing them both, whatever they might be. Her father’s plans were not so clear; and her means of opposing them, if contrary to her inclinations, much more difficult. She could not endure the thought that she had to guard against a parent’s attacks upon her property; yet did it perpetually recur, and brought with it, to her apprehension, so many painful sacrifices and adverse duties, as to confound her powers of reasoning, and to oppress her heart. These meditations, though they did not prevent her from retiring to bed at a reasonable hour, kept her wakeful long after the late one which consigned the rest of the household to repose, and roused her long before any one else was stirring. As soon as she could quit her own room with any hopes of finding accommodation elsewhere, she went down into the room where she had understood that breakfast was usually served; and where she had observed, the night before, there was the only appearance of books that the house afforded. There she took up a new publication, with which she endeavoured to engage her mind till Mrs. Fitzosborn should appear.

With those, however, who call “things by their right names,” the morning was gone before she had any interruption to her studies; and they were at last broke in upon, not by Mrs. Fitzosborn, but by her father. He saluted her, and welcomed her to his house, and apologized that it was not in his power to be at home to receive her the evening before. He told her that Mrs. Fitzosborn usually breakfasted in her own apartment, as he did in his dressing-room; but that if it would be agreeable to her, he would from henceforth breakfast with her. “I know you are an early riser,” said he: “I am not late: and by meeting at breakfast, we shall secure a little comfortable confidential chat every day, which otherwise it would be difficult to get in the whole course of it.” Caroline most readily assented to this proposal. It was her first wish to become acquainted with her father’s real character and disposition: and she flattered herself that she might, by her conduct towards him, so conciliate him, as to awaken in his breast a real affection for her; if, as she much feared, it did not at present exist. Caroline had, however, yet to learn in how many ways the love of self was indicative of “perilous times.”

The father and the daughter being seated at the breakfast table, “I hope,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “that Mrs. Fitzosborn received you well last night? I assure you she has very good dispositions towards you, which it must be your business to cultivate. The faults in her manners you must endeavour to overlook.” Caroline replied, that she had no doubt but that they should do very well together; and added, that there should be nothing wanting on her own part to produce so desirable an effect. “With all your efforts,” replied Mr. Fitzosborn, “you might probably find the task an irksome one: and it must be confessed, that, with all Mrs. Fitzosborn’s good qualities, she wants the graces most miserably; and this want must be particularly conspicuous to you, who have been accustomed to live, since you can be said to have lived at all, with people of such good taste and elegant manners as the Envilles.” Caroline had never heard her father talk of the good qualities of Mrs. Fitzosborn before; nor was he in the habit of saying civil things of the Envilles. She wondered to find him in so complimentary a humour. She smiled: “There might be compensations for this good taste and those elegant manners,” said she, “that would make me very willing to forego them.” “Oh, no doubt,” replied Mr. Fitzosborn; “but I fear we must not look for these compensations in Mrs. Fitzosborn: and when so much ton is united with so much goodness as the Envilles possess, it must be highly desirable for a woman like my Caroline to become one of so charming a family.” Caroline started; but instantly hoping that her fears might run before the truth, she said, “I had no reason to complain while I remained in Lord Enville’s house; and now you have withdrawn me from it, I dare say I shall have every reason to be satisfied with my home.” “I don’t talk of a temporary residence,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “I allude to you becoming a member of the family,—a *daughter* of the house.” “I understood,” returned Caroline, “that you wholly disapproved of any such connexion.” “What! with that spendthrift Charles? to be sure I did, and I do. We are not talking of him: no, my dear Caroline, I am happy to say it is by the means of Mr. Pynsynt that two families, already one in their tastes and their affections, will be indissolubly united by the sacred bond of matrimony. I congratulate you on the conquest you have made, and the prospects before you.” “You make me smile, sir,” said Caroline, “when you talk of my conquests: never was there a damsel more neglected than I was by Mr. Pynsynt before my visit to Henhurst; and I fear, that whatever are my prospects in life, he will not contribute to brighten them.” “The fear is vain, I assure you,” replied Mr. Fitzosborn: “what you took for neglect, was merely

generosity to that worthless fellow Charles. He was resolved not to stand in his way; and could not but be conscious, that if he had come forward ever so little, Charles could have nothing to hope: that obstacle removed, his love has burst forth; and I come ambassador from him, and Lord Enville, to lay his heart, his person, and his fortune, at your feet.” “From me,” said Caroline, with dignity, “Charles never had any thing to hope; nor do I believe that he ever entertained wishes or hopes with respect to me: but I must say, that notwithstanding Mr. Pynsynt’s generosity, and his consciousness, were I compelled to choose between the brothers, I should not hesitate to prefer Charles.” “Poo, nonsense,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “reserve all this pretty disdain and self-consequence for Mr. Pynsynt. It will give a poignancy to the cloying sweets of lovemaking upon sure grounds; but speak honestly to your father: there is no reason to deny to him that you think, with all the fashionable female world, that Mr. Pynsynt is the greatest ornament in it; or that you feel as every female, whether fashionable or not, *must* feel on the offer of a coronet.” “I see you are rallying me,” said Caroline, “and that you give as little credit as I do myself to Mr. Pynsynt’s passion, or his attractions.” “Upon my word you were never more mistaken,” replied Mr. Fitzosborn; “I am most profoundly serious; nor can I entertain a doubt but that you are as well pleased as myself with this change in the family politics; this substitution of the elder for the younger brother.” “Substitution of the elder for the younger brother!” cried Caroline. “What! am I at the disposal of Lord Enville? Does it depend upon him to say who I shall make my companion for life? My dear father, forgive me; who is it that fills your mind with such unfounded notions? What have I to do with either of the brothers? I should be miserable to be the wife of either. Whatever may be Lord Enville’s views, we have nothing to do with them. If Mr. Pynsynt must be established by the means of a wife, there are others of higher rank, and larger fortunes than I can pretend to, that will answer the purpose much better. But this is no concern of mine. He has nothing to offer that can please my fancy, tempt my ambition, or gratify my feelings and my taste: my principles and my heart equally reject him.” “Caroline,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, solemnly, “you must marry Mr. Pynsynt.” “Must! my dear father?” said Caroline; “from whence arises the necessity?” “Would you see your father in a jail?” “What can you mean, sir?” said Caroline, shuddering. “What connexion can there be between so deplorable an event and my marriage with Mr. Pynsynt?” “With your not marrying Mr. Pynsynt and such an event there is a very intimate, and indeed an indissoluble connexion.”

The light now broke in upon Caroline; and strengthening herself to support the evil which she saw herself called upon to suffer; “I understand you, sir,” said she, “and will spare you the pain of any farther explanation: what was the price at which I was to have been sold to Lord Enville?” “My dear Caroline,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “what strange words you use! Sold! Who would have sold you? *Arrangements* there must be in all family transactions. If you knew more of the world you would understand this. Nor can a coronet be had for nothing: nor are such charms and such virtues as your’s an every day prize. Lord Enville knows this, and Mr. Pynsynt feels it; and it is these considerations that have induced them to abate a certain part of your fortune. That certain part is necessary to me, if I am to continue to live as I do: and could I suppose for a moment that you would object to such a disposal of a part of your wealth? you, who have always been so affectionate a child? All the advantages of the bargain, you see, are on our side; you are established in the world at less cost than we could have hoped for; and the surplus of

your property remains in your own family instead of the whole being alienated. But what is there in this like being sold? I should rather say that you were given away.” “Forgive me,” said Caroline, with an anguish of spirit that she had never before felt, and for the bitterness of which she could scarcely account to herself: “forgive me, if I am incapable of understanding these nice distinctions. I would use no words that can offend you; but I am accustomed to use such as, to my apprehension, best explain my meaning. I wish to be dealt with in the same manner. May I ask, what is the amount of the sum necessary to your—accommodation?” added she, hesitatingly. “Whatever it is,” replied Mr. Fitzosborn, sullenly, “it matters not; for, except in the case of your marrying Mr. Pynsynt, I can assure you I am not such a wretch as to take it.” “If, my dear sir,” said Caroline, gently pressing his hand; “if we might speak in direct terms, we should be less apt to mistake each other, or to deceive ourselves; less in danger of being led away by false delicacy or false generosity.” “Do allow me, without offence, to state the case in such words as will best convey to you my sense of it. If I am wrong, you will correct me.” “Is it of Edward,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, sarcastically, “that you learn to speak so like a lawyer? that at eighteen you insist upon understanding all you utter? But go on.” Mr. Fitzosborn had, however, for a moment rendered it impossible for Caroline to obey him: the blood rushed from her heart to her cheek, and retreated thither again as hastily, before she could command her voice sufficiently to say, “It appears to me that you designed to have appropriated a certain part of my property to your own use, in consideration of having secured to me what you imagined I should esteem a much superior advantage: in a word, that you had made for me a good purchase. If, in my opinion, the relative value of the articles to be exchanged had coincided with your’s, my dear sir, your conclusion would have been just. Unfortunately it differs so widely, that I would give double the sum, whatever it is, that was to have purchased me a coronet, to avoid receiving it from the hand that now offers it. But there *are* other advantages more than equivalent to my whole fortune: *that* of making you, my dear father, easy, ranks the highest: name the sum that will make you so, and it shall be your’s.” “What! and leave you unestablished? What will the world say if I pillage my daughter, and do not secure her a rank and station in life which is so justly her due?” “What has the world to do with any transactions between you and me, my dear sir,” replied Caroline; “if you have wants, it is a daughter who ought to supply them. An establishment! rank and station in life! these are words that convey to my mind no distinct meaning, and therefore can have no attraction for me. When I marry, it shall be with the prospect of such an income as will be competent to afford me those conveniences of life to which I have been accustomed. Beyond this, I have no conception of any selfish gratification from the accumulation of thousands; and I should certainly consider such wealth more as a trust, than as a possession.” “All this is very good, my dear,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “but it is also very young. It was so that I and your mother talked when we were in love: but, as you are not in love, I would advise you to be a little more rational, and take warning from what you know was the consequence of our folly. I tell you that there is no living in this world without money, and a great deal of money too. Could any thing short of this conviction have made me the husband of the present Mrs. Fitzosborn? To marry to poverty is not only folly, but degradation. Have you never heard of the miserable way in which the mother and sisters of Edward live?” “Yes, I *have* heard of it,” said Caroline, with emphasis. “Well, should you like to live as they do? I am sure that I never think of them without equal compassion for their misery, and

indignation at that strange brother of mine. If you value his favour, Caroline, if you value mine, you will never think of connecting yourself with a poor man." "I do not think," said Caroline, blushing, "of connecting myself with any man. Such considerations are far from the present purpose. Will you be so kind as to inform me what is the sum that you wish to have?" "Deuse take me if I can prevail with myself to pillage you thus! Dear Caroline, think better of your own interests; accept the offer that is made you; and make us all the happiest family in town."

Caroline felt a degree of indignation arise in her breast, which hurt the delicacy of her filial feelings: but, repressing the involuntary sensation, she replied, "I entreat you, sir, urge me no farther on that subject: my resolution is definitive: and if you would accept assistance from me on any terms, surely you will prefer those which are the easiest to me." "Why, to be sure it is more in the sound of the thing than any thing else," replied Mr. Fitzosborn. "In the natural order of things, the whole of your fortune, in right of your mother, ought to have passed into my hands: that it did not, was the whim of romance. The little that I now want is less than what, in that case, I should probably have found it prudent to have appropriated to the settling my affairs; so that you will still be better off than you might have been; nay, rich, with all your little economical ways and your moderate desires; so that I do not know why I should scruple. But the transaction may be known, and not the circumstances which led to it; and then it may be mistaken, and imputations may attach to me that no man of honour can bear; and I can hardly hope that Lord Enville, stung as he will be by the disappointment of his hopes, will spare me." "Oh, my dear sir," said Caroline, "do not let us puzzle ourselves with all these possibilities, and suggestions that are nothing to the purpose. If what we do is right, why should we look farther? Why should we care what ill-informed or ill-intentioned people may say?" "Caroline," replied Mr. Fitzosborn, "this disregard to character is a very dangerous principle. Reputation is the best guard to virtue. When we have lost the one, the other is seldom preserved. This is a maxim that ought more especially to be held sacred by a woman; but it is not to be despised by a man. The transfer that is proposed by you, is not only expedient, but laudable; and as your interest and mine must be the same, equally right in both parties: but perhaps this may not be quite so plain to the world at large. If I do accept your offer, it must be upon the condition of inevitable secrecy on your side." "My dear father," said Caroline, "do you think I should ever mention such a transaction to any creature?" "No, no; not voluntarily, and unquestioned, mention it. I am sure your own prudence would prevent you: for why unnecessarily lessen yourself in the eyes of the world, where you are considered as being worth more than thirty thousand pounds? I do not think you such a simpleton. But you must be upon your guard; you must be prepared with some plausible story that will satisfy Lord Enville: you must persuade him, that on being obliged to break the engagement I had entered into with him, I am an equal sufferer with himself. In short, you must pass for a little obstinate gipsy, who would attend neither to her own interest nor the interest of her father." "Would this be quite consistent with the regard for character that you inculcated just now?" said Caroline. "Oh, this is a trifle," replied Mr. Fitzosborn. "Who thinks the worse of a woman for following her own inclinations, and keeping all the power in her own hands?"—"If such were the motives of my conduct," returned Caroline, "my being determined by them would involve a breach of duty to my parent, and manifest both folly and selfishness; none of which appear to me trifles in the character even of a woman."

“Well, well, tell the story your own way; only let it be such an one as will effectually screen me from all suspicion as to the real truth of the matter.” “I can promise you, sir, the most obstinate and not to be shaken silence,” said Caroline: “farther, I hope you will forgive me if I do not engage for.” “Truly, mistress Caroline,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “I think the most rigid veracity need not be startled with imputing unpersuadableness to your ladyship. What single point have you conceded to me in the whole course of this long conversation?” “Indeed,” returned Caroline, “I have yielded all that was in my power; and all, I hope, that is necessary either to your character or your happiness.” “Nay, child, it is not for my own sake that I shall encroach upon your thousands. It is the love of justice that induces me to accept the assistance you offer me. Ten thousand pounds, though in fact no great sum, is considerable to people of a certain description; and upon my honour I have too much feeling to bear the thoughts of distressing honest tradesmen, who work hard for their living.”

It was with an effort that almost amounted to suffocation, that Caroline was enabled to repress the exclamation of surprise that these words occasioned. Her consternation and dismay were but too visible to her father; but, carefully avoiding any remark on them, he went on:—“From an income of better than fifteen hundred pounds per annum, a young woman, having no house or establishment, cannot feel any deprivation by the diminution of five hundred pounds a year. If she have any prudence she would not touch a single penny of it. A thousand pounds a year ought to be amply sufficient for all her wants while she remains unmarried; and she would thus have the pleasure of making her hoard a more worthy present for the man she loved. This, my dear Caroline, is a pleasure that no consideration for others would have induced me to rob you of, did I not consider this paltry thousand pounds per annum as not a tenth part of your wealth. The Henhurst estate will infallibly be yours. That ring is the gage of its being so. And when you have that, you may gratify your taste for marrying a poor man, without much imputation on your prudence.”

Caroline’s various emotions on this speech of her father’s, the confusion of ideas that such a gross misapplication of words occasioned her, and the bitter reflections that the whole of this conversation had given rise to, made her for some moments wholly unable to reply to it. His last words had most particularly affected her; though the emotion which they had occasioned was of a kind that she could not have described, and which she did not understand. She remained silent so long, that Mr. Fitzosborn, alarmed by the symptoms of dissatisfaction that appeared in her countenance, said, “What is the matter with you, Caroline? are you not well?” “I acknowledge myself something surprised,” returned Caroline, “at the largeness of the sum which you have named; and I confess I am so far sorry for it, as I fear the alienation of it may in some degree disappoint the expectations that Mrs. Fitzosborn mentioned to me last night.” “How so? what expectations did she manifest?” “That I should pay five hundred pounds a year for my board,” returned Caroline. “Harpy!” said Mr. Fitzosborn. “But if it *were* to be so, my Caroline; there would still be another five hundred pounds left for your private purse; and I have heard you say that you do not spend two hundred.” “Not on myself,” said Caroline. “And surely, my dear little Lady Bountiful, three hundred pounds a year are ample for all the purposes of benevolence.” It falls short, thought Caroline, of the demands of extravagance. “But,” returned she, “I have really no such sum to bestow.” “Nor need you. Yet, when your servants’ wages are paid, and you have allotted a certain

sum for such presents and attentions as are indispensable, there will still be such a surplus on your income, as may well satisfy your passion for indiscriminate charity." "There will be no surplus at all," said Caroline. "You mentioned, my dear father, just now, the distresses of Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn: I have already appropriated three hundred pounds of my income to her. I have given my word that it shall be continued to her." "Three hundred pounds a year to Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzosborn. "Was there ever such folly? Why, child, were you mad? or had you lost all power of calculation?" "It is plain," returned Caroline, "that I did not take into my calculation all that I ought to have done: but the thing is done; nor can it be recalled. Of the seven hundred pounds a year that remain to me of my property, it is for *you*, sir, to say what part you require for the maintenance of me and my servants; and for *me* so to regulate my expenses, as not to exceed what may be left to my disposal." "This is a very foolish affair indeed, Caroline," said Mr. Fitzosborn, peevishly. "This comes of making girls of eighteen mistresses of themselves. I wonder at your courage in having disposed of so large a share of your property without my consent. You see what inconveniences you bring upon yourself by such self-willedness; nor will the mischief stop here. If this matter comes to the knowledge of your uncle, adieu to all our hopes of the Henhurst estate. He will as soon leave it to a beggar as to one who has taken upon herself to relieve the distresses of those whom he had consigned to perpetual poverty. Some means must be found to stop the mouths of those silly Fitzosborns, who will be talking of your bounty, and call it gratitude, and so ruin you. The deuce take me if I were ever more vexed at a thing in my life!" "I do not fear any evil consequences from what I have done," returned Caroline; "and if any should occur, they will be wholly to myself. I hope, therefore, sir, that you will not suffer this matter to rest upon your mind, any farther than as it may influence your decision as to the other parts of my property." "The evil consequences wholly to yourself indeed!" said Mr. Fitzosborn. "Is there not an immediate evil consequence that affects others? In the state of indigence to which you have reduced yourself, do you think that I can consent that Mrs. Fitzosborn shall realize her projects of advantage at your expense? And shall not I then be the victim of her ill-humour?"

Caroline could not help wondering at the quick-sightedness of selfishness, and the cold-heartedness of avarice.

"I beg," returned she, "that this may not be the case: I can live very happily upon two hundred pounds a year. I desire that you will permit me to pay Mrs. Fitzosborn the five hundred pounds on which she has set her heart; all then may be peace and harmony, as far as my residence in this house is concerned: and I can faithfully promise you, that I will not trouble it by any regrets of my own." "I believe it had best be so," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, carelessly. "My lawyer shall be here to-morrow morning, when every thing necessary to the transfer that we have agreed upon may be completed; and ere long the Henhurst estate will make all up to you again."

Thus ended this memorable conversation; Mr. Fitzosborn, as he said the last words, sauntering out of the room, and leaving Caroline at a loss to know whether the sacrifice of one third of her fortune, and the alienation of another third, had conferred an obligation, or had excited the smallest feeling of gratitude. She had heard the most gross misapplication of words, and she felt herself the victim of the most lavish extravagance and the most flint-hearted selfishness; while the person who thus spoke, and thus acted, seemed unconscious that his arguments were inconclusive, or his conduct reprehensible.

Caroline could not understand this: nor would she have understood it better, had she been privy to all that passed in the mind of her father. So accustomed was he to call "things by wrong names," and so little did he attend to the motives for his actions, that he believed unfeignedly that his expenses were no more than necessary; that in offering his daughter a coronet he had fulfilled the part of a good father; that by inculcating falsehood and cold-heartedness, he was teaching her prudence and a knowledge of the world; that in robbing her of her fortune he was taking no more than his due; and, finally, that she could suffer no real injury, as she would infallibly inherit the Henhurst estate. On the whole, as he had secured the ten thousand pounds to himself, he was better pleased that Caroline had refused Mr. Pynsynt than if she had accepted him. By being still to be disposed of, fresh advantages might accrue to him in the disposal of her; and in the contingents of futurity, events might arise which would give him cause to rejoice that Caroline was accountable only to himself for her conduct. The only particular that now occupied his thoughts, was how to conceal from Lord Enville, and every other person, the diminution that had taken place in Caroline's fortune, with respect to the ten thousand pounds absolutely given to himself, and the lessening of her income from her benevolence to Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn. He flattered himself, that as he was sure of her unbroken silence on these two points, that this would not be difficult; and he left his house, to throw himself into his usual round of morning occupations, with as much self-complacency and lightness of heart, as if he had been performing the most disinterested actions.

Caroline withdrew to her chamber in a very different state of mind. She could not doubt but that the promptness with which she had yielded so large a part of her property was right. It was a parent who had required her assistance; and the assistance that she had given him was so far from being beyond what she could prudently spare from her own wants, that she considered herself as still affluent. In the plan that she had sketched for the expenditure of her income, she had considered that part of it which she had appropriated to the calls of benevolence, as a fountain from whence to draw her purest pleasures. The stream was now to be almost wholly directed to one object, and that object her father. But where was the corresponding joy that such an indulgence of the filial and benevolent feelings in one seemed so imperiously to call for? Poor Caroline knew it not; felt it not. All within was blunt discomfort, or involuntary, but unequivocal condemnation. She durst not trust herself to embody in words the thoughts which the discovery she had made of her father's character gave rise to. She did not dare to call things as she knew them to be; and she would willingly have relinquished her power of giving, to have escaped such a proof of her father's injustice and rapacity. She turned from his maxims and principles with an abhorrence that terrified her; and then again she meditated schemes the most impracticable, how she should escape from the contagion of his example. But the turpitude of her father was not the only painful discovery that Caroline had made: she was conscious of the sharpness of the pang which she had felt on divesting herself of so large a share of her property; and with a heart as little mercenary as she knew her own to be, she could not be at a loss to account for what she had felt.

"I have still sufficient for my own gratification," said she. "I have parted with the superfluity to a parent. For whose sake, then, do I regret that I am no longer rich?"

Her head sunk upon her bosom as she said these words: and as she closed her eyes to exclude the light, which was at that moment hateful to her, "Oh Edward," cried she. But who has told me, thought she, a little recovering her composure, that, were I

queen of the globe, Edward would condescend to share it with me? Why should I regret an affluence, which, had I retained, it is but too probable, I should have found valueless?

The train of thought which these reflections gave birth to, led her to the conviction that she had no ground to flatter herself that the kindness which Edward had always manifested towards her, was marked by that particular distinction which would make him take any selfish interest in the diminution of her fortune. She saw in his manners towards her, frankness of disposition, friendship, perhaps partiality, but not love. She scarcely knew whether there was admiration. He had never paid one compliment to her person; never, except when warmed by gratitude by her favours to his family, had he been led or betrayed into a warm approbation of her sentiments. Nor could she recall to her mind a single symptom of jealousy, or even uneasiness, that the attentions of others of his sex to her had ever discovered. He had, indeed, warmly expressed his pleasure on being assured that she was indifferent to Charles Pynsynt; but she could too easily trace this feeling back to a general principle of benevolence, to be able, by any self-flattery, to place it to the account of any particular interest. In all that he did or said with respect to herself, he appeared unactuated by hope or fear; and she remembered with pain, that it was not till Charles had so unequivocally proved himself unworthy of her, that he had seemed to feel even a wish to ascertain the truth of any connexion between them. It was impossible to escape from the conclusion that these reflections forced upon her; and Caroline found, in one and the same moment, that her heart was no longer in her own possession; and that she had given it to a man who was probably indifferent to the gift.

Shocked, grieved, and humiliated, Caroline felt as if alone in the world. Poor, with reputed thousands; unprotected under the roof of a parent. Instead of a father, she had found an invader of her property; instead of the kindness of friendship, the machinations of selfishness; and instead of having secured the heart of one favoured individual, the mortifying conviction that she had lost her own! With this consciousness she lost also all the unreprieved delight hitherto attendant on her intercourse with Edward: she felt that she ought never to see him more, and yet not a single moment passed in which she did not wish to see him. She had accustomed herself to look to him as the enlightener of her paths, and the rectifier of her opinions. His better knowledge of the world, the strictness of his principles, and the steadiness of his conduct, had made her, from her first residence in London, turn to him for that assistance which she was sensible she must want on her entrance into life, and which she would have looked for in vain from Lady Enville, or from any of her family. The decorum of civilized society, the elegance of fashionable manners, she might indeed have learnt from them, had the benevolence of her disposition, and the correctness of her taste, left her in want of any such instruction: but the strength of principle, with the tenderness of feeling, that distinguishes the Christian, could not be taught by those who made not the precepts of the Gospel the standard of their actions. That Edward did so, she well knew, and therefore she had considered him as a casuist on whom she might safely rely. But could she now expose herself to a more intimate knowledge of his excellencies, when she suffered so severely from what she knew of them already? If Edward were not to be her friend, she had not one in the world: and how forlorn is that being who is friendless! Although Edward visited her father, she knew that he was seldom included in his dinner parties; nor was her chance of seeing him at the entertainments given by Mrs. Fitzosborn much better than that of meeting him at dinner. Mrs. Fitzosborn, constantly engaged from

home, returned the civilities of her friends by one or two crowded and magnificent assemblies in the course of the season. With the exception of these meetings, the society to be met with in her house did not extend beyond the hour that the law of fashion decreed as the instant of separation for those who had dined together. Caroline could no longer hope to be a welcome visiter in Grosvenor Square; nor would she have wished to be a frequent visiter there, could she have supposed herself welcome. As she was scarcely emerged from childhood, and as the three years previous to her attaining the epoch of her premature majority, had been fully engaged with the masters which it had been thought necessary to accumulate to supply the deficiencies of her country education, she had had little leisure to familiarize herself with any of the young people whom she was accustomed to see at Lord Enville's; and in general their pleasures and ways of thinking were so dissimilar to her own, that she had found no attraction in their company. She visited no where, but as a member of Lord Enville's family; nor did she suspect that, on her removal to Sackville Street, the intercourse with her present acquaintance would extend beyond an interchange of visiting cards; or that the new ones which she was likely to form, would open to her a more intimate society. The particular associates of Mrs. Fitzosborn, she was sure, could not be her's; and of the mixed multitude of names which were to be found in her visiting book, Caroline knew it was most likely that she should not become acquainted with half a dozen of the persons to whom they belonged.

At the moment that Caroline was thus reviewing, with a heavy heart, the forlornness of her situation; where acquaintance did not secure society, or intercourse friendship; she was told there was a gentleman below who wished to see her. She went down with no expectation of meeting a welcome visiter: she opened the door of the drawing-room, and found herself with Edward. "Dear Caroline!" "Dear Edward!" was the involuntary and eager exclamation of both: but Caroline felt herself blush so intolerably as the words escaped her, that Edward had taken her passive hand before she was aware of the liberty. "I protest," said Edward, laughing, "I am as much rejoiced to see you again, as if we had not met these ten years; so sadly estranged from us all do you seem by the change of your abode. We were a melancholy party in Grosvenor Square last night." "Not on account of my absence," said Caroline, with a melancholy smile. "Oh don't be so modestly incredulous," said Edward, "nor inquire too closely, whether I have not adopted the royal style, when that of the humble individual would have been nearer the truth. I am only bound to answer for myself; and I can say with the most perfect veracity, that it is the only unpleasant evening that I have passed in that house these two years." Caroline again felt her cheek suffused with blushes. It seemed to her that Edward had penetrated the secret of her heart, and that he was resolved to absolve himself from the charge of insensibility.

"But you do not tell me any thing of Charles?" said Caroline. "My dear cousin," cried Edward, looking earnestly at her, "what is the matter? Are you not well? You speak dejectedly." "Pray, if you *do* know any thing of Charles, tell me," said she. "It was one of the purposes of my visit," returned he: "but shall I confess that the sight of you drove every thing else out of my head? Those grave looks, however, will soon bring me to my recollection." "What of Charles?" said Caroline. "Ah, my cousin," cried Edward, while, as he looked earnestly on her, all traces of gayety faded from his countenance, "is this earnestness of inquiry consistent with the declaration that you so frankly made the other night?" "How should it be inconsistent?" said Caroline. "Can I not be solicitous for the

good conduct or happiness of so near a relation without having a personal interest in his solicitude?" "I beg your pardon—the exhilaration of my spirits—my giddiness—my—I don't know what, makes me commit a thousand blunders: but the truth is, that matters are mended with Charles; and a letter I have received this morning has set my brain a working in so agreeable a manner, that I scarcely know what I am about." "But how are matters mended with Charles?" said Caroline. "By having the play debt so arranged, though I fear at the expense of all that was settled upon him, as to leave no stain on his honour, as it is called, and by having got an appointment through the interest of Lord Evelyn, which will carry him out in a few days to India in a very eligible situation. But still more, as you will think, by the just regret for past errors, and the fervent resolutions against all such evil for the future, that this awakening blow has produced. Indeed, he feels so bitterly his late folly, that I should think him as pitiable as a man could be, if his present sufferings were not the guarantee of his future happiness." "And are the family in Grosvenor Square satisfied with all this?" asked Caroline. "Oh, more than satisfied," replied Edward: "Lady Enville thinks it the luckiest stroke in the world; and gravely tells her daughters to observe how good comes out of evil; then falls to castle building, and erects Charles into a governor-general at least: while Lord Enville remarks, like a profound politician, that the ablest designs are often less successful than the caprices of fortune; and the young ladies declare that they were never uneasy, for they were sure that Charles would never do any thing to make them ashamed of him. "I am very glad of it," said Caroline, in a tone of voice that showed how far her thoughts were from the subject on which she spoke. "My dear cousin," said Edward, fervently, "what is the matter? Why so grave? Why so sad? If you put me upon asking questions, I shall be very impertinent." "No, that you cannot be," said Caroline; "but it is not in my power to tell you all that at this moment weighs upon my mind, and I would not mislead you by any double dealing. In general I may venture to say that my change of residence does not promise me an increase of happiness: but I say even thus much *only* to you, and you must not repeat it." "Sacred is the confidence, however limited, that you repose in me," returned Edward; "but give me one smile, I pray, my sweet coz, and tell me that we shall meet this evening in Grosvenor Square." "Indeed we shall not," said Caroline. "Why then you will break half a score of hearts," said Edward; "for, be as unbelieving as you will, I heard of nothing but your perfections last night, uncontroverted even by the fastidious criticism of that admirable judge of merit, Mr. Pynsynt himself. And Lady Enville declared she should call upon you by sunrise, and run away with you for the whole day." "I fancy I may have lost some of my attractions in her ladyship's eyes by this time," said Caroline. "And I can guess how you have lost them," said Edward. "I could have told these Machiavels as much last night; nor did I believe a word of what I heard: yet give me the pleasure of hearing from your own mouth that you will never marry that puppy Pynsynt." "I will never marry any body who I think a puppy," returned Caroline, gravely. What was the precise impulse from whence Caroline returned so evasive an answer to a request that was neither offensive nor puzzling it would, perhaps, be difficult to say. It is true that her spirits were low, and her heart oppressed; and there was something in the gayety and ease of Edward so uncongenial to her feelings, that displeased her: but she felt, the moment the words were uttered, that he did not deserve such a reply. On him it had an instantaneous effect. "I beg your pardon," said he; "nothing was farther from my intention than to offend you? I see I have been impertinent. I ought to have been more

circumspect.” “And I less peevish,” said Caroline. “It is I who ought to ask pardon: but I will do more, I will make you all the amends in my power. I will tell you in express terms, that I never will marry that puppy Pynsynt.” “Ten thousand thanks for your condescension,” said Edward, kissing the fair hand that was held out to him in token of reconciliation: “this dear hand must never be made a property of: reserve it for him, whoever he may be, who would not part with its little finger for all this world’s wealth: and pray don’t let these foolish people use you as I see they do: assert your independence, and show them that a little steady principle and plain dealing are a match for all their versatile politics and polished duplicity.” “Upon my word,” said Caroline, with a faint smile, “you are in a very odd humour this morning. I never saw your spirits so buoyant, nor heard your tongue so flippant.” “It is because you never saw me intoxicated before,” said Edward: “but I have this morning drank so delicious a draught of hope, as has entirely overset my senses.” “I shall begin to think so in good earnest,” said Caroline, “if you are not more sober.” “Well, then, I will be gone before I have quite lost my reputation. Adieu, and all good angles guard you!” And so saying, he opened the door, and ran down stairs.

Caroline had scarcely time to think of the uncommon humour that Edward was in, before the entrance of Mrs. Fitzosborn interrupted her meditations.

“Upon my word, Miss Fitzosborn,” said that lady, “this is a pretty specimen of the manners of Grosvenor Square. Are you accustomed to tête à têtes with young men?” “It was my cousin Edward,” replied Caroline. “And suppose it was my cousin Edward,” returned the vulgar censorer, “what then? I can tell you, Miss Fitzosborn, I shall suffer no such doings in my house. I am accountable for your conduct to your father, and I know his mind too well to let you be intimate with any man who is not worth a shilling.” Caroline made no reply: and Mrs. Fitzosborn, with the colour rising, said, “Pray was this visit wholly to you? Did not the civil young man ask for me? I am sure he owes me all respect.” “Probably, madam, he did,” replied Caroline; “but I really know nothing of the matter. When I came down to Mr. Fitzosborn, I did not know to whom I was coming; nor that you, madam, were not in this room.” “Well,” said Mrs. Fitzosborn, “I shall give proper orders in future; for we must have no such hugger-mugger doings, I can tell you. Pray, Miss Fitzosborn, what has been settled between you and your father? What compensation are we to have for all the trouble that you and your fine servants will give in this house?” “My board is to be five hundred pounds a year, madam,” said Caroline. “And am I to receive it?” “Really I cannot tell; that will be as my father pleases.” “Upon my word, Miss Fitzosborn, I wonder at you; did I not warn you against trusting Mr. Fitzosborn with a guinea of your fortune? If you would make me your friend, all might be well; but if you put your affairs into Mr. Fitzosborn’s hands, you will be ruined; that’s all.” It is but too probable, thought Caroline. “I am obliged to you, madam, for your advice,” replied she, “but all these matters must be left to my father.” “Then you will be ruined: remember I tell you that you will be ruined.” “I cannot be ruined, madam, in any painful sense of the word, if all I have contributes to the comfort of my father.” “I understand nothing of such romance,” replied Mrs. Fitzosborn, contemptuously. “I suppose the truth is, that you reckon upon Henhurst; and a good reckoning it is: though, to be sure, the right of the thing is with Mr. Fitzosborn; and I am sure I do not blame you for giving him a great deal, for you have stood sadly in his way; and to be sure the father was born before the daughter, whatever some people might think: but, as to all house

concerns, the money ought to pass through my hands, and I can tell Mr. Fitzosborn it shall." To this Caroline again made no answer, and Mrs. Fitzosborn, having been silent for a few minutes, said; "Well, Miss Fitzosborn, I am going out this morning, and I would have you go with me, that I may introduce you to such of my acquaintance as I shall think proper. We will leave our cards together."

Caroline knew that she had nothing to do but to submit, and she endeavoured to do so with the best grace she could; but she had already had a sufficient specimen of what she might expect in a residence in Sackville Street, to determine, if possible, to find some other abode, let the exchange cost her what it would.

After a tedious morning spent in driving from door to door, and from shop to shop, the two ladies returned scarcely in time to dress for dinner; and as Caroline cast her eyes on the visiting cards that had been received in their absence, she saw with surprise, but not wholly without pleasure, the names of Lady Enville and Miss Pynsynt; and at the same time, written with a pencil under that of Lady Enville, "Dear Caroline, can you come to us this evening? We shall be at home, and long to see you."

After the prohibition with which Mrs. Fitzosborn had threatened her in the morning, she could not but be pleased to see that there was still a house open to her, where she might hope to see Edward without provoking the vulgar suspicion and ill bred reprehensions of her step-mother: nor was she insensible to such a proof that she was not regarded by the Envilles wholly on account of their own interest; for as she had no doubt but that her father had communicated the result of their conversation as far as related to Mr. Pynsynt's proposals, she considered the visit of Lady Enville, and the familiar and kind invitation which she had just read, as an evidence that her rejection of the son was to make no difference in her intercourse with the rest of the family. It was now, therefore, that she recollected, with increased mortification, an engagement that Mrs. Fitzosborn had made for her for a part of the evening; yet she flattered herself that she might still steal an hour for Grosvenor Square, and she was resolved to obtain her father's permission to do so. How far certain words that had fallen from Edward might conduce to that self-complacency in the mind of Caroline, which led to a kindness of feelings towards others, I will not pretend to say; but it is certain, that at this moment she was inclined to think more favourably of the whole Enville family than she had done ever since the misconduct of Charles had betrayed their general insensibility to all distinction between right and wrong: and as to any fears of being again exposed to an intimate intercourse with Edward, I doubt whether she was conscious of any such apprehension. Thus fearless of the one, and inclined to believe as much good of the other as they would allow to be possible, Caroline thought of nothing at present with so much pleasure as a visit to Grosvenor Square; and she was resolved to accomplish it if possible. She had, however, made herself too great a compliment in supposing that any part of her value with the Envilles was personal: her merit, in their eyes, was wholly dependant upon the number of her thousands; and the hope that they might still secure these thousands to themselves, was the main spring that put all their actions into motion. Mr. Fitzosborn, on leaving his daughter, had gone directly to Lord Enville's, and had there related, with what colouring he had thought expedient, Caroline's rejection of the hand of Mr. Pynsynt. But, in order to lull to sleep any suspicions that the sharp-sighted peer might entertain of his having secured his own share of the prize, while he had wholly abandoned the interest of his ally, he insinuated that this rejection need not to be

considered as absolute; that there was, in fact, more reason for Lord Enville's belief of Caroline's attachment to Charles than he had, till now, seen any ground for; and that though all thoughts of any connexion between them must now be at an end, and that it was not to be expected that the liking for one brother, could be so soon transferred to the other; yet that time and assiduity on the one side, and good sense and ambition on the other, would in all likelihood accomplish all they wished. Lord Enville, though he could not contest the solidity of a reasoning which rested upon facts that he had himself so strenuously asserted, was not without his suspicions that this was not the whole of the matter; but he did not the less readily agree with Mr. Fitzosborn, that they ought to give the most favourable opportunities to the operation of those active principles from which Mr. Fitzosborn professed to look for so happy an issue; and that, for this purpose, the two families should be more than ever together: and to keep off all competitors for Caroline's favour, the heads of each agreed to encourage the report that she was irrevocably destined for Mr. Pynsynt. It was not only with a view to conceding the whole of what had passed between himself and his daughter, that Mr. Fitzosborn thus condescended to deviate from the straight line of truth. A little reflection had convinced him, that of the seven hundred pounds a year, which his own rapacity and Caroline's generosity had alone left her possessed, it would be much more conducive to his domestic repose, and the splendour of his establishment, that the five hundred appropriated for her board should remain to that use, than that it should make any part of a matrimonial portion for Caroline; and as he was persuaded that she would never marry Mr. Pynsynt, he thought he might, by encouraging the report of her engagement to him, probably prevent her from marrying any one else; at least till after the death of his brother, when the possession of the Henhurst estate would call for other arrangements. Of his own death he did not think. A succession of expedients was the whole of his provision for the future; and as no expedient could avert the stroke of death, he thought, when he did think of it, as a misfortune to which he must submit, and as an additional reason for crowding the hours he was to live with every possible gratification. For these reasons, Caroline's desire to comply with Lady Enville's invitation found a ready concurrence from her father; and by his means all difficulties with Mrs. Fitzosborn were easily obviated; though on the brow of the latter sat a cloud that threatened a future storm. At present there was no time to enter into any discussion. The dinner hour was come; the guests arrived: every countenance was to be smoothed, and gayety and good humour were to prevail.

Caroline was known to most of the individuals who formed this dinner party. It was chiefly composed of men of fashion of the same standing in life as her father, while the proper number of females were supplied by those to whom Mrs. Fitzosborn had introduced Caroline as to her particular friends. Accustomed as Caroline had been to the well-appointed and elegant establishment of Lord Enville, she was astonished with the refinement of luxury and the wantonness of expense that she found at her father's table. Wines of the most expensive kinds were in the utmost profusion; while the mysteries of art, and the riches of nature, were exhausted to render the viands exquisite. Nor were such attentions lost upon the guests. To eat and to criticise, and to analyze what they ate, seemed with them to be the great purpose of life. Caroline had sometimes been wearied at the table of Lord Enville; but never, till this day, had she been so completely disgusted; nor ever had she before so earnestly returned, in wish, to the simple diet and unremarked repasts of her early days. In this world, however, all things have an end; and the dinner of

Mr. Fitzosborn was at length concluded. Caroline was to pass the early part of the evening in Grosvenor Square; and she was in haste to be there. She found the party at coffee; and Edward, who had dined there, made one of it. If the ebullition of his spirits seemed to have subsided, the pleasure and spirit with which he addressed her seemed the same; and the animation with which he conversed with her, and the delight which sparkled in his eyes as he looked at her, equally astonished and gratified her. She, too, became gay and happy; and while she gave way to the suggestion of hope, that she was not indifferent to the man she loved, she forgot how much the transactions of the morning had lessened her power of obliging him. By the Enville family she was received with the most flattering kindness. "Now this is so good of you!" said Lady Enville, "to come so early! and to look so pleased to return to us! I hope you have no engagement for any part of the evening? We have none that we will not joyfully break to have the pleasure of your company." "It was so provoking not to find you at home this morning!" said Miss Pynsynt. "I wanted to have seen a little of your interior; and to have heard all about Mrs. Fitzosborn," added she in a whisper. Lord Enville, taking her hand, said, "Caroline, we thought we knew your whole value when we parted with you; but a few hours' absence has taught us to appreciate it more justly: although," added he, drawing her a little aside, "you have made use of those hours rather cruelly for some of us. Pynsynt, come here," continued his lordship. "I am sure, Caroline, I may promise this poor mortified fellow that you will regard him still as a relation and friend; and I will promise for him that he shall not trouble you with high pretensions. Let him seal this compact on your fair hand." "I shall always be happy to consider Mr. Pynsynt as my relation and my friend," said Caroline, giving her hand. "And I," said Mr. Pynsynt, raising it gently to his lips, "would not forego that honour for all that the rest of your sex has to give. I have been presumptuous; I have been precipitate. Only pardon what is past, and you shall have no cause to complain for the future." How unjust have I been! thought Caroline: yet the insensibility shown to the sorrows and the indiscretions of Charles recurred to her mind; and she felt that she could not be wholly mistaken in the estimate that she had taken of the hearts and the sympathy of these kindly professing friends. She hoped that some one of the family would have mentioned this young man; but as no one did, she took an opportunity of saying to Lady Enville, "I am glad, my dear madam, that poor Charles's indiscretions are not likely to be attended with all the inconvenience that might have been feared." Lady Enville looked earnestly at her, endeavouring to ascertain the truth of what Mr. Fitzosborn had so lately, and so opportunely as it were, admitted of her attachment to Charles; of which, in fact, Lady Enville herself did not believe one word, and therefore suspected that there were some other reasons for her refusal of the elder brother, which the father did not think fit to avow. Caroline's unchanging countenance confirmed her suspicion. "Oh, my dear Caroline," returned she, "don't mention the subject! Think what a mother feels whose son is about to be banished to India! And think how much more she feels when that son deserves his banishment!" After what she had witnessed, Caroline could scarcely be the dupe of this sudden start of maternal sensibility; and, in spite of her candour, she could not help suspecting the sincerity of it. Have I no asylum, said she to herself, from the coarse selfishness of Mrs. Fitzosborn, but the polished duplicity of Lady Enville?

That part of the evening, however, that could be allotted to Grosvenor Square, was not, upon the whole, passed unpleasantly by Caroline; and she parted from her

friends with repeated assurances on all sides that they would meet frequently. The next morning brought Mr. Fitzosborn's lawyer, and the alienation of the ten thousand pounds was completed. Mr. Fitzosborn also informed her, that he had consented that the five hundred pounds which was to be paid for her board was to pass through her hands to those of Mrs. Fitzosborn; adding, "I believe that Orpheus must have had a golden lyre, or he would never have silenced this Rhodope."

A few weeks now passed in the usual routine of a London life; nor had Caroline much reason to complain of her situation. If her time were not so much at her own disposal as she could have wished it, or if it were not always spent as she approved, she considered that she was yet, by the laws of her country, an infant, and that it was one of her first duties to comply with all the wishes of a parent that did not lead to actual guilt. She sought to be good, but not to be distinguished: and though she knew that she ought to be about "the business" of her heavenly Father, she was not less aware that submission to her earthly parent made a part of that business. She had it still in her power to redeem some of those precious moments which would return no more; and she endeavoured, by a diligent cultivation of her understanding, and a strict guard over her principles, to prepare herself for that more independent and actively virtuous life to which she looked forward with hope. The diminution of her means of doing good had greatly curtailed those pursuits of benevolence which she had proposed to herself so much pleasure in the prosecution of: and indeed she found that it required the strictest economy with respect to her own expenses, if she were to preserve any part of her small income for the purposes of pure charity. So many were the demands upon her from the vanity or rapacity of others, and she found so much expected from her as to her own appearance, that it was little indeed that she could appropriate to the wants of real distress, or the gratification of those who could not spare from their necessaries any indulgence to their fancy.

Her father, in particular, a professed observer and critic of female dress, gave her much disturbance by his constant disapprobation of the simplicity and unexpensiveness of her's. She would willingly have sacrificed her taste to his; but her principles she was resolved to maintain. Neither remonstrance nor reproach could induce her to contract debts which she knew she should be unable to discharge without encroaching upon that part of her income which she had appropriated to the actual wants of others—an income that was become so limited by her largesses to her father himself. Nor were the difficulties which arose from these sources the only cause that Caroline had to lament the loss of so large a part of her property. They were accompanied with many mortifications from other quarters. She began to be conscious that she was considered as niggardly and mean-spirited by many of her companions. The profusion and self-indulgence which alone, in the mind of those triflers, made up the idea of generosity, were not found in Caroline. The expensive baubles which those who had not the fourth part of her supposed income, considered as indispensable to their appearance, made no part of Caroline's. She declined all expensive amusements, and turned a deaf ear to those tales of *elegant woe*, and *heart-rending distress*, with which certain fine ladies attack the sympathy of others, who they intend shall take upon themselves the whole expense of that benevolence which they know so well how to express. Caroline would see with her own eyes, and determine with her own judgment: and knowing that she could no longer be extravagant even in good deeds, she left those distresses which engaged the attention of every body, to be relieved by the aggregate of the small sums collected by the fashionable mode of

subscription from those who were indifferent to what purpose the money was applied, provided only that they complimented a high titled beggar by letting their names appear amongst the list of subscribers to her favourite charity. Her benefactions were secret, and well chosen; and she found means, even in that almost indivisible mass of vice and misery that London presents, to distinguish between the suffering of misfortune and the complainings of depravity. She endeavoured to content herself rather with the practice, than the reputation of liberality. But it was not always that her habit of calling “things by right names,” or even the pleasure that she derived from the restored comfort and gratitude of those whom she had relieved, could so wholly conquer self-love, as effectually to repress a painful sensation when she saw that her refusal to expend in some trifle the guinea that was appropriated to the mitigation of the evils of poverty, drew on her the imputation of sordidness.

Caroline had, however, been well-grounded in the Christian religion; and was aware that humility and self-abasement were the foundation stones on which it rested; and therefore if the first sigh arose from mortified pride, the second sprang from self-condemnation, and was followed by a resolution that her “conscience and her bible” should alone be the regulators of her conduct.

She continued to be extremely well received by the Enviles; and Mr. Pynsynt had assumed so much deference in his manner towards her, and so much appearance of attachment, that had Caroline had as much vanity as falls to the share of most human creatures, she would certainly have concluded that he was in love. But in fact Caroline had but a mean opinion of her own attractions. For the first fifteen years of her life she had never heard a single word of her person, or of the art of adorning it. Her virtues had been sedulously cultivated: but, as humility had been represented as the prime of them, she had been oftener led to consider whether she was humble, than whether she was good: and as the course of a right education, even in the guidance of the best disposition, will rather be the correction of faults, and a guard against errors, than a laudatory on progressive improvement, Caroline could recollect more instances of reproof, or caution, than of reward, or praise. The always delighted, though regulated indulgence of Mrs. Pynsynt when Caroline gave cause for indulgence, had convinced her of the unfeigned love of her aunt, and had occasioned her to carry every deprivation or reprehension which she had suffered, to the account of her own faults: and when, from the stable form of excellence which the character of Caroline had taken in the last years of Mrs. Pynsynt’s life, she had the satisfaction of scarcely ever finding a word or action produce a reproof, she became not the less humble, but the more grateful. Nor had the flatteries which she had met with since her residence in London been of a kind likely to counteract the influence of her earlier education. Of those who praised her most she had by no means a high opinion; and the evident motive by which both Mr. Pynsynt and Charles had been actuated in their attentions to her, was any thing rather than flattering to her self-love. The approbation and gratitude of Edward, whom she considered as the prototype of what a man should be, she believed herself to possess; yet could not her mind fasten upon one circumstance from which she could derive a hope that his regard for her exceeded the bounds of a tender friendship. Since her removal into Sackville Street she had seen little of him: nor had the vivacity of his regard towards her extended beyond the single day in which she had first remarked it; he had fallen back into his ever apparent; it is true, but calm and cousin-like, approbation: and though their intimacy

seemed always to be progressive, there was no sign that it would ever ripen into an affection more tender than esteem.

I may be approved, said Caroline; but I am not made to charm! The fortune-hunter and the friend can approach me, without either the one or the other forgetting his calculation or his prudence.

Whoever had heard this conclusion would have supposed that Caroline had never looked into a glass. They would have supposed that she could never have seen that brilliant complexion where the "purest red and white strove for mastery;" that hair which shaded, in beautiful abundance, a forehead, whereon sat enthroned benevolent intelligence; those eyes, from whence sparkled sense and spirit, or from whence beamed the gentler rays of affection and compassion: they would have supposed that she had never contemplated a person where symmetry and grace were united, or observed the limbs which might have served as a model for the statuary. Yet Caroline had seen, had contemplated, had observed all this; and the conclusion still was, "I am not made to charm."

She had, however, yet been scarcely seen; and the report so confidently propagated, that she was destined first for Charles, and then for Mr. Pynsynt, had occasioned her to be seen without hope. Of coquetry she had not a single spice in her disposition; and the little interest that she took in the frivolous conversation of those with whom she usually associated, prevented her from ever appearing the first figure in the group. But as she mixed in more general society, as she appeared more frequently in public, the admiration which followed her, gave her ample reason to retract the humble opinion that she had formed of herself, and would have justified her in the opposite conclusion, that "She was made to charm." If the discovery gave her pleasure, and it cannot be supposed that it did not give her pleasure, it was, notwithstanding, more than counterbalanced by the conviction, that every day seemed to grow stronger, that the only eye in which she would most have desired to have appeared lovely, seemed to regard her only as a kind relation and agreeable friend. Something of the same kind of moderation seemed, indeed, to pervade much of the admiration which now drew after her many followers wherever she appeared. No one seemed to have formed any design of making a particular interest in her heart. She might have wondered at this, if she had thought about it: but the truth was, that without adverting to the cause of so extraordinary an indifference, she enjoyed the calm that it produced, with scarcely a consciousness of what was passing in her heart: she rejoiced to escape all solicitations on the subject of marriage; and, without acknowledging to herself the period to which she looked forward, she nourished a secret hope, that the apparent calmness of Edward's affection was less a proof of the indifference of his heart, than the result of the disinterestedness of his mind, and the nicety of his honour. Whatever might be the cause of the distance which Edward maintained in all his intercourse with his lovely cousin, it certainly had nothing in common with that which deprived her of the more particular homage of many of those who gazed upon her with admiration. He was not the dupe of the art of the Enville family: and though he suffered the report of Caroline's engagement with Mr. Pynsynt to prevail, unchecked by any contradiction from him, he knew its falsity; while, to the apprehension of every common observer, nothing could appear more certain than the connexion that was reported to be between them. Caroline was never seen in public, unaccompanied by some of the Envilles; Mr. Pynsynt was the constant attendant upon

her steps, and ever by her side; nor did she appear to repulse his assiduity, or to withdraw from his attentions. As the exclusive right to entertain her which Mr. Pynsynt seemed to assume, interfered with no plan of her own, it either passed with her unnoticed, or disregarded; and feeling, that after the explicit rejection of him as a husband, and the stipulated terms of their continued intercourse, that her purposes could not be misunderstood by him, she was indifferent how they were regarded by the world: and thus she contributed alike to the furtherance of Lord Enville's and her father's designs, without being aware of either.

But if the fear of a refusal were sufficient to keep at a distance those who merely admired her beauty, or would have been glad to have possessed themselves of her fortune, it was not powerful enough to restrain the ardours of a real passion; and such was the emotion that Caroline had excited in the heart of Mr. Beaumont. He had met her at dinner; he had sat by her at the opera; he had danced with her at a ball; and he was perfectly persuaded that she was the most lovely and excellent of her sex. He was told of her engagement to Mr. Pynsynt. In consequence, he had observed their intercourse closely; and he was convinced, that though there might be an engagement, there was no attachment. Mr. Beaumont compared himself with Mr. Pynsynt, and he did not do himself the injustice to fear the event of a competition with him for the favour of Caroline.

Mr. Beaumont joined to an engaging person the manners of a gentleman and man of sense. In every stage of life he had added something to his reputation. The distinguished scholar at Eton had been the first amongst his companions at college. To all the improvement that the usual course of education could give him, he had added a personal knowledge of all that was worthy of observation in his own country, and of all that attracted curiosity in such other parts of the world as were not shut from the British traveller by the strenuous arm of ruthless war. He had returned home to take a part in the legislature of his country; and he already stood so high in the opinion of his fellow citizens for every public and private virtue, that virtuous mothers, and ambitious fathers, desired no better for their sons, than that they should resemble Mr. Beaumont. Descended from an old and respectable family, he was possessed of a large estate, unencumbered by debt, and adorned by an ancient mansion, where magnificence, beauty, and comfort, were united. It was surely no unpardonable vanity in Mr. Beaumont to aspire to the hand of Caroline. As there was nothing less in her thoughts than the making of conquests, so no one could be duller in discovering those she did make. Mr. Beaumont had appeared wherever Caroline was to be seen, and had talked almost exclusively to her for nearly a fortnight, before she began to see any thing more than usual in his attentions. In his conversation and manners, indeed, there was little in common with those who had hitherto distinguished her; and both were so much to her taste, that she was always pleased with "the lucky chance," as she thought it, that placed Mr. Beaumont by her side. On these occasions she thought more than ever of Edward, and regretted that he was not with her to share the pleasure which she experienced. She learnt that he was but slightly acquainted with Mr. Beaumont; and the places and hours where she met the latter, were not those where Edward was often seen. She had sometimes mentioned to Edward the satisfaction that she took in her new acquaintance, and was surprised that though he allowed the merit that she celebrated, he seemed to shrink from the subject, and became dejected and absent as she pursued it. "You are very ungrateful," said she one day to him,

on observing the coldness and pain with which he seemed to listen to her praises of Mr. Beaumont: "you will not say a word in favour of a man who is always commending you, and expressing the greatest desire to know you more intimately; and I am sure, if you knew him, it would be impossible that you should not love him." "We do not easily love the thing we fear," said Edward, and turned hastily from her. "Fear!" repeated Caroline to herself. "Is it possible? Can Edward fear Mr. Beaumont?" and at the same time a ray of hope shot across her mind, which made her more than amends for what she had the instant before felt on the coldness and narrowness which she thought she had discovered in the character of Edward. Her eyes were now opened as to the nature of Mr. Beaumont's attentions: and no sooner was she alive to his designs, than the dread lest they should meet with the approbation of her father, made her resolve to show him unequivocally that he had no chance of obtaining her favour. Her manners towards him became so entirely changed, that from this day he could find no opportunity of explicitly declaring his passion. As he thought Caroline incapable of caprice, he could impute this conduct only to the advice of her friends, who put her upon this mode of procedure the sooner to bring the matter to an issue. He did not, therefore, despair but that a direct proposal to her father might restore him to Caroline's good graces, and himself to happiness. Having in vain, for more than a week, endeavoured to meet her in their usual haunts, and finding that she appeared nowhere, he waited on Mr. Fitzosborn, and made him such proposals as he had no reason to suppose that any father would reject. Mr. Fitzosborn expressed in the politest terms his sense of the honour done both to himself and his daughter: he declared that there was not a man in England that he should have preferred to Mr. Beaumont as a son-in-law, and lamented that so public and so well known an engagement as his daughter's with Mr. Pynsynt should not have saved him the unmerited mortification of a refusal. Mr. Beaumont, thunderstruck, and for a moment incredulous, was, however, obliged to master his surprise, and to increase his faith as well as he could, for Mr. Fitzosborn had nothing more to add upon a point that would admit of no discussion or appeal. Mr. Beaumont could only retire; which he did very respectfully, and with evident signs of that sorrow which filled his heart: a sorrow not wholly selfish; for, as it was impossible for him to believe that such a woman as Caroline could be attached to Mr. Pynsynt, he concluded that she was to be the victim of some family arrangement, where her happiness, and perhaps her integrity, were alike to be sacrificed.

Experience had now convinced Caroline that the small income which she had reserved at her own disposal was very inadequate to the constant calls that were made upon her generosity, either from her own feelings, or the self-interestedness of others; and that the duty which she owed to appearance, would not suffer her to make any further sacrifice from her personal accommodation than she had already done. The savings which had arisen during her minority amounted to something more than two thousand pounds. This sum she had, in her own mind, appropriated to the purchase of a library; and it lay in her banker's hands for this purpose. On the alienation of the ten thousand pounds, she did not wholly give up the hopes that she might still be able to allow herself this gratification. She flattered herself, that by a strict economy in the expenditure of her income, she might make it equal to all her own wants, and all the reasonable claims of others: but she soon found this not to be the case; and that while she was the reputed possessor of fifteen hundred pounds a year, she would not be suffered to live either in

peace or reputation on the expenditure of two hundred. She therefore resolved to sacrifice her wish for a library to the increase of her income; and being informed about this time, by her good and faithful trustee, Mr. Somers, that he could provide her with an unexceptionable security for the money, she gave orders accordingly, and the business was completed.

Although Caroline had received with the most perfect deference the advice of her father, whenever he had bestowed it upon her, yet she did not consider it as her duty to seek it in pecuniary concerns. The above transaction had, therefore, been begun, carried on, and concluded, without his concurrence, or even the slightest suspicion on his part. He had, however, frequently heard her mention her intention of laying out the money in books, and it was for this reason that it had not been brought into the calculation of her income, when he had appropriated so large a part of it to himself. He believed it to be still undisposed of; and one morning, as they were sitting together at breakfast, he said carelessly, "Caroline, could you lend me that two thousand pounds for a few months, which is in Hoare's hands? You have at present not much leisure for reading; and when you want it you shall have it again." "I have lent it upon mortgage," replied Caroline. "Without my knowledge!" said Mr. Fitzosborn, angrily. "The truth is," said Caroline, "I found that I could not afford to lay out so large a sum in books, and I thought it better at present to add it to my income." "Upon my word, Caroline," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "you will be ruined if you suffer every body to pillage you so. I am sure you do not lay out your money on yourself: twenty pounds a year would dress you as you dress, so that how you can spend two hundred, without suffering yourself to be robbed, I cannot guess." "I am very sorry, sir," said Caroline, "that you disapprove of what I do." "I disapprove of this independent spirit, child," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, "which makes you act without advice. What can you know of business? or indeed of the proper expenditure of any income?" "I readily acknowledge my ignorance," replied Caroline; "but experience will correct it, I hope." "You cannot have a better corrective than the present," replied her father, "since you are likely to be the greatest sufferer by what you have done. It was for your advantage that I wished just now to have the command of two thousand pounds. There is a speculation, which I am invited to join, and which will certainly return fourfold within the next twelve months, which you and I might have shared the profit of, if I had had any ready money; but nothing is to be done without money." "If," said Caroline, smiling, "the inconvenience extends no farther than to the loss of what we have neither of us possessed, it is not much to be lamented." "Such philosophy," said Mr. Fitzosborn, sarcastically, "accords ill with the extravagant spirit which is always calling for increase of income." "I hope I am not extravagant," said Caroline, mildly. "Yes you are," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, "and perhaps more culpably so than those whose personal expenses are much greater. How many hungry mouths and shivering bodies are fed and warmed by what you moderate people call luxury; while your charities encourage idleness, hypocrisy, and all manner of meannesses!" "I am quite unequal," returned Caroline, "to the discussing the comparative advantages of benevolence and luxury; and indeed I do not mean either to condemn the one, or to lay claim to the other: all I aim at, is to expend what I have, most to the advantage and pleasure of others and myself; and if I am not so happy as to meet your approbation in what I do, I hope you will rather condemn my taste than my principles." "Well," replied Mr. Fitzosborn, "we will not discuss this matter now. The mischief is, that by your having taken on yourself to act

without consulting me, you have led me into a scrape. Depending upon the two thousand pounds, which I thought I could have at an hour's notice, I have already entered into the engagement which I mentioned. My word is past, I cannot go back." Caroline was silent. After a short pause: "And what is still worse," resumed Mr. Fitzosborn, "the money must be paid immediately, or my honour and credit are blasted." "I am very sorry," said Caroline. "Yes, I dare say you are very sorry," interrupted Mr. Fitzosborn: "and let this be a lesson to you for the future, never to do any thing in money matters without consulting me." "So advantageous an adventure," said Caroline, "would probably be easily disposed of." "You talk of what you do not know," said Mr. Fitzosborn, passionately; "the money must be had, and I must furnish it. I must take the inconvenience on myself. You must lend me the money, and I must abate so much as the interest of it comes to from what I was to have received for your board. And indeed," continued he, assuming a more conciliatory tone, "perhaps after all, this will be the best arrangement. The money will be paid again in twelve months, you will have suffered no inconvenience, and I shall have gained a very considerable sum at the cost of one hundred pounds."

Already Caroline thought that she saw all Mrs. Fitzosborn's predictions of her ruin by the hand of her father accomplished. She trembled, she hesitated; she found it impossible to utter a word. There were no terms in which she could refuse to grant a favour to a parent, that she would not have refused to an indifferent person of whose integrity she had entertained no doubt: yet her understanding forbade her to comply.

"I will give you my bond, or any security that your advisers may instruct you to require," said Mr. Fitzosborn, haughtily.

Caroline felt intolerable anguish, and even shame, thus to have betrayed her suspicions of a parent.

"Oh sir," cried she, "don't talk so. I have no advisers—I ask no security—All—every thing—Your word—"

She scarcely knew what she said, and still less what she meant to say.

"I see," said Mr. Fitzosborn with a kind of dignified concern, "the unjust prejudices that have been instilled into your mind: I have always seen them, and my heart has been deeply wounded. Oh, Caroline, you cannot guess what it is for a parent to know himself distrusted by his child; to feel that one for whom he would sacrifice his life, does not give him credit for common honesty." "Oh my father," said Caroline, falling at his feet, "do not speak so cruelly, do not think so harshly of me!—I—myself—all that I have is yours. Do with me what you will—I am nothing—I have nothing—dispose of all. I will be the child of your bounty; but do not, do not kill me with such cruel words!" "Caroline, my love," said Mr. Fitzosborn, raising her up, and pressing her to his bosom; "there is no cause for all this agitation: the whole matter is not worth it. Forgive me if I have read your reluctance amiss. I did not mean to accuse you. You have always been a good child; but I know how unkindly your aunt thought of me; I feared that she might have communicated the unworthy feelings to you. Forgive the alarm of parental sensibility. I perfectly acquit you. I am sure your reason and your affections must equally persuade you, that you will receive no injury from me. Have I not always dealt openly with you? When I wished for the ten thousand pounds, which I really thought my due, I told you so in express terms. I come now to borrow two thousand pounds, as one friend would ask such a favour of another, and I offer you any security which you think proper: indeed I

will not accept the money without giving such security. What is there in all this that ought to agitate you? It is merely a matter of business. Compose yourself."

Caroline endeavoured to do so. The evil, whatever was the extent, she saw was inevitable; and to meet inevitable evils with calmness she knew to be her duty.

"What is it, sir," said she, "that I must do?" "We must sell some of your stock," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "and you must tell me what security I must give you." "I know nothing of these sort of transactions," said Caroline: "your lawyer, sir—" "I will speak to him," interrupted Mr. Fitzosborn: "he shall prepare the papers, and you will have nothing to do but to sign them."

Caroline was about to have proposed that she should have spoken to the lawyer herself; but, so interrupted, she knew not how to object to her father's arrangement. Her reluctance, her doubts, her wish to be her own agent, all sprang from one feeling—a doubt of the integrity of her father: and this doubt, though she could not but entertain, she could not bear to act upon. "The business will soon be despatched," said Mr. Fitzosborn, rising, as if to withdraw; "and a good business it will be for us all. I am resolved next winter to have a larger house; and the increase of income which I shall derive from the matter in hand, will enable me to give you and Mrs. Fitzosborn this gratification without any inconvenience." So saying, he withdrew, leaving Caroline to regulate her thoughts as well as she could.

"My poor father certainly deceives himself," said she; "but I cannot think that he means to deceive me. And if I do lose this money; what then? It is but two thousand pounds. I have still enough for myself." To the thought that followed, "Edward does not wish to share it with me," she gave no utterance; but soon lost, in that very thought, all sense of the sacrifice that she had been making.

The next morning, Mr. Fitzosborn, accompanied by his lawyer, joined Caroline at the breakfast-table; the necessary papers were produced; Caroline received directions what she was to do; she signed her name, and endeavoured as much as possible to drive from her mind the remembrance of the whole transaction.

In the evening she met Mr. Beaumont, and was not displeased to find that a grave and distant bow was all the notice that he took of her. She was glad to be spared a more explicit declaration of her sentiments, and was gratified with thinking that she had not exposed him, by a more equivocal behaviour, to the mortification of a direct refusal. Edward was standing near her at this moment, and asked eagerly if she and Mr. Beaumont had quarrelled? "No indeed!" said she; "why should you think so?" "Because he avoids you; and who would do so, who was assured of being received with favour?" "Why should he be assured of being received with favour?" asked Caroline. "Have you not declared that you think him the most agreeable and estimable man you know?" said Edward. "I am not aware that I have," replied Caroline. "*One* of the most, is, I am sure, quite as far as ever I went." "And far enough too, my dear cousin, to encourage even a modest man to hope for a more exclusive preference." "Do you not think," said Caroline, smiling, "that Mr. Beaumont knows his own designs and inclinations better than either you or I? and had we not better leave him to them, without troubling ourselves about the matter?" "Oh, I do assure you," returned Edward, with vivacity, "my concern is not about Mr. Beaumont's inclinations."

Caroline blushed; and then sighed at the thought of the depredation that had been made upon her fortune.

Three weeks had now elapsed since Mr. Fitzosborn's rejection of Mr. Beaumont's proposals for Caroline, when one morning early she received the following billet:

"Return in the carriage which I have sent to fetch you, or send back the ring."

Amidst the wishes for a change of residence that her father's pillaging spirit had given rise to in Caroline, she had not unfrequently cast an eye towards Henhurst; but the entire oblivion into which she seemed to have fallen with the master of it, had for some time past made her cease to look towards him with the hope of support or shelter. Nothing could be more unlooked for than a summons to attend upon him; but nothing could have been more welcome, had it been conveyed in terms less peremptory and ungracious. Caroline was astonished and alarmed. It was plain that she had offended; but it was beyond the power of her imagination to conceive how. She would immediately have communicated with her father, but he was from home. Her decision, however, admitted of no delay. The servant who brought the letter, sent to inquire at what hour she would have the carriage; adding, that he had orders to be at Henhurst that evening. Caroline could not doubt what side of the alternative her father would have chosen; she therefore did not hesitate to follow her own wishes; and she sent word, that she would be ready to depart in an hour. She immediately prepared to do so. Mrs. Fitzosborn was still in bed; but the intelligence of Caroline's intended departure soon reached her; and before Caroline could finish a note that she was writing, to inform her of the necessity she was under to leave town, she sent to desire to see her.

"Well, my dear Miss Fitzosborn," said she, the moment she saw her, "this is nice! Now will all be as we wish it. To be sure the old man is dying, and he wants to see you, and give you all his fine things before he dies. I am sure you are a lucky person with aunts and uncles: and now you see how right we all were when we told you that you would be his heiress. Well, sure when you have Henhurst you will think yourself rich enough to dress like other people. I do hope that Mrs. Prudence will then be turned out of doors." "I should hope not, madam," returned Caroline; "and I have the pleasure of hearing that my uncle was never in better health." "Then what can he want you for? Can he be so barbarous, if he is well, to take you away just now? Why the town was never so full or so gay the whole season. I verily think we have engagements to four balls." "I believe we have to six," said Caroline, coolly; "but perhaps I may come in for some of them, for I have no reason to suppose that my stay at Henhurst will be long." "What strange whims old people have!" said Mrs. Fitzosborn; "but to be sure, when they are rich they must have their own way. Well, dear Miss Fitzosborn, good bye! take care of yourself; make the best use of your time; and, if you can, put in a good word for Mr. Fitzosborn."

Caroline, thus carefully instructed, took leave of her kind step-mother, whose caresses always rose or fell according as she thought her more or less likely to be the heiress of Henhurst, the thermometer of self-love being the only standard, in the mind of Mrs. Fitzosborn, by which she measured her benevolence to her fellow-creatures.

Caroline informed her father in a few words, that the earnest desire of her uncle to see her had determined her to comply with his request to return in the carriage he had sent: but as she could not explain the meaning of the enigmatical words of the note, she took no notice of them. She gave the same information, as to her departure from London, to Lady Enville: she hesitated whether she should make a separate communication to Edward: but as she had no opinion to ask, nor any confidence to make, she was afraid of

appearing to give more consequence to her absence than she might feel it to deserve: she therefore laid down the already taken up pen, and said pensively to herself, perhaps I shall return before Edward will miss me.

Before the appointed hour, Mr. Fitzosborn's carriage came to the door; it had post horses, and was attended by three servants on horseback, one of whom was out of livery: he informed Caroline that his master's coach-horses would meet her within two stages of Henhurst, and that Mr. Fitzosborn had particularly desired that she would travel at her ease, and by no means fatigue herself. The parade of the equipage Caroline could account for from the high notions which she had observed, while at Henhurst, her uncle to entertain of what belonged to the dignity of an ancient family; but the attention to her personal convenience she could derive only from kindness, and from thence she drew a hope that he was not very angry with her; and it was evident what side of the option which he had given her he both wished and expected her to take. At the worst, she knew that she had nothing to fear from caprice: if she could convince his understanding that she had neither done nor meditated ill, she was sure of a kind acquittal. The danger lay in the prepossessions which he might have received; and she knew that what he had once believed true, it would be difficult to convince him was false. She endeavoured, however, to present herself before him with the modest confidence which ought to accompany conscious innocence.

The moment she appeared, "I am very glad to see you," said her uncle, with emphasis. "I would not for half my estate that you should have sent me back my ring." "It is here," said Caroline, drawing it from her finger, and presenting it to him. "I am not worthy to wear it till I am as clear in your apprehension from the intention of offending you, as I am in fact." "Offending me, child!" said Mr. Fitzosborn sternly, and taking, with evident marks of disappointment, the offered ring: "that is not the question; you may offend me, and yet not have broken the condition on which the ring was to be yours. 'When you are tired of being good, send me back the ring;' were my words when I gave it you. Are you tired of being good?" "Alas! sir," said Caroline, with a sigh; "I dare not couple such a word with my best performances: but indeed I love virtue, and would not knowingly deviate from her paths." "Then answer me, and answer me with that strictness of truth, without which there is no virtue, How came you to be so depraved as to refuse all that can dignify human nature in the person of Mr. Beaumont; and consent to ally yourself with all that can disgrace it, in the compound of profligacy and insignificance, Mr. Pynsynt?" "Ally myself with Mr. Pynsynt!" said Caroline: "never, never did I entertain the thought!" "And you have not rejected the hand of Mr. Beaumont?" said her uncle, his brow becoming more and more contracted as he spoke. "I might reply with the most perfect truth that I have not," said Caroline; "for on my honour, sir, it never was offered me: but it is my duty to conceal nothing from so kind a guardian of my rectitude. I would rather answer to your meaning than your words; and I confess, that such were the distinctions that I received from Mr. Beaumont, that I had no doubt what his intentions were; and knowing that I could not meet them as he would wish, I endeavoured, by the coldness of my manner, to divert him from his design, and save him from the mortification of a direct refusal." "And your engagement with Mr. Pynsynt was the reason why you could not meet the intentions of Mr. Beaumont as he wished?" "Oh my dear uncle," said Caroline, "do not so wound me! I have said that I never entertained a thought of uniting myself to Mr. Pynsynt; how then can I have any engagement with

him?" "Beware, Caroline, what you are about," said Mr. Fitzosborn: "all that glow of offended ingenuousness will not bear you out against facts. I have proofs that Mr. Beaumont has received an actual refusal of his offers from you, and that the reason alleged for such a refusal, was your engagement with Mr. Pynsynt." "Does Mr. Beaumont say," returned Caroline, trembling, and turning pale, "that the refusal, and the reason for it, were given by me?" "No," replied Mr. Fitzosborn; "but they were given by one, who, unfortunately, has authority to give them, and who could not have done so without authority from you: a concurrence proved by your acknowledgment that you do not wish to be the wife of Mr. Beaumont." Caroline, who could alone recognise her father in the person who had authority to act for her, saw at once both the motive for his rejection of Mr. Beaumont, and his assertion that she was engaged to Mr. Pynsynt; and, confounded with guilt that was not her own, she stood as a criminal before her uncle, unable to utter a word. "Oh girl, girl," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "how soon have the wicked ones defaced that fair image of its Creator! You were formed to love virtue, to recommend it, to adorn it: how will you answer for such a dereliction of the purposes of your existence?" "My dearest uncle," cried Caroline, falling in an agony at his feet, "by what strength of assertion shall I induce you to believe what I have asserted as truth? How shall I persuade you that I never had any engagement with Mr. Pynsynt? that I was ignorant, till this hour, that Mr. Beaumont had offered me his hand?" "If *you* are true," said Mr. Fitzosborn, raising her as he spoke, "your father is a rascal!" Caroline covered her face with her hands, and bowed her head to the earth. "It is so! it is so!" cried Mr. Fitzosborn eagerly; "and why should I be surprised? The man who could sell his birthright, may not scruple to vitiate his child! To secure you a coronet he would hazard your soul. Look up child; compose yourself: you shall return no more to those mansions of wickedness; here shall be your asylum:—here you may tread the path of virtue not only with steadiness, but with safety." "And you will indeed, my dear uncle," said Caroline, delightedly, "let me live with you? Will you be my safeguard from temptation, which I might not of myself be always able to resist?" "I will do all this for you, child," returned Mr. Fitzosborn: "so perhaps I may save from everlasting misery an immortal soul. But remember that you bound your expectation to such guardianship: you will not be my heir." "Could you see my heart," said Caroline, "you would see that caution was unnecessary. I am not, indeed I am not mercenary." "I do believe it," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "but many circumstances may perhaps occur that might insensibly lead to this idea: you will infallibly be treated by all who approach you as the heiress of this place: you will be flattered, you will be solicited. Naturally, perhaps, the idea might arise that there was some ground for all this: bear it ever in your mind that there is none. I have not, however, yet done with my questions. From whence could arise sufficient foundation on which your father durst presume to build so gross a falsehood as your engagement with Mr. Pynsynt, if there be in fact no connexion between you?" "Such a connexion was proposed," returned Caroline, "but it was peremptorily and promptly refused by me: on the score of relationship, however, the intercourse of the families continued as it was. Mr. Pynsynt ever claimed, on the same ground, the right of conversing with me in private, and of showing me every common civility in public. As he never attempted to renew his application for any greater distinction, I had no reason for refusing him this; and being perfectly indifferent as to the conclusion the world might draw from seeing him still upon the terms of friendship with me, I may have been too inattentive to the reports that you

seem to say were so general: but, upon my word, this is all I know of the matter.” “Had you no fear that such reports would keep at a distance men whom you would have liked better?” said Mr. Fitzosborn, smiling. “No indeed!” returned Caroline, a little piqued, but blushing. “I presume you intend to marry?” said her uncle. “I cannot be said to intend *not* to marry.” said Caroline; “but it is an event that must depend upon many circumstances which I can neither control nor foresee.” “Look you, Caroline,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “I am no marriage broker. Your marriage, as a matter of negociation, I neither have, nor will have, any thing to do with. With your moral qualities I have much to do; and of course with all from which they may hope improvement, or dread deterioration. As in the state of maidenhood, half the virtues of the sex are not brought into action, so are there many deviations from the right path, which lie more open to the young unmarried woman than to her whose mind must be supposed to be occupied with the most sacred duties, and heart filled with the best affections: besides, the will is apt to become stubborn, the mind presumptuous, when submission and deference are not at times enacted, and thus the woman degenerates. Now, Caroline, I must not have you degenerate; and therefore I wish you to marry. You have acquitted yourself of the coarse turpitude that would have attached to your accepting Mr. Pynsynt as a husband, and have given a repose to my mind which it has not known night or day since I first entertained a contrary belief: nor do I say that your rejection of Mr. Beaumont must spring from unworthy motives: but the being insensible to the qualities of such a man somewhat impeaches your taste, and may awaken suspicion, that in your choice of a husband you would be more swayed by an ill-directed fancy, than by the virtues which ought to engage your heart. These, I know, are delicate subjects; and such as perhaps I do not understand; or at least such as you will think I do not understand; and we are strangers to one another yet. But suffer me to ask one question—Pray, what was it that you did not like in Mr. Beaumont?”

This was a hard push upon poor Caroline, who looked more like a fool than ever she did in her life before; and she stammered and coloured while she said, “Not like!—Indeed sir, I think Mr. Beaumont is—is—is very much to be liked.” Mr. Fitzosborn looked earnestly at her. “I am no inquisitor, Caroline,” said he; “I mean not to have recourse to racks and tortures to extort confession. I have said that we are yet strangers. At present, perhaps, I have not a right to expect that you should deal explicitly with me on such subjects; but remember that I shall take my estimate of your character from your choice of a companion for life. If your rejection of Mr. Beaumont arises from your preference to a worthless coxcomb, you become, in my eyes, but like the rest of your frivolous sex; and I shall leave you to ruin yourself your own way, while I strive to forget the never-before known interest which you have awakened in my breast.” “Be not afraid, my dearest uncle,” said Caroline: “take my word, my honour, that no worthless coxcomb has any interest in my heart. No,” added she, blushing at once at her own warmth and the cause from whence it arose, “the sun will sooner cease to shine than that I shall love a worthless coxcomb!” “Here then, I restore your ring,” said Mr. Fitzosborn: “wear it till I challenge the failure of your oath.” “Then,” said Caroline, “it will rest on this finger while I breathe, and descend with me into the tomb as a testimony that your Caroline did not disgrace you!”

The uncle and the niece now proceeded to arrange every thing necessary for Caroline’s taking up her abode at Henhurst. They were equally desirous that she should return no more to town. Mr. Fitzosborn would as soon have exposed her person to the

breath of the most contagious pestilence, as he would again have hazarded her morals in the society of London: and Caroline did not less dread to see her father, whose image filled her mind with a mingled feeling of horror, contempt, affection, and pity. She knew he would consider her residence at Henhurst as a guarantee that she was one day to be the mistress of it: an event, the advantages of which she was now too well aware he by no means intended should be confined to herself, and which therefore she did not doubt to be the great object of his wishes. At Henhurst, also, she would be removed from the danger of any matrimonial application, which she now had had so pregnant a proof that he dreaded her yielding to: and here, too, the small income to which he had reduced her, would be not only adequate to her real wants; for on that point she could not but suppose him indifferent; but sufficient for that appearance by which he wished to repress all curiosity or conjecture on her mode of expenditure, which might lead to the discovery of how little she had to spend. Nor did she suppose that he would be wholly insensible to the advantages arising from the four hundred pounds per annum, which would, she had no doubt, still find its way into Mrs. Fitzosborn's hands; for as she should make no demand for it, in consequence of the occasion being past for which it was given, so she felt pretty sure no offer of relinquishing it would be made. If Caroline had any regrets on quitting the focus of every delight that luxurious pleasure or the refinement of elegance can give, it was not that she was no more to listen to the harp and the viol; no more to feast her eye with wonders of splendour and of art. To all this she was at the present time as insensible as old Barzillai to the singing men and the singing women of Jerusalem: but, in quitting London, she quitted Edward—Edward, who, in spite of all her efforts to the contrary, in spite of her conviction that he had no corresponding sentiments to her, still kept his place in her heart; in whose conversation she found a charm unknown elsewhere; and in whose friendship and good sense she imagined that she had at once a support and a safeguard. This Edward she was to be separated from; she knew not for how long, nor how entirely. He did not visit at Henhurst. She was ignorant in what degree of credit his character was held by Mr. Fitzosborn. It was probable that the disapprobation which he manifested to the rest of his family extended to him; and that having once set him afloat in the world, he meant to leave him to his own devices. She was sensible that she ought not to seek an epistolary intercourse even with so near a relation of a different sex; or even to accept it, if sought by Edward. Thus she felt that all correspondence was cut off between them; and the sadness that followed this conviction proved but too plainly, that an asylum from vice and depredation was not without a powerful competitor in her heart. It was determined that Caroline should send her maid to town for the purpose of packing up her wardrobe, and of superintending the removal of all that belonged to her. She was also to be the bearer of such letters as Caroline thought proper to write. The mode of announcing to her father the change in her abode, Mr. Fitzosborn left wholly to herself: he would not condescend to account to him for his conduct; nor did he ever pronounce his name without evident marks of reprobation and disgust. The high sense that he professed to entertain of every moral obligation, would not allow him to say that Caroline owed no deference to such a parent; but the indifference which he betrayed as to how she performed this duty, discovered that it might have been violated without drawing upon her any reprehension from him. Caroline had, however, in the correctness of her principles and the softness of her heart, a surer guide to all that was right. She wrote respectfully and affectionately to her father; simply

stating, that she had found her uncle so unwilling to part with her, that she had consented to take up her residence with him, and that she had the more readily done this from the persuasion that her remaining at Henhurst would be acceptable to her father. She begged that he would frequently write to her, and assured him of her duty and affection. To Mrs. Fitzosborn she wrote with all civility, and to Lady Enville with kindness and freedom. Again she wished to write to Edward; nor was she at a loss for some reasons for so doing, that appeared to be sufficiently plausible: but the depressing thought that her letter would be read, though not with indifference, yet without any of the feeling that she could have wished to excite, withheld her hand, and she suffered her messenger to depart without any apparent remembrance of the one for whose sake alone she regretted that she knew not when she was again to revisit London.

Caroline had rightly calculated on the effect that her remaining at Henhurst would have upon her father. It relieved him from certain incivilities of his conscience, which he had not before been wholly able to repress, and from all fears of any discovery of the depredations that he had committed on the property of Caroline. The possession of Henhurst, which he now considered as secured to her beyond a doubt, would more than indemnify her for what he had robbed her of; and her seclusion, during the life of her uncle, would effectually screen from the eye of curiosity the proportion that her expenses bore to her supposed income. Thus "guilty without fear," Mr. Fitzosborn hushed his disquietudes to rest, and, unchecked, held on the career of the man of fashion and the man of pleasure. Caroline's notification of her change of residence was received in Grosvenor Square with very different sensations. It was indeed considered by the Envilles, equally with her father, as a proof that she was to be the heiress of Henhurst; but they plainly saw that the heiress of Henhurst would not now be the wife of Mr. Pynsynt. The bubble that had so long pleased their fancy was now broke; and they saw that they must look elsewhere for the thousands that were so much wanted to prop the falling fortunes of the house of Enville.

"She has then slipt through our fingers," said Lord Enville. "Let her go!" cried Mr. Pynsynt, with a tone of affected contempt, and real mortification: "I need no longer weigh my words before I utter them." While Lady Enville, with true female pertinacity to a favourite scheme, said: "Don't speak so, Pynsynt; the old man cannot live for ever; and while he lives she is safer from any attack inimical to our interest, than if exposed to the solicitations of all the money-seekers in town: and when he dies she will accept the first hand that is offered to lead her from her prison. I assure you I think our game is better than ever. We shall have no more such frights as Mr. Beaumont gave us." "I am sure," said Miss Pynsynt, "if I were my brother I would not care about the matter. There are as rich people as Caroline, surely, and who would not cost Pynsynt half the trouble to gain that she has done: and if he had married her, I am sure we should have paid dearly for it; for she would have made us all methodists, or charitably consigned us to the regions below because we were not so." "Charlotte," said Lady Enville, "restrain your vivacity: these are not subjects to be jested with. Caroline, it is true, is a little too strict; but that is not the worst fault a man can have in a wife." "Pray, mamma," said the youngest daughter, "what is being a little too strict? for you know we are told that we ought always to do our best." "Oh yes, to be sure," returned Lady Enville; "but there is no occasion to be always thinking of right and wrong, and making ourselves tiresome with our scruples. I am sure it is not good-humoured nor well bred to make people uncomfortable with

themselves. The best way is to do as others do, and to intend no harm. The intention is every thing.”

With this little exposition of morals the family dialogue ended; and each member of it went their several ways, to practise the doctrine which was so clearly and ably laid down.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Printed by J. Moyes, Greville Street, London.

Copyright Chawton House Library

THINGS
BY THEIR
RIGHT NAMES;
A NOVEL,
IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY A PERSON WITHOUT A NAME.

Let us “encompass virtue with associations more than moral; associations whose steady light may survive the waving and meterous gleams of sentimental illusion.”—ANONYMOUS.

—“Servant of God, well done! Well hast thou fought;
And for the test’mony of truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence; this was all thy care,
To stand approv’d in sight of God, though worlds
Judg’d thee perverse.”—— MILTON.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR GEORGE ROBINSON, 25, PATERNOSTER-ROW.
by T. Davison, Whitefriars,

1812.

THINGS

BY THEIR

RIGHT NAMES.

WHILE such were the different feelings of the Envilles and Mr. Fitzosborn, Edward received the information of Caroline's detention at Henhurst with great and genuine joy; a joy that sparkled in his eyes, and spread itself over his whole demeanour, but which he did not suffer to rise to his tongue. From whatever cause the pleasure sprung, it was such as he did not care to avow, while it was at the same time so powerful as wholly to outweigh any regrets which it may naturally be supposed he must have felt for the loss of her society; and while he was condoled with on every side on so decided an overthrow of all his hopes, he revelled in the most delightful anticipations of the future. Unrestrained by any of those feelings which had withheld the pen of Caroline, Edward joined to the large packet of letters which her servant conveyed to Henhurst the following epistle.

"I congratulate you, my dear cousin, from the bottom of my heart, on the change in your abode, but I congratulate my uncle still more; the exercise of your virtues will be the reward of his: the scenes in which you have lately been engaged are going to fade from your memory, but whatever else you forget, do not forget

EDWARD."

Caroline read this billet over and over: she was wishing to find in it something more than the effusion of cousinly affection, but she could make no such discovery. She read it till she began to think that it was scarcely so much. Not one expression of regret for her absence—not one lamentation that they were to meet no more—not the shadow of an attempt to engage her in any intercourse. "He is more interested for my uncle than for me," thought Caroline: "he is willing that my virtues should make any body happy rather than himself; be it so: in the oblivion that he predicts I must endeavour to include the exception for which he stipulates, an exception that seems rather dictated by vanity than affection."

Caroline was now established at Henhurst, and it appeared the delight of her uncle to honour her, and to make all those who approached her to do the same; but, except servants and dependants, the number of these were few. All female visitors had long disappeared from Henhurst; and although Mr. Fitzosborn seemed to lament the want of society in which Caroline was left, the dread of breaking in upon long-continued habits prevailed over his desire to procure her the gratification of company. He had besides a rooted belief, that in the conversation of more than half the human species there was contamination. Caroline was in his eye a gem of the purest lustre, and to guard her from every breath that could sully her brightness became his most assiduous care. "Shall I have snatched her from the contagion of London," said he to himself, "and shall I expose her

to the corruption of the country? Better that she should live alone than be the worse for the company she keeps; her pleasures will be few, but her virtues may be many. She shall be my almoner,—she shall be my umpire,—she shall learn to refer her actions to principles,—she will exercise her patience in being my companion, and her good humour in being so cheerfully. But Caroline must marry; and whom will she see in my house that she ought to marry? It is not, however, necessary that she should marry yet, and a few years may send me out of the world and her into it; yes, and better fitted to fulfil her part there than if her earlier years had been past in the frivolous amusements which make in general the business of her sex.

The conclusion was, that Caroline must live *tête-à-tête* with her uncle at Henhurst, and content herself with the duties of life rather than the enjoyment of its pleasures.

Happily for Caroline, these terms were not so much in opposition in her nomenclature as in that of most others. With her they generally meant one and the same thing; and when any distinction arose, she was mistress of a kind of moral alchymy which knew well how to transmute the lead to gold; nor was it long before she found that one of her first duties in her new situation was indeed her highest gratification. To amuse and gratify her uncle she had proposed as her first temporal aim, and in pursuing it she became herself so much amused and gratified, that time with her had never past more quickly than at Henhurst. Of the eccentricities, the humours, the misanthropy of her uncle she had heard; for by his eccentricities, his humours, and his misanthropy, he was known to the world. But his talents, his virtues, and his benevolence, had never reached her ears; for these were exerted alone for the amusement of himself, or the advantage of those who received his bounty and flourished under his protection, as too many receive the bounty and flourish under the protection of Providence without ever adverting to the cause of their well-doing, or even speaking of it with gratitude. Naturally gifted with a strong understanding, which had been sedulously cultivated in his youth, and duly exercised during the progress of his life, the conversation of Mr. Fitzosborn was a rich mine, from whence Caroline drew the most valuable ore. The seclusion from the world in which he had almost wholly lived, if it had contracted his knowledge in some respects, had given an originality of character to all that he did know, which more than compensated for his ignorance in those particulars that had not fallen under his observation. His agricultural and gardening pursuits had made him familiarly conversant with the wonders of creation, and as he conversed with Caroline on the physiology of a tulip root, or the provisions of Providence in the mechanism of a flower, there was opened to her a source of research at once new and enchanting. If Caroline were delighted with the information that her uncle could communicate, he was no less charmed with the docility and acuteness of Caroline: nor had she less reason to be pleased with the moral character of Mr. Fitzosborn than with his intellectual acquirements. Living in a constant exercise of benevolence, administering strict justice, and keeping a watchful eye over the motive for his actions, he approached perhaps as nearly to perfection as human nature admits of. That he had his prejudices, his prepossessions, and his frailties, who that ever attended to the operations of his own mind can doubt? Some of these prejudices, prepossessions, and frailties, had been heightened by the solitary life which he had led, and by the ill conduct and ingratitude of some of his nearest connections, and still more by the dormant state in which, with little exception, the affections of his heart had remained, even to the hour in which he first beheld Caroline. The sight of her had given the Promethean touch, which

had kindled into life all the qualities of his soul. Her form and countenance had realized his idea of a celestial being; the humility of her mind, the sweetness of her temper, her moderation and disinterestedness, had presented an image of human excellence that he had never before believed possible. From her first visit at Henhurst it had only been by a strong effort of self-command that he had conquered the earnest desire that he had felt to appropriate her wholly to himself, and to declare her to the world the heiress of all his possessions; but if he had yielded the latter desire to what he believed he owed himself, he had equally sacrificed the former to a sense of the superior claims that others had upon her, and to the consideration how little attraction there could be to a young woman just entering into life in the society of an old man just going out of it. He had, however, to the best of his power kept a strict eye over her during her residence with Lord Enville and her father, and this power was much greater than it was supposed to be by those who knew nothing of Mr. Fitzosborn except his oddities. Although he apparently had lived so long apart from the world, he was not wholly without connections amongst those who still moved within its circles. Amongst these connections was an old and intimate acquaintance who continued to correspond regularly with him, and who furnished him with information on such subjects as interested his curiosity. He had selected him for this office partly on account of his good qualities, but not entirely without some reference to others of a more questionable tendency. It was the intention of Mr. Fitzosborn to bequeath his property to such of his relations as he believed would most worthily enjoy it: but as he was aware that his idea of worth did not exactly square with the one which in general was entertained, he felt a difficulty in attaining a true knowledge of the characters with which he wished to become acquainted. He thought he had to guard equally against that affected tolerance which offers an excuse for every fault and every folly, and that splenetic humour which can see nothing good. He was alike to beware of the good humour that would stoop to falsehood to secure an heirship to a favourite, and that vanity which aspires to the praise of singular sagacity by discerning faults invisible to every other eye. He also knew that half the splendid qualities which dazzle the world classed with him as vices, and that the virtues which he most prized were too often considered as shades in the character. He therefore wished his informant to be one who would rather represent things as they actually appeared to him, even if his opinion of their moral quality differed from his own, than one whose tenderer feelings might lead him, from a just sense of the turpitude of the action, to soften the features of it. It was for this reason that, with reference to the conduct of those to whom he was looking as his possible heirs, he had preferred the intelligence of Mr. Beauchamp to that of any other person. He knew that while no consideration would prevail with him to falsify his information, that his notions of right and wrong were in some cases so distinct from his own, that he would probably obtain knowledge of the very failing which he wished most to keep clear of at the very time that his friend intended to recommend the claimant to his favour, and that from his very censures he might discover the excellence he sought for.

The circumstance of Caroline having taken up her abode with the Envilles had drawn that family within the circle of his scrutiny; and he was very accurately acquainted by his faithful informer of the character of each individual that composed it. Mr. Pynsynt had been too justly delineated to allow for a moment of his thinking with patience of his becoming the husband of Caroline, but he was slow to believe that she could entertain such a design; and it was not until he learnt with certainty the refusal given by her father

to Mr. Beaumont, and the reason assigned for this refusal, that he could be induced to credit a report so much to her disadvantage. Mr. Beaumont was the son of Mr. Fitzosborn's earliest friend, the person whom, till he had known Caroline, he had best loved upon earth; and he had followed him with his eye from his well-reported school-days to his now full meridian of well-deserved reputation. Mr. Beaumont was in habits of intimacy with Mr. Fitzosborn's friend, and had detailed to him his passion for Caroline, and its issue. No sooner was Mr. Fitzosborn informed of these particulars, which left him no option in his belief of what he regarded as the depravity of Caroline, than his first impulse was to send for the ring without any alternative. But against so rigorous a measure his heart rebelled: it suggested a thousand excuses for Caroline; and finally it decided, as an act of justice, to give her an opportunity of vindicating herself. The result has been seen; and from the moment that he knew her innocent, and believed her injured, he had given way without restraint to his predilection in her favour; nor had he hesitated a moment to withdraw her wholly from the influence of a parent whom he considered as one of the most degraded of the human kind.

The uncle and the niece, equally delighted with each other, often found the days too short for the variety of occupation which each hour brought with it. The domestic economy of Henhurst was conducted with the most exact regularity: the meals were served as the clock struck the hour at which they were appointed to appear: the table was spread with a profusion which, if, according to the modern idea, it excluded elegance, fully answered the ancient notion of magnificence. The cookery was equally apart from the refinement of luxury and the roughness of rusticity. All was excellent in its kind, but all was substantial; and having been but little diminished by the regulated and moderate appetites of Mr. Fitzosborn and Caroline, furnished many wholesome and strength-bestowing meals for the poor. Mr. Fitzosborn was an early riser, and he was delighted to find that Caroline was so too: he considered early hours as a guarantee for half a score of the moral virtues. As the clock struck eight the whole family assembled in the chapel to morning service. Breakfast was served at nine, dinner at four, coffee at seven, and a slight supper at nine; at ten the family again met at prayers, and at eleven all was silence and repose.

Amongst Mr. Fitzosborn's peculiarities was the aversion which he entertained against a minister of the church residing in his house. A sincere lover of religion, he was an abhorrer of all that he esteemed priestcraft; of all profanation, he held it to be the worst. He knew the influence that religious persons have over the human mind, and was too tenacious of his own authority to trust such a power in the hands of any subordinate member of his family. "In a protestant country," would he say, "with the Bible in their hand, and a weekly exposition of the duties that it inculcates, no one can wander from the right way through ignorance: there are few men (would he add) whose conduct will bear the scrutiny of an every day's observation. The frailties, or even the awkwardnesses (supposing him free from vice) of a domestic chaplain, may do more injury to the cause of religion than can be counterbalanced by his precepts and reproof.—Besides, how difficult is it for such an one to maintain his dignity without pride, or his humility without meanness!—Nor dare I trust myself. I should choose to be treated with respect and deference: and can I tell that I should be *apt* to mark the line of separation between respect and servility? Should I not too easily forget the superiority that the ministration of the holy offices, and perhaps the virtues of the man should give, in the inferiority of the

station of him who exercised them?—I will have no domestic chaplain; I will myself be the instructor of my family, and the judge of their moral conduct; there shall be no intermediate person between them and me.”

In consequence of such opinions and such conclusions, the service both of the morning and the evening had been read by Mr. Fitzosborn himself. But when he had become acquainted with the mellifluous tones of Caroline, and had heard the propriety and effect with which she read aloud, he delegated to her a great part of this duty, only reserving to himself such portions of it where exposition and reproof had a greater share than devotion and intreaty. Nor indeed could there be a more interesting or affecting sight than to behold the venerable old man, with Caroline, arrayed in all the charms of youth and beauty, by his side, by turns explaining the duties of the Christian religion, and persuading to the performance of them by “the terrors of the Lord,” or hymning the praises of their Creator, extolling his goodness to his creatures, and joining in devout supplication to that Being without whose permission not “a sparrow falls to the ground.” Caroline thought that she had never before felt the delights of religion; the hour that was spent in the chapel gave an elevation to her spirit, and her feeling that accompanied her through the day; and on retiring at night from the same sacred spot to her own apartment, she felt the world, its cares, its chagrins, its pleasures, and its temptations, to fade from her mind, and God and Heaven alone to possess her thoughts.

Although if Mr. Fitzosborn had alone consulted his own inclination he would scarcely have had Caroline a moment from his sight, yet he was so afraid of importuning her that he restricted his gratification to certain hours, making it a principle that she had a given portion of every day wholly at her own disposal; but as she was herself never so happy as when by the side of her uncle, she contended that she had a right to bestow upon him as much of this time as she pleased, in addition to that which he claimed as his due: a right which Mr. Fitzosborn was very ready to allow.

By the means of the old housekeeper, Caroline was soon introduced to all the poor in the neighbourhood; these became the objects of her daily care, as they were already of her uncle’s munificence. To him she would repeat all that occurred in these visits; and would often lead him from cottage to cottage, as they drove out together in the little park chair, now enlarged to admit of two persons. When the weather was fine, gardening and the farm fully occupied them; while the days that they were obliged to pass in the house flew swiftly away in various reading, in some music, and a few games of chess or backgammon. Sometimes, though very rarely, a neighbouring gentleman would make his appearance at dinner; but the visit was always short, and seemed in no way to contribute to the pleasures of Mr. Fitzosborn; nor had Caroline, at the end of three months residence at Henhurst become known beyond such accidental visits to any individual except the persons of whom the household was composed. At the parish church, where she regularly attended twice every Sunday with her uncle, she saw all the neighbouring families, with whom Mr. Fitzosborn exchanged all common civilities, but he did not introduce her to any one; and she saw that she was regarded both with wonder and pity. Perhaps envy also had its place in the breast of some, for no one now doubted but that the heir of Henhurst was declared, and that this heir was Caroline.

A knowledge of her uncle’s real character had proved to her how ill-founded was the notion that he could be imposed upon by the artifices of any one, or that he could be the dupe of his servants. She saw with what more than common acuteness he looked

through the action to the motive; and she beheld him so jealous of his domestic authority, that the slightest intimation of his will was not to be disregarded with impunity by any individual of which his numerous family was composed, from the maître d'hôtel to the meanest scullion. Partial as she could not but see that he was to all she said or did, she was aware that his favour hung entirely on his opinion of her merit; and that if she were to lose the hold which this opinion gave her over him, he could "whisk her off, and let her down the wind a prey to fortune."—While she respected him the more, she did not love him the less for this firmness of character; but it must be acknowledged that it made her sometimes turn her eye towards her ring with a feeling of anxiety, and reiterate her vows that it should never depart from her finger.

While Caroline continued thus happy and thus watchful over herself at Henhurst, she had little communication with her connections in town. From her father she heard seldom: his letters contained nothing beyond the news of the day, or an exhortation that she would take care to secure the favours of her uncle. Lady Enville had written only once, and Edward never. Of this young man Mr. Fitzosborn seldom spoke. Sometimes, when Caroline tried to introduce his name with advantage, he would say, "I hear nothing amiss of him—he will probably make a good lawyer—he promises well—we shall see"—and such like phrases; but he never mentioned him of his own accord, or seemed to remember that there existed such persons as his mother and sisters. On their claims upon him he had made up his mind, and believed that there was nothing more to be done. As Caroline had the satisfaction of knowing that their wants had been supplied by another hand, she thought it wise not to recall them to her uncle's notice; but she omitted no opportunity of placing the virtues of Edward before his eyes, till she was effectually silenced; when upon her having been unusually eloquent upon the subject, she saw her uncle fix his eye upon her with a penetrating look, and heard him say as he turned from her, "it is not the judgment of a young lady of nineteen that will decide with me the merit of a young man!"

The autumn was now far advanced, and the period for the half-yearly payment to Mr. Edward Fitzosborn being come, Caroline wrote to her banker for the necessary means with which to make the remittance. What was her surprise and horror on being told, in answer to her letter, that the whole of her property was sold out of the stocks more than two months before; and that fifty pounds were the whole of what remained due to her in her banker's hands.

As Caroline believed that the paper which she had signed before she left town had not given her father a power over her property beyond the amount of two thousand pounds, she endeavoured, on a little recollection, to persuade herself that there was some mistake in the matter, which her father would clear up. To him she wrote for information on the subject, and strove to await it with composure, and without suspicion. It was couched in the following terms.

"DEAR CAROLINE,

"The multiplicity of my engagements has prevented my communicating to you a circumstance that I am ready to acknowledge you ought to have been acquainted with earlier, and which if you had known would have prevented your application to Hoare—an application which I am sorry has been made. On entering farther into the affair which I mentioned to you before you left town, I found that the advantage would be more than

doubled in proportion to the money advanced: I therefore did not scruple to make use of the power that you had given me over the whole of your property in the stocks, and to act as I saw best for your interest and my own. I am hitherto well satisfied with what I have done, though at present no return can be expected. On your removal to Henhurst I was persuaded that you would have no use for any part of your income; and that if you had, the interest of the two thousand pounds which you had so prudently secured on mortgage, and the rent of your Somersetshire box, would supply all deficiencies in your uncle's bounty. Being assured, as I say, that you could not yourself want money, and really wanting it myself extremely, I am to account to you for the whole sum of—we will say for the sake of round numbers twenty thousand pounds, which I do as under. Instead of the two thousand pounds which we talked of when together, you must place ten thousand pounds under the head of the speculation I spoke of. As the interest of this sum made no part of your income, the present alienation of it is merely an inconvenience to me; but as it was necessary that the defalcation which such an alienation made in my income should in some way be supplied, I have appropriated the other ten thousand pounds to setting free some parts of my property, of which the income was swallowed up by interest money, and I thus remain your debtor for the whole. I shall be extremely sorry if any miscalculation of mine, as to the generosity of my brother, occasions you any personal difficulty; but this I can hardly suppose: and as to the three hundred pounds per annum which you had in so extraordinary a manner appropriated to the supplying the wants of relations whom you have never seen, I am persuaded that both your good sense (nobody has more, Caroline) and your affections will shew you that it answers the purpose of your benevolence much better by being applied to the relief of a parent's necessities. Indeed the claim that the one has upon you is so legitimate, and the other so fanciful, that they will not admit of a comparison. If the interest of the two thousand pounds, or the rent of your Somersetshire house, is not at present due, I shall be happy to furnish you with fifty pounds for your present occasions, and it may be carried to account.

"I hope this explanation will prove satisfactory; and I beg that you will not suffer any inconvenience that I can relieve,

"Being, dear Caroline, very sincerely,

"Your affectionate father,

"AUGUSTUS FITZOSBORN.

"P.S. On recollection, I believe there is still a small balance in your favour in Hoare's hands, which I conclude will make every thing easy."

Although Caroline had but too much reason to know that extravagance is the parent of avarice, she had no adequate idea till this moment of the magnitude that she could communicate to her offspring.

She remained silent and thunderstruck at this proof, that less than the whole of her property could not satisfy the rapacity of her father; and her own ruin affected her less than did his depravity. She could scarcely believe that he was himself aware of the extent of his cupidity and injustice. As she read his letter, it seemed more the simple, though not very intelligible, statement of an account than the notification of a robbery. She thought it impossible that he could have mistaken the limit of the power which she had given him over her property; yet how could she entertain the alternative? The conclusion which her uncle had so promptly drawn, on the proof of a much slighter guilt, revolted her whole

soul. "It cannot be!" said she. "If my father, unhappily, have not that strictness of principle which religion alone can give, he is at least a gentleman and a man of honour!—Would he have allowed me to sign a paper, the conditions of which he knew were different from those to which I had given my consent? Would he do this for the express purpose of robbing me? and would he in consequence actually rob me? Oh, no!—there must be some error, some misconception.—No gentleman, no man of honour——" She stopt; for she felt that the words she was uttering had no meaning when unsupported by religion. "Yet," thought she again, "how unconscious does he appear of an intention to injure me! Can the words which he uses be meant to designate the actions which he confesses? It is impossible!" Alas, Caroline knew not how completely it was possible to confound all notions of the nature of virtue and of vice by the ingenious science of calling things by wrong names.

So wholly was the mind of Caroline occupied by what she felt to be the villany of her father, though her heart refused to acknowledge what her reason could not disavow, that she was some time before she adverted to the impossibility there now was of her keeping her engagements with Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn: when it forced itself upon her notice she felt a pang that was scarcely exceeded by what she suffered on her father's account. She was aware that Mrs. Fitzosborn, depending upon the promised supply, would probably have contracted debts which she would now have no means to defray. She thought she saw her in a gaol, to which she had herself conducted her; and the agony of her feeling exceeded all expression. To whom could she apply for assistance or advice? To open her heart to her uncle was impossible—she could have died rather than so to have exposed a parent: nor was she sure that even at that expense she could have relieved the Fitzosborns. They had lost nothing of what her uncle had thought sufficient for their support; and her officious interference to add to their comforts was more likely to draw down his displeasure upon herself, than the disappointment of her benevolent purposes to induce him farther to assist them. Yet something must be done, and done immediately. The idea that Mrs. Fitzosborn was now looking to every post for means to purchase provisions for the day, and that no such means would ever arrive, was insupportable to her. What should she do?—Her thoughts turned towards Edward. He was already privy to her transactions with Mrs. Fitzosborn; and were she not now to communicate to him the change that had taken place, she was aware that he would ultimately become acquainted with it from his mother. She felt an invincible repugnance to addressing so mortifying a confession to a stranger as that which she had to make. She was sensible that she had a claim to the indulgence and favourable thoughts of Edward, even when appearances were so much against her. He too could best excuse her to Mrs. Fitzosborn; to him therefore she resolved to write, and she did so as follows.

"May I, without putting your friendship and your candour to too severe a test, request you to believe that it is not by my fault that I am no longer able to fulfil the promise that I made to your mother?—nor do I know that I shall ever again be able. It is useless to speak of sorrow or regret. All that I can do to obviate the inconvenience and disappointment so unexpectedly incurred I will do. I inclose a draft on my banker for fifty pounds, and a bank note for twenty; which sums I will be much obliged to you to transmit to Mrs. Fitzosborn, with an assurance, and I make it confidently, because the fulfilling of it depends upon myself alone, that she shall have fifty pounds more in two months time. I

hope these sums will be sufficient to prevent Mrs. Fitzosborn from suffering any immediate inconvenience from my having falsified my word. I am sure she has too much Christian charity to believe that I do so willingly. For the future I can only promise an annuity of fifty pounds; but I do promise this for as long as the time, whatever it may be, that I shall remain under the roof of my uncle; and in every circumstance, to the extent of my power, the supply of Mrs. Fitzosborn's wants shall have the precedence of my own. I know you will think all this very strange; but do not too curiously inquire why such things are. If you can, let me still retain your good opinion, and, in all events,

Believe me very sincerely yours,
"CAROLINE FITZOSBORN."

Caroline felt somewhat relieved when she had thus provided as far as she could against the evils which, in her apprehension, threatened Mrs. Fitzosborn. The task of writing to her father still remained. How was she to perform it? Accusation and reproach were alike unseemly and unavailing; but neither could she counterfeit a satisfaction which she was so far from feeling, or sanction even by her silence a statement which she knew to be false. After many attempts, she wrote as follows:

"You must pardon me, sir, if I allow myself to express some surprise at the contents of your letter. It is inexplicable to me how the mistake could have arisen which you inform me placed the whole of my property in the stocks at your disposal. That such could not be my intention must be evident from the circumstance, not unknown to you, sir, of my having already alienated a part of the income arising from thence. I apprehend, that whether or no I could have disposed of it better is not the question: my word had been given, and I am confident that I should not knowingly have recalled it. A misapprehension then there must have been somewhere, and I cannot wholly conceal my chagrin at the consequences that have ensued. The most grievous to me of these consequences is the incapacity to which I am now reduced of fulfilling an engagement into which I entered voluntarily, and the violation of which must involve in accumulated distress those whom I wished to assist. If it were possible for you, sir, to enter into my feelings on this point, perhaps you would find means to enable me to redeem my pledge. I should acknowledge your doing so as the greatest of obligations. For the supply of my own personal wants I have no request to make: I shall still be able to make my reduced income equal to every wish that centers in self. I owe every thing to my uncle for his kindness, but nothing for his bounty. He believes me rich, and he knows the proper use of money too well to lavish it on one whom he has reason to suppose has already a superfluity. I shall esteem it as a favour if you will give me an early answer to this letter; and I take the liberty earnestly to entreat that nothing short of an absolute impossibility may prevent you complying with my request in favour of Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn. Forgive me for observing that it is the only compensation that I ask for the all, of which I have been despoiled.

"I am, sir, your obedient daughter,
"CAROLINE FITZOSBORN."

Caroline was by no means satisfied with her letter; she thought that it said at once too much and too little: but as she found that no alteration which she could make would remedy this fault, she suffered it to go as it was. As she had little hope either from her father's justice or his feelings, her next care was to provide for the fifty pounds that she had promised Mrs. Fitzosborn, as in part fulfilling the original engagement, and as the reduced assistance that she could now furnish. The twenty pounds which she had inclosed in her letter to Edward had left her almost penniless; and a half year's interest upon the two thousand pounds was not due of two months to come. There were, however, sixty pounds arising from the rent of the house in the hands of her kind trustee, and which she had left there for the purposes of benevolence; nor could she withdraw it without acknowledging, by a change in its destination, a want of money, which she knew, in the eyes of this well-judging man, would be considered, in her supposed circumstances, as reprehensible. Here was another sacrifice of character which she had to make, but between the really doing well and the appearing to do so Caroline could not long hesitate. She had but too frequently and recently felt all the consequences of "calling things by wrong names" to fall into the same error herself. She therefore simply stated, that an unlooked-for circumstance having occasioned her to want more money than she could otherwise command, she requested that he would transmit her the sixty pounds then in his possession. This was the remainder of one hundred pounds, the annual rent of her house; fifty of this sum she henceforth destined yearly to the use of Mrs. Fitzosborn, and the remainder, with the interest of two thousand pounds, was the whole to which her income was now reduced. Caroline knew that she could draw her expenses into a very small compass if it were not for the wages of her servants. Since her residence at Henhurst her footman was in fact nowise necessary to her; but she durst not discharge him without explaining to her uncle her motive for doing so, both as she knew that he considered such an appendage in her situation as a proper decorum, and as it might appear, if she parted with the man, that she threw herself wholly on the services of her uncle's domestics. She had, therefore, no option; all the inconvenience must be taken; and she could only hope to meet the consequent expense by a still farther abridgement of all personal indulgences. The ample largesses of Mr. Fitzosborn made it easy for her to appear to fulfil all the duties of liberality to the poor, with little cost to herself; and as she was saved the pain of seeing distress which she could not relieve, she flattered herself that she should, in time, subdue the lesser pain of not being herself the actual reliever.

Mr. Fitzosborn's absence from home during the whole of one morning had allowed Caroline time to struggle with the first shock that her father's letter had occasioned; to write all the letters necessary in consequence, to form her own arrangement; and, in some degree, to recover her usual evenness of mind and cheerfulness: yet the agitation of the preceding hours had left its traces on her countenance, and when she met her uncle at dinner he immediately inquired if she were ill.

"I am quite well," returned Caroline, "and when I have said that, I know you will be kind enough, my dear sir, to ask me no more questions."

"Are you sure, Caroline," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "that it is wise to have any secrets from me?"

"I am sure," said Caroline, "it is very painful, but I believe it to be necessary."

“Beware what you do,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “where there is mystery there is seldom innocence.”

“Yet indeed! and indeed, I am not guilty,” said Caroline.

“So I believe,” returned her uncle; “but remember, that the first step costs all, and that first step is but too often concealment.”

Caroline returned no answer, but felt an added weight upon her spirits. The evening passed with less satisfaction both to the uncle and niece than any that they had yet spent together; and when Caroline came to perform her part in the devotions of the night, her voice was so tremulous as to render her accents scarcely articulate. Her tones grew stronger as she proceeded; and as she concluded the hour of prayer with a hymn of praise for past mercies, and expressive of confidence in future support, her voice became angelic, and her countenance glowed with the effulgence of religious hope and joy. Mr. Fitzosborn looked on her with surprise, and as he had her good night pressed her tenderly to his heart, and cried, “Thou art a most extraordinary creature, child! Thou durst not surely appeal to thy Creator for the furtherance of designs that thou dares not confide to thy sinful fellow-mortal!”

“Alas, my uncle,” said Caroline, “I have no designs but humbly to do my duty, nor a wish but that I may not be misunderstood!”

Caroline had so far mastered her feelings and regulated her mind in the course of a sleepless night, as to be able to appear at breakfast with her usual alacrity and cheerfulness; but there still hung a shade upon Mr. Fitzosborn’s brow. Still the tenderness with which he addressed Caroline, the gentleness with which he delivered his opinions, seemed to speak rather compassion than disapprobation, or doubt. Caroline having taken her part was herself again, and in a day or two there were no traces of that disturbance which had a little ruffled the serenity of Henhurst.

As Caroline felt that she had nothing to hope for from her father, so she attended his answer to her letter without impatience, and experienced no disappointment when successive post days brought her nothing from him. A fortnight had elapsed before she received a line: at length she one morning found amongst her letters the following one from her father:—

“I have really been so hurried, my dear Caroline, for some time past, that I have not had a moment at command, otherwise I should have answered your letter sooner. You take the whole matter in a wrong light; and, I see, do not understand a tittle of business: but all goes on well, and a little time will convince you that I have acted wisely and kindly. I am very glad to find that you have no personal wants; I should even be glad to gratify you in all your benevolent whims could it be, but at present it is quite out of the question. I am sorry for Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn; but in such times as these every body must come in for their share of inconvenience. However, I have sent down some gowns for the girls, and some little adornments for herself. I hope these things will be liked; they were well chosen, and *a les connoisseuse* assure me, of the newest fashion. I know this will give you pleasure, which was my chief motive for this little attention, being very sincerely,

“My dear Caroline,

“Your affectionate father,

“AUGUSTUS FITZOSBORN.”

Caroline sighed as she read this letter, and endeavoured to escape from the conclusions that her understanding, in spite of her heart, drew from it. But if thus mortifying had been the result of her communication with her father, very different had been the issue of her application to Edward. She had scarcely calculated upon an answer from him when his letter arrived. These were the contents.

“I know not, my dear cousin, in what words to express the emotions which your letter has occasioned; or rather, I know not how to conceal what I must not speak. Believe you! believe that it is not your fault that you do not keep your promise to my mother! And is this so wonderful a test of my friendship and my candour? Oh! where is the power able to persuade me of the falsehood of *that* which you assert for truth?—of that which I must have believed against the testimony of the whole world, except yourself?—Do not, you say, inquire too anxiously why such things are. Impossible, Caroline, impossible; I must inquire, I must know. Forgive me, oh, my cousin!—I would not be presumptuous—I would not be oppressive; but can I suffer you to shut up in your own pure breast this disgraceful secret? for disgrace attaches somewhere, and leaves you to struggle alone with all the heart-rending reflections that it must give rise to. By our relationship—by the good opinion which I have sometimes flattered myself you entertain of me—by each, and all of them, I conjure you to honour me with your confidence. Let not an unavailing tenderness for another deprive me of a privilege of which I am not wholly unworthy, and which is dearer to my heart than all that all the congregated monarchs upon earth could bestow. My suspicions have already but one object, your silence will but the more confirm them; the mischief appears to be extensive. You, I see, believe it to be hopeless, but this may not be the case; remedies, or at least mitigations, may be found: you must not, indeed you must not, take this burthen upon yourself without one effort to lighten it. Do not be afraid, my dearest cousin, to open the whole bad story to me. I will not stir a finger without your consent; I will counsel no harsh measures; I will have every consideration that your delicacy, might I not in this instance say *filial* delicacy? can require. But I must not suffer you to be pillaged unresistingly; I must not suffer the best of human intellects to be the dupe of the best of human hearts. Write to me, my dearest cousin; remember that family honour is with you and me the same, and be not afraid to tell me all that has been done, and we will then see what can be done. I have obeyed your direction with respect to my mother, because I know that here can lie no appeal from your will; and because I know how much more keenly you feel the deprivations of others than you do your own. For the same reason I will mention that a little successful industry has been able to supply the efforts of baffled benevolence; so do not fear that my mother will any ways suffer from your disappointment. Perhaps I ought to entreat your forgiveness for the liberty I have taken, and the warmth with which I have written; and if either should offend you I shall be most sincerely grieved, yet should I scarcely even then know how to repent, having yielded to an impulse which I should have found it so difficult to have resisted. My dearest cousin, farewell! Angels, only more pure and more spiritualized than yourself, protect and bless you!”

The tumult of mind into which Caroline was thrown by the perusal of this letter at once astonished and alarmed her: she felt how little she was advanced in the task she had

imposed upon herself of confining her regards for Edward within the bounds of friendship. As she read his animated praise, his ardent desire to serve her, it seemed that such delight was happily purchased by the loss of the whole of her fortune, and she forgot for a moment that her father's integrity and her own property had been wrecked together. Returning from the delirium of bliss that the first perusal of Edward's letter had occasioned, she again read it, and found ground for more sober feelings.

"Compassion," said she; "his own high sense of rectitude; his impatience under the feeling of injuries done to others; may they not fully account for all that I have been so ready to impute to another cause! He speaks to me as a friend, as an adviser, as a relation. 'We feel for the same family honour,' says he; would he have ventured to have spoken so peremptorily had he been a lover?"

She blushed as the last thought passed through her mind. "Foolish Caroline!" said she, "wouldest thou separate the character of a lover from that of a friend?—and is it not the part of a friend to forget forms in substances?"

"What is it," added she, "that I wish? Would I indeed desire that the happiness of Edward should depend upon an union which my poverty has now put out of all question?" The reflections that followed this thought soon stilled the effervescence of joy, and gave Caroline sufficient calmness to reply to Edward's letter with all the decorum that she could desire. Her decorum, however, was untinged by subterfuge, unchilled by affected indifference: it was the decorum of a delicate mind, not the disguise of spider-like coquetry. Thus she wrote.

"I hope I am not so undistinguishing as to mistake the warmth of a generous friendship for the impertinence of curiosity. I sincerely believe that it is for my sake alone that you wish thus to pry into what I would willingly conceal. Concealment, however, as far as the purpose for which I can alone wish it, seems with you to be impossible: as much so as, I am persuaded, my confidence would be unavailing to the end which you so kindly seek. Your sagacity is not mistaken as to the source from whence my difficulties spring; and having said this, I am sure you will spare me the pain of saying more. Your advice, could I have had it, might have prevented the evil; it is beyond your power to remedy it.—I will have no umpire between a parent and myself. All that I can now wish is that the transaction may remain a secret from the whole world; and I will so far tax your friendship as to require from you the most sacred silence, not only as to any supposed fact, but as to every circumstance that can point suspicion to the truth. I am now sheltered from all observation; I shall soon be, if I am not already, forgotten by what we choose to call *'the world:'* it will not, therefore, be difficult to draw an impenetrable veil over what has passed. In my situation you know that I can have no personal wants; and the change that has taken place in my circumstances would not cost me a sigh if I had not so intemperately, as I am now inclined to think, involved poor Mrs. Fitzosborn in my disappointment. Lest your conjectures should go beyond the truth, I will tell you that I still retain possession of two thousand pounds and my house in Somersetshire; so that I am, as to myself, still sufficiently affluent, still able, while I continue with my uncle, to do the little that I have promised for your mother. May the industry, which I pray to God to bless, supply my deficiencies! Earnestly as I wish to retain the good opinion of Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn, I must require that your eagerness to acquit me of blame does not lead you to exculpate me at the expense of another. I will trust my reputation to that

Being who has enabled me, as I humbly hope, to do my duty; and do not you, by your zeal in my favour, betray that you think my confidence ill founded. For the rest, it is but as if it had never been: let us think of it no more; but let us think a great deal of that which will never pass away—of that which will even outlive the affectionate and grateful regard with which I am sincerely yours,

C.F.”

To this letter Caroline received the following answer.

“I acquiesce, my dear, my wonderful cousin. It is all that I can, all that I dare trust myself to say; were I to say more I might perhaps offend you, or wrong others.”

Caroline, with a new spring of joy in her heart, which she knew not how wholly to account for to herself, now fully resumed her former occupations; and pursued them with a spirit and satisfaction that delighted her uncle. The evenings now began to lengthen; and books and backgammon were resorted to, rather than drives in the park, or walks in the grounds. A regular course of reading was begun, and Caroline already anticipated the store of knowledge that the winter would enable her to accumulate: but other thoughts troubled the mind of Mr. Fitzosborn. The uneasiness that Caroline had avowed on occasion of her father’s conduct Mr. Fitzosborn had connected in his own mind with the cause of her refusal of Mr. Beaumont: this cause he entertained no doubt was her preference to some other person; a preference which, if not strictly unworthy, he concluded to be indiscreet. In the discomposure that he had witnessed in Caroline he thought he saw the crisis of this preference; while the cheerfulness and renewed enjoyment which she had lately manifested evinced that the struggle was past.

The favourite wish of Mr. Fitzosborn was to see Caroline the wife of Mr. Beaumont; but the strict watch which he kept over his thoughts taught him to distrust the motive for this wish. He apprehended that he might mistake an indulgence of self-will for an earnest desire to secure Caroline’s happiness. That a marriage with Mr. Beaumont would secure her happiness, and, what was of still high price in his estimation, her principles and integrity, he did not entertain a doubt. Marriage he looked upon as the touchstone of all female virtues; and that as an unworthy choice too surely proved in general the shipwreck of all that is excellent in woman, so he regarded a connection with a man of religious principle and sound understanding as a harbour of safety. But he would not conduct Caroline even into this harbour against her will; and while the suspicion remained of her preference to another, he had been able to suppress, though he could not wholly conquer, his desire to recommend Mr. Beaumont to her favour. The happy moment, however, he believed to be now arrived, in which, without wounding her feelings, he could gratify his own; and having observed for several weeks past an uninterrupted serenity of mind in Caroline, he resolved to bring the matter to an issue.

“Caroline,” said he to her one evening, as she closed the book for the night, “I am thinking of some means to enliven these winter hours to you. So unvaried a life, I fear, will weary you.”

“It is a vain fear, my dear sir,” replied Caroline, with a smile; “I never found time so short as since my residence at Henhurst.”

“But, child, if you live wholly with an old man you will soon be unfit company for any body else.”

"I flatter myself," replied Caroline, "that you will let me always live with you."

"*Always*, child!—do you consider what you say?"

"I certainly meant," said Caroline, abashed, "to use the word only in the sense that a mortal *can* use it."

"Yet even then," said her uncle, "it was not the proper word: you meant to say that you wish to remain with me while I live."

"Or while I live," said Caroline, with emotion.

"We need not advert to so threadbare a topic as the uncertainty of human life," said Mr. Fitzosborn. "We all know that there is no dependence upon survivorship; but in the common course of things that must be your lot between you and me, and to this we must look. And do you think it would be fair, Caroline, so to spoil you while I live that nobody will have any thing to do with you after I am dead?"

"Why, dear sir, why must we think of such a period?"

"Because we ought to think of every thing that may happen. No weakness, Caroline—but I had little intention of making either of us serious. I was merely going to ask you if you should object to an addition to our tête-à-tête?"

"Object! my dear uncle; how is it possible that I should object to any one whom you wish to see?"

"Because you have seen the person I mean before; and because you have once been so foolish as to think you could see too much of him."

"I will not affect to misunderstand you, sir," said Caroline. "If it is Mr. Beaumont that you mean, although I will not deny but that I had rather he did not come here, yet if he come *wholly* as your guest, I can certainly have no objection to doing my part towards entertaining him."

"And pray," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "does your exclusive *wholly* refer to what has past, or to any fear of what may be to come?"

"To *both*," returned Caroline: "my mind remains unchanged."

"In *all*, particulars?" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"In *all* particulars," returned Caroline, colouring.

"Caroline," said Mr. Fitzosborn earnestly, "I can no longer bear this mystery. When first I received you into my house I was unknown to you; reserve on your part was then allowable; but except your knowledge of my character has led you to think me unworthy of your confidence, I have now a right to it, and as the guardian of your virtue I require it."

Caroline trembled, and turned pale; her lips quivered, and her voice faltered.

"What am I to understand by such emotion?" said her uncle: "can the simple disapproval of Mr. Beaumont cause it? No, it springs from a different feeling; you love another."

"Spare me, my dearest uncle; oh, spare me!" cried Caroline, in a voice of agony.

"I will spare you," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "but you must also spare yourself; you must tear from your heart that worthless being who, having gained so rich a jewel, has not courage to come forward to claim it."

"There is no such being," cried Caroline with energy. "Oh, my uncle! you demand and deserve my confidence. Away with false shame! I confess my heart was *given*, not *won*."

Mr. Fitzosborn, confounded with an avowal so little expected, was silent for a few moments; while Caroline, covered with intolerable confusion, durst not cast even a momentary glance towards him.

After a moment's pause, "It can only be on kindred excellence," said Mr. Fitzosborn affectionately, "that my Caroline has conferred so rich a gift. You love Edward."

Caroline was silent: the moment of enthusiasm was past, and she remained confounded and abashed.

"In a passion so founded," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "virtue has nothing to reprove. I have long had my eye on Edward; I know how highly he ranks in the estimation of all whose judgment has any value. But what says prudence to the matter? Will she allow that you shall bestow your thousands on a man who has nothing but his industry to give in return?"

"I intreat you, sir," said Caroline, in an agony of feeling that she had never known before; "I intreat you, sir, let us not discuss this matter any farther. It is no calculation of prudence—Edward—I—indeed, indeed this cannot be thought of."

"You would say," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, "that Edward never sought you, and you draw the conclusion that he did not wish to seek you; but so do not I. Had Edward endeavoured to win your heart, he had been unworthy of it. Would you have him such a coxcomb as to believe that his personal merit is a counterpoise to yours, and your money into the bargain?"

"Edward is free from all such coxcomby," said Caroline: "be assured, my uncle, that Edward thinks not of me."

"I will be assured of that from his own mouth," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "before I will believe it. Caroline, I must have you married. Perhaps my wishes did not lead me to choose Edward for your husband, and for this I may have my reasons, perhaps whimsical ones, perhaps good ones; but all ought and shall give way to so decided a preference as that which you have avowed. Religiously and morally speaking, Edward is worthy of you—I take it upon myself to bestow you upon him: yet search well your heart, and be assured that no vanity, no ambition, no predilection for the good things of this world lurks there, which will burst forth when this passion of love has burnt itself out. Now you may lawfully choose between a greater and a less splendid establishment; but your choice once made, all hankering after the flesh pots of Egypt will be vice. Can you be contented with the modest appointment befitting the wife of a man who must labour for his daily bread, and who ought to be ashamed to spend money faster than her husband gets it?"

Mr. Fitzosborn might have spoken for ever. Caroline was unable to interrupt him. She could have endured the torture of the rack with less anguish than his words inflicted. He looked on her amazed. "Caroline, what now? Speak!—How?—what?—what is the nature of the mortal contest that so shakes your frame?"

Clasping her hands, and falling upon her knees—"No more, my uncle!—no more, I beseech you!" said she: "no more, if you would not kill me on the spot. I cannot marry Edward. I would not that you should offer my hand to him for a thousand worlds."

"What am I to think of this unbecoming, this unusual violence?" said Mr. Fitzosborn. "What is it that you know of Edward or yourself that can justify it?"

“Oh, question me no farther, I conjure you,” said Caroline, with increasing agony: “I have told all I can tell; all I dare to tell—I cannot be Edward’s wife: yet he is all excellence; no fault attaches to him; but I cannot, I cannot be his wife!”

“Nor the wife of any other man then,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, solemnly: “you do not mean it?”

“No,” returned Caroline firmly, “my hopes, my wishes, are bounded in being allowed to pass my life with you, and the being able to retain your esteem.”

“I will tell you plainly,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “that this conversation has shaken the foundation on which it rested. Withdraw to your own room—compose your spirits—let us both forget, if it be possible, what has past.”

Caroline withdrew from the presence of her uncle humiliated, and half heartbroken. “Oh, cruel father!” almost broke from her lips, before she had sufficient command over herself to check the exclamation, or to turn her thoughts from her earthly to her heavenly Parent. But the aberration was momentary. “I have retained my integrity—I have performed my duty—the secret, just bursting from my lips did not escape me,” said she. “I will not repine: no, bankrupt as I am in fortune, in love, in the good opinion of him whose praise was most pleasant to my soul, I will not repine. Time with me shall not outweigh eternity!”

Caroline, as she said these words, wiped with her trembling hand the tear from her eyes. She addressed herself, with all the fervency of undoubting confidence, to the Vindicator of innocence. Her mind became calm—she retired to bed, and sunk, ere long, into a sweet and refreshing sleep. She rose not, however, in the morning with that lightness of spirit which the certainty of meeting the countenance of a partial friend is so fitted to bestow. “I have lost his esteem for ever!” said she; “yet never did I deserve it more than at this moment—let me shew him by my cheerfulness that I am free from self-reproach. He will not suspect me of studied deceit; when he sees that I esteem myself, perhaps he may again esteem me.”

She spent some time alone, thus endeavouring to arouse that sense of self-approbation to which she had so just a right: yet when she appeared before her uncle her eye sunk under his, as if with a criminal consciousness; and to the coldness of his morning salutation she could only answer with her tears. As soon as breakfast was over Mr. Fitzosborn retired to his library, without, as it was customary with him to do, arranging with her the hours that they were to spend together, or the manner in which they were to be occupied. They met not again till the hour of dinner. The meal passed in unbroken silence; and when they adjourned to the drawing-room Mr. Fitzosborn took up a book, and read to himself. Caroline was in agonies; yet was she resolved, if possible, not to desert herself.

“Shall I not have the pleasure of reading to you to-night, sir?” said she, in a broken voice.

“You are not able to read aloud,” said Mr. Fitzosborn.

“Indeed I am,” said Caroline, speaking with more steadiness; “and if ever my services were acceptable to you, I am not unworthy that they should be so now.”

Mr. Fitzosborn looked at her.—“We will, however, have no reading to-night,” said he.

“Let me play to you, sir;” said Caroline.

“My mind is not in tune,” said her uncle.

“Shall we look over these drawings together?” said Caroline.

“I cannot see them by candle-light,” said Mr. Fitzosborn.

Caroline snuffed the candles, and placed two more upon the table, and opened the book of drawings.—“If it will not hurt your eyes, sir,” she said, “be so kind as to explain this gem to me.”

Mr. Fitzosborn felt obliged to comply; and Caroline had the art to engage his attention from drawing to drawing till he began to relax his brow, and to change his monosyllables into conversation. Yet it was evident that “the domestic deity” was not at home, nor the heart alive to kindness. Cold and absent, his words came slowly from his lips; moral maxims or sarcastic observations composed the whole of his discourse; and after an evening of painful effort on the part of Caroline, and repulsive austerity on the part of her uncle, they parted, with little inclination to rest in either: yet was the consciousness of having lost the favour of her best earthly friend less painful to Caroline than her supposed dereliction of virtue was to Mr. Fitzosborn. Supported by the sense of rectitude, her breast swelling with the consciousness of having sacrificed all considerations of self to a principle of duty, Caroline was not, amidst all the gloom of imputed turpitude, without her moments of illumination, while all was blank and dark in the mind of Mr. Fitzosborn.

Over Caroline’s supposed deviation from the path of rectitude he mourned as over a fallen angel. In vain he wearied his mind to discover some clue to her conduct that did not terminate in offence. The mystery that attended an acknowledged uneasiness; the avowal of love for a man whom she yet so strenuously refused to marry; her willing seclusion from the world; and the evident reluctance, almost to dread, that she evinced to the very thought of quitting Henhurst; all seemed to point to some particular in her self-government that would not bear the light. He reflected on the company she had kept, on the temptations to which she had been exposed, and he trembled.

No one was a truer nomenclature than Mr. Fitzosborn when he spoke of virtue and vice in which he had no share: he was unacquainted with, and would not have understood, the modern vocabulary. He knew not what was meant by “an amiable weakness.” He had no conception that “an unfortunate passion” explained the premeditated invasion of the peace and honour of a husband, or “indiscretion” the grossest act of unfaithfulness in a wife. He knew nothing of “vows which, registered in Heaven,” annulled those registered on earth; of “the union of hearts,” that superseded all other union: nor could he better understand that seduction was “gallantry,” or murder “a point of honour.” He did not know that “a little derangement” meant bankruptcy, or “the settling one’s affairs” was depriving one’s creditors of half their due. He was not aware that “candour” was the toleration of every vice; or “freedom from prejudice,” infidelity. Nor were his principles much more liberal than his knowledge in the English language was extended. He would not allow that a young woman who spent the most part of her time in frivolous amusements, or selfish gratifications, was a Christian: or that luxurious refinement in accommodation, in ornament, in dress, or in food, consisted with sober-mindedness. Nor could he readily admit that coquetry, dissimulation, or extravagance, were “youthful follies—only freaks of thoughtless youth.” With him they tainted, and they stampt the character.

With such limited comprehension, and such narrow opinions, it was not wonderful that Mr. Fitzosborn, adhering in his notions to the old boundaries of the path

of uprightness, should entertain some fears that Caroline might have deviated from so narrow a line: what the nature of her wanderings might have been he was at a loss even to conjecture. When he called to mind the purity, the simplicity, the humility of her sentiments, he felt that it was impossible that the love of vice, the love of the world, or the love of self, should dwell in her heart. When he considered the ingenuity of her countenance, the frankness of her manners, the correctness of her speech, free at once from exaggeration and confusion, he found it absurd to suspect her of dissimulation. All that she chose to reveal she had revealed clearly—even virgin modesty had not misled her, when compelled to speak at all, to speak more or less than the truth, painful and humiliating as that truth must have been. She had asserted her innocence; she had even laid claim to merit. Was this consistent, in such a character as Caroline's, with a sense of guilt? Yet guilty in some way she must be; there was no other explanation of the mystery that she maintained, of the agonies that she had suffered. Again and again did Mr. Fitzosborn repulse this conclusion; but again and again it returned, and fastened itself so immoveably on his understanding that no efforts of his heart could shake it off.

Farewell, then, for ever to the delight that the company and conversation of Caroline had imparted!—The illusion was destroyed; this angel of light was but like the rest of her fellow mortals; and virtue was but a name—for Caroline was not virtuous!

“She shall yet continue with me,” thought he, “the poor thing desires to do so—perhaps this the only place of safety for her: yet to see her, to hear her, and not dare to love her!—the task will be a hard one.” And to *love* what he believed to be contaminated by vice or folly was by Mr. Fitzosborn considered as no venial weakness; yet not to love Caroline he found to be impossible; and this opposition between his feelings and his principles produced for her a very grievous effect. When absent from her he thought of her only with the tenderest compassion; but the agitation that the sight of her occasioned, the perpetual contest between the pleasure that she gave him, and the opinion that he ought not to receive pleasure from her, irritated his temper; and he treated her by turns with the most chilling coldness and the most caustic austerity. Caroline's spirits almost sunk under such undeserved harshness. That it *was* undeserved was her best consolation. She called in aid an increased activity in the pursuit of all that could inform her understanding, or gratify her benevolence. As she was now at full liberty to dispose of her time, she extended her rambles amongst the poor: she often spent whole mornings with them, either instructing the children, or allaying the pains of sickness or of age. Insensibly she formed a little circle of friends and panegyrists around her, who pressed upon her observation, and covered her with blessings whenever she appeared, more especially as she went and returned every Sunday to and from the place of public worship.

This increased interest that Caroline had excited could not escape the notice of Mr. Fitzosborn. He said one day, somewhat peevishly—“You are become very popular, I perceive.”—Caroline answered modestly. “The greater leisure which I now have gives me more time to look to these poor people.”—“But looking alone,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “does not satisfy such admirers as these.”—“Your bounty, sir,” returned Caroline, “does all the rest.”—“And, pray, why not your bounty?—have you nothing to give?”—“I endeavour,” said Caroline, in some confusion, “to proportion my expenditure to my means.” “It is prudently done,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, with a darkened brow.

These questions, and this observation, arose from a suspicion which, amidst the variety of conjectures that tormented Mr. Fitzosborn as to the nature of Caroline's turpitude, had lately stolen into his mind: he began to believe that she was mercenary. To this he referred her refusal of a poor man, even though he was the man she loved: to this he imputed her former recommendation of Edward to his favour. The Henhurst estate would have made his hand well worthy her acceptance; and to this he imputed the warmth of her rejection when he was offered to her only as the fabricator of his own fortunes. Here too he thought he found the spring of her earnest wish to remain shut up from all the world with him. Every attraction exerted to please him rose up in judgment against her. As his growing favour, he was persuaded, had generated a hope that she would be his heir, so he thought he saw her cling to this hope under every present discouragement.

It is true there were facts which strongly militated against such a notion: her absolute refusal of Mr. Beaumont, though in opposition to his declared wish—her resolute concealment of the cause of her rejection of Edward, though such refusal, and such concealment, had manifestly lost her his esteem—her perfect freedom from all servility, from all flattery—he saw her drooping under his displeasure; yet she seemed rather to mourn the loss of a happiness to which she had a right, than to supplicate for a boon—all spoke the independence, the disinterestedness of the mind of Caroline; yet all was not sufficient to destroy the opinion founded on contrary, and, as he thought, better grounds.

The occurrence of daily little circumstances served to confirm him more and more in this opinion. He was as minute an observer as was her father; and though the objects of his observation were different, they did not less certainly serve with him to stamp the female character. As to the garments that Caroline wore Mr. Fitzosborn was wholly indifferent; while there was nothing that militated against modesty, neatness, and cleanliness, he could not have told one hour what she had worn the last; but there was scarcely a word, a look, from whence he did not draw some conclusion as to her moral character.

The opportunities for spending money, except in charity, did not often occur at Henhurst. Charity she had almost disclaimed, and it therefore appeared to him that she did not spend money at all. If a new work was advertised, or an itinerant merchant offered his goods to sale, Caroline shewed no inclination to gratify either her own literary taste, or to indulge the humbler fancies of any of the domestics:—she seemed neither to have wants nor wishes—there were no signs about her of that readiness of expenditure which flows from a benevolent heart and a full purse. Mr. Fitzosborn had no doubt but that she possessed the one—his conclusion, therefore, that she wanted the other, was not wholly illogical.—“Fifteen hundred pounds a year,” would he say to himself, “and never forget the value of a guinea!—at nineteen too!”

Short of the actual commission of crime, no supposed failure in the character of Caroline could have been more fatal to her favour with her uncle.—“Covetousness,” would he say, “if it want the activity of vice, is the smotherer of every virtue. No, no, I must not be seduced by the lustre of the jewel to forget that it is false!”

Caroline was not unaware of the interpretation that the economy to which she was compelled would bear; and perhaps the imputation that it brought upon her was one of her most severe mortifications. But it was not wholly by the sense of its injustice that she

was left to struggle with the pain that it occasioned. She had still one drop of sweet in her bitter cup—and this was the animated praise and the ardent affection of Edward. Scarcely a post past without bringing her a letter or a paquet from him. Sometimes it was a new book—sometimes an amusing print—sometimes the gossip of the day, or the anticipation of public intelligence from abroad; but whatever was the pretence for addressing her, or whether he wrote shortly or at length, there was always so warm a colouring of her virtues thrown over his expressions, or so lively an image of the sense that he had of them impressed on all that he wrote, that Caroline could no longer hesitate to believe that he really loved her. There were, indeed, sometimes words that put it out of doubt that he wished her to feel that he did so; and if he still drew a veil over the sentiments of his heart, it seemed done rather from a fear of offending her than from any hesitation in himself. Caroline imagined that she saw in this change of Edward's manner of addressing her the workings of a noble and ingenuous mind. His former reserve and guarded affection, while fortune made her so much his superior, spoke his disinterestedness; while she saw in his present half-concealed and half-expressed passion all the deference that uncertainty should give, and all the confidence that a sense of the moderation of her character ought to inspire. "He knows," said she exultingly to herself, "that if he can win my heart, I shall not refuse to share with him the humble comforts that his limited property can give." That he would not be the heir of his uncle she thought that she had almost a proof, in the manner that, when offering her his hand, Mr. Fitzosborn had spoken of the deprivations to which she must submit in becoming his wife. Who his mysterious heir would be seldom engaged her thoughts; and when it did, she had the candour, which her uncle failed of in judging her conduct, to believe that all might be as it ought to be, though she could not discover how.

By the consciousness of her own rectitude, by her activity, and above all, it must be confessed, by the pleasure resulting from her new-sprung hope, Caroline was enabled to endure with fortitude, and with all the cheerfulness that he would allow her to manifest, the ever-growing displeasure of her uncle. Ill at ease with himself, tormented with suspicion, unable to decide between the apparent excellence of Caroline and her supposed imperfection, he continually broke the resolution, which he as often renewed, of treating her with gentleness. His regrets for the harshness into which he was again and again betrayed preyed upon his mind; he lost all self-command; and so poignant was his self-reproach for this weakness of mind, that he fell sick.

Caroline had seen the approach of disease some time before it decidedly declared itself, and had endeavoured to ward off the blow by every means in her power—but in vain. After a restless and painful night, Mr. Fitzosborn found himself, one morning, in a high fever.

Caroline was instantly summoned by his alarmed attendants to his apartment; and when she approached the bed, was shocked to behold the inflamed cheek, and burning eye, which her uncle turned towards her.

"What brings you here, Caroline?" said he.

"I am told you are not well, sir," said she, taking his hand: "I am afraid it is true—you are too hot."

"It may be the forerunner of being too cold," returned Mr. Fitzosborn. "But leave me, Caroline; the sight of you agitates me."

“*Never,*” said Caroline fervently, “will I leave you—never will I suffer another to perform those services that I can render you. Forgive me, my dear uncle—while I know that I ought to be as dear to you as I have been, I will act as if I *were.*”

“Strange!” said Mr. Fitzosborn.

“My dearest uncle,” said Caroline, “let all thoughts of what I am be suspended. Now there is but one care: let me see you restored to health, and banish me from your presence for ever.”

“You treat me like an infant,” said Mr. Fitzosborn.

“The sick are infants,” returned Caroline, gaily, “and must be governed. Now you shall see how well I can rule.”

Mr. Fitzosborn, taken unawares by the tone of playful tyranny that Caroline assumed, was not able to make any farther opposition. He suffered her to give orders for a physician; he submitted to the regulations that she made in his chamber; accepted from her hand the slight febrifuge that she had prepared; and followed her, in spite of himself, with a look of ineffable delight—as she did all this with the calmness of reason which sees what is best, and with the assiduity of affection which delights in administering it. The access of the fever was violent. The physician expressed some alarm for his patient, and enjoined the most perfect quiet and most watchful attention. Caroline undertook to enforce the one, and to perform the other. She watched by the sick bed night and day, gave all the medicines with her own hand, and preserved so entire a command over her uncle as surprised the attendants, and inspired an equal obedience on their part. The pleasure that Mr. Fitzosborn, even against his will, received from the well-directed and unwearied cares of Caroline, contributed more to his amendment than all the skill of the physician. A few days saw him convalescent, and a few more enabled him to leave his room. As Mr. Fitzosborn returned to health, Caroline resumed the respectful deference of humble duty, and her uncle relapsed into his silence and his thoughtfulness; but all harshness had disappeared. If his words were not tender, his voice was the voice of affection. “Child!” “my dear!” sometimes escaped him; and she perceived that, as he looked at her, the tear would often rise to his eye, and trickle down his cheek. She would then venture to take his hand, and press it to her heart, nor did he repulse her; but gently pulling away his hand, he would sigh, and turn from her. A week had now passed, and no further step was taken towards reconciliation or confidence on either side; when one morning, instead of withdrawing as usual to his library, he remained in the breakfast-room, and addressing Caroline, he said, “I can no longer endure the terms that we are upon: if you will not give me your confidence, I will give you mine. The obligations that I have lately received from your hands, from whatever motive they sprung, have bound me to you in bonds of never to be broken gratitude. I will confess, also, that I love you with a warmth and tenderness that my reason condemns: for, in spite of my obligations, in spite of my affections, you have lost my esteem. What you have so lately done for me has in no degree elucidated the mystery of your past conduct, nor reconciled its inconsistencies. This mystery, this inconsistency, must rise from some taint, some radical imperfection in your character, which though I cannot discover, I cannot doubt. Although the fascination of your manners, your apparent regard for me, still keep their hold of my affections, yet they are not able to blind me to the errors of your conduct. I can ill support the uneasiness that such a contrariety of feeling gives rise to, and it would be easier to part with you all together. But I will not throw you back upon the world, there perhaps to

consummate the destruction of the fairest promise of human excellence ever given. My house shall be your asylum while you wish it to be so; but I must deal plainly with you, that no ill founded notion as to the effect of my so openly avowed and I fear so ill placed a partiality may nourish expectations that must end in disappointment. When you know unequivocally what you have to look to from me, you may probably be the more ready to accept of the degree of happiness that is in your power. *That* Edward, whose hand you have refused, professing to love him, that Edward is to be my heir. Some months have now passed since I caused him so far to understand my intentions as to let him know that it depended upon himself whether or no he was to be the future master of Henhurst. He received this information under the seal of the most sacred secrecy, the most solemn annunciation, that if he suffered the secret to escape, either by design or inadvertency, the prize would be lost. He has conducted himself under this trial to my perfect satisfaction. His diligence in his profession, the sobriety of his habits, have remained the same since he had a reasonable hope of being sometime master of fifteen thousand pounds per annum, as when he believed that his daily bread depended upon his daily industry. I mean now to try him as the acknowledged heir of all that I am worth. I intend to expose him to the servility of dependents, the flattery of expectants—to put into his hands the dangerous alternative of using or misusing wealth. I mean to establish him in this house as my *son!*”

The various emotions to which this speech gave rise in the breast of Caroline were all in the eyes of her uncle unfavourable to her character. He saw the paleness which spread itself over her cheek, when he declared that she had lost his esteem, suddenly change to the varied colour, as he thought it, of offended pride as he proceeded to account for the plainness of his dealing; and again the glow give way to a death-like hue, as he informed her that Edward was to be his heir. In each successive emotion he saw but one feeling, and that feeling avarice; while in her inability to speak, occasioned by the variety of emotion with which she was assailed, he recognised but the sullenness of disappointed ambition. After a moment's pause, which had been passed in a severe scrutiny of Caroline's countenance, Mr. Fitzosborn resumed—“As it is impossible that I can understand what passes in a heart so inexplicable as yours, I cannot guess whether the residing in the same house with Edward will be painful or pleasant to you: if the former, you will be at liberty to depart—if the latter, the apartment and the accommodation which you have had hitherto shall be yours.”

Caroline could now speak—and throwing herself at her uncle's feet, “Oh, my uncle! my kind, my cruel, my mistaken uncle! let me but remain under your roof!—I ask no more. My safety, my happiness, my all of existence below is here!”

“And can you bear to see another fill the place which you have so long held? Can you bear to see the homage, the respect that has so long awaited you as the supposed heiress of Henhurst, transferred to the man whom you have refused for your husband?”

“Oh, torture me not!” said Caroline: “were I mistress of the universe, I would give it to Edward!”

“Astonishing!” said her uncle: “you would then give him every thing but yourself?”

“Oh, question me not!” said Caroline: “it is not for me to clear up this mystery; Edward perhaps may.”

“We will then refer it to Edward,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, feeling at the same moment an intolerable weight taken off his spirits. “If Caroline dare refer her conduct to

Edward," thought he, "that conduct cannot be very culpable." But suspicion that Edward as his heir, and Edward as a poor practitioner of the law, weighed differently in the estimation of Caroline, repressed his pleasure, and still kept the balance against her.

Mr. Fitzosborn retired, for the purpose of making the communication of his intentions to Edward; and Caroline withdrew to her own room, there to still the tumult of feeling that so unlooked for an occurrence had occasioned.

Caroline, confident in the love of Edward, could not fear but that he would seek her as soon as he had power to do so. Nay, she thought she now saw, in the intimation that he had already received of his uncle's intended favour, the origin of that increased openness of affection which he had manifested towards her, and the thought endeared him to her; nor could she scruple, portionless as she was, to give herself to him, who would now have sufficient to supply all deficiencies on her part. To him she thought she might safely refer whether her loss of fortune should be revealed or kept secret from her uncle. She knew the respect he would have for the delicacy of her feelings towards her parent; but in contemplating him as the guide and controuler of her future life, she felt that he alone ought to determine with how much or how little mystery as to her past conduct he would accept her as his wife. She had no apprehension but that her uncle would look with pleasure on the union of two people, of whom he professed to love the one, and to esteem the other. In a pecuniary light she knew he would regard the loss of her fortune as dust upon the balance; and as she imaged to herself the happy future that all these reflections gave to her prospects, she forgot the intervening present, wherein she still remained an object of suspicion to her uncle, and from whence might spring the disappointment of all her hopes. Her brightened eye, and glowing cheek, told tales to Mr. Fitzosborn which did not increase her credit with him; while he read in them rather the triumph of mercenary ambition than the modest hopes of disinterested love.

"That girl," said he to himself, "now believes herself in possession of all her wishes. She trusts to the power of her charms to bend both Edward and myself to her will: but she shall not be gratified; Edward shall not have a mercenary wife."

After a night passed in visions of the most perfect human happiness, Caroline rose to meet her uncle in the chapel. She was alarmed with the alteration that had taken place in his countenance from the night before. It was impressed not only by the lines of grief, but horror. He greeted her, however, kindly, performed his devotions with more than usual fervour, and suffered her to give him her arm, as they went to the breakfast-room. She perceived that he trembled, and that her support was necessary to him. She took hold of his hand. "Are you not well?" said she.

"Oh, Caroline!" returned he, "what are all human hopes?—what is all human virtue?"

Caroline knew not whether the apostrophe was addressed to her. She seated her trembling charge, and taking her place by his side, "My dearest sir," said she, "what has happened thus to discompose you?"

"Edward," said he, clasping his hands together, "Edward is a villain!"

"Impossible!" said Caroline: "I will stake my life on his integrity."

"And lose it!" returned Mr. Fitzosborn. "He has seduced the daughter of Lord Evelyn—he has secreted her—and, being called to account by her brother, he refused to meet him, and bears the name of coward!"

“Some enemy has slandered him to you, sir,” said Caroline: “some base heart, that envies the favour which you meant to show him, has calumniated him. A seducer!—a coward! Oh, no, no! Edward knows no fear but that of doing wrong!”

“Would to God I could think so!” replied Mr. Fitzosborn. “Read this.”—He gave into Caroline’s hands a letter. She took it trembling—she read it—and happiness and hope seemed fled for ever. These were the contents.

“My dear old friend,—if it were possible to conceal from you such a story as I have to tell, sacred as I hold the promise I have given you, and jealous as I am of my own integrity, I would yet keep it from your knowledge for ever. Hitherto with what pleasure have I performed the task you gave me of watching over the conduct of your nephew!—how have I exulted in his growing virtues, and boasted of the stability of his principles! No objection to be made to him, but a little singularity. But it is now for him to reconcile seduction and cowardice with virtue and magnanimity! The tale is told in few words! Edward has seduced and taken away the second daughter of Lord Evelyn, and, on being called to answer for his conduct by her brother, has refused to fight! In a good cause I know you would have admired this part of the business; and there is something, I must confess, in the circumstances of so unpardonable a refusal, that, even now, may not wholly disagree with some of those odd and out of the way notions that I know you hold. Thus it has been told to me:—On the young lady’s absence various conjectures arose, for it seems so cunningly had she and your precious nephew managed their affairs, that not one of her relations suspected any connection between them. Edward, it is true, visited at the house familiarly enough, and was there received with every distinction that was due to his character and merit, and the stock from whence he sprung; but no apparent intimacy subsisted between him and the lady. The lady’s maid had disappeared as well as herself. There were for some days no traces to be found as to whence she had withdrawn, or at whose suggestion. A younger sister, a girl of twelve years old, at length recollected that the evening before she disappeared she had seen her in earnest conversation with your nephew, and that, when they parted, she had heard him say, ‘I will not fail you.’ Faint as were the hopes that could be fostered on such a circumstance, and improbable as the well-reputed integrity of Edward made any supposition which attached villany to him, yet despair of better information induced Mr. Evelyn to wait upon your nephew. He has a manly spirit, and knows how to go directly to the point with equal clearness and decorum.

“‘I am come,’ said he to Edward, ‘to ask you, on the word of a man of honour, whether you know any thing of my sister?’

“‘Under such an adjuration,’ replied Edward, ‘I can make you only one answer. I do.’

“‘Heavens and earth!’ exclaimed Mr. Evelyn, ‘are you then a villain?’

“‘I am no villain,’ said Edward.

“‘Are you married?’

“‘No.’

“‘Then you are a villain.’

“‘Forbear to speak a word,’ said Edward, ‘which it ill befits you to use, and which I must not hear.’

“‘Speak—clear yourself—tell me all.’

“All that I *can* tell you I will. I know the place where your sister has withdrawn; I know her motive for withdrawing: but there is no power that shall extort from me the latter, nor any but a legal one that shall make me disclose the former.”

“Then must your life pay the forfeit of your silence. I will send a friend to you who will settle every preliminary.”

“Stay,” said Edward. “Mr. Evelyn, I will not fight.”

“Not fight, Fitzosborn! You are no coward. How is this?”

“You know I will not fight,” said Edward; “you have often heard me declare my mind upon that subject. I need not enter into my reasons; they are registered in a court from whence there is no appeal. Man I do not fear, God I *do*.”

“And shall a canting methodist rob my sister of her honour, and shall I not have it in my power to avenge the insult?”

“I am ready,” returned Edward, “to acknowledge, that the interests that we have to discuss are of the highest nature. The blessings of time and eternity hang on the issue of our dispute. I know that the affections, and even the passions, are to be taken into the consideration of the question; but neither the one nor the other must decide it. Whatever injury I may be supposed to have done, the reparation lies not in revenge. Nor can you more innocently seek the gratification of that impulse of the mind than I that of a less sanguinary passion. Would you, in the very act of punishing my guilt, be guilty yourself?—would you desire that I should be doubly guilty? The question between us is not life, is not honour, but crime!—and dare we, while we believe a God and an hereafter, knowingly, premeditatedly take upon conscience the hazard of crime?”

“Peace canting hypocrite! peace!” returned Mr. Evelyn. “Shall the man who has betrayed the confidence of a trusting woman talk of conscience?”

“I am no such man,” said Edward; “your sister will tell you that I am not. But while I must appear guilty in your eyes, I confess that you have a right to look for reparation at my hands; and any possible reparation, that does not involve the interests of eternity, I am willing to make.”

“Shall the hand of my sister reward seduction?” said Mr. Evelyn. “No, sir, I have a right to choose my reparation, and my reparation shall not be your reward. You must meet me.”

“Not as an enemy. I will ingenuously confess I *dare* not.”

“Then live the infamy of all who once called you friend,” said Mr. Evelyn, raising at the same time his hand.

“Edward recoiled a few steps. ‘Forbear!’ said he: ‘disgrace not yourself and me. Though I will not commit offence, I will repel injury!’”

“You are below my notice,” said Mr. Evelyn, and instantly withdrew.

“These particulars are related by Mr. Evelyn, who acknowledges that Edward over-awed him; that never before had he felt how little was revenge; and that never did guilt, the complicated guilt of seduction and cowardice, appear so like dignified innocence, and even virtue. For who can doubt that Edward is guilty?—Yet he walks about with an erect air, with a serious, but not dejected countenance; and though shunned by most, is still received by others. But what astonishes the world more than any other circumstance is the friendship that this affair seems to have given birth to between Edward and Mr. Beaumont. Only slightly known to each other before, they are now scarcely ever asunder. In all companies Mr. Beaumont is the defender of Edward’s fame.

He maintains that, in a Christian country, it is a shame that there should be found advocates for revenge and murder; that the first movement which stimulates to duelling is a principle that includes within itself the reprobation of our God; and that the man who acts up to the principles of Christianity calls for the support and countenance of all who profess themselves Christians. 'I do not hear Mr. Fitzosborn stigmatised,' says he, 'because he is supposed to have betrayed the virtue of a too easy female—that matter is left to be settled between him and his conscience, no door is shut against him upon that account; but he is disgraced because he has refused to aggravate his guilt by hazarding his own life, and that of a fellow-creature. You say this is cowardice. Were it so, physical cowardice is no moral taint. Shall he be banished from society rather for a fault in his nerves than in his heart? But can we believe that the man who has till this moment exercised every manly, every noble quality, can be a coward to his fellow man? To his God he professes that he is, and we ought to value him the more for such fear; were it universal, the golden age would be restored. We need in that case look no farther than the earth we tread for all the blessedness of Heaven. No,' adds he with warmth, 'I revere the man who prefers the laws of his country, and the laws of his God, to those of that fanciful and Proteus-like phantom cycled honour. Mr. Fitzosborn knows the price which he pays for the choice he makes; and here we have as much reason to admire his superior skill in calculation, as the greatness of mind shewn in his decision. It is mortal infamy rather than immortal crime that he has chosen; and who will say that he has not chosen well, when it is urged against such reasoning that the man who has been guilty of seduction cannot refuse a duel upon principle?'

"Mr. Beaumont replies, 'That case is not before us: a moment of frailty does not imply the guilt of seduction. Why should we not be as ready to believe that he has not been thus guilty, because he refuses to fight a duel from a religious principle, as to conclude that he cannot act from such a principle because he has been thus guilty? Is it impossible because a man has been wrong in one particular, that he should not be right in any? Let those who will withdraw their favour from Mr. Fitzosborn on account of his connection with Miss Evelyn, there will be nothing to object to them: but let not those who profess even to believe only the moral part of the Gospel brand him with ignominy because he has obeyed the precepts of it.'

"I know not, my dear sir, which side of the argument you will take: for my part I stick to my old notions—I am too old to change. Edward in my mind was a noble boy; he is now a poltroon, who dare not defend the mischief he has dared to do. All that Mr. Beaumont says is true, there is no denying it. We read of such things in our Bibles, and hear them from our pulpits; but then if we are to live in the world, we must do as the world does. Impossibilities cannot be required of us. Better not live than live in infamy. There are cases in which we must 'jump the world to come,' and where we cannot plead obedience appeal to mercy. I know all this will make you angry; but I know, notwithstanding, that it will vex you to the heart to have your boy a coward. You cannot make a coward your heir, and he might have known this; and yet at the very moment when all his hopes were on the point of being realized, thus with his own hand to dash the golden cup to the ground! No great proof this of his skill in calculation. The boy is a fool, if he is not a coward. I would rather he had run away with twenty misses than have refused to give the man he has offended the satisfaction of a gentleman—and there is an end of the matter.

"I know no more concerning this bad business but that the young lady, I find, acquits Edward on the point of *seduction*. She refuses to return to her family, or to inform them where she is. The family make no farther attempts to recover her, so that Edward will have this modern Eloisa on his hands, which, perhaps, they think is no inadequate punishment for his offences.

"It grieves me to send you such ill news, my old friend. It shews how vain are all human cares. You, with all your particularities, and your determination that your money should only go to merit, are not likely to be better off than those who let things go on the usual course: yet lay not your disappointment too much to heart. Look around you: a worthy heir perhaps may yet be found, and I trust there are many years yet to pass before an heir is wanted.

"I am ever yours,
"WILLIAM BEAUCHAMP."

The style of this letter ill accorded with the emotions that it excited both in Caroline and her uncle. The latter it had struck with horror, and the former it now overwhelmed with grief. Having read it, she returned it to her uncle without speaking.

"Will you still stake your life on the integrity of Edward?" interrogated he. "Does he know no fear but that of doing wrong?"

"You have read, sir," returned Caroline, "what Mr. Beauchamp says. You would not have Edward a duellist?"

"No," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "had he been so, I should equally have abandoned him: but I would not have him a coward."

"He is no coward," said Caroline; "he has dared but too greatly: yet I thank God that he has not pushed his daring to the extremest point, that he has not added murder to——" She stopt.

"Do you believe that he is withheld by principle from meeting Mr. Evelyn?"

"Most unfeignedly I do," returned Caroline; "and why should it not be so? Does one error imply a general dereliction of virtue? Slighter motives have been held no unmanly cause for refusing a challenge: why should the greatest to which the human mind can bend draw on the imputation of cowardice?—Is a tenderness for a worthless woman a more honourable stimulus from which to brave the censures of the world than the interests of an immortal soul? Shall we applaud in the one case, and condemn in the other?"

"Has he then," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "lost no merit in your eyes by refusing a challenge?"

"Lost!" repeated Caroline: "Oh, if that were all, my heart would rejoice at such a proof of the solid foundation of his excellence!"

"Excellence!" repeated Mr. Fitzosborn, contemptuously.

"My dearest uncle," said Caroline, "let us bound our censures to what is really wrong. Let not you and me be less charitable, less candid, than a stranger."

"You know not what interest you are thus pleading against," said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"I am pleading the interest of justice," said Caroline.

"And the interests of a rival," said Mr. Fitzosborn.

Caroline dropped her head. "I had never any claim upon Edward," said she, faintly, "and now I never can have any. Let not my weakness make any part of the question."

"Would you have me give my property to the seducer of innocence?"

"I would have you, sir," said Caroline, with a voice scarcely articulate "examine the matter with all the calmness and candour of which you are so capable; and then I would have you do what is right and good in your own eyes, for that will be right and good in fact."

"What is there to examine? You see Edward does not deny the charge of seduction."

"Not of attachment," said the agitated Caroline, "but surely of seduction."

"And do you admit the extenuating plea of a 'moment of frailty?'—Has vice with you two names?"

"Oh, no!" said Caroline, but in a voice that scarcely reached her uncle's ear.

"Would you have me encourage him to marry the girl? Would you have me reward him for so doing?"

"I would have Edward perform all that he has promised," said the almost exhausted Caroline; "and I would have your kindness, my dear uncle, render his return to the path of rectitude as easy as in justice it ought to be."

"Thou art a perpetual enigma!" returned her uncle: "you refuse the man you love for no conceivable motive but what must disgrace you; and you plead in favour of those who stand at once between the gratification of your love and the advancement of your fortune. What am I to think of such inconsistencies?"

"As favourably as you can," said Caroline. It was all that she could say. Her voice here failed her, and she sat with her head rested on the arm of the sofa, in all the agony of suppressed emotion.

"How strange is all this!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzosborn. "Caroline, look up; give vent to your tears. You terrify me."

"Oh, my uncle!" said Caroline, bursting at length into tears, "forgive my weakness; or rather think not of me. I have no incurable wound—I have no guilty steps to retrace—but Edward—oh, let us think of some balm for him!—some soothing for a mind, now, I fear, torn by all the agony of self-accusation: let him not be driven to despair! Do not, do not, my dearest uncle, cast him wholly from your favour!"

"Would you have me apply to him?" said Mr. Fitzosborn; "or do you suppose that he will dare to apply to me?"

"Harden not your heart against him," said Caroline, "and there may still be a happy future."

"No, Caroline, that is impossible: but withdraw. We equally want to be alone: each has much to regulate within. We will meet at dinner, and shall then be better able to determine what *can*, what *ought* to be done."

This was a most welcome command to Caroline, who hoped, in the stillness of her own apartment, to subdue the tumult within, and to reconcile her thoughts to this sudden overthrow of her unborn hopes. She found, however, that fresh cause for emotion awaited her even in the asylum where she had hoped to regain her composure. A letter from Edward lay upon her table. She broke it open with the greatest impatience, and read it with an eagerness as though life itself had depended upon its contents. Yet having read it,

she scarcely knew whether she were more or less miserable than before. Thus Edward had written.

“You will hear that the man who has the honour to bear the same name with yourself, and who boasts of deriving his original from the same stock; whom you distinguished by your friendship, and who wished to be thought emulous of your virtues, is stigmatised as the seducer of innocence, and degraded as a coward! In the sacrifice that I have made of all my worldly prospects, of all that gladdens life, and all that dignifies it, I can scarcely hope that your good opinion, more valued than any other blessing on this side Heaven, will not be included. I can scarcely ask from your candour the belief that the sacrifice has been made to principle: for what worthy principle can be supposed to actuate the man who is compelled to own that he has removed a daughter from the protection of her parents, and still retains her in a mysterious retirement? To assert innocence under such circumstances involves an absurdity which might revolt even folly itself, and appear a hardened effrontery that no candour can pardon. Yet I make this assertion, and appeal to the Knower of all secrets for the truth of it. I am persuaded that your heart will be most ready to believe me; and if your understanding refuse to assent, I cannot complain. Not to have entered my protest against the imputations under which I labour, would have been to have acquiesced in their justice. Having done this, I dare presume no farther. Of all *secret* guilts I am innocent; of that which is before the public that public must judge, and I must bend to the award. In taking the part which I have done I was aware of the magnitude of the hazard; nor must I now shrink from the consequence.—Heaven guard and bless the loveliest of its creatures! Farewell!”

There was nothing in this letter calculated to lessen the pangs that Mr. Beauchamp’s had inflicted. She scarcely knew to what the innocence which Edward so strongly asserted could apply. Of premeditated or complicated baseness she never for a moment had thought him guilty; and his refusal to give Mr. Evelyn a hostile meeting had her fullest approbation. But the fact of secreting a woman of reputation from the knowledge of her family established the certainty of a connection, which it was scarcely possible could consist with innocence. Yet he wrote not like a happy lover; nor could so degrading an attachment agree with the many marks of the ardent but delicate love which this late communication with Caroline bore. She was lost in conjecture; but on every side she saw the destruction of her own hopes, and, as she feared, the rectitude as well as the happiness of Edward. To preserve this rectitude, and to re-establish his happiness, she now resolved to make her most earnest care; and she persuaded herself that she had still sufficient interest with her uncle to induce him to contribute his utmost to both. Caroline shewed Edward’s letter to Mr. Fitzosborn; she pointed out his strong asseverations of innocence with respect to the lady: “and if he is innocent, then,” said the generous pleader, “how meritorious is the rest of his conduct! We must not condemn him unheard. At this very moment, perhaps, he is reading your letter, my dear uncle, which calls him near you; which tells him that he is to be established in this house as your son. Alas! with what bitterness of regret must he now think of your intended kindness! had it been announced a little, a very little sooner, who knows but it might have saved us all from this sad catastrophe? Edward could then have asked from Lord Evelyn the hand of his

daughter, and all this evil might have been spared. Is it not possible to repair it? Is it not possible to restore the lady to her reputation, and Edward to his peace of mind?"

"Not as the inheritor of Henhurst—not as an inmate of this house, shall the degraded wife of Edward tread in the footsteps of my virtuous mother!"

"You do not know that this lady is not virtuous," said Caroline. "If Edward is innocent, so is she: their guilt or their innocence must stand or fall together. If you were to hear what Edward has to say——"

"I know that she is indiscreet," interrupted Mr. Fitzosborn, "and indiscretion in a woman is vice. They have not our passions to plead; they are hedged round with so many safeguards that no danger can approach them, except they meet it half way: and if she did not meet it more than half way, what then is Edward?"

Caroline but too painfully felt the inference, but she did not therefore give up the cause. "I mean not to plead for vice," said she, "nor can I speak of indiscretion as a wholly venial offence; but we know not the circumstances of the case: we cannot tell to which side the greater share of blame attaches—we do not know that it attaches to either. The lady herself, in part, acquits Edward. There is in such acquittal at least the merit of truth, perhaps of a generous self-condemnation. Let us not condemn him unheard. Whatever may be your determination, my dear sir, after having heard what Edward has to urge in his excuse, you will not have to fear the being unjust."

"Do you wish to see Edward here?" said Mr. Fitzosborn. "Could you bear to look upon him?—to hear him plead the cause of a worthless rival with composure and dignity?"

"I hope I could," replied Caroline. "Whatever have been my wishes, they are all now centered in the fervent desire to restore Edward to happiness; to place him once more in the path of uprightness; to enable him to exercise those virtues which, however they may be tarnished, are genuine; and which, with proper care, may recover all their native brightness."

"Well, be it so," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "the trial shall be made; the trial of comparative worth: absolute merit I no longer hope to find. You, who can bear to see Edward," added he, "can, I suppose, bear to write to him: let us see in what terms you will summon him to appear before his judges—how you will invite him to present himself before those to whom he ought not to be able to raise his eyes."

"Alas, my uncle!" said Caroline, "make not me the judge of Edward. It is not me whom he has offended: my favour held out to him no reward; my condemnation can add nothing to his deprivation."

"He says otherwise," returned Mr. Fitzosborn. "'Your good opinion, more valued than every other blessing on this side of Heaven.' It may be difficult to reconcile the compliment with his conduct; but we must allow some motive for so exclusive a preference. There must be some value in an approbation which outweighed the loss of reputation and of fortune. But if you will not be a judge, will you be an advocate in this cause?"

"No farther than I have been," said Caroline. "See him, hear him: I presume to ask no more."

"I will see him, I will hear him: it is your task to tell him so."

Caroline took up a pen, and astonished her uncle by the steadiness of hand, and readiness of thought, with which she wrote the following lines.

“I am willing to allow of your appeal from the action to the motive, and to believe that all that is *hidden* is right: but while so much of what is *known* is wrong, you owe it to the interests of virtue, you owe it to yourself, to be more explicit—not to me; I have no demands upon you; but to him who is the present head of the stock from whence we both descend; to him who has fostered your youth, and who was about to have crowned your manhood with every blessing. A kindness, that not all the appearances which are against you can turn aside from its object, allows you to plead your own cause, and invites you to Henhurst for this purpose.”

“Admirable girl!” said Mr. Fitzosborn, with transport, and eyeing her at the same time with a delight which called the colour to her cheek; “with what delicacy, with what dignity have you explained yourself! and is there indeed a flaw in this jewel which robs it of half its worth?”

Every intervening hour which passed between the despatching of this letter, to the one in which it was possible that Edward should arrive in consequence of it, were to Caroline hours of the utmost uneasiness. She dreaded alike that Edward should accept, or that he should neglect, the invitation. She wished, and she feared to see him: she feared to shew him too much and too little regard; and shrunk from the contest of dignity and sincerity that she saw lay before her. This state of agitation was not however continued so long as she had calculated upon; before even she had thought it possible that Edward should arrive, the servant announced him, and he stood before her and her uncle. Mr. Fitzosborn started as with horror; while Caroline, rising, offered a chair to Edward.

“No,” said Edward, with a voice of the greatest agitation, while his lips quivered, and every limb trembled, “I stand here a culprit—I sit not in the presence of my judges.”

“There is your judge,” said Caroline, pointing to her uncle; “I have no jurisdiction here.”

“Are you my accuser, then?”—said Edward, in a tone of increasing misery.

“Certainly not,” returned Caroline.

“May I hope you will be my advocate?” cried Edward.

“Make clear the innocence which you have so strenuously asserted,” said Caroline, “and you will want no advocate.”

“Young man,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, in a voice that thrilled through every vein of both his auditors, “are you married?”

“No.”

“Do you intend to marry?”

“No.”

“Do your objections to marriage arise from pecuniary considerations, or from disinclination to the state?”

“From neither.”

“Will you restore the female you have degraded to the protection of her natural friends?”

“I cannot.”

“Is it your purpose to continue in the guilty commerce you have begun?”

“I acknowledge no guilty commerce. I assert my innocence.”

“What proof do you bring of your innocence?”

“I have no proof: I confess that every appearance is against me—every appearance must remain against me.”

“What result, then, could you hope from this interview?”

“To shew my obedience to your commands; to deprecate your ill opinion; to thank you on my knees,” cried he, falling at Mr. Fitzosborn’s feet, “as I now do, for all your past, for all your intended kindness; and to beg of Heaven eternal blessings on your head.”

“Edward!” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “how I have loved your fame, how I have studied your happiness, I will not now tell you. The sunbeam that should have gilded my evening sky you have obscured: this is the smallest part of the evil. It matters not that we lie down in storms, if we awake to peace. But you have destroyed yourself—you have tinged the cheek of modesty with blushes—you have made the fair form of virtue droop her head—you have arrayed hypocrisy in the holy garment of religion: what innocence can subsist with crimes like these? For ever they have dissevered you from my bosom; beware lest they do not banish you from Heaven. I touch not on that part of your conduct which has sunk you to infamy in the eyes of the world. In the man of virtue such bold defiance of the opinion of his fellow-men had been most virtuous: in the man of vice it can only have added baseness to villany. I was willing to hear you, because I would not condemn you unheard. For yourself you have not been able to say any thing: you are self-condemned, and will not dare to appeal from the justice of the sentence which casts you off from my affections, my esteem, my fortune, for ever.”

“Oh, my uncle!” cried Caroline, clasping her hands together, “say not so; drive not repentance to despair. Some future day—some farther trial—some time of probation——”

“Silence!” said Mr. Fitzosborn. “I will hold no fellowship, no communication with seduction, with hypocrisy: from this hour that young man and I are strangers. No future hour can reverse the determination of this; here ends all my romantic research after a degree of excellence which never existed but in a distempered brain. My aim must now be humbler; and while I declare you, Caroline, the heiress of all my possessions, I acknowledge a similar, though not an equal, disappointment in your character with that which I have experienced in Edward’s.”

“Impossible!” cried Edward. “Angels only are more pure, more excellent than Caroline.”

“Young man,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “I take not your opinion of excellence. Caroline has merit, but it is limited merit; and I fear it is limited by the bound which, almost of all others, I could least have expected, or least have wished to see, in so young a person. Caroline is mercenary.”

“Mercenary!” repeated Edward, with an accent of contemptuous incredulity.

“Yes, sir,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, disdainfully, “mercenary! I have watched her narrowly: with a purse overflowing with unappropriated wealth, her heart is not moved with the story of distress, nor her hand open to relieve it.”

“A purse overflowing!” cried Edward. “Oh, no, no! she is poor, she is penniless!”

“Edward,” said Caroline, “forbear!”

“No, I will speak,” said Edward; “I will restore to my uncle that bright vision of excelling virtue which he believes lost for ever. His sun shall not set in clouds. His

Caroline shall, with her wonderous virtues, gild his latest hours; and in the contemplation of her worth he shall forget the imputed turpitude of Edward.”

“I can bear no more,” said Caroline, in an agony: “if confidence is to be violated, let me not witness it.”

“Stay, Caroline,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “I command you, stay. After what has past I must, I will know all—you have already referred me to Edward; I have a right to require an explanation at his hands. In restoring you to the fulness of my approbation he offers some compensation for his own depravity.”

“My beloved cousin,” said Edward, lost at that moment to every thing but the distress that he had occasioned Caroline, “forgive me: to hear you calumniated—to hear you called mercenary! Oh, heavens! *you* mercenary! I must have spoken, or have died.—And I would rather have died,” added he, putting his arm round her to preserve her from sinking to the ground, “than thus have agitated that gentle, that generous bosom.”

“Oh, you have undone me!” said Caroline. “My father!——”

“Let me support you, dearest of created beings!” cried Edward. “Sit down—rest your head on my shoulder.—Oh, Caroline! I am not wholly unworthy of such an honour.”

“I am better,” said Caroline, withdrawing herself from Edward’s supporting arm: “let my uncle be obeyed.”

“I already anticipate the story,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “Caroline’s apostrophe has told me all.”

“No, not all,” cried Edward: “that she has been pillaged you may guess; but you know not, you cannot know, that when robbed of all her substance her care was not for herself but others—that she stript herself even to her last guinea to supply the wants of those who were then richer than herself.”

“And who were those others?” said Mr. Fitzosborn.

Edward hesitated; but Caroline, hastily throwing herself at her uncle’s feet, exclaimed, “That part of the story be mine. It was Edward’s mother, it was Edward’s sisters, to whom in my affluence I offered an assistance due to relations so near in blood, so high in worth. If by so doing I have offended you, sir, sorry I may be, but I cannot repent.”

“Child,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “I understand you not—my brain whirls round.—What? How? Rise! Offended! Why should I be offended? But tell me, has that rapacious father robbed you of all?”

“Of all,” said Edward.

“No, not of all,” said Caroline; “I have still sufficient for the modest comforts of life, and have lost nothing that I regret but the power of being useful to others.”

“Come to my arms!” said Mr. Fitzosborn, with a degree of rapture never felt by him before; “come to my arms, and take possession of my heart! I see it all; I understand the whole. Your self-denial, your delicacy, your generosity! How unjust have I been to you! But I will repair my faults: from you I will hear the whole detail, and you shall dictate what amends I shall make you.—Young man,” continued he, turning to Edward, “I acknowledge the obligation I owe you; but this obligation alters not the nature of facts. You must indeed have been a monster had you suffered this fair image of her Creator to have been calumniated in silence; and yet you know not half her worth. Go, sir, and

imitate if you can, at humble distance, virtues of which, it must be confessed, you do not seem insensible.”

“I obey,” said Edward. “Time may bring me that vindication I dare not afford myself. I go, and I bear with me a grieved, a grateful, but not a self-accusing heart. Oh, my uncle! for all I have received at your hands accept my thanks; but most accept them for what you have withheld. In having restored Caroline to affluence you have given me that which I prize beyond all the riches of the earth. Let no thought of me disturb your mutual peace: nor need it; for though I am wretched, I am not guilty.” And thus saying, he quitted hastily the room.

Caroline, exhausted by the variety and violence of her feelings, and the efforts that she had made to controul them, finding her task over, sunk gently back into the chair, and burst into tears.

“Weep not, my beloved!” said Mr. Fitzosborn, in an accent of love and tenderness which Caroline had never heard from him before. “You have no cause for tears. I ought to weep at the injustice I have done, at the harshness with which I have treated you. But I was jealous for your excellence, Caroline. It was pain intolerable to think less well of you than I had done. And why, dear child, should you inflict such pain upon me? Why keep a secret so injurious to yourself, so distressing to me?”

“Oh, ask me not why,” said Caroline; “I can conceive that soul and body part with less pain than this discovery costs me.”

“And do you prize the reputation of a worthless father, a father but in name, above the peace of one who is and will be more to you than ever father was? Can you thus prefer the name to the thing?”

“Oh, my uncle, have mercy on me! A parent is sacred. The child deserves reprobation that veils not a parent’s shame.”

“Thou martyr to thy duty!” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “I will have mercy upon thee:—I will not now ask for the particulars of this nefarious business; but I must have them; and never more must you, *shall* you, hold intercourse with so worthless a parent.”

“Can it be permitted to a child,” said Caroline, “to cast off a parent?”

“He has cast you off,” returned Mr. Fitzosborn. “There is contamination, there is destruction, in communion with such an one; you must not hold it: and be not disturbed by the prohibition. The man that abandoned you in your childhood, and has robbed you in your youth, is no father—he has not the affections of one; he will not feel the regrets of one:—he loves you not. As he would have sold you to a worthless lord, so he will resign you to a rich uncle; careless of your happiness, as your principles, so that he can see you in a situation where you may gratify his avarice or ambition.”

“Suffer me to retire, sir,” said the trembling Caroline. “I am really unequal any longer to such discussions.”

Mr. Fitzosborn rang for Caroline’s maid; and giving her his arm, supported her himself to her chamber. There having seen that every accommodation that she could want or wish awaited her, he pressed her tenderly to his heart.—“Be yourself, my dearest child,” said he—“the storm is past; let us rejoice in the sunshine.” And so saying, he left her.

But, alas! the storm was not passed with Caroline; her mind had received wounds, such as not even the returning favour of her uncle, and still less his intended bounty, could heal. In having exposed the infamy of her father, however involuntarily, she felt

culpable: and in the certainty which she now thought she had of Edward's attachment to another she felt miserable. Impenetrable as was the veil that hung over the nature of his connection with Miss Evelyn, she could not doubt but that it was grounded upon mutual affection; and confounded as she was with the inconsistency between such an affection, and the ardent and enthusiastic attachment which he manifested towards herself, she could not hesitate to decide where the preference lay; for Miss Evelyn was taken, and Caroline was left. While there remained any hope of retaining for Edward the favour of Mr. Fitzosborn, Caroline had lost, in the activity with which she had pursued this object, all consciousness of how much her own happiness depended upon Edward. In the belief which she had for some time entertained that she was not less dear to him than he was to her, she had fostered, unknown to herself, a hope that they would one day be united; and in the prospect, so nearly realized, of his becoming the heir of Henhurst, she thought she had seen the fulfilment of this hope. She had awoke from this dream of happiness to the sad reality of Edward's degradation; of his ruined fortunes, and his alienated heart: yet grief and compassion made up all her feelings. She could not complain, for he had never told that he loved, had never sought to obtain her love: she could not condemn, for she believed him innocent; she believed him more than innocent; she gave him credit for what she did not understand, and she glorified him for what she thought she did understand. Yet she had lost him, even as a friend had lost him: for while so disgraceful a mystery hung over his actions, all intercourse between them must cease; and she could not but expect that he would emerge from this mystery only as the husband of another. If she endeavoured to escape from the pain of these reflections she was met with the sense of her father's depravity, and the disclosure of his shame. She was herself to tell the story of both to one whose just indignation and abhorrence would be softened by no partiality of affection, by no sympathy with the weakness of humanity. While thus to do seemed, to her feeling and compassionate heart, a little less offence against the sacredness of filial duty than that act which drew after it the curse of unborn nations.

For this disclosure she was now to prepare herself; and she endeavoured to do so by turning her thoughts to that Source of bounty from whence for ever flow the streams of benevolence and consolation.

On her knees she recommended herself to God; to him she appealed, as a witness how reluctantly she had betrayed the errors of a parent. She prayed for that parent—she acknowledged the mercies that were still around her; and she arose consoled, strengthened, and composed.

When she attended her uncle he was, notwithstanding her newly-regained sedateness, struck with the alteration that a few hours of such severe agitation had produced in her countenance.

He pressed her tenderly to his heart. "This unworthy lover! This unnatural father!" said he, in a voice of compassion, "how they destroy you! We must have done with them both, my Caroline; and that we may, you shall now give all those details with which I must be acquainted; and then shall not the name of either be ever more uttered between us. Remember the condition on which this ring rests upon your finger. If Edward is not 'a worthless coxcomb,' he is a still more reprehensible character. His distinguished intellect, the boasted rectitude of his principles, his power of self-controul, so long manifested, and now so woefully overborne, colour his dereliction of the right way with a

deeper hue of depravity than can attach to any of the sins of a mere coxcomb. I must not have your happiness broken in upon by a nourished partiality for such a person.”

This speech nearly overcame the firmness of Caroline; yet she replied—“Nor shall it, my dear uncle. The virtues of Edward have been the objects of my love. He is not yet convicted of vice; my approbation, therefore, need not be withdrawn; but my love,” added she, blushing, “shall never voluntarily be given to that man whose heart I cannot now doubt is another’s.”

“Had he either heart or eyes,” said Mr. Fitzosborn peevishly, “there was but one woman in the world that he could have loved. But let us talk of him no more:—unconvicted, as you say he is, of vice, I could sooner believe that water flowed from fire than that actions such as his sprung from virtue.”

Caroline felt that the present was not the moment in which she could hope successfully to combat with her uncle’s prejudices; she was therefore silent, till called upon to fulfil the painful task of vilifying her father. This she did with all the mildness possible, consistent with truth: but the facts themselves were so loaded with infamy, that it is not surprising if the high, strong virtue of Mr. Fitzosborn sent forth sounds which nearly annihilated the trembling Caroline.

He talked of prosecution, of punishment, of reprobation here and hereafter, till she sunk almost lifeless at his feet; while with uplifted eyes and hands she strove to deprecate an anger, which in its unchecked course must have swept away at once the innocent and the guilty.

Mr. Fitzosborn, little used to such violence of emotion, when called to recollection by the agonies of Caroline, looked back on the storm which had been raised within him with surprise and contrition.

“I am wrong,” said he, endeavouring to sooth Caroline, “thus to suffer myself to be transported by any display of vice committed by unsanctified man; that child of sin, that storehouse of evil! I am more wrong thus to distress you, my injured, my virtuous child! for you are virtuous, as virtuous as a human creature can be. I will therefore so far respect your weakness as to forego that strictness of justice by which such turpitude, such abandonment of all that is just, and good, and holy; such alienation from all that is honourable in man, of all that is incumbent on a Christian, ought to be punished. But let us hear of no more hesitation; no more doubts whether such a parent should be cast off. There is defilement in the very wish to hold further intercourse with such an one. I take on myself the task of telling him that you have done with him.”

Caroline was as unable as she felt it was fruitless to make any reply; she therefore submitted in silence. And Mr. Fitzosborn having taken two or three turns about the room, as if to collect his thoughts and calm his feelings, after a few moments reseated himself, and taking a pen, wrote the following:

“In learning that I am fully informed of the whole of your conduct with respect to your daughter, you will look to the just consequence of such a disclosure—prosecution, punishment, infamy: that such effects do not follow you owe only to her whom you abandoned in your youth, and whom you have cheated and beggared in her riper years. In sacrificing justice to filial piety I extend my respect for the feelings of your daughter to the utmost limit. Henceforth all communication between you must cease; you have no longer a child, Caroline has no longer a father. You have broken every tie of nature; you

have made it a question whether there are any such, wretched man that thou art! Repent, if thou canst; or, as thou hast lived in vice, thou must die in misery.”

Caroline shrunk back with horror from so harsh an annunciation. “He will repent!” said she. “My uncle! he will repent.”

“I pray Heaven it may be so!” said Mr. Fitzosborn, fervently: “and here let the subject be at rest for ever. This has been a day of no common discomposure: but it is past. We have had to do with the wicked; let us be thankful that we have escaped the contagion. We have each a plain duty before us; I to repair the injustice that I and others have done you, you to disentangle your affections from the controul of a man who is not worthy of them. My work of reparation will begin by restoring you the independence that has been so basely stolen from you. No disclaimings,” cried he, seeing that Caroline was about to interrupt him; “I could take no delight in your kindness, I could feel no confidence in your apparent virtues, were you to be the creature of my daily bounty. My taste in happiness has a high relish; it requires the kind offices of disinterestedness; the obedience of independence; the manifestation of excellence that looks for no reward. By making you independent of pecuniary favour I may suffer from your unkindness, but I do not expose myself to your falsehood. Believing you rich, when in fact you were poor, I was led to take a wrong estimate of the liberality of your mind. In keeping you poor I should lose the best means of rectifying this mistake:—as my almoner you might be lavish, as your own you can only be generous. Nor can you, without a settled and liberal income, bring into action the various and often contradictory virtues of prudence and benevolence, of self-denial, and a due regard to appearances. As I had intended to have tried Edward, by exposing him to all the temptations of affluence, and all the assailants that declared heirship to riches give rise to, so do I intend to try you. The final issue must depend upon your own conduct, and so it should do were you the offspring of my very self. In keeping you in the beggary to which you have been reduced I should throw too much weight into one scale; by restoring you to the affluence which you have been accustomed to consider as your right, I give all the qualities, good and bad, of your head and heart, fair play: they cannot be repressed by servile fear; they cannot be disturbed by mercenary hope. I know what I expect from you; but that I have such expectations will not, I think, make part of your motive for action, I would not have it. You will receive in a few days securities for thirty thousand pounds; and take care,” added he, with a kind of bitter smile, “that you guard them better than you did the last. The first self-abandonment was virtue; the second would be vice.”

Caroline attempted to express her gratitude, and the high sense she had of a manner of thinking so generously singular; but Mr. Fitzosborn stopt her:—“No words upon this subject, it is not worth it. Having told you what I intend to do, you will make your arrangements accordingly—and there is an end of the matter.”

At length this stormy and memorable day came to a close, and Caroline, on reviewing the events of it, knew not whether she should applaud or condemn herself, on finding that they had brought to her no accession of happiness. Was it weakness, or a praiseworthy disinterestedness, that refused to accept of a restitution to fortune, to the good opinion and unchecked love of her uncle, as a compensation for the loss that Edward had sustained of all these? and a conviction that his heart never had been, never could be hers? Was the cloud that hung over his virtues a just or allowable

counterbalance in the scale of happiness for the recovered power of the free exercise of her own? Or, referring to another cause for the dejection of her mind, was the *discovery* of her father's vices more grievous to her than the knowledge of them?

In much dissatisfactory meditation of this kind did Caroline pass the hours of a sleepless night; but though dissatisfactory, it was not useless. It called her attention to the inward workings of her mind, and led to that energy of action in which true virtue consists. For the result of all her self-examination was a conviction that the happiness to which she had to look forward must rather arise from the gratification that she could procure to others, than any that could apply personally to herself.

The revolution that had taken place in the purposes of Mr. Fitzosborn produced a great and very visible change in the economy of Henhurst. As the whole concerns of the household were regulated with much ceremony, the declared heiress was not to step into her place silently and undistinguished. Mr. Fitzosborn gave orders that the apartment which had been his mother's should be prepared for Caroline. He appointed the housekeeper to take her orders from her; the bill of fare was submitted to her inspection; the servants were informed that they were to consider her as their lady; and, in addition to her own footman, a servant out of livery was assigned her. Mr. Fitzosborn also declared that he would henceforth receive the visits of the neighbourhood.

"I shall no longer live to myself," said he: "in having made Henhurst the permanent abode of Caroline, I must render it such a home as will enable her to mix with the rest of her species. I do not mean her for a recluse: I repeat that Caroline must marry—she must therefore see and be seen."

Such intimations were no sooner given than profited by. The neighbourhood was emulous who should first, and most, shew respect to the newly declared heiress. The singular character of Mr. Fitzosborn, a mansion so long shut up from observation, excited universal curiosity, perhaps even more than the beauty and graces of Caroline; but united, the attraction was universal. There were mothers who had daughters somewhat past younger hopes that thought Mr. Fitzosborn might still marry. There were fathers who, knowing that Caroline was the best match in the country, thought none more worthy of the prize than his own son. There were young ladies who wished to know how an heiress of fifteen thousand pounds a year dressed, and young gentlemen who longed to shew how well they were in their own esteem. Some came because they had heard their mothers talk of the gay days they had spent at Henhurst in their youth; others in hopes of the gayeties that were yet to come. All sought their own amusement or interest, and all therefore were eager in the pursuit.

Caroline received this motley concourse with equal dignity and ease; and the modest simplicity with which she attended to the various wishes of her various guests contrasted well with the more stately civility and ceremonious politeness of Mr. Fitzosborn. All declared themselves charmed with Caroline; for, from the praise of youth, beauty, and obligingness, none dared openly to dissent. But Mr. Fitzosborn underwent some criticism; the young ladies, almost without exception, thought him "a gig" and "quiz." The mothers were more tolerant, though they allowed that he had "some strange notions." Some of the gentlemen dreaded his severity, and others applauded his goodness, and admired the vigour of his understanding; but while his table was well served, and Caroline sat at the head of it, neither his gigism or his severity were likely to render it unfurnished with guests.

So public a declaration in favour of Caroline, at the very period when Edward's conduct was the subject of general animadversion, connected her exaltation with his disgrace so pointedly as to give her the most sensible uneasiness; and rendered what was in itself little pleasing to her so insupportably irksome, that she earnestly entreated her uncle that there might be some cessation to the visits and visitings in which they were at present perpetually engaged. But the impulse was given, and poor Caroline found herself compelled to go on with equal weariness and perseverance. Nor was it only at Henhurst that the change in Caroline's fortune produced a very powerful sensation. She was inundated with letters from town, written by those with whom, while she continued there, she scarcely interchanged the civility of a courtesy; and obliged to reply to professions of the warmest esteem from those who, for the last five months, seemed to have forgotten her existence. She had to repel hints how agreeable an invitation to Henhurst would be, and to discountenance malice, which sought to conciliate her favour by censure on Edward. Amongst these volumes of MS. so little honourable to the writers and so wearisome to Caroline, a letter from Lady Enville deserves to be distinguished. Many weeks had passed since she had last written; and the reports which, during that period, had been so generally prevalent that Mr. Edward Fitzosborn was the certain favourite of his uncle, and that he was at once to be the heir of Henhurst and the husband of Caroline, had in fact caused Caroline to be as little thought of as noticed by Lady Enville. But Edward's star seemed now to be set, and thus she hailed the rising sun.

"I have no apprehension that my dearest child will not be able to distinguish between the adulatory but hollow attentions which your present good fortune will expose you to, and the affectionate expressions of genuine love. You will not confound this paper, which brings you the warmest congratulations from all of the name of Enville, with the many others that you will receive on the present occasion, and which deserve not to be remembered beyond the moment in which they are read. You must also give us credit, my dear Caroline, for the sagacity of our predictions. Did I not always foretell that you would be the heiress of Henhurst? Could it be otherwise when your virtues were under the daily observation of so good and so discerning a man as Mr. Fitzosborn? I believe nothing of the rumour that you owe his immediate declaration in your favour to his disappointment in the character of Mr. Edward Fitzosborn; probably he always knew him better than we any of us did. What a complete hypocrite! It is really horrible to think of such depravity! How he can show his face any where is my astonishment. A coward! I am sure, my dear Caroline, you have blushed for the degeneracy of so near a relation; but it can reflect no disgrace upon you. I can scarcely expect to be believed, except by one who so well knows my scrupulous veracity, when I tell you there are people who vindicate him. Mr. Beaumont, who you so wisely refused, is amongst the number; but though he is a man of so large a fortune, and so well descended, he is a man of very narrow notions. They will have it that there is more courage in braving the opinion of the world in the performance of a duty, than in putting a life to the hazard. What nonsense! And that whether he is innocent or guilty with respect to Miss Evelyn (who would have thought that she could have so demeaned herself?) the killing her brother, or being killed himself, would not have mended the matter. And I can assure you such reasoning so upholds him, that he walks about with as much effrontery as if he had done every thing that a man of honour ought. If such doctrines prevail, there will be an end of all society.

What is it that people will not do and say to each other when they are no longer afraid of being challenged for it? I am sure I shall never forgive this bad Edward for the distress that he has brought upon the poor Evelyns. You know how much we owe them. Every thing that Charles has, or looks to have, depends upon Lord Evelyn; and when I think that it was Charles who introduced Edward into the family I am half distracted. But this, however, I must say, that poor, dear Lady Evelyn never did instil a proper pride into her daughters, and so the matter is the less to be wondered at. Charles is going on very well. How different his little misfortunes, or call them mistakes, to the steady unworthiness of Edward, who really cannot blush for his faults, public as they are. Charles will rejoice in your good fortune: so indeed do we all. All, did I say? No, there is one exception: my poor Pynsynt! He trembles lest there should now be less hope for him than ever; but I endeavour to keep up his spirits. So constant and so disinterested a passion as his will not ultimately go without its reward. You see how little the *sober* young men are to be depended upon. Edward has cured me for ever of my taste for sober young men. I hope your uncle will trust you with me in town next winter; and then, my dear, if you can find a more worthy or more constant lover than Pynsynt, you shall have my consent to take him. My lord and the girls join me in all manner of kindnesses. If Mr. Fitzosborn will do us the favour to accept our best compliments, pray present them to him.

Ever yours,

“HARRIET ENVILLE.”

This disjointed rhapsody, this medley of affected feeling and real insensibility, disgusted at once and amused Caroline. It astonished Mr. Fitzosborn, who could not conceive the mixture of shallowness and art that it betrayed; and he looked with still greater admiration on Caroline when he saw the purity and truth that she had preserved amidst such examples of duplicity and depravity. This letter had the still happier effect of rekindling in the mind of Mr. Fitzosborn some sparks of his former good opinion of Edward. In mere contradiction to Lady Enville he sought to see his conduct in the most favourable light possible, and he could not but allow that the character which she wholly condemned must have some merit in it. Caroline received another letter upon the present occasion which she did not dare to communicate to her uncle; it was from her father, and he thus wrote.

“Forbidden as I have been on the most injurious suppositions, and in the haughtiest and most authoritative tone, to hold any communication with my own child, I am not such a monster as to be insensible to the good that has befallen her, nor sufficiently master of myself to forbear telling her so. No, my Caroline, the desolated heart of your poor father has never known a real joy since you were snatched from his eyes, till he learnt, from common fame learnt it, (how reconcile you this to filial duty?) that the first wish of his heart, the exaltation of his child, was accomplished. How many sacrifices have I made to attain this one point! and for which I am branded with the imputation of having abandoned my child. I abandoned her indeed, but it was to better hopes and higher fortunes than I had to give. To secure her happiness I have deprived myself of her society: nor do I complain of the latter, since I have so fully accomplished the former. Accept, my dearest Caroline, my most sincere congratulations: be not led away by the misrepresentations even of one who you must undoubtedly consider as your

best friend. Our little account will sometime be settled; and that so satisfactorily, that you will have reason to acknowledge the prudence as well as the affection with which I am,

“Ever yours,

“A FITZOSBORN.”

While the good sense of Caroline was offended by the meanness and hypocrisy of this letter, her heart was not wholly untouched by the professions of fatherly regard which it contained, and still more by its freedom from reproach on a point of her own conduct to which she could not reconcile herself. She was happy that the letter required no answer, and that her disobedience to her uncle's will extended no farther than to having read it.

The first use that Caroline made of the affluence to which she was restored was to renew her engagement with Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn, with whom it was her earnest wish to become acquainted; but she feared that Mr. Fitzosborn's prejudices against this lady were not to be shaken, and while it was evidently and avowedly his wish that the son should be forgotten, she lost all hope that he would suffer her to be known to the mother. Yet Caroline languished to have some friend of her own sex in whom she could confide, and with whom she could communicate. In the mother and sisters of Edward she believed that she might have found such friends: from them, too, she might hope to learn truly something of him, of his pursuits, of his happiness, of his projects; as to all of which she was now in profound ignorance. It is true that she often found his name in her letters from town; but she found it there only to increase her uneasiness. All agreed in the certainty of his attachment to Miss Evelyn; in astonishment and condemnation that he had not yet married her; and in sarcasms upon a man who feared alike to fight the brother, or marry the sister.

If Caroline had her chagrins on her side, Mr. Fitzosborn had his disappointments on his. He had supposed that by opening his house to the young and the gay he had secured a number of candidates for the hand of Caroline, from which it would be no difficult task to select one equally acceptable to himself and his niece. He was astonished to find that not one young man presented himself that he could with patience have seen the husband of Caroline. He had abundance of proposals it is true for the heiress, from whence he could have formed settlements as splendid and lucrative as his heart, or a much more mercenary heart than his, could have wished; but he saw not one young man who realized his idea of a lover worthy of the beauty and the virtues of his Caroline. All were so taken up with themselves, so careless of others, so confident of success, so apparently indifferent whether they attained it, that Mr. Fitzosborn was indeed convinced that the “age of gallantry” was gone. If from the manners he proceeded to the scrutiny of the heart and the principles, he had there an equal disappointment. He found their good qualities confined to a lazy good nature, which, while it tolerated every folly and every vice, reserved all its moral acumen for virtue, and a kind of bastard benevolence, which gave to charity what it denied to justice, without effort, without discrimination, or self-denial. For principles he vainly sought. He heard, indeed, of what belonged to “the gentleman,” and the “man of honour;” but he found that riot and misrule might consist with the one, and servility and time-serving with the other. Of religion, action-directing, heart-seated religion, he found not a trace. It was not even assumed as the motive for any

one virtue, or allowed as a restraint upon any one vice. For the church, indeed, he heard warm advocates; but for God and the religion of Christ not one.

“Are all men of the present age,” said he to Caroline, “like these?”

“Not *all*,” said Caroline, with a sigh.

“Why, child, at this rate you must go unmarried to your grave. It is not colder than such lovers as these.”

“My dear uncle,” said Caroline, smiling, “marriage is now a matter of calculation and arrangement, not of love. Now you and I do not like such marriages: do let me remain your little nun, and let us cease to trouble ourselves with the thoughts of matrimony.”

“Caroline, you must marry; and you must marry a man who loves you, and who is worthy of you. Ill as I think of the human kind, I still believe that such an one is to be had, and I will never rest till I have found him; but as to these snow-souled automatons we’ll have none of them.”

To this decision Caroline gave a very hearty concurrence; but her assent was not quite so prompt, when, in a few days afterwards, Mr. Fitzosborn said to her, “Caroline, will you allow Mr. Beaumont to visit me?”

“Allow, my dear uncle! what a word!”

“Certainly your lovers do not use you to such a style of deference,” replied he gaily; “yet perhaps they may have in their hearts as much submission to your will as myself: for the fact is, Mr. Beaumont *must* be allowed to come to Henhurst.”

“It would be strange indeed,” returned Caroline, “if I should make any objection to any guest whatever who you wished to see in this house.”

“But, child,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “you look very grave: a smiling assent is alone of any value.”

“Indeed, sir,” said Caroline, “I do not know that I have any thing to do with either giving or withholding my assent—your pleasure is the whole in this matter. Mr. Beaumont’s visit can be nothing to me.”

“Then,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, playfully taking her hand, “give me this ring. It is no longer yours,” added he, half drawing it from her finger.

“I have not yet lost my right to it,” said Caroline very seriously, and replacing the ring.

“Give me one smile, Caroline,” said her uncle: “my heart is overflowing with the most agreeable anticipations, and you damp all my joy by your grave looks.”

“Oh, my uncle, forgive me! forgive this cold heart! All that delights you shall delight me, *if possible*,” added she, with a sigh.

“Well then, let us talk a little of Mr. Beaumont,” said Mr. Fitzosborn. “He writes me word here, that having understood from various quarters that I once again see my neighbours, he presumes to hope that he may be allowed to visit Henhurst for a few days; and then, like a flatterer as he is, he talks of the pleasant hours that he remembers in his childhood when he visited Henhurst with his father, and how he shall delight in paying his respects to his father’s friend: but he says not a word of the niece of his father’s friend, so you need not be frightened, child.”

Caroline had never seen her uncle so gay; but she too plainly understood the nature of his happy anticipations to be gay in consequence. Yet she strove to smile, to be

pleased, to trifle: yet often she looked upon the ring, and said to herself, "It is not yet forfeited."

"Describe Mr. Beaumont to me," said Mr. Fitzosborn: "when I saw him, boy as he then was, he resembled more his mother than his father; perhaps added years have better given the resemblance that I should have preferred."

Caroline drew the wished-for portrait; and Fitzosborn cried out with increased pleasure, "Yes, yes! he *is* like his father; that dark and fire-darting eye, that animation of speech and manner are all his father's! Did I not tell you that all men are not isicles?"

"Upon my word, my dear uncle," said Caroline, "I do not know you this morning. What am I to think of this predilection for fire and flame?"

"That I would have you warmed, my child," returned he: "your blood flows too slowly, your heart beats too low."

"Alas!" thought Caroline, "it is not Mr. Beaumont that can raise or quicken me."

Mr. Beaumont lost no time in availing himself of Mr. Fitzosborn's gracious acceptance of his offered visit, and he was received with all the pleasure and regard that he could wish.

Such were the charms of his manners and conversations, and such appeared to be the rectitude of his feelings and the strength of his understanding, that could Caroline have forgotten the pretensions which she had once manifested, and the wishes which she knew her uncle now entertained, she would have rejoiced in such an addition to their family party. There was nothing in Mr. Beaumont's address at this time that could remind Caroline of the lover; but there was so marked a partiality to all she said and did, so much affectionate deference to her wishes and opinions, and so gay a delight when he had reason to suppose that he had succeeded in his attempts to please her, that she could not but be aware that it depended wholly upon herself to convert so warm an admirer into whatever she chose to make him. She endeavoured so to unite kindness and reserve as at once to appear grateful for the distinction he paid her, and to repress all hope of any return beyond that which friendship can bestow. It was difficult, however, to draw with precision the boundary line between appearances so similar as those which proceed in a delicate female mind from friendship or from love. While Caroline continued to smile it was not unpardonable in Mr. Beaumont, or unreasonable in her uncle, to hope that she smiled from the complacency of reciprocal affection.

Mr. Beaumont had now been at Henhurst for nearly a week, when one morning finding himself alone with Caroline:—"I am going to make you a very extraordinary confession," said he, "and to exhibit a still more extraordinary expectation: yet I am not prepared for either anger or disappointment. May I go on?"

There was nothing in these words that could naturally lead Caroline to expect a renewed declaration of love: yet she certainly did expect it. She coloured, she hesitated—"You know, sir—I have said—I should be sorry——"

"No, my dear madam," said Mr. Beaumont, interrupting her, "you would not be sorry, I am sure, to assist me in reinstating your cousin Edward in the favour of Mr. Fitzosborn; and I am not afraid to confess to you that this was the primary object of my visit to Henhurst. So much for my confession and my expectations."

"And why," said Caroline, relieved from her embarrassment, "why should either the one or the other be extraordinary?"

“When applied to you,” returned Mr. Beaumont, “I acknowledge there is nothing in either which supposes any thing beyond the common mode of action; but to what other single human being should I dare to confess that my purpose was to deprive her of the inheritance of hundreds of thousands; or to acknowledge my expectation that she would aid me in such a project?”

“I hope,” said Caroline, “there is not only one, but many human beings, the majority of human beings, I trust, who would be happy to assist in an act of justice; and who would be grateful to those who gave them an opportunity of doing so.”

“I know not that we can strictly call this an act of justice,” returned Mr. Beaumont. “Between two relations so equally connected with him Mr. Fitzosborn has certainly a right to make his election: but having once chosen, and declared his choice, the motive on which he recalls it ought to be unequivocal and established.”

“My uncle,” replied Caroline, “believes he acts on such a motive.”

“The unworthiness of the person chosen?” said Mr. Beaumont. “But how is his unworthiness established? Not, surely, in the opinion of Mr. Fitzosborn, by a refusal to break at once the laws of his country and his God? By refusing to take the life of a fellow creature, or to lose his own? It is time, my dear Miss Fitzosborn, that maxims so barbarous, so unchristian, should be discouraged; that false honour should be distinguished from true. He is the man of courage that braves disgrace in the performance of his duty, not he who cowardly flies to death to escape shame. Edward is this man, and he deserves rather a statue to be erected to his heroism than that he should be branded with cowardice.”

“My uncle,” said Caroline, in a tremulous voice, “does not object cowardice to Edward.”

“I did believe as much,” said Mr. Beaumont.—“There is another charge; and, unfortunately, one that he cannot be exonerated from while he wraps himself up in silence and mystery. But that Edward should be at once a seducer of female innocence, and the man who embraces disgrace rather than crime, I cannot believe; and it is the duty of candour, of Christian charity, in this case to reason from what is known to that which is concealed; to believe that the same fountain cannot send forth sweet and bitter water; nor that Edward can be at one and the same time a Christian martyr and a villain.”

The bright glow of pleasure that lighted up the countenance of Caroline, on so animated a defence of the character of the man whose virtues she so highly prized, might have revealed the secret of her heart to Mr. Beaumont, had he at that moment had any attention but for the cause he was advocating.

“No, my dear madam,” continued he, “the thing is impossible. Struck with this impossibility, when first the gossiping world conveyed to my ears the painful tale, I sought the intimate acquaintance of a man who I considered as the example and ornament of his age. So high was his reputation before this period for all that dignifies human nature, that I had long desired the honour of his friendship: but our walks in life were different; and, but here I was probably mistaken, I thought I saw a reluctance in Edward to admit me to any intimacy. I would not obtrude myself; but when, unfortunately, something of support and countenance were wanted, I could no longer be restrained by an notion of etiquette or form. I owed it to my fellow creatures to bear a public testimony of approbation to a conduct fraught with so many temporal and eternal advantages, and which only wants to be regarded as *true honour* to be established on the ruins of that

sanguinary usurper, to whom so many victims are daily sacrificed. I went directly to my point. I left my card at Mr. Edward Fitzosborn's chambers, inclosed in a paper, on which I had written these words: 'Mr. Beaumont aspires to the honour of an acquaintance, and he presumes to add, to the friendship of a man who has dared, with a heroism so genuine, to be the example of the age in which he lives. If Mr. Fitzosborn should consider Mr. Beaumont's pretensions as too high, yet he flatters himself that Mr. Fitzosborn will not wholly disappoint him.' What do you think, my dear madam, of my boldness? Was your relation too condescending in granting me *all* that I had so confidently asked in allowing me to become his friend?"

"I think, sir," said Caroline, with the smile of an angel, while an unheeded tear strayed down her cheek, "you did honour to yourself and to human nature."

"Well then, my dear madam," said Mr. Beaumont, with an eye sparkling with delight, "from this hour Mr. Fitzosborn and I have been scarcely asunder; and I can now pronounce, on my own knowledge, that he well deserves the character for every worthy quality which he had obtained: that his heart and his understanding are the repositories of all that adorn the gentleman, and all that discriminates the Christian. He is at once acute and mild; at once spirited and temperate; tremblingly alive to every affection, master of every passion. No, my dear madam, we must not suffer such a man to be branded by the mark of disgrace, to be beggared by the mistakes of prejudice; we must restore the rightful heir to Henhurst, even at the cost of its lovely heiress."

"To this design," said Caroline eagerly, "I will set my foot even so far as who goes farthest."

"And may I seal our compact on this fair hand?" said Mr. Beaumont, gently raising the not reluctant hand of Caroline to his lips.

Mr. Beaumont retired from this conference with a heart overflowing with the most delightful hopes, and more than ever in love with Caroline, who had gone beyond his most daring expectations in the alacrity and disinterestedness with which she had bound herself to the cause of Edward: a disinterestedness which he would have found still more pure had he penetrated the secret of her heart. But of this he had no suspicion; for as he thought he had a proof that Edward was not attached to Caroline, so had it never occurred to him that Caroline was attached to Edward. Her former rejection of himself he imputed to some entanglement with Mr. Pynsynt, from whence, as he now believed her disengaged, he indulged himself in dreams of every happiness that auspicious fortune and mutual love can bestow.

Caroline, on her side, was scarcely less pleased. To restore Edward to fortune and to favour was the first wish of her heart; and to find that she, who was to lose so much by such a restoration, was considered by a man of Mr. Beaumont's merit as the fit instrument by which to accomplish it, so agreeably and so justifiably flattered her self-love, that she scarcely remembered, in the whole course of her life, a more delightful moment.

Let it be remembered that it was by "calling things by their right names" that Caroline was enabled to accomplish so complete a victory over every mercenary, every personal consideration.

Mr. Beaumont's next attack was upon Mr. Fitzosborn: but to subdue prejudice he found would be a more difficult task than to influence generosity.

If the mystery that hung over the conduct of Edward gave room for the operation of Mr. Beaumont's candour, in the possibility it allowed of innocence, it served equally, in the more severe mind of Mr. Fitzosborn, as the probable covert of guilt: if Mr. Beaumont argued that the man who preferred his duty in one instance to his reputation in the world could not be a villain in another, Mr. Fitzosborn rebutted the conclusion, by supposing Edward at once a seducer and a coward: if Mr. Beaumont brought the tenor of Edward's whole life in evidence against such a solution of the enigma, Mr. Fitzosborn called in hypocrisy on the other side; and, at length, knitting his brows, he said—"I have heard you, sir, hitherto with more patience than the subject deserves; we must have done with it. I have not acted but upon what I consider nearly as demonstration; I shall not alter my decisions upon a possibility: and I must tell you, sir, that this so eager endeavour to restore probable guilt to my favour, to the exclusion of established virtue, astonishes me in a man of your reputed probity, or, I might have said, of common gallantry."

"I understand you, sir," returned Mr. Beaumont; "but it is not my insensibility to that virtue, but the just homage that I pay to its superiority, that has encouraged me to undertake a cause which must indeed have been hopeless without such a support. If I had believed Miss Fitzosborn less than an angel I should not have entered your house with a hope of engaging her to assist me in disinheriting herself: but I conceived that I had a certainty of finding Miss Fitzosborn an advocate for suffering merit, though at the expense of her own interest. I have not been mistaken: she exceeds all that I had imagined of generosity and disinterestedness: that which you have refused to me I still hope will be granted to her. Her pleadings must be irresistible."

"Your hope is ill founded," replied Mr. Fitzosborn; "I can resist Caroline when Caroline pleads against herself."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Beaumont, "suffer me to open my whole heart to you: that heart has long been in the possession of your lovely niece. Before she had the happiness of being under your protection I offered it to her, with all I had beside to give: the offering was rejected; but from such a cause as, I am persuaded, no longer exists. In presuming to offer myself as your guest, my first purpose was to endeavour to reinstate my friend Edward in your favour: my next, to lay my fortune and my person at the feet of Miss Fitzosborn. It is not the heiress I seek, it is the woman that I love; but with this woman, all lovely, all excellent as she is, I could scarcely be happy if she brought me that fortune which I acknowledge (forgive me, my dear sir, if I am impertinent) I consider as the right of another. Give, then, your estate to Edward, but give the beloved Caroline to me. I am rich enough to gratify, and more than gratify, all her wishes; and she is dearer to me in the virtuous poverty to which she has reduced herself than she would be as empress of the globe."

"Miss Fitzosborn," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, with a stately air, "is not poor: whether she be my heiress or not, she will bring to whomsoever she honours with her hand a fortune not unworthy of any man."

"I see," said Mr. Beaumont, "that I am taking liberties, and that you think so, sir; but, pray forgive my frankness if I please myself with thinking that I am speaking to a father. I cannot surely have been misinformed as to a transaction which places Miss Fitzosborn's filial merits so high."

"Whatever you may have heard, sir," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, "you may be assured that my niece is at once affluent and independent. She is the probable heiress of

Henhurst, since her being so depends upon her perseverance in all that is right: she is the certain possessor of thirty thousand pounds, even if she should deviate into all that is wrong.”

“I am not,” replied Mr. Beaumont, “so romantic as to like a woman the worse for having thirty thousand pounds; but I should certainly prefer her who had sacrificed such a sum to the demand of duty, to her who had retained at the expense of duty.”

“Well, sir,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “the moral tact of my niece is high enough to satisfy even your idea of excellence; and if you can prevail with her to give you her hand, you need not shrink from the riches it will bring with it. It is honest wealth, it will wear well.”

“Have I your permission, sir,” said Mr. Beaumont, with eagerness, “to try to gain so high a prize?”

“Not only my permission,” returned Mr. Fitzosborn, “but my earnest wishes for your success. I will speak as plainly as yourself. To see you the husband of Caroline has been the first wish of my heart since I heard of you, and knew her. It might have been supposed that I should have wished to unite the only two competitors for my property that I could at all think worthy of it; but my thoughts flow not in the common channel. A marriage of negotiation and arrangement is, in my mind, a kind of profanation. Caroline, when I first knew her, was richer than I wished the wife of my heir to be; perhaps the stock from which she immediately sprang did not please me. I wished not to restore, by means of the daughter, the birthright that the father had not scrupled to sell; I had prejudices to her mother’s family; in a word, I had my reasons why I did not, while Edward was worthy of my care, wish Caroline the wife of Edward: I can still less wish it now. To an alliance with you I can have no such objections; you are, it is true, richer than I should have wished the husband of the heiress of Henhurst to be: I do not love cumulative wealth, but where all the rest is as it should be, this may be overlooked.”

“Not overlooked, my dear sir,” said Mr. Beaumont; “let it be removed.”

“No more,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, frowning: “I must tell you, sir, that this indiscreet, this incomprehensible intercession has already lessened you in my opinion; if it is persisted in it may change it altogether. But,” continued he, in a softer tone, “what hopes have you of success with Caroline? what reason has she given you to think that the cause of her former rejection is removed?”

“I know that the alleged cause does not exist,” returned Mr. Beaumont: “my hopes of success are, however, perhaps founded upon vanity. They certainly spring from the complacency, the graciousness with which I am at present honoured by Miss Fitzosborn.”

“If Caroline is the good girl I take her to be,” replied Mr. Fitzosborn, “you will find no difficulty; but I am afraid that the best of women in these matters are not determined by merit.”

Mr. Beaumont acknowledged the compliment with a bow, but it planted a dagger in his heart; something of the real truth flashed upon him. The unnecessary exposition that Mr. Fitzosborn had made of his disapprobation of an union between Caroline and Edward; his sturdy adherence to his opinion of Edward’s unworthiness; his absolute refusal to admit of any intercession in his favour, awakened a suspicion that he might not only condemn him as a man, but dread him as the object of Caroline’s favour. On the other hand, if her fervent desire to restore him to affluence and the affection of his uncle

might be supposed to argue a partiality on her part, the avowal and indulgence of his love for another, which would follow such a restoration, seemed to say that it could not be promoted by the woman who wished to secure him to herself. The disinterestedness that could resign the goods of fortune to the pleadings of justice and compassion Mr. Beaumont had given Caroline credit for; the greater abandonment of self in the resignation of a favoured lover to the arms of a rival he had not yet learnt to believe possible. Upon this impossibility he still retained, though not with so firm a grasp as before, his hopes of succeeding with Caroline.

On Mr. Beaumont's going from Mr. Fitzosborn he was met by Caroline. "What hopes," cried she, eagerly, "of success?"

"Success depends upon you, my dear madam," said Mr. Beaumont, yielding to an impulse of the moment that he could not resist. "Give this dear hand to me, oh! lovely and beloved Caroline! and with the other you shall present Henhurst to Edward."

"Are these," said Caroline, turning pale, "the terms on which my uncle will restore Edward to his favour?"

"I will not deceive you," said Mr. Beaumont; "Mr. Fitzosborn will listen to *no* terms: his rejection of Edward is absolute; but he would give me his lovely niece, and with her all his possessions. Do you but ratify the gift, and it shall depend wholly on your will who shall retain Henhurst."

"I cannot do this even for Edward," said Caroline, withdrawing her hand: "my uncle knows that I cannot."

"*Cannot!*" repeated Mr. Beaumont. "Oh! do not utter so killing a word! I am not hateful to you?"

"Far, far from it," replied Caroline; "your distinction honours me; your friendship is valuable to me: but I cannot be your wife."

"Then thus fall all my hopes of happiness," cried Mr. Beaumont. "I see my fate—I can urge my suit no farther. Farewell!"

Mr. Beaumont precipitately withdrew; and Caroline, surprised with the rapidity with which a matter of such moment to her happiness had been decided, scarcely believed that she was not in a dream.

Mr. Beaumont went directly to Mr. Fitzosborn, to report the final discomfiture of his hopes.

"I feared as much," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "Caroline is not yet an angel. Still the time may come when this absolute *cannot* shall be qualified, but it is not yet. Are you willing to wait its arrival?"

"To the last period of my life," replied Mr. Beaumont. "If I cannot have Caroline Fitzosborn, I will die a bachelor."

"You will then do unwisely," said Mr. Fitzosborn: "I have tried the experiment; it is a forlorn one. Of all passions, the passion for self is the least gratifying: of all cares, the care for self is the most wearing. I knew not what happiness was till my heart overflowed with tenderness for Caroline; and though the little gipsy has cost me many a pang, and will, I see, cost me many another, the constant interest that she affords my mind has given a relish to life of which I had not before a conception, and which I would not now resign for peace the most unbroken. But I hope this caution is unnecessary; I still hope to see you the husband of Caroline. I know how highly she values your virtues: she admires your talents; she likes your conversation: you must withdraw your claim as a lover, but

you must visit here as her uncle's friend: she, too, is just now under the fancy of dying a bachelor; but I trust that I shall see you both wiser, and of course happier."

Mr. Beaumont readily acquiesced in a proposal so agreeable to his wishes; for though he now entertained not a doubt but that Caroline's affections had been given to Edward, yet as he felt assured that the affection had never been reciprocal, he flattered himself that time, Edward's continued attachment to another, and the wishes of Mr. Fitzosborn, would lead to the accomplishment of all that he desired. He was however lost in astonishment when he compared the attractions of Miss Evelyn and Caroline at the unworthiness of Edward's choice, and never felt less disposed to acquit him of folly, or even of crime, than at the moment when he owed his own prospect of happiness to his being guilty either of one or the other.

Mr. Beaumont, though rejected by the niece, did not quit the house of the uncle; and he continued to be treated by both with very distinguished marks of regard.

Mr. Fitzosborn took no farther notice to Caroline of her rejection of a lover so acceptable to him than a half serious demand of the ring; to which Caroline made reply only by returning the diamond to her uncle, and remarking, "It has not yet lost its lustre."

While these things were going on at Henhurst, the career of Mr. Fitzosborn in vice, folly, and extravagance, was coming to a period in London. To satisfy his insatiable thirst for expense, the depredations that he had made on the fortunes of his daughter were not the only nefarious means to which he had had recourse: to meet the consequence of such deviations from integrity had been the imperious and irresistible impulse under which he had acted when he ventured to commit so daring a robbery on his child, as was his last transaction with Caroline. The relief had been short-lived; and had led so far into the discovery of the means by which it had been effected as had begun to stamp his name with infamy. The story spread: it was confirmed by innumerable circumstances; the disclosure became complete, and Mr. Fitzosborn found himself the object of universal reprobation and contempt. Had he still been able to have assembled his censurers around his festive board; could his table have been spread with its former delicacy; could his wines have flowed with the former copiousness; these disgraceful rumours might have been stifled in their birth, for few would have chosen to have believed that the man who could give such dinners was a villain. But his resources were stopt; his credit was at an end: and after in vain struggling for a few weeks to maintain his place in society a little longer, he beheld an execution in his house, and retiring to his closet, swallowed laudanum. No sooner had he thus consummated the work of self-destruction, than the image of an hereafter, which he had hitherto derided, arose to his mind in all the horrors in which guilt and despair could paint it. He called for aid; he entreated for life at the expense of honour, of fortune, of all that to the virtuous makes life valuable; but he intreated in vain: all that medical skill could do was to suspend for a short time the final stroke. Though the immediate effects of the poison were averted, the horrors he had undergone, the shock that his constitution had received were such that no hopes remained of preserving his life; his senses were already imperfect, and every hour might be his last.

The deplorable condition of her father was communicated to Caroline in the following letter from Mrs. Fitzosborn.

"I have bad news to send you, dear Miss Fitzosborn; but perhaps you won't think so, and to be sure nobody can wonder if you did not, for Mr. Fitzosborn has been a bad

father to you, as I always told you he would, but you would not take my advice: yet it is a sad thing for a daughter to forsake her father upon his death-bed, and to let him die, calling upon her, and she not to come near him. Indeed I do not think you will do so, and therefore I have thought proper to let you know that the doctors say he cannot live two days, and he says he can't die in peace except you forgive him. He should have thought of this before he took that wretched laudanum, but there's no help for all these things now. Times are sadly changed since you saw Sackville-street: an execution in the house, and I don't know what; for certainly it could not be expected that I should stay there after such sad doings; more especially as Mr. Fitzosborn would not suffer me to come near him, which is very strange and wrong. I am sure I am the sufferer, and I wish I had never been such a fool as to have married him; but that's nothing to the purpose. There are servants still in the house, and I believe you would not want for any thing if you were to come, or you might be at Lord Enville's. But all this as you please, or rather as your good uncle pleases; for without doubt you must do nothing which he does not like; I find his favour is all you have to look to. But I have done my duty in letting you know how matters are, and that's what concerns me, for you see what comes of neglecting one's duty.

“I am, dear Miss Fitzosborn,
“very affectionately yours,
“M. FITZOSBORN.”

Caroline received from other hands the same intelligence, conveyed in a more gentle way, but all agreed in shewing the indispensable call there was for her immediate attendance upon a dying and conscience-stricken parent. She hesitated not a moment to obey the call, nor did she anticipate from her uncle any opposition to the performance of a duty which appeared to her so legitimate and so urgent. What then was her astonishment and dismay when she heard him declare in the most peremptory terms that she should not quit Henhurst, that she should never again enter those doors which shut in her father!

“He is no parent!” cried he vehemently: “he has dissolved every tie of nature; he has violated every duty of society: never again shall you be exposed to his machinations. Of your pardon he must be assured, for he knows that you are a christian: to your soothings he has no right, they *ought* not to be of power to still the upbraidings of his conscience; they *cannot* have that power. You shall not be the victim of an effort which cannot avail to his consolation.”

“It may, it may avail!” cried Caroline: “if it should not, yet it must be made. I cannot here, my dearest uncle, submit to your will.”

“To my will,” returned Mr. Fitzosborn, with increasing violence, “you must submit, or follow your own at the peril of my favour for ever.”

“At the peril of your favour then let it be!” said Caroline, bursting into tears of the extremest anguish, and kissing at the same time the hands of her uncle, with an impassioned feeling which she found it impossible to restrain. “Not for all the good this world can give; not for that which my soul most sighs for; not for your kindest thoughts, my dear, my beloved, my reverend uncle, would I knowingly, willingly forego so sacred a duty.”

“And shall I suffer you,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “unprotected to expose yourself to the horrors, the dangers of the scene you so desire to rush into? Shall I so ill perform the guardianship I have assumed?”

“I am not unprotected,” replied Caroline; “my reason, my conscience, and my God, are my protectors! Oh, my uncle! all delay is parricide: if you value my peace of mind for all my life to come, detain me not.”

“Comply, I conjure you,” said Mr. Beaumont, who was present at this scene, though unthought of either by Mr. Fitzosborn or Caroline: “it is the voice of an angel that pleads, it must be heard.”

“Be it heard then,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, in an agony; “but oh, Caroline, return to me in safety, or the guilt of parricide will still be yours.”

Caroline, though deeply affected by this intimation, was not to be shaken from her purpose.

“I shall return, my dearest uncle,” said she, “in safety; be assured I shall: and from henceforward never can there be a duty more sacred to me than to stay for ever near you—there can be no second competition.”

Caroline lost not a moment in hastening her departure, and a few hours brought her to Sackville-street.

The blank silence which reigned where mirth and festivity used to resound; the strange faces that met her eye; the air of devastation that on entering the house presented itself on all sides, struck Caroline at once with grief and terror. She inquired for her father’s personal servant, and at the same time attempted to go up stairs; when one of the men, who seemed to be placed in the hall to watch over the actions of all who entered the house, stopt her, and desired to know her business.

“I am going to my father,” said Caroline, impressively: “a daughter is going to pay a last duty to a dying parent.”

The appeal seemed irresistible; but it was not so to the flinty heart to which it was addressed.

“You had best wait, miss,” said the man, “to know whether your papa is alive or dead.”

“Detain me not, sir,” said Caroline; “I will not be detained!” and she rushed up stairs. The man, however, laid hold of her gown; but on the appearance of the physician, and Mr. Fitzosborn’s servant, he let go his hold.

“What are you doing, fellow?” said the servant; “how dare you insult that lady?” The physician at the same time giving his arm to the terrified Caroline, led her into the drawing-room; and gave her repeated assurances that she had nothing to fear.

“I do fear nothing,” said Caroline, “but that I am come too late: let me see my father, let me see him while he can yet know me.”

“The scene will be too much for you,” replied the gentleman; “and this act of duty will be unavailing to its object.”

“Tell me not so,” said Caroline, impatiently; “I must, I will see him; alive or dead, I will see him,” repeated she, and made towards the door.

“Then,” said the physician, “summon all your fortitude; you will have need of it: a dreadful sight awaits you.”

They then approached the bed, where the poor object of Caroline’s undeserved care lay writhing in all the agony of pain, and all the horrors of a too-late awakened

conscience. The groan, which almost amounted to a howl, that struck the ear of Caroline, made her recoil a few steps; but the next moment she was by the side of the bed, and hanging over it. "Oh, my father, look on me!" said she, "I am come to give you comfort; I am come—"

"Are you a fiend from hell?" cried the poor wretch; "the minister of a ruined daughter's vengeance?"

"Take this, my dear father," said Caroline, holding a little cordial to his mouth, "it will do you good; it will compose you. I am come to nurse you: all may yet be well."

"Angel of light!" said he, "what words of comfort are those? But it cannot be; you are come, I know you are come, to curse me!"

"I am come to bless you, to—"

"Forgive me!" interrupted he in a voice that penetrated her very soul; "do you say that you are come to forgive me?"

"Most truly I forgive you. Oh, endeavour to forgive yourself; perhaps a greater forgiveness than either awaits you."

"Oh, no, no, it cannot be! Hell is open before me! Away, away! Let me not drag you with me to that place of torment! Away, away!"

"Retire, for God's sake," said the physician earnestly; "you have done all you can do. If there is a calmer interval I will again call you."

"Cannot I calm? cannot I soothe?"

"No, no; you hear his ravings, you see his agonies; the sight of you irritates him. Retire; and, if it be possible, let him die in quietness."

The almost exhausted Caroline withdrew, and turned her trembling steps towards the drawing-room; she started on seeing it already occupied, and occupied by—Edward.

"Forgive me," said he, "for presuming once again to appear before you. I saw your carriage at the door; I knew the horrors that awaited you in this house: it was impossible not to come to you."

Caroline scarcely heard him, scarcely saw him: her whole soul was filled with the scene from which she had just escaped. She could not speak, she could not weep: she sat down, her eyes half closed, and sensible only to an oppression on her chest that seemed to threaten suffocation.

"Speak to me, my dear cousin," said Edward; "look at me." Caroline turned her eyes upon him, but with such a gaze of vacant stupidity as frightened him.

"Caroline! my dear Caroline! Oh, be not thus overcome!"

"I think so!" said Caroline.

"Think! Oh, Heavens! you do not think!" cried Edward in an agony. "Oh, best beloved of my soul! what alienation of mind is this? Lost as you are to me, be not lost to yourself; to all those who may yet rejoice in your smiles, who may still witness your virtues."

A deep sigh relieved the nearly bursting heart of Caroline.

"What do you say? Who are you? Oh, Edward!"

"Yes, it is me, it is indeed Edward!" said he: and grasping her hands, and holding first one and then the other to his heart—"It is the wretched, the undone Edward, but not the guilty. Oh no, my Caroline! the man who loves you cannot be the villain I am supposed to be."

Scattered as were the senses of Caroline at this moment, the words of Edward did not escape her. What she might have said, what she might have done, cannot be told, for at this moment the physician entered the room.

“It is over!” said he: “my unhappy patient is released.”

Caroline became suddenly sick. Her head dropt upon her shoulder, and for a few moments she was unconscious of existence. As soon as she could recollect herself—“My task” said she, “is over; I will return to Henhurst.”

“I intreat,” said Edward, “that you will not leave London without allowing yourself some rest: I shall dread the consequences of such agitation if you do.”

“I cannot rest till I am again at Henhurst,” said Caroline. “But is there not something more to be done? Who will take care that all that is decent, all that is proper——”

“On me shall devolve those duties,” interrupted Edward; “I have a natural right to perform them as your deputy, my dear cousin. You will not deny me this privilege? you will not doubt my vigilance, my religious performance of all that you wish to have done?”

“I do not doubt you,” said Caroline; “nor need I explain my wishes. All of respect that a child can show a parent must be shewn on this occasion.”

“It shall be shewn,” said Edward: “be easy on that head, my dearest cousin. Every care on every point shall be taken.”—Caroline bowed her head in token of thankfulness.

“Now, then, let me be gone,” said she; “my uncle counts every moment of my absence.”

“And does no one else count the moments of your absence?” said Edward. “Am I not to believe that my friend Beaumont is indeed to be the happiest of men?”

“He is one of the happiest,” returned Caroline, “in the generous feelings of his own heart. Edward, you know not, you can scarcely imagine what efforts he has made in your behalf. It is not his fault that you are not restored to the favour of my uncle, and all its consequences.”

“How ill-directed is his care!” said Edward. “He would restore me to the goods of fortune, and robs me of what is dearer to me than my life: he would gladden the present hour; he makes all future happiness impossible.”

Another happy interruption spared Caroline the necessity of seeming even to hear these words. The kindly provident physician, hearing Caroline’s intention to return immediately, had quitted the room, and returned at that moment followed by a servant, bringing some refreshment. He prevailed with Caroline to swallow a morsel of food, and to drink a glass of wine; and then, highly approving of her intention to remove immediately, he endeavoured to quiet Edward’s fears as to the consequence of her renewed exertion, by assuring him that the air and the motion of the carriage would be of service to her, and that the sooner she was once again in the peace and safety of home the better it would be. Edward acquiesced; and Caroline having made her acknowledgments to the physician, and reiterated her request to Edward to omit no respectful care in the charge that he had undertaken, she suffered him to take her hand, and to lead her, accompanied by her maid servant, to her carriage.

When Caroline arrived at the first stage of her journey the evening was far advanced, and in consideration to the fatigue of her servants, and the alarm that she might perhaps occasion to her uncle if she were to arrive at Henhurst at an undue hour, she

resolved to remain at the inn all night. To her it could not be a night of rest; the deathbed scene that she had witnessed, the dying wretch a parent, was for ever before her eyes: nor durst she trust her mind with the reflections it gave rise to. Yet had she not the power to think of any thing else: the words of Edward, which would at another moment have seemed so important to her, scarcely rested on her memory; the sounds of her father's voice, the ghastly turn of his eye, his irrational words, his torturing anticipations, alone found a place there. It was in vain that she closed her eyes; she had no power to exclude from her imagination the image of her father: in vain was she conscious that all was still around her; his voice still sounded in her ears. Terrified, harassed, and afflicted, Caroline rose early, and pursued her journey; and so lost was she in the sadness of her meditations that it was not till the rising woods of the park shewed how near she was to home that she recollected the duties that awaited her there. To calm the affectionate apprehensions of her uncle, and to indemnify him for what he had suffered in her absence, now became the object of her first attention. She endeavoured to recall a degree of composure to her countenance, to arrange her thoughts, and to subdue her feelings; and she had so far succeeded, that when she appeared before her uncle he was more delighted by a return so much earlier than he had hoped, than alarmed by the ravages that the agitation which she had undergone in the few hours of her absence had imprinted on her countenance.

"My child, my darling child!" cried Mr. Fitzosborn, "this is good, this is kind of you. I hope you will now be satisfied that you have done your duty?"

"I have no farther duty to perform," said Caroline, solemnly: "the scene is closed for ever!"

"Closed for ever!" repeated Mr. Fitzosborn, and seized with an universal trembling—"My unhappy brother!—But you saw him, you forgave him?"

"I saw him——" said Caroline; it was all she could say: all that she had seen, all that she had heard, pressed upon her imagination, and stopt her utterance.

"You saw him! and was that all?"

"Oh no, not all!" cried the agonized Caroline; "but ask me no questions. Oh, my uncle! spare yourself and me the repetition of the horrors I have witnessed since we parted."

Mr. Fitzosborn seemed for a moment stricken dumb by the images of horror which these words presented to his imagination. He sat with his eyes wildly staring, his lips quivering, and every limb in agitation. At length cried he, "Caroline, take care of yourself; I must retire. Such a separation of soul and body as I perceive you have witnessed is too horrible to be thought of: I must have recourse to devotion to calm my mind." With these words he left the room; and Mr. Beaumont, who had been no uninterested spectator of this scene, now applied all his care to the soothing of Caroline, in whose countenance he too plainly read all that she had undergone, and all that she still continued to feel.

A few days, however, restored both the uncle and the niece to their wonted calmness; and Mr. Fitzosborn wished to hear, and Caroline was able to relate, the outlines of what had occurred in Sackville-street: neither, however, did his inquiries nor her information penetrate the chamber of death. A sacred dread seemed to pervade the minds of both on this part of the story. But the kind attentions of the physician, the unlooked-for appearance of Edward, the duties that he had taken upon himself, all these were detailed with exactness, and heard with interest. And now it was that the true and full meaning,

and the only meaning that could attach to Edward's vehement and undisguised professions of regard, first struck with all its force on the mind of Caroline. On relating to her uncle his so unexpected appearance, and the kind solicitude which had produced it, she thought that she was about to relate all that had passed: but she found that she had involuntarily suppressed every word that he had uttered beyond his first address to her; and in having suppressed, she acknowledged herself conscious of all that it would be meant to convey.

"I had hoped," said her uncle, "that you would never have seen Edward more. And how grateful am I to Providence that you did see him! If vehemence could have turned filial duty from its purpose I had prevented your journey to town, and now I would not for a thousand worlds but that you had been there. How limited are our views! how mistaken our wishes!"

As Mr. Fitzosborn made this reflection, he was meditating the most powerful argument to lead Caroline to accept of the hand and heart of Mr. Beaumont, as the only means, in his opinion, to secure her happiness; forgetting in his practice the blindness and error which he had but the moment before admitted in his theory.

"You see, my dearest Caroline," continued he, "how inefficient a protector a poor old recluse like myself must be to a young and lovely creature like you. I might indeed shut you up here, and watch over you as a miser does over his gold; but this would be safety, not usefulness. Your heart and your understanding must be in action; they can only be advantageously or safely active under the protection of a man whom you love and respect. Such a man *ought* Mr. Beaumont to be. Caroline, lessen not yourself in my opinion by telling me he is not so."

"I had hoped, my dearest uncle," returned Caroline, "that this subject had been at rest for ever. I admire, I respect, I esteem Mr. Beaumont, but I *cannot* be his wife!"

"And *why* cannot?" urged Mr. Fitzosborn: "are not admiration, respect, and esteem, sufficient grounds to build matrimonial affection on?"

"Not," said Caroline, hesitating and colouring, "not with a consciousness—a preference—the remains of a preference——"

"For one," said Mr. Fitzosborn, sternly, "for one whom you can neither esteem nor respect."

"Pardon me," said Caroline, "I do esteem, I do respect the object of my preference. The clouds which hang over his conduct may one day be done away; I will await the issue: but I promise you, if ever I cease to respect and esteem Edward I will give my hand to Mr. Beaumont."

"And what will avail to you even the manifestation of Edward's probity when he has given his heart, with all its propensities, good or bad, to another?"

"I have confessed," said Caroline, in the deepest confusion, "that my heart was a free-will offering. Its affections are dependant upon the virtues, not upon the inclinations, of its possessor."

"And dare you suppose that you can allow yourself even in the secret love for the husband of another woman, and yet be innocent?"

"No," returned Caroline; "I am not the dupe of so false, so dangerous a sentiment. I know I am accountable for the *allowed* inclinations of my heart as strictly as I am for my actions. But Edward is not married; we have heard him declare that he does not design to marry. I know you will call the soundness of my mind in question when I

acknowledge that I do not believe that Miss Evelyn is the object of Edward's affections. But oh, my uncle! suffer me, I beseech you, a little to await the unravelling this mysterious connection: if it issue in the degradation or marriage of Edward, I resign myself to your will."

"You say you do not believe that Miss Evelyn is the object of Edward's affections," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "do you mean to imply that she has never been the toy of his fancy?"

"I *do*," said Caroline, blushing: "if Miss Evelyn has *any* rights over Edward, I will acknowledge myself mistaken; I will abjure my present sentiments; I will adopt those with which you wish to inspire me."

"And you promise this?" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"Faithfully," said Caroline; "and I will perform what I have promised."

"With this promise then I will rest satisfied," replied her uncle; "but remember, Caroline, that more than your *happiness* is involved in the engagement that you have made."

The heart of Caroline fully subscribed to this truth; but as she had been emboldened by the knowledge that she believed she had gained of the state of Edward's affections to avow the constancy of her own, so resting alike upon the truth of his professions of love and his integrity, she did not fear the consequence of a promise that could bind her to nothing while Edward was not a villain. She was not aware that the word innocence might bear with her and Edward a different meaning; and impossible as she found it to form any hypothesis by which she could reconcile his connection with Miss Evelyn, and the love professed to herself, with the extended sense in which she alone understood the term, yet conceiving that it could have only *one* signification, she relied so undoubtingly upon his favour as from this period to admit the conviction that a time would arrive when he would be able to clear up the mystery to her perfect satisfaction. In the vindication of his character would be involved the justification of the partiality which she entertained for him, and this partiality she now indulged without any humiliating regret. Hers was no longer an unreturned affection, it was no longer the offspring of her own mind; it was the grateful sense of the excellence of a man who had told her she was to him the dearest of human creatures, and had told her so at a moment when it was impossible that he should utter the accents of falsehood; when he could hope nothing from such a declaration, and which had indeed been extorted from him only by despair. She no longer found any contrariety between her wishes and her reason. To await the raising the veil which Edward asserted obscured his integrity she found at once to be consonant to the feelings of her heart, and the reasoning of her understanding; at once to be the forbearance of affection, and the tribute of justice: assured that she was right, she did not fear being steady; and having fully explained her intentions to her uncle, she felt that she had attained the privilege of acting in conformity with them.

Mr. Fitzosborn's renewed attack, however, in favour of Mr. Beaumont, convinced Caroline that the latter had not so entirely given up his hopes of success as she had been led to believe; and she was aware that the freedom and kindness of her intercourse with him might nourish an expectation that she was more than ever inclined to discourage. From this time, therefore, she endeavoured as much as was in her power, without a harshness of which her nature was incapable, to convince him that he had nothing to hope

either from time or importunity; and Mr. Beaumont so plainly understood her, that in a fortnight after Caroline's return from London Mr. Beaumont left Henhurst.

The uncle and niece thus once more left to themselves, Caroline flattered herself that they should resume the course of life which in the earlier part of her residence at Henhurst had been so agreeable to her: never had her mind been more fitted to enjoy the calm and rational delight of literary instruction, or her heart more alive to the affectionate and benevolent feelings. If she were saddened by the scenes she had witnessed in London, and saddened she was at times to a degree of depression beyond all that she had ever felt from any other occurrence in her life, she was also relieved from the unceasing fear of some sudden evil which had oppressed her during the lifetime of a parent, from whose conduct she had every thing to apprehend. Dreadful as had been the passage, this evil was passed; and where she durst not presume to judge, she endeavoured to hope. Possessed of the invaluable secret of Edward's affections, her thoughts imaged the happy prospective that restored him at once to fortune, reputation, and love. She felt the self-complacency which a consciousness of having done justice to calumniated merit spreads over the mind; and she took some credit to herself that even his supposed attachment to another had not shaken her opinion of his worth, or slackened her efforts in his favour.

Thus satisfied with herself, and confident of the integrity of her lover, she thought more of the shipwreck that she had escaped than of the storms that she had undergone; and hope, springing on the elastic wings of youth, carried her forward to the consummation of all that she wished.

In this happy state of mind she thought only of administering to the happiness of Mr. Fitzosborn, and of communicating her own to all around her; and her uncle had soon unequivocal proofs that the want of means to give was with Caroline the only limit to her bounty. To relieve distress was easy; but to content the wishes of her uncle she found a more difficult task than she had expected. Mr. Fitzosborn was far from partaking of the confidence and hopes of Caroline. His projects were disappointed—his prospects were obscure: if he doubted not but that the confirmed ill conduct of Edward would give him a right to claim Caroline's promise in favour of Mr. Beaumont, he durst not assure himself that in fulfilling this promise she would find happiness. That she ought so to find it he was persuaded; and his mind became fretted from the fear that she should prove unequal to the task of reconciling her happiness to her duty. Caroline had, however, so perfectly established her character with her uncle, that although this fear was sufficiently strong to interrupt his peace, it had no power to check the tide of his affections. They flowed uninterruptedly toward Caroline; and were manifested by every act of kindness, or word of love, that the human heart can conceive, or the human organs utter. Still he wished her, in one particular, different from what she was; and the life of monotony and seclusion that she was to lead at Henhurst appeared to him unfavourable to the change in her sentiments which he so earnestly desired. He had endeavoured to detain Mr. Beaumont; he was angry that he had not been able to do so, and thought that he scarcely deserved the blessing that he appeared to slight. In his eagerness to promote the happiness of two people, who only of all his fellow creatures he could truly be said to love, he became unjust to them both, and uneasy to himself. Like the comforters of Job, his argument was true, but his conclusion was false; and poor Caroline was the victim of his want of logic.

Instead of the uniform succession of instructive study, or active benevolence, in which she had hoped the hours were to pass, Mr. Fitzosborn was never at rest while

Caroline was so. For a few weeks she took shelter under the first habits of her mourning; but these once passed, Mr. Fitzosborn would admit of no excuse for her remaining at home. The perpetual recurrence of visiting and being visited was renewed. He wished her to shew herself wherever gaiety and amusement were to be found. He was jealous of the hours of retirement, and suspected that every moment which she could steal from the hurry in which he wished her to live would be given to the remembrance of Edward. Nothing could be less selfish on his part than this conduct. In pursuing what he believed to be the only road of happiness and virtue to Caroline, he became weary of his existence: yet never did saint or fanatic advance more intrepidly to martyrdom than did Mr. Fitzosborn sacrifice every comfort of his life to oppose the phantom of Caroline's possible degradation, which existed wholly in his own imagination. In vain did she plead for his quiet and her own. In such intreaties he saw nothing but a wish to indulge in the reveries of an unworthy passion; and he drove her from him for whole days together, though he never parted from her without a tear, and counted every moment of her absence with a sigh.

Caroline, who penetrated the motive for so unexpected a procedure, felt her spirits sink equally under the suspicions of her uncle, and the mode of life to which these suspicions subjected her. Observing, however, his readiness to forego her society, she became emboldened to propose a plan which had long engaged her wishes, but which she would never have proceeded to execute if the gratification of her uncle must have been the price of her own.

One morning, as he was sitting by her, during her breakfast, which the engagement of the preceding evening had delayed to a late hour. "My dear uncle," said she, with her usual frankness of character, "what a life of inanity do you compel me to lead! How spiritless, how useless am I become! Kind as you are, I cannot believe that by thus forcing me into dissipation you seek *only* my *amusement*. I know it is a higher aim to which you sacrifice, forgive my vanity, the pleasure that you used to take in my company; but indeed you mistake the means to attain it. Is the suspension of every reasoning faculty favourable to the exertion of reason? Is the lassitude of exhausted nerves a power to be opposed to the force of inclination? Can dissipation that wearies me, frivolity that disgusts me, render me less alive to the charms of regulated cheerfulness and sterling intellect? Can I find in the flatteries, the homage of a promiscuous crowd, to whom I am indifferent, any compensation for the intercourse and partiality of real affection? Is it not, my dear uncle, in the contemplation of deformity that we lose the sense of beauty. The image that you wish to banish from my mind may be displaced, but can never be forgotten. In practising my own mind to the active exertion of every virtue I may find a succedaneum for the loss of that which adorns another, but in lessening myself in my own eyes I shall but exalt that merit which you already suppose I rate too highly. Let me then, I intreat, no longer continue a course of life so discordant to my taste, and so little favourable to the object that you have in view. If you dread the unvariedness of our hours of tête-à-tête; if you consider these scenes as too favourable to remembrances which you do not wish me to cherish; suffer me to absent myself from Henhurst, and from you, my dear, my almost only friend, for a short time. I shall return with recruited spirits, stronger nerves, and, perhaps, with a better regulated will."

"You would quit Henhurst? You would leave me?" said Mr. Fitzosborn, in a tone of affright. "Where? to whom would you go?"

“I would go into Somersetshire,” returned Caroline; “I would once again see those scenes of my infancy where first I learnt to think; where first my mind was trained by gentle but steady discipline to self-control; where I was taught to prefer duty to inclination, and instructed in the nomenclature of truth. It would not surely be in vain that I should awaken in my mind recollections so favourable to the cause of reason and of virtue.”

“And to whom would you go?” said Mr. Fitzosborn.

“I would avail myself,” said Caroline, “of the so often repeated invitation of the worthy Mr. Somers: he asks it of me as a favour that I will once again let him see the young person for whom he has always been so kindly interested. In his house, in the company of himself and Mrs. Somers, I shall have every protection and every accommodation that your fears or your love, my dear sir, can wish me.”

“But a journey of above two hundred miles!” objected Mr. Fitzosborn.

“The journey may appear long, but the absence will be short,” replied Caroline: “that day three weeks which takes me from Henhurst shall restore me to you; shall restore me to my best friend, to my place of dearest residence; and I hope, restore me in such a state of spirits and temper of mind as will preclude the necessity even in your opinion, my dearest uncle, of a return to that regimen which palsies every faculty of my mind and body.”

Mr. Fitzosborn could not but defer to Caroline’s “pleaded reason;” and if he could have conveyed her into Somersetshire with a wish, she would not have remained another day at Henhurst: but the difficulties, the dangers, as his imagination represented them, of a journey of more than two hundred miles, affrighted his apprehension and withheld his consent.

Caroline, half by argument, and half by raillery, succeeded in bringing him to a more just estimate of the facilities of English travelling; and having acceded to all the conditions which he thought proper to make, such as that she should be attended by two men servants, and should not travel after sunset, she received his consent to the projected journey.

This arrangement was, in fact, equally agreeable to them both. Caroline found in it the gratification of a long existing wish, and Mr. Fitzosborn a relief from the perpetual harassment of having Caroline for ever near him, and for ever absent. He began, indeed, to be weary of his own experiment; and found some repose to his mind in the hopes that Caroline would prove the better physician of the two.

Caroline received from Mr. Somers a joyful acquiescence in the proposed visit; and after a thousand reiterated adieus on her part, and as many repeated cautions on her uncle’s, she quitted Henhurst, and set forward into Somersetshire.

The third evening brought her to Abbotscomb; where she was received by Mr. and Mrs. Somers with all the native politeness that benevolence and good sense can give.

On the sight of Mr. Somers the interval that had passed since she had seen him last disappeared from the mind of Caroline: the death-bed of her benefactress and dearest friend, the kind support of Mr. Somers in that distressful hour, with her hurried departure from the Grove, alone rested upon her imagination, and left no place for any other thought. Tears filled her eyes—“Oh, sir!” said she, “when last I saw you!”

“My dear young lady,” said the kind Mr. Somers, “let us not renew painful images. This friendly visit shews me that you are the same excellent and affectionate

young creature from whom I parted with so much regret nearly five years ago. You have stood a fiery trial, and have stood it well: let us be thankful and happy, there is no cause for sorrow.”

“You know not how much I lost,” said Caroline, “when I lost my kind protectress.”

“Yes, I do,” returned Mr. Somers; “I know it all: but if you had not been thus proved, you would not have known yourself. All is well—all is as it should be: we will have no retrospect. This is a day of gala to Mrs. Somers and myself; you will not, I am sure, wish to sadden it.”

Caroline wiped away the tears that had escaped from her eyes, and said, with the sweetness of an angel—“The gala is to me: there is no remembrance of sadness which such kindness would not do away; and my dear Mrs. Somers smiles upon me as if she would ratify all your flatteries.”

Mrs. Somers was, indeed, one of the most benevolent of women; and seeing in Caroline all that her imagination could conceive of beauty and graciousness, she sat looking on her with an expression of delight which went at once to the heart of Caroline. A shade, however, crossed her countenance for a moment.—“Oh, madam!” said she, “how happy would my good friend have been could she have seen you so much all that she wished you to be!”

“Forbear, my dear!” said Mr. Somers: “Miss Fitzosborn wants refreshment. We have a great many things to talk over; but we will talk of nothing just now that can give any of us pain.”

The wise Mr. Somers having thus called both his wife and Caroline to order, and the tea and coffee having made their appearance, these three friends soon fell into a conversation equally gay and interesting. Caroline surprised her host and hostess by the variety of her inquiries, and the minuteness of her recollections. Not a person or name seemed to have escaped her memory. Every childish incident was recalled; every spot of ground remembered: all seemed to have become sacred to her.

In such a field she had gathered the first cowslips of the year; under such a tree she had eaten the earliest strawberries; here she had expatiated free and uncontrouled as the reward of diligence and docility; and here she had expiated idleness or inattention by confinement.

Thus passed the evening; and it finished by Caroline’s declaring her intention of making an early visit to the Grove the next morning. The distance from Abbotscomb did not exceed a mile; and as she learnt from Mr. Somers that the present tenants were at this time from home, she promised herself the melancholy satisfaction of visiting the haunts of all her past pleasures at full leisure, and free from the interruption of ceremony or observation. Mrs. Somers easily understood that Caroline would prefer being alone in moments when she must wish to give a free indulgence to the emotions of her heart; she therefore suffered her to pursue her own way, without any obstruction from ill-judged civility.

As soon as an early breakfast was over, Caroline set out alone for the Grove. It was a beautiful morning in June; the meadows were full of haymakers; the cattle stood in groups under the shade of the trees, or found an asylum from their winged tormentors by plunging themselves knee-deep into the water. The air was full of perfume, and resounded with melody; repose and labour, gaiety and pensiveness were united.

Caroline's mind was in harmony with the scene—if she felt past struggles, she felt also that they *were past*. If memory rendered her sad, hope made her cheerful. “There will come a time,” said she to herself, “when Edward will accompany me through these scenes of my childhood; when we shall look back on the loss of reputation and of fortune as a dream; when we shall acknowledge, that in the bitterest moments of such deprivation the consciousness of rectitude was *more* than a compensation; and we shall tread with a firmer step the path that in its progress is safety, and in its issue is bliss.”

Caroline's train of thought was more than once interrupted by encountering some of her old acquaintance: all were known to her, to all she was unknown. None recognized the little girl with whom they had thought themselves so familiar, in the fine lady, on whom they gazed with awe and admiration. But the exclamations, as Caroline discovered herself, of—“Lord, miss! is it you? Ah, how you are grown!—God bless your heart! I may say that, I hope, yet!” shewed that if the person was forgot, the character was remembered. And the inquiry, “And, madam, are you come to live with us?—what a day would that be!” proved how highly this character was estimated.

Caroline had a gracious word for all, and promised a visit to each individual cottage; but she disengaged herself as well as she could from their present importunity, and proceeded to the Grove.

She was readily admitted, on making herself known, within the house, and suffered to visit every room. This she did with so lively a remembrance of persons and scenes that were for ever past, as for the time banished every feeling of pleasure from her mind. But there was no eye to observe her; and she permitted the tears to flow till her heart, discharged of its burthen, felt lighter in her breast; and looking once more around her, she arose to pursue her researches through the garden and shrubbery. She found all kept with a nicety which gratified her partialities; and she saw reason, as she looked on the offspring of her former cares in the vegetable world, to repeat the exclamation of her village friends—“How you are grown!”

She sat down under the shade of a plane-tree, which on the seventh anniversary of her birth had been planted by her own hand, as the commemoration of an epoch when she had passed the age of infancy. She recollected the instructive moral by which this act had been accompanied from the lips of more than maternal tenderness.

“If this tree disappoint our hopes,” had said her affectionate instructress, “the fault will not be in the tree: if Caroline prove ungrateful to our cares, the fault will be hers.”

Caroline thought that she still heard the words; still felt the embrace by which they were accompanied; still heard the prayer—“Oh, may they flourish together! and may the branches that have been trained by the hand of innocence afford a shelter to respected age!”

Caroline looked up, and blessed her God that so far she had not wholly disappointed the pious solicitude of her benefactress.

“Oh, my uncle!” said she, “how much more conducive to a virtuous self-controul are scenes and recollections such as these than the imbecility induced by dissipation! Here I should never dare to harbour any unworthy partiality.”

As she said these words, she heard a voice crying out—“Never tell me; I will speak to her, if she was twenty fine ladies.—Trouble indeed! Have I not carried her upon my back twenty times, and never thought it a trouble?”

Caroline turned her head, and saw close to her Jenny, the old poultry-woman, her earliest favourite, and staunchest friend in all the scrapes of her infancy.

“Jenny!” said Caroline.

“Aye, madam! old Jenny. What, I warrant you, they told me I should not know you.—Not know my own dear Miss Carry?—why you are as like what you were as two peas; only taller, and slimmer, and paler:—and then you have a look about you, so commanding! as if you would say, ‘Jenny, do so;’ and I have used to say, ‘Miss Carry, you must not do so.’”

“And you shall say so again,” said Caroline, taking her hand; “for I dare say I should be inclined to play your chickens as many tricks now as I used to do then.”

“Ah, bless you! you never did any thing any hurt, though you used to put me into a twitter now and then. But you talk of chickens:—ah, madam! I have no chickens to take care of now.”

“How comes that, Jenny? I find every thing so much what it was, and every thing so neat and so nice, that I had hoped I should have seen you in your pretty cottage, with all your flock about you, just as formerly.”

“Why, look you, madam,” returned Jenny, “you know that cottage was not my lady’s, nor yours, madam; and so when my lady did not want it any longer, and new people came, and they would have the fowls, I warrant you, up at the house; to be sure they thought the cottage was too good for me: but they gave me another, and a pretty place enough it is. Yet it troubled me sore to leave the old spot.”

“And who lives there now?” said Caroline.

“Nay, madam, that’s more than I can say, or any of us. For first my lord—you know, madam, it belongs to my lord—made it a sort of a thing they called a dairy-house: but, Lord bless you, no more like a dairy!—To be sure all the milk must be in China dishes, and the butter on marvel, I think they call it—aye, on marvel tables; and there were gimcrack churns, and new-fangled presses; and the garden was made hugeous spruce, and green crossings put up all to the house; and there were honeysuckles, and roses, and what not, all tied to them; and, to be sure, it looked mighty pretty; and all the gentry, far and wide, came to see it. But my lady did not like this out of the way place, so she would come no more; and then there was no want of a dairy, you know: and so then the cottage was to be let. But, lack-a-day! it was too smart for a poor body, and it stood empty a year; and it pitied my heart to look at it: when, all of a sudden, one morning, what should I see but the door open, and old Katty rubbing and brushing as if for her life, and lame Joe weeding in the garden. And so says I, ‘What’s all this for?’ And to be sure it was because a lady had taken the house, and it was to be ready for her all in a twinkling, for she was in a wondrous hurry; and to be sure she might well be so, for down she came shortly after; and she had not been here a week before, as sure as you are alive, madam, a baby was born.”

“What kind of a lady was she?” said Caroline, with a palpitation of heart which hardly left her breath to utter the words.

“Why, madam, it is but seldom seen with her, I can tell you, for she keeps herself very close; but folks say she is very well to look at, and young enough not to have been in such a hurry.”

“Has she any visitors?” said Caroline.

“Not that I know of. Poor soul! she leads but a moping kind of life, always with the baby in her arms; her dear little Edward, as Katty says she calls it. Aye, she has been finely Edwarded, I warrant; for sometimes as I catch a look at her through the hedge, as I passes in a morning, I think she seems mighty sad.”

Caroline felt her brain turn round.—“I should like to have one look at the old place,” said she; “but I would not on any account be troublesome to the lady.”

“There’s no need for that,” said Jenny; “if it be as I think, she’s no such lady as you can know: and so if you were only just to walk through the field by way-side of the house, you might see all the altercations like, as well as if you were to go nearer, and nobody at all, I warrant, would take no notice.”

“Let us go that way,” said Caroline; “and afterwards you shall shew me where you live.”

“Aye, that I will, and thank you too; and when you sit down on the settle, I shall think old times are come again.”

Caroline made no answer, and stept forward with so quick a pace that old Jenny called out, “Bless you! I see you could run as fast as ever if you would; but I shall never shew you the way if you go so much before me.”

“If I turn down here,” said Caroline, “can I not see quite over the garden, and yet not be in any danger of being seen? I mean of giving the lady any offence?”

“Seen, indeed! How should such a lady know you? Besides, who cares if she is offended?”

“*I care!*” said Caroline, earnestly: and Jenny felt it was no longer the time when she could say, “Miss Carry, you must not do so!”

“Why now that’s so like you!—never would vex any body! Well, well, I see you are as good a lady as ever: but like it’s a pity that you should not see where you have played yourself many’s the time. So just come round here, and you may see all in and about, and nobody, I warrant, be the wiser.”

Caroline took the turn advised; and soon saw all, and more than she wished to see. In an arbour, directly facing her, sat Miss Evelyn in the tenderest act of motherhood; a slight cloak shading, but not concealing, her employment.

Caroline became rivetted to the ground for a moment; the next she attempted to turn from a sight that pierced her to the heart: but she trembled so with the effort, that she was forced to lay hold on the arm of Jenny.

“Mercy, madam! have you hurt yourself?” said the old woman.

Her exclamation made Miss Evelyn look up; and, on seeing how nearly she was observed, she rose in the greatest confusion, and wrapping the cloak close over the infant, hurried into the house.

“Ifackins, madam, she knows you!” said Jenny: “but she’s not for looking you in the face.”

“Impossible, impossible!” said Caroline. “Come away, Jenny! I am sure I have done very wrong—been very impertinent. How could I be so curious?”

“And why should you not be curious after your own place, as it were? Never fret for that. The lady has been looked at before, no doubt, and by those who have done her more harm, or she would not so call upon Edward—a false-hearted wretch, I’ll warrant him.

If Jenny had reason before to complain of Caroline's swiftness of movement, she had much more so now: she rather flew than ran; and, in spite of Jenny's entreaties to turn towards her cottage, made forward the directly contrary way.

"Then you will not look at my poor habitation, madam?" said Jenny, in a piteous tone.

Caroline stopt—endeavoured to recollect herself—was not able to command a thought—took breath—paused—tried to speak—and found herself unable to utter a word.

"Nay, madam, take time—you are quite out of breath. You look as if you were scared. Pray turn this way; we shall be at my door in a minute, and then you may rest.

Mechanically Caroline followed Jenny; unconscious of what she did, and undesigning as to what she would do.

"See, madam!" cried Jenny in an exulting voice, as they turned short on the cottage, "here it is!—a nice, neat, pretty spot, though I say it, as needs be: and there's a stone bench at the door; and you are so hurried and flurried, that you will like it better perhaps than going within the house.

Caroline sat down, and asked for water.

"Water!" cried Jenny. "What, and so hot? And, madam, if you'll believe me, I have not a drop of spirits, or any thing comfortable, if it were to save your life. What shall I do?"

"Pray give me some water," said Caroline: "I could drink nothing but water."

Jenny unwillingly complied. Caroline drank, and was relieved. Jenny looked wistfully at her.

"Well, I am sure," said she, "if I had thought how it would be, you should never have looked over the hedge at that strange madam. I wish she had been fifty miles off for my part. So agreeable and chatty as you were before, and now you have not a word to throw at a dog, as they say."

"No, no; not a word for a dog," said Caroline, endeavouring to collect her scattered senses; "but a great many for you, Jenny. It was so hot—and I walked so fast. But, come now, shew me all about; you seem to have every thing that you can wish for."

Jenny, now in her glory, began to display her wealth and the excellence of her own management; told what a miserable hole it was when she first came to it; how she had rubbed and scoured; how she had pulled down and built up; how she was advised by her neighbours; and how she was wiser than them all. Opened her walnut cupboard, and exhibited her flower knot; and was, in a word, as vain and as happy as if, like other improvers, she had spoiled all the beauties of nature by all the efforts of art. Caroline admired every thing; praised the skill and contrivance of the proprietor of the whole; gave an ample largess to old Jenny; and saying that Mrs. Somers would wonder what was become of her, turned her steps towards Abbotscomb. Mrs. Somers, impatient of the absence of her lovely guest, was already looking out for her, and, on seeing her approach, met her on the lawn. She had no sooner cast her eye on her than she cried out with alarm, "Oh, my dear madam! I feared as much; this has been a painful visitation—so many painful recollections!"

"They have, indeed, quite overcome me," said Caroline.

"I should not have suffered you to go alone," said Mrs. Somers. "But come within doors. The heat and walk have been too much for you, if there were nothing else."

So saying they went together into a cool and delightful room, the windows of which were shaded with a variety of beautiful troiners, and opening to a garden admitted the mingled perfume of unnumbered sweets.

Caroline endeavoured to arouse herself, and to give the whole of her thoughts to the objects around her. Silence on the rack would scarcely have been a greater effort. She talked of the flowers, the sweets, of what she had seen, of all but that of which she thought, till the room seemed to turn round with her. Her penance was prolonged by the coming in of Mr. Somers, who, interested in every thing which he supposed would interest Caroline, travelled over again the same ground—inquired how she approved what she had seen—expressed a hope that she would think he had provided her with a good tenant—and concluded with observing, that she must have found every thing much as she had left it, except old Jenny's cottage. "And really," said he, "we must allow that *that* is improved; bating," added he, with a meaning look, "its inhabitant perhaps."

"That cottage did not belong to my aunt," said Caroline.

"No," replied Mr. Somers; "but I have often thought it was a pity that it did not; and once I was busy enough to intend asking you whether you would like to purchase it, for it might have been bought; but it is as well now that you did not, for I fear that we have no chance that the Grove should be preferred to Henhurst; and of course there would be no advantage in adding to your property in this part of the world."

"Perhaps it would be better to get rid of it altogether," said Caroline.

"Sell the Grove?" said Mr. and Mrs. Somers, both in a breath. "Why, dear young lady, you said last night that you would not part with it for ten times its value; that it was your birth-place; more a home than Henhurst; that it should never be let again, but that you would come down to it every year. Ah! I am afraid," added Mr. Somers, "my dear Miss Fitzosborn is a flatterer, and that she thinks more of saying what will please than what she really feels."

"Oh no, indeed!" said Caroline, confounded rather by having said too much than too little truth; "but I hardly knew what I was saying. I have been pained and troubled this morning, and if every visit to the Grove was to be as distressing as my first has been, it might be better that the first was the last."

Her friends joined in assuring her that the case would be wholly different; and proceeding to apply remedies to evils that she did not feel, contributed nothing by all they said to the mitigation of her sufferings. Having undergone little short of martyrdom for some hours, Caroline at length made her escape to her own room; and throwing herself into a chair, gave way to a violent flood of tears. She wept for some time without a consciousness why she wept. Relieved however by this effort of nature, the power of thought returned, and with it all that energy of virtue which marked the character of Caroline. The bandage was now fallen from her eyes; she saw things as they were. She could not but acknowledge that the word innocence bore not the same meaning with Edward and with her: the scene she had witnessed, the name she had heard, so artless, so unequivocal an evidence, spoke too plainly the nature of his connection with Miss Evelyn. Yet could Edward so deviate from the path of rectitude? Alas! was she now to learn that the most exalted qualities of the human mind are in some fatal moments no safe defence to the weakness of human nature? In freedom from the guilt of seduction, Edward might believe himself justified in asserting his innocence; and in the indulgence of a fancy unconnected with esteem for its object, he might not be aware that he violated

the integrity of the pure affection which he had avowed for her. But such was not her estimate of vice and virtue. Her understanding refused to admit its validity, her heart rejected the man who acted upon such principles. His connection with Miss Evelyn he had allowed; the irrefragable proof of the nature of the connection which she had just received left her no means to escape from the conviction that "Edward was degraded."

"And do I still love this form," cried she in an agony, "despoiled of all its glory?—disfigured of all comeliness? Oh, my uncle! you know me better than I know myself. Unworthy as I am of this gage of your good opinion, I will not deceive you by wearing that to which I have no right. I resign thee, oh, fatal ring! for ever."

As she uttered these words she drew from her finger the memorable diamond; but starting at the same moment with a bitter recollection which now first struck her—"Alas!" said she, "this is not the only sacrifice I must make. The mystery has indeed issued in degradation. My word is passed! My destiny is at the disposal of another!—Be it so!" added she, after a moment's pause—"I will not despair but that I shall still be enabled to do all that I ought to do."

Supported by a humble but firm confidence in a Power superior to her own, Caroline endeavoured to resume her composure: she bathed her eyes with water; she pressed her hands to her heart in hopes to still its tumultuous beatings; and having remained without movement, exposed to the free air from the window, for some time, she became sufficiently mistress of herself to proceed to such preparations as were necessary to her again appearing below. She knew the kind attentions of her friends had collected a number of surrounding families, whom she was to meet at dinner; all, as she was assured, emulous who should shew the most marked respect to the representative of their late so highly regarded neighbour. To such a company she felt that she ought to appear with a countenance decked with smiles, and in that obliging passiveness of mind which takes its direction wholly from the wish of others; that her attention should be alive to the merest nothings; her answer prompt to the most insignificant question; her assent, her smile, her laugh, ready for all. She felt this ought to be so, and at the same time the impossibility of its being so: she resolved however that the effort should be made, that self should at least for one day be wholly forgotten. As she cast a glance on the glass at the moment of quitting her chamber, she was shocked to see how ill her countenance seconded her designs. Her cheek was pale, her eyes languid, her step measured, and unelastic. She blushed at the unworthy thralldom in which she felt herself held: the blush, and its accompanying feeling, restored the colour to her cheek, and the brilliancy to her eye: she hastened down stairs, and presented herself to the guests with a grace and animation all her own.

She found assembled many of those whom she had known in her earliest youth; and she found all so willing to please her, that it was impossible not to be pleased. This day produced as many invitations as there were separate families; and Caroline found that the time allotted for her absence from Henhurst would be too short to answer all the demands that good-will and hospitality made on it. To prolong this absence she had no wish. Every hour that she remained in Somersetshire now seemed to her a punishment; and had it been possible to depart, she would not have continued there another day. All she could do to satisfy the expectations of so many contending claimants was to lend herself to the arrangements that the impartiality of Mr. and Mrs. Somers should make for

her; and all that she could do for herself was to adhere steadily to the day already fixed with Mr. Fitzosborn for her return.

Every day having now its appointed engagement, there remained but few hours for Caroline to give to the concerns of her poorer neighbours, and none, but those which ought to have been spent in repose, to give to the interests of her heart. But this was a fund from whence Caroline was apt to draw too liberally; and after a morning passed in attending to every wish and every want of those who looked up to her bounty, and an evening spent in civilities that oppressed her, and conversation that wearied her, she retired—not to sleep, but to reason, to wonder, to lament, and to weep.

Having charmed, by the sweetness of her manners, all who had approached her; and having excited in the breasts of Mr. and Mrs. Somers the warmest affection and interest; having cheered the drooping and relieved the indigent, and arranged the continuance of her benevolence when her presence should be withdrawn, she found herself at liberty to depart: but she saw not the moment of separation from friends so kind and partial as Mr. and Mrs. Somers approach without a very sensible pain. As she made her adieu—“You must visit me at Henhurst,” said she. “I can assure you a welcome there as warm and as flattering as that which you have afforded me.”

“We *will* visit you at Henhurst,” replied Mr. Somers; “and oh that it might be at your wedding! My dear young friend,” added he, “happy as you make all who approach you, you are not happy yourself. I have seen it in the turn of your eye; I have heard it in your suppressed sigh; I have a confirmation of it in your very effort to seem otherwise. This must not be. You are excellent in the indulgence of every feeling, for every feeling is that of virtue: be still more excellent, be *great* in the victory over those which make you unhappy.”

Caroline struggled from the parting embrace in which Mr. Somers held her as he said these words.

“Farewell!” said she, and sprung into her carriage.

Here at liberty to deliver herself over to the mercy of her own thoughts, she gave way to the crowd of reflections that rushed in upon her. But amidst this crowd she could make no selection which might either reconcile inconsistencies, or bring comfort to her mind. No hypothesis could restore Edward to the height of excellence from whence he was fallen; and yet the conviction of his unworthiness brought not with it any power to expel him from her heart: and of the variety of painful sensations by which she was at once assailed she found self-humiliation the most oppressive. She wearied herself with reasonings, which from whatever point they set out all ended in the same conclusion; and she exhausted herself with forming resolutions, which she felt to have no influence on her mind. In the same melancholy and dispiriting circle her thoughts continued to move in an unvaried succession; no light sprang up to brighten the shades of guilt, or to guide the wish to do well: she condemned the object of her love, and she despaired of herself. Such was the state of her mind during the whole of the journey; and harassed, depressed, and discouraged, she presented herself before her uncle so altered in her appearance, that he started with alarm.

“The weather is hot,” returned she, answering his kind solicitude; “the roads dusty.” As she said these words, she threw back her cloak, and took off her gloves.

“And the ring gone?” said her uncle, fixing his eye on her hand.

Caroline felt the moment to be decisive: now if she deserted herself she felt she could never again recover her self-approbation.

“But not, I trust, for ever!” said she, with an effort that seemed to her the excess of heroism. “I hope you will one day replace it on my finger; but till that day comes, take it, my dear uncle! into your own custody, and at present indulge me so far as to inquire no farther.”

“Tell me only,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “is it marriage or degradation that has torn from your finger this gage of your own and of another’s integrity?”

“Degradation!” said Caroline, in a smothered voice.

“Then this moment may I replace it,” said Mr. Fitzosborn. “Caroline does not, *cannot* indulge in a preference to vice.”

“Oh, no! but some time must elapse before she is able to forget the virtue which she has so long been accustomed to consider as real.”

“The virtues are real,” said her uncle; “they exist in the bosom of Mr. Beaumont. Shall the vices of an Edward have more sway over your mind than the virtues of a Beaumont?”

“I hope not,” replied Caroline, faintly: “but at present my heart would be an unworthy exchange for that of Mr. Beaumont. My uncle! I acknowledge in the fullest sense the power which my promise has given you over me; my reason, my principles, are all on your side; and when I find myself more grateful to the divine superintending Intelligence for an escape from an union with vice, than grieved by the destruction of the fancied virtue that was so dear to my imagination, I will with thankfulness and satisfaction resign myself to your direction.”

“And do I hear you avow a distinction between your inclinations and your principles?” said the rigid Mr. Fitzosborn.

“No!” said Caroline, warmly; “there is no such distinction: from this moment I disclaim all such. Knowing what I know, I would prefer the grave to a connection with Edward: but feeling as I have so recently felt, it is impossible at present to think of becoming the wife of any other man. When the pain which the vices of Edward have inflicted is lost in the recognition of the virtues of Mr. Beaumont, then, my uncle, may the memorable ring be given and worn, as the gage at once of his love and my rectitude.”

“And do you bid me look forward to such a period?” said her uncle.

“I do, with confidence,” said Caroline kindling as she spoke. “The work is begun, the healing balm is applied. It is true the wound still smarts, but this is rather a proof of the efficacy of the application than an indication of the hopelessness of the evil; a little time, and all will be well.”

“Admirable girl!” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “be it as you say: and however you may have been mistaken in your model of imagined perfection, I shall find mine complete.”

Caroline now set herself seriously to the accomplishment of the task which good sense and right feeling equally dictated; and she found with surprise that the forms which at a distance had appeared so redoubtable, vanished into air as she approached to attack them.

In the art of seeing objects in their just light, in the science of a true nomenclature, Caroline found the secret of that imperfect happiness which is alone allowed to man below.

In the depravity of Edward she acknowledged a legitimate cause for sorrow, and she mourned it as a Christian and a friend; but in the bitterness of her own disappointment she was compelled to confess rather the mortification of self-love than the genuine sorrow of real misfortune, which virtue may sanctify, and which religion does not disavow. Of all that *ought* to give a relish to life, of what was she despoiled? Of an idol, which had no existence but in her own imagination; of a heart, which, if it had ever owned her sway, was not worthy of her sovereignty. Fortune, health, friends, intellect, and virtue, remained; and should she say, and should she allow herself to believe, that she was miserable? Should she disappoint the rational purposes and kind wishes of her best friend, rather than forego the indulgence of a feeling of her own, unfounded as it was on any principle, on which she professed to regulate her conduct? She was ashamed of the sentiment that opposed the conclusion suggested by her reason; she was resolute that she would not be governed by it; and in spite of the inexpressible reluctance with which she thought of marriage, in spite of the pain which still lay throbbing at her heart, she resolved to turn her thoughts to Mr. Beaumont as the companion of her future life, and to banish all sadness from her countenance.

The result of this determination equally surprised and delighted Mr. Fitzosborn. He dared hardly trust his senses when he saw Caroline with an aspect at once composed and cheerful; when he heard her converse without distraction, and found her ready to concur in every scheme of amusement; bland and diffuse in company, easy and hopeful when alone. He observed indeed that she grew thinner, and that the colour on her cheek faded: but that which he had not dared to hope would be done at all he could not expect would be done without effort; and this affection and good sense alike taught him that nothing on his part should be precipitated, and that he had only to wait quietly the issue of a resolution so wisely taken, and so steadily pursued.

The paths of virtue issue in happiness: the course may be longer or shorter, but the termination is infallible.

Caroline was destined to meet her reward earlier than she had presumed to hope; and she met it in a form that she had not looked for.

Some weeks had now passed in the progressive attainment of self-command, when one evening, as Mr. Fitzosborn and Caroline were sitting in a shady seat, in a retired part of the flower-garden, Mr. Fitzosborn ventured to inquire of Caroline whether he might be allowed to invite Mr. Beaumont to Henhurst. The question at the moment was unexpected, and caused a sudden convulsion in the frame of Caroline which forced the blood from her heart into her cheeks, from which it as instantly retreated, and left her pale as death.

The word “undoubtedly” was the only word that she could utter: but she pronounced it articulately, and with an unbroken voice.

“My Caroline’s triumph is then complete!” said Mr. Fitzosborn, exultingly. “I have found the perfection I sought. Great God, I thank thee!”

Caroline, overcome by the pious tenderness of her uncle, threw herself into his arms, and burst into tears.

“These are not tears of reluctance? these are not tears of regret?” cried he, in alarm.

“Oh, no!” returned Caroline! “they are tears of gratitude, of affection. I say with you, my dearest uncle, ‘Great God, I thank thee!’ ”

“The words will be echoed still by another mouth,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “from many mouths; for the happiness of my Caroline and her Beaumont can never be a selfish one.”

“Oh, most truly said!” cried a voice, which they both instantly knew to be that of Mr. Beaumont. “I come to renounce all selfish happiness, but I come to bestow it on those whom I love better than self. Edward is innocent, even of bad taste he is innocent: there is ‘no mistress in the wood:’ he is worthy of all that fortune and love can do for him.”

“Impossible!” cried Mr. Fitzosborn, sternly.

“Alas, it cannot be!” said Caroline, in a voice scarcely articulate.

“Cannot be!” said Mr. Beaumont. “My dear madam, why not? May not the darkest night terminate in the brightest day? I have pledged my life for Edward’s integrity, and I come to prove it. Edward has been the victim of friendship and self-abandonment without example. Charles Pynsynt——”

“Charles!” interrupted Caroline. “Has Charles Pynsynt any thing to do in this matter?”

“All and every thing,” returned Mr. Beaumont. “You know the transaction that hurried him from England at a moment’s warning; you know that all his hopes of a future re-establishment in life hung on the favour, the active patronage of Lord Evelyn: but you do not know that the man who looked for preservation to the father had already undone the daughter. This was the sole secret that he did not confide to the sympathizing, the affectionate Edward. It was hoped that it might have remained a secret from all but the unfortunate authors of it; yet the possibility of the contrary was not left unprovided for. Charles well knew how safe a guardian of his infant fortunes, how impenetrable an out-work of his threatened reputation he left behind him in Edward. In every contingency the partner of his apprehensions and his guilt was directed to refer herself to Edward. In her hands was deposited a letter to be used, if circumstances should require such an assistance, addressed to Edward, where a full disclosure of all that it was necessary for him to know was made; accompanied by the most solemn adjurations to preserve a secret, the discovery of which would ruin his friend, and effectually deprive him of every hope that any future hour would enable him to make the only reparation of which his fault would admit. The occasion for the use of this letter occurred. It was sent to Edward, inclosed in one from the object of its solicitude, so indicative of despair and desperation, as took from the heart of humanity all option on the manner of acting. A fellow-creature was to be snatched from destruction, a friend was to be preserved from want and infamy. Oh, my dear madam!” said Mr. Beaumont, suddenly turning to Caroline, “what is it that you and I would have had our dear Edward have done? Even that which he did:—forget himself, forget the interests of his fortune and his love (for Edward’s heart had long been in the keeping of another); and turning aside the barbed dart of obloquy and reproach from the bosom of his friend, receive it deeply in his own.”

“And what, my dear sir, is there impossible in all this?”

“Why, my dear madam, cannot this be?”

“What tale of romance are you telling us?” cried Mr. Fitzosborn. “Of what chivalrous knight, who thus plays with death and danger as with puppy dogs, are you speaking?”

“It is no tale of romance I tell: it is of no chivalrous folly of which I speak,” returned Mr. Beaumont: “it is simple unadorned truth that I utter; it is of the emanations which flow as naturally from the christian principles and the christian character as rays of light from the sun, of which I speak.—‘Do as you would be done by.’—‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’—‘Seek not your own.’—‘Be perfect.’ In these few simple principles we shall find the rule of Edward’s conduct; in the strength of a well-disciplined mind we shall find the instrument of it.”

“Well, sir,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “you pour these words into very incredulous ears, I can tell you. But proceed; let us have the whole of this miraculous display of human excellence before us.”

“And are you too incredulous?” said Mr. Beaumont, in a tone of reproach to Caroline. “Are the virtues, the sufferings, the triumphs of Edward indifferent to you?”

“Oh, no, no!” said Caroline, bursting at once from the silence which she had hitherto preserved, yet covered with intolerable confusion, “none of all these are indifferent; but surprise, astonishment—my senses are confused, confounded. Yet the virtues of Edward find with me a ready belief; his sufferings, and his triumphs, the warmest, purest, sympathy.”

“Oh, too excellent, too charming, Miss Fitzosborn!” cried Mr. Beaumont, “do not contaminate my better feelings with the taint of envy. Do not make me feel that the man whom I profess to love may be too happy”

“But we are not told,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “how this mighty secret has been revealed. We are not arrived at the moment when the cord of romantic generosity, stretched too tight, snapt asunder; when Edward forgot his friend, and thought only of himself.”

“No such moment ever did arrive; no such moment can arrive,” said Mr. Beaumont. “Faith led the martyr to the stake, and constancy supported him there. There too the sacrifice would have been consummated had Edward, as he was preeminent, been singular in generosity; but for the honour of human nature this was not so.

“Charles Pynsint no sooner learnt all that his friend had done and suffered in his cause—and he learnt not this from the pen of Edward—than every selfish consideration faded from his mind: a moment was not lost by him in endeavouring to repair the evils which his faulty conduct had produced. A letter to Lord Evelyn revealed the whole guilty transaction. He ‘acknowledged that he had deserved the ruin which the withdrawal of Lord Evelyn’s favour would bring: he presumed not to aspire to the distinction of being allowed to become a member of a family which he had disgraced: all that he dared to plead for was a complete and public vindication of the conduct of his friend; for himself he was, he would be, whatever Lord Evelyn should determine.’

“Horror-struck as Lord Evelyn was by such a disclosure, his honest heart rejoiced in an exculpation that restored to merit so distinguished as Edward’s a reputation only more illustrious from the temporary shade by which he had been obscured. He waited on him instantly; he apologized for the wrongs he had done him; he referred to himself the reparation that should be made. Shall I repeat the words of Edward? They will make even the cold heart of dear Mr. Fitzosborn glow.

“ ‘For myself, my lord, I ask nothing; I have simply done my duty: but if I may be allowed to hope any favour from your lordship, let it be exerted towards my friend. My lord, he has greatly erred, but he has greatly suffered; he has been guilty of vice, but he is

not vicious; he has excellent, he has superior qualities; adversity has given him principles, founded on which these qualities will become virtues. To your daughter he is sincerely attached; give her to him as a wife: the part that I have taken will then be easily understood; and if your lordship will grant me your friendship and your countenance, my character will be vindicated without any explanation which can compromise the reputation either of your daughter or my friend.'

"Excellent young man!" cried Lord Evelyn, "be it as you have so wisely, so kindly thought. *My* countenance, *my* friendship! the honour of both will be to me. I even aspire to a still higher honour. I have another daughter: you know her; you know that she is not unworthy of love. If you can love her she shall be yours, with a fortune of twenty thousand pounds."

"Edward then," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "is to be the son in law of Lord Evelyn?"

"I doubt that," said Mr. Beaumont, dryly; "but the manuscript is here torn, and I can tell you no farther."

"And is this story fact?" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"Plain, unvarnished fact," replied Mr. Beaumont; "the whole town is talking of nothing else. Edward is seen every where arm in arm with Mr. Evelyn; not with a more assured step or more erect countenance than in the days of his disgrace, but with the sunbeams of benevolent pleasure streaming from his eye, and the glow of hope and self-approval on his cheek. But all is insufficient to his happiness till his acquittal is signed by the individuals who next to his God and his conscience it is his dearest hope to please. It is in vain that every other door is opened to him while that of Henhurst is shut."

"It is no longer shut," cried Mr. Fitzosborn; "it will never be again shut, for Caroline here shall keep the key."

"Oh, my uncle!" said Caroline.

"Dearest madam!" said Mr. Beaumont, "accept the office, and use it instantly. Edward stands without, and waits for admission."

"Stands without? waits for admission?" cried the uncle and niece both in a breath.

"Is here!" said Edward; and threw himself at the feet of his beloved, his now assured Caroline. "Oh, pardon me all the pain I have given you!" cried he. "Oh, pardon the presumptuous hopes I have entertained: I am still and ever must be nothing but what you wish me."

"Oh, Edward!" said Caroline, glancing a fearful look at Mr. Beaumont. "Rise!—My uncle——"

"Forgive me, dear sir," said Edward; "forgive the impulse of a heart so long restrained in the expression of its feeling, yet while it beats it must beat with affection and gratitude towards you."

"Yes, yes; no doubt, young man," replied Mr. Fitzosborn, "no doubt of that: but I see there are warmer feelings in that heart than either gratitude or affection—and——"

"My friend," interrupted Mr. Beaumont, "I have conducted you safely into port. I know the happiness that awaits you there. Were I a hero like you, I might be able to be a spectator of that happiness; but it is enough for such a common mortal as I am to have promoted this happiness, and to rejoice in it. Till I can be more the thing I wish, the thing I ought to be, farewell!" And before the last word was half pronounced he turned, and disappeared in a moment.

“Even so,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “we learn the imperfection of human happiness. My beloved children! blest in your virtues, blest in your affections, even at this moment of a bliss that seems too great for mortality to support, the sigh of compassion rises in your bosom, and the tear of regret trickles down your cheek.”

“But this sigh, this tear,” said Edward, pressing the hands of Caroline between his, “are the sigh and tear of virtue; if they are not happiness, they lead to it.”

“Oh, they are happiness itself!” cried Caroline: “they are the tribute of gratitude to friendship. Mr. Beaumont deserves all from Edward and from me.”

“And what,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “does Caroline deserve from Edward?”

“Every thing short of adoration,” cried the enraptured Edward, “is the due of Caroline.”

“And how will Caroline repay so extended a homage?” asked Mr. Fitzosborn.

“By resigning all right to it,” said Caroline, blushing.

“And thus, in spite of me and my wise resolutions,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “the marriage that I disapproved, and the heirship which I set aside, must both take place, and I am compelled to acknowledge that no arrangement could be better. Children, I am your puppet; you play with me at pleasure, and make me what you will.”

“Oh, my dearest uncle!” said Caroline, “we will make you the happiest of men; and we shall be the most obliged and grateful of human creatures.”

“Away then,” cried Mr. Fitzosborn, “and open your hearts to each other; while I send for my lawyer, and set all hands a going, that no new discoveries may again overthrow our plans.”

Mr. Fitzosborn walked towards the house; and the two lovers struck into an adjoining wood, “nothing loath” to avail themselves of the privilege allowed them. Here, in tracing the commencement and progress of their sentiments for each other, Caroline had the gratification to find that she had reigned paramount over the affections of Edward, even from the period when the lovely girl had first grown into the accomplished woman; and that as she must find the solution of all of coldness and gravity that had ever alarmed her tenderness or mocked her hopes in the inferiority of his situation and the humility of his expectations, so might she recognize in the overflowing spirits which had upon one occasion surprised and half offended her the newborn hope which the recently received intimation of his uncle’s intentions in his favour had generated.

“I know,” said Edward, “how ill I kept my uncle’s secret at that moment; nor could I escape the imputation of impertinence by any thing short of a full disclosure of all that he had forbid me to reveal: but you were kindly indulgent; and I was quit for a little self-reproach, which, I acknowledge, was more than compensated by your kindness.”

If Caroline’s most delicate scruples were satisfied by the knowledge she had obtained of the state of Edward’s affections for her, Edward had not less reason to be contented with the confessions that he drew from Caroline; and after some hours walk in the wood they returned to Mr. Fitzosborn, in the mutual possession of every feeling in the heart of each that could contribute to the happiness of either.

Mr. Pynsynt and Miss Evelyn had had but a small share in their conversation; and when they rejoined their benevolent friend, Caroline had as much to learn as himself as to all that was necessary to complete Mr. Beaumont’s unfinished tale. The whole, however, could be told in few words.

Miss Evelyn was by this time returned to her family, and had assumed the name of Pynsynt; and by the care of her friends any doubts as to her right to this designation were so skilfully screened from the eye of curiosity, that not even Lord and Lady Enville were apprised of the truth of the matter. In learning that Lord Evelyn had recognized Charles as his son-in-law, that he was ready to portion his daughter as amply as if she had married with his consent, and that he still charged himself with the care of Charles's establishment in the world, they knew all that they were interested to know. Of the moral conduct of their son, or the discretion of the young lady, they thought little: the connection that he had made was at once splendid and lucrative, and they gave themselves no trouble as to the means by which it had been brought about.

Charles was to be allowed to return to England, apparently that he might participate in the advantages of the act of grace that had been passed; but in fact that he might become a husband, and convey his wife and child to India.

In declining the offered hand of the eldest daughter of the house of Evelyn, Edward had acknowledged the state of his heart, and the ground of his hopes with respect to Caroline; and Lord Evelyn, eager to obliterate every trace of the injury that he had sustained in the cause of his daughter, exacted from him that a disclosure of the whole truth should form his vindication with Mr. Fitzosborn and Caroline. He took upon himself the task of relating the tale, unmutilated, to Mr. Beaumont, whom he highly esteemed, and who had courageously been the frequent defender of Edward, even to Lord Evelyn himself. Nor had Charles Pynsynt been less generous in his conduct towards his friend. No sooner had he learnt from Miss Evelyn the price at which Edward had preserved their secret, than he not only gave Lord Evelyn all the information necessary to restore Edward to his fair fame, but he wrote also to Edward himself, releasing him from all obligation of secrecy; and exacting from him that he should not, by suffering for his sake, either in his fortune or his love, lay a still heavier burthen of favour and remorse on a mind already almost oppressed beyond sufferance by these feelings.

Thus Edward, restrained by no scruple, opposed by no duty, gave to the history of his conduct and the disclosure of his love all the sincerity and warmth that could establish the rectitude of his actions, and the truth of his affections; and Caroline and her uncle exulted alike in the lover, the kinsman, and the man!

In a few weeks Edward led his beloved Caroline to the altar: the fated ring became the gage of their mutual happiness; and as Edward placed it on the finger of Caroline—"Now, indeed," said she to herself, "shall we be severed by death alone!"

In the science of "calling things by their right names" may be found the secret of characters so uncommon as those of Edward and Caroline.

The bounty of Mr. Fitzosborn made them rich—their virtues made them happy. Neither dazzled by the glitter of sentiment, nor confounded by the misapplication of terms, their feelings were directed to a legitimate end, and their understandings became the champions of truth. To their unsophisticated intellect no qualifying epithet could christianize pride or authorize revenge: the licentiousness that invaded the peace, or the extravagance that ruined the fortunes of a family, were with them something more than the "frailty of human nature." The misuse of time, on which hung the interests of eternity, passed not with them for "agreeable trifling;" and in professing themselves to be Christians, they believed themselves bound to become patterns of *meekness, humility, and moderation.*

Reader! whoever thou art, go and do likewise!

THE END.

Copyright Chawton House Library