

THE COTTAGE OF FRIENDSHIP

Chawton House Library

THE COTTAGE OF FRIENDSHIP,

A LEGENDARY PASTORAL.

By SILVIANA PASTORELLA

“Lo! Colin, here the place, whose pleasant sight
From other shades hath weaned my wand’ring mind:
Tell me, what wants me here, to work delight?
The simple air, the gentle warbling wind,
So calm, so cool, as no where else I find:
The grassy ground with dainty daisies dight,
The bramble bush, where birds of every kind
To th’ water-fall their tunes attemper right.”

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PREFACE

IF any part of a book is written with humility, it is generally the preface. The only cause I can assign for such affected modesty, is to put the critics in good humour; this is paying their candour and impartiality so poor a compliment, that I shall not attempt to apologize for the imperfections of the following pages; neither take away the relish of the story by producing a bill of fare, which is frequently the case in a preface. May this composition, then, receive the merit it justly deserves, to keep up the spirits of the Author!--- but flattery cannot be admitted in the Cottage of Friendship.

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WHEN the human heart is oppressed with affliction, it is apt to chuse those scenes which inspire what is termed a melancholy pleasure, where the beauties of nature in its romantic and most seclude state affords room for a series of uninterrupted reflections, free from the molestation of an insipid or intruding multitude.

Mr. Bromley was one of those men who could only taste the smallest comfort from such refined and pensive meditations: he had early in life lost the sole female object that could ever engage his affections, and the only alleviation to his sorrows was to search after those situations which could give him the satisfaction of ruminating on past misfortunes, and where he might enjoy the charms of rural life, and admire and adore that Power who has been so beneficent to his creatures, that he not only supplies them with food and raiment, but also feasts the eye with the most fertile meadows, woods, hills, dales, and the richest views that can please the sight, or gratify the nicest observer.

Mr. Bromley had visited almost every spot in England worthy peculiar remark; and his last excursion was into Berkshire.---It was the middle of summer, and the heat excessive; therefore his humanity led him, to give the horses a reprieve during the most fatiguing part of the day, and he ordered his postillion to stop at the next inn, till the fervour of mid-day was somewhat abated: ere he arrived there, he was infinitely delighted to observe that to be the finest county he had yet discovered; the nearer he approached this temporary dwelling, additional beauties presented themselves to his view.

When he alighted from the chaise, he was shewn into a handsome apartment; and if he was charmed before, what were his present sensations, on beholding the most enchanting prospects around him, which before even fancy (highly as she exalts our ideas) had never figured to his imagination! On one side an extensive hanging wood formed a kind of amphitheatre, and was terminated by an ancient and illustrious seat of nobility, which, rising above the shades that surround it, had the most magnificent appearance. To give the final shadow to this well-finished picture, the bottom of the hill was bordered as it were with the dimpling current of old Thames, which, flowing in serpentine meanders, completed this most perfect landscape. On every other side the eye was relieved by that pleasing variety which the pencil of Nature knows so well to execute.

If the Reader has taste (and such I trust he has), his own conceptions will delineate, much better than my pen do, the enraptured feelings of Mr. Bromley.

The horses, which before he only considered from pity, were now perfectly at liberty to rest their weary feet. To have quitted such a place without minute observation, would have been putting every finer nerve upon the rack. And when Sol with milder influence yielded a more genial warmth, when the wanton Zephyrs began to sport with the milk-maids tresses, and Evening approached with all her dewy fragrance; Mr. Bromley could no longer deny himself the luxury of taking a nearer survey when even the perspective had so compensated all his researches.

After he had rambled for some time, and each moment found objects new and pleasing, he discovered a winding path, which was so interwoven with woodbines and eglantine, that it totally excluded every "bright-haired sun-beam."

Though we was on a beautiful terrace which commanded the most extensive views, and there seemed nothing wanting to render this a second Paradise, but to obliterate the sin of

our first Mother; yet Mr. Bromley had a strong propensity to see whither this little opening would convey him, which was only wide enough for two people to walk a-breast; but what excited his curiosity still more, on each side of it was planted different shrubs, which were in bloom, and perfumed the air with their sweets.

Having pursued his way through many turnings, he at length found himself upon the finest verdure, interspersed with wild thyme, and surrounded with every flower, that could embellish this most delightful spot. As the ground on which he stood had the appearance of a garden, tho' laid out with superior taste to any thing he had seen, "There certainly," said he to himself, "must be a near inhabitant to so charming a place!"

While he was looking around, to discover if there could be an adjacent habitation he had not observed, he heard something rustling in a small grove of trees that were behind him: he started, half afraid, and half surprized, when he saw the most beautiful little spaniel, playing with a lamb. As they both appeared equally meek, the one very unlike the upstart puppies of the great world, and the other of course innocent, as its nature is such; he went up to them, and was astonished to find the one as tame as the other, and that the lamb was no more afraid of him than the little dog.

"Well," said he, "I must now be near the abode of happiness. Alas! what a reflection upon man! Had this harmless creature been brought up among mankind in general, it would have run from me as from a wolf. Thus it is with the best of us in life: if we ourselves are harmless and unaccustomed to deceit, we do not suspect it in others. Did this poor lamb know how brutally its fellows are treated by our race, it would have dreaded falling a victim to inhumanity, and therefore shunned me; also the spaniel, never having been disturbed by the robber or the murderer, is passive as its companion."

They had both collars fastened round their necks, which made Mr. Bromley very solicitous to see if there was any inscription, that might lead to a discovery of the owner; the dog's was a silver one with the following words:

"Shouldest thou be so unfortunate to stray from the asylum of friendship, may some kind wanderer restore thee safely to the Sisters of the Cottage!"

The same was written on a gold collar, and tied with a blue ribbon on the lamb's neck.

"Surely," said Mr. Bromley, "this must be enchantment, or a vision! However, I will lose no time to seek our the Cottage of Friendship. Perhaps," thought he, "I may be the wanderer, and bring comfort to the sisters, in having found their little favourites."

He therefore took up the spaniel, and the lamb followed its affectionate play-mate: but how surprized was he, in passing around the grove of trees from whence came the objects of his attention, to perceive a small thatched building!

It stood in a crescent of stately oaks, which served as a relief to the paler greens that more nearly encircled this seat of rusticity. In the front of it was a field, with here and there a clump of trees. In it was a small flock of sheep and a cow. Close to the cottage was a continuation of the garden already described. The roof of the dwelling was thatched, and the other part seemed composed of roots and flints; it was entwined with ivy, honey-suckles, and jasmynes, which, as if aware of the content within, had crept thro' the window of one of the apartments to join the happy Sisters.

So much was Mr. Bromley pleased with the outside, and, like human-kind in general, always wishing to attain a something we are not possessed of, Mr. Bromley had a great desire to see the fair Cottagers, of whom he entertained the highest idea; but the little dog and lamb were too near for him to frame any excuse of having found them astray; and night drawing on apace, he fancied he might alarm the peaceful inhabitants, and likewise be too late to find his road back. He therefore determined to prolong his visit till the next morning, and ruminates on some plausible apology for disturbing their repose. As the door was shut, and no one could be seen or heard, he thought they might retire and rise early, or be engaged in some evening duties they would not chuse to be interrupted in.

As Mr. Bromley returned, he had scarcely emerged from the little path, before he saw a female figure advancing towards him; but, as she had a milk-pail on one arm, and a basket of strawberries on the other, he supposed she was, at least, only an attendant on the amiable Friends.

As she came nearer, he saw she was a pretty girl, and appeared very young. She had a chip-hat on, with green ribands, and otherwise attired as a neat cottager. When she passed Mr. Bromley, she was singing some country song, and seemed perfectly unused to disguise.

He had a great inclination to have asked her from whence she came, and whither she was going; but diffidence restrained his curiosity.

At first he was astonished she did not shew some surprize at meeting a stranger in that sequestered walk; but, when he recollected it must lead to that seat which belonged to the owner of the woods, and doubtless many people passed that road, he ceased to wonder, and arrived at the inn full of the most ardent wishes for the return of morning.

The mind, when elated with expectation of pleasure, can seldom sufficiently calm itself to admit of sleep; the ideas must be quiet and undisturbed, or totally spent with sorrow, ere that balmy restorer can shed his influence over our senses; there is may readily be supposed, that an imagination like Mr. Bromley's, so crowded with the imagery of what he had discovered, and pleased with the ideas of what he had yet to see, could not easily be composed; if he forgot himself, the cottage was remembered; and as often as it appeared to his fancy, he awaked to disappointment. However, that night, which seemed the longest he had known, at length bade him adieu; and as early as he could with any propriety he bent his steps toward the seat of harmony.

When he drew near the happy spot, he felt a timidity which had almost overpowered his resolution; but he roused himself from his imaginary fears by the reflection, that sincere friendship is generally attended by most other virtues, especially those of forgiveness and condescension; and from that idea he pursued his walk with additional courage.

When he approached the grove of trees, the little dog ran up to him, licked his hands, and seemed to own him as a third inhabitant of the sweet abode.

This encouraged Mr. Bromley to proceed to the front of the cottage, where he saw the same female who passed him the night before. She was seated on a stool, spinning. Mr. Bromley would have retreated; but the innocent girl left her wheel, and running up to him, said,

“Pray, Sir, have you lost your way? or did you want my mistress?”

Mr. Bromley replied, "He was very much ashamed to intrude upon the happy life they led; but ---"

"Ashamed!" answered this daughter of simplicity, "then I am sure you are a bad man, for no good one has any reason to be ashamed of his actions. Come, Feather," said she to the little dog, "let us run in, and take care of our poor mistress; for here is a bad man come to take her away."

She would have hastened from him; but, Mr. Bromley stopping her, said,

"Do not be alarmed, my dear; I did not mean I was ashamed of having committed any ill; but, in public life, it is the fashion to say frequently more than we think, and bad habits are too easily contracted; when I spoke, I had forgotten I was happily retired from its deceits and insincerity."

"Well," said the harmless maiden, "I am glad I don't live amongst ye: my mistresses and I never speak what we do not mean; but tell me what you are ashamed of that is not wrong."

"Then," said Mr. Bromley, "I will be explicit; I am so delighted with the outside of this cottage, that I have a great desire to become acquainted with the owners of it; but I feared I should be deemed impertinent, troublesome, and an unwelcome guest, as I am a traveller from that tumultuous world you are so superior to."

"My mistresses are very good," answered the fair rustic; "and I am sure they will be happy to see any gentleman who is so well-looking, and speaks so prettily."

What a proof this of the innocence of her heart! and also how unfit for *any other* situation!

"Her youngest lady," she said, "was at home; but the eldest with her lamb was gone to a poor woman, who was ill, to carry her children some money; but, if Mr. Bromley would like to see her Mistress Lavinia, she was at work in the Bower."

Mr Bromley said, "if she would make some introduction for him, he should be much indebted to her."

This she instantly complied with, and returned in a few minutes, to say, "Lavinia would admit him."

The first room he passed thro' was ornamented with various pictures, which seemed to have been executed by the ladies themselves. In it stood a harpsichord, and a guittar lay on the table; also many drawings and implements for painting.

This led to the Bower; the same shrubs which graced the outside, also beautified this apartment within; and the addition of roses, and many other sweets, which lent their aid to adorn this rural spot, entwining themselves in a circumambient form entirely round the sides of the room, rendered it the most fragrant and delightful Bower Mr. Bromley had ever seen. There were a number of little birds, which hopped in or out as nature directed them, and sang and built their nests in the different branches that enriched this enchanting arbour. Here restraint and confinement were banished, and every bird, insect, or animal, found the dwelling of tenderness and benevolence.

Figure to yourself, Reader, such a scene as this, and with nothing more you must pronounce it an Elysium; but, to make it more complete, when Mr. Bromley entered, Lavinia was seated there. She had been feeding a favourite nightingale, and it was pouring forth its gratitude in a song.

Lavinia was an elegant figure; but I hope it is sufficient to say, though not customary in these compositions, that she had rather a more pleasing face than a beautiful one; a fine openness of countenance adorned her features, shaded with the most delicate tints of melancholy, and softened with the benignity of religion. She was dressed in a loose white muslin vest, fastened with a green sash. Her hair was a pale-brown, and flowed in ringlets to her waist. She had a wreath of myrtle in blossom round her head, which was the only ornament she wore. She was amusing herself with dividing various kinds of moss.

As Mr. Bromley advanced, she rose; and Nature's colouring added a lively tinge to the cheek of modesty. She received him with the smile of meekness and condescension, and would have spoken; but Mr. Bromley interrupted her in the following words:

"Can you forgive, Madam, this daring intrusion from one who has no pretension or apology to offer for thus invading the holy sanctuary of friendship? I am a wanderer, in pursuit of some alleviation to a heart almost overwhelmed with affliction. Ever an admirer of rusticity, I have constantly chosen those places which could most forcibly gratify the only satisfaction now left me on this side the grave. Strolling in the wood, I espied the little path which leads to your peaceful habitation. Never expecting to find the seat of happiness in this strange motley world, wonder not, Madam, that, when I had discovered it, my soul was in such exstasy, it carried me beyond myself; and to be known to the owners of it, was a luxury I could not resist. Unused to dissimulate, and thinking that Art was an outcast here, I determined to throw myself at the feet of Virtue, and implore that pity which not even an insect is here denied; but, you will say, they are innocent; while man, the lord of the creation, and who ought to be the wisest and best, is most to be dreaded. His knowledge is often the instrument of destruction to his fellow-creatures; therefore to bid you fear me not, will be, alas! no consolation to any alarm you may have imbibed; but if you will favour me so far, gentle Lady, as to listen to my unhappy story, methinks your sympathy will lighten my distresses; and if I may have permission to be sometimes a visiter at the happy Cottage, you shall be perfectly satisfied as to the truth of my assertions, and be free from any apprehensions that I have deceived you."

Mr. Bromley had so much the appearance of an honest man, and he apparently felt so strongly every sentence he uttered, that Lavinia was entirely relieved from any anxiety she might at first have suffered.

She said, "His manner bore so little the aspect of disguise, that she was already interested in his history," but added, "that before two young women could with propriety admit a male visitor, they must be certain he was the character he represented himself to be."

She solicited his forgiveness for speaking so abruptly; but said, "If he ventured into rural life, he must expect Sincerity in her plainest garb."

Mr. Bromley thanked Lavinia for having shewn him so much candour, and would have proceeded to his narrative; but she begged he would defer that kindness till the return of her friend Miranda, "who," she said, "always shared her pleasures."

She then ordered Lucinda (for that was the name of the innocent attendant) to procure Mr. Bromley some refreshment. As it was early, she brought him a bason of new milk, with some of the nicest butter and home-made cake he had ever tasted.

Lavinia observed, "That their whole subsistence was vegetables, fruits, and milk, with wines made by their own hands, and composed from some of the flowers of their planting." She said, "Since their retirement, they ceased to find a relish for that food which is daily massacred to pamper the luxurious appetites of man." She observed, "That if happiness could be enjoyed without alloy, it would certainly have found admittance in their little cottage; but, alas!" said Lavinia (and a tear twinkled in her eye), "if we have nothing in the present, yet the past or the future will in some degree cast a cloud over the serenest horizon."

Here a deep sigh escaped her; and Mr. Bromley found that it is in other regions we must look for pleasure, unadulterated with pain; but, as Religion is the path, he perceived, when at Friendship's Cottage, he was still pursuing that desirable abode.

Thus far he felt happy, and was blessing his lucky fortune, when Miranda returned from her charitable excursion. As Lucinda had given her some information of the stranger who was with Lavinia, she was not surprized to see a gentleman with her friend.

Lavinia gave an explanation of Mr. Bromley's visit, which before had been painful to him to relate.

Miranda appeared equally affable as her companion, and still more desirous if possible to hear his history.

She was a year or two older than Lavinia, and had a prettier face, though not so elegant a form. She was the picture of sweetness and humility, with rather a more sprightly countenance than her sister friend. When she entered she had on a veil, which she instantly threw off. Her hair was nearly the colour of Lavinia's, and her head dressed the same; except that the wreath as of willow; otherwise they were attired alike.

When they were both seated, the one at her drawing, and the other selecting moss and shells, while the happy Lucinda sat on the turf, amusing herself with her voice and her wheel, the ladies solicited Mr. Bromley to oblige them, by fulfilling the kind promise he had already made, of relating the different incidents of his past life.

Mr. Bromley said, "It would give him particular pleasure to gratify their desires; but feared awakening that sensibility which was so apparent an addition to their many other virtues."

However, persuaded by the earnest entreaties of the fair sisters, he thus began:

"My father was a Colonel in the army. He had an independent income; but, being partial to the military life, he purchased a commission, and as he was a man much respected, he rose early to this high rank. He married a handsome woman with a large fortune. I was the only child of his that lived; and, being of a volatile disposition, I entreated my father to procure me an ensigncy, which he readily complied with. I soon entered into all the gaieties of life, and was so perfectly a fashionable man, that I laughed at the idea of being in love. The army is generally the means of introducing men into the first circles, provided they have a taste for high life, which was ever my ambition; and my father was of the same opinion. Though I knew many beautiful young women, not one had made the slightest impression on my heart, which induced them to give me the appellation of 'The frigid beau.' I was always

attentive and polite to the ladies; but it was from mere ceremony, and that they should not style me a perfect brute: indeed I began to imagine myself, that I was composed of different materials from mankind in general. I had the greatest veneration for the married state; but I had yet found no woman, who could sufficiently engage my affections, to make her my partner for life; and I detected the thought of profaning so holy a ceremony, by perjuring myself in that most sacred house, only from motives of interest; a practice, alas! too general, and too little considered by numbers in the world.

“I began to fear I was not blessed with the finer feelings of sensibility; and yet I never wanted a tear or a sigh when called forth by the voice of affliction. One day, while I was thus ruminating, and almost totally out of conceit with my own fancied insipidity, I was roused from my contemplation by the entrance of a Mr. Brookland, one of my intimate friends in the same regiment I belonged to. He said he came to invite me to go with him to his father’s house in ---shire, where, he told me, we should be very merry, and have dances every night.-- ‘You will then,’ says he, ‘Charles, certainly throw off that fence of steel which has so long guarded thine obdurate heart.’ I smiled, and answered, ‘I never wished to shield it from the pleasures of domestic society, and hoped that I should soon meet with a woman who could engage my affections.’

“The next week we set off to Brookland-hall, where ‘Mirth and all her Crew’ were indeed assembled. It being a spacious mansion, and the owners very hospitable, every kind of diversion was thought of to entertain. There were a number of young people of both sexes in the house, which, besides many daily visitors, made up a very large circle. Though there were several handsome women, they appeared all alike indifferent to me.

“Having been at Brookland-hall near a week, and much teased by my companions for my insensibility to the many charms around me, I was at last so vexed with myself, that from a very animated character I became dull and melancholy.

“One day after dinner a dance was proposed for the evening; but I was so surfeited with a continual round of gaiety, that I determined to enjoy my own reflections uninterrupted. I therefore begged leave of absence that evening, saying, ‘I wished to execute some particular business.’

“The evening was pleasant, therefore I took a long ramble, and returned through a gentleman’s park. The country was new to me, and the pleasure of diverting myself with my own meditations, being a satisfaction I could seldom partake of, I had strolled some miles before I was aware of the distance I had walked.

“It was an evening in May, and the moon shone most delightfully resplendent, and played between the leaves of the large oaks that surrounded the park. Every thing was silent, except the neighbouring village cur, or the dusky beetle humming as he passes the ear of the nightly wanderer.

“This was a moment fitted for contemplation; ‘Therefore let me,’ said I, ‘enjoy that delight which another day I shall not be allowed;’ and I seated myself at the foot of a spreading beech, to admire the wonders of that power who is so abundantly indulgent to us, who are daily counter-acting his commands!

“While I was thus holding converse with myself, a female figure passed me in deep mourning; she walked slowly along, and seemed enrapt in thought. I was more surprized than

alarmed at so singular a circumstance, and resolved to follow her at a little distance, so that she might not observe me.

“By the light of the moon I could discover she was an elegant figure, and appeared to be a person of distinction.

“I pursued her very softly, and was resolved to find out whither she was going. I perceived she had on her arm a silver basket.

“After coming to a dark avenue, shaded on each side with weeping willows, I saw at the end of it one much larger than the rest, under which stood a marble urn.

“I then conjectured the subject of the fair mourner’s pursuit, and placing myself directly behind the tree, under which this memento of affliction stood, I could see and hear every thing that passed, undiscovered.

“After kneeling for some minutes, engaged in silent prayer, she rose, and, unlocking the urn, sprinkled its contents with many different essences: after which with a solemn and audible tone she pronounced these words:

“Shade of my much-honoured parent! if thou canst deny thyself one short moment of perfect bliss, look down with pity on the unhappy Juliana, who can never cease to lament thee! Heavenly Providence! bestow on her length of years, to perform these obsequies to his blessed memory; and may the last worldly office of the wretched Juliana be to surround his ashes with the crown of filial love! so will it cast lighter shade over her deepest melancholy; and she will depart to the silent tomb in peace!”

“When she had shed some tears over the urn, she encircled it with a garland of the most odoriferous flowers, and was returning from her evening duty.

“As I had the most earnest desire to sympathize with the distresses of the fair sufferer, I crept from my retirement, and met her in the avenue.

“She started at seeing a stranger in that spot, which before she thought was only visited by herself, but when I had related the cause of my being there, and entreated her forgiveness for my curiosity, she looked with so much condescension, affability, and graceful dignity, she smiled, like an April sun-beam, so sweetly through her tears, that my flinty heart yielded itself a willing captive to the beautiful Juliana.

“Having given her the short annals of my little history, and told her from whence I came, she said, she had been well acquainted with Mr. Brookland’s family, and did not question the veracity of my account. ‘My poor father,’ said Juliana, ‘died in Paris, where he went for a short time to see an old relation; and it was with much difficulty I could obtain the ashes you have seen me lamenting over, which are deposited in that urn.’

“She added, ‘She had no other near relation; her mother died in child-birth of her; and she had neither brother or sister.’

“She observed, ‘That what gave her most uneasiness, next to her irreparable loss, was, that the spot which she had been bred up in would revert to a man who bore an infamous character.’

“And that, ‘A few short months would deprive her of the only thing in life that could give her satisfaction; and those walks, which ever brought to her mind some pleasing

conversations she had enjoyed with her dear father, she must for ever be torn from. Recollection', added Juliana, 'in our happier moments almost renews the luxury of former delights; but', continued she (and the most majestic smile beamed upon her countenance), 'one inestimable gem no one can deprive me of, the last earthly remains of my valued parent.'

"This reflection seemed in some degree to compose her shattered spirits, and by this time we had reached her mansion. As it was late, and some fleecy clouds obscured the radiance of the moon, Juliana requested an attendant might accompany me to the hall.

"When the moment of departure arrived, a something I had never felt cast a gloom over my imagination, and an involuntary sigh escaped me; it was the most reluctant adieu I had ever uttered; nor could I take my leave, till the angelic Juliana had given me permission to visit her again.

"As I returned, the road which before I so much admired seemed now rugged and uncomfortable, and the nearer I approached the hall, the more difficulties strewed themselves in my way.

"When I arrived, I found the inhabitants very joyous, and nothing was heard but music and dancing.

"Not in a state of mind to partake of the gaieties of life, I retired to my own apartment, where the scene I had just quitted, and the present one, formed so striking a contrast, that it furnished me with many different ideas; but I preferred the society of the pensive Juliana to all the vain amusements an insipid world could afford me.

"Full of a thousand various hopes and fears, but not one estranged from the mistress of my heart, I endeavoured to take a short repose, and determined the following day to revisit the fair object of my regard.

When I was (though reluctantly) obliged to attend the next morning at breakfast, every one raillied me on my absenting myself the preceding evening, and tried to tantalize me, by describing the pleasures of it in the most lively colours. Little did they imagine what a poor effect it would have upon me, and how much I would give to escape such another evening, could I pass it like the former.

"Several sorts of amusements were proposed, such as walking, fishing, riding, &c. and each party said with a smile, 'That if I would promise not to offend again, they would admit me.'

"I thanked them; but said, 'I could make no such declaration, therefore would not trespass on their civility;' and added, 'that having some affairs of importance to transact, I desired they would look on me as a very uncertain attendant on their pursuits.'

"They knew I was once very volatile, and were all amazingly astonished at the sudden change.

"Among the gentlemen, who were most interested in my welfare, and who, though younger, had ever been my particular friends, was Captain Henry Mellish.

At the name of Mellish, Miranda turned pale; the rose-bud withered on her cheek, and she looked like the modest snow-drop on which the early dew hangs pendant.

At length she raised her drooping head, and exclaimed, "Alas, my Henry! and can it be possible I now behold the friend of the much-loved owner of my heart! But I will, I must listen to your story; therefore, begone, Reflection, thou busy tormentor, thou dismal phantom haunting the afflicted mind! would I could forget every thing but Lavinia and my cottage! Though, alas! I fear, no time can wear away the impression while Memory keeps her seat. Pardon me, Mr. Bromley, for this digression; which has, like all distresses, brought some good in its train; though before I had no doubts of the truth of the interesting history you are relating, yet this confirms it entirely, and I shall have the additional pleasure of conversing on the excellencies of the unfortunate Henry."

She said, "She had frequently heard him speak of the worthy Bromley; but as a man of the strictest integrity he had never divulged one incident of his fate."

Miranda then intreated Mr. Bromley to proceed, saying, "From the first appearance of him she was particularly anxious to hear his story, though she could not then discover the cause."

Mr. Bromley said, "Though he was concerned at having awakened the remembrance of woe, yet he was happy he could prove to them that he was relating the strictest truth, and should continue his melancholy recital with much greater satisfaction to himself."

Lavinia dropt a sympathetic tear for her friend; but in a short time they were more composed, and Mr. Bromley thus renewed his story.

"Mr. Mellish was much concerned at the sudden gravity which had taken such full possession of me, and begged that I would accompany him in a walk; saying he had excused himself likewise from joining any party that morning. While we were deliberating which way we should go, we heard the following conversation in the next room.

"'What!' says Miss Flirtilla, 'are we to be deprived of two beaux this morning, and the smartest of the company also? I had pictured to myself a charming ride on horseback; but these men of fashion, as they call themselves, never know their own minds two minutes together: one moment they make us believe they are dying for us, and the next they behave like bears; and yet we think life insupportable without them.'

"'Oh!' says Miss Vainlove, 'they only do it to try if we have any regard for them; did you observe how earnestly Mellish looked at me when he proposed a walk with Bromley Oh, my dear, you do not know their way so well as I do; you have not left the deplorable country above two years; it is impossible you should know anything of the tonish scenes of life that have but just quitted the shady groves, the purling streams, and tinkling sheep-bells. Come, Maria, let us take our ride together, and boast of it as the pleasantest we ever had; that will tease them.

"During this modern chit-chat, which we could not help listening to, as it concerned us, we were deeply interested in matters of much greater importance to our peace than Miss Flirtilla or Miss Amelia Vainlove; and we sallied forth to enjoy a *tête à tête*, unmolested by such fashionable dialogues.

"I entrusted my friend with the important secret of my heart. He much approved the excellence of my taste; and said, 'the character of Juliana was most exemplary; and, if report might be credited, she was equally beautiful as amiable.'

"He told me, 'She was the daughter of the late Sir William Somerville, a person as

much distinguished for every valuable quality as Juliana. He died a few months ago abroad; and I have frequently heard,' added Henry, 'she is inconsolable for his loss. I assure you, Charles, I have great reason to believe you are the first stranger she has conversed with since his death. Having been thus favoured, let me advise you to lose no time in declaring your sentiments to her. She is very young, and has lived in the most secluded manner; therefore is most likely without any engagement. That friend, who can sympathize and pity our misfortunes, has a just claim to some regard; and, with a mind of sensibility like Juliana's, it is generally heightened. Sigh not then at the faint shadow of disappointment; believe me, her soft nature is easily won upon, and I can almost venture to pronounce you happy.'

"I have only this material objection," answered I, 'the recent death of her father; but as my stay here will not be very long, and she will soon quit her present mansion, I may never again be blessed with a sight of her.'

"This reflection left no alternative; and I promised Henry to see the fair mourner early in the afternoon, and

"I went to the park as soon as I could be released from the society I was engaged in.

"When I arrived there, a domestic I had never seen told me his lady admitted no company; but begged he might inform her my name; which I readily acquiesced in, as a mixture of hope and vanity led me to imagine I should obtain an interview.

"Surely," said I, 'she cannot shut out the voice of sympathy; it is contrary to the fair Juliana's nature to do so.'

"I determined, however, to be very slow in my departure. After strolling round the flower borders, and pretending to admire every thing worthy inspection, though unknowing whether they were weeds or shrubs, so much was I lost in thought, I involuntarily gathered a sprig of myrtle, which I considered a fortunate circumstance, as it was the most lasting memento I could then obtain of the beautiful Juliana.

"I was sauntering away, absorbed in the deepest melancholy, when, to my inexpressible delight (and the sudden transition almost overpowered me), the same attendant desired I would return. He said, "When Miss Somerville knew who I was, she gave orders for me to be admitted.'

"This particular indulgence animated me with new courage, and with hasty steps I proceeded to the apartment of Juliana.

"She was seated on a sofa of white satten, in a magnificent saloon, furnished in the most splendid manner. On a table before her, were a number of different ingredients for painting, and she appeared to have been copying the portrait of a gentleman.

"When I entered, she was sitting in a pensive attitude, leaning her cheek upon her hand. As I approached, I fancied the clouds of sorrow, which hung so heavily on her beautiful brow, seemed to disperse; and the serenity of satisfaction added lustre to her eye. She was the figure of Patience surrounded with all her meek-eyed attendants, the Virtues and the Graces.

"Thus looked the lovely Juliana! But, when she spoke, her sentiments were so just, elegant, and so full of resignation, that a heart of adamant could not have remained unmoved; much less mine, which was already chained with everlasting regard.

“She told me, ‘She could never forget the kind sensibility I had shewn for her affliction. Her mind,’ she said, ‘was much more calm; for till the last evening her sole comforter was Religion; that,’ she owned, ‘was a never-failing resource: but the additional solace of a friend was an infinite relief in sorrow.’ She observed, ‘the only amusement she could partake of, was being occupied in any thing which related to her dear parent, and she had been employing herself in drawing his resemblance from a picture, which was the greatest likeness.’

“This information was an infinite comfort to my mind, as I dreaded lest the portrait was of some favoured lover. Many times was I ready to throw myself at her feet, and declare my passion; and as often did my resolution fail me.

“I assured her, ‘that, if I could be of any service to her, I entreated she would command me; that the pleasure I received in her presence was of so great consequence to my peace, that, unless she would bless me with her hand, my future misery must be inevitable, and I hoped my continuance of affection might be deserving of some small return from the only object who could ever possess my invariable regard.’ I solicited a thousand pardons for my temerity, ‘which,’ I said, ‘I could not have had the presumption to discover but at the shrine of mildness, gentleness, and pity. And now,’ I exclaimed, ‘most inestimable fair-one, pronounce my sentence; it must either be the happiest or most miserable; there can be no mediocrity.’

“That face, which was before the seat of calm tranquillity, and always reflected the inward sensations of the heart, now underwent the various changes of surprize and contemplation.

“After a silent pause of some minutes, and to me they appeared hours, the lovely Juliana thus accosted me.

“‘And would you, Mr. Bromley, resign all the luxuries and allurements of a gay world, to live amidst the shades of retirement with the unfortunate Juliana? It is true, you are the friend of sorrow; but can the human mind, prone as it is to the love of pleasure, give up all its delights to live sequestered with an unhappy woman? When you petition my hand, you are not aware of the gloom that will encircle it. Were I possessed of millions, I could never enter into the ideal charms of a gaudy world. No, Mr. Bromley, you little imagine what you request; think no more of the wretched Juliana, who will pass her future days sacred to her God, and in living so that she may at that awful period, when life’s feeble lamp is fluttering in the socket, depart in peace with the happy idea of again beholding her much loved father.’

“‘If there are no other obstacles to divide me from the empress of my heart,’ answered I with emotion, ‘then am I blessed indeed! Think not so meanly of me, fairest Juliana, as to imagine when I addressed you it was to be endowed with riches and magnificence; permit me to undeceive you, and believe me when I declare, I would rather pass my days in the utmost indigence with you, than in a palace deprived of your pleasing society. Whatever manner of life you may chuse will be a luxury to me. Be candid enough then to fix my destiny; the fear of losing you has rendered me thus abrupt; but hearts, like yours, are full of forgiveness. Oblige me then, most excellent of your sex, with such a reply as may compleat my ardent desires.’

“‘Dissimulation,’ replied the amiable Juliana, ‘has ever been my aversion; neither does female delicacy in this instance require it. I will freely own to you, that your friendly consolation has been a powerful advocate in your favour; and the world speaks so largely in

your praise, that I have only the fear of making you unhappy from the retired manner I mean to spend my future days. Gaiety was never agreeable to me, and now it is still a more unwelcome guest; therefore, if you are not perfectly certain such a life would be pleasing to you, endeavour to forget the melancholy Juliana.'

"The extasies of joy I felt are better conceived than described. When I had visited her for some months, and constantly assured her, that I must be wretched without her, the virtuous Juliana promised to bless me with her hand.

"As the mourning for her father was not ended, she desired our marriage might be deferred some little time, for she said, 'Though she could never cease to lament her loss, yet she would try to compose her mind, that she might undergo the solemn change with some degree of serenity, and be more deserving my regard.'

"I immediately went in pursuit of some situation which I thought would be pleasing to Juliana. As she was to reside in the family mansion the first year after her father's death, I left her comfortable situated, and took my leave of Brookland-hall.

"The first thing I had to do, was to acquaint my father with the affair, for without his consent Juliana would not agree to be mine.

"It was a trying moment in which I was compelled to quit the idol of my soul. She too was affected; but affliction was so habitual to her, that she seemed almost superior to it. Alas! had this ever been the case, I had now been happy.

"My father, always ready to indulge me, instantly consented to our union; saying, 'He was glad to find I had shewn some taste.'

"I then went in search of a habitation which would be pleasing to Juliana. At length, with much difficulty, I found one which I thought she would like.

"It was a small house, situated in a romantic vale; there was a beautiful garden, at the end of which was a little grove, where I fancied Juliana might place the urn of her father.

"I fixed upon this spot for our happy abode; and Juliana was much pleased with the description of it.

"Nothing, worth remark, happened during the intermediate space till the day arrived which was to make me supremely blessed by the hand of the beautiful Juliana.

"My father gave me a handsome income; and I sold out of the army, that I might never be absent from my lovely wife. It was settled, that our nuptials should be celebrated before she quitted the seat of her nativity; after which we were to retire to our little dwelling.

"When the happy morning came, my angelic bride was the picture of rustic simplicity and innocence. She had changed her mournful vestments for the purest white. She went through the ceremony with the most heroic fortitude; but, when the carriage appeared, that was to take her for ever from her parental abode, she could not refrain shewing part of the inward grief she so severely felt.

"'Forgive me, my dearest Charles,' said she, 'the ungrateful return I make your fervency of affection. Be assured mine is not lessened by the tears I shed on the day I ought to have dedicated to you alone; but, alas! the Lethean cup can never reach my lips: however, I will use every argument of reason I am endowed with to banish past reflections, and

endeavour to disperse them by studying the present duties I owe my husband.'

"I thanked her most tenderly and assured her that my first pleasure would ever be to make her happy.

"Juliana was much delighted with our little retirement, and especially the grove in which the urn was carefully placed.

"Soon after our marriage, I had the misfortune to lose my father. He left me his whole property, which was considerable; but riches were of little use to me, who had already such a treasure in my sweet Juliana. Having no desire for grandeur, we did not wish to excel in the showish scenes of life.

"The first year after our union, Juliana presented me with a beautiful little girl. She was a great favourite, and still continued to be more so, as being the only child we ever had. This sweet infant was the means of restoring the shattered spirits of Juliana, as it took up much of her attention; and, with a few social friends, we looked no farther into the world for additional happiness. But, alas! that bliss we enjoyed was too exquisite! It is not here below, as I again experience, even in the virtuous sisters Cottage, we are to taste felicity unmixed with pain."

Here Mr. Bromley fetched a deep sigh, and with much difficulty proceeded.

"We had been married," said he, "about four years, when one evening, one unfortunate evening, as our little Louisa (for so we called her) was walking with her nurse, they were met by two men and a woman, who were Gypsies. One of the men dragged the nurse into a wood, and held her while the others carried off our dear little girl. He then left her, almost distracted, to bring home the melancholy story. Judge, amiable fair ones, the situation of our minds, and particularly that of the lovely Juliana already so much depressed by recent affliction.

"We made every research invention could dictate, but without effect. Had death deprived us of her, we must have submitted to the divine will, and have chased away our own anxieties, with the thought of her inconceivable happiness. But this was a shock the wounded mind of her fond mother could not sustain. As the pale lily bent with the northern blast, she drooped her languid head never to raise it more.

"At first, the most violent fits succeeded each other, without intermission; but, when calm contemplation began to take its gentler seat, a slow fever seized her frame, and, like some tender shrub struck with the piercing lightning, so she withered in her bloom.

"One evening, after she had been paying the last mournful duties over the urn of her father, she called me to her, and spoke these bitter words: 'This, my dear Charles,' said she, 'is another of the most trying moments of my life, in which I must pain the worthy mind of my much-loved husband, by telling him, that a few short weeks will deprive him of me for ever. For ever! did I say? no! that is too dismal an idea for humanity to support! a few fleeting years, my worthy Charles, and we shall meet again in those blest regions, where sorrow and afflictions are no more. This last stroke has been too severe for my shaken spirits to surmount, and I am sinking to the grave, which has no terrors but those of parting from my much-loved husband. My poor Louisa's fate is in the hands of that Power who has disposed of her according to his own wisdom; and, though harsh the decree, I murmur not: would I had sufficient philosophy to overcome it! I say this, my dearest Charles, to prepare you for that event, which in a little time must take place. I have a request to make, which I am sure you

will fulfill; place me near the urn of my father, and preserve that, as a relic, sacred to the memory of your Juliana. When I am no more, let me advise you to travel; variety will be the most soothing balm to your wounded mind. Sink not into despondency; remember we ought to bear our trials with patience and fortitude, knowing they are sent us for some good purpose; it is one of the errors of your unhappy wife is guilty of; but though she has surmounted the first misfortune, and submits with resignation to the second, 'yet human nature will be human nature still.' However, my dear Charles, let examples of this kind be productive of a useful lesson to yourself, and in all distresses be comforted and be submissive. May my weakness then prove a warning to you! so will good spring out of my unfortunate fate, and with that reflection shall I depart to the silent tomb with serenity.'

"This conversation, though spoken in the mildest and most placid tone, was like daggers to my heart; but I endeavoured to conceal the acuteness of my grief, that I might not add to the pains of Juliana. I promised to use every effort to comply with her desires, respecting my future peace; but begged she would try to subdue the melancholy which overshadowed her mind. She said, 'for my sake, she would use every means for her recovery.' But though change of scene and each method that could be conceived were tried, it had no effect; and the spotless Juliana took her leave of this chequered world, without a sigh but for her husband and her child!

"I was so overpowered with affliction, that I instantly lost every faculty of reason, and had an attendant constantly to watch me. After some time passed in this manner, my good friend Mellish, hearing of the deplorable state I was in, came to me; and by his continued assiduities at last brought me to my senses. He stayed with me near two months; and as I promised to travel, and seemed more composed, he left me. When I recovered my reason, my first care was to have a mausoleum erected close to the urn to Sir William Somerville; and, by the last request of my lovely Juliana, I ordered her remains to be conveyed there, which, during my state of insensibility, had been interred in a vault near the church.

"It was many weeks after Mellish was gone, before I could summon sufficient resolution to quit the spot which contained the only remains of every thing I valued upon earth; but leaving some careful domestics at the Grove (for so was our little habitation called, I departed, hoping in some degree to chase away the dreary gloom which hung over my head.

"My first business was to purchase the Grove, that it might always be sacred to the ever-honoured memory of my dear Juliana and her father; and be ready to receive the remains of the unfortunate Bromley, whenever it please his maker to recal him hence.

"Many different excursions did I make, and for several years equally displeas'd with all, till heaven directed my steps to the sweet Cottage of Friendship. And thus, ladies," said Mr. Bromley, "ends the woeful history of my past life. What the future pages may contain, is safely enrolled in the book of fate."

Miranda and Lavinia shed many tears over this recital, for which they expressed themselves much indebted to Mr. Bromley; and they declared, "It would be their greatest joy, to do every thing in their power to smooth the ruffles brown of recent sorrow; and, as he seemed so delighted with that quiet retreat, hoped he would pass as much of his time there as was convenient to him."

He thanked them most sincerely, and said, "He should be infinitely gratified to spend as many of his days near their peaceful Cottage as he could spare from his once pleasant abode; but," added he, "I cannot entirely quit that place, which was once so dear to me, and

must ever be so, while it contains the ashes of the charming Juliana.”

He said, “It would be a great satisfaction to him could he obtain leave to erect a small hermitage or sort of Gothic temple near them, so that they might alternately enjoy each other’s society; but if there was a possibility of a favour of that kind being granted he must apply to them to solicit it.”

Lavinia answered, “She did not doubt such an indulgence being permitted; for as the lord of the woods was famed for benevolence and hospitality, and had already most generously permitted them to reside there, they had reason to believe he would favour a second request, when it could be the means of relieving a virtuous heart, worn down by peculiar distress.”

Full of the ideal pleasure he should receive by living part of the year near the amiable friends, he endeavoured to draw a veil over the late afflicting narrative; but it was of too fine a texture, to prevent his seeing, in the strongest colours, the reverse of pleasure and pain he had experienced at the Grove.

By particular entreaties of Mr. Bromley, the ladies promised to relate their melancholy histories; but desired to defer it till another time, that they might amuse him better the remainder of that day, which had brought with it so much agitation to his wearied spirits.

Miranda and Lavinia solicited Mr. Bromley to partake of their rustic repast. He assured them, “Nothing could please him so well; and that, if he was lucky enough to obtain a retirement near them, he should follow their example in every thing, as far as it was in his power.”

Mr. Bromley’s surprize was infinitely heightened, when Lucinda informed them every thing was ready. He thought he had seen all the apartments, and, as no preparations were making, he was much astonished when Lucinda said their repast was prepared.

“Now, Mr. Bromley,” said Miranda, “I will shew you our dining-room; it is not furnished in the modern style.” Saying this, she led him through a serpentine lime-walk, at the end of which stood a grotto; the varieties of shells and moss which ornamented it formed an elegant and natural contrast, and the limes in blossom yielded the most fragrant perfume, while the thickness of their shades afforded a most grateful and refreshing coolness.

When they entered, there was a table spread with many fruits and vegetables the season produced, and arranged with the neatest simplicity. Over their heads hung a wreath of the most beautiful and odoriferous flowers, which Miranda informed Mr. Bromley was daily renewed by the good Lucinda; and she called it “the Crown of Friendship, entwined by the hand of Gratitude and Affection.”

Mr. Bromley declared this to be the most comfortable meal he had ever partook of. Miranda set on some of the richest wines, “which,” she said, “were made by their own hands, and composed of cowslip, grapes, and apricots.”

While they were refreshing themselves, they needed not a band of artificial music; they had nature’s melody, so superior to every manoeuvre of art; the thrush, the linnet, and the black-bird, entertained them with their harmonious notes, while the melancholy dove, with its plaintive murmurs, formed a *penseroso* to this enchanting concert. Miranda said they always sat in the grotto during the heat of the day, and the lamb and the little dog never failed

to accompany them.

They were much amused with the account Mr. Bromley gave them of seeing them at play, and the reflections it occasioned. They conversed on various topics till the evening approached; when Miranda proposed a walk, as she wished to shew Mr. Bromley all the beauties of their charming situation.

They went to the bottom of the hill*, and sauntered along the banks of the Thames for some distance, till they came to a bason of water, from which appeared once to have flowed a beautiful cascade; it seemed to have been raised by art, but nature had so far gained the ascendancy that it was infinitely superior to any thing the workman could execute. "Like the world," said Lavinia, "even Dame Nature seems partial to her own inventions, and she has led the gliding rill from its wonted source, and, falling between two venerable trees, renders it a most romantic scene. Ever murmuring, yet ever pleasing, it swells upon the evening breeze, and reaches the Cottage of Friendship."

*This description is taken from reality.

Mr. Bromley said, "He supposed they passed many hours near that delightful spring;" but they told him, "It was so much visited by the gayer world, that they seldom strolled so far; and indeed they could not desire more beauties than what surrounded their Cottage."

When they returned, Mr. Bromley saw the fair sisters safely lodged in their rural dwelling, and departed for the night, after promising to spend the next day with them.

When Mr. Bromley again became one of the busy multitude, what a change did he experience! he almost fancied himself in the situation of our first father, when deprived of the delights of Paradise; but the pleasing reflection, that he was not totally banished, in some measure smoothed his pillow, and he slept in peace.

When the lovely sisters had parted from their worthy friend, they sat for some hours contemplating the unexpected event of that day, which had brought so agreeable an addition to their happy dwelling. "How complicated," exclaimed Miranda, "are the incidents of our fate! and how wonderful the ordinations of Providence! I was sufficiently blessed in my Lavinia; but to have the valuable friend of my ever dear Henry restored to me, is a bliss I never deserved, or could possibly hope for." Lavinia too expressed her gratitude for this added luxury, and said, "Some inward monitor whispered, that, if they studied to administer consolation to their afflicted friend, he would prove a lasting source of comfort to them so long as they lived."

Engaged in these pleasing reflections, the hour of repose would have arrived too soon, had they not recollected that the approaching morning would give them another interview with their friend; and they retired, equally desirous as Mr. Bromley for the returning morrow.

The next day as Mr. Bromley returned to the Cottage, his ear caught the sound of a flagelet, playing the wild and unskilful notes on an untaught performer; however, they were not displeasing, and he listened with some attention and surprize, especially as the music seemed to proceed from the Cottage, and he knew of no other inhabitants residing there but the amiable friends.

As he approached the happy dwelling, he perceived a young man, habited as a shepherd, sitting under a hedge, in the field in which were Miranda and Lavinia's sheep. Though the music had ceased before Mr. Bromley appeared in view, he instantly conjectured

from when it came.

When he arrived at the Cottage, the sisters were particularly rejoiced to see him, because, they said, "They had the happy tidings to communicate, that Mr. Bromley had free permission to build a small habitation for himself." He was much delighted with this information; and after thanking the fair ladies for their kind attention to his wishes, he assured them he would lose no time to have it completed.

Mr. Bromley asked Miranda, "If she had heard the music which resounded along the hill as he was walking to her Cottage."

She said, "It was the shepherd, who had attended the flock since their retreat from society;" and she observed, "He was equally grateful as Lucinda. Similarity," said Miranda, "has grown into the truest affection, and so high is their attachment for each other, that Lucinda will sit for hours spinning on the grass, in the hottest part of the day, to be gratified with the sight of her lover at the further part of the meadow, rather than be seated in the shade to be entirely deprived of it; and in return he entertains her with his pastoral music. Their parents are poor, but very industrious, and they have thought them both too young to marry; but at last," said Miranda, "we have obtained the consent of Edwin's relations, and therefore hope to gain the permission of Lucinda's: If we should," said she, "you are just become acquainted with us in time, Mr. Bromley, to be the spectator of a rural wedding."

Mr. Bromley observed, "Nothing could give him more heart-felt delight, than to see two faithful lovers made completely happy." He begged the ladies would fix upon the spot on which he should erect his little Hermitage; and they chose one about a quarter of a mile from their own abode. It was upon the summit of the hill; the back of it was shaded with evergreens, and the front beautified with here and there a clump of various smaller kinds of trees, which, growing in vistas, admitted a view of the finest country fancy can paint to the most brilliant imagination.

The building was not large, therefore it was soon finished. It consisted of only two apartments: the roof was of thatch, and the sides were composed of roots and flints, the same as the Cottage; and, to have a more ornamental appearance, it was formed something like a Gothic Temple, or ancient hermitage. His only garden was a few shrubs, which grew in an irregular manner, and were of his own planting. Mr. Bromley had no attendant; for there were few people they could trust to enter into those happy retirements.

Miranda observed, "That, like spies from an enemy's country they might soon overturn the peaceful government of their little empire; there she entreated Mr. Bromley would partake with them his daily food, and Lucinda and Edwin might attend on their limited wants."

In a short time Mr. Bromley's rustic dwelling was completed; for there were no splendid embellishments to prolong the artists studies; and it was soon ready to receive the worthy owner.

As they were all very ardent in their endeavours to make Mr. Bromley's new situation agreeable to him; on that account all thoughts of Lucinda's marriage were deferred, till every thing was properly arranged at the Hermitage.

One evening as the amiable party were amusing themselves by conversing on various subjects, Mr. Bromley said, "He would now petition for the favour he had been promised of hearing the ladies histories; and should be infinitely obliged, if one of them would indulge

him.”

Miranda sighed: she said, “It was a melancholy talk; but, as it could not be more so than the distressing truths he had related of himself, she was bound in gratitude to comply with his desires; and Lavinia in her turn would recite her troubles.” The fair sister bowed assent; and Miranda, having wiped off an involuntary tear, sacred to remembrance, thus began.

“My father was a clergyman, of small fortune, in ---shire: my real name is Anna Maria Waters; but, that we might not be so readily discovered, Lavinia and myself have chosen fictitious ones. My father died very suddenly; and, unhappily for me, without making any will. I have one brother a few years younger than myself.

“My mother was a woman ill calculated to render a domestic life comfortable; she was fond of gaieties she could not afford, and of continual dissipation, which is not becoming the Mother of a family, especially where there is not a sufficiency to purchase such vain amusements.

“My father, who was a very worthy character, was much hurt at her proceedings; but she was not of a temper to hear advice. This occasioned continual pangs in the breast of my father, and in all probability shortened his life.

“I was never of a volatile disposition, and disliked the round of insipid company we were daily engaged in; for which reason I became the aversion of my mother, and indeed my brother was not a favourite: as soon as she possibly could, she sent him to sea. What fortune my father had was in money; therefore my mother took possession of it, as there was no will.

“Scarcely had my father been dead two years, before she married again, and had several children by her second husband. Only picture to yourself, Mr. Bromley, the situation I was in, losing the only parent who had any love for me; my poor brother gone, perhaps, for ever, and me dependant on such a mother for subsistence. The law was a poor resource, and it was a melancholy prospect on every side; but, alas! had I seen all the misfortunes that were to attend me, it would have been still more dreadful! But the good Providence, in pity to our weak natures, conceals from us our approaching destiny! My only comfort was in the friendship of my ever dear Jemima (for that is the real name of Lavinia). We lived near each other, and could lighten our distresses by unbosoming and sharing them together. My father-in-law was much more tender of me than my real parent; but he was a man of the world, and had a very moderate degree of sensibility; what he possessed was chiefly confined to his own children; there was little to spare for the unfortunate Anna.

“As I was fond of retirement, I used frequently to pass many hours, reading or working, under some tree or secluded shade, where I might ruminate on my misfortunes without interruption. For this purpose, I had placed a small seat, by the margin of a rivulet, which ran along the banks of one my father’s meadows. Some large elms, together with other smaller trees, formed a kind of leafy alcove over my head; whilst the roses and woodbines, that entwined them, rendered it a truly romantic little spot.

“Here I usually passed my days during the summer, and frequently my friend Jemima accompanied me. One morning, when I was particularly oppressed with sorrow, I retired alone to my favourite seat; and, too much overcome with grief to read or work, I burst into tears. While I was weeping, I was suddenly roused from my distress by the sound of footsteps. I felt much alarmed, as it was the first time any one had approached my quiet retreat:

but how infinitely was I agitated and confused when I beheld a handsome young officer, in a military uniform!

“He made a very polite apology, and said, ‘That being a stranger, he hoped, would sufficiently atone for his apparent rudeness, as he did not know that was a private walk.’ I was so hurt he should see me in such affliction, that I could make no proper reply. He saw my embarrassment, and immediately retired, without putting me to the pain of studying a speech I was then incapable of. I thought he seemed to pity me; and I fancied I could discover he wished to become acquainted with my sorrow. I reproached myself for not behaving with more propriety, and hoped I might have another opportunity to remedy my ill manners. Alas! I little knew it was not only a desire of appearing polite! There was a something more which soon after discovered itself. My heart, which before was the seat of silent woe, now underwent the different vicissitudes of hope and fear. ‘Could I,’ said I to myself, ‘but see him once more, methinks I should be happy, only to have the means of repairing my rude behaviour.’ Full of these reflections I returned home; my mind occupied with a thousand various ideas which this little adventure had occasioned. The next day I was in doubt whether prudence should restrain me from my rural shade; had but, as I could find no material cause for my absence and Inclination being a powerful combatant, I submitted to her will, and revisited the much-loved spot, which was now more pleasing to me, than before.

“When I came to the seat, how infinite was my astonishment to find it ornamented with the most beautiful bouquets of flowers, which were placed in baskets, and tied with bows of ribband to the boughs of the trees! Fruits too of the most delicious kinds were interspersed in the same manner among the branches; and they were disposed with such peculiar elegance, that it had the most pastoral and enchanting effect. I was so struck with wonder, that it was many minutes before I could resolve how to act. I thought of no one but the handsome officer I saw the day before, who could have shewn so much taste. I determined however to let them remain untouched till I had the advice of my friend Jemima, as I recollected that, beneath the most specious appearances, there often lurks a venomous serpent.

“I instantly quitted my retirement, though it was adorned with so many additional charms, and determined to consult my friend upon this singular event; but unluckily (as I then imagined) my mother desired my attendance at home, saying, ‘She had a large company of acquaintance that evening.’ Guess my amazement, when, among the number, I saw enter the same officer who had discovered my solitude.

“No sooner was he introduced to me, than I felt every nerve in motion, and had as great difficulty to speak as when he addressed me before. He was particularly attentive to me; but when he spoke of the beautiful retreat I had chosen, I did summon resolution to mention how elegantly I found it ornamented the last time I went there. He owned, ‘It was done by himself;’ and added, ‘He was completely happy if I approved of it.’

“I found he was on a visit in the neighbourhood; that his name was Mellish; and that he was much respected by every one who was acquainted with his excellencies. My father was extremely pleased with him, and invited him frequently to the house. This acquisition to our society seemed a very happy circumstance for me; I was not only pleased with his good sense and amiable manners, but it lessened the impetuosity of my mother’s temper towards me, as she did not like to discover it to the world.

“Mellish was equally pleased with me, as I could be with him, and a mutual partiality daily increased. Indeed, his first appearance prejudiced me in his favour; and when I feared

making a breach in politeness, there were other reasons much stronger for my apprehensions, which I could not then foresee. When Mellish had known me long enough to find that he could not bear the reflection of absence, he solicited my hand, with that energy, and yet that diffidence, which ever accompanies real love. 'Alas! Mr. Mellish,' said I, 'you do not know what you ask? I am a poor dependant, upon the slender bounty of an unfeeling parent, who may, for aught I know, leave me a miserable penny-less wanderer: it was some of these contemplations I was weeping over when first you saw me.' 'And can that be the lot of my lovely Anna!' exclaimed Henry, 'then am I happier than ever, if I can extricate her from such an inhuman wretch! My fortune is not profuse,' added he, 'but it will purchase us ease and comfort.' I begged he would entreat the consent of my mother; which she absolutely refused, by asking, 'if we meant to be beggars? I have nothing to spare,' said she to Henry, 'at least till my death; and that will be a mere trifle; and you have as little. Indeed, I am not quite such an idiot to consent to my daughter's begging her bread; therefore I insist on it, Mr. Mellish, you do not turn her brain with adulation, which is already overcome with pride.' This was a reply I expected; but to the tender heart of Henry it was very severe indeed. However, he declared, 'If I would give him my hand, he would take care I should live comfortably; and that his first delight would be to rescue me from the power of such barbarity.' After much persuasion I agreed to be his. Censure me not, Mr. Bromley, I already sufficiently reproach myself. Though my mother treated me unlike a parent, I should have behaved with duty; but I have suffered, I hope, enough; and that the debt it paid in this world."

Here Miranda wept, and was unable to continue! Therefore Lavinia begged her to retire, and she would end the sad catastrophe.

"Anna," said she, "had fixed the day and hour when she meant to elope with Captain Mellish. I was with her on the evening she intended to quit her mother's house. While we were waiting in momentary expectation of the carriage, which was to convey her from that hateful dwelling, a messenger brought a letter to the window, and left us almost lost in astonishment. It was some time before I had resolution to open it: as to poor Anna, her mind was full of a thousand foreboding fears, which proved but too true. The letter contained these words:

"Arm yourself, my dearest Anna, with all your fortitude; remember, the better we bear our trials here, so much the higher shall we be exalted in happiness hereafter. This is a lesson I doubt not your own good sense has long since dictated; but there are periods when the wisest of us stand in need of counsel; this, I fear, will be your case. The instant I left you this morning, after our walk, I rode away directly to give the necessary orders for the fancied happy evening. {Alas! how vain to depend on the next hour's felicity!}. On my return, I was thrown from my horse, and received a violent wound in my head. The surgeon gives me little hopes of recovery.

"I have made you, my lovely Anna, the sole mistress of my trifling fortune; and, if you regard me, instantly quit that detested house. The gently Jemima will always be a comfort to you; and, though deprived of your Henry, think yourself rich in her friendship. What I feel on leaving this world would be nothing, were I not to be separated from the partner of my affections; but, my Anna, we shall meet again in those blessed regions, where misery ceases for ever! Think on this, and be resigned! The pen trembles in my fingers, and I must write no more!

"Your faithful

"HENRY."

“Though I broke this unhappy event with all the tenderness I was capable of, poor Anna was almost frantic with grief. The next day I heard the unfortunate Henry was no more. This she readily conjectured. I recovered her so far as to take her home with me, that I might be continually with her. When her inhuman mother heard the news, she expressed her joy, that now her commands could not be broken; for though she did not know the time was actually fixed, yet she had reason to believe what were their intentions.

“Poor Anna had a most dangerous illness, during which I never left her; and with constant attention she recovered, but was in the most dejected state some months. When she was able, her mother insisted on her return, which prolonged her distress. She would have instantly left the house, but for an affair which concerned my future fate, and was not then concluded; of that I will give you the particulars in my short narrative. I will only add, in the remainder of this, that, when my cup was filled with misfortune, and we were each of us almost overwhelmed with despair, from the villainies of a sinful world, we determined to retire from its deceits: could we have known the future, we had escaped infinite sorrows had we left it many years before! And thus,” said Lavinia, “I sincerely hope end the woes of Miranda.”

Mr. Bromley was much affected with this relation; and the more so, as he had only received hints before of the death of his friend, which were now too fatally confirmed.

“Alas! who ought,” said Mr. Bromley, “to repine at their afflictions! we have all of us our share, and it is right that it should be so, or our ideas would soar no higher than this groveling earth; but,” added he, “in all our troubles, there is some resource to lighten them. You, most amiable Lavinia, have been an instrument, in the divine hand, to protect the despairing Anna, or she would long since have joined her Henry. As the different incidents of your lives have been so connected, it is pity the knot should be now severed, by relating them at separate times; therefore, if the fair Lavinia is not fatigued,” said Mr. Bromley, “I will solicit a continuation of the history, with what relates to herself.” Lavinia said, “The pleasure of obliging him would in some degree alleviate the recollection of her sorrows. Deceit,” she observed, “had been the canker worm which had preyed upon her peace; if such a tale could be pleasing to Mr. Bromley, she would endeavour to repeat it.”

He entreated her to proceed, and she spoke as follows:

“My origin,” said Lavinia, “I derive from parents of high family, and splendid fortune, who had a magnificent seat in Somersetshire; their names were Wentworth. When I was only two years old, my mother died. As they had no other child, I was a very great favourite. At the age of fourteen I was so unfortunate as to lose my father. He left me every thing in his power, and I became a very rich heiress. An old friend of my father’s, of the name of Leslie, was appointed my guardian, and I went to reside with him and his lady. They had one son, of my own age, a very handsome boy; we were continually together, and conceived a reciprocal attachment for each other, which was much encouraged by my Guardian. Though young Augustus had but a slender income, yet, as mine was large, it was no objection with me; true love, as mine really was, looks on gold as a secondary consideration. It was determined, when we came of age, we were to be united. I had no thoughts beyond my Augustus; and he appeared equally sincere: but, alas! it was only the shadow, perfect in its form, but a phantom in reality. When I came of age, every thing was preparing for our nuptials; but my Guardian was seized with a fit, and expired immediately. This melancholy event prolonged the ceremony for some time. But when every thing was settled relative to our wedding, and the day was fixed, Augustus said, ‘He must go out, for a

short time, before it took place; but would return the evening preceding our marriage.' After taking the most affectionate farewell, he departed; but, when the time came for his return, no lover appeared. The morning arrived, but without my Augustus; and judge my astonishment, when I found his mother had also decamped in the night, and I was left with only servants in the house, who were all (except one who accompanied her) equally ignorant of her departure. I instantly conjectured there must be some villainy; but little imagined the blackness of its hue. I dispatched messengers every where I could possibly think of; and at length the only tidings I could learn were, that a person of Leslie's description had set off from town that morning, in a chaise and four, with a very handsome young woman. I was almost overpowered with consternation; I could not feel that delicate melancholy which preys upon our more refined sensations; mine was a mixture of horror and violent agitation. Poor Anna came to comfort me, when she stood in need of consolation herself, and was too weak to bear another shock, without considerably injuring her tender frame."

Mr. Bromley was thunderstruck at this recital: "And can there," said he, "be such wretches existing! I had hoped the world was not quite so depraved."

"Oh," said Lavinia, "had his villainy ended here, it would have been well, but it was far worse; he had recourse to forgery, and carried off all my money, except one thousand pounds, which had had the humanity to leave, to save me from want; and for that I thank him, the misery will be upon his own head. I can live comfortably without riches, and am contented, though deprived of them; but have we not, Mr. Bromley, had a sufficient trial of the world, to be weary of it?"

Mr. Bromley was almost overcome with rage at this account. He asked Lavinia, "If she had heard of Leslie since?"

She said, "She had not, and sincerely wished she never might. After these distresses," observed Lavinia, "you cannot wonder at our desire to resign all future converse with society. Anna was well provided for by Henry, and my little remnant added to it, we went in pursuit of some spot, where we might end our days in harmony; and after many sought in vain, we were at last thus amply recompensed for all our troubles, by obtaining permission to erect a Cottage in this delightful place. Here we have remained unmolested and unheard-of by the world, till happily for us you chanced upon our abode. We took the names we now bear that we might not be discovered. Anna was in great dread of being found by her mother, who we heard made many researches when she knew we were gone. She had left home some time to be with me, therefore the evening preceding our departure she wrote this Letter to her mother, which I will read to you: 'Much honoured Madam,

"Will you believe me sincere, when I declare, it is not without many pangs I quit my native dwelling. To-morrow I shall bid adieu to this country, perhaps for ever! It is impossible for me to forget past afflictions, in a spot where every object, every walk, and each hill or vale, continually renews them. Rather than follow me to the tomb, I am certain my honoured mother would gladly suffer me to leave a scene, which is daily the cause of never-ceasing woe, and in the end must bring on a total decay. My dear Jemima has also drank deeply of the poisonous draughts of adversity; and we mean to pass the remainder of our lives, secluded from the world, in some retired Cottage. To bid adieu to a parent is a bitter thought; but, alas! your Anna has failed to deserve that affection which would have been to her so great a blessing; therefore she will no longer wound your peace with the society of an undutiful child. Will you indulge me, my revered mother, with one embrace before we separate, perhaps for ever? If not, I shall never omit to pray for your lasting happiness. And

may your other children prove a continual source of comfort to you, and be more deserving of your regard, than your affectionate and unfortunate

“ANNA!”

“Though so tenderly penned,” said Lavinia, “she never replied to it; nor would she consent to an interview with Anna. She has often had the means of hearing of her, by an honest old woman in the village; and our Letters,” said Lavinia, “which are very few, are left for us at the house of Lucinda’s mother; but lately the old woman is dead, and we have not heard of Anna’s mother for some time.”

Mr. Bromley was deeply touched with these melancholy narrations. “May heaven” said he, “bless your future days with such content as you now enjoy!”

Miranda, who had been amusing herself with her guittar, now entered.

“Well, Mr. Bromley,” said she, “do not you think we have cause to detest the world?” He repeated his observations, and added, “That he hoped, they should make each other happy, for the remainder of their existence.”

Miranda said, “Her only present anxiety was for her brother, whom she had never heard of since he sailed. But Hope,” exclaimed Miranda, “that balm to the depressed heart, leads me to imagine I shall again behold him.” Mr. Bromley soon became perfectly settled in his new abode; and every thing wore the aspect of that serenity which true virtue can alone inspire. Mr. Bromley generally amused the ladies by reading while they worked, and their evenings were spent in walking. One morning Miranda begged to make an observation before he began his daily entertainment: “We are now,” said she, “very tranquil and composed, and Heaven only knows the fate of to-morrow; therefore let us use the time allotted to us in doing all we can, which may contribute to the happiness of others; suppose then we hasten the wedding of Edwin and Lucinda; we will, if pleasing to my worthy friends, walk to the house of Lucinda’s parents, and if they will consent to the union, it shall immediately take place; we have already the permission of Edwin’s Father.”

Lavinia and Mr. Bromley were much delighted with the proposal; and as soon as the evening approached, they bent their steps to the hamlet.

It was a neat little dwelling, and the most romantic but homely Cottage. The good old Dorcas was spinning at the door; in the window by her lay a bible, a spectacle-case, and an hour-glass; close to the embers sat a grave old musing cat, purring itself to sleep, while its frisky kitten was playing with the good old woman’s pincushion. Every thing was arranged with the utmost neatness; and the old china relics of ancestry were placed in the exactest form. A little village cur announced their arrival, and when the honest old woman saw them coming, so great was her joy, that in her hurry she overset her wheel.

“Heaven bless these dear Ladies!” said she, “they are so good that the sight of ‘em makes my old heart dance.” When she saw a stranger she was cautious of speaking; but Lavinia informed her that Mr. Bromley was a particular friend, and knew their whole histories; therefore Dorcas proceeded in her encomiums without hesitation. “Ah, Sir!” said she, “you are a happy man to be among such dear ladies; if it had not been for them, we should have starved. When my poor old man lay at Death’s door, they cured him; and they pays our rent for us every year. When my sweet little Rachael and Polly died, they buried ‘em; and such pretty buryings you never see; and they took our Lucy, and have made her what she is; every body loves ‘em.”

She was going on at this rate, and would probably have talked for an hour or two more (for when gratitude enters the door of poverty, it is of the purest kind), but Miranda interrupted her by asking, "If she would agree to her daughter's marriage." "Ah! Madam," said she, "you little knows what miseries we poor folks suffer; you had better persuade her off on't." When Miranda told her she should live with her, and she would provide for her and Edwin too, the good old Dorcas fell on her knees, and overcome by her tears could only thank her in silence. She ran and called her husband, who was digging in his garden. He was equally overjoyed and grateful as his wife. "God bless you!" said the old man, "you makes every body happy about you; now when Lucy is well settled, I shall die contented."

Miranda having obtained the consent she wished, proposed their return; but the good old pair said they should have somewhat to eat and drink; and they fetched a bottle of grape wine, which Miranda had sent them a few days before, and a plate of strawberries and cherries. As they returned home they passed several other cottages; and Mr. Bromley was much astonished, to see that not even a little child would let them pass unnoticed; some brought fruit; others bouquets of flowers; in short, every one seemed to look on them as angelic beings.

When Lucinda heard she might be united to her Edwin, she wept for joy; she sung, and was impatient till her lover could partake the happy tidings. It was determined that the amiable friends should attend the ceremony, as Miranda and Lavinia were the sole presidents over the scene of rural festivity. Lucinda was habited as a shepherdess, in a white jacket with a small hat, ornamented with a wreath of roses and jasmine. Edwin was attired as a shepherd, with a garland of natural flowers across his jacket. Six little girls in white led the way, and strewed their path with flowers. Lucinda was the picture of innocence and modesty, and Edwin was the handsomest shepherd of the fields. The good old parents attended their beauteous offspring, and with heart-felt pleasure and delight looked back to that day which was now renewed in their beloved children. Miranda and Lavinia could not forbear shedding some drops of sorrow during the ceremony; not only the solemnity affected them, but a train of melancholy reflections would intrude upon their imaginations. Mr. Bromley too remembered that happy day when he saw the lovely Juliana blushing by his side, and an unbidden tear trickled down his manly cheek: however, the exquisite bliss of bestowing happiness in some measure chased away the oppression they would otherwise have felt.

Miranda ordered a rustic repast to be prepared at Dorcas's cottage, to which the happy couple and their attendants repaired, after they quitted the church, and in the evening Miranda promised to come, and be a spectator at their mirth. All Lucinda's village friends were to be present; and they were to have a rural dance upon the green. It was agreed that Lucinda and her Edwin should continue to reside at the Cottage of Friendship, and follow the same employment they had done before. The amiable friends felt impatient, till they were at the hamlet, to partake of this festive scene, and early in the evening they departed to the happy spot. The sound of the tabor and pipe soon convinced them the dance was began. Every one appeared in extasy; the old couples sat smiling beneath the shade of an ancient oak, and fancied themselves young again in their children. In honour of the Bride, the village nymphs and swains wore the habit of a shepherd and shepherdess, and it was the most enchanting scene of pleasure without allay (at least so the lovely sisters hoped); but as Miranda was observing each object around her, she saw a female figure sitting in a pensive manner upon the grass, at some distance from the rest of the company. This excited the curiosity of the Mr. Bromley and his fair friends, as she appeared to have come there to celebrate the day, but could not join in the universal joy. They enquired of the Shepherds, who she was? "Oh!" they answered, "it was only Lucy, who had come there, and now would not dance with them."

Miranda asked, "What her name was besides Lucy?" They said, "Nobody knew." Perhaps, madam," said Lucinda, "if you speak to her, she will tell you; but she won't let us know who she is. The woman she lived with is just dead and I believe she pines for her, and is very poor now."

This account excited the curiosity of the sisters and Mr. Bromley; and they determined to speak to her. It was agreed that Lavinia and Mr. Bromley should retire; while Miranda endeavoured to discover, the history of this pensive mourner. She seemed very intently looking at something; therefore Miranda passed gently behind her, that she might find out what it was. As she knew of no one being near her, she held a picture, and pronounced these words: "And must you too be taken from me; alas! I will sooner starve than part from the only blessing I now enjoy, the picture of my long-lost parent."

Miranda approached her, and in the tenderest accents begged to know, "Why she did not join in the general joy?"

She started at being thus accosted, and rose to answer Miranda. "Oh, Madam!" said she, "was you acquainted with my misfortunes, you would not be astonished at my melancholy; but I know your goodness, and therefore you shall hear the cause of my sorrows. When very young, I was taken away from my parents by Gypsies. With them I wandered about, till a good woman, at whose house we were begging, seeing I was not one of their race, bought me of them through pity. She had no child, and was a widow. She kept a little shop, and we lived very comfortably till about a month ago, when she died. As she left nothing but her furniture, I am obliged to sell that to pay the rent; and when the trifling overplus is gone, Heaven knows what will become of me! This picture," said she, "was about my neck when I was taken away, and they had the humanity to leave it me; but, should I be obliged to sell my dear mother's gift for subsistence, it would be death to me indeed."

Miranda asked her, "If she had made any enquiries after her father and mother?" She said, "Yes, but without effect; and she was too young, when taken away, to recollect the place of her nativity, or any circumstance till the time of her being released out of the hands of the Gypsies. What she knew was from the good woman with whom she lived; and the picture she imagined must have been her mother's, which led her to suppose she was the daughter of genteel parents."

Miranda no longer doubted, that this must be the long-lost child of Mr. Bromley. After having opened the approaching happiness in the most delicate manner to the fair Louisa (for she was almost certain this was the daughter Mr. Bromley had mourned for), she took the picture to him. The instant he beheld it, he exclaimed, "It is my Juliana herself! she lives again in this picture; and that is my lovely Louisa; let me fly to her embraces!"

Such of my readers as are endowed with all the genuine soul of sensibility and true sympathy, will alone be the proper judges of such a scene of parental and filial affection. What a luxurious moment then for the amiable sisters; so capable as were their feelings to taste the sweet and bitter portions this life is continually subject to! When the first effusions of bliss were over, Mr. Bromley turning to Miranda and Lavinia, said, "May I, most angelic of women, commit this long-lost treasure to your care? If she is like her dear mother, she will be an acquisition to you; but, if otherwise, she shall not ruffle the serenity of the happy Cottage. She has had no tender mother to lead her from the mazy road of vice, nor a father's instruction to bid her follow the footsteps of her virtuous mother; but, when the soil is good, the flower generally blossoms in perfection; and may this be the case with my Louisa!"

Miranda and Lavinia expressed infinite happiness in the additional society of Louisa; and to see Mr. Bromley so unexpectedly blessed, was a greater pleasure than they had aspired to hope for in this life.

Louisa, almost overcome with rapture and astonishment, thus exclaimed, "Who ought to repine at their fate, while we have so good, so indulgent, a preserver! When I fancied myself on the brink of despair, the mercy of Providence has seated me in the midst of every comfort! How infinitely do I reproach myself for not having placed more confidence in that Divine Power who never forsakes his servants in affliction! But," said Louisa, "I have still another desire ungratified, which is to see my poor mother: what pangs must she have suffered on my account!"

"Alas!" said Mr. Bromley, "to meet her, my dear child, is a delight you must never expect to enjoy here below; she is long since departed to better regions." (He forbore to tell the cause of her death, lest it might hurt the mind of his daughter.) This information grieved the tender heart of Louisa, and she wept: however, recovering herself, she said, "She ought not to complain, since she had so much treasure left her upon earth."

When the rustic cottagers heard this happy event, they sung, they danced, with increasing alacrity, and another tabor was found to celebrate the joyful tidings, till the shades of night summoned them to repose, when the lovely sisters and their friends proceeded to the peaceful Cottage.

"Now," said Mr. Bromley to Louisa, "think yourself the most fortunate of women; you will be surrounded by the Virtues and the Graces, accompanied with every beauty nature can give to the spot around you. Here dwells Content unsullied by ambition; and Friendship untinged with deceit."

Louisa expressed the most lively gratitude on the admission to so desirable an abode; and said, "she hoped to profit by the good examples before her, listen to their precepts, and in the end be deserving so much kindness."

Mr. Bromley settled every thing which related to the friend Louisa had lost, and attired her like the fair sisters. She had a fine melancholy countenance and an elegant figure. Mr. Bromley said she much resembled her mother. Louisa was greatly pleased with the Cottage; and, as everything was again tranquil, they amused Louisa with shewing her all the natural beauties of the wood. One day when Miranda and Lavinia were alone, they remarked, that there was still a cloud upon the brow of their young friend; but they fancied it might proceed from the loss of the good woman with whom she lived, therefore took no further notice of it, till one evening, Miranda going hastily into Louisa's apartment, found her in tears. She immediately desired to know the cause; but Louisa continued weeping, and gave her no answer.

"My dearest girl," said Miranda, "I entreat you to inform me what it is that distresses you? Your happiness is mine, and I cannot be serene till you are so likewise." "Then," said Louisa, "it would be sacrilege to disturb such heavenly repose; and I will instantly relate the cause of my affliction. While I was one day in the shop of the good widow with whom I lived, there entered a handsome young man in a naval uniform. He purchased some trifle, and went away; but he was continually calling on some pretended occasion; and after many visits, he declared himself my lover. I was particularly struck with the smartness of his appearance, which with a young mind is a primary consideration, and I returned his regard. He told me his sole income was what he received from his profession; and I having no fortune, we thought it

proper to defer our marriage till something advantageous might happen; our love we could not at any rate resign, that was immovable. One unfortunate day, when I expected to see my Frederick, I received a letter which contained this distressing news:

“My dearest life,

“How will you bear the melancholy recital! When I left you yesterday, I was cruelly seized and thrown into prison for a debt which I have been security for, for a mother, who hardly deserves that name. Had I not lost a large sum in my passage, I could have paid it; but now, when I shall be extricated, Heaven only knows. Comfort yourself, my dearest Lucy, with the hope of better days; and, believe me, no time can erase you from the memory of

“Your faithful

“FREDERIC.’

“This, Madam,” said Louisa, is the cause of my tears; and a heart like yours can judge of my feelings.” There was a something in this letter, which particularly struck Miranda, and she felt a cold chill overspread her whole frame; however, recovering herself, she ran to Mr. Bromley with the unfortunate story of Louisa. He was much surprized and affected, but promised to relieve his daughter from this distress, by paying the debt, and releasing Louisa’s lover. No pen can describe the extasy she was in at this declaration. She knelt down to thank the Almighty for his goodness, and embraced her father with the tenderest love, for his exquisite kindness to her. He instantly wrote a letter, and inclosed the money; but, when he asked her lover’s name, what a discovery did he make! it was Miranda’s brother! She had only hoped before that it might be so, but now she was convinced. Extreme joy for some minutes deadened every sensation; but, when a milder calm ensued, never was a scene of greater happiness, or natures more calculated to enjoy it.

In a few days the much-loved Frederick arrived at the Cottage. This rendered the transports of joy perfectly complete; and to find his sister in such a happy abode was what he so little expected, that he was lost in amazement and wonder. His Louisa too greeted him with the most lively raptures, and they were many days in relating each other’s histories, which were so truly amiable, that, like the blossoms in spring, some new beauty daily expanded itself to the view. Miranda’s brother observed, “That the events of his life were few and uninteresting, as most of his years had been spent on the sea; but, a few days after his arrival chancing to pass by the house of Louisa’s friend, he accidentally went in, and returned a captive fast linked in the rosy fetters of the sincerest love.” He told Miranda, “Their mother had spent every thing; and that several of her second children had treated her in the most inhuman manner.” Miranda was much hurt at this information, and determined to relieve her.

When Frederick found Louisa had discovered her real parents, and had taken her proper name, he still continued to love her as fervently as before, and repeated his thanks to Mr. Bromley, for the favour he had shewn him; but poor, and disgraced by a prison, he dared not solicit the hand of the beautiful Louisa. Mr. Bromley’s penetrating eye saw this with admiration, and he desired Louisa and Frederick would attend him at the Hermitage, where he thus addressed them:

“My children” said he, “for as such I regard you both, may you ever be happy in each other! Take, Frederick, the hand of Louisa, which your worthy diffidence has debarred you from soliciting; make her what she deserves to be, a happy woman. And do you, my daughter, study the duties you owe your husband, so will your days glide smoothly on (by the

blessing of Heaven) till old age closes the scene of mortality. Be not, my Louisa, led away by the vanities of an insipid world, which in the eye of virtue melt away like the snow before the morning sun-beam; and if you have children, train them up in that wise path you have walked in, so will they have cause to bless you as long as they live. I have a sufficient fortune to make yours an ample one; you shall reside at the Grove, which I will order to be improved and enlarged. It was once the happiest abode to your father; may you enjoy a longer continuance of uninterrupted tranquillity there than he did! To see this desire gratified will soften the pangs of past sorrows; and he will make his exit in peace.”

Tears of gratitude and joy were the only thanks they could bestow, for the generosity of this excellent man, who, like all benevolent minds, instantly retired, that he might not put them to the trouble of numberless unnecessary acknowledgements they were anxious to pronounce.

Mr. Bromley returned to the sisters, and when he told them how happy he had made the lovers, they both exclaimed, “What unexampled virtue, goodness, and affection! How rich are we in such a friend!” Scarcely had they finished speaking, when in ran the lovers, almost breathless, to inform Miranda and Lavinia of their happy fortune. When they saw Mr. Bromley, they knelt down, and thanked him in the most grateful manner, for his infinite goodness to them; and said, “They would do all in their power to deserve so indulgent a parent.”

Mr. Bromley observed, “He must go for a few days to the Grove, to give proper directions for the alterations there, and pass some hours devoted to the memory of his lovely Juliana; and as the marriage of Louisa could not be properly solemnized till every thing was ready to receive them,” he said, “he would lose no times in having the house prepared.” And the next morning Mr. Bromley set off to the Grove. Though his absence would be very short, yet every one wept at his departure, and entreated his speedy return. His society was a loss deeply felt by the whole circle, but by none so much as the amiable friends. The lovers were both very young, and could amuse themselves with rambling round the wood, and observing every beauty. They were truly virtuous and sincere; but few hearts are possessed of that exquisite sensibility which adorned the minds, of the lovely Miranda and Lavinia. While they were one day together, and the happy lovers were walking in the wood, Miranda said, “Now, my dear Lavinia, I will shew you a letter I have written my poor unhappy mother. I hear she is distressed, and it is my duty to comfort and support her in adversity.” Miranda read thus.

“My dear and much honoured Mother,

“Do you imagine, because absent, your Anna has forgotten you, or ever omits to enquire your fate? no, my dear madam, the first care she has had since she quitted you, has been to learn if you continued happy. The last accounts were so melancholy, that I am sincerely affected with your misfortunes; but what is pity, without we can afford more material relief? That is happily in my power, and I enclose you a hundred pounds; if it will be acceptable your Anna is recompenced. I have the satisfaction to tell you, my brother is with us, in a little rural Cottage, where we have dwelt in peace and harmony since we took our leave of a tumultuous world. He has left the sea, and will very soon be united to a most lovely woman. Frederick is amply provided for by her father.

“Adieu! my dearest madam,

“Your dutiful daughter

“ANNA MARIA WATERS.”

When Miranda had fulfilled this duty, she felt a certain cheerfulness which ever accompanies a good action. The day now arrived which was to gratify them with another sight of the worthy Mr. Bromley and they all walked to the extremity of the wood to meet him. When he approached, each face wore the smile of the greatest delight. He informed them, “He had made every necessary preparation for the happy event; and in a few months the Grove would be ready to receive Louisa and Frederick.”

Many days passed on in the serenest manner, with no new incident to chequer the worthy Cottagers’ repose, till one morning, when Mr. Bromley was sitting alone, Lucinda ran in to tell him, “There was a poor man at the door asking charity.” Mr. Bromley was much surprized, and rather alarmed, as it was so unusual for them to see a stranger in their retired abodes. When Mr. Bromley appeared, the petitioner accosted him with the utmost reverence. He was habited neatly, but very plain, and had the manners of a gentleman. Just as he began to relate his misfortunes, Lavinia and Miranda were returning from a walk. When Lavinia beheld the countenance of the petitioner, it would be difficult to pronounce which was the most agitated and confused, the lovely sister or the humble stranger. They were both struck motionless for some minutes. At length Lavinia exclaimed, “Defend me,” my dear friends, from a wretch who has robbed me of that peace which none but my Miranda could have restored me.” Miranda instantly knew it was the former pretended lover of Lavinia; and she intreated Mr. Bromley to take him to the Hermitage till Lavinia was a little composed.

When he was gone from her sight, she grew more serene. “Alas!” said she, “my dear Miranda, who then can be happy, if even our retired Cottage cannot escape these intrusions? I have long since forgiven his crimes; but to see him again, is too great a punishment.” Miranda begged, “she would reflect that some good always attended each apparent ill; and she felt convinced this would prove so in the end.”

The next morning Mr. Bromley entreated permission to speak to Lavinia. She instantly came to him. “Most amiable fair one,” said he, “will you listen a few minutes to the request I think your extreme goodness will comply with. The unhappy Leslie is wretched till you promise him your free pardon for his former crimes; and would you but see him and permit him to vindicate himself, it will be the last favour he will solicit at your hands.”

“If it is your desire, Mr. Bromley,” said Lavinia, “I will certainly submit to an interview with that unfortunate man; but it will renew the severest pangs in my bosom.”

“Suspence, my dear sister,” said Miranda, “is worse than the greatest affliction; therefore see him instantly.” Lavinia underwent many struggles but at last she consented.

When she entered, it was with difficulty Mr. Leslie supported himself from falling, and several minutes before he would utter a syllable. After many repeated efforts, he said, “What must my ever dear Jemima think of my boldness, to appear before her when I have so greatly injured; but I trust, when she knows the villainy I was linked with, it will in some degree palliate my offence. When first I addressed you, most lovely Jemima, my heart was pure, and regarded no other object; but, unluckily for me I met with one of those detestable women, who are made up of every vice. She was beautiful, and by all those insinuating arts they well know how to use, led me so far from the paths of virtue that I was lost in the mazes of wickedness. She ensnared my foot-steps, and, like a bird that is caught in the net of the fowler, the more I endeavoured to extricate myself, the more was I entangled. She persuaded me to take away the fortune of the lovely Jemima, and to depart with her. I too readily

complied with her desire. We immediately set off to Paris, where we had no sooner arrived, than she said, 'If I would not marry her, she would have me confined for the robbery I had committed.' Judge what a situation I was in! to save my own life, I agreed to this wretch's desires. We lived for some time abroad; but when her extravagance had nearly consumed our ill-gotten wealth, she left me with two helpless infants, almost destitute of support; for, in her turn, she robbed me of all the ready money she could find. What a scene of distress was I exposed to! and, what is worse than all, the terrors of an evil conscience! I thought it vain to stay longer in a foreign country; therefore returned to England, in hopes of finding my poor mother, and obtaining her pity for the innocent babes; but, alas! to add to my misfortunes my ill behaviour had shortened her days! I heard in Town, that, the evening before my departure abroad, she had some intelligence of my villainy, and set off in the night, to prevent it; but she was too late. The shock overpowered her so much, that she had successive fits till the moment of her death, which happened three days after my departure. I have been roaming about every since, wholly supported with the hand of charity; and by accident, and my happier fortune, have found the peaceful dwelling of my adored Jemima. Though I must ever be miserable for the injury I have done her, yet I have one comfort, that I have made some small justification of myself. This I do not mean as a total vindication of myself; for the heart which is truly virtuous spurns the allurements of the wicked; but say, lovely Jemima, that you forgive me, and I am content."

Lavinia replied, "My pardon, Mr. Leslie, you have long obtained, and, to regain my esteem, act honestly in future. I will give you an opportunity to amend, and live as becomes a man of integrity and justice. There is a sufficient sum for your present support; it will enable you to seek after some laudable employment, and when Louisa and her Frederick are united, your children shall be brought up under my care, and in our Cottage; but promise me not to revisit our abode but when it is with our permission, and make a solemn vow, never to discover our retreat."

Mr. Leslie was for several moments unable to express his thanks; but, when the first effusions of gratitude were in some measure abated, he spoke with that fervency which denotes a grateful heart. He said, "The only recompence he could make this angelic woman, was, his thanks, to pray for her happiness, and to finish his days like an honest man."

That Lavinia might not pain Mr. Leslie with a number of acknowledgements, or herself with hearing them, she immediately retired, after desiring to know where the children could be found. Miranda and her friends returned to the Cottage much happier than they came from it, because they had been doing good. Acts of charity were their greatest pleasures, and the more each could invent, so much the higher did they increase each other's felicity, and Miranda thanked her friend for this additional instance of her love.

"Alas!" said Lavinia, "how he is altered! that face, which was once handsome, is now pallid, and worn so thin, that I scarcely knew him."

"I cannot help pitying him," said Miranda, "though he has behaved so basely; bad precepts have brought many excellent minds to ruin, particularly when inculcated by a different sex. We shall easily learn his true character by his future actions; and may he prove deserving our favour!"

While the amiable friends were conversing in this manner, Lucinda brought in a letter for Miranda; it was her mother's sentiments, and contained what follows:

"My dearest and most amiable Daughter,

“Your conduct is a severe reproof, though to such an unfeeling heart as your guilty mother’s. A death-bed, surrounded with poverty and wicked children, has opened my eyes, and I see the many virtues of my lovely Anna; but, alas! it is too late; it is not in my power to repair the injuries I have done her! I am now, my dearest child, upon the eve of my departure; but with what horrors do I look forward to the moment of dissolution! I have shortened the days of your good father: I have been a source of continual distress to my beloved daughter; can I then, with fortitude, bid adieu to this world, when I reflect, how ill I deserve a better? A thousand thanks, my lovely girl, for your generous present! Part of it shall support my family, and the rest will lay me in the grave! I am happy to hear of your brother’s good fortune: may you both experience every comfort this world can bestow! I die a sincere penitent; and therefore trust in the goodness of the Almighty for mercy. Would I might be permitted to be your guardian angel, and protect you safely through his uncertain life; but I have not merited such a blessing. Adieu! my dear children; forgive me; and I die so far contented!

“Your affectionate mother

“MARIA WALLACE.”

When Miranda had read this melancholy epistle (which was penned by another person), she was overcome with grief. She and her brother had determined to take a last embrace of their unhappy mother, when another letter arrived, to inform them she was no more! Poor Miranda suffered the severest affliction, and her dear Lavinia was equally distressed for the sorrows of her friend.

“I have one consolation,” said Miranda, “in my sorrow; my poor mother died a sincere penitent, and I trust the goodness of Providence has forgiven her. Had she been sooner awakened to a sense of her errors, how happy for herself and her unfortunate Anna.”

Mr. Bromley administered consolation to his much esteemed friend. “Repine not, my Miranda,” said he, “when the event, though melancholy, has brought with it so much good. Had your unhappy mother been taken off in a moment, you would have cause to mourn her fate; but she had time to repent; and, we are told, contrition, when sincere, is ever accepted at the throne of Mercy. I had cause to grieve afresh at the recollection of my poor Juliana’s death, because her child would have again been restored to her; but when I reflect how much superior is her present happiness to any she could have enjoyed on earth, it appears wrong to lament her absence.”

These wise remarks were mutually offered to each other as they severally stood in need of comfort; and, with the aid of religion, they in a short time resume their usual tranquillity, and continued to live in the happiest and most uninterrupted manner.

Mr. Bromley having received information that the Grove was completed, it was agreed that the nuptials of Louisa and her Frederick should be celebrated. On such an occasion even the happy sisters determined to leave their rural abode.

A few days preceding the happy one, they all set off to the Grove, not even Lucinda remained behind; and only Edwin was left, to guard the sisters’ Cottage. When Miranda and her friend had quitted their peaceful retirement, and involuntary tear bedewed their lovely cheeks.

“Alas!” said Miranda, “would I could banish reflection! but it haunts me still, every object renews past sorrows.”

Lavinia too threw aside her veil, to wipe away an unbidden tear. However, they summoned all their fortitude, to appear cheerful on so joyous an occasion.

When they arrived at the Grove, they were delighted with the spot; it was romantic, and therefore the more pleasing to the fair sisters. The house was made exceedingly elegant, and the garden laid out with the most exquisite taste.

Scarcely had Miranda and Lavinia entered, before they went to the grove in which was the last earthly remains of the angelic Juliana and her dear father. Here they shed many tears, in remembrance of the worthy Sir William and his amiable daughter, whom, though unknown to them, they loved for their many virtues. It cast a gloom too over the mind of the gentle Louisa; but Mr. Bromley endeavoured to divert their ideas from the melancholy that spot had occasioned.

When the morning came which was to unite the innocent Louisa to her Frederick, she appeared with all that delicate modesty which is a gem of the most brilliant lustre to the female character. Her countenance was serene but enlivened with the bloom of diffidence, which gave additional expression to her beautiful face. Contrary to the usual custom of a bride, Louisa was, by Miranda's instruction, attired in pale blue, to imitate the painter's idea, who always habit the figure of modesty in that colour. It was a loose robe, of the most beautiful azure, and ornamented with a silver fringe. Her auburn hair flowed in nature's ringlets; and, like the fair sisters, was only adorned with a wreath of white roses. The amiable Miranda and Lavinia attended the wedding, and habited entirely in white.

As they proceeded to church, twelve village maidens, in white, carried baskets of the most fragrant flowers, and strewed their path with sweets without a thorn.

"And may your walks, my worthy friends," said Miranda, "be ever thus delightful! so will you meet with that bliss you merit, and which may it be the order of Providence you shall ever enjoy!"

Mr. Bromley could not be present at the marriage. He said, "it would be too much for his weak spirits to undergo."

When the ceremony was over, they returned to the Grove. Not seeing Mr. Bromley when they entered, they went in pursuit of him to the garden; where, to their great surprize, he was sitting under a most splendid canopy, and a band of music greeted their return. Mr. Bromley received them with tears of joy. They could scarce find words to express his kindness and unexampled tenderness to them.

When the first congratulations were over, the canopy was drawn up, and, to their great astonishment, discovered a number of young people of both sexes, in the most fantastic dresses, who were come to celebrate this festive day, by the request of Mr. Bromley. They instantly began dancing; and the day was finished with every token of mirth and the truest delight. In a few weeks Miranda and Lavinia returned to their peaceful dwelling, and Mr. Bromley was to follow them in a short time, for though he meant frequently to be at the Grove, he could not resign his happy retirement and the friendship of the lovely sisters.

Always engaged in doing some good, Miranda and Lavinia immediately sent for the children of the unhappy Leslie. They proved to be two beautiful little girls; a circumstance they were much rejoiced at. Lavinia heard that their father had employed the money she gave him to procure a comfortable maintenance. He was admitted about twice a year to see his children; and, every time they saw him, he appeared improved, and in a few years acquired a

moderate fortune. Thus we see, that when there is a good foundation, and an honest heart, only led away by evil persuasions, Virtue may again resume her seat, and shine with her former radiance.

Miranda and Lavinia continued happy in themselves; and the acts of charity they continually conferred were a lasting source of felicity to them. Mr. Bromley added frequently to their pleasure, and they continued patterns of excellence and goodness to the last moment of their lives; and Louisa and her Frederick enjoyed the most uninterrupted delight, the present scene of uncertainty can allow.

This little history, trifling as it may appear, yet it must remind us, that under every calamity we should be patient and resigned; always remembering, that, if we act well, we shall ever find some relief, and though Providence may afflict us for a while, it is for some good purpose. With these true reflections, shall we pass serenely through this insignificant world, and, when we take our leave of it, shall be deserving of a better. It is a staff of comfort on which the patient in misfortune find support; and, to obtain its aid, let us, my fair readers, imitate the virtues of Miranda and Lavinia.

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