

HONORIA SOMMERVILLE:

A

NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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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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NOVEL.

CHAP. XXXII.

I Will now inform my readers, though perhaps a little prematurely, of those circumstances which are necessary to connect Lady Clarendon's relation, and by what means the imposture was carried on with such success. Marianne Hervey was the daughter of a shoemaker in one of the most capital towns in Cornwall: he was a man of opulence in his way, and had only two children; the boy he bred to his own business, and sent Marianne as an half boarder to one of the principal schools in Exeter. She did not by any means want a good natural capacity, and had an uncommon stock of art and contrivance, which her several years residence there had greatly improved, as in the line she was in, she often had it in her power to assist the young ladies, and always paid her court to those who either had some friends in the town where she could accompany them, or had the best allowance for pocket money, which she hoped to share. Though her learning was but little attended to, yet she made a very tolerable figure; she could speak French rapidly, if not correctly; read and wrote well, and excelled in needlework; and as her turn lay chiefly this way, she was often employed in millenary for the scholars, and frequently drest their hair. Thus at the age of seventeen she was completely qualified for the station in life she was destined to fill, namely, waiting upon a lady; as her father had been some time declining both in health and circumstances, owing to the ill behaviour and extravagance of his son, who at last ran away and got into a service.

When Marianne left school, she hoped to return to her native place, and display her talents and accomplishments among her companions, but this expectation was not fulfilled; her father became a bankrupt, and not long after died of vexation. She was of course obliged immediately to go out in the world, and lived for a year and a half with an old lady in Cornwall; this lady then died, and her daughter, who was settled in Scotland, coming to take possession of her fortune, offered Marianne to return with her to London, where she promised to get her a place; she was delighted with this proposal and joyfully accepted it. Romantic in her ideas to almost ridiculous height, and having really a good face and tolerable person, on which however she set too great a value, she imagined nothing more was necessary to her making her fortune, than her being seen, and this journey to London filled her head with a thousand strange fancies. On her arrival, her first plan was to seek out her brother, who was then footman to a gentleman in Argyle street; he provided her a lodging in Oxford road, as the lady she came up with was on a visit, and could not take her to her friend's house. Not hearing of a place likely to suit Marianne

during her stay, she left it to the care of her friend, who very soon after her departure for Scotland, recommended her to Lady Bellenden, where it was settled she was to go in a fortnight.

It was in the interim that the fire happened at Mrs. Middleton's, and all the neighbourhood being alarmed, Thomas Hervey among the rest ran to the place and assisted the sufferers; here he met Mr. Gibbons, who telling him a very beautiful young woman, who had escaped at the first cry of fire, was then at his house, he attended him home merely for curiosity, and as the reader may remember, assured Honoria the flames were got under. Her wild expressions of regret for the loss of her trunk, made him suppose its contents were extremely valuable, and her desiring him to enquire for it, was an opportunity of gain his unprincipled mind knew not how to withstand. Totally a stranger to the lady whom he might never see again, he at once determined to secure the trunk in his own power, and running back to the place, where he well recollected it was deposited among the other things that were saved, he hastily seized it, and conveyed it unobserved to his sister's lodgings, which being at the corner of Poland-street, the people had been all alarmed, and were of course sitting up. He gave it to Marianne, charging her to keep it safely till he called the next day, but unwilling to confess even to her his guilt, he only said he found it by accident. He then ran back directly to Mrs. Gibbons's, and assured Honoria it was consumed, which it was not in her power to controvert.

The next morning he went to his sister's, and breaking open the box, promised whatever the contents were she should share with him; but how were they both disappointed, when they discovered nothing but a bundle of old cloaths, and a few other things of little value! Thomas, after swearing heartily, told Marianne, as he left her, she might burn them all if she pleased, for he did not see any use they could be of. But women have more patience than men; her curiosity was, at least, excited, and she looked over every thing carefully, in the hope of finding some concealed treasure; she soon came to the certificate, the letter to lady Eustace, and the paper written by Mrs. Fortescue, a few months before her death; these she perused, and guessing from them of how much consequence the trunk must be to the owner, though of so little to her, and not doubting but it would soon be advertised, and a large reward offered, she determined not to let her brother know any thing of the matter, that he might not expect to divide whatever she might receive. For this purpose she preserved every thing together with equal care, and at the same time resolved to tell Thomas, that she had carefully examined the box, and that there was nothing in it but what he had seen. This she put in practice the next morning, when he came to acquaint her his master was going abroad the following day, and that he was to accompany him. Marianne heard this with pleasure, as it would, at all events, prevent him from interfering in her plan, and in a week after his departure, she attended lady Bellenden into Cheshire.

Avarice, next to vanity, was her ruling passion; and her interest the first thing she ever considered. Having gained a small legacy from the lady she last lived with, and seeing, on her arrival at the Castle, that Sir Edmund was in a very declining state of health, she resolved to pay him the strictest attention, in the hope of being again equally

fortunate. She daily searched the newspapers for the expected advertisement, but had been hitherto disappointed, for believing it had been lost by an accident, she did not yet give up all hope; and willing to make all possible advantage, she took the gold seal and crown piece, both of which had escaped her brother's observation, into her pocket, thinking the seal would give her consequence among her fellow servants.

Her attentions to Sir Edmund were not thrown away; he grew really fond of her, and would often say, when she was waiting upon him, "certainly this girl was born to better expectations;" a hint which she never failed to confirm by a deep sigh; and would reply, "we must submit to the decrees of Fate." Sometimes he would ask her of her past life; this she usually evaded giving a direct answer to, but would say, her father had been unfortunate, and that the extravagance of a brother had reduced her to servitude. At this time she had no other meaning in these speeches, than to induce Sir Edmund, and indeed the whole family, to believe she had been formerly in a higher station, and it had its effect; her knowledge of French too was often affectedly displayed; and these circumstances combined, impressed lady Bellenden with the same idea, and she always treated her with the most considerate tenderness.

One day when she had made Sir Edmund some negus, he complained there was no nutmeg in it; she immediately searched her pockets for one, but not finding it readily, she took some of the things out, and laid them on the table, to discover if the nutmeg was among them. Here the seal and crown piece, which were by far the most conspicuous, attracted Sir Edmund's notice; he instantly knew them, and trembling with an agitation he could not conceal, he demanded, in a loud voice, how she came by them? Conscious guilt instantly flew into her cheeks, and dyed them with the deepest crimson; determined, however, not to accuse herself, she replied, they were her own. "Tell me," continued he, "tell me this moment, how you came by them? if they are really your own, you must be my niece, and lady Clarendon's daughter." Marianne, tho' struck at this declaration, had yet presence of mind not to deny it; she fell at his feet in a pretended confusion and surprize; for instantly guessing that the Honoria Sommerville, mentioned in the paper, was, though she knew not how, indeed lady Clarendon's child, she resolved to confess herself to be Honoria, and having obtained time from her feigned astonishment to meditate an answer, at last replied, "I know not alas, Sir, to whom I belong; but only that I was found on a common in Ireland, and these things you see, with several others in the possession of the woman who was dead by my side." "Let me see them immediately, my dear girl," returned Sir Edmund. She waited not to be asked twice, but flying to her chamber, brought down the trunk and all its contents, except the copy of Honoria's letter, which she suppressed for two reasons; one that the hand disagreeing with her own might raise suspicions; the other, that she could relate the circumstances there mentioned, without its being known she had such a guide to direct her; which, if they made any enquiries into the truth of, the coincidence of her story would prove her identity. This resolved on, she returned to Sir Edmund with the proofs, which he instantly acknowledged, as has been before related, as well as what passed in Ireland.

Thus was she to all appearance the daughter of Lady Clarendon; no one contested, no one doubted her right to that title; and she had but one fear to disturb her; this was the return of Lady Eustace, when she discovered her to be Lady Clarendon's niece; till she heard this she little dreaded her, as she supposed it would be easy to avoid her; but, however, she did not suffer this to prey long on her spirits; the East Indies were at a vast distance, the climate unhealthy, the voyage tedious; a thousand circumstances might prevent their meeting; at all events, it was very possible she might be married and provided for, before Lady Eustace could appear to discover the fraud. This determined her to accept the first offer she might meet with, which she did not doubt would be as soon as she appeared in the gay world; for who could resist her beauty, particularly when aided by birth and fortune?

Anxious, however, to secure, at least for the present, the rights she had thus basely acquired, she wrote to her brother, who was still in France, an account of all that had passed, and begged he would acquaint her more particularly from whence he had the trunk, that she might take her measures accordingly. In his answer, after congratulating her on her conduct and success, he assures her, she need not apprehend a discovery, as the lady from whom he had taken the trunk imagined it was burnt, and consequently would make no enquiry for it. This was very pleasant information to Marianne, who looked upon it as a perfect security; she had now only to conceal this wonderful history from the world, that it might not reach the ears of the real Honoria; and, as that name was a singular one, she entreated Lady Clarendon that she might be called by her own name, Louisa, who, pleased at this request, which she supposed proceeded from affection, readily complied; and she also begged all that had passed might be kept a profound secret, as if the story was circulated, it would make her a constant object of curiosity; to this her Ladyship also consented, promising only to acquaint those of her intimate friends, who knew she had lost a daughter, that she had been happily restored to her, but without telling them the means; for this secret she meant to keep as much from delicacy and regard to her brother's memory, as in compliance with Louisa's entreaties.

Thus was almost every possibility of a discovery of this unparalleled treachery prevented. Louisa, perfectly happy in her new situation, lost the remembrance of what she had been, and fancied herself born to riches and titles: her uncle's legacy completed her intoxication, and she forgot that any circumstance would possibly deprive her of it. Delighted with the gay world and the pleasures it afforded, she entered into them with a spirit which she imagined would give an idea of her taste for high life, and assumed an air of insolence and levity, which she thought would appear like dignity and fashion.

Let me here acquaint my readers with the contents of that letter which so greatly assisted Marianne in her schemes. When first Honoria was settled at Miss Mortimer's, she began writing to Lady Eustace an account of all that had passed since her departure, till her own arrival in England; on reading it over, before she had finished, it struck her as expressing too freely the sentiments of her father, and she resolved to begin another and write with more caution: the unfinished one she locked up in the trunk which contained all her treasure, and by this means it fell into Marianne's power. She had brought her

story no farther than her landing at Parkgate, and had not mentioned what name she had assumed, but only said she had resolved to change her own. Thus when the fictitious Miss Clarendon was introduced to Miss Catherine Wentworth, she had not the most distant idea of her being the very Honoria Sommerville whom she so much dreaded. It was perfectly easy for a girl who possessed such a degree of cunning, to connect her story with Honoria's; she said she came from Parkgate with a lady, who, pitying her misfortunes, took her into her service, but that lady dying, a friend of her's recommended her to Lady Bellenden. She carefully avoided meeting any one who could possibly reveal the deception she had practised; and her indifference to all her supposed friends in Ireland, was the first trait in her character which gave Lady Clarendon that dislike which daily increased. Ever attentive to the grand object she had in view, she encouraged the addresses of the young Templar; but this was discovered, and she was sent into banishment, as she termed it. There, however, her acquaintance with Captain Harcourt, who was quartered at Northampton, consoled her for her absence from London, and it was on his account she so much rejoiced at the journey to Bath, where by a letter he promised to meet her, being called from Northampton.

The reader will not want to be informed he was a mere fortune-hunter, his conduct has so evidently proved it; but the sight of Emily Onslow, and her two thousand a year, made him endeavour to convince her of his constancy, and obtain her pardon; failing in this, as we have already seen, his next scheme was to reconcile himself to Miss Clarendon, who had been extremely enraged at his attentions to Miss Onslow, but this was no difficult task, and he soon accomplished it. He corresponded privately with her from the time of his leaving Bath after the duel, and when Sir William was out of danger, and Captain Harcourt consequently in no apprehension of a pursuit, Louisa, that he might evade the law against stealing an heiress, went herself in a post-chaise, and took him up at Bristol, from whence they went into Wales, where, in a retired village, they were properly asked in church, and then married. Louisa, who fearing if she was married entirely by a feigned name, it would not stand good if the deception was ever discovered, told the Captain she was not christened Louisa, but was only called so in compliment to her mother, but that her name was Marianne Hervey; by that, therefore, she was asked and married, and when the ceremony was performed, they took lodgings at Carmarthen, till they could resolve on what measures to pursue.—And here for a while let us leave them, and return to the more respectable personages of our history.

CHAP. XXXIII.

HONORIA rose early the next morning, to write to Ireland, that she might no longer lie under the imputation of such deep ingratitude. She sent one letter to her old nurse, another to Miss Meriton, fearing, if she wrote to Mr. Fortescue, it might be intercepted by his lady; in this she requested Sophia, that her father would if possible ride over to Wood Park, and explain to her dear benefactor, the reasons which had so long kept her silent, and relate to him the imposture, and by what means it had been discovered. When she had finished, her mind was relieved from a load of anxiety, and she came down to breakfast, which was that day later than usual, with a smiling countenance, which was a true picture of the serenity of her heart. When the tea-things were removed, she informed Lady Clarendon, that if it was agreeable to her, she would go that morning to Major Southmore's, in Abingdon-street, to enquire for Mrs. Lambert and her grand-daughters. Lady Clarendon approved her resolution, and begged she would desire the favor of seeing them in Harley-street, as she particularly wished to be introduced to the Major, whose kindness to her child, she said, she should never forget. Sir William, then asked, if it was Major Southmore of the —— Regiment, and finding it was, added, he had heard a great deal of him from a brother-officer, who spoke in the highest terms of his understanding and character. This pleased Lady Clarendon, and she replied, she did not know, but she should apply to him for his advice and assistance with respect to the Harcourts. The chariot was then ordered, and Honoria drove to Westminster.

The whole family were at home, and received her with the utmost demonstrations of pleasure. Major Southmore thanked her for her kindness to his niece and her grandmother, and on her replying it was not then in her power to be of any service to them, he answered— “Yes, my dear madam, you gave them your countenance, your advice, and your society; you treated them with politeness, affability, and even affection, and believe me, these are favors, which to those, whose minds are delicate, though their fortunes are reduced, are the highest and most flattering a superior can confer.” Honoria bowed, and said, she had received more pleasure from Mrs. and Miss Lambert's company, than it was possible for her to bestow, and that she now came to solicit a continuance of their acquaintance, not only in her own name, but in that of Lady Clarendon, to whom she was impatient to introduce them. The Major replied, he should be happy to pay his respects to her, and the ladies appeared not a little pleased at the request. The former then acquainted Honoria with the several particulars of his finding his nieces, which Miss Melmoth had before informed her of; but she did not, till this moment, know what estate it was which had just fallen to him, and heard, with some surprize, it was Sir William Egerton's; to whose father he was first cousin. She then related to him her acquaintance with Lady Egerton, the reason why she quitted Mrs. Campbell's, and what had since befallen her, reserving only the late happy discovery, which she did not think herself authorized as yet to reveal. After spending two hours with them, she took leave; the Major promised to wait on her and Lady Clarendon the next day, but Mrs. Lambert and the young ladies regretted that they must for some time be deprived of that pleasure, as they were in the morning to return into Hertfordshire for a few days.

Honorina was not so well pleased with her visit as she expected; this she could scarcely herself account for, but, in fact, she was disappointed at hearing nothing of Colonel Effingham, which she had flattered herself with, and Mrs. Lambert's visit to Hertfordshire would put it out of her power to make any enquiry for some time. She told Lady Clarendon of the Major's promised visit, which he delayed not, but the next day, exactly at twelve, rapped at the door. After the common compliments had past, Lady Clarendon address him with an earnestness which surprized him. "Perhaps, Major Southmore, you do not know the extent of my obligations to you; permit me, however, to return my sincere thanks for your attentions to that dear girl, whom as yet you consider only as Miss Wentworth, let me now introduce her to you as my daughter." "As your daughter, Lady Clarendon! (replied the Major, in the utmost astonishment,) how, by what means has it been so long concealed from the world?" "Because, (said her Ladyship) unfortunately it has been, till within these few days, unknown even to myself." "Indeed, returned he, I am truly rejoiced at a discovery, which I am sure must at least make two people as happy as such an event can render them; but may I ask how it became known to you?" "Do you not remember, Major, (answered Honorina,) when we were travelling from Park-gate, a pretty little amusing anecdote a young woman gave us, of a Miss Sommerville, a beggar's child, who had eloped from very good friends in Ireland, with a young man of bad character?" "Yes, perfectly, (returned he,) and I also remember, that in spite of all we were told to her disadvantage, I thought in some respects she was much to be pitied, and you agreed with me." "Ah, that I did, indeed, (continued Miss Clarendon,) and you will not wonder that I did, when I tell you I was the very Honorina Sommerville she spoke of, though I really was not guilty of all she laid to my charge." "Is it possible! (interrupted he, then after a pause,)—but why, Miss Clarendon, when we had parted with her and her companion, did you not intrust me with the truth?" "What, Sir, after I had heard myself accused of crimes so black, and which I had no means to convince you were false? We were equally strangers to you, and it was more probable I should tell my story in the most favorable manner for myself, than that she should, without any cause, accuse a person whom she knew not, of such base and unprincipled actions: besides, I saw you were inclined to pity me, and I had then too few friends in the world, to risque losing your good opinion." "Indeed, (returned he) you might have trusted me; I was so prepossessed in your favor, by the ingenuous artlessness of your manner, that I should have believed whatever you had been pleased to tell me. But pray oblige me, by reconciling these strange things, and inform me how Miss Wentworth, Miss Sommerville, and Miss Clarendon, are all the same persons?"—Lady Clarendon and her daughter then gave him a short account of the circumstances that brought about the happy discovery, each relating the part which more particularly concerned herself; and the former asked him if he would be present at the interview, which she hoped would now soon take place between their family and the Harcourts. "Yes, Madam," he replied, "with pleasure, and will take any part in it that you wish me." She then mentioned her plan, which he approved of extremely, and offered to bring with him a Counsellor of his intimate acquaintance, and advised, that there should be some person qualified to take Mrs. Harcourt's confession, in short hand, if she should design to make one, lest at any future time she might chuse to deny it.

A long conversation then succeeded, on the variety of strange events which Honoria had experienced. "Let it, my dear Miss Clarendon, (said the Major,) be a lesson to you in future, to place an entire dependance on Providence; since through your whole life, those circumstances, apparently the most distressing, have been productive of the greatest good. Had not Mrs. Fortescue died, and Mr. Fortescue married again, you would not have left Ireland, and consequently could never have been known to Lady Clarendon; for, had you even been introduced to her, as Miss Sommerville, by Lady Eustace, she would never have guessed Miss Sommerville to be her daughter. Had you not by the fire, lost the trunk, as you thought, beyond a possibility of regaining it, you would have advertised, and Marianne restored it; thus Sir Edmund had never seen the gold seal. Had you not left Lady Egerton, and broke your arm, Miss Melmoth could not have been, as she now must be considered, the first cause, through Lady Pelham, of your becoming Lady Clarendon's guest, and of course of this fortunate discovery. Thus, my dear young Lady, (forgive my preaching to you, I confess it is perhaps better adapted to a clerical, than a military habit) if every body would reflect, when opprest by the hand of misfortune, how much would it contribute to lighten the evil they complain of, by lessening its effect on their minds! One word more and I have done. Is it not a wonderful and striking proof of the intervention of Heaven, that the very means Sir Edmund took to accomplish his purpose, should thus counteract his design? and now, Lady Clarendon, you have the happiness of seeing your child properly and strictly educated in the religion you have been taught to prefer." Honoria shed tears of gratitude to heaven for the blessings she had received, which she readily acknowledged, and thanked the Major for his kind paternal advice, which she assured him she would follow. Lady Clarendon, though extremely affected, was yet highly pleased with his serious and judicious remarks. He soon after took leave, promising to visit them frequently, and to hold himself in readiness for the expected summons.

The remainder of the day they passed again alone; Sir William was gone to Kensington with Emily Onslow and the Ashbourns; and Honoria thought this too good an opportunity to be lost, and determined to make some enquiries respecting Colonel Effingham's attachment to Mrs. Harcourt. From the first moment she had known herself to be really Lady Clarendon's daughter, it had struck her as a possibility that the Colonel's letter might be addressed to herself, and in consequence of indulging this idea, had taken her beloved locket from its long confinement, and kept it in her pocket, not daring to wear it tied round her neck as before, lest it should excite a curiosity she as yet knew not how to gratify. But this hope was damped by Lady Clarendon's silence on the subject, a silence which mortified and disconcerted her, since she was from that induced to suppose that the Colonel had some-where seen Louisa in her mother's absence, and was really attached to her; if that was not the case, she could not account for Lady Clarendon's not mentioning it when she cleared up every thing besides. Again she thought over his letter, but it gave her no light, it afforded no consolation, as it agreed equally with her hopes and fears. At length, after tormenting herself to no purpose, she determined if possible to think no more of it till Mrs. Harcourt's confession should discover the truth. But this resolution she had not the power to adhere to. During this *tete-*

a-tete with her mother, she thought a gentle enquiry for the volume of Metastasio would lead to the subject, and by determining her fate at once, in one way or another put an end to her suspense. After a number of hesitations and a thousand tremors, she at last gathered courage, and said to Lady Clarendon, "Pray, madam, when you opened the trunk, did you not see a book, I believe I left one there, a volume of poems?" "Yes, my dear girl, there was a volume of translations from the Italian, but I restored it as I thought to its right owner; Colonel Effingham's name was in it, and when Louisa rejected his addresses, I thought it proper to return it. "To Colonel Effingham, madam! Heaven and earth! did you send it to him?" The agitation with which she spoke, and the deep blush that crimson'd her cheek, gave Lady Clarendon an idea which had never before struck her imagination. But for this emotion I must account, by informing my readers, that when Honoria had first possession of this book, it being long before she had any reason to suspect his constancy, she had pleased herself by writing under his name, (little suspecting he would ever see it) four lines from a song which suited her feelings, and soothed her melancholy.

*Where'er thy wearied footsteps rove,
Where'er thy gentle spirit be,
My heart the favour'd spot shall love,
And bless the clime that blesses thee.*

This was signed Honoria Sommerville, and it was the recollection of this which now confused her, from fearing he was acquainted with the tenderness of her sentiments; a tenderness he had not returned, and so little deserved. "Honoriam," said Lady Clarendon earnestly, "your blushes, your agitation, lead me to suspect"— "Suspect what, dear madam? (interrupted Honoria, endeavouring to recompose her features,) I hope I have never acted in any way unworthy of your daughter." "No, my dear girl, (returned her Ladyship smiling,) I mean not to accuse you of any thing; but I wished to tell you, I fear I have been in an error; if I have, you can rectify it: answer me sincerely, do you know Colonel Effingham?" "Yes, madam," said Honoria, blushing and hesitating. "Where did you first see him, and was he merely a common acquaintance?" "I knew him when he was quartered in Ireland, at a little town within three miles of Wood Park, where he was a constant visitor." Her confusion was a sufficient answer to the latter part of Lady Clarendon's question, who continued: "You need say no more, my love, your countenance explains all I wish to know; I will now in my turn inform you of what you are yet a stranger to; but my mind has of late been so wholly engaged, that I forgot, among her other deceits, Louisa might pretend an acquaintance with the Colonel, and that in fact his letter might be addressed to you: this, I doubt not, was the case, but it had escaped my memory till you mentioned the book; that is a convincing proof it was found in the trunk, with his name written in the first page, and your's underneath. When Louisa so positively refused him, I judged it proper to return it to him, and have since never thought of it, and regarded the Colonel as a lover of her's, without recollecting at what time it was she considered him as such; her confession, however, will, I hope, disclose every apparent mystery. And now, my dear, as I have been thus explicit, you will not, I think, refuse me your confidence on this subject." "Certainly, madam, I will not (replied Honoria;) she then related every circumstance, from the first moment she saw him, not

concealing the locket, nor her reason for leaving Miss Mortimer; but concluded by saying, she dared not hope Lady Clarendon's suggestions were true, as his behaviour had been twice so pointedly neglectful." "You do not recollect, my love," returned her Ladyship, "he undoubtedly supposed you to be Miss Clarendon; though how he attained that knowledge, I own, I am puzzled to guess; but with that idea, was not his behaviour perfectly natural; for must he not feel a great degree of resentment, at the haughty contempt with which he imagined you had treated him?" Honoria allowed the possibility of this, but would not allow herself to hope, lest she should again experience a bitter disappointment: besides, unless she herself revealed it to him, which she could never condescend to do, how would he ever know the fatal mistake; since, in that case it was plain, even at Bath, she had fancied her to be Miss Clarendon, and her now being really so, would confirm his error, if at any future period they should meet? at all events, however, she felt happy in having disclosed to her mother the only secret she had concealed, and rejoiced that she could now at any time speak openly upon the subject.

Whilst they were conversing, a servant brought in a note, which he said a man waited for an answer to; Lady Clarendon opened it, and read:

"Captain and Mrs. Harcourt's respectful duty attends Lady Clarendon; the latter hopes she will not refuse her forgiveness of a step, to which she was compelled, by the fear that she should not obtain consent to unite herself to the man of her heart; and she only waits Lady Clarendon's permission, to throw herself at her feet, and solicit that forgiveness in person. But the Captain will wait on her Ladyship any day she will do him the honour to appoint, to settle respecting his Lady's fortune."

Edward Street.

Both her Ladyship and Honoria were much diverted at the style of this note, particularly at Mrs. Harcourt's dutiful reason for marrying the Captain; and the former taking her pen, wrote an answer as follows:

"Lady Clarendon desires to see Captain and Mrs. Harcourt to-morrow at twelve in Harley-street."

Cool as it was, this note highly pleased the fugitives; Mrs. Harcourt not doubting a favourable reception, rejoiced in the success of her scheme, and had now no apprehensions of a discovery.

Lady Clarendon, the moment she had concluded this, wrote others to the Ashbourns, and Major Southmore, claiming their respective promises; and by eleven o'clock all but the Harcourts were arrived. The Major brought his friend the Counsellor, to whom he had before given a short account of this strange affair, but only mentioned the name of Sommerville; how great then was his astonishment, when, on entering the room, he found in the fair plaintiff the very Miss Wentworth whom he had seen at C——! nor was she less surprized at discovering him to be the Mr. Milford, who had been one cause of her leaving Mrs. Campbell, by the ridiculous disclosure of her long

concealed plagiarism. He addressed her with that politeness which was natural to him, and congratulated her on this happy turn of fortune, at the same time paying her so many compliments, that she was totally at a loss how to answer him; but this distress was soon relieved, by a thundering rap at the door, which announced the arrival of the Harcourts, and the company all seated themselves. When the Captain and his Lady entered, neither his courage, nor her effrontery, could stand against the formidable appearance of such a circle, which so wholly precluded the hopes they had formed of a favourable and affectionate reception. The latter, however, never off her guard, ran up to Lady Clarendon, and fell on her knees, as if to entreat in the humblest posture, that pardon which she was conscious she had not merited; but before she could begin a speech framed for the occasion, her Ladyship disengaged herself, and with a look of extreme contempt, said, "I will not hear your protestations, Mrs. Harcourt, till I know whether you are really accountable to me for your conduct, or whether my forgiveness can any way be essential to your peace of mind, which at present I very much doubt."

Mrs. Harcourt rose, extremely astonished at this address, yet not guessing the cause: the poor Captain had still less an idea of its meaning, but willing to secure as many friends as he could, he went to Sir William, and said, "I now, Sir, entreat your pardon for what has passed between us, I confess my error, and hope in future we shall live like brothers." "When I acknowledge you as my brother (returned Sir William, haughtily,) depend on it, Sir, I shall behave to you as one, but what claim you have to that title is yet to be known." Captain Harcourt, piqued at this answer, resentfully withdrew his offered hand, and turning to Lady Clarendon, said, "I hoped, Madam, to find you alone, as the business which I came upon does not require so many witnesses." "I beg your pardon, Sir," returned her Ladyship, "it does require many witnesses; you came to demand your wife's fortune; I must now acquaint you she has no claim to any." "That, Madam, (said he scornfully) can easily be proved by the late Sir Edmund Bellenden's will, a copy of which I have this moment received, and brought with me, to settle any disputes upon the subject." "Produce the will if you please, Sir, (said Lady Clarendon); it gives thirty-thousand pounds to my daughter, Honoria Sommerville Clarendon; it is now to be proved who is my daughter, and I here declare your wife is not; she has deceived you, as she has deceived me before. My daughter sits in that window;" pointing to Honoria, who was pale and anxious for the event of this scene, but not from any fear that she should lose that title, which she was well assured she herself only had a claim to.

The guilty Marianne was alarmed at this speech, but resolving to lose nothing from want of spirit, she rose, and, in the madness of her rage, stamped on the floor, and attempted to fly to Honoria, but Harry Ashbourn forcibly withheld her; but he could not restrain her tongue, which lavished the bitterest invectives, accusing her of having, by the meanest arts, stolen her mother's affection, and said she had now prevailed on her to disclaim her child, that she might assume her place. Captain Harcourt in vain for some time attempted to stop this torrent, by telling her milder methods would be more effectual, and the moment she ceased, he addressed Lady Clarendon, and told her he could easily see through this pitiful artifice, which was contrived that she might avoid paying his wife the fortune which her uncle had left her; but that in a court of justice, if

she obliged him to have recourse to such means, he would assert his rights, and doubted not his success. "That trouble I will save you, Sir," replied her Ladyship, "by convincing you of the truth. Mrs. Harcourt, you well know you are not my daughter, though by what means you have so long passed for such, I am yet to learn." "Let me question her, Madam," cried Mr. Milford, "you are too much agitated:" then turning to Mrs. Harcourt, "Hear what Lady Clarendon offers; if you will at once confess who you are, and how you became possesser of the trunk and other things belonging to the real Miss Sommerville, she will immediately forgive you what is past, and suffer you to depart unmolested; but if you refuse, you shall be instantly consigned to proper officers, who shall take care of you till you are tried in court as an impostor; how you will then come off, your own conscience can at this moment inform you."

Mrs. Harcourt trembled, but endeavoring to conceal her apprehensions, answered with her usual assurance— "Pray, Sir, who can prove I was not Miss Sommerville, and of course the only person who has a right to those things you mention?" "Miss Sommerville's friends in Ireland, Madam, (replied Mr. Milford); Mr. Fortescue who bred her up; the woman who nursed her; the Clergyman who baptized her; the families who visited at Wood Park during her residence there, shall all be subpoenaed, and they can at once decide whether you or that lady, (meaning Miss Clarendon) are the real Honoria, and their decision nothing can contradict."

The authority with which the Counsellor spoke, terrified the guilty wretch, who was just going to fall on her knees and beg mercy, but Captain Harcourt again speaking, she had time to recover. "This (said he) is a mean subterfuge, intended by the family as a method of revenge for my past conduct; but by Heaven it shall not go unpunished, I demand justice, and justice I will have." "Captain Harcourt," returned Sir William, "perhaps the greatest favor we could possibly confer on you, would be to let the law take its course, as it might relieve you from a tie you will I fancy repent of, but we are not so merciful, and only wish to bring your wife to a true confession; and will then let you both depart, whether in harmony or not, time only can determine." The Captain turned round to answer this speech with a visible resentment, but was stopped by observing an extreme agitation in Mrs. Harcourt's countenance, which confounded and dismayed him. The hint conveyed in Sir William's last words, had so increased her terror, that though she determined to speak, she could not as yet articulate: the Counsellor observed, and resolved to take advantage of it: turning to Lady Clarendon, "You will not, Madam," said he, "regard the expence of a trial, and indeed it will be the best course you can take, as there cannot be the least doubt of the court's deciding in your Ladyship's favor; therefore if you please, we will immediately send for the officers of justice, and commit this guilty and obstinate wretch on your oath as an impostor, and on Miss Clarendon's for the robbery, which of itself would be sufficient to hang her." The resolution of his manner began to affright the Captain, but the conclusion of his speech completed the horror of Marianne; she fell on her knees in an agony, and begged for mercy; saying, that if they would not commit her, she would confess every thing. The Captain turned to her, "Confess what," exclaimed he, fiercely, "is it then true, that you are not Lady Clarendon's daughter?" "Oh, no, (cried she) indeed I am not; she is no more my mother, than she is

your's."— "Damnation! how then did you dare thus impose on me?" saying this, he advanced, and seizing her roughly by the arm, her fright, which his violence added to, deprived her of her sense: she screamed, and fell into a fit; and whilst they were endeavouring to recover her, he attempted to leave the house, but Harry Ashbourn detained him; and the Counsellor desired he would stay to take his lady with him, as her company would by no means be any longer acceptable, than while she was informing them of her story. Confused, mortified, and angry at this unexpected termination of his hopes, and provoked by the remarks which were whispered round the room, he threw himself sullenly into a chair, and silently waited the moment when he should be permitted to depart.

When Mrs. Harcourt grew better, she tried to speak, but could not; at last, a violent shower of tears relieved her; and, after thanking Honoria for the assistance she had afforded her, a kindness she had so little merited, she began relating those events the reader is already acquainted with. When she came to that part of her story of her attending Lady Clarendon to London, for the first time, in the character of her daughter, she addressed herself particularly to Honoria. "When I looked upon you as my inferior, Miss Clarendon, I often behaved with an insolence in every respect unjustifiable; but your mind is too noble, your sentiments, both from birth and education, too liberal, to resent it now I am fallen, and in every sense of the word, humbled: but was this the only offence I have been guilty of towards you, I should think myself happy; but, at a time when I was a stranger to your person, I traduced your character, by my conduct in your name; nor is this all, I have deceived one who is perhaps dear to you, and led him into an opinion, that you are the most ungrateful and unworthy of human beings." The whole company was astonished, not only at this address, but at its effect on Honoria; who, pale and trembling, assured her of forgiveness, but entreated her to go on, and she obeyed.

"Soon after our arrival in London, Lady Clarendon received a letter, the contents of which she did not at that time shew me, but it appeared to interest and animate her; there was one enclosed, directed to Miss Clarendon, which she gave me; but, what was my terror and dismay, when I found it was from a former admirer of the real Miss Somerville's? who had, in spite of all my precautions, though by what means I could not guess, heard of the circumstances of the discovery, and in consequence of it, wrote, to beg permission to renew his addresses, in the most respectful and affectionate terms. He spoke of many people, and adverted to many past scenes, of which no mention was made in the letter from which I derived all my information, and of course I was wholly ignorant of them. Terrified to death lest his passion should induce him to come to the house, which must inevitably have detected me, I determined, if possible, to prevent him, by sending him such a scornful message, that if he had one spark of pride, must destroy his love; but this message I had no means to deliver; I dared not write, lest my hand should discover what it was so much my interest to conceal; and Lady Clarendon positively refused to say what I wished, and declined his offers in a polite, but peremptory manner; at the same time, she grieved at my obstinacy, as she called it, in not accepting so eligible a match. But chance effected what contrivance could not: the day after this letter was sent away, at a lady's house where I was intimate, I was introduced to a gentleman, who soon entered

into earnest conversation with me; at first, I flattered myself I had made a conquest, but too soon found he only wished to speak of Colonel Effingham; he began, by asking me, if I did not know him? Fearful of making some mistake, I only answered his question by another, and his reply convinced me his conjecture was right. The confusion in my countenance, which arose from apprehension, when I discovered he was a particular friend of the Colonel's, he imagined originated in affection, and began to rally me on the subject. I then demanded, in a serious manner, if he was commissioned to speak to me on this head? "Yes," replied he, "Colonel Effingham informed me of his attachment, and entreated I would, if possible, discover whether you are the same Honoria to whom he gave his heart so long since?" This speech cruelly alarmed me, but the continuation of it dissipated my fears. "Whether, (added he) you are as unchanged in mind as in person, and will you not, as Miss Clarendon, despise that heart which, as Miss Sommerville, you condescended to accept?" This was an opportunity of effecting my purpose not to be resisted; and, assuming the utmost haughtiness, I replied, "Your friend, sir, is mistaken; tell him, if you please, from me, that Mr. Fortescue's niece, and Sir William Clarendon's daughter, are not the same; but that the latter wishes to forget every acquaintance of the former, and Colonel Effingham in particular, whose addresses, however they might once gratify my vanity, I should now consider as an insult, and hope in future not to be troubled with them.

"Captain Fairfax regarded me for some moments with a fixed astonishment that seemed to deprive him of utterance; and then in the most contemptuous manner, he answered, "Depend on it, Miss Clarendon, your wishes will be gratified, and you will not be troubled with addresses you so haughtily disclaim, and pardon me, if I say, so ill deserve. If his attachment to you were more violent and uncontrollable than the heart of man ever knew before, your message, which I shall carefully repeat, would obliterate every trace of it from his memory, and only leave a sense of shame and just indignation, at his having ever bestowed it so unworthily. However, Madam, you may possibly regard him as a poor officer, and perhaps have not heard of the advancement of his fortune; give me leave therefore, to tell you, he has lately inherited the whole estate of his uncle, Lord Bridgewater, and is of course, now, no less in fortune, than he ever was in rank, talents and accomplishments, a match for the first families in the kingdom, and I have not a doubt but he will soon convince you of the spirit with which he has conquered so inglorious an attachment, by making both a nobler and worthier choice."

"The fire which sparkled in his eyes, and the resentment which flushed his cheek, as he spoke, were proofs of the reality of his friendship for the Colonel, and the instant he had concluded, without waiting for an answer, he rose hastily, and bowing to the rest of the company, without taking the least notice of me, he quitted the room, apologizing for his abrupt departure, by pleading the sudden recollection of an appointment, which till that moment had escaped his memory. I once or twice afterwards met him at public places, but by constantly avoiding me, he shewed the profound contempt he had for my conduct: yet as it perfectly answered my purpose I was satisfied, and lamented not the loss of his good opinion."

Here Honoria, whose attention had till now supported her spirits, sunk under the terrible idea of appearing so base and ungrateful to the only man in the world whose affection she was solicitous to preserve. The agitation which was evident in her countenance, and the tremor which shook her whole frame, thus discovered to all present the attachment she had so long laboured to conceal. Major Southmore manifested an extreme astonishment, yet mixed with pleasure; and Sir William, who imagined the mistake might be easily cleared up, rejoiced at this intelligence, from having long entertained the highest respect for the character of Colonel Effingham. He went up to his sister, and in a low voice, bade her recollect how perfectly every apparent mystery might be resolved, and declared he would himself undertake the task: she blushed at his address, and her delicacy catching the alarm, she entreated him, with revived emotion, to take no steps in this affair without letting her know, which, seeing her earnestness, he at length, though unwillingly, promised. By this time Honoria had so far recovered, that she desired Mrs. Harcourt to conclude her story, which she did in a very few minutes, and then giving her keys to Miss Clarendon, told her in what place she would find the letter which was originally meant for her.

Captain Harcourt had remained in the utmost consternation and horror during the recital of her various arts and machinations; but when she confessed it was her desire of obtaining a settlement which first induced her to listen to his proposals, he flew into a most unbounded passion, declaring, nothing should ever prevail on him to consider that woman as a wife, who had married him only with a view of securing herself an establishment. Mrs. Harcourt then resuming some of her wonted spirits, replied, "I might, Captain Harcourt, have pretended, that affection was the motive which induced me to accept your offer, had I not been well convinced such a pretence would have had no effect upon your mind; for, did you not marry me for my fortune? though, worse luck for us both, you are disappointed; could you else, after declaring a passion for me, have quitted me for Miss Onslow, whose superior fortune made her an object of greater attraction? Or if I had not been swayed by interest, do you think, after such a proof of inconstancy, I could so easily have forgiven you? no, surely. Thus you must own we meet upon pretty equal terms; you have now married, and you must support me: let me therefore add one word of advice. I promise you the future comfort of our lives, for happiness is out of the question, will depend wholly on yourself; if you will make a tolerable husband, I will be a good and obedient wife."

Captain Harcourt made no reply, but turning sullenly from her, rang the bell, and desired the servant to call a hackney coach. Major Southmore then begged him to consider that all his wife had advanced was strictly true, that a mutual disappointment would ever be the consequence of a mutual deception; he then gave him a little more good advice, to which he paid not the least attention, but hearing the coach was at the door, prepared to depart, without taking any notice of his wife, who however determined to follow; and, asking Lady Clarendon if she had leave to retire, which was instantly granted, she flew down stairs, and sprang into the coach, before the door was shut, and, though much against his will, accompanied him to their lodgings in Edward-street; where

we will leave them to torment each other by perpetual quarrels and useless revilings, and return to the happy society at Lady Clarendon's.

CHAP. XXXIV.

THE whole party immediately congratulated Honoria, and saluted her as Miss Clarendon, a name by which she was now to be presented to the world. Miss Ashbourn, after expressing her heart-felt joy that this affair was settled to their universal satisfaction, said she had nothing to regret, but that the vile author of all this deception should remain unpunished. "No, Miss Ashbourn, (replied Lady Clarendon) not unpunished. I dare engage that she and the Captain will prove mutual plagues to each other, and amply revenge us for the injuries and mischiefs they have intended. I wish neither of them heavier evils, than their union in all probability will inflict." She then begged the present company would dine with her, and all assenting, Sir William, Harry and Fanny Ashbourn, set out to bring Miss Onslow to join their party, whose long absence the former had bitterly lamented, though he acknowledged the propriety of it. When they were gone, Honoria, who had with difficulty so long restrained her impatience, went up stairs to read Colonel Effingham's letter; and during her absence Major Southmore asked and received Lady Clarendon's permission to inform the Colonel of all that had passed: he then declared it should not be a moment longer deferred, for he well knew what he must suffer from the erroneous opinion he had so long entertained, and determined to relieve him from this anxiety in person. He took leave of the company, entreating they would not mention to Honoria or any one else the reason of his absence. He then sent for a postchaise, and began his journey to the place of Colonel Effingham's residence, which he had learned from the Lamberts, for he was yet an utter stranger to him, though so deeply indebted for the kind assistance he had afforded the younger branches of his family. Mrs. and Miss Ashbourn and the Counsellor, who were only privy to his scheme, promised inviolable secrecy.

When he was gone, their conversation turned wholly on the events of the morning; and Mrs. Ashbourn expressed her astonishment that after such violent agitation, Mrs. Harcourt could so far recover her usual spirit, as to address her husband in the manner she did, and depart in such perfect composure. "That," returned Mr. Milford, "was solely the effect of her terror; relieved from the dread of imprisonment and perhaps death, she forgot the hope with which she entered the house, in the joy she felt at being permitted to leave it, at liberty and uncontrouled; the poor man's disappointment was more bitter; as he could not gain her fortune, I fancy he would have approved of any means which might restore that freedom he bartered for gold; but, in every way mortified, his anger and indignation cannot be wondered at.

Whilst they were debating the point of which of the two would be the most miserable from this connection, Fanny Ashbourn and the gentleman returned with Miss Onslow, who had been informed of all that passed; and instead of entering the drawing room, she ran to Honoria's chamber to chide her for her want of confidence, in not disclosing the secret of her attachment: rapping at the door she was instantly admitted, but the sight of Honoria weeping over the letter in her hand, changed her feigned resentment into real sympathy, and though guessing her tears flowed partly from joy, yet with the

kindest attention she soothed her feelings, till they gave way to the tenderness of friendship, and were restored tranquillity. She then gave Emily the letter, and asked if it was possible to read it unmoved and consider the insolent ungrateful answer its writer had received? It contained the most ardent expressions of a deep, unalterable attachment, mingled with fears that his long absence had erased the impression he once flattered himself he had made on her heart: he said he had spent many months in fruitless enquiries for her, till an accident, the particulars of which she should know when they met, had informed him of the change in her situation, but hoped she would not imagine Miss Clarendon was dearer to him, than Miss Sommerville had been, for that was impossible: he then asked if she had ever received the locket, which through Mr. Fitzosborne's means he had sent her; mentioned several other past circumstances, and concluded with the most earnest hopes that she would not be less favourable to them than before; and that she would grant him an interview, when he flattered himself he could explain to her satisfaction whatever part of his past conduct might appear mysterious.

The respect, the tenderness, the ardour of this letter, all convinced Honoria not only of the strength of his attachment, but how worthy he was of a return: yet she had one fear which nothing could counteract; this was, that the unparalleled insolence of Marianne's behaviour might entirely have obliterated her from his heart. Emily tried all in her power to dissipate this fear, and in some measure succeeded. Honoria's bosom never rejected hope, and deriving a degree of comfort from Miss Onslow's arguments, she took out her locket, and with a satisfaction that she had on this account been long a stranger to, tied it round her neck, and joined the party that were assembled to dinner.

Miss Onslow was not a little surprized to meet in the Counsellor her old acquaintance, Mr. Milford. After they had chatted some time on various subjects, she enquired, smiling at Miss Clarendon, after his friend, Mr. Dixon, and whether he was married? "No, madam," replied he, "nor do I think he ever will; the poor man has been very unsuccessful in several applications." "Yes, (cried Emily aside to Honoria) that we know very well." "And I think," continued he, "he now seems to have given up all thoughts of matrimony." "Really!" said Miss Onslow. "Yes, madam, at least so it appears to me, but I may be mistaken, for he is the most reserved man in the world in this respect; and if I learn his disappointments in any way, it is entirely by chance, and not from himself. I remember when we quitted C——, he had met with a rejection, though I never knew from whom, nor could I guess from any particularity in his behaviour to any lady during our stay there." "So much the better; is it not, Honoria?" (cried Emily again, in a whisper).—"Hush! my dear girl, (returned she, colouring) you will betray me." Emily then promised silence, and kept her word.

The whole day was spent in the most chearful manner; but Honoria, Sir William, Emily, and Fanny, wondered at the Major's absence, and asked whither he was gone? Lady Clarendon said, particular business had obliged him to leave town suddenly; this satisfied them, and they enquired no farther. But Miss Ashbourn could not resist the pleasure of informing Honoria of the truth; she took her aside in the evening, and making her promise secrecy, declared the reason of the Major's departure. Honoria was extremely

surprized, and a little disconcerted at this intelligence; but after some reflection, being satisfied that the Colonel would be assured this scheme was executed without her knowledge, she gave way to the hopes which involuntarily arose in her mind, and in this interval employed herself in writing a full and true account of every thing that had passed, to Miss Melmoth; who returned her sincere and ardent congratulations, and requested to see Lady Clarendon and the whole family at Southern Lodge, when the Spring was sufficiently advanced to render the country pleasant. This invitation Lady Clarendon determined to accept, as she was anxious to see the kind friend, who with such unusual liberality and benevolence had taken in her Honoria, a stranger, unprotected, and unhappy, and had given her so many instances of disinterested attachment; but at present she wished to visit Clarendon Place, and there celebrate the day on which her daughter would be of age, which was now approaching. And whilst they were all impatiently expecting Major Southmore's return, let me entreat my readers to pardon me, if I carry them back to the first part of the history, to trace Colonel Effingham's conduct from that time.

CHAP. XXXV.

WHEN the Colonel left Ireland, he was, as has been already shewn, deeply attached to Miss Sommerville; and conscious of the mediocrity of his fortune and expectations, he had almost, without design, made her acquainted with a passion, which however scarcely dared hope a return; but flattered by the reception his declaration had met with, he departed, indulging a thousand fanciful ideas which amused his mind, while they strengthened his attachment; and forgetting his resolution of sighing in secret, he sent the locket to Mr. Fitzosborne, his friend, desiring he would find an opportunity of delivering it, without discovering himself to be the agent. This opportunity, Mrs. Fortescue's illness and death prevented him from meeting with for many months, as though he often went to Wood Park, and saw the family, and sometimes Honoria alone, when he could deliver the messages which he was constantly charged with, yet as Miss Fortescue and Honoria seldom left the house, he could find no method of sending the locket in the way his friend wished, till the time Honoria received it. He wrote constantly to America, giving the Colonel the most flattering account of Miss Sommerville's behaviour, of the expression in her eyes when she enquired for him, and added a thousand circumstances that kept alive a passion which was in its own nature too ardent to require any addition. Unfortunately, Mr. Fitzosborne was called to England just before Mr. Fortescue's marriage, and was ignorant of that event, and its consequences, till his return to Ireland, which was not till after Honoria's escape.

In the mean time, Captain Effingham performed wonders in America; actuated by love, and stimulated by glory, his bravery was so evident, that it soon procured him the highest respect and esteem, and was in time the cause of his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel; soon after which, the death of his cousin, Mr. Bridgewater, and the illness of his uncle, recalled him to England. Here he met his friend, Fitzosborne, and of him he anxiously enquired for Honoria, but could receive no kind of information. Lord Bridgewater was then so extremely ill, and every day growing worse, that it was impossible to leave him, but distracted for some account of the object of his affections, he pressed Fitzosborne's departure in the most strenuous manner, and after a variety of accidental delays, he at length set out. But what was the grief, disappointment and agony, he endured at the contents of his friend's first letter! it was literally this: After expressing his concern at the effect he knew his intelligence would have upon him, he said, that Mr. Fortescue was married again, and it had been discovered, that Miss Sommerville was not his niece, but a child whom the first Mrs. Fortescue had taken up on the road, and bred up out of charity, till she grew so fond of her, that she insisted on her passing for her own niece; but that the present lady had revealed the secret, at which Miss Sommerville was so highly enraged, she resolved to stay no longer at Wood Park, and had actually eloped a few weeks before it was universally believed, with a young man of the most dissolute character, who had carried her no one knew whither.

This letter almost drove the Colonel to despair, which was heightened by the impossibility of his then quitting his uncle, whom he was with at Bristol, to discover how

far this story was true; for though he thought there might be some foundation for the report, yet his soul refused to believe any thing inconsistent with the purity of that mind, which he knew was unsullied as an angel's. His uncle's death soon released him; but a law-suit, which threatened his whole property, obliged him to wait its decision in London; as the loss of his fortune would have put it out of his power to maintain his beloved Honoria in the manner he wished.

It was during this interval, and before he went to Bristol, that his visits at Lady Mortimer's gave rise to such cruel suspicions in the breast of our heroine, which the reader has already seen were wholly without foundation. Miss Mortimer, in fact, regarded Captain Fairfax with the same sentiments of affection, that the Colonel felt for Honoria, and he returned them with equal tenderness. It was of him only she spoke in those conversations which alarmed Honoria, and excited in her, for the first time, the bitter emotions of jealousy.

The law-suit was not concluded till she had been some time at Mrs. Campbell's, and the instant he found himself at liberty to leave London, he went to Ireland, where Mr. Fitzosborne confirmed every thing he had said in his letter; but this not satisfying his mind, he rode the day after his arrival to Wood Park, and found Mr. Fortescue alone. The alteration in his countenance and manner struck him forcibly; instead of the cheerful and hospitable freedom of his air and conversation, he received him with a restraint that shocked and mortified him; but this soon wore off; he pressed his hand with affection, and said, those were happy days when he was last in Ireland, but he had since met with so many afflictions, that he had sunk under them. "I wish, Colonel," added he, "I could ask you to stay at my house, but Mrs. Fortescue is a little particular, and does not love strangers." As soon as he paused, Colonel Effingham lost not a moment to enquire for his niece. "Ah," cried he, "that was a sad business, it almost broke my heart; and yet I dared not complain. Poor, dear girl, I wonder what part of the wide world now holds her? Hush," said he, placing his fingers on his lips, on Mrs. Fortescue's entrance, which put an end to his volubility, greatly to the Colonel's disappointment, as he flattered himself with gaining some essential intelligence with respect to the reason of her leaving Ireland; but his Lady amply made it up, though not in the way he wished. She seldom left her husband so long alone with strangers, but the business of the toilet took place of all other, and even at the risk of the disclosure of some of her artifices, induced her to remain in her dressing-room some time after the Colonel's arrival. She conversed with him fluently on common subjects, but his heart was too deeply interested in one to attend to her, and he prepared to depart, when Mr. Fortescue's leaving the room, gave him an opportunity of asking the lady for Miss Sommerville: "Oh, that vile wretch," cried she, "name her not, sir, I beseech you; it is horror to my ears." "Madam, (said the Colonel) what can you mean?" "I mean, sir, (replied Mrs. Fortescue) that the blackness of her ingratitude so far exceeds belief, that, perhaps, if I tell you the history of her behaviour, you will scarcely believe me." Probably not, thought he, and remained silent that he would not seem to request it; but she chose to go on; and accordingly, with every aggravation malice could invent, she related her supposed birth, actions, and elopement, and with those motives which she always added, and which were so different from the real ones. But in the

violence of her rage, she overwrought her story so far, that it wholly lost its intended effect. The Colonel disbelieved every syllable she had uttered, and doubted not but some secret reason, which he could not develop, had prompted her to this revenge. From the haste in which she spoke, she had so often contradicted herself, that in a court of justice she would have been condemned by her own evidence. This conduct excited in him so much horror and disgust, that he refused all her earnest solicitations to stay dinner, and took an hasty and abrupt leave. In the hall he met Mr. Fortescue, who, with tears in his eyes, again shook and pressed his hand; and, in a weak and flattering voice, wished him health and happiness; and then added, in a whisper, "Shall I not see you once more before you quit Ireland?" "No, sir, I thank you, (returned the Colonel, scarcely able to speak, from the variety of emotions that overpowered his mind) I shall go as soon as possible." The servant then opened the door, and he departed.

As he went through the park, a thousand tender recollections crowded on his memory, of the happiness he had once enjoyed on this very spot, which contrasted with the dreadful uncertainty he was at present informed such a gloomy combination of ideas, that he could not resist their force, but gave way to the deepest impression of melancholy. In this situation he returned to his friend, who endeavoured, but in vain, to restore him to cheerfulness: he sedulously avoided all society, and found no comfort but in retracing those paths, where he had once wandered with his beloved Honoria. One day as he was pursuing his solitary walk, he met an old woman whose countenance struck him as one he had often seen before; she made him a curtsy, and he stopped and asked her name? her voice and reply instantly convinced him he was not mistaken, but that she was the very woman at whose house he had frequently been, to gaze unobserved on the mansion which contained all he held dear. A few minutes conversation introduced the name of Sommerville; this was Mrs. Connor's forte: she began relating to him the true reason of her leaving Wood Park, to which he listened with unbounded satisfaction, as it confirmed every prepossession of her innocence that he had entertained. "But my good Mrs. Connor, (interrupted he, when she had declared herself an assistant in her escape) tell me I beseech you where she now is, that I may instantly fly to her, and relieve her perhaps from that distress, which so young, so beautiful, and so unprotected, she may in the cruel world have to encounter." "Arrah," cried Mrs. Connor, "the dear crature made me promise to tell nobody at all, but sure I may tell you without breaking it; and so, Sir, I cannot say myself where she is, though if you will enquire for her at Paddy's sister's in London, to be sure she knows." "That I will, you may depend on it, (replied the Colonel smiling) if you will inform me where Paddy's sister lives, and what is her name?" "Ay to be sure, I had forgot that, for else you might have asked at forty places before you came to the right house, and then ten to one but you had been wrong." She then gave him a full direction, and added, "You must remember, Sir, to ask Mrs. Middleton, for one Miss Sommerville, who goes by the name of Wentworth, because why, the dear child would not be called by her own name, as she had no right to any at all, so she took Wentworth, that nobody might know who she was."

The Colonel then departed perfectly satisfied with the intelligence he had gained, and left Mrs. Connor as perfectly satisfied with the present he had given her for this long

wished for information. He determined to quit Ireland instantly, nor could all his friends' entreaties prevail on him to stay another day, so impatient was he to profit by the kindness of Mrs. Connor. But he was unavoidably detained some time by contrary winds; however the moment he landed, he took post horses, and arrived at London in as short a time as it was possible to perform the journey. He would not go to Sir Charles Mortimer's lest they should detain him, but took a hackney-coach to Poland street; there he was told that Mrs. Middleton had been burnt out of her house, and was removed to Red Lyon street; thither he drove according to the direction he had received, and learned that she had been dead some time, but the woman of the house where she had lodged, said if he had any business he might apply to her husband, who lived still at Mr. Burnaby's in Park-street. With this gentleman he was intimately acquainted, but resolving not to be seen, he ordered his servant to enquire for Middleton; and here to his great disappointment, heard he was gone with his master into Berkshire. It now seemed to strike him like a presentiment that he might never know, and fearing, if he delayed an instant, some accident might happen to Middleton, which would for ever conceal the place of Honoria's abode: he sent immediately for a post-chaise, which conveyed him to the village near which Mr. Burnaby's country-house was situated. Stopping at a little ale-house, he sent for Middleton, and learned from him, that Miss Wentworth was, when his wife died, companion to a lady at C——, of the name of Campbell. Being now a little relieved from the extreme agitation he had suffered through his whole journey, he determined to take some rest; but early the next morning he set off for C——. Here also his enquiries were vain; the mistress of the inn where he alighted, on his asking for Mrs. Campbell, and Miss Wentworth, replied, she knew the former very well, but that Miss Wentworth had left her some days, and that she herself was gone into Sussex. The report of Honoria's leaving C—— with Mr. Audley, was yet only canvassed in the higher circles, and of course this good woman could give no farther information. The Colonel then begged to know if Mrs. Campbell had no particular friend, to whom he could apply for intelligence, and was directed to Miss Winterton.

The day was then too far advanced to admit of his paying a visit to an entire stranger, but as early the next morning as propriety would allow, he rapped at the prebendary's door, and was ushered into the dressing room; where unfortunately for our heroine, Helena was sitting with Miss Mary Walton discussing the point of Honoria's elopement. The entrance of a young man, so handsome, so elegant, so fashionable and whose cockade spoke him of that profession so generally captivating to the fair sex, alarmed them both, though not with unpleasing sensations. Mary Walton, who was really pretty, was conscious she should appear to no disadvantage by the side of her withering friend, and in the idea of conquest, called forth all her artillery of smiles and graces; but these had no effect on the insensible Colonel, who after apologizing for his intrusion, said, as Mrs. Campbell was absent, he had no means of learning whither Miss Wentworth was gone, except by applying to Miss Winterton, who he hoped would be so good as to give him all the information in her power.

Helena was so inexpressibly shocked at this address, which revived every terrible idea in her bosom, that she burst into tears, and covering her face with her handkerchief,

begged Miss Mary to explain the cause of her extreme agitation, which would at the same time answer his question. This was a task by no means unpleasant to the malevolent girl; in a few words she told him that the young lady for whom he enquired, had seduced a lover of Miss Winterton's by the basest arts from the honourable and ardent passion he had before entertained for her; and had not long since left the city with the same gentleman; but whether he intended to marry her, was a point yet undetermined, but the majority imagined his only view was to make her his mistress.

Colonel Effingham was at first struck with the deepest horror, but a moment's recollection, and a second glance at that face, (for the handkerchief was now withdrawn) which the young lady said had so ardently attached this pretended lover, by convincing him of the improbability of the first part of the story, strongly induced him to disbelieve the latter, and he instantly saw through the whole, judging that the superior attractions of the irresistible Honoria had charmed some young man, whom Helena had regarded as her devoted captive, and that in revenge for his infidelity, she had maliciously circulated this report: but here, as the reader knows, he was greatly mistaken. Enraged as he was, yet he commanded his temper, and only replied, "Pardon me, madam, for contradicting you, but you are certainly in an error: I have long known Miss Wentworth, and know her to be incapable of a dishonourable action; but her beauty and talents will often create envy in her own sex, though if ladies ever meant to charm, they would not so readily credit, and with such avidity relate any circumstance so disadvantageous to themselves; for if Miss Wentworth could possibly err, where can we hope for perfection?" Saying this, he arose and hastily quitted the room, leaving the two ladies in extreme astonishment at the earnestness of his manner, and both mortified and disconcerted at the intention and event of his visit. The Colonel left the city with the bitterest regret and disappointment, not knowing where next to apply; at last he resolved to consult Sir Charles Mortimer, and for this purpose on his arrival in London desired to be set down in Upper Brook-street.

CHAP. XXXVI.

SIR Charles was extremely concerned at the agitation in his friend's countenance, which so plainly proved the situation of his mind. This family returned to London earlier than usual, on Lady Mortimer's account, who had been extremely ill, and wished for the best advice. Whilst the Colonel was relating his misfortunes, Miss Mortimer was attending her mother, but when she joined them at supper, Sir Charles mentioned the principal circumstances to her. The name of Wentworth struck her with infinite surprize, but when he said she had lived with Mrs. Campbell, as a companion, she no longer doubted but it was the same Kitty Wentworth who had attended her. She then gave the Colonel every particular of her behavior during her stay with her, and said, that extreme melancholy which had often puzzled her, was now accounted for, and that she believed despair, and not pride, was the reason of her leaving her; as she found a report had prevailed in the family, that Colonel Effingham was her lover, instead of Captain Fairfax.

When the Colonel knew how near he had been to happiness, and how fatally it had escaped him; how often he had been under the same roof with his beloved Honoria, and yet, from ignorance, deprived of the power of availing himself of such unexpected felicity; his despair was almost heightened to frenzy: he rose, walked about the room, and declared he would immediately go in search of her, for he should have no peace till he had entreated her pardon for his unintentional offence. "Stay, Colonel, (said Caroline) gently detaining him, "believe me, your Knight-errantry will be useless, unless you have some guide to direct your wandering footsteps. Remain with us a few days, and I will write to Mrs. Campbell, who, probably, can tell us where this fair fugitive may be found; as to the propriety of her conduct, I have, myself, no doubts, (though even that mystery she can clear up) for, during the whole time she was with me, she behaved with the utmost prudence, scarcely ever left the house, and associated with none of the family, but spent every leisure hour in her own apartment, reading or working." The Colonel acknowledged the excellence of her scheme, promised to be guided by her, and expressed the highest satisfaction at the terms in which she spoke of Honoria, who was the dearest object of his heart. Miss Mortimer, always indefatigable in whatever she undertook, wrote the next day to Mrs. Campbell, and called on a friend, in town, for a proper direction to her in Sussex; and in a very few days received the following answer.

"Dear Madam,

"I am extremely concerned that it is not in my power to give you a more satisfactory account of Miss Wentworth: her departure from me was sudden, and the reason of it such as I cannot by any means reveal, but where she now is, I am utterly ignorant. I am sorry to add, that the inhabitants of C—— are unitedly of opinion, that she left the city with a young man, of the name of Audley, who, it was very evident, had been some time deeply attached to her; but what foundation there may be for this conjecture, I shall not take upon me to decide.

"I am, Madam,

"Your obliged

“Humble Servant,
“ELIZA CAMPBELL.”

This letter was brought to Miss Mortimer in the presence of Colonel Effingham, who remarking its effect on her countenance, entreated he might see it, that his suspense at least might be ended at once. She reluctantly consented, and with a well meant, though a mistaken zeal, for his happiness, when he had read it, she begged him to grieve no longer for one, who, apparently from the variety of circumstances in her disfavour, was unworthy his attachment; and as it was now undoubtedly out of his power to discover where she was, advised him to forget her. “Ah, Miss Mortimer,” returned the Colonel, with a deep sigh, “you know not how impossible it is for me to forget one whose idea is interwoven with my existence; besides, I know the innate rectitude of her heart, and am fully convinced there is no reason for these malicious innuendo’s, but what originates in envy; no,” continued he, with vehemence, “only from her own lips will I believe her false, and I will not stay another day here, but again visit Ireland, and endeavor to obtain farther intelligence.”

To this resolution he strictly adhered, and, contrary to all the persuasions of his friends, left them the next morning. Being obliged to take Oxford in his way, to transact some particular business, which could not be delayed till his return, he there unexpectedly met with an old and intimate acquaintance, who insisted upon his supping with him that evening. Though extremely unfit to join the large and cheerful party which were to assemble at his apartments, yet he knew not how to resist his solicitations, and accordingly promised. When he was called upon for his toast, after supper, he gave Miss Sommerville, and preferred a silent, but ardent wish, that his enquiries might be attended with success. Some minutes after, the toast-master called to a gentleman, who sat almost opposite to him, “Now, Audley, it is your turn;” who, immediately lifting the glass to his lips, exclaimed in the most animated manner, “I give you the irresistible Miss Wentworth.” Colonel Effingham was struck with the name of Audley, as that which Mrs. Campbell had mentioned in her letter, but how was his confusion increased, when this toast convinced him it was the same gentleman! Resolving however to conceal his emotions, from an idea that he might learn the truth of the report, if he asked any question, without appearing so deeply interested in the reply; he assumed a calmness he was in reality far from feeling, and begged to know, in a careless manner, if it was Miss Wentworth, of Yorkshire, whose health they had just been drinking? “Upon my word, Sir,” replied Mr. Audley, “I do not know; I saw the lady at C——, where she was on a visit. I only know she is the most beautiful, angelic creature in the world, and her mind is as perfect as her form.” “Very well,” said a gentleman at the other end of the table, “you are a violent lover indeed, Audley.” “No,” cried he, “but I could have been if she had permitted it.” “Was the lady cruel?” interrupted the Colonel, affecting to smile. “Yes, Sir, she was, she would not even listen to me upon the subject of love; she was not half so kind as the world, who gave her to me, for I declare it was reported she eloped from C—— under my protection; and one lady went so far as to say, she had seen her in my phaeton, when I was driving my sister to Dover, who happened to be drest that day in a great coat of the same colour Miss Wentworth usually wore. Thus this story arose from

female vanity, and was confirmed by female malevolence; for Charlotte observing Miss Wentworth looked like a divinity in brown, thought nothing but a change of dress was necessary to make her equally charming; and the rest of the ladies at C——, envious of her superiority, circulated the story to the utmost of their power. Unfortunately for me, however, there is not a word of truth in it, for I have not seen her since the morning I left C——, and despair of again enjoying that felicity.” “Then, (replied the Colonel) you do not know where she now is?” “No, really I do not,” returned Mr. Audley. The extreme frankness of his manner, was a convincing proof of the truth of all he had asserted, and it relieved Colonel Effingham’s mind from a heavy load of distress; as though he did not himself suspect her virtue, he could not bear that others should: and to remove all suspicion from Miss Mortimer, he made an apology for quitting the company early, and wrote an account of all that had passed to Sir Charles; and having dispatched his letter, pursued his journey, with a peaceful tranquillity he had not for a long time experienced.

On his arrival at Parkgate, he found the packet ready to sail, with a fair, but so rough a wind, that several people who were waiting to go would not venture, but this could not deter him; he had often encountered a storm on a less interesting and pressing occasion, though he would not rashly run himself into danger; but the master of the vessel assuring him there was none, and that it was only a smart gale, he embarked immediately; but they had not been long at sea before this gale increased almost to a hurricane; it drove the ship very far north, and they were in the utmost danger many hours. The storm at length abated, and the Captain endeavoured to bring the vessel again into its right course, though the wind was unfavourable; and Colonel Effingham perceiving this would not be soon accomplished, thought it would be the quickest method for him to be set on shore, and pursue his journey to Dublin. The Captain complied with his request, and he landed at a little place south of Belfast, and from thence proceeded some miles without any interruption; but, on his asking for horses at a small town, which was in his way to the direct road from Belfast to Dublin, he was told he must wait a day, or perhaps two, before he could go on, as the late rains had swelled the waters so much, it was not merely dangerous, but impossible to pass. He was, therefore, obliged to submit, and though extremely anxious to pursue his journey, he did it with a good grace.

It was a wretched place, and he was without books, or any thing to amuse him; but the clergyman, who was the only reasonable inhabitant, with that hospitality peculiar to the nation, hearing the circumstance of his detention, waited on, and invited him to his house; an invitation which the Colonel gladly accepted. This gentleman was, in fact, the very Mr. Richardson who baptized Honoria, and who had but a short time before confirmed to Sir William Clarendon the identity of his supposed sister’s person. The circumstance was yet fresh in his memory, and imagining, from the singularity of the discovery, it might amuse his guest, he gave him a minute recital of Miss Sommerville’s life, little suspecting how deeply he was interested in it. This was the first time he had ever heard a true account of the manner in which she was found, and was delighted that she was not a beggar’s brat, as had been represented to him. Mr. Richardson was too much engaged with his story to regard its effects on the Colonel, till he begged him to say at once where she then was, and relieve him from the suspense he had so long endured?

The good man was surprized at his earnestness, and instantly complied with his request; and when he learned that she was indisputably Lady Clarendon's daughter, and, at that time, under her protection, his joy exceeded all bounds, and was, indeed, little short of distraction. Mr. Richardson related, with the most minute exactness, the particulars of his interview with Sir William, which put the matter past a doubt; as he had kept an inventory of the contents of the trunk, which agreed in every point with that Sir William brought over. The Colonel then, in his turn, after thanking him for his happy information, mentioned his acquaintance with Honoria, the various and unfortunate disappointments he had met with, and concluded, by saying, he imagined, as the time agreed perfectly, that it was soon after her leaving Mrs. Campbell's that this discovery took place, and was the reason why he could not trace her. Mr. Richardson rejoiced at having been, in some degree, the happy instrument of Honoria's present situation, and hoped the Colonel's unexpected meeting with him, would be the fortunate means of his future happiness, in a union with the most amiable of her sex.

As soon as the fords were become passable, they parted, with mutual expressions of friendship; the Colonel proceeded to Dublin, without staying a moment on the road longer than was unavoidable, and from thence embarked for England, where he arrived in safety.

It seemed as if every thing conspired to clear Honoria's character, and place her conduct in the most amiable point of view, in order to make his disappointment the more terrible; for when he was about half way to London, on stopping at a little inn to change horses, he found they had but one carriage at home, which was already engaged to a gentleman who was then in the house; this extremely disconcerted him, but the gentleman hearing his enquiries, immediately came out, and finding they were both going the same road, offered him a place, which the Colonel gladly accepted. It happened to be Counsellor Milford; and though they were not acquainted, they knew each other personally, and were so mutually pleased with each other's conversation, that they would not part at the end of the stage, but agreed to continue their journey in one carriage. Colonel Effingham, restored to his natural cheerfulness, and at this time particularly animated, was a most agreeable companion; and the Counsellor rejoiced at the event which had been the means of their travelling together. The conversation turned on various subjects; at last the vanity incident to authors became the topic. "I once," said Mr. Milford, "was present at a most ridiculous scene, which I believe nothing will ever efface from my memory. I was visiting a friend at C——, who was paying his addresses to a rich and learned widow, who lived in the same city; he confessed to me he thought her understanding not so brilliant as she herself considered it, and as he always told it was, for flattery was his forte, and vanity her weak side. He carried me there one evening to hear some part of a work she was then engaged in translating; he told me it was highly ridiculous, but entreated me to commend it; this I could not promise, but declared I would behave as handsomely as I could, and Mr. Dixon, who was of our party, said the same. There was a large company assembled, and after tea, Hunter asked for the book and read us several chapters, on which we could, as far as the most elegant language could deserve, bestow the highest praises with great justice, which not a little pleased the lady, and her

swain felt the effect of her good humour. The next morning we all went to pay her a visit; she was not at home, but the servant saying he expected her in a few minutes, Hunter led the way to the library; where he said we might wait her return. A large old folio here attracted our notice, which on opening we found to be an old English translation of her very work: on the table lay her book, which was merely a copy of the folio, with the language modernized and refined. Whilst we were all enjoying the ridiculous discovery, the lady unexpectedly returned, and we had only time to shut the book before she came into the room, attended by a young lady who lived with her in the quality of a companion: we had not composed our countenances to a proper degree of gravity; she saw something had diverted us, without knowing what, till observing the fatal folio, the terrible mystery was revealed, and she fainted away. On her recovery, she darted the most furious looks at Miss Wentworth, who could not guess the reason of her anger till she was carried to her chamber, and then we disclosed it, and immediately discovered from her embarrassment, another secret that we had not before suspected, and this was, that the lady herself had really no merit in the work at all, for that her young friend copied, and of course the elegance of the style and language was all her own. "Pray, (replied the Colonel, extremely anxious to hear the answer,) what was the consequence of this?" "Why," added the Counsellor, "the young lady was dismissed, as too careless in such an important charge." "And know you what became of her?" "From C—— she went to London, with a very respectable old lady, whom I was well acquainted with, but how long she remained there I am ignorant. There was one trait in her character, which indisputably proved the goodness of her heart. I saw her the morning after this business at Mrs. Markham's, and I found by the conversation, both that lady and Miss Onslow were, till I mentioned it, entirely a stranger to the reason of her leaving Mrs. Campbell; indeed, she then said, she had promised never to reveal the circumstance of the old translation, and was therefore of opinion, that even Mrs. Campbell's unkind behaviour could not justify her relating it to any one. From that day to this, I have never spoke of it myself, for Hunter was afraid of his Minerva's resentment, if the affair was made public."

Colonel Effingham endeavoured to conceal the transport this intelligence gave him, which so entirely cleared up every doubt; and replied, with a smile, "I once knew the lady you speak of, but never till this moment heard this little anecdote; but do you know what has been the consequence of the concealment?" "No," (replied the Counsellor). "It was reported every where and believed, that she left C—— with a Mr. Audley, who had been very attentive to her; a report I imagine Mrs. Campbell did not chuse to contradict, lest the truth should be investigated." Mr. Milford expressed his concern that he had been in any way accessory to such a story being raised, and declared he would in future be very cautious what he promised. This engaged their attention to the end of their journey; the Counsellor was set down in Norfolk-street, and the Colonel proceeded to Windsor, where the Mortimers family then were, to consult them upon what plan he had best pursue, and take his measures accordingly.

Miss Mortimer was not a little delighted that her favourite Miss Wentworth was so happily acknowledged, and that she still so highly merited the esteem she had once bestowed on her; and joined with her brother in persuading the Colonel to stay with them

at Windsor, and from thence write both to Lady and Miss Clarendon. This he complied with, and Captain Fairfax promised if possible to see the latter in town, as he knew a lady who was intimately acquainted with the family, and tell her his friend's distress, and enumerate the fruitless pains he had so frequently taken to discover her. The reader is already informed of the contents of these epistles and her Ladyship's answer, as well as the particulars of the interview between Captain Fairfax and the fictitious Honoria; I shall therefore only mention the Colonel's extreme horror and astonishment at receiving so polite yet so peremptory a refusal from Lady Clarendon, who at the same time expressed her sorrow that her daughter should so positively decline his proposals, which she herself considered as highly honourable and advantageous. Still however he flattered himself with the hope of a kind message by his friend, but his return completed his despair, and absolutely for a time deprived him of sense and recollection. In vain he called resolution to his aid, the stroke was too severe for his fortitude to support, and he sunk under it. In vain his friends used every argument in their power to compose his mind; he would tell them, any thing but contempt and scorn he would have borne patiently, and submitted to the disappointment however galling; but the cruelty of her behaviour on whom he had so long doated, by convincing him of her pride and ingratitude, convinced him that all dependance on human happiness was fallacious, and left him in this world without a wish to animate, or a hope to support him. In this languid and inactive state he passed the winter in the country, inattentive to every thing but the report of Miss Clarendon's intended elopement, which was too public not to reach him; this, if any event could, would have added to his grief, but his mind was in a state of torpor, and was almost incapable of superior anguish, to that which already oppressed it. This his friends mentioned as an inducement for him to join them in town, as they said in consequence of this affair the object he so much wished to avoid, was sent to stay some time with a lady who lived in the country. Their entreaties at length prevailed: the variety he met with in London amused him insensibly, his spirits and activity were in some degree restored, and the spring of his mind, which had appeared broken, once more renewed its action; not that he had lost the prevailing idea of his soul; Honoria's inconstancy and scorn still haunted him, and pervaded every recess of his heart; but he was soothed by the attentions of those around him, and not insensible of their kindness, gratitude induced him to appear pleased, till in some measure he became so in reality. The book which Lady Clarendon had sent him with her daughter's refusal, had been through the whole winter his constant companion, and contributed to keep alive the passion, reason and pride ought to have conquered, as it was a convincing proof to him, that though Miss Clarendon despised, Honoria Sommerville had once loved him; and in this idea he would perpetually lament that prosperity should have perverted such a mind. This book, Sir Charles contrived to steal, when he found its baneful effect, and determined never to restore it.

Early in the Spring, Lady Mortimer's health being greatly amended, preparations were making for Caroline's marriage, and Captain Fairfax having purchased Ashbury Park, desired Colonel Effingham would accompany him and Sir Charles to fix on the necessary alterations and repairs; this he complied with, and was so pleased with the situation, and finding in the country a relief from the noise and bustle of London, which though a remedy, was a painful one, that he took a lodging at a farm-house, not far from

Ashbury, and offered his friend, as he was still very unfit for the gay scenes which of course he would be engaged in on his marriage, to stay in Hertfordshire, and overlook the workmen; an offer which Captain Fairfax the more joyfully accepted, as he hoped it would amuse and interest him. It was at this period he saw Honoria; no one except himself could tell how painful the interview was, but though shocked and surprized, he resolved not to gratify her vanity, by letting her see it, but determined, she at least should think, he “bore his sorrows like a man.” Yet her fainting, and following illness, almost conquered his resolution; however he avoided going to the house to enquire, and contented himself with sending to the apothecary’s, to know how the lady did at Southern Lodge, for he never mentioned her name; and the instant he learned she was out of danger, he flew from the spot. It was then he first became acquainted with the Lamberts, and in the exercise of benevolence, he lost in some degree the anguish of his soul. He doubted not but Miss Melmoth was the lady, where Miss Clarendon had been sent to conceal the impropriety of her conduct; and imagined, remorse had in some measure occasioned her illness: yet would he make no advances; he supposed her too well acquainted with his sentiments, not to let him know if there was any alteration in her own. Yet this he now scarcely hoped for; the disgrace which had been affixed to her name, would have hurt his feelings; for, like Caesar, he would not have his wife suspected.

Fearful of remaining in Hertfordshire, and disgusted with London, he spent his Summer in Scotland, till wearied with rambling, he fancied he should be happier in some sequestered spot, and at last fixed on Wales, as the variety of romantic situations would suit the despondence of his mind. He returned to London, staid there a few days only, as the Mortimers and Fairfaxes were in France, and then went to Bath, intending to cross the New Passage, and travel till he could find a place corresponding with his feelings. Here, more from listlessness, than any expectation of amusement, he went into the theatre; where the first, and indeed, only object that struck his eyes, was Honoria. He saw her, apparently, the same Honoria whom he had loved; her person, indeed, unchanged, but her mind, how different! He saw her, gay, animated and engaging, directing those smiles he had once the power of lighting up in her countenance, to another, and he sat the picture of fixed and silent melancholy, till Miss Onslow’s ridiculous observation drew on him the attention of their whole box: this alarmed him, he turned his eyes to the stage for some little time, though he saw nothing that passed there, and then precipitately left the house, went to the Bear, ordered a post-chaise, and, in less than two hours, reached Bristol, from whence, the next morning, he set off for Wales.

CHAP. XXXVII.

HERE, after wandering for some time, he at last met with a situation, romantic to a degree, where he resolved to pass the winter, indulging his melancholy; and to this resolution he would have adhered, had not the report of Miss Clarendon's elopement with Captain Harcourt reached him, and at the same time he learned that they were somewhere in Wales. This was quite sufficient to drive him from his retirement, and he again returned to England, uncertain where to direct his steps: at last he determined to go to Westmoreland and Cumberland, as those parts of the kingdom he was least acquainted with, and there remain till his friends were settled at Ashbury, and then join them there, as his reasons for avoiding Hertfordshire were now at an end.

It was during this northern expedition, that Major Southmore arrived at his house, where he found only an old woman, who had been left to take care of it, and from her he could gain no other intelligence, than that the Colonel had been gone a little time, but where, she knew not, nor could at all guess when he would come back. Dispirited at the ill success of his embassy, he returned to London, and went immediately to Harley-street, where the whole family were assembled. Honoria anxiously watched his countenance, and saw vexation and disappointment so deeply impressed on it, that she doubted not but the Colonel had either refused to hear her justification, or heard it with indifference. This idea was confirmed by his desiring to speak with Lady Clarendon alone, and, on her re-entering the room, the same traces were visible on her's. She could not so far subdue her pride as to ask for an explanation from either of them, when she had every reason to believe it would be disgraceful; and she had no other means of enquiring, as Miss Ashbourn, who alone was in the secret, was gone with her mother into Kent; and Lady Clarendon, little suspecting she knew any thing of it, would not inform her of their disappointment, lest she should condemn their conduct, and require them to promise to take no farther steps without her knowledge.

In this state, therefore, they all continued for some time. Honoria fixed on a plan for herself, which however could not yet be executed. She wrote constantly to Miss Melmoth, and learned from her that the Fairfaxes were not yet returned, and she determined to wait their arrival before she paid her promised visit at Southern Lodge, hoping then to have an opportunity of justifying herself to Mrs. Fairfax, a step in which she thought there could be no impropriety, if the Colonel was not at Ashbury, and the kindness she had formerly received from that lady, made her the more anxious to be restored to her good opinion.

In the mean time, the story of her discovery was made public, and she was introduced publicly as the real Miss Clarendon, and as such presented at Court; a ceremony which her predecessor had obstinately refused to go through, conscious, no doubt, of her inability to behave with propriety, as well as knowing it was a distinction she had no right to. Among the rest of Lady Clarendon's friends who paid their congratulatory visits, Lady Pelham paid her compliments, but in so cool and constrained a

manner, that her countenance contradicted her expressions, which were those of joy, at having been, in some degree, the means of this fortunate event. The fact was, Lady Pelham, though proud and haughty, was not so much swayed by situation as jealousy, and in the affections of her friend, Miss Melmoth, Miss Clarendon was perhaps a more dangerous rival than Kitty Wentworth, and such was equally an object of dislike and fear.

When these visits were returned, they went to Clarendon Place, and there celebrated Honoria's twenty first birth day; it was her mother's particular wish, but as there were very few of the neighbouring families at that time in the country, they had no inducement to stay long, but returned to London, very much to the satisfaction of Emily Onslow, who was of their party, and indeed now almost lived with Lady Clarendon, a circumstance no less pleasant to Honoria than herself.

They had not been more than a week in town, when the arrival of the Fairfaxes at Ashbury, determined our heroine to lose no time, but pay Miss Melmoth the long-promised visit, for which she had an excellent plea, not having seen her since the happy discovery. Lady Clarendon herself did not wish to go till later in the Spring, and though grieved to part with Honoria even for so short a time, could deny nothing she wished; and Emily saying she would as far as it was in her power supply her place, Miss Clarendon again quitted London, and was received by her friends with every possible testimony of the sincerest joy and truest affection. She triumphed in the idea of her own penetration, in believing her to be of high birth, when every apparent circumstance contradicted such a supposition. The whole evening was spent in reciting past events, in every one of which Miss Melmoth took the most affectionate interest. She said she could not understand Colonel Effingham's conduct, but if he had either refused to hear her vindication, or heard it unappeased, there must be a deeper motive than was visible to them; and this she would undertake to settle with Mrs. Fairfax herself, as soon as a slight indisposition which had confined her several days, would permit her to visit Ashbury: but for this Honoria's impatience would not suffer her to wait; she mentioned the next morning an inclination to ramble, and Miss Melmoth's cold being a sufficient apology for not accompanying her, she set out attended only by her servant, and directed her steps to Ashbury Park, not designing to inform her friend of her intention, till she saw whether the event justified her expectations.

With a heart alternately swayed by hope and fear, she walked up to the house; the fatal interview that occurred the last time she beheld it, was not one instant absent from her imagination. She was sensible of no fatigue, though little accustomed to walk so far; her mind only was affected. On enquiring if Mrs. Fairfax was at home, the servant answered in the affirmative, and on her footman's repeating her name, he ran up stairs, and announced Miss Clarendon, to the great astonishment of his lady, who, after all that had passed, expected not such a visitor; and received her with so marked a coldness, that it wholly disconcerted her. Conscious herself of the secret motive which induced her to wish for an explanation with Mrs. Fairfax, she feared all the world might penetrate her reasons, and from this fear had been half tempted, even when at the Park-gate, to return, lest there should be an impropriety in taking so much pains to acquit herself to the

Colonel, to whom apparently her conduct was totally indifferent. Yet reflecting, that no one could possibly blame her for endeavouring to regain Mrs. Fairfax's approbation, she resolved to leave every thing to its fate, and pursue her first intention. Yet even these doubts gave her, when she entered the room, an embarrassment which was mistaken for guilt and shame; and which was so much increased by the reception she met with, that answering Mrs. Fairfax's distant curtesy with another, she sat down, the tears almost starting from her eyes, and without the power of utterance.

After a few minutes silence, Mrs. Fairfax, whose natural good humour could not, even guilty as she thought her, stand against the visible distress in Honoria's countenance, broke it, by asking if she would not chuse to sit nearer the fire? Our heroine replied in the negative, and then summoning all her courage to her assistance, said, "From the kindness you once, madam, bestowed on Kitty Wentworth, I dared flatter myself with the hope of a less reserved reception; but I cannot blame your behaviour, it is founded on the best motives, and my sole reason for troubling you with this visit, is to restore myself to that place in your esteem I once possessed, by" — Here, Mrs. Fairfax, her eyes sparkling with resentment, interrupted her. "Had you, madam, as Miss Clarendon, pursued the same line of conduct you did when Kitty Wentworth, believe me, you could have had no friend who would more sincerely have rejoiced at your elevation than myself. At present, I must confess, my strongest contempt is excited by the insolence of your message to Mr. Fairfax's friend, which no apology can now justify, nor any motive excuse. Yet, I hope, neither the one, nor the other, can now be of any consequence to him, as I dare affirm, his heart is, at least towards you, in a perfect state of indifference, and that you will soon be convinced of it, by his publickly avowing a nobler and worthier choice." These words were merely spoken in the height of anger, and expressed only her wishes, not her belief; but Honoria took them in a literal sense, and judging from them, when added to the other circumstances, that he was on the point of marriage, it so deeply affected her spirits, that she was utterly unable to give the intended explanation; and thought, indeed, that at present it could avail nothing, since every long-cherished hope was destroyed by Mrs. Fairfax's intelligence. She turned pale as death, and grew so extremely sick, that it was with the utmost difficulty she could rise from her chair; but, after sitting a few minutes in total silence, she took leave, requesting Mrs. Fairfax to pardon the trouble she had given, and ringing for her servant, was just quitting the room, when the Captain entered. Honoria was to him a perfect stranger; but, addressing her, in the politest manner, he desired she would sit down, unless she had a carriage waiting for her, as it would certainly rain in a very few minutes: she thanked him, but said, she could not possibly wait, and added, she should not regard the rain: nothing, at that time, was so terrible to her, as the undeserved contempt she had experienced from Mrs. Fairfax, and the dread of a conversation's being pursued, so painful to her to hear; and she therefore refused, in so decided a manner, that he could not press it any farther; and, looking at Mrs. Fairfax, he saw a vexation imprinted on her countenance, which convinced him there was some reason why she did not join in the request. He then attended our heroine down stairs, and offering her his carriage, which she declined, he insisted on her servant's taking an umbrella, which the man, who was not so inattentive as his lady, gladly, for her sake, accepted.

With very different emotions from those she felt when she entered it, she hastily walked through the Park, deeply regretting her ill success, and alternately blaming herself, and rejoicing, that she had not staid to explain her conduct; but satisfied, at last, in this respect, from the certainty that when Captain Fairfax knew she was Miss Clarendon, he must judge there was some mistake, and would himself seek to clear it up. Before she had lost sight of the house it began to rain, and it soon encreased with such violence, that the umbrella, which was only of slight green silk, was wet through, and became an incumbrance, instead of a shelter; she, therefore, gave it wholly to the servant, and proceeded, as fast as possible, to the road, where she hoped to find a cottage where she might gain admittance; and, in this hope, was not disappointed, for the moment she quitted the Park, she perceived one, though at some distance, and ran towards it with such speed, that, on her arrival, her strength was totally exhausted, and her breath nearly gone. A decent-looking woman received her with much civility, and begged her to sit down, at the same time desired she would excuse her waiting on her, as she had a sick husband up stairs, who required her constant attendance. Honoria ordered her servant to go to Southern Lodge, and request Miss Melmoth to send her the chariot, and remained in the cottage with a little girl of about six years old, whom the woman had left with her, but whose presence interrupted not the train of reflection into which she fell, on the intelligence she had that morning heard. The exertions she had made to escape the rain, had, in some degree, rallied her scattered spirits, before so truly depressed, and rendered her more capable of going through the scene that followed.

Colonel Effingham, who had lately been informed of the arrival of his friends from France, was on his road to Ashbury, when the same storm obliged him to seek the same shelter; as he was then passing by the cottage, the woman's eldest son, a lad about fourteen, took his horse, for his servant was not with him, led it to a shed they called a stable, and shewed him into the room where Honoria was sitting. She started at his entrance, and an universal tremor seized her; but he regarded her with a fixed attention, which she considered as a fatal proof that indifference and not resentment was the reigning sentiment of his soul. He bowed, she returned his salutation, and for some moments they both continued in silence; Honoria afraid to speak, and the Colonel not knowing what to say, till the embarrassment on each side becoming more visible, the latter determined to break it, and exclaimed in an inward tone, "What unfortunate weather this is!" "Unfortunate indeed!" (rejoined Honoria.) The ice once broken, he thought as the shower continued with encreasing violence, and that it was probable they might be some time longer prisoners, it would be less distressing to converse upon common subjects, than to preserve a silence that must so forcibly remind them of what it was now become their duty, as well as interest to forget. To this end he spoke again of the weather, and then enquired by what accident she became exposed to it? Having by this time recovered some degree of composure, she replied, hoping from his answer to discover how far her suspicions were real: "I was tempted by the beauty of the morning to walk to Ashbury Park, as I earnestly wished to relate to Mrs. Fairfax an event in my life, of which I believe she is yet ignorant; but this her unjust and ill-grounded resentment prevented me from doing." "Then you did not mention it to her, madam?" "No, Sir," said Honoria, "she did not appear inclined to listen to me, and I was less anxious to reveal it, from some

intelligence she gave me, which made her knowledge of it perfectly immaterial to me. Perhaps I have acted inconsistently with the dignity of the female character, but——” “Indeed I fear you have,” interrupted he with emotion. “Just Heaven! this from you, Colonel Effingham!” her cheeks glowed, and the tears started involuntarily to her eyes, but suddenly recollecting herself, she added with calmness, “This event then has been related to you?” “Oh yes, madam, I learned it in Wales, just before I quitted my house.”— He paused a moment, and then continued, “Will you permit me to disclose it to Mrs. Fairfax?” “Yes, certainly, Sir.” “In the mean time, madam, give me leave to congratulate and wish you all possible happiness.” “I thank you, sir,” returned she indignantly, “and let me add for my own justification, it was without my knowledge and wholly against my inclination, that you ever did learn it.” “That, madam, I should imagine, but I thought myself obliged to the friend who revealed it to me; he did it with a view for my tranquillity, which though it failed in its effect, was not the less kindly intended. However, let what will become of me, I must again repeat I wish you happy, madam.” “I once flattered myself,” said Honoria, “it was the only event which could make me so; that it was the leading step to perfect felicity, but I find I am cruelly mistaken; my affections have been thrown away, I meet contempt and ingratitude where I, at least, deserve pity; and every step I have taken, however meant as a proof of sincere attachment, has been misconstrued, and every attempt to justify myself has had a contrary effect. Perhaps, had I acted otherwise, I might have been happier, at least, I should not have incurred my own censure, for now I am truly miserable.” “Oh, (cried he) for Heaven’s sake, do not, now it is too late, tell me this, do not torture my soul with vain reproaches;” then hastily rising, and walking to the window to conceal his agitation, he added, “Let us, madam, drop this conversation, I cannot, I ought not to listen to it; all explanations, all recriminations, are now useless at least, perhaps dangerous.” “I feel your reproof, sir, it is just, I thank you for it; but it might have been given with more delicacy; however, in future, you shall not be shocked in this manner:” then going to the door, “Will the carriage never arrive?” said she, impatiently; then added softly, in a voice broken by her emotions, “To what indignity have I exposed myself!” Colonel Effingham caught these words imperfectly, and addressing her once more, “Do not, madam,” said he, “reproach yourself because your former, perhaps your native character broke forth, unconcealed by ambition, unblinded by prosperity; yet in pity to my feelings again veil it, nor when I am sensible it is too late for my happiness, suffer me to see the value of what I have for ever lost. Preserve your own dignity, and fear not that I shall act inconsistently with my honour, or my situation.”

During this whole conversation, Colonel Effingham had addressed her as Mrs. Harcourt, though he ventured not to pronounce a name, it gave him such pain to know she had a right to. Honoria, on the contrary, thought his congratulations alluded to the late happy discovery, which she doubted not but he was acquainted with, and had not therefore the most distant idea, that he supposed her married; and every reference he made to her situation, she imagined, was only intended to hint to her his own engagement. Thus mutually deceived, it was not probable this interview would contribute to lessen the deep anguish they both felt from the same cause; and whilst the Colonel condemned the tenderness of her manner, as wholly improper in Mrs. Harcourt, she misconstrued his speeches into insolence and contempt, and replied, to the last, with more

spirit than she had before exerted. "To convince you, sir, how entirely I accede to your opinion, and that I am not so wholly inattentive to my dignity, or my honour, as you seem to imagine, I will, this instant, restore to you what has been too long the object of my regard, but which, in future, would only remind me of my own folly, and your ingratitude, and inspire me with resentment. Take it," continued she, (hastily cutting the blue ribband which fastened the locket to her neck, and laying it on a table) "and with it my most perfect indifference; and, believe me, in parting with that, I at once lose every trace of friendship and esteem; and every sentiment of regard I was once simple enough to feel, and vain enough to believe was returned with equal force."

Colonel Effingham beheld the locket with a fixed attention, and judging from the resolute calmness of her countenance and manner, which though free from passion, expressed the most unchangeable determination, thought he might venture to solicit her pardon, without renewing her affection. Taking, therefore, the locket in his hand, he replied, "Perhaps, madam, I ought to request your forgiveness for my temerity in first sending this to you, but now I dare only entreat you not to resent my present conduct. Believe me, I do not scorn your friendship, but I fear it; since fate has placed an insurmountable bar between us, I dread a renewal of those sentiments it has cost me so much time in any degree to conquer; sentiments, it would now be criminal in me to entertain. We meet, I hope, for the last time, for I could not sustain such another interview. Farewell, Honoria, once revered, still too well beloved, farewell! may you be happy, and forget there exists such a being, as the miserable Effingham!" At these words, disregarding the weather, he hastily quitted the cottage, and ran towards Ashbury, leaving Honoria almost distracted with the variety of emotions which tore her soul: convinced he still loved her, but at the same time more than ever convinced, some insuperable obstacle opposed his wishes. The carriage soon after arrived, and in a state of mind none can imagine who have not experienced, she threw herself into it, and it drove to Southern Lodge.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

WHEN the Colonel arrived at Ashbury, he found Mrs. Fairfax alone, scarcely yet recovered from her surprize: she saw, and begged to know the cause of his extreme agitation, and he instantly related the particulars of the late interview, which added to her astonishment, as she had not before heard of Miss Clarendon's marriage. She then told him of her visit, and lamented she had not detained her, or sent her home in the carriage. At this part of the conversation, Captain Fairfax entered the room. From the time of Honoria's departure he had been engaged with his steward, and of course had not since seen his lady, but the instant he had expressed his happiness at the arrival of his friend, she addressed him, "How could you, Mr. Fairfax, forget your resentment so far, as to pay such civility to that worthless girl?" "Do you mean Caroline," (returned he) "the lady I met going out?" — "Yes, certainly." "Then, my dear, I do not understand you, she was an entire stranger to me, and how could I judge of her worth? I paid her no more attention than her situation required, and such as even a stranger has a right to claim any where, particularly in our own house." "Then her beauty (said Mrs. Fairfax) certainly dazzled your eyes, or bewildered your senses, since you could not see it was Miss Clarendon, or rather Mrs. Harcourt, for the Colonel tells me she is married." "What is the meaning of all this, (said he) that lady was not Miss Clarendon, I am very positive, you must be strangely mistaken." "I think, Sir, (answered Mrs. Fairfax, gravely) it is more probable you should be in an error, than both your friend and myself. I cannot possibly have forgotten Kitty Wentworth, nor the Colonel Miss Sommerville, and when she left me, she was driven by the shower into a cottage, where he unfortunately met her, and they had a long conversation; she even confessed her marriage to him, and said she came here on purpose to reveal it to me, but that I was not inclined to listen to her, which is true; and she declared herself miserable in her choice, and in pretty strong terms lamented her past folly." "I beg your pardon, Caroline, (returned the Captain) for having contradicted you, you must be right; but here is some strange mystery, which I must endeavour to discover, for I am still certain this is not the lady I was introduced to at Mrs. Betterton's, who sent you, Colonel, that message, whom I afterwards saw so frequently in public, and who was universally acknowledged as Lady Clarendon's daughter." "If," said the Colonel, trembling, "there is any mistake, the disclosure may be in my favor; yet no, that is now impossible, for she is married, and of course, for ever lost to me." "No matter (cried Captain Fairfax) this business shall be cleared up. Where did this lady, whom you say is the real Miss Clarendon, come from?" "I know not, (replied his lady) but the servant can perhaps inform you." On ringing the bell, the man said, Miss Clarendon's footman had told him, she had walked that morning all the way from Southern Lodge. "Then to Southern Lodge I will instantly go, (exclaimed he) and happy be the intelligence I shall bring from thence!" The Colonel shook his head in despair, and his friend mounting his horse, in a few minutes lost sight of his own house, and soon arrived at the Lodge.

Honoria was weeping over the occurrences of the morning, with her tenderly sympathizing friend, when she was told Captain Fairfax desired to speak with her, on very particular business. She instantly guessed what it was, and consented to go down,

though hopeless of any other satisfaction, than that of acquitting herself of the heavy charges of pride and ingratitude. When she entered the room, Captain Fairfax, after making a respectful bow, said, "May I, Madam, take the liberty of enquiring if you are really Miss Clarendon?" "Yes, Sir, (replied Honoria) I really am." "Pardon, continued he, "the singularity and abruptness of my question, but I was more deeply interested in your answer than you could possibly imagine; but how am I to interpret this strange mystery, for surely, Madam, you are not the same lady I saw at Mrs. Betterton's, and who gave me so cruel a message for my unhappy friend?" "No, Sir, it was one who usurped my name and place; the circumstances are too various to relate at present; it will be sufficient now to tell you, the imposture for several months so successfully carried on, was at length, fortunately for me, discovered. My mother lost me in my infancy, and the credentials I possessed, fell into the hands of one, who disgraced the name of Clarendon, and it was her fear of being detected in her imposture, which induced her to refuse Colonel Effingham so rudely, lest by his attempting to see her, the secret should be disclosed, which it was so much her interest to conceal." "Is it possible, Madam! (said Captain Fairfax) what delight would this intelligence give my friend but for—" "Pardon me, Sir, (said Honoria) the Colonel already knows it, yet he forgives not the affront, though acquainted with the mistake. This morning he paid his congratulations to me, with the utmost coldness." "Alas, Madam, (replied the Captain) those congratulations were addressed to you on a different occasion, for believe me he knows not of this discovery; on your marriage, which he had heard of in Wales, and though his heart bled, he commanded himself enough to wish you happy." "I am not married, Captain Fairfax," said Honoria. "Not married! are you not Mrs. Harcourt?" returned the Captain. "That error, Sir, said she, was founded on the first; my predecessor changed her name to Harcourt, before it was known that she had never any right to that of Clarendon." "Then, dear Effingham," added he with rapture, "your unshaken constancy may be at last rewarded." "His constancy, Sir!" said Honoria with some surprize, "your lady this morning informed me the Colonel was on the point of marriage." "Oh no, Miss Clarendon, you must have misunderstood her," returned Captain Fairfax; "he has never ceased to regret you, nor ever, even in thought swerved from the truest attachment, the most inviolable fidelity." Honoria trembled and attempted to speak, but could not; the sudden turn of joy this speech gave her, was almost too much for her to support. "Will you then, Miss Clarendon," continued the Captain, "prove your forgiveness by permitting him to plead his own cause? will you suffer me to bring him here? for every moment I delay acquainting him with this happy change, my heart accuses me of cruelty." Honoria was still silent, but the deep glow on her cheeks assured him of all he wished to know. "Then, (cried he) as you do not forbid me, I will fly instantly to Ashbury to make the best of his sex the happiest." He then left her; she had no power to oppose him, perhaps no inclination, and a violent burst of tears at length relieved the oppression at her heart, and enabled her to inform Miss Melmoth of all that had passed, who rejoiced at the delightful prospect which now awaited her.

She had scarcely composed her agitated spirits, before the Colonel himself appeared: he was in an instant at her feet, entreating her forgiveness in a voice almost inarticulate, from the various emotions of his soul. Hope, fear, joy, remorse, alternately

moved him, and it was long ere he could with any degree of calmness inform her of the numberless and cruel mistakes which had occasioned his misery, and prompted him to behave in so strange a manner. Honoria accepted his apology in consideration of his sufferings, and without that parade so often accompanying female condescension, granted him at once, with that frankness which ever marked her character, her pardon and renewed esteem.

During the interval of Captain Fairfax's absence she had recalled the morning's conversation at the cottage to her memory, and found it so exactly consistent with his account, that in a moment she saw through Colonel Effingham's error, and instead of resenting, applauded his conduct. When they were a little tranquillized, he began a minute recital of the events which had passed since they parted in Ireland. Honoria followed his example, and concealed not her distress at his supposed attachment to Miss Mortimer, the reason of her illness at Southern Lodge, nor her grief when she heard of his offer to Miss Clarendon. He was enchanted with her candour, revered her spirit, and adored her tenderness; her relation of the time she had passed with Mrs. Campbell, so entirely agreed with what he had heard both from Counsellor Milford and Mr. Audley, that had he before doubted her veracity, this would have convinced him: but he was now so entirely certain of the constant propriety of her behaviour, and so struck with the various new and amiable points of view in which she appeared as she related to him the numerous events which had occurred in the last three years, that his affection was heightened into the most perfect esteem and the sincerest admiration. The sentiments of regard and passion which inspired him when he considered her in Ireland merely as a beautiful and amiable girl, were unavoidably increased into the purest friendship, by the knowledge of the steadiness, fortitude, and resignation, with which she had borne every reverse of fortune; and the gratitude she expressed for all who had in her adversity so kindly supported and protected her. The Colonel felt this with equal warmth; he revered Miss Melmoth with a degree of enthusiasm equal to her own, for her friendship to his beloved Honoria; and he would have spent half his fortune to repay those who in a lower sphere of life had contributed to her ease and comfort. Before they parted the locket was restored; Honoria again fastened it to her neck, but the book he insisted on keeping, as he set the highest value on it, from the four lines she had written under his name, which so tenderly expressed her regard and affection.

The next day, Mrs. Fairfax paid her compliments at Southern Lodge; she advanced to Honoria with a consciousness, which her ease and affability instantly dispelled. "Do not, my dear Madam, (said she) reproach yourself for the behaviour which has, in fact, endeared you to me. As I appeared to you, I deserved all the contempt you could shew me; and, as Colonel Effingham's friend, you acted consistently, for you must have been my enemy; and, believe me, your kind attention to Kitty Wentworth, can never be effaced from the memory of Honoria Clarendon." Mrs. Fairfax, delighted at a reception so different from what she expected, soon lost all restraint, regained her usual cheerfulness, and the day was spent by the whole party with the utmost satisfaction.

The following evening brought Lady Clarendon, Miss Onslow and Sir William, to join this happy circle, in consequence of the letters they had received from them. In one of these, Miss Melmoth entreated her ladyship to hasten her visit, relating the particulars of the eclaireissement, and requesting her not to delay favouring them with her presence. Colonel Effingham addressed her in the same terms, mentioned the real delight he experienced in the smiles of her daughter, and begged her permission to pay to her those devoirs, once so fatally misplaced. Honoria's letter was short, the extreme agitation of her spirits would not permit her to say a great deal, but a very few words expressed her feelings. All these, Lady Clarendon answered in person, and granted every request. Colonel Effingham, in her, found a favourable advocate with Honoria; she said, that in justice, the two years he had been seeking, or lamenting her, should be taken into the account; but this she only told the Colonel, nor would venture to mention it to Miss Clarendon, lest she should infer from it, she thought of parting with her with indifference.

A letter also to Major Southmore, soon brought him to Mrs. Lambert's, who had left her cottage, and taken a house in the same neighbourhood, more adapted to her present circumstances; for, exclusive of the fortune that devolved on his nephews and nieces, he had settled a comfortable annuity on her for life, as a recompence for her care and attention to them. He came instantly to Miss Melmoth's, and after congratulating Honoria, he paid his sincerest thanks to the Colonel, for the numerous obligations he had conferred on his family. "Mention them not, dear Sir, (replied the Colonel): had they really been of value, your kind attention to my beloved Honoria would have repaid them a thousand times, as well as your friendly journey into Wales, to relieve my mind from the tortures it then endured." Honoria then chid the Major for concealing his intention, telling him the strange idea she had formed from his silence on his return. "Yes, dear Miss Clarendon, (said he) but remember, had it not been for a vile tell-tale, you would never have guessed where I was gone, and how could I possibly suppose you knew half the story?" "Ah," cried Emily, "you would not trust me, though I should have been a better confidante; should I not, Honoria?" Then turning to the Colonel, she continued; "Perhaps, Sir, you may entertain some doubts of Honoria's conduct since your separation?" "Madam!" (replied he) with the utmost astonishment— "I mean only with respect to her gaiety, Sir, for you may be like Faulkland, and not chuse to have your mistress even smile in your absence; but if you are, I do assure you, you may be perfectly easy; she has not danced I am certain, and I never heard her sing but once, and that was Shenstone's Pastoral of Disappointment; and, as Captain Absolute says of his whimsical friend, 'I can acquit her of having been entertaining or sprightly;' and as for laughing, I am very sure she is also of his opinion, that, — "The mutual tear that steals down the cheek of parting lovers, is a compact that no smile shall live there, till they meet again." "Fye, fye, Emily," said Honoria, blushing. The Colonel took her hand, "Thank you, dear Miss Onslow, for your intention; but believe me, I am not at all like Faulkland: I have no doubts, no apprehensions, but should be much better pleased to hear Miss Clarendon had smiled, rather than sighed; but as I have now the pleasure of seeing her in good health and spirits, I will not quarrel with her for a former pensiveness, so highly flattering to me."— "Oh," replied Emily, unmoved by all Honoria's entreaties that she would be silent, "I forgot to tell you of two or three fits of sickness; here was a disorder without a name, proceeding

from a fright at Southern Lodge; and a bilious fever at Richmond, which terminated almost in a consumption; besides head-achs and faintings innumerable!" Here she stopped for a moment, and Captain Fairfax observing Miss Clarendon's embarrassment, determined, if possible, to relieve her, by turning the laugh on the Colonel. "I beg your pardon, Effingham, (said he) for contradicting you, but indeed in one respect you very much resemble Faulkland, for I am certain, like him, you "Regarded every mirthful moment in the absence of your Honoria, as a treason to constancy." Colonel Effingham acknowledged the truth of this charge, but said he gloried in it.

Thus several weeks glided insensibly away, unalloyed by misfortune, and unstained by regret. Honoria felt not a wish, except to hear from, or see Lady Eustace, to whom she had again written, but there was yet no possibility of receiving answers to her last letters: for though blest with the society and affection of all else who were dearest to her on earth, she had not forgotten the friend of her earliest infancy.

CHAP. XXXIX.

IT is, I believe, universally allowed, that nothing is so insipid to an uninterested person, as conversations in which love bears the greatest part. Under this idea, therefore, I shall pass over some time, without enumerating the walks, rides, visits, and parties of pleasure, enjoyed by this happy society, in which I now include the Lamberts and Ashbourns, who not having fixed on a summer residence, Mrs. Ashbourn not chusing to go to the family seat, they took a house only a mile from the Lodge, and came into Hertfordshire immediately on their return from Kent. Lady Mortimer and her son were also visiting at Ashbury, and the constant amusements the whole party engaged in, insensibly drew Miss Melmoth from the retirement in which she had so long lived, that solitude was become habitual to her.

Colonel Effingham now thought, since his pretensions were avowedly favored by all parties, he might hint a wish to Miss Clarendon that she would fix on a day, which by uniting them for ever, would put it out of the power of fate again to separate them. Honoria replied, "she had long given Emily a promise to resign her hand to him, at the same time her brother should receive her's, and could by no means break it;" but added, "that if any unforeseen event should delay their marriage beyond the appointed period, she should no longer consider herself bound to keep it." As this was intended as a proof of regard and condescension, the poor Colonel was obliged to receive it as such, though he at the moment thought of nothing but the length of the time; as seven full months were then wanting before Miss Onslow's minority concluded. He mentioned his distress to Sir William, who with a smile bade him follow his advice, and he would ensure them both happiness, much sooner than he had then any idea of, and accordingly gave him instructions.

The next morning at breakfast, when merely their own family were assembled, Colonel Effingham reproached Miss Onslow for having unfairly obtained a promise from Miss Clarendon, so much to his disadvantage. "Nay, Colonel, (replied Emily,) do not blame me, it is my guardian's fault, he will not consent, and Honoria has kindly agreed to wait till I am at my own disposal." "Well, Miss Onslow, it will be some comfort to me, if you will say, that if Mr. Bridges would permit, you would marry Sir William directly." "Ah Colonel, (replied Emily) I may very safely promise that; and here, Sir William, I declare if you can produce a written agreement from my guardian, I will marry you to-morrow, or when you please, and then Honoria must follow my example." "Thank you, dear Emily," (cried both the gentlemen in a breath) and Sir William held up a letter, the direction of which was in Mr. Bridges' hand. Emily coloured violently. "Surely," exclaimed she, "you cannot have deceived me. No, it is impossible; nothing could tempt him to break his word with Mr. Digby, though he has long been convinced of his unworthiness. Sir William smiled, and gave the letter to Lady Clarendon, who read aloud as follows:

“SIR,

“Have just received a letter from Mr. Digby, which informs me he is married; am therefore released from my engagement to him, and having no objection to you, here give you my free consent, with my name underwritten, to marry my ward, Emily Onslow, whenever she and you can agree. Should have consented before, had not been under promise to him. Will see your lawyers respecting her fortune, and the proper settlements whenever you please, and am,

“Sir,
Your humble servant,
Thomas Bridges.”

“My wife desires her
compliments.”

Miss Onslow was absolutely petrified with amazement; she exclaimed, “I am sure it is a forgery, Sir William, you shall be prosecuted;” but when convinced it was really from her guardian, she said, her promise would not stand good in law, for it was made under an idea of the impossibility of the event which had happened; and she then accused Sir William of having bribed the Colonel to betray her. “No, Miss Onslow,” replied he, “I wanted no other temptation to assist my friend, than the promise Miss Clarendon yesterday gave me, of blessing me with her hand, the same day you should bestow your’s on her brother.” “Well,” cried Sir William, “let it be decided by vote.” To this Emily, having no alternative, was obliged to agree, and all gave it against her but Miss Clarendon, who said, she was drawn in unfairly, and, being equally concerned, she thought herself bound to defend her friend’s cause. But Miss Melmoth answered this objection, by saying, it had long been observed as a rule, that in love, as in war, all stratagems were honourable; and Lady Clarendon joining in this opinion, Honoria and Emily were obliged to give up the point.

Accordingly every necessary preparation was made with all possible expedition; the lawyers performed their parts with unusual speed; and, in a few weeks, Sir William and Emily, Colonel Effingham and Honoria, were united, in the presence of the Mortimers, Fairfaxes, Ashbourns, Lamberts, and Major Southmore, who, at his own earnest request, gave the ladies away. Miss Melmoth alone declined being present at the ceremony; and Honoria would not express a wish it would give her equal pain to comply with or refuse.

After a few weeks spent in all the festivities the country would admit of, and of which all the neighbourhood partook in a degree, Colonel and Mrs. Effingham began to think of executing a scheme they had long had in agitation, of revisiting the scenes of her infancy, and the friends who had so long protected and supported Honoria, and whose present unhappy situation, gave him a claim to every comfort it was in her power to

afford him. In answer to the letters she had sent to Ireland, immediately on her being known as Lady Clarendon's daughter, Miss Meriton had, after congratulating her on the happy event, assured her of the utmost impossibility of acquainting Mr. Fortescue of it, as his lady chose not to let him be seen by any of his old friends; but added, if it was in his power to find an opportunity, her father would certainly avail himself of it, and comply with her request. Mrs. Connor's letter expressed still more joy, though it was less elegantly written. She said, she was sure all was not right, though she could not guess what was wrong.

Lady Clarendon, though she sighed at the idea of parting with her beloved Honoria, yet opposed not a plan she thought it her duty to pursue; and perceiving in Emily's countenance an earnest desire to accompany them, (tho' she never hinted it, even to Sir William, from a delicate fear that her Ladyship would be unhappy to lose them all at once) she herself made the proposal, which Emily instantly declined; but Lady Clarendon strongly urging it, by saying, if she had no objection, Sir William could certainly have none; that Honoria would be extremely gratified by her company, and that she herself would remain with Miss Melmoth till their return; she gladly consented, and the following week they began their journey.

On their arrival at Parkgate, the wind was so entirely against them, that they had reason to fear they should be detained there some days; but in the society of those we love, the time can never appear tedious. The second morning, while they were at breakfast, a post-chaise drove into the gate, and Sir William catching a slight glimpse of a gentleman who was in it, hastily ran out of the room, saying, he believed it was an old friend of his, but not mentioning his name. It was in fact, Sir James Eustace, and his lady, who were that instant arrived at Parkgate, in their way to Ireland. They mutually expressed the utmost joy and surprize at this unexpected meeting; and Sir James, after introducing him to Lady Eustace, demanded by what strange accident they all met at that place? "Suffer me first (replied Sir William) to enquire why you came through England without staying to see my mother?" "It was our fixed intention, (replied he) and for that purpose we landed at Portsmouth, but there meeting a gentleman who gave us the most unpleasant accounts of Lady Eustace's connections in Ireland, from whom it is very long since she heard, in compliance with her wishes, I determined to set out immediately for Wood Park." "And I (said Sir William) came here with the same view, and therefore we may go on together: but now let me introduce you to my wife, my sister, and her husband." "What, are you married?" "Yes, and to a most charming woman." "But what sister do you mean? your lady's sister, I suppose." "No, my own; but this mystery will explain itself when you see them." Saying this, he led the way, and opening the door of the room where they were sitting, Lady Eustace and Honoria flew into each other's arms, but joy and astonishment so wholly overpowered the latter, that she fainted away.

Sir William severely blamed his rashness in not preparing his sister for this interview, and the Colonel was half distracted with terror: He well recollected Henrietta Fortescue in the strange lady, and therefore guessed the reason of Honoria's alarm. Emily was the only one of the party ignorant of the cause of this confusion, and every one was

too much engaged to inform her, but the names of Fortescue and Eustace pronounced by some of them, instantly resolved the mystery. Mrs. Effingham after proper applications recovered, every apprehension subsided, and they all sat down to the breakfast table; and then Lady Eustace, whose curiosity was strongly excited by hearing Sir William call Honoria his sister, had a short account of the strange discovery which had taken place. She truly sympathised in her friend's unexpected happiness, and then turning to the Colonel, enquired in what way he was concerned? and hearing he was actually married to her, replied, smiling at Honoria, "That, I confess, does not surprize me so much; I always had an idea she was so partial to the name of Effingham, that in its favour she would at some time resign her own." Honoria then introduced Lady Clarendon, not merely as her sister, but her friend. "As such (answered Lady Eustace) I shall ever love and esteem her; but you must not, dear Honoria, let new friends and new connections banish from your heart those who, if they unhappily from absence wanted the power, have never lost the wish to serve you, and whose sincere affection nothing can ever extinguish." "Do not, my dear Henrietta, (replied our heroine) entertain such an idea; believe me it did not a little add to my happiness, that in gaining a right to the name of Clarendon, I should at the same time be related to you in the same degree that we really thought we were from infancy, but which the death of your excellent and ever lamented mother, discovered was merely a generous deception to secure me attention and respect." The tears started to Lady Eustace's eyes at the recollection of her mother, and she replied, "My poor father! Ah, Honoria, you know not what I have suffered since my arrival in England. At Portsmouth we accidentally met a gentleman from Dublin, who spoke of my mother-in-law in such terms, that I fear for his tranquillity: the letters I have received from him have been written in the highest style of praise of her, but I now doubt not they were of her dictating. The second packet I had from Ireland mentioned your having left Wood Park, and prevented my writing to you again, from not knowing where to direct." "Dear Henrietta, (returned Mrs. Effingham) your speech implies a reproof I deserve not. I wrote to you on my arrival in England, and have since dispatched two packets, the last of which however can scarcely be arrived in India; and have long, as Lady Clarendon can witness for me, been anxiously expecting an answer. You have now accounted for your silence, but in a manner that it gives me pain to reflect on, for surely you must often have accused me of neglect and ingratitude." "No, I knew there must be a good reason, for indeed I never suspected you would forget me." "Then, (returned Honoria) we had a mutual confidence in each other: Emily knows in my heaviest distresses I ever looked forward to your arrival, with a certainty of support and protection, that calmed my mind under all the misfortunes I endured." "And surely, Honoria, (said Lady Eustace) you only did me justice, in believing that had I been in England, you would not have experienced any misery, that my earnest endeavours could have relieved you from."

Whilst this conversation was passing between the ladies, Sir William Clarendon and the Colonel were explaining to Sir James some of the various circumstances which had occurred since their departure: this caught his lady's attention, and her curiosity was so strongly raised, that she was happy to be a silent listener to a relation, in which she was so deeply interested, from her warm attachment to her friend. This silence she only broke by some passionate exclamations, whilst Honoria, who took her part of the story, was

relating the treatment she had received from Mrs. Fortescue, of barbarous—inexcusable—dreadful—insufferable—but when she came to that part of her narrative, when she left Lady Egerton, and broke her arm, she sat as if in an agony of suspense and anxiety, to hear what followed; and when Miss Melmoth's kind and generous behaviour was mentioned, she burst into tears, and exclaimed, "Where is that charming woman, whose disinterested benevolence, and unsuspecting mind, prompted her to an act so amiable and so uncommon?" Honoria smiled at her transport, and after answering her question, continued her relation, during the recital of which, Lady Eustace was variously affected, but her agitation subsided into the most perfect and tranquil joy at the conclusion. She said, "Lady Clarendon might be certain of her unalterable friendship, and constant gratitude, for the many proofs of affection she had shewn Honoria, at a time she could little suspect that they should ever be sisters." Emily replied, "Mrs. Effingham's excellent example, and kind precepts, had reformed so many errors in her character, that the obligation was reversed, exclusive of the extreme happiness she always enjoyed in her society."

This conversation lasted till dinner, and in the evening they were summoned on board, the wind being fair, and they sailed for Ireland. Lady Eustace and our heroine had in the course of the day only a few moments to themselves, but in these they found time to say a great deal; they were convinced of the sincerity of each other's friendship, rejoiced in each other's happiness, and both joined in the hope, that in this visit to Ireland, they should find means to release Mr. Fortescue from his cruel and long endured bondage. It had before been settled, that Sir William, the Colonel, and their ladies, should take up their abode at Mr. Fizesborne's, and Sir James and Lady Eustace to go directly to Wood Park; but it was now agreed it would be better for one of the gentlemen to go on first, and break to Mr. Fortescue the arrival of his daughter and Honoria, lest in the present weak state of his spirits, the sudden appearance of either should be fatal to him. Under this idea they alighted at North Hall, and Sir James went on.

The sad change so visible both in the park and house, struck him with horror as he entered; he rang the bell several times before any one appeared; at last an old man came out, who, on his enquiring for Mr. Fortescue, replied his lady was at home, and asked him to walk in. That hospitality so evident once, even in the countenance of his domestics, was now no longer to be observed: the alacrity of the dependants, ever reflects the disposition of the governor, and it was so here; the parsimony of the mistress appeared even in the servants. Slowly the old man pushed open the hall door, which had lately never admitted a guest, and shewed Sir James into the parlour that was once graced by the benevolent Mrs. Fortescue, whose cheerfulness diffused universal pleasure among her friends. Here sat her contrast alone; she rose at his entrance, and being a perfect stranger to his person, could not of course, as he had not told his name to the servant, by any means guess who he was. She received him with that kind of civility she could at any time assume, but on his desiring to see Mr. Fortescue, replied, her dear husband was in a very bad state of health, and never saw strangers. "Then, Madam, if you will tell him, his son, Sir James Eustace, is here, that objection will be obviated." "Sir James Eustace!" cried Mrs. Fortescue, colouring violently from apprehension and dismay, "is it possible?"

“Yes, Madam, we are just arrived from India, and I left Lady Eustace at North Hall, to prepare her father for her reception, lest her sudden arrival should affect him too much; and with her, a lady, whom I believe you must recollect by the name of Sommerville, now Mrs. Effingham.” “Yes, Sir,” replied Mrs. Fortescue, rising in a fury, “I have so much cause to remember her, that I am determined if she enters this house I will that moment leave it.”— “That, Madam, shall be as you please,” returned Sir James, calmly; “it is a resolution, I fancy, no one will oppose, but Mrs. Effingham certainly will come here with Lady Eustace, and I beg I may this instant see my father, to prepare him against their arrival.” “Sir, I say, you shall not see him, but you shall know who governs here.” “I know too well who has governed here, Madam, but who shall in future, is another thing, therefore lead me directly to him, or I shall find the way myself.” Mrs. Fortescue re-seated herself, and Sir James observing her obstinacy, rang the bell with unusual violence. The servants, ever accustomed to obey with the utmost expedition the orders of their imperious mistress, ran hastily at her supposed summons, but were struck dumb with surprize, when Sir James, in a commanding and resolute tone, demanded where Mr. Fortescue was, and bade them shew him immediately. The servants looked at their lady and hesitated, but finding she contradicted them not, though her countenance displayed the most violent rage, and Sir James repeating his desire, at the same time informing them who he was, and by what right he insisted on an interview, they obeyed, and going before him to a distant part of the house, opened the door of an apartment where their master was sitting, and after respectfully bowing, withdrew. They had sagacity enough to perceive there would soon be a revolution in the household, and consequently paid their court to the rising party.

Mr. Fortescue started at the entrance of Sir James, but did not know him, till he told his name, and he then, after affectionately embracing him, burst into tears. Sir James, to soothe his spirits, said “his daughter was at North Hall, with her friend, Honoria, who both impatiently waited to pay their duty to him.” “Alas, (replied he) what shall I do, my wife will never let them come here?” “Not let them, Sir! are not you the master, and shall she dare contradict you?” “Yes, my dear son, (said he) she will, and I cannot help it. I have had nobody to support me, and she has had her own way so long, that opposing her is a task too great for my spirits to undergo.”— “Leave then the task of opposition to me, Sir; only tell me you are weary of the restraint in which you have hitherto lived, and willing to quit this vile woman, and return with your daughter and myself to England, where you can live happily and at ease, and I will instantly and effectually release you from this horrible bondage.” “Hush,” (cried he) in a low voice, and looking towards the door; “but can you take me away this moment, without my seeing her again, can we go out a back way?” “Yes, Sir, (said Sir James) to be sure we can if you wish it, but what can you fear with me at your side? if any one dare to controul you, I will assert your rights and defend you.” “Why, that’s true,” (said Mr. Fortescue) gathering courage as he spoke, “then we will go out at the great door, and I’ll never return again.” Sir James then rang the bell, and ordered the carriage to draw up. Mrs. Fortescue hearing this, and not having an idea her husband was to accompany him, imagined he was going to bring the ladies, and therefore to avoid another dispute, she retired to her own chamber, bidding the servants shut and lock all the doors when the carriage was driven off. It was no small

pleasure to Mr. Fortescue, that he thus escaped meeting her, and with more joy than he had known since his last marriage he got into the carriage, which then proceeded as fast as possible to North Hall.

CHAP. XL.

MR. Fitzosborne lived with that hospitable regularity which must ever constitute comfort if not happiness; he received this whole party with the sincerest demonstrations of joy, congratulated his friend in the warmest terms, and as Honoria's relations, paid Sir William and Lady Clarendon every attention in his power. He would not hear of Lady Eustace's going to her father's, but insisted that both Sir James and herself should take up their residence with him during their stay in Ireland, as he said he was well convinced it must be pleasanter for her to be with her friends, than under the roof with her vile mother, and that she could see her father every day. Her heart readily assented to this proposal, but referred him to Sir James for an answer.

Whilst this point was in debate another carriage stopped, and a gentleman and lady alighted whom Mr. Fitzosborne ran to receive, and in an instant returned, introducing Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland. When the former first saw Honoria he coloured violently, but soon recovering, he presented to her his Lady, in whom she saw her long esteemed friend, Sophia Meriton. She expressed the utmost joy at this unexpected an interview, and felt all that she expressed. The happiness was mutual; Mrs. Cleveland had always loved both Miss Fortescue and Miss Sommerville with the truest friendship, and had never given credit to the various cruel reports raised of the latter, even before Mr. Cleveland's return had convinced her of their falshood. They had been married about three months, and were now come to fulfil a long made promise to Mr. Fitzosborne, of spending some time with him whilst they were looking out for a house somewhere in that neighbourhood, as Mr. Cleveland's estate was in a distant part of the kingdom, and Sophia wished to fix on a spot not very far from Castlewood. But finding Mr. Fitzosborne's house at present so full, they would have deferred their visit, but he declared they must stay to help him to entertain his new guests, and give Sir William and Lady Clarendon a favourable impression of a country to which they were strangers: they knew not how to resist so strong an inducement as the pleasure of passing their time in such society, and at once consented.

Mr. Cleveland, after the first surprize, behaved to Mrs. Effingham with such unembarrassed vivacity, that she was soon convinced he had wholly conquered the attachment he had formerly borne her; and certain of this, she scrupled not to ask him by what accident it happened they should both leave the country the same day, and thus give the people a reason for saying they went off together? "Sophy can answer for me, madam," replied he, calling his lady to them, "that the instant I heard the report, I not only contradicted it, but even gave the true cause of my sudden departure. The fact was this: I had an uncle, a rich merchant at Cork, who from my former extravagance had wholly disclaimed me, but hearing that I was really reformed, resolved to alter his will in my favour; this he did, and soon after falling ill, he sent an express to desire me to go to him immediately. I wrote the note to you directly on receiving this, but would not mention the reason of my journey, lest I should be disappointed, little supposing you would leave Ireland before my return. On my arrival at Cork, I found my uncle in a dangerous but

lingering disorder; I continued with him till he died, and had the satisfaction of perceiving my presence greatly contributed to his ease and tranquillity. At his death I came into the possession of his whole fortune, excepting a few legacies, as I was his nearest and almost only relation: with part of this I paid all my creditors, who gladly restored my estate, which I then earnestly set about improving with the remainder; it had been so long neglected, that it wanted a large sum of money laid out upon it, to put it in the condition it was when I first inherited it. When all this was compleated, I went to Castlewood, and there solicited, and obtained the hand of my beloved Sophia, which has made me as happy as I doubt not but you are, madam; for give me leave to suspect your attachment to the Colonel is not of a late date." "You are perfectly right, Mr. Cleveland," replied Honoria; "it began long before I knew you."

Here their conversation was interrupted by Mr. Fitzosborne, who informed Mr. Effingham Mr. Fortescue was arrived with Sir James, and begged she would go with Lady Eustace into another room, where he impatiently waited to see them, and she instantly complied. Colonel Effingham followed his lady, and during their absence Sir William and Lady Clarendon informed Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland of some of the strange events they so much wished for a recital of. Sir William was never tired of speaking of his sister, nor Emily of her friend, and they were of course as anxious to relate as the Clevelands were to hear, and this conversation lasted as long as the rest of the company were with Mr. Fortescue.

The interview between him and his daughter was extremely tender and affecting; nor was Honoria excluded from his caresses, for he loved her with a fondness almost equal to that he felt for Lady Eustace. During their little journey, he had been calm and composed, and every step the horses took from Wood Park, seemed to restore his serenity and chearfulness; but the sight of his children, as he called them both, was almost too much for his weak frame to support. The idea of being so unexpectedly relieved from all he dreaded, and restored to all he loved, filled his mind with a joy it was not capable of bearing; which growing every moment stronger, might have upset his reason, had he not happily fallen into a state of insensibility; and when he recovered, a burst of tears gave vent to the feelings of his heart, and again settled his mind in a state of tranquillity.

The first use he made of his speech was to apologize to Mrs. Effingham for the cruel treatment she had received from his wife, which he acknowledged he had latterly observed, but without the power to resent. He entreated her pardon in expressions the most affectionate; and Honoria, falling on her knees, besought him not to recall circumstances that so evidently gave him pain, which she had long forgotten, and regretted only on his account. He tenderly embraced her, and called down the choicest blessings of Heaven upon her head: he then told the Colonel, her happiness was in his possession, and adjured him in the most solemn manner, to value the treasure he had in her as it deserved to be valued, and bade him never permit her to repent a choice which reflected so much honour on himself. The Colonel seized his hand, and with an emotion he could not suppress, replied, "When I lose the ardent affection, the gratitude, the respect, the tender friendship for her, which now glows in my bosom, may every good

forsake me, and may I be deprived of every hope of happiness." The whole party were in tears, but Henrietta's flowed with violence, from a joyful surprize to find her father's intellects in so perfect a state, his recollection so good, his understanding so unshaken. He had been represented to her as in a second childhood, and thus from apprehensions during the reign of his tyrant wife, he appeared to those strangers who accidentally saw him: but these happy events seemed to renovate his faculties, and restore them to their full vigour. He then enquired who the rest of the company were, and hearing there were only the Clevelands, whom he was perfectly acquainted with, Honoria's brother, whom he had before seen, and his lady, he desired to go into the drawing-room, and consult them all upon what measures were the properest to be taken with respect to Mrs. Fortescue: but, on his joining them, they all agreed in persuading him to devote that day to festivity, and think of business to-morrow. He willingly consented, and his spirits reviving with his happiness, Colonel Effingham once more beheld in him the same Mr. Fortescue whose convivial hospitality had so often been celebrated by his whole regiment. He congratulated Sir William on the acquisition of such a sister, and expressed a strong desire to see her amiable mother, which he doubted not would be gratified on his arrival in England. In the mirth and harmony of this day he forgot his cares, and he was the only one present who had any to forget.

The next morning Mr. Fortescue, refreshed by a quiet and undisturbed sleep, desired his friends would consult on what methods he had best pursue; and it was soon determined the gentlemen should ride over to Wood Park, and endeavour to bring Mrs. Fortescue calmly to comply with their wishes; which were, that she should retire wherever she pleased, with a decent annuity that Mr. Fortescue should allow her, and which was to be sufficient for necessaries, but not superfluities. On these terms she was to quit the Park instantly, which should be either lett or sold. Here Mr. Cleveland interrupted them, by saying, it was exactly the situation he wished for, and begged he might be permitted to treat for it. This offer Mr. Fortescue gladly accepted; and the gentlemen then set off, Sir James as the principal, Sir William, the Colonel, and Mr. Fitzosborne, as auxiliaries.

When Mrs. Fortescue learned the departure of her husband, she raved like a distracted woman, and accused all the servants of being in a plot to betray her; but a night's recollection calmed her passion, and suggested to her the mode of conduct it was best for her to pursue: she sent instantly for her brother, who attended her summons, and they waited together the expected visit from Sir James. On his arrival, he gave her in the civilest manner Mr. Fortescue's proposal; and desired from him that she would as soon as possible quit Wood Park, and retire to her brother's; but this she positively refused, saying, Wood Park was her own property, and nothing should ever induce her to leave it. "Your own, madam! by what right do you claim it?" said Sir James. "By virtue of a deed of gift, which Mr. Fortescue will not dare deny, and which my brother, at his request, drew up, making over to me the greatest part of his fortune." "We shall see whether my father will acknowledge it," returned Sir James. "That, sir," said Mr. O'Carrol, "can be of no consequence in law; Mr. Fortescue's intellects are too much impaired, for his assertions to stand good in a court of justice." "And, pray sir, (demanded Colonel

Effingham, with a look of affected pity) how long has he been in this unhappy way?" "Oh, for these six months," cried the brother and sister in a breath. Sir James saw through the meaning of this question, and still pretending to disbelieve the deed of gift, instantly demanded to see it, and it was produced. The four gentlemen were all witnesses, that it was dated only three months back; they were aware of some deception, and therefore chose to see it immediately, lest when they discovered their mistake, they should make some alteration in it. "This is a strange oversight, indeed, Mr. O'Carrol," cried Sir James, "if, as you say, my father's intellects have failed him above six months, a paper signed by him since that period cannot stand good in law; and that you both asserted it, here are three witnesses besides myself, all men of probity and unquestioned honour." The guilty wretches coloured at this fatal mistake, and Sir James went on: "But if we can prove my father is still in his senses, and if he denies the execution of this deed, it must be as I very much suspect it is, a complete forgery, and you may both depend on standing a trial in a court of justice." Hardened in guilt even this threat they both sustained, and insisted upon Mr. Fortescue's being applied to with an effrontery, which led the gentlemen almost to believe he had really consented to and signed it, though they doubted not but every improper means had been used to induce him to comply.

The fact was, that during the gentlemen's return to enquire of Mr. Fortescue, they both intended to make their escape, with all the valuables of plate, &c. they could secure; which added to what she had long hoarded from starving the servants, and denying her husband those indulgences to which he had ever been accustomed, would insure them a comfortable subsistence for his life, and at his death her settlement would afford them a certain affluence. For this end they affected so deep a resentment at the charge of forgery, that it partly imposed upon the gentlemen who saw not through their design, but proposed going to North Hall, and by Mr. Fortescue's answer be determined what further measures to pursue. But just as they were setting out, it occurred to Mr. Fitzosborne, who from living in the neighbourhood, knew the character this woman bore for art and duplicity, that it would be highly improper to leave them without a guard, and mentioning it to his friends, they became of his opinion, and Sir William Clarendon offered to stay with him for that purpose, with three servants who attended them, whilst Sir James and the Colonel went on. This was instantly acceded to, they set off, the others remained in the parlour, and the servants armed stood at the door, strengthened by several of Mr. Fortescue's, who gladly joined their master's party. This was a stroke of politics equally unexpected and unwelcome to O'Carrol and his vile associate, who uncertain in what manner to act, at last thought it would be best to continue the undaunted assurance they had hitherto preserved, hoping it might throw the gentlemen off their guard, and leave them at liberty to escape, but in this they were mistaken.

In the mean time Sir James and the Colonel arrived at North Hall, and mentioned their proceedings to Mr. Fortescue, who appeared greatly shocked at this intelligence, not as he declared from any consciousness of having signed the deed of gift, but from a knowledge of their complete villainy, which he said he doubted not would induce his wife and her brother to take any measures to obtain their ends. He repeatedly assured them in the clearest and most resolute manner, that he had never signed any paper since his

marriage, having been particularly cautioned on that head by a friend, who suspected his wife of unjustifiable intentions. He added, that once they brought him a parchment they called a lease of some house on his estate, but that he absolutely refused to sign it, as they would not permit him to read it; and that this refusal had afterwards caused him many miserable hours.

The proposals were then settled which were to be made to Mrs. Fortescue, and lest she should decline accepting them, Sir James and the Colonel took with them proper officers to terrify her into compliance, and again directed their course to Wood Park. Here they found every thing in the same state in which they left it, and they ordered the officers to walk up and down before the windows, whilst they entered the room. Mrs. Fortescue and her brother started at the sight of the men, but restrained both their terror and anger, till they heard Sir James speak, who with the most perfect calmness thus addressed them. "You must both be too sensible of your own guilt, not to anticipate the intelligence I bring. Mr. Fortescue utterly denies having signed any paper since his unhappy connection with you; the officers are therefore waiting without to commit you on the charge of forgery, and to confine you till you can be brought to a public trial: but he thirsts not for your blood, therefore listen to me. With that humanity which ever marks his character, he has consented you shall be this instant released, if you will give up your settlement, and confess the forgery; neither does he recede from his former proposal of allowing you a comfortable annuity, though this additional proof of your base ingratitude might well authorize such a step; but liberty and life upon these terms shall still be yours."

O'Carrol shook with apprehension; and saw himself in idea in the hands of justice, and the fatal cord round his neck; and fear, not penitence, induced him to fall on his knees, entreat for mercy, and make a full confession of his guilt; then going to a bureau, he took out his sister's settlement and the false deed, and gave them both to Sir James. Mrs. Fortescue saw the whole transaction with silent astonishment: more hardened than her brother, she still hoped a more favourable turn of fortune; and better acquainted with the extreme mildness of Mr. Fortescue's disposition, doubted not, but with some expostulation, she should, at least, obtain leave to keep the settlement; but his precipitate conduct depriving her of this hope, the instant she saw Sir James put the parchment in his pocket, she became furious with passion, which she vented in the bitterest invectives. When her rage had exhausted itself, she became calm, from the mere impossibility of continuing her violent expressions; and O'Carrol, taking advantage of this cessation, endeavoured to convince her of the propriety as well as necessity of listening to her husband's proposal; as he saw too well in the countenance of Sir James, a resolute determination, which left no hope of a revocation of a sentence pronounced in so decisive a manner. He begged the gentlemen to withdraw for a moment; and when they were alone, he painted so forcibly the consequences of a refusal, that she was at last obliged to comply, but desired she might remain a day or two longer in the house to pack up her cloaths. This request Sir James thought proper to deny, as he declared he should stay till she was gone, and then proceeded to fix his seal upon every place of consequence; whilst disappointed in her hopes of plunder, she soon made every preparation, and Sir James ordering the carriage, with a mortified heart, though an unsubdued spirit, she attended her

brother to his habitation at L——, which had long been merely a nominal one. Here they waited till Mr. Fortescue sent the paper which empowered his wife to receive the annuity, and then left a country where the characters of Mrs. Fortescue and her brother were both known and detested, and flew for an asylum to a distant part of the kingdom, in which we will leave them to the punishment they so well deserve, the terrors of an evil conscience, and the reflection that their own guilt and folly have deprived them of those comforts they would have otherwise have enjoyed.

CHAP. XLI.

WHEN Sir James returned to Mr. Fortescue with the account of his success, the old gentleman burst into tears, and seizing his hand, thanked him in the most earnest manner for his spirited conduct, that had released him from a tie, which had so long rendered his life a burden; and from that moment regained his usual cheerfulness and tranquillity. Mr. Cleveland purchased, and took immediate possession of Wood Park, and at the earnest request of Honoria, he reinstated Connor as head gardener. I would not have my readers suppose our heroine had forgotten her old nurse. The day after her arrival, whilst the gentlemen were transacting the business at Wood Park, attended by the other ladies, she drove near the well-known cottage, when they alighted, and walked up to the house. Mrs. Connor saw them at a distance, without knowing who they were, and advanced to meet them, but the instant she perceived Honoria, she ran, and clasping her in her arms, exclaimed in a transport of joy, "Oh, my dear child! are you come at last to see me? why, they told me, that a wicked creature pretended to be you, and had got your name and your fortune, and all the while she was you. I was crying to think you had forgotten your poor old nurse: but now you are your own self again, you are as good as when you sat upon my knee, or when in first madam's time, you came here every day with Miss Henny, and ran about the garden, and plucked flowers." Honoria, with equal affection, returned the good woman's embraces, who was so overpowered, she saw not Lady Eustace, till Mrs. Effingham, pointing to her, enquired if she did not know that lady? Mrs. Connor, when a little recovered, made a handsome apology, and said, Miss Henny always loved Miss Honoria so well, she was sure she would not be angry with her for the preference. Emily was delighted with her affection and gratitude: Mrs. Cleveland had often seen her, when in former days she visited at the Park, and had ever loved her honest and tender solicitude for her little darling, as she always called our heroine. They then explained to her some of the circumstances which she was yet ignorant of, and when she heard of Honoria's marriage with Colonel Effingham, she was almost out of her senses with joy. "Ay! (cried she) I have told Paddy a thousand and a thousand times, that there was not a man in the world good enough for her but the Captain, and that if she would not have nobody at all, she might have him, because he was so good, and so charitable, and so gentle, and so much like herself." Honoria smiled at her encomiums, and desired that she and her husband would dine the next day at North Hall, and then they should see both the Colonel and her brother; but even the hope of seeing her again so soon, could scarcely prevail on Mrs. Connor to part with her then; she walked by the carriage, which drove slowly, above a mile, talking to her all the way, and at last very unwillingly returned to her own house.

The following day they were punctual to their appointment, and exclusive of the satisfaction they derived from the attention with which they were treated by the whole party, their future comfort was secured by a handsome annuity which Colonel Effingham settled on them for both their lives, as a reward for their kindness to his beloved Honoria, in providing her an asylum in England, and releasing her from the cruelty of Mrs. Fortescue. Sir William Clarendon, who had in vain attempted to prevail on the Colonel to let him have the pleasure of paying half, saying he was equally obliged to them, after

expressing his thanks, forced on them a noble present in the name of himself and his lady, whose affection to Honoria he declared could not be exceeded, and only equalled by that which her mother and husband bore her. The good old couple knew not how to express their delight and gratitude for these numerous obligations; and Mr. Cleveland added to the happiness of Paddy, by giving him the charge of overlooking his garden; the Colonel's bounty had set him above labour, but employment was so natural to his active spirit, that in a life of total quietness he would have wanted amusement, and was so fond of his former occupation, that the continuance of it was a real pleasure to him.

Every thing thus happily settled, they all returned to England, accompanied by Mr. Fortescue. Lady Clarendon, though easy, had not been happy in the absence of her children, and was truly rejoiced to see them once more. During this little period, Sir Charles Mortimer had attached himself to Fanny Ashbourn, and Harry to Ellen Lambert, and all parties appeared to approve of these connections. In the winter, all but Miss Melmoth went to London: Sir William Clarendon and the Colonel took a house not very distant from each other, and as nearly Lady Clarendon as possible; and the latter began to seek for a summer residence in Hertfordshire, in compliance both with his own and Honoria's wishes to fix near the Fairfaxes and Miss Melmoth, and not very far from Sir William, to whom his mother had given up Clarendon place, intending herself to keep only the house in Harley-street, and pass the summer with her children.

The Colonel succeeded beyond his expectations; he purchased an elegant house and park within the proposed distance of Ware, and Sir James Eustace followed his example, to the infinite satisfaction of Honoria. Mr. Fortescue was to live wholly with his daughter, except when he chose to visit his beloved niece, as he still called our heroine, who was ever gratefully attached to him. Lady Egerton at the expiration of the year of solitude she had spent in Devonshire, returned once more to her friend, and again in some degree mixed with the world, though with a firm resolution she still adheres to the determination she made at the death of Sir William, never to enter into a second engagement. The memory of her unfortunate lover is still engraved on a heart, that never did, that never can know another attachment. A similarity of disposition, and a similarity of fate, have endeared her and Miss Melmoth to each other; both considering themselves, in some measure, the cause of the death of the person they best loved in the world.

The humanity which induced Miss Melmoth first to protect Honoria, has been its own reward; for in the strong and sincere affection she has long borne her, she has in a degree lost the recollection of those misfortunes, which before pressed so heavy on her soul. Honoria's happiness is become her own, and every blessing she enjoys, reflects a beam of true satisfaction on the breast of her attached and benevolent friend.

Lady Clarendon and Lady Mortimer, in the excellent conduct of their children, experience the happy effects of having in their youth instilled into their minds those principles of virtue, which have since regulated their lives.

Emily, from having copied the example of Honoria, whose pure and steady mind had been unshaken by adversity, unsullied by prosperity, has reformed the few errors which arose merely from a volatile imagination, and is become herself a bright pattern of every virtue. Fond of her to excess, Sir William would have loved even her faults; yet he rejoiced to think she was equally worthy of his esteem, admiration, and affection.

Major Southmore having with Sir William Egerton's estate acquired the power, as he before possessed the will, of doing good in the most extensive sense of the word, was truly happy, and had not a wish ungratified. He would not recall his son from the service of his country, but he gave him such an allowance, that, added to his pay, enabled him and his family to live in a style of comfort and elegance, which their limited income would not before permit. He now devotes his time to the education of his grandson and nephews; alternately visiting his friends, and often spending several months with old Mrs. Lambert, to enjoy the company of his nieces, whom he will not, though extremely fond of them, remove from under her protection. Ellen, it is believed, will soon have a protector in Mr. Ashbourn, but Lucy will still remain with her grandmother, whose declining health requires her attendance, only staying with her sister now and then a few weeks at a time.

Captain Harcourt, though he thoroughly detests his wife for the duplicity of her conduct, yet not being able to afford her a separate maintenance, is obliged to take her with him wherever he goes; and, as ever must be the consequence of mutual dislike and ill opinion, they live in a continual state of opposition and discontent. Marianne often bitterly regrets the ambition which induced her to personate Honoria, and marry Captain Harcourt; convinced, from observation and experience, she should have been much happier in an humble situation.

Sir James and Lady Eustace, Captain and Mrs. Fairfax, live in that perfect harmony with each other, which is ever the result of a choice, built on a well-grounded opinion, and secured by encreasing affection and confirmed esteem.

Colonel Effingham and Honoria, after the various misfortunes they have both experienced, enjoy with more gratitude to Heaven, the state of tranquil felicity in which they are now placed. Happy in the esteem of their friends, and the approbation of the world; assured of each other's disinterested affection, and convinced it will never lessen: surrounded by those dear connections whose encreasing regard and delightful society, could of themselves give pleasure, their wishes are all fulfilled. From the doubts which formerly tormented their minds having proved fallacious, they have now the most perfect confidence in each other; and from the truest attachment, grounded on the sincerest friendship, they possess that real happiness so seldom experienced by humanity.

Yet it will often, though not always, fall to the lot of those who placing a firm dependence on Providence, support the evils of life without repining, and enjoy the blessings of it, by diffusing them to all around them; and let us remember, if the virtuous lose an earthly reward, they are sure of possessing perfect felicity, in a state where happiness can meet with no alloy.

THE END.