

LOVERS AND FRIENDS.

A NOVEL.

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LOVERS AND FRIENDS;
OR,
MODERN ATTACHMENTS.

A NOVEL.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY

ANNE OF SWANSEA,

AUTHOR OF

CONVICTION, GONZALO DE BALDIVIA, CHRONICLES OF AN ILLUSTRIOUS
HOUSE,
SECRET AVENGERS, SECRETS IN EVERY MANSION, CAMBRIAN
PICTURES, CESARIO ROSALBA,
&c. &c.

“I hold a mirror up for men to see
How bad they are, how good they ought to be.”

VOL. III.

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LOVERS AND FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

The liberal-minded and generous part of the community are constantly exposed to the arts and deceptions of the cunning and designing; their feelings are worked upon, advantage is taken even of their virtues, and it is not till after repeatedly suffering from benevolent credulity, that reason and experience bring the painful conviction, that their liberality has been duped, and their humanity deceived. Z.

“—————Sweet is a rural life,
And innocent as sweet.”

An Arrest—Simplicity imposed upon—A fortunate Blunder—Suspicious and Confidences.

ON inquiring for Mrs. Doricourt, Cecilia was informed she was gone with a party to see a pair of Angola sheep, that had recently been added to the earl's menagerie, and that most of the gentlemen were gone to Keswick.

While Cecilia was preparing to follow Mrs. Doricourt, lady Jacintha Fitzosborne entered the saloon. With an air of perfect unconsciousness she inquired for the countess, and the rest of the party. On being told they were all out—“I am vastly sorry that I slept so late,” said she, “for, *sans doute*, the owner of this note-case,” displaying it, “is not a little vexed at its loss, and anxious for its recovery.”

Cecilia joyfully exclaimed—“Dear lady Jacintha, how happy I am that you found it! that note-case is mine; I was indeed very anxious for its recovery.”

“Yours!” replied lady Jacintha. “Well, really, Miss Delmore, you shew a most noble contempt for money, by throwing it about so carelessly.”

“I confess, lady Jacintha, I deserve your censure,” said Cecilia, “for I have been very blameable. I know not how I lost the note-case, and consider myself particularly fortunate that it fell into your hands, as I do not know what it contains.”

“Astonishing!” exclaimed lady Jacintha. “Why, Miss Delmore, do you possess the riches of Cræsus, that you are ignorant of the extent of your wealth? Not know the contents!”

“No, really I do not,” said Cecilia.

“Surprising indeed!” resumed lady Jacintha. “Where then, and from whom, child, could you receive this elegant note-case?”

Cecilia thought these interrogations extremely rude; but conscious there could be no necessity for concealment, she replied—“The earl of Torrington, madam, presented it to me last night in the drawing-room, where I had no opportunity to examine its contents. While I was undressing, I discovered my loss.”

“What a fortunate creature you are,” said lady Jacintha, enviously, “to be the adopted daughter of the munificent earl of Torrington! Four hundred pounds is a very handsome gift; there are persons in the world who might consider such a sum a very pretty fortune.”

Cecilia felt the allusion, but suffered no mortification; and lady Jacintha, seeing her malicious remark pass unnoticed, continued to say—“What in the world, Miss Delmore, will you find to do with all that money? Your mamma Doricourt supplies you so amply with expensive trinkets and every article of dress, that you can want no addition to your wardrobe. Well, you are a fortunate creature! I am almost tempted to wish I was an adopted daughter, that is, if I could meet as generous a papa as lord Torrington. Here, Miss Delmore, take your note-case, and thank your lucky stars it is restored; for money is really so tempting, that you may think it next to a miracle that it ever came into your hands again.”

Cecilia did not see any thing extraordinary in a woman of rank being merely honest, but she thanked lady Jacintha, looked at the amount of the notes, and wondered that the earl should give her so much money.

Lady Jacintha thought it might have been much better bestowed, and fell to contriving, in her mind, how she could, without lowering her dignity, and betraying her poverty, borrow a part of it; and being opportunely alone with Miss Delmore, she wished to draw from her the nature of her sentiments respecting lord Rushdale, and the certainty whether he had degraded himself by making her a declaration of love.

Cecilia had now tied on her bonnet, and repeating her thanks, she bade lady Jacintha good morning.

“Have you an assignation?” asked lady Jacintha; “does some happy swain wait you down in the Hawthorn Glen, my beautiful blushing maid?”

“If I do blush, madam,” replied Cecilia, gravely, “it is that you should suspect me of the imprudence of making assignations.”

“Well, don’t look so serious,” returned lady Jacintha; “I was only jesting; but surely, Miss Delmore, you will not have the barbarity to leave me to my own doleful meditations?”

“Perhaps your ladyship would like to walk?” said Cecilia.

“No really, my ladyship will not,” replied she, “walk at this time of day; the sun broiling—dust flying in clouds, I should be choked, and scorched the colour of an Ethiop. Do pray, my dear Miss Delmore, have a little consideration for your own lilies and roses. Spare your own complexion, and take compassion on mine. Come, I know you are fond of employment. Sit down, and finish your gold chain, which is really very pretty, though not quite massy enough for the child of nature to bind her lovers with. But deuce take the men! they are not worth a thought. Let us peerless maidens sit down and enjoy a rational *tête-à-tête*.”

Cecilia would have preferred a walk to the conversation of lady Jacintha, but politeness constrained her to open her work-box.

“I wish I had ingenuity and application sufficient to make a chain like that; for I admire it prodigiously,” said lady Jacintha.

“I shall be happy to present it to you,” replied Cecilia, “if you would consider such a trifle worth your acceptance.”

Lady Jacintha's pride did not prevent her accepting a present from the house-keeper's niece; she was all smiles and thanks; and Cecilia sat down to finish the chain, that her ladyship might wear it at dinner.

They conversed for some time on poetry, of which lady Jacintha had read a great deal. She spoke in rapturous terms of Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, and recited some beautiful passages from the *Fire-Worshippers* with much spirit and feeling. Painting was next discussed, and lady Jacintha lamented her want of skill in that delightful art. Portraits of the earl, the countess, and lord Rushdale, ornamented the saloon, and the merits and defects of each being pointed out, lady Jacintha asked Cecilia if she thought lord Rushdale resembled his mother?

"Not much," replied Cecilia, "though their eyes are the same colour."

"He is a clever young man," continued lady Jacintha; "very handsome and elegant, only too much tinctured with romance and sentiment."

Cecilia thought him all perfect, and a sigh she could not suppress heaved her bosom.

"Bless me, Miss Delmore!" exclaimed lady Jacintha, "that is a very expressive sigh; I hope the graces of the accomplished Rushdale have not made an impression on your heart?"

"Oh no," replied Cecilia, "I am not so susceptible or romantic as to fall in love, without a single hope to encourage me. I am sensible of the distance fortune has placed between lord Rushdale and myself, and shall never, even in idea, remove the fraternal title which has received the earl's sanction, and his own approval."

"You are really a prodigy of discretion, Miss Delmore," said lady Jacintha; "and I am vastly happy to hear you make this declaration, because I am certain that lord Rushdale's affections are seriously engaged to a lady of rank, an intimate friend of mine."

Cecilia's heart felt a painful flutter—a mist swam before her eyes.

"Yes, Rushdale is certainly a fascinating young man," continued lady Jacintha; "but it would be shocking if you were to be deluded by compliments, attentions, and flatteries, which mean nothing, and are only the mere gallantries of fashionable men."

This subject was particularly unfortunate to the gold chain, for Cecilia's tremor made her drop a stitch, and before she could recover it, half the chain was undone.

"The countess of Torrington," continued lady Jacintha, "has views of her own: her ambition has selected a wife for her son, of high rank and splendid fortune; but I, who am in his confidence, know that his affections are irrevocably engaged; and where he loves he will marry. Why you tremble and look pale, Miss Delmore. I really am sorry I introduced this subject, since you appear so affected by it."

"Not by what you have said, madam," replied Cecilia; "this room is very warm—the heat overcomes me."

"It is intensely hot," said lady Jacintha, throwing open a window; "I believe indeed a little air may be of service to us both. "But are you quite sure now," asked she, maliciously, "that you could hear of Rushdale's marriage without a tremor of the nerves?"

"Quite certain," said Cecilia, forcing a smile.

"The *idea* then," resumed the tormenting lady Jacintha, "is worse than the *reality*; for your hands absolutely tremble at the thought; and, as I live, child, you are undoing instead of finishing the chain."

"I have made a small mistake," said Cecilia, "but I shall soon rectify it."

“Well, you need not blush so deeply about a trifling error,” returned lady Jacintha. “Positively you must leave off blushing before you go to town, or you will be set down for a rustic simpleton; and if your heart, Miss Delmore, has strayed a little, call home the truant as speedily as possible. Rectify that mistake without loss of time; for you may rest assured that Oscar lord Rushdale inherits all the pride of his parents, and will never take a wife beneath the rank of nobility. Upon my honour, I tell you this out of friendship and goodwill; for I am *tout-à-fait* in his affairs.”

Cecilia was angry as well as confused; she wished lady Jacintha had kept her friendly communications to herself; for though lord Rushdale was not, nor ever could be, any thing to her, she was agitated, in spite of her unwillingness to acknowledge it even to herself.

Lady Jacintha had accomplished her design—she had made Cecilia uneasy; but ashamed of her weakness, she wished to remove all idea that she encouraged a partiality for lord Rushdale; but before she could express her sentiments, a servant entered, to say that lord Bechamp and major Norman wished to have the pleasure of paying their respects to lady Jacintha Fitzosborne, if she was not engaged.

“What can have brought these delightful men so far from Brighton, where they told me they were going?” said lady Jacintha. “Admit them instantly.”

Cecilia rose to leave the room.

“I shall not let you go, Miss Delmore,” said lady Jacintha. “Pray keep your seat: Bechamp is my flirt; but I can spare Norman, and you have my permission to make a fool of him.”

Cecilia had no wish to avail herself of this permission. She pleaded a headache, and had reached the door, when a tall vulgar-looking man rudely caught her arm.—“In another minit,” said he, “you would have put in leg-bail. Not so nimble, my lady, for ve has got a little small bit of business to settle with you.”

“You mistake, sir,” returned Cecilia; “you can have no business with me.”

“Beg pardon for contradicting a lady,” said a diminutive figure, dressed in all the extravagance of dandyism, who closed the door, at which the tall man stationed himself; “a writ, my lady, at the suit of madame De Hays, milliner, Pall-Mall, for two hundred and fifty-eight pounds six shillings and sixpence. Beg pardon for intruding, but your la’ship knows we must do our duty.”

“I repeat, sir, you are under a mistake,” replied Cecilia. “I never heard of madame De Hays. Suffer me to ring the bell—I shall then be able to convince you of your mistake.”

“Deep, deep as Garrick,” said the tall man, winking; “but ve be up to snuff, and a pinch above it; ve never makes no mistakes. Ve vas told vhere to nab you afore ve left Lunnun, so ve gist tooked the liberty to send in them there gemmen’s names, lord Bechamp and major Norman, case as how they vas at Mr. Hinde’s lock-up-house, in Gray’s Ind Lane, same time your la’ship vas last vinter.”

Cecilia looked round; she suspected it was lady Jacintha Fitzosborne the men mistook her for; but she had unaccountably vanished, and in terror Cecilia exclaimed—“Let me pass, man! Lock-up-house! I do not comprehend.”

“You has got a plaguy short memory then,” said the tall man, “like the rest of your grand folks; though I thinks as how you has got reasons plenty to remember Hinde’s sponging-house, vere you stuckt atwixt the bars, trying to make your ‘scape out on the winder.”

“I am still in the dark,” said Cecilia, advancing to pull the bell. “In one moment I will convince you I never was in London in my life, and am as much a stranger to lock-up houses as I am to you.”

“Stay, Miss Delmore—for Heaven sake stay!” exclaimed lady Jacintha, springing from the concealment of an Indian screen, behind which she had shrunk at the entrance of the men. “Don’t pull the bell. Don’t let me be exposed to the servants!”

“Good Heaven!” said Cecilia, “what is the meaning of this strange conduct? Why am I detained by these men?”

“Beg pardon, ma’am,” replied the little dandy; “a trifling misnomer, as we civilians term it—a mistake in persons, ma’am. It appears in evidence, ma’am, that you are not lady Jacintha Fitzosborne. This being now proved, we can shew no cause, ma’am, for detaining your person. Beg pardon—I perceive,” advancing to lady Jacintha, “that you are the lady we are to have the honour of introducing to John Doe and Richard Roe. I now recollect your la’ship perfectly. Had the honour, when I was clerk to Levisham & Co. to wait upon you in Chancery-lane, to settle Fairborne the jeweller’s business.”

“Your memory, sir,” replied lady Jacintha, “is impertinently tenacious; and I think you might have conducted this affair more delicately, without all this noise and exposure. Persons of rank are not to be put on a level with the vulgar.”

“That’s the way of you all,” rejoined the tall man; “nab you as ginteely as ever ve vill, ve be sure to get abused for our pains.”

Lady Jacintha having cast her eyes over the writ, exclaimed—“At the suit of madame De Hays! the vile creature! the abominable, ungrateful wretch, that I took so much trouble to recommend to all my friends!”

“But your friends,” retorted the bailiff, “vas gist like your la’ship—they tooked her goods, but forgot to pay for them.”

“I could not have believed that madame De Hays would have behaved so ungratefully,” said lady Jacintha; “she promised me she would wait till winter.”

“And no doubt madame De Hays would have kept her word with your la’ship,” said Mr. Ferret, the little dandy; “but unfortunately the customhouse officers have made so large a seizure of contraband goods, that the poor French-woman, being herself ruined, is compelled to be troublesome to your la’ship.”

“What is to be done I know not,” replied lady Jacintha; “for at this time I cannot command twenty pounds.”

“Vhy then, my lady, if you can’t pay the debt, vhy ve bees obligated,” said the bailiff, “to take you off directly to Lunnun.”

“At this time of the year to London!” exclaimed lady Jacintha; “intolerable! unbearable! it will be the death of me!”

“You can go to your old apartments in Gray’s Ind Lane,” said the bailiff; “and wery snug they be, as your la’ship knows; for Mr. Hinde told me as how you vas there three weeks last vinter.”

Cecilia, during this scene, had several times attempted to leave the room, but had been constantly prevented by lady Jacintha, who entreated she would not leave her.

“Nothing on earth could have been more unfortunate,” said lady Jacintha, “than this debt being demanded when I have no money. I really am at a loss what to do.”

“Beg pardon for hurrying your la’ship,” rejoined the attorney, “but really time is so precious, I have so much business on my hands, that I don’t know which way to turn,

which constrains me to hurry your la'ship's decision. Your la'ship must either pay the money immediately, or suffer us to convey you to a place of security."

"To the King's Bench," said the bailiff, "if your la'ship likes. All the grand folks goes to the Bench; there they waits for a solvency act, and vipes off all their scores with a vet finger."

Lady Jacintha walked about the room, wringing her hands.

Cecilia asked if it would not be right to acquaint lady Eglantine Sydney, who might have it in her power to advance the money.

"To apply to her will be useless," replied lady Jacintha; "she has no debts herself, and would exclaim against mine. If I could only have time till November, I could settle this demand."

The little dandy, to whom this intimation was addressed, replied—"Beg pardon, my lady, but I have no commission, no power, to withdraw the writ, or allow time. Sorry to be rude, or hurry your la'ship, but unless your la'ship has a friend who will advance the money, we must be off directly. Beg pardon, but your la'ship knows, by experience, that these sort of affairs admit of no delay: we must obey the law, or we stand in danger of being struck off the rolls."

"Ve must not lose no more time, Mr. Ferret," said the bailiff, "for you vell knows as how I has writs in my pocket against fourteen gemmen, and they must all be served this week, vile term lasts."

Lady Jacintha appeared ready to faint; and Cecilia, compassionating her situation, though the consequence of unwarrantable extravagance, entreated to be allowed to inform her cousin and lady Torrington of her unpleasant embarrassment.

"Did you know them as well as I do," said lady Jacintha, "you would be certain, as I am, that so far from assisting me in my distress, they would rejoice at it."

"Oh, no, no," returned Cecilia, "you mistake their characters; human nature cannot be so pitiless, so void of feeling; but if you think they would not serve you, let me apply to the earl of Torrington or Mrs. Doricourt."

"No, Miss Delmore," said lady Jacintha, "I would rather endure the horrors of a prison than lay open my distresses to the earl of Torrington or Mrs. Doricourt; and if I could so far subdue my pride, what right have I to expect Mrs. Doricourt would lend so large a sum to me, almost a stranger?"

"You do not know Mrs. Doricourt," replied Cecilia, "or you would hope every thing from her generosity and humanity."

"I have but one hope, Miss Delmore, and that," said lady Jacintha, "that rests with you."

"With me!" repeated Cecilia; "in what way?—how can I?—with me!"

"Yes, Miss Delmore, with you alone," returned lady Jacintha; "you can, if you please, release me from this disagreeable embarrassment; and if all the sentiments of feeling and generosity which I have heard you utter from time to time are real impulses of your heart, you will not hesitate to rescue me from this misfortune."

"Good Heaven! lady Jacintha, what can I possibly do?" said Cecilia. "I have offered to apply for you to the earl and Mrs. Doricourt, and their assistance you have declined. Do you wish me to inform lord Rushdale?"

"Not for your life!" exclaimed lady Jacintha, grasping her hand. "You seem affected at my situation; you would apply for my assistance to others—why not yourself be my

friend? You have the money, for which I know you have no immediate occasion; in a few months I shall be able to repay it, but my gratitude will be eternal.”

In the alarm and confusion of the arrest, Cecilia had entirely forgot the note-case.

Lady Jacintha remembered it with envy and desire.—“You have four hundred pounds at your command,” resumed she; “by lending me three hundred, you will be my guardian angel; you will preserve me from exposure, inconvenience, and suffering.”

Cecilia’s heart was feeling and generous. She would not have hesitated a moment in lending the money to remove the distress of lady Jacintha, but she doubted whether the earl and Mrs. Doricourt would approve her having disposed of so large a sum to relieve the embarrassments of a person whose character and manners she knew they disliked.

“It is easy, I perceive,” said lady Jacintha, bitterly, “to use the *language* of feeling and kindness, but very hard to conform to the *practice*. You will not lend me the money—you will not save me from disgrace—from destruction!”

Cecilia was silent, for she knew not how to act.

“’Tis no sort of use to vait any longer,” said the bailiff; “so do you see, Mr. Ferret, I bees for beginning the vay back to Lunnun.”

“Beg pardon for offering unsolicited advice,” said the attorney, “but really it appears to my conception that your la’ship does wrong in not applying to some of your friends, as this young lady, Miss Delmore, has more than once urged. A prison is disagreeable—confinement uncomfortable, particularly at this beautiful time of the year, when nature, as the poet observes, is *prodigal of charms*.’ Be persuaded, my lady; some of your right honourable noble friends may come forward, and settle this little awkward business.”

“I have no friends,” returned lady Jacintha, sullenly, “and must submit to my misfortunes.”

“Vell then, the chay may draw close up to the door,” said the bailiff, “since my lady is determined to go with us. I don’t care how soon ve bees upon the road again. I spose, my lady, you’ll choose to go to Mr. Hinde’s again?”

“I care not where I go,” replied lady Jacintha.

“Beg pardon for advising,” said the little dandy, “but should suppose a lock-up house will be better than to prison; many expences saved, fees et cetera.”

“I care not what is saved or lost,” interrupted lady Jacintha, “for I will not long survive the disgrace of incarceration, and when I have, with a desperate hand, put an end to my existence, the unfeeling will perhaps remember with regret, they had the power, but would not exert it, to save me from destruction.”

This speech, delivered with a frantic air, had all the effect lady Jacintha designed; it frightened and settled the resolves of Cecilia; she shuddered at the menace it conveyed, and rather chose to incur the censure of Mrs. Doricourt and the earl of Torrington, than to have suicide committed.

Mr. Ferret bade the bailiff see that the chaise was drawn up as close as possible.

Cecilia desired him to remain.

“Vhy, there has been time enough spent about this here little job already, Miss,” said he, “and I has got a vife and seven children to find wittles and clothes for, and so I don’t vait no longer; for vhile I stand here listnin to a parcel of purlaver as comes to nothing at last, vhy it vont put no Spanish into my pocket, do you see?”

“Very true, Trapwell,” replied the attorney, “but remember you are waiting on a lady, my good fellow; always behave polite to the ladies.”

“Purlite!” repeated the bailiff; “vhy, Mr. Ferret, I bees always purlite, when I gets vell paid for it; but here ve be kept purlarvering, with not so much as a drap of nothing to vet one’s vhistle vith.”

Mr. Ferret, who noticed Cecilia’s emotion, gave the bailiff a sly wink, that made him silent; then addressing Cecilia—“Beg pardon, Miss Delmore, I think you bade us remain; without doubt you would not detain me, a professional man, without having some reason, some purpose; excuse me, ma’am, for putting the question so abruptly, but do you intend to advance her la’ship the money to discharge the debt?”

“I intend lending lady Jacintha Fitzosborne three hundred pounds, sir,” replied Cecilia.

“Will you indeed?” exclaimed lady Jacintha; “will you be such a good, kind, generous angel? I will never forget the obligation.”

“I hope you will never again be in such a disagreeable situation,” returned Cecilia, placing notes to the amount of three hundred pounds in her hand. “I believe I do not act prudently in this affair, but I cannot bear the idea of a female going to prison for debt.”

“You are all that is good and amiable,” said the exulting lady Jacintha. “Now, sir,” turning to the little dandy, “here is the money; give me a proper discharge.”

“With all pleasure, my lady; my client will be rejoiced at getting paid with so little trouble—beg pardon,” placing the notes in his pocketbook, “but certainly did expect the honour of escorting your la’ship to town.”

“Beg pardon,” said lady Jacintha, mimicking his manner, “but I feel much pleasure in disappointing you.”

“Vell, now I hopes, my lady,” said the bailiff, “you vill think of me.”

“Not if I can help it,” replied lady Jacintha; “I always do my possible to avoid recurring to disagreeable subjects or persons.”

“Disagreeable!” repeated the bailiff; “vhy as to that, if so be as Jack Swinton had come down upon this here business with Mr. Ferret, steed of me, you’d a seed some odds twixt his behaviours and mine. Vhy all the gemmen at the vest end of the town vill give me the best of karacturs; they all know as I be as commodating a feller as is to be found in my calling, and every gemmen as ever I touched on the shoulder always remembers my purlite vay of doing the job.”

“Your purliteness is equalled only by your eloquence, Mr. Fletcher,” said lady Jacintha; “but to spare a further display of your oratorical powers, I shall remember you in the way you wish: there is a pound note for you, and the sooner you leave Torrington Castle, the more I shall be satisfied with your commodating behaviours.”

“A pound note!” returned the bailiff, disdainfully; “vhy, Ned Snip, the tailor, comed down more handsomer. Only this here dirty bit of paper! vont you order us a bottle of vind to drink your health, my lady?”

“I am not at home here,” replied lady Jacintha, “and can offer you nothing, Mr. Fletcher, but my sincere wishes for your absence.”

The bailiff retired, muttering that it vas like enough she might come in his vay again, and he vould not forget she vas cursed shabby, and had not so much as axed him to vhet his vistle.

The little dandy attorney, who had despaired of getting the money paid, having given her ladyship a proper discharge, begged pardon for having been under the disagreeable necessity of troubling her, which had been excessively painful to his feelings—hoped, if

she should hereafter have occasion to employ a gentleman of his profession, that she would condescend to recollect her most obsequious and devoted humble servant, James Ferret, solicitor, No. 15, Halfmoon-street, Piccadilly. He then, with many bows and scrapes, followed the bailiff.

Lady Jacintha threw herself on the ottoman, and indulged in a long fit of laughter, to the consternation of Cecilia, who thought she was going into convulsions. At last she said—"Beg pardon, as Mr. Ferret says, but did you ever see such a baboon, such a little ape, with his bows and grimaces and slides? I declare I should much sooner have taken him for a dancing-master than a lawyer."

"I am happy to see you in such spirits," replied Cecilia, not a little astonished to see the woman who but a few moments before had talked of destroying herself, so soon forget her troubles.

"Spirits! yes, thank Heaven," said her ladyship, "my spirits are tolerably good, and with sufficient reason, I think; but as you have never known the misery of being in the fangs of those vile myrmidons of the law, you can have no idea of the transport of an escape."

"What I have this morning witnessed," replied Cecilia, "will be a lesson to me through life; I am confident I shall never incur a debt."

"As yet you have had no occasion," said lady Jacintha; "but make no vows, child, for fear you should break them: when you get to town, and are surrounded with all the elegant splendid temptations of the *beau monde*, then will come the trial. I know you are very prudent and circumspect, and all that;"—Cecilia doubted her right to these praises, having so recently lent her money to a person who did not appear to possess one honourable principle—"but when you get into the great world," continued lady Jacintha, "you will discover a thousand wants, of which you can form no idea in the country. At every turn you will be assailed with some brilliant toy, some charming expensive decoration, without which you can have no pretension to fashion, or hope to excite envy and admiration. In short, whether you will or not, in town you will be compelled to incur debt. A-propos, that ugly word *debt* recalls to my mind that I ought to have let Mr. Ferret draw up a note for the money you lent me. Bless me, I am so thoughtless! now what is to be done? for I am really so ignorant of the vulgar forms of business, that I do not know how a note of hand should be worded."

"Mr. Wilson, the earl's steward, can remedy this forgetfulness," said Cecilia.

"On no account; I would not for the world this transaction should transpire," returned lady Jacintha; "and I entreat it as a particular favour, Miss Delmore, you will not mention the kindness you have done me to any person. I will give you a memorandum acknowledging the debt, and as soon as I can conveniently raise the money, I will repay it; though, situated as you are with the earl of Torrington and Mrs. Doricourt, that trifling sum can be of very little consequence to you."

The effrontery of lady Jacintha astonished Cecilia. Inexperienced as she was in the ways of the world, she perceived that the three hundred pounds were irretrievably gone, as she was certain no dependence could be placed on the honour of lady Jacintha; and to the former censure of carelessness she now must add imprudence: but all remonstrance was for the present prevented by the entrance of the party from walking.

"Dear, I am so tired!" said Miss Maxfield, seating herself. "La! do you know, lady Jacintha, I have been running up a hill?"

“And then you run down again, I suppose, and that accounts for your being so tired.”

“No, I did not run down,” replied Miss Maxfield; “I walked down, and I stumbled over a nasty great stone, and hurt my foot sadly; and do you know, though Mr. Drawley said he could run with me on his shoulder, he never offered to carry me a little bit of the way, for all I limped so you can’t think.”

Unheeding Miss Maxfield’s complaint against him, Mr. Drawley said—“I am quite delighted with the plan of the theatre.”

“Yes,” replied the countess of Torrington, “the theatre will be charming: Rushdale says we shall perform operas in grand style—Rosina is a prodigious favourite of mine.”

“And Miss Delmore,” said lord Rushdale, “will be every thing the author designed in that character.”

“Pray do not think of me,” replied Cecilia, “for I fear I should never have courage.”

“We cannot possibly do without you,” rejoined the countess; “colonel St. Irwin observed that the songs were set on purpose for your voice.”

“I trust,” said the earl of Torrington, “that the rage for opera will not consign the immortal Shakespeare to oblivion.”

“Romeo and Juliet,” observed Mrs. Freakley, “is a very fine play.”

“Excellent!” rejoined the countess; “Romeo, lord Rushdale; Juliet, Miss Delmore.”

“I think,” said lady Jacintha, who did not at all approve the arrangement, “you are assigning Miss Delmore a heavy task; you forget, my dear countess, she has never seen a play.”

“That is of no consequence,” replied lady Torrington; “Miss Delmore has genius, and a most excellent memory, and who besides her looks as innocent as Juliet and Rosina?”

“Your ladyship has entirely forgotten Miss Maxfield,” said lady Jacintha, spitefully.

“La! I wish you would not mention me, lady Jacintha,” replied Miss Maxfield; “I hate so to learn any thing out of book you can’t think. I have seen Romeo and Juliet two or three times, to be sure, but I know I should never get those long speeches by heart, about cutting Romeo up into moons and stars, and about his being a rose, and looking like a glove upon her hand; and about his eyes being like swords and Æthiop’s ears.”

Mrs. Freakley felt proud of the recollections of her niece, while the rest of the party found it difficult to restrain their risibility.

“Not remember!” said Drawley, with affected gravity; “you greatly underrate your abilities, Miss Maxfield; your memory is prodigious! for I am certain you have recollected much more than any other person in company can.”

“La! I am sure you are flattering me, Mr. Drawley,” replied the child of nature; “well, when I was at school, the teachers used to say I did not want abilities; that I only wanted patience; but, dear me, it used to tire me so to learn my lesson you can’t think; and I would not undertake to learn all those long speeches in the play for any thing. And, do you know, I vowed, when I left school, I would never learn any thing again as long as I lived.”

Mrs. Freakley said she should like to see Jemima in some pretty character, but certainly it was very tiresome to learn long speeches out of books, and she could not blame her for declining it.

The earl of Torrington observed, it was quite time enough to select plays and engage performers, when the theatre was in a state of forwardness.

The countess observed that the heat and dust during their walk had been quite distressing, and that she must retire to make a reform in her person. Her example was followed by the rest of the ladies.

Cecilia reflected with satisfaction that she had not promised secrecy respecting lady Jacintha's arrest and subsequent conduct. The loss of her money she did not regret, further than having deprived herself of the power to be essentially useful to others more deserving than lady Jacintha, whose manner convinced her that she had no intention of returning it. Having completed her toilet, Cecilia repaired to the dressing-room of Mrs. Doricourt, to whom she narrated the scene of the arrest, and the disposal she had made of three-fourths of the earl's munificent gift.

Mrs. Doricourt expressed no surprise, neither did she blame Cecilia for the humane and generous feelings that had impelled her to bestow so large a sum for the relief of an artful unprincipled woman.

"Lady Jacintha Fitzosborne, my love," said Mrs. Doricourt, "has in this affair proved herself designing and dishonourable. She was aware of your inexperience, and took an artful advantage of it; but let this transaction, my Cecilia, teach you, that persons who cunningly work upon your feelings are unworthy of your generosity: had this unprincipled woman really determined on suicide, she would not have made three persons the confidants of her intention. Of the money, my love, think no more; there must be a revolution in the mind of lady Jacintha before she returns it. As to the earl of Torrington, be under no apprehension of his displeasure; he gave you the money, and would never ask you an account of its expenditure, though I consider it proper to inform him of the advantage that has been taken of your inexperience."

"But, my dear madam," returned Cecilia, "lady Jacintha seemed particularly anxious to conceal the affair from the earl and lord Rushdale."

"No doubt," replied Mrs. Doricourt, "such a disclosure would militate against her grand scheme."

"I do not know the scheme to which you allude," said Cecilia.

"I did not suppose you did," replied Mrs. Doricourt. "Innocent yourself, my Cecilia, you are not aware of lady Jacintha's duplicity and cunning; you do not perceive that she is displaying all her graces to captivate the heart of lord Rushdale."

"Indeed, my dear madam," said Cecilia, with generous earnestness, "in this particular you do lady Jacintha injustice; for, with the greatest kindness, she—" Cecilia coloured, and hesitated to proceed.

Mrs. Doricourt took her hand, and asked what kindness lady Jacintha had evinced towards her?

"She warned me," replied Cecilia, blushing still deeper, "against viewing with partial eyes the graces of lord Rushdale."

"Kind and considerate indeed!" said Mrs. Doricourt, "had the motive been sincere."

"Indeed I think she was sincere," resumed Cecilia, "for she told me lord Rushdale was engaged to a lady of high rank, whom he loved with a most ardent affection."

"The warning lady Jacintha gave you was undoubtedly kind," said Mrs. Doricourt, "as far as it tends to secure your tranquillity; but be assured lord Rushdale neither has, nor will enter into a matrimonial engagement during his minority. Lady Jacintha is poor; the wealth of lord Rushdale, putting his personal attractions out of the question, extremely desirable to her; but if I read the young man's character aright, he will never,

unsanctioned by his father, marry, and with the earl's approbation, I am certain, never lady Jacintha Fitzosborne."

After dinner the countess of Torrington remarked the absence of Mr. Oxley—"I thought I missed something at table," said she; "pray, my lord, why did not your chaplain say grace as usual?"

"Mr. Oxley left the castle early this morning," replied the earl.

"And when does he return?" asked the countess.

"Never," was the earl's laconic reply.

"Bless me! what sudden movement is this?" said the countess; "you really astonish me; not hearing grace pronounced in his pompous way, I fear I shall not dine with my usual appetite."

"I never understood before," replied the earl, "that Mr. Oxley was of so much consequence to your ladyship; but as he is never to return, I trust you will be able to dine without seeing him at the bottom of your table."

"Never to return!" echoed sir Cyril Musgrove. "Rushdale, you have lost the prompter you fixed upon for your theatre."

"We shall have no difficulty in supplying his loss," said lord Rushdale, carelessly.

"I am really at a loss to understand you, gentlemen," resumed the countess, addressing her husband and son; "Mr. Oxley gone, without my having the slightest intimation of his departure, after his having so particularly requested my good offices with a certain young lady!"—Miss Delmore and lord Rushdale coloured scarlet deep—"and after," continued the countess, "I had promised to use all my influence in his favour—very strange indeed!"

"Your promise to Mr. Oxley was premature and inconsiderate," replied the earl; "but he is gone, and with the full assurance on his mind, that a certain young lady, neither with her own inclination, or with my concurrence, could ever accept him."

"*De tout mon coeur,*" said the countess: "it is a matter of perfect indifference to me; the poor man was never a favourite of mine, with his importance and pedantry; only I thought that your lordship might intend to——"

"Remunerate him handsomely for his services," said the earl, hastily interrupting what he supposed would be wounding to the delicacy of Cecilia, "which I certainly have not omitted doing. Lord Rushdale no longer has occasion for a tutor, and Mr. Oxley goes to resume his clerical avocation."

"He was the most self-conceited fellow under the sun," said sir Middleton Maxfield.

"And offered his advice with the lofty air of a bishop," remarked lord Wilton.

"How he would swell in lawn sleeves!" rejoined sir Middleton Maxfield: "he is now proud as any prelate."

"Woe to the clergy in his diocese," said lady Jacintha Fitzosborne: "he would be a tyrant."

"Another cardinal Wolsey," returned sir Cyril.

"The parson has made his exit, good folk," said Mr. Drawley; "let his faults depart with him. I never spare a man to his face, but I think it ungenerous to maul him, when he is too distant to make the retort courteous."

"That sentiment does you honour, Drawley," replied colonel St. Irwin, "and I join in it

most cordially.”

The company having dispersed, and no one remaining near—“How prodigiously good we shall all grow in this moral society!” said lady Jacintha to Mrs. Freakley, who sat fanning herself, and complaining of the excessive heat. “I think colonel St. Irwin and Mrs. Doricourt would make a famous match: they could sentimentalize, and lay down plans for the amendment of their neighbours *sans cesser*.”

“The colonel has no taste for mature beauty,” replied Mrs. Freakley; “he would prefer, I have a notion, Mrs. Doricourt’s daughter.”

“Has Mrs. Doricourt a daughter?” asked lady Jacintha.

“Never heard Mrs. Doricourt had a daughter!” returned Mrs. Freakley; “bless me! I thought every body knew that Miss Delmore was Mrs. Doricourt’s daughter.”

“No, really, I never heard this precious piece of intelligence before,” said lady Jacintha; “though, all circumstances considered, it appears likely enough to be true; but her father, my dear Mrs. Freakley—who do they say is Miss Delmore’s father?”

“Look at the earl of Torrington,” returned Mrs. Freakley, “and you will have no occasion to ask that question. I am sure I discovered a strong likeness the moment I saw Miss Delmore. I wonder it could escape your ladyship’s notice.”

“No,” replied lady Jacintha, musing; “no, I can perceive no resemblance; Miss Delmore is extremely fair—the earl is dark; her eyes are hazel—his are jet; then their hair is quite a different colour; no, I cannot see a sufficient resemblance to warrant a belief of her being the earl’s daughter, though I think it very probable she may be Mrs. Doricourt’s: that exemplary lady, depend upon it, has had a little momentary error, a trifling *faux pas*, of which Miss Delmore is the fruit. Some particular cause has driven this pattern of perfection from the world, Mrs. Freakley; her settling on St. Herbert’s Island, and taking upon herself to educate Miss Delmore, are corroborating proofs of this affinity; it is not improbable but the earl may be in the secret—a friend of the gentleman’s, perhaps, and in order to preserve the lady’s reputation, may have consented to adopt Miss Delmore, and bring her forward in life; though I confess why they have thought proper to let her pass for the housekeeper’s niece, goes beyond my comprehension.”

“I suppose your ladyship heard that Mr. Oxley offered himself to Miss Delmore, and was refused.”

“That accounts for his absence,” said lady Jacintha, “and so, in downright despair, the lovesick parson gave in his resignation, and made his adieu. I wonder what Mrs. Doricourt expects this girl is to marry; a prince of the Holy Roman Empire, I suppose.”

“Nothing less, I dare say,” returned Mrs. Freakley, “for colonel St. Irwin has been rejected.”

“Colonel St. Irwin offer to marry Cecilia Delmore! a girl of low family, if not of suspicious birth!” exclaimed lady Jacintha; “a man of his rank, fortune, and expectations! and she has been suffered to refuse colonel St. Irwin! you astonish me, Mrs. Freakley; but can this report be depended upon? has not Wilmot, or Musgrove, or that creature, Drawley, been hoaxing you, my dear madam?”

“I speak from far better authority than either of those gentlemen,” said Mrs. Freakley—“from the evidence of my own ears. I was sitting in the grotto this morning, when the earl of Torrington and colonel St. Irwin stopped close at the entrance, and I heard the earl tell the colonel, that Miss Delmore was grateful for the honour he had

conferred on her, by the offer of his hand; but as yet she considered herself too young to enter into so sacred an engagement as matrimony.”

“Well, and what answer did the colonel make?” asked lady Jacintha, eagerly.

“Why, he said something about renewing the offer when they met in town next winter; but to my great joy they walked on, and I made the best of my way to the lawn, for your ladyship must be sensible it would have been very unpleasant to me to be seen, as no doubt they designed their conversation to be secret.”

“Upon my word,” said lady Jacintha, enviously, “this girl, this Miss Delmore, must have an insufferable share of vanity—reject colonel St. Irwin! who, though he is between thirty and forty, half the women of fashion in town would be glad to marry; and Mrs. Doricourt and the earl to encourage her folly! what can the silly girl mean? she would very shortly be a duchess.”

“She will be content to be a countess,” said Mrs. Freakley.

Lady Jacintha frowned, and bit her lip, but not choosing to betray her suspicion to Mrs. Freakley, she asked, with affected indifference—“Does Miss Delmore expect to marry an earl?”

“It is impossible for me,” said Mrs. Freakley, “to tell what Miss Delmore’s expectations may be; but any person, with only half an eye, may see that lord Rushdale pays her all the attention of an accepted lover.”

Lady Jacintha detested Mrs. Freakley, for having discovered what was so evident to herself.

“The earl,” said she, “has desired them to consider each other as brother and sister. Lord Rushdale’s attentions are merely fraternal, depend upon it, Mrs. Freakley; besides, were it otherwise, he would never be suffered to marry so much beneath his rank. To my certain knowledge the countess has views for her son.”

“Yes, and other ladies,” returned Mrs. Freakley, pointedly, “have views upon the heir of Torrington; but we shall see—lord Rushdale will take his own choice, after all. I wish it had fallen upon Jemima Maxfield; they are nearly of an age, and would have made a charming couple.”

“A wealthy couple, you mean, Mrs. Freakley?” said lady Jacintha, spitefully; “for, with your large fortune added to Miss Maxfield’s, they might have a princely establishment, and challenge the kingdom for splendour.”

“Very true,” replied the widow; “but it is quite impossible to tell what will happen. I am not an old woman, you know, lady Jacintha; and it is by no means certain that I shall not marry again, and in that case I may have children of my own to possess my fortune.”

Lady Jacintha was too well-bred to laugh, though she could scarcely restrain her risibility, as she eyed the little rotundity before her, who measured in breadth nearly as much as in height.

“Possibly you may,” returned she; “for this is the age of miracles—witness the surprising conception of Johanna Southcote, and her train of wonders.”

Mrs. Freakley did not hear the whole of this good-natured reply, for lord Wilton, on whom she had bestowed not a few encouraging smiles, begged to know if she would go on the water, as a party was forming for an aquatic excursion.

“I have no objection to make one in this excursion,” said lady Jacintha; “but I am

really fatigued to death with pedestrian exercise. I am not robust enough to be perpetually walking.”

“We are going to see a curious waterfall,” rejoined lord Wilton, “and a rock beneath it, with a surprising echo.”

Lady Jacintha knew Mrs. Freakley never ventured on the water, and merely to plague her, she asked if she should order her bonnet and shawl?

Mrs. Freakley thanked her, but having no curiosity about echoes and waterfalls, she should not hazard her life in a boat.

“How cruel you are to deprive us of your delightful company!” said lady Jacintha; “you will positively expire of ennui, if you remain alone.”

“Mrs. Doricourt, lady Welford, colonel St. Irwin, and the earl of Torrington, have formed a reading party,” rejoined lord Wilton; “perhaps, as Mrs. Freakley dislikes the water, she may find entertainment in listening to the sublimities of Milton.”

Mrs. Freakley would have been much more agreeably entertained, if his lordship had staid at home and played at piquet with her, but, unsuspecting of the widow’s predilection, lord Wilton begged to have the honour of conducting lady Jacintha to the boat.

Mrs. Freakley, rather than remain alone, repaired to the library, where Mrs. Doricourt was reading “*Satan’s Address to the Sun*.” Mrs. Freakley impatiently listened while that passage and “*Eve’s Dream*” were read, and she wondered how any person could read for such a length of time without being fatigued to death. She thought a rubber at whist would be much more amusing, and anxiously wished to see the book laid aside; but though remarks were every now and then made, which suspended the reading, it was again resumed, till no longer able to conceal her weariness, Mrs. Freakley yawned; she took a pinch of the earl’s snuff, but that failed to rouse her, and fearful of incurring the charge of ill manners, by falling asleep, she left the room.

The evening was remarkably fine, and thinking the open air preferable to moping by herself, she threw on her bonnet and shawl, and walked about the lawn, debating within herself, as she was something older than lord Wilton, whether he might not be apprehensive of giving her offence by declaring a passion for her.—“If I could only be assured this is the case,” said Mrs. Freakley, mentally, “I might drop him a hint.”

While the agreeable idea of being still an object of love, and what was equally as pleasant, of obtaining a titled husband, while the coquettish conceited lady Jacintha was without a serious admirer, possessed the fancy of Mrs. Freakley, she strolled into a green lane, at the end of which was a rustic seat, on which she sat down to recover herself; for the walk, and the hope of a second husband, had fluttered and deprived her of breath.

At a little distance, on a road that led across the country, she saw two young-looking countrymen harnessing a horse to a covered cart. Mrs. Freakley was naturally inquisitive, and giving way to her propensity, she asked the men what they had got in their cart, and where they were going?

One of the men replied to her questions in the Cumberland dialect, while the other pulled out a letter, and attentively read it. He then drew nearer Mrs. Freakley, and making many awkward bows, said—“No offence, I hope, but does Miss Delmore ever fetch a walk this way?”

“And why, my good man, do you inquire after Miss Delmore?” asked Mrs. Freakley; “what can you know about Miss Delmore?”

The man laughed.—“I have got a secret to tell her,” said he, “and a bit of paper to give her; and, odds bobs! I have waited hereabout all day, and could not get sight of a petticoat till now; and that is not the worst of it neither, for I don’t know Miss Delmore if I was to see her.”

Mrs. Freakley thought this a glorious opportunity to learn Miss Delmore’s secrets; doubtless there was a lover in the case, and by telling a harmless white lie, she might learn why, and for whom, colonel St. Irwin and Mr. Oxley had been refused.

“My good friend,” said she, simpering at the idea of the hoax she was going to put on the man, “I am Miss Delmore.”

“No, no, that’s a hum, for certain,” said the man.

“I assure you I am Miss Delmore,” returned Mrs. Freakley, “and if you have a letter for me, pray let me have it.”

“Hold a bit there,” said the man; “I has got my lesson all by heart; and we knows, don’t we, Will, what we has got to do first?”

“To do!” repeated Mrs. Freakley, in alarm; “what do you mean? do you intend to rob and murder me?”

The men laughed, and seizing her by the arms, bade her not be scarified, for they were only going to take her to a snug little farmhouse, not far off, where a young handsome lord, or a sir, they could not tell which, wanted to have a bit of private talk with her.

Mrs. Freakley screamed, and struggled, and protested she was not Miss Delmore; but it was to no purpose—the men were strong, and in spite of her screams and resistance, they hoisted her into the cart, which they closely covered down, and instantly set off at a brisk pace; unheeding of Mrs. Freakley’s threats, shrieks, and persuasions, they continued trotting on till they came to a thatched cottage, at the side of the road, at the distance of six miles from Torrington Castle.

On lifting up the covering of the cart, the men found Mrs. Freakley lying breathless with the jolts and jumbling she had received. They carried her into the cottage, at the door of which they met a clean tidy-looking woman, who opposed their leaving the strange-looking body at her house, and bade them go on with her two miles farther, to the Carpenter’s Arms, where she could have accommodation.

The men pushed a dirty folded paper into the woman’s hand, told her to give the young Miss a night’s lodging, and that her sweetheart would be there in the morning, and well pay her for her trouble.

The woman declared she should not remain in her house; she did not want nothing to do with young Misses, nor their sweethearts.

The men laughed, bade her take care of the young Miss, and drove off.

The woman stared at Mrs. Freakley, whose bonnet was nearly the hind part before, and all her dress discomposed.—“Well,” said the woman, almost crying, “I never seed nothing to come up to this in all my born days—to have a mad cretur forced upon one in this manner, as I don’t know who she be, nor where she belongs to. Oh dear! oh dear! how terrificated I be! Oh, I wish as how my Tom was at home!”

Mrs. Freakley having recovered her breath, which was almost shook out of her body, asked the woman, who was still staring at her, what she was brought there for?

"How the pies should I know?" replied the woman; "the men as left you here, whether I would or no, said you was a young Miss, comed here to wait for your sweetheart."

Mrs. Freakley cast her eyes round, and terrified at the lonely situation of the cottage, heartily repented the *white lie* that had brought her into such a scrape.—"I am come here to wait for no gentleman," said she, angrily; "I was brought here by those two villains against my will, and I will have them hanged, if there is law or justice to be had. They forced me into their jumbling cart, which has almost shook me to death."

"You don't say so! Poor cretur! I never heard the like before! against your will to be carried off in that there manner is too bad!" said the woman; "but I hope the rogues did not behave uncivil to you, Miss?"

"Don't Miss me, woman!" replied Mrs. Freakley; "I am no Miss—I am a widow lady, a person of consequence and fortune. I am aunt to sir Middleton Maxfield, who is now on a visit at Torrington Castle, from whence I have been brought. I insist upon it, woman, you find me a messenger to go to the castle directly; and give me pen, ink, and paper, that I may write a note, to inform my friends what has befallen me, and what a miserable hole I am in."

"Well, to be sure, now I looks at you again," said the woman, "I may well believe you be no young Miss, for you seems pretty much in years. But as for ink, and pens, and sitch like, we does not keep none. Well, for sartin, the men must have been cracked, to take an old body like you for a young Miss."

This observation did not conduce to the calming Mrs. Freakley's temper.—"Procure me a messenger to go to Torrington Castle directly, woman," said she, "and don't trouble me with your impertinent remarks."

"There is not a living sould in the house but myself and the two children," replied the woman.

"Do you live here alone?" asked Mrs. Freakley. "Have you no neighbours?"

"Yes, plenty of neighbours," replied the woman, "but they lives at the village, a mile off; and my Tom is gone to fair, and the boy has lamed his leg, and the little wench don't know a step of the way."

"Then you must go yourself to Torrington Castle," said Mrs. Freakley.

"At this time?" returned the woman, "to meet old Whinney's ghaist on the lower common? No, not I. I would not go if you would give me a crownd!"

Mrs. Freakley began to cry and to exclaim—"What an unfortunate gentlewoman I am! If I had only been fond of reading, if I had only taken warning by Eve, I never should have met this cruel misfortune! What will become of me? what shall I do?"

"Why if you don't like to stay here till the morning," said the woman, "you can set off for the castle directly—it is not much more than four miles across the fields."

"I could not walk four miles," replied Mrs. Freakley, "if I should have Torrington Castle for a recompence."

"Well then you must be content to stay where you be till the morning," said the woman; "and, odds pies! here be the bit of paper the man bid me give you."

Mrs. Freakley tore it open, in the hope of discovering by whose contrivance she had been brought to that place, but the note contained only a few words, in a very cramped hand.—“*Make yourself easy, adorable Cecilia, no harm is intended you. To-morrow morning you will see him who lives to obey your will!*”

Mrs. Freakley committed this precious *morceau* to her pocketbook, in the hope that it would lead to the detection of the person who intended carrying off Miss Delmore; and finding that she had no alternative, but that she must remain where she was till the morning, she asked the woman if she could make her a cup of tea?

“Yes, to be sure, I always keeps sage, and balm, and mint, and them sort of herbs?”

“Herbs!” exclaimed Mrs. Freakley; “why, woman, I am not in a fever! I don’t want herb tea.”

“We never use nothing else here,” replied the woman. “I has not got none of that sort like the gentlefolks drinks, as they buys at the shops.”

“What have you got in the house?” asked Mrs. Freakley, in a tone of impatience.

“Why we has got skim-milk, and whey, and butter-milk,” said the woman; “and as you be poorly with jolting in the cart, why you had better have a little drop of the whey warmed with treacle and ginger, and a bit of bread baked brown in it.”

“What a filthy mess!” exclaimed Mrs. Freakley. “Do you want to poison me, woman? Have you nothing in the house fit for a Christian to eat?”

“Ay, by my troth!” returned the woman, “fit for better Christians than you be, as I thinks.”

“Well, well, don’t be affronted,” said Mrs. Freakley, “because I don’t like herb tea and whey with treacle and ginger. You shall lose nothing by being civil.”

“Oh! as to that,” replied the woman, “I ben’t no fool; I knows how to be civil, when folks behaves themselves; but I does not like to hear my whey called filthy stuff and poison, nor no such disparagement; for a very grand gentleman, as pratty a spoken body as can be, his horsen be here at grass, said as how my whey was as good as hecter; and he always axes for some on it when he comes here.”

“What gentleman are you speaking of?” asked Mrs. Freakley; “what is his name?”

“Bless your heart! I never remembers no names,” returned the woman; “but here,” reaching a book from the top of a cuckoo-clock, “here be Tom’s book, where he did set down the name.”

Mrs. Freakley read, with much pleasure, the name of her nephew, expecting, from the circumstance of his horse’s being there at grass, she should be treated with more respect.—“Why, my good woman,” said she, “sir Middleton Maxfield is my nephew.”

“Mayhap so,” replied the woman; “but you ben’t a bit like him; for he is a fresh, comely, good-looking body.”

This commendation of her nephew did not compensate for the slight put upon her own beauty, yet Mrs. Freakley had sense enough to perceive it would answer no purpose to be upon ill terms with her hostess, whom she asked if sir Middleton often came there?

“About once a-week,” was the reply.

Mrs. Freakley was so sore from the jumbling she had received in the cart, that she was glad to take a boiled egg, and accept the good woman’s coarse but clean bed, who, to accommodate her, slept with her children in the cock-loft.

Mrs. Freakley felt quite convinced that her nephew was in love with Miss Delmore, and that he was the person who had contrived to carry her off, though how his agents had made such a blunder she could not imagine.—“At any rate, I am the sufferer for his frolic,” said Mrs. Freakley, grumbling to herself. “My bones are nearly dislocated by jolting in the cart. I think he might have provided a genteeler conveyance for the young lady; and the brutes of fellows have left the prints of their fingers, in black and blue, all over my arms. Well, well, see sir Middleton when I may, I will read him such a lecture as shall make him ashamed of his conduct; for no doubt he designed to ruin Miss Delmore; and though she is not a person of family, she is under the protection of a man of rank, and respect for the earl of Torrington ought to have kept him from such shameful proceedings.”

The strange place and hard bed kept Mrs. Freakley from sleeping; and early in the morning, to her great joy, she heard the voice of sir Middleton’s groom. Having called till she was hoarse, she began rapping with her shoe on the floor, which at length brought up her hostess.—“That is William,” said Mrs. Freakley, “my nephew’s servant, below.”

“Why, to be sartin you be as good as a witch!” replied the woman. “It be he sure enough; and there be a mortal to do about you at the castle. If so be as how you be madam Freckly, some on ‘em thought as you had feld into the fish-pond; and some on em—”

“Well, no matter what they thought,” said Mrs. Freakley. “Tell William to come up stairs to me immediately; I want to convince him that I am alive after all my sufferings.”

“Up here!” replied the woman, with a look of surprise.

“Yes, up here, to be sure,” returned Mrs. Freakley. “What do you stare at? Go and send William up to me directly.”

“Send a man up stairs, and you in bed!” exclaimed the woman; “I would have you to know, for all you be madam Freckly, as I be a decent body, and keeps a house as is not used to no sitch wicked doings.”

Mrs. Freakley laughed.

“Ay, ay,” continued the woman, “I sees you be one of the fine Lunnun madams as is not ashamed of nothing. So then this is the sweetheart as was to come to you in the morning, is it? But I would have you to know as no man comes into my bedroom but my lawful husband, as married me twelve years ago, at our village church; and so if you does not choose to get up, the man is not coming up my stairs, I promise you; though, for the matter of that, I sartinly believe there would not be no harm, seeing as how you be so mortal ugly, and old enough to be the young fellow’s mother.”

The offended delicacy of the hostess made her slam to the door, and hasten to the kitchen, where she told the groom to wait and take his fine Lunnun madam away with him.

The groom replied he could not take Mrs. Freakley with him, for she could neither walk nor sit a horse.

“And yet,” said the woman, “sitch a poor, helpless, ramshackled cretur, with hair on her head as white as my cap, now her fine curled-up wig is off, sends for a man to her bedside! Shame on the naughty body! it would be fitter for her to think about her grave than sitch wickedness.”

The groom laughed heartily, and explained to the woman, who had never been ten miles from her own village, that it was not unusual with great ladies to breakfast in bed, and be waited upon by their footmen. He assured her that Mrs. Freakley was a person of unblemished reputation, and, to a certainty, had no design upon him, who had been brought up in her house from a child.

Mrs. Freakley had not dressed herself for many years, but such was her impatience to quit a place where the mistress was almost a savage, she contrived to huddle on her clothes, and in far less time than she had ever before completed her toilet, she descended to the kitchen, where William waited her commands.

After a tedious detail of her sufferings, and a narrative of the confusion her absence had occasioned at the castle, Mrs. Freakley inquired if there was no sort of carriage to be had to remove her from that wretched hovel, where, among a variety of other evils, the dread of famine was not the least?

To obviate this apprehension, William proposed a bason of milk warm from the cow, and a slice of toasted bread.

As neither chocolate or coffee had ever been seen in that remote place, Mrs. Freakley was necessitated to accept the homely breakfast of bread and milk, without even a cloth to cover the oak table at which she sat.

William, having mounted his horse, rode off to the castle, to give intelligence of Mrs. Freakley's safety, and order a carriage for her removal, leaving her to the amusement of despising and finding fault with every thing she saw till his return.

"I can't think how you contrive to live in this out-of-the-way place," said Mrs. Freakley.

"Why we does not want for nothing," replied the woman. "I has got a good careful husband, and two bonny children."

"But how can you pass your time in this lonesome cottage? that is what amazes me!" said Mrs. Freakley.

"The time goes fast enough," replied the woman; "for I has none to spare. I makes a little butter and cheese, and I fattens a pig or two, and feeds a few ducks and fowl, and I makes and mends all our garments. I finds plenty to do when the days be at the longest."

"But Sunday," said Mrs. Freakley—"don't you find Sunday very long and tedious?"

"No," replied the woman, "we be glad to see Sunday come, for then we goes to church, and hears a good sarmont, and we fetches a walk to the village, or to see my mither, as lives atop of yonden common; and at night Tom reads a good book till bed-time, for Tom's a scholar; and we never finds the day too long for us, for we works hard all the week, and we likes to take our pleasure on Sabbath-day."

Mrs. Freakley mentally exclaimed—"What a Hottentot!" She looked with contempt on the honest industrious creature before her, who cheerfully performed the duties of her humble station, nor thought that, uncontaminated by what the great call pleasures, she would quit the world, and, from the blameless tenor of her life, obtain a place in that kingdom where labour ends in an eternal glorious Sabbath.

For rural pleasures and occupations Mrs. Freakley had no taste, and she almost screamed with joy when she heard the wheels of a carriage, and saw her nephew, sir Cyril Musgrove and lord Wilton.

Sir Middleton was the first to enter the house.—“My dear aunt,” said he, “I am so happy to find you safe.”

“I am much obliged to you, sir Middleton,” replied she; “I dare say you are glad to find me alive, for, no doubt, it would have laid rather heavy on your conscience, had you been the cause of my death.”

“Me the cause of your death!” repeated sir Middleton; “I don’t understand you, madam. No one could shew more anxiety for your safety than I have.”

“Nephew! nephew!” interrupted Mrs. Freakley, “this may be very true, but yet when you saw Miss Delmore safe by your side, you could not help knowing what had become of me; and if you had possessed a grain of feeling, you would have fetched me from this miserable hole, where, after being jolted to a jelly, and stifled in a filthy cart, I have been in danger of starving.”

“Miss Delmore by my side!” repeated sir Middleton; “what am I to understand by that? what connexion is there between Miss Delmore’s safety, and your being jolted and stifled in a cart?”

“Most vile hypocrite! most abominable profligate!” raved Mrs. Freakley, “will you pretend innocence? but I am not to be deceived, sir; I know your fine plot, and though you are my sister’s son, I will expose your wickedness.”

“What the devil do you mean?” said sir Middleton; “are you mad? has the stifling and jolting disturbed your brain?”

“No, sir,” replied Mrs. Freakley, “I am not mad, nor quite a fool; I understand very clearly that you designed to carry off Miss Delmore, but your blundering agents mistook me for her.”

“That was a confounded blunder,” whispered sir Cyril Musgrove to lord Wilton, who, with a face of inflexible gravity, was laughing in his sleeve at the idea of any person mistaking the short fat widow for the blooming sylph-like Cecilia.

“And while you,” resumed Mrs. Freakley, “were enjoying yourself in the midst of luxury, I was tossing on a bed like pebbles.”

“As good a flock-bed as any body would desire to lie on,” said the hostess.

“And as I could get nothing fit to eat,” continued Mrs. Freakley, “I was almost starving.”

“I never heard of nobody starving,” retorted the hostess, “where there was plenty of bread and cheese, and butter, and bacon, and eggs.”

“Insolent woman!” exclaimed Mrs. Freakley, “how dare you talk to your betters?”

“Bettters!” repeated the woman, “I think myself as good as you, since you forces me to tell my mind; and I be sartin my skin looks more wholesomer, for your face be all over patches of red stuff, like the ruddle as I puts on my bricks afore the fireplace there.”

Mrs. Freakley had not seen her face that morning, for the only glass the house afforded was one of about six inches square, that hung beside the cuckoo clock on the kitchen wall, and her rouge having neither been washed off, or renewed, her face was, as the good woman described, “all patches of red stuff;” but the observation adding to Mrs. Freakley’s ill-temper, she furiously ordered the woman to quit her presence.

“Why, be you a-going to pay my rent,” said the woman, “as you orders me to get out on my own house? This is pratty thanks indeed, after giving up my bed to commodate

you, and offering you the best of every thing as I had! but, since it comes to this, I desires you will get out, for a more displeasing grumbling old body I never seed in my born days; you be worsor by half than old Elpsie Mumpy, as nobody could never satisfy, do what they would for her.”

Sir Cyril Musgrove laughed aloud.

Lord Wilton took Mrs. Freakley’s hand, and led her to the carriage, preserving a grave face, and condoling with her on her sufferings, while sir Middleton remained behind to pacify and remunerate the woman for her trouble, who protested she did not care about being paid, and should not have minded the trouble a bit, only the old body was so crabbed, and found sitch fault, and despised every thing in sitch a proud way, gist as if folks was not Christian flesh and blood, as well as she.

When arrived at the castle, the child of nature hung about her aunt’s neck—“Do you know,” said she, “we all thought you had tumbled into the fishpond, and I cried so you can’t think, and, la! all the while you was at that nasty cottage, and lying upon a hard flock-bed. Only think, sir Cyril, how shocking!”

“Yet that was better,” replied he, “than supping with the carp at the bottom of the fishpond.”

“Miss Delmore is under infinite obligations to you, Mrs. Freakley,” said lady Jacintha Fitzosborne, “for bearing the sufferings designed for her.”

“For me!” repeated the astonished Cecilia.

“Yes, for you, Miss Delmore,” said Mrs. Freakley; “I was taken for you, Miss Delmore, as this scrap of paper will prove,” presenting the dirty billet to the earl, who having examined it, said he should carefully preserve it, and would spare no trouble or expence to find out the principal in so daring an outrage.

Lady Jacintha suspected sir Cyril Musgrove, for when sir Middleton Maxfield proposed offering a handsome reward, through the medium of the public papers, for the discovery of the men who had forced his aunt into the cart, he opposed the measure with all his eloquence, and convinced sir Middleton that it would only be a means of exposing Mrs. Freakley to ridicule among all her fashionable friends in town.

Lady Jacintha also recollected certain expressions sir Cyril had let fall, but he laughed so heartily at the mistake that had preserved Miss Delmore, and appeared so earnest in the wish to discover the perpetrator of the outrage, that no one, her ladyship excepted, believed he had the remotest knowledge of the affair.

Mrs. Freakley, like the generality of weak-minded persons, was extremely positive, and considered it a reflection on her understanding to be mistaken; she therefore persisted in accusing her nephew of having exposed her to insults, through his profligate design of carrying off a young lady from her friends.

Every person acquitted sir Middleton, for no one believed he had brains to contrive such a project; but Mrs. Freakley having resolved to take a second husband, seized on this pretence to quarrel with her nephew, and to inform him that no part of her fortune should ever become his.

Sir Middleton Maxfield, though he did not possess superabundance of sense, was a good-hearted young man; he loved his aunt, because she was his mother’s sister, and because her house had been his home, and she had behaved very kindly to him during his

minority; he would have resented any insult offered to her, but for her money he did not care a straw, and he told her so in very plain terms: at her menace of marrying he laughed, and made the breach between them wider, by telling her that no man in his senses would accept her money, if she was to be put into the scale with it.

The count del Montarino was wiser than sir Middleton; he knew the value of money, from being so frequently in want of it; he therefore persuaded Miss Maxfield to be doubly attentive to her aunt at this period of irritation, whose wealth, he observed, should, if possible, be kept in the family.

The earl of Torrington examined his own household, and the servants of his guests, without any light being thrown on the affair, and was compelled to believe them ignorant of the design to carry off Miss Delmore.

Mrs. Doricourt was much more uneasy on Cecilia's account than she chose to express. Lady Torrington's behaviour, much too free and volatile for a matron, rendered her a very unfit person to guide a young inexperienced girl through the dangerous mazes of fashionable life. She knew that the earl intended Cecilia should pass the winter in London, and make her *entrée* on the great world, under the protection of himself and lady Torrington; but even in the country an attempt had been made to carry Cecilia off, and if such an atrocious act took place at Torrington Castle, how many more opportunities would offer for a repetition of the outrage in town, where the countess, taken up with the pursuit of her own pleasures, would become careless and forgetful of the treasure entrusted to her charge!

Mrs. Doricourt was not averse to Cecilia seeing the world, or partaking of its amusements, but she wished her a *chaperon* of graver manners and steadier principles than lady Torrington, who still believing herself beautiful, expected the adoration of the men, and would, she was convinced, detest Cecilia, for being younger and handsomer than herself. Weighty as were these reasons, there was still another of greater moment, that rendered Mrs. Doricourt unwilling that Cecilia should reside with lady Torrington: the elegant sentimental Oscar was an object so fascinating, that even the fraternal character he assumed was insufficient to secure the peace of Cecilia: it appeared prudent to Mrs. Doricourt to put an end to those seductive interviews they mutually sought, in which they read, or sung, or painted together, where similar sentiment and congenial taste were so likely to inspire love.

The preservation of Cecilia's innocence and happiness formed the chief employment of Mrs. Doricourt's thoughts; perfidy and ingratitude had shook her reason, and driven her, in the bloom of youth and beauty, from the world. Cecilia was to her a beam of light, shining on her darkened existence; she was her all of joy in the wide world; and to secure this darling's felicity, to watch over her innocence, Mrs. Doricourt resolved to quit her retirement, to mingle again in the busy scenes of fashionable life. Thus determined, she sought an opportunity of speaking to the earl of Torrington alone: she unreservedly explained to him all her apprehensions, and her intention of taking a house in town.—“A separation from Cecilia would be worse than death to me,” said Mrs. Doricourt; “her voice animates me, her smile sheds on my afflicted heart all the pleasure it is capable of feeling; judge then what a dreary wilderness St. Herbert's Island would be, when Cecilia's presence no longer gladdened its shades. Cecilia is more precious to me than a

daughter; while I live she shall share my affluence, and when I die, all I possess shall be hers.”

The earl was more gratified by this confidence than he thought proper to avow, for he was aware that lady Torrington was too thoughtless a character to secure Cecilia from danger in the vortex of *haut-ton*. On lord Rushdale the earl assured Mrs. Doricourt he should lay no restraint, and if Cecilia proved to be the choice of his heart, her humble birth should with him form no objection.—“As yet,” said the earl, “they are too young to marry; let us, madam, leave this affair to Heaven, without dropping a hint to the young people that we have ever spoken on the subject.”

Mrs. Doricourt acquiesced in the earl’s opinion, that it was best to preserve inviolable silence, being convinced that Cecilia would have no concealments from her, should she love lord Rushdale, and that she was too noble-minded to accept his hand unless her heart preferred him beyond all other of his sex.

CHAPTER II.

I call'd her fickle, for I thought her so;
Swore she was vain as any of her sex.
Gods! that such baubles should create us woe,
Should man's superior intellect perplex!
Thus did I rave; for she is pure as light,
Gentle as truth, and innocent as fair:
Grant me her smile to make my moments bright;
Nought else beneath the sky is worth my care! Z.

*Surmises—A Robbery—An Elopement—Disap-
pointments and Miseries of a Woman of Rank.*

A RAINY morning confining the party at Torrington Castle to seek amusement within doors, the countess chose to affect indisposition, and having displayed her person for some time, in a listless lounging attitude, she observed, that of all weather incidental to this dull, variable, and disagreeable climate, she detested rain most, it so distressed her nerves.

“It is extremely dull,” said lady Jacintha, who was amusing herself with opening and shutting a parasol; “we really want some delightful adventure to create a bustle, and put us in spirits.”

“What do you think of a wedding, cousin?” lisped lady Eglantine, casting a languishing look towards lord Melvil, who was winding thread on an ivory shuttle for her ladyship's tatting.

“A wedding!” exclaimed lady Jacintha; “sickening! I always make it a point to decline an invitation to a wedding; it is worse than a dose of ipecacuanha to be in attendance on these occasions.”

“La! do you think so?” asked Miss Maxfield; “I wish somebody would invite me to their wedding. I should like to be a bridesmaid above all things.”

“Except being the bride,” said sir Cyril Musgrove; “come, confess, Miss Maxfield, you would like that better.”

“Confess!” repeated she, “why, you are not a Catholic priest, sir Cyril, are you?”

“No, but 'pon honour,” replied he, “I envy those sly fellows, they have such opportunities and such influence with women.”

“But remember,” said lady Eglantine, “they are not permitted to marry.”

“La, what a shame!” observed Miss Maxfield.

“I shall be at lady Leonora Sedley's marriage early in January,” said lady Eglantine. “I am certain it will be delightful, lord Tempest is so fond of lady Leonora.”

“When persons are joined together by mutual concurrence,” resumed lady Torrington, “it is at best but a dull stupid affair, while a runaway match always occasions confusion, and is sure to put the contending parties in high spirits.”

“For my part,” said Mrs. Freakley, “I don't at all approve of runaway matches.”

“Nor of being runaway with?” asked Drawley.

“Pray don’t mention it,” replied Mrs. Freakley; “I have had a pretty good specimen of that pleasure, and shall take care to avoid a repetition of such adventures, by never walking out alone.”

“I think Miss Delmore ought to be careful of walking out alone,” rejoined the countess; “though it strikes me, if she had been carried off, her usage would have been kind and merciful. She would only have had to complain of confinement in a neat snug parsonage-house.”

“Does your ladyship then suspect Mr. Oxley of being the hero of the late adventure?” asked Mr. Drawley.

“Indubitably,” replied the countess; “my suspicion never glanced upon any one else, and, if I do his reverence wrong, I trust, that, out of his abundant charity, he will pardon me.”

The earl and lord Rushdale entered as lady Torrington was speaking, and lord Rushdale, from a principle of generosity, replied—“I am certain, madam, you do Mr. Oxley injustice, by imputing to him this villanous transaction.”

“Bless me, lord Rushdale!” returned the countess, “how decidedly you take upon you to exculpate Mr. Oxley! Pray, have you the honour to be his *é secretis*, that you are so perfectly informed in his affairs?”

“Without being quite so deep in his confidence,” replied lord Rushdale, with a good-natured smile, “I have reasons which I should suppose might be equally obvious to your ladyship, that compel me to acquit Mr. Oxley of any share in this outrage.”

“Positively,” resumed the countess, “with respect to these obvious reasons, I must confess my incorrigible *bêtise*; but I remember Mr. Oxley did me the superlative honour to make me the confidant of his *flamme amoureuse* for Miss Delmore, and I suspect that desperation might have set him upon this *ruse*, as his fair enslaver was inexorable to his tender suit, and scornfully rejected his overtures.”

“I am entirely of Oscar’s opinion,” said the earl of Torrington; “Mr. Oxley, depend upon it, has nothing to do with this villanous business: he is of too cool a temperament—too cautious a nature—to risk his fair character by an act of violence which must have been discovered.”

“But doubtless,” replied the countess, “knowing how immense a favourite the young lady is with your lordship, the reverend gentleman’s intention was to make *l’amende honorable*.”

“You are possessed with the spirit of contradiction this morning,” said the earl; “Mr. Oxley would not—dared not commit an outrage that he was certain would destroy his present and future advancement in life, for he well knows that any insult, offered directly or indirectly to Miss Delmore, would make me his irreconcilable enemy: and now, madam, let me request you to let the matter rest, till some fortunate chance reveals the villain; for villain he must be who would seek to possess himself of the person of a female by stratagem or force.”

The countess put up her lip, but as she wanted money for her intended fete, she did not think it prudent to irritate her lord.

The entrance of the count del Montarino turned the conversation, and the countess forgot her indisposition and weak nerves, while listening in rapture to his plan for decorating the castle and grounds for the *fête champêtre*. Such an entertainment had never been heard of in Cumberland, and to introduce a novelty was gratifying in the extreme to the vain lady Torrington, who wished to be considered the goddess of fashion and elegance, and who thought nothing of expending thousands on her whims: expense was beneath her consideration when her object was to rival, astonish, and eclipse; though to suffering merit, to aged affliction, or houseless poverty, lady Torrington was unfeeling and parsimonious; her charity was ostentation; what she gave was to obtain the praise of the world, for the pleasure of seeing her name enrolled among beings heartless as herself, not for the pure delight of fulfilling the divine command that says—“*Give of thy abundance to the poor.*”

The count del Montarino proposed illuminating the chesnut avenue, the lawn and shrubberies, with variegated lamps, and to erect in the park a light Corinthian temple to Fortune.

“The temple must be entirely open,” said lord Melvil, “for you know there are various entrances to the shrine of Fortune.”

“Very true,” rejoined lady Jacintha, “there are many ways to make a fortune; sometimes,” added she, significantly, “men constrain Cupid to introduce them to Plutus.”

“No matter for the means,” said lord Wilmot, “so the money is made.”

“La!” observed Miss Maxfield, “I have seen a man sweeping the crossings to the streets in London, and they told me he was so rich you can’t think.”

“And that,” said Drawley, “is not the only dirty means of making money.”

“Well, let the grovelling wretches sweep and toil to make it,” returned lady Torrington, “I know how to spend it; but let us speak about the temple; Rushdale, we will trouble you to draw us a plan.”

“This temple,” resumed the count, “must contain a statue of the goddess Fortune.”

“Why a statue?” asked the countess; “would not the effect be more striking to have a person in an appropriate dress preside in the temple?”

“Your idea is perfectly correct,” replied the obsequious Montarino; “doubtless a living goddess will be infinitely more effective; but in the place of her usual appendage, a purse, she must present to her votaries a splendid antique casket, containing elegant *bijoux*, the prizes of a certain number of female archers, whose unerring arrows shall bring down a golden key from the centre of an ornamented arch, erected in view of the temple.”

“What a delightful thought!” exclaimed the countess.

“Charming!” lisped lady Eglantine; “I will write immediately to town for appropriate costume—a green velvet robe, and buskins à la Diane.”

“And I will instantly set about practising to shoot with a bow,” said lady Jacintha.

“La, and so will I!” said Miss Maxfield: “dear, I should be so pleased to bring down the gold key you can’t think! What trinkets will be locked up in the casket, lady Torrington!”

“I have not thought of the matter,” returned the countess; “whatever the count thinks proper; I leave all these arrangements entirely to his taste.”

The count bowed, declared himself honoured, and informed Miss Maxfield that the prizes must not be known till won.

“La! well, it does not signify to me, I am certain,” said Miss Maxfield, “for, perhaps, I may not bring down the gold key; for I am always so unlucky at cards you can’t think. I lost every time I played last winter, though I am sure it was not all fair play, for everybody said the honourable Miss Plume cheated, and lady Aimwell laughed, and said, that as I lost at cards, I should be fortunate in a husband.”

“And that consoled you for being cheated out of your money?” asked lord Melvil.

“To be sure it did,” replied Miss Maxfield.

“But if lady Aimwell’s prophecy should be false, what then is to console you for losing your money?” asked lord Melvil.

“La! you only ask me that to tease me,” replied Miss Maxfield. “Lady Aimwell ought to know something about such things, for she has had three husbands.”

“How vastly indelicate,” lisped lady Eglantine, “to marry more than once!”

“What an unconscionable creature!” exclaimed lady Jacintha. “Mercy on us! three husbands! In my opinion, no woman ought to be allowed to marry more than once.”

“There certainly would be a greater chance for your ladyship,” said Mrs. Freakley, “if such a regulation could be brought about; and indeed I don’t at all wonder that you disapprove second marriages, who have remained so long single.”

“I am not yet weary of my liberty, madam,” replied lady Jacintha. “There are fools, fops, and fortune-hunters enough to be had, but these do not happen to suit my taste. I flatter myself with possessing refinement, and the man on whom I bestow my hand, must possess qualifications of no common stamp.”

The countess smiled disdainfully, for she knew to whom the wishes of lady Jacintha pointed, and to whose uncommon qualifications she alluded.—“Clouds and rain in the country,” said she, “are intolerable. Thank Heaven the sun shines!—Who will drive me to Keswick?”

Mr. Drawley immediately offered his services, and was, with a gracious smile, accepted.

The earl made one of the party; but lord Rushdale excused himself, on the pretence of having letters to write, but, in reality, to take a solitary walk, and muse over the altered behaviour of Cecilia, who, with Mrs. Doricourt, lady Welford, and colonel St. Irwin, were gone on a visit of charity.

The manner of Cecilia to lord Rushdale was indeed reserved and constrained; the artful communication of lady Jacintha had impressed itself painfully on her mind; the idea that his heart was bestowed, his hand engaged, never for a moment quitted her memory. She now considered him in the light of a married man, and feared to indulge herself in listening to him, lest she should feel a pleasure in his conversation that might destroy her peace, and outrage propriety. Oscar was engaged; delicacy bade her shun him, before his honour, or her own happiness, became endangered. She now constantly seated herself between lady Welford and Mrs. Doricourt. He could no longer approach her, and when he addressed a question to her, she replied without looking at him.

This conduct, new as strange, gave the generous Rushdale much uneasiness. Cecilia no longer smiled on him, and when he proposed renewing their reading or painting studies, she was particularly engaged; when he mentioned music, she had a cold, was hoarse, and could not sing.

At first these excuses passed, but when he saw her seated beside Mrs. Doricourt, employed with her pencil, and heard her, at the request of the earl, sing with her usual expression and brilliancy, he felt offended, and mentally accused her of caprice and inconsistency.—“Even the beautiful Cecilia,” said he, “whom I thought so artless, she is far from perfect; she has the fickle spirit of her sex. At first my attentions seemed to give her pleasure; our tastes, our pursuits, were congenial, but wearied with sameness, she has found some more interesting friend, some more agreeable companion.”

Lord Rushdale was jealous, though he knew not of whom. Cecilia had refused colonel St. Irwin and Mr. Oxley; but these lovers were advanced in the “*vale of years*.” They were not suited to her inclination. Perhaps she had made choice of sir Cyril Musgrove; he had spoken in rapturous terms of her beauty and accomplishments. Was it possible that the timid, modest Cecilia could receive pleasure from the profligate flattery of a professed libertine—a coxcomb who idolized under heaven nothing so much as himself, who never would have thought her worthy of a second glance of his, had he not found she was universally admired, and, in the language of *haut-ton*, was likely to be the fashion the ensuing winter?—“But be it so,” said Oscar, sighing, “Cecilia shall never know how much her conduct pains me; she shall ever find me the sincerest of her friends.”

Mrs. Doricourt remarked the reserve of Cecilia, and approved it. If lord Rushdale was seriously attached to her, such conduct would increase his passion; but if unfortunately the love was only felt by Cecilia, it was praiseworthy in her to deprive herself of moments of pleasure, that were to be succeeded by years of sorrow; it was a proof of nobleness of mind, to endeavour at subduing an ill-placed affection; but though lord Rushdale uttered no complaint, asked no explanation of this unaccountable change, yet his eyes mournfully reproached her; and Cecilia was compelled to keep a strict guard upon her feelings, to prevent relapsing into her former confidential habits.

The earl of Torrington had presented Miss Delmore with a beautiful horse, and having overcome her timidity, she could now enjoy the rides that were frequently made to the lakes, and about the country.

Lady Jacintha Fitzosborne piqued herself upon sitting and managing a horse gracefully; and it gave her no small vexation to see Miss Delmore, in a few days, as much at ease as herself, and looking more blooming than ever, from equestrian exercise.

Lady Jacintha perceived that lord Rushdale’s attentions to Cecilia were not as unremitting as they had been, but his eyes still followed her; and though in one of their rides she had fixed him to her side, and with all the wit and vivacity she could assume, kept him engaged in conversation, still she found Miss Delmore was the object that fixed his regard, for he spoke of the elegance of her figure, and the grace with which she sat her horse.

These observations were daggers to her envious bosom, and she determined to be revenged for the slight and mortification this low-born girl occasioned her. Suddenly crossing the road, lady Jacintha let fall a white cambric handkerchief, which she dextrously caught on her whip before it reached the ground.

This manoeuvre answered her malicious design—it startled Cecilia’s horse, and he set off at full gallop towards a turning of the road that led to a deep stone-quarry.

Cecilia's life was now in imminent danger; to pursue would but increase the speed of the terrified animal. Lord Rushdale waited not an instant to deliberate; his horse, quick as thought, cleared a high hedge; with the velocity of an arrow, he dashed over an impending gate, in the hope of preserving Cecilia from the horrible fate that menaced her with destruction.

Lord Rushdale was now before the dreaded quarry: Cecilia's horse was also there, trembling on the extreme edge of the tremendous gulph; but the lovely object of Rushdale's anxiety was nowhere to be seen. He cast a shuddering glance down the pit, expecting to behold her beautiful form mutilated and bleeding at its bottom, and never did more grateful thanksgiving arise from a devoted heart, than breathed from the lips of Oscar, when he found she had escaped that dreadful plunge. Again he set forward, and to his unutterable joy, found Cecilia safe and unhurt, but pale, faint, and trembling, on a high bank that overhung the narrow road, where, with admirable presence of mind, she had thrown herself from the back of the terrified horse.

In the fulness of his joy, Oscar pressed a thousand kisses on her hands, while she, overcome by the recollection of her narrow escape, wept on his bosom.

"Cecilia, my adored, my own Cecilia!" said the agitated Rushdale, "I feared you were lost to me for ever. Never will this dreadful morning be effaced from my memory."

Cecilia was unable to speak; but her heart felt, and her tears evinced, her gratitude for his tender solicitude.

Lord Rushdale's groom had by this time caught Cecilia's horse, and the rest of the party had arrived to witness and congratulate Miss Delmore on her miraculous escape; but though unhurt by the accident, Cecilia was too much agitated to ride, nor would lord Rushdale hear of it.

While debating what was to be done, sir Cyril Musgrove proposed, that some of the party should directly proceed to the castle, and dispatch a carriage, while the rest remained with Miss Delmore.

Lady Jacintha now repented her revengeful project, as it only had given Cecilia a new triumph, in the certainty that to preserve her life lord Rushdale had risked his own.

Lady Eglantine protested, that apprehension for the life of Miss Delmore had made her quite ill, and that she would proceed to the castle, for she was too much affected to be of any service to Miss Delmore.

Lady Jacintha was extremely sorry to leave Miss Delmore, but her cousin being too ill to remain, must be her apology.

"La! it is very ill-natured and unfeeling of you both to go away!" said Miss Maxfield. "You neither of you look ill at all, and see how pale Miss Delmore is, and how she trembles. I am sure I am so frightened you can't think; but I will stay with her for all that."

Cecilia pressed Miss Maxfield's hand, who seated herself beside her on the bank.

Lady Jacintha coldly wished Miss Delmore better, and lady Eglantine said she would send a smelling-bottle, if she reached the castle before the carriage set off.

Cecilia having wept, became more composed, and hoped that no one would inform Mrs. Doricourt of the danger she had been in.

Sir Middleton Maxfield asked lord Rushdale what he would take for his horse; and

by praising the extraordinary leaps he had taken, informed Cecilia of the imminent hazard lord Rushdale had put his own life in, by the endeavour to save hers.

Lord Rushdale replied, before that morning, he had never known the animal's great capabilities, but having discovered them, he would not part with him for any sum of money that would be offered.

Cecilia's eyes, eloquent with gratitude, met those of Rushdale, and that glance of soul repaid him for all the uneasiness she had made him endure.

Lady Jacintha and her party met one of the earl's carriages, but it past them so rapidly, that they could not see who was hastening to the relief of Miss Delmore; but when they reached the castle, they found that lord Torrington had gone alone, strictly charging the domestics not to inform Mrs. Doricourt that Miss Delmore had met an accident; but lady Eglantine chose to have hysterics, now she had a couch to throw herself upon, for she made it a rule never to have a fit but when she could display her person to advantage, and secure the attention of two or three gentlemen.

By the confusion this farce occasioned, Mrs. Doricourt became acquainted with what had happened, and her distress and apprehension for Cecilia occasioned her to faint in reality.

The noise, and hurrying backwards and forwards through the gallery, disturbed the countess of Torrington, who had not yet left her dressing-room; and, not a little displeased, she sent Smithson to inquire what uncommon event had taken place, to cause such a disagreeable bustle among the servants?

Mrs. Smithson quickly returned, with an account that Miss Delmore had been thrown from her horse, and fractured her skull, that sir Middleton Maxfield had broke a leg and an arm in trying to stop Miss Delmore's horse, that lady Eglantine Sydney was in convulsion fits, and Mrs. Doricourt had been carried to her chamber dying.

"Mercy on me, Smithson!" said lady Torrington, "what is to be done with all these people? Why the castle will absolutely be turned into an hospital for sick and wounded. I wish, with all my soul, Mrs. Doricourt had remained herself, and kept this girl, this Miss Delmore, who is always causing trouble, at her own Hermitage. They have chosen a very awkward time indeed for their accidents and their fits, just as if they did it on purpose to tease and torment one. I certainly hear a carriage. Do, for goodness sake, Smithson, look out, and see what is coming next! my *fête champêtre* and masquerade will be totally ruined. I think no person breathing meets with such disagreeable people, and such provoking disappointments, as I do."

Mrs. Smithson looked from the balcony, as she was desired.—"Well, to be sure, I never saw the like of this since I came into the world," exclaimed she.

"Well, let me hear," said the countess, eagerly. "Do pray, Smithson, be quick, and put me out of this painful suspense! What has happened? Don't be afraid to tell me. Is lord Torrington killed?"

"Dear me, my lady, no," replied Smithson; "but only think what an abominable story-teller Clinton is. What a pack of stuff he told me about fractured skulls, and broken arms and legs! and I declare, my lady, there is sir Middleton Maxfield walking about as well as ever he did, and Miss Delmore leaning on the earl's arm, looking a little palish, to be sure, but none the worse, as I see, for her fall."

“I breathe again,” said the countess. “I am quite happy to learn I am not to be troubled with sick or wounded; not that I care a straw about the girl, only I know lord Torrington would have insisted on my putting off my entertainments, if any thing had happened to her, and that would have been a most mortifying disappointment. As to lady Eglantine’s fits, I dare swear they are not dangerous, nothing more than affectation.”

A tap at the door silenced lady Torrington, and announced a visitor—it was lord Rushdale. Giving his mother credit for feelings she did not possess, he came to relieve the fear he supposed she would entertain on his account, by assuring her, in person, of his safety.

“Oh, it is only lord Rushdale; you may finish my hair, Smithson,” said the countess. “I suppose your lordship comes to treat me with a page from the Chapter of Accidents? but you may spare yourself the fatigue. I have heard it all.”

The heart of Rushdale felt an uneasy pang, and his cheek glowed with displeasure, as, with the utmost *sang froid*, the countess turned to her mirror, to complete the arrangement of her hair.

“Upon my word, lord Rushdale,” resumed she, “this Miss Delmore is quite a heroine, the princess of doleful adventures, and seems fated to keep us in a state of alarm.”

“Your ladyship does not appear to suffer much from alarm,” replied lord Rushdale, rather indignantly. “Miss Delmore, thank Heaven! has received no serious injury; and for myself, if I had lost my life in the attempt to save hers, I believe you would have received the intelligence with stoical firmness.”

“You pay my fortitude a great compliment,” said lady Torrington. “In that firmness I should have resembled your favourite Spartan and Roman matrons; but, for pity’s sake! don’t look so doleful. You know I mortally detest dismal. No injury having happened to any person, what do you expect me to lament and be melancholy about?”

“Mrs. Doricourt is very ill, madam,” replied Oscar; “and lady Eglantine Sydney is—”

“Having a fit or two of her own,” interrupted the countess. “*N’importe*: when she has fatigued herself with affecting to laugh and cry, she will recover, take my word for it.”

“I see,” resumed lord Rushdale, “it is impossible to interest your feelings; but surely, madam, politeness to your guests demands that you should pay them the compliment of an inquiry, after their late fearful shock, particularly Miss Delmore, who—”

“I entreat, lord Rushdale,” said the countess, not allowing him to proceed, “I entreat you will not designate your father’s housekeeper’s relation my guest. I never invited her to the castle. I never—”

“But Mrs. Doricourt, madam,” said lord Rushdale, interrupting her, “Mrs. Doricourt you did invite; she is your guest; and if Miss Delmore, lovely and amiable as she is, has failed to conciliate your esteem, respect to Mrs. Doricourt, who considers Miss Delmore her daughter, demands that you should inquire how she is after her accident.”

“I am really under an infinitude of obligation to you, lord Rushdale,” replied the countess, with a low courtsey, “for taking the trouble to instruct me how to conduct myself with good manners in my own house, and in the proper respect I ought to pay my guests. Be assured, I will not forget you have condescended to give me a lesson on politeness; but though,” continued she, ironically, “I must, of course, admire and applaud the knight-errantry, the chivalric bravery, with which you put your own life in peril to

preserve that of the peerless lady of your heart, I greatly apprehend your right noble and illustrious neck has been endangered in vain, and that your romance will not terminate, in the usual way of romances, with the marriage of the hero and heroine.”

Lord Rushdale moved towards the door.—“Be assured, madam,” said he, “I glory in what you are pleased to term my knight-errantry, though I am persuaded a perfect stranger, seeing a female in danger, would have evinced equal bravery; and in whatever way my romance may end, I shall consider him the happiest of mortals who obtains the hand of the peerless Cecilia Delmore.”

“So, so! vastly noble and sublime!” exclaimed the countess, as the door closed on lord Rushdale’s departure. “The silly boy is actually in love with this chit, this minx! Lord Torrington, with his charity, and humanity, and fine feelings, has effected a glorious business; but never shall a son of mine degrade himself by marrying Cecilia Delmore.” With this resolution the countess smoothed her brow, and descended to the drawing-room, to inquire after the sick and convalescent.

Mrs. Doricourt’s joy was extreme when she received into her arms the child of her affection, safe and unhurt; but Cecilia’s cheek was pale, and her nerves trembling, and she yielded to the advice of her friends, and retired, to endeavour, by sleep, to regain composure; but it was long before the tumult of her thoughts allowed her the repose necessary to her restoration, though it was rapture to her heart to remember that, if betrothed to another, Rushdale was her *friend*—that he had even risked his valuable life in a noble effort to preserve her from the terrific death at which her recollection shuddered.

Lady Eglantine Sydney, as the countess predicted, soon recovered from her fits, in which she remained something longer than agreeable, out of compliment to lord Melvil, whom she had heard say, that timidity, gentleness, and compassion, made a lovely woman appear more lovely. In conformity to this opinion, she determined to continue the amiable, and before she changed her dress, went to pay a visit to Cecilia in her chamber, who happily escaped her affected commiseration and condolence by being asleep.

At dinner neither Mrs. Doricourt nor Miss Delmore appeared, and in spite of lady Jacintha’s exuberant spirits, and Drawley’s drolleries, every person at table seemed sensible of their absence.

“That horse of Miss Delmore’s appeared a very gentle animal,” said sir Cyril Musgrove; “I have no idea what startled it.”

“La! don’t you know, sir Cyril,” replied Miss Maxfield, “that it was lady Jacintha’s white handkerchief, which she let fall and caught again upon her whip? When I saw Miss Delmore’s horse rear up, and gallop off, I was so frightened you can’t think.”

The countess, casting a suspicious glance on lady Jacintha, said—“If lord Rushdale had lost his life, I should never have endured the display of a white handkerchief on any occasion.”

“Miss Delmore’s life,” observed the earl of Torrington, “was equally valuable with lord Rushdale’s. I sincerely thank Heaven they are both preserved; and I confess I glory in the humanity and courage of my son.”

The countess frowned, and tried to change the subject; but Miss Maxfield would continue it.—“Dear,” said she, “when Miss Delmore’s head lay on lord Rushdale’s

shoulder, she looked so beautiful you can't think. I don't know which of their faces was the palest; and Miss Delmore's long hair hung over lord Rushdale's arm, and the tears ran down her cheeks, for all her eyes were shut; and I was so sorry to see her I cried too."

"Yes," replied lord Rushdale, "yes, Miss Maxfield, you did evince concern and humanity, for you remained with Miss Delmore, who must otherwise have been without the assistance of any but gentlemen in her distressing situation."

"For my part," returned lady Eglantine, in a languid tone, "my nerves are so excessively weak, that I had occasion for assistance myself."

"And I could not possibly let my cousin, who was so unwell, return alone," said lady Jacintha.

"A truce with these unnecessary excuses," rejoined the countess, "and introduce another subject, for I am absolutely *ennuyée* of hearing of startled palfreys, and fainting damsels, with pale cheeks and dishevelled hair. Do you think, count, that all will be in readiness by the seventeenth of the next month for the masquerade?"

"Without doubt," replied the count. "The artists are to be here to-morrow. Flowers for the Turkish garden will be down in a few days; and the dresses can be sent for. I really see nothing to prevent all being complete by the time your ladyship has appointed."

"What dress will you wear, lady Eglantine, at the masquerade?" asked Miss Maxfield.

"I really have not fixed upon any," replied lady Eglantine; "but I think a sultana, or a Circassian slave."

"*Her eyes blue languish, and her golden hair*'—very appropriate, 'pon my honour," said sir Cyril Musgrove. "Be a Circassian by all means, lady Eglantine."

"I intend to be a nun," rejoined Miss Maxfield.

"A nun!" repeated Drawley; "I pray you, saintly maid, when you do count your beads, offer a prayer for me!"

"La! what nonsense you talk, Mr. Drawley! I don't mean to be a nun in earnest," said Miss Maxfield; "but I have heard one of my schoolfellows read in a book about a young lady being forced into a nunnery, and going through such a deal of trouble, and then her lover ran away with her. La! it was so pretty you can't think."

"The running away part you mean?" returned Drawley; "but remember, Miss Maxfield, what I told you."

"Dear, how you tease one, Mr. Drawley!" said Miss Maxfield; "just as if you was sure that I was going to run away."

"You run away, Jemima! Heaven forbid, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Freakley. "I hope you will have more discretion."

"Yes, but an elopement is so charming," said lady Jacintha; "for if relations or guardians pursue, it gives the lover a delightful opportunity to display his courage, and the lady to prove the strength of her attachment."

"If my sister was such a fool as to run away," replied sir Middleton, "I would never take the trouble to run after her."

"La! that is very cross indeed, Middleton," said Miss Maxfield; "for I should expect you to be in a terrible great passion, and to try to force me away from my lover."

"I should certainly leave all that trouble to the lord chancellor," replied sir Middleton.

“I would not ride half a mile after you.”

“Dear, how ill-natured!” returned Miss Maxfield. “I declare I feel so vexed you can’t think.”

“Why sure, Jemima, you are not going to be so silly as to cry?” said Mrs. Freakley. “I protest this has a very serious look! Do you really intend to elope, child?”

“What a ridiculous question!” returned sir Middleton. “She has no such intention: she is thinking of the nun in the book.”

“I hate those novels and romances,” said Mrs. Freakley, “they fill the heads of young people with such a pack of foolish notions and schemes. I never read a book of any sort in all my life, and if Jemima will follow my advice, she will let such trumpery alone.”

Cecilia awoke seriously indisposed, and, at Mrs. Doricourt’s desire, a physician was sent for from Keswick, who recommended bleeding, and that the young lady should be kept perfectly tranquil, as he apprehended fever.

This report occasioned no little alarm to lady Torrington, who, in her solicitude for self-preservation, would have requested Cecilia’s removal from the castle, had she not been assured by the physician that Miss Delmore’s fever would not be catching. She therefore contented herself with ordering strong fumigations, and with sending to express the regrets she did not feel, secretly rejoicing that Mrs. Doricourt’s tenderness and compassion confined her to the invalid’s chamber, and delivered her, for the present, from the presence of a person whose dignified manner awed her, and whose reproving glance put an irksome restraint on her levity.

Lady Jacintha, far from repenting having caused Miss Delmore’s indisposition, now hoped that fever might carry her off, for she was convinced that the heart of Rushdale was devoted to Cecilia, and she hated her, with all the malice of jealous rivalry.

Far from being sensible to lady Jacintha’s blandishments, or grateful for the partiality she took no pains to conceal, Oscar did his best to avoid conversing with her at all; but when compelled to reply to her questions, his answers were monosyllables, or made in the fewest words possible.

Lord Rushdale had never admired the person or wit of lady Jacintha, but the knowledge that through her, who expressed no sort of concern, the accident had occurred that might yet cost Cecilia her life, made her an object of abhorrence to him; and he continually invented excuses to avoid singing, reading, or walking, with her.

Meantime lady Jacintha found the hope of attaching him grow every hour weaker. The countess too, since the night of the fire, had treated her with disdainful slight; but at present it was not convenient to her to remove, for she had just then no dear friend to visit, and her finances were not equal to the expence of a bathing-place. She was therefore obliged to conceal the torments of hatred, jealousy, and disappointment, and to smile, while she rankled with envy and spite.

Nor was the bosom of Rushdale much more at ease; his adored Cecilia was ill, might never recover, and if restored to health, he had the misery to know that he should possess her gratitude, her cold esteem, while the love he would give worlds to obtain would be bestowed on sir Cyril Musgrove, a fop, a coxcomb, incapable of feeling her worth, of appreciating her affection.

The dejection so visibly impressed on the countenance of Oscar exposed him to the

censure of his mother, and the illiberal sarcasms of lady Jacintha, who seized every occasion to ridicule the attainments of Mrs. Doricourt, and condemn her manner of educating Miss Delmore, “who, if she had been brought up according to her rank in life,” said lady Jacintha, “would no doubt have made a good milliner or dressmaker; but now, poor girl! with all her wonderful accomplishments, she will, I fear, remain a tedious time on hand, as very few gentlemen will choose to take a wife from the lower order of the people.”

“True,” replied Mrs. Freakley; “family is certainly a great object, when a gentleman takes a wife.”

“Yes, yes,” said sir Middleton Maxfield, “when a man makes up his mind to marry, high blood is of consequence; but they say, as an equivalent for family, the *‘Lady of the Lake’* will come down handsomely with her thousands.”

“Your information, sir Middleton, is rather incorrect,” replied lady Jacintha, “for I know, to a certainty, that all Mrs. Doricourt’s property is secured, and will devolve, after her death, to a nephew of her late husband’s.”

“Poor Miss Delmore!” said sir Middleton, “what will become of her, if the *‘Lady of the Lake’* should take it into her head to die?”

“She must go upon the stage,” replied lady Jacintha.

“No, no, that will never do for Miss Delmore,” said sir Middleton; “she is too reserved, too timid.”

“Her bashfulness will never stand in the way of her success,” returned lady Jacintha; “and really, when we consider how very fortunate the actresses of late have been, it would be no bad speculation for Miss Delmore, with her accomplishments.”

Lady Jacintha took care to say this when neither the earl of Torrington or his son were present. The countess, she knew, had not taken the trouble to inquire into Mrs. Doricourt’s affairs, and could not contradict her assertion respecting the disposal of her fortune.

Mrs. Freakley observed, that Mrs. Doricourt might outlive Miss Delmore, for she was yet but a young woman.

“Of about fifty, I suppose,” said lady Torrington.

“Not so much as that, certainly,” replied sir Cyril Musgrove; “but let her age be what it will, the *‘Lady of the Lake’* is a devilish handsome woman, ‘pon my honour!”

“She has a very odd look with her eyes,” lisped lady Eglantine.

“Her eyes are remarkably beautiful,” said lord Wilton.

Mrs. Freakley raised her eyebrows, and wondered he could think so.

“I wish she had remained, beauty and all, on her enchanted island,” said lady Torrington, “and had kept the paragon of perfection, Miss Delmore, with her; for they have absolutely deranged my plans of amusement, with their formal objections and their romantic adventures; and if I was at all inclined to encourage that *‘green-eyed monster,’* jealousy, which, thank Heaven! I am not, I might fancy my lord and husband paid too much devotion to this constellation of charms and fascinations, this *‘Lady of the Lake,’* while Rushdale, I blush for his degeneracy, seems influenced by his father’s example of folly, and worships the peerless Cecilia; but Rushdale will get over this boyish flame. I have views for him, which shall defeat all the artful snares spread to entrap him.”

As she spoke she looked full at lady Jacintha, who, nothing disconcerted, turned to sir Middleton Maxfield, and asked if he was afraid of being entrapped by the wiles of artful woman?

“None have ever yet thought me worth spreading a snare for,” replied sir Middleton, not aware that lady Jacintha’s question was a wile to throw him off his guard, and render him unsuspecting of the design she was forming in her own crafty mind.

Sir Middleton Maxfield had estates to the amount of sixteen thousand pounds a-year, and his godmother, a very old woman, had promised to make him heir to seven thousand a-year more. If lord Rushdale could not be brought to offer her his hand, lady Jacintha thought that sir Middleton Maxfield would be no bad match for her. Sir Middleton’s person was very tolerable, and for his wit, he had quite sufficient for a husband, particularly for her, who never intended the man she married should have an opinion of his own. Sir Middleton had a good voice: lady Jacintha invited him to sing duets with her. She pronounced his style superior to Braham’s. She condescended to flatter Mrs. Freakley; took the arm of Miss Maxfield when they walked; and by persevering in shewing a marked attention to sir Middleton, she at last persuaded him to believe that he was in love with her.

Lord Wilton, who had taken the hints of Mrs. Freakley, was debating whether he should tie himself to a little fat talkative woman, for the sake of her money, when lady Jacintha’s manoeuvring struck his observation; and, as sir Middleton might possibly be a part of his family, he thought it his duty to point out to him, that her artful ladyship had pursued a similar conduct with lord Rushdale; that her object, without a single particle of affection, was to secure a wealthy husband, her father being a ruined gamester, and herself portionless.

Sir Middleton acknowledged that he had once thought lady Jacintha Fitzosborne a disagreeable satirical coquette, but she had flattered his vanity—she had influenced his pride; he fancied himself beloved, and the representations of lord Wilton he considered as the ebullitions of envy. Lord Wilton, he recollected, had often acknowledged that lady Jacintha was handsome, and had too much understanding for a woman. What then, but envy at his success, could induce him to rail against her?

Sir Middleton was convinced, that to the sensible disinterested lady Jacintha, his fortune was no object, and though his friends remonstrated, and his aunt disapproved, he made up his mind, in spite of all former objections to matrimony, to offer his hand to lady Jacintha Fitzosborne, whose rank, beauty, and wit, were fortune sufficient.

But lady Jacintha by no means designed to hurry the affair; old lady Witherington, sir Middleton’s godmother, though very ill, was not insensible, and no one could yet be certain of the disposal of her fortune. She had of late been methodistically inclined, and might leave her money to build conventicles. A baronet and sixteen thousand pounds a-year was certainly infinitely better than enduring the inconveniences she did as a spinster; but she would not throw herself away—she would try one more winter, and if nothing superior in rank or fortune offered, why she would condescend to accept the title of lady Maxfield early in the spring. Of course, she took care not to explain her real motives to sir Middleton, but put off his urgency for an immediate union, by persuading him, that her disinterested principles would not allow her to take advantage of his partiality; reason

and judgment should have time to act; but if his heart continued unchanged after the trial of the ensuing winter, she would give him her hand the following April.

Lady Jacintha's hopes and wishes still lingered round the elegant Rushdale, whose jealousy and pride she conceived it possible to pique, by her flirtation with sir Middleton Maxfield; but her conduct was in every respect matter of total indifference to Oscar; he neither, by look or word, seemed sensible that she had made a transfer of her regards; but the countess, who had a watchful eye upon lady Jacintha, perceived, with much secret satisfaction, the change in her ladyship's conduct. She had beheld, with much displeasure, the pains she had taken to captivate her son; and none knew better than lady Torrington how fascinating to a young man were the blandishments of a fine woman.

The artists, machinists, and upholsterers, were now arrived from London, and the countess was made perfectly happy, with the noise of hammers, the smell of paint, and all the delightful hurry and tumult of preparation for her fete. She now, more than ever, indulged in the transporting idea of being the wonder, and supplying conversation for all the country. In the intoxicating pleasure of viewing, approving, and ordering, she quite forgot that Cecilia had kept her chamber four days, that her son looked melancholy and woe-be-gone, and that the earl had more sharply than ever remonstrated with her on the glaring imprudence of detaining the count del Montarino at the castle.

Secure in her conquest of sir Middleton Maxfield, who saw, heard, and thought, but as she directed him, lady Jacintha had one morning been more than usually brilliant; she had shot the arrows of her wit without mercy at sir Cyril Musgrove and lord Wilton; nor had the languishing lady Eglantine and her lover, lord Melvil, escaped her sarcastic ridicule, when, in the full tide of her illiberal triumph, she beheld Mrs. Doricourt, lady Welford, and Miss Delmore, enter the room.

In an instant Cecilia was surrounded by the gentlemen; even sir Middleton Maxfield, to lady Jacintha's extreme mortification, approached to pay his compliments of congratulation on Miss Delmore's recovery.

Cecilia's morning robe of cambric and lace sat close to her ivory throat; a rich Persian shawl hung loose over her shoulder, and the redundance of her glossy hair was confined under a cap; but in this dishabille, the disdainful, envious lady Jacintha was compelled to acknowledge, that though something paler, she had lost nothing of her enchanting beauty, and looked more interesting than ever. *The Lady of the Lake*, and her lovely *protégée*, now engrossed all the conversation and attention, and lady Jacintha found herself a mere cipher.

Mrs. Doricourt was witty, but not satirical, and the convalescence of her beloved Cecilia had so cheering an effect on her naturally-pensive spirits, that her powers of pleasing, by brilliant sallies of imagination, were that morning most happily exerted, and before her lady Jacintha shrunk into actual insignificance, to the infinite delight of sir Cyril Musgrove, who exulted in the mortification which all her self-command failed to disguise.

Lady Torrington was too busily occupied in arranging, planning, and decorating, to devote much time to her guests; but though the health, nay, the life of Miss Delmore, was of no consequence to her, she was yet glad to find she had left her chamber, and had offered her assistance to paint the white velvet for the draperies of the saloon. The

countess, *malgré* the displeasure of the earl whenever the count del Montarino crossed his path, was all smiles and affability, for every thing for the *fête champêtre* and masquerade was proceeding to her wish; a large chest full of masks and fantastic habits had arrived, and flowers enough to transform a desert into a blooming paradise.—A Laplander’s hut, sledges, reindeer, and hills of snow, were already created; a Turkish pavilion and gardens were in a state of forwardness; and Cecilia, aided by the taste of Mrs. Doricourt, was ornamenting with shells, spar, and seaweed, a grotto, in which the countess herself was to preside as the goddess Calypso. The invitation-tickets, with French devices, embossed and perfumed with attar gul, were ready for sending out. The countess of Torrington, too happy for mortality, appeared to tread on air: within and without the castle, all was enchantment. Transparent temples, gilded pillars entwined with roses, cascades, grottoes, and pavilions, met the eye in the extensive park, on the lawn, and in the pleasure-grounds; while the interior of the castle exhibited all the splendour of gold and silver draperies, tablets of verd antique, superb candelabras, vases of lapis lazuli, and statues of bronze and marble.

Cecilia retained a grateful remembrance of the feeling and kindness Miss Maxfield had evinced at the time she was thrown from her horse: suspecting the count del Montarino’s design of making himself master of Miss Maxfield’s fortune, she endeavoured to convince her of the little chance she would have for happiness with a man so devoted to pleasure.

Poor Miss Maxfield wanted to be a countess, and she would not be convinced that it was possible the count could love her money, and not her; but though she did not attend to Miss Delmore’s friendly admonitions, she liked her conversation much better than lady Jacintha’s or lady Eglantine’s, who both of them took pleasure in imposing upon her ignorance, and exposing her defective understanding. She looked on with surprise, while Cecilia, with tasteful hand, interspersed shells, weed, and spar, over the sides of the grotto, and sometimes she was gratified in assisting to spread the weed and sort the shells. At length, growing weary of employment, she exclaimed—“La, Miss Delmore! you work as hard as if you was to get a living by it: dear, I wonder you are not tired to death.”

“You know,” replied Cecilia, “how extremely anxious the countess is to get all finished, and I cannot possibly deny her the aid of my little services.”

“You are very good-natured, I am sure,” said Miss Maxfield, “to work so many hours, tiring yourself to please other people. La, Miss Delmore! do you think my brother is in love, in downright earnest, with lady Jacintha?”

“It is impossible for me to read sir Middleton’s heart,” replied Cecilia, “but certainly he pays her the attention of a lover.”

“La! do you think so?” returned Miss Maxfield; “do you know, I hate her so you can’t think; and if Middleton does marry her, I will never call her sister, for all she seems so kind to me, and so polite to aunt; and dear, what will become of me, if aunt should marry lord Wilton?”

“Have you any reason to suppose that Mrs. Freakley has such an intention?” asked Cecilia.

“La! yes,” replied Miss Maxfield; “Middleton and she had a fine quarrel last night

about lord Wilton. Do you know he was so rude to aunt, you can't think, and told her that lord Wilton thought her an old fool; and she told Middleton that lady Jacintha knew he was a young fool, and that she was a heap of deceit; and if she liked any body in real earnest, it was lord Rushdale."

"Indeed!" said Cecilia.

"Yes, indeed," continued Miss Maxfield; "and do you know, Mr. Drawley said, if any gentleman of higher rank and greater fortune was to offer, lady Jacintha would give up Middleton directly: that would be very shameful behaviour though, would it not, Miss Delmore?"

"Certainly it would," replied Cecilia.

"And lord Wilton said," resumed Miss Maxfield, "that lady Jacintha wished every body to believe that lord Rushdale was in love with her, and was always throwing out hints that they were to be married as soon as he was of age."

"I wish lord Rushdale every felicity," said Cecilia, with a sigh.

"I thank you most sincerely for that kind wish, Miss Delmore," replied lord Rushdale, who that moment entered the grotto; "but I give you my word of honour, I shall never seek it in any way where lady Jacintha Fitzosborne is concerned; neither in my love or my friendship will she ever participate."

"And yet her ladyship is in your lordship's confidence," said Cecilia; "is the repository of your heart's dearest affections and intentions. I shall never, I believe, be other than a novice," continued she, "for it appears quite impossible to me to comprehend the arcanum, or what lady Jacintha terms the mystification of fashionable life."

A sudden gleam of light shot on Oscar's mind, from the reproach conveyed in Cecilia's speech. He began to suspect that the late cold reserve of her manner was occasioned by some artful insinuation or communication of lady Jacintha's, and he eagerly and earnestly replied—"I give you my honour, Miss Delmore, I have never reposed a confidence of any sort with lady Jacintha: self-interested and unfeeling, she would be the last person on earth to whom I should make known my heart's affections or intentions."

Cecilia caught the glance of his deep blue eye; it beamed with the sublime energy of truth.—"I have lately perceived a strange alteration in your manner towards me, Miss Delmore," continued he; "I fear lady Jacintha has prejudiced you against me."

"I am sure, if she has," said Miss Maxfield, "she ought to be ashamed of herself; but lady Jacintha is so spiteful, she never speaks a good word of any body; no, not even of her own cousin; she takes off aunt Freakley, and calls her a Dutch frow and Bobbin Joan, and such odd names you can't think."

"Truth obliges me," rejoined Cecilia, "to exonerate lady Jacintha from the suspicion of having endeavoured to prejudice me against your lordship. I never heard her speak of you but with respect."

"To what cause then, Cecilia," said lord Rushdale, taking her hand, "am I to attribute the chilling change that has lately taken place in your manner? Why do I no longer meet you in the library, where the early hours of morning used to pass so pleasantly? Why do you refuse to sing with me? Give me, I entreat you, a reason for this strange conduct. Do not constrain me to believe that you are fickle—you, whose mind I have delighted to

believe as faultless as your person. Dearest Cecilia, let me not think you have no fixed principles. Afford me, I conjure you, some reason for your seemingly-capricious behaviour.”

Cecilia felt the hand that still held hers tremble.—“When I considered your lordship under no particular engagement,” replied she, “I saw no impropriety in admitting the friendship with which you honoured me; but no female of delicacy will—will—” Cecilia blushed, stammered, and felt unable to proceed.

“Cecilia! for Heaven’s sake, what do you mean?” inquired Rushdale, with increased agitation: “answer me, I entreat you?”

“Is not your heart, your honour engaged?” asked Cecilia, with a faltering voice: “are you not under a promise of marriage?”

“No, on my life! my soul!” replied lord Rushdale; “who can have been base enough to impose upon you such a detestable fabrication?”

Tears of joy filled Cecilia’s downcast eyes; her heart was relieved from an oppressive load, but unwilling to draw on lady Jacintha the displeasure of lord Rushdale, she refused to name her informer.

Oscar pressed the reluctant hand of Cecilia to his lips.—“Let me be assured,” said he, “that this explanation has restored to me my Cecilia, kind, affable, and ingenuous as I first knew her; and now,” added he, “that no future suspicions may interrupt our friendship, receive my sacred promise, that I will never address a lady without your approbation—never marry without you assist at my nuptials.”

Cecilia was extremely unwilling to receive this promise, but lord Rushdale insisted on keeping his word.—“I will not,” continued he, “exact a similar promise from you, nor insist on being a guest at your marriage, Cecilia.”

“You think I shall marry unworthily,” said Cecilia.

“In truth, my lovely friend,” replied Oscar, “I do not know among your present acquaintance any I should think worthy of you.”

“You overrate my value,” said Cecilia; “but at present my heart is free, and I think it will be some years before I marry—most likely never.”

“La, Miss Delmore! how strange you talk!” rejoined Miss Maxfield. “If I thought I should never marry, I should be so miserable you can’t think; for I know a Miss Prudence Freakley, a near relation of aunt’s, and she is an old maid, and so cross, and so particular about every thing. Do you know, Miss Delmore, she has got six white cats, and six white dogs, and they have all silver collars and bells about their necks; and she has got a parrot, and an owl, and a maccaw, and dormice in a cage, and a squirrel that rings little bells, and a monkey, and guinea-pigs; but she never suffers a man to come inside her house. La! I would not live with her for all the world. Would you, Miss Delmore?”

“Not if she is so cross and particular,” replied Cecilia: “but is it not time that we should return to the castle?”

“The air is balmy and refreshing,” said lord Rushdale; “and yesterday about this time I heard a nightingale in yonder shrubbery.”

“La! I never heard a nightingale in all my life,” replied Miss Maxfield. “Dear, I should so like to hear it sing, you can’t think!”

“I should be sorry to deprive you of the pleasure,” returned Cecilia, suffering lord

Rushdale to draw her arm under his, while he offered the other to Miss Maxfield.

“This is exactly such an evening,” said Cecilia, “as Milton describes.”

“Who is Milton?” asked Miss Maxfield.

“A poet,” replied Oscar, “who, after he became blind, wrote, among other beautiful poems, that celebrated work called Paradise Lost.”

“La! yes, so he did,” returned Miss Maxfield; “for I read in a book of sir Cyril Musgrove’s yesterday, that somebody asked lord Chesterfield what he thought of Milton’s Paradise Lost, and he replied, he thought it was an infernal production, for the devil was the hero of the tale.”

“In this instance,” replied lord Rushdale, “the wit of Chesterfield got the better of his judgment. Paradise Lost has immortalized its author; and though doubtless it has many faults, no poem of its length abounds with so many noble descriptions, or with such beautiful imagery.

“———Now glow’d the firmament
With living sapphire; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, shone brightest; till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveil’d her peerless light,
And o’er the dark her silver mantle threw.”

“Well, I declare,” said Miss Maxfield, “the moon is rising, just as if it knew you had been talking about it! and hark!—la! I declare I hear the nightingale.”

After warbling for some time, the bird ceased, and Miss Maxfield expressed much curiosity to see it.—“I am sure,” said she, “it is in this rose-bush.”

“Most likely,” replied Cecilia, “for the nightingale is said to be enamoured of the rose.”

“What! in love with it?” asked Miss Maxfield.

“Yes,” said lord Rushdale, “and many poets, particularly those of the East, have celebrated the loves of the nightingale and rose.”

“Well, only think what a deal of odd things poets have wrote about!” returned Miss Maxfield; “very pretty too, I dare say. I had a large book full of poetry when I was at school; but, la! I don’t know what became of it.”

Cecilia again proposed their return, and as the dew was falling, lord Rushdale did not oppose her wish, though to him the present scene was most sweet, most happy.

On the lawn they met sir Cyril Musgrove, who exclaimed—“A lady on each arm! Really, Rushdale, you ought to be called to account for monopoly. Here have I been sauntering this half-hour, and no smiling fair one was kind enough to take my arm. I shall grow quite melancholy, unless some compassionate female will allow me to make love to her.”

“Will you, Miss Maxfield,” asked lord Rushdale, “take pity on sir Cyril’s melancholy, and suffer him to make love to you?”

“La, no!” replied she; “for I have heard sir Cyril say, he wont be married these twenty years; and I should be getting an old woman, you know, by that time. Besides, I

hate long courtships so you can't think."

"After what Miss Maxfield has advanced respecting the period when I intend commencing benedict," said sir Cyril, "I dare not ask you, Miss Delmore, to have pity on me."

"And if I had not heard of your determination, sir Cyril," replied Cecilia, "I should not have been inclined to listen to you, because, not being ambitious of the character of a coquette, I should think it dishonourable to encourage a preference I never could return."

Sir Cyril bowed with a mortified air.—"You are very ingenuous, Miss Delmore," said he, "and, I flatter myself, rather more fastidious than young ladies in general are."

Sir Cyril's manner had more than once offended Cecilia's delicacy; he had taken opportunities, when he was unobserved, of whispering flatteries in her ear, while in general his behaviour, though polite, was distant and haughty; besides, he was a coxcomb, and seemed to think more highly of himself, on every occasion, than was consistent with good sense or good manners.

Cecilia retired to rest early, her mind restored to serenity by the explanation that had so happily taken place in the grotto; and though she could not understand what lady Jacintha meant by her invention, respecting lord Rushdale's being engaged to marry a friend of hers, she resolved in future to pay no attention to her communications.

"Doubtless lord Rushdale will marry some time," said Cecilia; "but he will always be my brother—my friend."

When recommending herself to the protection of Heaven, Cecilia prayed for the felicity of Rushdale; she supplicated blessings for Mrs. Doricourt; and soon after sunk into the tranquil forgetfulness of sleep.

The moon shone full into her chamber, when a noise near her bed startled her. She threw back the drapery, and gazed on a tall figure, wrapped in a scarlet cloak, whose face was covered by a grotesque mask. Unable to suppress her alarm, she uttered a faint shriek.

The figure approached the bed, and, in a strange squeaking voice, bade her be silent if she valued her life.—"You have in your possession," said he, "a hundred and fifty pounds. Give me instantly the key of your silver casket, for there I know the money is deposited."

Cecilia's hand was raised to the bell-rope that hung beside her bed.

Perceiving her intention of calling for assistance, the man grasped her arm, and throwing back the cloak that disguised his person, he displayed to her shuddering sight two pistols.—"You see," said he, "I am prepared to compel your acquiescence with my request. I have an immediate and pressing occasion for a sum of money. Under my present appearance, were I to swear I will return what I obtain from you, I should not gain your belief. Once more I request the key of your silver casket. Do not compel me to force it!"

"It does not open with a key," replied the terrified Cecilia: "the casket has a spring."

The man snatched the casket from the dressing-table, and placed it before her.—

"Open it quickly," said he; "I am in haste to be gone."

Cecilia, with trembling fingers, pressed the spring. The cover fell back, and presented to sight several valuable ornaments, as well as the bank-notes.

“I am not a robber,” said the man, “though the desperation of my circumstances has forced me on this compulsory action. I repeat, I do not mean to rob you.”

“Terror will deprive me of my senses,” replied Cecilia. “Take what you want, and leave me.”

“No, I will not take the notes,” said the man, drawing one of the pistols from beneath his cloak; “you must lend the money. I will not rob you. I will only borrow.”

Cecilia’s alarm was increased by the sight of the pistol. She snatched up the notes, and placing them in his hand, exclaimed—“Take the money, the casket, any thing I possess, and leave me—for mercy leave me!”

The man did not wait a second bidding. He grasped the notes.—“You have saved my honour,” said he. “Remember, you have lent me this money!”

Cecilia no sooner saw him quit the room, than she hastened to fasten the door; but before she could accomplish her design, the object of her terror stood again before her.

“One thing I had forgot,” said he; “you must solemnly swear to keep this transaction secret till you hear from me.”

“I shall be questioned respecting the money, and what excuse can I make?” replied Cecilia.

“Any that first presents itself,” said the man. “A woman’s invention never fails.”

Again the dreaded pistol was displayed. Cecilia took the oath he required, and the terrific intruder withdrew.

Left to herself, Cecilia regained composure. The figure of the man who had extorted her money was tall, and though the voice was disguised, she recollected a foreign accent, that left no room to doubt the count del Montarino being the perpetrator of this outrage.

Cecilia felt dissatisfied with herself, for having suffered fear to prevent her calling for assistance.—“Surely,” said she, “I shall gain experience and fortitude, otherwise I shall not be fit to be entrusted with money; for now, only alarm me, and I weakly supply any unworthy person. Surely I shall in future remember that I have allowed myself to be frightened into compliances that my judgment condemns; for certainly lady Jacintha would not have destroyed herself, neither would the count del Montarino have murdered me, had I but possessed firmness to resist his demand.”

Unable to sleep, Cecilia rose before the sun; but hearing no one moving, she sat at her window, to enjoy the freshness of the morning air, to listen to the early carol of the birds, and offer her matin prayer to the great Creator, at whose potent bidding all the beauties of the sky and earth assumed their varied forms, for the use and the delight of man.

At the usual hour Cecilia went to Mrs. Doricourt’s apartment, who remarked that she looked pale, and that her eyes were heavy.

Cecilia smiled, and declared she was quite well.

At breakfast they were joined by lady Welford, the earl of Torrington, and his son.

Oscar also observed that Cecilia looked pale, and suggested that she fatigued herself too much in completing the grotto.

“I suspect,” said Cecilia, “that there is a combination to persuade me that I am ill, but really I feel no symptoms of present or approaching sickness; and as my word is pledged to the countess of Torrington, I cannot think of losing time.”

She then requested a servant to inform Miss Maxfield that she waited for her to go to the grotto.

The earl asked if she found Miss Maxfield an able assistant?

“She selects the shells for me,” said Cecilia, “which saves much time; but if she was of no use to me, I would request her company, for neither lady Eglantine Sydney, nor lady Jacintha Fitzosborne, pay her much attention.”

“You are very amiable,” returned the earl, “or you would not trouble yourself with a girl, who is not above two removes from idiocy.”

“She has a feeling heart,” said Cecilia, “and is extremely good-tempered.”

“If Miss Maxfield’s relations,” resumed the earl, “do not keep a watchful eye over her, she will become the prey of some needy adventurer, who will take advantage of her feeling heart, and her good temper, to possess himself of her fortune.”

The servant who had been sent by Cecilia returned to say, Miss Maxfield was not to be found, and that she had not been in bed all night.

The truth instantly flashed on Cecilia’s mind, and clasping her hands, she exclaimed—“Deluded, unfortunate girl! she has eloped with the count del Montarino!”

Mrs. Doricourt turned on her an inquiring look, but no explanation was asked; for Mrs. Freakley and sir Middleton Maxfield entered the breakfast-parlour in high dispute.

“That blacklegs! that swindler! that foreign count, as he calls himself,” said sir Middleton, “has run away with my sister!”

“A count!” repeated Mrs. Freakley. “I believe he is nothing more than a dancing-master. Poor dear Jemima! to be overseen by such a shabby wretch, who has been supported—”

Mrs. Freakley recollected who was present, and affecting to cough, said—“By the charity of the countess of Torrington.”

“I wish, madam,” replied the earl, “her ladyship’s charity had found a more worthy object.” He then left the room, to satisfy himself that the count had actually left the castle.

Mrs. Freakley, provoked at the *nonchalance* of her nephew, burst into tears.—“Jemima,” said she, “is quite a child of nature, you know. She is too innocent to suspect this villain of having a design upon her fortune, or she never would have been persuaded to elope with him. Nobody knows what the vile wretch may intend to do with her, after he has married her, and got possession of her money. He may carry her to Italy, and afterwards sell her to the Algerines.”

“True,” replied sir Middleton, “and if she offends the dey, he may order her to be strangled, or to be tied up in a sack, and thrown into the sea.”

“Oh! what a terrible fate for poor dear Jemima!” said Mrs. Freakley. “Pray, nephew, let me entreat you to consider the honour of the family! If you have no affection for your sister, think of the disgrace, sir Middleton, that may result from this elopement. No doubt, if you set off directly, you may yet overtake them, and bring her back.”

“It is not my intention to try,” replied sir Middleton, seating himself, and pouring out a cup of coffee. “Jemima is a ward of Chancery—let the big wigs look after her, and settle the business in their own way. You know as well as I do, that Jemima is a little soft in the upper story, and the sooner she gets a husband, the sooner she will be out of danger. He will certainly marry her, for the sake of her fortune; and with her money, if he

is a count, he may live magnificently in Italy.”

“The villain is no more a count than I am!” said Mrs. Freakley. “Poor dear Jemima! she will be utterly undone! What is she to do among foreigners? She does not understand a word of their language. I hope the lord chancellor will hang the villain! If I was a man—but, Heaven help me! I am only a poor weak woman, and can do nothing but lament. Sir Middleton—nephew, are you made of stone? have you no feeling for the deluded girl?”

Sir Middleton very deliberately sipped his coffee, and devoured a plate of muffins.

“I can’t think how you can eat at this distressing time,” said Mrs. Freakley.

“I eat to keep up my spirits to be sure,” said sir Middleton.

“And while you are making a comfortable breakfast,” resumed Mrs. Freakley, “poor dear Jemima is on the road to ruin; and you, her brother, the nearest relation she has in the whole world, refuse to stir a step to save her.”

“They have the start by too many hours,” replied sir Middleton; “it would be folly to attempt overtaking them. Besides do you take me for a conjurer? How the devil should I know which road they have taken?”

“To Scotland, you may be sure,” returned Mrs. Freakley.

“Not altogether so polite in Jemima to take the lead of her elders; she ought to have let me married first,” said sir Middleton.

“I would sooner see you in your coffin,” replied Mrs. Freakley, “than married to lady Jacintha Fitzosborne.”

“Greatly obliged to you, madam,” said sir Middleton. “You agitate yourself surprisingly, because your niece has chosen herself a husband, and your nephew intends taking a wife. Now we have neither of us interfered with your folly—pray, when am I to have the honour of saluting you as lady Wilton?”

Mrs. Freakley bounced out of the room, calling her nephew an unfeeling unnatural wretch.

The countess of Torrington was really tired of the count del Montarino, but there was a selfish vanity in her mind, that could not bear the man she no longer cared for to prefer another. She was vexed, though she wished his dereliction; she was jealous, though she had herself set him the example of inconstancy by flirting with Drawley. The countess would have been pleased if Montarino had returned to Italy alone, if he had expressed regret and distraction at their separation, if he had vowed never to love another; instead of which, without even a reproach for the coldness she had latterly assumed towards him, without one regretful sigh, or look of sorrow, he had left the castle, with a girl who had not the shadow of a pretension to wit or beauty; and what was still a subject of deeper resentment, he had, by taking himself away at that important crisis, delayed, if not absolutely put an end, to her projected entertainments; for now a person to conduct her *fête champêtre* must be sent for from London, and another female found to personate the goddess Fortune, which Miss Maxfield, assured there was nothing more to learn than how to present the prizes gracefully to the female archers, had undertaken.

“These,” said lady Torrington to the commiserating Smithson, “these are miseries, these are disappointments. After having issued the most elegant tickets that ever were seen, after having endured this gloomy old castle, merely for the purpose of giving an

entertainment, that was certain to fill the hearts of all the county with envy, jealousy, and astonishment—oh, Smithson! Smithson! these are miseries, these are disappointments!”

“I wish their carriage may overturn, and break their necks!” said the compassionate Smithson.

“No, Smithson, no, that would be putting them out of pain too soon,” replied the countess. “Wish Montarino may marry Miss Maxfield, and that they may break one another’s hearts; to know they will be wretched for long lingering years, would, I think console me: but, good Smithson, dress me to the best advantage; make me look handsome; for I would not for the world that spiteful creature lady Jacintha Fitzosborne should think I fret at these miseries and disappointments.”

CHAPTER III.

Oaths made in pain are violent and void. MILTON.

.....

—The grinning fiend Derision
An uncouth bugle his left hand display'd,
From a grey monkey's skull by cunning made,
And form'd to pour, in harmony's despight,
Sounds that each jarring sense of pain excite.

HALEY.

.....

Who sees the heavenly Rosaline,
That like a rude and savage man of Inde,
At the first opening of the gorgeous East,
Bows not his vassal head?

SHAKESPEARE.

*A Charity Subscription—More Suspicions—Ma-
ternal Feelings—More Disappointments—
Lovers' Vows.*

THE elopement of Miss Maxfield with the count del Montarino stamped, beyond a doubt, the conviction on Cecilia's mind, that it was to enable him to carry off the silly girl before any competitor arrived to dispute the prize with him, that he had entered her chamber in disguise, and extorted the money from her, all she possessed, within a few shillings.

Cecilia felt the sincerest concern for Miss Maxfield; her unfortunate imbecility of understanding had rendered her an easy dupe to the pretended affection of the profligate count, who, once possessed of her fortune, would, she feared, despise his wife, and, too probably, treat her ill.

The exclamation uttered by Cecilia, when she heard of the elopement, had been remarked by Mrs. Doricourt with surprise, strongly tinged with suspicion that she had been made the confidant of Miss Maxfield's imprudent intention—a suspicion that gave Mrs. Doricourt much pain, as she had hoped and believed that Cecilia's understanding, as well as her humanity, would have urged her to use every possible means to prevent the silly girl from incurring the inevitable misfortune of becoming the count del Montarino's wife—a man who openly derided religion, and plumed himself on leading a life of dissipation.

The first time they were alone, Mrs. Doricourt introduced the subject of Miss Maxfield's folly, and having expressed her apprehension that the count would make a very bad husband, she said—"Surely, my dear Cecilia, you were not the confidant of this unfortunate girl's imprudence? you could not, I trust, have been acquainted with her intention to elope with the count del Montarino?"

Cecilia blushed crimson deep, not from reproachful guilt, but from the painful remembrance that she had been compelled to become an accessory in Miss Maxfield's imprudence; but, as she was bound by oath not to inform Mrs. Doricourt of the terrific midnight scene in her chamber, her "*eloquent blood*" rushed to her face, as she replied—"No, on my word, I knew nothing of Miss Maxfield's intention, though I cannot pretend to deny having, for some time, suspected the count of endeavouring to ingratiate himself with Miss Maxfield, and win her regard; and believe me, I have more than once warned her of the very little chance she would have in a marriage with the count, either to be happy herself, or promote his happiness, whose habits and principles were incorrigibly dissolute and libertine. I assure you, my dear madam, I had no knowledge, no suspicion, of an elopement."

Mrs. Doricourt knew that Cecilia was incapable of falsehood; she was satisfied with the explanation, and questioned her no farther.

The countess of Torrington had wisdom enough to know that tears and vexation would not add to the lustre of her eyes, but to a certainty would wash the bloom from her cheeks. She was sensible that to sit down and indulge grief was downright folly. Besides, she had never in her life been partial to the "*luxury of woe*;" she therefore set about repairing the loss she sustained by the count del Montarino's defection and departure with all possible expedition. In the first place, she wrote to town, to request the immediate attendance of monsieur Frippoine, who had conducted a grand melange entertainment for the duchess of Squander, which entertainment had, two summers before, filled all the newspapers in the kingdom, and furnished conversation for the higher circles for a month. In the next place, lady Torrington fixed on Miss Macdonald, the niece of sir Alexander Stuart, as the goddess Fortune; and as she was much taller, and had an infinitely more graceful *manière*, there would be nothing to regret in the absence of Miss Maxfield.

These points being arranged, the countess remembered, with much secret satisfaction, that the honourable Tangent Drawley, a very handsome young man, of fashionable celebrity, had declared himself the ardent adorer of her beauty. What then was there to regret? not the dereliction of the count, who had been a heavy tax on her purse.

The countess resumed her smiles and gaiety, and recollecting that the earl's birthday was on the following Thursday, she sent out cards of invitation to all the families of note in the vicinity of Torrington Castle.

No news having arrived from Miss Maxfield or the count del Montarino, it was supposed they were gone to Italy; and in listening to the compliments of lord Wilmot, Mrs. Freakley almost forgot to lament, or even speak of, the imprudent elopement of the "child of nature;" while, completely managed by the artful lady Jacintha Fitzosborne, sir Middleton Maxfield was taught to believe, that it was by no means proper or necessary for him to interfere respecting his sister's marriage with the count del Montarino.

Mrs. Doricourt, in her youth, had yielded to custom, rather than inclination, when she entered into public amusements and fashionable parties, and now, when disappointment, sickness, and affliction, had cast a deeper shade on her naturally-pensive disposition, she soon grew weary of the frivolous pleasures so eagerly pursued by the idle dissipated

inmates of Torrington Castle; she languished to return again to the tranquil rational delight she was accustomed to derive from books, music, and the pencil, to wander in the groves she had reared round the Hermitage, and listen to the rush of the waters, as they laved the green slopes of the island of St. Herbert.

Mrs. Doricourt announced to the earl and countess of Torrington her intention of returning home, and of taking Cecilia with her; but the countess could not spare either Mrs. Doricourt or Cecilia, for she had arranged, in her own mind, a concert and ball for the earl's birthday, and she was so pressing in her entreaties, that Mrs. Doricourt consented to remain her visitor till after Thursday, a day of splendour and festivity, of which every one spoke with delighted expectation, except the earl himself, who seemed to endure, rather than enjoy amusement. He was seldom seen to smile; and though he never expressed disapprobation of the expensive follies of his lady, nor absented himself from her entertainments, it was evident they neither flattered his pride, nor afforded him pleasure.

When the earl's melancholy was mentioned before the countess, she would laugh, and say, he was yet smarting under the perfidy of the duchess de Valencourt; for she well remembered, when basking in the sunshine of her smiles, lord Torrington never looked grave, never was addicted to reflection, but was at all times volatile, and ready to thread the rosy mazes of pleasure; but though at present suffering under a *maladie de coeur*, he would get over the *flamme amoureux*, and be himself again.

The good breeding of her ladyship's guests prevented their contradicting her assertion, but some of them placed the earl's gloom to jealousy of her ladyship; others believed that his fortune was considerably deranged by her extravagance.

Mrs. Doricourt alone knew that lord Torrington bore in his bosom a secret sorrow, the rankling remembrance of a crime, which all the glitter of rank and wealth, all the fascinations and allurements of pleasure, could not lull to silence, and with which neither the fidelity nor the expences of the countess were at all connected.

Mrs. Doricourt's charity was of that active sort, that she did not content herself with relieving present want and distress; her benevolence led her to provide against their attacks in future. A case of peculiar distress had come to her knowledge, and she determined to try whether her present fashionable associates would spare any thing from their own frivolous gratifications to relieve the wants of an indigent widow, who, by the sudden death of her husband, was left in extreme poverty, with eleven children, the eldest a boy not yet thirteen years of age.

Mrs. Doricourt's intention was to set the widow up in a shop at Keswick, appropriate a small sum to apprentice the two elder children, and reserve the remainder, if any money should remain, for placing out the other children, as they grew old enough to learn trades.

The earl of Torrington himself drew up a narrative of the widow's case, and set his own name down for a hundred pounds; Mrs. Doricourt, lady Welford, lord Rushdale, and colonel St. Irwin, for the same sum each.

The subscription paper was then presented to the countess, who, glancing her eye over it, coldly said—"Poor woman!—eleven children! Why does she not send them to the parish? I protest I am sorry for her; but I have not a single shilling to spare. No time on earth could be more unfortunate to ask money from me; but if you, my lord, or you,

Rushdale, will lend me a few pounds—”

The earl threw on her a glance of indignation, as, interrupting her, he replied—“I am ashamed to find that you can throw away thousands on toys and baubles, all useless and unnecessary, and yet coldly and selfishly deny your assistance to relieve the wants and sorrows of a wretched widow, and her helpless family!”

“Why you are lately become so charitable, so benevolent, my lord,” replied the countess, “that positively I think—”

The earl frowned.—“No matter, madam, what you think,” said he. “Are we to have your hundred pounds?”

“A hundred pounds!” exclaimed lady Torrington. “A hundred pounds! Your requisition amazes me! Pray, allow me to ask, is it your intention to portion this same widow’s eleven children? Really I have not a hundred pounds in the world! and if I had, I must confess my charity is not so diffusive.”

During this contest, Cecilia sat, pale and uneasy, in the thought that she should presently be applied to, and having only a few shillings in her purse, she knew not what excuse she could offer, as Mrs. Doricourt would suppose she had still a hundred and fifty pounds in her possession.

Lord Rushdale took up a pen, and setting down his mother’s name, said he would lend her the required sum.

“You are infinitely kind and obliging,” returned the countess; “but really I think ten pounds would have been a very sufficient and handsome donation; and if I become your debtor, lord Rushdale, for a hundred pounds, I am sure I can set no time for repaying it—the expences of my fete and masquerade will keep me poor for an age to come.”

Lady Jacintha Fitzosborne would rather have been broiling in London at that moment, than sitting cool in the earl’s library; but when asked for her contribution, she replied, no one could feel more concern than she did at a case of such distress; but all the world knew her poverty, and how utterly unable she was, except by good wishes, to promote Mrs. Doricourt’s benevolent design; but if her mite, a pound note, would be accepted, she would endeavour to spare that from her own necessities.

Lady Eglantine Sydney and Mrs. Freakley declared they had so many pensioners, that it was quite impossible for them to spare more than ten pounds on the present occasion.

Lords Melvil and Wilton contributed five pounds each.

Sir Middleton Maxfield set his name down for fifty pounds, observing, that he was sorry he could not do more, but his late losses on the turf had almost done him up.

Sir Cyril Musgrove and the honourable Mr. Drawley entering the room together, Mrs. Doricourt immediately handed them the subscription list, on which having cast his eye, sir Cyril said—“pon my honour, have given my name to so many charities lately, that my purse is as empty—”

“As your head,” replied Drawley.

“Thank you! Very witty, ‘pon my honour; but as to the article of brains—”

“The requisition is not for brains,” interrupted Drawley, “but for money.”

“*Tant pis*, ‘pon my honour,” said sir Cyril. “A widow and eleven children! If she had been young and handsome, there would have been some incitement to charity, but the

mother of eleven children, no doubt, must be ugly and old.”

“And therefore an object of greater charity, according to your own opinion,” rejoined Mrs. Doricourt; “for if this unfortunate widow had been young and handsome, no question but many gentlemen, as well as yourself, would have thought youth and beauty undeniable applicants; but I hope, sir Cyril, for humanity’s sake, that you are only jesting, and that I shall not plead to you in vain, for a distressed widow and her orphan family.”

“It is impossible, madam,” replied sir Cyril, bowing conceitedly, “that you should ever plead in vain. In compliance with your wish, as you advocate the widow’s cause, ‘pon my honour, if she was as old and ugly as Hecate, I would—”

“You would subscribe your hundred pounds,” interrupted lord Wilton.

Sir Cyril did not intend to give more than twenty; but seeing sir Middleton Maxfield’s name down for fifty, pride and ostentation supplying the place of better feelings, led him to double his subscription, and he immediately set his name down for a hundred pounds.

The generous eccentric Drawley did not wait to be asked; taking up a pen, he said—“Charity covers a multitude of sins, and Heaven knows, I have a multitude to cover.” He added his hundred pounds to the subscription.

Miss Delmore was now the only person who had not been called upon. Several times she had attempted to quit the room, but, as if spell-bound, still kept her seat.

At length the dreaded moment arrived. Mrs. Doricourt asked her for what sum she should set her name down?

“I am very sorry,” said Cecilia, changing colour, “but I cannot contribute to this subscription.”

“Cecilia, my love, you cannot mean to withhold your assistance from this poor woman: I never before knew you backward in the cause of charity. Recollect yourself,” said Mrs. Doricourt.

Cecilia, confused, and affected even to tears, rose from her seat.—“I am compelled to refuse,” replied she, “because—because—” Unable to say, “because I have not the means,” she abruptly left the room.

“This is very strange,” said Mrs. Doricourt. “I know the heart of Miss Delmore to be generous, feeling, and charitable; and I certainly believed her to be in possession of a sum more than sufficient for the present occasion.”

“Perhaps, madam,” replied the earl of Torrington, fixing his dark penetrating eyes on lady Jacintha, “perhaps Miss Delmore’s generous and charitable feelings have been played upon to supply another loan, and contributing to remove pretended distresses, may have deprived her of the power to relieve real ones.”

Lady Jacintha did not choose to understand, and she stood the look and hint of the earl with unblushing effrontery.

Mr. Drawley inquired what company was expected at the castle on Thursday?

Among many others, Miss Graham was mentioned.

Sir Cyril declared, ‘pon his honour, she was the finest girl in Keswick.

“And that may very easily be,” replied Drawley, “without her possessing any extraordinary charms; for I do not recollect seeing one tolerable-looking female in the town.”

“And as to Miss Graham,” said the countess, “she is freckled like a toad.”

“*Warm amorous kisses of the sun!*” exclaimed sir Cyril.

“And then her hair is red,” said lady Jacintha.

“Adown her ivory neck the massy gold
In many a loose and wanton ringlet roll’d.”

“Classical hair, ‘pon my honour,” replied sir Cyril.

“And if I recollect aright,” lisped lady Eglantine, “Miss Graham squints.”

“Jet,” returned sir Cyril, “dark and brilliant. What your ladyship terms a squint, is a certain arch turn, which, so far from being a defect, greatly adds to the beauty of her eyes.”

“So much for Miss Graham,” rejoined the countess. “Then her cousin, Miss Macdonald—she is another beauty, I suppose?”

“She is a very fine figure,” said sir Middleton Maxfield.

“Tall as a church-steeple,” replied lady Jacintha. “A grenadier in petticoats.”

“And as thin as a hurdle,” said Mrs. Freakley.

“With a complexion,” rejoined the countess, “pale as a corpse.”

“Miss Macdonald might easily improve that,” said Drawley. “I wonder some of her fashionable friends don’t advise her to wear rouge.”

“She would not wear colour on any account,” replied lady Torrington, “because she fancies her marble complexion gives interest to her features.”

“Well,” rejoined lady Jacintha, “I believe no one will accuse lady Jane Bruce of beauty or expression.”

“But every body will allow,” said lord Wilton, “that she is a famous dancer of reels.”

“Be generous then,” replied Drawley, “and give her heels the praise you refuse her face.”

“But are we to have a ball on Thursday night?” demanded sir Middleton Maxfield.

“Most assuredly,” replied the countess. “In what other way could I find amusement for the masters and misses who will honour lord Torrington with their company?”

“I declare,” said Mrs. Freakley, “it is almost a pity to spoil the floor, it is so beautifully chalked.”

“That is because she can’t dance,” whispered sir Middleton to lady Jacintha.

“Suppose you persuade her to move a minuet with sir Archibald Mackenzie?” replied lady Jacintha; “they would be the most prominent figures in the room. But, sir Middleton, are you fond of waltzing?”

“It makes my head giddy,” said he.

“I doat upon a waltz,” returned lady Jacintha; “but I suppose I must not think of Drawley for a partner, and he is the most elegant waltzer in the world.”

“And why not think of him?” asked sir Middleton.

“Do you not perceive,” said lady Jacintha, “that since he dropped the *indolent*, he has taken up the *attentive*, and undertaken to console the lady of the castle for the perfidy of her recreant knight, Montarino? At present it would be sinning against the divinity of love, to have eyes or ears for any one but her. No, I do not presume to hope for the

honour of waltzing with Drawley, till, weary of her ladyship's mature beauties, he shakes off the thralldom of *Monsieur Cupidon*, and engages in a new caprice."

Cecilia hurried to her own apartment, to give vent to her oppressed feelings, to weep the displeasure of Mrs. Doricourt, and the weak terror that had involved her in such distressing circumstances.

Mrs. Doricourt, though she had confined her suspicion to her own bosom, believed, as the earl of Torrington did, that Cecilia's humanity had again been wrought upon, and that she had supplied the artful lady Jacintha Fitzosborne with a second loan. Mrs. Doricourt felt hurt to think that her advice had been so utterly disregarded; but Cecilia had retired under evident agitation, and she was too dearly beloved for her friend and benefactress to allow her to remain in a state of uneasiness about so un consequential a sum as a hundred and fifty pounds.

With the amiable intention of restoring Cecilia to serenity, Mrs. Doricourt repaired to her apartment, to ask an explanation of her recent conduct, and to counsel her again to beware of the duplicity and cunning of lady Jacintha, and to forgive the error of generous compassion, excited by art, in the bosom of inexperienced youth.

Cecilia, oppressed with sorrow, had sunk on her knees, her head reclined on her clasped hands, over which her tears fell in large and heavy drops.

As Mrs. Doricourt entered the room, she started up, and throwing herself at her feet, said—"You are angry with me—I know you are; and I feel, I acknowledge your resentment to be just, for I have been weak and criminal."

Mrs. Doricourt sunk on a chair, faintly repeating—"Criminal! Good Heaven, what can you mean? Answer me, Cecilia, what have you done?"

"I dare not," said Cecilia; "I must not, cannot answer you."

"Do not distract me," exclaimed Mrs. Doricourt, "by accusing yourself of criminality. If you have lent the remainder of your money to lady Jacintha Fitzosborne, say so at once, and ease my alarming apprehensions; the act may certainly be termed folly, but does not amount to criminality."

"Oh, no, no," replied the weeping Cecilia, "lady Jacintha has no part in this affair. I have—but I must not, dare not explain the mystery. I must endure your displeasure, though it breaks my heart. It is fit I should suffer for my shameful weakness."

For a moment Mrs. Doricourt sat bewildered. At length Miss Maxfield's elopement recurred to her mind, and with a severity of look and tone she said—"You assured me, Miss Delmore, that you had no knowledge of Miss Maxfield's elopement. I grieve to suppose you capable of the meanness of uttering an untruth; but circumstances induce me to believe you lent her the money to take this imprudent step; if this is the case, you are indeed both weak and criminal, for you have supplied the unfortunate girl with money to render herself wretched for life, and you have grossly deceived me, your friend."

"Do not, I beseech you," sobbed Cecilia, "do not add to the anguish I endure, by thinking me so contemptible; do not believe me capable of uttering falsehoods—of deceiving you. No, no, I call Heaven to attest, I knew nothing of Miss Maxfield's elopement. I lent her no money."

"To whom then have you lent it?" demanded Mrs. Doricourt, affected and astonished at her grief and energy. "Cecilia, in what instance have I forfeited your affection, that you

thus cruelly withhold from me your confidence?"

"Heaven knows!" replied Cecilia, "there is no being on earth whom I love so much, so dearly as yourself; but do not, I conjure you, do not question me on this subject; for though I owe you all gratitude, all respect, here I am constrained to silence."

"It is true," said Mrs. Doricourt, "I have no right to question you on the disposal of this money. I have been led to inquire how it was employed, from the confusion you betrayed in the library, from the distress in which I have now found you, and the mystery you attach to its disposal; but since you can resolve to give pain to my feelings, by persisting to deny me your confidence, farewell for ever Cecilia! On your account I left the tranquillity of my home, on your account I shall return to it immediately, leaving you my good wishes, that the being who has persuaded you to conceal your actions from my inspection may prove to you as true a friend as I have been."

Mrs. Doricourt rose to leave the room.

Convulsed with agony, Cecilia clung to her knees.—"Take me," said she, "take me with you. Do not leave me to distraction in this hateful place!"

"No," replied Mrs. Doricourt, endeavouring to disengage herself from the strong embrace of Cecilia, "that cannot be, for the bond of our confidence is destroyed. When Cecilia Delmore was ingenuous, when no action of her life shunned the inquiry of her friend, then she was the pure angel whose smile illumined the peaceful, innocent shades of St. Herbert's Island; but now—"

"Oh that you could read my heart," interrupted Cecilia, "you would find it still ingenuous, still innocent as ever; you would see that I have no thought, no act, that shuns your inquiry; you would then pity me, for you would know that I am cruelly constrained to silence."

"Constrained!" repeated Mrs. Doricourt; "ridiculous assertion! You have no parents nor husband. By whom, or what then, can you be constrained?"

"Forgive me—I have been compelled to take an oath," murmured Cecilia, and sunk motionless at the feet of Mrs. Doricourt, who, having succeeded in restoring her to recollection, endeavoured, by the most soothing attentions, to assure her that she was still her tender and attached friend.

Mrs. Doricourt soon discovered that Cecilia had far overrated her error in calling it criminal, and that some deep artifice had been used to bind her by oath to conceal to whom she had lent her money. Mrs. Doricourt was convinced that compulsory oaths neither were, nor ought to be binding.

Having descended with Cecilia to the library, she sent to request the presence of the earl of Torrington, and at length their united arguments and persuasions drew from the weeping Cecilia the history—of the count del Montarino's midnight intrusion, and the means he had used to terrify her into lending the money, and extort from her an oath of secrecy.

Lord Torrington evinced the utmost indignation. He made no scruple to call the count a robber, of whom the law ought to be permitted to take cognizance. He wished that Cecilia had possessed the courage to call for assistance, but at the same time confessed that few women would have acted otherwise than she had done in such alarming circumstances.

Mrs. Doricourt mingled her tears of joy with Cecilia's; for it had been most painful to her feelings, to think the child she had brought up, whose mind she had cultivated with such fond solicitude, could be capable of deceit, or forgetful of the precepts of religion and virtue.

Mrs. Doricourt added Cecilia's name to the subscription list for the poor widow, and the earl insisted on replenishing her purse, saying, with a good-humoured smile—"Do not, my dear Cecilia, give one moment's thought or regret to the money you have lost; for I am greatly deceived, if either lady Jacintha Fitzosborne or the count del Montarino ever recollect they are in your debt."

"I am exactly of your lordship's opinion," rejoined Mrs. Doricourt; "and I recommend it to Cecilia, to set down as memoranda—"Paid four hundred and fifty pounds for experience, which shall, in future, prevent my being terrified or persuaded into compliances that reason, calm and dispassionate, may disapprove."

The earl informed his son of the base conduct of the count del Montarino; and though Oscar felt all the fiery particles of his nature roused up to revenge this outrage on Miss Delmore, yet regard for the feelings of Miss Maxfield's family, and considerations for Cecilia's delicacy, made it appear most proper to let the nefarious business rest in silence.

Cecilia's conduct was cleared from the shadow of blame, and Mrs. Doricourt entreated the earl to let the count del Montarino's villany remain a secret among themselves, out of pity to the unfortunate silly girl, who, no doubt, was by that time his wife.

Cecilia's tears and agitation had given her a violent headache, and Mrs. Doricourt apologized for her not appearing at dinner.

The countess thought of her morning concert, and hoped Miss Delmore was not seriously indisposed.

Lady Jacintha could not restrain a smile at the selfish solicitude of the countess, who, independent of her own purposes, she knew, did not care whether Miss Delmore lived or died; but the next morning found Cecilia perfectly recovered, and radiant in beauty, to the great relief of the countess, who had trembled with the cruel apprehension of being deprived of her assistance.

Lady Jacintha passed the morning salutation with Miss Delmore with ill-disguised vexation. She would have been pleased at any mischance, sickness, or accident, that would have prevented her appearing in the music-room or at the ball.

The next day, Thursday, the earl received the compliments and congratulations of his friends. The morning concert passed off with great eclat, but was not so well attended as the countess expected, which rather offended her pride; but before the dinner-hour a large party arrived from Keswick, and her vanity was gratified with seeing her table crowded beyond comfort.

With the last arrivals came lady Jane Bruce, Miss Graham, and her cousin, the Patagonian Miss Macdonald, whose towering height overtopped most of the females present by half a head.

Miss Graham, like lady Jacintha Fitzosborne, was a coquette of the first order, but far her inferior in finesse and fashionable education; she was showy in person rather than handsome, and united to the bloom of eighteen a good-tempered vivacity, that made her a

general favourite with the gentlemen.

Miss Macdonald had been told by a travelled gentleman, that she resembled the ancient Grecian statues in countenance and figure; and to render the likeness more strikingly obvious, she threw over her thin form antique draperies of the most transparent texture; she bound up her long lank hair with Athenian fillets, and affected graceful attitudes, till her tall person much oftener excited ridicule than admiration.

Lady Jane Bruce was a Scotchwoman, who prided herself but little on the score of beauty; but on her descent from Robert Bruce, and of her dancing, no mortal on earth was prouder or vainer.

The lively Miss Graham had never seen the wonders of London, and she was expatiating with great volubility on the delight she expected from being presented at court, and spending the winter in town, when the eyes of all her auditors were turned on Mrs. Doricourt, who, in compliment to the earl, had thrown off her black robes, and entered the drawing-room in a superb dress of oriental manufacture; her fine dark glossy hair banded *à la Grec*, and confined with brilliant ornaments of immense value. Mrs. Doricourt was still a beautiful woman: without study or affectation, her countenance, figure, and attitudes, were exactly Grecian, and near her Miss Macdonald appeared a coarse, awkward imitation.

The brilliants that glittered on Mrs. Doricourt's head, bosom, and arms, had excited much admiration, envy, and surmises, respecting their value, when lady Jacintha whispered sir Cyril Musgrove—"Your 'Lady of the Lake' is transformed into the queen of diamonds."

"Into the queen of hearts, you mean," replied he, "for, 'pon my honour, she is the handsomest woman in the room."

Lady Jacintha smiled disdainfully, thought sir Cyril very rude, and was about to mortify his vanity by praising the fashionable appearance of lord Alwyn Bruce, when Cecilia was led into the room by lord Rushdale.

Lady Jacintha coloured with envy, the countess of Torrington with indignation, for whispers met their ears that lord Rushdale and Miss Delmore were a beautiful pair, and seemed designed for each other.

Lord Alwyn Bruce had heard much of Miss Delmore's beauty, but had never seen her till the present moment, and he now requested to be introduced to her so eagerly, that Miss Macdonald, who had set his lordship down in the list of her admirers, felt a pang of jealousy, and threw the drapery over her left arm with an action so violent, so ungraceful, and so unlike her usual statue movements, that the tassel terminating its end struck sir Cyril Musgrove a smart blow on the cheek.

The lady blushed and apologized, and though he felt an unpleasant tingle, sir Cyril's politeness compelled him to say that he felt proud to be distinguished by Miss Macdonald, and if she had marked him, he hoped it was for her own.

During lord Alwyn Bruce's introduction to Miss Delmore, the females had leisure to examine her dress: it was lace of the finest texture, thrown over white satin; the bosom and sleeves were elegantly ornamented with loops composed of roses and lilies of the valley—all of the richest oriental pearl: her earrings, necklace, bracelets, and armlets, were of the same costly material, as was the chaplet of roses, lilies, and jessamine, that

crowned the glossy ringlets of her dark auburn hair.

“Open that window, for Heaven’s sake, sir Middleton!” said lady Jacintha, “or I shall faint: “why, all the pearl-merchants of Bassora have emptied their caskets to adorn Miss Delmore to-night. Did you ever see such a profusion of pearls on one dress?”

“For my part,” lisped lady Eglantine, “I never saw any thing half as elegant and I never shall be happy till I have just such another chaplet.”

“I should despise myself,” replied lady Jacintha, “if I was capable of wishing for any thing that resembles it: thank Heaven, I feel myself superior to the desire of copying the dress of lord Torrington’s housekeeper’s niece. What consummate vanity and effrontery the girl must possess, to appear in a dress fit for a princess before us, to whom her origin is so well known! No one need wonder she has not money for charitable purposes, when they perceive how extravagant she is in trinkets and ornaments.”

“And yet,” said lord Wilton, “I would venture to lay a thousand pounds, that Miss Delmore never bought a trinket in her life.”

“She is vastly obliged to you for defending her cause,” replied lady Jacintha, spitefully; “but I really wonder how you should know in what way Miss Delmore disposes of the large sums of money the earl of Torrington and Mrs. Doricourt supply her with.”

“I have more knowledge of Miss Delmore’s money transactions than your ladyship is aware of,” returned lord Wilton; “two gentlemen of your acquaintance lately let me into the secret.”

“Two gentlemen of my acquaintance!” repeated lady Jacintha; “your lordship must be in an error, for I am positive no gentlemen of my acquaintance would take the trouble to investigate any concerns of Miss Delmore’s.”

“Shall I name them?” said lord Wilton.

“Certainly,” returned lady Jacintha, carelessly; “just as you please.”

“Are you quite certain you will not be displeased if I do?” asked lord Wilton.

“I am quite certain,” replied lady Jacintha, “that I have no acquaintance with gentlemen that I shall be ashamed to acknowledge.”

“Vell then, my lady,” said lord Wilton, imitating the slang manner of the bailiff, “I shall come for to go for to ax you what you thinks of the information of one Dick Trapwell, and,” changing his manner to that of the dandy attorney, “beg pardon, my lady, of James Ferret, solicitor, No. 15, Halfmoon-street, Piccadilly.”

Lady Jacintha was in reality ready to faint. Astonished and confounded, she exclaimed—“I have heard quite enough—say no more, I entreat you.”

“Only this,” resumed lord Wilton, “that you may not suppose me in the confidence of Miss Delmore, I beg to inform you, that I met Messrs. Ferret and Trapwell, as I returned from Keswick: they were known to me, and I would have taken another road, supposing their visit to Torrington Castle was to pay their respects to me, but they overtook and undeceived me, and from these *ci-devant* friends of yours, lady Jacintha, I gained the information of Miss Delmore’s manner of disposing of her money.”

Lord Wilton coldly bowed, and moved to another part of the room. Lady Jacintha stood mortified and enraged.

Mrs. Freakley’s little grey eyes were extended into a stare of contempt, and lady

Jacintha saw in her look that she perfectly understood her obligation to lord Torrington's housekeeper's niece.

Sir Middleton Maxfield asked what they were talking about.

"Miss Delmore's beauty, to be sure," returned lady Jacintha.

"She is not so handsome as Mrs. Doricourt," lisped lady Eglantine: "I never thought her so beautiful before."

Lord Wilton again approached with sir Cyril Musgrove.—"pon my honour," said he, "I don't think I shall dance tonight."

"Not dance!" said lady Jane Bruce, "why not? are you ill, sir Cyril?"

"No, not ill," replied he, "but mortified, 'pon my honour: was stepping up to ask Miss Delmore if she would, when she turned away with the air of a duchess, and said she was engaged. I should be very angry, only, 'pon my honour, it is impossible to be angry with a beautiful woman."

"Really," drawled Miss Macdonald, "I think the gentlemen are all fascinated by this Miss Delmore: they talk of nothing but her beauty."

"Pardon me there," replied lord Wilton; "lady Jacintha Fitzosborne can witness we had just now a long conversation, in which we never spoke of Miss Delmore's beauty, but only of her amiable qualities, her generosity, and feeling."

"Bless me, lord Wilton," exclaimed Mrs. Freakley, anger tinging her cheeks of a deeper red than her rose-coloured satin, "I actually believe you are in love with Miss Delmore, you talk so much about her."

"No," replied sir Cyril, laughing; "no, I promise you, Wilton has more wisdom—

"Philander pass'd the op'ning rosebud by;
The tulip's full-blown charms engag'd his eye."

Mrs. Freakley smiled with self-complacency. She felt she was the tulip, and, as sir Cyril suppressed the conclusion of the stanza, she construed the quotation into a compliment.

Miss Delmore and Miss Graham, though rival beauties, appeared to be much pleased with each other, which lady Torrington assured Drawley was nothing more than finesse; for she was certain they could, in reality, poison each other; but she was prodigiously glad to see Miss Delmore conduct herself so properly, because it relieved her from uneasy apprehensions respecting her behaviour when introduced to her parties in town, where it was highly necessary to be *au fait* in the art of mystification.

The day passed with Cecilia very pleasantly, but the evening was delightful. She danced with lord Rushdale, with lord Alwyn Bruce, and with Mr. Drawley, who, while they waited for the forming of the set, wished that her heart was at liberty; he would assail it with all "love's artillery," but I know," continued he, "that the little flutterer is caged, and all that remains for me is to wish you happiness."

Cecilia protested she did not understand him.

Drawley would have given her a hint that her partiality for lord Rushdale had not escaped him, but lady Torrington was too near, and the conversation was interrupted by the commencement of the dance.

Lady Jane Bruce made a set for reels, and proved that report had not exaggerated, for in this national dance she excelled, and kept up its spirit with unwearied gaiety.

Lady Jacintha had set her heart on tormenting the countess of Torrington, and by persevering in ridiculing, alluring, and teasing, she at last engaged Drawley to waltz with her. In the giddy velocity of this dance, lady Jacintha contrived to outvie the attitudes of Miss Macdonald.

The countess declared Drawley a divinity, but lady Jacintha shockingly indelicate; and lord Rushdale, as he beheld their limbs entwined in the whirl of the dance, mentally hoped that he might never see Cecilia waltz.

A magnificent supper, served between one and two in the morning, disengaged Drawley from the inebriating witchery of the waltz, in the delirium of which he forgot his dislike of lady Jacintha; and while, in the rapid whirl of the dance, he held her in his arms, he began to think her beautiful; but when the music ceased, the fever of imagination subsided, the spell was dissolved, and he returned to whisper soft nothings in the ear of the countess, to the extreme vexation of lady Jacintha, who had flattered herself with enslaving Drawley, and gaining a triumph over the countess, whom she hated, and wished, by every possible means, to annoy.

It was near eight o'clock in the morning before all the company had left the castle, to spread the fame of lady Torrington's taste and elegance, and the earl's hospitality.

Fatigued but not satiated with pleasure, the countess retired to rest, satisfied that she had given the Cumberland gentry a specimen of splendour such as had never blazed upon their optics before, and had inflamed their imaginations with impatient longings for her *fête champêtre*; but when lady Torrington awoke from entrancing dreams of outdoing every thing that taste had hitherto projected or wealth procured, she was fated to prove that disappointment treads on the heels of expectation, and that it is an error to say wealth can purchase every thing. A letter was handed to the countess, informing her, that monsieur Frippoine had departed this life the very day her ladyship wished to engage him, and that all the clever people in town had been put in requisition, to arrange and conduct a fete to be given in Devonshire, in honour of the marriage of a citizen's daughter with the earl of Brookford.

The countess wept and raved, and execrated the perfidious villain, count del Montarino, through whose unparalleled ingratitude she should be obliged to give up her fete, on which not only her waking thoughts, but her very dreams, had been employed for the last month.—“Oh,” said the countess, wringing her hands, “every thing happens to plague me; that monsieur Frippoine died on purpose to disappoint me. Oh! it was barbarous!—it was cruel of him not to live till my fete was over! He might have been spared then, but now—oh! Smithson! Smithson! I shall go mad!”

“After having cost so much money, and being in such a state of forwardness,” said Mrs. Smithson, sobbing in sympathy with the distress of her lady, “and after having such beautiful things made, which are now of no use at all. Oh dear, it is shocking barbarous work, for a citizen's daughter to set about disappointing a countess. I could tear her nasty eyes out—the impudent creature.”

“To be sure, Smithson, that greatly aggravates the disappointment,” replied the countess. “A citizen's daughter to have the presumption to give a fete! but this

impertinent attempt of city pride, to imitate the entertainments of persons of fashion and rank, would only have been matter of diversion to me, had that vile man put off his ridiculous elopement for another fortnight; but I am now ruined past redemption. All the newspapers will relate the disappointment of the countess of Torrington, and the triumph of this detestable *citoyenne*—every column will be filled with descriptions of her splendid entertainment, while my disappointment will afford subject of laughter to all my acquaintance.”

Before night the ferment of lady Torrington’s spirits had considerably subsided, for the sudden indisposition of lord Rushdale seemed to promise her an excuse for giving up her fete, and sparing her the mortification of confessing she was obliged to yield to a citizen’s daughter.

Lord Rushdale, while playing at chess with Mrs. Doricourt, complained of a swimming in his head, and shortly after fell back in his chair in a fainting fit.

The opinion of the physicians, that lord Rushdale’s disorder was the smallpox, constrained Mrs. Doricourt to remove Cecilia immediately from the castle, as she had never had that terrible enemy to beauty.

Cecilia thought not of herself—Oscar, the suffering Oscar, filled every idea, and she would have been content to share the disorder, might she but be permitted to watch over and console him in his illness.

The earl, though full of apprehension for his son’s life, hurried the departure of Cecilia, so fearful was he of her taking the infection, and suffering from a disease so generally fatal in its progress.

The countess, irritated by her recent disappointment, seemed little affected by her son’s malady, or sensible of Cecilia’s danger; self occupied her mind solely, and she heard her guests giving orders for their departure, with no other feeling of regret but that the gloom and loneliness of the castle would be intolerable, when she was left with no other company than the earl, who had never been to her very agreeable society, and now would be worse than ever.

Nothing on earth could have given lady Jacintha more pleasure than to witness the disappointments of the countess of Torrington. At the dangerous state of lord Rushdale her malignant heart rejoiced; she anticipated, with the feelings of a fiend, the extinction of the title of Torrington; for since Rushdale would not live for her, she wished him laid in the family monument.

Lady Eglantine Sydney, with much affected concern for the situation of lord Rushdale, with many hopes that he would recover, and wishes that his very interesting face would not be injured by the shocking distemper, prepared to join her aunt, the honourable Mrs. Mabel Oldstock, at Weymouth, thus evading giving her cousin, lady Jacintha, an invitation to Jessamine Lodge, her father’s seat, near Bath; lord Melvil intending to follow her to Weymouth, and privately make her his bride.

Lady Jacintha, not being able to persuade her cousin to put off her visit to Weymouth, found herself awkwardly situated, having at that time no dear friend that she could favour with her company. Thus disagreeably circumstanced, she would have invited herself into Wiltshire, to Strawberry Hall, with Mrs. Freakley; but Mrs. Freakley had felt the effect of lady Jacintha’s wit, in ill-natured remarks on her person; she also

disapproved sir Middleton Maxfield's attentions to her ladyship, and fearful of her inveigling the foolish boy into marrying her, Mrs. Freakley prudently resolved to give them no opportunities of meeting at her house, by volunteering, with lady Welford, to remain at Torrington Castle with the countess, during the melancholy illness of lord Rushdale.

Lady Torrington joyfully accepted lady Welford and Mrs. Freakley's offer of remaining, dreading solitude, and being without mental resources; any society was better than none, for neither of these ladies had ever been favourites with the countess; but now she was willing to forget that lady Welford belonged to the *perfects*, and that Mrs. Freakley was a short, fat, disagreeable, talkative, old woman.

The earl of Torrington, in the illness of his son, saw an awful visitation for the sins of his youth. Regardless of his own health, he seldom left the chamber of the suffering Oscar, whose disorder was of the worst sort, and his life in imminent danger. Covered with virulent pustules, he was in a high fever, delirious, knew no one, and raved continually of Cecilia, to whom he addressed the most impassioned vows of love and undeviating fidelity.

The visits of the countess to the sick chamber were always short; the dreadful situation of her son, she pretended to say, was too much for her feelings to bear, and she spoke truly; for the name of Cecilia, uttered in so impassioned a way by her son in his delirium, proved to her the strong attachment of his heart. Her indignant feelings were roused into tumult at the disclosure of what she denominated his meanness and depravity, and in preference to the destruction of her own ambitious schemes, she would have preferred to behold the heir of Torrington a corpse.

The state of lord Rushdale was every morning dispatched to the Hermitage by lady Welford, where Mrs. Doricourt had, in her turn, very unpleasant intelligence to communicate.

Cecilia, the morning after her return home, had been taken ill, and exhibited symptoms of the terrific smallpox.

"My Cecilia," said Mrs. Doricourt, in a note to her friend, "is free from fever, her face is entirely covered, and her beautiful eyes are sealed up with this frightful distemper. Her beauty, I fear, will be entirely destroyed; but this, I trust, her good sense will enable her to bear unmurmuring. If it pleases Heaven to restore her sight, beauty is but of little consequence; her amiable disposition, and her various accomplishments, will render her sufficiently attractive."

The earl of Torrington heard of Cecilia's illness with grief as sincere as that he felt for his son; and in the privacy of his closet, he humbled himself before the Omnipotent Dispenser of blessings and misfortunes, and while he acknowledged that his offences deserved the punishment of losing both these interesting beings, he prayed that the chastisement of his sins might fall on himself alone, and Oscar and Cecilia might be spared.

The prayer of the penitent was not rejected—contrary to the belief or hope of the medical gentlemen, lord Rushdale, having passed the crisis of his disorder, fell into a deep sleep; a gentle dew moistened his burning frame, and he awoke refreshed, restored to reason, and so much better, as to remove from the mind of the countess the horror of

being what she called buried alive—remaining at Torrington Castle with no other company than the perfect lady Welford, and the tiresome *pronneur*, Mrs. Freakley.

At the same hour that lord Rushdale spoke rationally, Cecilia was also declared out of danger, which intelligence, gratifying to lord Torrington's ears, was communicated to him in the presence of the countess by Mrs. Milman, who was just returned from the Hermitage, where she had distressed and offended Mrs. Doricourt, by weeping and ignorantly lamenting the disgusting appearance of the disorder on her niece's face.—“The poor dear child is quite a downright fright to look at, my lady,” said Mrs. Milman, wiping her eyes; “they have cut off her fine long hair close to her head; and only think, my lady, that the dear creature should catch the disorder from lord Rushdale, after having been vaccinated twice, and never taking it! All her eyebrows, and her long dark eyelashes, are gone! Oh dear, dear!” bursting again into tears, “Cecilia, that every body, man, woman, and child, said was so beautiful, will be quite an object!”

“So much the better,” returned lady Torrington, hoping her ugliness would cure lord Rushdale's *maladie de coeur*.

“Don't say so, pray, my lady,” said Mrs. Milman; “don't be so cruel as to say it is better for the poor dear child to be a fright.”

“I did not mean that,” replied lady Torrington, perceiving the earl looked displeased. “I mean she will get better—that is, I mean her appearance will get better.”

“Indeed I hope so, my lady,” said the housekeeper, “or else, poor thing! according to my fancy, she would be better in the grave, with her poor mother, than to live, and be such a fright as nobody could bear to look at.”

Lady Torrington having given her orders, Mrs. Milman left the room, repeating to herself— “The countess has a heart as hard as a flint stone; but as she felt so little for her own son, I need not expect her to care at all about my poor dear Cecilia.”

Mrs. Milman found Mr. Wilson in her parlour, impatiently waiting, in hopes of hearing news of Cecilia's amended health; but for some time her sobs and tears, and wringing of her hands, led him to suppose she was dead.

At last he made out, that her excessive grief was for the loss of Cecilia's beauty—not her life, which was considered entirely out of danger; and he almost scolded to think that she put so much value on so perishable an article as beauty, or thought a smooth skin of such consequence.

“If Cecilia should lose her beauty,” said Mr. Wilson, “never mind that, my worthy friend—she will keep an amiable temper and good sense.”

“Yes, Mr. Wilson, all this is very true,” replied Mrs. Milman, sobbing; “but then, what great lord or baronet cares a fig about amiable tempers or good sense? they can see when a young woman's face is handsome, but they never trouble themselves to look so deep as her mind.”

“More fools they,” said Wilson; “beauty is a flower that soon fades, and the mind is what a man ought to look at, if he intends to be happy when he marries; and if a woman has nothing more than a pretty face to recommend her, after the honeymoon is over, a man would care less for his wife than he does for his horse.”

Mrs. Milman was not convinced by Mr. Wilson's logic, and she continued to sigh and weep, as he went on—“Now, for my part, Cecilia's beauty appears to me to be of no

sort of consequence; in fact, it will give my nephew Solomon Scroggins a better chance of success; and from what you, Mrs. Milman, consider a great misfortune, I derive the strongest hope that the earl of Torrington will agree with my wishes, and approve the marriage of the young folks. I am really quite hurt to see you cry so, Mrs. Milman; you know you used to tell me, that whatever happened was for the best."

"Well, I suppose it is," replied Mrs. Milman; "but I am only a weak silly woman, and when I remember her white skin, and her beautiful colour, it almost breaks my heart. Oh dear, dear, Mr. Wilson! if you was to see the poor dear child, you would not know her; her face is so swelled, and her nose looks so big and do you know, when I was telling the earl, who loves her as well as he does his own son, how altered she was, the countess, (I shall hate her for it as long as I draw breath), she, forsooth, who prides herself so much on her own painted face, said, it was so much the better that Cecilia's beauty was quite and clean gone."

"Indeed! Did lady Torrington say that?" asked Wilson.

"Yes, indeed did she," replied Mrs. Milman; "the unfeeling creature!"

"It is the most sensible thing she ever said in her life," returned Wilson.

"Oh dear, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Milman, bursting into a fresh flood of tears. "You are all alike; you have all hearts harder than flint stones. I know the countess can't bear that any body should be handsome but herself; I know she would be glad if the poor child was to have seams in her face as thick as my finger, and to be blind with one eye, and blink with the other; but I little expected that you, Mr. Wilson, would have been so hard-hearted; that you, Mr. Wilson, who always pretended to be so fond of Cecilia, would have said such cruel things."

Wilson looked amazed.—"Mercy on me!" replied he, "what cruel things have I said, Mrs. Milman?"

"Why you said," replied Mrs. Milman, "that the countess spoke sense when she said—'so much the better that Cecilia had lost all her beauty.'"

"Beauty! nonsense!" replied Wilson; "what is it good for? only to make girls vain and foolish."

"But Cecilia was neither vain nor foolish, and I was in hopes her beauty would have married her to a baronet at least."

"Her good temper and her good sense," said Wilson, "will marry her to Solomon Scroggins, my nephew, the best translator of Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek, in England. Keep up your spirits, my good woman, and you will find that sense is better than beauty. I am now very glad that I did not invite Solomon down this summer: he will now choose his wife by his judgment—not with his eyes."

Mrs. Milman being left alone, did not feel all the consolation Mr. Wilson intended to give, when he informed her that the loss of her niece's beauty made not the least alteration in his design of marrying her to his nephew.—"To be sure young Scroggins may be a good enough match now," said Mrs. Milman, wiping her eyes and smoothing her apron, "but, oh dear! dear! before Cecilia's face was so disfigured, I looked forward to seeing her a countess, and now nothing but plain Mrs. Scroggins. Well, well, what poor short-sighted mortals we are! I had set it down for certain that Cecilia would marry highly, and that I, when she was countess, or somebody of rank, should have risen in life

myself. Ah! well-a-day! nothing in this life but troubles and disappointments! Now I suppose I shall be the earl of Torrington's housekeeper as long as I live, unless I choose to go to London and keep a coffeehouse."

Cecilia's greatest anxiety during her illness was lord Rushdale. She had not once expressed a wish respecting her own person, but had many times hoped the fine expressive countenance of lord Rushdale might not be injured by the ravages of the distemper.

"You have had the disorder much more heavily than lord Rushdale, my love," said lady Welford, who was come to the Hermitage, at Oscar's express desire, to see Cecilia, and to bring him a true account whether she was, as his mother had dropped a hint, much disfigured; "you," continued lady Welford, "have had the disorder much more heavily than lord Rushdale: when the redness wears off, I do not believe he will be at all marked."

"Thank Heaven!" said Cecilia, with fervency; "I should have been extremely sorry to see his fine face disfigured."

Cecilia's eyes were yet too weak to bear the light, and being covered with a green shade, she could not see the smile exchanged by lady Welford and Mrs. Doricourt.

"And for yourself, my sweet Cecilia," resumed lady Welford, "have you no concern for your own beauty?"

"Not in the least, my dear madam," replied she; "I am so certain that the loss of any little personal attractions I might have once possessed will make no alteration in the affection of my friends, that I never give my face a thought; but now you put me in mind of it, I should like to see what effect the disorder has had on my countenance."

"You have entirely lost your eyebrows and your eyelashes, my Cecilia," said Mrs. Doricourt.

"Yes, and my long hair," returned Cecilia, "of which, to confess the truth, I was not a little vain; but these, my dear madam, will, you know, grow again."

"There have been many very kind inquiries made since your illness," said Mrs. Doricourt, "particularly by lady Jane Bruce, and the lively Miss Graham."

"Miss Macdonald, being a little jealous," rejoined lady Welford, "has not, I suppose, been very anxious for the preservation of your beauty. Lord Alwyn Bruce, though, has made daily inquiries after you: but fortify your mind, my love, for, with the loss of your beauty, you must expect the loss of your lovers."

"If my beauty was their sole attraction," replied Cecilia, smiling, "I am content to lose them. It is true, I have heard many fine speeches from the gentlemen at Torrington Castle, but they made no impression, and indeed, before my illness, I had almost made a resolve never to marry; and now, since—"

"Beware of making rash resolves, my love," said Mrs. Doricourt, "particularly on a love subject: I hope to see you married and happy with the man of your choice."

Cecilia sighed.

"There is not the smallest occasion for that deep sigh," rejoined lady Welford, "for you know you said yesterday, that if you could hear that lord Rushdale's face would escape injury, you should be quite happy."

"And so I am," returned Cecilia; "I am quite happy, for, thanks to Heaven, and you,

my dear madam,” pressing Mrs. Doricourt’s hand to her lips, “I am now almost well, and if I should be altogether as frightful as aunt Milman said when she fancied me asleep, why I will correct all my faults, and endeavour to be amiable.”

“You are already amiable, my dear Cecilia,” said lady Welford, “and will, I trust, forgive the little trial I induced Mrs. Doricourt to make of your fortitude and resignation. I wished to know how you would bear the loss of your beauty—the most precious, in a vain woman’s idea, of all her possessions.”

“You have borne the trial nobly,” rejoined Mrs. Doricourt, “and believe me, Cecilia, in spite of your aunt Milman’s doleful predictions, and Miss Macdonald’s wishes, you will, in a very short time, recover all your charms. I was very sorry to cut off your hair, my sweet girl, but that will soon grow again, while I do not think your face will retain a single mark of the disorder.”

When lord Rushdale was able to quit his chamber, and join the family party, he expressed the greatest delight at being assured by lady Welford that Cecilia would not lose a single charm.

The countess of Torrington replied, she wished very sincerely that Miss Delmore had been deprived of all her charms, for she had been the very genius of mischief in her family; “twice,” said the countess, “she has endangered Oscar’s life, and added to her mischief by driving all my friends from the castle.”

Lord Rushdale would have spoken in defence of Cecilia, but the earl prevented him by contradicting part of lady Torrington’s assertion.—“It is not true,” said he, “that Miss Delmore has twice endangered Oscar’s life: the symptoms of this cruel disorder first appeared in lord Rushdale; of consequence, he must have communicated the infection to Miss Delmore, and deprived you of the company of your friends: but are these idle retrospections, Emily, your aspirations of gratitude to Heaven, for having graciously restored the health of your son, whose life your weakness, not to give it a worse name, has endangered? for had you not persisted in sending him from you in his infancy to be inoculated, you would have been certain the operation had been performed, which is now evident never took place. Are these idle querulous complaints of the departure of your friends, the most grateful return you can make those ladies who have kindly remained with you during the illness of your son?”

“I am sure you are growing every day more and more *unkind* in your remarks and censures,” replied the countess; “you must be very certain that I am infinitely obliged to lady Welford and Mrs. Freakley, for having staid to enliven my solitude, and no person of common sense can doubt my being very happy to see Oscar able to come among us again; but you know I never could see Miss Delmore with your lordship’s eyes, and that I have always hated to hear her beauty so extravagantly extolled.”

“I am very sorry to add to your vexation,” said the earl, “but I fear Miss Delmore’s beauty is fated to disturb your serenity, and give you mortification, for I shall insist that you invite Mrs. Doricourt and Miss Delmore to all your routs next winter.”

“What miracle next?” exclaimed lady Torrington; “the Lady of the Lake intend to forsake the Island of Calm Delights, as sir Cyril Musgrove calls it, and pass the winter in the foggy impure atmosphere of London! can this be possible?”

“*Most veritable*,” replied the earl.

“Mrs. Doricourt’s own house in Bedford-square is preparing for her reception,” said lady Welford, “and she has ordered a superb equipage.”

“Wonder upon wonder!” exclaimed the countess; “all this fine show-off is with the intention of getting the peerless Cecilia a husband, I suppose; but, alas for portionless maidens! this is a very mercenary age, and men are only to be caught with a golden hook.”

“All men,” replied lord Rushdale, “are not so mercenary, and the beauty and accomplishments of Miss Delmore—”

“Of which I am positively sick to hear,” interrupted lady Torrington—“may perhaps entrap the hearts of silly romantic boys; but the laws of this country, thank Heaven, lord Rushdale, have wisely provided against a minor disgracing himself and his family by an improper marriage.”

“And, thank Heaven,” returned lord Rushdale, “the same wise laws give freedom of will at a certain age, and restrain the heads of families from exercising the authority that might occasion misery for life.”

“Over you, Oscar,” said the earl, “no undue authority will ever be exercised; in your father you will find an indulgent friend.”

The countess frowned, and retired to write a note to doctor Bellamy, in which she offered him a considerable *douceur* if he would directly advise sea-bathing for lord Rushdale. The countess was *ennuyée* to death with the unceasing nonsense of Mrs. Freakley, and the perfections of lady Welford. Her friend, the duchess of Aberdeen, was at Brighthelmstone with her daughter, lady Arabella Moncrief; and the handsome elegant Tangent Drawley had written to assure her that he had seen no eyes half as brilliant as hers among the fair promenaders on the Steine.

Agreeable to her ladyship’s request, the obsequious doctor Bellamy, at his next visit, recommended change of air for his patient, and particularly advised sea-bathing, as necessary to lord Rushdale’s perfect recovery.

The earl had come into Cumberland with an intention of remaining till the beginning of November, but his son’s health was to him of so much importance, that he proposed setting off immediately for Weymouth.

Lady Torrington strongly objected to Weymouth, declaring that she wished to avoid lady Eglantine Sydney, and the tiresome old maid, her aunt, whom she must be compelled to visit if she went to Weymouth. She then mentioned Brighthelmstone, and carried her point with very little opposition from the earl.

Mrs. Freakley had promised to meet lord Wilton at Tunbridge Wells the beginning of October, and she took leave of Torrington Castle with very little regret, the purpose for which she had so eagerly sought an invitation from the countess being completely disappointed by the indifference of lord Rushdale to the sweet engaging simplicity of her “Child of Nature,” and by poor dear Jemima’s unfortunate engagement with an artful villain, whose right to the title of count she had always doubted; but that her own choice had fallen on a nobleman she was quite certain; and she consoled her mind for the imprudence of her unfortunate niece, with the delightful thought of very soon exchanging the plain Mrs. Freakley for the title of lady Wilton.

All the regrets and disappointments of the countess of Torrington were now forgotten

in preparing to leave Cumberland, which she protested to Mrs. Smithson, she hoped never to visit again.

Notes were every day exchanged between Torrington Castle and the Hermitage, and Mrs. Doricourt had informed the earl that she considered it proper to prevent lord Rushdale from seeing Cecilia again before they met in town in November. But the impassioned Rushdale had opened his heart to his father; he had declared his unalterable affection for Cecilia, and the misery he should endure, if not permitted to see her previous to his quitting Cumberland.

The earl was not inexorable to the pleadings of his son; he remembered when he had loved a being fair and faultless as Cecilia; his heart melted at the tender recollection, and Oscar received his permission to see and disclose his passion to Cecilia.

Lord Torrington prepared Mrs. Doricourt to expect a visit from himself and Oscar, whose cause he pleaded so successfully, that Mrs. Doricourt consented they should take Cecilia by surprise.

Cecilia was now quite well, and her complexion was regaining its natural delicacy. She was practising a favourite harp song of the earl's, when the guests so little expected by her were welcomed to the Hermitage by Mrs. Doricourt.

Lord Rushdale impatiently inquired for Cecilia.

"She is well, and you shall see her presently," replied Mrs. Doricourt; "but I would yet recommend that all professions and declarations, save those of friendship, be postponed till you meet in town. Your heart will then have proved the effect of absence: perhaps, after that trial, you will find—"

"I shall find," replied Oscar, eagerly interrupting her, "that neither time nor absence will alter my love for Cecilia."

Mrs. Doricourt mournfully shook her head. She remembered that Henry Woodville had so vowed: he had sworn to love none but her, yet, in the short space of a little month, he had forgotten his ardent professions, and married another. Mrs. Doricourt wished to spare the heart of Cecilia the pangs she had endured; but lord Rushdale felt confident of the stability of his affection, and would not listen to remonstrances, or admit delay. He was impatient to plight his own vows and receive those of Cecilia; he longed to press her to his heart, to gaze upon her face, and assure her, that had her person been ever so much altered, she would have been still dearer to him from that circumstance.

Mrs. Doricourt, finding all her arguments ineffectual, sent to request the company of Miss Delmore; but Cecilia, whose thoughts were too full of Oscar to allow even her harp to tranquillize their restless wanderings, had left the boudoir, and unconsciously strayed to the chapel. Cecilia approached the altar, where it had been her custom to breathe a prayer of thankfulness for the blessings bestowed on herself, and to supplicate for the happiness of her friends.—"Rushdale is my brother—my friend," said Cecilia; "I will pray for him."

In the act of bending her knee at the altar, she perceived a miniature picture lying on a missal; she caught it up, and gazing with astonishment, beheld the resemblance of him who occupied her thoughts—of Rushdale! The crystal was wet with recently-shed tears. Cecilia almost doubted her senses. Again she examined the countenance. It was Oscar's, though the hair was something lighter, and divided in a different way to that in which he

wore his, and the dress was Spanish.

Cecilia's eyes were fixed on the picture with feelings almost amounting to horror. Was it possible Mrs. Doricourt could love lord Rushdale? Again she perused the lineaments of the face, in the hope of discovering that it was not his resemblance; but the deep blue eye, the serpentine lip, gave a pang to her heart; the countenance was older than Oscar's—"But she has painted him thus," said Cecilia, "to bring him nearer to her own time of life. Unhappy Mrs. Doricourt! wretched—wretched Cecilia!" Her own tears fell on the miniature, as she again placed it on the missal.

As she left the chapel she met the earl of Torrington, who having warmly and affectionately congratulated her on her good looks, informed her that Mrs. Doricourt wished to see her.

Cecilia wished to speak of Oscar, but merely saying Oscar is well, the earl pursued his way through the grounds, while Cecilia, passing under the arcade, entered the library. Here she was surprised by the presence of lord Rushdale, who, folding her to his heart, expressed the happiness he felt in again beholding her.

The countenance of Mrs. Doricourt expressed no jealous emotion, but with a smile of approving sweetness she said, as she rose to quit the room—"Lord Rushdale, my Cecilia, has a suit to prefer to you, of which the earl of Torrington and myself are informed, and we invest you with full power to reject or approve, according to the dictates of your own heart."

A few moments explained to the happy Cecilia lord Rushdale's love and hopes. With modest candour and sincerity, she confessed that the knowledge of his affection increased her happiness, though she feared the world would consider her altogether unworthy his preference, being so much his inferior in rank.

"And superior to every other female," said the enraptured Rushdale, "in beauty, temper, virtue, and accomplishments."

Cecilia having given him the promise he so urgently entreated, of being his as soon as he was of age, the period his indulgent father had appointed for their marriage, Oscar became more calm, and informed Cecilia that sea-bathing had been prescribed him, and that his mother had decided on going to Brighthelmstone.

"And Mrs. Doricourt," said Cecilia, "has accepted lady Welford's invitation, and we are going to Teignmouth till November."

"And then, my lovely Cecilia," returned Oscar, "to London, where," said he, kissing her hand, "you will be surrounded by admirers; where you will be followed, flattered, and perhaps will forget—"

"Beware of suspicion," interrupted Cecilia; "I have given you my sacred promise, and it must be your own conduct alone that will induce me to retract."

Rushdale again repeated the warm vow of everlasting love and fidelity; again he pressed his lips on her white hand, and obtained her promise to correspond with him during the period of their separation.

companions, had led him.

Mrs. Doricourt had powerful reasons for believing that lord Torrington was sincerely penitent for the errors and offences of his past life; she knew that all men had much to be forgiven, and she was also certain that the earl had virtues which demanded and deserved esteem: for his sake, but more particularly for the sake of the interesting amiable Rushdale, whose happiness was so closely entwined with that of her darling Cecilia, Mrs. Doricourt wished to be on terms of amity with the countess of Torrington. To preserve this lovely unsullied blossom from the contagion of fashionable vices, she constrained herself to cultivate the acquaintance of a woman from whose society she expected to derive neither improvement or pleasure.

Mrs. Doricourt was now about to quit the peaceful retirement of St. Herbert's Island, to embark again on that headlong turbulent stream, where her happiness had been engulfed and lost for ever. A trembling presentiment, the dark shadow of evil, fell on her mind, as she reflected on the manners of the present day, and the sort of beings that crowd the fashionable circles in which the innocent Cecilia was about to move. Mrs. Doricourt was, to a certain extent, superstitious, and yielding to this weakness, she fancied that she saw sorrows and misfortunes for the child of her affection; but clouds and mists hid from her prophetic view the termination of her destiny.

Having for some moments indulged this melancholy vision, she started as from a trance, and exclaimed—"Surely it is wrong to anticipate evil, and worse than folly to *'shun joy's transient beams, because to-morrow's storm may lower.'*" To the protection of Heaven I commit my Cecilia, satisfied, that be her portion in life weal or woe, the wisdom of Providence cannot err."

Having resolved to give an entertainment at the Hermitage, previous to quitting Cumberland, she summoned Cecilia to the library.—"There, my love," said she, placing them before her, "there are the invitation cards. You will perceive I have remembered all who appeared solicitous to cultivate our acquaintance while we remained at Torrington Castle, and who expressed, during your illness, anxiety for your recovery."

"But, my dear madam, will you not invite Miss Macdonald?" finding no card addressed to her. "You know her cousin, Miss Graham, accepts no invitation in which she is not included—they are inseparable."

"In person," returned Mrs. Doricourt, "and as opposite as the poles in mind; but certainly, if you wish it, Miss Macdonald shall have a card; though you should recollect, my love, she considers you her rival with lord Alwyn Bruce, and under that impression has expressed herself in a way that reflects no credit on her delicacy, or her heart."

"I am too happy," replied Cecilia, "to bear enmity against any one; and if Miss Macdonald loves lord Alwyn Bruce, she is to be pitied, believing he prefers another."

"Miss Macdonald loves the rank of lord Alwyn Bruce," returned Mrs. Doricourt. "She is of too cold and selfish a disposition to feel any torments, except those which have their rise in disappointed ambition; but as there certainly is no revenge so noble as that of shewing kindness to an enemy, why there is a card for Miss Macdonald."

On Mrs. Doricourt's first arrival in Cumberland, she had declined receiving visits, on the plea of ill health, which had given no little offence to many, whom the report of her high family, and large fortune, rendered anxious to introduce themselves to her

acquaintance; but her choosing to reside on St. Herbert's Island soon confirmed the idle report that she was mad, and all resentment at what had been considered pride, was lost in commiseration for her fancied malady; but her appearance at Torrington Castle, after having lived so many years in total seclusion, did away the idea of her insanity—to be seen was to be admired, and again her intimacy was courted with eager avidity.

As no company had ever been received at the Hermitage, Mrs. Doricourt's unexpected invitation was hailed with transport, for curiosity, respecting the complete transformation of the island, had for years pervaded the bosoms of all ranks of people in the vicinity; and many a longing look had been cast over the barriers that prevented the landing of intruders on St. Herbert's Island.

The accounts of the extreme beauty of the walks and buildings given by Wilson and the workmen, had by some been considered fabulous, and by all greatly exaggerated; and perhaps no exhibition, promising a display of all the wonderful in art and nature, that ever was announced to the grown children of Great Britain, could have excited more general commotion.

The consecrated shades and forbidden walks of St. Herbert's were thrown open. Curiosity was at length to be gratified. All Keswick was in motion. Tailors, shoemakers, milliners, dressmakers, and hairdressers, jostled one another; and lady Torrington had the misery to hear, that even her intended fete had not been half so much talked of as Mrs. Doricourt's invitation to the Hermitage.

On the appointed day, gilded boats, with silken streamers glittering in the sun, covered the bosom of the lake; and Mrs. Doricourt and Miss Delmore received their expected guests on the Chinese bridge, where a band of concealed musicians welcomed them with enlivening strains to St. Herbert's Island, where the groves, the lawn, the shrubberies, and gardens, exhibited a beautiful spectacle of blooming fertility, and more than answered the expectations of the admiring guests, who, without a dissenting voice, agreed that the once-sterile island was converted into Elysium.

The swans, the grotto, the Chinese temple, were visited; and feasting, music, and dancing, made the hours fleet as rapidly as minutes.

In the evening the walks, bridges, groves, and shrubberies, were illuminated with variegated lamps, that shed over the island and surrounding lake a light brilliant as noonday; while a grand display of chemical fireworks completed the splendour of the scene.

But while Mrs. Doricourt and Miss Delmore, with the most elegant and polite attention to the pleasure and gratification of their guests, exerted their various talents to banish every unquiet thought and baneful passion, yet envy, jealousy, hatred, and disappointment, prevailed, and, with their scorpion fangs, prevented the countess of Torrington and Miss Macdonald from participating the general hilarity, or feeling the smallest portion of the satisfaction they affected.

Lady Torrington writhed with envy, to see that Mrs. Doricourt's entertainment had far outdone all the splendour of Torrington Castle.

Miss Macdonald could scarcely obtain a look from lord Alwyn Bruce; and she execrated the beauty of the fascinating Miss Delmore, on whom he gazed with tender admiration, near whom he contrived to fix himself, evading all her advances and efforts

to draw him into conversation.

A thousand times Miss Macdonald viewed her Grecian figure, adorned with antique draperies, in the surrounding mirrors; and vanity as constantly told her, she was in all points superior to the girl near whom lord Alwyn Bruce so provokingly hovered. Miss Macdonald wished she had remained at home, and avoided the mortification of seeing the man whom she had for many weeks played off all her studied graces to mould into a lover, treat her with negligent politeness, and bestow his warm regard on a low-born girl, subsisted by charity.

Miss Macdonald could not conceal her vexation from lady Jane Bruce, to whom she pointed out, with no little acrimony, her brother's prodigious admiration of Miss Delmore.

Lady Jane Bruce was too proud of her high descent herself, to entertain the remotest suspicion that her brother could have any serious meaning in complimenting Cecilia Delmore, whose humble birth, she wisely concluded, would present an insuperable objection, and deter any man of rank and family from thinking of her for a wife.

Lady Jane laughed at Miss Macdonald's jealousy and vexation, observing, at the same time, that her brother's gallantry gave her no sort of uneasiness. His attention to Miss Delmore, whom she must confess was a very lovely young woman, she thought extremely natural; but she had many times before seen him very attentive to handsome women—she had even known him compose sonnets and odes in praise of their beauty; yet, though he had been guilty of the folly of turning poet, she believed she could venture to affirm, his heart had never been seriously attached.

Lady Torrington greatly enjoyed the mortification of Miss Macdonald. The evident admiration of lord Alwyn Bruce for Miss Delmore consoled her for being outdone in splendour by Mrs. Doricourt, whose worldly prudence, she hoped, would persuade Miss Delmore, that lord Alwyn Bruce, being uncontrolled master of his fortune and actions, would, in every particular, be a much more eligible match for her than lord Rushdale, who was yet a minor, and that it would be best at once to secure a husband of rank, in the way of which there was no impediment, rather than wait the changes that might even in the short space of a few days, be effected in the heart of a young man, who, from his situation in life, would have access to the first and most beautiful women in England, while the splendid sphere in which he moved would enable him to select a wife from any family, however noble and distinguished.

Lady Torrington saw with concern that Cecilia's person was still lovely as ever, and that the infatuated Oscar beheld her with the same romantic passion; but lady Torrington was a woman of the world—she gave no credence to eternal love; she hoped to find the accomplishment of her ambitious projects in absence, and the natural mutability of his sex.

Miss Graham had already made herself a favourite with Mrs. Doricourt, who hoped in her that Cecilia would find a friend and companion the ensuing winter in town, the delights of which they both pictured to themselves with the vivid colouring of youthful imagination.

The supper served up to the company at the Hermitage revived the envy and vexation of the countess of Torrington; for, without any bustle or parade of preparation, Mrs.

Doricourt entertained all the first people in her vicinity, and placed before them, in a magnificent service of gilt plate, every variety and delicacy that wealth could procure, or taste invent. Her mortification was increased by seeing the company take their leave, more than ever impressed with the opinion, that Mrs. Doricourt and her *protégée* were unrivalled in beauty, elegance, and accomplishments.

Lady Torrington took leave of Mrs. Doricourt and Miss Delmore with the warmest professions of friendship and regard, at the same time secretly hoping she might never in the course of her life meet either of them again, or any other persons belonging to the class of perfects, for whom she had a most sovereign contempt, and detested with all her soul.

The earl and his son bade Mrs. Doricourt and Cecilia adieu, with unfeigned regret, and while they dwelt on the pleasure they should experience in relating to each other, when they met in town, the events occurring during their separation, Oscar took an opportunity to slide from Cecilia's finger a ring, which he replaced with a valuable brilliant from his own. While the countess bade lady Welford farewell, whom Mrs. Doricourt had prevailed on to remain at the Hermitage till their departure for Devonshire, Oscar took the opportunity of whispering in a low voice—"Heaven guard you, my adored Cecilia! Remember that my health, nay, my very life, depends on your faith!"

Cecilia smiled and blushed, for the eyes of the countess were at that moment turned on her with a look of disdain.

"Without doubt, Miss Delmore," said she, "lord Alwyn Bruce will follow you to Teignmouth; and if you are wise, you will employ all the witchery of your beauty to engage him in the trammels of matrimony. Lovers of rank and fortune are not to be met every day; and it is far better to ensure a certainty, than depend on contingencies."

Mrs. Doricourt coloured with indignation.

Cecilia's delicacy was offended by the grossness of lady Torrington's speech; but coldly thanking her for her advice, she remarked, that lord Alwyn Bruce never having professed himself her lover, she had not the choice to approve or reject his suit; but whenever she did marry, she begged to assure her ladyship, it would be inclination, not interest, that would influence her choice.

The earl and Oscar looked their approval of her reply; while the countess, twisting an expensive shawl round her throat, replied—"I have heard young ladies make similar protestations before, and seen them, after all, make marriages of interest; prudence, I believe though, would have been a more correct expression. Adieu, Miss Delmore! I predict, when we meet in town, I shall salute you by the title of lady Alwyn Bruce."

Mrs. Doricourt was prevented from uttering a few plain truths, which would have been unpleasant to the refined ear of the countess, by a servant announcing that the yacht was ready to convey the earl's party across the lake.

On the Chinese bridge Oscar lingered a moment to press Cecilia's hand to his lips, to conjure her to answer his letters, and to assure her of his unalterable affection.

"Adieu, dearest Oscar!" said Cecilia, as she waved her white hand to him, while he leaned over the side of the light vessel, still gazing on the angel-form of her his youthful heart adored.

"We have met and parted," thought Cecilia, as she walked silently between lady

Welford and Mrs. Doricourt to the house. "Farewell, dear Oscar! Heaven only knows whether we shall ever meet again, and if we should, what alteration a few weeks separation may make in the heart, that now professes itself fondly devoted to me."

Mrs. Doricourt saw the tender regret of Cecilia, and it recalled the remembrance of Henry Woodville. He too had vowed, "*tender was the time when we two parted ne'er to meet again.*"—"Oh! may gracious Heaven avert from my Cecilia the anguish of knowing Oscar deceitful and perjured!" exclaimed she. "Better, far better, will it be that she should weep him dead, than endure the anguish of knowing that he lives, and is forsworn!"

The arrangements of Mrs. Doricourt kept her in Cumberland a few days after the family had quitted Torrington Castle, and Cecilia had the melancholy pleasure, when she went to take leave of her aunt Milman and Mr. Wilson, of visiting lord Rushdale's chamber, of sitting in the place where, the night before he was taken ill, they had read together in the little drawing-room.

Cecilia respected and loved Mrs. Milman, but she knew she was fond of talking; she therefore bade her farewell, without entrusting her with the secret of her engagement with lord Rushdale.

Mr. Wilson felt more regret at parting with Cecilia than Mrs. Milman did, for she plumed herself with the hope that, since her niece's face was not injured by the smallpox, she would yet marry a great lord, or a rich baronet, and that when Cecilia's own fortune was made, she should herself become a person of consequence.

Mr. Wilson cared nothing for her beauty, only that in its preservation he saw many obstacles to her becoming Mrs. Solomon Scroggins; but, at all events, he determined to go to town early in the winter, for the express purpose of introducing them to each other; and if they were designed for each other, why very good; and if not, he would endeavour to believe with Pope—"whatever is, is right."

"If it had not been for that consequential Mrs. Smithson, who so entirely manages the countess," said Mrs. Milman, "I might have gone to the town-house for the winter; but Mrs. Smithson did not like me, and so I must mope out the winter here as well as I can."

"You are mistress of your own time and actions at Torrington Castle," replied Wilson. "If you had gone to London, you would have been driven mad; for the servants in town are ten times worse than they are in the country."

"Well," said Mrs. Milman, consoling herself with her old adage, '*every thing that happens is for the best.*' I am certain I should have quarrelled pretty often with Mrs. Smithson; for she gives herself as many airs as the countess herself; but I shall be so sorry after Cecilia, though nobody knows but this jaunt may make her fortune."

The countess of Torrington, as the travelling carriage drove through the great gates that terminated the chesnut avenue, looked back at the castle, and in a joyful tone exclaimed—"Adieu, thou dreary pile!"

The spirits of the earl and his son were neither of them *in alt*; and though they both felt displeased with the tasteless exultation of the countess, they remained silent, unwilling to reproach her silly and unfeeling joy.

Finding she could not provoke them to talk, the countess was constrained to converse with Mrs. Smithson, who being rather indisposed with a cold, was permitted to occupy a seat in the carriage.—"In the morning," said the countess, "we renovate our beauties by

taking a dip in the sea; we then put on a becoming morning-dress, and lounge an hour or two at the libraries, toss over the novels, criticise all the new publications, and subscribe to the loos for some pretty trifle, which is always put up at four times its real value, for the possession of which we contend with as much spite and envy as if the bauble was actually necessary to our existence. Then we have our morning and evening promenades on the Steine, where the prince regent frequently condescends to receive the compliments of the company, and allows his own band to play for their amusement. Then there are balls, public and private, and the theatre, where people of fashion go to hear and retail scandal. I assure you, Smithson, Brighton is a delightful place.”

At every stage the countess, to the great annoyance of her husband and son, uttered childish exclamations of joy and thankfulness, that she had escaped the boors of Cumberland, and lost sight of the gloomy Gothic Castle of Torrington, where she protested she had passed the most miserable days of her life.

The earl was at last tormented into expressing himself greatly pleased with the castle, its situation, prospects, and neighbourhood.

“The lakes,” said Oscar, “are stupendous objects of grandeur, beauty, and sublimity. Poets and painters continually visit Cumberland, to admire and exercise the best efforts of genius, in describing the scenery of the lakes.”

“But unfortunately,” returned the countess, “I am neither a poet or painter; and, thank my stars, am not romantic enough to pretend to genius.”

“No one, I believe, ever yet accused you of genius,” said the earl; “but taste is not confined to poets and painters. To every eye Heaven has given the faculty of observation, and none but the cold and senseless can view the grand and picturesque beauties of the lakes of Cumberland, without feeling strong emotions of awe and admiration.”

“I then,” replied the countess, “am one of those cold senseless beings. I neither admire woods, mountains, rocks, sheets of water, or old castles; my taste is infinitely more gratified by seeing representations of them at the theatres. I prefer the Opera House, or a crowded ball-room, to all the solemnities of the lakes of Cumberland; and again, I thank Heaven that the sound of water is out of my ears, which, all the time I was at the castle, reminded me of Noah’s flood, and that I have entirely lost sight of the ivy-covered battlements and pointed turrets of the ancient seat of your illustrious ancestors. I am sure I never met more disappointments in my life, nor ever mingled with a set of more disagreeable and ignorant people, than did me the immense favour of annoying me with their visits at Torrington Castle.”

The earl did not choose to pursue this altercation further. He was perfectly aware that the defection of the count del Montarino, and the disappointment of the *fête champêtre*, yet rankled in the frivolous mind of the countess, who said truly, that she had no taste for the sublimities of nature, who only existed in crowds, and delighted in parade, noise, and show, and shrunk with horror from what she was incompetent to sustain—a rational conversation; but Oscar, his fine countenance flushed with the glow of indignation, asked if she ranked Mrs. Doricourt with the disagreeable persons who had visited at the castle.

“Most assuredly I do,” replied the countess. “The miraculous attainments and endless perfections of Mrs. Doricourt have worn my spirits to death’s door. It does not signify your looking offended, lord Rushdale, for unfortunately I do not possess your *lumière de*

sentiment, and cannot admire with your enthusiasm.”

“Mrs. Doricourt,” said lord Rushdale, “is in mind and manners the most superior woman I know.”

“Prodigiously polite and complimentary!” returned the countess; “but different persons will, you know, have different opinions. Then that other *rara avis*, Miss Delmore—I saw nothing wonderful in her, though she belongs to the class of *perfects*.”

“Permit me to ask your ladyship,” said Oscar, “can you possibly assign a reason why you dislike Miss Delmore?”

“Undoubtedly I can,” replied the countess; “a thousand! in the first place, she is low born.”

“Emily! Emily!” said the earl, “can you be serious in this declaration?”

“Positively I am,” returned the countess, “though perfectly understanding the drift of your question. I beg leave to remind your lordship that I was not of suspicious birth, nor brought up on charity. Bless me, how you frown! you ask me for reasons, and then are angry at my candour; but *je n’y saurois que faire*—I have many times before observed, that the *perfect* Mrs. Doricourt, and her amiable, artless pupil, Miss Delmore, have, with their wonderful accomplishments and superior sense, entrapped the heart of the romantic, sentimental lord Rushdale; and I am sorry to add, that it is evident to me, that you, lord Torrington, instead of opposing, as the honour of your family requires, this boyish attachment—”

“Cecilia Delmore is an angel!” said lord Rushdale, “and in manhood I am convinced my heart will as warmly approve her as at the present moment.”

“I hope to see my son happy,” rejoined the earl: “fortune has already placed him high in the ranks of life; he will, I trust, choose a wife, who will be his companion, his friend; who will be able to exist as happily in solitude as in a crowd.”

“And who so suited for this friend and companion,” said the countess, “as the *perfect* Cecilia Delmore? But,” added she, spitefully, “remember I tell you, lord Rushdale, if you flatter yourself with my ever receiving that low-born girl as my daughter, you encourage *un fol espoir*; and now having favoured you with my determination, I beg to hear no more of this girl: she has sufficiently annoyed me all the time I was in Cumberland, and I most sincerely trust that her inimitable perfections and wonderful beauty will dispose of her to some fool or other before November, that I may escape the misery of having to introduce her to my friends in town.”

To this generous wish neither lord Torrington nor his son made any remark or reply; their opinions and determinations were fixed beyond the power of envy or ambition to alter, and the rest of the journey was performed without the names of Mrs. Doricourt or Miss Delmore being again mentioned.

The countess of Torrington, on her arrival at Brighthelmstone, found an elegant house prepared to receive her, within a few doors of her dear friend, the duchess of Aberdeen, and being again in the midst of beings weak, vain, selfish, and unthinking as herself, the countess for a few days thought herself in a new world, and the very happiest of created beings. The libraries, the assemblies, the promenade, the theatre, and detailing to her friends the terrible disappointment she had endured, in being constrained to put off her *fête champêtre*, for which every thing was in such delightful preparation, through the

unfortunate illness of lord Rushdale, had left her no leisure to remark that the honourable Tangent Drawley was by no means so ardent an admirer of her beauties at Brighton as he was at Torrington Castle; nor could all her hints, allurements, or invitations, when she perceived his coldness, produce the change she wished.

Drawley was extremely polite, but nothing more; and again the countess of Torrington had the mortification to find that the professions of men were empty as air, but determined not to give his vanity a triumph, by seeming to lament his inconstancy: she looked round for some fashionable dashing man, with whom she might alarm his pride and inflame his jealousy. At this crisis she was introduced to the celebrated major Norman, whom lady Jacintha Fitzosborne had, on the memorable morning of her arrest, given Miss Delmore permission to make a fool of.

Major Norman was a fashionable man, who dashed into every extravagance of *haut ton*, with very little more than his handsome person and a commission in the guards to depend upon; but his easy manners and insinuating address made him so general a favourite with the ladies, and procured him such constant invitations, that he lived a gay life, without restriction or annoyance, except when his tailor or shoemaker, his hatter or his laundress, tired of giving him credit, became troublesome and impertinent.

The earl of Torrington at first received major Norman with hospitality and kindness, but having learned his character, and seeing him every day occupy a place at his table, and constantly attending lady Torrington like her shadow, he began to fear what was already the case, that the weak vanity and imprudence of the countess would expose her to the censure of the scandal hunters and venders, with which the place abounded, and that by suffering the major to visit so familiarly at his house, he should cover himself with disgrace, and be considered an easy accommodating husband.

Finding all remonstrances ineffectual to convince lady Torrington of her imprudence, the earl gave his servants, in her hearing, a positive command, not to admit major Norman on any pretence whatever.

Of this, the earl's first act of authority, the countess complained bitterly, and in high resentment threatened, since she was deprived of the liberty of choosing her visitors, that she would separate from such barbarous tyranny.

This menace had not the effect lady Torrington expected, for the earl calmly and coldly replied, that in the particular of a separation, he was at any moment ready to acquiesce with her wishes; but while she continued to reside under the same roof with him, he would endeavour to prevent her disgracing herself, and rendering him contemptible in the eyes of the world.

This remonstrance on the part of the earl had no other effect on the countess than to provoke bitter upbraidings and reflections on his past conduct, and an indignant declaration, that being past babyhood she would submit to no control—no, not even that of a husband; that she would, *malgré* his displeasure, choose her own company: adding, with a sneer, that certainly he must be very capable of ruling the conduct of others who had never yet been able to govern his own.

Lord Rushdale entered in the very heat of this altercation. No hints respecting the imprudence of his mother had met his ear, but the gallantries of major Norman were too notorious, and too generally talked of, for Rushdale to approve his mother's intimacy

with him; and when the earl, full of resentment, had left the room, with the most respectful tenderness he represented to her ladyship the fatal consequences that must ensue from continuing an acquaintance with a man of major Norman's licentious character: with moving eloquence he represented to her, that she put to hazard her son's life, for should a whisper against her fame reach him, his sense of honour would compel him to demand satisfaction from the major, when one or perhaps both their lives would be sacrificed, and to the indelible shame and disgrace she would fix upon her reputation, she would have the stain of murder on her conscience.

The countess shuddered. Oscar saw she was affected, and seizing the moment of compunctious feeling, he obtained her promise that in future she would avoid major Norman, as far as she could with politeness.

With this promise lord Rushdale satisfied the anxious mind of his father. He then read to him part of a letter he had just received from Miss Delmore, who spoke of the beauties of Devonshire with animated delight, particularly of the romantic scenery round Teignmouth, but confessed a preference for the mountains and lakes of Cumberland, which were endeared to her by local circumstances, and recurred to her memory with all the finer emotions of affection and gratitude.

For a few days the countess persevered in keeping the handsome major at a distance; but too intimately acquainted with the weak vanity of her mind to be so easily repulsed, he assailed her with billets filled with tender complaints of her cruelty, which was affecting his health, and driving him to despair. It was impossible to let so handsome a man die for love; the countess answered his tender epistles, bade him take care of his health, and look forward with hope to their meeting in town.

The major laughed, and exclaimed—"Frailty, thy name is woman!" But two months were an age to the impatient major, who, finding it necessary to take a trip to the Continent, to avoid the impertinent applications of clamorous creditors, thought it would be no bad hit, if he could persuade the countess of Torrington to be his companion, and draw upon her purse for travelling expences. The major wrote again, and his billet was so flattering, so persuasive, that the countess consented to an assignation at a farmhouse, two miles from the town.

In one of those drives, taken at an early hour of the morning, the countess of Torrington, to her extreme surprise, beheld the honourable Tangent Drawley and lady Arabella Moncrief sauntering in a love-making way along a field near the road, where so very earnest was their conversation, that they never raised their eyes at the sound of the carriage-wheels. The countess could have exclaimed with Milton's Satan—"Sight, hateful sight, tormenting!" but shame and jealous resentment sealed her lips, and as long as her straining eyes could behold them, she gazed with rage and astonishment.

Lady Arabella Moncrief was an only child, and, as well as being heiress to the wealth of her deceased father, had a large independent fortune, which she was to possess at the age of eighteen.

The terms of kindness in which lord Rushdale always spoke of lady Arabella, and the intimacy that subsisted between them, visiting, dancing, walking, and riding together, had deceived the countess into a belief that her wishes were *en train*; and that her son, ashamed of and forgetting his Cumberland attachment, had discovered that it was his

interest to address the high-born wealthy lady Arabella Moncrief; and that she, a wild, good-tempered romp, actually preferred the sensible, elegant Rushdale, to all the young men of fashion who formed her train, and eagerly sought to render themselves agreeable.

The countess now saw her mistake, for nothing short of a serious attachment could possibly have induced lady Arabella and Drawley to take a long and early walk, and to so unfrequented a place. Lady Torrington now clearly saw why and for whom Drawley had failed in his allegiance to her, and spite, envy, and jealousy, did not render her the most agreeable companion in the world to the obsequious major, who, while trying to flatter her into good humour, had not suspicion that her sudden change from smiles to frowns was effected by the demon Jealousy, but imputed her ill-temper to the apprehensions of the seeing her ambitious scheme entirely defeated by lady Arabella Moncrief preferring the honourable Tangent Drawley to the right honourable heir of Torrington.

Major Norman knew that lady Torrington had near three thousand a year independent of her husband, and he had been exerting all his power of persuasion to induce her to leave the dull, gloomy earl of Torrington, and fly with him to enjoy the delights of liberty and love in Italy—a country of which she always spoke in raptures; but all the major's vows, sighs, and flatteries, were at that time thrown away: rage and jealousy possessed the bosom of lady Torrington, and she insisted on returning home on the instant, that she might, as she said, investigate the deceptive conduct of lady Arabella Moncrief, who, though a mere child in years, appeared to be an adept in affairs *de la coeur*, to be perfect mistress of the art of coquetry.

But the countess of Torrington had greatly mistaken lady Arabella Moncrief: entirely exempt from coquetry or dissimulation, Nature never enshrined in a female bosom a heart more generous, sincere, and ingenuous: having met the honourable Tangent Drawley a few times at public and private assemblies, she was pleased with his person, and captivated by his lively manner: on a more intimate acquaintance, she found him a being exactly suited to her taste, eccentric, gay, and full of whim. Lady Arabella was fond of dancing, for which her little light airy figure was admirably adapted. Drawley had solicited the honour of her hand at two or three balls, and his inimitable style of dancing had completely secured her heart; nor was Drawley less won by the lively unassuming manners of the blooming lady Arabella, who united to all the gaiety of youth a generous feeling heart, and a sweet unaffected temper, that rendered her a general favourite with the circle in which she moved; and though her talents, understanding, or attainments, did not place lady Arabella Moncrief high in the ranks of genius, she had sense sufficient to prevent her saying or doing any thing glaringly silly, and her good heart and amiable disposition amply supplied the place of more brilliant, but not more estimable qualifications.

The affections of Drawley were free; his vanity, his imagination, and ardent passions, had sometimes led him into excesses that his judgment condemned, and his untainted principles despised.

The countess of Torrington had thrown out lures for him, that it was utterly impossible for a gay young man to pass unnoticed; but honour had a peremptory voice in his bosom, and forbade his taking advantage of her weakness, or abusing the hospitality of the earl; and Drawley had resolved on breaking the spells of the countess, by pretending

to be called away by urgent business, when lord Rushdale's illness furnished an excuse for quitting Torrington Castle. One letter, and only one, he wrote to the countess, after he left Cumberland, filled with the news of the day, and those unmeaning compliments which a polite man thinks himself constrained to pay to a vain female.

The heart of Drawley had never been seriously touched till he became acquainted with lady Arabella Moncrief, whose rosy smile, innocent and playful as infancy, and whose preference of his attentions, on every occasion, gave him the hint on which he determined to speak the feelings and purposes of his heart, as soon as honour would allow the declaration; and this love for lady Arabella found him invulnerable to the inviting smiles and reproachful glances of the countess of Torrington, who declared that the air of Brightehelmstone had transformed the charming animated Drawley into a dull, insensible clod, even more annoying than when he chose to assume the *INDOLENT*.

Drawley, while amusing himself with lady Torrington's partiality, had been admitted into her confidence respecting the intended alliance of the houses of Aberdeen and Torrington; but he had marked the impassioned glances of lord Rushdale, and was sensible that the affections of his heart were devoted to Cecilia Delmore, and that the ambitious views of his mother would never influence him in a matrimonial engagement.

Previous to making an avowal of his passion to lady Arabella Moncrief, Drawley generously resolved on coming to an explanation with lord Rushdale, that the countess might not, at a future period, have it in her power to accuse him of deceptive and dishonourable conduct.

The second day after the arrival of the Torrington family at Brighton, a conversation with lord Rushdale, open and explicit on both sides, put Drawley in possession of a sincere friend, and left him at liberty to declare himself to lady Arabella, who, with sweet smiles, and engaging modesty, bade him endeavour to win the favour of her mother, the duchess.

"And yours, sweetest Arabella, will follow," said Drawley. "Assure me but of that, and I shall be happy."

"Every body knows," replied lady Arabella, "that I am so dutiful a daughter—"

"That if," interrupted Drawley, "the duchess desires you to accept lord Riverton, you will obey her."

"No," interrupted lady Arabella, laughing, "though he kisses my gloves, puts my nosegay in his bosom, and fondles my Barbet, I fear I shall not be quite dutiful and obedient enough for that, because—because—"

"Because what?" asked Drawley.

"Why because I dislike lord Riverton," replied lady Arabella; "he has such frightful red hair, and such long yellow teeth, that he always puts me in mind of the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood; but there is my hand—obtain the consent of the duchess, if you can, and I am yours. Will this promise content you?"

"No," said he, covering with kisses the white hand she struggled to release from his clasp—"no—but, dearest Arabella, I will be content if you will promise to be mine immediately, whether the duchess consents or not."

"My mother," returned lady Arabella, "has hitherto been most kind and indulgent; if you fail to win her approval, you must wait till I am of age."

“Till next spring,” said Drawley, “and then, my Arabella, you will, I trust, give me a right to this dear hand.”

“How can you expect me to make an obedient wife,” replied lady Arabella, “if you yourself persuade me to be an undutiful daughter?”

“Heaven forbid that I should ever persuade you,” said Drawley, “to an act that your own heart would condemn, or the duchess consider unpardonable! but I trust to the venial trespass of love she would not long remain inexorable.”

Lord Rushdale was announced.—“I fear,” said he, “I interrupt an interesting conversation. Be candid, lady Arabella, and tell me if I am an unwelcome visitor.”

“By no means,” replied lady Arabella; “for though we are in league to contradict the wise schemes of the countess of Torrington and the duchess of Aberdeen, I trust we shall ever meet as friends, and be glad to see each other.”

Lord Rushdale expressed himself honoured in being admitted to a participation of her friendship.

“Yes, I permit you,” said Drawley, “to call Rushdale your friend, though I know very few others that I should feel pleased to hear you honour with that distinction, lady Arabella.”

“Do not arrogate to yourself too much authority,” returned lady Arabella, “lest I punish your arrogance by curtailing your pretensions.”

“Could you have the cruelty?” asked Drawley.

“I really cannot say,” replied lady Arabella; “but no doubt you would survive, were I ever so cruel; and as to the friendship,” continued she, “of such a giddy creature as I am, it is not of much value; and though lord Rushdale is good enough to accept it in lieu of a tenderer sentiment, I fear lady Torrington will not so readily pardon me.—As I live, her ladyship’s carriage!”

“I do not wish to meet my mother just now,” said lord Rushdale.

The visit of the countess was not to lady Arabella, and having inquired for the duchess, she was conducted to her dressing-room.

“I am for the library,” said lady Arabella, tying on her morning bonnet. “We are to decide a loo this morning for the most complete work-box—”

“A work-box!” repeated Drawley, with a smile; “and if you win it, of what use will it be to you? Does your ladyship ever work?”

“To be sure I do,” said lady Arabella. “I have been employed for the last two months in making—” Baby-clothes she was on the point of saying; but stopping short, and blushing deeply, she added—“but what right, pray, have you to inquire?”

“None, certainly,” replied Drawley; “only I was surprised into the question by your speaking of a work-box, which, I confess, I never suspected could possibly be of use to you.”

“You are greatly mistaken,” returned lady Arabella. “Ask lady Torrington—she will tell you that I belong to the class of *notables*, and that when I marry I shall imitate the industrious dames of the olden time, and employ my hours in knitting comfortable stockings for my husband, and in spinning and making linen for my household.”

“Happy would it be for England,” said lord Rushdale, “if the simplicity and industry of the olden time had not been exchanged by its females for frivolity, idleness, and

extravagance.”

Lord Rushdale and Drawley attended lady Arabella to the library, where the party had collected who were to decide the possession of the work-box.

The earl of Torrington hastily entered, drew lord Rushdale aside, and in great agitation asked him if he had seen his mother that morning?

“Yes,” replied Oscar, “we have had rather an unpleasant discussion respecting the duties of parents and children.”

“Do you know,” inquired the earl, “at what time she left home?”

“Not till after I did, I am certain,” said Oscar; “and I left her a few moments since with the duchess of Aberdeen, who, having sprained her ankle, is confined to her couch.”

“Are you sure,” demanded the earl, “that your mother is at the duchess of Aberdeen’s?”

“I am certain I left her there,” returned lord Rushdale.

“Thank Heaven!” exclaimed the earl. “I heard she was seen in a carriage, driving furiously towards London.”

The next moment lady Torrington, a Miss Sedgeley, and lord Riverton, passed the library.

The earl seated himself.—“I see,” said he to his son, “there is not much reliance to be placed on reports.”

Oscar was distressed, for he perceived that the imprudence of his mother had given rise to some new scandal; but he was prevented from asking an explanation from the earl, by lady Bloomfield taking his arm, and insisting on his going with her to see her long-tailed ponies.

Lady Arabella Moncrief observed to Drawley, that Miss Sedgeley looked remarkably well that morning.

“Oh dear, yes!” said old lady Bromford, in a half-whisper to Miss Jameson, a Miss of fifty-four, “she lays on her Paris bloom with great effect.”

“Does Miss Sedgeley wear paint?” asked her nephew, sir Thomas Plover, a young miser of large fortune. “What ridiculous extravagance! it is throwing money away.”

“It is throwing out a bait to catch a gudgeon,” resumed lady Bromford. “Miss Sedgeley is putting on her best looks to captivate lord Riverton; but, poor thing! she may spare herself the pain of affecting to smile. Report says that lord Riverton has other views, and she will be fated to another disappointment.”

“There is nothing but disappointments in this life,” said Miss Jameson, with a sigh. “I am sure I have had my share; but what does your ladyship allude to? I never heard of Miss Sedgeley having met a disappointment.”

“Dear me, can that be possible?” returned lady Bromford, taking an enormous pinch of snuff. “Well, really I thought all the world had heard of poor Miss Sedgeley’s disappointment.”

“No, really,” replied Miss Jameson, with a look of curiosity, “I never heard a syllable of the affair. Pray how—”

“Oh, my dear creature,” said lady Bromford, “the story is too long to narrate with all its aggravating circumstances; but Miss Sedgeley, it seems, fell in love with the handsome major Norman, at a ball given by her uncle, sir Robert Arden, in

Leicestershire; and the major believing the young lady heiress to Arden Manor, and all her uncle's wealth, was, for some months, her most adoring slave; but when the Leicester Bank broke, and other misfortunes of sir Robert were made public, and major Norman understood that Miss Sedgeley's fortune would not be more than five or six thousand pounds at most, his violent love began to cool; he pretended that she encouraged the addresses of another gentleman, sent back her letters, and demanded his, which she was silly enough to return, and after a vast many paltry inventions and evasions, gave up her acquaintance altogether. Report says she had a fit of sickness, and was very near death; but I am glad to see that she looks tolerably well, and has spirit enough to treat the major with the indifference and contempt he deserves."

"The major is a gay deceiver," observed Miss Jameson; "but so handsome, and so very insinuating, that I have always avoided his acquaintance. The fascinating wretch, he behaved very ill indeed to Miss Sedgeley!"

"He acted very prudently, I think," said sir Thomas Plover. "A man must be out of his senses that marries in these dreadful times, when taxes are so exorbitant, and every article of life so extravagantly dear, unless his wife brings a sufficient fortune to enable him to support the enormous expences of a family. Let who will blame the major, I do not. The affair would have been very different if he had broke off the acquaintance before her uncle's misfortunes."

"The times indeed," said Miss Jameson, "are very bad, sufficiently so to make every person wary how they marry, to increase expences; and as the major has very little, if any thing more than his commission to exist upon, it certainly is necessary that he should have a wife with a large fortune. His habits, I am told, are very expensive."

"And are paid, I fancy, by the public at large," returned lady Bromford, "for he runs in debt wherever he can; and if he has no fortune, independent of his commission, his tradespeople must suffer. He is a very bad and dangerous character. Poor Miss Sedgeley! he now meets her with a ceremonious bow, and takes no more notice of her than if she was an absolute stranger."

"Major Norman," returned Miss Jameson, "has another pursuit, or report speaks falsely; but as he is notorious in the annals of gallantry, ladies, if they have any respect for their reputations, should be careful of giving the world occasion to censure their conduct, by encouraging an intimacy with a person of his libertine celebrity."

"Bless my soul!" said lady Bromford, delaying to raise the ready pinch of snuff to her nose, "I wonder I have not heard this report."

"So do I, upon my soul!" rejoined sir Thomas Plover; "for if a scandalous story is in circulation, you have generally the earliest information."

"Thank you, sir Thomas," replied lady Bromford; "you are pleased to compliment; but I think a less impertinent remark would have better become the mouth of my nephew; but it does not suppress my curiosity; and pray, my dear Miss Jameson, on whom is it said the major bestows his attentions now?"

"On a married lady," replied Miss Jameson, "a person of no small consequence in fashionable life, who contrives to give him private meetings, in spite of the jealousy of her husband."

The earl of Torrington rose from his seat, and hastily left the library.

Miss Jameson smiled, and nodded significantly, as she gazed after the retreating earl.

“Bless me! how very stupid I must have been!” said lady Bromford, stuffing her nose full of snuff. “I might, from several little incidents, have suspected this affair; but never having been given to intrigue myself (lady Bromford was very much deformed, and had grey squinting eyes), I never inclined to think ill of other females; but if detection should follow this business, the husband will be obliged to call the major out, for he is too poor to pay damages.”

“And if he was rich,” observed a tall, thin, sallow-looking man, who had sat for some time leaning on his elbow, and concealing his face with his hands, “the husband would be a contemptible wretch who makes a sale of the honour of his wife; and what better than a sale can it be considered, when a man takes money—damages the law terms it—for the infidelity of his wife?”

“I must beg leave to be of a different opinion,” rejoined sir Thomas Plover; “I think it quite right to make a man pay for breaking up the peace of a family; and in such a case I should infinitely prefer a handsome sum of money to an ounce of cold lead.”

“Or to any thing else under the sun,” said lady Bromford. “Your love of money, nephew, is as notorious as major Norman’s gallantries.”

“Avarice is the vice of age,” observed the stranger. “Is it possible so young a man can make gold his passion? No character is more detestable than that of a miser; for love of money contracts the heart, dries up the sacred fount of charity, and extinguishes every noble and generous feeling. The *auri sacra fames* makes a man hateful to his fellow creatures, and miserable in himself.”

“There, sir Thomas, do you hear?” asked lady Bromford.

“Yes, madam, I do hear, and I think,” said he, “that such observations from perfect stranger are very unaccountable, very odd, very—”

“Very impertinent, no doubt you mean,” returned the stranger, “though you hesitate to say so. Perhaps they are impertinent; but I wished to warn you against making gold your idol, for I never yet knew, and I have had some experience in the world, one person whom its possession made happier, wiser, or better.”

“But its possession gives a man consequence in life,” replied sir Thomas; “it procures him respect.”

“From sycophants and fools,” returned the stranger.

“Your opinion and mine, sir, will never agree,” said sir Thomas. “I consider it wisdom to accumulate money; and to be careful of it when gained, the greatest proof a man can give of sound sense. Your crack-brained poets indeed affect to rail against wealth, but that is because the poor devils cannot prevail on persons of sane mind to purchase their doggerel.”

Lady Arabella Moncrief now advanced from the opposite side of the library, where she had been deciding the loo for the work-box, which she had lost— “There is,” said she, offering a paper to lady Bromford, “the petition of a poor man who fell off the mail coach a few evenings since, and unfortunately broke a leg and an arm; and, from this dreadful accident, is unable to proceed on his journey.”

“I have no objection to give the poor fellow five shillings,” said lady Bromford, feeling for her purse.

“I have really no money about me,” said Miss Jameson; “but I will get the man’s address, and send to him.”

“Send him to his parish!” exclaimed sir Thomas Plover, refusing to look at the paper. “I have made up my mind never to encourage paupers by looking at petitions. I suppose the fellow was intoxicated, or why should he meet with an accident any more than the other passengers? and really, Mr.—what is your name?” addressing the master of the shop, “you do very wrong to encumber your counter with these sort of things; for if a gentleman cannot come into your library without being annoyed with beggars’ petitions, it will make him resolve never to enter it at all.”

“Poor young man!” said the stranger, darting a look of contempt on sir Thomas Plover. “I pity you, because I feel convinced there is no poverty so deplorable as a niggardly spirit.”

He then approached lady Arabella, and laying a bank-note on the petition, added, with enthusiasm— “*An angel thou, descended from thy heavenly sphere to plead the cause of charity!*”

He then inquired where the poor man was to be found, and left the shop.

“That man is certainly mad,” said sir Thomas Plover. “Can any one tell who he is?”

No one knew the gentleman.

“He is a stranger,” said the master of the shop. “I saw him get out of the mail yesterday.”

“I thought he was nobody,” resumed sir Thomas. “Some poet or actor, no doubt; for these fellows have always an abundance of assurance, and rail against money because they seldom are worth a groat.”

“This gentleman then is neither poet or actor,” said Drawley, “for he has given five pounds to this petition.”

“That was for mere gasconade, to make himself appear of consequence,” said sir Thomas. “I warrant the fellow must go without a dinner for a month at least, after parting with that note, for most likely he has not another in the world.”

“The greater then must be his generosity,” said Drawley, “if he deprives himself of necessary food to relieve the wants of others.”

Lady Arabella again addressed sir Thomas Plover— “Come,” said she, “I know that you are only jesting, and do not mean to be out done by this stranger in humanity and charity. You will, I am certain, subscribe your five pounds.”

“Does your ladyship suppose,” replied he, “that I pick up bank-notes on the highway? I promise you I know the value of money better than to throw it away upon vagabonds. I am sorry to deny any thing to lady Arabella Moncrief, but I have positively made up my mind never to notice petitions.”

“And I have made up my mind never to speak to you again,” said lady Arabella.

She then wished the ladies good morning, and telling Drawley she was ready, left the library.

“I will take care,” said lady Arabella, “to exclude that miser from all the duchess of Aberdeen’s entertainments. They say he is immensely rich, but always lives in lodgings, without a servant, to save expences.”

Drawley laughed, and replied—“Sir Thomas has been known to purchase second-

hand clothes; and it is said, when he has not invitations to dine with his acquaintance, he constantly visits a cook's shop. At one of these eating-houses, report says, he sat down to table with his tailor, whom he cautioned not to know him, attempting to conceal his parsimony by telling the man he had a wish to see life in all its varieties."

On the Steine they met the countess of Torrington, Miss Sedgeley, and lord Riverton, who immediately deserted Miss Sedgeley for lady Arabella, to whom he addressed all his conversation; while Miss Sedgeley, who had before received from him the most flattering compliments, would have remained silent and unnoticed but for Drawley, who, out of mere compassion to her feelings, talked of the weather, the company, and the amusements.

The countess of Torrington looked at her watch, and protested it was near dinner-time, and she had invited the rich alderman Sealand, his wife, and their pale-faced niece, Miss Featherstone, that she might have the pleasure of quizzing them. But on her return home, lady Torrington found a card of excuse from Miss Featherstone, stating that Mr. Sealand, having been taken ill after eating a glass of pineapple ice, they were under the necessity of postponing the pleasure they proposed to themselves, in accepting her ladyship's polite invitation.

"A glass of pine-apple ice!" said the countess, with a sneering laugh—"A quart of turtle soup, and a pound of solid rump steaks, more likely, with which trifling quantity of food I am told Mr. Sealand constantly stays his stomach when he dines abroad. Heigho! No company today. We shall be most dolefully dismal; for of all things a family party is most stupid and miserable."

But what was even in her idea more stupid and intolerable than a family party, awaited her ladyship—a *tête-a-tête* dinner, with her lord and husband; for Rushdale had engaged himself, with Drawley, to dine at the duchess of Aberdeen's.

Two or three times lady Torrington thought she would affect indisposition, and by eating her chicken in her dressing-room, avoid the horror of sitting at table alone with the earl; but as she had promised to meet major Norman at lady Needham's rout in the evening, she considered a sudden recovery would excite suspicion, and it would be best to endure the earl's company for an hour or two.

When they met in the dining parlour, the countess perceived, by the frown on his brow, that the earl was not in the best of possible tempers, but determined not to suffer her own spirits to be discomposed, she seated herself at the table, when to her dismay lord Torrington dismissed the servants from their attendance. Still, however, she preserved an appearance of ease, and carving a chicken, asked the earl if she should have the pleasure to help him?

"I wish with all my soul, madam," replied he, "you could help me to a little patience."

"I really possess so very little myself," returned her ladyship, flippantly, "that I have none to spare: but may I, without offence, inquire what vexatious affair has occurred, that your lordship is in want of patience?"

"I have dismissed the servants, madam," said the earl, constraining himself to be calm, "because I am unwilling to degrade you in their eyes."

"Vastly considerate and obliging indeed!" returned the countess; "but pray do not

look so solemn, or you will destroy my appetite: the chickens are very delicate, and the flavour of the ham excellent: do, my lord, allow me to help you to a slice.”

“Emily! Emily!” said the earl, “this apathy—this affected gaiety is shocking!”

“And your indifference and disregard of my politeness,” returned the countess, “are worse than shocking.”

“Madam! madam!” exclaimed the earl, pushing his plate from before him, “this trifling is unbearable: will you hear unmoved that your reputation is ruined? the town rings with your imprudent intimacy with major Norman.”

“Indeed!” replied the countess, affecting composure, “the town then has something to enliven it. I thought it monstrously dull since the regent left us.”

“Nay, more,” resumed the earl, “it is said you were seen this morning in a hired carriage with major Norman, and the report was current, that, abandoned to infamy, you had eloped with him.”

“Charming fertility of invention!” exclaimed the countess: “any thing more my lord?”

“Yes, madam,” replied lord Torrington, “much more: I was at the library this morning, where I heard—” The earl’s emotion prevented his speech, while lady Torrington, with provoking calmness, said—“I am dying with curiosity; what did you hear? pray go on.”

“Hints and inuendos, bitter and pointed,” replied the earl, “thrown out by your friends, lady Bromford and Miss Jameson, against your reputation, and censures of my own want of spirit in tamely submitting to your unworthy conduct.”

“And yet,” returned the countess, “when I meet these railers to-night at lady Needham’s rout, they will greet me with kindness, smiles, and affability.”

“Major Norman,” said the earl, “is invited to lady Needham’s, and I insist, madam, that you give up your engagement.”

“Give up my engagement!” repeated lady Torrington; “not go to lady Needham’s rout! when all the world will be there, I cannot think of absenting myself. I should be the talk of the place.”

“You are already the talk of the place,” said the earl; “but I deserve more, much more misery than this, for I deceived, abandoned—Would to Heaven your uncle Blackburne’s money had been left to endow almshouses and build hospitals: I had then escaped the disgrace, the wretchedness of being your husband.”

“And I, most likely,” replied the countess, picking the merry thought of the chicken, “should have been happily married to Edmund Saville, who was, to tell truth, a very agreeable man; he would have had more sense and more politeness than to listen to idle reports. Edmund Saville would—”

“Presume not to mention that name in my presence,” said the earl, sternly interrupting her. “Oh, Saville! Saville!” continued he, covering his face with his hands, “thy injuries are all avenged.”

The countess asked if his lecture was finished, because, if it was not, she wished he would conclude it as speedily as possible, as she had dined, and wished the dessert to be brought in.

“From this moment, madam,” replied the earl, “I shall be silent; I have fulfilled my

duty in warning you of the precipice on which you stand; pursue your own measures, but if you prefer disgrace and infamy, do not expect that myself or your son will share it with you; for if I should discover that the report of your assassinations with major Norman is true, we separate at once and for ever.”

The earl left the room, and the countess having called him in her own mind a disagreeable troublesome fool, amused herself with cutting a pine-apple to pieces, and throwing it out of the window to some ragged boys; and bidding them scramble for it, she retired to dress for lady Needham’s rout, where, as she had said, the very persons who had been loudest and most bitter in their censure of her conduct, were the first to salute her with adulatory compliments and professions of friendship.

In the meantime, the mind of the earl of Torrington was suffering from a variety of causes. It was true, he had never loved the countess sufficiently to feel jealous of her preference of another, but his pride was hurt, and he shrunk in agony from the idea of seeing his noble-minded Oscar sinking under the disgrace of his mother. To relieve the misery of his mind, though incapable of receiving pleasure from company or amusement, the earl was persuaded to join a party who were going to the theatre, to the representation of a new comedy; but though the wit of the author was admired, and the piece was received with general applause, lord Torrington sat thoughtful and unentertained till the last act of the play had commenced, when the box-door opened, and the tall, thin, sallow-faced man, the stranger of the library, entered, and the earl of Torrington, to his confusion and dismay, beheld himself face to face with the man whom he had deceived, whose confiding friendship he had treacherously abused, whom he had injured beyond reparation, with EDMUND SAVILLE!

Time, sorrow, and an unhealthy climate, had made a great alteration in the person of Mr. Saville, but the dark penetrating eye, the expression of the countenance, was still the same; for a moment that dark eye was fixed on the pallid face of the earl, when again the closing door sounded on his ear. The earl ventured to raise his eyes, which had fallen beneath the reproachful glance of Saville: he was gone. For a moment lord Torrington believed that his restless and uneasy imagination had conjured up a phantom, and that only in his “mind’s eye” he had beheld the form of his injured friend: but a gentleman near him soon convinced him that it was no delusion of his brain, but the living man he had seen, by observing that Mr. Saville had just arrived from Calcutta, and that he was then waiting the arrival of a sick friend, with whom he was going to the south of France.

Unable to remain, lord Torrington made sudden indisposition a plea for quitting the theatre. The sight of the man whom he had so greatly injured, renewed in his tortured memory the years long past, the generous friendship of Saville, the love of the tender, beautiful Edith, whom he had basely deserted for the possession of that wealth which, had he but listened to the voice of honour and rejected, a few months would have rendered of no consequence to him; for, by the death of the sons of the late earl of Torrington, and two other relations, he had, together with the earldom, become heir to incalculable wealth; but shrinking from the honest labour of a profession, a slave to mammon, he had villanously broken vows which his heart approved; he had perfidiously burst asunder the ties of friendship, and married a woman whom he neither loved nor respected. What was now to be done? Saville was arrived—would doubtless call him to

account for his treachery. After an hour passed in agonizing reflections, lord Torrington saw but one path to pursue; he resolved to offer his injured friend all the amends in his power to bestow—an opportunity to revenge his wrongs by blowing his brains out. Having come to this determination, he sat down and wrote as follows:—

“The earl of Torrington is deeply conscious that Mr. Saville can never meet him as a friend: he also feels that no other reparation can be offered Mr. Saville but that which the laws of honour have established. The earl of Torrington, ready to give Mr. Saville the satisfaction he acknowledges his right to demand, will meet him at any hour and place he may think proper to appoint.”

This note being dispatched, the earl began to arrange his temporal affairs in the best way the tumult of his mind would permit; he had made a will while in Cumberland, in which he had made a very handsome provision for his adopted daughter, Cecilia Delmore: this will he resolved should remain unaltered, lest any circumstances, then unthought of, should make a change, either in lord Rushdale’s sentiments or hers, and they should not marry.

No answer arrived from Mr. Saville that night, and at a late hour the earl retired to his bed, full of remorseful feelings, tired of existence, yet shuddering at the thought, that before that hour the following night, he might be in the regions of eternity. His vain, imprudent, unfeeling wife he thought of with pity and forgiveness; of his affectionate noble-minded Oscar, with regret and agony.

The morning dawned on the sleepless eyes of lord Torrington, and while he sat at breakfast with his son, a note was handed to him: the superscription was in the well-remembered characters of Saville. The earl turned pale; his whole frame trembled, and unable to break the seal, he laid the note on the table.

The earl’s agitation was too visible to escape the notice of Oscar, and he kindly expressed a hope that his father did not anticipate ill news.

“No,” replied the earl, endeavouring to smile; “no; on the contrary, I anticipate, from the contents of this note, relief from much mental anxiety.”

There was a solemnity in the earl’s tone, in spite of his smile, that gave lord Rushdale alarm, though he did not perceive the ambiguity of his speech. He feared some new imprudence on the part of his mother, but observing his father evaded opening the note in his presence, he hastened to conclude the morning repast, and remembering an appointment, he left him at liberty to learn Mr. Saville’s decision.

“Now,” said lord Torrington, tearing open the note, “now let me ascertain the resolve of him who was once my friend: doubtless he will eagerly seize the opportunity of revenging his own and Edith’s injuries.”

But the earl was mistaken. Sorrow had quenched the fiery passions of impetuous youth, and religion’s holy precepts had taught Edmund Saville, that revenge was sinful, and that the divine command expressly said—“*Thou shalt do no murder;*” and in his reflective mind, the *duellist* was a *murderer*, let custom gloss the practice how it might. With astonishment, the earl read—

“Mr. Saville’s principles will not allow him to accept the earl of Torrington’s

offer of what he denominates honourable reparation. To take the earl of Torrington's life would not restore the happiness of which he has bereaved Mr. Saville, who, while his religion forbids revenge, sincerely hopes they may never meet again."

The earl groaned heavily as he threw the note into the fire, and if wishes would have restored the happiness he was conscious he had destroyed, gladly would he have resigned his proud titles and splendid possessions, to enjoy again those white and precious days when he was blest with Saville's friendship and Edith's love; but these were gone past recall, and to avoid meeting Mr. Saville, which he knew would be disagreeable to both, he resolved to go to town for a few days.

"Upon my word, lady Arabella," said her grace the duchess of Aberdeen, who had recovered from the confinement of her sprained ancle, "upon my word, I wonder lord Rushdale is not jealous."

"I should greatly wonder, my dear mamma, if he was," replied her ladyship, "for I don't believe the mistress of his heart has ever given him cause."

"Perhaps not in reality," returned the duchess, "but your everlasting flirtations with that handsome young man, the honourable Tangent Drawley, might certainly excuse him if he was a little suspicious."

"Do you really think Mr. Drawley handsome, mamma?" asked lady Arabella.

"Yes, really," returned the duchess, "and, though his manners are so versatile, extremely agreeable."

"I am out of my little wits with joy to hear you say so," replied lady Arabella, sitting down on the ottoman beside the duchess, "for I am exactly of your opinion; and do you know, mamma, I like Mr. Drawley infinitely better than I do lord Rushdale."

"Arabella! child! you astonish me! but you are not serious; I know you are not," said the duchess.

"Indeed but I am very serious," replied lady Arabella. "I admire and like lord Rushdale extremely as a friend, but I should not at all approve him for a lover: he is too sentimental by half: now, as to Drawley, he suits my taste exactly, for he is all life, spirit, and whim."

"Yes," returned the duchess, "he is celebrated for his whims; only think of his buying five pieces of French cambric at the auction the other morning, and then selling it out again himself by the yard. Why, as long as he lives, if that should be for a hundred years, he will be told of selling cambric handkerchiefs to his friends."

"I hope," said lady Arabella, "while it is remembered that Mr. Drawley sold the cambric, it will not be forgotten that he gave every shilling of the money arising from the sale in charity."

"And now," resumed the duchess, "the eccentric mortal is engaged in a new caprice—this rowing-match, on which he has betted five hundred pounds."

"I am quite delighted at his spirit," said lady Arabella; "if he wins, he will give the money to those who want, and if he loses, it will not injure his fortune; and are not Mr. Drawley's whims a thousand times more honourable to himself than the pursuits of other young men of fashion, who rarely have it in their power to boast having bestowed either their time or money to a good purpose?"

“I am really amazed to hear you, child,” returned the duchess; “and if lady Torrington knew your sentiments what would she say, who has set her heart on seeing you the wife of her son?”

“She must make up her mind to be disappointed,” replied lady Arabella; “for I shall never be lady Rushdale.”

“What possesses you, child?” demanded the duchess; “I trust Mr. Drawley, strange being as he is, has had more honour than to attempt supplanting his friend in your regard.”

“Mr. Drawley will never be guilty of a dishonourable action,” said lady Arabella, warmly; “but, mamma, I will tell you a little secret.”

“I do not wish,” returned the duchess, “to be informed of any secret in which Mr. Drawley is concerned.”

“My secret relates to lord Rushdale,” resumed lady Arabella, “and I am sure you will not refuse to listen.”

“He is a very charming interesting young man,” said the duchess, “and the son of a particular friend: proceed.”

“Well then, mamma, you must know,” resumed lady Arabella, “that lord Rushdale is in love.”

“Is that your secret? I really supposed lord Rushdale to be in love,” said the duchess.

“But not with me,” continued lady Arabella.

“Nonsense!” exclaimed the duchess, rising from her seat; “Is not the affair entirely settled between the countess and myself? and does not lord Rushdale pay you the attention, and have you not received him as a lover?”

“No, upon my honour, I have not,” replied lady Arabella; “nor has lord Rushdale ever offered himself to my acceptance; for he has told me in confidence, that he positively, and with the earl of Torrington’s consent, is affianced to a beautiful young lady of the name of Delmore, who is to be brought out next winter by lady Welford.”

“The countess does not know of her son’s engagement,” said the duchess; “and I really think the earl and lord Rushdale have behaved extremely ill in not acquainting her.”

“My dear mamma,” returned lady Arabella, “you are quite mistaken; lady Torrington is informed of her son’s affection for Miss Delmore, and that the earl approves his choice.”

“If that is the case,” said the duchess, “lady Torrington acts with great duplicity to me.”

“To be sure she does,” replied lady Arabella; “but as to Rushdale, he is the most candid creature breathing for he told me all about his love for Miss Delmore.”

“Well, all things considered,” resumed the duchess, recovering her placidity, which had been a little ruffled, “it may, perhaps, be all the better that you are not attached to lord Rushdale, for I have heard some whispers relative to an intimacy between major Norman and the countess of Torrington, that are rather unfavourable to her reputation; though, to be sure, suspicions of this sort glance so often upon persons of the *haut ton*, that it would be folly to break off an advantageous alliance, when absolute proof had failed to disgrace the party.”

A thundering rap at the door announced a visitor. The duchess of Aberdeen was at home. It was the honourable Tangent Drawley, in a check shirt, black handkerchief, blue jacket, and snow-white trowsers.

The duchess declared the dress of a sailor became him, and suffered him to conduct her and lady Arabella to see the rowing-match, which, with his usual good fortune, he won.

END OF VOL. III.

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