

HONORIA SOMMERVILLE:

A

NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.

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The hues of bliss more brightly glow
Chasten'd by sabler tints of woe,
And blended form with artful strife
The strength and harmony of life.

GRAY.

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CHAP. XII.

THE first visit our heroine paid after her return, was to Mrs. Markham, who as well as Miss Onslow, gently chid her for her long absence. In excuse she told them how much she had been engaged with Mrs. Campbell's friends, and gave them a short account of their late expedition, though without mentioning those particulars, that would have rendered her narrative more amusing, and have been strictly consistent with truth, though not with friendship. She heard with great regret she should soon lose this amiable family. Mrs. Markham told her, her son Ashbourn's health being perfectly re-established, he proposed passing some time in Paris with his family, and had written to Miss Onslow's guardian to beg she might meet them there: though so long inexorable, he thought proper to grant this request, and Harry Ashbourn was come to fetch her; but as Mr. Bridges chose to see her before she went, Mrs. Markham was the following week to accompany her to London. They both requested our heroine to call on them as often as possible during their stay, which she readily promised. Before she left them, a card arrived from Mrs. Campbell, to invite them to a *converzatione*; this Mrs. Markham declined, but Miss Onslow accepted it.

Immediately on her return, Honoria was informed this party was made at Mr. Hunter's desire, who wished for some part of Mrs. Campbell's philosophical treatise, to be read to two gentlemen of his acquaintance; and in compliment to them, she had invited several of her friends to meet them, and then was to have the book introduced as it were by chance. This scheme pleased her highly; she had no fears of its reception, for in an author, modesty and vanity are incompatible qualities, and she had too much of the latter in her composition to admit one grain of the former. She entreated Honoria to attend for the next three days steadily to her pen; this she complied with so strictly, that Mrs. Campbell was greatly pleased.

By seven on the appointed evening the company were all assembled in Mrs. Campbell's drawing-room, consisting of the Wintertons and their guests; Emily Onslow, Mr. Hunter, and his two friends; Mr. Dixon, and Counsellor Milford; two other gentlemen and four ladies. If my readers expect in an account of this evening's entertainment, any thing similar to the conversations which may be heard between the members of the Blue-stocking society, they will be extremely disappointed. It has before been observed, that Honoria had sometimes here seen literary people, and those of real learning, taste and refinement; but they were generally among the accidental visitors of the city, and not any of the inhabitants, who were of that common cast of character usually met with in places remote from the metropolis. At first the conversation turned on the most trivial subjects; when an old gentleman in brown, who had hitherto observed a profound silence, thus addressed a young lady on the opposite side of the room. "Well, madam, I found you deep at your studies this morning; pray how do you like the Essay on old Maids? did

it answer your expectations?" "Yes, sir, perfectly: (replied the lady) I was extremely pleased with some part of it; the characters are extremely well drawn, and many of them interesting, and there is certainly a vast deal of wit in the performance, but so intermixed with ridicule, that I must say the author has done all in his power to prevent our sex from living in that solitary state he so ludicrously describes." "I am quite of your opinion," (said the old gentleman). "There is vast learning in the work," (observed Mrs. Campbell, either not hearing or not attending to this speech). "Well, (cried Miss Onslow) that ridicule would never influence me. I will never alter my situation, but remain the blasted tree on the wild common, if I cannot meet with a man from whose general character I may reasonably expect not to be treated with that indifference, and even contempt, I have so often observed among the husbands of my acquaintance." "Miss Onslow's perfections (said Mr. Audley) must ever secure her from both." "Really, Mr. Audley (she replied), I must be very vain indeed, if I could suppose the little merit I possess would exempt me from the fate of the rest of my sex, and alter the nature of yours." "You are very severe on us, madam, (said Mr. Milford), but this is the age for female triumph: the literary attainments of the ladies have given them so much advantage over us, that we scarcely dare make any defence, even when unjustly accused, which I hope is the case at present." This was addressed to no one in particular, but Mrs. Campbell by a bow, shewed she took it to herself.

"Yes, (added Mr. Dixon,) the authors of the Recess and Cecilia, not to mention many others, are a proof of what you assert." Mrs. Campbell, did not at all relish this speech, and coldly replied, "I know little of either; I never look at a novel, and was only tempted to read the Recess, from a hope that it would illustrate history, and was, you may believe, highly disappointed when I found it so strangely deviate from truth, and that instead of adding to my knowledge, it only bewildered my ideas." "Well, (cried Miss Mary Walton, who had not spoken before) I am surprized, Mrs. Campbell, you do not like it. I was never so charmed in my life; tis all in such high style, and about kings and queens, and lords and ladies; and then Leicester and Essex are such sweet fellows!" "Could the author hear you, madam, (said Mr. Milford) she would not be highly pleased by your approbation." "Pooh, pooh, counsellor, (returned Mr. Hedges, half aside) she is a woman of too much sense to regard the criticism of a silly girl, who can call Leicester and Essex pretty fellows." "Really, (said Mrs. Campbell) allow the work what other merit you please, yet will you not confess that the character of Elizabeth is too glorious to be treated with such disrespect?" "Her character, (replied Mr. Dixon) however glorious in other points, was so sullied by cruelty and envy, that she must become an object of disgust and aversion, if we consider the treatment the beautiful and unfortunate Mary received, when she claimed assistance and protection." "You are a partial advocate, (returned Mrs. Campbell, with a look of displeasure) therefore, if you please, we will drop the subject." "Certainly, madam, (said Mr. Dixon) I see it is a disagreeable one to you; permit me however to observe, that my opinion is the general one, for all the world places the two ladies we have mentioned, among the first female writers of the age.

Mrs. Campbell arose hastily, and ringing the bell, asked why the tea was not brought in. The servant then placing the tea table, Honoria offered to make it, and was followed to the other end of the room by Miss Onslow, who desired to sit by her.

Miss Mary Walton then again took the lead. "I always, when I read novels, (said she) love

high life; Lady France's, and Lady Caroline's, and Earls and Marquises. Why the very sound often enlivens a book that has no other merit in the world." "Then, I suppose, (cried Mr. Hedges) you do not like Fielding, or Smollet, or Le Sage?" "Oh no, (exclaimed she) I detest them. I once began Tom Jones, but could scarcely get through half a volume, it was so insupportably vulgar." "Why, indeed, (rejoined Mrs. Campbell) one cannot properly relish that book without understanding Latin; for my own part, the speeches of Partridge afford me more entertainment than any thing else through the whole." "You read Latin then, madam," (said Mr. Milford). "Oh, yes a little, Sir." (she replied, in an affected manner). "Why, Milford, (said Mr. Hunter) did I not tell you?" "I beg your pardon, Hunter, (answered he) I forgot it, but now I recollect perfectly; (and then in a lower voice, said) I flatter myself, madam, after tea we shall be favoured with your translation." She bowed, and the rest of the company joining in the request, the book was sent for and laid on the table. Mr. Hunter took it up, and looking over a few pages, closed it with an expression of admiration; and then thus addressed Mrs. Campbell— "What barbarians must that people be, who can believe women have no souls? you, madam, must have two, I am sure." This speech, absurd as it was, *she* received with a smile of approbation that arose from gratified vanity, but most of the company with a smile of contempt; and Mr. Hedges shaking his head said, "Fie, Mr. Hunter, were I a young man like you, I could have made a more gallant speech than that. I should have told the lady she had two hearts or more." Then going up to the tea table, he addressed our heroine and her friend Emily. "What do you say, young ladies, tell me, do you not care more for your hearts than your souls?" They both smiled, and replied, "I hope not, indeed, Mr. Hedges." "Well, (returned he) are your hearts in your own possessions? if not, I hope you have at least one or two more to supply the places of those you have lost." "Mine, said Miss Onslow, (colouring, but her eyes sparkling with animation and pleasure, the consequence of satisfied recollection) is well pleased with its abode, and wishes for no change." "Ah, that is right, (answered he) and your's, Miss Wentworth?" "Is at rest Sir, disturbed with neither hopes nor fears;" while the tear that stood in her eyes, contradicted the assertion of her tongue. Mr. Hedges could not but observe her emotion, though he appeared not to see it; but turning to Emily, continued to chat with her on indifferent subjects, till the tea table was removed. Mr. Audley then left Miss Winterton, who had been teizing him all the afternoon; and seated himself by our heroine, to whom he paid the most visible attention, to the no little mortification of the deserted Helen.

The book was soon introduced. Mr. Hunter offered to be the reader, and for some time it completely engaged the attention of the company. Mr. Dixon and the Counsellor, who had formed no high idea of it from Mrs. Campbell's conversation and manner, and who were determined to speak their sentiments freely, if they were required; were happy to find they could bestow real praise on it, without deviating from the truth. They were in fact extremely struck with the beauty of the language, though they still thought it a ridiculous undertaking for a woman, and that it was confused and unsatisfactory. Mrs. Campbell was highly gratified by the compliments they paid her, and quite forgot their former rudeness, as she termed it. Yet she was a little hurt on reflecting the praises were in reality due only to Honoria, and regretted that she was present to hear the encomiums bestowed on another, which she must be conscious wholly belonged to herself: she was however comforted by the strict reliance she had on her honour, and soon lost every other consideration, in the pleasure she felt at the applauses of her friends.

But though the language was elegant, the subject was not enough interesting to keep the attention of all the party alive for two hours. Charlotte Audley, and Miss Mary Walton in particular, appeared so weary, that Mr. Hunter, to relieve both them and Mrs. Campbell, who felt no little uneasiness at their indifference, at last closing the book, told the latter he must at that time give up the pleasing employment, though fully sensible he should draw the indignation of the whole company upon himself, but that he had so bad a cold in his head and eyes, that he could read no longer, to do the language the justice it deserved.

Mrs. Campbell bowed, and received the united thanks of the party, for the instruction and amusement she had afforded them; but no one offering to take Mr. Hunter's place, and it being near the time proper to take leave, they all departed, excepting the Wintertons and Audleys: Mr. Hunter, deeply against his inclinations, being obliged to attend his friends to sup with them at the inn. The rest of the evening was spent by them all in a most uncomfortable manner. Mrs. Campbell was disconcerted at that gentleman's leaving them; Helen at her lover's neglect; Honoria at his assiduity: George himself at her coldness, and Miss Winterton's tender resentment: Charlotte at the universal stupidity; and the old Doctor at his daughter's melancholy; though he could not guess the cause, yet it had been visible enough to every one else, as she scarcely spoke at all the whole evening, and kept her eyes, which sparkled with anger, constantly fixed on the cruel swain and the innocent Honoria. They parted earlier than usual, having so little inducement to remain together.

The next morning, before Honoria had quitted her chamber, she was informed Mr. Audley waited to speak with her in the parlour. She immediately hastened down stairs, but how great was her surprize when he thus addressed her?

"My charming Miss Wentworth, forgive this early visit, but I had no other possibility of seeing you, as I must leave C——— this moment with my sister, and could not go without taking leave of you, and wishing you health, and that happiness, which however you prevent all others from enjoying." "What do you mean, Mr. Audley, said Honoria, are you really going?" "I mean, Miss Wentworth, said he, you kill all our sex with hopeless love, and your own with envy. Heaven and earth! we had such a scene last night, but it was all your fault; Helen was in fits two hours; at intervals calling me all the ungrateful wretches and deceitful monsters in the world. By Jove 'twas the second part of Dido and Eneas; and there was the old gentleman swearing and vowing I should not stay another day in his house; that I had trampled on all the laws of hospitality, and seduced the affection of his girl. Yes, upon my soul, he called her his girl; and poor Charlotte stood by, looking like a fool, for Helen would not let her come near her, but raved and stamped like a fury, saying she laughed at her. So I told her to go and pack up her cloaths, and we would be off this morning before the family were up. When madam was a little recovered by the help of hartshorn and burnt feathers, and the deuce knows what, she was carried to her chamber, but not 'till she had told me, she hoped never to behold our ungrateful faces again: but, by all that's good, I believe if I had made the least concession, I should have been restored to favour; for at parting she addressed the two maids who supported her, and who had been present at the whole scene.

"He is faithless, and I am undone;

*Ye that witness the woes I endure,
Let reason instruct you to shun,
What it cannot instruct you to cure.”*

She spoke this in a most pathetic manner, and as they shut the door she waved her hand, and lifting up her eyes, said,

*“Make, oh make the maid he chuses,
Treat his love as he does mine.”*

“I was so petrified with astonishment, that I stood for some moments in the place in which she left me, without knowing where I was. I have now been to order the phaeton, and stolen the present moment to tell you the particulars of this affair, as I doubt not but you will have it represented to you in a very different manner.”

“I am, indeed, (replied Honoria) truly concerned, but give me leave to say, though you accuse me, the fault was originally your own; and if I have been in the least accessory, it was wholly against my inclination: but I must now desire you to conclude your visit, for should Miss Winterton hear you spent the last minutes of your stay in this house, it will encrease her resentment, and I, though innocent, shall probably fall a sacrifice to it.” She then attempted to leave him, but he detained her to request she would permit him to write to her, and honour him with an answer; but this she absolutely denied, declaring that so far from answering them, if he sent any letters they should be returned unopened. He endeavoured to alter this cruel resolution, as he called it, saying, “Do not, dear Miss Wentworth, fulfil the cruel wish of that spiteful old maid:” but in vain; she again insisted on his going immediately, and at length, though unwillingly, he complied, intreating she would sometimes bestow a thought on one who should ever retain her image in his mind.

Honoria, after debating a few minutes on the best method of proceeding, determined to acquaint Mrs. Campbell with every thing that had passed, which she accordingly did at breakfast, and had the satisfaction of receiving her entire approbation of her conduct, at the same time she justly lamented the folly of her friend, and they both agreed Charlotte was very properly served for her thoughtless and ill judged ridicule. Honoria then retired to the study, and began her daily employment; when in half an hour Mrs. Campbell came hastily into the room, saying she had just received a message from Miss Winterton, requesting to see them both, and therefore desired Miss Wentworth to accompany her directly. This hasty summons fluttered her so much, she scarcely knew what she was about; but conscious of no ill, she feared her absence might be construed into a dread of Miss Winterton’s anger, and this determined her to go; closing her book therefore immediately, she prepared to attend Mrs. Campbell.

On their arrival at the Doctor’s, they were shewn into Miss Winterton’s bed-chamber: she was but just risen, and laid negligently on a sofa; she received them with a torrent of tears; but contrary to their expectations, without one reproach or expression of resentment. She told Honoria her heart had felt its death’s wound, but that she had no one to accuse but the faithless Audley. “Why, (cried she) did he ever mention the love he bore me, when he must be sensible of

the natural inconstancy of his heart? and why after beholding your charms, did I ever flatter myself with the hope of retaining his affections?"

In this manner she ran on for near an hour, giving Honoria very little opportunity to disclaim him as a lover; but this was a vain endeavour: Helen could not persuade herself but that George Audley was irresistible where he tried to fascinate; and fully convinced of this, it was impossible to undeceive her. They therefore took leave, promising to call the next day; and our heroine pleased that this affair ended without any of the consequences she expected, little thought another storm was hanging over her head, and ready to burst on her with all its violence.

CHAP. XIII.

WHEN Mrs. Campbell and Miss Wentworth returned home, finding the street-door open, they went up stairs without any notice; but just at the top, were stopped by hearing several voices laughing and talking very loud in the study. Mrs. Campbell soon distinguished Mr. Hunter's, and on entering the room found it was really that gentleman and his two friends, who were come to pay her a morning visit. Mr. Dixon hastily retreated from the writing table, and seated himself by the fire, with the air of a man who has pocketed a bank note. There was indeed a visible embarrassment in all their countenances; Mr. Milford appeared as if suppressing a laugh, and Mr. Hunter endeavoured to draw Mrs. Campbell's attention wholly on himself; but in vain; she saw there was something she could not comprehend, and her first idea was, that one of them had been writing a copy of verses on her, and to discover whether she had guessed right, she turned her eyes to the table, but nothing lying there that confirmed her suspicion, she would have given up the thought, when unfortunately her eyes were attracted by a large folio that was open on the desk; she grew alternately pale and red as she gazed on it with a fixed attention; when, unable any longer to bear the uncertainty, she rose, and going up to it, glanced her eye on the title page, and instantly fainted away.

Honorina, little knowing the cause of her disorder, flew to her assistance. Mr. Hunter ran for a physician, and after the usual methods had been taken she recovered her senses; by that time Mr. Hunter arrived with Dr. Golding, who after feeling her pulse, ordered her to be laid down on the bed, and said he would write a prescription which should be taken immediately. Honorina in the most affectionate manner went up to her, and begged to assist the maid in carrying her to her chamber, but she pushed her away with great violence, and replied, "she wanted no other assistance than what Susan could give." Surprized and mortified at a behaviour so different from what she had ever before experienced, and not conscious of having offended, she did not repeat her offer, but resumed her seat.

When she had left the room and the door was shut,—“So, Miss Wentworth, (exclaimed the Counsellor) you do not know the occasion of all this bustle?” “No, really, sir, (she replied) I have not the least idea, nor can I guess how I have offended Mrs. Campbell, though she certainly is angry with me.” “Then I'll tell you the cause,” answered he: then addressing the physician; “It is proper, Doctor, you should know too, that you may prescribe accordingly;” and leading them to the desk, to the utter dismay and astonishment of our heroine, she beheld the old folio translation from the Latin, out of which she had been that morning transcribing and which in her hurry to visit Miss Winterton, she had neglected to lock up as usual.

This was an enigma to Dr. Golding, but the Counsellor explained it, and then added; “If you, Miss Wentworth, left the book here, it accounts for Mrs. Campbell's apparent resentment; and forgive me if I say 'tis ten thousand to one if ever you are pardoned, for she certainly heard us laugh, which we all did most heartily at the discovery before she came in. But how happened it to be in your possession? pray does she put a double cheat upon us, and let your alterations pass for her own?” Honorina's silence convinced him this suspicion was just. “Well,” (continued he) “it puzzled me extremely last night, to find her present work so much superior to her conversation and all she had before published, but the mystery is now explained. Doctor Golding,

who had been to visit his patient, then returned, and said she wished to see Miss Wentworth, who immediately complied with her request. Mr. Hunter, who had only waited to hear how the lady was, then took leave, and was followed by his two friends, both of whom humourously wished our heroine well through the task of restoring an enraged and mortified authoress to tranquillity.

When she entered Mrs. Campbell's apartment, that lady ordered her servants to quit the room, and then with a bitterness and asperity in her manner, she had never before shewn on any occasion, she accused Honoria of having contrived this scheme purposely to mortify her, from the envy she supposed she had felt, when the praises bestowed on her the evening before, reminded her they were only due to herself. In vain Honoria endeavoured to convince her that it was merely the effect of accident; Mrs. Campbell either did not, or would not believe it, and told her with an air of contempt, she could not after this affair retain her in her service, and therefore begged she would the next day return to London, as she should never recover the effects of this accident, whilst her presence continually brought it to her mind; and added that she was at that time unequal to any longer conversation on the subject. She then gave her a banknote as a recompence for her past services, and ringing the bell, ordered Susan to assist Miss Wentworth in packing up her cloaths, as she was to leave her the next day.

Honoria then rose, and with that calm dignity which never forsook her, said, "Give me leave, madam, to thank you for the attentions I have received from you, and which are too deeply imprinted on my memory to suffer me to be guilty of such base ingratitude as that you impute to me. I shall ever retain a sense of your kindness, and I forgive, and will endeavour to forget, the unjust suspicions you entertain." She then left the room without waiting for a reply from Mrs. Campbell, who was so engaged with her own perplexities, that she took little notice of the speech.

Honoria with a heavy heart began her melancholy task: she particularly dreaded to return to London, but there was no alternative, as in all England besides she did not know a creature who could receive her. She determined, however, not to quit C——— without taking leave of her amiable friends, Mrs. Markham and Miss Onslow, and when every thing was ready for her departure, she called at the door, and fortunately found they were at home and without company. She told them she was going from C——— the next day, and therefore should not feel their absence from it; but should ever regard the hours passed in their company, as the happiest she had ever known since—here she paused, not knowing how to go on.— "Are you going to London, Miss Wentworth?" (said Mrs. Markham) "Yes, I believe I must go there, madam, but if in the country I could meet with an eligible situation, I should greatly prefer it." "What situation?" (interrupted Miss Onslow, with some surprize) "As companion to a lady or a governess, replied Honoria, embarrassed; perhaps you did not know it was in the former line I lived with Mrs. Campbell." "No, really, (returned Miss Onslow) I supposed you were a visitor." "Her kindness and attention to me, answered our heroine, made it a very probable supposition." "But why then, my dear girl, do you leave her?" Honoria hesitated, for though her own honour required some reason to be assigned, she could not bear to betray a person for whom she had still a strong regard, though she pitied her infatuation.

Whilst meditating a reply that might gratify herself, and yet not expose Mrs. Campbell;

the entrance of the counsellor and Mr. Dixon relieved her from her distress, as they immediately related the whole story, to the infinite amusement of the ladies, who then saw the reason of Honoria's embarrassment, and inwardly applauded her delicate generosity. Miss Onslow laughed heartily at the ridiculous discovery, and said, "I could almost pity any one but Mrs. Campbell, but she is so cold, so stiff and so rigid, that she scarcely deserves compassion; and then I have the strongest aversion to duplicity of every kind; perhaps I am wrong, but there are few faults I cannot more easily pardon." "*Indeed*, Miss Onslow! (said the counsellor) why you are as wicked as Sir Timothy Valerian; you confess your error, but do not mean to amend it." "I own I do love to serve my friends, that's my failing, but I cannot help it." Emily smiled and said, "Very well, Mr. Milford, but will you not allow some virtues become the contrary, by being overstrained?" "Yes, certainly, madam, but let me say in your justification, that duplicity cannot be held in too great detestation by a young mind." After some general conversation, the gentleman took leave; and Mrs. Markham and Emily both expressed the highest admiration at our heroine's forbearance, and hinting in the most delicate manner a wish to know more of her future plans and past life, she determined, as far as was in her power, to satisfy them.

She then told them, having lost her parents early in life, she was bred up by a kind and ever-lamented friend, whose death, as she had it not in her power to leave her any thing of consequence, threw her upon the world: that this lady's daughter was in the East Indies, on whose friendship she had the firmest reliance, but that she was unacquainted with her distress, and till her return she should endeavour to support herself in an honorable manner: that the lady who recommended her to Mrs. Campbell, was, she had every reason to believe, married, and probably not then in London; she had therefore no resource, but to board once more with the same person who had formerly accommodated her, and there wait till she could meet with a situation, where she might remain till the arrival of her friend; which she hoped would not be very distant, as her husband only went abroad on some business, which she did not imagine would detain them many months.

Mrs. Markham and Miss Onslow thanked her for the confidence she had reposed in them; and the latter said, she believed she knew a lady who would think herself happy in such an acquisition, if Honoria had no objection to living wholly in the country, and in a retired manner. Our heroine assuring her it was her most ardent wish to live in solitude, Emily was going to mention some farther particulars, but was interrupted by Mrs. Markham; "I suppose you mean Lady Egerton; then, perhaps, Miss Wentworth, if this proposal meets your approbation, you will not object to going up to Town with us, and then Emily can introduce you in person to her Ladyship. We shall set out the day after to-morrow; there is a vacant place in the coach, which you will make us very happy by accepting; and as it must be unpleasant to remain at Mrs. Campbell's, you had better stay with us the short time we shall continue here." Honoria consented, and with the liveliest expressions of gratitude, thanked them both for the interest they took in her happiness. She then returned to Mrs. Campbell's, with very different sensations from those she felt when she quitted the house before, and hearing she was rather better, but laid down on the bed, she left a message with Susan to inform her where she was, and why she had quitted her before the time appointed.

Once more under Mrs. Markham's hospitable roof, she felt happy and composed. Miss

Onslow then fulfilled her promise of relating to her, Lady Egerton's history, which she thought necessary for her to know, before she became an inhabitant of Elmsthorpe.

“Her mother (said Miss Onslow) died when she was an infant, and her father, Captain Hallifax, being in the army and continually moving from one place to another, intrusted her to the care of his sister, who lived in Devonshire, very near the place where I passed eight years of my life, and for those eight years we were inseparable. From this long intimacy you will allow me, my dear, to be some judge of her disposition; it is the most gentle and amiable one I ever met with, but she has too little spirit ever to be happy in this world. Mr. Lisburne, a Lieutenant in her father's regiment, and a young man of some paternal fortune, had with her father's approbation addressed her for several years, and she was sincerely attached to him; but her father thought her too young to marry, and desired them to wait till Mr. Lisburne was of age, which he was not to be till four and twenty. About fourteen months since, when he was unfortunately absent, she was seen at a ball by Sir William Egerton, who fell distractedly in love with her. I speak now literally, for surely love such as his is distraction only. He made proposals to her father, who disregarding his first engagement accepted them, and insisted on Maria's marrying Sir William with a violence; that not having me to advise, or Lisburne to support her, her gentle spirit knew not how to resist. In short, he terrified her into a compliance; and when her lover returned, and found her Lady Egerton, the shock, one should suppose, for a time deprived him of reason, for he upbraided Maria in the bitterest terms for her inconstancy, and challenged Sir William. They met, fought, and were both wounded, though not dangerously. It was in vain that at her request I represented to him the force her father had used to effect his purpose, and that her heart was his only: he would not credit me, but went to every house where she visited, and every public place where he thought he should meet her, with a design, as he said, to strike her barbarous heart with remorse. This conduct almost killed Lady Egerton, who had thus the object ever before her eyes, it was now become her duty to forget; and irritated Sir William, the natural jealousy and violence of whose temper, was increased by a consciousness that her affections were engaged to another when she married him; a circumstance, I know, he was well acquainted with, when he made his first proposals, but which the selfishness of his passion made him disregard. You may therefore believe he consented with great pleasure to a request she has lately made him of living wholly in the country; but as he is fond of rural amusements, and they engross great part of his time, he is probably fearful from the loneliness of the situation, she may repent her wish, and has desired her to look out for some agreeable female companion who may enliven her solitude. Of this she has informed me, in a letter from London, where she now is on her return from a visit to her aunt in Devonshire, and where she only waits to see me, and then goes into Lincolnshire for the winter. Now, my dear girl, as you object not to retirement, Lady Egerton is so very amiable, I think you may pass the short time you will have to dispose of, till the arrival of your friend, not uncomfortably in her society; and I dare say you will have but little of Sir William's, who is, I must own, a most disagreeable creature.”

Honorina gratefully thanked Miss Onslow for her information, and gladly accepted the offer of so eligible a situation. The rest of the evening was spent in conversing on past occurrences, and future schemes; and when Mrs. Markham retired, Miss Onslow in the most delicate manner offered Honorina any pecuniary assistance which might at that time be serviceable to her; and with the timidity a considerate mind ever feels on such an occasion, begged her not to

be offended, nor construe her wishes to serve her into any ostentation or affected superiority. Honoria with a frankness, that ever marked her character, replied, "Indeed, my dear Miss Onslow, I do not think so meanly of you, and to convince you how sensible I am of your kindness, I would accept the offer if I were in the least distressed; but Mrs. Campbell's generosity has so far exceeded my wants, that I am comparatively rich; and in the comfortable prospect of Lady Egerton's protection, comparatively happy."

From the affluence in which she had passed the first eighteen years of her life, she knew not the value of money, and the natural liberality of her mind, and benevolence of her disposition, rendering her ever attentive to the distresses of others, and ever assiduous to relieve them; she had on her first arrival in England, been involved in some perplexities: but taught prudence by experience, she now regulated not merely her own expences but her charities, from a conviction that indiscriminate bounty often lessens the power of bestowing upon the worthy. Yet when extreme want solicited her benevolence, she waited not with cold propriety to enquire into their merits, but often denied herself many little articles of ornament to contribute to their relief. Thus drawing an exact line between extravagance and parsimony, she lived with comfort to herself and benefit to society; the lowest members of which, often deriving the necessaries of life from her just oeconomy, followed her steps with blessings, and addressed the earnest prayers of gratitude for her happiness to that heaven, whose commands she so exactly obeyed.

CHAP. XIV.

THE following day was spent in some preparations for their journey, when in the evening the footman brought in a letter directed for Miss Wentworth: she took it with that eager curiosity those feel whose bosoms are ever alive to hope, but on opening it coloured excessively, then grew pale as death, and when she had finished reading it, laid it down and burst into tears. Her kind friends, alarmed at this sudden agitation, hastily enquired the cause; she could not speak, but gave the letter to Miss Onslow, who to her great surprize read as follows:

“It was not, my charming Miss Wentworth, till after I left you yesterday at Mrs. Markham’s, that I learned your situation with Mrs. Campbell, and that by contributing to make you an object of envy, I have innocently done you a great injury, by robbing you of the asylum her house afforded, and reducing you to the necessity of seeking another. I entreat you, my lovely girl, to grant me your forgiveness, and suffer me to make all the reparation in my power, by offering you my protection, my fortune, my constant and invariable love; love which your perfections will render more lasting than those sordid ties, by which vulgar and insipid souls bind themselves; and you shall ever have the entire command of the heart and fortune of

“Your eternally devotet

Oct. 6,

“EDMUND DIXON.”

Mrs. Markham was extremely surprized and offended at the insolent freedom of this address, and when Honoria was a little recovered, advised her not to give way to her emotions, but treat the letter with the contempt it deserved, by taking no notice of it: but Miss Onslow thinking it would be more expressive of her just resentment, if she returned it in a blank cover, and Mrs. Markham recalling her first opinion, and joining with her, Honoria followed their advice; and whilst sealing it exclaimed in a voice broken by sobs, “Oh, it is surely the bitterest evil of poverty to be subject to the insults of the rich and powerful.” “And it is, my dear girl, (replied Mrs. Markham) the privilege of the unfortunate only to shew the meek spirit of Christian forbearance, by receiving the insolence of the world with quiet resignation, and by looking on it as one of the traits we must expect in this life, suffer it to purify our minds for a better state.” Thus did this excellent old lady draw from every event the purest precepts of religion and morality. Early the following morning they began their journey, which, from the vivacity and attention of her companions, was the pleasantest Honoria had ever known in England.

In a fairy tale of Count Hamilton’s there is an account of a palace, in one of the apartments of which four magpies are playing at quadrille, and a crow is knotting at the corner of the table. What a pity it is in these days of refinement, that the magpies and crows which infest card parties are not equally harmless! It was at a rout at Mrs. Walton’s, a few days after our heroine’s departure from C——— that her leaving Mrs. Campbell was mentioned in terms of surprize by some of the company. “Dear me, (said Miss Walton), it was very odd she did not call to take leave of us before she went.” “Take leave, indeed! (returned a lady who was just sitting down to whist), the girl I suppose, knew better than to put herself on such a footing with you; why she was only a young woman who Mrs. Campbell hired to write for her, and I think it was

very wrong to introduce her in the manner she did to all her acquaintances; but however she has smarted for it, and that will teach her better another time." "Oh, my dear Mrs. Stanton, (cried Miss Mary Walton) do tell us what you mean." "Why is it possible, Miss Mary, (returned the lady) that you have not heard the reason of her sudden departure? why it is all over the town. I know not the story perfectly myself, but as it was told me, you shall have it. But first let me remind you the other evening at Mrs. Campbell's, did you not see George Audley sitting by Miss Wentworth the whole time, and never speaking to a creature in the room but her?" "Yes, that we all did (returned Miss Mary) and if I am not mistaken, his conversation with her was something particular, for she often blushed." "Well, (continued Mrs. Stanton) this morning my mantua-maker came to try on my new chintz gown, that one you know which you admired so much, and said it was the most elegant thing you had ever seen. So I asked her, for these kind of people generally know all the news, if she had heard why Miss Wentworth left Mrs. Campbell? Now I would not have what I say repeated, because it might hurt the poor woman in her business; but she told me, that a few nights ago she went to Miss Winterton's by appointment, but found she was so ill that she could not see her; so she asked the maid what was the matter? and she told as a great secret that she believed her mistress was jealous of Miss Wentworth and Mr. Audley, for that the night before she came home from Mrs. Campbell's in fits, and told Mr. Audley he was the most barbarous man in the world; she did not know entirely what had passed, but added, that "Audley's folks were gone off that morning in the whiff of a hurry," that was the maid's expression. Well, upon this her curiosity was so excited, that she goes to Mrs. Campbell's to see Susan, who is her cousin; and she learned from her that her lady and Miss Wentworth had been to Miss Winterton's, and that she came home ill, fainted away, and sent off Miss Wentworth directly. Now Susan seemed to think that Mr. Audley waited somewhere on the road for her, for that he had been with her half an hour in the morning before her mistress was up; and I dare say it was so, for the girl would never have quarrelled with her bread and butter, unless she had secured herself another establishment.

All the company agreed in this idea; and another lady said she was sure it must be so, for that day she was riding eight miles from C——, and met Mr. Audley in his phaeton with a lady, who could not be his sister, for she always rode in a green great coat, and this had a brown one. Thus was this point determined to the general satisfaction of all the company, except Miss Walton, who though she dared not controvert the established opinion, said, she was very much concerned for Miss Wentworth, who had ever appeared to her as a most amiable woman. "I am surprized, Anne, you could think so, retorted Mary abruptly; to me she was always insipid and disagreeable." Here Mrs. Stanton's partner, who loved the four honors better than all the scandal in the world, and had most impatiently waited the end of her relation, interrupted the young lady, saying peevishly, "I wish, Miss Mary, you would not call off Mrs. Stanton's attention from her cards any longer; you may discuss this affair another time." This reproof put a stop to the conversation; but from this only arose the report that Miss Wentworth left C—— with Mr. Audley, which was afterwards currently believed by the whole city, excepting the few who knew better, but whose interest prevented them from relating the truth.

Miss Winterton was one of the first who credited the story; she was convinced of his attachment to her, and doubted not but she returned it, notwithstanding her asseverations to the contrary: she had seen her and Mrs. Campbell but the morning of her departure, in perfect

harmony with each other; and her friend, as she imagined from delicate attention to her feelings, evidently avoided the subject, nor ever gave her any reason for their parting. She was not in fact sorry for the report, nor would ever contradict it, lest the real reason should be discovered. Mr. Hunter, when his friends returned from Mrs. Markham's, and informed him they had rallied Miss Wentworth on the adventures of the day, requested them in the most earnest manner not to mention it again to any one; as, if it was made publick through his or their means, it would infallibly lose him the favor of Mrs. Campbell, and entirely ruin his hopes. They scrupled not promising him secrecy; and leaving the town a few days after, knew not how deeply their keeping that promise, wounded the reputation of our heroine. Mr. Dixon was highly mortified at receiving his own letter in a blank cover, but rejoiced that he had trusted no one with his scheme, as consequently no one could exult in his disappointment.

Mrs. Markham on her arrival in London, went to a relation's in Cavendish-square, where her grandson was; and left Honoria with Miss Onslow at her guardian's lodgings, in Bishopsgate-street. He received them civilly, but coldly; and when they had taken some refreshment, desired Emily to attend him into another apartment; she consented, but with visible reluctance, and during their absence, which lasted an hour, Honoria was tormented with continual and almost impertinent questions from Mrs. Bridges, a woman, whose curiosity was her predominant quality. These enquiries were often particularly distressing to her, as she was at a loss how to answer; and she was happy when the entrance of her friend put a stop to them, though concerned to see her eyes red and swelled, and a look of deep displeasure in her countenance. At supper, Mrs. Bridges, whose conversation was all interrogation, asked her how she liked C——— ? "Very much indeed," (returned Emily). "What, better than Devonshire, I suppose?" "Yes really, madam." "Well, what, did you ever see Captain Harcourt there?" "No," (cried Emily, with an indignation in her voice and manner that she could not suppress). "Hush, my dear, (exclaimed her husband) what signifies talking of that now?"

When they retired, Honoria took no other notice of what passed in the evening, than expressing her concern to see her out of spirits. "Yes, (cried Miss Onslow) my guardian has been reading me a fine lecture; a lecture which I hope my late conduct has not deserved, but which even if it had, was not given in a proper manner to make any impression on my mind." She then asked Honoria, if it would be agreeable to her to go to Lady Egerton's the next morning after breakfast: to which she immediately consented, glad of an opportunity to leave a family, whose manners were so ill suited to her own.

The next day at eleven, Mr. Bridges' carriage came to the door, and soon conveyed them to Sir William Egerton's, in Somerset street. Lady Egerton, whose pale countenance and dejected manner too plainly shewed the state of her mind, received her friend with animated satisfaction, and Honoria with a polite affability. Miss Onslow had by a note sent early in the morning, informed her of her intention, and had the happiness of seeing this interview complete her purpose; her friends were mutually pleased, and Lady Egerton entreating Emily to spare our heroine immediately, she consented, though unwilling, to part with her for the time she remained in town: but reflecting, if her own situation was disagreeable, how much more so her friend's was, gave up her own wishes in compliance with Lady Egerton's request. As she had promised to dine with them, it was not till late in the evening she left Honoria with her new patroness,

promising to see them as often as possible during their stay. But the next morning at breakfast, when Sir William first made his appearance, he told Lady Egerton, that now having a companion, there was no reason for her remaining any longer in town, and desired they would set out for Elmsthorpe the next day, and he would follow them in less than a week. Lady Egerton immediately assented; and with Honoria devoted that morning to take leave of Miss Onslow, who was the less disconcerted at this intelligence, as it had been just concluded upon by Mr. Henry Ashbourn, that they would quit London a week earlier than they had at first intended. Emily promised to write to them both frequently, and they parted with mutual expressions of friendship and regret. Honoria in their return to Somerset-street, called on Mrs. Markham, who was truly rejoiced at her happy establishment, and congratulated Lady Egerton on the acquisition Miss Wentworth would be to her. Lady Egerton replied, she was very sensible of it, and grateful to Miss Onslow for her introduction of Honoria.—It was with deep regret our heroine observed that Mrs. Markham appeared languid and weak, but hoping she might attribute it chiefly to the fatigue so long a journey must have naturally caused in a person at her advanced age, endeavoured with that hope to console herself.

During the short time Honoria had been in London, she had only been out in a carriage; but when in the streets, her eyes were ever directed to the passing objects, as if anxious, yet afraid to discover among them one who could interest her. In the afternoon, she recollected her old landlady, for whom though she had no affection, she thought it right to enquire; and sending for a Hackney coach, drove to Great Marlborough-street, and stopping at Mrs. Gibbon's, enquired if she knew where Mrs. Middleton then lived. Mrs. Gibbons did not at first recollect Honoria, till the enquiry brought her person to her remembrance. She received her with great civility, but said, she was sorry to inform her that Mrs. Middleton was dead. She had been so much hurt by the idea that the fire was occasioned by her own carelessness, that she never wholly recovered it, but fell into a rapid decline, which ended her life but a few days before; and added, that her husband still lived at Mr. Burnaby's, to whom she would faithfully deliver any message, as she often saw him. Honoria expressed her regret at the poor woman's unhappy fate, and thanking Mrs. Gibbons for her information and civil offer, took leave, not imagining it could be of the least consequence to acquaint Mr. Middleton of her change of situation, though she had intended to inform his wife.

Sir William, who ruled in his own house with the most absolute sway, ordered the carriage at six the next morning, and desired the ladies to be ready at that time. His lady assenting, Honoria had no right to object, though she regarded it as one proof among many others of his arbitrary disposition. They slept the first night at Huntingdon, and arrived the next day to dinner at Elmsthorpe, where, at the appointed time, they were joined by Sir William, whose presence, instead of adding to their comfort, laid them under a continual restraint, from the haughty austerity of his manner and conversation.

Honoria had formed a very different idea of the situation of the place from the reality; connecting that of a jealous husband, with an ancient castle, built in a remote and gloomy wood, and surrounded with high hills. Unacquainted with the nature of the country, she had pictured to herself a building of this kind, and was surprized at seeing a modern house in a small park, where a few trees were thinly scattered; the country flat for many miles, the corn-fields bounded by no hedges, and the meadows adorned by no trees. The desolate appearance of the place, for it was

now the latter end of October, and a very wet season, gave her mind an unpleasant impression, when she beheld it, an impression no favourable circumstance ever counteracted.

The few among the neighbouring families whom the approach of winter had not called to London, visited them sometimes, but always in a formal and unsocial manner; and at these meetings the conversation of the gentlemen turned wholly on sporting or politics, and that of the ladies on domestic events, or the little scandal the country affords; they could give no entertainment to Honoria's polished and cultivated mind; and she was soon convinced that a life of almost total inaction, is particularly unfit for those who have been depressed by any heavy affliction. Her thoughts, which at C——— were enlivened by a variety of objects, which if they failed to please, generally amused; were now wholly employed in re-tracing former scenes, the recollection of which always added to her dejection. Lady Egerton too, giving way to the languor which oppressed her, usually sat a picture of silent melancholy.

Even the relief of books was denied them; Sir William seldom read himself, and of course his library consisted of a very few, and those were either too trifling to engage attention, or such as Honoria was too well acquainted with to receive any entertainment from their perusal. Music was their only resource, and that was a dangerous one. Lady Egerton was extremely fond of it, and played well; but Honoria understood it scientifically, and was a most capital performer; but not having practised however since she left Ireland, she had lost in some degree her skill, but this by strict attention she soon recovered. There was a very fine organ, and whilst Sir William was engaged in the morning, Lady Egerton would listen for hours whilst Honoria played, whose disposition leading her to chuse the most plaintive tunes, this, instead of becoming an amusement, only nourished both in herself and her friend, that sorrow so destructive to her peace.

Scottish airs were particularly their favourites; and one day Honoria recollecting "Robin Gray" was often sung by Colonel Effingham in their hours of happiness at Wood Park, began to play it, and joining her voice without observing her friend was silent, went through it; the tears streaming down her cheeks from the painful regret which filled her mind, when shocked and surprized at seeing Lady Egerton, whose head rested on the back of her chair, in an agony of grief; she suddenly thought of the impropriety she had been guilty of, in fixing on a song, the story of which was so exactly similar to her case. She entreated Lady Egerton to forgive her folly; Lady Egerton made no answer, but pressing her hand in an affectionate manner, burst again into tears, and threw her head on Honoria's lap, who grieved at her emotion, and oppressed with her own ideas, wept silently over her. They had remained but a few minutes in this luxury of grief, when Sir William entered, and hastily demanded "what was the matter?" He soon learned the cause was melancholy music, and knowing Mr. Lisburne was a performer, became jealous of the organ, from supposing it recalled his image to his lady's mind. With an affected solicitude for their health and spirits, which, he said, so much crying would injure, he bade them follow him into the parlour, and locking up the music room and taking the key, declared they should play no more but in his presence, and then he would chuse their music. Lady Egerton as usual acquiesced without a word, but Honoria, whose indignation was raised by this unjust tyranny, retired to her chamber, and remained there the whole day, pleading a head-ach, which was in fact not merely an excuse, as the violence of her agitation had really extremely disordered her.

CHAP. XVI.

THE letters which they both frequently had from Miss Onslow, were now all that enlivened their solitude, as her descriptions were animated and amusing: but after a long silence, they received one which was far from having the usual effect, as it informed them of the death of Mrs. Markham. Miss Onslow said, her health had been declining ever since her first arrival in London, where at the request of her friend Mrs. Draper, she had remained ever since: but that about three weeks before, that lady apprehending for the first time her danger, wrote to Mrs. Ashbourn at Paris, desiring her to return immediately to England. Mrs. Ashbourn was divided between her affection to her mother and husband, who had relapsed, and was then in a most alarming state, at last determined to leave him to the care of his children, as there was no appearance of an immediate termination of his life, and go to Mrs. Markham. On her arrival she found that excellent lady so much reduced, that she thought it impossible for her to exist many days. In fact, in less than a week she expired in her daughter's arms, and resigned her breath with that tranquillity, which a consciousness of having strictly fulfilled every duty both to God and man, will ever give to the last moments of a Christian. As soon as the last sad duties were performed, Mrs. Ashbourn hastened to Paris, where she had the satisfaction of finding her husband rather better, though yet too weak to undertake a journey to the South of France, which however the physicians declared was absolutely essential to his perfect recovery. Miss Onslow then begged them to pardon her long silence, as she had been constantly engaged in assisting her friends in their attendance on their father, and promised to write again before they left Paris.

Both Lady Egerton and Honoria were deeply afflicted at this intelligence; they not only regretted the death of Mrs. Markham, for whom the former had a high respect, and the latter a sincere affection, but they lamented the long absence of their friend, Emily; and meeting with no variety to relieve the melancholy impression it gave them, it for some time added to the dejection that was now in a manner become habitual.

Sir William still continued firm to his purpose, and they had no access to the music room but in his presence. The evenings were devoted to whist or cribbage, if they could get a fourth, which was seldom wanting, as Mr. Millar, the clergyman of the parish, was so fond of cards, he with pleasure attended them almost every afternoon, leaving his poor wife, who could neither ride nor walk two miles in the winter, at home to take care of her seven children, and attend to her domestic duties. Regularly however on a Sunday they both, and some of the children dined at Elmsthorp, and were always brought and sent home in the coach. This was literally a day of rest to Honoria, who had an extreme dislike to cards, and her natural fondness for children made it the most agreeable one in the week, as some of the little Millars were pretty and engaging. To Henry and Sophia she grew particularly attached, and grateful for her kindness, they returned it with equal affection.

It was now the beginning of February; and the weather which had been before almost a series of incessant rains, settled into a calm and clear frost; which gave Lady Egerton and our heroine, opportunities to indulge their partiality for walking. They frequently rambled into the village, and visited the cottagers, where, by relieving their necessities, they bestowed upon

others, that happiness, they were incapable of feeling themselves. One day as they were wandering through the village, they met a cart loaded in so strange a manner, that it excited their curiosity, and stopping at a farm house, they enquired of the mistress if she knew what it was, and learned from her, that it belonged to a company of strolling players, who were come to perform for a few weeks. This being something like an amusement, was pleasing intelligence to Lady Egerton, who gladly caught at any relief from her own thoughts; and communicating her intention of visiting the theatre to Sir William, he made no objection, but an engagement preventing them the first night of performance, on the second, not chusing to go himself, he consigned them to the care of his friend Millar.

The play was *Romeo and Juliet*, and the entertainment *Rofina*. The part of *Romeo*, as expressed in the written bills, by Mr. Meadows, and *Juliet and Rosina* by Mrs. Meadows. The accommodations were, as they expected, very indifferent, and the actors in general wretched and ill drest. *Romeo* was genteel and handsome, but ranted so violently, that it was highly amusing to the ladies; the farmers wives and daughters however who were present, cried almost throughout the whole play, and extolled the fine acting as they called it. The appearance of *Juliet* charmed and surprized them; she was exactly the age the poet has fixed; her person small and delicate, her face not beautiful, but extremely pretty, though pale. Her voice weak, but her manner of speaking just and energetic: and her dress compared with the rest, elegant: it was a fine muslin petticoat and train, a lutestring body, a sash and a chip hat, ornamented with a large plume of white feathers. There was an appearance of something superior to the station she was then in, that struck Lady Egerton and our heroine, and she gave the most pathetic parts of the play with great energy and feeling, even shedding tears, and seeming strongly agitated in the scene between *Juliet* and *Lady Capulet*. When the play was concluded, she fainted away, from the exertions she had used, and continued a long time so ill, that the entertainment was delayed above half an hour. The people at length grew so clamourous that she altered her dress, and appeared as *Rosina*; as there was no other young woman in the company, who could take her part. She went on tolerably, for two or three scenes, but just as she had concluded one of the songs again fainted, and was carried off the stage.

Mr. Millar then, at Lady Egerton's request, asked her husband how he could suffer her to appear again, after having been so ill. He replied with a low bow, that he was very sorry; but he believed the reason of her illness was, that she had not tasted any meat for three days; and that as she had not gone through the whole of her part, he doubted whether the manager would give them the promised stipend, with which they hoped that evening to procure a hot supper, the hope of which had induced her to endeavour to go through *Rosina*. Shocked at this speech, Mr. Millar called for the manager, and asking him if Meadows had any reason for his supposition, assured him if he did not immediately, in the presence of the whole audience, pay him the sum agreed on, the company should the next day be turned out of the village; and addressing Lady Egerton, said, he was sure she would use her whole interest with Sir William on the occasion, who had power, as Justice of the peace, to send them away directly. The manager, intimidated by this menace, complied at once, and Lady Egerton and Mr. Millar received the poor man's grateful thanks. The farce was then ordered to go on, that the people might not be disappointed, which it did; the girl who acted *Phebe* reading the part of *Rosina*, and omitting all the songs. But even in this manner it pleased the rustics, who departed highly satisfied with their entertainment. Mr. Millar was

rejoiced that he had done a charitable action, and Lady Egerton and Honoria were secretly happy in the idea of enquiring further into the story, and contributing to the future relief of this apparently unfortunate young couple.

Sir William on their return seemed amused with their account, and promised to attend them himself another time. The next morning, followed by the servant carrying two bottles of wine, the ladies walked to the village, and stopping at the cottage where Mrs. Meadows lodged, enquired how she was; they were informed rather better than the evening before, but still very weak. Her husband came out, and respectfully asked them if they would walk in; they assented, and shewing them into a neat little room, where his wife was sitting, Mr. Meadows immediately withdrew. She attempted to stand up when they entered, but could not; Lady Egerton begged her not to make the attempt, and said she was sorry to witness her illness the preceding night, and still more sorry to learn the cause; that she had brought some wine which she desired her to accept, and hoped it would be of service to her. The poor young woman burst into tears at this unexpected kindness, and strove to express her gratitude, but could not for some moments articulate. When she began, Lady Egerton stopped the effusions of her heart, by saying, she wished to extend her relief beyond the present moment, if she would inform her in what manner she could serve her. She shook her head, and replied, nobody could serve her; that she had been guilty of the fault, and perhaps ought to suffer the punishment. "What fault (returned Lady Egerton) can you have been guilty of? You seem very young, are you married to Mr. Meadows?" "Oh yes, madam, indeed I am married; the fault I allude to is disobedience. I ran away with him to Scotland without my father's consent, and he has never seen me since, he is so angry; though, to be sure, if he did but know how often I have been almost starved, he would relent a little." "Why then, (said Lady Egerton) if your profession is so very unprofitable, do you still follow it? Cannot your husband gain a livelihood by any other means?" No, madam, (replied Mrs. Meadows) he never learned any trade; his father was a miller in Dorsetshire, but died when he was about twelve years old; his mother married again very soon, and his father-in-law used him so ill, that he ran away before he was fifteen. He lived two or three years I do not know how, and at last got into a company of strolling players." But where did you meet with him?" (interrupted Lady Egerton) "Why, if it will not intrude too much on your time, ladies, (said Mrs. Meadows) I will give you some farther account of myself, as, though it will not make me appear wholly excusable, yet I flatter myself you will view my conduct in a more favourable light, than you can do at present." Her Ladyship and Honoria both expressing a wish to hear her story, she began:

"My father is a farmer in Yorkshire. My mother died when I was about five years old, and not having any female relation to take care of me, he was advised by a person in the neighbourhood to send me to school; and thinking, as I should have a tolerable fortune being his only child, that if he was at the expence of sending me out, he had better give me a good education at once, determined to take me to London, to his sister, who was married there, and then look out for a proper situation with her assistance; and this he was the more induced to, as I could spend my holidays with my uncle and aunt, and in every other respect be under their care. This scheme was no sooner thought on than executed; my aunt fixed upon a proper place, and there I remained ten years, without ever returning to Yorkshire; as my father thought it would be too great an expence to have me up and down often; and as he came to town every year, and I staid almost every school recess at my uncle's, who was a haberdasher in King-street,

Bloomsbury, I had no wish to go home.

“The school where I was, though not a capital, was a very genteel one, and the number of scholars limited. As my father allowed me very handsomely for cloaths, I made as good an appearance as any of my companions, even those whose birth and fortune placed them in a much higher rank of life; and always having plenty of pocket money, and being naturally inclined to let them share with me the little comforts it afforded, I soon made myself many friends, and was frequently asked by their parents to accompany them home for several days at a time: by these means I often associated with my superiours; and even my aunt’s acquaintance, though only in her own line of life, by conversing with those above them, and mingling in the world, had acquired a kind of gentility in their manners, not to be met with among the rustics at a distance from the metropolis; and their conversation was generally amusing, as they knew all the common topics which engrossed the minds of the more fashionable circles.

“I had learned during my stay at school, French and English grammatically, dancing, needle-work of all kinds, writing and arithmetic. I was very anxious to add music to the list, but that my father prudently refused; however I devoted all my leisure to pick up what little knowledge of it I could gain from my school-fellows, or else to reading such books as I could borrow. They were always plays, novels, or poetry; dangerous studies, I am now convinced, for a young person who has no adviser to direct her to the best, perhaps I might say, the least injurious.—Extremely attached to my aunt, who had been a mother to me, and happy among my companions, it was with great regret I heard of my father’s intention of taking me home the next vacation. Convinced however that to object would be undutiful, I never expressed the concern I felt, except at parting with my aunt; surely my grief was a presentiment that I should never see her again, and of the evils I have since experienced.

“On my return to Yorkshire, I was shocked, and disgusted, at the coarseness of manners, and vulgarity of expression, of those with whom I was destined to converse; but perhaps this by degrees might have worn off, and I might have been reconciled to their society, if my father had not been so precipitate, but in less than a fortnight he told me without any ceremony, that he had promised farmer Rogers I should marry his son, and desired I would prepare myself to comply. Oh ladies! you cannot think how I was shocked at this command.” “Oh yes, (replied lady Egerton, with a deep sigh) I can, indeed, and sincerely pity you; but your heart was not then engaged to an amiable and deserving object?” “No, madam, returned Mrs. Meadows, but Thomas Rogers was a mere clown; he could talk of nothing but farming, hay and wheat, and such things; and then he was so rude and rough, I could not bear him. However I only told my father, I hoped he would not oblige me to marry against my inclinations, but he said, his word was given, and he could not retract, and that I had best say no more about it. From this time young Rogers came to us every evening, and I was obliged to be civil to him before my father; but when we were alone, I always told him I should not marry him, and he used to say, he hoped I would alter my mind. In the mean time a company of players came into the village; and by way of avoiding him, and amusing myself, I went to the play as often as possible. Meadows was then manager, and I could not forbear comparing him with my lover, to the infinite disadvantage of the latter. The parts he acted were such as to a young girl, fond of theatrical amusements, represented him in the most captivating light. In a short time we became acquainted, and knowing how disagreeable the

engagement my father had made was to me, he spared no pains to pervert my mind, by saying a father had no right to command the affections of his child, declaring his own passion for me, and assuring me he had some property in Dorsetshire, which would support us comfortably, if my father should remain inexorable. In short, ladies, for why should I expatiate on my folly? his entreaties prevailed: dreading an union with young Rogers, and weakly flattering myself, my father would forgive my disobedience, when the event was past recall, I consented to accompany him to Scotland. To raise money for this expedition, he sold the scenes, dresses, and every thing that in the character of manager belonged to him; not doubting any more than myself, but that we should be received on our return. But in this we were cruelly disappointed; my father shut his doors against us, and except sending my cloaths, absolutely refused us any assistance. Thus were we thrown on the world at once. Deprived of his stock in trade, my husband had no resource but becoming a subaltern actor in that or some other company, and I offered my abilities, though conscious of their inferiority. In this way of life we have continued several months, sometimes living tolerably well, at others experiencing the utmost penury and distress.”

Here Mrs. Meadows concluded her little narrative, during the recital of which she had shed many tears. Lady Egerton assured her she would exert all her powers to relieve her from this uncomfortable situation, as though her quitting her father was not wholly to be defended, yet his conduct had made it more excusable. “Perhaps, added she, if Sir William was to write to him he might relent, finding a stranger could interest himself in your behalf.” “I fear he would not, madam.” “Supposing (interrupted Honoria) he should offer to receive you if you would leave your husband, could you consent?” “No, madam, indeed I would not. Before I married I owed no duty but to my father; that I dared violate, and heaven has punished me for it. But I will not be again guilty; I will not voluntarily break a voluntary engagement, and forget the vows I so lately swore to keep inviolable. Whatever misfortune we may meet with, whatever poverty we are involved in, it is my duty to share it. Yet I will not take more merit than I deserve; affection has equally with duty fixed my resolution, and nothing shall alter it: my husband has ever behaved to me with unremitted kindness, though deeply distressed at the mortification he met with on my father’s refusing us admittance.”

Lady Egerton and Honoria both applauded her resolution, and the latter said her question was only to try the steadiness of her attachment, and that her answer had proved its sincerity. Lady Egerton then giving her five guineas for her present support, and enquiring her father’s name and address, left her hastily to avoid her expressions of gratitude.

She related the whole to Sir William on her return, and he appeared to take more than usual interest in it; and immediately wrote to the father, informing him, that under the complicated evils of distress of mind, sickness, and poverty, his daughter had been found by strangers who afforded her that relief she was denied by those, from whom she had a natural right to expect it. He then begged him to consider that though she had once materially offended him, she was still his child, and as such had still a claim to his protection; and that he had been in great measure accessory to the evil, the consequences of which he refused to pardon, by giving her an education equally improper and ridiculous, for the station of life in which he meant to fix her; and hoped this letter would set the affair in a light, which probably he had never before considered it in; and induce him to receive his daughter and her husband, and by taking them

from the misfortunes to which they were at present exposed, prevent himself from being answerable for their misconduct, as whatever errors they might be guilty of, would undoubtedly be caused by his unnatural behaviour.

This letter, though written in Sir William's usual style, had the desired effect. The farmer, ashamed that his rigid conduct should be known and condemned, answered in the most humble manner; thanking him and his lady for their goodness to his child, and accompanied it by a letter to her, expressing his forgiveness, and adding that if she and her husband would leave their vagrant profession, and return to him, he would endeavour to put them in some way of supporting themselves.

When this was carried to the poor creature, it almost overset her reason with joy. She threw herself at Lady Egerton's feet, and burst into tears; nor was Mr. Meadows much less affected; he gratefully acknowledged Sir William's and his Lady's kind interference, and said he would endeavour to deserve it by the strictest attention to his father. Sir William then gave them a handsome present to defray the expences of their journey, and sent another letter by them to the old man, expressing himself highly satisfied with his conduct, and recommending a mild and good-humoured treatment, as the best way of making an impression upon generous minds. They had then the pleasure of seeing them depart with chearful and contented countenances; and had themselves the innate happiness of reflecting, they had saved a young creature from inexpressible misery, and perhaps from guilt, for in a situation so public, yet so distressed, who can tell what poverty might have driven her to?—Then how, ye rigid censurers of fallen virtue, can ye condemn that conduct, which is often the result of despair in minds once pure and spotless; and who in the days of prosperity would have shuddered like yourselves, at that infamy, to which the most complicated evils have exposed them.

CHAP. XVII.

THE active part Sir William had taken in this affair, pleased Lady Egerton, and in some measure reconciled Honoria to him: she began to think, could he divest himself of his jealousy and haughtiness, he would be a tolerable companion; and from the animation their anxiety for the Meadows's had raised in their minds, the time had of late passed more pleasantly than usual. Their conversations took a livelier turn, and Sir William, gratified by the tranquillity that appeared in his Lady's countenance, not only relaxed his severity, but even endeavoured to amuse them. He gave up the key of the music room, and strove to make parties that they would think agreeable.

This harmony continued till the latter end of March; when an accident happened that entirely destroyed it. At a town about three miles from Elmsthorpe, there was an annual ball at this time; as it was resorted to by every body of the first fashion for many miles round, it was advertized in all the newspapers for a fortnight before. Sir William had pleased himself with the idea that it would be an agreeable evening to his Lady and Honoria, and was extremely disappointed when in the morning at breakfast, the former mentioned her intention of staying at home, and gave as a reason that she had a cold and violent head ach, which she feared the heat of the ball room would increase. He remonstrated, but in vain; she continued firm to her purpose, and as she pleaded illness, he could not without an appearance of barbarity insist on her compliance. "What, and shall not you go, Miss Wentworth?" (said he) "No, Sir, (answered Honoria) I shall certainly attend Lady Egerton." "Tis very well," replied he, biting his lips with vexation and anger, for even in so trifling a circumstance, he could not brook the least disappointment. He spoke not again the whole time of breakfast; and when he retired, Lady Egerton bursting into tears, exclaimed, "Oh, Miss Wentworth, how does my cruel fate pursue me! I see you are surprised at my declining an amusement I have for some time thought of with pleasure; but yesterday morning when we were airing with Mrs. Allen, did you not observe a gentleman in a blue coat, alighting from his horse at the George, at S———? Yes, my dear girl, that is the very man I have taken such pains to avoid, who is now I doubt not with his usual cruelty, come down on purpose to meet me at the ball; but I have fortunately discovered his intention; as I was not in our own carriage, he will not suspect I know of his arrival. I am sorry (added she) to keep you at home, but I dare not stay alone, lest he should attempt to see me." "Do not, dear Lady Egerton, (replied Honoria) let the idea of my losing an entertainment distress you; believe me, so far from wishing to join the party, nothing but the fear of appearing singular, prevented me from requesting to be left behind." Lady Egerton was satisfied by this assurance; but Sir William continued the whole day in his gloomy disposition, and set off in the evening for S———, without having once spoken to either of them.

The instant the carriage drove from the door, Lady Egerton went into her dressing room, rang the bell, and ordered the servant, if any one should call in the course of the evening, to say she was not at home; then telling Honoria she was too much out of spirits to converse, begged she would read to her; she instantly complied, and taking up a volume of Shakespeare, began *As you like it*; but had scarcely finished one act, before they were both alarmed by a loud ringing at the porter's lodge: Lady Egerton turned pale as death, but soon recovered, and nothing further

passing, Honoria went on 'till it grew too dark to see without candles, and was then going to ring for them; but Lady Egerton stopped her, saying she was just in the humour to enjoy the light of the moon, which then shone very bright through the windows, and would indulge her pensive inclination for some time. She then leaned her head back on the sofa, and gave way to the melancholy ideas that obtruded themselves in her mind.

Honoria imagining her presence was a restraint, left the room and walked for half an hour up and down a gravel walk in the garden, when she was recalled to the house by loud and repeated screams; she flew to the dressing-room, where she found Lady Egerton in strong fits, but wholly disregarded by Sir William, who was raving like a madman, and vainly endeavouring to make himself understood by two strange gentlemen, who with Mr. Millar, were present at this scene. Honoria waited not for an explanation, but flew to Lady Egerton's assistance, rubbed her temples with hartshorn, and at length restored her in some degree. From the haughty agitation which appeared in the countenance of one of the gentlemen, and knowing Lady Egerton's apprehensions, she immediately guessed it was Mr. Lisburne; the other she had never seen before, but from his assisting Mr. Millar to keep him and Sir William apart, she judged there had been some dreadful quarrel on his Lady's account; but how they came all in the dressing-room she could not learn, for they spoke so loud and with such extreme anger, she could not distinguish a syllable to give her the least information. However, justly supposing her afflicted friend would not recover whilst within hearing of the dispute, she rang for her woman, and with her help carried her to her own chamber and laid her on the bed. When a little recovered, Lady Egerton addressed Honoria, who was watching her in mournful silence. "Oh, my dear girl, shall I ever survive this dreadful night! Sir William will kill him, I know he will. Why did you leave me? perhaps your persuasions might have aided mine, and they would not have met." Honoria begged her to compose herself and endeavour to rest, but this was out of her power. However, after some time she lay silent for a few minutes, and our heroine stole softly out of the room, and went down stairs to learn if possible the occasion of the late confusion.

In the parlour she only found Sir William and Mr. Millar, the others were gone; and immediately on her entrance, the former thus addressed her with mingled rage and contempt. "Well, madam, you are a fine companion for a faithless wife, a kind, convenient friend, who can introduce a lover, and regard not the agonizing pangs of a husband: but by heaven this night is the last you spend under this roof; whether I live or die, my commands shall be obeyed. If I fall, my blood will rest on you, and if I execute my just vengeance on the guilty Lisburne, the crime will lie to your account, for but by your cursed contrivance we had never met." Honoria for a few moments stood speechless with astonishment at the strange and violent charge, accompanied with so terrible a denunciation: at length recovering her voice, she begged to know what he meant, and what crime it was he dared accuse her of? She spoke with a warmth that surprized him; but injured innocence and conscious integrity gave an unusual spirit to her words and manner. He then directly charged her with having introduced Lisburne to his Lady's dressing-room, and leaving them together. She then in the most solemn manner assured him, that half an hour before she was summoned to the apartment by Lady Egerton's screams, she left her by herself, and had been walking alone in the garden from that time, and had not seen a single creature, nor did she on entering the room know who either of the strangers were. He heard her finish her speech, and then with the utmost contempt said, he did not believe one word of it; that

it was her interest to say so, and his lady's to countenance her, but it would never make the least impression on him. "You may therefore (he continued) go back to your injured and innocent friend, as no doubt you think her, and console her with the intelligence, that before twelve hours are at an end, either her lover or her husband will be no more; fate only can determine which; but at all events she must prepare herself to leave this house to-morrow morning; if I escape a bullet, I must fly my country to avoid an halter, and I promise her she shall be the companion of my flight; and lest I should fall, I will spend this night in taking measures to prevent her from being that gainer by my death she doubtless hopes to be." He then quitted the room, followed by Mr. Millar, who stood aghast, yet dared not interpose. The barbarity of this speech absorbed Honoria's own resentment in the compassion she felt for her amiable and afflicted friend; she returned and passed the night by her bed side, endeavouring but in vain to comfort her.

I will now acquaint my readers with the particulars of this fatal adventure. Sir William when he entered the ball room was engaged by some gentlemen to make a party at whist: he directly sat down to the table, but before the cards were dealt, was accosted by Mrs. Allen and some other ladies, who enquired why Lady Egerton was not there? he replied she complained of a cold and head-ach, and he could not prevail on her to come. Just as he spoke this, he turned round to answer a gentleman who had addressed him, and saw Mr. Lisburne standing so near, that he must have heard all that passed; he made him a formal bow, and instantly left the card-room. Sir William played one game very uneasily, then calling Mr. Millar, desired he would go into the dancing room and inform him whether Mr. Lisburne was there? He presently returned saying the room was so full, a search would have been vain; but that he accidentally heard a lady say, he had left the assembly some minutes before.

Sir William was distracted at this intelligence, and intreated Mr. Millar by his friendship for him to take his carriage and go to Elmsthorpe and bring him word, whether there was any one with Lady Egerton. The poor man, though in the utmost surprize, not knowing how to account for this strange request, promised to obey, but begged to know what he could say to her Ladyship, as an excuse for his visit. "Oh! tell her (replied Sir William impatiently) I sent you to know how she was." It was Mr. Miller's ringing so loud at the gate, that gave the first alarm to Lady Egerton: on being told that she was not at home, he informed the porter he knew very well she was; but on his replying that she had given orders to refuse every body admittance, he could press no farther. When he brought this account to Sir William he was just cut out; he received it with the utmost agitation and requesting Mr. Barrington (a gentleman with whom he was intimately acquainted) to accompany him and Mr. Millar to Elmsthorpe, on the way informed them of his suspicions, and his reasons for them.

Mr. Lisburne, who had been told of Lady Egerton's motive for quitting London, was so shocked at the reflection that he had banished her from society, that struck with a deep remorse, he resolved to go abroad for some years, if he could have one more interview with her to obtain her pardon, and inform her of his determination. The advertisement of the annual ball at S——, first gave him the idea of meeting her there, and he was consequently highly disappointed on hearing Sir William say, she was confined by indisposition: having no other inducement to stay, he then left the room, and returned to the George, intending to send her a letter; but after writing some time was dissatisfied with what he had said, and determined if possible to see her, which as

her husband was engaged at whist, he hoped he might accomplish without discovery. He took a post chaise as the swiftest method of conveyance, but arriving at the park gate, alighted, and ordered the post-boy to drive back to the village, and wait for him there. The porter at first denied his lady, but a golden key soon opened the gates, and he walked to the house without molestation: another bribe prevailed on the footman to admit him up stairs, where he surprised Lady Egerton not long after our heroine had left her, and at the very time Sir William was on the road attended by his friends. She started at his entrance, for there was no light in the room but what the moon and the fire afforded, which was insufficient for her to discover who he was; but the first sound of his voice declared it was Lisburne. She screamed, and rising from the sofa, insisted on his leaving her immediately, but in vain: he seized both her hands, and held them fast to prevent her from quitting the room; she struggled to disengage herself; but her strength was unequal to his: her tears however and entreaties affected him, and he assured her he would go, if she would listen to him a minute only; she unwillingly consented, and when he had informed her of his intended plan, for which he hoped to receive her thanks, he fell at her feet to solicit her forgiveness for the former injustice and cruelty of his behaviour.

Sir William in driving through the village, met the post-chaise which carried Mr. Lisburne; and suspecting something he stopped his own carriage, and called to the postillion to know from whence he came? "From Elmsthorpe, sir," (returned the man). "And who, pray, did you leave there?" "A gentleman, sir, I do not know his name, that came to master's yesterday." "And when are you to fetch him again?" "I can't tell indeed, sir; I am to wait for him here at the Red Lion." This little conversation redoubled Sir William's anger and anxiety; he ordered the coachman to whip his horses, and in a very few minutes arrived at his own gates. Here they all alighted, not to give any alarm, and walking through the park came to the house, and opened the dressing-room door, at the very instant Lisburne was on his knees to Lady Egerton, and kissing her hand. The darkness of the room added to Sir William's rage; he drew his sword and would have sacrificed the defenceless Lisburne instantly to his fury, had not Mr. Barrington and Mr. Millar forcibly withheld him. The lady fell into fits, and at this period Honoria entered from the garden.

Sir William, choaked with passion, was uttering the bitterest invectives; and with dreadful imprecations was calling all the powers of evil on his head, if he suffered Lisburne to exist another day; who, inattentive to his threats, was vainly endeavouring to clear Lady Egerton from the imputations he cast on her. After half an hour spent in mutual expressions of anger and revenge, the other gentlemen separated them, but not till they had agreed to meet the next morning at seven o'clock, in a close about half a mile from S——.

At six, Lady Egerton, who after a night spent in extreme agony of mind, had just fallen into a slumber, was awakened by a message from Sir William, desiring her to rise and dress herself immediately, and have every thing prepared for their journey, as he should return for her in an hour. She was obliged to comply, but her mind was in such a state from her apprehensions of the event of their meeting, of which this message informed her the exact time, that Honoria and her maid dressed her as they would an infant, not having the least power to assist herself. Sir William then called on Mr. Barrington, who had promised to be his second, and repaired to the appointed spot; where they were soon joined by the other gentlemen. When the distances were

measured, Mr. Lisburne turning calmly to his second, said, "Wilmot, remember if I fall, it is my last and most earnest request that you suffer Sir William to escape, and should my mother blame you for it, tell her it was my dying wish. I have provoked my own fate by the rashness I have been guilty of, and have perhaps deserved punishment for injuring the happiness, the fame, though not the honour, of the most unfortunate and most amiable of her sex. And now, Sir William, before we fire, listen to me one moment. I am perhaps on the verge of eternity, and would not for worlds utter a deliberate falsehood; believe me therefore when I assure you, Lady Egerton knew not of my visit till I entered her apartment: she insisted on my quitting her immediately, which I promised if she would hear my vindication, and receive my last farewell; for I intended going abroad directly on leaving Elmsthorpe; thus I compelled her attention, and before five minutes were elapsed, your arrival put an end to our conversation."

"Then pray, sir, (returned Sir William, with an air of insolent incredulity) where were you from the time you quitted the ball room, which if I recollect right was long before my presence interrupted you; and how came Lady Egerton, if unconscious of your intention, to admit you and be denied to every one else?" "After what I have so solemnly asserted, Sir William, (replied Mr. Lisburne, haughtily), I should scarcely deign an answer to your questions, did not the reputation of an innocent woman perhaps depend on it. Then know, sir, I went from the ball to the George, where I wrote a letter to her; but not expressing sufficiently in that the remorse of my soul, I determined if possible to see her. The porter and footman both refused me admittance, and they can testify the hour, nay the minute that I came. A bribe prevailed on them to permit me to pass, and I once more condescend to repeat, that I had not been five minutes in Lady Egerton's dressing-room when you returned."

"We are wasting the time, (said the Baronet, without appearing to hear his last speech); fire, sir." Mr. Lisburne complied, but his hand was so unsteady from the resentment he felt, and his agitation, that he only grazed Sir William's shoulder. Sir William took a surer aim; the ball entered Mr. Lisburne's temple, and he dropped instantly dead. Mr. Wilmot then resentfully addressed Sir William:—"You are free, sir, at present; the request of my departed friend obliges me not to detain you, but it does not bind his relations, and if justice pursues you, the unremitted cruelty with which you have sought his life, will make me an unfavourable witness on your trial, if your stay in England should permit your adversaries to bring you to one. He then had the corpse removed, whilst Sir William attended by Mr. Barrington returned to Elmsthorpe. There Mr. Millar waited for them, to whom he consigned the management of his affairs, and tearing Lady Egerton from Honoria, placed her in the chariot in a state of insensibility, into which she fell when she heard of his return, from the certainty of Lisburne's death, and the dread she felt of his treatment when absent from all her friends, and from her native country.

Honoria, whose sensibility had been deeply wounded by her distress, saw her depart with a flood of tears; but her grief was soon interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Millar, who apologizing for his intrusion, said he was ordered by Sir William to see her leave the house that very day, and therefore begged her to prepare for her journey, and pardon him for the liberty he took in mentioning it. She replied it was her intention, and she should certainly lose no time but hasten to quit a spot, where she had witnessed so much cruelty, and had been treated with so much injustice. Her preparations were soon made, and sending for a post-chaise from S——, she

left Elmsthorpe early in the afternoon, but went a little out of the way to give her two favourites, Henry and Sophia, a token of her affection. She staid an hour at the parsonage, and then drove to the George at S——, where she bespoke a bed and a place in the diligence, which was to set out for London the next morning.

It was some addition to her embarrassment that she knew not where to direct to Miss Onslow, as her last letter was from Paris, but it informed her that she was going to the South of France with the Ashbourns, and would write again when they were settled.

CHAP. XVIII.

AT three o'clock the next morning our fair heroine was informed the diligence was ready: she entered it agitated by the variety of emotions, that the events of the day before had raised in her bosom; but resentment to Sir William, and pity for Lady Egerton, were at length wholly absorbed in the painful idea of her own friendless and unprotected situation. Thrown once more on an un pitying world, without a friend to whom her welfare was dear, but Lady Eustace and Miss Onslow, and those friends too far distant to advise her respecting her future schemes, or stand forth in defence of her character, which she doubted not but Sir William would cruelly asperse. At length, after a variety of plans, she determined for the present to take an apartment at Mrs. Gibbons's, and there look out for some situation, or wait for letters from Lady Eustace.

There was no other passenger in the diligence, but an elderly gentleman, whose drowsiness and natural taciturnity, prevented him from interrupting the train of reflections into which she fell, as she lost sight of those scenes, where she had witnessed afflictions, which had for some time obliterated from her mind the painful recollection of her own.

They had travelled near sixty miles, in a silence only broken by an occasional remark on the weather or the dust, or an apology from the gentleman for deranging the lady's hat, when by the jolting of the carriage, or from his inclination to sleep, he struck his head against her's; when her reverie was suddenly put an end to by an accident, not only disagreeable but dangerous; one of the wheels going over a bank, the carriage immediately overturned. The old gentleman was bruised by the fall, but Honoria received so violent a blow on her arm, that she rightly conjectured it was broken. Some labourers in a field by the road came directly to their assistance, and conducted the passengers to a small public house not far distant, from whence after a short time, the diligence proceeded to London; but the pain in Honoria's arm increased so rapidly, she could not pursue her journey. The woman of the house put her to bed, and sent for a surgeon, who set her arm and declared her in no danger, if a fever did not ensue, to prevent which he begged her to keep as quiet as possible, and by no means think of travelling till she had his permission. With this injunction he left her, but not to repose; a thousand distracting thoughts kept her the whole night from sleeping. A few hours before, she had imagined her sorrows incapable of aggravation, but this accident fatally convinced her of the contrary, as she now experienced every misery that violent bodily pain and the deepest uneasiness of mind can inflict.

Mr. Williams, the Surgeon, was a man of some skill and great humanity; but from living entirely in the country, he had none of those finer feelings which often distinguish those, who mix in more general and higher circles. Unaccustomed to elegance, he regarded our heroine in no other light than he would have done a farmer's daughter in the same situation; he could not see that she was of a superior order of beings to those with whom he usually conversed; and in these terms mentioned her the next day, when he visited Southern Lodge, to the amiable mistress of the mansion, whose pity being excited by his account, she ordered her carriage, intending to call on the unfortunate passenger immediately, and as she thought her situation must be very uncomfortable, offer her all the assistance in her power.

Miss Melmoth was at this period considerably turned of thirty; she had been beautiful, and might still have been called angelic,

*Could poets or could painters fix,
How angels look at thirty-six:*

Her understanding was elevated, yet truly feminine; her benevolence universal and her power to do good almost as unbounded as her will; as she possessed a very large estate, the annual produce of which she constantly spent, principally in deeds of charity; as she frequented no public places, and lived entirely at the lodge, where she kept an hospitable but not a profuse table, and dressed in a manner equally plain and elegant.

To a spirit like her's, active always in the relief of distress in whatever shape it appeared, Mr. Williams's tale gave an anxious emotion to visit his patient; though he only described her as a pretty young woman confined by an unlucky accident to a wretched habitation; and from having always been in high life, and accustomed to the first style of company, she fancied a passenger in a public conveyance of any kind, must be a person of inferior birth and unformed manners. Impressed with this idea, when her chariot stopped at the Swan, she ordered her servant to ask for the young woman who had been left by the stage coach the evening before. Honoria heard this enquiry, and wounded pride and momentary resentment dyed her cheeks with the deepest crimson; but an instant's recollection convinced her of her folly, and she desired Miss Melmoth might be admitted. But what words can express the astonishment of that lady, when instead of an awkward country girl she beheld a young creature who was beauty itself; whose voice was harmony, and whose native elegance could not be disguised by her dishabille! She hesitated, apologized for her intrusion,—“I was informed, madam, (said she) of your accident by Mr. Williams, and the certainty that your situation here must be as unpleasant, as a removal to any distance would be dangerous, prompted me to wait on you, and permit me to request you will accept an apartment at Southern Lodge, till you can safely continue your journey.”

The proud spirit of Honoria, which at Miss Melmoth's entrance gave her bosom such painful sensations, subsided by degrees during her whole speech; but at the conclusion, surprize and gratitude so entirely overcame her, she burst into tears, which her attentive visitor, who thought them only the effect of a lowness of spirits, not unnatural in her situation, would take no notice of, but added with a most benevolent smile, “Will you not think me too impertinent, madam, if I beg to supply the loss of your arm by writing to your friends, and relieving the uneasiness they are undoubtedly in for your safety?” Honoria started, and striking her hand on her forehead agonized almost to madness, exclaimed, “Oh, I have no friends, no relations, nor is there at this moment one person in England, to whom the life or death of the wretched Honoria is of the least consequence.”

Though these words, and the action which accompanied them, excited the greatest astonishment in Miss Melmoth, it abated not her kindness nor altered her intention. The prepossession she had at first sight felt for her, was rather increased than lessened by the knowledge of her misfortunes. She soothed the fair mourner with the most affectionate expressions, and promises of protection and assistance, and repeated her entreaties with so much

earnestness, that Honoria, who grew more composed, at last consented to return with her to the lodge.

During their little journey, Miss Melmoth with a delicate attention avoided every subject which might recall those painful ideas, that had so lately agitated her lovely guest; but as they passed a small cottage in a retired and romantic situation, Honoria wrung her hand, and exclaimed, "If I was but the mistress of that little hut, where I might pass my days in solitude, how comparatively happy should I be! In the silence of that retreat I should lose the sense of my misfortunes, and a total seclusion from the world would perhaps restore peace to my wounded mind." "Oh beware (said Miss Melmoth with a deep sigh) of indulging an idea that may be destructive to your reason. I have myself too fatally experienced, how inefficacious are solitude and reflection, to the restoration of content: they only augment those sorrows they appear to soothe. When you are better I will relate the short but melancholy history of my life, which will I hope convince you of the truth of my affection.

When they arrived at the lodge, Miss Melmoth ordered an apartment to be got ready, and whilst it was preparing, turned the conversation on the most indifferent topics, for anxious as she was to know more of her guest, she saw plainly her spirits were too much agitated, to begin that evening a recital of events, the mere recollection of which had given her such painful emotions.

During this interval, our heroine had leisure to contemplate the countenance of her amiable benefactress; it was strongly marked with sense and humanity, though early affliction had robbed it of those graces, time would have spared many years: it had destroyed her bloom, and faded a complexion once the finest in the world, but her cheeks would still glow with compassion for the injured, or resentment to the oppressor of innocence: her once polished brow was clouded, but not contracted with anxiety it was the seat of mild resignation. Grief had impaired but not extinguished the lustre of her eyes; they often sparkled when her bosom was animated with the only delight it was now capable of feeling, that of giving happiness to others.

After a few days residence with this charming woman, Honoria grew considerably better; she related to her every circumstance of her life, and gratefully received a promise of support and protection till the arrival of her friend, Lady Eustace. Her mind thus relieved from half its cares, became insensibly more tranquil; and she lived in a state of serenity she had not known since Mrs. Fortescue's death, but the idea of Colonel Effingham would still obtrude on her imagination, and embitter every comfort.

One day as they were walking in the park, Honoria was unusually pensive: when Miss Melmoth, who well knew the cause of her sorrow, said, "I will now, my dear Miss Wentworth, fulfil the promise I have long made you, and relate the unhappy events which have changed a disposition naturally lively, and disposed to give and receive pleasure, into a melancholy if not a gloomy one: and perhaps you may learn from my example, not to grieve too much for unavoidable evils, but submit with meek and pious resignation to the All-wise decrees of Providence. I lost my mother before I could be sensible of her worth, but her loss was rendered of less consequence to me, by the attention of an indulgent father, and the care of an excellent aunt, who instilled into my mind those principles which I hope will ever be the guide of my life. She

died when I was just eighteen, and I lamented her as a parent: had any one told me at that time how much heavier afflictions I was to suffer, I should have thought it impossible.

“Whilst we were in mourning for her, my father to amuse my mind took me to Brighthelmstone, hoping the change of scene would have the effect he wished. It was here I renewed an acquaintance begun in my earliest years, with a gentleman whose father lived near us, but being sent abroad in a public capacity, he took his whole family with him, when Orlando was only nine years old, and we had never seen each other since: we at first conversed with all the formality of strangers, and there was a reserve and even coldness in Mr. Brudenel’s manner, which I thought inconsistent with the intimacy that had subsisted between our families, and the affection with which in childhood we had regarded each other. This by degrees wore off, and before we left Brighthelmstone I esteemed him as a brother, but he, as I afterwards found, returned my friendship with more tenderness than I at that time had any idea of. I cannot dwell any longer on this period, the happiest of my life. The Brudenel family returned to our neighbourhood; Orlando was constantly with me, and for two years our affection increased every day. Our parents had projected an union, and with joy beheld our inclinations in unison with their own. Every thing was prepared for our marriage, which was to be solemnized in six weeks; when I fatally requested my father that the intermediate time might be spent at Brighthelmstone, for which place I had a strong partiality, from the recollection it was there I first made an impression on the heart of my beloved Orlando. My father, unaccustomed to deny, unfortunately assented to my wishes, and in an evil hour we set out.

“Every day was devoted to some amusement, but water parties principally engaged our time. The week before that fixed on for our return, the weather had obliged us to put off from day to day a scheme, from which we expected particular pleasure. Full of spirits and a stranger to calamity, I considered the rod of adversity as far from me, and scarcely thought there was a possibility that my hopes of happiness should be blasted.

“From the repeated disappointments I became more anxious that our plan so long projected should take place, and the morning before our intended journey, though the sky was still unfavorable, prevailed on my father and Orlando, who was ever solicitous to oblige and amuse me, to collect the party, many of whom refused from apprehensions of the weather, and only two ladies besides Mrs. Brudenel joined us. We sailed several miles from the shore in an open boat, and on our return, went on board a large vessel, where every refreshment was prepared for us. The conversation was particularly cheerful, and we were hardly sensible how the moments flew, ‘till the approach of evening warned us to leave the ship; which we were the more anxious to do, as the clouds gathered, the wind rose considerably, and there was every appearance of an approaching storm. Though we took a hasty leave of our hospitable entertainers, yet in that short time, the wind increased so much, that we were all a little alarmed; but the sailors and gentlemen assuring us there was no danger, if the sail was taken down, we prepared to descend. This occasioned a still farther delay, but some of the party were soon seated in the boat; Orlando stood at the edge to receive me, when just as I was stepping down, it tossed so violently, my foot slipped, and I fell into the sea.

“It was many, many days, before I was sensible of what had passed during that dreadful

period, and yet I awoke too soon to the knowledge of misery. I scarcely recovered from one fit of delirium, when the horror which the recollection of the truth brought on me, threw me into another. They grew indeed weaker and weaker, but the seat of reason was shaken, and will not I fear ever"—she stopped, looked wildly around her, and put her hand to her forehead.—Honorina was dreadfully frightened; they were at a great distance from the house, and she also looked round with the hope of seeing some person near them, but not a creature was within sight. Miss Melmoth walked unusually quick, and Honorina followed with trembling steps and a beating heart. They soon came to a seat where she threw herself down, and burst into a flood of tears, which equally relieved the agitation of the one, and the apprehensions of the other.

When a little recovered, she took her pale friend affectionately by the hand,—“Forgive me, my dear Miss Wentworth, for thus alarming you, but I could not at that moment command my emotions. I am now more composed, and will conclude my melancholy story; do not oppose me, (observing Honorina was going to request her to defer it till another time); I am much better, and believe me it will do me less injury to go on now, than to begin the subject again, and I will not dwell on those particulars which pain me the most. It is enough to say, Orlando plunged immediately into the water hoping to save my life, but his own fell a sacrifice. I ought to be thankful to those who preserved it, though I have a thousand times ungratefully wished I had resigned my breath at the same moment with my ever regretted and beloved Orlando. My father and Mrs. Brudenel watched my slow recovery with anxious care, and when I could bear the journey, removed me from a place where every scene renewed the memory of my loss. They took me first to London, and when my health was re-established, we set out for France and Italy; where they hoped the variety I must necessarily meet with, would by degrees remove the stupor that seemed wholly to absorb my faculties: but their designs were frustrated, and their expectations disappointed. I was entirely pensive, objected to none of their plans, but obstinately resolved to indulge my grief and refuse all consolation, and thus repaid with unkindness and ingratitude, Mrs. Brudenel’s attention, who left England with the hope of soothing that affliction in me, she too deeply felt herself.

“After some months stay in France, my father finding neither change of air or scene had any effect on my spirits, determined to return to England; and hoping to remove that insensibility which so particularly alarmed him, carried me to his seat in B—shire. This had all the effect he expected; my grief became frantic, when I viewed those scenes of early happiness: not a tree or cottage could I pass, without recalling to my mind all the misery I had experienced since I last beheld them. The violence of my emotions at length gave way to a more composed sorrow, and I spoke and acted more rationally than I had done since the fatal event. He now thought my cure completed, and we soon after left Westwood, and returned to London for the winter. There my friends injudiciously joined with him in persuading me to frequent the public amusements: I complied unwillingly with their solicitations, but company and diversions, far from affording me the relief they expected, only disgusted me, and confirmed my resolution of retiring from the world if ever I had it in my power.

“The spring following my dear father was also taken from me, and I not only endured the grief every dutiful and affectionate child must feel at such an event, but I had the additional misfortune of reflecting that I had probably shortened his days, by the unreasonable indulgence of

my melancholy, which neither time nor the kindest attentions I had received from my friends could subdue. Mrs. Brudenel was then gone abroad with her husband, where she still remains; and I was more firmly than ever resolved upon retirement; and in opposition to all entreaties, some weeks after my father's death, I left London with only two servants, and went into North Wales. I fixed on the most retired and romantic situation I could meet with, and took a small house very distant from any large town or high road: it was at the foot of a mountain, and almost enclosed by a thick wood; a narrow river ran by the garden, which at some distance falling down a rock, formed a natural cascade; a rugged seat was cut out of the rock, shaded by some lofty trees. It was here listening to the water fall, and the cawing of a distant rookery, I spent my melancholy hours, and sometimes climbed the mountain, which commanded a fine and extensive view of the ocean.

“In these solitary rambles I constantly devoted my thoughts to the recollection of my past happiness and present misery; indulged myself in ideal conversations with Orlando, till my wild and disordered imagination almost fancied him present at my side.

“In this manner I spent the remainder of the summer, nor did the autumnal storms prevent me from daily visiting the seat, or climbing the mountain; and the enthusiastic ideas that constantly accompanied me in these excursions were now succeeded by fits of stupor which were so violent, that my servants sometimes found me almost insensible, and wet with the heavy rains that often fell whilst I sat totally inanimate, and unconscious of my situation. Alarmed at the frequency of my reveries, and the wildness of my behaviour, my own maid, Fanny, who had lived with me many years, and was tenderly attached to me, wrote privately to my friend, Lady Pelham, and begged her to come, and if possible draw me from a spot, where the unlimited indulgence of my grief would, she feared, prove fatal to my reason.

“Lady Pelham flew to me with all the ardor of friendship upon receiving this account, and her judicious arguments at length convinced me of the danger as well as impropriety of what I called soothing my melancholy, which in reality only heightened my affliction. She prevailed on me to leave Wales for ever, and accompany her for a time to her house in Huntingdonshire, where she promised I should live as I pleased. Under her hospitable roof I became what you now see me; my unbounded grief by degrees gave way to her kind attentions; she spent the whole winter in the country to inure me to society, for at first I flew from every stranger as I would from a beast of prey. She indulged all my fancies, and humoured me like a child, till at length I exerted myself to return her kindness, and convinced that she secluded herself from company on my account, obliged myself to attend her on her visits, and see her company at home. This at first was extremely irksome to me, but I was soon convinced that even when most fatigued with the insipidity of common conversation, I was at least prevented from attending so entirely to my own distress, as I had been for some time accustomed to. During the time I staid with this kind, attentive friend, I became daily more and more tranquil; and after a variety of schemes for my future life, she persuaded me to purchase this house and park, assisted me with her advice in a few alterations, and remained with me till I was entirely reconciled to my new situation. She visits me every year, and I now expect her very soon. It will give me great pleasure, my dear girl, to introduce you to her, and she will, from mixing so much in the world, be a more agreeable companion, than from my recluse way of life I possibly can.”

Honoria thanked Miss Melmoth for the confidence she had placed in her, and owned the justness of her arguments, and promised to be guided by them; but reproved her for supposing Lady Pelham could add to the happiness she enjoyed in her company.

Several weeks glided away in this tranquil manner; Miss Melmoth's visitors were few, but generally agreeable, and the society she here met with, was more to our heroine's taste, than any she had been engaged in since her arrival in England.

CHAP. XIX.

SOUTHERN LODGE was five miles distant from Ware, and in a most beautiful situation: the variety of charming spots every way round it, often tempted Miss Melmoth and Honoria, who had now perfectly recovered from her accident, to ride on horseback, and as the spring was uncommonly fine, and they were both excellent horse-women, a day seldom passed without their taking this salutary and delightful exercise.

One morning as they were just setting out, a young lady rode up to the house to pay them a visit; who hearing their intention, would not detain them, but offered to join their party; they gladly accepted her proposal, and set out. Returning, they passed by a very good and elegant house, delightfully situated in a spacious park, and commanding a charming prospect, but the grounds appearing rude and uncultivated, as if its owner neglected them. "Who does this place belong to? (said Honoria) I have often observed and regretted its uncultivated and deserted state." "The family, (returned Miss Melmoth) are abroad, and not in a situation to bestow much money on repairs. I hear it is to be sold, and wish some agreeable person would buy it, as the distance from Southern Lodge is so trifling, I could here have an excellent neighbour." "Bless me, (cried Miss Wallace) how could I be so stupid as not to tell you the news? I know you will be glad to hear it, and you may depend upon its being true, for I had it from the very best authority. Mr. Williams called to see my grandmother yesterday; you know his brother is an attorney who transacts business for the Ashbury's, and he assured me Ashbury Park was bought by Sir Charles Mortimer, for the gentleman who is just going to be married to his sister, but whose name I have forgot. It was something of Ef---Ef, I cannot remember what though, I declare; and he added, Sir Charles had been, nay perhaps is still here, giving orders for alterations and repairs."

Honoria's distress and confusion at this speech can better be imagined than described; yet what she then felt was nothing to her sensations when Miss Wallace exclaimed, "Oh, I dare say that is Sir Charles coming from the house; look, Miss Wentworth!"—She did look, and saw not the Baronet, but Colonel Effingham himself; her heart beat violently and she turned pale; fortunately this was not observed by her companions, who were wholly though differently engrossed, one by the beau, the other by the house. She was immediately sensible he must pass them, and not feeling any degree of shame at her appearance, did not so much wish to avoid him, as when she was only Miss Mortimer's attendant; and her anxiety was accompanied by some curiosity to know in what manner he would address her, whether with any marks of his former attachment, or any consciousness of his own infidelity. Surprized she was certain he would be, and she passed the few minutes before they met, in preparing her mind for the interview, and exulted in the idea of receiving him with as much apparent indifference and unconcern, as he himself could possibly assume: But how was she shocked and astonished when he came near! he started on discovering her to be among the party, which at a distance had attracted his notice, coloured excessively, but passed them as an entire stranger, only making a slight bow as he walked by.

Honoria, who was prepared for any behaviour but neglect, could not support this; she vainly endeavoured to conquer it, but after a few minutes ineffectual struggle, fell from her horse

quite insensible. The creature she rode happening to be very gentle, stopped instantly, so that she received no other injury, than that the fall on the road could occasion. The screams of the other ladies recalled the Colonel, who could not consistently with common politeness refuse his assistance; he carried her in his arms to a neighbouring farm house, where hartshorn, burnt feathers, and various other remedies were tried without the least effect. Miss Melmoth was extremely alarmed, and he appeared to join in her uneasiness, but at last observing some symptoms of returning life, and Miss Melmoth expressing a wish for her carriage, he offered to send his servant for it, as her's was dispatched for Mr. Williams. She accepted his offer, and he immediately left the house; the carriage soon arrived, but the Colonel returned no more.

Honorina was lifted into it without having in the least recovered her reason or recollection; she once or twice opened her eyes, but closed them again instantly. Her kind friend was greatly terrified, and feared the fall had hurt her senses. Mr. Williams however arriving at the lodge soon after them, bled her, and this gave her more relief; she knew Miss Melmoth, and gratefully pressed her hand, but could not yet speak. She was immediately put to bed, and Miss Wallace took leave; but before night the surgeon pronounced her in a high fever, and begged to have further advice. A physician was directly sent for, who greatly to Miss Melmoth's satisfaction, declared she was in no danger; that the fever proceeded not from the fall, but some inward agitation of mind: the event proved him right, she grew better in a few days, and Miss Melmoth had the infinite happiness of seeing her tender cares rewarded with success.

One morning she was sitting by her bed side, when Mr. Williams entered, and fancying Honorina asleep, sat down by her and began a conversation in a whisper: "What an unfortunate young creature is this, (said he) to meet with two such accidents in so short a time! But do you know, continued he, what an odd thing has happened? Twice every day since she has been ill, I have had a country fellow come to my house to know how the young lady was at Southern Lodge; he never enquired for her by name, nor could I make him tell me who he came from; and I find he has been once or twice at Dr. Corbett's to know his opinion."

"'Tis very strange, indeed, (replied Miss Melmoth) but whoever he is, he has been kinder than the gentleman we met at Ashbury Park, for though he saw our distress, and how alarmingly ill she was, he has never had the politeness to enquire for her since."

This latter speech Honorina heard; she was just awake, and by exciting the most painful sensations, it contributed to restore her: she burst into a flood of tears which relieved her extremely, and she recovered quicker from that time. As soon as her mind was enough composed to begin the subject, she informed Miss Melmoth of all that passed, and who the gentleman really was, whose neglect had surprized her; and added, that grateful as she was for her offered protection, it was at present impossible for her to remain at Southern Lodge, as Colonel Effingham's residence at the Park would constantly impress her mind with a terror of meeting him, and prevent her from regaining that tranquillity so essential to her health. Miss Melmoth endeavoured to persuade her at least to stay in Hertfordshire till the repairs at Ashbury were finished, as till then the family could not reside there. "Oh no, (cried Honorina hastily) but he will be often there to overlook the workmen, and indeed I shall be miserable if I stay. Do not, dear madam, accuse me of ingratitude, for believe me, could I by any action of my life convince you

of the sincerity of my regard, I would submit to any evil however painful, except this, which would be more than my heart or mind could sustain. No, I will, till Lady Eustace returns, continue the way of life from which I shall at least derive a support." Miss Melmoth then begged her not to rely on such a precarious method, but accept her purse, which she might at all times freely command, and board in some place which she might chuse, in a respectable and agreeable family, till the arrival of her friend. "No, dearest Miss Melmoth, (replied Honoria) that I cannot submit to; as your guest, had the cruelty of my situation permitted me to remain so, I would not have refused your kind assistance, when by any attention to you I could in the least return it. But compelled to leave you, I will again depend on that world which I have hitherto found better than it is pictured. Think, dear madam, of the unprotected state in which I left Ireland, and then consider how many friends Providence in this country has raised me; though the peculiarity of my situation has so often prevented me from receiving the benefits they would have bestowed on me. Of this you are the highest instance; and I shall not be the less deeply sensible of my obligations to you, though I am not suffered to prove the reality of my attachment, by devoting myself wholly to you, and regulating my conduct entirely by your will."

Miss Melmoth, greatly affected at this speech, and the energy of her manner, would no longer oppose her inclination; but finding her resolute and anxious to leave the Lodge the next day, ordered the carriage to attend her. At the same time wrote a letter to Lady Pelham, who had been prevented from visiting Hertfordshire, recommending her in the most earnest terms to her care and protection; but mentioning no more of her history than her present friendless state, and requesting Lady Pelham to detain her till she could meet with an eligible and pleasant situation, which she doubted not would soon offer among her Ladyship's numerous acquaintance; but delicately hinting, that as such a companion must in every family be a valuable acquisition, perhaps she might wish her to continue with herself; and in that case, Miss Melmoth, added, she should be particularly happy in the reflection of having contributed to the comfort of two so dear to her, by introducing them to each other.

This letter she brought down at tea, and giving it to Honoria, desired she would take it to Lady Pelham, to whose house in St. James's-street the coachman had orders to drive her. "And do not, dear Honoria, (continued this amiable woman) let an overstrained delicacy induce you to refuse the asylum she will for the present afford you, and with her I hope you will remain till it is your own wish to quit her; and surely if I do not judge too partially of her heart and manners, that will not be soon." Honoria thanked her fervently for the kind and tender interest she took in her happiness, and assured her she would in every respect be guided by her judgment. They both passed a melancholy evening, and parted in the morning with the utmost regret. Miss Melmoth requested Honoria to write as often as possible, and begged her to excuse her not attending her to town, but said she had not yet conquered the horror she felt at the idea of entering it. The chariot then drove off, leaving its charming mistress in a flood of tears, whilst Honoria was no less agitated.

During the few weeks she had resided at Southern Lodge, she had experienced every happiness in her power to feel, or Miss Melmoth's to bestow, in whose character all that was animated and tender united, and conspired to render her the most agreeable companion and the kindest friend. Honoria could not therefore but regret, though she did not repine at the

unfortunate concurrence of events, which drove her from so safe, so happy, and so honourable an asylum; but rejoiced in an assurance of her constant regard, which whilst she continued to possess and deserve, would insure her from many of the evils, usually attending on poverty and dependance.

These reflections filled her mind 'till the carriage stopped in St. James's street; but how great was her surprize and grief, when the footman knocked at Lord Phelham's door, and was informed by the servant, that his Lady was that morning gone to Richmond for a week or ten days, but that his Lord was still in town, though not then at home! This intelligence distressed and perplexed her, and she regretted her precipitation in leaving Southern Lodge, till Lady Pelham had received notice of her intended arrival. She was at last awakened from her reverie, by the footman's asking her if she would not go back into Hertfordshire? "Oh, no, (answered she) drive me to Great Marlborough-street." they obeyed her orders, and stopped at Mrs. Gibbons's, who immediately came out to the door. Honoria enquired if she had an apartment to let for a week, and was first answered in the negative. "I have (said she) let my first floor for these last three months to a gentleman and lady, but if one bed-chamber on the second will serve you, madam, you may have that, for I have not another to spare."

Honoria had no alternative, as she knew not where else to go; and ordering her trunks to be brought in, agreed to take the vacant apartment for a week, and board with Mrs. Gibbons. She then wrote a few lines to Miss Melmoth to acquaint her with her disappointment, and the steps she had taken in consequence of it; but assured her, as soon as Lady Pelham returned, she would wait on her with the letter. This she sent back by the servant, and then attended her landlady at dinner, who informed her the gentleman and lady on her first floor were very good-natured, agreeable people, that Mr. Wilton was in some public office and very little at home, so she had asked Mrs. Wilton to drink tea with them, as she thought she would be a pleasant companion. Honoria thanked her coolly for her good intention, but begged she would give herself no farther trouble, as she by no means wished for company; since the ill state of her health would induce her to spend the greatest part of her time in her own chamber.

However, not to appear too reserved, she came down to tea, and found Mrs. Wilton already arrived. Her appearance did not prepossess her in her favour; her manners were affectedly polite, yet rustic almost to a degree of vulgarity. She talked a vast deal about the public amusements, yet confessed till that winter she was an entire stranger to them, as she had till her marriage lived wholly in the country. She told our heroine she hoped she would spend a good deal of time with her, as Mr. Wilton was very little at home. Honoria bowed and was studying for some civil excuse, when a loud rap at the door interrupted her; this was followed by the entrance of a very elegant man, about three or four and forty, who from his address she immediately discovered to be Mr. Wilton. His lady, after expressing her surprize, as his return was quite unexpected, introduced Miss Wentworth as a young lady who was come to lodge in the house, and who she hoped would favor her with her company as often as possible. He joined in this hope, and coming up took her hand in a free manner, and added at present he should be benefited by it, as for the next week the holidays at his office would permit him to be more at home. This, thought Honoria, would be very little inducement, even had I any intention of accepting these civil offers. "Dear me, cried Mrs. Wilton, then let us go some where this evening, and Miss

Wentworth will go with us." He immediately assented, and ringing the bell ordered a hackney coach, before Honoria had time to declare against joining their party; her refusal, however, was not attended to; she pleaded ill health; they said it was a fine evening, she could not catch cold, and amusement would do her good. She still persisted in her refusal, when Mr. Wilton going to her and seizing both her hands, declared positively she should go. Finding from his freedom it was necessary for her to assume an air of greater consequence, than merely as Mrs. Gibbons's boarder she had any right to; she replied with extreme haughtiness,— "Indeed, sir, I shall not," and instantly, to avoid their importunities, left the room, and retired to her own chamber.

When a little recovered from the agitation into which this had thrown her, she resolved to be on her guard during her stay, and associate with them as little as possible: yet she almost blamed herself for forming an unfavourable opinion of them, fancying it might proceed merely from disgust at the rudeness of their behaviour; yet she could not entirely reconcile some apparent contradictions which struck her as singular. Mrs. Wilton was awkward and unformed, though extremely beautiful; her husband had in his appearance and manner an air of high fashion, distinguishable even in the few minutes she had spent with him; and their dress and the style in which they lived, was highly inconsistent with their going into public with a woman like Mrs. Gibbons, who, tho' decent and creditable, had nothing of the gentlewoman about her.

The next morning at breakfast she apologized to Honoria for their pressing her so much to attend them the evening before; but added, I am sorry you did not, for we were vastly entertained I assure you. "Where did you go?" said Honoria. "To Astley's, (returned she) and coming home Mr. Wilton declared he would not ask you to accompany us any more, though I am sure he would be very glad indeed if you would offer." "I endeavoured, replied Honoria coldly, to make them understand that my ill health will not permit me to attend public places."

Nothing further passed at that time, and she spent the whole day, excepting at meals, in her chamber, to avoid again meeting them: but the following, just as she had finished dinner, Mr. Wilton entered the room. She rose immediately to retire, but advancing with a respectful bow, he begged her to stay till she had heard his apology for the strangeness of his behaviour the first evening he had the honor of seeing her.— "Believe me, madam, (added he) I will no more attempt to alter your resolutions of retirement, and however happy Mrs. Wilton would be in your acquaintance, she shall not again solicit it, nor ever intrude on you uninvited." "I should be sorry, sir, (returned Honoria gravely) to offend Mrs. Wilton by a reserve which is not natural to me; but I am yet scarcely recovered from a violent fit of illness, and consequently unable to join in parties of any kind: besides, my stay here will be probably but a few days longer, as I only wait the return of a lady from the country. Mr. Wilton again bowed and withdrew. "Bless me, (cried Mrs. Gibbons) well to be sure he is affronted, for I never saw him so grave before." "I should rather say so reasonable or so polite, replied Honoria, for in my opinion he appears to a much greater advantage than the first time I saw him." During the remainder of the week they never met; she had only been out to enquire if Lady Pelham was returned, and was informed she was expected the following Thursday. The rest of her time she passed usually in her own apartment, reading, writing, or working.

At this period she had been in England rather more than a twelvemonth, but from her

frequent removals had heard only twice from her old nurse; her letters had contained nothing more than an account of Mr. Fortescue's encreasing infirmities, and his lady's growing influence and additional ill humour, and the most earnest wishes for her happiness. She began now to expect impatiently to hear from Lady Eustace; she had desired her letters might be addressed to her at Mrs. Middleton's, and since the fire and her death, imagining all with that direction would be carried to her husband at Mr. Burnaby's, she begged Mrs. Gibbons would speak to him, and have them sent to her, from whom she could receive them at any time. It was in vain to write to Miss Onslow, since she knew not where to find her, therefore contented herself with waiting her arrival in England, when she could easily hear of her by applying to Mrs. Draper, in Cavendish square.

On the following Friday morning she went to St. James's-street, and enquiring for Lady Pelham, was shewn into a dressing-room, where her Ladyship was sitting. The elegance of her appearance and manner always ensured her a polite reception, but her mentioning Miss Melmoth's name and delivering the letter, at present entitled her to something more: but the smiles with which her Ladyship took it, were wholly banished from her countenance by the perusal. She told Honoria with a cold civility, that she saw by the date that she ought to have received it near a fortnight before, and she feared her absence had been an inconvenience to her, by obliging her to take a lodging; "for, added she, Miss Melmoth here desires me to accommodate you with an apartment in my house, 'till I can among my acquaintance find an eligible situation for you as companion or governess, for either of which she observes you are well qualified: therefore I suppose, Miss Wentworth, you need not return any more."

This address was so ill calculated to soothe Honoria's melancholy, that her proud spirit once or twice during this speech impelled her to renounce and disclaim the protection so haughtily offered, but recollecting her promise to Miss Melmoth, she curbed her rising resentment, and thanking her Ladyship coolly, said she would wait on her the next morning, as that evening she was obliged to spend in Great Marlborough-street. Lady Pelham replied that was as she pleased, and a loud footman's rap announcing the arrival of more company, she took leave, impressed with the most unfavorable idea of her new protectress, and truly unwilling to become her guest, from an apprehension of meeting ten thousand mortifications, to which she had been hitherto a stranger.

CHAP. XX.

HONORIA was at a loss to account for the coldness of Lady Pelham's behaviour; it was so entirely inconsistent with the character Miss Melmoth drew, and the opinion she had herself formed of her. But the fact was, though sincerely attached to Miss Melmoth, Lady Pelham had a little heart that would admit but one friend at a time; and as jealous in friendship as most women are in love, she could not bear her favorite should bestow any peculiar marks of regard on another, and the warmth of expression that lady had used in her recommendation of Honoria, had excited her jealousy and resentment, and caused that distant civility which so highly mortified our heroine. Yet fearful of offending her friend, Lady Pelham hesitated not to comply with her request, though highly disconcerted at it: she considered this sudden affection as merely the effusions of a romantic and enthusiastic mind, and probably bestowed on an object unworthy of it. Yet being a woman of principle, though not of sensibility, she would not endeavour to lessen the opinion she had formed of her merit, but determined literally to fulfil her wishes, by endeavouring to find her a proper situation, without appearing to understand the hint of keeping her in her own family.

With this view she received her the next morning with something of more cordiality, but it was so evidently constrained, that Honoria was not in the least better pleased, but silently regretted Miss Melmoth's ill-placed partiality, which consigned her to the protection of one so unwilling to undertake the charge.

Honoria spent the evening alone; her Ladyship being engaged to a party, to which she asked not our heroine to accompany her. Lord Pelham did not appear the whole day: but the following, just before dinner, he entered; his confusion at seeing her was equal to, but could not exceed, the astonishment Honoria felt, at beholding in him the very Mr. Wilton, whose behaviour at Mrs. Gibbons's had at first so much disgusted her. Fortunately his Lady did not observe it, but introduced her as a young person Miss Melmoth had recommended to her care, till she could meet with some situation that would suit her. Honoria, hurt at this expression, curtsied coolly to Lord Pelham, who addressed her as an entire stranger; but when her Ladyship a few minutes after left the room, he came up and said, "Let me now, Miss Wentworth, in my own person, again apologize for my conduct, as Mr. Wilton; for I can see you recollect me. My rudeness then arose merely from mistaking your character, from the company in which I found you; but the dignity of true virtue will ever repel the insults even of the greatest libertine, and I hope I may not consider myself as such, though you will suppose I did not change my name without some reason, not strictly consistent with the character in which I appear at present. The truth is, it was to prevent Mrs. Gibbons from raising unnecessary scruples about admitting Mrs. Wilton into her house, though not to deceive her; for I am greatly mistaken if she does not know my real situation in life, though she affects ignorance to avoid the censures of her neighbours, among whom she passes for a good kind of woman. Though as you know I am guilty of the folly of a connection with a girl who cannot pretend to virtue, yet I am not so depraved as to associate with one whose mind is wholly perverted, and who has lost all sense of delicacy: it was therefore to prevent her from becoming acquainted with those wretches in her line of life whose society is the destruction of every good principle, that I placed her with Mrs. Gibbons, where she is in no danger of

seeking amusement abroad, from the want of a companion at home. Now, Miss Wentworth, let me say when I found from your spirited behaviour and Mrs. Gibbons's account, that you were really a woman of virtue and delicacy, so far from endeavouring to intrude Mrs. Wilton's company on you, I would not have permitted your innocence to suffer by my deception, by her appearing with you in public or even in the streets, and of the truth of this assertion I hope you are convinced by my first apology."

Here he paused, and Honoria thanked him for his consideration, and confessed she was struck at the singular difference of their manners, and knew not how to account for it. He then continued, "Before Lady Pelham returns, let me intreat you not to mention this circumstance to her, as it would make her miserable, and not have any good effect; as her reproaches, instead of reforming me, would add disgust to what is now merely indifference." Honoria assured him she would not, for though concerned to be in a family where there was any thing to conceal, yet she would not, by revealing what required concealment, disturb the happiness of one unconscious of her husband's infidelity.

Lady Pelham soon after entered the room, and the conversation turned on the public amusements. "Have you been at the play since your arrival in town, Miss Wentworth?" (said Lord Pelham) "No, my Lord," (she replied, scarcely able to suppress a smile from the idea that he well knew how her time had been spent.) Why do you not make a party, Lady Pelham?" rejoined he. "Oh, answered the Lady visibly embarrassed, the theatres are just closing, and there is nothing to be seen worth going for." "But Ranelagh, madam, it is now the proper season for, and if Miss Wentworth has never been there, it is well worth her attention. Honoria, to relieve Lady Pelham's distress, coolly said; "I am obliged to your Lordship; but if my situation permitted, my health would not suffer me to attend public places of any kind; nor indeed have I spirits to undergo the fatigue they generally occasion." "Very true, (returned her Ladyship) you look extremely pale, but we go into the country soon after the Birth Day, and I hope the air will be of service to you."

To attempt giving a particular account of the life our heroine passed here would be impossible for its sameness and insipidity. Lady Pelham was constantly engaged in large circles either at home or abroad, but never asked her to attend her on her visits, or appear in her own company, except, which occurred once or twice during this time, it was a small conversation party: then she was suffered to sit in one corner of the room, make the tea and listen to what passed; but if she attempted to join, which from having been accustomed to she did at first, a freezing look from her Ladyship awed her into silence. A treatment so different from what she had ever before experienced, excited in her as great a dislike to Lady Pelham, as her gentle nature was capable of feeling. It sometimes hurt her conscience that she could not help preferring his Lordship, though sensible of his foibles; for, grateful for her compliance with his request, and respecting the innate purity of her mind, and the resolute propriety with which she maintained and avowed her principles, he ever behaved with a politeness and affability, which could not but raise her gratitude. She often thought with regret of Lady Egerton, and even Mrs. Campbell, whose character was pleasing, and would have been estimable, had not in one act her vanity got the better of her justice. If these shared her tender recollection, how much more did the amiable Miss Melmoth engross her ideas? but the memory of her kindness was so interwoven with her

reasons for leaving Southern Lodge, that it recalled to her mind all the melancholy and unfortunate events of her life, and added to the weight of afflictions that now pressed so heavily on her heart.

One evening as she was making tea for Lady Pelham and two ladies her visitors, a circumstance was mentioned that discovered more fully the illiberality of her sentiments, and heightened Honoria's dislike. Mrs. Egmont was speaking of a lady of her acquaintance, who had lost some very valuable laces and jewels, from the dishonesty of a servant in whom she had placed great confidence. "I am not in the least surprized, (replied Lady Pelham) nor can I even pity her; she took the girl from the Foundling Hospital, and what could she expect from one whose parents she could know nothing of, and who perhaps were thieves or murderers?" "Oh, Lady Pelham, (said Lady Clarendon) these cannot be your real sentiments; if all the children were to be forsaken whose parents were guilty or unknown, what would become of half the world? and is it not even criminal to judge so harshly? You may as well fancy every stranger you meet in company to be unworthy your notice, because you cannot possibly know whether his parents were people of honor and reputation."

"That (answered Lady Pelham) is a very different thing; we do not confide in every stranger we meet in company; but I again repeat, I would not for the world have a person in my house as a servant or dependent, who might belong to villains or banditti; and such possibly are half the children in the Foundling Hospital, who doubtless inherit their parents vices, though they do not bear their names." "Well, (cried Mrs. Egmont) I should never have entertained such an idea; why Lady Clarendon, do you think vice or virtue is hereditary? I once thought so, (she replied, with a repressed sigh) but I am now sadly convinced that virtue at least is not always. But Lady Pelham I am so far on your side, that I confess it would make me miserable for either of my children to marry into a family remarkable for licentiousness; but pardon me if I say it is uncharitable to suppose that those poor creatures, who from the peculiarity of their fate are deprived of the knowledge of their parents, even allowing it possible they were faulty, will derive from them evil inclinations sufficient to counteract the benefits of a good and virtuous education." "I dare say your Ladyship is perfectly right, (returned Lady Pelham) but your arguments cannot alter my sentiments."

Honoria had during this conversation been agitated with various emotions; the asperity with which Lady Pelham had declared an opinion so cruel and unjust, shocked and mortified her; she fancied other people might think the same, and lamented that she had acquainted even Miss Melmoth with the mystery of her birth, and secretly determined never to have another confidante.

Lady Clarendon's spirited opposition and delicate reproof, excited her utmost gratitude; she felt almost ready to thank her for the defence of that unhappy class of beings, to which she perhaps belonged. Her attention was seldom attracted by Lady Pelham's visitors, but this circumstance fixing it wholly on her, she was surprised that she had not before observed her interesting and elegant figure.

*Her form was mark'd with sorrow's traces,
But time had left her many graces,*

Nor dar'd to spoil a face so fair.

She was between forty and fifty, had the most striking remains of early beauty in her countenance; her complexion was transparently fair, but extremely pale; her blue eyes had now more languor than fire in them, yet when she smiled they often sparkled, though their expression of vivacity was but momentary; her features were still fine, but there was an habitual pensiveness in her face, that seemed the result of deep affliction; yet a serenity in her voice and manner, which proved it was affliction submitted to with resignation, and lessened, if not wholly subdued by religion. Honoria gazed on her for some moments with a fixed admiration, and for the first time regretted the cruel restraint she was under, as she had never before so ardently longed to join in conversation as she now did, from an earnest and irresistible desire of attracting the notice of this amiable woman; nor were her wishes vain; before the tea was quite finished, Mrs. Egmont was recalled home by a message, to let her know a lady from the country was unexpectedly arrived at her house; and when the table was removed, Lady Clarendon with a peculiar sweetness in her address, begged our heroine to take the chair next to her; she joyfully complied, and as she frequently in the course of the evening asked her opinion on the different subjects that were started, she could not refuse to answer, or indeed to converse without an appearance of ingratitude or indifference; though Lady Pelham was visibly hurt at the respect with which Lady Clarendon treated her. Honoria was probably the more delighted with her kindness and condescension, as she had never before experienced the least from any of the visitors who frequented the house; having never been introduced to them, they of course regarded her merely as an humble companion, and behaved to her as such.

When her carriage was announced, Lady Clarendon addressed Lady Pelham: "You have not, dear Madam, mentioned this young lady's name to me." "I did not think it was of any consequence, (returned she) but if your Ladyship wishes to know, it is Wentworth: she was recommended to me by an intimate friend, who has desired me to endeavour to find her some situation, similar to those she has been in before, as companion or governess. I have not yet succeeded, but perhaps you can assist me." Lady Clarendon without attending to the latter part of this speech, turning to Honoria, who coloured violently from mortification and resentment, said, "permit me, Miss Wentworth, to hope for the pleasure of seeing you on Saturday with Lady Pelham, in Harley-street." Honoria curtsied, and thanked her; she then took leave, and the carriage drove from the door.

Our heroine, deeply impressed with the strongest sentiments of gratitude and affection, waited the arrival of Saturday with an impatience mixed with fear; for though she hoped Lady Pelham, would take her, she dreaded a disappointment: her apprehensions were too well founded, she went without giving the least hint she expected her company. For the first time in her life, on an occasion so apparently trifling, she sat down and gave a free vent to tears, that flowed not from wounded pride, but merely from sorrow. Many days elapsed, and Lady Clarendon's name was never mentioned, though she gathered from the conversations which passed at table, that Lady Pelham had been frequently at her house.

One morning as she was at work alone in the dressing room, Lady Clarendon was announced; Honoria immediately arose to meet her, and expressed her sorrow that Lady Pelham

was absent. "So the servant informed me, returned her ladyship; but I wished to come up, for as you will not let me see you in Harley street, I would not deny myself that happiness when it was in my power.

"Oh, madam, (cried Honoria earnestly) how little do I deserve your reproof! my heart can witness how much I wished to attend Lady Pelham, but I could not intrude myself unasked." "Why surely, Miss Wentworth, you could not mistake me when I requested to see you?"—"No, madam, said Honoria, I mean Lady Pelham; she heard your Ladyship's condescending invitation, but she never took any notice of it, and as I do not usually accompany her in her visits, I was unwilling to remind her of it; though when she left the house I accused my timidity, which had perhaps deprived me of the happiness of waiting on you; as at all events she could but have refused me."—"Refused you! (exclaimed Lady Clarendon, with much surprize) surely she could not." Then after a pause,— "Will you my dear young lady, (said Lady Clarendon) pardon me for requesting to know, if what she said the other evening of your situation with her, is an exact account?"—"Yes, madam, replied Honora."—"And you do not mean to remain with her?" said Lady Clarendon.— "Oh by no means, if I can be so fortunate as to meet with an eligible situation," said Honoria.— "Could you (continued Lady Clarendon hesitating) prefer the society of one like myself worn out with anxieties and deprest by misfortunes, to that of a Lady like her, young, sprightly, and animated?" "Ah, madam, replied Honoria, where shall I find one like you? tell me, and I shall joyfully accept the proposal."—"Seriously then, replied her Ladyship; my son when at home is constantly engaged, my daughter is very little with me, and if you could be happy under my roof, and Lady Pelham will part with you, I shall be most grateful to her and you for the comfort I shall derive from your society." Honoria was so elated at this speech, that she in vain endeavoured to express her satisfaction, but attempting to speak burst into tears; Lady Clarendon was extremely affected, but understanding the cause, was delighted with the readiness and even joy with which Honoria had declared her happiness at this unexpected offer.

Every thing was soon settled between them, and Lady Clarendon determined to wait Lady Pelham's return to mention it to her. That Lady heard it with a visible satisfaction, and replied, it might perhaps be a further recommendation to Miss Wentworth, if she read Miss Melmoth's letter, and directly gave it to her: Lady Clarendon said, she wanted no other proofs of her merit, yet notwithstanding the letter impressed her more fully with an idea of Honoria's amiable qualities, from the warmth with which Miss Melmoth enumerated them. She then left them, promising to send her carriage for Honoria the next day at twelve o'clock; who immediately sat down to acquaint Miss Melmoth of the change which was so soon to take place; thanking her for her partial friendship, through which Lady Pelham had recommended, and Lady Clarendon received her. She would not mention the coldness with which the former had behaved, but only said in the present state of her health and spirits, the house was too gay for her, and the mistress of it too much engaged, for her to derive that comfort from her society, she hoped for with Lady Clarendon, who mixed little with the world, and devoted her time to domestic amusements.

At dinner she endeavoured to learn some account of the family into which she was going. Lady Pelham was not very communicative, but his Lordship informed her, Lady Clarendon had only two children, a son and a daughter. Sir William, he said, was a very amiable and accomplished young man, who it was thought, was attached, if not absolutely engaged, to a

young lady of very large fortune. Miss Clarendon was totally unlike her brother both in person and manner; she was a fine woman, but had been guilty of some indiscretions that had given her Ladyship real uneasiness; that she was now very little at home, usually spending her time with a relation in Northamptonshire.

This intelligence was not unpleasant to Honoria; though she regretted the sorrow Lady Clarendon must have felt, yet she rejoiced that Miss Clarendon did not live with her; as she promised herself unmixed satisfaction in the society of this amiable and elegant woman, which the presence of a girl devoted to fashionable follies, and immersed in dissipation, must interrupt, if not utterly destroy. She spent the evening in preparing for her removal, and waited the arrival of the carriage the next day, with an impatience hitherto unknown to her.

Lord Pelham before her departure took an opportunity of repeating his acknowledgments for her secrecy respecting Mrs. Wilton; at the same time informing her from a discovery of her infidelity, that connection was wholly at an end; but assuring her he had settled sufficient on the unhappy woman for life, to enable her to subsist comfortably without continuing in that state, to which he blushed to confess he had reduced her. Honoria replied, it was an act of justice he owed her; "but what, my Lord, (added she) can compensate for that innocence which by your means she has lost, and for that peace of mind arising from conscious virtue, which she can never regain?" "It is too true, returned he; my own reflections are too poignant not to oblige me to acknowledge the truth of your assertion; but I have the satisfaction of knowing, that I have made every reparation in my power, by setting her above necessity." Lady Pelham's entrance put a stop to this conversation, and the carriage at the same moment driving to the door, Honoria coolly thanked Lady Pelham for the attention she had shown her, curtsied to his Lordship, and flew down stairs with an alacrity that sufficiently proved the lightness of her heart; and springing into the chariot, was in few minutes conveyed to Harley-street.

CHAP. XXI.

LADY Clarendon's reception of Honoria was truly kind and flattering; she behaved to her with that mixture of affection and respect, so well calculated to gain a heart glowing with tenderness, yet proud and tremblingly sensible of insult and mortification. They quitted London in a few days, and went to her Ladyship's house upon Richmond hill. The extreme beauty of the situation, the variety of the landscape before her, and the liveliness of the place, contributed to restore her serenity of mind, and even in some degree her cheerfulness; as from the unvarying attention of her kind friend, and the pleasant society they had formed in the neighbourhood, her time flew with rapidity. When not engaged in company, she read to Lady Clarendon, or amused her with playing on the harpsichord. Sometimes she rambled about the fields, or rode on horseback, and often accompanied her Ladyship an airing, when they usually paid a visit to some distant friend to vary the scene.

The latter end of June, Sir William arrived from France, and took up his residence with them; he was lively and sensible, and of course a great addition to their parties. Honoria indeed thought him, except one, the most agreeable and elegant man she had ever seen; and fortune, which at present smiled on her, had another unexpected happiness in store. Sir William went to London for a few days, when one morning at breakfast a note was delivered to her Ladyship, who with her eyes sparkling with pleasure, gave it to Honoria and begged her to read it; it contained only these few words:

“To-morrow, my dear madam, I hope to have the inexpressible happiness of introducing to your knowledge, her whose virtues do no less honor to my choice, than her approbation bestows pleasure on my heart.”

It required no great penetration to discover Sir William meant the fair lady to whom he paid his devoirs. Honoria returned the note to Lady Clarendon, and began to congratulate her, and was just going to enquire the lady's name, when the entrance of a gentleman interrupted her; and finding he came on business, she left the room the instant the breakfast was over, and called on a young lady who lived near: she sat with her some time, and at last proposed a stroll in Richmond park, which as it was a cool pleasant morning the other readily assented to: they extended their walk beyond its usual limits, when Honoria looking at her watch, was surprized to find it so late, and feared she should scarcely reach Lady Clarendon's before dinner. They returned immediately, and Honoria walking up to the house saw two ladies in mourning sitting by the window. When she read Sir William's note, she did not observe it was dated the night before, and consequently did not expect company till the next day; but the appearance of these reminded her of the mistake she had made, and she regretted her long absence, fearing Lady Clarendon might impute it to neglect.

The moment she came in sight, Sir William flew out of the parlour to meet her, and taking her hand hastened to introduce her to the visitors; but the moment she entered the room, one of them, to the great surprize of all present, ran up and embraced her with a warmth that proved it was not their first meeting. Honoria was no less delighted to behold in Sir William's

favourite, her beloved and long absent friend Emily Onslow, and returned her expressions of joy with equal animation. Both Lady Clarendon and Sir William were pleased that they were so well known to each other, as it heightened their satisfaction in the opinions they had formed of each, by convincing them they were well founded.

When a little recovered from their mutual agitation, Emily apologized to Lady Clarendon for her strange behaviour, but confessed the joy she felt at so unexpectedly meeting Miss Wentworth had rendered her inattentive to the rules of politeness. Lady Clarendon declared she participated her happiness, and should be sorry if she had in any degree suppress it. Emily then introduced Miss Ashbourn, whose deep mourning informed Honoria of her father's death, and prevented those enquiries she was upon the point of making.

The conversation turned the whole day on past occurrences; they informed Lady Clarendon how their acquaintance commenced, amused her with an account of Mrs. Campbell's absurdities, and grieved her with a relation of Lady Egerton's misfortunes. Miss Onslow was herself ignorant of the particulars of the event which carried Sir William and his Lady abroad, and was shocked at the history Honoria gave of the interview and duel. Emily then acquainted her friend with what had occurred since she wrote last, but as Miss Ashbourn was present, passed slightly over great part of the time, and only said when their journey to Montpelier was fixed, she wrote both to her and Lady Egerton, but on her return to Paris her surprize at not hearing from either of them, was lost in apprehensions for the fate of the latter, from whom she found a note left for her at the hotel, acquainting her that in consequence of having killed Mr. Lisburne in a duel, Sir William was obliged to quit England, and had brought her with him, intending to leave her in a convent while he travelled, but in what part of France she was yet ignorant. "Had I been a man, continued Miss Onslow, I have so much the spirit of Knight errantry in me, that I should not have hesitated at travelling all over the kingdom, till I had found my unfortunate friend; but as it was, I could do nothing; Mrs. Ashbourn and all her family were just leaving Paris, and I could not stay alone; however on my arrival in England I wrote to her aunt in Devonshire, acquainting her with all I knew, and begging her to take some method of learning the fate of her injured niece. I have not yet heard from her, but expect a letter every day."

Lady Clarendon, Sir William, and Miss Ashbourn, joined in lamenting the ambition of captain Halifax, which had been of such fatal consequence to his daughter: and Honoria reflecting on her severer misfortunes, confessed her own fate comparatively an happy one, and thought perhaps had she known her parents, they might have rendered her equally miserable by an ill judged wish to contribute to her happiness; and rejoiced, though at present separated for ever from the man she loved, no creature on earth had the power to make her bestow her hand where she could never give her heart. The day was spent with mutual satisfaction by all parties: early in the evening Mrs. Ashbourn's carriage arrived, and Lady Clarendon promised to return the visit as soon as possible.

The remainder of the summer passed in this pleasant manner. Mrs. Ashbourn took a lodging at East Sheene, and the two families were constantly together. Honoria and Emily grew every day more attached to each other, and Lady Clarendon, whose partiality to the former was grown into a settled and warm affection, founded on an additional knowledge of her amiable

disposition, superior understanding, and excellent principles, and who regarded the latter as her future daughter; beheld their friendship with the sincerest pleasure, hoping that from Miss Wentworth's example, Emily would attain a steadiness which only seemed wanting to complete her character.

Dorothea and Fanny Ashbourn were both pleasant and agreeable; the eldest was pretty but rather affected, and the youngest had a satirical turn which often offended Lady Clarendon, whose disposition was too just and too benevolent, not to feel pain when the failings or even faults of others were made objects of derision. From the pensiveness which hung on Mrs. Ashbourn, in consequence of the recent loss of her husband, to whom she was sincerely attached, Lady Clarendon had a peculiar satisfaction in her society; there was a similarity in their feelings which endeared them to each other. Sir Edward had been dead nine years, yet his Lady with unusual constancy still lamented him, and could not mention his name without unaffected tears.

Thus situated, every one of this party enjoyed in a degree what they most wished for. Miss Onslow the attentions of a favoured lover, the approbation of his mother, and the company of her most valued friend. Sir William lived but in her smiles, and felt not a wish beyond. Dorothea and Fanny loved amusement, variety, and admiration, and in visiting among the neighbouring families they met with it all. Honoria, blessed with the society and secure of the friendship of her amiable protectress, endeavoured to bound her wishes, and let neither hope nor fear disturb the tranquillity of her situation; and she probably had succeeded, but a letter from Miss Melmoth, and some intelligence she heard, again perplexed her mind with doubts, and agitated it with ten thousand new tormenting ideas; which she had neither the resolution to banish, nor the power to relieve, by making those enquiries which, by satisfying her restless curiosity, might in some measure have restored peace to her bosom.

She was one morning informed a Gentleman wished to speak with her, and going into the drawing room, found it was Mr. Wallace, brother to the young lady who was with her when she fell from her horse. After the usual compliments had passed, he held out a letter which, he said, Miss Melmoth had made him promise not to deliver, till she had granted her forgiveness for not writing for so long a time; but that she had really been prevented by illness. "Indeed, sir, replied Honoria, Miss Melmoth's request was unnecessary; I have only regretted, not resented her silence; and that regret is now heightened by hearing illness was the cause." She then took the letter and began reading it; but having satisfied herself that the writer was recovered, and seeing the name of Effingham, a name she was sure her friend would not have mentioned without some particular reason, not willing to trust herself to go through it in the presence of Sir William, Lady Clarendon, and Mr. Wallace, she put it into her pocket till she had an opportunity of retiring to her own room; this she soon found, and then with an emotion which sadly proved she had not conquered the fatal passion, which had so long corroded her happiness, she read the paragraph, which was as follows:

"The rheumatic fever which has confined me so long to the house, and even to my chamber, by suffering me to see few people, prevented me till yesterday from hearing a circumstance that I delay not a moment acquainting you with. It is not, my dear Honoria, Colonel Effingham who has bought Ashbury Park, but Captain Fairfax, his friend, who was last week

actually married to Miss Mortimer. How you could be so mistaken I know not, but you may depend on my intelligence as a reality. Last night Mr. Williams, the attorney, came to me on some business, and I asked him when the repairs at Ashbury Park would be finished, and Colonel Effingham take possession?" "You mean Captain Fairfax, I suppose, madam?" (said he) "No, (I replied) I mean the Colonel, who is to marry Miss Mortimer." "How much you have been misinformed!" returned he, and then took a letter from his pocket and gave it me to read. It was from Sir Charles Mortimer himself, requesting he would hasten the workmen as much as possible, and informing him that his sister was three days before married to Captain Fairfax; that he was to accompany them for a few weeks to Southampton, but on their return they would wish to have the house ready for them. In the mean time his friend Colonel Effingham, who had declined being of their party, would be frequently at Ashbury to overlook the alterations, and observe that they went on according to Captain Fairfax's plan: a few directions to Mr. Williams concluded the letter. "This, my dear girl, you must allow is an incontrovertible proof of your mistake; and may it restore to your mind that peace, the erroneous opinion you have hitherto entertained has for so many months deprived you of!"

This intelligence was far from having the effect her amiable friend hoped for; in fact it only raised new disturbances, by exciting in her breast a painful struggle between hope and fear. She could now less than before account for the indifference almost amounting to scorn with which he passed her at Ashbury; though from the glow in his cheeks he evidently knew her: she had supposed that conscious of his approaching marriage, he would not by renewing the acquaintance re-excite in her breast any degree of that esteem, he too well knew she once bestowed on him; and thus endeavoured to make her reason applaud that conduct, her heart so severely censured. But now, deprived of a clue to unravel the mystery of his behaviour, she was wholly at a loss to determine the cause: sometimes she imagined the story of her leaving Wood Park with Mr. Cleveland had reached him, but then fondly fancied he would have endeavoured to learn the truth of this report, before he gave it such entire credit. Then the fatal mystery of her birth rushed wildly on her imagination, and bore down every opposing idea. "Alas, (cried she) he had heard it and despises me; yet I could not have believed that a mind apparently so noble, could harbour such illiberal sentiments. Oh Lady Pelham! your opinion is not singular; the world joins with you in reprobating that description of unfortunate beings who are deprived of the knowledge of those to whom they owe their existence; and that ignorance comprehends every other misfortune." A shower of tears a little relieved her, yet this idea took such fast hold upon her mind, that even the flattering hope which sometimes entered it, arising from the reflection, that he was however still disengaged, had no power to dissipate the gloom that hung on her; and which was so visible when she was summoned to dinner, that Lady Clarendon was alarmed, and anxiously enquired if she was ill. "I have a violent head ach, madam, (she answered) but I hope it will be better if I walk a little in the air, which I intend before tea. She was then surprised to see Sir William enter the room with Mr. Wallace, whom her Ladyship would not suffer to depart without an invitation to dinner, which he readily accepted, and had been walking with Sir William.

The conversation then turned on the neighbourhood of Southern Lodge; and in the course of it, Mr. Wallace mentioned Colonel Effingham's name. "Colonel Effingham! (repeated Lady Clarendon with a deep sigh and some apparent emotion) does he live near you?" "No, madam,

(he replied) but he is the intimate friend of a Captain Fairfax who has bought Ashbury Park, and has been there frequently." "He is a man of very amiable character, I have heard." (added Lady Clarendon) "I believe, Madam, that is the universal opinion." (returned Mr. Wallace) "He has a considerable fortune I am told." (said Sir William) "Yes, answered he, four or five thousand a year landed property, which he inherited from his uncle, Lord Bridgewater, whose son was killed by a fall; and no man deserves such a fortune better than Colonel Effingham. It is impossible to relate how many acts of unostentatious charity he has performed in his few visits to Hertfordshire." "Has he now fixed place of residence?" (said Sir William) "I believe not yet; (he continued) he has lately spent his time in rambling over the kingdom in the hope, I suppose, of removing the dejection of mind he labours under from a disappointment, for it was told me as a great secret by a gentleman, who had it in confidence from Sir Charles Mortimer, that he was violently in love with a young lady of birth, beauty, fortune and accomplishments, but she refused him." "Bravo, cried Sir William, who after this of our sex shall dare to say, they "wonder a woman keeps a secret," when here is an instance of three men following who revealed one? Let the satire be henceforth transferred to us." Mr. Wallace coloured, but attempted to laugh it off, and succeeded.

This conversation by no means contributed to lessen Honoria's head ach. Lady Clarendon's emotion had not escaped her, and she determined if possible to know the cause the first opportunity, by asking her if she was acquainted with the Colonel. The account Mr. Wallace gave of his fortune and attachment, excited her wonder, and raised her curiosity: she had heard of his uncle's death, and seen him in mourning, but knew not the value of the estate he had bequeathed to him. But who the young lady was, to whom he was so ardently attached, she could not guess, though very anxious to learn, for she was too well assured it could not be herself.

When they retired from table, Lady Clarendon who saw with pain the heaviness of her eyes and the paleness of her cheeks encrease instead of lessen, ordered the chariot; telling her walking would be too great a fatigue, and that she would herself accompany her an airing. During their ride, Honoria, whose thoughts turned constantly to one point, asked her, after introducing the subject not to appear too abrupt, if she knew Colonel Effingham? "I am not (replied she) personally acquainted with him, but to confess the truth, my daughter is the young person Mr. Wallace alluded to; he was distractedly in love with her, and wrote to me for my consent and interest with her; the first I readily gave, but the latter I exerted in vain. Louisa resolutely refused him, and earnestly as I wished for the alliance, I could not use the power of a parent to make her miserable. When we return I will shew you his letter to me." No words can give a tolerable idea of Honoria's astonishment at this intelligence; the account she had heard of Miss Clarendon, was so totally different from what she supposed could captivate a mind like his, that she could only imagine it was wholly perverted, or his reason hurt by the unexpected addition to his fortune. This idea she resolved if possible to cherish, and regard him in future as a man utterly unworthy of one tender remembrance. She observed with pleasure Lady Clarendon seemed as unwilling to pursue the object as herself, and her head ach giving her a good pretence for being silent, very little more conversation passed between them till they arrived at home. Mr. Wallace was gone, and Lady Clarendon went up stairs, and taking a letter from her bureau, gave it to Honoria, who immediately with a beating heart retired to her apartment, and read as follows:

“Madam,

“The constant, respectful, and invariable attachment I have so long felt for the amiable Miss Clarendon, and which I once flattered myself she was not wholly insensible to; emboldens me to solicit your Ladyship’s consent to my renewing those addresses, that were once not unfavourably received, and your interest with your charming daughter. I dare hope your enquiries respecting my character, fortune, and situation in life, will not be unsatisfactorily answered, or be found unworthy of your approbation. Nor the true and ardent passion which now glows in my breast, and which nothing can ever lessen or destroy, thought undeserving of a return from the dear and much loved object of that unalterable attachment.”

Honoria, who from the idea that he was grown ambitious or mercenary, thought the letter would confirm her opinion, was transfixed at a declaration of love so ardent, that she could no longer doubt its sincerity. In spite of her new-formed resolution to forget him, the cruel certainty that he really loved another, opened every wound afresh. She had no need to copy the letter, every word was engraved on her heart; yet she read it again and again, endeavouring but vainly, to find something on which to rest a hope; but every perusal convinced her more fully of his inconsistency. She observed it was dated at the time she was with Lady Egerton, and earnestly wished to know when and where their acquaintance commenced: but Lady Clarendon appeared so disinclined to speak on the subject, that she did not like to introduce it again, and was not a little perplexed what to say when she returned the letter; but this difficulty was removed by the arrival of Emily Onslow and Fanny Ashbourn, and being immediately summoned to attend the tea-table, she took it with her, and restoring it in their presence, nothing of course could be said.

They were both concerned to see her look so ill, and Lady Clarendon, who was ever anxious for her, desired they would both stay all night, as their company might contribute to amuse her. However grateful to her Ladyship for this kind mark of attention, it failed of the desired effect: she grew gradually worse for some days, her disorder at last terminated in a bilious fever, and she continued for some time in a dangerous state: but from a naturally good constitution, and the unremitting attentions she experienced from all around her, she at length recovered though slowly; and the physicians giving it as their opinion, that nothing but the Bath waters would wholly restore her to health, Lady Clarendon determined to take her to that place, as soon as the proper season for drinking them commenced.

END OF VOLUME II.