

PREPOSSESSION ;

OR,

MEMOIRS

OF

COUNT TOULOUSSIN.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I

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PREPOSSESSION ;

OR,

MEMOIRS OF COUNT TOULOUSSIN.

DEAR FRIEND,

IT is not in our nature to see all of us every thing in the same light. Whole sets of philosophers have been of different sentiments concerning this or that particular, which in itself appear to admit of no dispute; and though on every side of the question there was very great men, they have entertained and propagated opinions as far distant from each other, as all of them seem to be of common sense.

If that difference had proceeded from logical subtilities only, we could not but admire their talents, in finding reasons to maintain their surprising respective hypotheses; but it is evident, that they believed in reality what they maintained—And to this day, we see philosophers too, who, equally divided among themselves, consider the ideas entertained by their anatagonists, on seemingly indisputable points, as chimerical and ridiculous; tho' we think them most conform to reason.

Knowing, then, that many of those reputed wise men not only are apt to differ in opinion on what we deem incontestable ; but even have carried their extravagance so far, as to maintain that the diamond is not hard—the honey not sweet—nor the snow white; with many other as surprising contrarities, to the generally believed qualities in them, or the evidence of our own senses; we cannot wonder at the erroneous notions suggested in the multitude, by things in themselves naturally liable to be mistaken or misunderstood; such as the incidents in the history of Mrs. Lunel and mine.

Nevertheless, perhaps it is foolish in me to comply with your request, and proceed to explanations on the subject ; but as the common reports concerning that lady and me had all along so much of the marvellous, I do not wonder to see a man of your good sense unwilling to give implicit credit to them; or anxious to know how far they may be depended upon; because, when sure that something extraordinary has really happened, the more it deviates from the

probable, by the invented particulars or exaggerated accounts we hear of it, the more it must naturally excite the curiosity of the sensible, to know how far it is grounded in truth; therefore, though you have teased me into a rather disagreeable task, as I cannot but approve the motives which have induced you to do it, I will endeavour to evince my regard for you, in contributing to your amusement, by a faithful account of those very adventures, which though really curious, by attempts to make them more so, or a run of mistaken notions, they have been left almost without a resemblance.

Partiality for me has indeed contributed greatly to the deviation; but I am so far from willing to take any advantage of it, that I intend to prove in my following narrative, that all the noise I have made in the world, has been the mere effect of prepossession; as my merit was so little, or my personal recommendations, if I had any, so few: whilst my conceit and silly forwardness were so conspicuous, that if people in general had not been prepossessed in my favour, I would have been rather despised than admired—or, at the best, I would have run my course as little noticed as any of my contemporary blockheads.

To avoid, however, the imputation of ingratitude to a public so favourably disposed towards me, I will forbear to turn its kindness into ridicule by affected modesty. I will represent things such as they really were, and even represent myself such as I was, with all my good and bad qualities about me, that you may judge for yourself how far did I deserve that kindness and favour. But be pleased to remember as you read, that I mean only to enable you to *judge*, and not to indulge any vanity of my own; for if so inclined, it would be a great deal better to leave the common notions prevail still; as every attempt of mind to exalt myself being more likely to fall short of my already established fame. But as I do not think it would be proper to sanction errors you rightly suspect to have been reported in the joint history of Mrs. Lunel and me, I would rather lose that great reputation I have attained through them, than to attempt its support at the expence of the sincerity on which I ground my claim to credit in more important matters.

I would not wish to delay the gratification of your curiosity with accounts that you do not care for, but as the gallantries for which I became famous, have been so many, and some of them (as those relating to Mrs. Lunel) of such a nature, that they may appear out of the common way of things, it becomes necessary to tell you something of my principles in general, that you may guess at the predominant ones on particular occasions, and wonder the less at the strange parts of my conduct.

CHAP. I.

THOUGH I was an only child, as my parents died when I was very young, and my guardians were two very honest gentlemen, I was not spoiled by too much indulgence. Anxious to give me an education suitable to my rank and fortune, at seven years old they sent me to Paris with a tutor. After a residence of nine years in the most celebrated academies there, having acquired the reputation of a well-improved youth, and being peculiarly distinguished for dancing and fencing, I left that city to make my tour of Europe along with my tutor and a servant.

As it was intended that I should travel till I became of age, of which I wanted almost five years, I not only at every court which I visited, but also at every town of note in my way, I remained till became as familiar almost as I had been in Paris, and celebrated too for my trifling accomplishments. These, among courtiers and other fashionable people, were much valued, and procured me the best of opportunities to display them, by the many recommendations I was favoured with from place to place; and thus far they proved very useful, as they served to introduce me directly in every respectable family; a circumstance advantageous to every traveller, but that to one of my cheerful and social temper, could not fail to be uncommonly agreeable.

My tutor, whose philosophical turn had recommended him to my guardian's notice, proved himself deserving of their good opinion and my esteem; as though very far from approving my too great indulgence of that gay bent he had observed in me, sensible that a too severe restraint could not answer with so lively a disposition as mine, he affected mostly to humour it, whilst in reality he was but watching every favourable opportunity of conveying instruction so prettily disguised, as not to let me perceive that they were meant as such, but rather as means to amuse me in my lucid intervals; he by degrees often succeeded so well, that he engaged my attention to the making me forget for hours together, that there were fiddles in the world. But in proportion as I approached to manhood, I discovered such a fondness for the fair sex, and such a turn for gallantry, that my poor tutor did not think himself able to manage me any longer; and though very fond of me, he resolved to give up his charge and return home alone. Luckily, that whilst he and my guardians were writing one another on the subject unknown to me, my servant observed, that he kept constantly all his things packed up, as if ready to set off at a moment's warning; and having told me of it, I was alarmed and could not rest till I knew the cause. This the tutor owned to me without hesitation; adding, that he was resolved to set off on his return home at the arrival of his successor, even without taking leave of me, which he wished to avoid, sure that it would be a painful scene to us both.

CHAP. II.

HIS gentle temper and kind behaviour for fourteen years during which period I had been under his care, had endeared him to me so, that the loss of the most tender relation could not have affected me more than his. Therefore, unable to guess what had induced him to take that resolution, the discovery surprised me exceedingly ; but when a little recovered from the first emotions excited by it, I begged of him to tell me what I had done, to be thus abandoned all of a sudden? Nothing as yet, said he ; but your fondness for the sex, and your more than common opportunities to indulge it, I foresee will drive you soon to your inevitable ruin, and I do not chuse to be a witness of it; I love you too much to see it with any degree of patience. How so! said I—How can my trifling with women of character have so terrible a tendency? I love them indeed, but I thought that it was enough for me to avoid prostitutes, and I never dreamt that my fondness for the others could be of any prejudice to me. If I am mistaken, why did you not tell me of it? Have I been so untractable, or so unmindful of your instructions, that you should think me unworthy of some of them on the subject? No, said he ; but the passions are more concerned in it, than in any other; it has been question of doubt till now between us; and yours are so much bent that way, that I despair of making an impression sufficient to prevent the mischief. Perhaps you are mistaken, said I, and if you are so kind as to suspend your resolution till you try, I will not oppose your return if the trial happens to be without effect. Very well, said he, we shall try ; but do not blame me if I leave you as soon as I perceive that my stay is to no purpose.

Thus prepared to pay the utmost attention to his advice and remonstrances, I listened with pleasure to his instructions, the first of which on the subject was, a very curious description of the passions and appetites; in which the difference he made between love and lust, easily accounted for their different effects; as the similarity in some respects did for the too often mistaking the one for the other. He proceeded then to a satirical investigation of the actuating motives of the youth, as much of the one sex as of the other, in their courtships; but with such humour and penetrating wit, as to make me often think since, that my tutor was an uncommonly good judge of these matters; which seems to me the more astonishing, as though very agreeable and respectful to the fair, he never was married, nor had I ever a reason to suspect him of any intrigue or connection with them. Nevertheless, I cannot but think, now that experience, we may suppose, has qualified to give my opinion, that he had studied human nature with as much success as any man ever did; as none that I know any thing of, has ever wrote or spoke more to the purpose. But let that be as it may, certain it is, that he gave me often from that day forwards, such pleasing lectures, and made so proper remarks on the fondness of one sex for the other, and the daily incidents produced by it, that I was both diverted and instructed.

Beauty had already attracted so much of my attention, that I could not think of finding any pleasure but in the company of some fair one. I formed to myself such ideas of happiness in the enjoyment of a mutual affection, that no hero's exploits, though performed for the honour or safety of their country, could be worth their while, I thought, if in the end proposed by them, there was not also included the possession of some fair damsel. On the contrary, none seemed to me too arduous, when directed to that delightful purpose. In fine, my notions in that particular were as truly romantic as those generally entertained by the youths of each sex for the other; but since my tutor began to acquaint me with his, and point out reasons and proofs to convince me how well grounded he was in his opinion, I perceived some errors in mine, and even began to

think like him, that women may be handsome and worthless, and very deserving without being handsome. But still beauty continued to have a powerful influence on me ; and indeed to do justice to my tutor, so far from striving to excite in me an aversion for the sex, he rather seemed to wish I should continue fond of it : he wanted only to give a proper direction to my fondness, by correcting my false notions. He was perhaps the first in the world who contributed to stop the pernicious progress of a domineering passion, by representing it as laudable, or that attempted to correct the excess of a fondness for women, by making a youth take a particular notice of every charm and excellency in them. But then, by pointing out to me the general abuse of those charms, the bad effects produced by them, and the neglect in the cultivation of their minds, he put me as much out of conceit with women in general, as he enhanced in my esteem a few of them in particular.

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CHAP. III.

OBSERVE that fond couple, said sometimes my tutor to me, at the sight of a young pair within a few days of their marriage; do you not think them happy? Indeed I do, was generally my answer; they must be certainly so to a very high degree; they are both young and handsome, and they love one another; what could hinder them from being happy, chiefly when legally authorised to indulge their reciprocal affection as much as they please. We shall talk of that another time, would he say then, dropping the subject; but he never did fail to take it up again a few weeks after their wedding. He used to desire me then to observe that very couple in public; and I was obliged to own, that their civilities or condescension for one another had so much the air of affectation, as rather to indicate growing indifference, than to convey ideas of a reciprocal affection as they had done before. But when placed by some contrivance of his, as I generally was, where I could observe them, when supposing themselves without witness, they behaved without restraint too, my surprise was inexpressible to find, that instead of running, as I thought they would, into each others arms, to express in them by the most lively caresses, the exquisite pleasure they enjoyed in their mutual love, they mostly sat at the opposite extremes of the room—spoke but little, and that often in a peevish tone—proceeded, perhaps, to find fault with one another for mere trifles. If they did not abuse one another, at least they went to bed so sullen, or at the best so cool and indifferent, that neither did I envy them the rest of their private amusements, nor could I possibly account for such conduct without the assistance of my tutor; but I had it in so peculiar a manner, that even thus early, I was convinced that young people, both male and female, are quite deceived in their notions; and I have been confirmed in that opinion by an infinity of subsequent instances, having constantly found, that though the attractions for each other are very powerful indeed, they are seldom of farther duration than till they become familiar together. Disgust or indifference, at least, succeeds so immediately after, however great their ardour may have been before, that their beauty or respective attracting qualities (as if of a fascinating kind, that cannot well bear the touch) soon seemed to have melted in their embraces. They leave each of them burdened with a companion, in whom neither can find any thing agreeable; unless good sense and discretion repair the loss for ever attending on familiarity, by so engaging manners and conduct, as to make a friendly affection succeed and support that formerly excited by personal charms. That happens sometimes, but very seldom. Women in whose power it might be to insure that felicity, think, almost without exception, that a pretty face and a genteel person, are sufficient to secure them a permanent dominion over us; they do not consider the improvement of their minds, as essential to that purpose, but mostly neglect it, and confine all their worth to a showy outside; this, unluckily for them, said my tutor, has no other effect upon men, than just what a new toy has on a child; it excites a vehement desire to possess it, but when so, a few days, perhaps hours, reduces its value in the opinion of the once happy possessor, to mere lumber—As soon as the pleasure of novelty is over, which it is not consistent with our nature to last long, they mostly appear as insipid to their formerly loving mates, as the no longer pleasing toy is to the child, and the less supportable, as they are found to be the more troublesome of the two, however high may have been the notions they entertained of themselves, when they consulted only their looking glasses, or when they were applauded by their fascinated admirers and equally ignorant companions, for their pert nonsense.

In short, before my return home, by my tutor's observations and my own, I was fully convinced, that though women are really invested by nature with power to charm mankind, they

generally reduce it so much, by obstinately following the dictates of their own vanity, in preference to those of reason, as to retain scarce sufficient to cheat both themselves and us into engagements in which neither finds but the effects of their common error, the more unsupportable then, the less it was thought of before; as by a train of false notions, both parties are led to expect never-ceasing raptures in their union: instead of which they mostly find only reproaches and ill humour naturally produced by their respective disappointments.

And though the knowledge of all those rather to be lamented circumstances, did not diminish in the least my fondness for the sex, it was of very great service to me, by inducing me to confine it within certain bounds; as I seldom exposed myself to any of the mortifications other men meet with in their amorous pursuits; my love, so far as it went, was no less vehement than theirs ; but as my heart was not so much affected by it, the disdain, whims, tricks and even inconstancy of the courted objects, by which they are commonly distracted, it furnished me rather a fund of diversion, in which I really delighted; because by paying them in the same coin, as I generally did, besides the pleasure of being tit for tat, a thousand to one but I had also that of bringing them sooner to reason, than the others do with whining, humouring, or the vast pains they are obliged to take for that purpose. At the worst, as no disappointment of that kind interfered, generally speaking, with my good humour, my cheerfulness insured me a welcome every where, and enabled me to add ten charming objects for every one I was obliged to blot out of my loving catalogue: of course, to carry myself through every stage of my amours, with something like indifference as to the success of them.

Nevertheless, no man was ever born, I believe, more susceptible by nature, of a tender passion, than I myself; but I was so prepossessed by the notion that few women possess the qualities necessary to insure that happiness they might and they were intended for, that Cupid's shafts scarce had more effect on me than if they had been pointed with minikin pins ; except those tempered rather in the amiable disposition, than in the beauty of Mrs. Lunel, whose history I will give to you now.

CHAP. IV.

MRS. Lunel is the daughter of a country gentleman, who has a large family and a small estate ; when very young, she was sent by her father to her uncle, Mr. Sobervie, who was then just returned to Paris from the East Indies, where he had made a considerable fortune—She was a lively girl, and Mr. Sobervie being a widower, and having no children of his own, she became a very great favourite with him ; he took a particular pleasure in her education, and as the most eminent masters in Paris attended her, and she was very sensible and beautiful, she came in time to be looked upon as one of the most accomplished young ladies in that capital, which was sufficient to procure her a great number of admirers, even if she had not been considered besides as the heiress to her uncle—But they sued in vain; because, as if to settle some family dissensions on account of Mr. Sobervie's partiality for his wife's relations, he had resolved to marry her to his wife's nephew, Mr. Lunel, and to leave them both his fortune.

That purposed marriage had been talked of for some time, when I, quite a stranger to both the uncle and the niece, waited on Mr. Sobervie, being charged to transact some money matters with him, by a neighbour of mine in the country from which I was just arrived in Paris—Mr Sobervie happen'd to be confined to his bed, by a fit of the gout; but when informed of my errand, I was admitted without hesitation—As I entered his room, the first object that struck my sight, as being opposite the door, and nigh a window, was a beautiful young lady with a book in her hand—I paid, of course, my respects to her, and observing that she seemed not to take notice of me, I repeated my bows till her inattention confounded me: I did not know what to think, as I could not suppose her blind, and to be deaf could not be a sufficient apology for such want of civility—I was some how abashed, when Mr. Sobervie roused me by begging I would come forward and sit by him—I did so, and having then the lady on one side, and the gouty gentleman on the other, in every part of the discourse that did not immediately relate to business, I endeavoured, by addressing myself seemingly to her, to engage her in it; but in vain—she continued with the book in her hand, and though I plainly perceived that she was not reading, she did not take more notice of my words than she had done of my bows—I strove to hide my surprise or confusion, by more attention to the business I was charged with, and after an hour and a half, in which, it seems, I had recommended myself greatly to the esteem of Mr. Sobervie, for which I did not care, I departed as unnoticed as I came in by the young lady, whose attention I had been so anxious to engage.

I need not tell you, that I was very much mortified by her scornful inattention. The kindness and pleasure with which I was received by all others, made me look upon her conduct, as an unsupportable affront, and the more I thought on it, the less disposed did I think myself to bear it with patience; but she was a woman, and a beautiful one too: what could I do or say to her !

So overheated was my head by thinking on the vexatious scene, that I raved almost as I went along the streets, and very likely it would have turned my brain, had I not been met by a friend whose company and conversation drew by degrees my attention to other occurrences, and gave me time to cool before I was alone again; and though I suffered enough on the same account, by subsequent thoughts till the hour appointed for my calling the next day on Mr. Sobervie, as I had promised to do, being less agitated, I could reason on my disagreeable adventure, attributing it, at last, either to silliness or to pride, I consoled myself with the notion, that if it was the last, when

informed who I was, as I supposed she had by Mr. Sobervie after I left them, she would certainly behave otherwise.

But I was quite mistaken; and as disappointed and mortified, or more, if possible, than the day before. The young lady was sitting in the same place, with the book in her hand too: but neither civilities, nor artful endeavours to engage her in the discourse, were sufficient to procure me a word, look, nor the least notice; and I should have run mad with vexation, had I not concluded, that she was not right in her senses—That notion, which indeed changed my resentment into pity, and the really obliging disposition of Mr. Sobervie, induced me to turn my thoughts in earnest towards the business we had in hand; and in my third visit, though I could not help looking at her every now and then, her continued inattention did not make me uneasy, but as far as compassion could, considering what a pity it was, that such a beautiful person should happen to be disordered in her mind.

However I was mistaken in that too—Mr Sobervie sent a servant to me with some papers early the next morning, and I eagerly seized that opportunity of inquiring into particulars I wished so much to know—I put a louis into his hand, and begged of him to tell me, who was that young lady I saw in his master's room; and how was it that she never meddled in our discourse, nor took any notice of me—Is she a natural? said I—a natural! said the servant, bursting into a fit of laughter, O Lord, Sir! she is perhaps the greatest wit in this town—a natural! no, no Sir; she is Miss Sobervie, my master's niece, very much loved by him, and faith by every body else who knows her; because she is as good natured as she is handsome, and that is enough I believe—How is it then, said I, that she is so uncivil to me? Uncivil Sir! said he,—Ay, and to a very great degree indeed, said I—I am astonished, Sir, said he; I never heard before that she was uncivil to any body—Pray, Sir, what did she say to you? I make bold to ask, because she is very droll, and perhaps she said something as a jest, that you took for something else—No, said I, there can be no mistake in the case, because the want of civility I complain of, consists in her not saying any thing at all; or in not taking notice of what I say or do—Strange! said he, as if much surprised, and proceeded, after a little pause—I cannot think but that it is some trick of hers—She is certainly very gay, very sprightly; except when she is reading for her uncle of wars and battles, as you have seen she does every morning for three or four hours; that, perhaps, it puts her a little out of temper.

I did not chuse to inquire farther, because I was afraid the servant would tell her, and I did not wish to feed her vanity by the discovery of the influence her conduct had upon me. What he had told me already being sufficient to conclude, I thought, that vanity and conceit were so predominant in Miss Sobervie, as to render her whimsical and unmannerly—Well, well, I am glad to hear, said I, that she is not an ideot: it gave me such uneasiness to think she was one, that I cannot but acknowledge thus my satisfaction (putting another louis in his hand)—I pitied the poor lady; but as you tell me, that instead of being a natural, as I suspected her to be, she is rather a wit, I am overjoyed for her sake, and do not care whether she continues for ever dumb or inattentive to me; she is welcome to carry her whims that way as far as she likes—But I beg you won't tell her, nor any body else, that I asked you any questions; which indeed I never should have done, had I not been induced to it by mere compassion—He thanked and assured me that he wished to have opportunities to convince me of his gratitude.

CHAP. V.

AS soon as the servant went away, I began to ruminate on every circumstance he had informed me of; and as I could no longer doubt that Miss Sobervie was making a fool of me, I turned my thoughts towards the most proper method of being even with her; and having concluded in my mind, that the best and easiest way would be, to take as little notice of her in my future visits to her uncle, as she had taken of me in my former ones, I waited with impatience for the appointed hour, fully resolved to re-assume my natural cheerfulness, of which she had deprived me in some manner, by damping my spirits with her ridiculous behaviour; and thanks to my kind tutor, I had none of those difficulties to encounter that less knowing swains generally have when once struck by this or that beauty.

Instead of my usual stop to pay my devoirs to the facing deity, as I had done till then, I went directly towards the bed, with a How do you do to day, my dear Mr. Sobervie? extending my hand to receive his, and without even a glance to his niece. He soon observed that I looked very cheerful, and by some compliments, and his evident pleasure to see me look so, he induced me the more to launch out in my usual lively way; especially after we had done with business, that we had a touch at politics, scandal, and many anecdotes, through all which I went with such a flow of spirits, that the good Mr. Sobervie squeezed my hands almost to pieces, in excessive demonstrations of pleasure and approbation—I took at last my leave of him in an affectionate manner, and promising at his request to see him again the next day, departed without even looking towards Miss Sobervie, though I plainly perceived on what side lay the loadstone.

I followed in my next visit the same plan; not the least notice of Miss Sobervie, nor in the three or four succeeding days, but I was every one of them as entertaining to Mr. Sobervie, or more so, and he as much or more pleased with my company; to which he was pleased to attribute his better state of health, being then able to sit with some pillows behind him, and making it a pretence to request the continuance of my visits, as the most acceptable proof of my friendship, or even the greatest act of charity I could do. I promised to do myself that pleasure in which he was so politely pleased to indulge me, and was going to take my leave for that day, when he stopped me, first with some apologies for having deferred asking me to dinner, till he could go down stairs, and then with begging I would come that evening to take a dish of coffee with them; a favour I was obliged to decline, being engaged, but that I promised him to accept of the next day; not so much indeed because Mr. Sobervie insisted very much upon it, as because I had noticed that my adopted scheme of indifference was making some impression on his niece—Turning my head accidentally, I had detected her three or four times that morning peeping at me, and making a skreen of her book, thinking to do it unnoticed by that means; but I observed it, and was willing to try if my going to take coffee would afford me still better opportunities to mortify her in my turn, with inattention—But she found an easy way to disappoint in part my expectations, by setting the table far from the bed, and making a servant hand us the coffee.

However, the careless manner in which I received and sent back my cup, could not be very agreeable to her, as I am sure I was ashamed at the share of my rudeness the servant was obliged to bear; and so afraid that the uncle would take notice of it, that I made it my particular study to amuse him all the while with some story or other; that either by diverting his attention, or inducing him to suppose mine too much engaged in what I was telling him, my unmannerly

behaviour might pass unnoticed by him, or at least be attributed to absence of mind—But I found out after, that there was no danger; as though Mr. Sobervie was a very well meaning man, he was also one of those that do not chuse to trouble their heads with trifling ceremonies—And indeed I had suspected as much from the beginning, by his never having mentioned his niece to me, nor taking the least notice, whether she behaved civilly or otherwise—I left them at last, closing my evening amusement with a very expressive farewell to Mr. Sobervie, and a rub against Miss Sobervie's clothes as I passed by, without speaking to or looking at her.

In my three following visits, my conduct was much the same. And I found no more difference in theirs than that of Miss Sobervie looking boldly at me without any skreen; and so disdainful besides when she caught me looking at her, that at first she used to put me out of countenance; but by and by I summoned up my pride, and made it a point to look as boldly and disdainfully as she did: though I was soon sorry for having carried my resentment so far, as after two or three days of the impudent looking contest, she gave it over by leaving the room at my arrival, and if I stayed ever so long, she would not come into it again till I was gone.

Strange as it may appear to you, I protest I missed her so much, that though I had a very great regard for Mr. Sobervie, and was sensible how improper it would have been in me to desert him on that account, I really believe, that if she had kept herself out of sight much longer, I would not have been able to keep up appearances—Such influence has beauty always had upon me, that even when so unfavourable as I knew Miss Sobervie was to me, the presence of a fine woman contributed to keep up my spirits; though I carried on the occasion a kind of warfare that would seem incompatible with that very influence, if not considered, that the actuating principle was nothing but a desire to be better friends.

I went to Versailles, where I was detained for some days, and finding at my return that Mr. Sobervie had sent several times to inquire after me, I waited on him directly; and in my affected hurry to get to his bedside, without looking at Miss Sobervie, that lady being in as much haste to get out of the room to avoid me, we met at the door and knocked so rudely the one against the other, that I could not help but stop, and with unfeigned concern beg her pardon—And though she proceeded without making any answer, I saw her smile just as she was going out; and glad to find that she was not ruffled by the incident, I passed a whole hour chearfully with Mr Sobervie; but as I was going down stairs, the very servant who informed me of his mistress's wit and good nature said to me—Sir, Miss Sobervie bade me to present her compliments, and tell you, that if it is not inconvenient, she would be glad to speak to you—Who? your mistress, said I, in a kind of rapture—Yes, Sir, said he, she is in the dining-room waiting for you.

The distance to it was short, and the variety of thoughts suggested by that message was such, that I entered the room as if agitated with hopes and fear of I did not know what: the heavenly summons, as I thought, had thrown me into a pleasing confusion; but I was not long in it—I saw Miss Sobervie advancing in haste, towards the middle of the room, from one of its corners, and before I had time to say a word, she asked me with a voice and look of indignation, and without waiting for my answers—What do you want here, Sir? is it not very impertinent in you to intrude thus upon any body? what has brought you here, Sir? I wonder at your assurance!—Softly, madam, softly, said I, a little recovered from both my agreeable and disagreeable surprise—It was rather respect for you, than want of it, that has brought me here—Your servant said, that you

had some commands to honour me with—I? the fellow is a fool, and you another if you mind him, said she, turning from me with a frown—I believe so, madam, said I; but I will make him take care not to throw you again into a passion by a similar mistake—I ran then to the servant who was at the door listening with astonishment and his mouth open, and though at seeing me coming he took to his heels, I was nimble enough to help him down stairs with a kick; and off I went without farther ceremony.

I was in too great a passion, to venture on any company—I went home, and for the first hour I was raving mad—my vexation then, was not as it had been before, a pique of gallantry—I was affronted too much, I thought, to bear it even from a woman—I was too much insulted to bear it patiently from any body—Her insolent language and unmannerly behaviour degraded her in my esteem below a cinder wench; all the affection and respect her beauty had inspired me with, was changed so far into contempt, that I was almost sorry I had not served her as I did her servant—How could I get satisfaction otherwise I did not know—I knew no body favoured by her, or else a thousand to one but I would have fallen upon him before my mad fit was over.

My first emotions subsided at last, and when cool, I began to look on the whole foolish transaction rather as on a laughable matter. I could not persuade myself, that Miss Sobervie could possibly pass for a wit and a good-natured girl even with her family, and be, at the same time, so much otherwise, as every part of her conduct towards me would have proved her to be, if there was not in it some mystery which I could not guess; and supposing that to be the case, I was afraid to render myself ridiculous in earnest, by want of temper to bear with so charming a creature's humorous whims; I was not only ashamed to have entertained the least idea of resentment against her, but even sorry for having kicked the servant. I resolved in consequence to be more upon my guard, and neither let her make so great a fool of me, as to render my complacency a matter of triumph to feed her vanity with; nor to draw upon myself her just resentment by any other return of ill treatment, than that of inattention, which either was not in my nature to give up, or that I thought rather of prejudice to the ladies themselves to be humoured so far, as to bear with a run of unmannerly conduct, without letting them know that it does not become them.

CHAP. VI.

I WENT in the evening along with some friends to the opera, and a little before its beginning, whilst still capering with them and some of the opera girls between the scenes, my attention was called to take notice of some people in the boxes my companions looked at, and was not a little surprised to find, that it was Miss Sobervie herself, who, charming beyond description, sat not far from us along with a gentleman I did not know. I had looked for some time at her, and was listening to one of the girls, who, leaning on my shoulder, was telling me how that young lady was looked upon as the greatest beauty in the kingdom, when, observing that Miss Sobervie had taken notice of us, we went about our capering again, till obliged to take our seats.

I chanced to be placed between two of my most communicative companions, and both very well acquainted with Miss Sobervie's person and circumstances; therefore, I was soon informed of many particulars concerning her situation, accomplishments, and great expectations ; and from the whole together I had almost concluded that her behaviour to me was an excess of pride on account of her beauty and fortune, supposing her spoiled by flattery and conceit ; when one of them whispered in my ear, that Mr. Lunel, who was the gentleman sitting then by her side, strove in vain to appear happy in so beautiful a partner, as every body knew she hated him, and would never appear in his company if she could help it. Those few words induced me to suspend my judgment, and put some questions, by the answers to which I knew, before the end of the opera, sufficient rather to pity Miss Sobervie, than to envy Mr. Lunel; though I can't say but at the first hearing that he was to marry her, I felt an uneasiness I could no way account for, as neither had I an inclination to marry myself, nor could expect if I had, that Miss Sobervie would give me the preference, being so indifferently used by her, as I had been till then.

I learned from my companions, that she was a young lady of uncommon good sense, spirit, conduct, and amiable dispositions, whilst Lunel was looked upon exactly as the reverse in every respect; and that nevertheless she was designed for his wife by her uncle and her other relations; and though she had declared her aversion to him, after a hard struggle in support of her liberty, she had been obliged to give her consent and dismiss every one of her admirers; among them some of the most elegant youths for their persons and education in the nation; none of whom chose to remain in Paris after.

That dismal piece of news altered entirely my opinion of Miss Sobervie; and as it accounted in a more rational manner, than all my former notions could, for any peevishness or whims in her, I began to be heartily sorry at the idea of having contributed by my conduct to render her more uneasy. I sincerely regretted that we were not better known to one another ; because I had the conceit to think, that my cheerfulness and sympathising heart might afford her more relief than a whole legion of whining admirers, by rousing her depressed spirits, and prevent unavailing and melancholy reflections. I wished it possible to be soon on an agreeable footing with her; but our respective deviations from the common ways of civil intercourse, did not leave me hopes of having that satisfaction. However, I resolved to do on my part as much as I could to obtain it; but as a sudden alteration in my conduct might render it less attainable, by inducing her to think, that it was only the effect of her personal charms, I found myself under the necessity of waiting with patience, and without giving directly over my affected inattention or disdainful carriage.

I called on Mr. Sobervie the next day, but his niece was not in the room; and though I strove to prevent by my good humour his taking notice that I missed her, I could not hold up long; I was obliged to feign some business to excuse the shortness of my visit. I met on the stairs the servant I had kicked the day before, who, instead of complaining of my treatment, began to apologize for his having contributed, though innocently, to the disappointment he knew I had met with; and the poor fellow, who was still so afraid of my resentment as to keep a proper distance, to run away at my first threatening motion, was very glad to hear me beg his pardon, and smiling, throw a couple of louis to him as I was going away. Then he begged of me to stop, and coming near, I am very much embarrassed, Sir, said he in a whisper, I don't know what to do—What is the matter? said I—Why, Sir, said he, I am afraid to expose you again to be affronted and ill used as you was yesterday; and, at the same time, I am loath to let you go without telling you, that my mistress insists on my giving you just the same message again—Where is she; said I—Up in the dining room, said he—Well, friend, said I, there is nothing in the world that I would not do with pleasure to serve your mistress; but as you saw and heard yesterday, she only wants to make April fools both of you and me; therefore, to excuse yourself, you may tell her that you did deliver her message, but that I took you for a fool, as she said to me you was, and did not chuse to make any answer—That you could not stop me, though you attempted it, by assuring me that your mistress did really want to see me—And should she happen to insist again on your giving me the same message, give it to me at the dining-room door if she is there; and don't be afraid of me if I speak rough or threaten you ever so much, as upon my honour I will not touch you—but hush—you understand me, and away I went, very much puzzled to guess what could be Miss Sobervie's design, either in repeating the former silly trick, or in admitting me to an interview, situated as she was, and as indifferent as we had proved to be to one another.

However, the next day, at the coming down from the uncle, with whom I had passed a whole hour without a sight of the niece, I found the same servant waiting for me at the dining-room door, who, after a significant wink, repeated very distinctly the same message he had delivered to me two days before in the same place. How dare you, Sir, trifle with me thus every day, said I, seemingly angry. Must I be at the trouble of chastising you again for throwing your charming mistress into a passion, and provoking her to distort her beautiful features so, by scolding me, that scarce could I know her at the opera, though some hours after? I have a mind to tear out your tongue, Sir, that you may not tell lies any more. It is not a lie, Sir, I protest, said he; my mistress bade me give you this message. But I know better, Sir, said I, your mistress has too much good sense and good nature to abuse me for obeying her commands—At these words, Miss Sobervie, who had been listening, opened the door, and asked, smiling, what was the matter? Pardon me, madam, said I, I am sorry to have disturbed you ; but I was a little provoked by this servant of yours, who had the impudence to give me just now such another message as that by which I was led into the error of intruding upon you, and drawing upon myself so much of your displeasure, that my heart is breaking ever since. Indeed, Sir, I guessed it, said she, when I saw you a little after capering behind the scenes.—Did you indeed, Madam ! said I.—Yes, Sir, I did, and I was so sorry for it, that I wonder how you did not perceive it in my countenance, as you did the distortion of my features.—O, Madam, that is easily accounted for, said I—your countenance was so dazzlingly beautiful with all that, that I could not look long enough on it, or else you might be sure that I should have taken notice of the one as well as of the other.—Say rather that you was taken up in laughing at the adventure with your companions, said she.—The adventure,

Madam, turned so little to my credit or satisfaction, that I must have been a fool indeed to boast of it, said I.—I know, however, by your frequent glances that you were talking of me, said she.—I cannot deny that, Madam, said I, as you certainly engrossed too much of our attention to think of any thing else.—I wonder what part of my conduct was then the most severely censured, said she.—I believe, Madam, we were all as prepossessed in favour of your discretion, as taken up with your charms. I am sure nothing was mentioned of your conduct in a light that could bear censure.—For my part, indeed, I was out of the question in that particular, as it is a secret still to my companions that I have the honour of knowing you—Is it indeed! said she. By this time we had insensibly walked far into the room, and the poor servant, glad, I suppose, to see us so peaceably there, had shut the door. I would ask you to sit down, said Miss Sobervie, was I sure that your condescension would not interfere with some more agreeable engagement.—Impossible, said I, no engagement in the world can afford me an equal pleasure, Madam, to that of being near you.—Circumstances considered, said she, that compliment is rather a satire upon my conduct—I am conscious that I have used you very ill; and to give you some satisfaction, or at least my reasons for having done so, I wished for this opportunity of taking to you in private; but afraid that my uncle will take it ill, if I continue much longer from him, I will put off that subject till to-morrow—If not inconvenient to you, and you condescend to take the trouble of calling here as you are coming down from him, I will tell you then what I hope you will be pleased to admit as a tolerable apology, if any thing can be so, for the uncivil and undeserved treatment you have met with. A servant, sent by her uncle in search of her, opened the door at that moment, and the adjournment became then indispensably necessary without a word farther on either side.

If Miss Sobervie, even in her sullen or disdainful moods, appeared to me beautiful, you may easily guess how much more so I must have found her when so smiling and complacent. That she was a great beauty cannot be doubted, because every body acknowledged it. But there is such a difference in the same woman in the two mentioned cases, that the impression she makes on us admits of no comparison. In the first she may draw our attention and induce us to admire her; but it is only in the other that she can ravish our senses.

You must not think, however, that I was then smitten by Miss Sobervie's charms; no: I had not as yet a particular regard for her. I loved her as a fine woman indeed, but I loved others as well—if she had more of my attention than they, it was rather drawn at first by her situation than her merit—I pitied her, and as I had not prescribed bounds to my compassion, as I had done to my affection, I was insensibly carried greater lengths by it than in all likelihood I should ever have by love alone. Had I departed then from my already-adopted maxims in that respect, her name and mine never would have appeared together in the world; as if she had found me of the common melting mold, it is more than probable that she never would have honoured me with her friendship and confidence; and to them only can in reality be ascribed the beginning of our love; as they enabled us to find each in the other, qualities that we thought more deserving our respective esteem, than exterior accomplishments.

CHAP. VII.

THE next day, I was agreeably surprised to find poor Mr. Sobervie up—He tendered his hand to me at my arrival, and said, pressing mine—Come, my dear doctor, I long to thank you for the restorative cordials that this obliging hand has administered to me—Your kind visits and chearful company have done me more good in a few weeks, than the prescriptions of the most eminent physicians used to do in as many months—I rejoice heartily in your recovery, said I, but I don't like to see Miss Sobervie robbed thus of her due, or of what in my opinion is entirely the effect of her care—What, my niece here? Pish, said he, she has been these eight or nine years about me to very little purpose in that respect ; she has had no hand, indeed, in breaking my constitution, as the doctors have, but I can't say that she has contributed much to the mending of it: though the poor girl does what she can, and is very kind to me— Then, though sensible of your politeness, and much obliged to you for it, said I, my sincerity never will permit me to return you that compliment—I will not flatter you by telling that your visits, in similar circumstances, would have had so favourable an effect on me, as the attendance of a nurse so charming as Miss Sobervie—Because, upon my honour, I believe that she would have done me more good in a single day, than you could in your whole life—Mr. Sobervie burst out a laughing; but I, addressing myself to Miss Sobervie, who was then tying a ribband about her uncle's cap, proceeded to beg her pardon for any improper ideas, that the word nurse, or any expression of mine, might seem to convey; and to assure her, that I only meant to say, that the happiness of seeing about me so charming a person, would cheer my spirits and whole frame so, as to banish or prevent the approaches of every displeasing sensation as well as disorder—She said something very proper on the occasion, and, for the first time, condescended to bear a part in our conversation, which of course, became as agreeable as it may be supposed, with the addition of such enlivening circumstances, as the recovery of the uncle, and the wit and good humour of the niece.

Miss Sobervie left us in about an hour, and I with no small difficulty prevailed upon myself to keep Mr. Sobervie company for half an hour longer ; but I took my leave at last, and flew down stairs, where I expected to meet with such a reception, as to make me amends; and I was not disappointed—Miss Sobervie received me with an enchanting smile and the most engaging manners—When seated, she began to inquire if I had been at the opera the preceding evening—I answered in the affirmative, and she proceeded then to ask my opinion, and give hers, of several songs, as well as of the abilities of several public singers and dancers of both sexes; in all which she displayed such a taste and judgement, as to evince that she was not improperly considered as sensible and witty—She observed that I seemed fond of the theatre, and asked me how I came to be so familiar in so short a time as I had been in Paris, with so many theatrical people, as she conjectured by my discourse I was—I suppose, said she, that Count Renier, in whose company I saw you there, has introduced you to most of them. She was surprised to hear me say, that though he had indeed to some, it had been in return for my having introduced him to great many more—How can that be possible! said she; the Count is reckoned one of the greatest admirers of stage ladies—You must be infinitely more so, to have made already such a progress among them—It is not a particular liking, madam, said I, that is the cause of that progress; but when I lived formerly in Paris, my excessive fondness for dancing brought me acquainted with every famous dancing-master in it, as well as with every promising pupil; a great number of whom, and of each sex, are now employed on the theatres; and being thus old acquaintances of mine, it was

in my power when the Count began to talk of introducing me to a few actresses and female singers, to return him the compliment by introducing him directly to a greater number of female dancers: that I did, not out of vanity as he did, but out of an aversion I have to be under any obligations to those of my companions equally fantastic with himself. I see that you seem acquainted with their real characters, said he; and I was glad to hear yesterday, that you are not so communicative to them, as they are to you; because most of those with whom I saw you the other evening, though every one of them respectable for their extraction and fortunes, and some for their personal merit too, are despised by the sensible part of my sex for their levity—If not in danger of suggesting the notion, that I mean to appear possessed of some merit, by talking with contempt of theirs, I would own myself of that opinion—I may venture to say, however, that by being a rule with me, to indulge others in their talkative humour, I seldom find myself under the necessity of telling them any thing of mine; and thus neither am I exposed, nor do they ever find fault with my reserve : whilst, without appearing inquisitive, I know every step of theirs, and every adventure they meet with or know of—Ay, most of which are, I dare say, but mere inventions, said she—That may happen sometimes, said I—I should be glad to know what they did say to you of me, said she—You should, madam, was it not a rule with me too, to keep their secrets as well as my own—But I may so far gratify your curiosity, as to assure you, that they all did justice to your merit, and never told me any thing of you, but what would become the most exalted character—As to the particulars it is no matter ; though so far from dealing then in inventions, as you suspect they do on many other occasions, I am afraid they did too much the reverse—Well, well, said she, (blushing and giving me a look that indicated she guessed more than she wished to hear) I will not press you to break through those rules you have prescribed to yourself, as I am, on the contrary, so fond of that self-denial and reserve myself, that I must own myself pleased to observe, in your various conversations with my uncle, that you kept up to them, in a very uncommon manner—And is it possible, said I, that the charming, though disdainful, and seemingly insensible idol in the corner, condescended to take notice of any thing I said then?—Very possible, said she, smiling; and of what you did too—That idol in the corner, as you say, affected to have neither eyes nor ears, when in reality she exerted both to the utmost—I know that it was too unmannerly a behaviour for any woman, and I was the more sorry to have been guilty of it, the more I was convinced by my observations, that you did not deserve it—Pardon me, madam, said I, interrupting her, how can you say that I did not deserve it, when you own to have taken notice, even of what I did!—Well, but you were provoked, said she, and your behaviour to me was but a spirited return, that I could not disapprove or complain of; because I was sensible that I did not deserve better—I had used you ill for several days, before you discontinued your civilities to me; and to assume airs of indifference or inattention was too mild a way of shewing your resentment—But how could I shew any resentment at all, without being guilty of a greater error, than any you can possibly think to have committed? your present condescension conveys indeed severer reproaches than I could bear, was I not encouraged by it to expect, that you will extend your goodness, to the forgiving my unmannerly conduct—I don't think that any wants forgiveness but my own, said she; nevertheless to humour you, I will agree to forgive and forget—Let us then shake hands and be friends, said I, taking her hand and kissing it with transport—I will forget every thing but your enchanting complacency—I am glad (said she withdrawing her hand and getting up) that we have made our peace, even before acquainting you with the circumstances which have been the cause of so unaccountable a behaviour, as mine must have been to you—I will acquaint you with them however, some other time—I could never be easy if I did not—Permit me now to wait on my uncle, who, I dare say, wonders already what

can keep me so long absent—I could not but approve of her concern for him ; and after assuring her of my gratitude and most respectful regard, we parted, to meet there again the next day.

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CHAP. VIII.

I Enjoyed the pleasure of many such visits to Miss Sobervie, after my usual ones to her uncle, but our discourse turned always on such trifling matters, as those already mentioned; though they contributed to make us better acquainted with our respective sentiments and dispositions, they had not as yet procured me the promised explanation of the reasons for her former behaviour; nor did I care to say any thing about it; because her many questions and other circumstances, had induced me to think, that she was striving to find out whether I was fit or not to be treated with confidence—But Mr. Sobervie being so far recovered, as to talk of leaving his bed-chamber, we found ourselves at the eve of losing, by his coming down stairs, the opportunity of seeing one another in private; and it became then necessary to put Miss Sobervie in mind of her promise, that she might not think me too careless in a matter she had mentioned as of some concern to her—She thanked me for having done so, and seemed to pause only as if to recollect herself; but some sighs escaped her, and the tears I saw soon after in her eyes, having convinced me that she was agitated with sorrowful emotions, I was going to propose a putting off, when she begged of me to bear with her weakness, and have a little patience, as she wished to acquaint me with circumstances, not in her power to think upon without being affected—I guessed then, that she meant to tell me something about her expected marriage I knew already, and therefore begged, in my turn, to drop the subject, assuring her, that the pleasure of having my curiosity gratified, never could make amends for the trouble it gave me, to see her thus distressed—No, said she, I thank you for the concern you so obligingly express, but I must tell you something, without the knowledge of which you never could be a judge of my conduct, nor think me but a mad creature—Then she paused again, and I could not help sympathizing with her, and waiting patiently.

You wonder, I dare say, said she at last, what ails me; and connecting my former behaviour, with the confidence I seem now disposed to repose in you, you think, perhaps, that I am the oddest woman in the world; but I hope to convince you, that I am only the most unfortunate one in it—She gave me then an account that agreed pretty well with what I had been told before—She had been courted, she said, by some worthy youths; but the partiality of her uncle for Mr. Lunel had obliged her to dismiss them, and consent to be that gentleman's wife; though sure that in so doing, she had consented to be the most unhappy creature under heaven—Because, said she, not only I have an unconquerable aversion to his person, but by many years experience of his disposition, I am quite convinced, that two more opposite characters than his and mine, never met together in wedlock—But terrified by the anger of both her father and her uncle, and menaced with the resentment of all her family and friends in general, she had resolved to give up all notions of happiness, and submit to her sad fate; she still dreaded, she said, the moment of that sacrifice, infinitely more than death, certain that it would prove a too lingering one to her—That the only thing in which she found herself less unfortunate than she might have been, was, that her affections had not been decidedly engaged as yet to any man, and of course, she had not been obliged to struggle with a passion which very likely would have added greatly to her sufferings—But though born to have nothing to do with that passion myself, said she, and perhaps less likely to inspire it in others than most other women, I had the unlucky chance to hit the fancy of some high rank rake, who too proud to solicit a legal alliance, and mean enough to insult me with proposals for a clandestine one, has made me very uneasy for twelve months, he had the address to follow me to every place to which I went in all that time, so disguised and

cautious for fear of my uncle, that I never could ascertain his person, though often sure that I had spoken to him; and having bribed some of my uncle's servants, by their means I have got many a billet of his, so cunningly laid among other papers, and perhaps in my very pockets, or pocket book, as to be induced to read most of the contents before I knew them to be such; I often found in them the very expressions I had made use of but the night before, talking to somebody or other, I could not well recollect then, though sometimes I believed I had an idea of the person; and you happened to answer that idea so much, that your first appearance in my uncle's room, almost petrified me, by suggesting notions of some stratagem calculated to impose upon him as well as upon myself; surprise forced me then to act a part nature has not designed me for. When convinced by inquiries I had made directly, that you could not be the same, having found out that you was but just returned from your travels, I grew ashamed, and so exceedingly uneasy at the recollection of my behaviour to you, that I neither could rest nor resolve myself to alter it, till I had explained to you the cause, or at least begged your pardon—As I have told you how I am situated, I hope you will be so kind as to acquit me, not only of a design to affront or ill use you, but even of conceit ; surely it cannot be supposed that I would boast of imaginary lovers, when even real ones are so far out of the question already, that I could not look upon any body who would talk to me of love now, but as upon an insulting enemy, delighting in reminding me of my unhappy fate.

But supposing, said I, that your first orders for my waiting upon you were the effect of that generous remorse, how came I to be scolded for my obedience? I was listening and even peeping when the servant delivered to you my message, said she, and the joy or alacrity with which I observed you received it, tended so much to corroborate my first notions, that fear of some mistake in the information I had got about you, suggested to me that sudden alteration ; but certain, on farther inquiries, that my apprehensions were ill grounded, that very error added to the impatience with which I wished to have an opportunity to apologize, and produced the repetition of my message.

Though I knew before most of the particulars relative to poor Miss Sobervie's situation contained in her account, the affecting manner in which she related them, could not fail to make a very great impressions on a heart so susceptible of compassion as mine. I was troubled, and the more so, as it was not in my power to afford her any relief; when even if I had been still of a romantic turn enough to propose an elopement, or something of that kind, she had prevented every recourse to such an expedient, by warning me, that she would think herself insulted by any body who should venture to talk of love to her. What could I do then but sympathize? She perceived that I really did so, and sensible that I could do nothing else, seized every opportunity of making me amends for her former affronting behaviour by a most kind one, and of convincing me by a continuation of her confidence, that she was satisfied with my conduct.

CHAP. IX.

MR. Sobervie moved to the dining room early the next day as expected; and his house, which all the time of his illness had been shut up, except for a few of his acquaintance, was open again for every one of them; and as he was rather profuse in entertaining his friends, their great number took so much of Miss Sobervie's attention, that it was likely to have prevented the cultivation of that friendship already established between us, had not her uncle grown so fond of me, that no company seemed to please him like mine. His pressing solicitations obliged me to yield so often, that not only I dined with him almost every day, but breakfasted and supped, and I became by degrees one of his family. In return, that my complaisance might not deprive me of the public diversions that I was used to, and of course render his friendship disagreeable to me, he often insisted on my taking to them Miss Sobervie, which, as you may guess, was very pleasing to us both. Chiefly as Mr. Lunel, with whom I soon grew familiar, seemed to be so little afraid then of being made uneasy by me, as to say often he did not care where I did take her, provided it was in her uncle's carriage, and not in my own.

That liberty of going together where we liked, though by policy sparingly used, gave us fine opportunities to entertain ourselves on many pleasing topics, as we had done in the dining room; and poor Miss Sobervie often said how happy she would think herself if permitted to pass all her life in the innocent manner she passed it then. But her marriage had been deferred on account of Mr. Sobervie's indisposition only, and now that he was recovered they began to talk of it again; and that talk embittered all our amusements. Miss Sobervie could do nothing but cry, and her tears affected me to distraction. As she had formerly declared her aversion to the match, and begged in vain to let her rather live single all her life, than be forced into the arms of a man she detested, she thought it of no use to plead anew in favour of her natural right; the less so, as the consent extorted then from her was likely to be mentioned now as binding; and made use of to sanction every act of severity or violence that partiality or resentment could suggest. Therefore, she silently submitted and pined away with sorrow, whilst preparations went on to the bespeaking of jewels and clothes, and the fixing on the day; but before that arrived, her delicate frame proved unable to bear the weight of a long-indulged affliction. I can't say that she complained; but she was found to be so ill, that the Doctors had little or no hopes of her recovery; the symptoms were all very bad, they said, and in consequence they consulted, prescribed, and consulted again, but much to their honour, conscious that they did not know what was her disorder, they prescribed only such innocent things, that, whatever it might be, could do her no harm; whilst they kept a strict watch to make, if possible, some discovery that might direct them to the use of the proper ones. I observed them closely, for fear that by mistake they might treat her improperly; but when they took notice of my doing so, being rather prepossessed in my favour by Mr. Sobervie's good opinion of me, they did not hesitate to tell me in private, that though they all knew the young lady was very ill, none of them could say to a certainty what was the matter with her. And I seized that opportunity of preventing, by some hints, the mistakes I dreaded; and as if in return for their confidence and candour, I told them what I knew of her illness myself, though merely as a probable conjecture; and they had good nature enough to own that I was certainly right, every circumstance in their observation concurring to prove that I was so, though they were not likely to have thought of it, they said, because they supposed the aversion of the lady to the match conquered long before, not hearing any thing about it, since the former pretty well-known struggle between her relations and her.

But though there remained no doubt as to the nature of the disorder, the Doctors could do little or nothing to stop its progress, and poor Miss Sobervie had been confined to her bed for some weeks before we began to entertain any hopes of her recovery. Nature, however, was doing her part : youth got the better at last, and our dejected spirits began to revive at the wished prospect. She began to talk, and when able to bear to be talked to, at her uncle's request, I sat by her bedside as constantly as decency could permit. He rightly suspected that her aversion to the match was the only cause of her illness, and thought my company more conducive to her recovery, than all what the Doctors could do; looking upon my usual good humour as a better remedy for her lowness of spirits than any they could prescribe. But though I did all my endeavours to divert her, she did not wish to live to be Lunel's, nor could I tell her that she would not be forced to be his if she lived, I did them to very little purpose. Nevertheless, Mr. Sobervie, who could not be persuaded there was a possibility of exerting myself in vain, obliged me to accept of an apartment in his house, to insure more of my attendance on his niece with less inconvenience to myself; and when thus engaged by my friendship for them both, I devoted myself entirely to their service with more pleasure indeed than he or any body else had any notion of. I tried every means my fondness could suggest to turn her thoughts from the disagreeable subject on which I supposed them mostly to run, and though often without effect, as I knew how nice were her feelings, by complaining tenderly every now and then, that her inattention was an improper return to my care and inexpressible concern for her, I succeeded so well by degrees, that I seldom permitted her to indulge herself in her preying melancholy. And though I could not prevent her doing it in my absence, by a constant care not to be out of her room but when absolutely necessary, I facilitated the efforts of nature and youth. I enjoyed and procured to all her friends the satisfaction of seeing her recovering apace; though not without drawing upon myself her reproaches; as she often told me—cruel Touloussin! what pleasure do you take in restoring me to a hated life! Was I to be permitted the liberty generally enjoyed by other women in the disposal of themselves, even if obliged to live and die a maid, under the penurious circumstances of earning a livelihood by my daily labour, I would thank you for your kindness and pains; but to preserve me to be the drudge, the worse than slave, of a man I hate, is cruel beyond description.

I strove then to divert and comfort her, though, to tell the truth, I was very much of her opinion myself; as, by what she and others had told me of Lunel, as well as my own observations and private enquiries, her prospects were uncommonly dismal for a woman of her sense and feelings. But I wished her to live at any rate, and even entertained some hopes that her uncle would relent in consequence of her narrow escape, and such strong proofs of unsurmountable aversion as she had given us, till in a private conversation I had with him on the subject, I was convinced that nothing in the world could possibly induce him to alter his plan; because he could not be persuaded that the aversion of a woman, to a man who had nothing remarkably deformed in his person, could be but the mere effect of a foolish conceit and whim, that soon wear off, as he said, when they come to lie together, and that does not deserve a moment's consideration when put in comparison with the evident advantages of a family.

I was almost sorry myself then, that she had not disappointed them all, by taking a trip into the other world, as she was not likely to be but very unhappy in this. I could not bear to see people, though so sensible otherwise, and even so good, so stupid, or blinded by partiality, or so

absurdly wrong in their notions on matters that so much concern a fellow-creature, as to render others miserable by obstinately insisting on proving themselves kind to them. However, as things stood, thinking that I could not exert my friendship to a better purpose than that of reconciling her as much as possible to her fate, I undertook the disagreeable task of proving that Lunel might happen to be a tolerable husband, though I did not believe it myself; and my good intention was rewarded in an unexpected manner.

Some officious friend of Mr. Sobervie, to prove his regard for the family, and his own wisdom, told him, that in the nature of things, Miss Sobervie's aversion to Lunel could proceed from nothing else but an attachment to some other man, and hinted that perhaps I was he. Mr. Sobervie rejected directly the idea, because the discovery of that aversion had been made long before she knew me; but his friend, unwilling to give up his pretensions to be considered as a person of profound penetration, reasoned the matter so as to make him believe, that though not then, I might be since, the favourite man; and induced Mr. Sobervie to contrive how to be thoroughly convinced if I was so or not. To that purpose, a communication was very privately opened, from a back room, into Miss Sobervie's closet, and every thing settled in it so, that her uncle could go in and out without being perceived or suspected. From thence, it seems, that he heard me often talk to her and plead so well the family cause, and even speak of Lunel so that his esteem for me was ever after proof not only against reports and malicious suggestions, but almost against the evidence of his own senses; and the incident though seemingly trifling then, by inducing him to distrust the stories of designing people for the future, had as favourable a tendency on the money affairs of his niece as the best concerted scheme could be expected to have, and as you will be informed of in its proper place.

In other respects it was really lucky that my talk was such as to refute appearances; because my silly forwardness was grown already so much into a disorder, that it would have been a wonder to see me fix times with any pretty woman without accustoming her to sit on my knees, no matter who was present—And a greater wonder still to see any of them vexed in earnest by my freedoms, though they kept at the same time far more deserving men at a distance: But I had something droll in my natural cheerfulness that prevented every idea of offence, and overweighed merit in their opinion; perhaps that induced them to look upon me as a harmless being, that might be admitted to freedoms incompatible with the respect they expected from others; and they were so far right, that indeed the liberties I used to take on the occasions alluded to never exceeded the bounds of decency. I often kissed their lips, and pressed them to my bosom; but neither did I go farther, nor appeared in the least to wish it—and so far Mr. Sobervie did see me do to his niece, without being alarmed; because, as he told me after, I saw nothing in it that exceeded a brotherly affection, in which I rather rejoiced.

CHAP. X.

I WAS first very cautious in the speaking of Lunel, and setting forth the match in a favourable light ; forseeing, that the supposing me turned to be his advocate would effect poor Miss Sobervie greatly; but with all my caution, I could not prevent her wrong notions in that respect. At the beginning she would not hear me talk on the subject upon any account whatever; but when she found me so industriously bent, day after day, to bring it on, though mostly in a jocular way, she burst at last into tears, and appeared so much afflicted, that I was afraid of a relapse, and almost out of conceit with my well-meant reconciliating scheme; but, pressing her to my bosom with affection and emotions as pure and tender as could be those of a brother, I begged and preyed her to compose herself. How can I compose myself ! (said she almost drowned in her tears.) How can I support my already-too-depressed spirit! and struggle against such a combination of misfortunes!— was it not enough to see myself so persecuted by my relations, that, to avert their resentment, I have consented to marry the only man in the world I hate, and render myself unhappy for life without resource: but you, the only person in the world too, in whose company and conversation I found some relief—you that I thought sympathised with me, and by pitying, encouraged me to bear my distress—you too, have ranked yourself on the side of my persecutors, and as if their unfeeling nature had not been sufficient to oppress and crush me to death, are lending an helping hand to the barbarous work—Oh! is it for this that you seemed so solicitous to preserve my life ! was it to shew your friendly zeal for my uncle, that you wished me to live ! If it was, go tell him you have succeeded—tell him that I am ready to do any thing he pleases—that I am ready to give my hand to the hated Lunel—and depend upon my word that I will do it with as good a grace as I possibly can ; that you may claim with him the merit of having persuaded me to do so—I will do that and more if I can to oblige you, or in return for any part of your conduct in which I may happen to be indebted to you—and if there is none that deserves my thanks, because all what you did seemingly for me, was but to oblige my uncle, I will do still any thing for you, to requite your trouble in deceiving me so, as to make me find some satisfaction in the deception—I will do it to convince you, how grateful was this poor heart you have helped to break.

I was so much affected by her lamentations, that I could not interrupt her—She had gone a good while at that rate before I was able to speak; her sufferings had been all along a source of inexpressible uneasiness to me, but now as I thought that the idea of my contributing to them was an unsupportable addition to her sorrow, I was distracted; and nothing but that same anxiety it produced in me could have had influence enough on my senses to render possible the use of them at that time. My dear Miss Sobervie, my angel, my life, said I, wiping and kissing off her tears, how can you be so cruel as to torture me with such reproaches! and by entertaining of me such strange notions, add so much to your sufferings and mine. How can you think my concern, my friendship, my affection, all feigned! Have you not perceived through every one of my words and actions something that evinces the sincerity of my heart? Have you not observed them to evince a generous soul that scorns every thing that is mean? you certainly have, if indifference has not blinded you, or prepossessed you against the evidence of your own senses—And how can you then, my suffering darling, my most pitied victim to family conceits, how can you suppose me capable of any thing that can tend to increase your troubles! How can you then, said she, torment me every day, by bringing on a subject, that you know is unsupportable to me! How can you talk to me of Lunel, but as of the odious monster you know he is! I will tell you that,

said I if you are pleased to tell me first, whether have you altered in any thing, your former resolution, concerning your marriage to him: because it is on that circumstance the propriety of talking to you of it depends—No, said she sighing, I have not altered, nor can I alter in the least my resolution in that particular—My father and uncle must be obeyed—I will give my hand to the man of their choice, though I own, I never could do it but in hopes that there will be but a short interval, between my going to the altar, and being carried to my grave—As you might be disappointed in those hopes, said I, and they do not seem to me consistent with that spirit of resignation, to which they owe your obedience, but, rather suggested by despondency, I think it incumbent on me, as an affectionate friend, to observe and communicate to you every thing that may contribute to your relief—You may happen to be as much blinded by aversion, as your father and uncle by partiality; and to discuss the merits or demerits of Lunel, on which the one and the other is grounded, cannot make matters worse; but rather enable you the more, to decide how far you are right in your opinion of him. Good God ! Said she, can you think that six or seven years of as unreserved intercourse between us, as if we had been brother and sister, has not enabled me sufficiently to decide it! Well, but perhaps you never thought of circumstances to which I mean, or wish at least, to turn your attention—As supposing you unalterably resolved to be his wife, he is to be considered henceforth, not in the character of a batchelor as he has been considered by you till now, but in that of a husband ; which often happens to make such a difference in the same person, that scarce can we believe the latter to be the same we knew when he was the former—If my aversion was produced by nothing but the excesses or follies incident to youth, said she, the discussion you propose might perhaps answer your expectations; but I am afraid it will rather add than diminish it; as it will make his unworthiness more conspicuous in my sight, instead of his merit. Besides, there is something disgusting to me in his person, notions and behaviour, that neither is likely to alter for the better, nor can I explain it so, as to convey an idea of the manner in which it affects me, and excites my repugnance to a near connexion with him—With all that, said I, as you own yourself prepossessed enough already to hate him, I cannot think that our talk on that topic could have been productive of any harm ; and I expected to have gratified in it my inclination to do every body justice—But as it is so disagreeable to you, I will make no farther attempts to have it so—Your condescension confounds me now, said she, making me sensible how well entitled you are to mine, by your kindness, and every part of your conduct ; and as you tell me that it will tend to your satisfaction, I will not lose this opportunity of convincing you, how much I wish to contribute to it, by every means in my power—I shall rather beg, that without any regard to the trouble you have seen me in, by the introduction of the subject in question, you will be pleased to bring it on at any time; sure that as I will think your intention different, from what I thought it to be before, it will never more have the same effect on me—I thanked her, and after some little compliments on both sides, she insisting on my doing as she desired me to do; and I in a seeming unwillingness to do what I knew she did not like, we agreed, at last, to postpone it till she was recovered from that day's uneasiness, and I began my talk on the next.

Supposing of use in the case some touch of my own notions, concerning the influence of beauty, and the intercourse between the two sexes, I communicated them accordingly; illustrating the subject with so many merry anecdotes, and droll occurrences, as to render it amusing. My charming Miss Sobervie not only seemed to be well pleased, but she often shook her head and smiled, thinking to have found out the way to account for that command she had observed I had upon myself in love matters; or the easy manner in which I seemed to

accommodate myself, and the women's dispositions, to the loving, or letting them alone— However, I went on in my endeavours to convince her, in what false light the youth of either sex do generally view their respective passions and merits; as I thought, that if I could once destroy the romantic part of her ideas, her aversion to Lunel would be the less, the more it would appear founded on some of them, as his inelegant person made probable it was—I knew him to be a good for nothing, but as I knew, too, that women seldom consider farther, in their favourite swain, than his being a pretty fellow, when I thought to have said enough to make Miss Sobervie sensible how little is the influence of external accomplishments in bed-fellows, however romantic their notions may have been before they became so: I went about proving, that as they are not requisite to the making of a good husband (as we often see the most flashy men make the worst ones, and vice versa) Lunel, though without them, might be as good as another—But as he wanted not only every recommendation to the favour of the ladies, being neither handsome, genteel, nor gallant, but also every good quality that in other men make amends for the want of those sweetening ingredients, I was obliged to shift, and endeavour to make good my assertion by a well-known truth, viz. that it is almost always in the power of a wife, to make her husband to be a tolerable one: and that it often is the wife's fault, if he is not so at least—And to make it plain, I explained the prodigious effects of meekness and prudence, of patience and resignation—of condescension and cheerful compliance with a husband's commands, and even whims—and of discretion in remonstrating but only with kindness and at a proper time—And as all those are qualities every woman may have and enjoy the benefit of, if she chooses, it was easily proved then to a demonstration, that the happiness or misery of wives, with respect to their husband's conduct, often depends upon themselves; or that they can make of a man if ever so bad, almost always a tolerable good husband.

I strove next to prove, that it would be Miss Sobervie's own advantage, to exert herself in tempering the bad qualities I could not deny in Lunel, with her natural sweetness and good sense; as it would redound to her own satisfaction. It could not fail to please all her friends, and interest them in her favour; though wrong in not consulting her inclinations, they were not so otherwise, than by a combination of mistaken notions and kindness; which unluckily, with the best intention, might indeed produce indifferent effects, if not prevented by her discretion—But that as no woman in the world would be better qualified to civilize Lunel, and inspire him with love and sentiments becoming his happy situation, the union with him might turn out less disagreeable by much than she apprehended.

She thanked me for the many undeserved compliments I had paid her, she said, but though till then she seemed to have been agreeably entertained with my various dissertations, and often seasoned them with her lively and witty remarks, when we came close to the point, or when I came to gather and apply the scattered reasons alledged in them, to look on her expected match with less aversion, I found myself much disappointed; as scarce could I boast of any other advantage in the many days of my well-meant exertions, than that of having contributed to her recovery by amusing her.

I did not give up my scheme however; I had still hopes, because, though I had not succeeded in the main, I perceived I had made some impression with my remarks on young people's mistaken notions and disappointments; and she owned to have observed herself, many corroborating instances among her acquaintance. But observing that by speaking in Lunel's

favour, I rather excited a spirit of contradiction than persuaded; and that she seemed moved when I talked of the old folks in a strain of compassion, provided I did not speak of them as if quite blameless, I resolved to try only, how far I could prevail on her good nature. I often mentioned the effects her conduct was likely to have on her father and uncle—How glad will you make them, said I, in accepting of Lunel's hand with cheerfulness, and as if your own choice! Their souls, which, without doubt, do now doat upon you, would melt then in transports of tenderness and affection—Yours itself could not but rejoice greatly, to see them so happy by your means. On the contrary, how painful it must be to them, to see you dragged to the altar as a victim! how much must their poor old hearts be affected by your reluctance and evident grief, when they mean and dispose every thing, as to the best of their knowledge, is most likely, to insure your happiness. They have not paid indeed, that regard they ought to your inclinations, but their good intention deserves some allowances; especially as it is certain, that old people seldom remember in such cases, what, in that respect, seemed to themselves once of the greatest consequence. It is so seldom that love matches answer the expectations of the parties, that the experienced cannot be brought to consider a previous liking as indispensably requisite. And as you are resolved to obey, why not carry your dutiful principles and generous sentiments to the conducting yourself, as one reconciled to her situation by magnanimity at least, or as really above those little souls, who are led in a hurry, by the mere influence of a pretty outside, into engagements; of which they repent at leisure all their lives. The influence of your beauty is too great to be entirely lost on any man, if ever so savage in his disposition; and even if it was, your good sense and discretion must absolutely enable you to go through life with more satisfaction than is generally enjoyed by an infinity of others, to which, I am sure, the recollection of having gratified, with cheerfulness, all your friends' wishes, on this trying occasion, will greatly contribute.

In fine, I teased her so much, that at last she surprised me one day, by throwing her arms about my neck, and telling me, though in tears, Count, you have succeeded: not in making me believe that Lunel is a bit better than what I thought him before to be, but in persuading me, that in my present circumstances, the best, the most prudent way is, to submit with a good grace to the will of my friends; and strive after, to bear my detested lot with patience and resignation. To conquer my aversion for Lunel, I never can; but I hope to find in my adherence to your kind advice, the means of rendering it tolerable. The pains you have taken to convince me, how ill grounded are most of the young people's notions, have not been lost with me: by drawing my attention to circumstances that never had occurred to me before, you have led me to observe causes and effects, as well as to investigate and make reflections on both; and I must do to you the justice to own, that I have found your reasoning very just, in almost every thing. You have suggested to me new ideas, or at least set my former ones in a different light; and as I expect soon to hear, that a day is fixed again for my wedding, anxious to convince you, that this my resolution of submitting with as little perceptible reluctance as I can, is more the effect of your advice and kind endeavours to persuade me I ought to do so, than of my relation's stern commands, I beg you may be pleased to tell my uncle, that I am ready to obey him and give my hand to Lunel when he thinks proper: but for God sake, (said she, drowning me almost in her tears) do all that you can, to have the day as far distant as possible; let all the rest be just as they please.

After so much pains, it was indeed a matter of triumph to see her so far reconciled; and yet, from that moment, I began to be uneasy at the thoughts of seeing her in Lunel's arms: so

unaccountably whimsical are we in our nature, and so little do we know the secret springs that direct our passions. Whilst Miss Sobervie was unwilling to marry, and wished herself rather dead than Lunel's, though I knew she was designed for him, it did not make me uneasy farther than what pity for her may be supposed it could; but as to myself I was quite reconciled to the event ; and now that the poor creature, persuaded by me, owned herself willing to obey and live, though Lunel's wife, as if disappointed in my success, I was some how affected and displeased with it.

However, I had a sufficient command of myself to appear otherwise—I returned ten fold her caresses, gave her many thanks for her condescension and confidence, and promised to employ all my influence with her uncle to get the day fixed as she wished to have it—Indeed it was not a difficult matter to obtain from him such a favour at that time; as the good gentleman was so transported with joy, at the news of her willing compliance, that he would have done any thing to please her. He insisted on me then, to fix myself the day, and considering that every thing was ready, I durst not to fix it farther than two months—he was satisfied, and Miss Sobervie a great deal more so, because she did not expect to get half that time. She rejoiced as if that reprieve had been a full release; and either that her cheerfulness did really enliven, and improved her charms, or that they appeared only so, through some jealous tinge in my optics, she never had been so handsome in my opinion, as I thought her to be then.

The news of her voluntary submission, spread soon among the family friends, all of whom caressed her greatly in consequence: and she seemed to enjoy herself in their excesses, except in Lunel's clumsy ones, whom, with all her resignation, she could scarce suffer near her. A circumstance I observed with an unaccountable pleasure too; but as it drew always my attention, as soon as Miss Sobervie perceived that I took notice of it, so far was she from suspecting the cause, that thinking I reproached her with my looks, for want of adherence to my advice, my poor darling used to submit herself, and let that brute paw and teaze her, who never failed on such occasions to exert her patience to the utmost; whilst I was obliged to look on in silence, though ready to go mad with vexation, or I don't know what—I knew that the least hint from me would have been gladly attended to by Miss Sobervie, to keep Lunel at his former distance, but it would have been an inconsistency of too bad a tendency, and honour, as well as gratitude, obliged me to bear with that and many other as unaccountable mortifications, without letting any body perceive that they were so to me.

CHAP. XI.

WE passed the first of the two intervening months very gayly, in the enjoyment of public diversions and private parties of pleasure, but some trifling incident at a ball we went to, in the beginning of the second, seemed to have been calculated as a period to our thoughtless career. At the first talk of that ball, I entertained myself with the pleasing notion of surprising Miss Sobervie, dancing being my greatest recommendation to the ladies favour, and having had no opportunity till then, of dancing before her. But a relation of Lunel's being just arrived from the country, common civility led him to ask her the honour of her hand for that night, before I thought of asking it myself, not having occurred to me, that such a formality might be necessary between us, whilst Miss Sobervie, observing that it was her uncle's pleasure she should, was obliged to grant it, though much displeased at the idea of seeing me bestowing upon another, those attentions she had expected, and was so used to receive from me on every occasion, and when I understood how uneasy she was likely to be on that account, sacrificing my vanity to the pleasure of obliging her, I resolved not to dance at all; and kept up to that resolution for the best part of the evening, though under the mortification of appearing in as despicable a light as Miss Sobervie appeared in an advantageous one. She was admired as the most elegant female dancer in the room, and I was laughed at as the greatest dunce in it: having excused myself all along by saying that I did not know how to dance, not to affront some ladies who had already proposed to honour me with their hands, I was obliged to refuse Miss Sobervie herself, who, with her partner's consent, kindly asked me to walk a minuet with her and I was likely to have returned home as I had proposed, had not a gentleman just come in, and who knew me of old, heard a lad say that it was a pity I did not dance; as having asked her the cause, and receiving for answer, that it was because I did not know how, he burst into such an immoderate fit of laughter, as to excite the curiosity of every body in the room to know what was the matter; and no sooner had he let the cat out of the bag, by telling how famous I was some years before the reverse, that I was surrounded by almost every one of the ladies present, who, as a satisfaction for having imposed upon them in general, and affronted some in particular by refusing to dance with them, insisted, at the instigation of the same gentleman, on my dancing alone some celebrated parts of the ballets in vogue then on the theatres; and as the atonement proposed did not interfere with my wishes of avoiding a partner, I obeyed with pleasure, and danced so much to their satisfaction as to make many conquests, none of which deserves however any particular notice here, but that of Miss Morin, whom I must mention often by and bye, because her partiality for me had a similar effect on Miss Sobervie, to that her resignation and message to her uncle in consequence of it, had upon me.

Compliance, and vanity too, I suppose, kept me dancing so long, that I heartily wished to rest myself; and to do it with all the liberty I wanted, I capered as if by chance towards the door, and when near it, I gave the slip to my kind spectators, and nimbly crossing two or three card rooms, threw myself upon a couch in the first I found without company. At my return to the ball room, I could not but observe, that whilst the ladies seemed to vie with each other, in giving me a kind welcome among them, Miss Sobervie only kept at a distance, and looked dull—I thought she was affronted by my mentioned refusal, and going up to her, I hope my darling Miss Sobervie is not vexed with me, said I—No, why should I be vexed with you, said she, coolly—Perhaps, said I, you are so, because I did not accept of the honour you proposed to do me—No (said she again, interrupting me, and seemingly out of temper) why should I be vexed for that,

you may have your reasons—And such ones too, said I, as I flatter myself deserve rather your approbation than your frowns—I had no opportunity to say or enquire farther for that night; but I had seen and heard enough, to long for some explanations on so sudden and extraordinary a change.

I went to Miss Sobervie's room the next morning, on the pretence of knowing how her evening amusement had agreed with her, it being the first time she had danced since her illness; and sorry to find that she was not very well, having had but an indifferent night's rest, as she told me, I was loath to say any thing about what passed between us in the ball room, but she spoke of if herself; she came to sit on my knee, and embracing me with perceptible emotions, I don't deserve your goodness, said she, I am sensible I do not; and stopped, hiding her face in my bosom; what is the matter now with my darling, said I, endeavouring to see her face, which I found bathed in tears—what ails my jewel? What unexpected misfortune has happened, or what has vexed you? tell it to me, my life, that I may share your sorrow—but I can't tell that, said she, I don't know it myself—that cannot be, my darling, said I, wiping off her tears, you must certainly know what ails you, or what you cry for—but I don't, said she—I know only that my heart is full and ready to break, but I don't know for what—I could cry for ever, but it does not relieve me—I have cried all night long, and yet I am not a bit better this morning. Strange, said I, how came your heart to be so unaccountably affected? when did you begin to perceive this alteration in you? you was very cheerful last evening—I was so, said she, and if you promise me not to be angry with me, I will tell you how the alteration began—Angry with you! said I, impossible! I never can be angry with you, my jewel, let the thing be what it may, but rather thankful for your condescension and confidence. My heart leaped in my bosom, said she, with joy and surprise whilst you was dancing, and every body was so charmed with you, especially the ladies, that they all were loud in your praises, and that gave me such a pleasure too, that I could not but join them, till they grew unreserved past bearing—to hear the one exclaim—O the dear creature! The other—O the charming man! a third—O he is an Angel! and so on; I can't tell how it vexed me, nor for what, when I know that they were but doing justice to your merit, and I have as much or more regard for you than any of them can have.

But of all things, none vexed me so much as the impertinence of Miss Morin, who not only asked me a thousand questions about you, but also thousand pardons for a little misunderstanding between us, which has kept her a great while from this house, where she used to be almost always with me. And as her condescension last night was evidently produced by a desire of coming to see you here, it disgusted me so, that I became unsupportable to myself for the remainder of the evening—my heart grew then very uneasy, and every thing vexed me—I longed to be alone to cry for I did not know what; nor do I know what ails me since, though I never felt myself so ill in all my life.

I saw directly that Miss Sobervie's indisposition was the effect of such another unaccountable weakness as that with which I had been affected, when she declared herself resolved to submit with a good grace to her fate. Whilst she had me about her, unnoticed, for what she knew, by every other woman in the world, she seemed to look upon me as her undisputed property, and was easy—so did I upon her, whilst I judged by her aversion, that she was far still from giving her hand to Lunel—but now that she saw a likelihood of my being soon claimed by others, she was distracted, and knew not why, no more than I did at the time of her

mentioned declaration; neither of us had experienced, as yet, how apt are we to set an incomparably greater value on things after we lose them, than we ever did before; or that our desires, whatever, grow stronger or weaker, but in proportion to the more or less difficulties we find in gratifying them. The discovery of such partiality for me in Miss Sobervie, of whom I was rather too fond, would have been very flattering in other circumstances; but situated as she was, it could be no less than painful to me. The inexpressible uneasiness I felt myself, whenever I reflected that I was going to lose her, and another to possess a person so dear to me, led me to feel for her, guessing by her already evident anxiety, that she was likely to suffer no small share of a similar trouble if her regard for me became as much of a mixed complexion as mine for her undoubtedly was. I resolved in consequence, to conduct myself as to the best of my knowledge would appear most conducive to re-establish her peace of mind, and prove I deserved that confidence she and all her family reposed in me.

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CHAP. XII.

WE had remained for some time silent, as if both lost in thought, when Miss Sobervie raising her head of a sudden, said to me, there is Miss Morin. My pretty darling, said I, pressing her to my bosom, how I grieve to see you thus raving and tormenting yourself for what there is not, nor can be any reason to make yourself uneasy! If that young lady comes, it must certainly be for the pleasure of renewing her intimacy with you; your company is too agreeable not to be coveted even by your own sex—Ay, said she, why did she not renew it then till now? Why did she not come to see me even when I was dying?—No, no; I am obliged to you for your compliment, but the thing is too plain to admit of so favourable an interpretation—she made no apologies—she asked no pardon, till she understood that you lived with us. I will not lose time, said I, in keeping up a contest which after all can be of no consequence—it is enough for me to know that you will not like to see me intimate with Miss Morin, never to be so—I shall take care to be out of the way whenever she comes here; and if it so happens that I cannot possibly avoid her, I assure you, that till I have an opportunity of doing it, I will avoid, at least, every other intercourse with her, than the indispensable one of common civility. You confound me with your kindness, said she—No; why should I deprive you of any thing that is likely to be a pleasure to you! when you are so obliging to me—I don't know how much may be the merit of the young lady in question, said I, but I could wish it was very great, to convince you the more, that there can be no pleasure in the world for me, equal to that of contributing to your satisfaction. You are too good, said she; you often have induced me to reproach myself with a want of gratitude, that I never should have been sensible of, but for your condescension—I will not have you to avoid Miss Morin; she is a very good girl, very pretty, and very entertaining too—Though she really vexed me last night with her impertinent questions, I cannot but do her justice, and even excuse her for liking you; though I could wish she had art enough to hide her tender sentiments for you, because I am afraid they will add to my troubles, by depriving me of my only comfort in them. But as I have no right to meddle with your conduct or hers, or if I had, could I think, after the many proofs I have of your tenderness for me, that you could take a pleasure in making me uneasy, I shall strive to conquer the weakness that has made me so miserable since last night. Come, said she, getting up, let us go down stairs; I will begin to put in practice my resolution, by introducing you to her. She is there I know—I heard her. My uncle, with whom she is a great favourite, has detained her, otherwise she would have been here by this time.

It was true indeed. Miss Morin was below with Mr. Sobervie. I was introduced to her accordingly, and I found she did answer the description Miss Sobervie had given of her. But to come the sooner to more interesting particulars, I must omit all those which, on this and other occasions, concerned only that young lady and me—I may say, in general, that, aware of the consequences, I confined for a while my intercourse with her (as I had promised to do) to formal civilities: and as she did not know that it was in direct opposition to my custom and bent, she did not perceive my restraint; and Miss Sobervie was so well satisfied, that they soon became as intimate as they had been before; which, for a time, proved to be a very favourable circumstance, as, in proportion as the wedding day approached, the care of keeping up Miss Sobervie's spirits became more necessary; and Miss Morin's exertions to that purpose were a great help to mine—she knew of her friend's aversion to Lunel; and Mr. Sobervie had begged of her to do her utmost to divert the effects of it by every means her friendship could suggest.

Nevertheless, it would be too tedious to relate the many affecting scenes the approach of that day produced ; let it be enough to assure you, that I believe never a woman was prepossessed against a match by so unconquerable a personal dislike, or so genuine antipathy as Miss Sobervie was ; though as she was sensible that objections at that time could answer no other purpose than that of making her ridiculous, she made none ; but at every opportunity she had of communicating to me her distress, she did it so effectually, in every sense of the word, that I don't know which of us two could be said was the more affected by it, as, without doubt, we both were so to an inexpressible degree; and I really think that no man or woman's resolution, virtue, feelings, and honour, were ever put to a severer trial than ours were then; but, with such a pattern before my eyes of goodness and filial duty, I must own that my merit in advising to go on as I did fell very short of hers in taking that advice.

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CHAP. XIII.

THE dreaded day arrived at last; but it is impossible to give an adequate idea of our respective sufferings; you must rather endeavour to form it to yourself, on your own feeling. No man, if ever so unconcerned, but would have grieved to see so beautiful a creature as Miss Sobervie was, and of so mild and obliging a temper, delivered up for ever to the arbitrary disposal of a man she detested, and who, in his person, habits, and temper, was the greatest contrast to hers that nature could produce, delivered up for ever to the use and caprice of a brute, that scarce could be said to have any thing rational about him but the bare form, as his manners, ideas, inclinations, savage and unfeeling disposition, were rather a reproach to human nature. How much must I then have been affected, who knew that she was infinitely more deserving of admiration and love, for her angelic disposition, than even for her angel's form!

They were indeed going to live at the uncle's house, and along with him: but as his jurisdiction over her was going to cease, the moment she became Lunel's wife, and he was known to be excessively overbearing, nay, a tyrant to all those under his authority, it may be properly said that she was going to be torn besides from relations whose darling she had been till then—from a number of other fiends who sincerely loved her, and whose company she hardly could expect to be indulged in as before, no more than in mine—and I was going to be deprived of a dear friend, of a tenderly beloved object, in whose charming company I used to forget the world, and be the more happy, as from our innocent intercourse we had no reproaches to apprehend, no remorse, coolness, or disgust, to fear—of a sensible, affectionate companion, whose distressed situation, gentle disposition, and grateful heart, had excited such a sympathy in mine, that her sufferings affected me more by much than ever could any of my own, independent of hers—and to see such a darling of my soul delivered up for ever to the brutish treatment, at the best, of such a being as Lunel, whose person I knew she loathed—a man, or rather a monster, incapable in his nature of any tenderness for her, and whose very caresses threatened her with sufferings hardly to be born, even by women of less delicate habits and frames. To see her ill used and afflicted, and myself debarred, at the same time, from interfering between them, or affording her any relief—was more than I could bear.

And if, to all that, we add the sacrifice we were respectively making of a tender passion we certainly entertained for each other, and which, though neither of us had acknowledged or mentioned, we both were sensible of, you may well wonder how could we bear or consent to a separation, which, in the nature of things, could not be less cruel than a death on the rack. Fate indeed, seemed to have had a hand in our submission; as by setting our mutual affection in such a light, that we had not looked upon it but through the medium of mistaken notions, we were deluded into a foolish acquiescence; otherwise it is not likely that we should have tamely submitted to the unsupportable tortures, we must have foreseen in that separation, however great the merit of the submission might appear to us. But my darling Miss Sobervie depended on her virtuous principles, for fortitude to bear her troubles—I on my loose ones for means to forget mine; and we both were mistaken. Whatever success we might have promised ourselves in other cases, we were undoubtedly wrong in depending on common resources on that extraordinary one.—She was going to renounce all intercourse with a person she tenderly loved for a more intimate one with another she detested; and I was giving up the only woman who ever had made an impression on my heart, in the vain hopes of making myself amends on others who never

could touch it, for the insupportable torment of seeing the object of love enjoyed by a rival; and neither of us seemed sensible of the error till it was too late to correct it.

The uneasiness felt by Miss Sobervie on observing the partiality of other women for me, and that which I felt myself on reflecting that she was to be soon in another man's arms, had given us both already an idea of our future sufferings; but how faint a one we found it to be when the parting moment came! the tender scenes of mutual condolence between that lady and me the evening before her marriage, equally convinced us that we had no relief to expect in our respective distress, either from her supposed fortitude, or my weak expedients; and we parted in agonies that beggar all descriptions, rather to lament it than with any notion of rest. I continued in them tortured and distracted all the night, without intermission, walking about my room till the approach of day—of that fatal day that was going to tear for ever from my arms my darling friend, my charming companion—then, sure that I could not possibly bear to see her given away, nor endure in silence the pangs with which my poor heart was worse than torn; and wishing to be where I might, unnoticed, give a vent to sufferings I found growing too great to be suppressed, I took horse, and though agreed by Mr. Sobervie and family to go after the church ceremony to pass the day in the country, and all expected I would be one of the party, I rode off a quite different way all day long, without knowing where, or any other design than that of avoiding every body, and indulging my grief alone. When night came on, I found myself even more agitated and troubled than I was in the morning; but so weak, and my head so giddy, that scarce could I keep the saddle—I asked then whereabouts we were, and was answered by my servant that he did not know, as we had been most part of the day through cross roads he never had passed before; but if I thought proper to ride a little to the right we soon should be in an inhabited place, where he perceived some lights; and indeed, Sir, you must, added he, if you expect to have horses in the morning, as these poor creatures we ride are not able to go farther. It is even a wonder, that they did hold out so long, without feeding or stopping—I did then as he wished, and we alighted in a little town, twenty miles only from Paris.

I was soon provided with a decent lodging and supper; but how could I think of eating, or of rest!—No sooner was I left alone in the room than I fell a prey to the most distracting reflections, and insupportable anguish that ever tortured the human heart, and was led by them into so unmanly excesses, that I am ashamed at the recollection. I roared and cried—rolled myself about the floor, and upset with vexation and mad violence, table, chairs, or any thing else that obstructed my way in my turning here or there, till, exhausted with my extravagant exertions, and the struggle of contending passions, I stopped to torment myself with unavailing lamentations, such as, O my charming Sobervie! Have I lost you for ever! Have you been torn from my arms; And can I live to see you in those of another!—O no—it is not possible—I cannot—I cannot live without you, nor can they separate your heart and mine—they are knit together—they are inseparably united by the most tender ties of friendship and affection—of a guiltless, though ravishing, intercourse, infinitely more delicious than any sensual one, but unknown and untasted by less generous souls than yours and mine—O my angel! are you already another's!—O no—it is not possible—it is a dream—I rave—you are my very soul, and they cannot take you from me, and I to live still—no, I cannot—But, alas! it is too true—you are now in bed—nay, in Lunel's arms, or at the will of that unfeeling brute, who ignorant of your worth, sets no more value on you than he does on any common woman in his way; and I have to lament your misery, your insupportable sufferings, along with my own—If you were happy, I should

not be half so distressed—it would be a relief to me to think that you were so—but to consider you ill used, to know that you are tortured with a similar anguish to mine, and obliged besides to yield, and bear the embraces and loathsome caresses of a man you detest—Oh ! how can I think on it—how can my heart bear the anguish of that thought!— O my angel! my adored angel! your goodness has subdued me, and ruined us both!— without your prepossession to obedience, or your too scrupulous adherence to your word, and what you thought your duty, we should have seen one another in a different light ; and we should have found out that we were born for each other—O, my darling, O, my ever-dear friend! have I lost you for ever!

After some hours spent in bemoaning my loss in that extravagant, impassioned manner, so far from finding myself any way reconciled to the unhappy event, I grew quite distracted—unable to turn my thoughts from tormenting scenes, more than probable, I became furious: and who knows to what extremities I should have become mischievous too, had not the calling for my horses been part of my ravings; but luckily the people of the house, who had observed my behaviour, and were terrified by it, glad of getting rid of me, took me at my word, and made as haste as possible to get them ready, and call my servant too—I set off then directly for Paris, and pressed so hard on the poor creatures, that at six o'clock in the morning I was at Mr. Sobervie's door; but unwilling to knock, I went to the stable, and through it up to my own apartment.

When there, I sent for a servant of mine, whom I had commissioned, at my setting off the day before, to tell Mr. Sobervie and family that a letter I had just received by an express obliged me to set off without a moment's delay, but that I should do my endeavours to be with them by dinner time; and I learned from him, that every body was amazed to hear of my absence: still more so, when at their return home at night, they did not find me there, nor any news from me—that Mr. Sobervie seemed much concerned ; but his niece quite inconsolable—that he heard the servants who attended them to the country say, that she fainted at church, and frightened them greatly, having been for a whole hour seemingly dead; but that when she came to herself she proceeded of her own accord to the altar, and gave her hand to Lunel without farther ado—that though she had kept up all the day with a smile in her countenance, she had all along tears in her eyes, too; and since their return home, till almost twelve at night, that she was carried to the nuptial bed rather like a corps than a bride; she had been constantly crying or fainting in her own room, surrounded by her female friends, some of whom cried along with her; and that, except Lunel's, he really believed there was not a dry eye in the house in all the evening.

So dismal an account of a wedding made it rather plain to me that it would be cruel not to be very cautious, as there was too much trouble already to bear additions—I became by degrees, sensible how improper had been my conduct on the occasion; and, afraid that it might suggest notions prejudicial to my much-pitied and still beloved object, I began to think of means to repair it—I strove to compose myself—took a dish of coffee—then I went about dressing; and when fit to be seen, by playing on the violin, I soon acquainted every body in the house with my return to it, and perhaps removed suspicions, whilst in reality I was endeavouring to divert my thoughts, and enable myself to behave with common decency.

CHAP. XIV.

ABOUT nine the happy bridegroom came into my room along with a relation of his—I wished him joy with as much cheerfulness as I was able to muster up, and a few plausible apologies set matters to rights again between us; but he was no longer gone, when in come the bride herself, who, running to me with open arms, before I could well receive her in mine, said, bursting out in tears and sobs, and without the least reserve, O my comfort ! O my dear, dear friend! have I lost you! have I been parted from you! Am I to fold you in my arms no more! am I not to express my gratitude to you any longer, in guiltless tokens of affection! Oh ! what will become of me now! forsaken by you, where, where shall I find a friend to pity and relieve me in my distress with that sincerity and tenderness you have done! you sympathized with me then, why not sympathize with me still! I never wanted it more; I never was half so unhappy as I am since I know that I have lost you! It is now that my heart suffers pangs insupportable! It is now that I want the lenient, the kind hand of friendship to support me in my affliction!

In vain did I strive to stop her mouth—as if insensible to every thing but her sorrow, she wanted to go on still, and add to my grief the dread of consequences justly to be apprehended, if she had been seen or heard at that time by any body else—though I thought before, that my trouble was too great already, she made me feel that it could be still greater by such demonstrations of hers and her despair and yet, so much more concerned was I for her sufferings than my own, that, to relieve her, I seemed animated with a resolution and spirit much above what I thought myself to possess a little before.—My ever dear jewel, my life, my soul, said I, pressing her to my bosom, stop your sorrowful expressions, if you will not have me run distracted—my grief is already too violent to bear the addition of seeing you expose yourself thus—these caresses, these endearing tokens of affection, which, two days ago, none could call but innocent, will be now thought criminal—I don't care said she, let them take my life, as they have already taken my soul, and all that was precious to me in the world—they have torn me from your arms, from the bosom of my kind, my dear friend, what care I for any thing they can do to me—I don't wish to live without you—Hush, that is an improper language, said I; the language of rashness, and does not become the sweet tongue of my charming friend.— But it becomes my anguish, said she; my heart is too much afflicted to dictate any other—how can I think to live, when every recourse to my only comfort in this life, which was your affection, is to be looked on as a crime, you say! If any thing could have enabled me to bear my distress, it was the continuance of that satisfaction and pleasure which I enjoyed in your company—If I am not to be indulged in it any more, why should I wish to live?—my life must be too insupportable a burden to me to wish for any thing so much as to be soon rid of it.—But you never can be deprived of my friendship, affection or company, but through errors in your conduct: that I wish to prevent, said I; compose yourself, my darling, and be sure of every comfort in my power—I wish it could extend to the making you forget all your troubles—O the horror of last night! said she.—Hush ! nothing, for God's sake, of night transactions, said I; you will set me stark staring mad.—But can you love me still? said she.—Yes, said I, because I look upon you as an innocent victim to mistaken notions of duty.—If so, said she, I am happy still in my misery.—If that can make you happy, be so to the full, said I my heart is yet wholly yours—you are still the idol of my soul; and though I cannot interfere between your husband and you—O hated name! the source of all my distress ! said she—He is your husband, and must be respected as such, said I—I cannot interfere, I say, between him and you, but I shall continue to sympathize, and your

sufferings will ever be my own—If any other comfort is in my power, command it at pleasure; but let us go now down stairs, your stay here at this time is improper, and we must be very careful henceforth, not to make the worse by indiscretion—go, my darling, I'll follow you directly—I must go to my own room first, said she, where my female friends are waiting for me—I left them there to go to my uncle, with whom they think I am yet; but he is getting up already, and he is very angry with you—I wish you would go to him and strive to be friends again—we will meet below, said she—Very well, said I, I will do as you wish—farewell, my life—my dear Mrs. Lunel—O forbear, do not torture me with the mention of my detested name—let me be still that happy Sobervie you loved; do, I know that you cannot love me so well under any other—You must however use yourself to it, said I, because I cannot obey you without doing more harm than that—but of this more another time; farewell again.

Such proofs that I was really beloved by poor Mrs. Lunel, whilst, on the one side, seemed to comfort me, and render Lunel's happiness less enviable, on the other, affected me greatly, by making me sensible of her distracting situation; but as the little relief she could find in my affection depended mostly on the continuance of that regard both her uncle and husband favoured me with, I resolved, for her sake, to humour the one and cultivate the friendship of the other, and therefore went directly, as I promised, to Mr. Sobervie; but I did not find it so easy to satisfy him with plausible apologies as I had done Lunel—nay for some time he put me out of countenance with his frowning looks and short answers. At last, You think, said he, shaking his head, that I am so great a fool as to be imposed upon so easily, or not to see through such remarkable parts of your conduct; but you are mistaken, Sir—I am an old soldier, who has learned to know the world at the expence of his blood. Such expressions, and the emphatical manner in which they were delivered, roused my native pride in a moment; and as the turbulence of youth, and the conceit of my own abilities had no less influence on me than experience might in Mr. Sobervie, my answer was likely to have been rather incompatible with Mrs. Lunel's expressed wishes to have us reconciled, had I not been so concerned for her as to hesitate a while about it, and luckily before I had determined upon. Come, said Mr. Sobervie, tending his hand, shake hands—I forgive you—continue the man of honour I know you are, and be assured that my friendship will be ever proof against appearances or malicious insinuations—and holding me fast by mine, he led me to the room where the new-married couple and many of their friends were waiting for; to whom he introduced me, saying, there is the deserter—here is that rogue whose chearful company we missed yesterday so much, that we all seemed a body without a soul—I deliver him to you, ladies, to be dealt with, not according to the articles of war, which have nothing to do with a wedding, but to those of friendship, through which he most shamefully broke by absenting himself on such an occasion.

I strove to appear as agreeable as he had represented me to be; but though they all seemed well pleased, I was far from being so myself—every thing I saw or heard tended to irritate those passions I had so much trouble to subdue by poisoning my eyes and ears, as much as my mind was before, by reflexion. The expressions besides, of Mr. Sobervie, about his being imposed upon, and the rest, far from suggesting any comfortable notions, they seemed to me to indicate something of a perplexing or alarming nature of some suspicions on the one hand, and of confidence on the other. In short, every thing seemed combined to increase my sufferings as well as to render them more insupportable, by the absolute necessity I was under of behaving in such a manner as to prevent every notion of them, which was not an easy task.—My love only, the

very cause of all my distress, or the gnawer of my very vitals, as one of those reptiles that carry in themselves both poison and an antidote against it, furnished me with incentives to keep up my spirits. The glances of my darling Mrs. Lunel conveyed to me every now and then such ideas of the anguish she was striving to conceal under affected satisfaction, that my anxiety to relieve her animated me to do wonders; and thus I conducted myself so tolerably well as to cheer and amuse the company, not only that day, but many succeeding ones too, in which, however, my own sufferings were too great to be described.

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CHAP. XV.

OF all the women in the world none was so well calculated as Mrs. Lunel to render me either happy or miserable—the first it was no more in her power to do, because she was already another's; but she made me the last to a degree, and in a manner that none but herself could ever have done the like: and what will seem to you more strange still, is, that I liked her the better for it. To her natural gentleness and complacency, dread of her brutal husband's ill treatment added so much, that the poor creature seemed always on the watch to prevent his ill humour, by doing or submitting herself to every thing that seemed likely to please him; and as that was not an easy matter, I often witnessed scenes that tortured my very soul. To see him return her kindness with rudeness and insults, by exciting as much my pity for the one as my aversion and contempt for the other, kept me in a continual uneasiness; but to see her sitting on his knees, and forced by his imperious commands, out of mere ostentation, not only to kiss and caress him, but even to bear with indecent freedoms, as repugnant to her disposition as improper in my presence—Oh! that was a torment that no words can possibly express.—I trembled then from head to foot—my limbs were seized with so strong convulsions, that my bones made a rattling noise—my whole frame seemed independent of my will, whilst my heart swelled, as if ready to burst with the violence of inexpressible pangs. By turns, shivering with cold, or burning with heat, my senses, and feelings all were exerted, mortified, and affected to distraction; and yet I could not blame her—I could not complain—I could not but pity her, and admire her patience and discretion—any other conduct in her, and any alteration in that same by which she made me suffer so much, would have made her much more miserable than she was. Though wretched, though in inexpressible anguish, I often exclaimed within myself, O my angel! O my darling precious jewel; how unfortunate I am in not having known your value in proper time! How many unhappy couples have I known whom the hundredth part of your meekness would have made the reverse!—what man, if ever so rough or unreasonable in his temper, can stand such condescension and sweetness!—No—no brute, if ever so fierce or insensible to the charms of beauty, can do but yield to those of your unwearied attention to please him.

Nevertheless, Lunel's behaviour was far from growing milder by them. Awed, at first, by his uncle, he durst not give a full scope to his sour humour in his presence; but, out of his sight, he indulged it, and treated her in a most brutal manner. By degrees he lost, at last, all restraint—abused and ill treated her without reserve; and the uncle, as well I, was often shocked with his barbarity, and astonished at her patience! and neither his remonstrances, reproaches nor threats, had other effect than that of inducing Lunel to use his wife still worse in private, though no better in public.

To tell you that I was unhappy then, is to say nothing, because nothing but your own feelings can inform you how much I was so, or give an idea of my grief. To see that idol of my soul, that angel of a woman, so distressed and so patient, so condescending and so ill used, and myself under the necessity of bearing, in silence, her sufferings, and mine was certainly to be far more unhappy than words can express. My trouble was inexpressible indeed, and I was altered by it so much, both in my person and temper, that every body took notice, and asked what was the matter with me. I did not know what to do—there was no remedy but what appeared to me worse than the disease—I might leave the house, and strive to get the better by absence; but, then, what would become of my charming and already too-much-afflicted friend!—My

tenderness and affection was her only relief; deprived of that, it did not seem possible that she could bear her distress—to abandon her in it would have been cruel, and I could not think of doing it without horror—even if I had, the agoines in which the bare mention of it threw poor Mrs. Lunel, would have induced me to drop the notion.

She acknowledged, however, that I was altered, and sensible that my regard for her was the reason, eagerly seized every opportunity of convincing me, in her turn, how grateful she was, by expressions and caresses, which, though without any thing criminal in them, were far preferable, in my opinion, to any thing Lunel could boast of, as they fully evinced that her heart and soul were entirely mine. With all that, the more she strove to make me amends, by endearing the proofs of her affection and confidence, the less could I bear the idea of his intimacy with her, and for ever tormented either because she was enjoyed or ill used, I could not think it possible to continue long in that situation, unless enabled by an expedient that circumstances suggested to me at that time.

It seemed to me that if I could divert a little my attention by an intercourse with some other agreeable woman, I might be relieved of whatever part of my trouble was the effect of jealousy, without depriving Mrs. Lunel of the satisfaction she found in my friendship and company. To make then both her relief and mine compatible, I thought that no woman could answer so well the purpose as Miss Morin, who came to see us almost every day, and who I knew, since the ball night, was prepossessed in my favour. The greatest difficulty was how to alter my conduct to her without the knowledge of Mrs. Lunel, who I suspected would prove unable to bear that alteration.

Trusting, however, to our respective ingenuity, and conscious that young people never want, in such cases, a pretty good share of it, I resolved on that expedient, and was likely to have succeeded tolerably well in it, had not the evil stars of my too-nice-feeling friend led her to make a discovery, which, by overpowering her senses, gave a fatal turn to my scheme. Profiting by every little opportunity to indulge without danger, my gay bent, I had already convinced Miss Morin that my reserve with her was not natural: and as she was a sensible girl, and, no doubt, had made her own observations on Mrs. Lunel's conduct and mine, she easily guessed the cause of it, though we both were silent on that subject. But as she happened to come one morning earlier than usual to Mr. Sobervie, and I to meet her accidentally, as I was going from one room to another, knowing that Mr. and Mrs. Lunel were still abed, I sat for a while in the dining-room with Miss Morin, and in a fit of good humour I had just forced her to sit on my knee, when in comes Mrs. Lunel, who at the sight of us in that familiar manner, gave a loud shriek, and fell senseless on the floor.

We both ran to her assistance, frightened out of our wits, and found my poor darling in a convulsive fit; I took her up, and with no small difficulty laid her on a couch whilst Miss Morin went to inform Mr. Sobervie and bring help. But how was I tortured all the time she lay in that condition—To see her struggle with strength almost superior to mine—her beautiful features distorted—that mouth—those eyes—that whole frame, where the graces were so conspicuous but a little before, so disfigured—even so frightful!!—It would have deprived me of my senses too, had not my very concern for her roused my spirits to support both her and myself. All the house was alarmed in a moment; and the uncle and the husband, as well as the family, were all soon

about her—a doctor and a surgeon were directly sent for; but all our joint endeavours proved ineffectual for more than an hour; and, when she came to herself, scarce had she thrown her eyes on Miss Morin, than she fell into a second fit; on which I whispered her to keep out of the way; and she did it, on some pretence or other, without exciting any suspicion.

Our consternation was indeed very great—Lunel only seemed to laugh at it, and affecting to attribute his wife's indisposition to her pregnancy, turned our concern into ridicule, till the uncle was so much vexed by it as to insist with threats on his leaving the room—he left us without hesitation. The second fit proved a short one; in about half an hour she opened her eyes again, and did not fail to look about for Miss Morin; but when sure that she was not there, she fixed then her eyes upon me, that I might read in them her anguish, and I did it so affectingly, that I could not conceal my grief—She soon saw the tears in mine, and snatched my hand, unperceived, kissed and bathed it with hers; which flowing by that time very plentifully, was reckoned a sure sign of her speedy recovery—She was carried then to her own bed, and we all retired to let her try if she could go to sleep, as she undoubtedly was much fatigued.

In the afternoon Mr. Sobervie and I went together to see Mrs. Lunel, and had the satisfaction to find her very much recovered and refreshed, sitting on the bed. We passed all the evening very pleasantly along with her; but, though anxious to have a little private chat, I had no opportunity till the morning. At our withdrawing the uncle begged of me, in the presence of the husband, to see her early next day, that he might learn from me at his waking how she did; and, thus authorised, I did not fail to pay her a visit early enough to answer his purpose and mine. Mr. Lunel was already up, and preparing to ride out with some friends he expected, who called soon after—Mrs. Lunel was sitting on her bed, looking very dejected.

As soon as her husband and his friends went away, she burst into tears; and turning to me with inexpressible tenderness, O my too-well beloved friend, said she, how insupportable, how excessive is my grief become! how welcome must death be now to a wretch like me! And yet, said she, taking my hand, and kissing it affectionately—and yet I should be sorry to part with you, tho' you are no longer mine.—Sobs and sorrowful emotions did not permit her to say farther then, or whilst I with as much tenderness and sincere affection kissed her hand too, and wiped her tears off, assuring her that she was under a very great mistake, and tormented herself in consequence, as if some new misfortune had happened to her, when, in reality, she had no reason in the world to think herself a bit worse than she was before.—Your apprehensions hurried you yesterday too much, my darling, said I: had your feelings been less exquisite than they are, you would have spared yourself and us a great deal of grief—you are still the only idol of my soul; and there is not the least likelihood that you would be the less so, had I the greatest influence on a thousand other young ladies.

I reminded her then, that, by an early prepossession, the mere effect of observations on the conduct and false notions of women in general, though I loved the sex still, I was become so far proof against their charms as not to be liable to impressions from them farther than skin deep, just like their beauty—she herself, as beautiful as she was, would never had made any other, had I not found that her merit did not consist, like most others, in a pretty face and genteel person, but in her good sense, improved mind, good temper, good disposition, meek and condescending nature. And as it is certain that the impressions made by such amiable qualities and disposition as

hers, independent of beauty, last for ever without being liable to its vicissitudes, she could not be but wrong in tormenting herself; for what was no more than a mere frolic, that neither could affect my heart, nor was intended but as a means to divert and enable me to enjoy her company, in which only I ever could think myself happy.—Besides, my darling, said I, if with all what I say to you, though true as it really is, my talking in private to Miss Morin is to make you uneasy still, I promise you, upon my honour, that I never will do it again. And will you make that sacrifice for me? said she.—Yes, my life, said I; and I will think nothing of it, nor of greater ones, if I had then to make, if likely to re-establish your peace of mind.—O my darling friend, said she, throwing her arms about me, how can I—how can such a poor insignificant object as I am now requite so much goodness! If the most pure affection and unaffected gratitude that ever warmed the human heart can be thought by you an adequate return, let this my embrace convince you that I am not deficient in making it.—To see you cheerful is the only addition this pleasure can admit, said I, pressing her to my bosom. Compose yourself then, my charming jewel, said I, and let not ill grounded notions make you uneasy any more—I will be as distantly civil to Miss Morin, or any other you may have an objection to, if you chuse, as I have been till now.—Condescending goodness! said she, your kindness revives my dejected spirits, as it convinces me that I am not so much abandoned in my distress as I thought; but it would be inconsistent with that candour you are so fond of, and for which I hope to recommend myself always to your esteem, if I was to deny that my mind is still uneasy in that respect—It is not that I doubt the truth of any thing you say to me, nor that I distrust the assurances you give me of your affection—no; but that I know Miss Morin has merit and loves you—she has told me herself that she does. I am sure she will do all her endeavours to seduce that heart which I have no right to keep—what other business could she have here so early yesterday!—I heard somebody coming, and I guessed that it was she; you know that I was not mistaken—I got up, and found you together.—My ever dear jewel, my adored and most pitied darling, do not torment yourself, I beg, by thinking on such trifles—Miss Morin has not, nor can have, any influence on my heart, because it is wholly yours, and it is no longer in my power to dispose of it—I might have frolicked with her, as I have done with many others; but she, no more than they, could have made on it that impression you have—its conquest was reserved for an angel-like woman as you are, and never could be that of superficial beauties.—O but I am married! said she, sighing.—I was heartily sorry to see her so apprehensive still, but I could say no farther then. A servant came in that moment from her uncle to know how she was, and I was obliged to go myself with the news.

CHAP. XVI.

IN less than an hour I returned to Mrs. Lunel's room along with Mr. Sobervie. We breakfasted together; and after keeping her company for two hours longer, thinking herself able to go down and dine with us, we went to dress, and left her to do the same. Mr. Lunel returned early, and two of his riding companions staid to dine with us at Mr. Sobervie's request, as did the doctor, who a little before came to see how matters went on. We all waited a while for Mrs. Lunel, much afraid that she would not be able to come down as promised; but she did at last, though she looked very poorly: her presence, however, enlivened us all, and we sat down to dinner very merrily. Unluckily, we had not been long at table, when Miss Morin came in, having not been at Mr. Sobervie's since the morning of the day before; and, as if her sight had been a bullet shot through the heart of poor Mrs. Lunel, she fell backwards with chair and all in the middle of the floor, and in as strong a fit as the first she had the day before—we were all much frightened; but, on finding that she had not broke her neck nor any of her limbs, we thought ourselves happy, though so greatly affected by her sufferings. I leave you to think how afflicting they must have been to me, who knew the cause!—Impelled by my affection, I could not help but be the most officious in her relief; of which very particular notice was taken by the strangers present, as I shall tell you in its proper place. As for the husband and uncle, they did not mind it: they were so used to see me assiduous about her, that they could not think my behaviour then extraordinary.

However, when a little recovered from the surprise, Mr. Sobervie very prudently thought the scene very unfit for strangers, and took them into the next room, leaving with the patient only the doctor and me, whom he supposed sufficient, along with the women, for any attendance the situation of his niece might require. Miss Morin asked me then, in a whisper, what I would advise her to do, and I was very much perplexed with her question, foreseeing that the absenting herself again, as she had done the day before, along with some other circumstances rather too remarkable to pass unnoticed, might give an idea of Mrs. Lunel's disorder, which, till then, was not even suspected by any body out of the secret: but at last, afraid that the discovery would be of a worse tendency than any thing else that could happen, I advised her to stay and speak so affectionately to Mrs. Lunel, as to wear off as much as possible of her aversion to her; and she did it a great deal better than I expected. When Mrs. Lunel came to herself, Miss Morin caressed her so much, spoke so lovingly, and so much to the purpose to her, that she prevented, I think, the repetition of the fit for that time, and reconciled to her, my poor darling sufferer, so far as to bear her sight and company for the whole evening without any farther perceptible emotions.

CHAP. XVII.

UNFORTUNATELY, though Miss Morin's success then induced me to hope that a continuance of their affectionate intercourse, and some care on my side, would prevent, for the future, any such tragical scenes, I happened to be quite mistaken, and learned, to my sorrow, that jealousy carries women even greater lengths than men, if once infected with it. Every succeeding visit of that young lady brought the fits upon the unhappy Mrs. Lunel; and as the oftener that happened, the greater we thought the necessity of striving to conquer that antipathy which was the cause of them, there being no other probable way of refuting the daily growing suspicions; we contended at last till the disorder became a too incontestible proof of the jealous apprehensions which produced it. Our mutual affection becoming thus the common chat among the family acquaintances, spread, and became, by degrees, so among all the genteel ones in the capital, and, by and bye, in the whole kingdom; and we were then brought, for the first time, into that public notice we have been for some years after honoured with.

But as stories rather gather than lose in being carried about, ours was so much embellished with detections, narrow escapes, and pretty little incidents, that we became famous for what scarce deserved any attention; and whilst, in reality, we were taken up with business of a very different nature to the pleasing ones we were thought engaged in—At that time, my darling Mrs. Lunel, by the repetition of her fits, ill treatment from her husband, and the workings of her fancy, was already almost entirely distracted, and our private interviews, instead of being employed, as hitherto, in innocent and mutual caresses, were employed in exerting myself to prevent her from dashing her brains out, or doing herself some other as great injury. She knocked her head often with mad violence against the wall, or the chimney—She often did tear her beautiful hair by handfuls; and gave me many other frightful proofs of her disordered mind.

When I forced her to sit on my knees, and listen to me, which I was not able to do always, I begged of her, with tears in my eyes, to compose herself, and cease to afflict me with such a barbarous behaviour. Often did I say to her, what have I done to you, my adored jewel, my charming friend!—what have I done to you, that you seem to take pleasure in tormenting me! in torturing my very soul with those cruel extravagancies!—what have you to complain of me!—do I not love you in my heart!—do I not love you even to distraction!—Well, she used to say, then kissing off my tears or wiping them, well, I love you too—you see there is no love lost between us—I am not vexed with you, no, no—but with those monsters who have made me miserable by taking me from you, and abusing me because I love you; and every reflection of that kind threw her again into her mad demonstrations of sorrow, and she struggled so hard to go from me and do herself mischief, that I was scarce able to hold her.

I had gone through many scenes of that distressing kind, and suffered besides inexpressible trouble by the repetition of her fits and attendant circumstances, when I came to hear of the public reports about us; and learned, that in consequence of them, and the raillery of the strangers, (who happened to be once present, and who, as I mentioned before, noticed my tenderness for Mrs. Lunel) her husband upbraided her with carrying on a criminal conversation with me, insulted her with the most infamous names, and even beat her; and that he was not sparing in abuse against me neither, where he thought that it would not be reported to me.

I was much surprised and affected by such a string of disagreeable news—by them, and by my poor darling telling me, in her distraction, that she was abused because she loved me, I concluded, with reason, as I learned after, that Lunel, by abusing and beating her when very weak, in consequence of the frequent repetition of the convulsive fits, had reduced her to the distracted condition she was in; and I had an eager desire to quarrel with him, on pretence of having satisfaction for the insolent language I was told of, and run him through to revenge in reality his wife's wrongs; and I certainly should have done it, had I not been prevented by my respect for his worthy uncle.

I was much perplexed—I did not know what to do—I wished to avoid every thing in my conduct that could be construed into an offence, or want of gratitude to Mr. Sobervie, as his uncommon regard for me deserved my greatest attention. My quarrelling with Lunel, and bringing by it grief into the family, never could be reconciled, I thought, with that attention, nor fail to be an addition of trouble to my dear friend, his deserving and obliging uncle. The report of the criminal conversation was a disagreeable circumstance, to which I had indeed contributed by my assiduities to Mrs. Lunel; but for what Mr. Sobervie knew I had been induced to them by mere complaisance for him. By absenting myself now, when my continuance about her was become injurious to her character, I thought that Mr. Sobervie could have no reason to complain of me; but then, how to part with my poor distressed jewel! how to abandon her in such a deplorable condition, knowing, as I did, in what barbarous hands she was. But again, what could I do for her! My stay might add to her affliction, but was not likely to bring any relief. She was almost insensible, in her distraction, to every exertion of my friendship, and found little or no comfort in any thing I could say to her. I knew she would miss me in her lucid intervals; but they were so few, and the reasons against my staying so many, and concerned so much her reputation, that I could not hesitate in the choice. If she ever recovered the right use of her senses, she could not be less obliged to me for my resolution—besides, my very absence might contribute to her recovery; that and time being the only things from which it could be expected.

CHAP. XVIII.

THUS resolved, I went early in the morning to Mr. Sobervie's room—acquainted him with my intention to leave his house, and, to prevent his taking it ill, I told him very minutely my reasons. He listened with great attention, though agitated with the sorrowful emotions naturally excited by the subject, and which for a while affected him too much to let him speak. You are going to leave us! said he at last, sighing—I feel all the weight of the reasons you have to take that resolution, and I cannot but thank you for the concern which has suggested it, as well as for your condescension in staying so long among us; because, as things have unfortunately turned out, I must own it has been a severe trial of your integrity and good nature. Such is the concurrence of circumstances, that, though your company is a blessing to me at this time, I cannot request you to favour me with it any longer. The nature of my troubles will not bear that comfort, and I am justly punished in being deprived of it, as it is but the natural consequence of the greater afflictions I have inflicted on others.—O, my dear Count, how you would pity me if you knew but half my grief! though perhaps you would not, as I have used you very ill too. I was rather surprised to hear the end of that exclamation, and I begged him to tell me how that could be. Though sensible of the many obligations I was under to him, I did not know of any ill usage.—You think, said he, that your fondness for my niece was a secret to me, but you are mistaken. At the beginning, indeed, I had not any notion of it, and very foolishly, depending perhaps too much on the virtuous principles of the girl, I put it into your power to do some mischief; but somebody took care to make me sensible of that error, and I have watched you ever since.

He told me then of the affair of the closet, the outlines of which I gave to you already, and said, that he had seen his niece and me kissing together very often ; but having observed, that though we seemed to be very fond of each other, our caresses never exceeded the limits of decency; and hearing me several times taking great pains to persuade her that she ought to obey cheerfully her father and him, and also that Lunel might make a good husband, his opinion of me since was decidedly the best he ever had of any man in the world. That on farther observations, made too at the instigation of other people, he had indeed reasons to conclude that I loved his niece with more than a brotherly love, and had been confirmed in it by my absence the wedding day; but that he had many others to be convinced that I knew how to keep my passions so much under the control of honour, as not to be led by them into the meanness of abusing the confidence of my friends ; that had raised me still more in his esteem, and induced him to reproach himself for not having made a proper return to my generosity when in his power to have done it. By that omission he had used me ill, doomed to misery a very deserving girl he loved, and who loved him, and destroyed for ever his own peace of mind.

But that blind partiality for his unworthy nephew (or, to say better, for his deceased wife, who had recommended the measure) had led him to commit that and other errors; for that nephew not only he had deprived himself of an alliance with me, which would have made him and his niece the two happiest creatures under heaven, but he was deprived also of the affection of his own brother, and other dear relations to him, whom he had affronted, and even injured by a too great partiality for those of his wife. That indeed he did not know, till it was too late, what kind of a man Lunel was, because he had cunning enough to behave always, in his presence, in such a manner as not to give him reason to suspect any of his many bad qualities. He knew that he was not a fine figure; but not thinking it absolutely necessary to be so for the making a good

husband, and supposing the plainness of his person to be the only objection his niece could have to him, he thought himself justified in insisting on their marriage, though against her will. He expected it would have been the means of reconciling two families he loved, and heartily wished to see united; but that since he had found out the cheat, he had repented enough of his partiality, and had paid dear for it too. To see his darling girl so ill used, distracted and distressed him so much, that he felt himself sinking apace into his grave with the weight of his affliction; that increasing by my absence, as in all probability it would, was likely soon to put an end to his sufferings.—I wish, said he, I could think those of my niece of no longer duration. It would be a great relief to me to suppose a speedy change in her situation likely, as her troubles sit heavier on my heart than my own. The poor innocent victim to my obstinacy and blindness deserved a better fate: she is an angel, and ought not to have been matched to a devil; but I shall remember his behaviour, and how much he has deceived me—I must leave them my fortune—I am bound to do it by irrevocable deeds; but I will have a care to leave it so, that he may perhaps find himself a little disappointed in his expectations.

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CHAP. XIX.

AFTER a long conversation on such matters, Mr. Sobervie and I agreed that I should leave his house the next day, without letting his niece know that I was going away, lest she might happen to be sensible enough to be affected by the information; and he took upon himself the care of talking to his nephew and servants, for the purpose of keeping her ignorant of my absence as long as possible—She was pretty calm that day; and some time before dinner, being left alone by chance, she came herself to sit on my knee; and after looking tenderly upon me for a while, said, embracing me, Why should I not love you? you were always very good to me—But do not cry, said she again, (observing the tears that the idea of our approaching separation had brought into my eyes) I don't say any thing to you now about Miss Morin; I know that you love me best—Then I hope my darling will not torment herself or me any more, said I, with groundless apprehensions—No, no, said she; though I know that she loves you, and that I am married—Then she sighed, and hiding her face in my bosom, cried, whilst I was too much affected myself to say any thing to her—Afraid at last of being surprised in that manner, I was obliged to exert myself in stopping the farther progress of her sorrow, and succeeded better than I expected. That short interview made the thoughts of my leaving her for ever less supportable to me, by convincing me the more that her's were continually taken up with something or other suggested to her by her love for me; and I passed the intervening night not much better than I had done that of her wedding.

However, I could not resolve to depart without seeing her again; and as I might pay her a visit without letting her know that it was a farewell one, after taking an affectionate leave of my worthy friend, Mr. Sobervie, I was obliged to own my weakness, if it can be called so, and beg of him to indulge me in contriving, that I might see and press her to my bosom once more before I went—He was affected by the perceptible emotions with which I asked that favour, and took me directly into her room, where he remained at my request, though unknown to Mrs. Lunel, and crying like a child whilst I was taking my leave of her—But Oh! How can I, express my distress then!—She was alone, in bed and half asleep; but at my drawing the curtain, she opened her eyes, and looking surprised on me,—Is it a dream? said she.—No, my darling, said I, smiling; I was afraid that you was not well, as you are not up yet; I come, at your uncle's request, to know how you are—Alas! said she, sighing, my good uncle means always well; but his notions of happiness and mine are so different, that to tell him I am as well as can be expected in my wretched situation, would affront him; though, in truth, nobody can be more distressed and unhappy than I am—Pshaw, that is lowness of spirits, my jewel, and must not be indulged, said I; come, rouse yourself, and sit up, that I may talk it away, while you awake yourself enough to get out of bed.—Unless you talk me out of the world, it cannot be, said she, rising, though you are the only person in it whose company and kindness can possibly prevent their sinking still lower—Am I really?—Yes, said she, you have proved yourself my only sincere and disinterested friend, and are still my comfort—Then let me see you, if not very chearful, at least so far alive, as to convince me that I have some influence on you still—You used to be once very lively when we met—True, said she, and so should I have been all my life, had I been permitted to pass it near you, and far from the barbarous Lunel, if employed only in cleaning my uncle's shoes and your's—But Oh! my jewel, (said she, then bursting into tears, and throwing her arms about me, extremely agitated) why do you put me in mind of my misery? It is cruel in you—Am I not unhappy enough! without reminding me of it?—Her sobs and violent sorrowful emotions

prevented her saying more.—I remained pressing her to my bosom, as unable to speak for a while as she.—I broke silence at last; but neither intreaties, caresses, endearing expressions, nor tears itself, could calm her again— She continued distracted, without paying any attention to what I said to her, though pressing me to her bosom too, crying and exclaiming every now and then,—O my dear! O my jewel! O my beloved friend!—Have I lost you for ever!—Have I been torn from you! Am I never to be your's again!—And I was obliged to leave her in that melancholy condition, because we heard Lunel coming up.

We did not leave the room for a while, because Mr. Sobervie, as much affected as I, acknowledged that he was not able to stir, and begged of me to sit down by him. Lunel came in indeed, but took no notice of his wife, and very little of us—He took some papers out of a desk in a hurry, and went out again, humming a tune—We were afraid that Mrs. Lunel was in a fit; but her uncle peeped between the curtains, and seeing her lying quiet, we stole away unnoticed soon after, and sent one of her maids to watch and attend her—Mr. Sobervie begged of me then to defer my removal till next morning, as much for his sake as for that of his niece—I am afraid, said he, that poor creature will run stark mad when she misses you—At any rate, no day can be so improper to put her fortitude to the trial, as one in which she has undergone already such an agitation of spirits—My heart is, besides, breaking; the scene has affected me greatly ; and the favour of your company will, of course, lay me under a great and peculiar obligation, as I am sure never did I want so much the comfort of a friend. I could not refuse him; and I had the pleasure of seeing my darling again, and passing the whole evening with her; which was the greater, as she appeared all the while composed, though very melancholy, and as unfit to enter into any thing like conversation, as she had been for some weeks past.

CHAP XX.

I passed a very bad night, and early in the morning I left Mr. Sobervie's house—The idea that I was never to set my foot in it again, afflicted me, as I went along, in such a manner, that before I arrived at mine, I really thought I should die with inexpressible sorrow—I walked about my room for some hours quite distracted, asking myself often,—Is it possible! Must I never see again that idol of my soul? Can I possibly live without seeing her!—No, I cannot—She is my very life—I feel that I can no more live without her, than a body can without its soul—Overheated, and less able to bear the reflections which suggested those exclamations, I strove to find relief by setting the cause of my affliction in several lights; but after examining it at leisure in every one of them, I found myself as bad or worse.—I was obliged to conclude, that my loss was irreparable; because, though there were women enough, as handsome, or handsomer, than Mrs. Lunel, there were none perhaps whose sweetness of temper and amiable disposition could be compared with her's—And as it was those enchanting qualities, and not her beauty, that had subdued my heart, I thought it in vain to expect that any other could repair my loss.

Besides, I had been fond of other young ladies before: but though handsome, though charming, as they were generally thought to be, I did not find myself affected at parting with them, as I was at parting with Mrs. Lunel; the only reason that I can assign for the difference is, that my affection for them was produced by beauty and accomplishments, equally possessed by many others—Whilst that I felt for Mrs. Lunel was the result of excellencies, which though they do not strike at first, as beauty and an elegant person do, yet never fail to make a more lasting impression—Her sensibility, her exalted and improved mind, represented her to me, as far more valuable for a friend and companion, than most of her sex. And her meekness, her candour, her obliging nature, as an angel; the idea of whose sufferings affected my very soul; and neither could I forget them, nor think on, without feeling in my heart every pang of hers—In fine, the more I reflected on my situation and hers, I found my trouble the more unsupportable; I went on at a raving rate, till my anguish, by growing too excessive to be borne, suggested an expedient, which proved soon a relief to it, and that experience has convinced me since, is the only cure in the world, for disorders like mine.

It is superfluous to strive, said I to myself in a fit of despair—I cannot live in this manner—I cannot bear my affliction—What shall I do? My soul is tortured, my heart is breaking; the more I think, the more afflicted I am—How happy are those who do not think at all !—This last reflection brought to my mind my old companions—They are mostly of that happy cast, said I; and who knows but their company may chance to communicate so much of that blessing, at least, as to enable me to bear my sufferings?—Under that lucky notion, I set off for the Coffee House; but I had been so long absent, or so entirely taken up with Mrs. Lunel for many months, that my appearance there produced a general shout—My old companions were both surprised and glad to see me—They crowded about me rather rudely; some asking how it happened that I had so much time to spare—And others telling what they thought of it themselves—But as I knew their rudeness was a compound of friendship and curiosity, very natural to them, I took all in good part, and affected to be rather pleased with them; and as their impertinent questions, and their own answers, were to me as many proofs of that happy want of thought I envied them for, I became every moment more confirmed in the opinion, that their company was likely to be of service to me, by keeping me from thinking too ;—And I was not mistaken—By being taken up

the remainder of that day among them with some trifling thing or other, I found myself in the evening so much refreshed and relieved, that I dreaded to go home; supposing that when alone I should relapse, and fall again into the tormenting reflections by which I had been so much distressed—It was equally easy for me to pass the night with them—I was sure of being as well entertained; but then I wanted rest, and there was not a prospect of getting any in their company. My dread of tormenting reflections got, however, the better, and I did not go home till next day at ten in the morning.

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CHAP XXI.

ALL the servants at Mr. Sobervie's, those of Lunel not excepted, were so much devoted to my service, and so fond of poor Mrs. Lunel, that none would have refused to bring me daily accounts of what passed in that house; but I had agreed only with the one I once kicked, to do me that service, and I was sorry to hear at my return home, that he had been inquiring for me already, thinking to have lost the opportunity of hearing that day from that quarter. But he soon came again, and told me, that his poor mistress had certainly missed me already; as though she had not mentioned my name, nor spoken but very little in all the preceding day, she looked about very wildly, and as if inquiring of every one with her looks, where I was—That her favourite maid, who had promised to let me know every thing, desired him to tell me, that Mrs. Lunel had been crying all the evening, and for what she knew, the night also; that morning when she went to her, she found her sitting on her bed and crying too—And though she had done her endeavours to find out the cause, by asking questions, condoling, and even weeping with her, she could get no answers to the purpose; and had been obliged to let her alone, crying still, and wringing her hands in demonstration of sorrow.

The thoughts of my darling's distress of mind, which appeared to me evident by the above account, reduced me soon to the distressed situation, too, in which I had found myself the day before; But as I knew of a remedy, and my anguish was growing intolerable, I did not hesitate to have recourse to it—I went to the Coffee House, and strove to lose my melancholy thoughts among my companions, with pretty good success—The day was spent in trifling chat on one subject or other, and visits; but some rather too plain hints were given to me, that Lunel's imprudent and unreserved talk about me and his wife, deserved my resentment—Of these I did not choose to take that notice I would have done, if not refrained by my respect for Mr. Sobervie, and the fear of adding to the distress of Mrs. Lunel; as in all likelihood her unworthy husband would revenge himself upon her, if told that I spoke to his disadvantage—I affected at first not to believe that he was capable of talking as reported; but when the proofs produced before me that he really had, became too strong to be discredited, I said only, that it was a pity Mr. Lunel should be under such a mistake as that which appeared to have suggested such foolish nonsense; when his worthy uncle, Mr. Sobervie, who could not be supposed to connive at any thing inconsistent with his respectable character, was still an affectionate friend of mine; a circumstance which, in my opinion, was a sufficient refutation of such scandalous inventions, and that would render my resentment against Lunel improper.

Such evasive language I knew disappointed my companions of the sport they might promise to themselves if I had been less cautious; but as even so early as before the setting off on my travels, I was already remarkable for a rash propensity to draw my sword on the slightest provocation, and Lunel was known to be of a very different disposition, my moderation in the case was not liable to animadversions—Though as it was rather uncommon among them to see any body declining the honour of been thought so happy as to have ruined some worthy woman, my denying of the fact, and speaking of Mrs. Lunel with the greatest respect, puzzled them greatly.

Some days passed in which neither the accounts I received from Mr. Sobervie's house differed much from that of the first, nor my manner of life from that I was obliged to adopt

then—My poor Mrs. Lunel continued seemingly inconsolable; and giving proofs of her affliction, in her looks, tears, and wringing her hands, but without telling the cause, not even to her maid—Mr. Sobervie sympathized with her, and appeared very much affected—I passed my time either in the Coffee House, Tavern, or sauntering with my companions.—I went one evening along with some of them to the Opera; but no sooner was I perceived there, than the eyes of all the company were upon me—Even the Opera girls, to whom I was pretty well known before, pressed to look at me, with as much eagerness as they could have done if I had had twenty heads—The whispers, titters, and fixed looks from every side, put me at last out of countenance, and obliged me to watch the first opportunity to steal away unnoticed—And though some of my companions, to induce me to go there again, did swear they would give half their fortunes to be as much noticed, and on such an account, as my supposed connection with the beautiful Mrs. Lunel, they were not able to draw me into any other public party of pleasure—I paid some private visits indeed; but though I found that the reports of my gallantries had paved my way to many others, if I had had a mind to engage in them, I did not chuse to do it, nor be seen twice with the same woman, because I wished to spare my darling Mrs. Lunel the additional trouble I supposed it would have been to her, to hear any thing of me that looked like a new attachment—I avoided even Miss Morin, though I received some letters from her, in which she kindly complained of my neglect—But having written to her my reasons, she proved herself so good, as not to complain any farther.

CHAP XXII.

I HAD been about three weeks from Mr. Sobervie's house, when among the accounts I received of what passed in it, I found the (to me) surprising one, that Miss Morin had been all the day before with Mrs. Lunel, who, far from being thrown into fits by her visits as usual, seemed very fond of her; and they had been seen by the waiting maid not only chatting affectionately, but even kissing and crying together. Mrs. Lunel, though still afflicted, appeared to have something in her countenance more tender and less wild. I was glad to hear it, as puzzled to find out the reason of so unexpected a reconciliation—I waited with impatience to know farther, and was gratified so far as to hear daily, for a whole week after, that they continued mighty good friends: but scarce had I begun to entertain some hopes of Mrs. Lunel's recovery, to the right use of her sense at least, by the good effects that friendship seemed to produce, than I received the melancholy news that she was very ill of a fever, which affected me so much, that, even when among my companions, scarce could I refrain from tears.

I was inconsolable, especially since I received a letter from Mr. Sobervie, in which he said to me that poor Mrs. Lunel's troubles seemed to draw near a period, she being thrown into so severe a fever as not to leave any hopes of her recovery, by the discovery of my motives to leave his house, which Miss Morin, with more simplicity than prudence, had communicated to her.—For my part, said he, I don't think that there is any reason for us to grieve on this occasion; on the contrary, she has been in so unhappy a condition for a long time, that we cannot love her, and be sorry to see her delivered from it. It is a satisfaction besides to observe, that though she had been able to bear your absence, and seemed to be getting the better of the sorrowful impressions made by it on her heart, I plainly perceived, in her countenance and behaviour, she could not hold out against reports injurious to her character. Her husband had indeed insulted her often with reproaches of that nature; but I had advised her to look upon them as only the effects of his brutal temper. But when she found out that others think as bad of her as he seemed to do, she thought it full time to bid us all farewell.

I wondered how Mr. Sobervie could be so unconcerned as he appeared by his letter; but I was not long in finding out that the good man had wrote it purposely in that manner to sooth me into that resignation he affected, but that he could not boast of himself. Though his good-natured endeavours were entirely lost, as I really proved melancholy mad from the first, and so much incensed against Miss Morin, that had she been at hand, it would not have been a wonder if I had choaked her in some of my fits. I had some notion that she resented my neglect and I could not acquit her of malice in the case, but longed to go and reproach her with it; and would have done it, if I had not been so ill myself that I could not leave my room for many days. in truth, I thought to die then, and I may assure you as a fact, that, in all likelihood, I was indebted for my recovery to the pleasing ideas I entertained all the while of dying and meeting with my darling friend in the other world; as, after the violent emotions excited by the hearing of her illness subsided, those ideas come so speedily to my relief, every time I was afflicted by reflections on her distressed condition, that my anguish was soon mitigated by them, or entirely lost in a succession of imaginary raptures, which, in all probability, kept me in a proper temper to benefit by medical prescriptions, though I heard every day that Mrs. Lunel was rather worse.

I did not neglect, however, to wait on Miss Morin as soon as I was able; but after hearing her,

I could harbour no longer any unfavourable notion of her intention or conduct, but rather think that she was, as Mrs. Lunel had told me once, a very good girl, and indeed an uncommonly generous soul, that became dear to me ever after. You think, I suppose, said she, that I was vexed on the receipt of your letter. There is not a woman in a million who would not have been affronted at being told, as you did to me in very plain terms, that you did not chuse to be civil to her, because in being so, you would displease somebody else you loved. But to convince you that I was not ruffled by that rudeness, so as to forget that your beloved and you were both my friends, I will tell you what I did in consequence:—As I knew that jealousy, on my account, had added greatly to Mrs. Lunel's distress and yours, I thought of doing you both a service, by convincing her how ill grounded her apprehensions were, as now that you are out of the house she could not suspect me of any design in taking pains about it. I communicated my scheme to Mr. Sobervie, and, when I found that he approved of it, I requested him to go and prepare Mrs. Lunel for my reception, by telling her how anxious I was to rectify some mistake which seemed to render my presence odious to her, of late; that step had the desired effect. Mrs. Lunel received me kindly. As I passed the whole day with her, I had time enough to put her in mind then of many circumstances she seemed to have forgotten. I told her of others she did not know, and I proceeded to adduce from them all so many proofs of my friendship for her, the constancy of your love, and the foolishness of her notions in supposing me in the least inclined to deprive her of it, that, though at first she was rather obstinate, she owned herself at last convinced of her error, and acknowledged herself to have been in the wrong.

When thus far successful, to prevent a relapse, and every idea of every other design in my conduct than that of re-establishing her peace of mind, I begged she would permit me to go and pass my time entirely with her. She objected to that; because, said she, I could not then enjoy the melancholy pleasure of thinking, as I do, on some past scenes, which still helps me to bear my present distress, by diverting my thoughts from it. I guess that you was the principal actor in the scenes she meant, and by promising not only to let her think as much as she pleased, but even talk to you, and you only, whenever she liked, she signified her consent and thanks, with caresses, tears, and lamentations, in which I could not but bear a part. I love her so, that it is impossible for me not to share her troubles.

We had passed some days together already, in which, by making you our constant theme, though we both were often thrown into crying fits by the recollection of this or that word or saying of yours or, the sight of any thing that had belonged to you, which never failed to be kissed and bathed with our tears; in the main, Mrs. Lunel seemed to be growing better—she talked very sensibly, and her countenance seemed to recover apace that sweetness for which it was formerly remarkable. But, unluckily, our discourse having turned one day on your absence, at the hearing her complain of it as of a very cruel step, to justify you and console her, not knowing that she was ignorant of the cause, I said something about the injury your farther stay with her was likely to have been to her character. This, catching directly her attention, suggested questions that, being innocently answered by me, explained the motives of your conduct, which, till then, I did not think a secret to her, and made such an impression on her heart, that, not only I strove in vain from that moment to keep up her spirits, but I believe the discovery has brought on her this fit of illness, by which I am afraid we are going to lose her.

CHAP XXIII.

MISS Morin ended her narrative with demonstrations of sorrow that did honour to her friendship and feelings; and though much affected by it myself, I could not but acquit her of malice in the transaction, and thank her besides for her kind intention and behaviour, as, according to my daily intelligence, she really was making a progress in the recovery of my darling sufferer, and was likely to have completed it, had it not been for that fatal discovery, for which she was the more excusable, as neither Mrs. Lunel could be supposed acquainted with my reasons for leaving her, nor Miss Morin had any opportunity of knowing that she was ignorant of them. She had not been at Mr. Sobervie's from before I knew of the reports, which induced me to take that resolution, till some weeks after my removal. As those reports were public, and the step I took of such consequence to Mrs. Lunel, it was rather natural to suppose that she knew of every particular circumstance relative to it. Unluckily Miss Morin did not know that my poor darling, afraid of bringing upon herself more reproaches on my account, our intimacy being a subject which she was sensible enough still to judge of a delicate nature, durst not open her lips to inquire for me, not even of her own maid; but bore in silence the inexpressible anguish my unexpected absence must have caused. She had not any notion but that it was a voluntary one, and of course to be accounted for only by a supposed decline in my affection; while, by Miss Morin's account, her's for me appeared to have continued without the least diminution.

After lamenting together our dreaded loss, Miss Morin and I agreed to establish a correspondence between us for the purpose of acquainting me with every alteration in Mrs. Lunel's situation, and every other circumstance relative to her. Miss Morin had continued to pass her time near our unfortunate friend every since she was confined to her bed, and intended to do the same to her recovery or last moment, being at home then only on a few hours visit to her father. On leaving Miss Morin, I durst not go home, because, independent of the actual danger in which I knew Mrs. Lunel's life was, I had been furnished with too many hints for reflection to trust myself alone. My darling's melancholy delight in thinking on me, and the expressive tokens of affection in crying over and kissing every thing that had belonged to me, and that at a time when she could not but think me inconstant, were too tender topics to give my thoughts to them, and not to break my heart; therefore I went in search of company, and one way or other I made a shift to pass my time till nine the next morning. I went home to wait for news from Mr. Sobervie's house; but neither those I received that day, nor for a fortnight after, deserve any particular notice, no more than the manner in which I passed all that time. I was now told that Mrs. Lunel was in much the same way—that she was dying—no hopes of her recovery—much the same again—again dying—and so on; and I was tortured in that manner—obliged of course to seize any opportunity whatever to amuse me or divert my sorrow.

Mrs. Lunel's disorder took at last a turn, and I began to hear that she seemed to be a little better—then for many succeeding days that she was really mending; but the recovery proved very tedious—it was some weeks before she was able to sit on her bed, and as many more before she was able to leave it. The news I received all that time, from my emissaries at Mr. Sobervie's house, did not extend farther than just a repetition of what the doctors said day after day concerning the progress Mrs. Lunel was making in her recovery. Indeed more could not be expected, considering her condition, for a while; from the time that she began to sit and chat, I waited impatiently every hour to hear farther—but no, I was disappointed—there was not any

thing worthy communicating in her conduct—she spoke but little, I was told, and that very sensibly, and without appearing influenced in the least by any passion whatever. The servants could not tell me whether she had mentioned my name since the beginning of her illness ; and I longed to see Miss Morin, that I might inquire into particulars, as till then, though very exact in telling me how Mrs. Lunel did, she had not acquainted me with any thing else. I begged of her to let me know when she did intend to be at her father's, and I waited on her there, to learn, with surprise, that Mrs. Lunel had indeed mentioned my name sometimes since her recovery, but that never in any other way than just in the common run of talk, and as she did any other of the family friends occasionally: that though she did not look cheerful, she did not look much afflicted neither, as she did before; and that Miss Morin, having observed in her a very great alteration with respect to the turn of her thoughts, did not think it proper to bring on topics that might, by overheating her imagination again, make her relapse into the former kind of delirium, which served only to make us both unhappy.

I listened to that account with great attention; and though at the beginning of it it seemed to make me uneasy, I grew composed by degrees, and the last reflections of Miss Morin appeared to me so prudent and just, that I could not but approve of her conduct; and we agreed that she was to persevere in it, and I to wait on her every time she went to her father, that she might inform me there of whatever should happen worthy my notice from one meeting to another.

I went home very thoughtful. For a while I did not know what to make of all that I was told. The news was in reality the most pleasing I could possibly expect—Mrs. Lunel was recovering her strength apace, and she seemed easy in her mind: two circumstances in which I ought to have rejoiced; but her indifference made me too uneasy to enjoy them—I could not bear the idea of her forgetting me, making no difference between me and others—I missed, what ! her delirium—the ravings of a love-sick heart, that, as Miss Morin justly observed, could tend only to make both her and me unhappy—reason, however, got, at last, the better, and I began to look on Mrs. Lunel's alteration in a proper light.

Let my charming friend recover herself and be happy, whether she loves and remembers me or not, said I to myself; I love her enough to wish her well, not only if she had forgot me entirely, but even if she hated and despised me. From that moment I began to grow easy in my mind; but in proportion that I did so the company of my coffee-house acquaintances grew insipid to me—I could not bear now that very nonsense that had contributed before so much to my relief—I wanted other diversions; but though Mrs. Lunel seemed careless about me, I could not resolve to be careless about her—I could not resolve on any thing in which I thought there was a possibility still of making her uneasy—she was weak yet—the smallest vexation might prove fatal to her, and I should be then inconsolable—I never could forgive myself, I thought, if she was made unhappy again on my account.

CHAP XXIV.

IN the two next interviews I had with Miss Morin the information I got amounted to very little—Mrs. Lunel continued doing well, and gathering strength, but as careless seemingly about me. In the third indeed I was told, besides, that she had been crying in private the two preceding days on account of a talk about Mr. Lunel going to reassume his place in her bed; and I own to my shame, that as it looked like a continuance of her dislike for him, it pleased me to hear it. Miss Morin, who was naturally droll, said then, laughing, I thought to hear your dear name brought in, on this melancholy occasion, to be again our comfort; but no, faith, we both have already cried many a long hour and bitter tear without the least mention as yet of your sweet person to render our talk agreeable.

We saw one another oftener after, because it was not so much in the power of Mrs. Lunel to enjoy that young lady's company, her time being much taken up between her necessary attendance on her husband, and what to avoid him, according to Miss Morin's opinion, she bestowed on her uncle, who was in bed ill of the gout again. As for me, I seemed to be quite forgotten by her, at least as a person for whom she had any particular regard. Miss Morin assured me that she had no other reason, not to conclude that Mrs. Lunel had none for me, or that she really had given me entirely up, than the having found out one day, as they both were taking an airing in her own carriage, that the sight of me, and even my voice, affected her still. You passed at a distance from us, said she, riding fast along with other gentlemen; but you all talked so loud, or were so noisy as you went along, that we could not but take notice, and look towards the merry riders. I no sooner I knew you to be one of the party than I had the wickedness to look at Mrs. Lunel's face, and I saw the tears in her eyes, though she feigned to look a different way from that you went; and I recollected then that I had seen her start a little before you and your companions appeared within sight of us, and I could not doubt that the distinguishing your voice among theirs had been the cause of it. I said nothing then, nor have I since, about that incident or you; but, to tell you the truth; it gave me some suspicion that you are not so indifferent to her as one could think by the rest of her behaviour; and I could almost wish, from mere curiosity, to see how she would bear your gallantries to another. But stay, (said she in the same breath, and as if recollecting herself) don't take this as a hint, because though I cannot deny you are the man in the world I have the greatest regard for, I protest you would be the last in it too I would chuse to have any thing to do with—I esteem you as a friend; but I love Mrs. Lunel too much ever to look upon you as any thing else.

You are at once both so obliging and cruel, said I, that I do not know whether to complain or thank you—I may, however, protest, in my turn, that, of all the young ladies I know, you would be the only one I should chuse to make that experiment with: but you show yourself such a pattern of generosity and friendship, that it would be a shame in me to entertain any thought inconsistent with that gratitude to which Mrs. Lunel is entitled from me by her former kindness—she is now married, and we cannot say but that she does her duty in striving to conquer a passion incompatible with it and her own welfare. We ought rather to second her endeavours, and approve our friendship by enabling her, as much as we can, to persevere and insure to herself that peace of mind she seems to enjoy now, and of which she has been deprived too long.—Indeed I think so too, said she, though I cannot help sometimes to talk like a woman, with all my female curiosity and weakness about me; but I assure you that you enhance yourself

greatly in my esteem by your generous sentiments with respect to Mrs. Lunel; it would be cruel to throw that poor creature, by any part of our conduct, into the distressed situation in which she was formerly—she has but too much still to suffer in her unconquerable aversion for her husband and his savage disposition, which I am afraid is more than enough to make her miserable—her severe fit of illness suspended her sufferings in that respect, as well as the talk and reproaches about your supposed criminal conversation; but they are not likely to be suspended long, as it is easy to see that Lunel does himself violence in forbearing to abuse her; and it is more than probable that she will soon experience in his ill treatment the violence of a torrent breaking forth after having been stopped.

I wish I could prevent that too, said I; but as it is not in my power, and the hearing of it would grieve me, I have a mind to banish myself from the capital for a while—far from it, I may perhaps recover my peace of mind also, which I assure you, between one thing or other, I cannot flatter myself to enjoy. I could not think, however, to live without hearing sometimes how poor Mrs. Lunel does, though I don't wish to hear farther about her, nor to let her know any thing about me.—I will let you know that, if you chuse, said she, and without ever talking to her of you.—And I will be extremely obliged to you, said I, if you condescend to take that trouble.—It would be rather a pleasure to me, said she; she is a dear friend, and I cannot think it a trouble, knowing how much you are concerned about her.

Nothing but love could have enabled me to bear with the confined and otherwise disagreeable kind of a life I lived for so long a time; but now, that neither I could enjoy the company of my beloved object, nor be of service to her but by letting her alone, the idea of continuing in that situation became insupportable to me—I longed to enjoy again that freedom and indifference I prided myself upon before; but I could not bear the thoughts of adding, by my conduct, to the other troubles of the still-dear Mrs. Lunel—I knew that if she had any remains of regard for me, the report of any intrigue of mine would distract her; and whether she had or not, I wished to have the self satisfaction, at least, of having behaved myself so as to prove the continuance of my regard for her. But as I could no more live without an intercourse with her sex than fishes can without water, I resolved to get at once out of her reach, and indulge my amorous bent without prejudice, as I knew I might without inconsistency with any of my professions to her; because my heart and mind were so fully prepossessed in her favour, that she seemed to be for ever before my eyes. Whether I considered her as the beautiful and amiable Miss Sobervie, or the loving and distressed Mrs. Lunel, I was always delighted with the lovely image, and ready to acknowledge her the object of my affection and only idol of my soul, however diverted I might be with others: therefore, when sure of hearing from her, by a person so proper to inform me of her situation as Miss Morin was, I turned my thoughts in earnest towards the country.

CHAP. XXV.

AT my arrival at home soon after, I was surprised to find, that, though at so great a distance from Paris, Mrs. Lunel's name and mine had been handed about together in a long love story, embellished with very pretty romantic scenes; on the hearing some of which I could not but laugh myself : and as they had set me forth in it as a pattern to amorous swains, you hardly could believe how much to my advantage turned the invention. From the miss in her teens to the matron of fifty, every woman was in love with me, whatever side I went in my country excursions, even before they had seen my person; of course, my becoming as famous as I did then was not in consequence of any merit of my own, but of the workings of a fiction on weak people's fancies. I have thought ever since that women's affections are a proof rather unfavourable to the character of their object, because I have observed, and found by experience, that the best recommendation to them is a rakish or a profligate one.

However, I had been more than a month in the country, enjoying myself, or doing my endeavours to forget the anxiety and troubles I had gone through in the capital, when a letter from Miss Morin spoiled all my diversions with its melancholy contents:—Mr. Sobervie was dead, and poor Mrs. Lunel very ill; and as she was then near her lying-in time, it was apprehended the mournful event would accelerate her labour, and carry her off, her weakness and dejection not permitting her friends to hope that she would be able to go safely through it. My grief was very great indeed at the sad news. Mr. Sobervie was a very worthy gentleman, and I loved him with a filial love: his loss affected me greatly; but when I considered it with respect to Mrs. Lunel, it afflicted me exceedingly, and could do no less, knowing the dangerous situation she was in, in what hands she was, how much grieved, and how destitute of friendly comfort—she loved her uncle, and was beloved by him; and though he could not preserve her from the sufferings incidental to her unhappy match, sorry for having forced her into it, or for having been, by his obstinacy, though well meant, the cause of all her misery, strove to make her amends with his kindness and indulgence; and no doubt she found some comfort in him. Besides, his presence, though not a sufficient check on Lunel's conduct or bad temper, must have been at least some means to prevent his shewing it in greater insults and excesses than, for what I knew, he had been guilty of as yet: but now that Mr. Sobervie was gone, poor Mrs. Lunel's best prospect was indeed the grave.

CHAP. XXVI.

A FEW days after a second letter informed me that Mrs. Lunel, amidst agonies and pains, seemingly above what she was able to bear, was at last delivered of a boy; but that there was no hopes that either the mother or the son would live long, so ill seemed both. I was a whole fortnight then without hearing a word farther; but a third letter accounted for the delay, by attributing it to uncertainty with respect to Mrs. Lunel's situation, as no opinion could be formed till then whether she was likely to recover or not; but that then it was generally thought she would recover—that the child was likely to do well too; but that a country nurse, in whose hands the father had thought proper to put him, had carried him to her own home, and Miss Morin could tell but little about that transaction, because, since the death of Mr. Sobervie, she was no longer received in his house but as a stranger. Mr. Lunel was very reserved with her, and poor Mrs. Lunel knew nothing of what passed in it, but of the distress she went thought herself, as neither was she consulted by her husband, nor had she courage enough to ask any questions.

Though clearly of opinion that she had no relief to expect but from death, I was glad to hear that she was likely to live—I could not help but indulge that truly-selfish pleasure—I had no notion indeed of ever seeing her any more, and yet it pleased me to know that she was within my reach. But I was not long without repenting myself of my indulgence, nor even without wishing she had taken then her trip to the Elysian fields. Miss Morin wrote to me soon after as if in a fit of distraction—Come, said she, come dear Count, come to plead your own cause, and that of our dear and unfortunate friend, who never ceased to love you—fly, that you may clear yourself, and at least rescue her character from calumny and malice—Come, don't stop a moment till you see me—you may arrive too late, if you delay.—Adieu!

Thrown by that letter into the greatest consternation, and unable to guess what might be the matter, in less than half an hour after the perusal of it I was on the road to Paris, and arrived in that city in less time than I believe any body ever did from an equal distance. Miss Morin was both surprised and overjoyed at seeing me so soon.—O, dear Count, said she, how shall I tell you the barbarous, the horrid cause of my writing for you in such a hurry!—I dread to tell it you—I am afraid your heart will break at the hearing of it—I am myself almost out of my senses by its sad impressions.—Nothing can be so insupportable to me as the delay, said I; speak, for goodness sake, let me know the worst at once, and spare me the torture I am in whilst thus in suspense. Know then, said she, that our unfortunate friend, the dear Mrs. Lunel, is no more—she has been poisoned by that monster her husband, who, to conceal his crime, does not hesitate to add to it the scandalous assertion that she is gone away with you.

I had figured to myself in the way many disagreeable things, to which I thought there was a possibility of Miss Morin alluding to in her letter; but all of them fell short of the mark—I was far from suspecting such double-edged cruelty—I trembled first at the hearing of it, and before Miss Morin could say farther, I frightened her by sinking senseless on my chair. But I came soon to myself; and, fired with resentment, I wanted to go directly in search of Lunel—she stopped me, and requested I would stay till well informed of every circumstance on which she grounded her accusation; and considering the propriety of the request, I could not but comply.

She proceeded then to give me such an account of the barbarities exercised by Lunel on his

unfortunate wife, that there could be no heart so savage as not to have melted with compassion at the hearing of them—none but the monster Lunel could ever be so hard as to use a woman so cruelly—much less Mrs. Lunel, who, as Miss Morin justly observed, was one in an angel's frame, with everyangelical quality.—At the beginning he did not beat her, said she; but he spoke always so crossly to her, was so sullen, behaved so rudely, indecently and unkindly, whilst she talked to him so mildly, behaved with such complacency, and was so patient and submissive, that it was impossible to witness their respective conducts without being irresistibly led to hate, to detest with horror the one, admire and tenderly love the other. But since the strangers, who unfortunately happened to be present once when Mrs. Lunel fell into fits, began to rally Lunel about your great tenderness to his wife, to the most scurrilous insulting language, and his former worse than savage deportment, he added blows. I often saw such marks of them, in several parts of her body, as to be of opinion that he meant to kill her: and yet that patient angel, that wonder of meekness, durst not complain, not even to her uncle. Her greatest care then was to hide those marks from him and you, afraid of making you uneasy: nay when the cruel monster bade her to strip, (as it seems he did often) to beat her with a rod provided for that purpose, perhaps by some of his infamous companions, the meek lamb did it without hesitation, or ever asking what was she to be beaten for. But her delicate frame and gentle nature, so little calculated to bear so barbarous a treatment, could not hold long under it—her brain was turned, and she became then less sensible of her injuries, but no less miserable, as he was so far from being moved by her distress, that he used her even worse than before, if possible. At last, her severe fit of illness, of which his malignity was the chief cause, put a temporary stop to her torments, because he seldom was permitted to come near her—every body in the house knew of his barbarity, and loved her so much, that they seemed resolved to protect her, whatever might be the consequences to themselves.

After her recovery, he fell again to maltreat her, rather with additional cruelty, as she was still weak, and very far advanced in her pregnancy; but neither that nor her uncle's presence were the least check on his fury—he abused and beat her before him, whilst the poor gentleman, unable to stir out of bed, neither could bear nor prevent her distress, but pined away and died of grief—Lunel got then possession of Mr. Sobervie's large fortune; but though indebted for it to his alliance, he was resolved his wife should not enjoy any share: he wanted to get rid of her; and the strangers alluded to, who were his constant companions, often closeted themselves up along with him to consult about the means.—

Nannete, Mrs. Lunel's favourite maid, happening accidentally to be one day within hearing, unknown to them, listened, and, frightened out of her wits at the barbarity of the design, ran directly to acquaint her mistress with it; but she, with incomparable goodness, not only heard her unmoved, but insisted on the girl's secrecy, or on her holding her tongue, and never to let any body else know any thing of the matter, assuring her, however, that she was obliged to her, and that she intended to make a proper use of the discovery. But either that she did not think it possible to survive her sorrow and threatening labour, or, what is more likely, that she did not wish to live, she took no step, no measure, to prevent the horrid plot; but, by keeping it a secret, permitted it to ripen and effect her destruction.

She was brought to bed a few days after that warning, and while she lay so ill that there was no hopes of her recovery, the ruffians did not stir; but, on the first talk of favourable symptoms, they began to closet themselves up again, and the same maid, prompted both by curiosity and

concern, did not fail to go and listen too; but they seemed more reserved, spoke very low, and she could not hear distinctly, but damn the bitch, poison her at once, which one of the strangers said, as if in a passion. Nevertheless she warned her mistress again in consequence, but with no better effect—Resolved to die, she bade her to hold her tongue again, and the poor girl did so, persuaded that Mrs. Lunel had provided herself with some antidote, by the means of the doctor who visited her still, or taken some other measure to prevent the threatening evil—though on her being discharged from her service without assigning any cause, and seeing that the old servants were so too, she suspected the reason, and came directly to inform me of what she knew, and her fears that her poor mistress might be murdered or destroyed one way or another.

I was seized with such a trembling and horror on hearing her, that I was not able either to speak or think; but she herself having suggested to me to consult my father, who was then in the country, but expected in town in two or three days, I resolved to do so—desired her to stay at our house till his coming, and went myself directly to Mrs. Lunel to see what I could do for her there; but I was refused admittance by a new servant, who said he did not know me—in vain I did beg him to let his master know that I was at the door—he was deaf to my entreaties, and shut it in my face, telling me that he knew his orders. Convinced then by the porter's rude behaviour that his master did not mean well, at my return home I sent an express to my father, that he might come without delay, and he did so; but, alas ! too late for the purpose of saving our dear friend !— Whilst we were consulting about the most proper means to effect it, we heard the report that she was gone away with you ; and concluding from it that she was no more, (supposing Lunel had it spread on purpose to prevent the notions of his crime) we thought of sending for you to save her character, at least by refuting that scandalous report with your presence, and to take any steps it may appear proper on the occasion; but if you will oblige me, you will take none till you consult my father. The affair is of too delicate a nature to go inconsiderately about it: to attack Lunel, or even to cut his throat, will not clear his wife's reputation, and for the love of her I beg of you to moderate your passion, and submit to advice.

My love for Mrs. Lunel was so seasonably invoked by Miss Morin, that though impatient for revenge, I promised to submit and be directed by her father as she wished. —Stay then, said she, till he comes home; I have still something to tell you that perhaps will induce you to think your time not quite so ill spent as it may appear to you now.— My time never can appear to me ill spent in my much-esteemed Miss Morin's company, said I; I always thought myself very happy in it—and though it scarce could be supposed that my present distress of mind leaves me susceptible of any pleasure, yet your sympathy adds so much to your other charms, that I cannot but find still a very great one near you.—Well, well, said she, I am not disposed to enter into a contest of compliments—let that be as it may, I will proceed to tell you, that in the short interval between Mr. Sobervie's death and Mrs. Lunel's lying in, being one day by ourselves, as I was lamenting her situation with a sincere friend concerning her, Miss Morin, said she, don't afflict yourself on my account—spare those friendly tears—my troubles, I hope, are almost at an end—death, kind death, is going to deliver me from them—and there is, I assure you, but one circumstance that makes me uneasy whilst I wait with patience for it—that indeed keeps my heart heavy, said she, sighing—but though it might be in your power to relieve, nay, to take entirely off that heaviness, it proceeds from such a cause, that I dare not request you to do it. I am resigned to die, whether relieved or not.—As I plainly perceived it was something that lay upon her mind, and which she was afraid to trust me with, I begged of her to do me more justice,

and mentioned so many circumstances as proofs of my sincerity and friendship, that at last, convinced of both, she said to me, though inwardly satisfied with my own innocence, the report of my supposed criminal conversation terrified me so much, that, since I heard of it, I dread even to mention Count Toulousin's name; and it has been my particular study to refute, by forbearing to mention him and every other part of my conduct, that scandalous and malicious invention. But, Oh ! dear Morin, how much have I suffered by my restraint ! that name, that man became the more dear to me, the less I could indulge myself in the sight or talk of him; and the probability of being thought by him ungrateful has tortured my soul to an inexpressible degree ever since. Could I convince the Count that my seeming neglect proceeded only from fear and notions of duty, and not from any diminution of my regard for him, nor from forgetfulness of his kindness to me, I could die content and smiling amidst all my bodily sufferings.

Scarce can I say that you tell me any thing new—I suspected as much all along, said I; and you may judge by my silence (even with you) till now on that particular, how little need you fear to trust me with any thing that concerns you or him. Will you then, my dear Miss Morin, my only remaining friend in this world, put the finishing hand to the many kind and faithful, friendly services I am indebted to you for ; then tell the Count, as soon as you can, that though regard for my character, and fear to incense a husband, already too barbarous, or afford him any pretence for his cruelties to me, have forced me to assume the appearance of an ungrateful woman to him, I was far from being so; that I never ceased to love him, nor is it possible for me ever to forget or love him less—that I die as affectionately his as I ever was, regretting only that I cannot die in his arms; assuring him with my last breath, that he was ever as dear to me as my very soul—that the impression his kindness made on my heart was such as I think death itself cannot blot out of it—and that if his affection is not altered, by the supposed defection in mine, I hope to see him yet, where no stern commands will separate us, where no unfeeling, barbarous husbands will torture me for being grateful, while I am only so, consistent with the strictest notions of virtue, as I have ever been. My love for the Count never interfered with my duty, nor induced me to neglect it in the least; if it had, I never would have been Lunel's.

Tell him all that, my dear Morin, and give him this ring, said she, taking it out of her bosom, which, though my own, I kept it hid this great while, that Lunel might not take notice of it, as it was a present I received from my uncle unknown to him, and designed all along, in my mind, with my uncle's consent, as a token of my constant love. Beg of my dear Count to wear it for my sake, do—beg of him to forgive me, and, if possible, to love me still. Sobs and tears prevented her saying farther then, and we had no opportunity again to resume the discourse.

Miss Morin gave me the ring then, the intrinsic value of which, though very great, was of no consequence in my eyes; but as a token of love from that darling of my soul, attended with so many, to me, interesting circumstances, it was invaluable indeed—I wished I could wear it in my heart, instead of on my finger; and could not help but kiss it a thousand times with transports that partook of all the passions by which I was agitated, anger not excepted, as it greatly increased my resentment against the barbarous Lunel.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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PREPOSSESSION ;

OR,

MEMOIRS OF COUNT TOULOUSSIN.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. 11

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PREPOSSESSION ;

OR,

MEMOIRS OF COUNT TOULOUSSIN.

CHAP. 1.

MR. MORIN arrived at last, and made his appearance, saying, with evident surprise, I have often heard that love has wings, but never was convinced of it till now; how could you possibly come so soon otherwise! Pity it is, said he, that your activity and your good intention prove both of no use—but supper is ready—more of this by and by.—When the servants withdrew, Mr. Morin proceeded to assure me that he passed the evening in consultation with two very eminent gentlemen, friends of his, who were equally of opinion, that though there was too many reasons to believe that Lunel had rid himself of his wife—one way or other, there was no proof sufficient to attack him with a criminal prosecution as a murderer—that her father, or some other near relation, might indeed bring me to the purpose of obliging him to produce his wife, or justify himself from the suspicions to which he was liable on account of her absence, in consequence of her maid's evidence; but that for me, a person publicly thought to have carried on a criminal conversation with that lady, it would be very improper to meddle at all, as my interference could answer no purpose than that of confirming everybody in the notions they already entertained injurious to her character.

That the report of the lady being gone away with me, though false, signified nothing, as it could not be traced to its source; and even if proved that Lunel was the author of it, any charge grounded thereupon would be easily evaded, only by his proving but just that she had eloped ; as then my former connections with her would make the conjecture probable, of course natural—in fine, Mr. Morin and his friends alluded to were entirely

against my taking any judicial step against Lunel; and it was not difficult to draw me into the opinion, having had no notion of taking them. Those gentlemen had been at such pains to canvass that point, only because their prudence and peaceable habit admitted no ideas but of legal expedients; whilst I was sure that my patience never could hold up to their decision, knowing, as I did, of shorter methods to settle matters among gentlemen; therefore I was glad to observe that there was no mention of forbearing to call Lunel otherwise to an account, as I could not comply with any request against settling the affair in a *tete-a-tete* with him, now that neither Mr. Sobervie nor Mrs Lunel were likely to suffer by my doing so. Mr. Morin proposed writing to Mrs. Lunel's father to come and sue Lunel for explanations, which I approved, acknowledging it to be a very prudent measure ; and thus equally satisfied, we parted for that night, and I hastened to my lodgings, resolved to act in the case but according to my own notions of propriety, and pleased to think that I might do so without offence to Miss Morin, having paid all the attention we wished to her request.

In the morning I made my appearance in several coffee houses, which I knew to be resorted to by my old acquaintances, and *petit-maitres* of all denominations, whose surprise at seeing me there was above description, because the elopement of Mrs. Lunel with me was generally believed, and being so fresh a one, they could not comprehend how I could be there before them, when they supposed me at least in England, as the running away with the wife of so rich a man as Lunel they thought could not permit me to stop nearer. I diverted myself with their surprise, and by turning into a jest every thing they said on the subject, there being not any probability that to contradict them, or explain how wrong their notions were, would have had any other effect than that of making me pass for an hypocrite. Besides, my business that day, according to a plan I had laid out for my conduct, was no other than to make it public that I was in Paris; and to make it still more, I went in the evening to the Opera along with some of the most celebrated *beaus*; but having made our appearance there just at the overture, we spoiled it. Such was the rumour and bustle about the house, as soon as I was perceived in it, that many of the performers stopped, and all of them might have done it with propriety, as for a quarter of an hour no attention was paid to the music—every one was busy in talking with his neighbour about the supposed elopement of poor Mrs. Lunel, and looking at me—nay, they talked from box to box, and I not only could observe every body's eyes fixed upon me, but I heard some of the ladies nearest to me honour me with very kind epithets. I was, however, resolved not to flinch, or be out of countenance, as I had once been in the same place, and on account of Mrs. Lunel too; and by laughing, and looking, and prattling with my companions, I made a shift to remain to the last, though at every interval in the theatric amusement I became again and again the general object of whispers, titters, and looks, as I did every time after there, and in every other public place I frequented.

CHAP. 11

ABOUT ten next morning, unwilling to have any confederates, I called on Mr. Lunel myself, but was told he was in the country. I asked when he was expected in town, but they could not tell. I called again two days after, and I received the same answer. I asked then where he was, as I wanted to see him on business of importance, and would willingly go to him; but two servants I saw, and who were both strangers to me, could not tell when he was expected, or where he was, nor even asked my name. By being denied in this manner, and what I knew of his mean spirit, I concluded that Mr. Lunel was resolved to avoid me at all events; but as I was as much resolved to find him out, I wrote to him in terms that did not admit of any evasion—I threatened to expose him as a mean coward; to have him watched, hunted, and even horsewhipped, if he did not assume courage enough to appear and give me satisfaction, not only for freedoms I knew he had taken with my name, but also for the ill treatment of his wife on my account; and I gave him a whole week to determine himself and come to meet me, promising to wait for him every day of it, at a coffee house I mentioned, from eight to ten in the morning; adding by way of postscript, to provoke him, that as neither the excuse of his being in the country, nor any other would do, after giving him so much time to appear, if he did not do it, I would besides proceed to acquaint the world with his barbarous behaviour to an angel of a woman, whom none but unfeeling villains, like him, would ever have ventured to insult; and, in short, that I would not stop till I had excited the resentment of every honest person against him, as against a monster unfit for society, or that deserved to have a mark upon him, and turned out like another Cain.

But Lunel was an oddity or a compound of all that is execrable in mankind; and my letter, instead of rousing him to support the character of a gentleman, served only to exert his talents as a ruffian. He had a report spread first, that he was gone out of the kingdom on purpose, as it came to be known after, to make me drop the notion of waiting for him at the coffee house; that as soon as I should be missed there, he might go himself, and then make it appear that it was my fault if we had not met. But as constant attendance prevented the success of that mean scheme, he had recourse to another manner, still more infamous, viz. the last appointed day for my waiting for him, between nine and ten, two gentlemen came into the coffee room, whom I instantly knew to be Lunel's intimate friends—the two strangers often mentioned before. The recollection of the cruel and unmanly part they had acted in poor Mrs. Lunel's tragedy, or how much they had contributed to her afflictions, and her death at last, fired me in a moment to wish for an opportunity to tell them that she had still a friend in the world able and willing to call them to an account for their inhuman and villanous conduct; when lo! I found they intended to anticipate my wishes. As they walked about the room, affecting not to take any notice of me, one of them stumbled and trod upon my toes, and, instead of making an apology, tacked a damn to the insult, which, being prepared, I returned with a kick on the breech. I saw then that they came on purpose to pick a quarrel; and, glad to revenge Mrs. Lunel on one of them at least, I met him more than half the way with that well applied greeting of the very toes he had provoked. The other affected great civility, and appeared anxious to promote a reconciliation between his companion and me; but as in reality neither of us wished it, a coach was soon called, and at the stroke of ten I stepped into it, and they both did the same, bidding the coachman to drive to some place they had fixed upon beforehand, and which happened to be some fields northwards, but that were about two miles clear of the town, and on some cross road little frequented.

At our arrival there we lost no time—we drew directly; but I was rather surprised to see both my companions on that little excursion with the swords in their hands as well as I. —I asked the meaning, and was answered by the third one, with a great deal of affected civility still, that he drew his as an umpire; and putting himself then at a proper distance, seemingly ready to interfere, if wanted, now, said he, you may fall to it, I will not meddle at all—I mean only to be a witness that you had both fair play. But scarce he saw us engaged than throwing off the mask, he appeared in his own character, and the villain, attacked me with as much fury as the other; and by coming upon me on different sides, both at once, in an open field, they put it out of my power to profit by the advantage I evidently had in the manage of my weapon, or even to defend myself. By mere activity indeed I maintained, for some minutes, the unequal contest, and wounded them both; but I was wounded myself by them in several places; and a wound I had on the joint of my right shoulder and arm, quite in the back, proved so painful, that from the moment I received it every stretch or violent motion cost me a groan. The others were not painful, but bled a great deal ; and in all likelihood I could not have kept up long, had not chance brought that way two gentlemen in a post chaise, who seeing me so harrassed, as I really was, ran directly to my assistance. The sight of them encouraged me as much as it intimidated my antagonists: they saw themselves detected in a villany, and were perplexed; whilst I myself, enraged by it and my pain, sure besides of somebody at hand to do me justice, pressed upon them with redoubled vigour. The false umpire wanted then to appear a real one; but by re-assuming the place he had taken at first, he gave me an opportunity of attacking him alone, and I did it with such violence, that I brought him to the ground with a thrust that would have run him through the breast had not the sword hit on some of the breast bones. I turned then quick upon the other, whose perplexity was such, that he seemed almost abandoned to my resentment, and therefore I disarmed him without much difficulty, not caring to take away his life, since I saw it so entirely in my power; but I beat him with the flat of his own sword till I broke it in pieces, to the great satisfaction of the two kind gentlemen and their servants who came to my relief, and who, finding that I had extricated myself pretty well, remained quiet spectators of the chastising scene, mighty well pleased at seeing me inflict that punishment, though ignorant as yet how well deserved. But when I had done, and told them all the particulars of the quarrel they had seen so happily terminated, though without mentioning Lunel, their indignation seemed to be without bounds. Instead of affording them assistance, though both seemed to be in very great want of it, they bade their servants to take their remaining sword, and drag them to the nearest magistrate, tied up like assassins, to be dealt with as such. With great difficulty I obtained, at last, as a favour, to let the villains go, to be punished farther by the shame and disgrace they had brought upon themselves, as, though both men of fortune, they could not expect to be admitted any more in the company of gentlemen. The servants then kicked and buffeted them to the hackney coach, which was waiting at a distance, and sent them about their business without any sword, calling them many opprobrious names, and pelting them till out of reach; whilst I rejoiced to see the enemies of my darling Mrs. Lunel, and the cruel worthless counsellor of the barbarous and equally infamous Lunel, so humbled, debased, and so well trimmed too.

All the attention was then turned upon me—my wounds were examined in a hurry, and not only the masters, but the servants themselves, pressed on me their handkerchiefs to bind them up, and expressed their joy at seeing that not one of them appeared to be dangerous. I had bled greatly, however; and in proportion as the passions, which had kept up my spirits during the contest, subsided, I grew faint ; and they thought proper to put me in the post chaise and drive as fast as possible to the house of one of those gentlemen present, which was not far off, and whose name was Richar, whilst a servant was sent to

Paris to bring a surgeon with the greatest expedition. Some cordial, kindly administered by Mrs. Richar, kept me pretty well till the surgeon arrived, when the bleeding was renewed by the taking off the first bandages, I grew faint again, almost past the power of cordials to support me; but as the wounds were not dangerous, when they were all dressed, I soon recovered enough to sit and chat; and would have done it, had not the surgeon insisted on my keeping myself very quite for fear of a fever, I wrote two lines, however, before I lay down, to Mr. Morin, just to let him and his daughter know that I was in no danger, and prevent their being frightened by the report of the quarrel; and that step had very agreeable consequences, as Mr. Morin and Mr. Richar, happening to be both members of the parliament of Paris, and intimate acquaintances, the father and the daughter came to me before night, and staid at Mr. Richar's as long as myself.

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THE next day we were diverted with accounts of my own adventure sent from Paris, where it was already public, but set forth so much to my credit, that, though in the main true, scarce could I own it myself without blushing: nevertheless, it was not known for three or four days farther what had been the cause of the quarrel. At first it was supposed to have originated only on the single circumstance of treading upon my toes; but by degrees the whole truth came out, not only as it was in vindication of Mrs. Lunel's character, or at least to avenge her for the ill treatment she had met with, but that having challenged Lunel, he had contrived that plot to have me assassinated; and then nobody thought too much could be said in my praise—all the fair sex were on my side, and I became equally famous for my attempt to chastise the husband, as I was before for my affection to the wife. The tale of my amours with poor Mrs. Lunel, and that of her elopement with me, received additional lustre from my supposed boldness, and the exaggerated accounts of my marital exploits. My name became soon a favourite toast in every genteel company all over the kingdom, and I was looked upon as a wonder, in consequence of the incidents rendered favourable to me by mere chance.

Even within the walls of Mr. Richar's house we had very remarkable instances of the principal effects of prepossession on the human heart. Miss Morin's kind attendance about me had been taken notice of directly by Mr. Richar's two eldest daughters, who were themselves very fine girls: they often rallied her about it at the beginning; and Miss Morin, naturally gay, owned that she had a very great regard for me, and kept up the joke by warning them as often to take care of their own hearts; adding, with a smile, that I was a bewitching fellow. The sisters laughed, and turned into ridicule Miss Morin's caution: they could not see any thing bewitching in me—I was but so—I had fought indeed bravely, by their father's account; but what of that? that did not make me look a bit the handsomer—I could not certainly be put in comparison with such and such gentlemen, who, it seems, were two great beaux, known admirers of the said ladies. Miss Morin laughed at them in her turn; made as little of their admired swains as the sisters did of me; and by keeping up that spirit of contradiction, I became, in all likelihood, as disagreeable to them as I appeared to be by the scornful manner in which they talked of me.

Besides, everybody in Mr. Richar's house were told who I was, from the first day I went into it, and none thought I had any thing extraordinary about me. But when they heard my name along with that of Mrs. Lunel, in the public talk, O Lord! then every one wondered themselves who could they be so great fools as not to recollect that I was the very same person talked so much of before: they all saw in me then something or other, which ought to have convinced them that I could be no body else but that celebrated gentleman.

The two sisters in particular were greatly surprised at the discovery; their (till then) declared opinion of me went so much against the known one of most other ladies, that they could not be less than ashamed; but, as if to make me amends, they were soon more than that. From the moment they heard that I was Mrs. Lunel's celebrated friend, those very young ladies, who two days before thought me but so so, or not worth looking at, could not be kept now sitting five minutes together without coming into the room I was in, on some pretence or other, to have a peep at me; and they found me every time altered for the better, that Miss Morin had reason enough to rally them as much about me as they had rallied her before: they not only did not strive to conceal their growing partiality for me, but submitted to own that they really thought me bewitching, though indeed very pale with

the loss of blood. If I had been ever so accomplished otherwise, I had not the least opportunity of appearing to advantage; but appeared rather the reverse, being as awkward as a man may be supposed to be with a painful wound in his right shoulder, two pretty deep ones in his left arm, and some smaller ones in other parts of his body: my tongue itself was almost tied up with the surgeon's orders; but no matter, they were prepossessed in my favour by the common report, and that was sufficient to make me look, in their eyes, as a nonpareil—I was entitled indeed to allowances on account of my situation; but I was so from the beginning; why not make them before !

Though happy in my constitution, and well pleased with my success, and everything about me, I was so weak that my recovery proved tedious. My wounds were not dangerous indeed; but if neglected a little longer, I was likely to have bled to death; and the lucky arrival of Mr. Richar and his friend may be justly said to have saved my life by affording assistance to stop the blood, as well as by preventing the farther progress of the murdering scheme. However, I returned to town in a fortnight ; and at the request of Mr. Morin, I accepted of an apartment in his house till quite well, to keep me, as he said, from companies, that, by leading me into excess or otherwise, might prove fatal to me. Mr. Richar and his family followed us there the next day, and we passed another week very pleasantly together; but after their return home, Miss Morin and I, when alone, seldom failed to pass our time talking of Mrs. Lunel, and lamenting her loss: her child too become¹ sometimes the subject of our chat; but we knew so little about him, that scarce could we do farther than pity him, supposing that the barbarous Lunel was not likely to be a better father than he had been a husband. I wish to know, said I, one day, where this child is, that we might have an eye upon him, and do him any little service in our power for the sake of the mother. He is somewhere in the country, said Miss Morin, but I cannot tell where—we will send for Nannete, and ask her—I know that she is as ignorant as I in that particular ; but she may perhaps direct us where to inquire. I should be glad to see her, said I, to question her about that and other things, and to know if I can do something for her—she was a favourite with me formerly; but if she never had been so, her attachment to her mistress will induce me to serve her with pleasure, and she shall not want.

Nannete came in consequence, and though she could give us no news about the child, by finding out and bringing before us every one of the servants who had been discharged along with her by Lunel, she enabled us to make discoveries that cannot be thought of without horror. Lunel had indeed procured a woman, who had the appearance of a country nurse, and kept her for some days in the house; but the inhuman villain did it only to beguile and avoid suspicion of his barbarous design on both the mother and the son. That woman was bribed to take the infant, as if to nurse him in the country, but in reality to put him into the Foundling Hospital.

Compassion for the one, and my never-ceasing affection for the other, induced me to take directly every step we could think of to find out the child; but I should have taken them in vain, had not chance lent me an helping hand², because the intelligence I received from the old servants amounted to no more than bare conjectures. Lunel had taken care to discharge every one of them before he executed any part of those designs, supposing them all devoted to their mistress's service or mine ; but he kept one whom he had lately taken, whom, as he did not know me, nor had any opportunity of being acquainted with his mistress, because she was already very ill, Lunel did not think dangerous; and indeed he

¹ This is how it is written in the original text, p.22.

² Original text, p.24

could not have been so, had he not become acquainted with the discharged servants before they left the house; but that acquaintance between them, though a slight one, being sufficient to salute one another ever after whenever they met, served me as a clue to the labyrinth of Lunel's infamous conduct.

The new servant was met by an old one much in my interest, at the very time that I was making inquires³ about the child, and who, seeing he had not his livery on, asked him if he had left his place; the fellow answered in the affirmative, and after some chat between them on the subject, they went to drink together. The old one profited by that opportunity, to try if he could pick up something relative to the child; but the other affecting to be reserved, gave him to understand that he could tell enough if he had a mind; on which my emissary thought it proper to exert herself⁴ in coaxing him, with all the art he was matter of, to come and see me, assuring him that I was very generous, &c.; and he succeeded.

The fellow came to me the next day, along with another servant, discharged by Lunel as well as he but a week before, and as much a stranger to me. From those two I learned how, and at what time, the infant had been put into the Foundling Hospital —two circumstances absolutely necessary to the ascertaining and finding him out. I learned the reason assigned by Lunel to put him there was the supposing him to be my child, not his — that Lunel was in the house both the times I went to inquire for him, having been shut up from the moment he heard I was in Paris till the very day he left it, and discharged them, without admitting any body to see him but the two strangers of infamous memory —that when he received my letter he laid it before them, and they all three consulted together about its contents for several days —that Lunel wanted of the said strangers to go and fight me, as they both passed with him for brave fellows; while he (Lunel) owned, that for him to go and meet me was not better than to go to the slaughter house, because he was not a match for me —that they seemed indeed inclined to do anything for him but that, being as much afraid of me as he himself; but they put it off by advising him, as more to his honour, to spread the report of his being gone out of the kingdom, that deceived by it, I might discontinue my attendance in the coffee house, and Lunel go then to it. Disappointed in that plan, they thought of murdering me, by attacking me both at once; a design very much approved of by Lunel, as the most likely to rid himself of me at once. The mis-carriage of this had put him into such a panic, that his well-trimmed friends hardly were able to persuade him to wait till their recovery, that all the three might leave the kingdom in earnest, as they had done at last, resolved on not returning to it till their shameful affairs were entirely forgotten.

I was extremely well satisfied with their account of the circumstance to which it related, and wished to have been as much so in other particulars; but when I inquired of them about those relative to Mrs. Lunel herself, they looked at one another, and seemed equally unwilling to talk about her. They thought the affair of too serious a nature, they said, to be talking about it, and for what they knew they might bring themselves into trouble if they did talk.—And it was not without great difficulty, and a promise of protection at all events, that I could persuade them to speak on that subject, being both of opinion that Mrs. Lunel had been murdered; as though reported that she had eloped, they were sure, they said, that she was dead and buried, but where, or how she died, they did not know. Of the servants, none but one that Lunel had taken along with him knew any thing of either; that all the others had been sent out of the way at the time of her death, as well as

³ Original text, p.25

⁴ Original text, p.25

when she was carried out of the house; that all the black transaction had been conducted in so private a manner, that they would have been apt to believe the reported story themselves, had not the corpse been moved to their master's study, and remained there while he was filling the house with bustle and uproar, as if he had really missed his wife. But there being a communication to that study through a closet, unknown to Lunel, but not so to most of his servant⁵, they had seen the corpse there, and concluded that the story of the elopement was invented to hide the murder.

I guessed directly that the closet alluded to was the very same in which poor Mr. Sobervie had been listening to me, and upon inquiry I found it was so; as Mr. Lunel had turned the room formerly Miss Sobervie's into a library, and that it was there where he and his well-matched friends used to shut themselves up to deliberate about their horrid designs, and where they had deposited the corpse. This accounted at once for the discoveries made first by Nannete, Mrs. Lunel's maid, and now by these two servants. The only thing that seemed to me strange was, how the servant in Lunel's confidence did not foresee that the other might see the corpse whilst in the study; because, said they, he knows nothing about the closet himself, he being so proud a fellow, that, by keeping us at a distance, he made us afraid to trust him; and if nobody else was to be hanged for the murder of our poor mistress than our late master's valet de chambre, none of us would be unwilling to go and give evidence. They could not tell to what purpose the corpse was brought there, and only suspected that it was done with a view to persuade them that she was gone as reported—every room in the house being left open immediately after for their inspection, except the study—and to supply Lunel with pretences to send them out of the way, while she was carried out of the house, they both were sent on inquiring errands, which they knew to be sham ones; and at their return, having had the curiosity to go and peep, the master not being at home, they found that the corpse was no more in the study.

I did not chuse to keep these two servants about me, nor even near Mr. Morin; but as I thought their evidence, if ever wanted, of very great consequence, after rewarding them well, I put them into the service of two of my acquaintances, who, knowing that I wished to be sure of them, had taken care to make their stay agreeable. As for the maid, Nannete, we did not hesitate to keep her in Miss Morin's service; she was a very deserving girl, and we both were fond of her; besides, we thought her necessary to us for the ascertaining of the child when found, as she and the supposed nurse were the only persons he had been handled by while in the house.

⁵ Original text, p.28

CHAP 1V

I Renewed then my search after the child; but though able to give a better account than before, it was not such an exact one as we might have wished. After some pains taken by one of the hospital governors and me, there were no less than three children that might each of them be supposed he we were looking for; however, having the pleasure to hear that all three were well, and none farther off than twenty miles from Paris, we thought it an easy matter to ascertain young Lunel among them; but we were mistaken. Miss Morin had seen the child before, and Nannete had seen and handled him for some days, and yet neither of them could venture to say this is he. None of the children had any thing of the Lunels in his countenance; and though agreed by us all that one of them had something of Mrs. Lunel, the likeness we perceived was not a sufficient proof to take him and reject the others. As the best expedient in such a dilemma, I thought of taking them all three, in hopes that time might perhaps discover farther, or at least, that as they grew up their features, vioces⁶, and other incidental circumstances, would enable us to decide that point: and when this was resolved, I soon obtained the necessary orders, procured new and most decent nurses, and got the children from the old ones, making up their loss so well, that they parted with them without regret.

But they had not been a month on my hands when we came to know to a certainty which of them was Mrs. Lunel's child. The supposed country nurse, who had put him in the Foundling Hospital, was met accidentally by one of Lunel's informing servants, who being sure of being well rewarded for his pains, coaxed her to come along with him to me, without knowing where she was going. At first I could not get but unconnected answers from her; but partly by threats, and partly by promises,⁷ her at last to confess everything she had done and knew concerning the child in question. She assured me besides, that she would know him among thousands; because, said she, the circumstances of his birth, and the orders I had to drop him into the hospital, induced me to take a very particular notice of him; and I recollect perfectly well his features, and some moles he had in his body, the description of which she gave us then.

We continued to keep her in the house without inconvenience to herself; and Mr. Morin, his daughter, and I, sat in consultation about the best method to prevent even the possibility of imposition in the case: and as young Lunel's birth-right was very considerable, and as in all probability it would be contested, Mr. Morin insisted on our taking that ascertaining step before such witnesses, and in such a manner, as to render that point indisputable. Accordingly, Mr. Richar was consulted too on the subject, and by his advice I gave orders to have the three children brought to his house, where, on inspection, we were agreeably surprised to find that the child who had a resemblance to Mrs. Lunel had also such moles as the supposed nurse had described, whilst the others had none like. To be the more sure still, and for from⁷ sake too, we procured a dozen of other children, much of the same age, from poor trades people; and having appointed an hour for their own mothers to bring them to Mr. Richar's, we hid even from their sight the one thought to be young Lunel.

Thus prepared, we waited a while for the supposed nurse we had sent for to town, and at her arrival we desired her to look among the fourteen children there present for the one she had put into the Foundling Hospital, by Mr. Lunel's orders, as by the steps we had

⁶ Original text, p.33

⁷ Original text, p.35

taken we were sure he was among them. The woman went about it with alacrity; looked, stripped, and examined every one of them with great attention; but when she had done, turning to us with a dejected countenance, the child we look for is not here, said she. We all affected to be much surprised, and desired her to look again, representing that the alteration in a child from his birth to that age was generally great, and might deceive her.—O no, said she; I know that there is some difference almost always, but he never could alter so much as to deceive me; but I will look again to satisfy you, and she did it with more attention still than the first time, but to no purpose: she swore that he was not there, and we gave it up seemingly much disappointed. But whilst Nannete took her to a far off room to refresh herself, the hidden child was put in the place of one of the others, and as Miss Morin was stepping into her carriage, in which the supposed nurse and Nannete were sitting already to return to town, as they thought, how sorry I am, said she, to go without finding out this child!—Are you very sure, nurse, that he is not among those you have looked at?—O Lord! madam, said the nurse, I will lay my life that none of them is the child I put in the Foundling Hospital by Mr. Lunel's orders.—However, I am loath to go, said Miss Morin, without looking at them once more. Will you oblige me, nurse, to come again—let me have the satisfaction of having done all our endeavours to find him out. To oblige you, Madam, said the nurse, coming out of the carriage, I will do any thing; but I am sure it is of no use, because I know that he is not there.

We all went in again, and the nurse began the search a new—looked at some of the children, and gave them back shaking her head, as if to make us understand she thought it lost! but as soon as the formerly hidden child was put in her hands she screeched and kissed him, saying in a transport of joy, O Madam, here he is, look at him; this is he, the darling, and without even taking up his clothes, handed him to Miss Morin—Look, Madam, look, I am positive, said she, that you will find he has such moles as I told you before.—How is it then, said Miss Morin, coolly, taking the child, that you did not know him neither the first nor second time?—Because, Madam, said the nurse, without hesitation, that child was not among these I looked at.—But he was, said Miss Morin.—He might be in the house, said the nurse; but I will swear that he was not handed to me before, and even that he was not in this room when I looked at these before—The child was stripped then, and every body present saw the moles, and acknowledged that the supposed nurse was right—the more so, as the circumstance of having kept him out of her sight till then was explained to general satisfaction. We took proper measures to be sure of her also, in case of need; and though I made a difference henceforth between Lunel and the other two children, I did not abandon them.

CHAP V.

I Must go more than a month back to tell you of public consequences produced by both Lunel's conduct and mine. As soon as known that I was carried from the field of battle to Mr. Richar's, and that I meant to remain there till cured of my wounds, the formerly unnoticed, and almost only cart road, as he said himself, became one of the most frequented ones by fashionable carriages about Paris. The gate of the court, and the door of the house, both were constantly kept open to avoid noise as much as possible. Curiosity, civility, or affection, brought thousands of both sexes to see me; but as it would not have been proper to transgress the surgeon's express orders to keep myself quiet, most of those who did me the honour to come and enquire about me carried so much farther their politeness as to be satisfied with leaving their names; some indeed of each sex insisted on seeing Mr. Richar, having a previous acquaintance with him; and as none of them did chuse to go away till he had given them a particular account of my quarrel, and he was very kind and partial to me. Though these inquisitive ones were few in number, they proved to be enough to trumpet my exploits infinitely above my deserts; the infamous conduct of Lunel raised me into esteem in proportion as it became known, and sunk him even below contempt: his barbarities to Mrs. Lunel became as public then as my tenderness for her, and excited as much the aversion of all her sex again⁸ him as their regard for me. I was looked up by them, it seems, as their general champion; knowing I was wounded in the arm, and that I had in my possession the swords of both my assassins, to evince their feelings and gratitude, they were pleased to honour me with a cart load, I believe, of their favours, in arm slings and sword knots, annexed to pretty billets, or some verses, which furnished me with a fund of amusement, the more agreeable, as I was not under the necessity of answering any of them, being mostly sent by unknown hands, and by those of angels rather, if I may judge by the beauty of the little presents.

It is true they exited⁹ a contention between my friends at Mr. Richar's and me; but it was not a bloody one. They insisted that it was incumbent on me to wear, by turns, when fit to appear in public, both my antagonists swords, it having been a constant practice time immemorial for combatants to wear the spoils honourably taken from their enemies in the field. And undoubtedly, said they, those flashy sword knots are intended to render your triumph the greater, by making the spoils more conspicuous; and you will disappoint your friends if you do not wear them. But I had reasons enough to prove the contrary—I pleaded modesty first; then an aversion to wear swords which had been drawn to such an infamous purpose as to murder and evince the treachery of their owners; and above all, I pleaded the impossibility of wearing either the knots or slings of one person without affronting the other, it not being in my power to wear them all.

But all the gentlemen present happened to be very obstinate—they would not give up the point; and an expedient which I thought would have decided it directly in my favour, turned out so much the reverse, that I was obliged to submit, having not a word to say after in support of my own opinion.— I appeal, said I, to the ladies present—let them judge by themselves, and if they can say that they would not be affronted, should any body happen to wear another's favours, in preference to theirs, I will own myself in the wrong, and give it up, or do anything you think proper.—The ladies smiled condescension; and after canvassing the matter this way and that way among them, to my great surprise concluded that the other gentlemen were right—that custom made it indispensable for me to wear the

⁸ Original text, p.40

⁹ Original text, p.41

swords, and then the knots followed of course, being as necessary ornaments as slings to support my arm—that I ought to wear them both, as otherwise, to avoid giving offence to some ladies, I was likely to give it to them all; while by wearing a different knot and sling every day, said they, you might in time acquit yourself genteely with many; and if you should happen to continue lame ten years, with many more, or with almost every one of them: besides, that no lady could be offended, as she might judge of the number by the variety; and supposing you so just as to wear them in rotation, according to the day or hour they were sent to you, she might expect that some time or other her own favour would be taken into proper consideration, and there could be no reason to complain, or be affronted, as in the case of a partial preference, and so forth. The logic of the ladies confounded me; and as I perceived that my acquiescence was likely to please them, I submitted to their pleasant decree, promising to wear my antagonists' swords, and the knots and slings too; but as I could not exactly tell which were the first I received, to evince the impartiality supposed necessary, to prevent giving an offence, I left the choice of those I was to wear for a month to come to Miss Morin, Mr. Richar's daughters, and other young ladies present; and they all were much diverted with those trifling incidents.

CHAP. VI.

WHEN I thought myself seasoned enough by airings, little walks, and visits, (to bear the noise of a Theatre, which by the by, was not till some weeks, after my return to Paris) I wanted to take along with me to the Opera some of the young ladies who had decided the knotty point, and got their parents to consent ; but none would venture there that night—they all suspected that I would draw too much attention at my first appearance, not to get a greater share of it themselves than they wished—they proposed to go too, but wished to be far from me, that they might enjoy the sport without inconvenience—Mr. Richar, his family, and others, passed the day I had fixed upon with us, and in the evening, after seeing them all to the Opera house, I went myself to another side of it, in search of some old acquaintances of mine to keep me in countenance; but when I was perceived among them, the audience was not satisfied, as they had done twice before, with whispering, looking &c.; but they fell a clapping so in earnest, that for half an hour the noise was as great as ever individual there had been applauded with; and as it was so evidently a compliment paid to me on my recovery, that not to take notice of it would have looked like an ill-timed or too-affected modesty, I saw myself obliged to appear sensible of their kindness by nodding a little, and smiling¹⁰ with gratitude; but every time I did so, they clapped so much the more, that I rather let them alone.

The Opera began; but though the noise ceased, the looks and even whispers did not all the evening. I was so much still the object of the attention of the ladies, that the soft parts of the airs, in which, generally speaking, the audience scarce dares to breathe, often permitted me to hear myself honoured by them with the kindly-meant, though blunt, epithets of—my bold dog—my sweet bully—my charming rogue—and many other similar ones. When we met at supper, in Mr. Morin's house, talking of the reception I had met with, Mrs. Richar was pleased to say that I had bewitched her daughters, and all the other young ladies about her, as they had cried at the Opera, on my account, as much as she had ever seen them do at a tragedy.—What could be the matter with you, my dear Miss Richar? said I to the eldest, who was sitting by my side.—I don't know, said she, blushing, and with a languishing look towards Miss Morin, who smiled at it.—I hope, said I, that you was not sorry to hear the people so kind to me.—No, no, said the mother ; it was for joy that all these little fools shed tears. I believe every one of them looks upon you as her brother—as any thing else certainly they cannot; because they see plainly that they are too many for you. She excited a general laugh; but, though against me, I could not help laughing myself at the wonderful effects of prepossession—merit, in all the applause I met with, being almost entirely out of the question. What would have become of me, if chance had not brought Mr. Richar, or somebody else, at that critical moment, towards the field of battle! Even five minutes delay in making his appearance there was likely to have done my business, and then my adversary perhaps would have been applauded instead of me, for his courage.

In the other Theatres, and every public place I went to, I was received with no less demonstrations of joy, and the infatuation continued to be for a good while so great, that the knowledge I was to be in this or that place was enough to fill it; but though it could not be less than flattering to me, at my age, in one sense, in another it was rather a disagreeable restraint, as no lady liked to go to them with me, because I drew so much the eyes of every body upon her too, that none could stand the unreserved review; and thus was I deprived

¹⁰ Original text, p.46

for many hours of one of my greatest pleasures, which was the company of some fair one I liked.

But of all the ridiculous effects prepossession ever produced, none, I believe, was ever so remarkable as what both Miss Morin and I experienced then. She was willing to favour me with her company at any of the public places; but she was naturally timid, and could not resolve to come, supposing that to be with me would expose her to more notice than she wished. But as I was saying one day that she might venture with me to the Opera, because, though the audience seemed still glad to see me, there was not so much noise made at my appearance as before, nor so much looking and whispering, she consented to go, provided I could prevail with her father to go with us, as his company would contribute more to keep her in countenance, she said, than any thing else could. Mr. Morin, very obligingly, agreed to go as requested; but no sooner did Miss Morin and I appear together there, than the house seemed coming down with a most loud and general clap. I wondered what the devil could be the matter, as for the last two or three days I had been in that theatre we had no noise—my appearance had produced no more than some whispers, looks and a general smile—I was almost inclined to doubt that the clapping concerned me at all, when I understood by what a lady near us was telling to another farther off, that Miss Morin was taken for Mrs. Lunel herself.

Astonished at the mistake, I whispered it to Miss Morin, laughing, as she did at, it¹¹: though I begged of her to come forward and correct the error by shewing herself well; but her condescension in that particular had a quite contrary effect of what I expected—the clapping was renewed with redoubled ardour, and for a while we could not hear one another either by whispering or otherwise. However, when the fury began to subside, For goodness sake, my dear Miss Morin, said I, come as far forward as you can, and shew boldly your face; here are certainly many ladies and gentlemen to whom you are well known, and then this foolish notion will appear as false as it is, and we shall be left in peace. I explained the matter to her father, who was behind us, with wonder in his countenance, and begged him to come forward too. They both did as I wished! but the people in general were so far prepossessed with the idea of my having brought there Mrs. Lunel, as if in defiance of her husband, that the more Miss Morin strove to shew her face and make herself known, the louder seemed to grow the clapping storm, till, unable to bear that madness any longer, both father and daughter left the box, and I was obliged to follow them home; where for a while, we did no more than to look upon one another, as if astonished still at the scene we had gone through, without knowing whether to laugh or be vexed at the recollection. At last we seemed to consider it in its proper light, and we laughed heartily enough the remainder of the evening, to make us amends for our theatrical disappointment.

But to mend the matter, though there were among the people in the Theatre at that time, many who knew Miss Morin perfectly well, and that in consequence it was to be supposed would have undeceived those who did not; when once cool, they rather seemed to have done the reverse, either that they did not chuse to cripple the lie of the day, or that they were not believed, all Paris was full next day of my supposed boldness. And I really think that several of those very persons, who knew and saw Miss Morin there, were themselves so weak as to be persuaded by the public report against the evidence of their own senses, that I had actually brought to the Opera along with me that very evening the

¹¹ Original text, p.50

identical Mrs. Lunel; whilst I and others were lamenting her loss and untimely removal from our company to her grave.

If my elopement and intrigues with Mrs Lunel had been really true, and Lunel had been as respectable by his conduct as conspicuous for his fortune and station, though the gay and thoughtless would have still rejoiced in the report of my adventure, the sensible part of mankind must have disapproved of them, and could not join in applauding publicly what they naturally disliked; but as Lunel was known and despised as a man of the most contemptible character, not a soul but was glad to hear that he was made a fool of, and punished by some vexatious step in my amours for his meanness and barbarity. Lunel's father was a banker, and indeed in every respect a respectable man; but every body knew that he himself reprobated the conduct and mean disposition of his son—of course, not even the regard for the one could prevent the natural contempt excited by the deportment of the other from breaking out in demonstrations of applause, to which their mistaken notions inducted them to think I had a just claim.

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CHAP. VII.

SURFEITED at last with public applause, and perhaps in compliment to Miss Morin and others who I knew wished it, I gave up most of my public diversions for private balls and parties of pleasure; in which, with less noise, I enjoyed myself a great deal more—dancing had been till of late my fort, or the accomplishment which was of most service to me in the aspiring to the favour of the ladies; but then, except Miss Morin, I knew of no acquisition made by it in Paris worthy my notice; and though not able as yet to exert myself as well as I did before my last weakening adventure, I longed for opportunities to convince others, that even independent of those qualities for which they supposed me entitled to their attention, I had some unknown to them, as much or more considered in the fashionable system; and to tell you the truth, I was besides a little piqued at the poor opinion entertained of me by Mr. Richar's daughters, till mended by the public report, in which I could not boast of any merit of my own; and being as vain as most young people are of every trifling thing the ladies happened to approve of, I could not resist the temptation of shewing myself as much to advantage as possible.

We agreed, therefore, to have our first ball at Mr. Richar's, and celebrate my recovery on the very spot where I was for a while scarce able to crawl, and full liberty was given me to invite to it any body I liked; but I used it with great moderation—I invited indeed some ladies, but none without a gentleman I knew she would like to dance with, and I reserved my self entirely to the service of Mr. Richar's daughters and Miss Morin, who richly deserved my utmost attention; though resolved at the same time not to deprive them in the least of the company of their respective admirers, and I only to accept occasionally the honour of the ladies' hands to relieve them. In the main, it was a scheme suggested by my vanity, because, having not a fixed partner, I was left at liberty to dance alone whenever I had a mind, and enjoy a better opportunity of appearing as an uncommon dancer; and though at the beginning I retrained my natural levity out of mere conceit, expecting to surprise by and bye, and with a view too of encouraging others to do their best before they were put of countenance by my exertions; I was not long in making them think that it was almost a wonder to see the capering of that very cripple they had thought so little of but a few weeks before. You may judge how well gratified was my pride on the occasion, when I assure you that the very admired swains with whom Mr. Richar's daughters said then that I could not be put in comparison, were intimidated, or ashamed of themselves—though some how or other, as I wished them all well, I found the way to coax and flatter every one into good humour again, and all the company seemed extremely well pleased long before we parted. Miss Morin's pleasant temper had indeed its full scope then on both Mr. Richar's daughters; they blushed at the repetition of some of their own words, with which she seasoned her railleries; begged for goodness sake to spare them, and the charming and good-natured girls submitted to make her and me amends with some innocent expressions of their affection.

I mention to you all those trifling particulars because they were the source of an infinity of adventures. My capering abilities were henceforth so much exaggerated, that my former fame for lightness of heels,—which between my travels and my attendance on Mrs. Lunel seemed to have been lulled asleep, was now awaked so as to confound almost with her noise that of my gallantries. There were balls every day on purpose to see me, and to which I was so pressingly invited, that I could not excuse myself: those balls produced parties of pleasure, and between the one and the other I found myself soon engaged in so many amorous pursuits and quarrels, that I never could give you an account of half of them: I may of some curious ones hereafter; but till then let it be enough to tell you in

general, that never was a man, I believe, with so little intrinsic merit as I had, so happy, or so generally favoured by the ladies as I was ; nor one so well fitted by nature and principles as I to enjoy that happiness and favour, as none ever trod so light as I did on the slippery paths of pleasure. Mrs Lunel did indeed make a very deep impression on my heart, but never any other beauty touched it farther than a fine person, without other recommendations, generally does, that of a man perfectly well acquainted with both the failings and excellencies of the sex. Nevertheless, every one of the many I had an intercourse with thought me very fond of herself, and perhaps I was so; but experience induced me to be cautious, or to have a particular care not only to avoid the entangling myself too much with them, but even to break off prettily when I perceived my beloved fair ones entangling themselves too much with me, to prevent a repetition of the inexpressible tortures that my darling Mrs. Lunel and I reciprocally went through: and if I leave her out of the question, I may truly say,

A chaque Belle a son tour,
J'aime a conter des fleurettes ;
Mes amours les plus parfaites
Ne saurois durer qu'un jour ;
J'ai toujours des amourettes,
Mais je n'ai jamais d'amour.

CHAP. VIII

I MUST mention two accidental occurrences of that time, because, though in themselves trifling, they became after of consequence, or had a favourable tendency in the affairs of Mrs. Lunel and her son. Mr. Morin's acquaintances were mostly among his own brethern¹², or the gentlemen of the law; and as he was so kind as not to permit me to leave his house while I remained in Paris, and I expected one day their assistance in favour of young Lunel's rights, I became acquainted with many of them myself; among whom there was one Mr. Mortange, a gentleman of about thirty, that I was very fond of, because, besides being a man of an improved understanding, he was very good natured, and of a most amiable disposition, with an exceeding good temper: that gentleman came one morning to my room earlier than usual, and so perceptibly dull, that I could not but take notice, and inquire directly what was the matter with him. I came on purpose, said he, to beg of you, as a very particular favour, to answer with that frankness you are remarkable for, and that friendship you honour me with, some questions that highly concern me, or from which my future happiness or misery depends.—I begged of him not to torture me with preambles, but to tell me directly what I could do to serve him, as he could not doubt I would do it with pleasure.—Do you love Miss Morin, said he, then?—Yes, I do, and dearly too, said I.—It is almost superfluous, said he, sighing, to ask if she loves you, because I know she does.—I think so too, or else I am very much mistaken in her, said I; and as he remained silent and thoughtful, I proceeded to ask, in my turn, if that was all he wished to know.—

That is all, said he, with another deep sigh; and guessing the rest, I said, offering my hand to him, Come, keep up your spirits—I know what ails you now, and I am happy to find that I may soon contribute to your relief.—Impossible, said he, shaking his head. O, but I know better, said I; you love Miss Morin, and you think that as she loved me, and I love her, that you have no business there; and you are mistaken, because my love is not incompatible with yours; as for hers to me, I assure you, upon my honour, that she has told me more than once in my face, that though she loves me as a friend or a brother, I should be the last man in the world she would think of for any thing else. In short, our affection for each other never did exceed, nor ever shall, the limits prescribed between brothers and sisters.—You surprise me, said he, with a cheerful countenance.—Ay, and very agreeably too, I see, said I; tell me how matters stand between you and her, and perhaps I will surprise you more still, by employing all my influence with her in your favour.—I have been courting her these three years, said he; but though I have no reason to say that she hates me, I have none neither to flatter myself that she loves me—she received me with civility indeed, but she keeps me always at too great a distance, in comparison of that familiarity I observed, with pain, between you both. But I wonder it never occurred to you, said I, that only a brotherly love could entitle me to it, and then you would have thought nothing of it. A virtuous girl as Miss Morin undoubtedly is, would no more admit me to those familiarities than she does you, if she thought us actuated by the same motives—she knows me to be a trifler, who means no harm to her, and admits me to freedoms without meaning too¹³; but you are a solid fellow, and she thinks, that as trifling would not become you, you mean something else—and her intercourse with you is likely to be formal till you are authorised to bed together.

Did you ever talk to her of marriage? No, I never did, said he, nor of love, because she appears shy at the mention of any thing like it; but I know that she is not ignorant of my

¹² Original text, p.60

¹³ Original text, p.63

design.—I dare say she is not, said I; I guessed that she knew of it by that very shyness. Young ladies are apt to affect it when they think us in earnest: they think it not decent to talk of love in that case. I never talk to her of any thing else, said I, and she never is displeased with me, nor with the subject, because she knows that I have no design at all. Did you speak about it to her father? No, said he, because as he knows that my fortune is a pretty one, he wishes the alliance; and I scorn to have any woman forced into my arms. — That is right, said I; that answers perfectly well with the opinion I entertain of your liberal principles. See now if you have any objection to my courting her for you, and if you have not, depend upon it that I will do more for you in a week's time than you have done for yourself in three years; I will lay my life that I will bring the matter to an issue infinitely more expeditious than you, though not a lawyer.

That would be droll indeed, said he, laughing. I dare not beg of you to take that trouble; but certain it is, that if you was pleased to carry your friendship for me so far, I should acknowledge myself, all my life, under the greatest obligations to you, because custom has made my love for Miss Morin a second nature—my affection is entirely confined to her person, and I never can be happy without her.—I knew that Miss Morin loved me, and that since we had lost Mrs. Lunel she had entertained hopes of attaching me entirely to herself; but I had had care all along to convince her, by my conduct, that though I loved her too, I was not likely to confine my gallantries again to any particular woman; of course, that I was not to be depended upon: and as my love for her went no farther than as if she were my sister, and Mr. Mortange was likely to make her happy, I could not think of making her lose that opportunity of being so; therefore in less than an hour after I attacked her, and by rallying and joking about Mr. Mortange's courtship I soon found out that he was not indifferent to her—and as that discovery was with me a very material point, as unless she liked him, I never should have thought proper to interfere, I forced her then to sit upon my knee.—Come here, said I, my charming, my ever dear Miss Morin; I love you too much to let slip this opportunity of doing you a real service, whatever you may think of the abrupt manner in which I mean to do it.

That gentleman loves you tenderly; and of all the youths I ever saw about you, or that I know of, likely to aspire to the honour of your hand, he is the only one I should consent to let have you—nay, do not frown or look with that seeming astonishment you do, at the hearing me assume such airs of authority—I will repeat it again and again—I would oppose every body, and none should have you but one I should be thoroughly convinced that was likely to make you happy, because I could not bear to see you otherwise. You know, my darling Miss Morin, that you are very dear to me; that I love you in my soul; and that if I had been able to conquer my still domineering affection for Mrs. Lunel, my heart would have been wholly yours—but she is still there; and that death itself has not been able to drive her out of it; will you not let me have, at least, the satisfaction of seeing you happy in the arms of a worthy man who loves you, and that I know you do not dislike? to know that you possess the heart of a person whose intrinsic worth is far superior to mine, of one who knows yours, and is likely to prize you accordingly, is the only thing that can enable me to support the uneasiness it must be to me to see you another's; and you cannot be so cruel as to deny me that only comfort, when the granting of it is so connected with your own welfare—Mr. Mortange is not only a fine gentleman, but his sweet temper promises more happiness to a wife, and every body about him, than any other think in the world can possibly do.—Ay, said she, you are all very good tempers before you marry, but how few after!—True, said I, that observation is just—we are all apt, when courting, to adapt our conduct as we think most agreeable to the courted object, but when sure of her, the mask is soon thrown off, and we appear in all our native deformity; but Mr Mortange's

temper admits of no suspicion of that kind; it is naturally sweet, and I may take upon myself to assure you that it is so, because he never courted me, and he is always in good humour in my company—always the same; though I put often his patience to the trial with frolics which would have set any body else mad—his feelings are exquisite; he is a man of an exalted mind, of engaging manners, and of so condescending a disposition, that he does not know how to be rude to any body, not even if an enemy; he was always kind and civil to me, though he had sufficient reasons even to hate me.—To hate you! said she—Yes, said I, because he was jealous of me. And what reason could he have to be jealous of you, said she.—A very good one, faith, said I; after three years attendance on you, he finds himself, kept at a distance, whilst he sees me every day playing with you as children do with their dolls, though we have known one another scarcely a twelve-month as yet.—And how can I hope that! said she ; I never desired him to keep off, no more than you to come near ; but you are so impudent.—True, said I, and he so bashful. Well, but why should you not make him amends for his sufferings through modesty and respect for you, in so long a time, by giving him your hand directly, and when the doing it is to ensure your happiness as well as his own: I shall go to speak to your father about it, and with his leave, I shall introduce Mr. Mortange to you this very day as your lover. I hope you will evince your sincere regard for me by accepting this proof of mine, and receiving him kindly.

She had a great many excuses, and wanted me to delay at least that step; but I was inexorable—I coaxed, caressed, and teased her, till seemingly angry—I don't care what you do, said she. It is to carry your sway rather too far. You have been a tyrant over my heart ever since I knew you; and not satisfied with that, you want to dispose of my person too at your pleasure.—O little rogue, said I; you know that it is your advantage if I do, and that I would not do it otherwise.—Come, come, let me hear you say that you are satisfied.—Ay, said she, I must be so, to be sure, to please you.—That is a good girl, said I, pressing her to my bosom—my darling Miss Morin cannot doubt that I am happy in promoting her felicity, and that nothing else would induce me to be thus pressing, when, to give her to another, she knows very well, is to part with half my life.

I went directly to her father, and though I found he was going out, I stopped him to talk the affair over in a hurry; and the proposed match was so much to his liking, that he gave me leave to do as I thought proper with respect to the introduction of Mr. Mortange. In consequence of that I sent to request the favour of his company at dinner, and as soon as he came I introduced him to Miss Morin as her lover before her father, telling her I was commissioned by him to do so; and she received him in a very becoming and satisfying manner. Mr. Mortange looked foolish with surprise—scarce could he believe it true, that in five or six hours, I had forwarded his wishes more than he had been able to in three years. But not to do things by halves, I teased and hurried the parties so, that in less than a month after Miss Morin and Mr. Mortange, equally pleased with each other, became man and wife, to the satisfaction of all their friends.

CHAP. 1X.

THE other circumstance alluded to was the natural consequences of the roving system I had adopted. Beauties invited me on every side to exert my amorous turn, and I could not let slip any opportunity of convincing them how far from insensible I was to their charms: though sometimes I found to my great mortification, that notwithstanding the noise I had made excited a curiosity in every woman to know me, some were not in love with my person, but with my adventures only. I became acquainted at a ball with a charming young lady, whose father belonged to the queen's household, and had one of the most considerable employments in it—I liked her so well as to put myself to the trouble of inquiring and following her wherever she went, which, for a man of my great fame and multiplicity of business, similar to those I had with her, was more than could be expected in the regular course of things, even by first-rate beauties.

When the court moved to Fontainebleau, I followed her there; but as other admirers of that lady did the same, that retirement served only to make more conspicuous their number, and render us more troublesome to one another. I was not frightened, however; I depended so much upon my already-established reputation for gallantry as to think that when it should be known that I was in pursuit of her, many of the others would give up the chase; and indeed I was not mistaken—they all did so, except a Spanish gentleman, nearly related to the Ambassador of his nation, from whom I expected the greatest opposition, because I knew that the Spaniards are in general obstinate and romantic; I did not know till then that he was in love with the lady in question, though I was long before acquainted with him. The vicinity of my native place to Spain having made his language familiar to me, I took a pleasure in conversing in it; and by mere chance that gentleman and I had each contracted a kind of friendship for the other, which we continued to cultivate for a while, even after we found out that we were rivals.

The applause he saw I met with, in some balls we had at Fontainebleau, filled him at last with apprehensions that he could not get over; and in a jealous fit he desired me to attend him into the Park. But though he did not tell me for what, nor speak a word in all the way, I guessed not only our business there, but the very situation of his soul—I had been in love myself, and tortured also by jealousy, as I supposed him to be then; and as my affection for the object of his was not of a kind to make me very uneasy, compassion and the esteem I really had for him, knowing he was a very worthy man, operated in me so far, that before we stopped I had resolved to settle the matter amicably, if possible. When we had walked about three miles, as we crossed a clear spot, surrounded by thick shady groves of beautiful trees and shrubs, Stop said he, this is a very proper spot for the purpose; then he took off¹⁴ his coat and drew his sword—I did the same, without hesitation, but could not help bursting into a loud fit of laughter, and say, in a joking way to him, in the Spanish language, that we were acting the prettiest dumb show I ever had seen.—What the devil is the matter with you? said I; you made me take a terrible long walk without even inquiring first if I had got my breakfast, and now you want to put me to the trouble of running you through the guts, without the least consideration of the bad consequences so much fatigue may be of to my health.—No jokes, said he, in the same language; you are the last man in this country I should have thought to fight with; but you have touched me in too tender a part to bear it with patience.—Well, but if you mean to fight, why did you not tell it to me in the way, that I might have turned my thoughts towards saying my prayers, as I believe you have been doing all along, to be a little better prepared, should you happen to prove

¹⁴ Original text, p.75

such a bloody-minded fellow as to run me through yourself.—Come, come, leave joking, said he; our business here is rather of too serious a nature. Then he put himself in an attacking attitude.—Stop, said I, continuing in the same I was, and still half laughing, I never fight till I know for what, and you have not told me any thing as yet about the matter.

In two words, said he, you must either give over your pretensions to Miss Bernard, (the lady in question) or we must fight till one of us gets rid of the other.—Faith, that is a concise way to explain things, said I; but jesting aside, as you say, and as you know that fighting is an amusement to me, I hope you will do me the justice to believe that it is mere friendship for you which induces me to make the following proposal, as upon consideration you will find it very reasonable and kind.—What is it, said he, in haste.—Let Miss Bernard herself decide this point, said I; you are too generous to force her inclinations, even if in your power; and, for my part, I pledge my honour never to go on purpose near her, if she thinks proper to give you the preference. That will not do, said he, our claims admit of no comparison; I was in possession of her heart before you ever saw her, and I have a right to that preference of which mere caprice might then deprive me.—Then, to preserve your imaginary right, said I, you want to deprive her of her real one. No matter for that, said he; I told you my terms, and I did not bring you here to dispute but with our swords; you have intruded upon our happiness, and you must withdraw or take my life.—Scarce had he pronounced these last words when he attacked me with such a fury, that having not had time enough to put myself upon my guard, he wounded me slightly on my right arm; but we both were surprised in that moment by a loud screech first, and then by the sudden appearance of three ladies and two gentlemen, who were coming towards us, crying, stop; how dare you draw your swords in this place?

On looking attentively as they came near, I perceived them to be two of our Princesses, the Dutchess of Parma, and one of her sisters, with some of their attendants : they, it seems, after having been hunting with the King, their father, for a while, had stopped to refresh themselves in those groves next to us, from which they had been looking since we arrived to that spot, and listening to all our discourse; diverted by which, they had resolved not to stir till necessary to prevent bloodshed. We were rather embarrassed in our apologies, and could not deny the cause of our quarrel. The Duchess, after reprimanding us a little, with seeming severity, condescended to ask, with a smile, in the Spanish language, if we were Spaniards. When informed who we were, she proceeded to tell, laughing, our quarrel was so droll a one, that it was with great difficulty they had been able to keep themselves from bursting into such fits of laughter as to spoil the sport, and was going to say more, when her sister frightened her by pointing to the bleeding of my arm; but on the other gentlemen and I assuring her that it was a mere trifle, and I tying on a handkerchief about it, the apprehensions of the ladies ceased.

They all insisted, then, on my antagonist submitting to the terms I had proposed; and on making us promise, upon our honour, that we would continue our courtship without the least interruption of our friendship, leaving the lady at liberty to give the preference to him she should happen to like best. On these conditions, said the Duchess, in Spanish again, and looking at my rival, this your transgression will be kept a secret; but I assure you that if I ever hear that you do not keep exactly to them, not only my father, but the King of Spain, my brother, shall be informed of it. She ordered then our swords, which the gentlemen had taken from us, to be restored; but on their representing that it would be better to keep us without them till we could be supposed quite cool and out of the park, a servant was called of those who were with their horses at a distance, and ordered to carry them till we were near Fontainebleau.

My antagonist and I returned then as silent as we came; he tormented, I suppose, with his jealousy, and I rather uneasy with the notion, that as the Princesses had been looking and listening all the while we were on the meant field of battle, I had not the honour of being particularly known to them, they might think that my unwillingness to fight proceeded from other motives than those it really did. My pride was hurt by that idea, and the more so, as by keeping the affair a secret I could not expect to be justified in their opinion by what might have been known of my character, on a public discussion of it; and I had rather lie under the King's displeasure than under the imputation of cowardice. On the other hand, I saw reasons enough to be satisfied with the suppression of the adventure, as neither the beauty or rank of the lady on whose account it had happened seemed to me considerable enough to do me any credit, thought it might to others less in vogue than I was.

Thus perplexed, I arrived at my lodgings, and sat in them some hours, still ruminating, and without ever thinking of my wound, till by growing painful I was put in mind of it; and newly puzzled by thinking, to whom could I apply without danger of being soon known that I was wounded, and exciting the general curiosity to know how I had been so. I knew how everything catches in such places, where, for want of real occurrences, invention is always on the stretch to find something new to exert the slandering talents of the idle and lazy. At last I resolved to be my own surgeon; but though I got from the apothecary what I thought would have done well enough, either that it was not what ought to have been, or that it was not properly or timely applied, my arm was very painful all the following night, and in the morning I found it very much inflamed. But by sending in a hurry for my own surgeon to Paris, the progress of the effects of my neglect or error was stopped without any other inconvenience than that of a whole week's confinement to my room.

CHAP. X

THE fifth day of that week I received the honour of a visit from one of the gentlemen who attended the Princesses at the park at the time of my quarrel, and who was pleased to hint that I had been missed at the palace. I told him what had been the cause of my confinement, begging of him to frame upon it some proper apology for my not having done myself the honour of paying my devoirs to the royal family in all that time.—That part of it who has missed you, said he, want no apology; they will be rather concerned to hear the disagreeable cause.—I would have thought myself highly honoured at any other time by such exalted benevolence, said I; but on the present occasion I must think myself peculiarly happy in it, because my backwardness to fight, before those to whom I had not the honour of being particularly known, might have made me appear in too despicable a light to be remembered by them but with contempt.—You are then mistaken, said he; we all knew you in the park—even the Princesses were well acquainted with your name by circumstances independent of your rank, and a little with your person too; they recollected they had seen you at court; but indeed they did not recollect in the park who you were till we parted, but that I put them in mind of it, and by doing so, made you or your exploits the topic of our discourse the remainder of the morning.—Have I then the honour of being known to you in particular? said I. Very much so, said he, and I wonder that you do not recollect me—my name is Montigny.

He had been my intimate friend when we were both in one of the Parisian Academies, but I had not seen him since I went abroad; I would have been glad to renew my acquaintance with him at any time, but in that critical one still more. We embraced with eagerness, which evinced the sincerity of our affection; I was sure then that the recollection of me at the park had turned to my advantage. He told me as much, and advised me to go as soon as possible and pay my duty to the Princesses, assuring me that I would be received with pleasure; because, said he, not only they, but every other lady at the court know of your adventures, and all long to be acquainted with your person. As to your backwardness in fighting, be under no apprehension, it has done you no harm; on the contrary, it has set you in a very favourable light—you have fought so often that people might be apt to think you quarrelsome; but the park transaction, and your jocular expostulation and generous proposals there, which the Duchess condescended to explain to us in French, has proved you rather of a peaceable and amiable disposition.

I went to court two days after, and the Princesses condescended to honour me with a smile at first sight, and with a very kind reception otherwise, inquiring how my arm was, and rallying me on my last and former adventures. This did also many other ladies present, who, by the perceptible curiosity in their look and other circumstances, convinced me that they did really long to know the much talked-of hero. The Duchess of Parma was graciously pleased to ask me, in Spanish, whether I had seen yet Miss Bernard, and expressed a wish to know henceforth how matters went on between my rival and me with respect to that lady; which gave me an opportunity of cultivating her Royal Highness's condescending disposition.

With so favourable an introduction, I need not tell you that my stay at Fontainebleau became every day more agreeable. There was a ball somewhere almost every evening, at which you may be sure I was invited, and in many of them my rival, Miss Bernard, and I, met together; but I may say with truth, much to the honour of so young a person as she was, that she behaved with so much discretion, that neither of us had reason to complain or boast of her partiality. She heard how apt we seemed to be to support our love pretensions

with the sword, and, dreading the consequences she feigned to be pleased with both alike wonderfully well. The Fontainebleau season was almost at an end, without the least likelihood of bringing her to decide herself in the proposed choice, though my rival often pressed her to do it. For my part, to tell you the truth, I never did, nor wished to be the preferred one, though I kept up appearances; but since our regard for Miss Bernard became known to the Princesses, I thought the affair too serious for my purpose, and I would willingly have given her up, if I could have done it without suggesting unfavourable notions. As marriage was out of the question with me, I dreaded to be the favourite man of a woman I liked.

However, as the delay excited still more the curiosity of the Princesses, I thought of a stratagem to find Miss Bernard's real sentiments concerning my rival and me, and went about to put it into practice, but absolutely resolved to keep the result a secret if it should happen to be favourable to me; and if not, to make a proper use of it to disentangle myself with honour. I bribed Miss Bernard's maid to let me into the house early one morning, and to hide me in any room or closet, from which I might have a peep at her mistress, either when she lay in bed, or immediately after her rising, assuring her that I had no other design in it than that of observing what effect should be produced on her mistress by certain news, which, according to my instructions, she herself was to bring her. The maid did as I wished—she hid me in the next room to her mistress, which happened to be a kind of lumber room; and by leaving her bed-chamber door a little open I could safely see the young lady.

At eight o'clock Miss Bernard rung her bell, and desired the maid to reach her a book that lay on a table; then half sitting and half lying on her bed, she began to read—I thought that a proper time, and I instructed the maid to go and tell her mistress, with all the air of surprise she could possibly affect, that, being that moment at the street door, she heard somebody telling to another that my rival and I had been fighting, and that I was killed on the spot. The girl did it prodigiously well; if it had been true she could not have done it better. But her mistress, though very much alarmed when the maid began to talk of the fight, as soon as she understood that I was killed, and the other safe, she composed herself and lay down, saying only with an air of compassion, Poor gentleman! I am very sorry! he was a merry creature; which excited my laugh so, that I was obliged to give over my peeping for that time, and retire to the lumber room.

The maid came soon to me, and we laughed together very heartily; but after half an hour's delay I bade her to go in again, and tell her mistress, with the same air of surprise, or more, if able, how she did hear since that the first report was a mistake, as the truth of it was, that the Spanish gentleman had been killed by me. On the hearing of which, poor Miss Bernard fell instantly into fits. I had seen then as much as I wished: and before I permitted the maid to call for help, desiring her to tell her mistress, as soon as possible, that both reports were false, I got clear out of the house, and in the same forenoon I had the honour of acquainting the Princesses with what I had done, and the consequences, declaring myself determined at the same time to leave my rival in the quiet possession of the prize, as there was no longer a doubt that he was the man of her choice. The Princesses applauded my liberality of sentiment, and laughed heartily at the intervention; whilst the ladies about them paid me the compliment of railing at Miss Bernard's taste; and I rejoiced to find myself so prettily rid of an affair in which, at the best, the pleasure could not be thought worth the trouble. My pride indeed might have been a little hurt by that young lady rejecting me for another, as she really did; but by that time I had made already such a progress among higher beauties, that her decision scarcely could be supposed to deserve

my notice—I had prepossession on my side, and that was enough to set every thing else at defiance.

To guard against all malicious suggestions as to the reality of my trial on Miss Bernard's disposition, I hinted a wish that we might be informed of her situation. On which the Princesses condescended to give instantly orders for that purpose, and we soon learned that the poor creature, after a succession of fits, without a sufficient interval between them to be undeceived in it, was actually delirious. I was so much affected by the news, that some of the ladies present began to rally me; but I soon silenced them with such reflections on the probably consequences, that no person of feeling could disapprove or misconstrue my concern. The Princesses were moved by it, and sent directly their own physician to attend Miss Bernard, with very particular orders to contribute as much as in his power to the relief and speedy recovery of that young lady. We were informed by him the next day that she was in a fever and delirious still, raving after some young man or other, whom she lamented as dead. That confirmed indeed my assertion, but added greatly to my trouble, and I was likely to have run distracted myself with the notion of having killed, by a foolish frolick, a charming and worthy girl, who had endeared herself to me more by her constancy and discretion than she ever could have done by her beauty or affection; being not so partial to myself as not to distinguish and do justice to her uncommon merit.

Luckily, after three days, the fury of her fever and ravings subsided. She began to grow calm, and we began to think of proper methods to acquaint her, without danger, that her lover was alive and well: her maid was forbidden by the doctor to speak to her on the subject. By order of the Princesses, he took upon himself the care of undeceiving her: that he did with such prudence and success as to declare in a couple of days more that there was nothing wanting for Miss Bernard's perfect recovery but a sight of the lover; and by his advice I went to see the Spanish gentleman. He knew no farther but that she was very ill, not having been admitted to see her in all the while, nor having any notion of the cause. I took him along with me to pay her a visit. To avoid surprise, the doctor told her that we were coming, and waited by her bed-side to introduce us. She was sitting on her bed, and received us with a countenance that plainly evinced her inexpressible pleasure. Willing to render it still more complete, by assuring her that restraint was no longer necessary, I took that opportunity to declare that Miss Bernard would be ever dear to me as a friend, if she condescended to admit me as such, but that as to any other pretensions I entirely gave them up in favour of my worthy friend, the Spanish gentleman present. I was sensible that they loved each other, and that my interference tended only to interrupt their felicity, without contributing to mine. She acknowledged then her partiality for my rival, apologizing very prettily for it, by assigning, as a cause, the much longer duration of her acquaintance with him. Throwing her arms about my neck in her transports, she pressed me to her bosom, assuring me, with tears of joy in her eyes, that she would be proud if I condescended to accept the second place in her heart, the first being no longer in her power to dispose of. My rival expressed then his gratitude to us both, in transports of love and friendship, concluding by asking me a thousand pardons for his rude behaviour, and protesting that nothing but the phrenzy by which he was overpowered could ever have carried him to quarrel with me.

The doctor made a faithful report of the friendly scene he had witnessed, which pleased the Princesses exceedingly; and along with the preceding circumstances, which proved Miss Bernard a worthy and sensible girl, and contributed greatly to recommend her to the esteem of her royal mistress: that, unluckily, she did not live to enjoy long, as I understand she was privately married soon after, and died in childbed. The Spanish

gentleman was also honoured with more notice on her account than he could have expected otherwise; and I, though really foiled by him both in the town and the field, far from being injured by my ill success in that pursuit, had the happiness of being distinguished ever after with peculiar marks of favour ; some of them I shall mention in proper time, as it is to the purpose of accounting for some subsequent favourable circumstances in Mrs. Lunel's affairs that I have acquainted you with the two last anecdotes.

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CHAP. XI.

ON my return to Paris I was obliged to take again possession of my old apartment at Mr. Morin's, because neither he nor the young folks who lived with him would hear of my going to lodge any where else. Indeed it was a most pleasing lodging to me—the scenes constantly before my eyes there were as agreeable as those I had witnessed at my worthy friend's, Mr. Sobervie, were the reverse. Mr. Mortange was happy, and strove to make every body so about him, as I had foreseen he would. I had the exquisite pleasure of seeing Mrs. Mortange made an idol of, and hearing her acknowledge that she enjoyed more happiness than she ever thought could be the lot of mortals in this world. But it is true that I don't recollect I have ever known a couple whose dispositions were so well calculated to contribute each a share to their common felicity, both sensible, both careful of the cultivation of their minds without being careless about their persons; both good tempered and obliging, that there was nothing to be heard but endearing expressions, nor to be seen but mutual caresses, and endeavours to please each other. A similar conduct must make happy every couple in the world, whatever may be their situation; and none can say with truth that it is not in their power to imitate it.

The despicable Lunel turned to my good humour and tenderness for his wife (in which I protest there was not the least idea of injury to him) into an inexhaustible source of scandal and abuse; but Mr. Mortange never was better pleased than when he saw me play with my doll, as he called his wife, still.—I am afraid, said I one day to him, as Mrs. Mortange was sitting on my knees, that you will at last grow jealous of me, as Lunel did.—Lunel is a fool, said he, and knows but very little of mankind; but I who have studied them know that it is not from men who, unreservedly led by mere cheerfulness, toy as you do with the women, no matter who is present, that we have any thing to apprehend; designing men never do so, but affect modesty, the better to impose; the very idea of an intended crime suggests that of being reserved in every action that may tend to give any notion of it. If my wife had not been really virtuous, and you a man or more than nominal honour, she would have fallen long before she was mine, as Mrs. Lunel would have done before she was entitled to that name: they both were in love with you, and neither Lunel nor I could have prevented the abuse of that confidence reposed in you by the uncle of the one, and the father of the other.—Well, well, said I to Mrs. Mortange, you hear my pretty doll, that there is no more harm in playing with me than in playing with another doll like yourself.—Faith, said Mr. Mortange, though I know that you are far from chaste, and that you are rather a man of pleasure, I know too that the only way to render you harmless is to trust you and depend upon your honour. Your friends will do that I am sure, because they know that you are too generous to prey upon your friends, and that you could not find in your heart to destroy their peace of mind, and render them miserable. I, myself, am so sure that such a cruelty or villany as that would be is incompatible with your good nature and noble sentiments, that I had rather trust my wife in bed with you than only in the next room with any of those hypocrites who affect to find fault with your conduct, and who I always suspect would be the first to imitate you, at least, in those very parts of it they reprove, if they did know how, or were not afraid of appearing (as very likely they would) as awkward as the ass in the fable.

A man who, to his natural sweetness, added such a liberality of sentiments, could not fail to render a woman happy, chiefly one who greatly resembled him in both temper and manner of thinking; nor could their company be otherwise than exceedingly agreeable to me; and, with all that, after I had enjoyed it for some months, and diverted myself greatly with my ever-ceasing intrigues and frolics about town, I began to long for a sight of my

own home, from which I had been already absent above a year and a half, after leaving it at a quarter of an hour's warning. I had indeed my choice of pleasures in the capital; but I was sure to want none in the country, as I had reason to expect a favourable reception there, my fame being so much increased since I left it. I could not doubt that my amours and exploits had been reported in my own neighbourhood, as they had in other parts of the kingdom, without losing any thing in the carriage; and, in fact, when I arrived there the people seemed disappointed at seeing me alone in the post-chaise. Everybody looked for Mrs. Lunel; and by a little mistake in their calculation of time, which they did not choose to have corrected, for fear of lessening the consequence of their favourite hero, they gave full credit to the story of the elopement, though I was among them the very day in which it must have happened, if it had happened at all, and even the three or four following ones. However, when I found that they did not like to be undeceived, I gave up the point, and left them at liberty to join that pretty adventure to many others of mine reported among them, and that I never heard of till then.

I had been much caressed before by my country neighbours, and I was still more so now; but how could it be otherwise? To run away with a very rich man's wife; to bring her after to the public theatre in defiance, as they said, of the husband, who happened to be present; to fight a whole troop of ruffians he had sent to assassinate me, when challenged for using ill that very wife, and killed several of them with my own hands; and to take the swords of as many more, and beat them with them, and many such exploits, reported and believed all the county over, were such great additions to my supposed merit, that I could not be much less than adored: and indeed a little incident immediately after my arrival came near to prove that they looked upon me as something more than mortal. Willing to have young Lunel more properly under my care, I sent him from Paris before me, along with his nurse, a sister of her's and two servants of mine; but as they went on easy journies, I arrived at home some days before them. My neighbours, who had been so much disappointed at seeing me come without Mrs. Lunel, took into their heads to think that either the nurse or her sister must certainly be that lady herself; but as neither of them happened to be handsome, nor even genteel, and it was incompatible with their notions that Mrs. Lunel should be any thing less than an elegant and ravishing beauty, it could not be accounted for otherwise than by supposing me endued with the power of metamorphosing people into any shape or likeness I thought proper. The circumstances of the case might make that caution necessary, as Lunel might think of sending ruffians to assassinate her, as he had once sent to assassinate me; but by keeping her under the appearance of an homely country woman, and at a distance from my own house, that danger was avoided. As for the child, to be sure, he was the fruit of our amours, and any body could see that he resembled me as much as one drop of water resembles another.

That foolish talk indeed was among the vulgar only; but what could not be expected from others, who, though they did not talk in the same ignorant way, were so much prepossessed with the idea of my astonishing faculties, as to seem persuaded that I had actually run away with Mrs. Lunel at the very time they knew I was sitting among them, at above four hundred miles distance from her! certain it is, that leaving all matters of conjecture aside, or all the wonderful out of the question, the reception I met with every where, was much more favourable than I could have expected in the common course of things; and that the high notion generally entertained of me not only tended to facilitate my amorous pursuits to an uncommon degree, but also to increase the respect paid before to me as the head of a family the most considerable within many miles from my place. In short, the people in my neighbourhood took into their head to erect or set me up for their oracle.

Was there any difference between individuals, I was sure to be made the arbitrator in it nay, squabbles between man and wife would bring some of the parties to apply for my interference. No step was taken in public or private matters of any consequence without consulting me about it; no party of pleasure was thought of without my approbation and concurrence; no extraordinary thing occurred, was observed, or heard of, without running to me with the first news; and all on no other foundation, or for no other reason whatever, but because they were prepossessed in my favour, and thought me a wonder of a man, when in reality many among themselves were men of far superior merit.

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CHAP. XII.

THAT increase of attention I was indebted for to prepossession, brought me acquainted with the following particulars, which were attended with strange consequences. Some months after my return home, early one Friday morning, the hostess of the only inn we have in my place came to my house, and with a very mysterious air informed me, that the preceding Monday evening a gentleman and a very fine lady arrived at her house in their way to Spain, mounted each on a very good horse, but that he had a large portmanteau behind him, having no servant with them. That a fall of snow on the Pyrennean mountains that night had prevented their proceeding on their journey the next morning; and they had kept themselves very close in their own room all Tuesday, in expectation that as the season was not far advanced as yet, the stoppage would be but of a short duration; that at their request she had sent on Wednesday morning towards the mountains to know whether there was any probability of the road being passable the next day; and that being informed that there was not the least likelihood of its being so in many days to come, both the gentleman and the lady seemed very much chagrined, and had kept themselves as close that day in their room as the preceding one; that on the Thursday morning the gentleman got up before it was quite daylight, went to the stable, and putting the portmanteau on one horse, mounted the other, and rode off with them both, telling the ostler that he was going to take some measures concerning their passage to Spain, and that he would be back before dinner time.

That about nine that morning the lady called the servant of the house; but none of the girls being in the way, the hostess herself went up to know what the lady wanted, who asked her in great agitation, where the gentleman was; and at hearing he was gone as mentioned, she fainted. That the hostess was going then to call for assistance, but that on reflection she thought it better to stay herself with the lady, and strive to find out what was the matter with her: as she perceived there was something strange in the case, besides her fainting, she had observed, that though they professed to be man and wife, they did not lie in the same bed; that she got water, and did her endeavour to relieve the lady, but that when she came to herself she fell into such crying and demonstrations of sorrow as to frighten the hostess greatly. Notwithstanding all her kindness, or all what she could say or do, to pacify and comfort her, she had continued all that day in a state of distraction, without either answering her questions, eating, or drinking; that when night came on, afraid that the poor creature might do herself some harm, as she was going to bed herself, she bade one of her maids to sit by the lady; and that when the hostess returned to her in the morning, she found her crying, but lying quiet on the bed, and was informed that she had been crying and sobbing all night; that she sent the servant about her business, and when alone with the lady she had pressed her to say what was the matter with her, but in vain; that all that she had been able to get out of her was but some thanks for her humanity; and if pressed farther, she begged to let her die in peace for God's sake; and lastly, that it having occurred to her that I was the only person in the world who could make something of that lady, she had talked to her of me, and asked if she knew me; but that for a great while she could not get her to say a word, till at last she had teased her so much that she said she had heard of you; on which, said the hostess, I put on my cloak, and came to tell you of it.

Though moved all along by the good landlady's account, I could not but laugh at its conclusion. And what do you think that I can do with that lady? said I.—Why I am sure you will make her speak, at least, if any body can.—Well, well, we shall see that, said I; but pray does any other person know of her being in your house?—Not a soul, said she,

she was never out of her room since she came into it, and surely you cannot think that I would go to inform anybody of it before you!—Well, I thank you, said I; but if you will oblige me, you must not tell of it to any body else, nor permit your servants to tell it neither.—As for that, said she, you may make yourself easy; I know when to stop my mouth; I will be dumb for you, and my servants know, that to go with stories out of the house would be as much as their place is worth I would tear out their tongues if they did.

I followed her to the inn; but reflecting on the circumstances as I went on, it appeared to me that the lady was some person of distinction on some clandestine errand, and I thought that it was not proper I should go and add, by my intrusion, a kind of insult to her sorrow; therefore, at my arrival there, I begged the landlady to go up herself, and endeavour to obtain the lady's leave to introduce me to her, telling her, that I was a person from whom she had nothing to apprehend, and upon whose assistance she might certainly depend. The hostess went up accordingly, and for a whole hour I remained waiting below; the more impatient, as by the very difficulty to admit me I had the more reason to conclude that the lady was such a person as I had thought her to be.

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CHAP. XIII.

THE landlady came at last with leave for me to go up, whispering all the way, how hard it had been to obtain it. The room was kept so dark, that at the beginning, I was directed rather by the ear than by the eye; and the hostess having handed me a chair, though resolved to speak in the most encouraging manner, I sat for a while without even making an apology, because I did not know to what side of the room to address it. My silence was not favourably interpreted, I suppose, as she, the lady herself, broke it by saying that, in compliance with the reiterated intreaties of the landlady, she had consented to see me. But indeed, Sir, said she, I don't know to what purpose; I do not think it can answer any other than that of giving you unnecessary trouble. It will be indeed very great trouble to me, Madam, said I, if the requested honour does not procure me that of being of some service to you—I am sensible you have granted it with reluctance; but I hope it proceeded only from a mistake. You think that I come to pry into your affairs, and dread the trouble it would be to you, the disclosing of them to strangers. But I come to do myself the honour of assuring you, Madam, that I am heartily sorry to hear, how much you appear to be afflicted; that whatever may be the cause, you may be pleased to command any assistance in my power, without putting yourself to the trouble of telling me a single word about it. This is the only object of my errand, Madam, and not to add by impertinent questions to your uneasiness or affliction. I wish to see you more conveniently situated, though I will not propose my house for your residence, because I am a bachelor; but I have some respectable friends who are married, any of whom will think himself honoured by receiving and protecting you in his, without prying any more than I into your affairs. When recovered from the lowness of spirits I understand you are in at present, you will think fit at leisure, if convenient, to acquaint us with some circumstances about them; but unless it is to enable us to serve you, you need not. To serve you to the utmost of our power, we know already enough; we know that you are a young lady under some misfortune; we require no farther. If pleased to accept of our services, we shall look upon your condescension as an obligation conferred upon us, not as any conferred upon you, whatever may be your present situation.

That situation was really so deplorable, and she felt so much the horrors of it, that the kind language of friendship she heard from me, and with which she did not expect to hear herself addressed any more, surprised her, and produced emotions that did not permit her to speak for a while. I perceived her distress, and approaching the bed on which she sat, dear Madam, pray be composed, said I, don't afflict yourself—you are among friends who will lose their lives to protect and comfort you.—A flood of tears came then very seasonably to her relief, though still sighs and sobs prevented her from speaking plain. I heard the words, “Unhappy wretch, forsaken woman.” —Loth to let her say any thing concerning her affairs in the hearing of the hostess, hush! said I, not a word about misfortune; we are all liable to meet with some of one kind or other, and must bear them with patience when we do. It is now the question only to recover yourself as fast as possible. I understand you have taken no nourishment these two days—will you oblige me, will you be so kind, Madam, as to take something at my request? I shall look upon your condescension in that respect as a very particular favour; as a proof that you are not displeased to see me take a part in your troubles. I will do anything to convince you, Sir, of my gratitude, said she—The landlady ran then to the kitchen, and, while she was absent, I begged of the lady to compose herself and muster up courage, that she might move where we could talk without danger of exposing her, or being overheard. She took then some broth, and lay down at my request too, in hopes that a little rest would enable her to leave her bed, which she seemed then unable to do by her weakness and dejection.

I went then to Dr. Bartlet, who was both a physician and¹⁵ a man of fortune, and having related what I knew about the unfortunate lady, begged of him to receive her in his house. I consulted also his wife, and, by her direction, I sent directly to our market town for some things we thought necessary, as linens, cambricks, silks, &c. &c. In about three hours after I returned to the inn along with the doctor, having first disposed that his wife and eldest daughter would follow us there in his own carriage, and bring some linen; as the poor creature seemed to have been left without any; that at the helping her to dress they would slip into her pocket, unknown to her, a purse, containing a bank note for fifty louis, and ten more in gold, which I gave them for that purpose. We supposed that she would be less embarrassed when she would find that she had money of her own, and which she might think to have overlooked before, distracted as she was with her trouble.

When informed that she was awake, I sent to beg her leave to introduce to her the doctor and his family; and she received us as a person sensible of our kindness. She had taken a nap, and owned herself much refreshed by it, and looked less dejected—The doctor thought she might try to get up, and leaving the ladies to help her, we went ourselves to take a walk, and at our return found her ready. She was indeed a fine woman, and though in that disadvantageous condition, we were charmed with her person. We went together to dine at the doctor's, and, not without much difficulty, prevailed upon her to eat something.

¹⁵ Original text, p.116

CHAP. XIV.

WHEN dinner was over, she told me in a whisper that she would be glad to speak to me in private; I waited upon her into another room, and when seated there, she asked me if I knew Marquis Des Prats?—I answered in the affirmative, adding, that we were intimate friends, and had dined together but a few days before I left Paris.—I am his eldest sister; but how can I tell you the rest, said she, bursting into tears.—I had been concerned for her before, because I knew she was a young lady in distress; but now that to that circumstance I joined the knowledge of her birth, and the ideas of injury to her honour, and that of my friend, I was exceedingly affected, and cursed in my heart the foolish landlady for having delayed the coming to me with her story till the supposed villain was out of my reach. I used then all of my endeavours to comfort her, and encouraged her to proceed; and she did it by telling me, that though their house was far from Paris, her brother could not be long without pursuing her there; and that he had not been but a few days from home, on his last one, when she became acquainted with a person, who, though born in France, was reputed to be an officer in the Spanish service, and who, since the first time they saw one another, which happened to be in a neighbouring town's assembly, had followed her every where for some months; that though at first she rather laughed at what she called then his presumption, his assiduities, his genteel person, engaging manners, and she did not know what, had made at last such impression upon her, that notwithstanding her being sensible that she was doing wrong, or being told so by two sisters, she ventured to see him in private; from that fatal moment he had won so much upon her, that thinking she could not live without him, at the hearing that her brother was coming home, sure that he would take every proper method to keep them asunder, she had assented to the proposal made to her by her lover, of going with him to Spain, where they were to have been married, having had no time for that purpose, since they heard of her brother's coming.

That the last Saturday, after her sisters were asleep, and all the family retired to rest, she dressed herself in that gown she had on, and having packed up a great many valuable jewels, belonging some to her brother, others to her sisters, and many of them to herself, with two of her best suits, and above five hundred louis d'ors, of the money she had received by her brother's orders from his steward for family expences, (she having been the manager of the house since their mother's death) she left the house by a back door about two o'clock on Sunday morning. She met her lover, who was waiting for her at a mile distance with two horses, and after having packed the heavy bundle she had brought in a large portmanteau he provided for that purpose, they rode off together. With very little rest, they made their way through cross roads, mountains, and fields, to avoid¹⁶ a pursuit or disagreeable rencounters, and arrived on Monday at the inn where I had found her; that they expected to have crossed the Pyrenean mountains the next day, but finding that it was impossible, in consequence of a great fall of snow in the night between Monday and Tuesday, they had remained close in the room, much afraid of being overtaken and seized there by people they supposed would be sent after them by her brother; by the last accounts from him he was expected in his house the very day she left it.

That her lover often said on Tuesday that he knew of other passages to Spain, which could not be stoped¹⁷ by the fall of snow; but that besides being much frequented by travellers, and of course dangerous for us, the nighest of them was at half a day's journey, and to go there they would be obliged not only to go some miles back the same way they

¹⁶ Original text, p.121

¹⁷ Original text, p.121

came, but many more too on the highway along the Pyrenees, where it was a thousand to one but they would be apprehended; that the fear of being so, and the hopes of hearing on Wednesday that the roads would be passable on Thursday, had induced them to wait where they were with patience, though trembling; but when news was brought that there was no probability of passing that way for many days to come, then his spirits failed him entirely, and he gave himself up for lost; that her own apprehensions not having permitted her to pay much attention to his, they had passed all Wednesday in a silent melancholy manner, and had gone to bed early, equally ill disposed seemingly to enjoy any rest ; that for her part, she had passed almost all the night crying on the rash step she had taken, which she found herself the more disposed to do, as the delusive instrument of his tongue, by which she had been infatuated till then, had been that day too much out of tune to be made use of, and keep up her spirits, though she never wanted it more; that towards the morning she fell, however, asleep, and he seemed to have watched that opportunity to get up and leave her there, as by the account she had of him from the people of the house it plainly appeared to her that she had not been half an hour asleep when he went away.

That when she awoke, observing it was full daylight, curious to know what o'clock it was, and not finding her watch where she had left it when she went to bed, called to her lover and inquired for it; but surprised that he did not answer, she lifted herself up, and looking about the room, she thought, at missing him, that he was only gone down stairs ; being so far from suspecting that she had been all along in the hands of a ruffian, that her first emotions were those of fear for him; when having waited for a while, and she did not see him come, thinking that perhaps he had been taken by some pursuers at his going to see the horses, as he had done the two preceding mornings. She had not the least notion of his having abandoned and robbed her, till she missed the portmanteau, though she had missed the watch before; but when having put her clothes on in a hurry, for fear of being seized herself, she inquired, and was told that he had been gone with the two horses and portmanteau above two hours, then she was thoroughly convinced of her error, and that he was the greatest of villains; he not only had abandoned her to the resentment of her brother, and the contempt of the world, but even to the want of the necessaries of life in a strange place, having carried away every thing she had brought, except the bare clothes she had on her back ; the idea of which excited in her such hatred, that she wished to see the monster hanged, and detested him from that moment as much as she had loved him before—that indeed he had kept from her bed, because resolved not to allow of any familiarities between them till they should be married, she had insisted on his not approaching it, and he had indulged her in that particular, which she thought he did out of fear whilst in France, as he had often hinted that he would do so no more, if once the other side of the Pyrenees— But it matters not, said she, crying again, my character is for ever blasted, and I am a wretched woman.

CHAP. XV.

I strove to console her, and thinking the affair of the most serious nature, I begged her leave to call in the doctor, that we might be helped in our deliberations by his prudence and penetration, assuring her that he was a very good-natured man, and of a solid judgement too; who, having children of his own liable to the like impositions, would be the more ready to exert his invention in the search of expedients to mend matters as much as possible. The doctor came in, and when informed of the most essential points, he advised me to send an express immediately to her brother, telling him that the young lady was safe, and hinting that perhaps the matter might be managed so as to prevent her transgression from being publicly known. The least hint in that particular, he said, will be sufficient for him to improve upon it, and adopt proper measures, which cannot be done without knowing how much of it has already transpired there; if the affair is not more known in his neighbourhood than it is in this, as it may happen, every thing might be soon accommodated.

The doctor's advice seemed to me very good; but poor Miss Des Prats dreaded so much the resentment of her brother, that she could not relish it: and I really believe she wished herself in that moment at the inn still unnoticed by us. However, I pledged my honour that she would not be abandoned to it, nor to any insult; I assured her so in earnest that I would protect and cherish her, as if she was my own sister, that no person in the world should dare to affront, or use her unkindly, and that even her brother should not see her till both the doctor and I had his honour pledged in his own handwriting that he would use her as kindly as before, without ever reproaching her with any thing relative to her unhappy adventure. In short, I did so much to convince her of the necessity, safety, and good tendency of the measure, that she consented at last; and going to join the doctor's wife and daughters, she left us both to write and settle the matter accordingly; and two hours after a servant of mine set off with our letters and proper orders concerning expedition and secrecy.

I sent directly another servant to the market town with orders for more things than I thought necessary, before I knew who the young lady was; and the next day we had, at the doctor's, linens, cambrics, muslins, silks, watches, toys, &c. &c., sufficient to equip fifty ladies in the tip of fashion. Miss Des Prats condescended to chuse, at our request, just what was necessary to appear in her own character. Though her brother's house was almost one hundred miles from mine, our messenger came back in three days with the most pleasing news.

As the three young ladies, the Marquis's sisters, lay in the same apartment, Miss Des Prats was missed first by the other two on her elopement. As they knew of her amour, suspecting directly that she was gone away with her lover, on the approach of her brother they lost no time in superfluous lamentations, but very prudently consulted among themselves what they should do to keep the unfortunate affair a secret until the arrival of the Marquis at least, who they supposed might find expedients to keep it a longer time. As Miss Des Prats had left all the keys she used to keep on a desk in her own room, they resolved to give out that she was not well; that her next sister should take the management upon herself, and the other the care of keeping every servant from the apartment on some plausible pretence.

The scheme succeeded pretty well; the morning was passed without the least suspicion, and very likely the remainder of the day would have passed in the same manner;

but the arrival of an aunt of theirs furnished them with a better expedient still. The old lady lived about twenty miles off, and called there on her return home from a visit to her daughter. They consulted together, and by agreement between the three, having continued to keep every one of the family out of the way, the old lady stepped into her carriage, giving orders to drive home; and she was gone an hour before any of the Marquis's servants missed her. Then the two sisters, as if by way of talk among themselves, affected to rejoice at the accidental visit of their aunt, the jaunt being likely to do Miss Des Prats good from this the servants who heard it understood that she was gone with the old lady, and thought nothing of it, because they knew she seldom left her nephew's house without taking one of her nieces along with her.

The Marquis arrived in the evening, and he was told by his sisters, before the family, that Miss Des Prats was gone in the morning with her aunt; he was so used to see them go occasionally along with her, that though not in the secret he thought nothing of it. He embraced the two present ones, wishing the other a great deal of pleasure along with the dowager. This might have been sufficient to wear off all suspicion, if there had been any entertained by the servants; but Miss Des Prats had no confidants among them, and they had not the least notion that she was in love. When the Marquis was informed in private of the truth, he seemed affected to distraction, but nevertheless he had a sufficient command of himself, when in public again, to behave in such a manner as not to spoil what his two remaining sisters had done, and what he could not but approve, bestowing the highest encomiums on their prudence. But as pursuits would have been inconsistent with the supposed cause of Miss Des Prats' absence, there was none thought of; the only step taken by the first post, and proper in the situation of things, was the requesting the old lady to remove at a greater distance from the Marquis, to render more difficult the intercourse between the servants of the two families.

So favourably situated were matters at the arrival of my messenger to the Marquis; therefore the doctor's letters and mine were received with inexpressible joy; to see by them that a sister he tenderly loved was safe, and the scandal of her elopement prevented, were circumstances of too cheering a nature not to excite joyful emotions. He did not hesitate to give us, in his answer, every assurance of forgiveness towards his sister we had required of him. He wrote also a most affectionate letter to his sister, assuring her, that provided her future conduct answered his expectations, her past errors never should be remembered, and that she should ever find him as kind a brother as she had before; concluding, by begging of her to make herself easy, and not to fret upon any account, as once that she was safe, nothing else deserved to be minded. In his letter to me he said, alas! Count, how can I but forgive an error of that nature to a sister I love! you and I are too well acquainted with the weakness of her sex to require from any of them more than we know they are able to do. My sister owes indeed a particular regard to her birth; but then she is still a woman, and it would be unreasonable to expect that she would have as much command over her passions as an angel. Neither you nor I have found as yet, I believe, any of them that can boast of being so happy as to have it. It is well that it is no worse. She has had a narrow escape; I hope she will remember of it, so far at least as to be more cautious for the future in listening to love tales.

To be brought home by her own aunt, as on former occasions, seemed to him more likely to keep up appearances; but as the old lady was gone to Paris at his request, he begged of us to have a little patience, that he might know when she would return to her own house, as he was going to write immediately to her, and doubted not he would be soon able to fix a day for his sister's return. We were all perfectly satisfied; the prospect of so

happy a reconciliation diffused a general cheerfulness among us. Miss Des Prats, especially, was transported from extreme sorrow to extreme joy. Nobody could be more dejected before, and nobody more gay now; she was naturally lively, but she was too sensible of her folly, and the contempt and resentment to which she had exposed herself by it, not to have been deeply affected by her unhappy situation; but when she saw all cause of apprehension banished, that she felt all addition to her usual flow of spirits we experience or observe on a sudden happy change, or on being rescued from a great and uncommon danger. We thought of nothing then but of amusements to pass our time agreeably, and it not being proper to expose Miss Des Prats to the sight of the people of the inn, where her most tragic scenes had been acted, we took trips to towns in the neighbourhood, where we danced and enjoyed every other diversion they could afford, far from every idea of being, as we really were, laying the foundations to future disasters, the account of which I must reserve for another time.

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CHAP. XVI

AT last the Marquis wrote, requesting the doctor and me to conduct his sister, on a stated day, to her aunt, where he proposed to be waiting for us. The old lady's house was but a long day's journey distant from my own, and willing to arrive in one day, we set off at four in the morning, taking along with us the doctor's eldest daughter, but not without perceiving some reluctance and emotions in Miss Des Prats, which we attributed partly to gratitude at leaving a family who had been extremely kind to her in her distress, and partly to notions of fear and shame, suggested by reflections on the approaching appearance before her brother and aunt. However, when once on the road, we went merrily on, and were by eleven o'clock more than half the way, in an inn where we purposed to dine, and where, not expecting us till one, the dinner was but just thought of. Orders were given to accelerate it as much as possible, and after refreshing ourselves we went to take a walk in the garden. At our return from it, as the young ladies wanted to make a little excursion about the town, we went all four into the kitchen, as we passed by, to see how far advanced the dinner was, or to inquire how long we might stay out, and were there rather disgusted with the sight of a poor young woman who was in fits by the fire-side. The doctor's humanity carried him directly to see what was the matter with her, and detained him a good while, prescribing and striving to procure her some relief: but while we waited for him at a distance, the scene being rather disagreeable, my two young ladies were put greatly to the blush by two or three rustics by the fire side too, who, observing the kickings and distortions of the poor creature, exerted their wit, as they thought, in obscene strictures on the shape of her legs, and other parts of her body, which they either saw, or pretended to see.

When the doctor returned to us, we went out of the kitchen in a hurry, and on the young ladies complaining of the indecent language of the rustics, and that it was a shame to keep a young woman thus exposed to their view, I begged of the hostess to have her removed, for decency sake, into some private room, and to give her besides all the assistance in her power, promising to pay for it myself. That disagreeable incident detained us too long to think farther of our town excursion; instead of which, we went to the dining room to wait for the dinner, and finding there a waiter busy about the table, the young ladies had the curiosity to ask him who that poor young woman in the kitchen was.—I don't know, said he; she is a stranger, who begged of the cook, for God's sake, to let her sit a while by the fire, as she had been early on the road, she said, and shivering with cold all the morning. She appears to be, said he again, some soldier's wife or trull, as she wears soldier's shoes. She is very poor; she has been there these two hours without calling for any thing either to eat or drink, and seems to come from afar, and to have had a painful job of it. She has no stockings on; her heels are raw with the rubbing of her draggled-tail rags.—I wonder, said one of the ladies, if she has those fits often?—I don't know, said the waiter; she had none in all the time she was in the kitchen till the very moment you went into it.

CHAP. XVII.

WE were all moved to compassion for the poor creature, and talked of giving her something when dinner was served; and we could not but observe the kitchen scene seemed to have blunted our appetites. We did our best, however; and at the end of the dinner the landlady came to tell me, that in consequence of my orders, she had got the poor woman removed to a room, where she herself had attended her, and administered, with her own hands, some drops the doctor had prescribed for her when in the kitchen, and that the poor soul seemed much better, and very thankful. But what I hope will make you laugh, as it has done me, said she, (scarce able to tell it by the hearty fits of laughter at every word), that as soon as she came to herself, she asked me, with an air of impatience and concern, whether any of these ladies were your wife; then whether you were married at all. She made us laugh indeed, especially the young ladies, who did not fail to rally me about the poor woman having taken a fancy to me. But when the landlady proceed¹⁸ to tell, that she begged the favour of my going to see her before I left the inn, because she had something of importance to tell me; then all present laughed heartily except myself, who, without knowing why, looked like a fool, and was uneasy without knowing for what: I wondered at myself how such a silly subject of raillery could put me so much out of countenance; and rather to dissemble my confusion than to gratify my curiosity, or to affect to enjoy myself the pleasantry, I got up, and without ever thinking what might be the poor woman's business with me, I begged of the landlady to conduct me to her.

She was in a mean room; and there being not a chair but what was too lame to trust myself upon it, I was going to sit on the very same bed on which she lay; but the landlady, surprised and ashamed by my unexpected condescension, run to get me the first sound one she could meet in her way, and while she was absent the poor woman begged that she might speak to me without witness. To humour her, at the landlady's return, taking the chair she had brought me, and as if turning the whole into a jest, I requested she might go about her business. You shan't hear our secrets, said I, joking; you shan't have the pleasure of carrying the story to our young folks below: they have enough to laugh at without it; on which she went away laughing immoderately herself, and I shut the door after her.

But heavens! what a scene! By what a succession of opposite emotions was in a moment my bosom agitated, and my heart torn!—The room was naturally a dark one: the bed was in its darkest corner; and by having no other place to sit but the window side, I darkened it so much more, that scarce could I see at first how the poor woman lay.—Is the Count Toulousin still so humane as to come at the call of so poor an object as I! said she, in a very weak voice.—Why should I not, my good woman, if I can be of any any¹⁹ service to you, said I. But pray how came I to be known to you? They tell me that you are a stranger.—I am so indeed! said she, with a deep sigh; but I know you by your goodness. I perceived then that she had got hold of my hand, and that she was kissing and bathing it with her tears.—Do not afflict yourself my poor woman, (said I, rather surprised, and really moved with compassion, stooping, as I withdrew my hand); tell me what can I do for you? Be sure that I will do any thing in my power to relieve you. Though you are a stranger, that is not an objection with me; I think you rather the more entitled to compassion in your distress by being so.—But she was resolved to surprise me still more with her expressions: she lifted herself up, saying I know how generous you are: it was by your goodness you became so dear to me, that I never knew a pleasure like that of pressing

¹⁸ Original text, p.141

¹⁹ Original text, p.143

you to my bosom—who can but love you! And throwing then her arms about my neck, exclaimed, in a transport of joy, though trembling and perceptibly checked by timidity and a flood of tears—O my jewel, my jewel! have I lived to see you again! am I so happy as to fold you in my arms, and call you my dear friend, my only comfort again!

The well-known sound of the voice had scarce reached my ear, than I felt the effects of it in my heart; its palpitations increased in a moment, whilst, lost in astonishment, I remained a while gazing indeed, but without speech or motion. Unfortunately, the poor creature, missing the affectionate return she expected, took my stupidity, silence, and wild looks for a rebuke, and looking on my face with dying defection, said, Alas! am I despised and abandoned by you too! She sighed, and raising her eyes to heaven, said, after a short pause, Welcome death now, welcome! I have no more business in the world. Looked on me sighing again, and sinking senseless in my arms. Roused by her melting accents and affecting looks, I was already striving to support her.

I saw, I was made sensible then, when too late, that I had in my arms—Who do you think it could be in that ragged, distressed, and, in every respect, miserable condition?—But why should I keep you in suspense even for a moment!—That poor unhappy creature, that despicable object of raillery and compassion, was no less than the formerly-admired, and ever deserving to be so, Mrs. Lunel herself—that darling of my soul, whom I had lamented so long as dead.—O heavens! how can I describe to you the situation of my heart then, or my sensations! I had her indeed in my arms, but seemingly a lifeless corpse. My grief at seeing her so was rendered more insupportable by the reflexion that the supposition my unkindness to her had killed her, or at least deprived her of her senses. What to do to relieve her I did not know. Her very rags, even without any other reason, pointed out the necessity there was for remaining unknown to everybody else. Unable to resolve myself on any thing, or to suppress the overflowings of my heart, I tried to rouse her with my kisses and affectionate expressions, persuaded, that if sensible at all, my tenderness and caresses would be likely to prove the best restorative I could have recourse to.

O my darling friend! O my life? O my patient angel! are you restored to me, said I, only to renew my afflictions and lament your undeserved ones! to make me the most unhappy of mortals, by allowing me to see them, whilst not in my poor²⁰ to relieve you! Could you ever think me altered so as to be unkind to you! Could you ever think me so hardened as to see your distress unmoved! Could you not make some allowances for the wonder naturally annexed to such a happy and unexpected event! for the surprise of seeing you in my arms, after supposing you so long in your grave!—O my charming jewel! O my ever dear and incomparable sweetness! my suffering innocence! speak to me; open your eyes and see my soul dissolved in the most sincere tears that ever flowed from compassion and love! See my heart! look how it bleeds for you! how it sympathises in your suffering! observe in it the impression you once made as fresh as ever it was in the height of our mutual affection.—O my darling! O my angelic meekness! my comfort! speak to me, do : stop my flying soul with your enchanting voice ; bless me with a glance of compassion, that I may bear the torture it is to me to see you so distressed, so afflicted, but in vain.

²⁰ Original text, p.146 - there may to be a word missing here.

CHAP. XVIII

SHE continued senseless, and I proceeded to add, to the already insupportable conflict in my bosom, by reflections as painful as natural. I knew that my fellow travellers were waiting for me; that I could not disengage myself from them; and that it was not proper to let them know my embarrassment; and what to do I did not know—to leave my darling, in that condition, I could not think of it—I was distracted, and yet I felt something pleasing in my very trouble which seemed to render it different from any other I ever had gone through before. The pressing in my arms so beloved an object, after having lamented her as dead for almost two years, had something so surprisingly delightful in it, that perhaps with less alloy it would have turned my brain.

But the time pressed, and, surprised at my delay, the Doctor himself came to see what was the cause of it; and I was not sorry to see him come, because I was more than ever in need of the advice and assistance of a friend. I told him, without any preamble, who was the person I had in my arms, and that was enough to give him at once an idea of my perplexity.—What shall I do, Doctor? To tear me from this woman is to tear my very soul! How can I leave her in this condition? said I. I know, too, that it is absolutely necessary for her welfare, and my peace, to continue as little known as she is now; and that I cannot stay without affronting the Marquis and his sister, and by so doing excite too much curiosity, not to apprehend a discovery; I cannot beg of you to stay neither, because they will want to know the reason. What shall I do then?

He tried her pulse, made some observations, and, after thinking a while, this is a perplexing affair indeed, said he: nature is exhausted by her distress, and she is very weak; but she is young, and with proper care she may recover. How did she come here? or where does she come from?—I don't know, said I: she had scarce begun to talk to me when she fell into the situation you see her; and I grieve the more at it, because I believe she was so far affected by taking for coolness in me what was the natural effect of so surprising a rencontre. That is an additional motive to make me wish my stay here possible. Supposing that if she comes to herself, and I am not at hand to undeceive her by my kind exertions, she will think herself confirmed in the already-too-fatal notion of her being repulsed and abandoned by me, and her heart will entirely break.

With all that, said the Doctor, you will not stay, if you will believe me, because you cannot do it without exposing her to greater inconveniences than that of missing you for a short time. There is a physician in this town with whom I am intimate: he is a prudent, worthy man, and, if you chuse, I will try to prevail on him to come and attend this lady till our return. I will manage the matter so, if you are pleased to leave it to me, that, without letting him into the secret, we may all be satisfied: and, in my opinion, it will be more proper to have him by her side, when she comes to herself, than you—she is too weak to bear at once the natural emotions at your meeting: my friend may prepare her, and she is likely to be the better by that precaution. The care taken of her must convince her that she is not abandoned.

Go then, for goodness sake, said I, and see what you can do—to leave her is to me an inexpressible trouble; but I will submit to your advice, and bear it as well as I can. See to engage your friend to sit constantly by her, as it will be some comfort to me to know she is properly taken care of. I beg also that you may be pleased to make some apology to the young ladies below for my delay, and to send me the woman of the house.—When the landlady came, I told her that she would oblige me very much in preparing immediately

the most convenient room and best bed in the house, and removing the poor woman into it; as well as in furnishing her with some bed-gowns and linen, and in bestowing upon her the best care, without permitting any of the servants to come near her, except her most handy maid, whom I wished to attend her constantly. I explained to her then how much she would oblige me by doing as I wished with expedition and secrecy, or disoblige me by the reverse. I gave her to understand that the poor woman was a person I had known in very good circumstances, and that if we exposed her in her distress, for want of delicacy or care to keep it a secret, our endeavours to serve and oblige her would lose the best part of their effect. She promised me to be exact in complying with my request, and indeed I never had reason to complain of any omission in the fulfilling of her promise. She ran then for water and smelling bottles, but neither the one nor the other had the least effect upon my poor, senseless, and dear jewel; and I was obliged to settle her on the bed then, and with a heart torn by inexpressible anguish leave her, and trust to chance the seeing her alive again.

Both the Doctors came soon after together; and as I did not know what the new one was told by the other, I staid only to assure him, that in taking a particular care of that poor creature he might be sure to oblige me exceedingly. I returned then to my young ladies, and found them as much out of temper as I expected; but though little disposed to mirth, I reassumed an air of cheerfulness that brought them soon to a tolerable temper. I was already resolved to go—I became then the most impatient of us all to set off. I hinted to our drivers that they would oblige me by their expedition, and in consequence they acquitted themselves so well, that, notwithstanding our extraordinary delay at the inn, we were at our journey's end at nine o'clock that evening.

CHAP. XIX.

THE Marquis and his aunt received us with demonstrations of joy; put²¹ poor Miss Des Prats, who had been all the evening in very low spirits, in spite of all our endeavours to keep her otherwise, trembled as we approached, and, falling on her knees before them both, was so agitated, or seemed so ashamed and afraid, that even, if less favourable disposed, they could not but pity her. The brother took her up in his arms, and whilst he pressed her most affectionately to his bosom, she fainted and frightened us all, not so much on account of her personal sufferings, as for the danger of letting the family perceive that there was some thing extraordinary in the case. To be thus affected by the tenderness of a brother, in which she formerly rejoiced, had too much the appearance of conscious guilt not to be have been remembered by the servants as a corroborating circumstance, if anything else had ever transpired. Luckily she came soon to herself, and a very tender scene between the brother and sister, in which she acknowledged herself unworthy of his affection, and he assured her of a continuance of it, all was set to rights again. We sat down to supper all very chearfully seemingly, though God knows how far I was from being really so; my heart and soul were in the inn we had left behind, and the necessity under which I was to dissemble proved a perplexing addition to my troubles, especially as every now and then I had to bear with ralleries about my private interview with the poor woman.

Both the old lady and her nephew expected us to pass some days with them, and seemed disappointed when told that we were resolved to set off on our return very early the next morning: but we assigned so many plausible excuses for that resolution, that they at last consented to let us go, on condition that we would leave Miss Bartlet behind and come to pass a week at the Marquis's, when we should think proper to have her home again. About twelve we took our leave of them all, and retired to the apartment designed for us; and no sooner we were in it, than I surprised the doctor by taking leave of him myself. He did all he could to detain me, but in vain; the having had no rest the night before, nor the having passed a very tiresome day, did not signify any thing to me; my anxiety, if I staid, was likely to be of worse consequences than any thing else could have. I left my servants to come along with him, and prevent every notion of my clandestine retreat; and begging he would take the trouble of setting off early enough, that none in the house should know but we were together, I stepped out of it unnoticed, and went to take horses at some distance, where I had contrived to have one ready waiting for me; and I made so expeditious a trip, that before four in the morning I was safely arrived at the inn where I had left my suffering darling Mrs. Lunel.

I did not know in what room she was, nor was any body in the way to inform me, the stable people being not likely to know any thing of the matter; but I took some pains, and found it at last, without disturbing any body. Dr. Blondel, in whose hands we had left her, had kindly complied with my request of sitting constantly by her, and as soon as he perceived me, advanced to meet and tell me, in a whisper, that the lady was likely to do well; but begged I would not approach the bed, rather follow him into the next room, where we might talk without danger of awaking her, or exciting any dangerous emotions by my sudden appearance; and I did as he wished, after peeping between the curtains, and being convinced that she was really sleeping, very quiet, and seemingly easy.

He told me then, that being convinced by Dr. Bartlet's notions and his own observations, that the patient's bodily weakness was the worst part of her disorder; as by it

²¹ Original text, p.154

she was unable to bear any uncommon agitation of her mind or spirits, he had prepared himself accordingly, getting restoratives and other necessaries, without a moment's loss of time.—In less than an hour after our departure she came to herself, and though at first she did nothing but sigh and look wild; when some cordial he made her take had roused her a little, she seemed to be more sensible, and looked at him and about the room with attention. Profiting by the opportunity, he had spoke to her kindly, according to the instructions he had got for that purpose from Dr. Bartlet: she seemed to listen though she said not a word. Soon after she began to sigh and look wild again, and then relapsed into a second trance. He had her removed whilst she was in it into the room, and bed already prepared for the reception, (the landlady having previously shifted and washed her) being fully persuaded by her pulse and other circumstances, that she would not continue insensible long. The knowledge that she was so much minded, and so carefully attended, would contribute greatly to the rousing of her dejected spirits. And indeed I was right enough, said he: she had not been removed above half an hour when she opened her eyes, and after relieving her oppressed heart by many sighs, she began to look about, and seemed to observe, with surprise, the room and everything about her. I gave her some cordial then, and spoke to her again in the same encouraging strain I had done before; and though she seemed not to mind me, but to continue gazing still, she broke at last silence by asking me, with much timidity, whose house was this? I told her it was the same inn where she was before; but that we had removed her to a decent part of it, and more fit for her.—Alas! (said she then, with much anxiety but I am a poor woman, without means to pay or reward such a kindness. In accepting of it, madam, the friend by whose orders it was done will think you have highly rewarded him.—That is impossible, said she, with much agitation; that is a mistake. I am a poor woman who have no friends in the world; the only one I ever had was offended at seeing a wretch like me presuming to call him by that familiar name. Tears and sobs prevented her saying farther then, said the doctor ; but while she was giving vent by them to sorrowful emotions, which threatened us with a second relapse, I continued talking to her, and insisting that the mistake was on her side, as she certainly had a friend, and a worthy and sincere one too, to my certain knowledge. Who is he then, said she, that charitable person? Be so kind as to tell me his name, that I may admire and bless him. It is really a wonder to see so much attention bestowed on so despicable an object as me.—You do injury, madam, to your own merit, said the doctor. Misfortunes may depress, but never can lessen it in the eyes of so sensible a man as Count Touloussin.—What! said she, with surprise, is the Count my benefactor?—He is, madam, your most affectionate friend at least, said the doctor. She remained silent a little while, and then said, (after a deep sigh, much dejected, and still in tears) But he does not chuse to see me!—Pardon me, madam, said the doctor, you are mistaken in that too. It is regard for you, and my advice, that keeps him from you; you are too weak, and his personal attendance might be of prejudice to you, or else he would not have absented himself a moment from your bedside; endeavour to recover yourself, and you will see how affectionately he waits on you.

Those last words seemed to have infused²² a new life into her.—Will he, do you think? said she, then, with an air of timidity and joy.—I am sure, madam, and that there is nothing in the world which he will not do with pleasure to serve you, said the doctor, who, as he neither knew who she was, nor had been intrusted farther than in a few particulars relative to her debilitated condition, and her mistaken notions of her being abandoned in her distress, could not indeed say much more.—She begged of him then to be so good as to direct her, assuring him that there was nothing in the world neither which she would not do, in her turn, to evince how sensible she was of the Count's goodness and his. From that

²² Original text, p.161

moment, said the doctor, she has done, without hesitation, everything I have requested her to do. If I desire her to take some nourishment, she takes it directly; cordials the same, and even rest. If I desire her to lie down and compose herself to sleep, she strives to do it; to please me, has feigned to be asleep, when I am sure she was not. And I observed her to take the opportunity of my being far from the bed, and my back to it, to ask the girl who attends or sits constantly by, in a whisper, and with as much anxiety as she did me, shall I see the Count again! She is now fast asleep, and has been so for these two hours; and as rest is very necessary to her recovery, and till now she has had none that signifies, we must have a care not to interrupt it, as either by the still unsettled situation of her mind, or what is more likely, by the succession of ideas, suggested by what I have told her of your concern and friendship for her, she has not had but very little sleep.

O my darling jewel! said I then to myself, you are still that meek angel I so much admired; you are still that sweet, that charming idol of my soul, and none but unfeeling monsters can know you without loving and even adoring you!—And pray, said I to the doctor, do you think proper that I may see her when she awakes?—That will depend on circumstances, said he; if I find her (as I hope I shall) so much refreshed and composed as to think her able to bear your meeting without injury to her health, I shall let you know of it. In such a case your presence and kindness will contribute more than any thing else could to her wished recovery; If not, you must have a little patience, not to spoil, by an imprudent hurry, the happy prospect we have before us. You may go now to rest yourself as you certainly stand in need of it; and besides, you are not wanted here, as I mean to continue near the patient till the return of Dr. Bartlet. I thought it better to take his advice than watch to no manner of purpose.—After making a hearty breakfast together, for which I seemed uncommonly well disposed by the good news, I went to bed and slept till four in the afternoon.

CHAP. XX.

AT four I got up, wondering to have been so long without hearing from the doctors, nor even from my servants; but I rung the bell, and from one of them who made his appearance, I learned that both the doctors were together, and had been so for the two last hours. I made haste to dress, that I might go to them; but before I was ready I saw them coming to me, and guessed in their looks that it was with joyful tidings.—Well, Count, said Dr. Bartlet, I hope your long nap has done you no harm.—No danger for me, doctor, said I, short or long, they all agree with me as you see. But pray, Dr. Blondel, what news from that angel, your patient? Can I go to see her?—I believe you may, said he; she seems to be much recovered; she slept almost as long as you, and rest has done her as much good as I expected; she is very lively and composed. I have prepared her with a promise, sanctioned by my brother Bartlet, of letting you come to see her before night.—Dr. Bartlet said, he thought there was no danger, as he himself had talked to her about it, and she seemed so well prepared to see and receive me, as not to leave any thing to apprehend from that step, provided I took care not to dwell long on affecting subjects, nor let her talk long on any other whatever; and after chatting a while about her weakness, and the most proper methods of treatment in it, I will go now, aid Dr. Blondel, to tell her that you are coming, and give her a cordial I have there ready. In half an hour I will expect you, but don't come sooner I beg.

I put then my watch upon the table, and talking with Dr. Bartlet about his solitary morning trip, my nightly one, and other trifles, I walked about the room for one of the longest half hours that I thought ever to have been spun by any thing able to move at all. At last the worse than snail hand pointed to it, and leaving Dr. Bartlet, I flew to my darling Mrs. Lunel. She waited for me sitting on her bed, and at the opening of the door I perceived her stretching her arms already to receive me, and smiling. Dr. Blondel left the room at my entering it, and very prudently had sent the maid out before. I had resolved to refrain my transports for fear of prejudicial consequences to my poor weak jewel, but who could command himself on the occasions! In a moment, scarce sufficient to pronounce the endearing expressions of my jewel and my darling, we found ourselves both pressing to our bosoms, in an ecstasy of joy, what each held most precious in the world.

When able to talk farther, is there an end at last of my afflictions! said she; do I then live to call you my dear friend again? and to enjoy the despaired-of satisfaction of finding myself kindly received in these arms, which have so many times supported my sinking spirits! and do I then live to press again in them this darling of my heart! said I; O my life! how could you ever think me less transported, less enraptured with the inexpressible pleasure of seeing you again! of convincing you, by every demonstration love was capable of, that my affection knew no bounds! the grave itself being none to it. Though I have lamented you as dead two years, I have not ceased to love you, no, not a moment. You have constantly been the only idol of my soul.—O joyful sounds! said she; what words can repay such unheard-of kindness!—O the sweet and precious reward of all my long sufferings! they have been very great indeed, and yet I would think my present happiness cheaply bought with them and as many more. O my life! said I, how can I express to you my anguish at the hearing of some of those very sufferings! My grief at the idea of others, which your distressed situation was but too likely to give! How could I bear the reflections suggested by that indigent and forlorn condition you was in, of the hardships and misery you must have gone through! My heart, designed by nature to sympathize with yours, bleeds still at the recollection; and whilst you was afflicting yourself with the wrong notions, nay, the impossibility of my being unkind to you, my very soul was tortured on

thinking of that mistake.—O my poor suffering darling! how could you think me unkind to you! was it not more natural to think that the sudden appearance,—and in such a condition, of a person so dear to me, after two years supposed in her grave, was likely to petrify me with astonishment! O my patient angel! your troubles were already too many to bear additions.—Alas! my beloved friend! said she, the contempt I have been exposed to and experienced, the little compassion I have met with in my unheard-of distresses, and the general unfeeling disposition I have observed in mankind for the misfortunes of others, had filled my head with notions which did not permit me to flatter myself, in the despicable condition I was in, with a kind reception any where, not even from you, though I knew that you are uncommonly generous and good natured. To find you so much superior to others in those exalted sentiments, by which you scorn to look on the vicissitudes of fortune, but as a new claim on your compassion, enhances your worth in my esteem much above expression. I loved you in my soul previous to this trial, and with a love that neither affliction nor absence have been able to diminish in the least; but if you never had had any share of my affection before, I could not do less than idolize you now, and think myself more than rewarded for all my sufferings by the happiness of having found, at last, so deserving a friend. If your merit were less, there would be perhaps some in my conduct, said I; but who can know my ever-charming friend, and think it but a duty to pay you all the attention in his power, whatever may be your situation! None but unfeeling monsters, like Lunel, can know you, and not be proud to serve you. But enough of this: I am afraid that you are still too weak, my darling, to bear a long conversation on topics of so affecting a nature. If you think it proper, we will call in the doctors, and endeavour, by the discussion of indifferent matters, to prevent sad impressions from the others. My impatience to know how it is that you are still in the world, and by what strange means you have been preserved from the malice and horrid designs of your persecutors, is great indeed; but till you are quite well I will bridle my curiosity, and neither will I let you enter into discourse of that kind, nor talk to you of any thing relative to them, but a little at a time. And will you go away from me again? said she; Must I be deprived of your company any more!—Never, my jewel; if I can enjoy the happiness of yours, without injury to your health, you never shall. The barbarous Lunel has forfeited all claim to you, and even if you had none upon me, but that of humanity, I never would abandon you again, nor permit him to come near you.—O transporting news! Now I am blest indeed! said she.

The doctors came in then, and, as they really sympathized with us, contributed greatly to render the remaining part of the evening very agreeable by their good sense and good humour.—Poor Mrs. Lunel's countenance evinced how much she rejoiced in her heart at her new prospects, and mine rejoiced as much at least in her happiness. Besides, to see my darling again, and have it in my power to put an end to her sufferings, to observe her recovering from their dreadful effects, and to think it was not farther improper to take entirely upon myself the care of her, were too many gladdening particulars for me not to be transported with them. We all retired early that evening, and in the morning, when Dr. Blondel came to us again, we consulted together about the removal of Mrs. Lunel; but though she had passed a very good night, and was in very good spirits, both the doctors were of the opinion that it would be better to defer it for eight or ten days. Though in an inn, she was very conveniently situated to avoid its incidental bustle and noise, and in so healthy a country and place, that her continuance there, along with the particular attention we intended to pay, in every thing likely to retrieve her decayed constitution, promised a speedy recovery; while the removal might perhaps retard it by some unforeseen circumstances. A person in her debilitated condition was easily discomposed. As the idea of any danger to her, if ever so remote or unlikely, was enough to determine me, it was

soon agreed that Mrs. Lunel and I should continue there, and that the doctors should keep us company by turns.

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CHAP. XXI.

NATURE, youth, our care and endeavours to divert her, and above, all, her inward satisfaction, contributed so much to accelerate Mrs. Lunel's recovery, that in a few days she was able to give me the following account of herself, without the least injury to her health :—Some time before my lying-in, said she, I was warned by my maid Nannette of a plot to poison me, then in agitation between Lunel, and two of his friends; but as I had lost you, had been so constantly ill used by him, and my prospects were so much more dismal after my uncle's death, I could not consider the being rid of so unhappy a life but as a happy event; and, therefore, far from being alarmed by the intelligence, I rather rejoiced in it. I looking upon what the affectionate girl called a barbarous design, as the only piece of kindness my husband's nature would ever permit him to do me; and though I did not tell her so, by prevailing upon her to keep the affair a secret, I thought myself sure of its success.

When thus resigned to my premeditated fate, I looked upon every thing presented to me, either to eat or drink, as containing my liberating dose; and after imploring in my heart the mercy of heaven, I took it very composedly. But I was so many times disappointed, that I began to suspect Lunel had repented; thinking it too much goodness to send me out of the world at once, and deprive himself of the pleasure he had in torturing me, and sending me there by the lingering course of cruelties he delighted to exert upon me, and by which I was brought so low. That notion, my lying-in, and the deplorable condition in which I continued for a long while after, had banished entirely every idea of that kind out of my head, when the same kind girl came again to tell me that the poisoning scheme was going on still; but scarce could I believe it true, till I saw that Lunel discharged that very maid, and some other servants, without assigning any reason for it. Then indeed I thought that the plot was ripe, and began to expect anew my delivering potion. For two days however I was again disappointed; but at last, the third, in the morning, I had reason to think that I should not be longer so, as Lunel came and introduced into my lying-in room his two plotting friends, as if to congratulate me upon the supposed prospect of my recovery, and insisted on our breakfasting together. Then I took it for granted that it was my last breakfast, and prepared myself accordingly. As I was still in bed, and the table was laid on²³ the middle of the room, on the pretence that the new servants were not come as yet, they took upon themselves to manage the breakfast, and Lunel, apparently officious to attend me, handed me a dish of coffee, a civility so new in him, that even unwarned I believe I should have suspected him of some evil design in it.

When I was drinking the pretended coffee up, I observed the eyes of all three fixed upon me; and sure, by the taste, and the many other concurring circumstances, that they had done my business, as Lunel came to take the cup, telling him that I had got enough, I shook my head a little, and smiled in his face, to make him sensible that I knew what they were about, and I saw him confused for the first time in my life; though without taking seemingly notice of his confusion, I turned my thoughts entirely to heaven, and lay down, settling myself in as decent a posture as I could think of; but in a few minutes, instead of growing sick as I expected, I grew so drowsy, as to find it impossible to keep myself awake as I wished. I fell then asleep, or in a trance, but I cannot say what became of me for some time after; all that I know is, that the next day, in the afternoon, (as I found after it was) when I awoke, or came to myself, I was surprised beyond description to find myself in a coach, going on somewhere, along with two men and a woman, all strangers to me,

²³ Original text, p.176

whom, if it had not been for the variety of objects in the way, which did not permit me to think of it, I certainly should have taken for departed souls, going, as well as myself, through the other world, on a visit to Minos; but though my mind was full of my dying ideas, I could not mistake for a land of spirits that in which I saw the people eating and drinking, and heard them talk in a very unspiritual stile.

However, I was so afraid, that scarce did I venture to look either to the faces of my fellow travellers, or any thing else, but by stealth—nor did they seem to take any notice of me, for the first two or three hours from my resurrection. After that time, indeed, observing something like a fainting fit on me, and being then putting fresh horses to our coach, they called for some wine, and insisted on my drinking a glass of it, which I durst not refuse. I took it for fear, and indeed in hopes too that it was some poisoning draught, as by that time it had already come into my head that I was going to be murdered somewhere, and rather die poisoned than to have my throat cut; but I was quite out of guess—my fellow travellers seemed to be rather a good sort of people.

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CHAP. XX11.

AFTER travelling two days more at a furious rate, with very little rest, and myself without any other nourishment than some broth, we arrived to our journey's end, to a nunnery, in which I was doomed to languish the remainder of my days. I was told so at my arrival there, but indeed I was not the more frightened for that: obliged to remain in the world, I thought any thing would be better than to be near Lunel; and I should have been satisfied even in that condition, had he not carried his inhumanity to the prepossessing the whole sisterhood so much against me, or rather to the bribing of the nuns so, that almost every one of them became a Lunel to me. He had given out that I was a lewd, scandalous woman, who had been detected in adultery, and was so hard to be kept within bounds, that a single nun not being thought a sufficient sentry upon me, I was watched night and day by two or three of them; and tormented, I may say, too, as they treated me no better than if I had been as bad as represented.

I never would have thought it possible, if I had not experienced it, that any of our sex, much less religious ladies, could have been so hard-hearted, or could speak to any body in the indelicate and insulting language they did to me; nor that hypocrisy, superstition, or avarice, could carry any body in the world so far as to torture, unprovoked, any poor creature (who shewed herself ready to serve and oblige them) as they did torture me. But so it happened, that I was the perpetual mark to exert the insulting and abusive talents of every living soul, from the highest to the lowest in the house; they all seemed combined against me, and every one of them did their best to render me miserable, as if the being abusive and cruel to me was to be taken for a proof of their own virtue. Lunel had thought that a safer way for him to send me to my grave; and as it was more suitable to his tormenting disposition than the poisoning me, or cutting my throat, he was resolved not to spare any expences in the accomplishment of it.

I had passed above a twelvemonth in that worse than unhappy condition (more impatient I am sure than Lunel himself might be of being by my death released from it) when I heard the first kind words addressed to me since I was in the nunnery. Poor Mrs. Lunel, how I pity you! said a nun who was sitting by me, while two others, designed as well as herself to guard me, were at a distance from us, busy in some fiddling work of theirs. I looked on her in surprise; but those few words raised such tender tumults in my breast, that I could not refrain from tears, and my crying brought instantly the busy part of my watch to inquire what was the matter with the troublesome baggage; on which the kind nun was obliged to join in the abuse, though in the middle of it I observed her to throw a look of compassion upon me, which plainly evinced she did it much against her will, and in consequence from that moment I looked upon her myself as my friend, and wished for opportunities to be left alone with her, but in vain. Lunel had provided against every possibility of finding a friend there, by insisting on my being constantly watched by several nuns at a time, that he might be sure none of them ventured to be kind to me for fear of the others.

Chance, however, did more for me in the particular than could have been expected from the common course of things, or guarded against by the malignity of Lunel. As I was sitting one evening at the farther end of the garden surrounded by many more nuns than those usually kept about me, just when the abusing and insulting me was become their only sport, we were alarmed by a cry of fire in some part of the house; on which every nun ran like lightening towards their respective cells to save some trifling thing or other, which

they prized as if worth their trouble, except my friend, who kindly preferred, to any selfish concern, the pleasure of comforting me. She staid and acquainted me, in that moment of general distraction, that she knew me and you both since the first report of our criminal conversation, and had reasons to believe²⁴ them false; that she herself had been soon after reduced by her parents to the sad dilemma of marrying a man she hated, or end her days in a nunnery, the last of which evils she had preferred to the other, thinking it the less; that she saw with grief the barbarous manner in which I was treated by the nuns, her sisters, but that the superior was to be obeyed at all events, and the orders every one of them had were such, that scarce could she find fault with their conduct, being herself obliged, in consequence of those orders, to have a hand in the making of me an object of compassion ; but that she was really disposed to do any thing consistent with her own safety to relieve me, and desired that I would depend upon that disposition, and think if she could do something to serve me, sure that, if in her power, she would do it with pleasure. She could say no more because the dreaded conflagration was found to be no more than a chimney on fire; and the nuns, recovered from their panic, were fast coming to take again their parts about me.

²⁴ Original text, p.184

CHAP. XX111.

IT would be too tedious to relate the several little stratagems that good nun and I continued to talk of to one another without witness. Let it be enough to tell you, that we did succeed in some of them; but though her kindness and spirit inspired me with more courage than ever I could have thought myself possessed of otherwise, and with a kind of inclination to do what I never had any notion before: we had it so little in our power, that the doing any thing to the purpose seemed next to impossible. She was the youngest nun, having professed but a few weeks before she declared herself my friend, of course, she had less authority and was more confined to duty, than any of the others; She was also at variance with her relations, having thrown herself into the sisterhood in opposition to them, and there was not a possibility of writing neither; she could not venture on doing it herself without almost inevitable danger. I was so carefully watched, that it was entirely out of my power to write; the nuns had besides so particular orders in that respect, that neither ink nor paper was even within my reach, and to find such things about me would have been worse than murder. Even if we had been able to get over the difficulty of writing, we should have had a still greater one to overcome, which was, the finding a proper person to whom we could trust our letters. In short, there was no way to procure me relief but one we had recourse to in a fit of despair.

My friendly nun, venturing for my sake a great deal beyond the bounds of safety she had at first prescribed to herself, procured from a gardener's wife an old great-coat of her husband, with a hat and shoes to march in; that with a well-daubed face, promised to be a tolerable disguise for me, could I but get once out of the nunnery; but the difficulties to effect it were so great, that scarcely could we think it possible. Two nuns slept in my room every night, though none with me indeed, because I was looked upon as too great a sinner, not to think that they would be polluted by touching my body. Nevertheless, to get out of the room itself unknown to them seemed impracticable, as they locked the door and took the key out of it. The window, besides, being high, was also secured with iron bars; but the resentment my friendly nun had fired me with, by representing meekness as folly, when so much abused as mine had been, suggested to me the means of rendering all their cautions insufficient. I began by watching where they put the key of the door after they had locked it. When sure of that, and that there was a possibility of getting it, when they would be fast asleep, I profited by every opportunity in the day time, the key being then in the door, to make myself expert in turning it without noise; I agreed with my friend the nun, that if I succeeded in getting safe out of the room, I would go to her's, and she would help me to the rest, and prepared myself for my bold attempt.

I tried several nights, but the key was under their very pillow, and the least motion of their bodies, or even irregularity in their breath, sent me trembling to my bed again. At last I got the key; but for a quarter of an hour after I was in such a trepidation that I could not make any use of it, nor stand upon my legs, and I was almost tempted to put it under the pillow again, and give over all notions of elopement; but on reflecting on the daily abuse and injuries which I was obliged to endure, and that seeing you again, was my only object, I plucked up courage, went to the door, opened it, and, when out, I locked it after me, and put the key in my pocket. My friendly nun daubed my face, and put on my masquerade dress. Helped by her, I climbed up the garden wall, and though obliged to let myself go down from a too great height on the outside, I was still able to take to my heels, and did not fail to do it, though very dark and quite ignorant of the place and all its neighbourhood. Fear supplying in me the want of strength, I walked all night, directing my course, as I

thought, towards the south: luckily, I did not meet a soul in all the way that night, else very likely I should have been frightened to death.

At the break of day I left the great road, and following for almost two hours longer every little one or path which I thought took me far from the highway. I came at last to a wild place, or some common, where I saw a poor cottage, which seemed to be some miles from any other inhabited place. I hovered about it for a while, with more inclination than courage to ask for shelter, seeing no trees or anything else which could afford relief from the scorching sun, till having observed that there seemed to be only a woman with an infant she was nursing, I ventured, and she very kindly desired me to walk in and sit down. But when I had been sitting for about an hour, in which time she embarrassed me greatly with her questions, I grew so faint, so cold and stiff, that unable to keep my feet, I let myself go down, and lay on the earthen floor. The good woman, better acquainted with travelling on foot than²⁵ I was, soon guessed my situation, and very humanely putting the child in the cradle, went out and brought a bundle of straw, spread it on the farther corner of the cottage, and helped me to lie down upon it ; by which operation she found out that I had petticoats on, and was undeceived with respect to my sex, having at first taken me for a boy. She warmed then some milk, which I took at her request, with a bit of bread; and by her advice I composed myself on my rural bed. I fell fast asleep, and did not awake till late in the evening.

I found myself then much refreshed, but so full of pains in my limbs, and so many blisters on my feet, that I could not stir. What to do then I did not know ; I had not my friendly nun to keep up my spirits, and they failed me so, that if it had not been for fear of the consequences to her, I believe I should have told who I was, that I might have been carried back to the nunnery. I repented of my elopement, because I thought it was impossible for me to obtain the pleasing end proposed by it, which was to see you again. The distance to your house was, by our calculation, four or five hundred miles at least, and all the money I had got for my travelling expences there did not exceed a crown. My kind nun had no more to give me; and, for my part, I was sent from home without money or anything valuable, and had been kept so all along while in the nunnery. I perceived that all the strength and courage my expectations had furnished me with were imaginary, and that, after all, I was but a poor weak woman.

The conflict in my bosom, on the reflections suggested by my helpless condition, drew tears from my eyes; and the poor cottager, seeing me cry, and not knowing but that it was for the pains I suffered in my limbs, began to tell me, by way of comfort, that I would grow soon used to the road, and would think nothing of walking twenty miles a day, provided I had a care not to tire myself so much again; that at the beginning I ought to make but small journies, and never to venture on the road either too early or too late, and many other things to the same purpose, which not only diverted my thoughts for the moment but proved very usefull instructions for my conduct afterwards. Well, but what shall I do now, that I cannot walk at all? said I to the woman. Where shall I go?—O, as for that matter, said she, does not signify; you may stay where you are; my husband, who is a good sort of man, will not say against it, and I will be bound that to-morrow you will be as brisk as a bee.

It is impossible to express how truly comfortable the proposal of the poor woman proved to me. Night was approaching, and to think myself obliged to venture again in the

²⁵ Original text, p.191; 'feet' (referring to feet) two lines above is also spelt like that in the original.

dark on an unknown road, and in the condition I was in, was worse than death to me. When I heard that I might stay where I was, I could willingly have fallen upon my knees, and have worshiped the proposer, had I not been afraid of suggesting some unfavourable notions. I had only to wish then that the husband might prove no less kind than the wife; but as she had told me that he was a good sort of man, I doubted not that would be the case. But he came at last from the field, where he had been at work all the day, and at the first address I was frightened almost out of my senses. A tremendous hollo was his first word, and then he proceeded to talk abruptly, and seemingly angry, who have you got here?—It is a poor girl, my dear, said his wife, who is going to Paris to a relation. She got on the road this morning, that, not knowing it well, she went astray; the poor creature was so tired, and has got so many blisters on her feet, that she scarce can walk; I therefore asked her to stay and rest herself to-night here.—Egad, a thief, I will swear, said he; what the devils business could she have otherwise? this was but to hide herself from some family she has robbed.

Alas! Sir, said I, (more out of fear than any notion of vindicating my character) I am a poor girl, and to convince you that I am not a thief, let your wife search me, and if she finds any thing of value, except this little sum of money I have to defray the expences of my journey, you may think me a thief indeed; but if not, I hope you will not entertain any bad opinion of me.— He looked at the money, then, and said, what! have you got no more than this to go from this to Paris?—No, Sir, said I.—You are right enough—you are a poor girl indeed! Well, well, you seem to have an honest face, though dirty; I will not grudge you a good night's rest, no, no. Come, wife, give us something to eat; let this poor creature have her belly full, she will sleep the better. I will bring more straw for her by and bye, and throw my great-coat about her, if she wants it.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE kind cottager was really as good as his word. Both he and his wife did every thing in their power to afford me relief. Some fresh-laid eggs and rusty bacon constituted our humble fare, which the keenness of my appetite made very savoury. But the most pleasing circumstance of the entertainment was the attention, kind looks and soothing words, of my host and hostess. In my opinion, they were actually polite, that is, if we make the criterion of politeness, not the performance of certain bows, grimaces, and ceremonies, but a manifest disposition to promote the happiness of a company. Their benevolence was the more grateful, as I had of late been so much accustomed to the contrary. Our good and evil, my dear Count, is, as you know, very much the effect of comparison. What in certain cases would be suffering, is, in different circumstances, enjoyment. After supper, and a draught of wine, the best they had, I was conducted to their best bed, that is, which had the greatest quantity of straw. I slept very soundly, and awakened in the morning much refreshed, and rose with an intention of setting out. This the hospitable cottagers would not allow. I learned that the place I was in was north of Nancy in Lorraine, and about a hundred and fifty miles from Paris. I resolved, instead of proceeding southward to Languedoc, as I had at first intended to, to move on to the capital, hoping you might be returned from the country. After resting another day, I took leave of my hostess, and was guided by her husband to the road to Chalons in Champagne. I parted with my host, and took the road, trusting to my disguise not only to individual concealment, but to the attacks of male travellers, since I had taken pains to look hideously. I made out Chalons the second day, without meeting any thing remarkable on my journey. I put up at the meanest inn I could see, determined to stay a day to refresh myself from my fatigue. I was obliged to remove the next morning to avoid the importunities of the ostler, who swore, that though my face was disfigured, and my attire very mean, I had a good person, and would make an excellent piece. Indeed the shabbiness of my dress could be no objection with the worthy currier of horses, as his usual mistresses were probably not more sumptuously arrayed. My departure, I could observe, gave great pleasure to a fat scullion. She had perceived the assiduities of the ostler to me, and resented them with sour looks both to the gallant and me. I afterwards overheard by accident a dialogue between these two persons, which convinced me that the cleaner of kettles and the cleaner of stables were linked together in the bonds of affection, from which the latter wished to break loose. I walked out some miles from Chalons, and, coming to a hamlet, heard a confused noise of mirth and jollity issue from a house near the road side. Not having had time to recover from my fatigue before I left Chalons, my walk, short as it had been that day, had already quite tired me. I directed my steps towards the house; knowing that when the spirits are exhilarated, the mind is more disposed to the social virtues, I expected a charitable reception from the enlivened rustics. On entering, and begging leave to rest myself, the landlord bade me heartily welcome. I perceived a hurdy gurdy and offered to play on it to amuse the company. This proposal was joyfully accepted of, as there was no one present that could play but one, and he, by his own confession, not contradicted by the others, very indifferently. Contemptible as that accomplishment had appeared to myself formerly, I found it now more useful than I ever had all other musical talents together. The company were so delighted, that all of them contributed enough to carry me to Paris—a very timely supply, as my own pittance was nearly exhausted. This shewed me that no acquirement, however trivial, ought to be despised, if attainable without interfering with something more important, since in life it may be serviceable. I staid there till next day, and set off in company with a carrier, to whom the landlord recommended me. In four days we arrived at Paris, without any other adventure. I passed the house that had been my dear uncle's, in which I had experienced such happiness and such misery. Knowing it was impossible to be

discovered, unless I chose it, I went to Mr. Morin's, but learned that they were all out of town ; and I heard also that you were then at your country seat. Thither I resolved to set out, in hopes of finding protection from my dearest friend, in which I have not been disappointed. Off I came—in three days I arrived in the suburbs of Orleans, on my road to Thoulouse, where I knew I could easily find out your country seat.

By this time the plaster was worn almost off my face, without my perceiving it, so that my natural features were appearing. This I discovered from a holy priest to whom I applied for charity. The religious man eyed me very attentively, and asked me to follow him to his house. After he had given me something to eat and drink, he told me he was convinced I was a beautiful woman in disguise. This director of souls began to take very improper liberties. When I resisted, he took and threw me on a couch, and had, notwithstanding my shrieks, almost accomplished his wicked purpose, when a gentleman unexpectedly knocked at the door. The priest instantly let me out at another door, and I made off. I found this worthy promoter of religion had two rich livings, the rewards, no doubt, of his piety. That church, my dear Count, certainly wants regulation where such men have rich benefices. Why should bad men be employed in an office which requires great virtue? Besides, why should a man be paid for services he does not perform? This man certainly does not do the duties of his two livings.—My dearest Mrs. Lunel, said I, the ecclesiastical establishment is on a very bad footing just now in France, as well as the political; but in the progressive diffusion of light and science this wide, fertile and populous country must be emancipated from civil and ecclesiastical tyranny.

Clergymen are merely servants employed for a certain purpose, viz. promoting piety and morality. These, either individuals or ranks of them which do so, deserve their salaries, if not greater than the service, but NONE ELSE, whether DIGNITARIES or not.—But be so good, my dearest Mrs. Lunel, as proceed with your narration.—Mrs. Lunel then went on.—I applied next to a shopkeeper, whose face prepossessed me in his favour, and was kindly received both by him and his wife: they both seemed very industrious and very chearful, but were poor, being much oppressed by the very clergyman from whose clutches I had escaped, who had, with the profits of his two livings, purchased the house they rented, and was severe and unjust in his exactions, with which, from his situation, they were obliged to comply. The hard earnings of industry went to support idleness wallowing in luxury. I told that worthy couple I was going to Thoulouse to meet a dear friend, who would relieve me from my distresses. They made me stay some days with them, and on my departure insisted on my accepting six livres.—Their kindness, and that of the rustics on the road, said I, I shall amply repay. All the good offices done you, my dearest Mrs. Lunel, I shall requite; the bad, if possible, revenge.—I shall be extremely happy, my best friend, said she, at the repayment of their beneficence. No debt does a grateful mind pay with such exquisite pleasure as favour conferred in distress.—I travelled from Orleans two days, rested a third, and was the fourth about two miles on my road when was overtaken by violent storm, and obliged to take shelter in an adjoining wood, there being no house near. The rain penetrating through the trees, I looked about to see if I could find any better place to defend me, and at last espied a cave. Having from hardship acquired courage, I boldly entered; when what was my surprise and alarm when a man appeared and demanded what I wanted. In great trepidation I told him whither I was bound, and what brought me there. He then in a voice commanding, but not stern, bid me follow him through a dark passage. Obeying his orders, I did so, and found myself amidst four men with arms lying near them. The man whom I first saw bid me fear nothing.—I see, says he, in your face, sentiments above your apparent condition, and fear not your making an ungrateful return. You probably suspect our profession. We were all formerly in creditable circumstances, on

good farms ; but what with the exactions of our landlords, *churchmen*, we are reduced to distress, and obliged to prey by one species of injustice on that society from which we were driven by another.—What, Sir, said I, encouraged by his behaviour, are churchmen the most severe of landlords ? The nobility are oppressive enough, Heaven knows, to support their luxury and ostentatious vanity at Court; but they have some regard to their families, and as their possessions are hereditary, do not make such exactions as would ruin their tenants altogether, as that would eventually hurt their estates. But churchmen, as their possessions are not hereditary, make the most of the present by distressing the tenants. Until they are paid, like other servants, by precise wages in money, and not by lands, a great portion of our countrymen must be distressed. One of the men now went out, and returned with an account that the rain was over. The chief, for so he appeared, then attended me till within sight of a village, and then left me, flipping a six livre piece into my hand. I proceeded to the village, entered into an obscure public house, and asked for something to eat and drink. I fared very sorrily, and night approaching I requested a bed, which, on my producing my money, was accorded. In the morning, when the bill was presented, I found it amounted to two thirds of my fortune. In my situation, to dispute would have been vain, and might have been dangerous. In two days more I had exhausted all my finances. Travelling in the evening over a common, I was overtaken by an old soldier, who, after a very short address, began to make love to me, and was eager to gain the victory at the first onset. To refuse him flatly would have been very imprudent; I therefore amused him with hopes that he might be successful at the first public house we should come to. In half an hour we arrived at a solitary house, where the soldier proposed calling: I was necessitated to comply. In we went. My gallant called for some wine, and ordered supper. I had before my entrance had hopes that I might find protection from the people of the house; but soon found reason to believe they were devoted to the soldier, who was, it seems, an old friend. Meanwhile the soldier, landlord, and landlady, drank very jovially, urging me to join, which I eluded on pretence of a violent head-ach. The hero excused me, apprehensive that drink might render me unfit for his purpose. Supper was brought in; the glass continuing to circulate quickly. The son of Mars, after swallowing a large bumper of brandy to qualify his wine, now, much intoxicated, proposed going to bed. I thought of Penelope's expedient, and begged some time not to weave, but to patch my dress. He agreed, probably at that time, like her suitors, more fond of the table, than mindful of love. In a short time, after a concert of roaring and swearing, with the bottle for an accompaniment, they all fell fast asleep, and began a no less-melodious concert of snoring. I took the opportunity of stealing away; walked all night; stopped at a village some miles from this place for an hour or two to refresh myself: I then moved forwards, and was just entering this place when the soldier overtook me. I came into the inn to avoid him: there I saw the object of my journey: the rest you know.

Mrs Lunel here finished her narration. I assured her her sufferings were, as far as my exertions could go, at an end. I then informed her of all that had passed in her absence. She expressed the most anxious eagerness to see her boy and Mrs. Montange. I dispatched an express for the latter, wishing her to be present at the first interview with the former. Mrs. Lunel recovered apace, and when Mr. and Mrs. Montange arrived was almost well. The meeting between the two friends was extremely affecting. Meanwhile the boy was by my secret orders arrived. After some preparation he was introduced. To paint that scene would be either unnecessary or impracticable—the first to those that have hearts, the last to those who have none. We were all charmed with the child's striking resemblance to his lovely mother, and also pleased that in some measure his features resembled Lunel. We deliberated how to act concerning that monster, and resolved to set out for Paris immediately. In a few days we arrived there; consulted Mr. Morin, who advised Mrs.

Lunel to state on oath all the circumstances of Lunel's bad usage of her, and to sue for a divorce and the restitution of her own fortune.

Being well informed that Lunel was in London, I proposed going thither immediately, to call him and his cowardly associates to an account. Mr. Montange represented him as no object for the personal chastisement of a gentleman; but at the same time recommended an interview with him to intimidate him to grant advantageous terms. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Montange and I should set off for London, and Mr. Morin, with the ladies, follow us. In two days we arrived, put up at Lothian's Hotel, which had been often praised by noblemen and gentlemen from England whom I met with abroad. We traced Lunel, by report, to a gaming brothel in Pall Mall; but heard he had left town about a week before to go to Doncaster races. We set off for the north at seven in the evening. As we were some miles beyond Hatfield, in a wood, we came up to a chaise attacked by highwaymen. One fellow rode up, commanding us to stop at our peril—I fired a pistol, wounded the villain, and, springing from the chaise, went up to the other, where a robber had been rifling, with his horse standing by, but was then mounting. I knocked him down with a cane, whilst Mr. Montange came up to the chaise. We found a gentleman very much wounded. A person who was with him told us that the gentleman was his master, and a foreigner; that two highwaymen had set on them; that the gentleman was going to make no resistance, but that he unfortunately had fired. One of the robbers fired in return, and caused the catastrophe we witnessed. His master's name, he told us, was Lunel.—Lunel ! cried I.—Yes, says he : I was told he had left his country for an affair of honour.

The moon, which had been under a cloud, now shining, I was convinced he was the identical Lunel, the object of our search. I told the servant I knew his master, and ordered the chaise back to Hatfield; there we staid all night. In the morning I went to Lunel's apartment, and found him very bad, but in his senses. His servant had just been telling him that a foreign gentleman who knew him had been very assiduous and kind. On seeing me, and being told I was the gentleman, Heavens! cried he, the man I most injured and wished to assassinate, returning my base designs with kindness! and fainted away. In some time he recovered so far as to assure me he had, before he saw me, resolved to make amends for his behaviour. He had, he said, been stripped of all his money at Doncaster. His associates had deserted him in his distress; but a faithful English servant had insisted on his accepting his purse. Ruminating on the road on his misfortunes, he considered them as a judgement for his brutality to his wife and child, and his baseness to me, and that he was determined to make every restitution possible.—I assured him my resentment ceased with his penitence. Meanwhile I ordered a litter, and had him conveyed to the Mitre at Barnet, where he was most tenderly treated by the fair and humane hostess. The next day we arrived in town. Lunel was conveyed to his lodgings, very weak. The next morning he desired me to witness his last will, with Mr. Montange, and dictated it to an attorney he had sent for. He had asked an eminent physician whether he did not think him in such a state as to render it necessary to settle his affairs. With much pressing, the physician acknowledged it was.

He accordingly dictated to the following purport:—That all his hereditary estate should devolve on his son, under the guardianship of his mother and me; that his wife's fortune should be her own property. He bequeathed 24,000 livres (1000L. English money) to the servant who had not deserted him in his distress, and several smaller sums to other domestics. He would also have left a legacy for what the French once called *pious uses*, had I not represented to him the misapplication of gifts to the church; that what was really by the donor intended to do good was employed only in supplying the luxury of

ecclesiastics. —Montange and I were witnesses to the will.—After that was finished, and we were alone, he appeared very composed. He told me he hoped his endeavours to redress the injuries he had done would be accepted by Heaven as proof of his penitence.—Montange observed, that as the end of all religion was to do good, and promote happiness, whoever, from compunction for pursuing a contrary course, and desire of making up for it, did endeavour to make amends, would, in his opinion, go to Heaven.—Lunel then began to speak of faith; but we both declared, that, *being no divines*, we were convinced that merit depended on *the will*, not the *understanding*, of which last exclusively faith is a work.—He then very pathetically begged pardon of God, and prayed for the happiness of his wife and child, and gave over speaking.—I went out with Montange to Lothian's to inquire if our friends were arrived, and found a servant, who was just come to tell us they were at Canterbury, and would be with us next day.—We returned to Lunel, and found him much worse from his mental exertion and agitation.—We had given orders to have a chaise ready to meet our friends: that was at the door when the servant of poor Lunel came hastily to us, telling us his master was at the point of death.—Alarmed, I rushed to his apartment, and found him almost expiring. He squeezed my hand, and in a voice hardly articulate recommended his wife and child to my protection, and not long after breathed his last.

Mrs. Lunel and her friends came to London that day, and were informed by Montange (I being at Lunel's) of the great change that had taken place.—I soon joined them, and found my dearest Mrs. Lunel in great sorrow for the death of her husband, whose penitence she had just heard. She remembered him no longer as her oppressor, but as a misguided man who had repented of his misconduct. A good heart remembers injuries no longer than it conceives the intention which produced them exists.—We had the remains of the unfortunate Lunel embalmed, at the express desire of his widow, and as soon as possible returned to France, where they were deposited in the family vault.—The relations of Mr. Lunel vied with one another in testifying their approbation of his wife and me for our generous conduct.

All pecuniary matters were settled according to the will, and to our satisfaction. I earnestly solicited Mrs. Lunel, now that she was her own mistress, to give her hand to me. She, with a frankness and grace peculiar to herself, declared she would be mine as soon as propriety would permit; but that till a year after her late husband's death she would hear no more on that subject. I found means to abridge the time. About eight months after Lunel's decease my lovely angel became Countess Touloussin. Since that time our days have passed in an uninterrupted tide of prosperity and happiness.

Within ten months of our marriage she blessed me with a sweet little girl. We have since had two fine boys, and another girl. Young Lunel is now sixteen years of age, and a handsome and accomplished youth. Our eldest daughter is thirteen, and the express image of her mother.—The intimacy between the Montange family and ours is still closer than ever, and extends to our young people.

I have rewarded all the friends of my dear wife in her distress. As to her enemies, they shall have no punishment but what their own consciences inflict. In short, Fortune seems resolved to make us amends for her frowns; and even among a people happy in their emancipation from monarchical, aristocratical, and ecclesiastical usurpation, by their own spirited and well-directed exertions, there is not now a happier couple than the Count and Countess Touloussin.

FINIS.