

ANY THING BUT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

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AUTHOR OF MONTEITH—ETHELIA—MEMOIRS OF AN
AUTHOR—RECORDS OF A NOBLE FAMILY, ETC. ETC. ETC.

In Three Volumes.

VOLUME II.

“Alle day
“It is both writ and sayde,
“That woman’s faith is, as who sayth;
“Alle utterly decayed.
“But nevertheless right good witness
“I’ this case might be layde,
“That they love trewe, and contynewe.—”
Nut Browne Mayde.

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CHAPTER I.

THE morning was ushered in without any of those appearances of nature, which are supposed to be peculiarly propitious to bridal rites; in the elegant language of Milton,

“Not trick’d and frounc’d as she was wont
With the Attie boy to hunt,
But kerchief’d in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud.”

Though every preparation had been previously made, yet to see them all properly carried into execution gave ample employment to Lady Walpole and her coadjutors, for the five hours which succeeded the breakfast one; much remained to be done, both to adorn and embellish the grand drawing-room, and dedicate it appropriately to its present solemn purpose; the dining-room required much tasteful decoration; and in the other apartments there were so many plants to arrange, so many pictures to compose and decompose; such a number and variety of flowers and vases to place in order, and so many other items to attend to, that only two hours remained for the labours of the toilet; and there Lady Walpole improved so well, that she came forth a superb and gay, though not juvenile bride; her dress was composed of white satin, silver net, and rich fringe of the same material; while the ornaments disposed about her person, which were as numerous as fashion would sanction, were all of diamonds; no assistance that art has contrived to aid nature was omitted; and the satisfaction of her heart spread such a radiance over her countenance, that she might literally be said to beam smiles, and breathe rapture. Cordelia wore a most elegant dress of her own work; her beautiful hair needed no adornment, and a pearl necklace was all of her costume that could be termed ornamental; yet altogether her face and form looked interestingly lovely.

About five the Ravenpark party arrived; the two noblemen were dressed with characteristic grace and propriety, and the resemblance between them was so striking, that Lord Dunotter might truly have contemplated in his son a younger self. The earl was polite to all, and most attentive to Lady and Miss Walpole, but yet dignified, and rather grave.—Cordelia thought he looked as if the habitual superiority of his deportment was struggling to resume its wonted sway; Lord Lochcarron, whatever might be his inward feelings, was gentle, good-tempered, and very tender in his manner towards his bride elect. Mr. Malcolm had another reverend gentleman with him, and conducted the ceremonial of the marriages extremely well; the archbishop’s licenses were displayed with all due form; Mr. Addington had the honour to give Lady Walpole to that hand which put on her the golden fetter which constituted her a new-made countess; and then Lord Dunotter himself gave the fair hand of Cordelia to his son. Those circumstances

which in perspective appear so formidable, that the mind thinks it will never have courage to go through them, are often, when brought to the test, supported with singular fortitude: thus it was with Miss Walpole, she had always felt appalled when reflecting on the ceremony which was to unite her to lord Lochcarron; but when the moment arrived, all those fears vanished, and she supported herself with great firmness; in moments like these, when the parties who are taking an important step in life are surrounded by their friends, the hearts of all, if not absolutely callous by nature, or seared by a commerce with the world, expand with something like a thrill of pleasure as they give and receive congratulations; it may be questioned whether Lord and Lady Dunotter were capable of such expansion, but they could well assume the appearance of it; and as every one else felt it in reality in a greater or less degree, they sat down to a most magnificent dinner, a very pleasant bridal party. Harmony and hilarity seemed to increase over the dessert, which was truly sumptuous; every delicacy that art can compel our climate to produce, was brought from the hothouses at Ravenpark; the bride had ordered every foreign importation that is esteemed delicious, and the wines of Lord Dunotter could not fail to be some of the best which England contained. The bridal toast to the health and happiness of the junior pair had just gone round, when one of the attendants whispered something in the ear of Lord Lochcarron; the eye of Cordelia, in stolen glances, anxiously watched the countenance of her new-made lord, but no very particular degree of emotion was discoverable in it; he rose, however, and quitted the room without any one seeming to notice the action; conversation was carried on with unabated spirit, but his bride secretly counted the minutes, and wondered at his stay; when he had been gone about a quarter of an hour, pauses were visible in the discourse, and Cordelia could observe that her father-in-law every now and then stole a look towards the door, while the glance of Lady Dunotter mechanically, as it were, followed his; the bride of Lochcarron wished to trace on her watch the progress of time, but was restrained by the consciousness that so many eyes were observing her.

The glass to the usual toast was waiting; half an hour had now elapsed, and when all, as if by general consent, were sinking into silence, Lord Dunotter expressed some slight surprise at the absence of his son; his words seemed a directing impulse to Miss Addington, who never approved of long fits of silence, and now with her eyes turned to Lady Lochcarron, as if addressing her in particular, exclaimed, "Dear, how strange that his lordship should stay so long, where can he be?" questions are sometimes asked which the inquirer cannot expect to have answered, and this was certainly one of them; Mr. Kenyon, the clerical friend of Mr. Malcolm, promptly relieved the bride by saying, "that he could not avoid in part overhearing the message brought by the servant to Lord Lochcarron, which was respecting a letter." Lord Dunotter's look now betrayed visible inquietude, he paused a moment, and then said, "I fear it is from Shellmount, and that my sister is worse." His bride begged him not to be alarmed—expressing her conviction that Lord Lochcarron would soon return—smiled on Cordelia, as if translating her apprehensive countenance, and wishing to do away the impression—and endeavoured to rally and re-animate conversation, but all would not do; the earl, evidently distressed, remained abstracted a few minutes, and then ringing the bell, a servant opened the door, and his lordship, going into the hall, desired Lord Lochcarron's valet to be called; a shade of busy curiosity, mingled with some degree of inquietude, was visible on the

countenances of all the domestics, and the earl had to repeat his orders twice before he received the laconic information that the valet was gone with his lord. It still appeared that either every one was unwilling to speak on the subject, or no one knew what to say, for Lord Dunotter was compelled to descend to the humiliation of inquiring minutely who had been with his son; when and whither he went; and by what mode of conveyance: in answer to these questions, he was told that a man on horseback, apparently in very great haste, had brought a letter addressed to Lord Lochcarron, which he said must be delivered immediately; the messenger rode off without staying for an answer, and his lordship was summoned from the dining-room in the way already described; he read the letter alone in a breakfast parlour, and then went into the shrubbery, where he walked, by the light of the moon, about a quarter of an hour. On his return to the house, he instantly summoned his valet, to whom he gave some orders in a low voice; the man departed to execute them, and the young nobleman, *rushing hastily out of the house on foot*, was seen to take the road towards Ravenpark.

Such was the strange, alarming, mortifying intelligence with which Lord Dunotter was compelled to return to his own bride, the bride of Lochcarron, and their party; his own conjectures were best known to himself, but he softened down what he had to say as much as possible, by assuming a serene look and cheerful tone, and by totally suppressing the emphatic words used by the domestic, that Lord Lochcarron *rushed hastily out of the house*, and that he was known to have taken the road to Ravenpark; that he went on foot he was compelled to admit, and slightly saying he was surprised, though not very uneasy, expressed his intention of going to Ravenpark to see if his son was there. "Oh no, my lord," said Lady Dunotter, "you had much better dispatch a messenger." The earl, without giving either an accord or a negative to her ladyship's proposition, again hinted his fears that the letter was from Shellmount, and that Lady Charlotte was worse.

Apprehensions which have grounds are much more supportable than those which have none, a truth of which Cordelia felt the conviction; for the supposal of Lord Dunotter was so plausible a reason for her lord's strange absence, that she became comparatively easy, strove to rally her spirits, and joined in conversation with Mrs. Addington, who was kindly endeavouring to amuse her. Lord Dunotter seemed to take a part with them, but his frequent pauses of silence, and slight absences of mind, betrayed the agitation which he was endeavouring to divert and conceal; another half hour thus wore over, Lord Lochcarron had now been gone an hour and a half; Cordelia's terrors were visibly reviving, and Lord Dunotter's starting eye seeking the door on every slight motion, when Lady Dunotter rose to adjourn to the drawing-room, again reiterating her persuasion that Lord Lochcarron would soon return; but when there no longer appears a foundation for hope, saying "*I hope he will*," seems tantamount to "*I fear he will not*."

Lord Dunotter and his two clerical friends soon followed the ladies; tea was served, and for a short time uneasiness was veiled till it seemed banished, but like whatever is under forced restraint, it gathered strength, and soon broke out again with augmented violence; Lady Lochcarron's pale countenance spoke the agony of her mind; Lady Dunotter grew seriously uneasy, and expressed herself so; the earl alternately soothed them both with the most tender attention, and then losing his own self-command,

rose from his seat, traversed the apartment, and reiterated his apprehensions that his sister was dead, and that Lochcarron, reluctant to cloud the happiness of that day, was withholding intelligence so distressing, and writing from Ravenpark such instructions as were absolutely necessary: "Oh, but in that case he would surely have sent to say he was detained by business, and would return presently," said Cordelia, in mournful accents: it seemed so rational to suppose that he would indeed have done so, that every one silently admitted the painful conviction. Miss Addington now observed that his lordship had been gone upwards of two hours; when the unhappy bride, unable longer to rein in her anguished feelings, broke into a passion of tears, and sobbed with the most moving grief; Lord Dunotter flew to her, folded her affectionately to his heart, begged her to be composed, and saying he would instantly go to Ravenpark to ascertain the truth, rang the bell, and ordered his carriage.

The night was growing stormy, heavy clouds obscured the moon, and a rain was commencing which threatened to be of long continuance; Lady Dunotter looked rather averse to her lord's intention; spoke of the weather, glanced her eye on Cordelia, who sat the genuine picture of woe, and as if half inclined to censure her for its indulgence, hinted at the duty of patience; Mr. Malcolm translated her countenance, and offered to relieve Lord Dunotter from the task of going to Ravenpark; but this his lordship declined with a mild determination, which precluded any further interference on the point; Mr. Malcolm then requested permission to accompany him, Mr. Kenyon made the same offer, but the earl waived both, and departed with only his own servant in the carriage.

Seriously alarming as the affair now looked, it was yet some little relief to the anxious circle, most especially to the unhappy bride, that Lord Dunotter was himself gone to ascertain the truth; only Lady Dunotter seemed to disapprove of it, the efforts of every one else were chiefly directed to sooth Cordelia, and to support her spirits; in this Mr. Malcolm succeeded best, for he did it with a gentleness and feeling inspired by his affectionate regard for Lord Lochcarron, but he hid his fears in the recesses of his own breast; he was apprehensive that the letter Lord Lochcarron had received was in reality a trap to decoy him into some danger, of what nature he could not define, but to which he had fallen a victim.

Lady Dunotter, though she had at first been, or affected to be, the most buoyant in hope, had now nearly sunk into the opposite passion of despair, and formed a very dreadful secret surmise, that Lord Lochcarron, the prey of a violent passion for Miss Borham, and detesting the union he had been as it were, forced into, had cut the thread of existence with his own hand; nor was her ladyship single in this horrid supposition, but it was of course the last in the world which any one would have avowed. Mr. Addington's private opinion was, that the letter had contained a challenge; that the consequence had been an immediate meeting, perhaps at some inn in the neighbourhood, and the event too probably fatal. Mr. Kenyon thought, or chose to say he thought, that Lord Dunotter's fears were verified, that Lady Charlotte Malcolm was dead, and that Lord Lochcarron had gone post to Shellmount; Cordelia shook her head in mournful sadness, and said (what every principle of reason and common sense seemed to justify her in saying) that her lord would never have gone to Shellmount without sending a line to notify his

intention. "But," observed Miss Addington, "perhaps Lady Charlotte is not dead, but so dangerously ill that his lordship could not lose a moment." This supposition did not appear to illuminate the affair in the least, for if time had not allowed his lordship to write, he might at all events, and certainly would, have charged an intelligent servant with a verbal message, which should give a cautious explanation of what had occurred.

Thus the party talked, and thus they looked till the clock told the awful hour of midnight; Lord Dunotter had now been gone above an hour, and though he could not be expected back until at least twice that time had elapsed, every moment which was now added to his stay took something from hope and gave more to fear, for every one had cherished a secret wish, almost amounting to an expectation, that his lordship would have been prevented from performing his journey to its full extent by meeting either his son or a messenger upon the road.

Oh! how splendidly miserable was now the lovely bride of Lochcarron, arrayed in her nuptial dress, surrounded by all the pomp and magnificence that taste could invent, luxury suggest, or wealth command; unable to endure the anguish of her own thoughts and feelings, she moved from seat to seat, and wandered from apartment to apartment, while the glare of the lights, the bloom of the flowers, the finest odours of nature, and the most rare and expensive combinations of art, only served to write and impress wretchedness on every sense. She was returning to the drawing-room from her own boudoir, where she had gone to implore that protection and assistance which, perhaps too little thought of in health and joy, is our never-failing refuge in sickness or in sorrow, when she was met by Lucy, her loquacious attendant, who, with a face solemnized for the occasion, and with a particular expression of countenance beyond that, exclaimed, "Oh, my lady, I have just heard such a thing—" "For heaven's sake," said Cordelia, wrought up almost to frenzy with apprehension, "tell me at once what you have heard, let me know the worst, I cannot bear suspense." Again she commenced with, "Oh, my lady," when they were appalled by a violent scream from Miss Addington; Cordelia, who now expected that all her most dreadful surmises (and every dreadful surmise she had in turn harboured) were now about to be confirmed, flew to the spot, where the first object she beheld was Mr. Malcolm, pale as death, and stretched on a sofa; he was, what is rarely met with in this our day, a man of refined feelings, and possessed of an inquiring, though not always a penetrating mind; his attachment to Lord Lochcarron was very great, both personally, and as the rising sun to which his noble house looked up for the support of its family honours; and now persuaded that his strange disappearance on his bridal day was owing to none of the causes which the supposing party around him had conjured up, he was driven to the horrid alternative of adopting the belief, that either he had destroyed himself, or that the letter had been a decoy to lure him to a death only less shocking inasmuch as it was not self-inflicted.

All now became a scene of confusion, Lady Lochcarron was nearly distracted by the dreadful apprehension that Mr. Malcolm was possessed of the fatal secret concerning her lord, whatever it might be, and that his struggles to conceal it had produced this singular effect upon his frame. Proper remedies were applied, he recovered from his swoon, but felt so much disordered that he was obliged to be carried to bed. A messenger

was despatched for Mr. Herbert, to ascertain whether the patient required bleeding, or whether it would be requisite to have medical advice. Lady Dunotter, in addition to her terrors, was now ready to expire with vexation, and something like shame, for she well knew that the arrival of Herbert, and the intelligence he would gather from the domestics, would as effectually blazon the secrets of this eventful bridal day as if they had been published in the gazette.

The distressed party was scarcely settled into some degree of mournful composure, after the removal of Mr. Malcolm, when a servant entered, and placing a letter by Lady Dunotter, said it had been brought by a person on horseback who rode off the moment he had delivered it. The superscription was simply, "The Earl of Dunotter," sealed with a wafer, and without postmark or any other character by which its progress could be traced; and now as her ladyship turned it over and viewed it with eager anxiety, sometimes persuading herself that it contained the fatal secret they all so longed to know, yet dreaded to hear, and at others yielding to the belief that it was another letter sent by the same hand to lure the father to the fate which had already befallen the son, she felt almost tempted to break the seal. Cordelia, her frame sinking under the most violent apprehensions, watched her every motion, but yet in the midst of the most trying distress, her keen sense of propriety would not allow her to urge any one to open a letter addressed to another person. Miss Addington, less scrupulous, openly exclaimed, "Oh, dearest Lady Dunotter, end our terrors at once." And it is more than probable her ladyship would have complied, but for the consideration that the earl her husband might not exactly approve of such an assumption of privilege in this early period of their union. Miss Addington, thus precluded from seeing the inside, next endeavoured to ascertain whether the direction was really the writing of Lord Lochcarron, but no one present was sufficiently acquainted with his lordship's hand to place the matter beyond a doubt, though all agreed in tracing, or fancying, a resemblance between it and the little they had seen of his writing. Mr. Malcolm, the only person who could have decided in the case, was too ill to be referred to; and thus the poor distressed bride was doomed to the punishment of Tantalus, having before her eyes what might probably either have confirmed or dispelled her fears, without being able to extract from it the slightest particle of information.

Worn down by such a weight of wretchedness, that no pen can do justice to her feelings, she now begged Mr. Addington to go and examine the servants, and find out whether they had put any questions concerning Lord Lochcarron to the person who brought the letter. Mr. Addington obeyed, and the result of his inquiry was, that the bearer of the letter, who (as far as the darkness of the night would permit conjecture) appeared to be the waiter or assistant at an inn, had been asked by the servant who answered his knock, if he knew any thing of Lord Lochcarron, to which he only replied, "I cannot say any thing about him," and rode off.

The mode of expression *cannot*, is frequently used as equivalent to *will not*, and in the present instance the melancholy party feared that such was the case. The arrival of Mr. Herbert next summoned Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Addington to the apartment of the invalid to hear the medical report, and the ladies were left to the sad indulgence of silent anguish; to the repetition of conjectures a thousand times repeated before; to delusive

expressions of hope which only betrayed the reality of fear; to faint attempts at consolation, while all were conscious that they had none either to give or expect; and to reiterated examinations of the outside of the letter. The writing was certainly not good, and Lady Dunotter, after a close inspection, said she thought it an imitation of Lord Lochcarron's hand, intended, no doubt, for the worst purposes. Lady Lochcarron, perhaps reluctant to yield up the belief, and with it the faint ray of comfort it afforded that it was indeed written by her husband, expressed her opinion that it was agitation of nerve which had caused its crooked and inelegant appearance. Miss Addington observed that it looked like a hand disguised, as if the writer wished it not to be recognised; but Lady Dunotter repelled the supposition, and said somewhat indignantly, that if Lord Lochcarron were writing to his father, there would exist no possible reason why he should not wish it to be known.

As the hour of one in the morning drew on, all sunk into boding silence, and "listening fear" pervaded every face. At length the fatal stroke was heard, and poor Cordelia, as if the final knell of hope was struck on her heart, uttered what might be termed a shriek of anguish, and throwing herself into the arms of Mr. Addington, wept tears of wounded love, and grief, and despair. The two gentlemen now returned from Mr. Malcolm's apartment with intelligence that Mr. Herbert had bled his patient, ordered a composing draught, and pronounced that a night's rest would effectually restore him; all expressed themselves glad to hear it, but as for the two brides, it must be owned that in their case grief,

"The master passion of the breast,
"Like Aaron's serpent, swallowed up the rest."

Lady Dunotter had too much pride to inquire, either directly or indirectly, whether Herbert had in any way mentioned the more than strange disappearance of Lord Lochcarron; but she felt the present humiliation of their circumstances at every pore, and rising from her seat, she traversed the length of the apartment, sometimes venting her anguish in a deep groan, mentally wishing that she had done all in her power to retard the marriage of Lord Lochcarron and Cordelia to a later period; expressing the strength of her fears about her lord, and appealing to Mr. Addington whether he had not now exceeded all bounds of time for going to Ravenpark and returning? Mr. Addington said "Not yet;" but he only spoke to lull apprehension, for his lordship had certainly stayed much beyond the period at which he might reasonably have been expected back.

The night, or to speak more properly, the morning, was becoming more tempestuous, the gale blew in the direction towards the windows, and the heavy rain-drops, driven by its fury, pattered loudly against them. No language can do justice to the distress of Ladies Dunotter and Lochcarron; the former proposed and the latter eagerly seconded the sending off a messenger on horseback to Ravenpark, for both, now alike the victims of their well-grounded terrors, felt a conviction that the father and son were involved in the same fate. Miss Addington, not formed for the tameness of sitting down to wait the arrival of either joy or despair, went every two minutes to the staircase to

listen for the sound of the carriage; sometimes Cordelia accompanied her, and felt her anguish renewed by every disappointment.

Another half hour wore away; Lady Dunotter was in the extremity of distress, and her daughter exhibited such alarming symptoms of illness, that her friends united in endeavours to persuade her to retire, but in vain; she insisted on awaiting in the drawing-room the return of Lord Dunotter, and though scarcely able to support her drooping head, tried to wear some appearance of composure.

“It is just two o’clock,” said Miss Addington, returning from one of her perambulations, “I thought I heard the carriage, but I was mistaken; hush—no—I am right,” and away she flew. It was indeed the earl, but his step, his voice, his every motion, too plainly told that he brought no joyful news; to Miss Addington’s exclamation of “Oh, my lord, are you come at last!” he replied, “Yes, my dear Miss Addington, I am here;” but there was no animation of tone, nothing of that cheerfulness inspired by satisfaction, and calculated to inspire it; his voice was little like the voice of the bridegroom, and his manner the most widely different from that joyful character that can be imagined; his face was pale, and his eyes, when he entered the apartment, first sought Cordelia, next glanced on his bride, and were then directed to the floor. Lady Dunotter snatching up the letter, placed it within the folds of her gown, and flew to her lord; while Cordelia, raising her drooping head from the arm of the sofa, looked with frenzied eagerness, but, as if afraid to ask the question which should terminate her dreadful suspense, spoke not a word. The rest of the group surrounded the earl, who said in a faint and dejected tone, “So the servants tell me Lochcarron has not returned.” “And has he not been at Ravenpark, my lord?” questioned Lady Dunotter: to which the earl faintly replied “No.” In this word every worst surmise which had been harboured seemed confirmed; Lady Dunotter thought she saw him weltering in his own blood, shed by his own hand; Mr. Addington beheld him in idea stretched lifeless by the pistol of the duellist; and as to his unhappy bride, she had been pondering on one dreadful idea, till its certainty seemed written on her very brain—it was that the associates of the robber who had fallen on the evening which first introduced her to the acquaintance of Lord Lochcarron, had formed this diabolical, and it appeared too successful, plan to lure him away and deprive him of life, on the sacred and cherished day from which the date of his future happiness was to be drawn. This supposition was similar to that harboured by Mr. Malcolm, and it was near producing the same effect on Lady Lochcarron as it had done on him, when the progress of anguish was checked, and for the time suspended, by seeing her mother draw the letter from its concealment; Lord Dunotter glanced at the superscription, and exclaiming, “Ha! when did this come?” snatched it from her hand, with an eagerness not entirely according with his habitual attention to the established forms of etiquette and politeness, but which this unparalleled moment not only excused but justified. “Oh, my lord, is it indeed the hand-writing of Lochcarron?” questioned Cordelia, in the most piercing accent which could be dictated by the struggle of hope and despair. He replied in the affirmative, for a moment, suspending his attention to the letter, which he was tearing open with an impetuosity that nearly defeated its own purpose, he turned away, as if to have the advantage of a light; the Addingtons and Mr. Kenyon respected his feelings, and retired to a distance; Cordelia’s eagerly-anxious eyes followed every turn of the earl’s face, but

still her amiable retiring diffidence prevented her from drawing nearer, and only Lady Dunotter remained standing near her lord; yet he seemed jealous lest the contents of the letter should be seen even by her, and kept it as much as possible in a position to meet no eye but his own. Every look was fixed on his countenance, and all exerted their best skill in physiognomy to translate its expression; no trace of surprise or astonishment was visible, but evident inquietude, sorrow, and something nearly resembling vexation. Cordelia, while he read, appeared as if restraining by force the inquiry which was ready to burst from her lips; but when she saw his eye glance near the bottom of the page, she exclaimed, "Oh, my lord, is Lochcarron safe? in mercy tell me what has occurred?" "Nothing fatal, assure yourself, my dearest life," said the earl, hastily folding the letter, and putting it into the pocket of his waistcoat, "nothing, I trust, which will be of long duration; my son is offended with me;—it sounds strangely to say so—but a villain has misrepresented circumstances."

There is a point of suffering which a well-regulated female mind cannot brook; needs it be said that the slightest shade thrown upon character, the veriest atom which can stain reputation, constitutes that point: the keenly-susceptible mind of Cordelia instantly construed the hint of Lord Dunotter to imply that her fame had been traduced to his son; the idea checked her feelings, suspended grief, and gave her reanimation and new energies: rising from the sofa, and approaching her father-in-law, she laid her hand upon his arm, and said in a tone of composure most deeply affecting, because it was evidently the composure of despair, "I now see the extent of my misery, do not in mistaken kindness endeavour to deceive me, it is I who have been traduced and misrepresented—Lord Lochcarron believes me unworthy to be the partner of his life:" but with the last sentence her voice fell, and the bitter heart-wrung tears were forcing their way when Lord Dunotter caught her to his bosom, exclaiming with fervency, "No, my beloved girl, if it will relieve your fears on that point, I will solemnly, sacredly assure you that Alexander is truly sensible of your merit, and does you every justice; no, the reason he has for the present withdrawn himself from his family must, I am convinced, be traced in the infamous misrepresentations which have been made to him of some transactions of mine; in short I have been compelled to cause Pringle, my steward, to be arrested; his dishonesty has injured me deeply, and would have done so to a much greater extent had I not discovered it when I did; he is now in Buckingham gaol; the villain, I know well, has laid the foundation of this affair, but he shall suffer both for that and his knavery to the utmost extent that the law can punish him." As the earl spoke, a strong expression of anger kindled on his countenance, his eyes flashed, and every feature of his face seemed acted upon by the feelings of his mind; there was much ambiguity in all that he had said; he had very inadequately accounted for the absence of his son, and certainly no one present was at all satisfied with, or even any wiser for the sort of explanation he had given; but to poor Cordelia, who was most deeply interested, it seemed to convey a dreadful evidence that her cruel lord was still so passionately attached to Miss Borham, as to resent most deeply the measures which his father had taken against her uncle; and oh what a dreadful stab did she feel it to her heart, to think that he had deserted, forsaken, repudiated her; the conflict was too powerful for her worn-out feelings, and just as the earl was inquiring for Mr. Malcolm, and Mr. Addington was replying to his inquiries, she sunk down in a swoon.

CHAPTER II.

FORTUNATELY, if indeed a restoration to the most perfect misery can be termed in any degree fortunate, the remedies proper in Cordelia's case were all at hand, having been so lately used for Mr. Malcolm; and though not so rapidly successful as they had been in his instance, they were ultimately so; the unhappy bride revived, and was led to her chamber, and an express was sent off once more to summon the attendance of Mr. Herbert. Both Mr. Kenyon and the Addingtons thought it strange, that though Lady Lochcarron might be considered as dangerously indisposed, inasmuch as fainting fits which proceed from grief are of more serious consequence than when owing to many other causes, yet neither Lord nor Lady Dunotter proposed sending for a physician; but a very probable cause for this seeming inattention might be traced in the repugnance they would naturally feel to making public the strange circumstance which had occurred, which it was certain would soon be but too well known.

Lady Dunotter and Mrs. and Miss Addington attended the poor sufferer to her apartment, and had recourse to every common-place argument to sooth and console her; indeed what other could they use, or what could apply in such an unparalleled case? she made scarcely any answer, and appeared quite exhausted; Lady Dunotter said she thought her inclined to sleep, and Mrs. Addington observed that rest was more proper for her, and would be of more service than any thing they could do; the countess acquiesced, and the two ladies returned to the apartment where they had left their spouses. Miss Addington said she would not quit the invalid till she saw her asleep, and sat down by the side of the bed. The moment they were gone Lucy approached, and said in a whisper, but such a one as she took care should be loud enough to be overheard by Cordelia, "Oh, dear ma'am, what a thing this is to happen in a family, what a day has this been! what a cruel, cruel man Lord Lochcarron is to draw my dear lady in so—if he was for going off he might have done it yesterday, and who would have cared?"—"Hush, Lucy," interrupted Miss Addington, "you will disturb your lady." "No, ma'am, my lady is asleep; poor dear angel, how *inhumanously* my Lord Lochcarron has treated her!" then lowering her voice, and bending her mouth almost close to Miss Addington's ear, she subjoined, "but to be sure he has been married all along; won't he be hanged, ma'am, if he is taken? is it not death to have two husbands, or two wives, at once?" Here curiosity, of which Miss Addington possessed an ample share, got the better of discretion, with which she was not superabundantly gifted, and forgetting the caution she had just given Lucy not to talk so high, she exclaimed aloud, "Married! gracious me, who is he married to?" Poor Cordelia caught the word, and it seemed the last fatal death-blow her heart could receive; in all the conjectures, all the suppositions which had been formed concerning the strange disappearance of Lord Lochcarron, the idea of a prior marriage had never occurred to any one of the party at Holleyfield; and now that it was obtruded upon Cordelia, she stayed not to reason on the probability or improbability of the circumstance, but in a voice which seemed at once the dictate and effusion of the most bitter earthly misery, she exclaimed, grasping the arm of Lucy, "What were you going to tell me awhile ago? say it at once." Whether the girl was awed by the wild energy of Cordelia's manner, or prompted by ignorance or malice to inflict a yet deeper wound on her peace, it is not material to

inquire; but she immediately replied, "My lady, I was only going to tell you that Miss Borham is gone with my lord, she was seen in a postchaise about——" They who *have* heard the shriek of mental agony, will now hear in idea that which Cordelia uttered, and to those who *have not*, description will never make it comprehensible; but it was only a shriek, no word accompanied it, and she fell back in a state which both Miss Addington and Lucy believed to be death. As Miss Addington's feelings of every sort lay near the surface, they were quickly called into action, and quickly evaporated, and she now screamed exactly in the same way she did on Mr. Malcolm's seizure; its echo penetrated to the ear of Lady Dunotter, who, starting up, exclaimed, "Sure Cordelia has relapsed," and, accompanied by her lord and Mrs. Addington, hurried to her chamber, in which, by this time, half the female servants in the house were assembled; but on the approach of Lord Dunotter they all retreated to the anteroom. "Oh, Lady Dunotter, the dear suffering angel is dead, gone for ever!" cried Miss Addington; Lord Dunotter clasped his hands, pressed them to his forehead, and ejaculated, "Gracious heaven! what have I done!" and this exclamation, which was overheard only by his lady, sunk deep into her mind. When the whole tenor of her ladyship's character is taken into consideration, with that principle of self-interest which had ever been her governing one, it will not, perhaps, be going too far to affirm that she was not grieved when told her daughter-in-law was no more, but she instantly assumed all the visible signs of maternal grief; and while she was beginning to inquire of Miss Addington in what way her dissolution took place, Lord Dunotter approached the supposed corpse, took one of the hands, and feeling with delight that no chill of death was there, applied his hand to the heart, where the vibrations of life's warm current were too perceptible to be mistaken; "Thank heaven!" he exclaimed, in a voice of rapture, "she is not dead! run, fly instantly, send for every physician in the neighbourhood—send all my servants;" and pulling the bell with violence, he reiterated his commands to the domestics, who promptly answered its summons; while Lucy, whose want of caution, to give it no worse term, had caused all this distress and disturbance, sneaked off, under pretence of executing the earl's orders, but in reality to escape the reprimand which was her due, for she found that Miss Addington was repeating to Lady Dunotter all she had said about Lord Lochcarron.

The old housekeeper, whose lameness placed her in the rear of every one else, now entered the room, and finding that Cordelia had not in reality taken her departure from this world, applied strong aromatic vinegar to her nostrils, rubbed her hands and temples with vinegar, and used such other remedies as were at once simple and likely to prove efficacious; prudently observing that rest and quiet were most proper in her case, and that all sudden surprise and agitation were to be carefully avoided.

Meanwhile Lady Dunotter, more intent on drawing from Miss Addington every syllable of what Lucy had said, than in assisting the means used to recover the invalid, succeeded much sooner in the former instance than her lord and the housekeeper did in the latter.

However improbable the circumstances might be, they seemed corroborated by the exclamation she had just heard the earl utter; and though certainly in her situation she must have been most reluctant to credit such a supposition, it seemed a too probable one

that Lord Lochcarron had contracted some sort of a marriage, and that his father knew it, yet hope whispered it might not be so; she wished the matter cleared up at once; but not choosing to mention it in direct terms to her lord, she took the indirect method of saying to Miss Addington, loud enough for him to overhear, "No, my dear madam, I cannot believe either story; I am persuaded Lord Lochcarron is incapable of the first, and the last, I hope, is not true." "How, what is that?" questioned the earl, "what is my son accused of?" Lady Dunotter, though fearing that her son-in-law had indeed erred in the way reported, saw, or imagined she saw, the propriety of preventing the report from obtaining currency; and to do this it seemed requisite that the earl should be told what was said, as it might then receive a positive contradiction from his own lips; and supposing that her lord would of course comprehend all she thought and wished, and would act accordingly, she, in reply to his question, repeated what had been said by Lucy in the first instance, and detailed to her by Miss Addington, taking care to disclaim all belief in it herself.

Lord Dunotter very likely did understand all that his lady wished, and in that case he either was the most finished dissembler ever known, or the potency of truth needed no disguise; for when told what the girl had said, the habitual polish of his manners seemed to yield to the influence of strong passion, and in a voice of deep anger he exclaimed, "It is altogether an infernal falsehood; where is the girl, that I may question her." Lady Dunotter's woman went to summon Lucy, but at that moment Lady Lochcarron exhibited symptoms of reviving animation, and all attention became fixed on her alone; she at first showed no signs of recollection; but when it seemed returning, Lord Dunotter ordered some warm lemonade to be brought, and while himself supported her with one arm, held the glass to her lips with the other hand, and in the soft soothing tone of paternal tenderness entreated her to exert herself and swallow the contents; this appearance of gentle kindness easily gained on the susceptible heart of Cordelia, but at the same time it brought back the keen and torturing remembrance of her misery; she meekly strove to obey the earl, though, choked by grief, she could scarcely take the liquid; and then said in accents of deep distress, "Oh, my lord, in what way did I ever injure or offend your son, that he has thus wrecked my peace for ever; held me up to the scorn of the world, by mocking the most sacred institution, and—" "No," interrupted Lord Dunotter, with the deepest earnestness of look and voice, "no, my dear child, allow me to call you so—you have been imposed upon by a diabolical, infamous falsehood; I positively assure you, not only upon my honour, but in the most solemn and unequivocal manner, that my son was never married, either legally or illegally, until he was this day united to you." The poor sufferer felt as if a small part of her anguish was removed, but it was indeed a small part, and what remained soon dilated itself and pressed with double force. She was just beginning, though in a very incoherent way, to mention what had been told her of Lord Lochcarron's flight with Miss Borham, when she was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Herbert, and in the same instant the entrance of the culprit Lucy, on whom the eye of Lord Dunotter became fixed with peculiar sternness: the doctor felt the pulse of his fair patient, and, in his pompous way, began to descant on her symptoms, when the earl cut him short by saying, "My good Sir, it would not be doing you justice to suffer you to prescribe for the dear sufferer without explaining in what her indisposition originated.— A very unexpected circumstance has occurred which compels Lord Lochcarron to take a

journey, and, very probably, to pass over to the continent; this, for I will be very candid—is in consequence of some steps which I have taken, and which an artful villain has misrepresented to my son; indeed I find,” continued his lordship, glancing his eye satirically round, “that misrepresentation is quite enthroned at Holleyfield; for though they have seen Lord Lochcarron actually married to Miss Walpole, they have, within these few hours, bestowed upon him a former wife, and carried him off with her in a postchaise; certainly, if only my son and myself were concerned, I should have no objection to the amusement the good people may derive from the fabrication of such stories; but as Lady Lochcarron’s peace, and the character of a very excellent young woman are at stake, I feel it a duty I owe to both, to declare upon my honour that Miss Borham is gone down to Scotland on a visit to my sister’s seat; this, I am persuaded, Lord Lochcarron does not even know; and so far from travelling together, he has taken the route to Harwich; now,” he whispered to Cordelia, beside whom he had been leaning with her hand clasped in his while speaking, “now, my life, make yourself perfectly easy, for to you I solemnly swear that all they have been telling you about Lochcarron and Miss Borham is falsehood itself.”

Oh, how soothing to the afflicted is any thing that comes in the shape of hope! that Lochcarron had not acted in a way which must place an everlasting barrier between them, that he was neither the husband of Miss Borham, nor the companion of her flight, she was solemnly assured by Lord Dunotter himself; and partly calmed by this assurance, partly worn out by the distress and indisposition she had suffered, she took the composing draught which Mr. Herbert prescribed; and promised Lord and Lady Dunotter, who both embraced her with every appearance of tenderness, that she would endeavour to make herself easy, and to exert fortitude and patience.

It was now five in the morning, and the blackness of night was beginning to vanish before the rising dawn. Lord Dunotter, after conversing a few minutes with his lady, retired to the library to write, he said, to his son; which, his lordship observed, he ought to have done before, had not Cordelia’s illness claimed his whole attention; the rest of the party sought repose, of which, it may well be imagined, they stood in much need; only the housekeeper, and the prating Lucy (for nobody could awe the latter so well as Mrs. Greville) remained with Cordelia, whose senses soon yielded to the influence of the opiate; but her sleep could not be called repose, for she betrayed every symptom of restlessness.

Lord Dunotter soon finished his packet of writings, whatever they might be, and consigned them to the care of his confidential servant, who was waiting with his horse ready equipped to take them to their destination.

About six, two physicians arrived, and were introduced to the chamber of their patient; Mrs. Greville gave them every requisite information; that part of it which concerned the origin of her illness, she of course gave in very general terms; but on all that had been done for her in the way of prescription she was clear and explicit; the gentlemen seemed to concur in forming a very unfavourable opinion of her case, but could give no positive decision until she should awake. Lord Dunotter had a short

conversation with both of them before he retired to his chamber, and, it may be supposed, made an explanation similar to that he had already given to Herbert.

No one at Holleyfield rose until long after mid-day; Mr. Malcolm was quite recovered, and had some conversation in private with Lord Dunotter, its subject was best known to themselves; but a new idea had now taken possession of more than one of the party, which was, that embarrassment of circumstances on the part of the father had, in some way, involved the son, and that such was the fact seemed confirmed by the frank acknowledgment of the earl, that there existed a point of disagreement between them.

When Lady Lochcarron awoke from her artificial slumbers, every bad symptom of the preceding evening was increased, and every additional one had appeared which could threaten danger; her pulse, though low, was quick in its vibrations; alternate fits of heat and chillness agitated her frame; the anxiety of her mind had settled the deepest dejection upon her spirits; her hands shook with a nervous trembling, and her appetite was so entirely gone, that she recoiled from the very idea of any kind of food; her medical attendants pronounced her case very bad, and enforced the absolute necessity of rest and quiet; but even when she lay perfectly still, and those about her hoped she was deriving benefit from that circumstance, she was only indulging grief, and mentally viewing in every possible light all the circumstances of the dreadful blow which had crushed her peace. Lord Dunotter might *say*, and had *said* every thing calculated to impress her with a conviction that his son regarded her with tenderness and affection; but had he done so in reality, would it have come within the verge of possibility for him to have withdrawn himself in the way he had done, almost in the very hour of his marriage, without sending one line or word of explanation to the woman he had just solemnly vowed to love, comfort, and honour? No; the very essence and nature of the circumstances seemed to vouch that no man could have acted so; and every time the idea occurred, she felt as if a dagger was plunged afresh into her lacerated heart. Young, naturally good, and educated in such a degree of retirement as had at least preserved her from all intercourse with the worst part of her species, she could not for a moment doubt the veracity of Lord Dunotter, who had averred that no prior marriage had existed, not only by that honour held sacred by a nobleman, but with that awful and emphatic solemnity which appeals to all the best feelings of man; indeed scarcely any one, though much older in years and experience, less disposed to look for truth in human nature, and better acquainted with its duplicity and depravity, would have disbelieved the earl's asseveration; but still all this applied no balm to her sufferings, presented no point of rest, left no foundation for hope.

Another circumstance was recalled to memory, and reflected upon till it seemed to augment the aching of her harassed brain; Miss Borham, at the time Cordelia and her party took refuge in Pringle's house from an apprehended thunder-storm, had said that Lord Dunotter persisted in retaining a servant who was suspected of being an accomplice in the attempted robbery of his son—Miss Borham in saying this had added, "It is very strange, is it not?" and now Cordelia, ill as she was, pondered on this and similar matters connected with her sad situation, till her spirits were totally subdued, or rather as it were eradicated; she could obtain no sleep but what was the effect of soporific medicines, and

successive fainting fits brought her so low that no rational hope of her recovery could be entertained: when out of the fits, her intellects were very unsettled; frequent alienations of mind, and delirious ravings, which but too plainly betrayed their source, distressed her anxious friends, more especially her father-in-law, whose every hope seemed to hang on the thread of her existence: not satisfied with the medical advice the country afforded, two physicians of the first eminence were summoned from town, but they could do little, except reiterate the orders of their predecessors. In all her intervals of reason she was ever asking if Lord Lochcarron had returned; but though the surrounding circle told her many well-intended falsities, one sad fact contradicted and annulled them all—Lohcarron neither appeared himself, nor sent a single line! Oh, how frequently did she recall to mind, and how ardently did she wish that no temptation had ever induced her to disobey the half-expressed command of her father, never to have any future intercourse with Lord Lochcarron; she remembered how much she had been agitated at the time, and in the present exhausted state of her spirits believed that feeling to have been prophetic. Thus worn down, and oppressed with continual grief, anxiety, and misery; wasted with a slow but perpetual fever; exquisitely sore from the succession of blisters which had been applied, and too ill to take any thing which might support exhausted nature, except a little wine, she was unable to bear the slightest motion, and by the twelfth day of her illness was pronounced by the faculty past recovery.

Oh! what a contrast did the mansion at Holleyfield now present to what it had done a fortnight before! then, all was pleasure and gaiety; animation in every face, and all that decorates life, or gives it grace and elegance, shining in every object! now, all was dejection, gloom, and silence; almost every window-shutter closed, all the bells muffled, and scarcely a particle of the flooring and stairs was not covered with thick matting; none but the inmates of the family, and some of the medical people, were within the walls; the Addingtons had been suffered to depart without receiving any very pressing invitation to prolong their stay; for the earl, in the present state of his spirits, had no relish for society, but rather felt it a restraint; and the countess, charmed with the novelty of her lord's fascinating manners, and anxious in this early period of their union to fix her empire over his will and actions, as she had done over those of Sir Charles Walpole, desired no company but his; her ladyship, however, soon discovered that she would never succeed in this way in her second marriage, so well as she had done in the first. Lord Dunotter, though uniformly elegant and polite in his manners, and by no means harsh in his general disposition, was tenacious of his own opinion; and, at this time, it might be inferred, harassed by a variety of mental feelings, working with more bitter effect because confined to his own bosom; the points which his lady first laboured to carry were to draw from him all he knew concerning the departure of his son; to learn the place of his present abode; and to obtain a sight of that letter which the earl had acknowledged came from Lord Lochcarron, and which she had often regretted not having opened when it was first put into her hands on the eventful wedding-night; but in none of these matters could she succeed. Her lord persisted in declaring that he did not know where his son then was, and that he had seen no reason to alter his early opinion, that it was some misrepresentation of Pringle's which had caused a slight difference between them; and as to the letter, he said he had committed it to the fire, but his manner of saying it looked more like evasion than truth.

A mournful gloom seemed to pervade every countenance as they contemplated the approaching hour of Lady Lochcarron's dissolution; but with Lord Dunotter himself it seemed more than gloom, it was the comfortless expression of that despair from which hope is entirely excluded—that pale hue of a countenance to which a cheerless heart refuses to lend any colour. Lady Dunotter was scarcely visible; but when she did pass from one apartment to another, her handkerchief was held to her eyes, either to absorb her tears, or to hide the reality that none were there; she seldom went near the sick room of her daughter-in-law, observing, and certainly not without truth, that her presence there could be of no service. Lord Dunotter, on the contrary, paid frequent and anxious visits to the sufferer, conversed with the medical gentlemen, suggested many little plans of comfort for the lovely patient, and gave her with his own hand the little nourishment and medicine she could be prevailed upon to swallow; this, indeed, was in some sort a duty imposed on him; for Cordelia soon became so much attached to her father-in-law, that she would scarcely receive those articles from any one else; this attachment might, no doubt, in part be ascribed to the kind and unremitting attention Lord Dunotter showed her; but it had another and a tenderer source; he was the parent, and, in person, the prototype of Lord Lochcarron, to whom, in despite of all he had made her suffer, of the contempt, the ignominy, with which he had treated her, of every appearance which seemed to brand his name with the blackest villany, her heart turned with a feeling but too much like the fondest love. But all mortal feelings and sentiments seemed now for ever at an end with Cordelia; after continuing throughout the day in a state between life and death, she fell, between nine and ten in the evening, into a kind of stupor; this, her physicians pronounced, would terminate in either death or convalescence, but neither they nor any one present, Lord Dunotter excepted, had any hope that she would be restored; and the earl had no other ground for this confidence, than the circumstance of having once seen a young person in Germany recover under similar symptoms. His lordship watched by her till the hour of retiring, and then kissing her cheek, he feared for the last time, a tear, which he could not restrain, fell on it. He gave strict orders that if any change, either for better or worse, took place, he should immediately be called. About three in the morning her breathing, which had been scarcely perceptible, became more so, which all but Mrs. Greville believed an unfavourable symptom, and now looked forward to nothing but the immediate extinction of the vital spark. Two hours more wore over, and what little change could be perceived was rather for better than worse; she appeared to sleep, and a gentle moisture covered her hitherto parched hand; about five o'clock she suddenly started, opened her eyes, and faintly, but plainly, articulated, "Lord Dunotter, where are you, my lord?" The first care of the overjoyed Mrs. Greville was to give the poor sufferer a glass of wine, which she took more readily than she had done any thing since the commencement of her illness; she then went to an adjoining apartment, where the earl's valet was in waiting, and instructed him how with due caution to impart the joyful tidings to his lord: then, and not till then, did she summon the physicians; for so little reliance had she on their skill in the case of her beloved patient, that she feared trusting to any thing they ordered or prescribed unless Lord Dunotter were present. Great was the delight his lordship expressed, and seemed to feel, when told that Cordelia had inquired for him; he hurried to her room, pressed her hand, implored her to be composed, and for his sake to strive to get better; and as the advice of the medical men was such as

met his entire approbation, he gave strict and positive orders that it should be enforced, and that if possible more care than ever should be taken not to disturb her; the earl was rejoiced at the prospect of his daughter's recovery; whether that circumstance gave equal pleasure to Lady Dunotter was best known to herself, but she did not fail to affirm it due.

CHAPTER III.

LADY Lochcarron's convalescence went on very slowly, every symptom of immediate danger disappeared, but the remote ones which threatened both her intellects and life increased; the weakness in which she was left by her disorder, did not yield to the bark and other restorative medicines which were thought proper in her case; the dejection of her spirits was rather augmented than lessened; and aware that the singular circumstances in which she was placed must be the talk of the country, she felt so much oppressed with shame, though innocent, and with sorrow that seemed to have no remedy, that she could not be prevailed upon, even by Lord Dunotter himself, to take that degree of exercise in the open air which was absolutely requisite for the recovery of her health. She was now left much alone; Lord and Lady Dunotter were absent, first on a visit to Lady Charlotte Malcolm, and then in town, where business both public and private, the earl said, required his presence; the countess, when with her sister-in-law, tried by every possible means to draw out of her some intelligence of Lord Lochcarron, but in vain; Lady Charlotte expressed her deep regret and disapprobation of the way in which he had acted; but defended, with glowing affection, his heart, his principles, and general conduct.

In this sad interval of sickness, grief, and solitude, it was natural that Cordelia should sigh for the presence and consolatory converse of her early respected friend and directress, Mrs. Emerson; she hinted her wishes on this point to Lord Dunotter, and though he felt rather reluctant to having the present circumstances and situation of his family displayed to the penetrating scrutiny of a lady, whose distinguished talents and cultivation of mind he had frequently heard highly extolled; he yet, in consideration of his daughter's comfort, waved these objections, and requested Lady Dunotter to write an invitation to Mrs. Emerson: her ladyship, for reasons similar to those of her lord, and for several others superadded, not the least of which was the recollection of the shyness which had taken place between herself and Mrs. Emerson at that lady's last visit, resolved that she should not become an inmate of Holleyfield if it was in her power to prevent it: she obeyed her lord's request with great apparent readiness and pleasure; wrote the invitation, but took care to word it in such a way that its acceptance was the last thing to be thought of: the absence of Lord Lochcarron she spoke of as a matter of necessity, or a point of business, and of course more regretted than wondered at by his father and herself; her daughter's illness she mentioned in as slight terms as she could, and as if no longer a subject for apprehension; and concluded by hoping that if her beloved Mrs. Emerson could make it convenient to venture so far at that period of the year, she would favour them with her company at Holleyfield, but never said how earnestly Cordelia wished for it. Mrs. Emerson, thus kept ignorant how far her presence was either requisite or desired, wrote in reply to Lady Dunotter, politely declining the invitation; and the wily countess, while she hinted to her lord how unkind it seemed in Mrs. Emerson, secretly exulted in the success of her plans. All this took place in the interval between their return from Shellmount and departure for London; and as Cordelia positively refused to have any other person invited to stay with her during their absence, she was again left to solitude, grief, and tears.

Her excellent constitution so far conquered her complaints, that appetite, and with it strength, in some degree returned; in proportion as her frame was invigorated, so were the faculties of her mind; she could now reflect with calmness, though certainly not with resignation, on late events; she again and again viewed them in every possible light, but to trace her through them would be to pass over beaten ground; the only certainty she could attain was, that Lord Lochcarron had acted towards her with the height of unfeelingness and cruelty; in a religious point of view, with daring impiety; in a moral one, with great turpitude; with disobedience and undutifulness to his father; and, to finish the black picture of his criminality, with gross violation and contempt of the laws of his country; and connected with this last point, the cup of her sufferings seemed now filled to the brim, for Mr. Crompton called one morning to see her, and, after much circumlocution, painful inasmuch as it gave her to apprehend every possible evil in turn, told her that however reluctant he felt to give her pain, it was yet a duty which he could not recede from, to inform her that Lord Lochcarron had sent instructions to his lawyer to assist any measures that might be taken to annul the ceremony of their marriage. Poor Cordelia listened to this heart-piercing communication with a strong exertion of fortitude, and with such command of countenance that very little emotion was perceptible in it. Mr. Crompton, who, as one of her nominated trustees, no doubt thought himself privileged, then proceeded to hint that Lady Dunotter, as her ladyship's guardian, was determined to contend for the legality of the marriage, and never to permit its dissolution. Cordelia, nearly wrought up to frenzy by such a discussion, was at last compelled to say that neither her health nor spirits were in a state to enter on such a topic, and begged Mr. Crompton to make every communication on the subject to Lord Dunotter, and not to her; the faintness with which she was really seized, of which the paleness of her countenance was a sufficient indication, was a good pretext for her to retire, but the moment she was alone; every passion which wounded feeling can raise in the bosom, burst with a violence which her gentle nature had never known before; that anger which was the just emanation of injured and insulted innocence, treated with a contumely as unmerited as it was unprecedented, thrilled through her frame with poignant stings; to it succeeded shame,—shame, it is true, unmixed with guilt; but yet so deep, so overwhelming, that she would willingly, gladly have buried herself in the most remote solitude, in the recesses of a forest, or even in the caverns of the earth, to shun the smile of scornful pity, the glance which should point her out to notoriety, and the half-audible whisper which should say, “That is the repudiated bride of Lord Lochcarron.” Then this tumult subsiding, love resumed his empire; memory traced back the fond and flattering visions of connubial happiness which she had pencilled out in imagination on the eve of her marriage; and that tenderly remembered moment, when the deceitful Lochcarron had planned to pass in Italy this very winter which was thus consumed by his victim in the sighs and groans of an anguish as great as human nature could support: with love came jealousy, its never-failing concomitant, creating and fancying a thousand evils; painting Lochcarron as attached to Miss Borham, and alternately swaying the heart it reigned over to love, contempt, pity, revenge, and at last to despair.

In this frame of mind she went to rest, at least she sought her couch, but slept little, and rose late the following morning, more unrefreshed, dejected, and unhappy than ever; it was Sunday, and at once too unwell and too much ashamed to go to church, she

sought by devotional exercises at home, at once to tranquillise her thoughts and to discharge what she conceived to be her duty; but that happy peaceful frame of spirit in which, when resident with Mrs. Emerson, she used to perform her devotions, was her's no longer; then, she offered thanks and adoration for every real blessing of life, and supplicated a continuance of them; but now, sad contrast! her prayers were for support and comfort in her afflictions; for divine counsel and aid to enable her to act for the best in the painful and singular circumstances she was placed in; and, if it were the will of Providence that they should not be removed, for patience and resignation under them. Alas! to exert the last sincerely, and from the bottom of her heart, seemed a task beyond mortality; for the idea of an endless separation from Lord Lochcarron was too distressing to be contemplated with any thing approaching to fortitude. In this sad way the hours wore over, rather dipping into, than reading several pious books, when a text of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, "Some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come," caught her eye. When the mind is powerfully occupied and impressed with one subject, whatever is presented to it through the medium of seeing or hearing, is sure to be examined in every point of view, to see what relation it bears to the matter which engages the attention; in this chain of association perhaps may be traced the instant conviction which seemed to say to Cordelia, "You have done evil that good might come;" "you severed, at least assisted to sever, the tie which bound the heart of Lord Lochcarron to that of Miss Borham, and you are now reaping the reward due to such an act." This thought was accompanied with feelings sadly and painfully humiliating: "Is this," she asked herself, "the only instance in which I have erred? did I, in consenting to become the wife of Lord Lochcarron, intend to make the good my high rank and station would enable me to do, my first end and aim? did I seriously consider of what influence and consequence my example would be? and did I firmly resolve, in married life, to adopt that meekness, discretion, and benevolence of character which become a christian matron?" truth and ingenuousness, in which Cordelia had never been deficient, answered to each separate article, "No, no, no." Again she urged the mental inquiries, "Or were a title and its attendant coronet; the homage paid to beauty and to rank; the pleasures which wealth can purchase, and all the pride and display of life, the objects to which I looked forward in a married state?" candour, sincerity, conscience, said, "They were." From considerations like these, she reverted to the lecture which Mrs. Emerson had given her at the time of her departure from Holleyfield, and the treble injunction she had then laid upon her: she certainly had not exactly fallen into those fashionable levities and eccentricities which Mrs. Emerson had apprehended; but this, she could not disguise from herself, was to be imputed to her not having been introduced to the world; for her native humility owned, that had Lady Walpole, instead of forming a connexion with the Dunotters, fulfilled her engagement with the Hootsides, and gone to Brighton, she might, thoughtless and giddy as she had been of late, have become the slave and votary of folly, if not of vice, and would not even have had the only comfort she could now turn to— comparative innocence of intention. With regard to her devotional duties, she felt but too well aware that the steady glow of piety in which she was educated had, since her residence at Holleyfield, languished and burned dim; and now awakened to what she had of late scarcely given a thought to, self-examination, and a sense of her defalcation in principle, she clearly saw that what Mrs. Emerson had prognosticated had indeed come to pass, and that duty, sacred and social, had ceased to be the acting spring of her character.

In a mind like that of Lady Lochcarron, firm and dignified, though meek and gentle, active, acute, and penetrating, such a state of awakened feeling was followed up by the natural inquiry of, "What shall I do to amend those faults?" she saw her error, and the source of it; repentance followed conviction, and a deep resolution of amendment was the fruit of both; yet though her mind was weakened by illness, she did not yield herself to the belief that this revolution in her mode of thinking, and consequent intended change of action, would require no exertion on her part; on the contrary, she strove with ceaseless and unremitting attention, by prayer, by watching the operations of her own mind, and by all the aids of reason, reading, and reflection, to acquire patience, fortitude, and resignation; she felt that her best resolves needed all these helps: often when one moment she had made a firm resolution to submit to the will of heaven, and await with calmness the issue of her fate; in the next, she caught her heart wandering in search of him, who had thrown the treasure from him, and half tempted to accuse an indefinite something called destiny: still she struggled, persevered, and though often defeated, returned to the charge, until her temper and habits were so far changed, or rather rectified, that she became resigned, though not apathetic under her afflictions, and regarded the pleasures of life only as secondary considerations; yet remembered that she still had duties on earth to perform. Her temper was sweet, and had always been distinguished for its meekness, but her manners now acquired a dignity and sedateness which they had hitherto wanted.

One of the first acts of her renovated mind was to begin a long letter to Mrs. Emerson, in which she detailed every event that had taken place, every circumstance of her own conduct, "nothing extenuating," and all her past and present feelings; but as the subject was too painful to be undeviatingly pursued, and the detail too long to be finished at once, she laid it by, and added to it from time to time as her strength and spirits would permit. The change in her appearance was not less real and more striking than that in her manners; she was taller and considerably thinner than before her illness; her fine auburn hair had come entirely out; the bloom of her complexion was gone; all the beauty of her features remained, but they were shaded with a pensiveness which quite changed their expression; and even the tone of her voice was so deepened and altered, that she could hardly be recognised for the same.

Such was Cordelia when Lord and Lady Dunotter, whose absence had been prolonged by various assigned causes, returned from London a little before Christmas; the earl was astonished at the striking change; but he could trace all its causes, and it drew her still nearer to his affections. Lady Dunotter, elevated as she had been ever since her brow was graced with a coronet, doubly so by her noble house, splendid equipage, and every other appendage of her high rank which she had enjoyed while in town; and, beyond all, by the contemplated pleasure of her intended presentation in January, had little of either attention or sympathy to bestow on her daughter.

Lord Lochcarron seemed consigned to oblivion, except in the memory of his injured lady; the earl never mentioned him; and lady Dunotter, in answer to the inquiry which Cordelia compelled her fluttering heart to be still while she made, told her that all

the intelligence his father had been able to obtain was, that some money had been drawn for by his order on the earl's banker through an agent at Paris; that Lord Dunotter had taken every possible pains to trace his son by this medium but in vain; the person at Paris either could or would only say, that he received the order from the hand of a friend who had since taken his departure for Spain, for what part of it he declared himself ignorant. This was all the information Lady Dunotter had to give; but Cordelia felt it, at least thought it her duty (and from duty she resolved not to shrink) to mention to the earl what Mr. Crompton had said of Lord Lochcarron's wish, to have their inauspicious union set aside by law. Lord Dunotter heard her with a sort of grieving impatience, "Never mention it again, my dearest girl," he said emphatically, "if Lochcarron values my regard or my blessing, the tie between you shall never be dissolved; I live but in the hope of seeing him implore, at your feet, the forgiveness of that excellence he has so deeply injured." He then hastily changed the conversation, and engaged Cordelia in a game at piquet; indeed he devoted every faculty and almost every hour to amuse her; he read to her; assisted her in the cultivation of her fine talents and taste; told her unnumbered continental anecdotes; and when the weather and the state of her spirits would give permission for a short winter's ramble, assisted to wrap her up warm, and supported her into the grounds; twice he prevailed on her, accompanied by Lady Dunotter and himself, to take short airings in the park; and as she seemed to derive both health and pleasure from the exertion, it would have been repeated, had not the weather suddenly changed and become stormy, with occasional heavy showers of rain and sleet.

It was now within a week of the time appointed for Lord and Lady Dunotter's return to London; the earl was tenderly and earnestly importunate with Cordelia to accompany them; but every principle of reason and delicacy seemed to rise against such a procedure, and she mildly, but positively, refused: as to the countess, she was so entirely occupied with the brilliant figure she proposed making at court, that she seldom interfered in any discussion or arrangement which went forward between her husband and daughter.

After the weather had continued as described above for some days, a sharp frost set in; the air was now too cold, and the roads too slippery, for an invalid to venture abroad; Lord Dunotter, who had many papers at Ravenpark which he had frequent occasion to consult, usually rode over thither in the mornings, and returned to dinner: on one of these excursions, his lordship had occasion to call at the house of a person about a mile from Holleyfield, which induced him to take a different road, and to cross a small brook now completely frozen over, and, as he supposed, quite hard enough to bear him; the event proved his mistake; the ice gave way, and though the shallowness of the water precluded all danger of one sort, another of a very dreadful nature awaited him; the horse he rode, a very spirited animal, when he found his fore-legs entangled in the ice, made an attempt to free himself by a retrograde movement, plunged violently, and threw the earl on the edge of the brook with such a force, that his only attendant, who was a very short distance behind him, concluded that if he was not absolutely killed by the fall, in the present state of the ground and weather several of his bones must be fractured; when he came up he found the earl already insensible; they were a quarter of a mile from any house, and no human being appeared; poor Paterson, in the dreadful agitation of the

moment, called aloud for help, galloped from the spot, then back again, tried to recall animation in his lord, and did every thing that a person in his situation could do, but in vain; no one was within hearing, and nothing could revive the earl, in whom, Paterson feared, life was extinct: time was not to be trifled with, and he at length felt himself compelled to do what he might as well have done at first—leave his lord in his present disastrous state, and ride full speed to Holleyfield for assistance. Oh! how humiliating to the pride of man are accidents like these! the earl of Dunotter, one of the first noblemen of the age in talent, accomplishments, and celebrity; high in rank, so lately married, and by that marriage enabled to redeem the splendour of his ancient possessions, graceful in person, and elegant in manners, had, in almost the evolution of a moment, become levelled with the dust, and to all appearance, if not in reality, had paid that debt to nature which every one must pay: all his advantages, those at least which were personal, were now of no more value than the ground he lay upon; the voice of fame which trumpeted forth his honours and distinctions, seemed now an empty breath, loudly proclaiming the vanity of man; and neither his exalted rank could command, or large fortune purchase, breath if it was flown, or health if it was injured by this accident of a moment.

Paterson, aware of the danger of delay, stopped at Holleyfield only to announce the sad tidings to Mrs. Greville and old Sherwin the butler; and then rode back as fast as possible, the earl's valet and some more attendants following with one of the carriages as quickly as the state of the roads would admit. The next point of consideration with Mrs. Greville was, how to break this sad intelligence to Lady Dunotter, but especially to Cordelia, whose sufferings, mental and corporeal, had already been so great; as to the countess, whether she had a higher opinion of her fortitude, or a lower one of her sensibility, cannot exactly be determined, but she felt less apprehension on her account; the two ladies were sitting together in Lady Dunotter's apartment, and Mrs. Greville, after some deliberation, sent to request the favour of speaking to Lady Lochcarron; Cordelia cheerfully obeyed the summons, but when she beheld the countenance of the housekeeper, she felt a sad presentiment that some fresh anguish was in preparation for her, and thinking only of her wandering lord she believed it connected with him; with that composure which the state of her feelings inspired, yet in that tone of anguish which betrayed she had no hope, she said, "I see you have some distressing news, Mrs. Greville, tell me the worst, for, believe me, it will be mercy;—I have endured so much from suspense, that it seems to me preferable to know the reality of evil, however great." Mrs. Greville thus sanctioned, told at once the distressing truth.

Calamities in *abeyance*, if the mode of expression may be allowed, are sometimes more overwhelming than when actually brought to pass; for then an aid, a support which is not our own, nor inherent in ourselves, is accorded us; yet sad was the stroke to the poor suffering Cordelia, and deeply did she feel it; as Lord Dunotter, who she had but too much reason to fear (from the account brought by Paterson) was hurt past recovery, she should lose her only efficient friend, endeared to her by all the circumstances already detailed; but deeply and solemnly resolved in every instance to attend only to the call of duty, she put all selfish regrets aside, struggled with the overflowings of sensibility, and with a caution and tenderness which only her feeling heart could dictate, and her elevated mind execute, she gradually made Lady Dunotter acquainted with the sad situation of her

lord, and prepared her to see him brought home; to say that her ladyship was shocked is no departure from veracity; for there is, perhaps, scarcely a person in existence who, under such circumstances, could have been otherwise; to say she was grieved is not less true, but it was almost as much the grief of disappointment, because she could not now appear at court, as of sympathy for the sufferings of her husband: she loved the earl as much as she could love any one but herself, for the last-named personage was always the one who claimed the first consideration with her ladyship; besides, she had for some time past ceased even to hope that she should ever be able to gain over Lord Dunotter that influence which Sir Charles Walpole had allowed her to acquire; and accustomed to take in at the first glance all the bearings and relations of a subject, she perhaps conceived the hope of obtaining from her lord, in the lassitude of illness, those concessions which full health would not yield.

When Paterson reached the spot where he had left his lord, he found him supported by an old peasant, who in passing accidentally had seen him; he was so far revived as to be sensible both of the cause of his fall and its consequence, which was the fracture of his left arm; not to enter into long and unnecessary details, his lordship was brought home with all the care and tenderness possible; Lady Lochcarron herself, with a strong exertion of fortitude, seeing him carried to his chamber, kissing his hand, bathing it with her tears, and receiving from the pressure of his the assurance that he was sensible of, and grateful for her attentions.

The whole phalanx of medical people, whose services had of late been so frequently required at Holleyfield, were once more summoned. Dr. Herbert, the nearest in vicinity, of course arrived first, and examined the limb, which he found in as shocking a state as it is possible to conceive; the arm was broken in two places, a simple fracture of the large bone, and a dreadful compound one of the elbow joint; the case could admit of no demur of opinion, amputation was absolutely necessary; the earl, with great fortitude, signified his readiness to undergo the operation, but Lady Dunotter positively insisted that it should not be performed until Mr. C—, one of the first surgeons in London, should arrive, and give his decision. By this time some other practitioners of the neighbourhood had arrived, who confirmed the necessity of having the limb taken off, and thought the sooner it was done the better; Mr. Herbert, ever politely acquiescent to Lady Dunotter, said that he thought the delay of a few hours could be of no consequence; but as the other gentlemen were evidently of a different way of thinking, Lady Lochcarron wished their advice, and not Herbert's, to be followed; but her wishes were in vain, and her remonstrances disregarded. Oh! how poignantly did she now feel the absence of Lord Lochcarron, and as keenly deplore his dereliction from duty; he who ought to have watched by the couch of his parent; to have soothed his sufferings with filial attention, and to have been the consoler and protector of the countess and Cordelia, was wandering from his home and his country in a way degrading to his rank and character, no one knew whither.

Dr. C— did not reach Holleyfield till the following morning; he censured visibly, though with tenderness and caution, the delay which had taken place. The season of the year was favourable, and the earl's habit not bad, but the torture he had for so many hours

endured, had produced an alarming degree of fever, yet he was composed, and sustained the operation with great firmness. Dr. C— pronounced all immediate danger over, and the best skill of the medical men was exerted to keep the fever down; but in despite of their utmost efforts it raged very high, the earl became delirious, and in that state frequently called on his son; raved about Miss Borham; and sometimes talked wildly and incoherently about political affairs. Cordelia, who passed the chief part of her time in his apartment, and whose every energy was devoted to repay to Lord Dunotter the attentions she had received from him during her own illness, heard all these wanderings, often with surprise, and sometimes with perplexity to discover their meaning; but they were so unconnected that the efforts of imagination could seldom give them plausibility, certainty was out of the question.

Lady Dunotter seemed at first greatly shocked by the situation of her husband; then as the time drew on in which she had hoped to shine in the circle, and glitter in the hemisphere of fashion, and she contrasted the splendid equipages and gay dresses she had planned in idea, with Lord Dunotter's sick event and mutilated form, she became peevish, fretful, and disposed to quarrel with fate; but new scenes and fresh schemes engaged her fertile brain, and opening plans of power and interest called forth the exuberant activity of her spirit; Lord Dunotter, stretched on a sick bed, and suspended between life and death, could neither inquire into, nor regulate any of his affairs: no one could tell where Lord Lochcarron was; and the meek and nearly exhausted Cordelia gave no attention to any thing but nursing and soothing her father-in-law: thus was her ladyship left sole paramount-directress over the stewards and servants, whose every act of consequence was submitted to her judgment and pleasure; and thus did that love of power and of money, which had always been ascribed to Lady Dunotter, receive complete gratification.

Yet though it was said above, that no one could tell where Lord Lochcarron was, let it not be understood that no one inquired; Cordelia, in this season of affliction, compelled wounded pride and delicacy to step aside while she made it her care to see the person who, since the disgrace and removal of Pringle, had the chief management of Lord Dunotter's affairs, and entreated him to use all possible means to discover the place of Lord Lochcarron's present residence, that he might be immediately informed of his father's situation: this Mr. Brewster professed his inability to do in any other way than by sending a letter to Lord Dunotter's banker, to be by him transmitted to the person at Paris by whom the money before-mentioned had been drawn for; but this was at best a very precarious and uncertain mode, as the gentleman in question had already declared his perfect ignorance of Lord Lochcarron's retreat. However as no other method could be found, this was adopted; and both Cordelia and Lord Dunotter, when his lordship was sufficiently composed to be made sensible of what had been done, flattered themselves that when such distressing intelligence of his only parent reached Lochcarron, filial duty would revive, and he would return to the bosom of his family. Lady Dunotter neither wished nor hoped any such thing; as a usurper dreads the restoration of a lawful sovereign, so did her ladyship dread the thought of Lord Lochcarron's arrival; aware that she must resign into his hands great part of her present power and sway: besides she felt angry with and jealous of Cordelia's interference in having presumed to dictate to Mr. Brewster in the matter; and Mr. Herbert had delicately and distantly hinted to the

countess, through the medium of Mrs. Dobinson, her ladyship's woman, his belief that the earl would not long survive his accident; and that Lord Lochcarron should return and be reconciled to his wife, and that they should on the demise of their parent blaze forth to the world as Earl and Countess of Dunotter, while herself should dwindle into a dowager, were matters which her ambitious spirit could not bear to think of: true, she would, even in case of those events coming to pass, retain for life the chief part of Sir Charles Walpole's immense property; for it was not to be supposed that Lord Lochcarron would litigate the will of his wife's parent with the widow of his own; but faulty natures are ever overlooking the blessings and advantages they possess, and grasping at those which Providence has in justice and mercy denied them: her brain was now occupied in forming a thousand schemes and plans, to counteract what she ought to have been the first to promote; but new and unexpected events soon occurred, which placed all parties in different positions.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD Dunotter continued very ill for about a fortnight, and though at the end of that period his fever abated, it left him in a state of extreme weakness. Cordelia was well nigh worn out, and reduced to the situation she had so lately recovered from, with watching by him; but now that his reason, and, in some degree, his spirits, had returned, she felt herself amply repaid by the gratitude his lordship expressed for her attentions, and by every little change and circumstance which gave promise of his recovery.

No news was received of Lord Lochcarron; and his much-injured lady, on whose heart that sad subject ever pressed, had now no one to whom she could pour out her grief, except in letter to Mrs. Emerson; for as to Lady Dunotter, she seemed very willing to resign to her the task of nursing her lord.

Matters were in this state, when one morning, as Cordelia, having seen Lord Dunotter fall into a fine sleep, was reading in an adjoining room, the following card was put into her hands: "Capt. Thornton begs permission to pay his respects to his beloved relation, Lady Lochcarron, if his presence will not be deemed intrusive." Great was the perturbation of Cordelia when she read this note; on inquiry she found that the writer was at the gate, alone, in a carriage and four, having declined alighting until favoured with her answer: "How am I to act?" was the question she asked herself; "As duty dictates," was her own reply. Capt. Thornton, though not a very near, was yet her nearest relative, and in her various and deep reflections on her own situation, it had often occurred to her, that on his return home he would very probably think it incumbent on him to compel Lord Lochcarron to do her justice, either by the decision of the law or the sword: the first, was humiliation, grief, and shame; but oh! the last was horror itself: true, she might, by declining to see Capt. Thornton, intimate to him that she did not desire his interference in her affairs; but regard for the memory of her father, and for her own respectability, already wounded in the eye of the world, were the points which seemed to predominate above all others; and not able, while Capt. Thornton was waiting in the way described, to give much time for reflection, she gave orders for his admission.

Those romantic days, when feeling was so exuberant that love at first sight was thought neither weak nor indecorous, are so long since gone by, that it must not be inferred Capt. Thornton fell in love with his fair cousin in this their first interview; all circumstances taken into consideration, a more interesting object, or one more worthy to inspire tenderness, cannot be imagined than was Lady Lochcarron when she presented herself in the drawing-room; one half of her short life had elapsed since herself and Thornton last saw each other; then she had exhibited the sweet engaging picture of playful innocence; now she was a graceful, dignified, lovely woman; her recent afflictions had shed a pensiveness over her fine features, and softened the expression of her mild blue eyes; but a beam of pleasure enlightened them when she beheld the only surviving relation of her father, and that sadly-painful consciousness which, whenever the eye of a stranger met her's, whispered, "You are the despised, deserted bride of an hour,"

tinged her cheek with the mock of semblance of that bloom, the reality of which had vanished before the sad circumstances of the last few months.

When she approached Capt. Thornton, she held out her hand with great sweetness; said she truly rejoiced to see him in England; and subjoined a very kind inquiry after his health: Thornton, who was frankness and cordiality itself, both by nature and profession, was charmed by a reception so much in unison with his own feelings: with that sunshine of affection which, whatever art may effect on the muscles of the other features, it can never throw into the eyes, and that elastic pressure of the hand which is the spontaneous dictate of real friendship, he expressed, as he led her to a seat, the very great pleasure which this interview gave him; but he neither inquired; for Lord nor Lady Dunotter, and Cordelia, who could not for a moment think the omission accidental, felt an impression that it was only a prelude to the censure he would pass on their conduct for having involved her in so disastrous a marriage: oh, how sadly did she feel the contrast between this silence and those congratulations which, had that marriage been auspicious, she should now have been receiving.

Unable to endure these sad reflections, she said, “Capt. Thornton, it is now, I believe, ten years since we saw each other; but trust me, I have never forgot our relationship, or that I owe you a debt of gratitude for your kind attention to my dear father during his last illness.” Thornton replied, “It was then, and has been ever since, a subject of my keenest regret, that I was called away exactly at that time; your excellent father’s heart and mind, weakened by illness, were too easily warped by those who suited their arts to their own designs; had I been there, you should have been done justice to, and—” he added, the native energy of his character breaking forth, “you shall be done justice to still; Lady Dunotter shall not riot in your spoils; her lord repair his broken fortunes with your ancestor’s property, and his son insult you thus with impunity.—Pardon me, my dearest cousin,” he pursued, seeing the pale hue of death overspread the lovely face of his auditor, “I am too abrupt, but neither my friendship for you, my respect for the memory of your father, nor the sense of what I owe to our family will suffer me to be tame: but I will at least endeavour to be more calm; will my beloved cousin honour me with her confidence, and say what is the treatment she has received from Lady Dunotter, and how a union so unfortunate was ever brought about: she must be sensible,” he pursued in a kind and gentle tone, seeing a shade of deep emotion gathering on Cordelia’s brow, “she must be sensible that her reputation demands a scrutiny, which shall declare her innocence to the whole world, and that as her nearest, almost only relation, it is my positive duty to make it.”

While Capt. Thornton was talking, Cordelia had time to recollect herself, and her native dignity of mind and character rising above every trivial embarrassment, she, with the most charming candour, detailed every material event which had taken place from the time of her father’s death, only she carefully suppressed all mention of Miss Borham; while of Lord Dunotter she spoke with filial tenderness, and of Lady Dunotter with all the respect due to her father’s widow.

Thornton heard her with all the admiration which her candid mind and sweet disposition could inspire; when she paused, he said, "My dearest Lady Lochcarron, I have no hesitation in saying that you have been infamously ill-treated; I think only a madman could have acted as Lochcarron has done, when at the height of happiness; no one but the most unfeeling savage could have abandoned so much gentleness and lo—" he was evidently going to say loveliness, but suppressed the word, and proceeded, "and have left it in the power of a harshly-judging world to form such conjectures and suspicions as it may have done; and none but a ——in your presence I will not call him what he well deserves to be called, would have thus dared to defy every sacred and moral obligation." Every word that Capt. Thornton uttered stabbed Cordelia to the heart; there was but too much truth in all he said; her reputation ought to be vindicated, it was the first point a female should think of; but ah! her every earthly hope died within her when she reflected, that before that could be done, the blood of Lochcarron and Thornton would too probably be shed by the hand of each other; she raised her sweet face to her defender with a meek, pity-imploring look—"Oh, Capt. Thornton," she sighed, "I feel too sensibly the truth of what you say, but I cannot yet come to any resolution on the steps which ought to be pursued—I cannot sanction any proceedings without being allowed some little time to reflect." "No consideration is due to them," he exclaimed; "believe me, the son only merits your contempt, and the father does not deserve your confidence; pardon me, dearest Lady Lochcarron," he proceeded, seeing Cordelia much distressed by the blunt energy of his manner; he was about to continue his discourse, when they were interrupted by the opening of the drawing-room door.

While Cordelia's morning had been employed as already described, first in attending Lord Dunotter, and then in reading, Lady Dunotter had been closeted with Mr. Herbert and Mr. Crompton, who were both fraught with important intelligence; the first came, he said, to discharge a most painful, but incumbent duty;—Dr. C— had been indiscreet enough to hint an opinion, which had already gone abroad, that there was a great probability of Lord Dunotter's illness ultimately terminating in a decline, and had he suffered the countess to hear this opinion—which, *he hoped, might be erroneous*—from any one but himself, he should have felt that he was acting neither with the candour of a medical man nor the kindness of a friend. "Oh!" sighed her ladyship, with a deep and heavy respiration, holding up her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, "do not say so, my dear Mr. Herbert; in mercy revoke that sentence; are my afflictions never to cease?" Mr. Herbert replied, "My respected Lady Dunotter, do not distress yourself; probable events are not always certain ones; Dr. C—'s opinion in cases of this description is very high, to be sure; Dr. B— thinks as he does; and I confess I—but, indeed, my dear madam—" he was about to add more, when he was interrupted by Mr. Crompton with, "My dear doctor, leave these events to fate, and the consequences to the time they happen; Lady Dunotter has been distinguished for dignity and fortitude under the most trying circumstances; indeed it is a matter of astonishment to a reflecting mind, to think how well some people acquit themselves in life; and others how ill! how very absurdly Lady Hootside has acted, my lady, in making such matches for her children," he added, addressing Lady Dunotter. "What matches, my dear sir?" questioned the countess, in the surprise of the moment, dropping the mask of concern on her lord's account, which she had just assumed. "Has your ladyship not heard?" he resumed, drawing from his pocket a

newspaper, from which he read the following paragraph: "Married, yesterday at St. George's, Hanover-square, the Earl of Hootside, to Miss Cottingham, only daughter of Sir Roger Cottingham, bart. of Cottingham park, Herts. same time and place the reverend Thomas Harrington, nephew of Sir Roger, to Lady Caroline Mannark, sister of the earl." "Oh! my dear Lady Hootside, how I pity her; what a sad vulgar set her headstrong children have involved her with!" said the countess, raising her hands and eyes, and shrugging up her shoulders; thus veiling beneath affected concern for Lady Hootside, the real vexation she felt at the marriage of her son, for she had already begun to reflect, that as Lord Dunotter's approaching death seemed certain, it would be her wiser way, as the zealous guardian of Cordelia, to free her from her engagement with Lord Lochcarron, and to renew the long-projected one with the Hootsides: that was now quashed, and in a way most mortifying to her ladyship; for though she had chosen to call the Cottinghams a "vulgar set," she knew well that they were all persons of great property and moral worth; and though some of their peculiarities were laughable enough, the two last-named qualifications would so greatly outweigh them, that they would be very little regarded by people who knew life; while in the connexions of herself and daughter, impaired fortune on the part of Lord Dunotter, and violated morality on that of his son, opened a fair field not only for censure but ridicule; and she well knew that Lady Hootside's satirical talent would not fail to improve it: impatient to make Cordelia acquainted with this intelligence, she hurried to the apartment of her lord in the expectation of finding her there; Lord Dunotter was up, and in answer to the well-assumed tender inquiry of his lady, declared himself much better, but there was a shade of inquietude on his features which did not escape her penetrating eye. "Where is Delia?" she inquired; "Why, don't you know who is come?" questioned the earl, with increased emotion; "Oh, may I hope it is Lochcarron?" said the countess, seeming to wish what in reality she dreaded; her lord shook his head, "No," he replied, "I am not so fortunate; it is Thornton, Sir Charles Walpole's relation;" Lady Dunotter involuntarily started, and the earl added, "the ghost of the old family quarrel will now be raised, Alexander's behaviour will be traced to that source, and I foresee that if we do not effect an immediate reconciliation between him and Cordelia, we shall all be ruined." Lady Dunotter, whose governing principle had ever been the interest of the first person singular, saw that her present step must be to break in upon the tête-a-tête of Cordelia and Thornton; "I must go and see what they are about," she exclaimed, and abruptly quitting her lord, without even thinking of the Hootside marriages, so much was she occupied with this new and nearer concern, she repaired to the room in which Cordelia usually received morning visitors, and entered as she was nearly sinking under the pointed energetic representations of Thornton.

Lady Dunotter's approach to Capt. Thornton, was the very quintessence and perfection of art; it seemed as if a beam of lively joy, caused by the presence of a beloved friend not seen for a long time, was forcing its way through the deep dejection which her husband's situation could not fail to inspire; and even while she was saying, in the very kindest tone of esteem, "Capt. Thornton, I truly and sincerely rejoice to see you once more in your native country," a deep and heavy sigh was bursting from her bosom; and added to all this, was a visible but chastened dignity which seemed to say, "I am now Countess of Dunotter."

Whatever opinion to the prejudice of her ladyship past circumstances had given Thornton reason to form, he could not, when addressed by her in her own house, with so much kindness, do otherwise than reply with corresponding cordiality.

Lady Lochcarron had risen from her seat on her mother's entrance, and glad of the opportunity to make her escape, she begged Capt. Thornton would excuse her, pleading her recent illness, which would not, she said, allow her to converse long; and wishing him a very friendly good morning, she hurried to her own room to compose her spirits. The countess followed Cordelia with her eyes to the door, sighing as in the depth of sorrow, and ejaculating, "Dear, meek, injured angel!" then as if her full heart required a confidant to unburthen itself to, and was glad to seize the present opportunity, she exclaimed, "Oh! Capt. Thornton, what have I not suffered about this heart-rending affair! we all acted for the best, and how unfortunately has it terminated!" These few words she well knew were enough to throw the frank and impetuous Thornton off his guard; he reiterated all that he had already said to Cordelia, but with less check from delicacy and fear of wounding the feelings of his auditor, or giving offence: Lady Dunotter did not resist like the sturdy oak, but bent like the pliant willow; she had seen that when her daughter quitted the room, *her* eyes were not the only ones which attended her motions; and well could she translate, that the soft sparkle of those other eyes spoke a dawning tenderness beyond the regard of consanguinity or friendship; and the discovery was enough to determine her mode of action; she saw all the points of the precipice on which she stood; these were that she should soon lose Lord Dunotter by the hand of death; that the property of Sir Charles Walpole would be torn from her by law, and that she should be stigmatized, perhaps criminated for having, as the guardian of Cordelia, drawn her into such a connexion; she saw that interest, as well as inclination, would prompt Thornton to sever at once the tie between Cordelia and Lochcarron—to become the champion of the virgin bride, and to secure to her, if possible, the immediate reversion of the property of her father. No way seemed so well calculated to guard against the consequences of these dreaded contingencies, as ingratiating herself with Capt. Thornton; and though he was long since perfectly acquainted with her character, and aware of her arts, yet such is the influence of female subtlety over the mind of man, that she succeeded in changing his opinion of her principles, and inducing him to believe that the world had imputed to her a degree of avarice and duplicity that she never possessed: he declined her pressing invitation to stay dinner, but promised to visit Holleyfield on an early day, which he named.

Cordelia, after taking a little while to compose herself, went to Lord Dunotter's apartment; "I have been wishing to see you, my love, to tell you I am better," said the earl, holding out his hand; "And I have been most earnestly wishing to hear you say so, my lord," she replied, pressing the hand thus held out to her. Lord Dunotter smiled in gratitude for her affection; "You have had an unexpected visitor, I understand, my dear," he said; "Quite so, my lord," she answered. Lord Dunotter paused a few seconds, and then while a shade of inquietude passed over his countenance, said, "Capt. Thornton would think we have used you very ill, Delia:" "If he does," she replied, compelling herself to look cheerful, "his judgment is erroneous—your lordship has never used me ill." "Not intentionally," said the earl, and then added, in a half-articulate voice, "but my

errors have had consequences which I could not foresee.” Cordelia, who heard these words with some degree of perturbation, looked a distant inquiry into their further meaning; but the earl waived the subject by asking if Lady Dunotter joined them before Capt. Thornton went; she was replying that she left her ladyship and Capt. Thornton together, when a servant popped in with, “Lady Dunotter waits dinner of your ladyship.”

Lord Dunotter had a very expressive countenance; since his illness it had become more so, and Cordelia, who had made its emotions her study, thought she could translate it as if he felt himself hurt that his lady had not come to see him before she went to dinner; and with her wonted sweetness, she endeavoured to atone for the neglect by saying, as she went out, “I will return to your lordship the moment I have dined.”

The countess mentioned Thornton in terms of guarded but absolute panegyric; “Trust me, Delia,” she added, “you cannot have a better guide, or one more justly entitled to your confidence.” Cordelia felt extremely surprised, aware how inimical every measure which Thornton would recommend seemed to be to Lady Dunotter’s interests: she only replied, that she believed his advice would be dictated by the pure sincerity of his judgment, and then turned the discourse, resolved not to commit herself on the subject of her separation from Lord Lochcarron, until she had taken time for reflection.

When their meal was ended, Lady Dunotter said she would visit her lord; and Cordelia, that she might be no restraint on their conversation, went to her own apartment, adjusted her dress, and had recourse to her usual occupations of reading and drawing; for she did not feel sufficient composure of mind to enter on that reflection concerning her own affairs, to which she had pledged herself in her conversation with Capt. Thornton. In less than an hour, she received the following note: “Though most reluctant to impose on myself so severe a deprivation, I must, my sweet Cordelia, for this evening relinquish the best soother of my pain and antidote of my sorrows—your dear society. I have letters which must be replied to, and I think myself equal to the task. Come to me, my love, before you retire to rest, just to say good night—till then, I bespeak a very dear and inestimable privilege—no less than that the first place in your memory may be occupied by yours ever, Dunotter.” Cordelia, when she read this, was only afraid that the earl would fatigue himself by writing, and such seemed to be the case; when she made her evening visit he looked ill, and was more dejected than usual, but, as he always was, uniformly kind and attentive to her.

Several days now wore over at Holleyfield unmarked by any material event; Lord Dunotter’s health continued to fluctuate without any visible change either way; he was able to walk a little in the grounds, but could not bear the motion of a carriage, and the air was yet too cold for a garden-chair, though the severity of winter was past, and the weather gave promise of a fine and early spring; the earl’s medical counsellors advised an immediate journey to the south of France; his lordship gave neither accordance nor denial, but said he should determine in a few days. Lady Dunotter dreaded such an order of things, as a death-blow to her most cherished hopes; yet she could not hazard even the semblance of an open objection, but seeming warmly to espouse the idea, told the physicians that she would persuade her lord to undertake the journey, as soon as the

season would allow an invalid to travel. Cordelia strenuously urged Lord Dunotter to go; her first consideration was his health, but perhaps the idea of meeting her fugitive lord on the continent was not her least inducement: at all events no woman, situated as she was, could have wished to remain in England.

Such was the position of affairs the evening preceding the day on which Capt. Thornton had appointed to dine at Holleyfield, when Cordelia made her usual visit to the earl; after conversing some time on different subjects, he said, "So Capt. Thornton dines with you to-morrow, Delia." "With Lady Dunotter, my lord, but I dine here, if your lordship will allow me that pleasure." "No, my love," said Lord Dunotter, his languid eyes lighting up with a beam of delight, "I appreciate and am truly grateful for your kindness, but it must not be; as the relation of your father, you must treat Capt. Thornton with every proper respect; but you will allow me, my dear child, for you are my child, and do not let me suffer for Alexander's folly—you will allow me to hint, that though he is your nearest relation, he is not a very near one, and should he take any precipitate step, it may injure that character, which ought to be immaculate, perhaps even more than Lochcarron's shameful conduct, which, I am sure, none can execrate more than I do." The sensitive purity of Cordelia instantly took the alarm; she heard in idea the voice of public fame arraiging her of seeking the aid of Thornton to disunite her from Lochcarron; and should, what she dreaded beyond every thing, a duel ensue, could she ever be self acquitted? blushing deeply, she said, "Your experience and kindness, my lord, are ever my best and safest guides—as my father's relation, I may respect and esteem Capt. Thornton, but I cannot allow him to exercise any authority in my name which could injure me in the eyes of my friends, of the world, and, of course, in my own." "I do not wish you to pledge yourself to any thing which you may hereafter see reason to retract," hastily interposed the earl; "the treatment you have received from my criminal son—I know not what epithet to give him harsh enough—justifies any measure you can take; but should we meet him shortly on the continent, for I have heard to-day, from unquestionable authority, he is now in Paris"—Cordelia's heart beat with wild vibrations, and her colour rose to the deepest crimson, and fell to the palest white; the earl, charmed with these indubitable symptoms of tenderness for an object dear beyond expression to his own heart, threw his only arm around her, and hid her face in his bosom, while he proceeded, "I was going to observe that should we join Alexander abroad, and your transcendent goodness accord him that pardon which he can never merit, yet which your glory will be the greater in granting; and which, partial as I am myself to my child, I should never solicit, did I not feel a conviction that his conduct in after life will justify his father's partiality;—should all this take place, my sweet Cordelia, the world need never know, whatever it may suspect of the actual position of our affairs, and it will, at least may, appear that your temporary separation was the act of both, justified to each other by imposing and existing circumstances which, as I stated from the first when I owned there was a subject of disagreement between us, compelled Lochcarron to go abroad."

How ready are we all to believe what we wish, and how apt to view things in the light in which they are last exhibited to us! Cordelia's sanguine and youthful mind was willing to hope for the reality of all the fair prospects Lord Dunotter held out to her view;

though the contempt Lord Lochcarron had treated her with, certainly left no room for any such expectation; while the opinion which the representations of Capt. Thornton had, but a few days before, induced her to form, that should she tamely endure the desertion of her lord, the world would believe such desertion merited, vanished before the more recent one conjured up by Lord Dunotter's hints, that should Thornton stand forth her avowed champion, his interference would at once bar all hope of reconciliation with Lord Lochcarron, and stain her character with an imputation which, however undeserved, might never be removed. Persuading herself that she was chiefly actuated by a fear of giving pain to Lord Dunotter, and hurting his health in his present weak state, she fervently assured him, that no person whatever should influence her to take any step without his entire concurrence and approbation. The earl warmly thanked her, and added a hint of caution not to name her lord's being at Paris to any one; this, so far as it respected Thornton, was certainly needless; for ill as Lochcarron had treated her, his personal safety was too dearly prized for her to tell his adversary where he might be found; but she felt surprised when she said, "Shall I not tell Lady Dunotter, my lord?" and the earl, after the pause of a moment said, "No," in a mild but emphatic tone, as if he had reflected upon and felt the propriety of absolute silence: his lordship soon complained of fatigue, and Lady Lochcarron rose to retire; the earl took her hand, and after a short pause, said, while his face was averted from Cordelia, "You do not know, I suppose, that poor Miss Borham is dying." Cordelia replied in the negative, and while she involuntarily asked herself, "Has any act of mine done this?" a sigh stole from her bosom; it was gently reverberated by the earl: "Poor girl!" he said. Cordelia asked where she was? and Lord Dunotter replied, "At Inchclair," (the seat of Lady Charlotte Malcolm.) "Thank heaven!" he added, "she has nothing of actual guilt to reproach herself with;" then kissing Cordelia's hand, he released it, bade her good night, and entered the room where he slept. Lady Lochcarron retired to her own, where the words just recited concerning Miss Borham supplied her with matter for reflections and conjectures, but she tried in vain to solve their meaning; then she reverted in idea to the hour she had passed in Pringle's house, only about six short months before, and to the changes which in that little period had taken place in the situation of almost every person then present; the master of the mansion, then so gay, so ostentatious, and so ceremonious, was now an inmate of a gloomy prison; his lovely niece, the most perfect being in form and features Cordelia had ever seen, was stretched on the bed of death; the earl of Dunotter, then shining in all the splendour of his high rank, great political influence, and distinguished talents and accomplishments, was bereft of a limb, and sinking into a languor and debility which there was but too much reason to fear would terminate fatally; the earl of Hootside was married, and if to revel in riches and pleasures can make their possessor happy, he was undoubtedly so; and lastly, herself—but poor Cordelia finished the picture with a tear.

CHAPTER V.

THE dinner party at Holleyfield consisted but of Lady Dunotter, Lady Lochcarron, Capt. Thornton, and Mr. Crompton, and the conversation was only table-talk, undistinguished by any thing of a very interesting nature, except the behaviour of the little company to each other be thought such: the countess was so kindly and cordially polite to her three friends, that any uninterested spectator would have thought they stood in the scale of her affections in the degrees of dear, dearer, and dearest; Capt. Thornton holding the highest place, Lady Lochcarron the second, and Mr. Crompton the third: Thornton was polite and respectful to both ladies, but when he addressed or replied to Cordelia a shade of tenderness mingled with it: Crompton was a cringing and fawning candidate for the favour of all; and as to Cordelia, her dignified and elegant manners were marked towards Lady Dunotter by all that dutiful respect which she always made a point of showing her; towards Thornton, with the easy freedom due to a valued friend; and to Crompton, with that attention she thought it right to display to a person whom her father had thought worthy to be left in trust for her.

In the course of the evening Capt. Thornton said to Cordelia, with solicitous kindness of look and voice, "My dear Lady Lochcarron, may I inquire if you have come to any decision on the subject we discussed at our last interview?" he paused, but did not wait long for a reply; Cordelia had previously made up her mind both as to the manner and matter of it, and now said mildly, but with firmness, "I have, sir, come to one with which I beg, for the present, to close all reference to the subject; while Lord Dunotter continues so ill, I am determined not to sanction any proceeding in which I am concerned, which could give his lordship the slightest uneasiness; his kindness to me during my illness demands every return of gratitude, no failure of duty on the part of others should excuse our own dereliction from it." "But my dear young lady," said Crompton, "you will just allow me to observe, that our duties are both various and complicated; some of them we owe to society, and others to ourselves; and where both have been violated, as pardon me if I venture to say they have in your ladyship's case, it then becomes *our duty towards society* to take all lawful methods to repel the injury; for should we tamely submit to it, we should tacitly encourage others to commit the same fault in similar cases, in the hope of meeting the same impunity;" he seemed about to add more, but seeing Lady Dunotter going to speak, he paused: "Then judge for me, my dear friends," said her ladyship, sighing deeply, "what painful duties are mine; united as I have been to two of the most excellent men, duty with me has hitherto been only another name for pleasure; but oh! I fear—I fear—" and she seemed ready to sob with grief, "it must now be otherwise; my dear Sir Charles left me the sacred, precious charge of his only child—that child, endeared to me by her own amiable qualities as if she were my own, I thought myself fulfilling to the utmost of my power the consecrated trust I held, when I married her to Lord Lochcarron, the only son of my lord, who I believed to be at once the heir to his father's honours and virtues; you, Mr. Crompton, joined with me in that trust, thought as I did—oh, fatally have we all been deceived, and painful, agonizing to me is the alternative I shall be compelled to embrace; either I must seem to fail in tenderness to the dead or to the living, but oh! how unjust will either accusation be!" and

she raised her eyes to heaven, as if appealing there to the truth of what she said—"I have," she proceeded, sighing deeply, "divested myself of every existing partiality, and allowed myself to be governed only by the strict rules of principle; most painful it is to me, to say that I feel it my incumbent, though heart-rending, task to *seem* to fail in tenderness to my dear lord, and, as the guardian of my Cordelia, to sanction you, Mr. Crompton, to institute that suit which, as you have repeatedly told me, Lord Lochcarron is so extremely desirous of, to set aside the ceremony which was performed."

Cordelia, who could view the conduct of Lady Dunotter in no light but that of "doing evil that good might come;" or in other words, of cloaking her own selfish designs with a show of principle and regard for her, was shocked beyond expression; but determined not to recede from the resolution she had avowed, she said, "No, Lord Lochcarron has never made any communication to me on the subject, and till he does so either personally or through the medium of his father, and"— "My love," interrupted the countess, in a well-assumed tone of remonstrance, "exert your reason, call to your aid that sense of dignity and innate worth which no female mind should ever be without; would Lord Lochcarron, think you, after the treatment you have received from him, hesitate one moment to apply himself for a legal separation, if he knew what to allege as a ground for such application? No, Delia, on me, and on me alone must devolve the heavy responsibility, and a mournful task it is; all we can do is to urge your nonage, and to get you declared at liberty to marry again; that is what the guilty son of my lord expects from us; it is more than he deserves, but it is the only step we can take, at once to save your reputation from the stigma which misrepresentations might cast upon it, and to screen Lochcarron from the censure he is too likely to fall under for contempt and violation of the laws." The sudden flash from the eyes of Thornton, and the sly gleam from those of the lawyer, told Cordelia without the aid of words that all this was a preconcerted plot; and knowing Lady Dunotter as she did, she could be at no loss to develop her motives: the manner of Capt. Thornton too betrayed somewhat more interest and solicitude in her fate than was exactly warranted by their degree of relationship, and the slightness of their previous acquaintance; and she felt her heart revolt from the unfeeling selfishness of her mother-in-law, who was thus, for purposes of her own, trying to traffic with her feelings, and barter her regards; yet reason, which never spoke in vain to Cordelia, told her that all they had been saying about Lochcarron was but too true, and that the world, which could not see and appreciate the motives of Lady Dunotter so plainly as she did, would give her credit for much purer ones than she in reality held; and would at once applaud that firmness which would not suffer the daughter of her first husband to be insulted by the son of her second; and that prudence which would direct the ultimate choice of her ward to Capt. Thornton, who was certainly every way worthy of her regards; he was elegant in person, and polished in manners; his fortune was now very large, with considerable expectancies from rich relations on the paternal side; his character as an officer ranked high, and his friends, and all who knew him well, pronounced him to have one of the best hearts in the world. All these recommendations, however, and perhaps ten times more, had he possessed them, would have weighed little with Cordelia in her present frame of mind; though in her rational and reflecting hours she had scarcely any hope of ever being the acknowledged wife of Lochcarron, still she could not support the thought that any other should reign lord of her

bosom; and supposing, like all young people, that such a frame of mind would be endless, she determined at once to cut Thornton's hopes, if indeed he cherished any; rising up, she said with mild but impressive dignity, "My lady, I have already avowed my resolution: until Lord Dunotter recovers, and is able to take a decisive part in this affair, I solemnly protest against any step being taken in my name;" she then begged to change the subject, and after this firm and positive declaration no one could venture to pursue it; Lady Dunotter decided in her own mind to follow her own measures without saying any more, and Thornton secretly resolved to call Lochcarron to a personal account when he should discover the place of his retreat, which hitherto he had attempted in vain. When the party broke up, Lady Dunotter gave Capt. Thornton a general invitation.

Cordelia, who had now been several hours from Lord Dunotter, went immediately to his apartment; she tried to look composed, but the traces of emotion left there by the conversation which had just passed, were too visible to escape the earl's penetrating eye; aware that her noble mind was above all petty concealments, and that if she tried to hide any thing from him it would only be in consideration of his peace, he did not endeavour by inferences, or by those modes of circumlocution which, with a person of a less ingenuous temper, he might perhaps have used to draw out of her all that had passed; but said, with the insinuating kindness of voice and countenance, "I see, my beloved child, that something has been said to disturb you—confide in me, my dearest girl, and believe my sacred assurance that I will protect you to the last moment of my life, and advise you even though the line of action which I see it right for you to follow, should traverse the nearest and dearest wishes of my own heart." The earl knew best whether he was quite so disinterested as he professed himself; but Cordelia, grateful, affectionate, and never wishing to swerve from the first bonds her heart had formed, identified all her interests with his, and gave him her whole confidence, only softening as much as possible the evident solicitude of Lady Dunotter to ingratiate herself with Capt. Thornton; but Lord Dunotter, who was penetration itself, easily fathomed the depth of his lady's mines, and formed his own counterworks accordingly. "Thank heaven!" he said, "they do not know where Alexander is; Cordelia, my love, I am determined to set off for the continent the day after to-morrow if it is agreeable to you, and," added his lordship, taking her hand, and speaking lower, "we will not mention our design to Lady Dunotter until to-morrow, because—" The entrance of the countess broke off the conversation; her eyes, as she came in were fixed upon her lord, while every feature and muscle of her face expressed the most anxious and tender affection, and seemed to ask even before her lips moved, how his health had been during the hours of her absence. Lord Dunotter knew very well how to repay all this in kind; it grew late, and the earl, with paternal kindness, dismissed Cordelia to her rest; but painful reflections on the past, and anticipations, not unmingled with fear concerning the future, kept her awake the greatest part of the night.

All had been for some time perfectly still in the house, when she suddenly heard, or thought she heard, an unusual bustle, with a sound like the opening and shutting of distant doors: through the whole of Lord Dunotter's illness, she had always given strict orders to be called should his lordship be materially worse in the night, and in painful apprehension that such was the case, she rose and dressed herself; but after waiting nearly an hour, and going into the gallery to listen, without any one approaching her apartment,

she hoped she had been mistaken, and returned to bed; worn out with watching, she fell asleep, and did not awake till rather beyond her usual time in the morning; her first inquiry to Lucy always was if she knew how Lord Dunotter had rested; Lucy, long since known as one of that class who are never better pleased than when they can be the harbingers of ill news, threw into her face as much of the appearance of concern as her features would bear, and replied, "My lady, my lord was taken very ill in the night; his lordship was seized with a violent pain in the same side the arm was taken off, and fainted several times; Philipson says he thought his lordship—" "Why was I not called?" interrupted Cordelia, in a tone of grief and alarm. "His lordship, ill as he was, insisted you should not be disturbed, my lady," was the reply. Not to be prolix, Cordelia learned that Mr. Herbert had been summoned; that the more violent symptoms appeared to yield to the remedies he had recourse to, and that the earl had just fallen into a doze; Lady Dunotter, who had been with her lord the whole time of his extremity, exhausted by fatigue and anxiety, had, by Mr. Herbert's directions, taken a composing draught, and retired to bed.

Poor Cordelia was deeply grieved by this intelligence, and blamed herself severely for not having risen when she heard an unusual noise in the house; determined to atone for what her affectionate mind deemed a neglect, she silently took her station by the earl's bed-side, watched his agitated slumbers, and when he awoke, her sweet face was the first object his eye rested upon; no one was present but themselves and Philipson, his lordship's valet, with whom he was under no restraint; in answer to Cordelia's solicitous and tender questions, the earl assured her that his pain was quite abated; but added, with a sigh, and a languid look, "I fear, my love, we must for the present relinquish the plan we formed yesterday;" in reply, she entreated him only to think of getting well; but she saw, with unspeakable grief, that the last few hours had effected a deeper change in his fine countenance, than all his previous sufferings and illness; and when he rose, which he did in the course of the day, his weakness and low spirits were not less apparent than his altered looks.

Upwards of a week now wore over; though every art of medicine was tried, the earl visibly lost strength, and seldom smiled, except as it were by an effort to cheer Cordelia, who was his only comforter; for as to the countess, her manner was little calculated to sooth a drooping invalid; when in his presence she seemed buried in the depth of anguish; but almost the whole of her time, when she was not either in her lord's apartment, dressing, or sleeping, was passed in close consultation with Mr. Crompton.

It was the ninth evening from that on which Lord Dunotter was last taken ill, that as Cordelia was walking on the lawn, Philipson came to her with a message from his lord requesting to see her immediately, if not particularly engaged; relieved from the distressing apprehensions which seized her by Philipson's assurance, that his lord was not worse than usual, she obeyed the summons, and when she entered the earl's apartment, saw with a feeling resembling joy, that though his interesting countenance exhibited traces of evident emotion, it seemed to be of a pleasurable kind. "I believe it is our acknowledged property to encroach on goodness, my Cordelia," he said, holding out his hand; "your society is so dear a solace, and you indulge me with it so often, that I now

venture to invade your retirements.” She replied with a cheerful smile, “Few of us complain, I believe, my lord, when called from our retirements to enjoy pleasure;” the earl kissed the hand he held, and said, “My pleasures are so few that I am become quite epicurean in those I possess; I cannot increase their quantity, but their quality is greatly enhanced when shared with you; I have a letter from town this evening,” he added, with a beam of that animation which formerly distinguished him. Cordelia started, and the earl hastily subjoined, “from which I learn that Alexander is now at Poole in Dorsetshire.” Astonishment and joy succeeded each other so rapidly, that Cordelia had no power of articulation; the earl watched her emotions with guarded and silent, yet close observation, and without attempting to speak, seemed waiting to hear what she would say; “Perhaps,” she began, and was going to make out the sentence, “perhaps he is coming home;” but a bashful fear lest she should seem too ardently to wish it, checked the words before they passed her lips; still the earl was silent, and she again said, “Perhaps,” and was about to say, “Perhaps he will go to Lady Charlotte Malcolm’s;” but reflecting that this “*perhaps*” was also liable to misconception, and might be construed into a jealous fear lest he should be gone to wait there the issue of Miss Borham’s illness, she again broke off the sentence, and was mute. Lord Dunotter, though he could not exactly know what she would have uttered, read very plainly the feelings of her bosom, and said with a look and voice of peculiar earnestness, “Oh, Cordelia, had I been well enough to go to Poole myself, I would have restored my truant boy to reason and to duty; but he has acted so infamously ill by you, that I blush to think of it;” and with a pause, he gazed earnestly in her downcast face, then resumed, “could you, would it be possible that you could, if assured of his sincere contrition, exert the most amiable attribute of heaven, and forgive a repentant offender?” Cordelia was holding the hand of Lord Dunotter; she did not attempt to reply, but gently kissing it, concealed her face on his shoulder: the earl embraced her with tender affection, and with much agitation of voice proceeded to say, “When I first desired your union with my son, I own I was greatly swayed by the advantages it held forth; but now that your virtues, your excellencies—my Cordelia, I do not flatter you when I say your perfections, are so well known to me, I wish and pray to see that union cemented as the best blessing my closing life can know; do not grieve, my love,” he continued, as he heard the sigh which breathed from Cordelia’s gentle breast, “I cannot live long, it would be vain to deceive either myself or the few on earth who are interested for me; no one, I am well aware, is so much so as yourself; no child of my own could possibly have a firmer hold on my heart; and my earnest, ardent wish is to leave you in the protection of one who will be to you a still dearer Lord Dunotter—” his manly voice faltered as he spoke the last words, and poor Cordelia was incapable of breathing a syllable; the earl leaned his head on the back of the sofa, and seemed for some minutes abstracted in thought, then seeming to acquire firmness by an effort, he said, “I must give you my whole confidence—I will lay open all my errors, you shall judge me, and decide how we must act.” His lordship paused again; Cordelia trembled, but tried to listen with composure; he resumed, “You remember, I dare say, that on that evening which would have been one of the happiest of my life, and, I flattered myself of yours also, I mentioned the circumstance of Pringle, my late steward, having injured me to a very considerable amount, and of my having caused him to be arrested; for this I own I had more than one motive, I—I mean when I first returned to England, and came down to Ravenpark—” again Lord Dunotter paused, then gently disengaging the hand of Cordelia

which he held within his arm, he rose and traversed the apartment three or four times with slow steps, then resuming his seat, he said, "I am fatigued to-night, my dear, and cannot go on; there are some letters which it will be proper you should see; expect them in the morning, and do not come to me till you receive them;" he then bade her a very affectionate good night, and Cordelia retired to her chamber, and her own meditations, not the least pleasing of which was the certainty that Lochcarron was now in the same country with her; and not the least distressing, the conviction which she could no longer shut her mind to, that Lord Dunotter was indeed fast descending to the grave.

Prohibited from going to his apartment in the morning, her first inquiry was after his health and rest: Philipson, as Lucy reported, said he had passed an indifferent night, and, if not worse, was certainly no better. In great anxiety she waited till nearly three o'clock, beguiling the time with various occupations, and dreading lest the unusual circumstance of her being the whole morning from the earl, should excite Lady Dunotter's observation; but his lordship had himself barred all comment on that point, by also excluding his lady from his apartment, under the plea that he was busy with papers of importance.

At the hour before-mentioned, Lucy brought in a packet which she had just received from Philipson; it was the size of several letters, sealed, and directed in the hand-writing of Lord Dunotter, "To Lady Lochcarron;" that tremor of the nerves which the almost perpetual agitation of her spirits had of late made her subject to was coming on, augmented by a feeling, not exactly of curiosity, but anxiety respecting this packet; she felt an unaccountable repugnance to opening it; but she had been so many hours from Lord Dunotter, that a desire to return to him overcame her reluctance, and severing the seal, she found within the cover four letters, each folded in a separate paper, and numbered 1, 2, 3, 4; the envelope contained the following lines:

"My dearest Cordelia,

Could my mind have approached, even in the most distant degree, to the purity of yours, I should not have shrunk as I did last night from that unreserved confidence I had just pledged myself to; what I cannot say in person, I have attempted by letter, aided by the explanations which you will find in the others inclosed; read them, my love, in the order they are numbered; and though when you do so, I dare neither appeal to the bar of justice, nor seek the award of mercy; neither ask your forgiveness, nor try to avert your indignation, when you know me as the primary author of your late sufferings, and the intended violator of the sanctities of domestic decorum, I yet implore you to remember that the offending culprit is your truly affectionate father,

Dunotter."

The hints contained in this note seemed to Cordelia of so distressing a nature, that she felt more than ever reluctant to examine the letters; hitherto Lord Dunotter, when acknowledging that there existed a point of difference between himself and his son, had

always ascribed it to misrepresentation, now he accused himself as the aggressor; while at the other hint she shuddered, without being able to define what it meant; painful, however, as she feared her present task would prove, she must go through it, and with desperate resolution she severed the seal of No. 1; the hand-writing was totally unknown to her, but with amazement mingled with a feeling resembling horror, she proceeded to read what follows:

“To Lord Lochcarron.

My lord,

Though confined a prisoner, accused as a criminal, and suffering under a severe fit of illness, neither deprivation of liberty, shame, nor pain could have induced me to intrude my miseries on your lordship on this happy day, did not a far more severe and touching interest than any of those compel me to lay open my sorrows to one who, as I well know, is ever ready to assist the injured and oppressed; my lord, I humbly entreat pardon, I use strong language, but it is wrung from me by a grief that rends my very heart! my Caroline—my child—for such your lordship knows I have always regarded her, having none of my own, was carried off last night—oh! my lord, I scarcely know how to write it—by your noble father’s orders, to his lordship’s seat in Scotland;—oh! Lord Lochcarron, I am accused of being a defaulter in my accounts, perhaps I may be so, though, I hope, not to any great amount; I confess I made some unfortunate speculations, and I was in hopes my lord would not discover the deficiency until I had made it good, which, I protest, I intended to do, as soon as ever I could raise the money, by selling and mortgaging every thing I had, and borrowing of my friends; for, my lord, I am not without good friends; but if I had even robbed your noble father, ought he to have reimbursed himself with the honour of my niece, for too much I fear it is so: I once thought, and I know I thought too truly, that she was too aspiring, and that her heart was fixed, oh, my lord, I dare not say on whom—my heart melts when I think of her, such beauty as can hardly be equalled, and such accomplishments as cannot be excelled—and what, I fear, have they all come to? at all events what will they come to? my lord, I most humbly beg, implore, entreat you to use your influence with your noble father to restore my poor girl to me—to take all I have, and let us hide our heads in a distant land. If I am criminal in one respect, is every one else innocent in others? and can none but poor men infringe the laws? once more humbly hoping your lordship will excuse what my full heart has compelled me to write, I take the liberty to subscribe myself, with the most profound respect,

your lordship’s most obedient
humble servant,

Ralph Pringle.”

Artfully as this letter was calculated to rouse into action the romantic feelings of Lord Lochcarron, Cordelia yet read too plainly in it, both the record of his love for Miss Borham, and of the acknowledged turpitude of Lord Dunotter; it was dated from

Buckingham gaol, on that eventful day, the consequences of which seemed to be endless: without allowing herself time to indulge painful reflections, she tore open No. 2, and with deep emotion, beheld that letter which had been given to the care of Lady Dunotter, three or four hours after Lord Lochcarron's mysterious departure, and by her presented to her lord at his return from Ravenpark; well did she remember how ardently she wished at that time to inspect its contents; but now, when she held it unsealed in her hand, she gazed on the superscription, and felt as if withheld by a spell from opening its folds; she did, however, open them, and, often interrupted by her tears, read what follows:

“My lord,

Though my heart is bleeding at every pore, and my mind oppressed with a weight of anguish which I believe it will never recover from, I neither write to upbraid, to remonstrate, nor to complain, but to give my motives for a line of conduct which I am unalterably determined to pursue; my peace is wrecked by the hand of a father—he who gave me being has plunged a dagger in my bosom.—I have proved myself ready and willing to sacrifice my own feelings and sentiments to the plans and wishes of others, and how have I been rewarded? I may perhaps be told I had placed my affections unworthily; if so, bitter has been my punishment. I only have to implore you, my lord, by every tie that men usually hold sacred, that if your unhappy victim is yet innocent, you will give her an asylum with my aunt, who, for *my* sake will cherish and protect her; and if I have indeed the misery to deplore the actual guilt of those I *have* loved, I supplicate you to save *her*, and I will, I must add, *yourself*, from further—I have no word to substitute. Oh! my father, how cruelly you have treated me! could you not have respected the woman your child loved, and would have married? but I am infringing the resolution with which I begun this letter—let me hasten to finish it, and to shut out for ever all communication between my family and myself—receive then my last, solemn declaration—the tie which I have formed this day I will never ratify; on the young lady's account, I regret extremely that ever I consented to it; from the little I have now seen of her, I wished and intended to teach my heart to do her justice; but my resolution is taken; such a union in its present state, may easily be dissolved, and I shall write to my lawyer to give every facility to the suit, which it will be best the friends of the lady should institute for that purpose. For myself, I shall pass over directly to the continent, and in new scenes endeavour to lose the remembrance of home.—I have nothing to ask but the continuance of my present allowance, for which, with your lordship's permission, I shall draw on your banker. I have nothing to add, my lord;—that your lordship may enjoy very many years of health and happiness, is the earnest prayer of, my lord,

your unfortunate
and afflicted son,

L.”

To say that almost every line of this letter contained an arrow which pierced the heart of her who now read it, is not using a stronger figure than the reality justifies; for almost every line contained an avowal, either direct or indirect, of the writer's attachment

to Miss Borham; yet it also contained his assurance, that it had been his fixed determination to conquer that attachment; and though nothing could exculpate Lord Lochcarron for having violated the most sacred engagement, by abandoning his wife the moment he had made her such, yet in the partial eye of Cordelia, the conduct of Lord Dunotter, who had thus, at such a moment, outraged the feelings of his only child, justified, as far as justification was possible, all that had ensued.

CHAPTER VI.

CORDELIA, taking the cover from No. 3, beheld with some degree of surprise, a large packet directed to Lady Charlotte Malcolm, in a most beautiful female hand: either it was that curiosity now became the governing motive, or that fear vanished before the soft influence of characters traced by one of her own sex, for no hesitation impeded the opening of this paper, though many emotions awaited the reading of the following lines:

“Dearest madam,

The innumerable instances of your ladyship’s goodness which are daily showered upon me, and the kind attention which by your orders is paid to all the wants of my weak situation, have called up in my heart the most sincere and ardent gratitude; they have done more, and have been, under Providence, a powerful means of awakening the recipient of so many favours, to a sense of her deep unworthiness; of pointing out that precipice on the edge of which she has been standing; and of illuminating her mind before the eventual close of life, with a humble sense of that Mercy which saved her from being a victim to the vanity and inconsideration so long her guides: I am too well aware, that your ladyship has received, from one of the best of human beings, impressions of me very different from my real deserts; there has been a time, when I could have worn such false honours without remorse; but now, on the verge of the grave, I no longer see things through a false medium; my habits of mind are totally altered, and truth alone, unchangeable and immutable, whether we stand acquitted or condemned by its ordeal, appears to merit the regard of a moment. Under the influence of this frame of mind, I am led, dearest madam, to hope that it is not the weakness of human nature, clinging, like some philosophers of old, to a world it affects to despise, and seeking to live in fame when dead in vitality; but a better principle—which teaches us to confess, and as far as may be, atone for error, that our memory may be cherished by the worthy—which now impels me, irresistibly impels me, to entreat your ladyship’s indulgence, while I detail those events of my life, by me ever to be deplored, as forming that chain of circumstances which has so unfortunately wounded the peace of your noble family.

“My father, as I believe your ladyship has heard, was in the church, and the fond partiality of a child is gratified in recording the testimony of all who knew him, that he was a truly worthy member of the sacred function; my mother dying a few weeks after my birth, and my father before I had completed my tenth year, I was left, with a small portion, to the care of my uncle and aunt Pringle—the latter, who was my father’s sister, survived him but a short time, so that the whole plan of my education devolved on my uncle; and only solicitous to improve my personal advantages, which he was pleased to think great, he placed me at a boarding-school in Surry, where, at the expense of all that my father left me, both principal and interest, I received what is frequently termed a first-rate female education; that is, I was taught to execute and display with facility, and in the most fashionable style, those acquirements which are usually called accomplishments; imagination was cultivated at the expense of judgment, and a spurious off-hand species of memory was so assiduously called forth and furnished, that I could easily make myself

appear well-instructed in arts and sciences which I knew very little about. Here I must pass my unqualified censure on that governess under whose care I was placed; she was for ever pouring forth encomiums on my beauty, and when any ladies came as visitants to the school, I was sure to be exhibited as a something surpassing human perfections; my shape, complexion, eyes, and teeth, were extolled in my own hearing; and frequent hints were given both on those occasions, and when my uncle came to see me, that I would certainly make my fortune by marrying highly; these ideas were so consonant to his own sentiments and views, that he did all in his power to realize them, and enabled me to dress in a style greatly beyond my station in life: thus placed on a seeming equality with, and made the companion of, the daughters of peers, and men of opulence, I imbibed a taste for high life, its luxuries, parade, and gratifications, so strong, that I dreaded any deprivation of them, any situation removed from their sphere as the very climax of earthly misery.

“At sixteen I was taken from school, and placed at the head of my uncle’s house; change of scene and novelty for some time amused me; but I was beginning to feel out of my wonted element, and to weary of the dull uniformity of the country, when my every thought and feeling were changed, or to speak more properly, pointed anew by the arrival of your ladyship’s noble brother at Ravenpark; hitherto I had seen very few gentlemen, and those few chiefly flippant trifling youths, who, having no minds of their own, cannot admit—and, indeed, are incapable of receiving—the idea that women have any, and are perpetually offending against those refinements and proprieties, so delightful to those females who have seen much of elevated life: oh! how exquisite seemed every motion, how dignified every thought and word of the earl of Dunotter!—but it is a theme in which I must not, will not indulge; I shall only say that there was in Lord Dunotter’s manner an attention, a—a—I do not err from truth if I write tenderness, which, from rank and perfections like his, had on a young giddy heart like mine the effect of magic; my uncle saw all that passed in my bosom; and, not less vain than myself, and urged on by additional motives, thought he saw all that passed in that of the earl also; he cautioned me to play my cards well, as he termed it, and congratulated me on the prospect of soon becoming Countess of Dunotter: oh! even now, when about to enter on the valley of the shadow of death, what blushes overspread my cheek as I write all this!—but, however painful, I must go on; my uncle, as your ladyship now knows but too well—was considerably in arrears with my lord; and to screen, to ingratiate himself, I fear—alas! I more than fear, for I know—tacitly, at least, encouraged hopes in his lordship respecting me, which even then had I known, or even suspected, much as I was biassed by a presumptuous partiality, I should have resented, and deemed criminal. Such, my lady, was the state of circumstances when I first saw your amiable, excellent nephew, a few weeks after I became acquainted with his dear father: humbled now to the dust, and beholding when I turn my eyes to the mirror, an awful memento of mortality in this faded form, which wears already the hue and substance of death, little of vanity, I trust, can actuate me when I was say I was loved at once by parent and child; but Lord Lochcarron’s passion—oh, it was purity itself, yet only avowed in sighs and glances, and waiting, as I could well perceive, in the hope that he would in time gain from paternal tenderness, that sanction which had he suspected (as I am well aware he never did) the sentiments of the earl, he would have ceased to look for. I will not attempt to conceal or

extenuate one of my errors; vain, ambitious, and, as I now see, more artful than my insidious heart had hitherto allowed me to think myself, even when I was listening to, and hoping to become the wife of the father, I was giving at least negative encouragement to the son; and cherishing another chance of becoming a countess: I must pause, for while I write the record of my own duplicity, the pen drops from my unnerved hand.

“Such, dearest madam, was the state of circumstances, when early symptoms of decline appearing in my constitution, alarmed my uncle, and induced him to send me to Tunbridge for my health; at my return, I heard reports from various quarters, of the double union which was projected between the families of Dunotter and Walpole; but my uncle, actuated by the base reasons (I must give them the term they merit) which I have already stated, assured me that so far as regarded Lord Dunotter, there was no truth in the talk of the neighbourhood; and when I saw the earl himself, which I did only once after I came home, he gave me no reason to suppose that he meditated such a sudden change in his situation. Too sensible that I am wearying your ladyship with my prolixity, I will now be as brief as possible: my uncle came to me one evening, and with every possible expression with which he could endeavour to call up my feelings of gratitude, and to excite my fears for his personal safety, and my own future comfort, he told me, that in his accounts with Lord Dunotter he was a defaulter to the amount of nearly seven thousand pounds; that the dreadful fact could be no longer concealed from his lordship; that his only chance of safety was an immediate flight to America; that he had provided the means; and that we were to take our passage on board a vessel then lying in the Thames, ready for sea: he concluded by advising me to pack up every thing of value in as small compass as possible, and to hold myself in readiness for travelling to town the next night but one: oh! respected, venerated Lady Charlotte, in what language shall I describe my feelings when told all this? how was my very soul torn and agitated by the conflicting passions which were now roused into action? shame, to think that my nearest relative had acted a part so mean and pitiful; fear, as I contemplated a voyage in my delicate state of health, and a cheerless, too probably an endless—exile from my country, and from every known and familiar object; disappointed ambition, which had so long pampered itself on prospects of imaginary aggrandizement, consequence, and victory over all competitors and contemporaries;—and there was yet one thought more bitter to endure than all the rest—I found, on deeply probing my own heart, that time, aided by shame, might enable me to support a separation from every object in England but one; but oh! when I connected ‘That banished, that one ‘word banished,’ with that one who I had been accustomed to contemplate as the standard of grace, elegance, fashion—of all that the female mind can admire—I believed that no effort I could make—for hitherto I had been quite unaccustomed to any exertion of self-control—could enable me to support the idea of never again seeing Lord Dunotter.

“Thus I thought, and thus I felt; the day came, and spiritless and irresolute, I half-obeyed my uncle in the preparations he ordered to make; but your ladyship’s noble brother had intelligence of all my uncle’s plans, and prevented their execution by an arrest: spare me, dearest madam, any recapitulation of the attendant circumstances of that event; it took place the very day preceding that which was fixed for the solemnization of two marriages, of which I knew nothing, as my uncle had cautiously concealed from me

his knowledge that they were to take place. He was scarcely taken from the house, when my maid placed on the table, where I leaned weeping, a letter from my lord; this I neither can copy nor inclose; duty in every shape required the sacrifice, and I destroyed it some months ago; it was short, but, to my vain and biassed heart, appeared to be written with great tenderness: his lordship defended the step he had taken with regard to my uncle, on the ground of the obligation he owed both to society and to himself, not to suffer so gross a breach of trust to escape with impunity; and enforced the necessity of my seeking an asylum for the present at Dunotter Castle, 'where,' as his lordship expressed it, 'Mrs. Grant the housekeeper, would feel herself honoured in such an opportunity of paying me every respectful attention.' Alas! this was that moment when I was 'weighed in the balance, and found wanting;' I rejected reason, which would have counselled me to reflect on the consequences to which the step I was urged to take might lead; I abandoned the great outwork of female virtue, *character*, by consenting to take refuge beneath Lord Dunotter's roof;—I did more, I stifled, 'the still small voice of conscience,' and listening only to the fear of being exiled from those indulgences of life to which I had been habituated, and of never seeing Lord Dunotter more, I wrote to his lordship, expressing my gratitude for his friendship, and signifying my acceptance of his protection; could blushes burn, or tears wash out this outrage against feminine decorum, I should not now retain even the resemblance of it; but heaven has wisely ordered that the sting of not only active, but passive guilt shall be lasting.

"I travelled to Scotland leisurely, as Lord Dunotter, in consideration for my delicate health, had cautioned my conductors, and during the journey was in a state of mind which I cannot describe; it was a weak sense of rectitude deploring strong error—in short it was what I would not willingly, if I had the power, inflict on a person who I knew to be my bitterest foe.

"I reached Aberdeenshire very much exhausted; and here a new trial, I was going to say, awaited me; but no, it was mercy, mercy of the highest order which snatched me from the guidance of my own corrupt and wayward heart, and introduced me to the protection of your ladyship: Mrs. Grant put into my hands two letters, one in the handwriting of Lord Dunotter, the other that of my uncle; the purport of the earl's letter was as follows:

"'Since your departure, my sweet friend, the painful apprehension has occurred to me, that an ill-judging malicious world may possibly attach to your residence under my roof a most unmerited censure, which may reflect not only on you, but on my son; the events of this day, which I have not now time to detail, but which you shall soon know, are such as I am sure will justify me to your dignified mind, in requesting that you will honour Lady Charlotte Malcolm, by making Inchclair, instead of Dunotter Castle, your residence.'

"This letter was dated the day of his lordship's and Lord Lochcarron's marriages, and had reached Scotland before me, as I had travelled so slowly. Mr. Pringle's letter harrowed up my soul, for it confessed all I have hinted above, of the mask he had worn on my subject to Lord Dunotter; told me what had all along been his lordship's views and

expectations concerning me; and told me too, that the earl was that day married to Lady, and Lord Lochcarron to Miss Walpole. I thought I should have expired on the spot, yet an indignant feeling supported me, and folding up my letters, I endeavoured at the appearance of composure: I would not, though urged by Mrs. Grant, remain a single night under the roof of Dunotter Castle; perhaps fatigue and agitation accelerated my malady, or perhaps it was too previously deeply rooted to yield to medicine or change of air; for since my residence in Scotland I have rapidly declined, though I acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude, the skill and tenderness which have been exerted for me, and with more than gratitude, with veneration, I beg to express my esteem for, and obligations to, your ladyship's worthy chaplain, Mr. Baxter, whose pious and inestimable instructions have cleared my understanding from the mists and errors that oppressed it, and taught me to rest on that Rock from whence my hopes of forgiveness of error, and final acceptance alone can spring.

"Mrs. Johnston has told me of the accident which has befallen your ladyship's noble brother, and of the departure of my Lord Lochcarron; on the *first* point, I will not say how deeply I feel, and how fervently I implore heaven to restore the earl to health; but the *last* has been my inducement to trouble your ladyship with this long narrative, and most solemnly to aver the truth of every syllable it contains, that no shadow of suspicion in which Lord Lochcarron is concerned, may, after I shall repose in the grave, remain on the mind of your ladyship, or any other member of your exalted family, for every one of whom my earnest prayers shall mingle with the last feelings of departing life. Once more I implore your ladyship's permission to apologize for this lengthened intrusion, and to subscribe myself with the most fervent gratitude,

your ladyship's devoted servant,

Caroline Borham."

Cordelia read and wept over this long epistle with such attention, surprise, pity, and emotion, that she was summoned to attend Lady Dunotter at dinner before she had finished her comments: "My lord and you seem very busy with papers, my dear," said the countess, with a scrutinizing look; "may I ask what so deeply engages your attention?" Cordelia, aware that she ought not to "Do evil that good might come," or in other words, tell a falsehood to promote truth, only said, that she had not seen Lord Dunotter that day; but she felt indignant at the meanness of Lady Dunotter, who it was plain had heard from her servant, that the earl had sent her a packet of papers; "That is no answer to my question, Delia," said her ladyship, with a smile, at once so pleasant that it could not be resented, and so sly, that its satirical meaning could not be mistaken; "I am sorry it is not in my power to give your ladyship a more satisfactory one," replied Cordelia, for the meekest natures are sometimes the most determined when roused into action; "I declare, upon my honour, that I do not know what papers my Lord Dunotter is busy with; and as to myself, I have been looking over some letters which belong to a friend, of course such a confidence is not my own." She saw the countess and Mr. Crompton exchange glances, and trembled lest they should have discovered that Lord Lochcarron was in England, and were urging forwards that suit of separation which she dreaded, and which Lochcarron's letter to his father had too fatally told her he was willing to promote. It seemed too as if they were determined to make a point of detaining her in the dining-room.

Lady Dunotter, she found, was resolved no longer to confine herself at home without company, on account of her lord's illness; and, since going to town that spring was now out of the question, had made up her mind to receive and visit all of the world that the environs of Holleyfield and Ravenpark contained: in this view she had been ordering patterns of new clothes, which were all to be submitted to Cordelia's inspection, and many of them recommended to her choice; she gave her opinion when asked, but positively, though mildly, refused making any purchases beyond what were consistent with the undress costume she had never departed from since her disastrous marriage, alleging that she could not on any account see company at present; the countess smiled, bantered what she termed her love for solitude, and looked as if she would say, "I will leave no means untried to change your resolution." Crompton's grin was the constant accompaniment of her ladyship's smile, and he had always a complaisant "yes" and "no" ready to chime in with her opinions. Cordelia did not like their manner towards her; they seemed to assume a positive right over her actions; to dictate where they ought only to advise, and to advise where silence, and some deference to her feelings, would have been at least decorous; she had, however, no appeal from their aggressions, for she was too tenacious of her father-in-law's peace in his present weak state, to harass him with her complaints; still she was reluctant to give wilful offence, and sacrificed an hour more than usual after dinner, to avoid the appearance of doing so; Lady Dunotter then went to her lord, and Cordelia, retiring to her room, bolted the door to guard against interruption, and opening the last of the letters, found it directed to herself in the hand-writing of the earl; these were the contents:

"Before my beloved child peruses these lines, the faults of her husband's father will be made known to her; not in the glaring colours they deserve, but shaded and softened by the generosity of one, whose own errors, rigidly as she is inclined to judge them, were but the emanations of his; and who, had she never known him, might now, perhaps, have been both well and happy: I offer no extenuation of my conduct—on Miss Borham's subject, it has been inexcusably bad; at my first return to England I was captivated by her beauty—I have seen the finest women of London, Paris, Vienna, and Naples, but never, in my estimation, beheld a form so elegant, and a face so perfect as those of Caroline Borham; I studied her character, and found its vulnerable parts in those inseparable attributes of woman, desire of distinction, and tenderness of heart; I saw the impression I made, and had I acted with honour, I should have avoided her society, and intrenched myself in my elevated rank; I did neither, but had recourse to flattery, and while Pringle thought he duped me, made him my tool, resolved to act by him at a suitable opportunity, as I have since done. Alexander's passion I considered but as a boyish fancy, the natural result of the romantic sentiments he had imbibed from his aunt, and which would vanish before that conviction of the unworthiness of its object, which must follow the success of my schemes.

"Oh, Cordelia! how is the longest and most intricate train of policy that the wit of man can invent, defeated in a moment by one unforeseen circumstance! on that day, when I received the hand of Lady Walpole, and gave yours to my son, I felicitated myself as having reached the ultimatum of human good: in addition to all those advantages and

distinctions, by which I had for some time past triumphed over all my competitors, I had, I expected, obtained a vast addition of property and influence in the county; I had secured Pringle; and managed so as to keep my son in ignorance of my plans with regard to his niece, whom I had placed under the care of a person who would, I knew, convey her safe to Dunotter Castle: I blush, Cordelia, to tell you who that person was, but I have pledged myself to conceal from you no part of the truth—it was the fellow who drove Lochcarron’s carriage on the evening which introduced him to your acquaintance, and who was suspected—whether justly or not I could never determine—to have been in league with the villain who attempted to rob you, and who I retained in my service because I knew him to be a time-serving wretch, and had always intended to employ him on this very occasion, in the success of which I now exulted—Miss Borham, by accepting my protection, had entirely forfeited her character, and when the outposts are given up, the citadel is seldom known to hold out long. Pringle’s letter, by causing Alexander’s unprecedented departure, levelled at one stroke all the superstructure I had been rearing—may the villain perish who thus insidiously endeavoured to exasperate a son against his father! I will pursue him to the last hour of my life, and punish him with the utmost severity of law; nor shall his insolent threat at the conclusion of his letter avail him any thing; I will let him see that the law makes a material distinction between placing a young lady in a retirement by her own consent, and a steward embezzling the property of the nobleman for whom he acts. Pardon me, my Cordelia; my passion, when compelled to mention that culprit, gets the better not only of my reason, but of my respect for you, which I am sure will be one of the last principles my heart will hold. Let me return to my narrative; Lochcarron’s conduct compelled me to an immediate change of plan; and I wrote to Caroline in the terms she has stated in her letter, and to my sister to apprise her of the guest I had taken the liberty to introduce at Inchclair: again I congratulated myself on my finesse—again I rested secure in the hope that my past designs respecting Miss Borham would never be clearly understood—and again I was fated to endure—I must say merited—disappointment. Lady Charlotte, in the first instance, gave me credit for all the motives I chose to ascribe to myself; but she was soon undeceived; Alexander, after he had been some little time in France, in justification of himself, transmitted Pringle’s letter to lady Charlotte; and shortly after that of poor Caroline completed the business of unmasking my errors. My sister, though she remonstrated with me very seriously, and would, I am persuaded, have done so to a much greater extent but for the accident I met with and its consequences, complied with my earnest request, and sent me the two letters.

“Now, my Cordelia, you have before you the black catalogue of your father’s transgressions; should I say I repent of and deplore them, they to whom I made the assertion, would quote upon me the words of an excellent writer, ‘when our vices forsake us, we flatter ourselves that we leave them;’ my every sense of justice withholds me from suing for your forgiveness, because I am conscious that in doing so I should be asking for what, were I in your place, I could not grant; and to implore pity is but to beg for guilt the meed of innocence. Relying then only on your mercy, I shall put myself entirely out of the question, except to say, that had it pleased heaven to spare to me my remnant of strength a little longer, I should have gone to Poole, and made my peace with Lochcarron, and Lochcarron’s with you, through the medium of poor Caroline’s letter; though to see

Alexander's eyes tracing such a record of his father's shame, would have been the last stab my dying heart could receive; but if even those sufferings could have been accepted as an atonement, it is denied me to make it—I am now too far gone for the journey, short as it is; oh, my Cordelia, I know not how to write my wish, yet write it I must, for I cannot speak it—would you, could you exert that inherent dignity and fortitude so eminently your characteristics, and, accompanied by a suitable female friend, go down to Poole, and when there, transmit to Alexander a packet which I shall write, inclosing Miss Borham's letter; he landed from France, my friend informs me, at Southampton, and is now at Poole, at the house of a Mrs. Garland. I have some reasons for believing that he came over with the intention of seeing me; but the suit which, I must now tell my Cordelia, Lady Dunotter has commissioned the lawyers to institute, in order to obtain an immediate dissolution of the marriage, must prove an effectual bar to his approaching Holleyfield. I would say much more, my Cordelia, but am now so exhausted, that I can only beg you to devote the first moment of your leisure to your affectionate, afflicted father,

Dunotter.”

“Oh! how much does a bad cause darken and bewilder the finest understanding!” was Cordelia's mental observation as she perused the earl's letter, and marked the incoherence, and the want of connexion, and of energy which pervaded it; when she came to that part which mentioned the postilion, she shuddered with chill horror; she well remembered Miss Borham speaking of this man, and noticing the singularity of Lord Dunotter's retaining him in his service; it now appeared for what purpose he had retained him; and Cordelia, partial as she was to Lochcarron, and biassed in favour of his parent, alternately wept and felt her blood run cold as she reflected on the conduct of both father and son on the marriage-day; the one deceiving the woman to whom he was sacredly vowing everlasting fidelity, and carrying off another, whom he in reality preferred in every point but those of rank and fortune; and the latter abandoning his wife the moment he had made her such, in defiance of the solemn obligation he had just contracted, in conformity to the laws of both heaven and earth: but she felt that if she pursued these contemplations too far, her inherent love of virtue might so far prevail, as to diminish that uniform tenderness of manner which she had hitherto preserved towards Lord Dunotter, and which she still wished to persevere in. Again she turned to the letter, and again laid it down with a strong feeling of disgust, at the ready duplicity which, when his own plans promised success, could rejoice in the thought that Miss Borham had forfeited her character; and when change of circumstances made it his interest to restore her to society immaculate, could so adroitly plead solicitude for her reputation and that of his son, as if the world would impute her residence at Dunotter Castle to Lochcarron alone: but oh! when she read the earl's wish that she should go to Dorsetshire, and be herself the medium of transmitting Miss Borham's letter to Lochcarron, how did her every nerve tremble with agitation, and how did she shrink from such a task! yet if some immediate measure was not had recourse to, the tie between her and Lochcarron would be annulled;—unable to decide, she felt more unhappy than ever; the night was wearing fast, and so short a time remained till the usual hour of Lord Dunotter's retiring to seek repose, that either she must go immediately to his apartment, or send an apology for not seeing

him that night; she resolved on the former, and found him anxiously expecting her; he looked, or at least she fancied he looked, worse than ever, and every thought of harsh censure for his errors vanished before the tender pity his appearance inspired; "I am just come to bid you good night, my dear father," she said, in a voice of kindness, "and will attend you as soon as you are up to-morrow." It was the first time she had ever called him father, and his quick intelligent eye spoke the delight he felt in the epithet. Philipson had retired on Cordelia's entrance; the earl held her hand, and averting his face, said, "You now know all, my Cordelia." She drew from her pocket the letters of Lord Lochcarron, Miss Borham, and Pringle, and placing them by Lord Dunotter, said, with forced composure and cheerfulness, "I will know nothing to-night, my lord, but that you are going to rest;" then kissing his hand, she was turning away, but he detained her; "Yet, my Cordelia," he said, "there is one point which cannot be delayed; have you—can you come to any determination? on no account would I urge you—act, my beloved child, as your excellent judgment shall dictate; but Lady Dunotter, Crompton, and Thornton are, I find, quite on the alert; and Caroline's letter, Alexander must see it, dearly as it costs me, he must see it, but not for worlds could I support the thought that it should meet any eye but his and yours;—there is no medium by which it can be conveyed to him—the post is not to be thought of—" here the earl paused, and Cordelia thus called to an immediate determination in a point of such importance, replied with mild, but firm collection, "My lord, it is a matter in which both my age and the circumstances I am placed in are incompetent to decide—I request to have the advantage of higher experience; with your lordship's permission, I will write to Mrs. Emerson." The earl gave a moment to reflection, and then said, "Yes, do so, my love; make Mrs. Emerson acquainted with every particular, have no reserves, but disclose the truth in every respect—your judgment is so excellent that nothing can warp it to error;" then after another short pause, he added, "I also will venture to intrude a few lines on Mrs. Emerson—you, my dear, shall give the narrative of circumstances, and I will add the reasons why I think you ought to pursue the line of conduct I am recommending." This seemed so considerate, so kind, so regardful of her feelings, that Cordelia was delighted, and gracefully thanked the earl; he advised her to write her letter as early as convenient in the morning, adding, that he would do the same, that they might go in the course of the day; he then subjoined, "I was so ill, and concluded my letter in such haste, that I did not say Alexander passes by the name of Campion; a very particular friend of mine in town, has succeeded in tracing him so far. I wish, ardently wish to see you reconciled," he added, gazing earnestly at her, "but that is not my sole motive for advising this journey—I think the exercise and change of scene will be of service to you—now, my dear, go to rest;" and saluting her cheek, he dismissed her.

There was something so conciliating in Lord Dunotter's manner, he knew human nature so well, and could so easily suit his voice, looks, and style of writing to existing circumstances and situations, that it can be no matter of surprise, if Cordelia was always won to his opinions; and the letter to Mrs. Emerson, to which he devoted the first hour of his rising the next morning, was in every point and respect calculated to win that lady to favour the plan he wished Cordelia to adopt. There were no little blandishments of flattery; no studied deference to her judgment, or artful appeals to her feelings; none of these, he was well aware, would do with a woman of her elevated mind; her only

vulnerable part, he knew, would be fear for Cordelia's peace, and there he fixed his battery; insinuating that he saw plainly she would never enjoy either happiness or comfort in a state of separation from Lochcarron, and that nothing could so well convince him that Cordelia was no party in the proceedings of Lady Dunotter and Capt. Thornton, as her paying him a visit.

CHAPTER VII.

CORDELIA, apprehensive that if she deferred the task of writing to Mrs. Emerson till the next day, she might not be able to complete her packet in time, aware that from its nature it must be very large, devoted the rest of the evening, and great part of the night to her pen; she epitomised the four letters of Lord Dunotter, Lord Lochcarron, Miss Borham, and Pringle; added whatever else could elucidate the present state of affairs at Holleyfield, or display the real sentiments, apprehensions, and wishes of her heart and mind; requested the counsel of her friend how to act; and should she advise the journey, begged her influence with Mrs. Brooks to be her companion; this lady was the widow of a highly respectable person in Yorkshire, who, dying about five years before, left her without a family, and with but a slender income, which a large circle of kind friends did all in their power to prevent her from feeling as a serious evil; nor in doing this were they quite disinterested: she had qualities which made her assistance truly valuable on a thousand occasions in life—she had excellent moral principles, solid good sense, and useful female knowledge: she was now nearly fifty, but with an appearance of youth which might have passed her for much younger; of middle stature, very pleasing in person, and cheerful in temper: she sometimes resided for months together with Mrs. Emerson, and doted upon Cordelia, who did not entertain a doubt that she would accede to her request.

Lord Dunotter sent for Cordelia to preside at his breakfast table, but though he received her with more than wonted animation, his pallid looks would not allow her to think it the result of amendment, but merely a fictitious flow of spirits called up by the present occasion: his letter was ready, and sealing it up in the same cover with that of Cordelia, Philipson himself conveyed them to the post-office; for so apprehensive was the earl of Lady Dunotter's counteracting his plans, that he would not trust them in the hands of any other person. So ardently was Lord Dunotter bent on carrying his scheme into execution, that he would not suffer himself to glance at any part of the question where he could trace the possibility of disappointment; he had not showed Cordelia his letter, but now that it was gone, he told her many particulars of its contents; he had made it a request to Mrs. Emerson to find out a suitable companion for his daughter on her journey, and was delighted when he found that she had not only preferred the same petition, but had fixed on the person; even the very route by which they were to travel, and mode of travelling, the earl had settled, and, smiling, told Cordelia he would develop them as occasion required; he was much pleased with her account of Mrs. Brooks, who, he told her, would travel in the coach to Dunstable, where one of his lordship's carriages should attend—"not to bring her *here*, my love," he said, "but when she shall arrive there, I will go on with the detail of my plan;" he then advised Cordelia to take an immediate airing in the park, and to do so each succeeding morning: she sometimes aired with Lady Dunotter, but that was some hours later in the day; "By going *earlier*," his lordship observed, "she would strengthen her frame, and fit it to endure a longer journey; by going *alone*, she would both free herself from Lucy's troublesome impertinence, and, by being seen to drive in a morning unattended, take the edge from that officious curiosity which might otherwise be found extremely inconvenient when she

actually set out on her excursion; and by using one of my carriages, it may pass for Lochcarron's, and at least give the world to believe that no great degree of ill-will subsists between you." Cordelia could hardly suppress a smile at such a far-fetched idea; however she cheerfully obeyed the earl in all he required, and during the days which intervened before they might expect answers to their letters, kept as much as possible to her own apartment and that of Lord Dunotter.

Cordelia found her morning drives generally delightful; but on one occasion they proved themselves to have a capability of being very much otherwise; too actively benevolent to make them mere excursions of pleasure, she frequently called at the neighbouring cottages, where her bounty dispensed blessings, and her winning affability cheered the drooping spirits of poverty and affliction: it was the third morning she had been out, after having visited the family of a small farmer on the earl of Dunotter's estate, the mother of which was confined to her bed by a rheumatic fever, her carriage having to traverse a small portion of the turnpike road to regain the more private way in Holleyfield park, she saw advancing, with all the rapidity in which four-in-hand could be driven, a very dashing equipage, in which were seated a gay charioteer, and a fair belle by his side; two servants attended in very splendid liveries, which Cordelia recognized, even before she came near enough to see that it was the earl of Hootside and his bride, her Orton-abbey acquaintance; perhaps the same kind of recognition struck them, and told them to whom the postchaise belonged; eager to see who it contained, the gay young countess stretched out her neck, while her plumes waved in the wind, which was rather high; the eyes of the two ladies met, and were in the same moment instinctively, as it should seem, averted; those of Cordelia, because the painful circumstances in which she was placed made her shrink from scrutiny, and those of Lady Hootside because she knew not in what style to address such a non-descript as an unacknowledged wife; each, however, quickly repelled her separate feelings, and each looked again: Cordelia, firm in conscious innocence, mentally said, "Why should I shun the gaze or the address of any one? my misfortune has not been my fault;" and Lady Hootside, exulting that she had her noble husband seated by her side, thought to herself, "Why should I use so much ceremony with one who has made herself the public talk, and whose name is going to be bandied about in Doctor's Commons?" Cordelia had once been Lord Hootside's choice beyond all the women he had ever seen, and though she had never felt any positive preference for him, he had in the earlier part of their acquaintance flattered himself she did so, and had deeply resented her refusal to be of the Brighton party, and subsequent marriage with Lord Lochcarron; but he was naturally too good-tempered to rejoice, as the countess his mother, and Lady Melissa did, in the miseries she had since endured; he was prepared by the Addingtons, at whose seat they were now on a visit for a few days, to see her greatly altered; but still he was so little prepared for the total change which had taken place in her appearance, that if he had met her any where but in that place and equipage, she would have passed as a perfect stranger: these considerations called up a thrill of former tenderness, and though the consciousness of his own more prosperous circumstances at first disposed him to behave with insolent hauteur, resentment dissolved before the natural goodness of his disposition; and when Cordelia pulled the check-string, and with all her native elegance and sweetness, addressed Lord and Lady Hootside, asked after

their health, and congratulated them on their marriage, he replied at once with the respect due to her rank, and the kindness of an old friend.

As it was now the current talk of the neighbourhood that proceedings would shortly be instituted to dissolve the marriage, the earl cautiously avoided addressing her by the title of Lochcarron; Cordelia felt and understood the delicacy of his motive, but sighed to think, that

“That name for ever sad, for ever dear,”

was not considered as belonging to her. Lady Hootside looked as if she thought the manner of her lord too conciliating yet as she could not, in open defiance of his example, address Cordelia as Lady Lochcarron, she took care by a stammering, hesitating, “ma-’-am,” to let her see that she was at a loss for her proper pronoun personal: mutual inquiries after respective friends were made on both sides; Lady Lochcarron left no claim of politeness unanswered; but the interview was painful, and she terminated it as soon as she could do so consistently. When she got home, she found Lady Dunotter in her lord’s apartment, and related who she had seen, but without making any comments on their mode of behaviour to herself; the countess, however, asked so many questions, that she found exactly what that of Lady Hootside had been, and appeared to boil with indignation; but Cordelia, whose gentle nature was not inclined to notice every little effervescence of petulance she met with, only said, “that Lady Hootside had not distressed her feelings in any way to call up resentment,” and was glad when Philipson brought in the newspapers, which changed the conversation; but Lady Dunotter did not dismiss the subject, without saying emphatically, “I will yet triumph over them all.”

In the course of the morning, her ladyship told her daughter that she should have a small dinner party on the following Saturday: Cordelia easily guessed that Thornton would be amongst them, and she now wished more ardently than ever that Mrs. Emerson’s opinion might sanction her going down to Poole, and that she might be off before this appointed dining day; though whenever a thought recurred of what errand she was going upon, and how it might terminate, she felt her heart sink with apprehension.

The earliest possible return of the post brought Lord Dunotter and Cordelia answers to their letters; that to Cordelia was as follows:

“My beloved child,

In deep anxiety lest delay should prove detrimental to plans which may eventually be for the peace and happiness of my Cordelia, or give time to promote those which might prove destructive to her interests, I have given to reflection every moment of time since I received the letters from Holleyfield, and shall not seek rest till I have replied to them with that sincerity of heart and uprightness of intention, which must plead for acceptance, in the room of that unerring rectitude of judgment, which occasions like the present too fatally convince me I am deficient in. In the first place, my Cordelia, ever bear in mind that our sex is always in a state of dependence in every situation of life, as daughters, as

wives, and as widows; women are never free agents; obedience is one of the first duties enjoined them by both divine and human laws; while a female remains unmarried, and has parents living, she owes obedience to them in all that is consistent with sacred and moral duty; but when she marries, that obedience is transferred to her husband; you, my love, solemnly vowed it to Lord Lochcarron, and his shameful—I do not hesitate to say infamous—dereliction of his vows, does not exonerate you from the performance of yours: his lordship has no right to throw you from him without cause, as if there existed on your part a degree of criminality so great, that it compelled you to the patient endurance of silent contempt; it is therefore a debt which you owe your own reputation, before you consent to any preliminary step being taken towards instituting a suit of separation, to demand a personal interview with Lord Lochcarron, to engage him to do you justice in point of character, that it may not remain in the power of malevolence to attach any shade of obloquy to you, as being in any way unfit or unworthy to bear the title of Lady Lochcarron; but you may and ought to prefer this request with meekness, mildness, and, I will add, with submission; for ungracious as it may sound to some female ears, *submission* and *subjection* are the words of scripture, when its sacred pages inculcate the duties of a wife: this suggests to me another consideration: a wife, in espousing her husband, marries both his temporal and eternal interests; and where she sees him about to make shipwreck of his duties, his principles, or his respectability, it becomes, a sacred obligation proceeding from her marriage vow, to admonish him with mildness and gentleness, to awaken his conscience, to point out his dangers, to be to him a second, a juster, a more impartial self: Lord Lochcarron in his conduct to you, my Delia, has abandoned his duties, violated his principles, forfeited his respectability—it is harsh language, but, it grieves me to say, the language of truth:—yet though he has done all this, he is still your wedded lord: now, my love, I well know your piety, your meekness, your good sense—(I may reiterate my words, Delia, and say this is flattering language, but it is the language of truth) should you bring back Lord Lochcarron to reason, and establish him in habits of domestic regularity and goodness, the glory and the happiness will all be your own; you will have discharged your duty to heaven— “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins;” you will have fulfilled your part of your marriage vow, and you will have cleared your own character from all shade of suspicion: but to do all this you must go to Poole, or wherever else Lord Lochcarron is, and even then I think you have only a negative chance of success; but to fail when we have made every possible exertion is, you know, to fail with honour, and is, in all cases, more meritorious than a supine inactivity. I certainly think such a journey for a lady situate as you are, in many respects extremely ineligible, yet, all points considered, I advise you to take it; and now having counselled you with my best ability, both of head and heart, I have only to refer you to Lord Dunotter for every other particular, to assure you of my ardent prayers for your success, and to subscribe myself, my beloved Cordelia, your truly affectionate,
Matilda Emerson.”

Such was the letter which Cordelia perused with many fluctuating emotions, in which joy, fear, and hope, alternately had the sway; she was still meditating on its contents, when she was roused by a message from Lord Dunotter requesting to see her; she obeyed, and taking the letter with her, presented it to the earl on her entrance with a

timid blush; he thanked her for her confidence, read it attentively, folded it up, and in returning it, said, "I cannot, my dear, sufficiently admire Mrs. Emerson's strength of understanding and clearness of judgment; I regret," he added, with a sigh, and a softened expression of countenance, "that I am not personally acquainted with her, for her sentiments and writing are so like those of the mother of my Alexander." These appeals to the feelings of Cordelia did not fail to make their way to her heart, and to work there in the way the earl has wished; he resumed: "another point of excellence in your friend, is her charming candour; though she expresses herself in such strong, and, I am most ready to allow, such proper terms on the subject of Lochcarron's behaviour to you, she is yet willing to do him every justice; and from what her penetrating mind discovered in him on the evening you met at St. Alban's, is convinced that he possesses those qualities of the head and heart, on which alone the basis of an estimable character can rest, and which his partial father will venture to prophecy, he will in after-life display."

Cordelia had no sort of inclination to doubt the earl's prognosticating powers, but she was timidly and sweetly silent; his lordship next proceeded, in pursuance of his former promise, to develop as much of the plan of her journey as it was necessary to unfold at once; this was Tuesday, and Mrs. Brooks, the earl said, would be at Dunstable the following day, where she would be met by a brother of Philipson, a highly respectable man, in whom he could place every confidence; "For," pursued Lord Dunotter, "it occurred to me on reflection, that my arms and liveries, and Philipson himself, were all so well known at the inns on the different roads, that to send him to escort Mrs. Brooks in one of my carriages would excite observation, and give publicity where every thing depended on privacy, secrecy, and passing unnoticed; David Philipson," proceeded the earl, "will see Mrs. Brooks safe to Egham, and leaving her there, return to Holleyfield, and attend you, the next morning, to the same place; I am most reluctant to hurry you so, my love, but it cannot be avoided; you will reach Egham in time for the coach which passes to Poole, in which it shall be my care that places shall be secured before it leaves London, for Mrs. Brooks and Mrs. — now, my Cordelia, for your travelling name!" Cordelia, to whom the idea of passing by a fictitious appellation had never occurred, trembled and hesitated; Lord Dunotter read her emotions in her countenance, "It must be, my love," he said, "you cannot be addressed as Lady Lochcarron." The propriety of this she could not controvert, and after a short pause, said, "Then I must be called what you please, my lord" "Then you shall be Mrs. Beaumont," he replied, smiling; and proceeded to say, "it would make me infinitely more easy if David Philipson could attend you through the journey; but he is so well known to Alexander that it would destroy all; for if he had notice of your approach, he would, perhaps, evade you." Poor Cordelia started at this picture of what she might expect to encounter, and the earl made haste to add, "every thing depends, in the first instance, on the influence of Caroline's letter; I shall write to Lochcarron, inclosing it, and when you reach Poole, Mrs. Brooks will be your ambassador, and deliver it only to himself; certain I am it will bring about all we wish—could I for a moment believe otherwise, dear as my only child is to my heart, I could throw him from it for ever." Cordelia next asked the earl what method she should pursue to elude the suspicions of Lady Dunotter, and yet account satisfactorily to her ladyship for her departure; "I will instruct you in proper time, my dear," he replied, smiling; "but leave me for the present; Lady Dunotter will suppose we are hatching a plot, we are so much together; go to your own apartment, and arrange your travelling dress; contrive it

so as to hide that sweet face as much as possible.—Yet another troublesome task remains—when will my Cordelia be exempt from trouble? such little articles of apparel, as you may think absolutely necessary during your short residence in Dorsetshire, David had better take with him to-morrow, and consign them to the care of Mrs. Brooks; dismiss your troublesome, prying attendant, until you put what you want together; Philipson himself shall come for them, and pack them in my apartment.” Cordelia, thus instructed, had nothing to do but to obey; she pinned together a few changes of linen, and a couple of morning gowns, which she gave to the charge of Philipson, and employed the rest of the evening, when not with Lady Dunotter, in arranging her papers, locking up some, burning more, and securing others in a pocket-book to take with her. Cordelia began to think she should have a narrow and fortunate escape by setting off on Thursday morning, for the preparations making seemed to indicate that the party invited to dinner on Saturday was far from a small one; and she even had reason to think that the Hootsides and the Addingtons were amongst the number, for the purpose, no doubt, of letting them see that Lady Dunotter was, and would remain, mistress of Holleyfield: as to Lord Dunotter, he seemed already to be considered as defunct; and Cordelia also thought—but the thought was painful—that Mr. Crompton was looking forwards to the time when Lady Dunotter, released from her present engagements by the death of her lord, might permit him to become a candidate for her hand.

The following day wore over unmarked by any particular event; in the evening, while Cordelia was sitting with Lord Dunotter, Philipson came in with the pleasing intelligence that his brother was returned from escorting Mrs. Brooks, who was now at Egham, reposing after the fatigue of her journey, and acquiring strength for that of the following day; she had charged him with a very affectionate letter for Lady Lochcarron; and Lord Dunotter, when he read it, felt so perfectly convinced of her suitability as a companion for his daughter on her excursion, that it removed a weight of anxiety from his bosom. Lady Dunotter soon after came in, and after the interchange of a few sentences, the earl said, “I am glad you are come, my dear, that you may influence, and, if that will not do, command, this obstinate girl of ours; she has just got a letter from her friend, Mrs. Elderson—” (purposely pronouncing the name wrong, that he might seem to know very little of their concerns) to say, that a joint friend of theirs will be, at this time, on a visit near Egham—” here the earl paused long enough for the countess to *look*, but not to *speak* an inquiry, and then resumed, “the dear little flatterer is so anxiously solicitous about me, that I cannot persuade her to take this short excursion to see her friend; I was going to send her to you, Harriet, that you might persuade her, for I really think the change of scene for a few days would do her good.” Cordelia, in much trepidation at the ready duplicity of Lord Dunotter, and fluctuating between a conviction of what was expedient, and a consciousness of what was right, had a degree of emotion on her countenance, which Lady Dunotter, mistaking its cause, attributed to an unwillingness to leave Lord Dunotter in his present state of health; her ladyship did not over well like this strength of attachment between her lord and his daughter-in-law—it did not augur very favourably for her schemes, and, of course, was one reason why she rather inclined that Cordelia should go, that they might at least be separated for a while; true, she had wished Lady Lochcarron to grace the party when Capt. Thornton was present on Saturday, as that would look like an acquiescence in their plans; but it seemed

very likely that if she remained at Holleyfield, she would persist in staying with Lord Dunotter, in which case it would be better that she were really and ostensibly absent, than cooped up in the house, and concealed by the common phrase, "Not at home:" however, her ladyship, before she exerted any power of persuasion in the way she was required to do, asked who the lady was whom Mrs. Emerson wished her to visit. Cordelia opened her lips, but her hesitation would have betrayed her, had not Lord Dunotter promptly replied to his lady, while he held out a flower which he had in his hand to draw off her attention— "A Mrs. Brooks, staying with a Mrs. Beaumont, are not those the names, Delia? some thirteenth cousins, I suppose." "I know nothing of her maternal relations," replied her ladyship, somewhat contemptuously. Cordelia felt her situation too painful; "Would you advise me to go, mamma?" she said timidly raising her eyes; artful as Lady Dunotter was, she had not, in this instance, been able to penetrate the designs of her spouse; but believing what she had been told, she, after a short hesitation, answered, "Yes, I think you had better go, but not till after Saturday." Cordelia felt she must speak, and with all the firmness of voice and manner she could assume, replied, "In that case I might as well not go, for Mrs. Brooks will probably have left Egham before Monday." "You must start in the morning, I think, my dear," said the earl, "the sooner you go, the sooner you will be back to me." "I am sure I shall earnestly desire to be back, my lord," said Cordelia, and the native eloquence of truth spoke in her look and voice, for she did desire to return, though not unaccompanied. Lord Dunotter thought it best to close the conversation, and complaining of fatigue, now his usual resource on such occasions, he pressed his daughter to take a glass of wine, and dismissed her to her rest, telling her aloud, that Philipson would arrange every thing for the journey, and see her safe to Egham; not that he intended any such thing; the brother of Philipson was to be Lady Lochcarron's attendant, but this he wished, at all events, to conceal from Lady Dunotter; in waiting upon Cordelia to the door, a remnant of fine old manners which the earl never omitted, he whispered her, "Do not let your insolent domestic know that you intend any thing beyond your usual drive in the morning, and when you take leave of Lady Dunotter, say you have taken no servant, as your friend's attendant will do for both."

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY Lochcarron rose in the morning after a nearly sleepless night, rendered so by anxious reflections on the step she was about to take, and the consequences which might attend it; her first care was to send Lucy on a plausible errand about two miles off; her next, to disguise herself as much as possible; and this, after a little study, and trying different articles of dress, she effected so well, that Lord Dunotter himself was surprised at the apparent change: she put on a dark habit, and not having worn a riding-dress since the alteration in her person which the fever effected, the contrast was more striking; her own hair was not yet sufficiently grown to dispense with a wig, and she purposely chose one considerably darker than her beautiful tresses; a very large straw bonnet nearly concealed her face from observation, and a veil of green crape was so disposed, as to shade it entirely when occasion required.

Thus equipped, and having finished every little arrangement which depended on herself, she devoutly implored a blessing on her enterprise, and then went to Lady Dunotter's apartment to bid her adieu: to the great joy of Cordelia, the room was so darkened by the curtains, that the countess could not see enough of the costume she had adopted, to animadvert upon it; she kissed her cheek, cautioned her to be careful of herself, and to return as soon as possible; Cordelia responded an affirmative to both, and turned towards the room where Lord Dunotter usually sat, and where it had been so long her self-imposed, but welcome task to preside at his morning meal, and to cheer and sooth his drooping spirits: a sad presentiment seemed to swell at her heart, and to whisper that she should return to Holleyfield no more, or return with hope extinct, and with peace completely wrecked and broken, and that before that period, the eyes of Lord Dunotter would be closed for ever on this world; her hand trembled as she placed it on the lock—she paused a moment, and heard a deep sigh within; this circumstance augmented the tremor of her frame, and she was nearly yielding to that nervous weakness which grows by indulgence, but determined to act as duty required, she put up a mental petition for fortitude, and opened the door: the earl was seated at a table, on which were placed writing materials; a long epistle, which he seemed to have just finished, lay before him; and in his hand was the letter of Caroline Borham, which was to be the medium of peace with his son. His still fine, but faded, features wore an expression of deep concern as his pensive eye followed the characters; and Cordelia doubted not that the sigh she had heard, had been wrung from his bosom, as he thought of the dying hand which had traced them: when Cordelia entered, he looked up, and that beam of joy shone on his face which ever welcomed her approach; after the wonted salutation of the morning, he said, "I have been writing to Alexander—and have now nothing to do but to fold my packet—the chaise will be here in half an hour—for all the reasons I gave you the other day, I think it best you should travel in a hack—it will not occur to Lady Dunotter to inquire how you went—Philipson will attend you the first two miles, and then consign you to the care of his brother, who, I am well aware, will discharge his precious trust with a respectful attention, that will satisfy even my anxious solicitude." He then noticed her dress, and expressed his approbation of it; Cordelia, who saw that Lord Dunotter was more than usually dejected, though he made an effort to appear otherwise, strove to seem cheerful,

and at once to dissipate the earl's pensiveness, and conceal her own;—"I have done my best at masquerading," she said, with a smile, "but I think it would have been better still to have borrowed the travelling habiliments of Lady Melissa Mannark, in which she came to Holleyfield—I dare say I have described them to your lordship more than once." Lord Dunotter made a faint attempt to return her smile; "At all events, I cannot allow my Cordelia to adopt them," he said, "lest they should impart any of their oblivious qualities, and cause my child to forget Holleyfield." "That can never be, my lord," said Cordelia, as she took her seat at the breakfast-table, and glanced her eyes round on every object which they were now leaving, perhaps never to behold them more, though again she endeavoured to reason herself into a conviction, that nothing existed to ground such an idea upon; again she looked earnestly at Lord Dunotter, and thought she had never seen him look so ill; he took scarcely any breakfast, but tried to conceal his want of appetite by busying himself in making the last arrangements for Cordelia's departure; glancing his eye on the letters, he said, "Poor Caroline is now in the last stage, Delia; my sister tells me she cannot live a fortnight." Lady Lochcarron uttered an ejaculation of pity, but thought it best to make no comment; Philipson came in to announce the carriage, and retired immediately: the eyes of Cordelia and Lord Dunotter were instinctively turned towards each other, but neither spoke; Cordelia soon repelled the feeling which induced her to hesitate, and rose from her seat; the earl rose too; he had by this time sealed the packet with a blank seal, and put it into her hands with an expressive look, but spoke not; she received it in silence, with her eyes bent downwards; the earl next presented her with a pocket-book; "Your lordship's kind attention leaves me nothing to ask," she said, "but really I do not want money—I happen to be rich at present, and have amply sufficient for my journey." Lord Dunotter faintly smiled; "You are a novice in travelling, my dear," he said, "and do not know what unavoidable, and sometimes unforeseen expenses attend it;" he continued to detain one of her hands, and regarded her with a look of speaking tenderness: Cordelia suffered that look, if the mode of expression may be allowed, until her eyes filled with tears; Lord Dunotter felt their thrilling influence, and made an effort to conclude the painful scene; with the arm which remained to him he held her to his heart, and kissed her cheek with fond affection; "Go now, my dearest child," he said, "and may every blessing attend you and prosper you;—I trust in heaven that you are destined to be the ornament and the restorer of my family; for I feel the deepest conviction that you are the best gift Providence could have bestowed on my Alexander; and that when he is once awakened to a consciousness of your inestimable worth, the whole of his future life will be devoted to express his gratitude to—" The voice of the earl began to falter, and fearing to distress Cordelia, he paused—her gentle nature was subdued, and as she hung on Lord Dunotter's shoulder, she implored him to be careful of his health, and promised to write frequently while absent; the earl breathed every assurance that could calm her fears, and, making the signal to Philipson, led her to the outer door of the anteroom, and giving her hand the parting pressure, hastily turned away; she drew her veil over her face, and, assisted by Philipson, got into the chaise; he followed, and the driver putting his horses in motion, they set off at a brisk pace.

It was a beautiful morning in March, and the clearness of the weather displayed to great advantage every charm which the country presents at that season; but not all the enchanting scenery which the environs of Windsor displays, could win Cordelia from the

thoughts of home, or make her for a moment forgetful of Lord Dunotter, and of the weak state he was in; she earnestly questioned Philipson as to his opinion, and he, with a laudable regard for her peace, pretended to think more lightly of it than he did in reality.

At the second mile stone on the road, Philipson resigned his place to his brother, and returned to Holleyfield, charged from Cordelia with every kind remembrance to Lord Dunotter, and a thousand injunctions to be careful of his health.

She found her new travelling companion very intelligent and agreeable; he had been tutor in a very worthy family, and was of genteel manners, respectful, and attentive; with her spirits thus supported, the journey seemed short, and they reached Egham about three o'clock; the meeting between Cordelia and Mrs. Brooks was truly joyful and affectionate, for the latter loved the former as her own child; but she declared that she saw so striking an alteration in her since last they parted, that she could not possibly have known her: they had much to say, and many points to settle; dinner was served, and time wore over very pleasantly: as the gloom of evening began to fall, Cordelia felt a sensation of dismay, which though she endeavoured to combat, she could not altogether repel: a visit in the neighbourhood of her residence had hitherto been the utmost extent of her travels in the dark, and she could not resist a feeling nearly allied to fear, as she contemplated in idea the prospect of passing the night in a carriage, where all but Mrs. Brooks were perfect strangers: the coach reached the inn a little before ten, and as evils and inconveniencies are often more formidable in the perspective, than the reality, she went to take her seat with more cheerfulness than she had expected to muster: she saw by the lights which surrounded her, that her fellow-travellers were two gentlemen, the elder about sixty, upright, spruce, and clean, with a drab coat, an old-fashioned hat, and a face full of intelligence; the younger, who the ladies afterwards found was nephew to the other, was about six-and-twenty, by no means remarkable for beauty, with enough of affectation to make him ungraceful, and enough of fashion to make him a fop.

In getting into the coach, Mrs. Brooks, with a sort of instinctive respect, was yielding place to Lady Lochcarron, but the latter, with ready presence of mind, stepped back, saying, "You had best be seated first, aunt;" but this trifling incident was a hint which awakened the curiosity of Mr. Jefferson, the younger gentleman; he was

"Sly, observant, still:"

and clearly saw, that the action implied deference on one side, and concealment on the other: with ready politeness he offered his hand first to Mrs. Brooks, and then to Cordelia, and giving place to Mr. Webster, the other gentleman, was himself placed opposite to Lady Lochcarron, "It is rather cold this evening, ladies," said Jefferson, as a first introduction, both assented with monosyllables; and Webster, said, "Not quite so cold as it was yesterday evening, John;"—"Yes it is," responded the nephew, a pettish mode of contradiction, which he was in the constant habit of using, especially towards his indulgent uncle. "A fine night for astrological observations," said Webster, casting his eyes upwards from the windows of the coach, "I regret that I am absent from my apparatus—the dragon's head—" "Pray, uncle," said Jefferson, "don't use technical

terms to the ladies—it is so pedantic.” “Pedantry, John, can only be associated with ignorance;—I may venture to say, that I understand a little astronomy as well as Herschel himself.” Webster took care, by his arch and humorous way of uttering these words, that they should not be mistaken for an explosion of vanity; Jefferson was about to say something, when a sudden jolt of the carriage called forth a slight exclamation from every one present, and an observation from Webster about turnpike roads, which finding a rejoinder from Mrs. Brooks, who detailed some incidents of her journey from Leeds, it led to a long dissertation, in which Mrs. Brooks talked so much about the woollen manufactories of Yorkshire; Mr. Webster such a great deal about Southdown and Cotswold sheep, fairs and markets, sheepshearing and fleeces; and Jefferson made such long harangues about monopolies, and promoting trade in one country to destroy it in another, that Lady Lochcarron supposed, if she remained quite silent, she would either be deemed by her companions, haughty and unsocial, or rustically ignorant; compelled then to join in the conversation, she did so with great sweetness, but with such decided superiority, that her male auditors were entranced in astonishment: so long the constant companion of Lord Dunotter, and imbibing from him the clearest and more perfect information on every subject, not only could she detail the essence of what had been done in this country to improve the quality of wool, by both public societies and private individuals, during the last thirty years, but could give equal elucidation to the code of sheep-laws in Spain, and the modes which, in other countries, the same end is sought to be attained: “Upon my word, young lady,” said Webster, “your knowledge of the subject would enlighten the Board of Agriculture.” While Jefferson wondered, and revolved, and screwed up his mind until he decided with himself, that Cordelia must be a spy employed by the court of Spain, to ascertain the state of matters connected with the woollen manufactures in England, and that she was now going over to the continent with a packet of facts on the subject;

“Now black and deep the night began to fall.”

Mrs. Brooks seemed to feel its power, to become more silent, and to betray symptoms of drowsiness; Cordelia, sweetly and gently attentive, ceased to converse; Mr. Webster yielded to the influence of Morpheus; and Lady Lochcarron was left to her own meditations, and Mr. Jefferson to note observations, make discoveries, and profit by them when he had done; three points on which he piqued himself highly: that there was some mystery attached to his fair fellow-traveller opposite, was a position he had assumed at their first entrance into the coach, and this was confirmed when they began to converse, by the decided superiority of her conversation and manners; but as he did not conceive it possible that a female could possess information either of the sort, or to the extent that Cordelia had this night displayed, he drew the delectable conclusion that she must, in some way or other, be concerned in a contraband wool trade; and setting it down as a maxim, that they who espouse evil of one sort as a profession, will not shrink from associating other faults with it; he inferred that neither Mrs. Brooks nor Mrs. Beaumont, as he heard each style the other, were persons in the first class of respectability: there is nothing more easy than to be mistaken, and nothing more common than to act under the influence of mistake: Mr. Jefferson resolved to know whether or not his conjectures were right, endeavoured to establish a whispering conversation with Cordelia, commencing in

a strain of common-place gallantry, too equivocal to be absolutely resented, but which, fortunately for Cordelia, the elevated sphere of life in which she had always moved, had not fitted her to comprehend; yet she had an indefinite feeling that it was not perfectly right, which, added to her own quick sense of propriety, would not, under the existing circumstances of time and place, allow her entering into discourse with a stranger, and prompted her to say briefly, yet politely, that “She begged permission to decline all conversation at that hour.” Jefferson, awed by the imposing dignity of her manner, was silent, and wished impatiently for morning, that he might have a more perfect view of the face which, though seen only in the gloom of evening, he had yet seen enough to know was very beautiful.

Cordelia, alike indifferent to what he either thought or wished, employed the hours of darkness and silence in mental wanderings back to Holleyfield and Lord Dunotter, and in solicitous anticipations of her approaching meeting with her fugitive lord, to whom she believed herself drawing nearer every moment; but she felt it a prospect which it was impossible to contemplate with steadiness, and mentally praying, that when the moment of trial came, she might be endowed with fortitude to support it; she softly clasped Mrs. Brook’s arm, and tried, like her companions, to lose her anxieties in the sweet forgetfulness of repose: but it was long, very long, before she could obtain that blessing, and even then it was so light that it fled before the most trifling motion; the noise of entering Winchester completely dispelled the drowsiness of all parties, and though the faint strokes of the dawn were scarcely visible, Webster could see very well to talk, and Jefferson to contradict: “This is a very ancient city,” said the former; “it was the Venta Belgarum of the Romans, the Caer Gwent of the Britons, and Wintsceaster of the Saxons”—“No,” interrupted his nephew, “it was the Wittanceaster.” “I say it was Wintsceaster,” maintained the other, stoutly; this dispute, carried on with equal pertinacity on both sides, lasted all the way to Southampton, greatly to the amusement, if not the edification of Mrs. Brooks, who enjoyed the peculiarities of her fellow-travellers: as to Cordelia, she was now so occupied with contemplating the noble prospect without, that she regarded nothing that passed within the vehicle: the sun was rising in splendour, its rays sparkling on the blue waves of the channel, and illuminating its rocky and romantic shores; the white fleeces of the innumerable flocks pastured on the downs, contrasted finely with the varied tints of green, in which the season had clothed the surrounding country; and all of hill, dale, and verdure, that could diversify and adorn the landscape was there. Mr. Webster observing how much Cordelia was charmed with the surrounding scenery, with great good-nature, pointed out its most striking beauties, and gave her much local information, in which she felt interested, and for which she was grateful: “We will put down the window, if you please, madam,” said he, “and enjoy the morning air, there is nothing so salubrious, and so bracing as fresh air—I say fresh.” “The wind comes on that side, and will annoy the ladies,” said Jefferson; both ladies felt themselves called upon to say, “Not at all,” and, with Cordelia at least, the assertion was truth, for she thought the air pleasant and reviving.

Mrs. Brooks, gifted with an active and inquiring mind, and having no object in perspective to urge her forwards, regretted that she could not spare time to examine every object worthy of notice at the different towns they passed through: at Southampton, had no obstacle intervened, she would gladly have lingered a day or two, to explore the

vestiges of Roman antiquity in the vicinity, which Webster described with great justness and precision. Cordelia certainly had some share of that curiosity inherent in the children of Eve, but, at present, had all the antiquities in Europe been open to her view, her mind was too much occupied to have attended to any of them; her every feeling, faculty, and idea were now concentrated in Lord Lochcarron; the air breathed but of him; every sound seemed his voice; and every form which her clear vision beheld through the distant perspective, if moulded with any degree of elegance, her fluttering heart sighed to hail as its lord.

Jefferson, sly and subtle, was ever in the practice of tracing by stolen glances and veiled observation, the workings of the passions on the human countenance, inferring from thence what was passing in the mind, and from such premises forming his estimate of individual character; he was too much charmed with Cordelia's lovely face; to need any other incitement to watch her motions: as they drew near Poole, he perceived that her anxious eye searched every carriage which met theirs, and that when any gentleman passed quickly on horseback, a repressed start and flushed cheek proclaimed an interest which, in so young a female, seemed either indecorous or mysterious; "And yet," thought Jefferson to himself, "it cannot be admiration which she seeks, for she evidently shrinks and hides her face from the gaze of the passing stranger; no, her contraband occupation makes her fear pursuit and detection, but I shall have my eye upon her when we get to Poole."

On reaching the inn, the two gentlemen took leave with great politeness; but Jefferson kept his resolution, and took measures to inform himself of all Cordelia's motions. Mrs. Brooks would gladly have persuaded Lady Lochcarron to retire immediately to bed, to refresh herself after the unusual fatigue of travelling all night; but she was too anxious to fulfil the task assigned her, to execute the important mission which brought her to Poole, to think of any indulgence which had only self for its object; and after taking some slight refreshment, and devoting a short time to the toilet, Cordelia, with a countenance which expressed more than language can utter, placed in Mrs. Brooks's hands that packet on which she believed the fate of her future life depended; "And, oh! my dearest, best friend," she said, with an imploring look, "if you indeed find that I—I have no hold of his affections, no hope to rest upon—in mercy shelter me from the mortification of having it known that I am here, and be yourself the ostensible bearer of the letters." Mrs. Brooks promised every thing that was calculated to quiet a sensitive mind, so delicately and peculiarly situate as was that of Cordelia, and having seen her in some degree tranquillized, set out on her embassy, attended by a little boy as a guide to show her Mrs. Garland's house; when within sight of the door, she rewarded him for his trouble, dismissed him, and then knocked; a female servant answered the summons, who, when Mrs. Brooks inquired "if Mr. Champion lodged there?" replied, eyeing the inquisitor, and as if somewhat surprised at the inquiry, "Mr. Champion! he left on Wednesday." The surprise was so sudden and unexpected, and the disappointment she anticipated for Cordelia so great, that she felt quite unwilling, and nearly unable, to believe what she heard, and asked the girl if she was certain that Mr. Champion had left Poole? but the first agitation of her spirits beginning to subside, she reflected that it would be more proper to make inquiry of the mistress of the house, than thus to question

a servant; and without attending to the girl's answer, she requested to speak with Mrs. Garland, and was shown into a little parlour, where the first object she beheld was Mr. Jefferson, seated with all the composure of a person at home, conversing with the mistress of the house, a female about thirty, with nothing peculiarly attractive or forbidding in either her person or manners: Mrs. Brooks felt extremely reluctant to making her inquiries before Jefferson, but as he and Mrs. Garland seemed to be on a quite familiar footing, she felt it would be extremely imprudent to ask a private audience, and thus make an appearance of mystery which could serve no end but to excite suspicion: having therefore taken possession of the seat which Jefferson officiously placed for her, and replied to all those inquiries after her health and that of Cordelia, which, though he had parted from them so lately, and now saw Mrs. Brooks perfectly well, he thought it would be a high breach of politeness to omit making, she came at once to the point, and begged Mrs. Garland would inform her, if she knew, what route Mr. Campion had taken: now it so happened, that this mysterious Mr. Campion had been the subject of conversation between Mrs. Garland and Mr. Jefferson, at the moment of Mrs. Brooks's entrance; during the fortnight that Mr. Campion, as he chose to call himself, had been resident at Poole, the grace of his person, the united dignity and sweetness of his manners, his wealth, which was evident in his simple yet elegant mode of living, and the very superior servant who attended him, were circumstances which altogether created around him such a halo of interest, as attracted all the gossips of the place: from Harris, Lord Lochcarron's valet, they vainly tried to extract information, he was proof against all their modes of wheedling and fishing, both direct and indirect, round-about and straight forward; all the reply they could ever obtain was a sly smile, and "Mr. Campion is a gentlemen from France." Thus foiled, they substituted suppositions for facts, and the young nobleman was alternately a Russian prince, a distinguished French exile, and a South American patriot chief; all this, and much more, was detailed by Mrs. Garland to her friend Jefferson on his arrival; while he, in his turn, gave the history of the journey home in company with the fair wool-smuggler, for such he persisted in supposing Cordelia; Jefferson's natural inquiry was, "What had become of this wonderful man? whither had he gone when he left Poole? and how did he travel?" "He went in a postchaise from Poole to Lyme," was the reply: they were still comparing notes, and commenting on the singular coincidence that each should have seen such a paragon as Mrs. Garland described Lord Lochcarron, and Jefferson Cordelia to be, when Mrs. Brooks entered, and the ceremonies already detailed took place: Mrs. Garland, though she well knew the route her late lodger had taken, did not choose to reply directly to Mrs. Brooks's question, for two reasons, one of which was, that Jefferson's absurd suppositions about Cordelia had prejudiced her mind against Mrs. Brooks—and first impressions either to the advantage or disadvantage of a party are sometimes very strong—the other reason was that Harris's pertinacious silence on his lord's—or, as she supposed—his master's subject, was so offensive to Mrs. Garland, that she did not choose to own any knowledge of their affairs; she only replied, "That she really could not say what route he had taken; he came from Southampton, and might very likely be gone back there:" such was the answer with which Mrs. Brooks was compelled to depart, for Jefferson, though he had just heard a different story from Mrs. Garland, had his reasons for not contradicting her in her own house.

Cordelia, trembling with the alternatives of hope and fear, anxiously waited the return of her friend; the deep interest she felt in the subject quickened her power of penetration, and when Mrs. Brooks entered, she read in her countenance the failure of her mission: a lesser evil is nearly unfelt by a mind which has apprehended a greater, and when Lady Lochcarron learned that her lord was no longer at Poole, the chance of yet attaining the object of her pilgrimage, made the scale still preponderate on the side of hope; yet the probability there seemed that he might have made up his mind to return to the continent, made her anxious to pursue, and, if possible, overtake him before he crossed the water: her ladyship and Mrs. Brooks, on this occasion, presented a striking contrast of the calm deliberation of age, and the ardent impatience of youth; the latter was for setting up their rest at Poole until they should write to, and hear from, Lord Dunotter; and then, if sanctioned by his approbation, going back to Southampton, and, if necessary, over to the continent. Cordelia could see no possible good in thus sauntering away time, and perhaps losing the chance of effecting what she came about; her plan was to order a postchaise and return to Southampton that evening, for she was already disgusted with travelling in mail and stage coaches; it subjected her to the chance of discovery, and to the intrusion of society not pleasant in every respect, facts which Mrs. Brooks did not attempt to controvert, but she edged in a hint about the superior safety of the coaches; her young friend, in reply, observed, that the distance was so short they might easily reach Southampton before dark, if they started immediately after an early dinner, and this by the way, though she did not say so, she remained at Poole for on Mrs. Brooks's account, not on her own; for now that she was fairly in for the stake of winning or losing Lord Lochcarron for life, she was reluctant to waste a moment which was not employed in the pursuit of that great object.

“This is a very singularly situated place,” observed Mrs. Brooks, while their fowl was preparing; “it is quite a peninsula.” Cordelia assented to the justness of the remark, but felt no interest about a place which her lord no longer inhabited, and was only anxious to leave it. They had finished dinner, and were chatting over their little dessert, when the waiter announced, “a gentleman;” oh! what did not Cordelia's fluttering heart anticipate! who but its lord and master could possibly inquire for her? Mrs. Brooks took on herself to order the gentleman to be shown in; it was a moment of anxiety beyond description—the door opened—and Mr. Jefferson entered; Cordelia, who had risen, mechanically reseated herself, but in the next moment her native politeness prompted her to rise again, and however disappointed, and however surprised at Jefferson's intrusion she might feel, to pay him the customary compliment due to a stranger on his entrance; he bowed ceremonially to both ladies, accepted the seat offered to him by Mrs. Brooks, and addressing himself to her, hastened to explain the cause of his coming, by saying, that he could not avoid hearing her inquire of Mrs. Garland, after a Mr. Campion, who that lady had said she thought he might be gone to Southampton; but by the merest accident in the world, he had just now seen a person who by chance mentioned having seen Mr. Campion when at Poole, and knew that when he left that place he went to Lyme, and not to Southampton, as Mrs. Garland had supposed.

This intelligence was too important to be neglected, and too welcome to Cordelia to be received without thanks; she paid them in her sweet and graceful way, and pressed

Mr. Jefferson to take some wine and fruit, an invitation which he did not need to be repeated; he further informed the ladies that they would hear of their friend at the George at Lyme, and thither Cordelia resolved, in her own mind, immediately to proceed, though marvelling much why Jefferson, quite a stranger, had taken so much trouble; the fact was, that Jefferson, prompted by curiosity, after he left Mrs. Garland, had inquired at the inn, from whence, as she told him, Mr. Campion had the chaise which took him to Lyme, and on conversing with the post-boy, heard enough to make him change his belief, that his fair fellow-travellers and their connexions were wool-smugglers; for the boy affirmed positively, that he had heard the gentleman's valet call his master "My lord;" this was enough to determine Jefferson, who was at all times a worshipper of rank, to atone by all means in his power to Cordelia, for the injustice his hastily-formed supposition had done her; for though he now only exchanged it for one equally degrading in the eye of mortality—namely, that she was the *chere amie* of this nobleman, who was passing by the name of Campion, he shrewdly considered that people of rank and their favourites have it in their power to acknowledge and return little civilities, and as he was endeavouring to walk upwards in life by the rugged path of the law, he had taken all this pains to oblige, in hope that the obligation would not go unrewarded.

While Jefferson sipped his wine, he and Mrs. Brooks entered into conversation on the slight local topics of the day; Cordelia every now and then joined in, but impatient to pursue her journey, and aware that the chaise must now be ready, she hoped at every pause that Jefferson would take his departure, but she hoped in vain; for when those subjects were exhausted, Mrs. Brooks asked "if Poole was an incorporated town?" "Bless me," thought Cordelia, "what has Mrs. Brooks to do with the corporation of Poole!" Jefferson replied in the affirmative, and entered into a dissertation statistical and historical concerning the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses of Poole; the privileges granted them by Queen Elizabeth, and all the advantages and disadvantages pertaining to them. Cordelia ceased to talk, but compelled herself to wear the appearance of listening, and hoped her suspense would be ended with this subject; but she again hoped in vain, for her curious friend next reverted to the trade of the town, its exports and imports; "How surprising that she should care about such matters, in a place which she may very probably never see again," thought Lady Lochcarron, and again she found herself doomed to listen to a long harangue, which had for its objects pickled fish, Purbeck stones, and numberless other articles. "Now," thought Cordelia, when they paused again, "they will certainly be done," but vain was the expectation; from the town they travelled round the environs, ascended every eminence, discussed every prospect, and talked about Brownsea castle and island, which Jefferson described until Mrs. Brooks seemed quite charmed, and to wish for nothing so much as to view them. Cordelia's last gleam of patience expired, and she was in the very act of rising to pull the bell with the intention of saying that the chaise would be wanted the next stage to Lyme, not Southampton, hoping it would be a hint to Jefferson to take his departure; but as it happened, he saved the credit of her politeness by looking at his watch; he seemed himself surprised at the length of his stay, and with much ceremony made his parting bow; Mrs. Brooks, delighted with the local information he had given her, took leave of him with frank cordiality; and Cordelia, delighted that he was going, bade him a very gracious adieu; and then without regarding the advanced time of day, or her own wearied frame, harassed with such

unusual exertion, she got into the chaise with her companion and took the route which she was led to believe was that of her lord; his keeping the sea-coast seemed to indicate an intention of returning to the continent, and rendered her doubly anxious to come up with him in time.

END OF VOLUME II.